

Hi, I'm Charlotte and I would like to be your next Association President. I truly believe that I have the ideas, skills, and experience needed to be the best candidate to serve you in this role. As Association President I will tackle a number of key areas that are most important to students, including but not limited to: widening access, accommodation, national representation, alumni communication, the environment, international students' concerns, and improving the internal dynamics of your union. My experience at St Andrews has been an invaluable one - the people I've met, the University's high level of education, and the opportunities offered by the Students' Association have all made their mark on me. I want to ensure every student knows about and can access these opportunities. I have the voice and a record of achievement that demonstrates my ability to succeed as your Union President; qualities which I have demonstrated as President of Debates, Association Alumni Officer, and on the Students' Association Board of Trustees. I stand on a platform of having delivered on every election pledge I gave in each of my roles: if I am elected you can have confidence in my integrity and determination to deliver.

Widening Access

St Andrews is an exceptional University with a vibrant and talented student body. We should be incredibly proud of our achievements, and we should use our exceptional resources to continue to build on our already-excellent reputation and performance.

Our University is located in a town with notoriously expensive living and academic costs, which only contributes to an unfortunate image of St Andrews students as elitist. It's not true of the current student body, and it's not fair for prospective students who want to apply to our university but are deterred by this image. They're long-standing, difficult issues, but we can and should tackle them. We must ensure the University's image and the cost of living in St Andrews does not dissuade people from attending our fantastic university. Students helping fellow students is a core part of St Andrews life, and we should extend that to those who are considering joining our community.

So how do we tackle this? It'll take time and effort, but my three major policies for Widening Access will make real, tangible change:

Encouraging Outreach – I want to strengthen the relationship between the Students' Association and the Admissions department by encouraging a more diverse student intake. I would create a volunteer Outreach Advocate scheme. This would have current students to return to their local areas and train them to lead presentations and workshops aimed at encouraging potential students to consider St Andrews. This would extend current outreach programmes that mainly focus on Scotland, and promote the unique St Andrews experience to those who might not otherwise consider it. Our students have experiences that only come from attending this university. The advice they can give to potential students about what it means to go to university – to our university – and what it could do for their future is invaluable.

Being Vocal – The role of Association President shouldn't be simply inward looking; I intend to increase the Union's engagement with national issues. Recent legislation

has led to the abolishment of Maintenance Grants, the limits on how many hours international students can work, and the pay cap on international graduates' ability to live in the UK; these policies are harmful to the student body. As a previous President of the Union Debating Society, I am used to liaising with my counterparts at other universities. I will give our Union and our student community a voice on a national level. We have a wonderfully articulate student body which is full of intelligent and passionate people. We should use this to take a stand when the Government proposes and passes legislation which directly affects us.

Reaching out – For a town of allegedly only three streets, we are a diverse student community. I think it's imperative to connect with international students, mature students, student parents, commuting students, and those who rely on bursaries, grants, or work at university for their continuing education. I will ensure the needs of and issues facing these student groups are properly represented and addressed. I will work closely with the relevant Students' Representative Council (SRC) members to identify and resolve the problems faced by these students, and ensuring that they are properly represented. I want to ensure that these students feel part of the Students' Association and our St Andrews community. I want to make sure that the St Andrews university experience that I have so dearly valued and enjoyed is readily available for all our students.

Accommodation

Accommodation is a continual problem in St Andrews and is regularly discussed in election cycles. I believe my policies will make an impact that, in the long term, will improve the situation for both students and town residents. Having sat on the Community Council for a year, I know the cost of renting is a problem for all who inhabit St Andrews and many are looking for solutions. This is also a problem that could escalate as the University expands its student population by around 2000 students.

The cost of accommodation also links into Widening Access; I personally know of students from my Sixth Form that decided not to apply to St Andrews because the cost of the Halls accommodation was just so high, and they were ineligible for bursaries. When families have several children attending university at once, or for a variety of other reasons, spending between £6000 and £8000 a year on accommodation is often impossible.

