



# Pre Clár

This document is complete except for some foreword components and is fit for interim release.



## President's Welcome to Congress

A chairde,

Welcome to Congress 2020!

While Congress is taking place in a very different way than we had originally hoped and planned for, it is nonetheless an integral event on the USI Calendar. This year, while we are staying connected by staying apart, one thing will not change - the debates and votes that you engage with over the three days of Congress will play a vital role in determining the work of your national union over the next three years and as we know, where the student movement goes, others follow.

I hope you have had a positive experience with USI this year and have felt that you were part of a movement that prides itself on fighting for the best education for you and for a society that is supportive and welcoming for all. It has most definitely been a busy and jam-packed year with more unexpected bumps at times than one would hope for but regardless, we always pulled together and supported each other to continue our mission.

We have fought to break the barriers to accessing education, for affordable and suitable accommodation, for improved financial supports, for real and meaningful action on the climate emergency, for a welcoming society and much much more this year. We have had some significant wins from the reinstatement of the Gaeltacht grant to a commitment to review SUSI but none of it would have been possible without the dedicated and passionate students on every campus across the Island.

Each member of the USI Executive Team has committed every fibre of their being to working on your behalf every day since we took up our roles on the 1st of July. I really want to thank them for their drive, their passion and their ability to find creative solutions to issues that arose. I will forever be grateful for having the opportunity to work with each and every member of our team.

While COVID-19 came upon us quite quickly, it has had an unimaginable impact on our lives. The 'new normal' is coming and we will be at the fore of the discussions, lobbying to ensure students voices are core to decisions that are made that affect you.

Take care of yourself and we look forward to seeing you all again very soon.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. FitzPatrick', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Lorna FitzPatrick,  
USI President

## Congress Director's Welcome

Congressperson,

Welcome to the Clár for USI Congress 2020 – the first fully online Congress in USI's 60 year history, and definitely the first one where we're proud of our ability to keep apart, when we'd far rather be together.

Along with the chairs of the various committees, we have endeavoured to ensure that the constitutional requirements of the Congress are met to the full extent possible under COVID-19 restrictions. We recognise that, to make things work, we have had to adopt new ways of debate and voting, and we ask you to pay close attention to the documents and materials supplied for the purpose of debate. All those parts are available from this document and in useful links throughout.

Democracy is at the heart of USI. You have been elected, selected or nominated to attend this event because you are trusted to represent your fellow students diligently and effectively. Across three days you will debate and decide the policies of your movement for the coming year. There will be opportunities to speak on motions, opportunities to vote and opportunities to ask questions of your leadership, all facilitated online.

We'll use a website to cast our votes. We'll do our debating and hear our reports through Zoom. We'll livestream the whole thing on our social media channels and we'll tweet about the best bits as usual. We're only sad we can't hold our 'Congress Got Talent' talent show online and that a hotel breakfast can't be downloaded. But we know this crisis will pass.

We know online isn't as good as in person. We know the internet might get glitchy, some things which are easy in a conference room might be hard from our respective tablets, phones, laptops and desktops across the island and beyond. But Congress is always about the delegates and the positive energy you bring.

Please bring that energy to the room – across the breadth and length of the island, let's make a Zoom plenary feel like a crowded conference room in a rural hotel – and let's make Congress 2020 the one we had to do *differently* but the one we did *well* nonetheless.

Ben Archibald

USI Congress Director 2020.

## Chair of Steering's Welcome

Delegates,

Welcome to USI's Annual Congress 2020.

It is often said that the times change and we must change with them. In these unprecedented times I am proud that the organisation has been able to transition this important annual event to an online setting and preserve USI's inherent democracy and principle of being a student led, student focused union.

Over the next few days, my colleagues and I on the USI Steering Committee will be chairing various debates. This platform is all a little new to us, so I ask your patience and co-operation to help us over any little technical problems and help debate run smoothly.

The work of USI and the Third Level Sector must continue in so far as possible. You and your colleagues will be instrumental in helping Ireland recover socially and economically from this pandemic.

Finally, I would like to thank the Congress Director and the USI President for their hard work in making USI's first online Annual Congress a reality.

Stay safe and look after your mental health

Colm Murphy

Chairperson

USI Steering Committee

President's Welcome to Congress	2
Congress Director's Welcome	3
Chair of Steering's Welcome	4
How Congress Works	11
Timetable	1
Interim Policies for Ratification	2
20 AA (NC) 1 Casualisation of labour amongst Postgraduate research students	3
20 AA (NC) 2 Accreditation for Participation	4
20 AA (NC) 3 Student Complaints Procedures	4
20 AA (NC) 4 Student Nurses and Midwives Campaign	5
20 EQ (NC) 1 Migrant Education Access	6
20 EQ (NC) 2 T Fund	7
20 EQ (NC) 3 Period Products	8
20 NA (NC) 1 Decriminalisation of Sex Work	8
20 NA (NC) 2 USI position on Divorce Referendum Support	9
20 NA (NC) 4 Motion on Insurance Reform	10
20 NA (NC) 5 Motion on Free Public Transport for Students	11
20 NA (NC) 6 Motorcycle Safety	12
20 NA (NC) 7 Internship campaign	13
20 NA (NC) 8 Rent Strikes	14
20 NA (NC) 9 Industrial Relations Act 1990	15
20 IA (NC) 1 Anti-War Motion	16
20 UO (NC) 1 Remit Specific Training Day for Deputy Presidents/Campus Conveners	16
20 UO (NC) 3 Casework training day	18
20 UO (NC) 4 GOODYBAGS & SUSTAINABILITY	18
20 WEL (NC) 1 Ask for Angela	19
20 WEL (NC) 3 Active Consent Partnership Motion	20
20 WEL (NC) 4 USI Support and Promotion of the Student Health Matters App	21
20 GAE (NC) 1 Síneadh Fada	21
20 GAE (NC) 2 Comharthaíocht Dhátheangach ar Champas // Bilingual Signage on Campus	22
Policies Due to Lapse / Seeking Renewal	0

17 AA4	Student Participation in Governance	1
17 AA7	Class Rep Accreditation	1
17 WEL 3	Dealing with students in distress	2
17 AA3	Borrowing model of IOTs	2
17 AA6	Class Rep Best Practice	3
14 AAQA 12	FEES FOR STUDENT APPRENTICES	3
17 WEL 9	Gambling Control Bill 2013	4
17EQ3	Integration of displaced persons into education	4
17 EQ4	Expansion of '2in2u' Campaign	5
14 NA 2	ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS	5
17 UO1	Independent Students' Unions	6
17 UO14	USI Calendar	6
17 UO15	Comparative Research Manual	7
17 UO18	Secretary for standing committees and action points	7
17 UO19	Election Training	8
14 AF 1	FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR LARGE-SCALE EVENTS	8
11 NA 2	VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN	9
11 ED 4	SUPPORT FUNDS FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS	9
17 AA2	Fees Sanctions	9
17 WEL 27	Stim Room for ASD students	10
17 AA10	Shared Feedback Standards	10
17 AA11	Motion on residency criteria for returning emigrants	11
14 AAQA 2	ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS	12
14 EQ 2	WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP	12
17 NA4	Car Insurance Campaign	13
14 NA 5	OPT-OUT ORGAN DONATION	14
11 NA 5	ROLLING REGISTER	14
17 UO6	USI Policy book transparency	15
17 UO7	Utilising National Council	15
17 UO12	Regional Training Events	16
17 UO25	Policies and Submissions Made Widely Available	16

## New Policies Prioritised for USI Congress Online 2020\_\_\_\_\_ 17

20 WEL 1	SUSI Eligibility Review	18
20 AA 9	Learning in a Digital World	18

20 WEL 7	Drugs and alcohol harm reduction campaign _____	19
20 WEL 4	Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign _____	20
20 UO 8	Multi-campus support _____	23
20 GAE 1	Athchóiriú na Gaeilge sa Chóras Oideachais / Reform of Irish in the Education System 23	
20 WEL 8	Mental Health and casework training for Students' Unions officers _____	24
20 WEL 11	Student Assistance fund _____	26
20 WEL 17	Review USI Health Promotion Strategy _____	27
20 UO 1	Regional Leadership & Personal Development Training _____	27
20 UO 5	USI Election Regulations _____	28
20 AF 1	Affiliation Fee Review _____	28
20 EQ 1	Supporting the Traveller Community _____	29
20 EQ 2	20 x 20 campaign support _____	30
20 EQ 3	Reporting Racism _____	30
20 EQ 4	Supporting LGBTQ+ Students _____	31
20 CZN 1	The Cost and Criteria of Irish Citizenship. _____	31
20 GAE 5	Cúrsaí Lán Ghaeilge ag an Tríú Leibhéal / Courses through Irish at Third Level 32	
20 GAE 8	Students' Union Bilinguality _____	33
20 GAE 9	An Ghaeilge ó Thuadh - New Decade New Deal _____	34
20 UO 15	Panel of External Members _____	36
UO 16	Students' Union Levies _____	37
20 AA 12	Placement Campaign _____	37
20 AA 5	Student Complaints _____	38
20 AA 6	Academic Integrity _____	39
20 AA 7	Postgraduate Specific Supports on Campus _____	40
20 WEL 2	PrEP Accessibility _____	41
20 WEL 3	Celebrating and Supporting Recovery Through Harm Reduction and Support 41	
20 WEL 5	SHAG packs _____	42
20 WEL 6	Smoking cessation _____	43
20 WEL 9	Mental Health Awareness Days _____	43
20 WEL 12	JAM Card _____	44
20 WEL 13	International Student Financial Support _____	44
20 WEL 14	Disordered Eating Support _____	45



20 WEL 18	Cervical Cancer Awareness and Age Threshold	45
20 UO 3	USI Strategic Plan	46
20 UO 6	Constitutional Review	46
20 UO 10	Position on the National Demonstration	47
20 AF 3	Financial Reporting & Accountability	47
20 EQ5	International Decade for people of African descent	48
20 NA 1	Climate Action Policy	49
20 NA 3	Campaign for Electoral Reform	49
20 GAE 2	Scéim Teanga AMLÉ 2020 / USI Irish Language Scheme 2020	50
20 GAE 4	Irish Language Working Group	51
20 GAE 6	Tumoideachas Gaeilge / Immersive Education through Irish	52
20 AA 1	USI Participation in ESU	54
20 AA 2	Next Steps for NStEP	54
20 AA 3	Quality Assurance - Looking Forward	55
20 AA 4	Wellbeing in Education	56
20 AA 8	Postgraduate Representative Training	57

## Constitutional Amendments 59

20 CA 1	Intersectionality	60
20 CA 2	Removal of Electoral Commission	60
20 CA 3	Constitutional Amendment to the Regional Officers Role.	60
20 CA 4	Governance Review and Formation of a Governance Committee	62
20 CA 5	Advisory Panels	69
20 CA 6	The Creation of a Full-Time Postgraduate Affairs Officer	70

## Unprioritised Motions 71

Welfare		71
20 WEL 10	Mature Student Support	71
20 WEL 15	Broadening the views and language around disablement/disability	72
20 WEL 16	Accessibility to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities	73
Union Organisation		73
20 UO 2	Solidarity Fund	73
20 UO 4	Irish Language Working Group	74
20 UO 15	Panel of External Members	75
20 UO 7	No Platform Policy	75

20 UO 9	Student Sport Ireland	76
20 UO 11	Annual 'Protest'	77
20 UO 12	Recommended standard wage report for Sabbatical Officers.	77
20 UO 13	Student National Demonstration	77
20 UO 14	Position on Campaign Support for MOs	78
	Equality	78
20 CZN 2	Boycott Aramark	78
	National Affairs	79
20 NA 2	Decriminalisation of Sex Work	79
20 NA 4	Gender Quotas	80
	Gaeilge / Irish Language	81
20 GAE 3	Imeachtaí d'Fhoghlaimoirí / Events for Learners	81
	Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance	82
20 AA 10	Lobby the Government to rearrange the TUI members leave to support an academic calendar that is supportive and effective for students in terms of academia and their mental health.	82
20 AA 11	Postgraduate Follow Up Training	82
	<b>Officer Reports</b>	<b>84</b>
	<b>President / Uachtarán</b>	<b>85</b>
	Lorna Fitzpatrick	85
	<b>Vice President for Academic Affairs / Leas-Uachtarán do Chúrsaí Acadúla</b>	<b>90</b>
	Kevin McStravock	90
	<b>Vice President for Welfare / Leas-Uachtarán do Leas</b>	<b>94</b>
	Róisín O'Donovan	94
	<b>Vice President for Equality &amp; Citizenship / Leas-Uachtarán do Chomhionannais agus Saoránacht</b>	<b>98</b>
	Megan Reilly	98
	<b>Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region / Leas-Uachtarán don Iarthar, Lár-tíre agus Teorainn</b>	<b>101</b>
	Marie Lyons	101

Vice President for the Southern Region / Leas-Uachtarán don Deisceart \_\_\_\_\_ 105

Darren Malone \_\_\_\_\_ 105

Vice President for the Dublin Region / Leas-Uachtarán do Átha Cliath \_\_\_\_\_ 109

Craig McHugh \_\_\_\_\_ 109

Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge / Vice President for the Irish Language \_\_\_\_\_ 112

Clíodhna Ní Dhufaigh \_\_\_\_\_ 112

Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs / Leas-Uachtarán do Chúrsaí Iarchéime \_\_\_\_\_ 116

Sara Dowling \_\_\_\_\_ 116

NUS-USI President AMLN-AMLÉ Uachtarán \_\_\_\_\_ 120

Robert Murtagh \_\_\_\_\_ 120

# How Congress Works

## Who attends congress?

Congress is composed of the current Officerboard and delegates from each Member Organisation (MO) whose affiliation fees have been paid. The number of delegates from each MO varies according to the number of students registered in that Students' Union.

## Who is in charge at congress?

Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring that things run smoothly and that motions are discussed fairly and properly.

They do not vote and they are not members of any delegation. Steering Committee enforce the rules which Congress have adopted : they do not make the rules.

Their responsibility at Congress is to preside over the various sessions of debate and to ensure that speakers are not improperly interrupted. They also enforce time limits or other regulations and ensure that votes are carried out in a proper manner.

## How do debates work and who proposes the motions?

The Officer or MO who put the motion forward initially, normally proposes the motions in each session.

If the people who initially wrote the motion don't turn up, or don't want to speak, any delegate can start the debate by proposing the motion. Once a motion is proposed, it is then open to the floor for discussion.

## How often can I speak?

Unless you are the person who proposed the motion, you can only speak once on any motion. There are two speech slots for and two speech slots against each motion.

You can, speak on as many motions as you wish during Congress if you are called by the Chairperson. If you proposed a motion, or if you

have an amendment to a motion successfully passed, then you can also sum up before a vote is taken.

## How long can I speak for?

First speaker (proposer): 3 Minutes. Each subsequent speaker: 2 minutes.

Speakers for and against a motion alternate, until a vote is called.

Once a vote is called for, the Proposer has the right to sum up, unless an amendment to the motion has been passed, in which case, the proposer of the amendment has the right to summate.

## What procedural motions can be put?

To help ensure that debates run smoothly and as quickly as possible, procedural motions exist. The following are the procedural motions and their effect, if passed:

### (A) THAT THE QUESTION NOW BE PUT

If passed, the Proposer will summarise and then an immediate vote will be taken.

### (B) THAT THE QUESTION NOT BE PUT

If passed, no vote will be taken on the matter under discussion.

### (C) THAT THE QUESTION BE TAKEN IN PARTS

If passed, divides the motion or amendment into specified sections to be voted on individually. Used if there are sections that you do not agree with.

### (D) THAT THE MATTER BE REFERRED BACK

If passed, refers the matter back to a specified time or a specified Officer, or a specified Committee, or to a National Council. It is therefore not voted upon at Congress.

### (E) A CHALLENGE TO THE CHAIRPERSON'S RULING

If passed, the Chairperson must change his or her ruling on an issue in accordance with the motion.

### (F) NO CONFIDENCE IN THE CHAIRPERSON

If passed, the Chairperson will vacate the Chair for the remainder of the session and will be replaced by another member of Steering Committee.



# Timetable

Monday 25 May 2020

13.00 National Council

14.00 Election Hustings

16.00 Polls Open

Tuesday 26 May 2020

09.00 Congress Session

13.00 Session Closes

Wednesday 27 May 2020

09.00 Congress Session

14.00 Election Results

14.10 Congress Close by President Elect

# Interim Policies

## Interim Policies for Ratification

Interim policies adopted by National Council are automatically submitted to USI Congress for ratification. For debate purposes they become the 'property' of USI Executive Team, who introduce the motion for ratification by Congress. If they pass at Congress they become the policy of USI for three years.

