

SEMESTER ONE REPORT

ALICE HODGES ✨

PRESIDENT OF UNION AFFAIRS



YOUR
UNION

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

*Union photo credit: Aidan

December 2025

WELCOME



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First of all, thank you so much for electing me. I ran because the Union gave me a strong sense of purpose, even before I took on this role, and it still does. I care about how we work, how we change, and how you feel about it. I would love to extend my huge thanks to Holly, Campaigns and Impact Co-ordinator, without whom this wouldn't have happened (literally because she hired me as intern last year)!!

This semester has been full of change. I am the first ever PresAffs and we are the first Officers to live through the Change Programme as it rolls out. We are understanding what this means for our services, our spaces, and our laws. And even with all that, the work this semester has been productive and steady and across all of this, I've LOVED working with YOUR Exec Team.

If you read this alongside my manifesto, you'll notice that this semester prioritised affordability and defending our future alongside transparency in order to tackle a large part of my manifesto. Over the course of the past 6 months, I have driven forward a wide range of impactful initiatives that support students' financial accessibility, sustainability goals, and community engagement. To indulge the way my brain works, I have quotes from my manifesto to clumb themes rather than list each achievement individually <3

Thank you again for trusting me with this role.
I'm proud of what we've done, and I'm so excited for
the next semester xxx



Manifesto Goal	What I've Done
<p>COST OF LIVING</p>	<p>This is the first time the Union will contribute to the St Andrews Access Award, which supports students with the cost of studying here. Those in the highest bands will receive free Freshers' wristbands for 2026/27. This will help new students take part in welcome events without worrying about cost, and it should make it easier to meet people and feel part of the community. I've built strong links with the Scholarships team so we can grow this support each year and match it to our financial position. I have also spent time in discussions with Scholarships and Student Services about the cost of graduation. We have already started developing ideas to further support, and this will be a key focus for semester two.</p>
<p>COST OF LIVING</p>	<p>One partnership I'm especially proud of this semester is with IT Services. We have worked together to expand and better platform the loan device schemes. Alongside this, we've been working on access to charging facilities and more affordable Wi-Fi. I'm looking forward to seeing how these changes help students over the next few months once they are rolled out.</p>
<p>FREE BREAKFAST</p> 	<p>On Monday 8 December, we delivered on my manifesto commitment to trial free breakfasts with inclusive, student-designed menus. As part of the Union's 12 Days of Christmas campaign, we gave out 400 free exam breakfast packs, each with cereal, tea and coffee, breakfast bars, Nutella, and oat milk. We also provided gluten-free options so more students could eat before exams or a full day of studying. This trial directly supports students during the cost-of-living crisis, where 28% of students have skipped breakfast. And for full transparency, we secured £1000 of University funding for this project, so the Union did not fund this and, after its success, we aim to continue and expand it in Semester 2.</p>

ACCOMMODATION



Manifesto Goal	What I've Done
ALBANY PARK COMMITMENT	This semester I used my seat on the Planning and Resources Committee to keep a close eye on Albany Park plans at every stage of consultation.
AFFORDABLE ACCOMODATION	To address the wider town issue, I also used my position on the Community Council to ensure students could have their say on short-term lets and worked with the Courier for visibility. These responses will directly influence whether short-term let control areas are introduced in Fife. Much more is needed to be done here which I look forward to tackling in Semester 2!!
UNIVERSITY GUARANTOR SCHEME	I've been able to support the proposal for a guarantor scheme with Jack, Ava and Holly and have met with the Principal to present a paper for the University to offer an in house Guarantor Scheme. I have also helped shape the policy for university-managed accommodation, which includes better guidance about the summer months and handover methods.
ACCOMMODATION BURSARIES	Bursaries were of my priorities from the start. We raised the bursary amount 2026/27 by 8.57% from stable funds, ensuring this support comes at the lowest possible cost to students. This adds to a new PGT accommodation scholarship, which will be managed by Registry and embedded into the admissions process.