University Managed Accommodation – Accommodation is a crucial issue that every student is invested in. The University already manages a number of properties on behalf of private landlords. Largely, this has been successful with student tenants reporting cheaper, fairer rates, and a dependable figure concerned with providing decent living conditions for students. Increasing the number of university managed properties will expand the number of more affordable and well managed properties available. By advertising to private landlords in St Andrews the existence of the option to have their properties managed by the university we can increase the support for this system. Landlords will be likely to take up this opportunity as they know, and it can be clearly demonstrated, that the university will be able to maintain their properties especially as the students they work with are far more likely to build up trust with them.

Private accommodation – In terms of non-financial support, the Students' Association offers advice and information through the part-time Accommodation advocate that works with in the building on a part time basis. This position has recently been vacated and it depends upon the next President to ensure the position continues and what form it may take. I would promote and extend the role of the Union's Accommodation Advocate, expanding their reach within the student body by increasing hall visits and strengthening relationships with Senior Students. This would ensure that students are supported and able to access reassurance and guidance while in the arduous hunt for accommodation. Renting for the first time is hard no matter where you are but in St Andrews letting agents often require students to jump through additional hoops and the key to overcoming these issues is to have as much information distributed to students as possible. Having a high level of knowledge empowers students to know exactly what their rights are and when it is perhaps appropriate to challenge the way that they are treated. I would expand the number and reach of accommodation talks by inviting representatives from letting agencies and private landlords, to improve the direct communication students and accommodation providers in St Andrews. These would help alleviate any tensions that can arise between stakeholders and ensure students know what is expected of them and what they should expect from their landlords.

Hall accommodation – I would explore new strategies to make hall fees more manageable for students. I'd ask that the option to pay Hall rent monthly be made available. For many students it is cash flow that causes issues, particularly when student loans and grants are given in bulk sums spaced at inconvenient times throughout the year. As President my primary aim is to advocate for the needs of students and to ensure the university understands where the financial requirements of students are most constrained by the expensive nature of St Andrews accommodation.

HMOs – Fife Council's decision to prevent the creation of any new Multiple Occupancy Housing is actively detrimental to both students and other inhabitants of St Andrews. It is responsible for grotesque rent inflation. I currently sit on the St Andrews Community Council, and using the voice of the students, I would use my position to explore Fife Council's justifications for the HMO ban. Their limitations on HMOs are more extensive than is legally necessary, and the aims stated while implementing the policy have not been fulfilled. The main result of this policy has only been an increase in the number of student let properties that have spare bedrooms that could be filled, and as a result we could improve the property crisis in our town.

Community relations – This is a significant factor in the student body ever being able to effect change in terms of accommodation in St Andrews. It's important that we continue to have students sit on the Community Council outside of just the President and the Community Relations Officer and that we reach out to town residents to reassure them of our positive intentions.

International Students

St Andrews University has an unusually diverse student population when it comes to

country of origin. International students' tuition fees increase every year, whilst British and European fees do not. At the same time, they pay significantly more than British and European students and are restricted from working both during and after their degree. There is a limit to how much the Students' Association can influence the fees themselves and the legal restrictions on working, but there are ways we can help.

Equally, there are communities within the broad group of international students that are not catered to or involved in Union activities as much as they could be. In the same way that the Union needs to recognise the importance of groups such as mature students, it also needs to embrace the demographic of different ethnic backgrounds in a more visible way.

Require the University to reduce the annual increase of tuition fees for international students. Realistically, it is unlikely the University will stop the annual increase altogether, but we should push for change and stop the culture of treating the higher tuition fees international student pay in a cynical fashion. I would also ask the university to link the tuition fees of international students to the conversion rate of their currency. The fact that students have had to drop out of university due to sudden changes in currency conversion rates is appalling and something that needs to be remedied. These policies will ensure a level of stability in costs that will allow students to plan for their entire career at university and be financially prepared for their time in St Andrews.