## 20 AA (NC) 1      Casualisation of labour amongst Postgraduate research students

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress commends:

The work of Third Level Workplace Watch in highlighting the precarious conditions and casualisation of labour within a higher level education sector.

### Congress notes with concern:

The Trinity News Investigation (Thursday, Jan 28th) highlighted that post-graduate research students are being cajoled into taking on more teaching duties without Compensation.

### Congress notes with concern:

The detrimental effect this has on the abilities of these students to properly pursue their research and the impact this occurrence places upon their mental wellbeing.

### Congress notes with concern:

The VP AAQA to investigate the extent to which this occurs across the third level sector and to report the findings to Congress.



## 20 AA (NC) 2      Accreditation for Participation

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress recognises::

The importance of student participation in extra-curricular activities such as clubs & societies, Students' Unions, volunteering and civic engagement during their time in college, and the benefits that engaging in such activity brings about in terms of the overall personal development of the student.

Congress further recognises:

The continued promotion by Students' Unions of students getting involved in these activities, and the associated advantages which can be conferred on students who have been active in these areas when seeking future employment.

### Congress notes with concern:

The development of modules and recognition within programmes which exist in some Higher Education Institutions to accredit students for their involvement and participation in these activities, in order to facilitate, recognise and encourage their nonacademic as well as academic development whilst in college.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to research best practice across Higher Education Institutions in this area, with a view to developing USI policy on Accreditation for Participation which may be presented to the appropriate College bodies by Students' Unions who wish to do so.

## 20 AA (NC) 3      Student Complaints Procedures

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress observes:

Recent comments by the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform issuing a warning that the government is looking to remove underperforming teachers, and the potential appetite for change in this area.

### Congress recognises::

The difficulties faced in the current environment by colleges and Students' Unions in dealing effectively with student complaints.

### Congress acknowledges:

That best practice does exist nationally within some Higher Education Institutions in developing complaints' procedures which are more timely and efficient, afford greater student protections and offer tangible outcomes to complaints or issues which are raised than many current practices.

### Congress therefore mandates:

Appropriate members of USI Officerboard to lobby for the development and implementation of a common national Student Complaints' Procedure, which takes into account the importance of protecting the complainant, speedy and efficient resolution of complaints, and the principles of transparency and accountability

20 AA (NC) 4      Student Nurses and Midwives Campaign

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress mandates::

Co-operation between the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), students' unions, student nurses and midwives and relevant trade unions on the remuneration and treatment of student nurses and midwives while on placement.

### Congress notes with concern:

The considerable problems experienced by student nurses and midwives while on placement. The issue of the grossly unfair trainee wage imposed on them. Exploitative graduate programmes, emigration, working 39 hours a week, bullying and lateral violence and burnout are emerging as other key concerns.

### Congress applauds:

The research done by USI Officer Board into the issues experienced by student nurses and midwives while on placement.

### Congress acknowledges:

From the research conducted by USI that it was found that 51.8% of student nurses and midwives feel that placement has had a negative impact on your performance in aspects of your study. 57.3% feel placement has had a negative impact on physical health while 51.9% feel placement has had a negative impact on mental health. 81.9% feel that working as a nurse or midwife led to burnout as a result of working long hours during placement. 92.5% have thought about emigrating when they qualify as a nurse or midwife.

49% have experienced bullying or harassment while on placement while 18.3% have been bullied into working longer hours while on placement. 47.9% have considered dropping out of college as a result of a negative experience while on placement. When asked "what aspects of being a nurse and midwife would prompt you to emigrate?" 72.3% said payment was the key issue.

#### Congress notes with concern:

The Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to strive to work with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) the relevant trade union to mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, emigration, bullying and lateral violence.

#### Congress also mandates:

The Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective on the issue of pay and financial support.

#### Congress further mandates:

The Vice President for Campaigns to work on implementing a comprehensive evidence based campaign and programme to erase the negative culture of bullying and harassment on placement by collaborating with the INMO, relevant trade unions, governmental departments, students' unions, hospitals and higher education institutions.

## 20 EQ (NC) 1      Migrant Education Access

Property of the USI Executive Team

#### Congress notes with concern:

That in the absence of a standardised residency test Irish third-level institutions apply an 'EU' fees' category which often means migrant students pay two or three times more than the typical fees charged. Young people who have grown up in Ireland (gone to secondary school here) are denied access to financial assistance and the free fee scheme upon entry to third level.

#### Congress also notes:

That young people who have secured citizenship during their time in third level are often unable to 'reverse' their fee status and have no choice but to continue to pay these high tuition fees for the remainder of their third level education. These young people are also often unable to secure higher education grants.

#### Congress believes:

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to advocate for accessible education for all students and should lend support to the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Migrant Education Access Campaign, including that children of non EU migrants who have come to Ireland to join their families and should enjoy equality of access to third level Education.

#### Congress notes with concern:

The Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to work with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland on their Migrant Education Access (MEA) campaign.

#### Congress also mandates:

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Education and Skills to take effective action to address the situation of young people who have secured Irish citizenship but are currently unable to reverse their fee status. This may require a re-examination of the criteria of access to the Free Tuition Fee Scheme currently administered by the Higher Education Authority and should result in code of practice or a revised set of criteria being outlined to all third level institutes in Ireland to ensure a coordinated, equitable and consistent response.

20 EQ (NC) 2      T Fund

Property of the USI Executive Team

#### Congress notes with concern:

That according to TENI, 78% of trans people in the UK and Ireland have thought about ending their lives and 40% have attempted suicide. For many people, beginning and continuing social transition brings significant relief. College is filled with financial stresses and for many transgender students, name changes and other transition expenses are not an option, even though they are life-saving.

Congress commends:

NUI Galway for the introduction of the 'T fund' for social transition, aiding students financially with elements of social transition which may include gender affirming items, such as makeup, and dysphoria relieving items like chest binders.

#### Congress also notes:

That the USI has a proud history of fundraising for various causes, but more recently does not fundraise annually for charity.

#### Congress therefore mandates:

The USI to develop a guidance strategy, based on best practice models, on how to establish a local fund, which USI will then circulate to all member organisations.

## 20 EQ (NC) 3      Period Products

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes with concern:

- A person who has a period will on average have 507 periods throughout their lifetime, and will spend an average of €8100 in a lifetime on sanitary products.
- According to a survey of more than 1,100 young girls and women aged between 12 and 19 years by Plan International Ireland, nearly 50% of Irish teenage girls find it difficult to afford sanitary products; some 109 of the young women who participated in the survey said they were forced to use a 'less suitable sanitary product' because of the high monthly cost involved.

### Congress notes with concern:

- Students' Unions have quite often borne the financial burden of buying Sanitary products for students and distributing these.
- New period products such as menstrual cups and period underwear are still taxed at a higher rate of 23%, making them less affordable.
- Period poverty disproportionately affects student groups. The National Strategy for Women and Girls has identified students as an at risk group of period poverty.

### Congress believes:

That these products should be provided free of charge as a necessary provision of healthcare for anyone who needs them.

### Congress mandates:

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to campaign for free sanitary products to be provided nationally. The provision of these products should encompass a wide variety of choice.

## 20 NA (NC) 1      Decriminalisation of Sex Work

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

Sex work refers to escorting, lap dancing, stripping, pole dancing, pornography, webcamming, adult modelling, phone sex, and selling sex (on and off the street).

Currently prostitution (the exchange of sexual services for money) is not illegal, but associated activities (soliciting in a public place, kerb crawling, operating a brothel) are.

### Congress notes with concern

With the rise in living costs, the potential increase in tuition fees, the inadequacy of the maintenance grant, and various other personal reasons it is highly likely that some students do and will do sex work alongside their studies.

### Congress does not believe

That anyone should be forced into sex work as a means of supporting themselves and that the current system fails those it affects directly: sex workers.

### Congress applauds

In August 2015, Amnesty International voted to adopt policy to protect the human rights of sex workers. The resolution recommended that they develop a policy that supports the full decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual sex work. The policy will also call on states to ensure that sex workers enjoy full and equal legal protection from exploitation, trafficking and violence.

### Congress believes

That there should be far more support for sex workers, both within the industry and for those looking to get out of it. Sex workers should be fully supported when seeking to leave the industry, especially through the opportunities to re-skill or upskill through education.

### Congress believes

Decriminalisation would ensure that sex workers feel able to report unsafe clients or violence at work without the worry of criminal repercussions, work together for safety, and that those who wish to leave the sex industry are not left with criminal records as a result of their job.

### Congress mandates:

Officer Board to support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work. This is to be done through the support of sex worker organisations who work to improve the lives of sex workers across Ireland.

20 NA (NC) 2      USI position on Divorce Referendum Support

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes with concern:

The upcoming referendum on The Regulation of Divorce on the 24th May, which proposes changes to the length of time a person must live apart from someone before they can divorce, and also around the recognition of foreign divorces.

#### Congress notes with concern:

These proposed changes essentially lessen the waiting period a couple must live apart for looking for a divorce. It aims to ensure that the process for obtaining one is fair and dignified, so that both parties to move forward with their lives within a reasonable timeframe.

Congress adopts the following policy

USI to campaign for a Yes vote in the referendum on the regulation of divorce.

20 NA (NC) 3 Election Posters

#### Property of the USI Executive Team

#### Congress notes with concern:

The excessive use of posters during elections in Ireland.

#### Congress also notes:

The environmental impact of election posters along with the inequalities that this presents when one candidate has significantly more posters than another.

#### Congress notes with concern:

USI in its current election campaign to encourage local election and EU candidates to sign up to the pledge which has been started by DCUSU & UCCSU. This would require candidates to vote in favour of future proposals looking to bring in proportionate caps on posters in all electoral contests post 2019 local elections.

#### Congress also mandates:

USI to support other MO's in establishing their own petitions to lobby their own local Congresses on this issue prior to polling day on the 24th of May and that they raise awareness of the environmental impact of elections through their current Election Campaign.

#### Congress further mandates:

USI Officer Board support MO's in establishing campaigns to lobby both local and national bodies to implement regulations around proportionate poster caps post polling day on May 24th

. 20 NA (NC) 4 Motion on Insurance Reform

## Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress believes

Students are massively struggling with the cost of education, from the extortionate fees to the huge costs of accommodation. Transport is another cost we need to reduce for students.

Students are commuting by car more because of the high costs of education or lack of availability of public transport but the commutes themselves are almost as expensive as renting in some cases.

### Congress notes

That after Central Bank abolished releasing the PMIS report in 2015, that there is very little data available on specific stats in relation to insurance - including around young people/students and motor/travel insurance, making it very difficult to create a case to lobby on.

### Congress believes

According to anecdotal data, that students face a number of barriers when it comes to insurance including cost, getting insured on cars aged 10 years and older.

### Congress believes

That transparency is important in terms of real reform of this market and in order to lobby on this issue.

Congress acknowledges

That there is a broad alliance of groups work on insurance reform called the Insurance Reform Alliance who are highlighting the negative impact of persistently high premiums and calling for real action to tackle the issue. Their aim is to leverage reforms that will quickly reduce liability and motor insurance premiums to affordable levels and keep them that way.

### Congress mandates:

The USI Executive to join the Insurance Reform Alliance.

Congress also mandates

The USI Executive to work on reducing the costs of insurance to students, including lobbying relevant bodies and building partnerships with companies to offer discounts.



## Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress believes

Students are struggling with the cost of education, from the extortionate fees to the huge costs of accommodation. Transport is another cost we need to reduce for students. Students are commuting more because of the high costs but the commutes themselves are almost as expensive as renting in some cases. This is a much more viable option for those who have the option to get a bus as it is better for the environment and does not require parking spaces in the vicinity of the college, which is not offered in some institutions.

### Congress acknowledges

By 2000, there were 27 free public transport systems in the world. That increased to 60 in 2010, 99 in 2017 and 114 today - the majority in Europe, according to Wojciech Keblowski, an expert on free public transport at the Free University Brussels.

### Congress notes

Ireland already provides free public transport for citizens aged 66 and older, and for certain categories of welfare recipients.

### Congress mandates:

The USI Executive to lobby for the further reduction and in turn, the abolition of public transport costs for students.

## 20 NA (NC) 6      Motorcycle Safety

## Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

That the Road Safety Authority do run campaigns in relation to vehicles of all types albeit more influence is placed on some more than others The Road Safety campaigns currently run by USI and MO's both locally and nationally and the increasing number of students choosing motorcycles as a mode of transport.

### Congress notes with concern

The rise in motorcycle related collisions and accidents on Irish roads. Based on figures from the RSA (Road Safety Authority) May 2019 the amount of motorcyclist involved in fatal collisions from 2005-2015 was 212 in comparison to cyclists during the same period was 47.

### Congress notes

The RSA has information available on motorcyclists but unfortunately they don't provide enough information for other road users on how to look out for motorcyclists. The need for MO's to highlight the importance of motorcycle safety is of paramount importance.

### Congress therefore mandates

USI to assist MO's where possible to roll out motorcycle safety and awareness campaigns geared towards students.

Congress also mandates

The VP Welfare to look into collaborating with organisations such as the Road Safety Authority in promoting Road Safety (irrespective of vehicle – that all vehicles are included in their road safety, inclusive of cars, motorcycles, bicycles etc.) inclusive of all with a particular emphasis on students.

### 20 NA (NC) 7 Internship campaign

#### Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress acknowledges

The work done by the Media Interns Alliance on highlighting the issues faced by interns working in media. The Media Interns Alliance is a grassroots alliance established in February 2019 comprised of media workers in Ireland, former interns, legal professionals and current interns campaigning for the abolition of unpaid or low paid internships. They believe that unpaid internships act as a barrier to students and graduates from working class, migrant, traveller and LGBTQ backgrounds on the basis that these people can not afford to work for free. Through the use of social media, the Media Interns Alliance have shared the stories of former and current interns in Ireland, unveiling the extent of the unethical and unlawful practise of unpaid or low paid internships. The Media Interns Alliance also offers workshops to students and recent graduates to explain their rights, share stories and acts as a community for those who they feel have been taken advantage of by media organisations.

### Congress believes

That the practice of internships are critically under regulated in Ireland. It is common practise in many European Countries to have protections in place for interns in the workplace. No such protections are afforded in Ireland.

### Congress believes

That media companies in Ireland have been profiting off the backs of unpaid and low paid intern labour for many years, creating a revolving door style of precarious quasi employment for students and graduates.

### Congress notes

That the current practise of expecting job ready graduates to work for free with little mentorship and fulfil the roles of full-time staff members creates a free labour market to the detriment of students and graduates in lieu of sorely needed entry level positions. This also exacerbates inequality, as these unpaid internships are only accessible to those who can afford them.

Congress acknowledges

that interns have no rights under current Irish law and therefore no legal protection from exploitation. The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 which introduced the Job Bridge Scheme is the only time an intern is mentioned in Irish law. Under this legislation, the legal definition of an Intern is "not an employee" and therefore should not be adding value to a company. The Media Interns Alliance believe that they can prove that interns are in fact employees and adding value to numerous companies in many sectors and should therefore be entitled to at least the minimum wage and workplace legal protections.

### Congress notes

That unpaid or low paid internships exclude working class people, migrant groups, members of the LGBTQI community and other marginalised groups who simply cannot afford to take work with no or little pay to further their career.

### Congress notes

That many students and graduates rely on internships in order to gain work experience and build networks in their field with the plan to secure a job in the future.

### Congress therefore mandates

The USI Vice President for Campaigns to engage with Media Interns Alliance, relevant trade unions and other groups of interns to develop a campaign together to improve the rights for interns.

## 20 NA (NC) 8      Rent Strikes

### Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

Following from the success of Rent Strikes in the UK and emerging Rent Strike groups in Ireland, rent strikes involve the withholding rent, typically from the college in college-owned student accommodation, in a form of protest of the cost of student accommodation with the objective that the college would reduce the rent.

Congress also notes

Collective action and rent strikes have proven extremely effective. Victories include a £1.2 million rent cut at UK based colleges UCL and a 35% backdated rent cut at Goldsmiths, UK.

NUS (the UK National Union of Students') have been supportive of rent strikes in the UK.

Congress acknowledges

Focussing on college-owned student accommodation, brings the fight for affordable student accommodation to the campus, creating a college that is more affordable and accessible for future students who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend college. Colleges should be working to remove barriers to attending college and the cost of accommodation is a huge barrier currently.

### Congress mandates:

USI to support campaigns involving rent strikes in campus accommodation.

IT Sligo Congress

Student Accommodation Position Paper

You can find the paper here.