DEFENDING OUR FUTURE⁺

Manifesto Goal	What I've Done
CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE VITAL WORK OF THE CAMPUS LARDER 	<p>In the past few months we have seen a huge increase in donations and support, particularly from external organisations. For example, I receive regular monthly donations from Itsu and we have had a large one of donation of 400 bars of soap from the Old Course Spa and 104 boxes of porridge from Hamlys (1040 750g bags). Equally, we have had a significant stock donation from Brakes which is the Uk's leading wholesale provider worth hundreds of pounds, and the beginning of a partnership. Working with the head of community engagement and social responsibility in the university I got Campus Larder to receive raisin receipts for the first time. I would like to platform Holly and Tash every time I mention Campus Larder as it is their drive and committment that brings everything into fruiton and keep the larder running.</p>
TRANSPARENCY YOU CAN TRUST 	<p>I also co-launched the Union Exec Instagram. It reached over 250k accounts organically last month, and my implementation of the new “Ask Exec Thursdays” feature has helped students hold us accountable, especially around forum formats and the way we operate. To make myself more accessible, I set up weekly office hours and a system where students can book time to speak with me directly.</p>
I'LL REBOOT SOSU	<p>In my manifesto I said I would reboot SOSU. Together with 25 other Sabbs in Scotland, I suggested we use the established Save Our Scottish Education campaign as our base, but reshape it to match today's reality by bringing colleges fully into the fight, renaming to Save Our Scottish Education.</p>

DEFENDING OUR FUTURE

Manifesto Goal

What I've Done

I WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO PUSH FOR A MEETING WITH THE MINISTER FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION OF SCOTLAND.



Since relaunching, I've met with the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Graeme Dey, and with Willie Rennie MSP. We've also secured public support from Unison, UCU, and Unite Scotland. The campaign now has signatures from a wide range of colleges and universities across Scotland, including Abertay, Edinburgh, Dundee, Edinburgh College, NUS Scotland, Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt, Dundee and Angus College, Glasgow Caledonian, Stirling, the University of the West of Scotland, New College Lanarkshire, and all ten institutions in the UHI Partnership. I have also been involved in the consultation for a government steering group that will quantify the scale of funding challenge facing institutions and oversee exploration of options to co-design a sustainable and successful future for Scotland's 19 higher education institutions to 2045 and will focus on designing a route to support the sector to help drive change.

THROUGH UNIVERSITY COURT, I WILL CHAMPION THE ETHICAL REALIGNMENT OF OUR INSTITUTION'S INVESTMENTS.



This semester I used my position on University Court, I have stood with student groups in calling for the alignment of shared values of sustainability and social responsibility and attended ethical finance training with SOS UK! Alongside your environment officer, I take part in the Sustainable Leadership meetings, where I have presented a paper on Divestment and this group has led to me becoming the first Exec Officer to sit on the Biodiversity Working Group. There, I've helped monitor and improve the biodiversity of the field behind 601 and contributed to the development of new sustainable investment KPIs for next year's sustainability strategy. I also spoke on a panel at the Court Away Day, where I advocated for expanding environmental graduate opportunities and internships within the University, ensuring students can play an active role in shaping a more sustainable future.

KEY MANIFESTO GOALS ✨

Manifesto Goal

What I've Done

I WILL CHAMPION A MORE CONNECTED AND EMPOWERED EXEC TEAM



One of my manifesto commitments was to champion a more connected and empowered Executive Team. Coming into this role, I cared deeply about building an environment where we genuinely got along, collaborated openly, and felt comfortable supporting each other so we could be as effective as possible. While I can't take credit for the fact that we naturally work well together, it is something I actively prioritised before we even began. To nurture that sense of connection, I have chaired and organised our informal "Ever to Exec" meetings in the weeks between formal sessions. These meetings are a relaxed space for us to talk through our projects, offer help where needed, and make sure no one is working in isolation. This has helped strengthen our teamwork and ensured we stay aligned and supported, meaning more productive student representation.

UK WIDE CAMPAIGNING ...HOLDING POWER TO ACCOUNT

Yours sincerely,

Aislinn Taha

President, Warwick Students' Union

Co-Signed By

Elected student leaders from universities across the UK, including Students' Unions within the Russell Group and across the wider higher education sector, united in our concern about the proposed international student levy and the broader direction of policy towards international students.

We represent hundreds of thousands of students across diverse regions, institutions, and disciplines. We believe strongly that progress without student representation and involvement risks long-term damage to the UK's global competitiveness in higher education, the cultural and intellectual richness of our campuses, and the international partnerships that underpin world-leading research and knowledge creation.

