We are now halfway into our terms. Thank you to everyone who has helped us achieve what we have been able to so far. You can expect even more from us for the second half of the year.

Here is an update on some of the things I have been working on:

**Widening opportunities within, not just access to, University**

- **Protecting the access bursaries:** The Edinburgh Access bursaries for Home and RUK students have been under review. Our position has been clear: we must protect this vital financial support for students from low income backgrounds. We have recently had commitments from senior managers that they will be protected. We will work over the next months to ensure that commitment is honoured.

- **A New Participation Grant:** This would provide extra funding support for students from low income backgrounds to participate in extra-curricular activities. A funding application has been sent off and we are waiting to hear back.

- **Airmiles Campaign:** A campaign to use the University’s air miles to pay for international experiences for students from lower income. The University-wide campaign committee will meet next week and is set to launch the campaign in second semester.

- **Connecting students with alumni mentors:** Have been given a commitment that an online portal that connects students with alumni mentors will be ready by the end of the academic year. Face-to-face mentoring has also been piloted in three Schools with notable success.

**Making student mental health and wellbeing a top priority**
• **New Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund:** We received over 20 applications to the fund and around £4,500 of the £10,000 fund has been allocated to various groups, societies and individuals. There will be more funding rounds in second semester.

• **Mental Health Week.** Set to take place between 8-12\textsuperscript{th} of February. Have been working alongside Andy Peel, EUSA VPSA, on this – he will be able to update.

• **Integrating Mental Health into EUSA Peer Support.** EUSA Peer Support already involves over 7,000 UoE students a year. It makes sense to integrate mental health support, as well as academic support, into this. This will be a great start to help students support each other’s mental health.

• ‘**Good Food**’. Have been working with EUSA VPS Urte on a ‘good food’ campaign. ‘Good Food’ is healthy, sustainable and ethically sourced. We are looking at launching new food offers in the Dome Café and Kings Buildings House.

**Getting things done for all campuses, not just Central.**

• **Wee Red Bar.** Have been working with ECA Convenors and ECA students to make sure they have a solution that works for them. Students want to have ownership over the Wee Red, for it to be open during the day and free to use.

• **Kings Buildings House refurb.** Have been supporting Urte on this. As she said, there will be more to announce in the New Year.

• **Free/Affordable Transport for all students.** Have been meeting and working with Convenors from the Vet and Medic School to develop a solution to their transport issues. We are currently waiting for the University’s new Transport Strategy, but are prepared to campaign on this issue if necessary.

**Other priorities**

*Supporting student social enterprise and entrepreneurship.* Am working with student entrepreneurs and EUSA departments to develop better support for student social enterprises and entrepreneurs, who currently do not fall under a EUSA category.

*Exam dates released one week earlier.* Without compromising the needs of disabled students.
Letting students know about the Pleasance development. Last year’s Sabbaticals won a £6 million investment in society space at the Pleasance. We need to be letting students know about this and the benefits it will bring. As well as supporting student groups that are displaced in the short-term.

Wednesday afternoons completely free. Working on this with the Sports Union President. Meetings will take place with relevant University colleagues next week. We hope to reach an agreement in time for the next academic year.

Democracy Review. This is vital in making EUSA more relevant and representative of its members. See other Sabb reports.

Affordable Housing. Have been supporting Urte in her work on this. We are working with the City of Edinburgh Council to try and secure regulation on purpose built student accommodation that will ensure that there is some element of affordability in them.

Campaigning to save maintenance grants. Hosted a stall outside Teviot New Amphion yesterday. Will hopefully be sending some Edinburgh representatives down to London for the National Union of Students’ Westminster Lobby on December 8th.

Report from Imogen Wilson, Vice President Academic Affairs

Gender Jam
Sarah Moffat and I were successful in our Innovative Learning Week application to have a half day conference exploring gender inequality in academia. Building on last year's smaller Gender Jam event, we will have four workshops, a panel discussion on liberating the curriculum and a keynote lecture. We are now finalising the workshops and speakers, but it is shaping up really well. If this is something you are interested in, it will be on the Thursday of IWL, and tickets will be free.

Liberation in the Curriculum
With the help of the liberation group conveners, and in partnership with the university, I lead a project proposal for the Higher Education Academy and Scottish Funding Council’s 'Embedding Equality and Diversity into the Curriculum' initiative. We won't find out for another couple of weeks if we got it, but the university has now essentially admitted that
this needs to be a priority, so will have to follow through on some things at least. The main areas for development we identified included were the lack of diverse perspectives on reading lists and in course content, and how tutorials aren't facilitated in a very accessibly enough.