Alongside the Member for Racial Equality and DoRep, I will create focus groups for students of different ethnic origins and backgrounds in order to investigate problem areas within the Students' Association and then attempt to solve them. Often, arriving at St Andrews can be a massive culture shock, and not one that many of us can understand. In order to prevent sections of the student body feeling isolated, the Students' Association needs to take the initiative and ask how it can become more welcoming. In tandem, I would like to introduce alternative communication platforms for the Students' Association, such as Weibo – China's alternative to Twitter, used by many students at St Andrews. Facebook is not the only way to publicise events and focusing upon this method can exclude those who prefer other platforms. The more information we have about different students the more we can cater to their desires for their student experience.

I would ask the Admissions Office to instate a "buddy" system between incoming and current students. Many first years have questions the summer before they arrive here, particularly those from abroad with different cultural and social backgrounds. If current students volunteered to answer any worries students had, this would present a welcoming face to the university and Students' Association as well as provide a friendly link for the incoming student once they arrive in St Andrews. We would try and match students with people from their home regions so that students can have support from someone who understands where they come from whilst transitioning to life in St Andrews.

Alumni

As the University's first Association Alumni Officer, I've created the foundations for

increasing student access of our University's most under used resource. Students can gain a huge amount from contact with alumni, through CV advice, networking opportunities and career workshops. My main aim for the next year is that this the possibility of utilising this resource is promoted to the point of it being the norm to reach out to alumni for advice. I would also like to promote and increase the scholarships and bursaries funded by alumni, specifically to help out students from an international background, those who are from low socio-economic backgrounds and also first generation students.

Environment

The University of St Andrews was one of the first institutions in the world to introduce a Sustainable and Responsible Investment policy in 2007/8 and we are one of only three in the UK to have this policy. We have been at the forefront of many ethical and environmentally friendly activities, but we still have a significant amount of money invested in a fossil fuel extracting company. A significant number of the student body, at last count over 500, has already expressed their support to strengthen the University's current investment policy to divest from fossil fuel extraction companies. I believe:

We should push the university to move these investments over the next three years into a more sustainable portfolio. At least some of these investments will hopefully, and would be profitable to, be in technology that actively combats some of the issues facing the world such as the massive boom in Green Technology.

Given that our university is still leading in this area, we should ask for another statement reaffirming its commitment to the values of sustainable investment and outlining all the excellent work it has done in the area since the policy was put in place in 2007/8. This will maintain our status as leaders in Social Responsibility, maintaining the reputation and the success of our university.

Within Your Union

A key problem consistently brought up in elections is communication. I'm a firm believer that this is one of the most important things a sabb can focus upon; even if you're doing great things, if you can't tell people about it, they won't be able to access the benefits you're creating. Equally, I have a serious problem with the current structure of the Student Association hierarchy. There is currently no way to hold sabbs to account or question their progress in a convenient way, and no way to complain if there were, however unlikely, a serious problem with a sabbatical's behaviour or work. The only higher authority than the sabbs is the Board of Trustees that those individuals sit on.

Communication – Information from the Students' Association is often focused upon events being hosted or projects being worked on by the SRC and Students' Services Council (SSC). I think a key way of maintaining a solid link between the sabbatical students and the larger student body as a whole would be to promote a focus upon the individuals holding the role that year. Regular short videos released of their activities, reinstating the sabb blog, creating graphic information videos and simply encouraging interaction between students and their elected representatives will all

tackle this problem. This applies to the council members elected too; there should be photos of these individuals in the Union, their reports should be advertised to a greater extent and there should be posters in the Union and Halls demonstrating the structure of SRC and SSC, and the sabbaticals' responsibilities.

Direct accountability – Increased communication helps with indirect accountability, but there should be a more concrete change in how the sabbaticals respond to students' needs. I'd like to introduce regular, data driven reviews of their work for internal use by the Board of Trustees, the governing body of the Union, which will both hold them accountable but also allow for a more supportive framework to be created for key points in the year that require a higher workload, or for any sabbs that simply need help in a particular area. Most importantly in terms of students though, I'd like to introduce a Question Time event twice a semester for students to ask their sabbs about their progress and give feedback on their work.