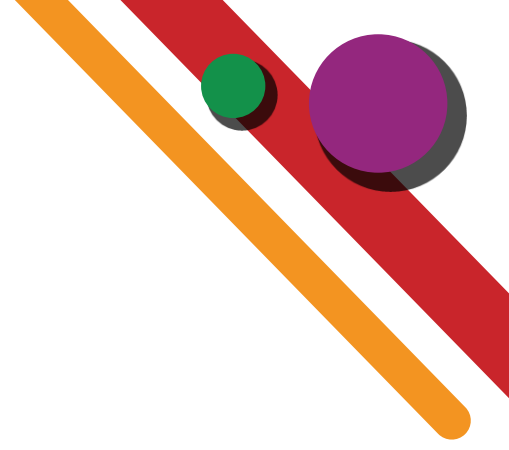




SENEDD!



Officers Report Bayanda Vundamina

**Senedd
28/10/2024**



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Summary:

It's been amazing to see both new and returning students arrive in Aberystwyth and jump into the new school year with so much enthusiasm. Freshers' Week was a big hit, with great turnout at our evening events and meet-and-greets. We're looking forward to a year filled with fun events and important campaigns that we hope will resonate with the student community.

Welcome Week

Freshers was a big hit for us! Both students and staff had a great time, and it was a wonderful way to kick off university life. We want to give a huge thank you to the opportunities and communications team for all their hard work in making Freshers Week happen.

The week started with our officer quiz, and we were thrilled to see so many students join in. It was a lot of fun, especially when we saw our officers' faces on famous movie posters. Throughout the week, we promoted various events and met students at the Freshers Fair.

We also organised several Meet and Greets for students who often feel overlooked in higher education, such as BAME, LGBTQ+, Trans, Women, International, Postgraduate, Mature, Independent, Welsh, and Disabled and Neurodivergent students. These gatherings were a great success, and we really appreciate all the officers and union staff who helped make them possible.

In our first month, we focused on getting our officers familiar with their roles and planning for the year ahead. We went to a training event in Cardiff with other Welsh student unions, which was a fantastic opportunity. It helped us understand our goals for the year and strengthened our team spirit, which was super helpful for organising Freshers Week.

We're also involved in different university committees and boards like the Council and Senate to ensure your voices as students are heard. Participating in these committees has been really interesting!

New Staff/Staff Changes

We have also had two new staff members this year! I would love to welcome Emily who started as our Marketing Coordinator over the summer and Cat who is our new societies coordinator. They are both going to be amazing and we're super happy to have them.

We also have a staff change, Tom who was formerly our societies and volunteering coordinator will be now solely responsible for Volunteering as a volunteering coordinator.



Bayanda - President

I've been busy this year diving into my goals, kicking off new campaigns, and planning some exciting events! Here are my top priorities for the year:

- Making sure international students can shape their own experiences
- Continuing to push forward with my anti-racism campaign

I'm really passionate about helping international students have a say in their journey here. I've set up an international student advisory board, which is a great way for students to share their thoughts and advice with the union and the university about any challenges they face. I'm thrilled about the potential for international students to have a significant role in shaping their induction process next—it's going to be amazing to see what this group can accomplish!

On the anti-racism front, we're putting the finishing touches on our race equality charter submission, and I'm looking forward to running more workshops throughout the year to help educate everyone on how to be actively anti-racist.

On top of all that, I'm staying in close talks with the universities to ensure that the student experience remains strong during this uncertain time in the higher education landscape. Exciting times ahead!

Elain Gwynedd – Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President

It's been a busy period for Elain as the Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA (Welsh Language Students' Union of Aberystwyth) President. Over the summer, alongside her fellow Officers she attended training to prepare for the year ahead, as well as attended various key University meetings. Freshers was also a great success for Elain as she welcomed 198 students alongside her committee to Pantycelyn during the Welcome Weekend, took part in the Welcome Talks on the first Sunday, attended departmental talks for new students throughout the week, and organised events every night of Freshers Week for Welsh speakers and Learners with UMCA, including Karaoke night, 'Cwis Mawreddog UMCA', Welcome night, without forgetting the first Sŵn of the year which was held in the Cŵps with Buddug and Fleur De Lys performing. Elain also organised the yearly UMCA Trip to Tregaron after Freshers Week and held the first UMCA Cyf Cyff (General Meeting) to update students on her priorities and what events are coming up in the near future.

We celebrated Diwrnod Shwmae/Su'mae Day in the Undeb by playing Welsh language music in the Cwtsh Bar and shared a video of the staff and some clubs and societies sharing their favourite Welsh words.

Elain is currently in the middle of organising Y Ddawns Ryng-golegol which is the Intercollege dance, which is held here in Aberystwyth in November every year. This is one of the highlights in the Welsh language Unions' events calendar, given that students that are part of Welsh societies around the UK will all head to Aberystwyth for an entire weekend of events, such as Karaoke night, a football tournament, and the Dance itself with some of the most well-known bands in the Welsh rock scene. The line up this year is Mynadd, Pys Melyn, Y Cledrau and Yws Gwynedd!