20 NA (NC) 9      Industrial Relations Act 1990

Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress highlights

The great work that the student movement and trade union movement do in tandem with each others' campaigns, create campaigns together and to support students as workers.

### Congress notes

That past campaigns where the USI and trade unions have had their members have worked together have been inhibited by the restrictions of the Industrial Relations Act 1990, particularly around secondary picketing, aside from the additional impacts it has on students as workers and future workers.

### Congress notes

The 1990 act was introduced to restrict and control trade unions. It is fundamentally flawed and is the worst dilution of workers rights in the history of the state. Since its introduction we have seen precarious employment, short term contracts, bogus self employment, the gig economy, privatisation, low pay and a general race to the bottom in workers rights which in turn has led to a decline in union membership. Decisions on industrial action should be left in the hands of workers and their unions without fear of repercussions.

### Congress notes

The work done by the Trade Union Left Forum (TULF) in the campaign to work towards the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act 1990.

### Congress mandates:

USI to engage with like minded unions and TULF to support them in the campaign to repeal the 1990 Industrial Relations Act and replace with legislation that allows secondary picketing but also gives union recognition, full collective bargaining rights and the right to union access.

## 20 IA (NC) 1Anti-War Motion

### Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

that Ireland is considered to be a neutral country. However, the Irish government allows the US military to stop and refuel on Irish soil in Shannon Airport.

### Congress believes

the pace of development of EU militarisation (and Ireland's involvement) and the threat to world peace has accelerated in the last year.

Congress acknowledges

The work being done by the Anti-War Movement, the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) and other organisations.

### Congress mandates:

USI to take a stance that Ireland should remain a neutral country and support the work of organisations working towards peace and neutrality.

## 20 UO (NC) 1 Remit Specific Training Day for Deputy

Presidents/Campus Conveners

Property of the USI Executive Team

## Congress notes

A number of Students' Unions have officers with specific or portfolio responsibilities on their campuses that may be additional to all other officers, if any, on that campus.

## Congress notes

That SUT and SUT+ are already jam-packed with modules, and that there isn't enough time to provide adequate training in a number of areas relevant to the role of the deputy president/campus convener/VP with responsibility for a campus.

## Congress recognises:

The USI Training Policy, and the methodology within it of assessing the needs of a group before providing training, and seeks to uphold this policy when ascertaining the additional training to be provided under the remit of this mandate.

## Congress therefore mandates

In line with the USI Training Policy, the USI President to facilitate a daylong training day- to coincide with "Pres Day", where possible, where training will be provided in essential areas as needed through assessing the needs of the relevant SU Officers. This day is to occur no later than August 30th in any given year.

20 UO (NC) 2 Campaigns Directory

Property of the USI Executive Team

## Congress notes with concern:

Campaigns across different MOs. need support from USI in particular education, welfare and union campaigns.

## Congress applauds:

The past directories produced by a previous USI Vice President for Welfare titled 'Welfare Campaigns Directory'.

## Congress notes with concern:

There is a rising need for specialised supports around these campaigns ran across MOs.

## Therefore Congress notes with concern:

The Vice President for Campaigns, Academic Affairs and Welfare to produce a joint online campaigns directory to be published no later than SUT+ annually.

Congress repeals:

17 Wel 17

20 UO (NC) 3 Casework training day

Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress notes with concern:

The majority of Students' Union Officers are presented with casework on a daily basis.

Congress notes with concern:

The training provided at SUT and SUT+ doesn't meet the full requirements to prepare officers entirely for casework.

Congress notes with concern:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Welfare to organise a dedicated training day around casework as informed by the relevant working groups.

20 UO (NC) 4 GOODYBAGS & SUSTAINABILITY

Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress notes with concern:

There is a growing demand from students for Students' Unions to actively engage in more sustainable practices.

Congress notes with concern:

In 2018, the Goodybags company delivered 35,000 freshers packs to over 17 campi. The contents, while not environmentally friendly, were also contained within plastic sponsor bags.

Member Organizations, without success, have called upon Goodybags to become more environmentally sustainable in what they will and will not accept to be distributed to students.

Congress notes

Students' Unions have actively asked the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) to lobby on behalf of the student movement to recognize business sustainably. These bags go unused and become single-use for most students who get them.

Congress believes that:

In order to lobby companies to change their way, movements must be mobile and act collectively. These types of companies are exerting their powers of supply/demand with threats of pull-out if they are not accepted, leaving little choice to singular Member Organizations who demand change. Therefore, the Congress must act as a single unit.

Therefore, Congress notes with concern:

For USI to actively lobby to produce a written letter on behalf of Member Organizations to unite together outlining concerns against the environmental impact of the goodybags provided by Goodybags (and any other company engaging with Students' Unions for "freebies").

20 WEL (NC) 1     Ask for Angela

Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress notes;

That consent has become a point of mandatory understanding in society, particularly among the third level sector.

Congress notes;

That the concern for student safety within the community is of paramount importance also and student movements have an obligation to work with the local community wherever possible to ensure their safety.

Congress Understands;

The Ask for Angela Campaign targets student social areas (ie bars, social settings, etc.) by offering a safe, easily implemented system to escape a situation that may not be safe for them to be in.

Congress applauds;

The work done across the country by Unions and USI around consent.

Congress mandates;;

The Vice-President for Campaigns to work with the Vice-President to Welfare to role out a national campaign to support, encourage and promote where possible a National Ask for Angela Campaign each year.

20 WEL (NC) 2     Crisis Text Line Motion

Property of the USI Executive Team



### Congress recognises:

Crisis Text Line is Ireland's first 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. The Crisis Text Line platform will connect texters with a volunteer, who is most likely at home, who has been trained to listen, reassure and guide people from a hot moment to a cool calm. More information about Crisis Text Line can be found [here](#).

### Congress understands

Many students experience high levels of stress, anxiety and depression as found in the USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Ireland.

### Congress notes with concern

Waiting lists for support services both on and off campus can be long and leave students in distress.

### Congress believes

Students should be able to access support in a quick manner when in a crisis.

### Congress mandates:

The USI President to enter into a keyword partnership with Crisis Text Line to promote the use of USI keyword for the service offered.

## 20 WEL (NC) 3 Active Consent Partnership Motion

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes with concern:

There is very little specific data on sexual attitudes and behaviours of those studying in third level education in Ireland.

### Congress believes:

We need to gather specific information to develop a baseline understanding of sexual attitudes and behaviours of students currently studying in Ireland. This understanding will help us to lobby and campaign for improved support services and improve education across society.

### Congress notes with concern:

USI to gather data on sexual experiences in partnership with The Active Consent Programme.

## 20 WEL (NC) 4 USI Support and Promotion of the Student Health Matters App

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes with concern:

An app called Student Health Matters was recently developed by ISHA.

### Congress recognises::

The wealth of information the app provides to students including information about local services such as GP services and Counselling services provides a great benefit to students at local campuses who may have moved away for college and are not as familiar with the services available in the area.

### Congress notes with concern:

That there is a holistic in the information it provides which include topics such as healthy living, alcohol & drugs, sexual health, mental health and that the app provides links to HSE approved information and service providers that students can go to if they would like more information.

### Congress notes with concern:

The app is free to download from both the Apple store and Google Play store.

### Congress notes with concern:

The USI President and USI Vice-President of Welfare to promote the app on a national platform and to encourage MO's to advertise the app on their own platform.

## 20 GAE (NC) 1 Síneadh Fada

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes with concern:

That Irish is the first language of the Irish State as outlined in the constitution and that many students on the Island of Ireland have Irish names.

### Congress notes with concern:

That Ireland is one of the only countries in Europe, in which English isn't the first official language, where computer systems in State departments and in public organisations such as Iarnród Éireann, Leap Card, and the HSE, and HEI's are not equipped to process the síneadh fada or special characters.

### Congress also notes:

That similarly in Northern Ireland there is little recognition for the síneadh fada on computer systems and within State departments.

### Congress believes:

That people have the right to their identity and to have their name spelled correctly when dealing with state organisations and HEI's and on all identification issued by these organisations for example on student ID cards, Leap Card, and on public records such as the Register of Electors.

### Congress therefore mandates:

For Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby public sector bodies in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland for the recognition of the síneadh fada, and for those bodies to update computer systems to allow for the síneadh fada and other special characters, as and when these systems need to be updated.

### Congress further mandates:

Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to work with Our Fada to roll out a campaign highlighting the importance of the síneadh fada as part of people's identity as well as a potential breach in GDPR law.

20 GAE (NC) 2 Comharthaíocht Dháttheangach ar Champas //  
Bilingual Signage on Campus  
Property of the USI Executive Team

### Tugann an Comhairle faoi deara

An tábhacht a bhaineann le comharthaíocht dháttheangach a bheith ar fáil ar champas do mhic léinn agus do bhaill foirne le Gaeilge.

### Tugann an Comhairle faoi deara chomh maith

Obair na gcapall atá á déanamh ag na Cumainn Ghaelacha agus na Aontais na Mac Léinn ó Thuadh agus iad ag feachtasaíocht ar son na gcomharthaí dáttheangacha seo.

### Creideann an Comhairle

Go bhfuil sé de cheart ag mic léinn a bhfuil Gaeilge acu comharthaíocht dháttheangach a bheith curtha in airde ar champas chun timpeallacht comhionann a chruthú don Ghaeilge agus dóibh siúd a labhraíonn í.

### Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhairle:

Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge AMLÉ tacaíocht a thabhairt do mhic léinn ó thuadh comharthaíocht dhátheangach a lorg ar champas. Ba cheart go n-oibreoidh LU don Ghaeilge leis na Cumainn Ghaelacha agus Aontais na Mac Léinn brú a chur ar Údaráis an Choláiste comharthaí dátheangacha a chur ar champas le Gaeilge agus Béarla ar mhéid chomhionann.

### Congress notes

The importance of providing bilingual signage on campus for students and staff who speak Irish.

### Congress notes

The work being done by Irish societies and Students' Unions in the North in campaigning for bilingual signage on campus.

### Congress believes:

Students who speak Irish should have the right to have bilingual signage in place on campus to create an environment of equality for Irish and for students who speak it.

### Therefore, Congress mandates:

The USI Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to support students in the North in getting bilingual signage on campus. The LU don Ghaeilge should work with the Irish societies and Students' Unions the put pressure on college authorities to provide bilingual signage on campus where Irish and English are given equal footing.

# Policies Due To Lapse

## Policies Due to Lapse / Seeking Renewal

These policies of USI have been selected by Member Organisations for debate at Congress. If they pass they will be readopted as policies of USI. If they fall, or are sent to another body for consideration, they will cease to be the policy of USI at the conclusion of Congress.

Policies ceasing to be policy have very often been superseded in the Mandates Manual and Policy File.

## 17 AA4 Student Participation in Governance

### Congress:

Repeals 15 AAQA 8 and 14 AAQA 6

### Congress notes:

That student participation in the academic governance of their institution is integral to ensuring that the perspective of the learner is embedded and reflected in decision-making.

### Congress further notes:

Tertiary-level education is becoming increasingly marketised and competition-driven, with HEI Management engaged in strategic work around recruitment, marketing, and internationalisation. Students are increasingly denied a role in academic governance, creating a democratic deficit in our institutions.

### Congress believes that:

Students and student representatives are partners in their education, and should have a key role to play in governance throughout structures in their institutions.

Congress recognises:

- The experiences of MOs in student participation and institutional democracy is varied.
- The work to date with NStEP on institutional analysis and academic representation.
- The work to date with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning on partnership.

### Congress mandates the President and the VP Academic Affairs:

- To carry out diagnostic work with MOs to get a broader picture of institutional democracy and student representation in governance structures.
- To create resources around best practice examples of democratisation and decentralisation of institutional governance structures.
- To work with individual MOs, as appropriate, to support efforts to improve student participation in academic governance.

## 17 AA7 Class Rep Accreditation

### Congress Believes:

Class Representatives form the backbone of SU and institutional activities in terms of providing a representative student voice within an institution.

### Congress Notes:

The role of class representatives is increasingly being recognised by the HEA and QQI, through national initiatives such as the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress Further Notes:

Class Representatives involvement is crucial to the success of such programmes.

## Congress Recognises:

Student time is becoming increasingly scarce due to the nature of semesterisation, and that therefore it is not always possible for them to fully and actively engage with programmes such as the NStEP, and the other functions associated with the role of a class representative.

## Congress Therefore Mandates:

The USI VP Academic Affairs to work with the HEA and QQI to look into the feasibility of rolling out accreditation for the position of class representative, similarly to how standard modules are accredited.

## 17 WEL 3 Dealing with students in distress

### Congress Notes:

Student's mental health issues are prevalent from the beginning of a Sabbatical officer's term

### Congress Believes:

Although basic Mental Health Training is offered at SUT, Sabbatical Officers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to assist students during times of distress from the start of the welfare officers elected term.

### Congress Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Welfare to organise comprehensive and practical training at SUT to ensure Sabbatical Officers are capable of dealing with students in distress from the early stages of the officer's term.

### Congress Repeals:

16 WEL 19

## 17 AA3 Borrowing model of IOTs

### Congress notes

There is a huge crisis in relation to the current financial state of many IOTs across the country. IOTs are not allowed to borrow money in the such ways Universities can. According to recent reports in the media, currently there are six Institutes of Technology in a vulnerable state.

### Congress further notes

This causes huge issues for IOTs regarding progress and helping to advance their status the same way Universities can. This can also come into effect as IOTs cannot borrow money to help with the accommodation crisis, and they cannot borrow money to build.

## Congress therefore mandates

The USI President as a member of the HEA board to highlight with the HEA and lobby the government for IOTs to access additional funding the same way Universities can access it.

## 17 AA6 Class Rep Best Practice

### Congress Notes:

Class reps are the backbone of a Students' Union in terms of providing a student voice on institutional activities.

### Congress Further Notes:

The role of Class Rep, their elections and their implementation operates differently in each individual Member Organisation.

### CONGRESS MANDATES:

The VP Academic Affairs to coordinate a piece of research that establishes best practice across all third level HEIs in terms of electing, training and empowering Class Reps to perform their roles on a local level, bearing in mind the challenges posed by institution type and size.

## 14 AAQA 12 FEES FOR STUDENT APPRENTICES

### Congress notes:

The publication of the Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland, and the consistent focus on the importance of work-based learning and apprenticeships as part of the dialogue around the Youth Guarantee.

### Congress condemns:

The decision taken in Budget 2014 to impose a new pro-rata Student Contribution fee burden on student apprentices.

### Congress welcomes:

The collaboration between the USI and the TEEU in launching the 'Axe The Tax on Training' campaign this year.

### Congress mandates:

The President, Vice-President for Campaigns and Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to lobby to overturn this decision in Budget 2015 and reinstate the State contribution to this fee, in conjunction with the TEEU.



## 17 WEL 9 Gambling Control Bill 2013

### Congress notes:

That USI has a stance to campaign to educate its members on the prevalence of problem gambling for students.

### Congress also notes:

That Ireland has one of the loosest regulations on gambling in Europe while the Gambling Control Bill 2013 hasn't been acted on since it was first drafted.

### Congress believes:

That with increase awareness of gambling and improvements in technology, that this bill must be passed to ensure that students and future generations are protected from gambling addiction.

### Congress Mandates:

That the VP Welfare work with organisations such as Problem Gambling Ireland & the Rutland Centre to lobby the Minister for Justice, relevant Junior Ministers and Oireachtas members on introducing the Gambling Control Bill.

## 17EQ3 Integration of displaced persons into education

### Congress recognises

The ongoing refugee crisis, in which over 20 million people have been displaced due to war, terrorism, and other conflicts.

### Congress asserts

That education is an emancipator and affords people the tools with which to become independent and self-determinant.

### Congress calls on

The Irish government to partake in the resettlement and relocation of displaced persons (such as refugees and asylum seekers) in numbers appropriate to the scale of the crisis.

### Congress calls on

The education sector in Ireland to proactively support the integration of such displaced persons.

### Congress calls on

The Minister for Education to extend "domestic" fee status to such displaced persons resettled in Ireland who wish to pursue their studies. This status should also extend to eligibility for the student maintenance grant and other student supports.

### Congress calls on

Institutions of third-level education to follow the lead of Dublin City University and pursue "University of Sanctuary" designation.

## Congress therefore mandates

The officer board to campaign for the integration of such displaced persons into education in Ireland with particular focus on access, student supports, retention, recognition of prior learning and cultural integration, the latter including the provision of English language lessons.

## Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to provide for student leaders, particularly elected officers, to become "No Hate Speech" ambassadors.

