

# LEIA RANSLEY

FOR PRESIDENT OF UNION AFFAIRS

INCLUSIVITY

ACCESSIBILITY

SUPPORT



PUTTING YOU AT THE  
CENTRE OF YOUR UNION

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Goals Overview.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Change for Good.....	5
New Roles, New Opportunities	
Supporting Student Wellbeing.....	6
Inclusivity, Accessibility, Support; Championing Work-Life Balance	
Cost of Living Support.....	7
Supporting Working Students; The Campus Larder; On-Campus Free Food Options	
Housing Support.....	8
Addressing Accommodation Affordability; Centralising Resources	
Our University Community.....	9
Inclusivity and Accessibility; Student Safety; Improving Postgraduate Integration	
Our University Community cont.....	10
Enhancing Alumni Support and Networks; Spaces that Serve You	
Our University Community cont.....	11
Sustainability is our Responsibility; Save our Scottish Universities and Navigating Government Policies	
Making Your Voice Heard.....	12
Increasing Student Outreach and Improving Student-Union Engagement	
My Commitment to You.....	13

# GOALS OVERVIEW

## INCLUSIVITY, ACCESSIBILITY, SUPPORT

**My priority is and will continue to be to support and enhance the lives and experiences of ALL students**

**PROVIDE** COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

**ADDRESS** ACCOMMODATION AFFORDABILITY

**PROMOTE** SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

**SUPPORT** STUDENT WELLBEING

**IMPROVE** POSTGRADUATE INTEGRATION

**ENHANCE** ALUMNI SUPPORT AND NETWORKS

**CONTINUE TO STAND UP** FOR SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES

**INCREASE** OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

**LISTEN TO OUR COMMUNITY**

**YOUR VOICE, ALWAYS.**

# INTRODUCTION

## Who am I?

Hi, I'm Leia! I'm from Carlisle, and am currently a PGT student on the Women, Writing and Gender MLitt after getting my BA (Hons) in English Language and Literature. I have a love for theatre (especially musicals!) and have probably gone through more Rectors loyalty cards than seems reasonable for 10 months.

## Why President of Union Affairs?

I may have only started at the University this year, but I see how amazing this community is - and how amazing it can be in the future!

I want to be a voice for all, ensuring that nobody feels unconsidered. I want to make sure that change is made in accordance with what students actually need. I want to work FOR you and with the full Officer team and University to make meaningful differences.

I have been involved in student leadership and advocacy positions all throughout school and my undergraduate, from social events to academic representation, always with the desire to ensure student voices are heard at the highest levels. I am not afraid to have those hard conversations and am committed to always representing the best interests of the university community.

# CHANGE FOR GOOD

The current team has made significant progress with the Change programme, but that doesn't mean we need to stop there!

**There is always more to do** - and I want to make sure that work is the work that needs to be done and that it is done in the best way - to make sure it is always **change for good**.

## New Roles, New Opportunities

The titles and responsibilities of many roles have been redefined going into this coming year, which provides us a unique opportunity to shape these positions in precisely the ways that best benefit our university community. I am motivated and committed to ensure that these new titles are not just placeholders that suggest change, but actually **promote and push for change that our community needs**.

Pledging to put YOU at the centre of Your Union isn't just an empty promise for me - with new positions comes a chance to redefine what Officers do for students. We need to **listen to our community** to determine what needs are going unfulfilled. I want to make it much easier to feedback what students need to ensure that **all conversations with the university have an intended, useful purpose**.

# SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING

Student wellbeing should never be an afterthought.

**Inclusivity, Accessibility, Support**

These are not empty words, they are a mission statement.

Your Union should truly be YOUR Union, regardless of your background or personal experiences. I want to ensure the space - and other university spaces - prove **welcoming for all, accessible for all** and are the **safe and supportive hubs** that they can and should be. I pledge to work with subcommittees and societies to always actively strive to **improve lines of communication**, ensuring a **clear feedback loop** is always open to make sure that existent structures are always serving the best interests of the student community.

Student wellbeing support channels should never feel difficult or scary to **access**. I am committed to ensuring that **all wellbeing support channels are clear and easy to understand**, as well as making sure they are **designed to be as supportive and user-friendly as possible**.

## Championing Work-Life Balance

I am keenly aware of how important a work-life balance is to supporting student wellbeing, and will **actively champion its importance** at the highest levels. When a work-life balance is prioritised, it often results in more **opportunities to thrive** - and this is something I want to promote, always. The importance of taking a break cannot be underestimated and I want to **support and improve structures** that help ensure this is possible, ensuring that the university implements taking a break into its basic academic structures with class distributions and exam timetables and that **mental health support structures are clearly and easily accessible** at the point of need and beyond.

# COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

There is no doubt that we are facing a cost of living crisis. Universities have a responsibility to support their students through this crisis. I recognise the problems that the crisis has created for students, and am **determined to do whatever possible to implement structures that ease this financial pressure.**

## Supporting Working Students

I recognise the increasing necessity for students to work alongside their studies and that structures must be in place to support this. Whether this is through **financial, academic or wellbeing support, policies or provisions**, the university must acknowledge the position that working students are in to ensure that students never feel that work is compromising their studies or ability to enjoy the student experience. I want to know what working students feel is affecting them the most, and to work with the university to implement ways to navigate and relieve these difficulties.

## The Campus Larder

The successes of the Campus Larder should not be disregarded and I want to acknowledge the hard work that has gone into it! I also want to make sure the **larder remains a priority**. The contents of the larder should continue to be **under review and expanded**, ensuring that it best **serves the needs of students** and is **conscious of potential dietary needs** (allergens, religious requirements, vegan options etc). I also wish to implement an anonymous **feedback form** to hear what could be done better with the space itself (acknowledging the clear windows the space currently has for one!) and the processes in place to access the larder, to continue to ensure **that nobody feels unable to utilise its resources** because of confusion, intimidation or embarrassment.

## On-Campus Free Food Options

It is no secret that many students find it necessary to skip at least one meal a day in order to curb rising food costs, having negative effects on productivity and energy levels. Working with University halls and management teams, blending initiatives that both **provide food options and lower food waste**, I will work to provide a programme that **provides an on-campus free food option** for students that covers at least one meal a day.

# HOUSING SUPPORT

Along with the increasing cost of living, problems with accommodation and housing are only amplified. **This cannot be ignored.**

## Addressing Accommodation Affordability

**No student should feel that they are priced out of living in university accommodation.** I pledge to work with the university to ensure that there is a **commitment made and active steps taken to provide the most affordable accommodation that is possible.** It is crucial that there is a more affordable option available for students **that does not compromise on the facilities provided.**

## Centralising Resources

Word of mouth goes far in this town, but it should not be the only resource students depend upon to gain information about accommodation and private housing processes. I intend to provide a **clear, centralised site of information and resources** for all students that compiles the most **relevant and useful information** about these processes. In centralising these resources, the hope is to shed light on an often mystifying processes, **supporting incoming and current students to help minimise stress** around figuring out the logistics of finding and securing housing.

The hope is that this centralisation will also ease some of the burden on the Accommodation Officer, helping to **better serve the needs of all students by constantly enhancing the quality and detail of resources available.** It will also ensure that there is consistent and accessible housing support available for private sectors as well as accommodation, meaning **no student is left behind** once moving out of halls.

# OUR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## Inclusivity and Accessibility

Inclusivity and accessibility should be central to all actions being implemented at the very foundational level of our university community and I am determined to ensuring this is truly the case. **All students enter university with a unique background, and all students should feel equally welcome.** BAME students, LGBTQ+ students, disabled students, international students, mature students, commuter students, student carers - there are a vast number of communities that students are a part of and **I am unwaveringly committed to listening to and standing up for the rights and needs of each and every student in our community.**

## Student Safety

Significant progress has been made concerning on-campus safety, for example with the implementation of the anti-spiking poster policy, but there will always be ways to **expand and strengthen safety policies** to ensure all students feel **safe and supported** at all times. I also want to work alongside PresWell and societies to **broaden the reach** of such networks, making clear that opportunities to access support for safety concerns is not limited to Union-based events and helping to **institute accessible resources** (posters, online material etc) to make sure that **making events safe is as simple as possible.**

## Improving Postgraduate Integration

As a PGT student myself, I recognise the importance of ensuring **postgraduate students feel welcomed and part of our wider university community.** On a personal level, I was unsure about levels of postgraduate acceptance in societies, spaces in which I have since found some of my closest friends. Working with St Leonard's College and the Officer Team, I intend to work to ensure **postgraduate students have as rich a student experience as undergraduate students.** This work begins with Freshers Week and emphasising that **welcome events are open to all students** and also **providing a postgraduate-specific welcome** outside of St Leonard's College to promote integration within the whole community, not just the postgraduate college.

This integration should not be forgotten as the year progresses - **promoting postgraduate integration should and will be an ongoing project.**

# OUR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## Enhancing Alumni Support & Networks

Ensuring all members of the university community - present or alumni - feel supported and connected to their university community is a real priority for me. Whilst the current support is great, I want to **make explicitly clear what provisions are in place for alumni and provide quick guides to explain how best to utilise the resources on offer** - especially in terms of career support. I also want to help connect alumni and our current community, enhancing alumni networks to strengthen relations by regularly **inviting alumni back, in-person or virtually, to the university to meet with current students** to provide advice and insight, discussing where life has taken them, much like the alumni panels Mermaids has instituted. I want to broaden this reach and **create connections between alumni and current students that open new doors and conversations** whilst hopefully also serving the purpose of helping alumni feel connected to their university community.