HE Green paper

Just after the last student council the higher education green paper came out, outlining plans for a teaching excellence framework and other horrific things. We had an event on Monday to get some students' opinions which we will include in our response to the consultation. There will be much more to come on this, including plans for action. At the moment I'm focussed on lobbying the university to oppose the TEF as much as possible, an approach encouraged by NUS Scotland. If you are interested to read more, I wrote an article about it and what it could mean for Scottish universities which can be found at www.thestudentnewspaper.org/the-teaching-excellence-framework-will-ruin-higher-education/ and there is lots of information available on the Internet, especially in times higher education.

Special Circumstances Review

I had the meeting of the special circumstances review group, the next is on the 11th. I really hope we can make some good changes, and the thing I'm mainly pushing for is self-certification for mental health, to avoid having to go to a GP.

Teaching Awards

The Teaching Awards launched this week and will be open until March now. This is a huge project every year so thanks to everyone in EUSA who is involved with it. I've been visiting school offices in the last few weeks to talk to them about this years Teaching Awards and solidify the relationship between EUSA and school administrators. Get nominating! Last year we had over 3000 nominations and we are hoping for even more this year. We have also received some funding for someone to work one day a week for us analysing the data from last years awards, so going forward we will be trying to use the data more effectively, and hopefully have a more concrete idea of what good teaching looks like in each school.

University Challenge

I was on the judging panel for university challenge and helped select the final team. They were all amazing and I wish them best of luck in the television rounds!

Democracy Review
We are ready to move on to the next stage of the review now and the survey has closed. NUS are confident that there were more than enough responses to conduct their analysis, so thank you to everyone who completed it. We have spent a lot of time on this both in the lead up to the survey, and doing outreach and visiting satellite campuses to make sure all groups of students are represented.

We are at a time of year when our main projects are underway and we are making sure they continue developing and ticking over, so not much big new news right now. The new gender studies course will be designed next semester as part of the ‘SPS in Practice’ 4th year course. Paperless hand-ins will happen by next September, and I'm still working towards changing the assessment regulations so semester one courses must be assessed in semester one. The university are responding well to this, and as a result we are now looking at the structure of the academic year and seeing what small changes could be made that would allow more symmetric semesters.

Report from Andy Peel, Vice President Societies & Activities

Democracy Review

As I mentioned in my previous report... ‘EUSA is changing. We are having some independent consultancy work being conducted throughout first and second semester, which will potentially change a lot - EUSA’s governance, representation structures and sabbatical officer positions. The first stage of this is a survey that will be sent out to all students...’ The survey closed on Fri 27th and had 1387 total respondents. The following stages in the process are a series of consultations with students and sabbatical officers, starting with today’s consultation! Following this, consultations will continue into the early New Year.

Give It A Go

Give It A Go was a 2-week program of events organised by Societies, Volunteering Groups and Sports Clubs to encourage students to try something new. Currently, there is a culture where students feel that after the first few weeks of a semester, they are too late to join a sports club or society. We were trying to challenge that culture by encouraging sports clubs and societies to put on taster events for students to try out during Give It A Go in mid-November, after the initial buzz of Fresher’s Week had died down. The 2-week period came to a conclusion in late November.
Gender Neutral Toilets

Since the previous Student Council I have been meeting with members of the University’s Estates Department to get a greater understanding of the provision of gender-neutral toilets within the University. At present, gender-neutral toilets are provided as per the requests of the buildings’ users, for example, a University department or school. Regarding the Pleasance redevelopment, EUSA, the user, fed in the requirement for gender-neutral toilets and so we will have 23 gender neutral, 4 disabled and 17 single sex toilets. Going forward, we hope to embed a formal Estates policy into the work of the University, rather than it being at the discretion of the building users.

Anti-Sexual harassment campaign

My predecessor Eve, worked tirelessly to secure a commitment from the University to address sexual harassment on campus. This has resulted in a joint University – EUSA – Sports Union campaign that will be launched in semester 2. The group taking this forward recently met and I will continue to keep the Council updated on its progress.

Misc. Updates

EUSA and the Sports Union are continuing to collaborate on training sessions and workshops for Club committee members. Following on from the successes of the October workshop on mental health and looking after your teammates, EUSA society Sexpression carried out the second installment in this series with a workshop on sexual consent and what constitutes harassment.

Improving the pastoral aspect of the Personal Tutor system is still at the top of my agenda. Following the second Welfare Committee of the year – where the group also highlighted this as a priority – I will continue to work with staff and students to ensure that the PT system is improved. The Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR), which took place in October, highlighted the PT system as an area for improvement and in early January the four sabbatical officers will be meeting with members of University staff to discuss how to take this forward.