## 17 EQ4                      Expansion of '2in2u' Campaign

Jointly proposed by the VP Equality & Citizenship & WIT Students' Union

### CONGRESS RECOGNISES:

The organisation Women's Aid runs a successful '2in2u' dating abuse campaign which is supported by the Union of Students in Ireland. This campaign helps young women to spot the 'danger signs' of dating abuse and provides information to combat online stalking and digital abuse, as well as signposting support services.

### CONGRESS NOTES:

The campaign, whilst being very beneficial, has limitations in regards to the types of relationships and genders it focuses on.

### Congress recognises:

That several national organisations are doing work in the area of domestic violence, sexual harassment, violence, and emotional abuse, and the USI should build partnerships with them in order to ensure students are part of their target audiences moving forward.

### CONGRESS MANDATES:

That VP Equality & Citizenship and VP Welfare to work with Women's Aid to expand their 2in2u campaign to become more inclusive of all genders and relationships. If this is not feasible, then a similar campaign and materials should be developed to compliment the 2in2u campaign which is more inclusive of gender and sexuality.

### Congress further mandates:

The VP Equality & Citizenship to develop a partnership with the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) in their project work nationally to end sexual violence and harassment at third level.

## 14 NA 2                      ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

### Congress notes with concern:

# USI Congress 2020

The problems of Zero Hour Contracts, seeing them as exploitative, precarious and disproportionately altering the relationship between employers and employees, many of whom are students.

## **Congress regrets:**

That this has additional problems in relation to families/ single parents, given the difficulties of combining Zero Hour Contracts and childcare.

## **Congress mandates:**

USI to confirm its opposition to Zero Hour Contracts, and work with the trade union movements and sympathetic political parties to bring about the abolition of ZHC.

## 17 UO1 Independent Students' Unions

### Congress notes with concern

The creeping intrusion on students' union democracy and independence occurring around the country.

### Congress believes

The backbone of the student movement is for students' unions to be allowed to democratically self-govern, and to be free from interference by outside bodies.

### Congress further notes with concern

The attempts to censor some students' unions, and encroach on their freedom of association.

### Congress mandates

The President to have the Independent Students' Union campaign as a priority campaign for the year, and to form a Committee, made up of the President and members of national council, and any external bodies that National Council see fit. This Committee is to report back to each National Council.

### Congress further mandates

The President to undertake an annual dossier of the current situation within individual students' unions, so as to keep a national record of developments and changes as they occur. This dossier is to occur no later than September 30th to allow for adequate time to analyse and respond to issues as they arise. The information provided within the dossier is to be kept confidential, and is only to be used as part of the Independent Students' Union campaign.

### Congress further mandates

The President to seek legal counsel in relation to proposing changes to Irish legislation to protect students' union independence, and to report findings and recommendations back to both National Council and the Independent Students' Union Committee.

## 17 UO14 USI Calendar

### Congress notes:

USI organise a number events over the course of the year.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress recognises:

The dates and volume of events organised by the organisation may need to be adapted from time to time.

## Congress believes:

Students benefit from attendance at USI events.

## Congress further believes:

If students had sufficient notice in regards to the timing and location of events, attendance at these events would be increased.

## Congress mandates:

The USI President in conjunction with the Officer Board to develop a set calendar of USI events and activities, including the location when known/available, for their term of office

## Congress further mandates:

The USI President to make this calendar available to Member Organisations and students via the USI Website and other mediums they feel appropriate.

## 17 UO15 Comparative Research Manual

### Congress Recognises:

Students' Union Officers sit on a number of boards and committees within their respective institutions.

### Congress Notes:

Students' Union Officers roles on these boards and committees is to represent students and to defend their rights predominantly.

### Congress Believes:

Students' Union Officers need at their disposal statistics and figures from other member organisations to strengthen their arguments on a number of issues, for example but not limited to library opening hours, on campus catering prices etc.

### Congress Therefore Mandates:

The Regional officers of USI to compile together a comparative research manual following a consultation process with students and the USI National Council in terms of which areas should be covered within this manual.

## 17 UO18 Secretary for standing committees and action points

### Congress Notes

that fluent discussion can come from standing committees of National Council.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress mandates

USI Officerboard to ensure that as part of standing orders for Committees, a secretary should be elected to take minutes and action points are created from these minutes, which track the work of these committees in an effective manner.

## 17 UO19 Election Training

### Congress acknowledges

That each Students' Union would hold elections to elect their officers.

### Congress further acknowledges

That it can be difficult to get the correct information and know exactly how to run a successful campaign. It is important that students who put themselves in an election that they feel they know how to run an election.

### Congress therefore mandates

USI Officerboard to run training which offers advice on how to run a successful election campaign.

## 14 AF 1 FINANCIAL REPORTING FOR LARGE-SCALE EVENTS

### **Congress believes:**

Transparency in the financial dealings of the Union of Students in Ireland is of paramount importance.

### **Congress also believes:**

That this transparency is particularly important in relation to large-scale high-cost events organised by USI.

### **Congress notes with approval:**

The presentation on the finances of the USI offered by the General Manager at National Council each year and the further presentation by finance committee at congress.

### **Congress asserts:**

That every effort should be made to ensure financial transparency and that Member Organisations should be entitled to input before decisions regarding the budgets of large scale events are made.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

That the President present a projected budget for large scale events, including but not limited to Pink Training, SUT, and Congress to a National Council prior to the event for discussion.

### **Congress further mandates:**

That the President present an actual budget for large scale events, including but not limited to Pink Training, SUT and Congress to the first National council after the event as an item for discussion.

## 11 NA 2 VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

### **Congress notes:**

The unusual political situation in the year 2010/2011 put USI under a lot of pressure as regards a Voter Registration Campaign in the run-up to a General Election.

### **Congress believes:**

That a Voter Registration Campaign would be more feasible operationally if it was carried out at the start of the year instead of in the run up to the election.

### **Congress further notes:**

That to encourage people to vote an organisation must be registered. If CO's run a Voter Registration Campaign, it must be done through USI, who are registered.

### **Congress mandates USI Officer Board:**

To run a Voter Registration Campaign every September/October, to provide help to CO's running Voter Registration Campaigns, to make officers available on the ground to COs, and to approve all CO information etc for any Voter Registration Campaign.

## 11 ED 4 SUPPORT FUNDS FOR PART-TIME STUDENTS

### REAPPROVED 2015

### **Congress notes:**

That a number of support funds including the Fund for Student with Disabilities, the Maintenance Grant are only available for students studying on a full-time basis in recognised Higher Education Institutes.

### **Congress further notes:**

That part-time students are not able to avail of the "free-fees" scheme.

### **Congress mandates the Education Officer, Welfare Officer and Equality Officer:**

To campaign and lobby for support funds and the free fees scheme to be extended to include part-time students.

## 17 AA2 Fees Sanctions

### CONGRESS NOTES:

That many students are unable to pay their fees by the deadline put in place by each Third Level Institute.

# USI Congress 2020

## CONGRESS FURTHER NOTES:

That there is no best practice guidelines in place to deal with the issue of late fee payment of students.

## CONGRESS FURTHER NOTES:

That in an attempt to encourage to students to pay their fees, they can be locked out of online resources including moodle and emails.

## CONGRESS FURTHER NOTES:

That this is resulting in students becoming very distressed, as the sanctions put in place are having a direct negative impact on each of the students academics, as students are unable to access upload continues assessments or sit online exams.

## CONGRESS MANDATES

The President to lobby the HEA to set up a Sub group to examine best practice guidelines in relation to sanctions for late fee payment.

## 17 WEL 27 Stim Room for ASD students

### Congress notes:

That some students find it hard to concentrate and integrate into the student body during lectures and exams due to environmental sensitivity, such as florescent lighting, overcrowding, heat temperature and distracting sounds.

### Congress further notes:

That students internationally with conditions such as ASD (autism spectrum disorder) have benefited from stim rooms, which is a low cost resource that can be easily implemented into universities and institutes across the country.

### Congress mandates:

VP Equality & Citizenship to investigate the feasibility of implementing this across all colleges in the country.

## 17 AA10 Shared Feedback Standards

### Congress Notes:

Current assessment and feedback structures vary across all institutions. This results in highly varied teaching standards. Students are suffering as a result.

## Congress Also Notes:

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning have chosen "Assessment Of/For/As Learning " as their most recent enhancement theme. It places a special focus on assessment in Irish higher education.

## Congress Further Notes:

ISSE data collected since its initiation, which indicates that first year students experience a low level of interaction with lecturing staff.

## Congress Mandates:

VP AA to engage with the Department of Education, QQI and HEA to introduce shared standards for feedback on assessed work across all third level institutions that improves the students' experience and develops quality of assessment across the country.

## 17 AA11 Motion on residency criteria for returning emigrants

### Congress notes

That students who have not lived in Ireland or another EU member state for 3 of the last 5 years do not qualify for EU tuition fee levels or the student maintenance grant, regardless of their nationality and/or citizenship.

### Congress regrets

That this policy has particularly affected the many young people who emigrated from Ireland during the economic crisis. Those who wish to return to Ireland to pursue higher education at both undergraduate and postgraduate level face significantly higher non-EU fee levels as a result of their residency in a non-EU state. In practice, this serves as an incentive to defer or reconsider repatriation.

### Congress also regrets

That for a huge number of emigrants, emigration has not been a "lifestyle choice". Hundreds of thousands of people have emigrated from Ireland over the past 10 years and many of whom did so under the obligation of a scarcity of opportunity.

### Congress accordingly asserts

That it is unjust to penalise those Irish citizens who were forced by external circumstances to seek opportunities abroad. Moreover, the current policy is inconsistent with government strategy to incentivise the repatriation of those same emigrants.

### Congress believes

That returning emigrants should be subject to less strict conditions of residency in order to qualify for EU fee levels and student supports

### Congress therefore mandates

Officer board to liaise with the Department of Education and the Higher Education Authority to pursue the implementation of less strict conditions of residency for these people.



## 14 AAQA 2 ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS

### **Congress regrets:**

The almost exclusive focus of the current third-level admissions route on prior academic attainment.

### **Congress believes:**

That taking into consideration contextual data can ensure that an individual's true potential for performance in higher education is considered.

### **Congress also believes:**

That such consideration would broaden the socio-economic demographic of the third-level student body; the current admissions system disproportionately advantages applicants from fee-paying secondary schools.

### **Congress notes with approval:**

That an Irish Universities Association (IUA) alternative admissions route is being piloted in Trinity College Dublin. The alternative route shall offer 7530 students in total a place in a competitive Level 8 degree programme in September 2014 on the basis of Leaving Certificate results, performance relative to classmates, and a personal statement.

### **Congress mandates:**

That the USI shall support initiatives to create an alternative common admissions route for all publicly-funded third-level institutions where contextual data, including but not limited to socio-

economic background, is considered in addition to prior academic attainment.

### **Congress also mandates:**

The President to lobby for state investment in retention activities to prevent disproportionate drop out levels of those from non-traditional backgrounds.

### **Congress further mandates:**

The President and the VP Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to lobby for improved information, advice and guidance and careers information at all levels of education.

## 14 EQ 2 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

### **Congress believes:**

That women are still significantly under-represented in Student Union politics, as well as politics nationally.

# USI Congress 2020

Only 20% of Presidents are women in USI member colleges are women.

Only 33% of UK Students Union Presidents are women.

In the Dáil Éireann the representation of women is even worse. Only 15% of TDs are women. In local councils across Ireland the representation of women is below 20%.

In Northern Ireland, only 19% of MLAs in Stormont are women

Ireland ranks 23rd out of 27 EU countries for their percentage of women in parliament.

## **Congress also believes:**

Despite forming a majority of students in higher and further education, women are under-represented in powerful positions in colleges and students' union.

Women's representation in colleges and students' unions is vital to women's equality and to overcoming the inequality and discrimination that women face.

## **Congress mandates:**

The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship, to run a national campaign supporting and empower women in leadership and create a support network in order to encourage more women candidates to run for election.

The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship to campaign on increasing the number of women who run for all sabbatical positions, all student councillors and voluntary roles within students unions.

The VP Equality and Citizenship to make links with the NUS-USI and the NUS Women's Campaign and work together to encourage women in leadership.

## 17 NA4 Car Insurance Campaign

### **Congress Notes With Concern:**

The cost of car insurance claims has increased by 44% from 2012 to 2015 while insurance costs have soared by more than 70% since June 2013.

### **Congress Acknowledges:**

The increase of fees, rent, cost of college materials, transport and other costs on students have made attending third-level a financial difficulty.

### **Congress Further Acknowledges:**

The Cost of Insurance Committee, Chairpersoned by Minister of State Eoghan Murphy TD, has published its report containing 33 recommendations comprising 71 actions with recommendations that implementation needs to be swift in order for these recommendations to be felt for consumers.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

## CONGRESS FURTHER MANDATES:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns to join the external campaign led by taxi drivers, road hauliers, older people groups and sympathetic political parties to take action on car insurance increases.

## 14 NA 5 OPT-OUT ORGAN DONATION

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of organ donation within this country in saving lives.

### **Congress applauds:**

The usage of organ donation cards and the promotion of organ donation within the “Irish Donor Network”.

### **Congress further applauds:**

The implementation of an “opt out scheme” for organ donation in neighboring European countries.

### **Congress believes:**

That further actions should be taken to lobby for an opt out scheme to be introduced in Ireland.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

USI President and VP for Welfare to lobby relevant parties for the promotion of an opt-out scheme in relation to organ donation.

## 11 NA 5 ROLLING REGISTER

### **Congress notes:**

That the ‘door to door’ method of maintaining the electoral register currently used in Ireland means there is little public confidence in the current method of voter registration.

### **Congress further notes:**

That responsibility for compiling the electoral register lies with individual local authorities rather than a central body. While this may seem like a sensible delegation of responsibilities, in reality the opposite is true. It has been shown that the current method of voter registration allows for:

- Varying degrees of priority afforded to maintaining data;

# USI Congress 2020

- Wide variety of practices among registration authorities;
- Insufficient field-workers and door-to-door visits to obtain the necessary information.

## **Congress believes:**

That transferring responsibility for managing the register away from the local authorities to a newly created Electoral Commission operating an individual, rolling register would greatly increase the accuracy of the electoral register. Furthermore, it would make the process of registering students in third level colleges much easier as only one authority would be involved in the registration process.

## **Congress mandates the Deputy President, Education Officer and Area Officers:**

To lobby for the creation of an Electoral Commission that would facilitate an individual, rolling register to ensure that the electoral register is up to date and accurate going forward.

## 17 UO6 USI Policy book transparency

### Congress Believes:

The USI Policy Book is essential in directing the work of USI and Officerboard.

### Congress notes with concern:

That it is not always clear what motions have been completed.

### Congress therefore mandates:

The USI President to ensure an up to date Policy Book is made available online with a clear indication of mandates complete, mandates ongoing and mandates not complete.

### Congress also mandates:

Members of Officerboard to give updates on mandates complete in their officer reports to National Council.

## 17 UO7 Utilising National Council

### Congress Notes:

The importance of National Council in steering the work of USI and deciding interim policy.

### Congress Believes:

That National Council is best utilised with contributions from every Member Organisation.

### Congress Mandates:

The USI president to organise training at SUT for Sabbatical Officers on how to interact with National Council.

## 17 UO12 Regional Training Events

### Congress Notes:

Training events for Students' Union Officers are frequently held within the Dublin Region.

### Congress Further Notes:

That therefore it is not always feasible for officers from other areas to attend these vital training events.

### Congress further believes:

During the academic term it can be difficult for SU officers to find the time to travel for required training.

### Congress Believes:

All training is important to SU officer's roles. Therefore by making it more accessible through regional training more SU officers will likely be able to attend the training.

### Congress Mandates:

USI Officer Board to ensure that when they are organising training events aside from SUT, SUT+ and other events as determined by the officer board, that they do so in each region where logistically and financially possible.

### Congress Further Mandates:

The USI Officer Board to clarify and justify to USI National Council and/or relevant officer working groups why it is not possible to facilitate regional training events aside from SUT, SUT+ and other events as determined by the officer board in detail prior to the events being organised.

## 17 UO25 Policies and Submissions Made Widely Available

### Congress Notes:

The work done by USI Officerboard in creating policy, reports, strategies and submissions on behalf of students

### Congress Acknowledges:

That these policies, reports, strategies and submissions could be used by the media, researchers, students' unions and other stakeholders in their own policies and submissions.

### Congress Mandates:

That the USI President should ensure that policies, reports, strategies and submissions which are not subject to confidentiality are made available on the USI website in an easily accessible manner.

## New Policies Prioritised for USI Congress Online 2020

After a prioritisation process, the following motions were duly submitted and prioritised for early debate at USI Congress 2020.