Signed in support by:

Antonia Latham - President, University of Birmingham Guild of Students

Diya Salas - President, Queen Mary Students' Union

Holly Thompson - Deputy President, Liverpool Guild of Students

Kyle Gray - Vice President of Representation, Dundee University Students' Association

Alice Hedges - President of Union Affairs, St Andrews Students' Association

David Blair - Education President, Edge Hill Students' Union

Olivia Chapman - Vice President for Welfare and Campaigns, Warwick Students' Union

William Jones - Vice President, Liverpool Guild of Students

Isabelle Christian - Vice President Education, University of Southampton Students' Union

Neerajkumar Tiliath - Education Officer, LSE Students' Union

Tanazette Cusance - President, Dundee University Students' Association

A core goal in my manifesto was to lead UK-wide campaigning that genuinely holds power to account. This semester, I've been deeply engaged in national campaigning on several fronts. I co-wrote the STEP Palestine open letter with Cambridge University, that successfully called on the UK Government to intervene so that more than 70 offer-holding and scholarship students trapped in Gaza can access biometric appointments and travel to the UK. I have also been working with Sabbatical Officers across the UK to challenge the unfair financial reliance on international students. This has included raising the issue directly with the Minister for Higher and Further Education, contributing to sector-wide steering discussions, and publicly opposing the proposed international student levy in England. Looking ahead to the 2026 Scottish elections, I have been an active member of the national student elections campaign, collaborating with student leaders across Scotland to prepare for what will be one of the most significant elections for students in a generation. This work is already helping to build a united and powerful student voice ahead of the campaign season.

TRANSPARENCY

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Project

What I've Done


DEMOCRACY & REJECTING CLOSED DOOR DECISIONS

In the area of democracy, I organised the first-ever All Student Forum on 14 November, which also served as a pilot for new democratic structures, which I set out to do in my manifesto. This included trialling a new voting style, which will be refined and adapted in response to feedback ahead of future forums. While the wider change programme is ongoing, we have also worked to address the oversight from the last elections in which no Chairs were elected. Chair elections are now underway in individual forums we have a Chair for the All Student Forum, Luke, who will serve next semester, and arrangements in place for Chairs to be elected again in the next round of elections. By the next all student forum, all forums will have elected Chairs in place, strengthening democratic leadership and accountability across the Union.

REMIT SPECIFIC PROGRESS & SPACE REVIEW

Alongside acting as liaison between the Union and the Rector by ensuring a Rector's Assessor was able to be chosen, I have led the Association Executive and supported officers across a wide range of portfolios. I have also begun the early stages of planning the One Union Awards, acting as Executive Officer lead to ensure the working group, including several officers, is in place for the new year. In addition, I have continued to build on the space review, taking the lead on transforming the former Media Suite (previously the temporary Representation Suite) into a dedicated, accessible space for volunteers and Elected Officers. This space will be ready for use when you return in Semester 2.

POSTGRADS & TRANSPARENCY

Project	What I've Done
MORE EVENTS AND SPACES FOR PGS	<p>This year I have been working closely with our new postgraduate presidents to secure Beacon as a dedicated postgraduate-only space. This gives PG students a place that reflects their needs and supports a stronger sense of community and take effect by next semester. It is a step in the right direction to build a better relationship with the PG Community in hopes we will become a top choice to come to.</p> <p>A major step forward is that I have successfully ensured that the PG presidents now sit on the Senior Leadership Team, as a non negotiable. This gives postgraduates a direct voice in high-level decision-making.</p>
FINANCES 	<p>With joint accountability alongside the CEO, I have taken a proactive approach to financial governance by promoting an internal audit of our finances and internal processes. We have also brought in a commercial consultant, and I led the 601 consultation and review, the outcomes of which will directly inform the Union's future commercial strategy. Significant progress has been made in block grant negotiations, which many will recognise as one of the Union's most substantial challenges this year. While the Union's financial position is not a new issue and is arguably at its most acute, this year has marked the first time it has been communicated openly and clearly to our members. I am proud to note that on two formal occasions I have presented, alongside the CEO, a transparent and detailed analysis of our financial position; further context is available through the <u>Saint coverage</u></p>

SEMESTER 2

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I will focus on community and care, climate action, the postgraduate experience, supporting officers, and strengthening representation and rights by:

- Working with the Careers Centre, I will advocate for a platform that highlights flexible job opportunities that fit around studies, and I will work with the President of Wellbeing to develop a resource to support students balancing work, academics, and mental health.
- Implementing a student action hub and I would love to launch a Union podcast to make our signposting and projects more accessible.
- Including St Andrews in the Rate our Landlord platform that is more recognised across the UK.
- Exploring ways with Development and Student Services to reduce the financial cost of graduating.
- Improving the volunteer experience by introducing a dedicated space, while working with PresOpps to create a Volunteer Development Framework that provides better guidelines, recognition and spaces, I thank the volunteers who have already spent the time meeting with me to discuss this.
- Expanding the annual One Union Awards.
- Being an active member of the national Scottish Elections campaign and create the YOUR Scottish Elections Guide for 2026.
- Delivering an impactful Sustainability Week.