Liberation Group Update

Disability History Month
Disability History Month has drawn to a close after a successful panel discussion last week asking: What can Edinburgh do for your wellbeing? We are currently working on the #AccessibleEd campaign, highlighting the accessibility issues students face in all aspects of university life. We are excited to kick off the New Year in partnership with the Mental Wealth and Wellbeing Society on a ‘You are more than your marks’ campaign. We are also going to be working with the Black Triangle Society to campaign for equal and independent access. We are looking forward to working with several groups to plan and facilitate Mental Health Week in February. – Jess Killeen

Report by Urte Macikene, Vice President (Services)

We’re now halfway through our terms, and so I’ve written a massive update on every single one of the manifesto points I was elected on, and what I’ve done on it thus far. You can read it here on my blog: http://bit.ly/1Ikf4Sp.

This month I’ve spent a lot of time in meetings and just making sure that things are ticking over as they should, as well as attending student engagement events, so there’s a bit less ‘new’ stuff to report, but I hope the 6-month update will provide people with context for some of the ongoing work I’m keeping up to date with.

**Democracy Review**

A large amount of my time this month was spent planning for and promoting EUSA’s democracy survey, which will feed into a proposal for changes to our sabbatical officer roles, governance structures, and democratic engagement beyond policy-making and elections. The survey has now closed, and we’ve received a statistically significant number of responses. NUS has administered the survey and we’ll be getting initial results next week. Myself and the other sabbs spent time doing lecture shutouts and stalls around campus getting students engaged with this.

Next steps include workshops planned with Student Council, our Student Trustees, and in-depth interviews with us sabbs and other senior EUSA staff. Recommendations for new roles and structures will be put to student referendum alongside the March elections, and we have begun planning for this. The new structures will be implemented throughout next year, with the new sabbatical officer roles being elected in March 2017.

**Asylum seeker funding**

This month has seen the official announcement of the university’s policy to exempt asylum seekers from international student fees and treat them as home students for fees purposes. This is a direct result of campaigning from myself and EUSA, other student groups, and some incisive journalism from The Student. Thanks all who pushed this and I’m very proud of this
I am continuing further campaigning work on allowing asylum seekers to access SAAS funding, including gathering signatures from many student unions on an open letter to ministers I have written on the issue. This will be presented to ministers before Christmas. I am also supporting student campaigning for fee waivers and support funding for asylum seekers at the university’s discretion, and continuing lobbying of the international office.

**Estates Redevelopments**
There’s been a significant amount of work taking forwards the Kings Buildings House investment planning. This is still confidential but keep an eye out for an announcement after Christmas. I was on the interview panel for the design team for the Central Area redevelopment. The team put in place will carry through the project to its final business case and approval for construction. I am still waiting on the Estates Department’s final decision from the teams we shortlisted following the interviews. Again, we’ll be putting out some communication detailing the plans for this immediately after the Christmas holidays so please hold tight and apologies I can’t say more.

**“Good Food”**
With the commercial and marketing teams, we have developed a marketing and comms plan to be rolled out in January-February to make students more aware of the provenance and supply chain of our food, to include an online version of the menu which will detail where all the ingredients are sourced from. We are pursuing the Healthy Living Accreditation as recommended in the report compiled by our intern doing work on the issue over the summer.

**Scottish Elections Planning**
After collating the responses to our student consultation on what issues are most important to students in the categories of education, housing, environment, and employment, as well as taking a steer from the NUS Scotland campaign goals, we’ve come up with a set of issues we will be focusing on campaigning on ahead of the Scottish Elections. We’re in the process of setting up lobbying meetings and will be inviting students along to these.

We’ll also be organising 2-3 elections debates with candidates as well as representatives from key organisations on specific issues of interest to students.

**Case work**
I’ve also spent some time this month specifically chasing up some issues for students, including to do with the Levels Café in Moray House, which has resulted in the pre-load amount for the university’s cashless catering being reduced from £5 to £15 which should make it easier for students to use it and to access their student discounts in certain outlets.

**Other**
EUSA’s Commercial Director, Conrad Jones, has let us know that he will be leaving EUSA and
moving on to a fantastic job opportunity closer to his home in Wales. I’ve worked closely with Conrad this year and he’s been nothing but efficient, considerate, helpful, and I couldn’t have done nearly as much on my objectives without him. Our Business Development Manager, Nick Robertson (the next most senior member of staff in the commercial department) is also leaving after Christmas. If you see either of them around please thank them for their work. Recruitment for these positions may take some time, and I’ll need to ensure there are contingency plans in place for ongoing initiatives on the commercial side of EUSA.