For this year, motions will not be retitled according to their debate order, but the policy folder will reorder them accordingly.

Errors do occur during this process. Please do consult the document and report any irregularities to [congress@usi.ie](mailto:congress@usi.ie).

11/05/2020

# USI Congress 2020

These are arranged in order of the priority expressed by Member Organisations with no respect to the topic of debate.

- If they pass they will become the policy of USI.
- If they fail, they will not become the policy of USI.
- If they are referred to an officer or other entity within USI, they will not become policy unless they are submitted to National Council for adoption as interim policy, or back to Congress next year.

## 20 WEL 1      SUSI Eligibility Review

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

### Congress notes

That students have been excluded by the criteria of SUSI. Many aspects of the application restrain students from receiving adequate financial support. The criteria is outdated and does not reflect the reality of struggling students.

### Congress further notes

That BTEA (Back to Education Allowance), distances, and other forms of eligibility can be the direct cause of people dropping out of college.

### Congress therefore mandates

USI to lobby for the eligibility criteria to be changed to suit students and lobby for radical reform with the support of relative organisations."

## 20 AA 9      Learning in a Digital World

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

### Congress notes

The advancements that have been made in digital learning & teaching in Ireland over the last number of years, and the increasing interest in digital delivery of courses including, but not limited to, blended learning and fully online programmes.

### Congress further notes

A number of initiatives exploring the field of digital and online teaching & learning have been launched within the sector over the last year, including, but not limited to, the Irish Universities Association's 'Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning' project, and the Innovative Opportunities Transforming Education' (INOTE) project being conducted by the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (GMIT, IT Sligo, Letterkenny IT). Local Students' Unions, and USI

have been a key stakeholder in these projects, and other local initiatives exploring the theme of digital learning.

### Congress welcomes

The work that was carried out by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Autumn 2019, surveying over 25,000 students in Ireland on their experience of digital learning, and which will publish a national report of the findings in May 2020, as well as providing each institution with their own individual data to enable them to produce institutional reports on the survey.

### Congress believes

All of the above initiatives demonstrate the currency of digital and online learning in the current Higher Education environment, but also show that there is still a lot of work to be done in improving the digital experience of students in Ireland, in order to ensure that digital tools are used for the betterment of the student learning experience, and not simply to tick a box.

### Congress further believes

Online and blended-learning can provide a flexible route into higher education for students from a range of backgrounds, and for international students wishing to access the Irish Higher Education system from their own home country. However, it is vitally important that students on online and blended-learning programmes are offered equal access to support, personal development and other opportunities that are afforded to on-campus students. This should include access to the free fees initiative and SUSI funding.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide resources to support MOs in engaging with online students, including support for Students' Unions who are not currently funded to support their online students and advice on embedding student representation within online and blended-learning programmes. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, President and other members of the Executive Team to work with sectoral bodies and the HEA to put in place further support for students enrolled on online and blended learning programmes, including lobbying for full access to SUSI funding and the free fees initiative for those enrolled on fully online programmes.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with the National Forum, and with MOs, to build upon the findings of the INDEX survey, and to call for further action to improve the digital learning experience of students. The USI Executive Team to continue to engage with, and support national projects focused on digital learning & teaching

## 20 WEL 7 Drugs and alcohol harm reduction campaign

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group



## Congress notes

Education for third-level students is crucial in terms of informing students about drugs and alcohol, and the consequences taking them may have on their future.

## Congress further notes

That alcohol and drug misuse are still huge issues among the student population. According to the National Student Drugs Survey 82% of students have tried illegal drugs The National Alcohol Diary Survey showed that almost two-thirds of 18-24 year-old drinkers consumed six or more standard drinks on a typical single drinking session (anything over 4 drinks is considered binge drinking).

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to roll-out a national campaign on drugs and/or alcohol using harm reduction messaging. This campaign can be in collaboration with organisations such as, Irish Secondary-Level Students' Union (ISSU), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and any other suitable organisations.

## Congress further mandates

: That the Vice President for Welfare supports MO's in writing local drug and alcohol policy, and offers training on drugs / alcohol awareness, and substance abuse to Students' Union officers at a time most suitable.

## Congress therefore repeals

19 WEL 8 19 WEL 7 18 WEL 4 12 WEL 4 12 WEL 6

## 20 WEL 4 Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

## Congress notes

Currently USI runs multiple campaigns during the year, relating to various issues (eg. SHAG week/Re:charge/etc.)

There are many mandates in the USI policy book in relation to the running of a number of campaigns relating to different Welfare issues, namely:

- WEL 19 - 4 Undetectable = Untransmittable
- WEL 19 9 Second-hand Smoke
- WEL 19 7 Excessive alcohol consumption campaign for secondary and third level
- WEL 19 13 Men's Mental Health
- 2018 WEL 4 : Drug awareness and harm reduction campaign
- 2018 WEL 11 : Smoking Cessation Campaign
- 2018 WEL 12 : Abusive Relationships, Sexual Violence & Harassment
- 17 WEL 18 PrEP Availability in Ireland
- 17 WEL 22 Social Inclusion Campaign

# USI Congress 2020

- 17 WEL 25 Personal Safety Campaign during Freshers' Week
- 15 WE 25 Gambling
- 14 WEL 10 WATER SAFETY
- 12 WEL 3 SEXUAL HEALTH WEBSITE
- 12 WEL 5 EXAM STRESS PACKS
- 12 WEL 6 DRINK RESPONSIBLY CAMPAIGN
- 12 WEL 7 SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN
- 12 WEL 14 EXAM STRESS CAMPAIGN
- 09 WEL 2 ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

## Congress applauds

The effectiveness of the #BreakTheBarriers campaign (a campaign that compiles multiple issues faced by students in relation to accessing education ie. Accommodation, Fees, Grants, etc.)

## Congress notes with concern

That coupled with the numerous campaigns that are run locally in MOs, the various campaigns that USI run may get lost among the many campaigns that students see during the year.

## Congress believes

That a generic health campaign, promoting all aspects of health (physical, sexual, mental, etc.) should replace the specific campaigns, and be rolled out across all MO campuses during the year.

That a Student Health and Wellbeing campaign that takes into account the many issues related to Welfare that students face, and brings them under an umbrella campaign, would be the best way to ensure that the Welfare related campaign activities of USI are identifiable on a national level.

## Congress further notes

That some campaigns avail of funding from external bodies (such as the HSE) and it is unknown how the combination of multiple campaigns may effect this funding

## Congress mandates

The VP Welfare alongside the Welfare Working Group to investigate the feasibility of running a single, year long Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign, which incorporates the many issues under the remit of Welfare.

The VP Welfare to use student feedback to decipher how the campaign should be run.

## Congress further mandates

That should the VP Welfare and the Welfare Working Group deem the running of a single, year long Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign feasible, that a mandate will be put to Congress Floor at the next Congress. This mandate shall be to repeal all mandates in relation to the running of welfare campaigns, and to replace these mandates with a single mandate relating to a year long Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign



## 20 UO 8 Multi-campus support

Proposed by the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

### Congress notes

Nationally there are a number of multi-campus Higher Education Institutions and these campuses provide vitally important education to regional communities.

### Congress further notes

With the planned designation of additional Technological Universities and the continued merging of Colleges into Universities in the coming years, the number of multi campus HEIs is set to increase.

### Congress mandates

The USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other relevant members of the executive team to lobby the Government to prevent the closure of satellite campuses where the Students' Union is against the closure and highlight the value of multi-campus and satellite campuses and the need to support these campuses during mergers.

### Congress therefore repeals

17 AA8

## 20 GAE 1 Athchóiriú na Gaeilge sa Chóras Oideachais / Reform of Irish in the Education System

Proposed by an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

### Tugann an Chomhdháil faoi deara:

An géarghá le hathchóiriú a dhéanamh ar an gcóras oideachais ó thaobh múineadh na Gaeilge de ón réamhscoil go dtí an tríú leibhéal mar a fheictear ón bhfeachtas #Gaeilge4All.

### Tugann an Chomhdháil faoi deara chomh maith:

Go mbíonn na meáin chumarsáide agus an pobal i gcoitinne de shíor ag gearán faoin mbealach a múintear na Gaeilge agus faoin easpa feidearthachtaí a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge lasmuigh den chóras oideachas.

### Creideann an Chomhdháil

Gur cheart go mbeadh an Ghaeilge riachtanach ag an mbunleibhéal agus ag an dara leibhéal agus gur gcuirfear tacaíocht breise ar fáil dóibh siúd a bhfuil deacrachtaí foghlama acu agus daltaí a bhog go hÉirinn ó thíortha eile.

### Creideann an Chomhdháil chomh maith

Gur cheart athchóiriú iomlán a dhéanamh ar an gcaoi a múintear na Gaeilge ón réamhscoil go dtí an tríú leibhéal, bunaithe ar an gCreatlach Comónta Eorpach ionas go mbeidh deis níos

## USI Congress 2020

fearr ag daoine óga an Ghaeilge a bheith in ann an Ghaeilge a labhairt nuair a fhágann siad an scoil agus chothófaí grá don teanga iontu.

### Mar sin sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

Go ndéanfaidh Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge stocaireacht ar an Aire Oideachais agus ar pháirtithe eile leasmhara leis an gcóras oideachais ó thaobh múineadh na Gaeilge de a athrú agus é a dhéanamh níos inrochtana agus níos uileghabhálaí do chách.

### Mar sin aisghaireann an Chomhdháil:

11 NA 3 14 GA 1

### Congress notes:

The urgent need for reform of the education system in relation to the teaching of Irish from preschool to third level a highlighted by the #Gaeilge4All campaign.

### Congress also notes:

The continuous negativity portrayed by the media and by the general public about the way Irish is taught and the lack of opportunities to use Irish outside of the education system.

### Congress believes:

That Irish should be a compulsory subject in primary and secondary school and that extra support should be given to students with learning difficulties and to those who have moved to Ireland from other countries.

### Congress also believes:

That there should be an entire reformation of how Irish is taught from pre-school to third level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) so that young people will have a better chance of being able to speak Irish when they leave school and also so that they can develop a positive relationship with the language.

### Therefore, Congress mandates:

That the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge lobby the Minister for Education and other relevant interest groups to change how Irish is taught in the current education system and to make it more inclusive and accessible to all.

### Therefore Congress repeals:

11 NA 3 14 G 1

20 WEL 8 Mental Health and casework training for Students' Unions officers

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

### Congress notes

The majority of Students' Union Officers are presented with casework on a daily basis. Therefore the skills of how to manage a student in distress and boundaries are essential.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress believes

Everyone has a role to play in suicide prevention and that Students' Unions should to be equipped with the skills to intervene if needed.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to organise the following training, where and when possible, such as, but not limited to, SafeTalk, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Casework and boundaries training. These training sessions are to take place in a way that's most suitable to the Students' Union officers and informed by the relevant National Council working groups.

## Therefore congress Repeals

17 WEL 3

17 WEL 10

14 WEL 3

14 WEL 4

14 WEL 16

## 20 WEL 11 Student Assistance fund

Proposed by the Vice President Border, Midlands and Western region

### Congress notes

The Student Assistance Fund is an extremely important resource for students to access if they are in financial difficulty. Often it can be the difference between someone staying in college or dropping out.

### Congress mandates

- The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for: The SAF to be extended to postgraduate students The Vice President for Welfare to assist Member Organisations in their lobbying of their institutions to provide the applications for the SAF in the most accessible way for students, whether this be online or otherwise.
- The Vice President for Welfare to work with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to seek inclusion for these students so they may be eligible to apply for the SAF. As currently students participating on a second qualification at the same or a lower level are not eligible for SAF funding.
- The Vice President Equality and Citizenship to work towards the Student Assistance Fund being accessible to all students regardless of whether they are in receipt of SUSI or not across Institutions in Ireland.
- The Vice President for Welfare to provide briefing to all MO's on all aspects of the SAF, and seek representation on all committees relating to SAF on their campuses, and to also continually lobby the HEA to redraft the guidelines for the SAF and to include recommendations to increase efficiency of systems.
- The USI Executive team to campaign for increases and oppose any suggested cuts to the SAF.

Congress therefore repeals

18 AA 20

18 WEL 2

18 WEL 9

17 WEL 16

15 WEL 2

14 WEL 7

## 20 WEL 17 Review USI Health Promotion Strategy

IT Sligo Students' Union

### Congress notes

The importance of having a streamlined health promotion strategy plan for USI as it provides a sense of direction and outlines measure goals for the VP Welfare and USI to achieve and evaluate.

### Congress further notes

With the growing awareness of one's health, it is important to have a holistic view on health. A health promotion strategy is a vital stepping stone in allowing USI and the VP Welfare to have clear, consistent, national objectives in relation to all aspects of health.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to review the USI Health Promotion Strategy 2017-2020 alongside welfare working group to develop a new USI Health Promotion Strategy that outline reachable and achievable strategic objectives that can be evaluated.

## 20 UO 1 Regional Leadership & Personal Development Training

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

### Congress notes

That leadership roles have become a staple demand of job seeking, role pursuing and many other aspects of advancing your personal/professional development. The trials and tribulations associated with this can have quite the heavy toll on people's work/life balance as well as stress management.

### Congress further notes

That running a large scale National event can be difficult to organize and risks excluding attendees due to additional cost associated with travel/accommodation.

### Congress recognises

Events such as Pink Training, EMpower, Women in Lead among others which encourage, support and facilitate students to take bold steps into leadership.

### Congress therefore mandates

That Regional Officers organize regional leadership training focused on leadership and personal development. Such an event would encourage students from that region to engage, and also have a huge focus on minding yourself when going for leadership roles as well as maintaining healthy boundaries while dealing with the trials and tribulations of leadership."



## 20 UO 5 USI Election Regulations

Proposed by the President

### Congress notes

The lack of regulation or rules for running in USI Elections.

### Congress recognises

The Electoral Commission as included in the Constitution was created with good intentions but it does not work in practice as it does not have the power to investigate or sanction any breaches to the regulations it is due to create.

### Congress mandates

The USI President to convene an ad-hoc committee with members and nominees of National Council to write a schedule to the USI Constitution outlining rules for running in USI Elections and provide powers to investigate and sanction, where necessary. This schedule is to be presented to National Council for approval no later than the December meeting of National Council.

## 20 AF 1 Affiliation Fee Review

Proposed by the President

### Congress notes

That affiliation fees for USI are currently based on registered students in each member organisation as agreed by the Higher Education Authority as outlined in the USI Constitution.

### Congress further notes

The need to undertake a full and broad review in relation to the affiliation fee charged by USI and that this review should be ongoing so to ensure it is reflective of the current and future landscape

### Congress recognises

The work currently ongoing by the USI Executive Team to develop a Student Partnership Agreement and Framework for Students' Unions with the Department of Education and Skills which aims to incorporate legal recognition and funding for Students' Unions.

### Congress further recognises

This is a key development in relation to the affiliation fee for USI as it will have an impact on the funding provided to Students' Unions and also may impact how that fee is paid to USI by member organisations.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress understands

The impact of a change to the affiliation fee will have on USI and wants to ensure the decision that is taken will not negatively impact the work of the organisation.

## Congress therefore mandates

The USI President to set up a working group to include sabbatical officers of USI member organisations and members of finance committee and the USI President to develop a long term impact analysis of a change to the USI affiliation fee in line with the following suggestions:

1. Incremental cap on the affiliation fee
2. Link affiliation fee with inflation (based on the average of 2018 - 2020)
3. 30% reduction in affiliation fee

The working group will develop a terms of reference which will be brought to National Council no later than the September meeting.

## Congress therefore repeals

AF 19 1

## 20 EQ 1 Supporting the Traveller Community

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### Congress notes

The Traveller community is one of the most marginalised in Irish society, and often face systemic barriers to accessing third level education, as well as healthcare and housing amongst other things. The latest data shows there are only 61 travellers in higher education.

### Congress welcomes:

The National Access Plan for inclusion of travellers in third level education which aims to increase the number of travellers in third level education through targeted initiatives. Also, the Yellow Flag programme which does great work in terms of breaking down social barriers in educational institutions.

### Congress affirms

It's support for the Traveller community as an ethnic minority group.

### Congress mandates

The USI Executive team to mark Traveller Ethnicity day on the 1st of March every year, and to support events that recognise intersections within communities, such as Traveller Pride.

### Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support the expansion of the yellow flag initiative into third level.

## Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to provide resources to MOs on specific issues students in the travelling community may face, working with organisations that provide education and awareness traveller culture and identity training, such as the STATUS toolkit. "

## 20 EQ 2 20 x 20 campaign support

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare USI

### Congress notes

The 20 x 20 Campaign is a national, all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perceptions of women's sport by 2020. The campaign aims are: - 20% increase in media coverage of women in sport - 20% increase in female participation at all levels of sports - 20% increased in attendance at women's games and events

### Congress further notes

USI supports women in sport and the well-being of students in third level college.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to engage with the 20 x 20 campaign.

## 20 EQ 3 Reporting Racism

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship working group

### Congress notes

The recent development of reporting tools across HEIs, for example, sexual assault reporting tools, and role these tools play in supporting students.

### Congress notes

The same structures are not in place in our campuses to tackle racism, despite anecdotal reports that racism does happen in third level institutions. Furthermore, until we have hate crime legislation at a national level, it is very difficult to report racist incidents in a formalised manner.

### Congress acknowledges:

The success of the iReport tool launched by INAR which allows people to identify and report incidents of racism. As well as this, race neutral language is not effective and to truly have a conversation about racism in this country we must have conversations about race and our attitude to it.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress mandates

USI to promote the iReport tool and to lobby for its use across society.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support MOs in their lobbying of their institutions to develop stronger protocol against racism.

## Congress further mandates

USI Executive team to provide anti-racism training for officers.

## 20 EQ 4 Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

### Congress reaffirms:

It's support for the LGBTQ+ Community.

### Congress notes

There are particular challenges still facing the community and we cannot become complacent in tackling these.

### Congress therefore mandates

All information sent out in USI materials must be inclusive of the LGBTQ+ Community. The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to send out information after Pink Training to LGBT+ Societies and Students' Unions that will assist them in the events and campaigns they may wish to run throughout the year. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, Vice President for Campaigns and Regional Vice Presidents to work with LGBTQ+ organisations in developing a framework that could be applied to colleges in order to give them a LGBTQ Friendly Campus status. Congress therefore repeals

14 EQ 4

14 EQ 5

12 EQ 7

11 EQ 1

11 EQ 2

11 EQ 3

11 EQ 4

## 20 CZN 1 The Cost and Criteria of Irish Citizenship.

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group.

## Congress notes

The total fee to become an Irish citizen for an adult is ,1145, consisting of an application fee of ,175 and a fee to gain citizenship of ,950. Furthermore the criteria to apply for citizenship includes having a period of 365 days\* (1 year) continuous reckonable residence in the State immediately before the date of application for naturalisation.

## Congress notes with concern

This high cost acts as a barrier to many young people and students who wish to apply for citizenship, excluding them from being able to vote in certain Irish elections. Also, the restrictive criteria of having to stay in the country for 365 consecutive days limits opportunities for people who are hoping to apply to become Irish citizens.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for a reduction in the cost of citizenship and to lobby for the continuous 365 residency in the state to be changed. "

## 20 GAE 5 Cúrsaí Lán Ghaeilge ag an Tríú Leibhéal / Courses through Irish at Third Level

Proposed by An Coiste Cultúrtha

### Aithníonn an Chomhdháil

Go bhfuil an-chuid daoine le Gaeilge ag dul isteach in institiúidí ardoideachais nach mbaineann úsáid as a gcuid Gaeilge tar éis na scoile.

### Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith

Go bhfuil easpa tacaíochta ar fáil i roinnt coláistí do chainteoirí Gaeilge, go háirithe cainteoirí dúchais, agus daoine a d'fhreastal ar an mbunscoil agus/nó an meánscoil trí Ghaeilge nuair a théann siad isteach sa tríú leibhéal. Tá easpa rogha acu maidir le cúrsaí iomlán trí Ghaeilge nach mbaineann leis an teanga féin agus mar sin ní fheictear dóibh gur cheart an teanga a labhairt a thuilleadh.

### Creideann an Chomhdháil

Gur cheart go mbeadh níos mó cúrsaí ar fáil trí Ghaeilge ar fud na tíre nach mbaineann leis an teanga í féin, le freastal ar an bpobal seo a bhfuil Gaeilge acu ach ar mhaith leo a bheith ag obair in earnáileacha nach mbaineann leis an teanga féin mar shampla, Gnó, Dí, STEM srl.. Mar sin bheadh níos mó daoine le Gaeilge ag obair in earnálacha éagsúla a bheadh in ann freastal ar an bpobal i gcoitinne go hiomlán trí Ghaeilge le cearta teanga faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 a chomhlíonadh.

## Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

Go rachaidh an LU don Ghaeilge i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachas, agus an Roinn Cultúr Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta le tuilleadh infheistíocht a dhéanamh i gcúrsaí lán Ghaeilge timpeall na tíre ionas go mbeidh deis níos fearr ag mic léinn a gcuid cumas sa teanga a chothú agus a bheith ag obair in earnálacha éagsúla trí Ghaeilge.

## Aisghaireann:

12 G 1

## Congress notes:

That there are many students with Irish entering third level education who do not use their Irish after school.

## Congress also notes:

The lack of support given to students who have Irish, especially native speakers and those who attend primary and secondary school through Irish, when they enter third level. There is also a lack of choice in courses conducted through Irish which are not related to Irish itself and students don't see the value in speaking Irish anymore.

## Congress Believes:

That more courses should be made available fully through Irish, which are not centred around the language itself, to cater to this group who speak Irish but who would like to work in areas outside of the language itself for example, Business, Law, STEM etc. Therefore there would be more people working in different sectors who have Irish, and who can deal with the general public through Irish and fulfill language rights provisions made under the Official Languages Act 2003.

## Therefore Congress Mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education and Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht to invest more in courses conducted through Irish throughout the country so that students have a better chance of maintaining their Irish and being able to work in various sectors through Irish.

## Repeals:

12 G 1

20 GAE 8    Students' Union Bilinguality

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

## **Congress Notes:**

Many but not all MOs have an Oifigeach na Gaeilge, and some HEIs are bilingual institutions, making use of both Irish and English.

## **Congress Further Notes:**

That many MOs would like to make the transition from a monolingual Students' Union to a bilingual one, but there is an absence of a definition as to what that entails, and many feel they do not have the support or resources to do so.

## **Congress Applauds:**

The work of MOs around the country in efforts to increase the use of Irish on their campuses, and the work of the Oifigí Gaeilge and the LU Gaeilge in promoting the Irish language throughout the year.

## **Congress Mandates:**

The LU Gaeilge to create a best practice guideline for Student Unions who wish to become a bilingual organisation. This guideline will set out the parameters of what it means to be a bilingual Students Union, and will set out stages of bilinguality that Student Unions can work towards implementing.

## **Congress Further Mandates:**

The LU Gaeilge to work to support MOs wishing to become a bilingual Students Union

20 GAE 9    An Ghaeilge ó Thuadh - New Decade New Deal

Proposed by An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

## **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

Na Céimeanna móra a rinne an Feidhmeannas ó Thuadg i gComhaontú New Decade New Deal Approach maidir le Gaeilge trí Choimsinéir Teanga a chruthú agus aisghairm na bpéindlíthe deireanach.

## **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith**

An sár-obair gnómhaochta a rinne An Dream Dearg agus mic léinn ó Thuadh leis an méid seo a bhaint amach.

## Creideann an Chomhdháil:

Cé go bhfuil na héachtaí seo iontach dearfach, ní leor iad i gcomparáid leis an Acht Gaeilge a éilítear, go háirithe toisc nach luaitear aon rud faoi chomharthaíocht dhátheangach ann.

## Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Go leanann Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn ag tacú le hobair an Dream Dearg agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge.

## Chomh maith leis sin sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Go bhforbródh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge feachtas in éineacht le NUS-USI agus balleagraíochtaí leasmhara le ciorraithe ar chúrsaí Gaeilge a sheachaint, go leathnófaí cúrsaí ionas gur féidir staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge le hábhair eile, go méadófaí infheistíocht i Ranna Gaeilge agus le tacaíocht a thabhairt do na Cumainn Ghaelacha agus d'Oifigigh Ghaeilge maidir le cúrsaí eile Gaeilge ar champas.

## Anuas ar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Go n-oibreoidh Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn le NUS-USI, Conradh na Gaeilge, Dream Dearg, agus an Coimisinéir Teanga ó Thuadh le moltaí a dhéanamh agus iad a thabhairt do choláistí maidir le dea-chleachtas ó thaobh cur chun cinn, feiceálacht agus cothú na Gaeilge de.

## Mar sin, aisghaireann an Chomhdháil:

17 IL2

14 G 4

## Congress notes:

The advances made in the New Decade New Approach agreement reached by the Stormont executive regarding the Irish language; including the creation of an Irish language commissioner and the repeal of the final penal laws.

## Congress also notes:

The radical and brilliant activism carried out by An Dream Dearg and student activists in the North in achieving these provisions.

## Congress believes:

That while these achievements are positive, they fall far behind what activists have been calling for in a standalone Irish Language Act, largely by not including any provisions for bilingual signage.



# USI Congress 2020

## Congress mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to support the continuing activism of An Dream Dearg and Irish language organisations.

## Congress further mandates:

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to develop a campaign along with NUS-USI and relevant MOs to prevent cuts to Irish language courses, for the expansion of courses able to be studied jointly with Irish, increase funding to Irish faculties and to support na Cumainn Ghaelacha and Oifigigh Ghaeilge on any issues pertaining to Irish on campus.

## Congress also mandates:

The Union of Students in Ireland to work with NUS-USI, Conradh na Gaeilge, An Dream Dearg and the new Irish language Commissioner to create recommendations of best practice to present to colleges in the north pertaining to Irish language visibility, promotion and protection.

## Congress therefore repeals:

17 IL2

14 G 4

20 UO 15 Panel of External Members

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

*This motion was submitted in accordance with rules and due to a technical issue was excluded from the pre-clár. As a result it has been assigned an automatic prioritisation.*

## Congress Notes

That some MOs have it as part of their democratic structures the need to appoint external members to their boards and committees, such as an Independent Chairperson.

## Congress recognises

The importance of governance and accountability in Students' Unions to ensure the Union is run effectively and efficiently for the benefit of students.

## Congress believes

That through USI and other MOs, there would be a wealth of past Sabbatical officers that would have the knowledge and interest to serve as external members of boards and committees of Students' Unions.

## Congress mandates

The President to provide a contact list of external contacts which could act as external

members for MOs committees and boards. This list should be updated on a yearly basis and provide details of their experience and involvement in Students' Union.

## UO 16                      Students' Union Levies

Proposed by UC Cork Students' Union

*This motion was submitted in accordance with rules and due to a technical issue was excluded from the pre-clár. As a result it has been assigned an automatic prioritisation.*

### Congress repeals

2018 UO9

#### Congress notes:

Student levies are voluntary fees brought in by popular vote by students for student services, project and other student interests. Levies are an essential source of revenue to keep MOs afloat so they can continue to represent students.

#### Congress further notes, with concern:

There is a lack of clarity surrounding student levies in Irish legislation and a lack of continuity across Irish institutions surrounding the ownership of this levy and for what it can be used. HEIs, in the past, have used this legal confusion to miscommunicate how the money would be used and abuse the system of how student levies are brought in.

#### Congress, therefore, mandates:

The President, or a nominee of the President, to draft a set of guidelines highlighting an indicative list of guarantees or assurances MO's should seek and obtain from HEIs before deciding to engage in the implementation of a student levy for the HEI.

#### Congress also mandates:

The Regional Representatives to work with each MO to help them research how student levies are being used within their institution and to compile a document of the correct amount of funds collected and how it is being used, for other MO's to use.

#### Congress further mandates:

The President to lobby the government to ensure that each Students' Union has ownership over their levy and that it cannot be changed by any other body, other than a vote by the students of that institution.

## 20 AA 12      Placement Campaign

Proposed by UC Cork SU

*This motion was submitted in accordance with rules and due to a technical issue was excluded from the pre-clár. As a result it has been assigned an automatic prioritisation.*

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress Recognises:

The huge value that placement in courses has for students.

## Congress notes:

That students may face barriers when it comes to engaging in placements from finding a suitable placement, travel/accommodation, financial reasons and others.

## Congress Notes:

Many students undergo placements throughout their time in higher education institutions and that several of said placements are outside of their hometowns and away from their institutions. Many students have to source their accommodation for said placements in workplaces and are not paid or reimbursed in any form for said expenses or if they are they, not in a sufficient way.

## Congress Further notes:

Previous research was done by USI for Student Nurses, Pharmacy Students and Student Teachers to gather data from those cohorts of students, including information on placement, that has led to the formation of successful campaigns and lobbies. The gap in overall research for all students undergoing placement and the need for the development of a campaign(s) stemming from the experiences gathered.

## Congress Recognises:

The need to support students who are undergoing unpaid placements or paid placement where they are receiving less than the minimum wage. This is too little to live on as there is currently a massive disparity with the minimum and living wage

## Congress Believes:

All students should be paid when they go on placement and receive at least a living wage and that many students are financially exploited.

## Congress, therefore, mandates:

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Campaigns to conduct a national survey to gather data around student experiences on all placements.

## Congress further mandates:

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Campaigns to create a campaign(s) from the collected data on their experiences, included but not limited to, a campaign to lobby for a living wage or, at least, financial assistance for students on placement

20 AA 5      Student Complaints

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress notes

That all HEIs, as well as other public service providers in the Higher Education sector, including HEAR, DARE and SUSI are required to have an internal Complaints procedure.

## Congress further notes

That, if dissatisfied with the response received through the formal procedure, students are entitled to submit a complaint through the Ombudsman.

## Congress believes

Student Complaints processes can often be time-consuming, confusing and frustrating, leading many students to withdraw complaints they have submitted. To date, there has not been a lot of interaction between the Ombudsman and student representatives meaning that there is a lack of clear information on the Ombudsman process, and how Students' Unions can best support students wishing to make a complaint through this process.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide guidance notes for Students' Unions on supporting students throughout an internal complaints process, and to work with the Ombudsman to develop guidance for students, and for Students' Unions on the Ombudsman complaints process.

## 20 AA 6 Academic Integrity

Proposed by Academic Affairs Working Group

## Congress notes

Section 43a of the updated Quality and Qualifications Act 2019 which provides Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) statutory powers to prosecute those who:

- assist learners to cheat by completing, in whole or in part, any piece of work required of the enrolled learner for their programme of study, or sit an exam or facilitate the sitting of an exam by someone other than the enrolled learner or provide answers for an exam;
- advertise cheating services;
- publish advertisements for cheating services.

## Congress further notes

That in preparation for the enactment of this part of legislation, QQI have established a National Academic Integrity Network, which aims to identify and disseminate good practice in dealing with contract cheating, inform a dedicated communications strategy and develop a culture of positive academic integrity within Irish Higher Education. This Network includes representation from all Irish Higher Education institutions, as well as representation from USI, and from a number of Students' Unions. The Communications Group working as part of the network will be chaired by the USI Vice President for Academic Affairs.

## Congress believes that

It is only through effective dialogue with students, and the adoption of student-centred learning approaches, that the sector can work towards building a culture of positive academic integrity. It is critically important that positive engagement with students on this issue is placed at the centre of the network's priorities, and that any student-facing communication that is developed is accessible, proactive and student-centred.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work closely with QQI, other sectoral agencies, and all members of the National Academic Integrity Network to ensure that the work of the National Academic Integrity Network places the needs of students at its' core. The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with members of the Academic Affairs Working Group, and members of the Academic Integrity Communications Group to ensure that student-facing communication on this topic is proactive, accessible and student-centred.

## Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Vice President for Campaigns to work with the National Academic Integrity Network to develop campaign resources for local students' unions to roll out their own awareness campaigns on Academic Integrity.

## 20 AA 7 Postgraduate Specific Supports on Campus

### Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

#### Congress Notes:

The lack of dedicated services in relation to mental, physical and financial wellbeing of Postgraduate students across the Island of Ireland.

#### Congress Further Notes

That services on campus can often be inaccessible to Postgraduate students, with many HEIs excluding PG students from the remit of their on campus initiatives aiming to improve the education experience of students.

#### Congress Recognises

The increase in the amount of Postgraduate Students reporting poor mental and physical health and significant financial strain.

#### Congress, therefore Mandates

The VP for Postgraduates to work with the VP Welfare and VP Academic Affairs to research what supports are currently available on campus specifically for Postgraduate Students.

#### Congress Further Mandates

The VP for Postgraduates, the VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to lobby for a national strategy of support services specific for Postgraduate Students across Ireland.

## 20 WEL 2 PrEP Accessibility

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

### Congress notes

PrEP (Pre Exposure Prophylaxis) is a drug taken to prevent the contraction of HIV and is now available in Ireland.