## Spaces that Serve You

With an ever-increasing number of commuting students, there needs to be a **centralised space that serves both working and lifestyle needs during the day** - providing at least some means of water source and a food preparation and heating space, as well as providing a space for study beyond the library. Butts Wynd serves some of this purpose, along with being a 24-hour study space, but this **is not the most accessible or practical** location, and therefore **an alternative must be considered** and put into place. I pledge to work with the university to institute this as swiftly and effectively as possible. **An opportunity to access a 24-hour study space should not be impeded by accessibility issues.**

Further, any other space currently being used for storage or left vacant needs to be considered as a potential **space that could be used to serve the needs of the student community more directly**. Even if a space is used in the evenings, but vacant during the day, there is likely a useful purpose that it could be serving. There needs to be a **review and feedback process** to establish where exactly students are feeling these gaps in provision, leading to **discussions with the university to begin adapting existent spaces to actively support our developing community.**

# OUR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## Sustainability is our Responsibility

Student voices are becoming increasingly more important in conversations about sustainability, and we cannot take our foot off the pedal now! There are already some fantastic schemes in place, but there is definitely more that can be done. There are a number of schemes focused around Freshers Week that could be **expanded to ensure visibility in the second semester**. Student sustainability schemes, for example clothes swaps, should also be **granted more visibility and support** on a university level to maximise their impact. I want to use the Union social media to begin ‘**Sustainability Saturdays**’, a quick and easy means designed to **highlight successful sustainability schemes and provide sustainability tips**. I also want to implement a scheme to assess university spaces and their sustainable practice, **identifying areas where sustainability can be improved** (for example, by minimising food waste in halls) and **putting together a plan for how these improvements can feasibly be made with a realistic timeline**.

## Save our Scottish Universities and Navigating Government Policies

Unfortunately, universities and especially Scottish universities are currently in a very precarious positions, being subject to the whims of government decisions on funding and support. This has two immediately awful effects: minimising opportunities for Scottish students to attend Scottish universities, and increasing fees and subsequently decreasing access for international students, who are increasingly being depended upon to ‘make up the difference’. **This is not ok, and students are being exploited on all fronts.**

**I pledge to be an active voice on this issue, holding policy-makers accountable for the real-time and real life effects of policy changes.** Working with other universities and national student bodies, I will **champion our student voices and make sure that they are not excluded from this conversation**, and that this conversation does not fall off the radar. I want to make sure **being informed about this issue is made easier and more accessible**, so that our community feels an active part of this conversation at all times without having to take on a significant personal burden. **Students should never suffer or be subject to exploitation because of financial policy decisions.**

# MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

## Increasing Student Outreach and Improving Student-Union Engagement

Putting YOU at the centre of Your Union is a committed promise, but if students are left in the dark about the Union and the work of Officers, then it is a promise that can only go so far. It is also not the responsibility of students to reach out to the Union to figure out what is going on. **Engaging with Union activities should not be a chore.** It should be an **easy and transparent process** where students can quickly engage and participate in active conversations whenever they wish, **prioritising student voices** in spaces where decisions are being made that actively impact student lives.

The most immediate means of improving this access and engagement is in **streamlining how information can be accessed.** It is much easier to find relevant information and provide feedback if information is centralised and consolidated in a single location. I want to add **a section on the website that is dedicated to detailing the key work that is currently being undertaken by the Officer team, providing a clear overview of what is happening and why, with a form linked on the page for students to give their thoughts on what is happening and what they want to see.** This page will then be linked via QR code on the screens at the Union and on social media, making it **easy to find and quickly accessible.**

I also want to **ensure that the Officer team feels accessible and human** - it's all good being a face on a wall or a website, but that needs to translate to personability. **Providing a more casual introduction** to the team on results days and around Freshers Week will be an immediate way to do this, but this should be geared towards both current and incoming students. **It should be clear what the purpose of a position is, what is actually being done and who is actually behind a title and a gown!**

# MY COMMITMENT TO YOU

## YOUR VOICE, ALWAYS.

**LISTEN** TO OUR COMMUNITY

**EMPOWER** YOUR VOICE AND BELIEFS

**PROMOTE AND FOSTER** INCLUSIVITY AND  
ACCESSIBILITY

**STAND UP** FOR THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF ALL  
STUDENTS

**PROVIDE** COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

**MAKE IT EASIER** TO UNDERSTAND AND ACCESS UNION  
ACTIVITIES

**STREAMLINE AND CONSOLIDATE** COMMUNICATION  
CHANNELS

**MAKE CHANGES FOR GOOD**

PUTTING YOU AT THE CENTRE OF YOUR UNION

Inclusivity, Accessibility, Support

PUTTING YOU AT THE CENTRE  
OF YOUR UNION

Voting Open 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> June



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