UMCA will also host another major event here in Aberystwyth this year, Yr Eisteddfod Ryng-golegol (The Intercollege Eisteddfod) where again Welsh Unions and Societies around the UK will compete against each other in sports, dancing, singing and writing for the Rhyng-gol Shield. UMCA won the



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Eisteddfod for the first time since 2015 last year, and Elain is hoping to lift the shield and claim victory again in March 2025.

Finally, here are Elain's priorities for the academic year 24/25:

- Improve Welsh Language Provision in Modules.
- UMABerSU to change name to Undeb Aberystwyth.
- Petition for Free Laundry Services for Full-time Residents.
- Uni to replace Starbucks with a more sustainable, local coffee brand.
- Raise awareness of Welsh learning opportunities available for students.
- Host and Organise a successful Eisteddfod Rhyng-gol in Aberystwyth.

Tiff - Opportunities Officer

Tiff has selected her priorities for the year based on current SU policy and student feedback. They are below:

- Improve communication between the University, the Student's Union, and the Students
- Ensuring students have the sports facilities that they need to enable them to compete

Tiff recently completed a policy to bring back our RAG charity. Students submitted suggestions, these were whittled down to four by our officer team, and students voted during Fresher's Week. The charity chosen was St John's Ambulance Cymru. Give It A Go returned again this year. So many new groups got involved this year, and it was wonderful to see so many students trying something new.

She is relaunching 'Tiff Tries' but with an additional 'Try with Tiff.' This is where she tries every sports club and society and allows for extra advertisement of Student Groups. If an individual wants to join a group but is nervous about going alone, they can email her, and she will go along too.

She is currently planning and looking forward to a variety of events in the first semester, such as AberChallenge and ArtsFest.

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Will Parker – Academic Affairs

Since assuming the position of Academic Affairs Officer in **July**, Will completed training throughout that month to prepare for a successful start in August. In **August**, Will primarily focused on planning for the upcoming academic year, including the development of his "Neurodiversity Charter" and enhancing his understanding of University and Undeb affairs. During **September**, Will collaborated with various academic departments to communicate details about the upcoming cohort of Undeb activities and the Academic Representative system. Throughout the **freshers'** period, Will engaged with numerous student groups, facilitated several meet-and-greet events, and assisted in the acclimatization of neurodiverse students.

Will will be working on **three** primary priorities alongside representing students on a variety different boards/committee.

Will's primary focus is to enhance the academic experience for neurodiverse students. He plans to achieve this through the development and implementation of a "**Neurodiversity Charter**," which aims to promote the acceptance of neurodiverse behaviours within the learning environment and improve the accessibility of lectures and their content. This initiative is also expected to benefit neurotypical, undiagnosed, and unaware students as well as lecturers, leading to a more enriching academic experience for all.

In alignment with this direction, Will will ensure the continued implementation of the **special circumstances** policy, which does not require evidence, and will also assist in facilitating the "Fit to Sit" policy that has made significant progress over the past year to enhance accessibility for re-sits for all students.

As a third and more supportive initiative, given the ongoing relevance of this matter, Will will be assisting in **streamlining the use of AI** at Aberystwyth University. His goal is to help students understand how to utilize AI within the parameters established by the university, while also promoting its adoption among both students and staff to alleviate their workload.

Will will also collaborate closely with the Academic Representatives and the relevant volunteer officers to ensure that the **student voice is heard**. This will be supported during Academic Rep training, conferences, and meet-and-greet events.

Emily (Mo) Morgan - Wellbeing Officer

Officer priorities:

1. Reduce the wait times for the mental health services provided by student support.
2. Enhance promotion and increase student engagement in wellbeing-related activities.



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Since starting the role at the beginning of July, Mo has completed Officer training, attended meetings, had conversations with student services, sat on disciplinary panels, attended equality champions meetings, spoken to students, helped to host meet and greets, spoke at the postgraduate welcome talk, and planned and held wellbeing walks and connection sessions. After identifying a key problem for students that "Students are not getting the Mental Health support they need", her priority of "Reducing the wait times of the student support service" was developed. Since this Mo has had meetings with different people from student services to discuss her priorities and plans for the year.

University:

Over the summer, Mo has completed internet-mediated research to identify 'what works' at other Universities/Student Unions/Mental Health services. She organised meetings with the Head of Student Services to discuss the research findings and from this Mo is now in contact with Reading University student services (a University that scores very highly in regards to student support feedback) to find more about a tool that they use.

Undeb:

Mo has spent time developing and planning connection sessions and wellbeing walks in the hopes that they provide a time and space for students to be mindful and take a break from studies in a relaxed environment. Mo has attended planning meetings for work around SHAG week and OCD awareness week. She attended the training from Citizen's UK. She has been engaging with student groups to help further promote the Beyond the Binary campaign.