### Congress further notes

That PrEP is primarily aimed towards the MSM (men who have sex with men) group and meanwhile HIV does not discriminate against who it targets and can be contracted by anyone. The accessibility of the drug is also very limited in the sense of who can and cannot access this for free.

### Congress notes with concern

That studies in countries where PrEP is available has shown an increase in the likes of Syphilis, Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia and that this is due to the lack of sexual health education that goes with the drug.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the Executive to lobby the government for increased accessibility of PrEP for all and furthermore to campaign to promote education of still using protection even while on PrEP.

### Repeals

2017 WEL 18"

## 20 WEL 3 Celebrating and Supporting Recovery Through Harm Reduction and Support

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

### Congress notes

Addiction is not defined solely with substance use/misuse. That an effective way of reducing issues around drug use lies not solely with anti-drug policies rather also include harm reduction and the promotion of recovery.

### Congress further notes

However, people living with addiction have overcome huge mountains with the current system that doesn't offer adequate support and should be celebrated in all ways whenever and wherever.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress recognises

The work done by USI with regards to harm reduction and the MO's from around the country on some amazing work done to reduce harm.

## Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to encourage celebration for anyone going through recovery, adopt a harm reduction policy and help Students' Unions set up forums for people to celebrate and share their experiences and living with addiction.

## Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to organize a Harm Reduction roadshow that is to include study drugs and other forms of addiction recovery (such as gambling and others).

## Repeals

2018 WEL 4"

## 20 WEL 5 SHAG packs

Proposed by: Vice President for Welfare.

## Congress notes

USI distributes approx. 30,000 SHAG packs every year to students in Ireland during the annual SHAG campaign.

## Congress further believes

This is a huge opportunity to get crucial sexual health information out to thousands of students across the Island of Ireland.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, to have the following, but not limited to, in SHAG packs:

- Condom and Lube
- Support Services
- How to put on a condom and make a dental dam
- Consent info
- Abortion info

## Congress therefore repeals

19 WEL 1

## 20 WEL 6 Smoking cessation

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare USI

### Congress notes

According to the HSE, Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland with almost 6,000 smokers dying each year from tobacco related diseases.

### Congress also notes

Despite a number of campaigns run by USI, HSE and DRUGS.ie on the dangers of drug use, more could be done to highlight the dangers of smoking tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes and how addictive they are.

### Congress believes

That educating students about the dangers of smoking regular tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes may lead to a decrease in use.

### Congress also believes

That there should be designated smoking zones on campuses across the country.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to carry out a national campaign on smoking cessation and the dangers of smoking.

### Congress Also Mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to mark 'World No Tobacco Day' each year.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to support MO's in their efforts to introduce designated smoke zones across their campuses and any other smoking cessation initiatives.

Congress therefore repeals

18 WEL 11 19 WEL 9

## 20 WEL 9 Mental Health Awareness Days

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

### Congress notes

There are many mental health awareness days that take place every year, that USI recognise and support.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate an action, in partnership with relevant



organisations, to mark the following, but not limited to, mental health awareness days such as International Men's Day, Suicide prevention day and World Mental Health Day. These actions can be, but not limited to, creating a toolkit for MO's, sharing a graphic of support, or to organise an on or off-campus action.

### Congress therefore repeals

19 WEL 13

12 WEL 7

## 20 WEL 12 JAM Card

Proposed by DCUSU

### Congress understands

that those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition. JAM Card allows people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily.

### Congress notes

the recent success of the implementation of the JAM Card in DCU by the partnership approach taken by DCUSU and the University which has had a positive effect on the welfare of those students who sometimes may need an extra few minutes in certain situations.

### Congress mandates

the USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to assist member organisations in the implementation of the JAM Card on their campuses to widen the accessibility of their services to their students and support the JAM Card initiative as a whole.

### Congress further mandates

the USI Exec Team to undergo Jam Card training.

## 20 WEL 13 International Student Financial Support

NUI Galway Students' Union

### Congress notes

The huge financial struggle International students face when attending third level institutions across the Island of Ireland with the increase in International Student fees year on year.

### Congress further notes

The lack of financial supports available for students who are classified as International Students, with many leaving third level education with huge student loans or debt.

## Congress therefore mandates

The VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to research what financial supports are available for International Students across HEIs and FEs on the Island of Ireland.

## Congress further mandates

The VP Welfare and VP Academic Affairs to lobby for a national financial aid fund to support International Students.

## 20 WEL 14 Disordered Eating Support

NUI Galway Students' Union

### Congress notes

That students fall into a demographic who are often affected by disordered eating.

### Congress further notes

The lack of information for third level students around disordered eating and the stigma of shame and silence this creates.

### Congress notes with concern

The lack of visibility and funding for services and supports that are aimed at those with disordered eating available within HEIs, FEs and the wider community.

### Congress mandates

The VP for Welfare and the VP for Campaigns to work with relevant organisations to develop a campaign resource pack for MO's to utilise, as well as creating a survey that can be used as a lobbying tool for the USI.

## 20 WEL 18 Cervical Cancer Awareness and Age Threshold

Proposed by WITSU

NOTE: The referenced document is available at

<http://congress.usi.ie/online-congress-2020/policydocs/>

### Congress notes

The Cervical Check Ireland provides free Smear tests to women over 25 years of age.

### Congress further notes

Cervical Cancer is increasing amongst the younger population of women in Ireland.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress believes

Although free smear tests are provided for all women over the age of 25, women under this age may also develop Cervical Cancer and must pay to have one done as well as wait to get appropriate treatment.

## Congress mandates

The USI VP Welfare, to work with the HSE to develop an awareness campaign on cervical cancer and to use this campaign to lobby the appropriate bodies to campaign on lowering the initial age of smear screenings.

## Congress therefore repeals

17 WEL 1

17 WEL 14

20 UO 3      USI Strategic Plan

Proposed by the President

## Congress notes

The importance of strategic planning in an organisation with a large membership and high turnover of elected representatives.

## Congress recognises

A strategic plan allows an organisation to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals

## Congress therefore adopts:

USI Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025

Congress therefore repeals

UO 19 1

20 UO 6      Constitutional Review

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

## Congress recognises

The democratic review undertaken by USI this year which has brought a Constitutional amendment for a new governance structure for the organisation.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress notes

Article 10.9 states that there shall be a complete review of the Union's Constitution every five years effective from the date at which this Constitution was passed by Congress.

## Congress further notes

In light of the new governance structure being proposed, it is necessary that the whole Constitution is up to date and cohesive to this new structure.

## Congress therefore mandates

The President to set up a working group that will oversee the process of the review of the USI Constitution. This Working Group shall be made up of Sabbatical officers and seek external expertise as deemed necessary.

## Congress further mandates

That the Working Group should provide updates at each National Council with a view to providing the proposed amendments to the December meeting for consideration before going to Congress 2021.

## 20 UO 10 Position on the National Demonstration

Submitted by TCDSU:

## Congress notes

Most years the delay brought about by conferring with the campaigns committee, can often result in a delay in information being disseminated by USI and the MOs.

## Congress further notes

That previously mandated policy has resulted in delays to promotion of the National Demonstration which has had a significant effect on MOs in terms of work and stress levels.

## Congress understands

That the current policy does not allow for any changes to be made without the consent of the campaigns committee.

## Congress mandates

The President, in times of emergency or decisions needing to be made promptly, to ensure presidents working group be consulted in person or digitally to come to a decision, in order to keep the National Demonstration on target.

## 20 AF 3 Financial Reporting & Accountability

Proposed by the President

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress notes

Every year; the USI operates from a budget derived from the membership fees of the individual Member Organisations.

## Congress further notes

USI runs many large scale events throughout the year which are accounted for through the USI budget.

## Congress recognises

USI Congress approve USI financial accounts as proposed by Finance Committee each year.

## Congress mandates

That at every National Council financial statements showing cumulative income and expenditure from 1st July each year are presented up to the time of each meeting. These statements should be presented by a member of the Finance Committee or the President as an item for discussion.

## Congress further mandates

That the President present a projected budget for large scale events and campaigns to the National Council prior to the event and an actual budget for those large scale events and campaigns to the National Council just after the event as an item for discussion.

## Congress also mandates

The USI President to ensure that financial accounts are uploaded to the USI Website no more than 5 working days after being approved by Congress each year.

## Congress therefore repeals

17 NC/AF

14 AF 1

17 AF1

20 EQ5      International Decade for people of African descent

Proposed by the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

## Congress notes

The Decade for people of African Descent (lasting from 2015-2024) sets out programmes of actions and stems from the Durban Declaration, the first international document from the first ever international conference to address racism experienced by people of African descent around the globe. It seeks to protect and promote the human rights of people of African descent, raise awareness of the issues faced by the group and to adopt national, regional and international frameworks for its implementation. It was acknowledged (in the document or the resolution) that due to the historical perception of people of African descent as slaves, prejudice exists to this day that manifests itself in day to day racism, institutional racism and

# USI Congress 2020

discrimination in accessing services and employment which results in the group's development disproportionately lagging behind compared to other groups.

## Congress notes with concern

The Irish Government has yet to launch the decade. The decade is opt in and is not enforced but provides real opportunities to tackle racism in Irish society and have conversations about what can be done to overcome prejudice.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Equality and Justice to formally launch the decade, and to put pressure on them to put in place a programme that celebrates the decade.

## Congress also mandates:

The USI executive team to organise an action to celebrate the decade.

## 20 NA 1 Climate Action Policy

Proposed by the Vice President for the Southern Region,

NOTE: The Climate Action Strategy is available at

<http://congress.usi.ie/online-congress-2020/policydocs/>

## Congress adopts

The Climate Action Strategy

## Congress therefore repeals

2018 UO 20

2018 UO 19

UO (NC) 19 - 1

UO 19 18

2018 NA 2

EM 19 (CZN)

5 CZN 19

2018 CZN 1

## 20 NA 3 Campaign for Electoral Reform

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Dublin Region

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress notes

That automatic voter registration does not exist in Ireland.

## Congress further notes

The Written Submission to the Public Consultation on Modernising the Electoral Registration Process put forward by USI in 2019.

## Congress recognises

A number of students and young people were not able to vote in the 2020 General Election due to the election being called for a date; a week ahead of the publication of that year's electoral registration.

## Congress understands

The benefit that automatic voter registration would provide to Ireland's electoral system and political engagement.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship and Vice President for Campaigns to put a campaign together to push for electoral reform which includes but is not limited to; votes at 16, automatic voter registration, and the establishment of an electoral commission."

## 20 GAE 2 Scéim Teanga AMLÉ 2020 / USI Irish Language Scheme 2020

Proposed by Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

NOTE: The language scheme is available at

<http://congress.usi.ie/online-congress-2020/policydocs/>

## Aithníonn an Chomhdháil

An tábhacht a bhaineann le scéim teanga a bheith ag Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn agus í a bheith chomhtháthú in obair laethúil an Aontais.

## Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith:

Go bhfuil Scéim Teanga ag AMLÉ faoi láthair ina leagtar amach dualgais an Aontais maidir le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus úsáid na Gaeilge laistigh den eagraíocht.

## Creideann an Chomhdháil:

Gur cheart uasdátú rialta a dhéanamh ar Scéim Teanga an Aontais chun teacht leis na hathruithe rialta a tharlaíonn san Aontas. Ba cheart go mbeadh an Ghaeilge mar chuid nádúrtha d'aon obair a dhéanann AMLÉ go háirithe in aon fheachtas nó imeacht de chuid an Aontais.

# USI Congress 2020

## Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Gur cheart an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus Uachtarán AMLÉ Scéim Teanga AMLÉ 2020 a chur i bhfeidhm agus bheith cinnte go bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar chuid d'obair laethúil an Aontais.

## Chomh maith leis sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Go ndéanfaidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge athbhreithniú ar an Scéim ar a laghad gach dara bliain chun mbeadh sé ag teacht le haon san Aontas nó ó thaobh reachtaíocht an Stáit de.

## Aisghaireann an Chomhdháil:

2018 IL 2 2018 IL 3

## Congress Notes:

The importance of USI having an Irish Language Scheme in order to promote the language through its integration in the everyday work of the Union.

## Congress Also notes:

That USI has an Irish Language Scheme which outlines the responsibilities of the Union in promoting Irish and the use of Irish within the organisation.

## Congress believes:

That any USI Irish language scheme should be regularly updated in line with any major changes which occur in the Union. Irish should be a natural part of any work USI does, especially events or campaigns run by the Union.

## Therefore Congress mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the USI President to implement USI's Irish Language Scheme 2020 to ensure Irish is seen as a central part of the Union's day to day work.

## Congress further mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to review and update the scheme at least every two years to comply with any changes to the Union or to State legislation regarding the language.

## Therefore Congress Repeals: 2018 IL 2 2018 IL 3

20 GAE 4 Irish Language Working Group

Proposed by IT Sligo Students' Union

## Congress notes:

The position of Leas – Uachtarán don Gaeilge became a full time position in congress 2018-2019 as congress believed it was important to have a full time officer to roll out the various tasks throughout the year. Since the introduction of the role as a full time position Congress has seen the great work that has been done by the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and how the Irish Language has grown since the full time position has been put in place.



## Congress further notes:

That other full time officers in the executive team are allocated time to roll out working group's at every National Council.

## Congress therefore mandates:

The President to allow for an Irish Working Group in the National Council schedule and The Irish Language Officer / Leas – Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to run an Irish working group at every National Council.

## 20 GAE 6 Tumoideachas Gaeilge / Immersive Education through Irish

Proposed by An Coiste Cultúrtha

### Aithníonn an Chomhdháil:

An méid daoine sa tír seo a dhéanann staidéar ar an nGaeilge sa Choláiste, idir an teanga féin agus a cúrsaí oideachais, nach bhfaigheann go leor tacaíochta ó thaobh labhairt na teanga de le linn céime.

### Creideann an Chomhdháil

Go bhfuil an-tábhacht leis an tumoideachas mar chuid d'aon chéim a bhaineann le teanga ar bith. Tá easpa deiseanna ag mic léinn úsáid a bhaint as a gcuid Gaeilge labhartha le linn na céime ach amháin nuair a théann siad chun na Gaeltachta nó má tá siad i mbun scrúdú béil. Ní leor an méid seo go mbeadh mic léinn líofa sa teanga go háirithe d'ábhair oide nuair ar ghá dóibh a bheith in ann an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh do pháistí.

### Chomh maith leis sin, creideann an Chomhdháil:

Gur cheart go mbeadh tréimhsí foghlama sa Ghaeltacht mar chuid de gach cúrsa a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge gan costais bhreise ar mhic léinn le freastal orthu. Ba cheart go mbeadh na Ghaeilge níos fite fuaite sna ábhair eile a dhéanann na hábhair oide mar shampla, ceol, ealaíon, corpoideachas ionas go gcloisfidh agus go labhróidh siad an Ghaeilge níos minice mar chuid den chéim.

### Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Go rachaidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus an Leas-Uachtarán um Chúrsaí Acadúla i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachas, an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, agus Institiúidí Ardleibhéal le tréimhsí foghlama sa Ghaeltacht a tharraingt isteach mar chuid de chúrsaí a bhaineann le Gaeilge ionas go mbeidh an deis an mic léinn a bheith iomlán tumtha sa teanga.

## Chomh maith leis sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Go rachaidh an LU don Ghaeilge i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachais, an Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta, Ceardchumann na Múinteoirí agus páirtithe leasmhara eile leis an Ghaeilge a tharraingt isteach níos mó sna cúrsaí bunoidreachais chun go mbeadh níos mó Gaeilge á labhairt ag na hábhair oide le linn na céime.

## Congress Notes

The large number of people in the country who study Irish in college, between the language itself and education courses, who do not receive enough support when it comes to speaking the language throughout their degree.

## Congress believes:

That it is hugely important to have immersive education as part of any degree which involves learning a language. There is a distinct lack of opportunity for students to speak Irish during their degree with the exception of going to the Gaeltacht or oral exams. This is not enough for students to become properly fluent in the language, especially for student teachers who should be able to teach children in Irish.

## Congress also believes:

That learning periods in the Gaeltacht should be a part of any course which involves the Irish language without any extra cost to the student for attending. Irish should be further integrated into other subjects studied by student teachers for example music, art, PE, so that Irish will be heard and spoken more as part of their degree.

## Therefore Congress mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and HEIs to introduce Gaeltacht courses into any degree which involves learning Irish so that students have more of an opportunity to become immersed in the language.

## Congress further mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education, the Teaching Council, Teachers' unions and other relevant organisations to integrate Irish into ITE programmes so that student teachers will have more opportunity to practice their Irish during their degree.

## 20 AA 1 USI Participation in ESU

Proposed by Technological University Dublin Students' Union

### Congress recognises:

That many policies and initiatives developed and agreed at European Union and European Higher Education Area level effect the Irish Higher Education system and our students.

### Congress also notes:

That progress is accelerating in the creation of European Universities transnational alliances that will become the universities of the future, promoting European values and identity, and revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. Several HEIs in Ireland have secured funding for this project, with many following suit.

### Congress believes:

As a member of the European Students' Union, USI has an important role in the shaping of international policies and has the opportunity to inform national and local policies with international best practice.

### Congress mandates:

The Executive Team members who attend each bi-annual ESU Board meeting to present a report to the following meeting of National Council including explanations of the policies proposed and voted on by USI. They should also provide a comprehensive information session to Students Union offers about the work of ESU at SUT each year.

### Congress further mandates:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to co-ordinate a delegation, selected from National Council participants, to attend each bi-annual European Student Convention. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is also tasked to investigate funding opportunities to cover the associated costs.

### Congress also mandates:

That USI ensure the student voice of each HEI is incorporated into each EU University application, and that USI provide support to each MO who is involved in the process.

Congress Repeals: 14 AAQA 19

## 20 AA 2 Next Steps for NStEP

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

### Congress notes

The National Student Engagement Programme [NStEP], which was officially launched in 2016 as a joint initiative between USI, the Higher Education Authority [HEA] and Quality and Qualifications Ireland [QQI], to embed student engagement practice through championing

# USI Congress 2020

meaningful staff-student partnerships in Irish Higher Education. The work that has been undertaken so far through the NStEP programme including the roll-out of the class rep training programme, and the creation of National Projects, focused on specific areas within student engagement in Higher Education.

## Congress further notes

That NStEP launched a new Strategy in November 2019, which sets out its strategic objectives until December 2021, focusing on:

1. Strengthening the value of student engagement nationally
2. Developing the leadership capabilities of students in Irish Higher Education
3. Supporting staff and students across the sector to foster a culture of partnership

## Congress believes

That student partnership is an important model in adopting effective student engagement practice.

## Congress further believes

NStEP plays a vital role in ensuring that student partnership and engagement is at the centre of discussions within the sector, and in supporting students' unions to improve partnership with their respective institutions.

## Congress calls for

NStEP to continue to be supported beyond its current funding window of December 2021, in order to ensure that student partnership continues to play a vital role in the student-learning experience nationally.

## Congress mandates

The USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other members of the Executive Team continue to support the delivery of NStEP in its current guise, and to lobby for the continuation of its funding beyond December 2021.

## Congress therefore repeals

16AAQA 3

## 20 AA 3 Quality Assurance - Looking Forward

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

## Congress notes

The USI policy on Quality Assurance as set out in 09 ED 15, which outlines USI's principles on quality assurance.

## Congress further notes

The extensive involvement of students within external quality assurance processes in Irish Higher Education, as demonstrated by the long-standing Student Quality Reviewers pool

operated jointly between NStEP, USI and QQI, and the centrality of students within QQI external quality review processes.

### Congress notes with concern

That in spite of the principles outlined in the aforementioned policy, there is still a notable lack of student involvement in internal quality assurance mechanisms within institutions, as detailed in QQI's "Quality in Higher Education 2019" report.

Congress also notes

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee structure adopted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, in the UK, to embed the student voice within the work of QAA, as the national quality assurance agency.

### Congress believes

That in order to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms are working effectively in favour of the student experience, students should be involved and represented at all levels of quality assurance, including but not limited to, internal and external quality assurance review processes.

### Congress further believes

There is scope to further widen student engagement with QQI's core work - taking into account best practice from other national quality agencies, such as QAA UK.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with QQI, and other relevant stakeholders, including members of the Academic Affairs Working Group, to improve student involvement in internal quality assurance mechanisms across Irish Higher Education institutions, and to develop further student engagement with QQI's own work, modeled on the QAA student engagement structure.

## 20 AA 4 Wellbeing in Education

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

### Congress notes

The findings of the USI Mental Health Survey which recommended that consideration be given to embedding mental wellbeing into the curriculum in higher education, in order to ensure that all students had equal access to information on wellbeing within their academic programme. This survey also found that just over half of respondents (51.4%) were involved in activities outside of their academic course, and that those who were involved in external activities were less likely to be extremely severely anxious, depressed or stressed.

## Congress further notes

The work that has been carried out within the UK Higher Education sector on embedding wellbeing into the curriculum, most notably the 2017 report by Advance HE on embedding mental wellbeing in the curriculum.

## Congress believes

That in order to fully tackle the mental health and wellbeing crisis within Higher Education, an all-institution approach must be sought, which takes account of the role that the academic curriculum has to play in supporting the wellbeing of students. Whilst support services are of vital importance in addressing the needs of students, they must not be seen as the only part of an institution with responsibility for the wellbeing of its students.

## Congress mandates

The USI Executive Team, in particular the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to lobby the Department with responsibility for Higher Education to initiate work on the area of Wellbeing in the Curriculum through the creation of a national working group on this issue. The USI Executive Team to support NUS-USI members to explore the area of mental wellbeing in the curriculum within their own jurisdiction.

## Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to undertake research on, if and how wellbeing and extracurricular activities are facilitated within the academic calendar in all MOs, and to push for this to be considered as part of national discussion on Wellbeing in the Curriculum.

## Congress repeals

AA-19-1 and 18-WEL-6

## 20 AA 8 Postgraduate Representative Training

Proposed by the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

## Congress recognises

That there is a recognised lack of Postgraduate representation across Higher Education Institutions and in their Student Unions.

## Congress further recognises

A need for greater support and encouragement of active Postgraduate Class Reps and SU Officer roles. Specific training is needed for Postgraduate Class Reps to build up wider engagement with their Unions and better inform the understanding of Postgraduate matters.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress notes

A training initiative should focus on the culture of postgraduate engagement in the absence of formalised structures. It would help participants develop tools for taking up representative roles, and encourage inclusive diversity of leadership across all Postgraduate levels

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, in collaborative partnership with NStEP (the National Student Engagement Programme) to develop a training initiative to support Postgraduate Class Rep and SU Officer elections.

# Constitutional Amendments

## Constitutional Amendments

All Constitutional Amendments are prioritised to be debated at Congress.

- A Constitutional Amendment requires 2/3rds of those voting to vote in favour, with 50% of those registered for the Congress to cast a vote
- If they pass they will amend the constitution of Congress one month from the conclusion of USI Congress
- If they fail, they will not amend the constitution
- They cannot be amended during the debate – it is not possible to operate a Procedural Motion 9c on these Constitutional Amendments



## 20 CA 1 Intersectionality

"Proposed by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

### Insert

3.8 USI Shall take an intersectional approach to its work.

## 20 CA 2 Removal of Electoral Commission

Proposed by the President

### Delete:

6.3 The Electoral Commission and all subclauses

### Delete:

Schedule M: Terms of Reference for the Electoral Commission

## 20 CA 3 Constitutional Amendment to the Regional Officers Role.

Proposed by the Vice President for the Southern Region

**Replace** 5.8.2 The VP/BMW shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organistaions, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, campaigns and training events.

**With** 5.8.2 The VP/BMW shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organistaions, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, updates to Councils, campaigns and training events. When conducting campus visits, a minimum of one week's notice, where possible, is to be given to MOs by the VP/BMW. The VP/BMW must conduct a minimum of one contact to each MO in between National Councils.

**Replace** 5.8.3 The VP/BMW shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Executive Team.

**With** 5.8.3 The VP/BMW shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Executive Team and support MOs with internal issues relating to but not limited to, team disputes, relationship with their HEI, and student engagement.

**Replace** 5.8.5 The VP/BMW shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region.

**With** 5.8.5 The VP/BMW shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region and will assist MOs when requested in the run-up to or during campaigns, events, projects, initiatives, within reason when available.

**Replace** 5.9.2. The VP/Southern shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organisations, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, campaigns and training events.

**With** 5.9.2 The VP/Southern shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organisations, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, updates to Councils, campaigns and training events. When conducting campus visits, a minimum of one week's notice, where possible, is to be given to MOs by the VP/Southern. The VP/Southern must conduct a minimum of one contact to each MO in between National Councils.

**Replace** 5.9.3 The VP/Southern shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Executive Team.

**With** 5.9.3 The VP/Southern shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Executive Team and support MOs with internal issues relating to but not limited to, team disputes, relationship with their HEI, and student engagement.

**Replace** 5.9.5 The VP/Southern shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region.

**With** 5.9.5 The VP/Southern shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region and will assist MOs when requested in the run-up to or during campaigns, events, projects, initiatives, within reason when available.

**Replace** 5.10.2 The VP/ Dublin shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organisations, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, campaigns and training events.

**With** 5.10.2 The VP/Dublin shall communicate the message of the Union to ordinary members, Member Organisations, external organisations and the general public through various means including, but not exclusively, social media, traditional media, meetings, conference events, updates to Councils, campaigns and training events. When conducting campus visits, a minimum of one week's notice, where possible, is to be given to MOs by the VP/Dublin. The VP/Dublin must conduct a minimum of one contact to each MO in between National Councils.

**Replace** 5.10.3 The VP/ Dublin shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Executive Team.

**With** 5.10.3 The VP/Dublin shall communicate regional and Member Organisation's issues to the Executive Team and support MOs with internal issues relating to but not limited to, team disputes, relationship with their HEI, and student engagement.

**Replace** 5.10.5 The VP/Dublin shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region.

# USI Congress 2020

**With** 5.10.5 The VP/Dublin shall be responsible for the implementation of Union campaigns within their region and will assist MOs when requested in the run-up to or during campaigns, events, projects, initiatives, within reason when available.

**Insert** 5.8.6 The VP/BMW will chair the BMW Regional Working Group.

**Insert** 5.9.6 The VP/Southern will chair the BMW Regional Working Group.

**Insert** 5.10.6 The VP/Dublin will chair the BMW Regional Working Group.

**Insert** 5.8.7 VP/BMW to organise a regional bonding event throughout the year.

**Insert** 5.9.7 VP/Southern to organise a regional bonding event throughout the year.

**Insert** 5.10.7 VP/Dublin to organise a regional bonding event throughout the year.

## 20 CA 4 Governance Review and Formation of a Governance Committee

Proposed by the President

**Congress replaces Article 4.1.1 (relating to the authority and power of Congress) to read:**

4.1.1 The highest governing body of the Union is its Congress. It has the power to:

- Review and amend the Constitution and schedules
- Review, adopt and set policy

**Congress replaces Article 4.1.2 (relating to the tasks allocated to Congress) to read:**

4.1.2 Congress shall

- Review USI finances
- Direct the Executive Team through mandates
- Review the work of National Council and the Executive Team
- Elect the Executive Team (excepting the NUS-USI President)
- Receive and discuss an annual report from the Governance Committee.

**Congress amends Article 4.1.6.1;**

Replace 'Finance Committee' with 'Governance Committee'

**Congress Amends Article 4.2.9**

Remove 'Finance Committee'

## Congress replaces Article 4.2.3 (relating to the authority of the National Council) with:

4.2.3.1 National Council is the management body of the Union and must meet at least eight times per academic year. Its primary functions are: a) to organise and implement effective campaigns to protect and advance the interests of students in terms of the education system and society, as per Union policy, b) to review and oversee the governance procedures of the organisation and c) to hold the members of the Executive Team to account.

4.2.3.2 In relation to the governance procedures of the organisation, the National Council will:

- Approve the annual budget, financial policies and procedures and any amendments to the same as they arise
- Review independently examined accounts and submit the same to Congress for approval
- Approve employment policies and procedures, including terms and conditions, and any amendments as they arise
- Approve governance policies and procedures and any amendments as they arise
- Approve risk management policy
- Receiving recommendations from the Governance Committee on: any proposed changes to the legal form of USI; general financial management and commercial development; legal strategy in relation to any litigation that may arise; type of insurance and levels of cover
- Receive and consider reports of significant deviations from the Union's budget, in line with financial policies and procedures
- Receive reports from Governance Committee on legal compliance and risk management actions
- Adopt interim policy if necessary, subject to ratification from the next Congress,
- Review and amend the schedules to the Constitution

## Congress Amends Article 5.2.9:

Remove 'and Finance Committee'

## Congress replaces Article 5.3.3 (relating to the authority of the President) with:

5.3.3 The President is a member of the Governance Committee, giving feedback and reporting on relevant motions passed by National Council to the Governance Committee and reporting on the work of Governance Committee to National Council

## Congress replaces Article 5.3.4 (relating to the human resource management duties of the President) with:

5.3.4 The President, as leader of the organisation, may take such decisions as do not require a meeting of the National Council or Congress, or of the Governance Committee, in line with the Governance Handbook.

Congress replaces Article 5.2.6 (relating to the authority of the Executive Team) with:

5.2.6 Have the authority to act as the executive of the Union and make decisions when it is not possible to convene a meeting of National Council. All such decisions, which must be in line with the specifications of the Governance Handbook, must be reported to the next meeting of National Council.

Congress amends Article 5.14

Replace each reference to 'Finance Committee' with 'Governance Committee'

Congress amends article 7.2.4

Replace 'Finance Committee' with 'Governance Committee'

Congress deletes Articles 9.1 and 9.2 (relating to the Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees respectively)

Congress inserts a new Article 4.3 (relating to the formation of a Governance Committee as a key governance pillar of the organisation)

## **4.3 Governance Committee**

4.3.1 The Governance Committee is responsible for the implementation of good governance practice by:

Developing governance policies and procedures for approval by National Council

Implementing approved governance policies and procedures

4.3.2 The Governance Committee is responsible for managing finances by:

Drafting the annual budget in consultation with the President, who presents the budget to National Council for approval

Monitoring income and expenditure against the budget on a quarterly basis and reporting any significant deviations to National Council as specified in financial policies and procedures

## USI Congress 2020

Developing appropriate financial management procedures for approval by National Council and ensuring implementation

Ensuring annual accounts are independently examined and presented to National Council

Recommend auditors to Congress on an annual basis

Ensuring USI develops a prudent reserve and sinking fund as set out in the financial policies and procedures

Overseeing the general financial management and commercial development of USI and making recommendations to National Council as necessary, in line with USI policy

4.3.3 The Governance Committee is responsible for managing Human Resources by:

Developing employment policies and procedures (including terms and conditions) and any necessary amendments for approval by National Council

Ensuring that staff recruitment and management, disciplinary and grievance procedures and termination processes are carried out as laid down in employment policies and procedures

Reviewing the performance of the General Manager

4.3.4 The Governance Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements by:

Reviewing current legal form of USI from time to time and making recommendations to National Council as necessary

Developing and reviewing the compliance checklist, ensuring all necessary action is taken and reporting to National Council

Making recommendations to National Council regarding legal strategy in relation to any litigation that may arise while maintaining boundaries in relation to the sharing of sensitive information

4.3.5 The Governance Committee is responsible for managing risk by:

Developing a risk management policy to be approved by National Council

Developing a risk register and overseeing a mitigation programme

Reviewing type of insurance and levels of insurance cover on annual basis and make recommendations to National Council

4.3.6 The Governance Committee is responsible for working effectively by:

Organising the work of the committee to meet the obligations above

Making an annual report on the work of the committee to Congress

4.3.7 Sub-committees or working groups may be set up by Governance Committee as needed with the approval of National Council

4.3.8 The Governance Committee shall be composed of at least ten members, to include the following:

4.3.8.1 The President of USI, who shall serve whilst they remain President of the Union

4.3.8.2 An Independent Chairperson, who will serve a term of three years

4.3.8.3 Four Sabbatical Officers, each a sabbatical officer from a different USI member organisation, who will serve a term of one year

4.3.8.4 Four external members who may not have been a staff member, service provider or member of USI for three years prior to their appointment, who shall serve a term of three years.

4.3.9 Stipulations of the permissible number of terms to be served by members shall be laid out in Schedule J

**Congress Amends article 9.3.2 (regulating the authority of the Union to borrow money) to read:**

National Council shall have the power to borrow, raise or secure the payment of money for the purposes of the Union and with a view thereto, to direct the Governance Committee to consider and make recommendations on such borrowing or raising or securing the payment of money. For these purposes the National Council shall be empowered to authorise the Governance Committee and the President to act on its behalf, to enter into the necessary agreements and to sign guarantees.

**Congress Amends Article 9.3.3 (indemnifying the Trustees and the President in financial affairs) to read:**

The President in acting on behalf of National Council shall be indemnified against risks and expenses out of the assets of the Union.

**Congress deletes Article 9.3.4 (relating to the need to create a governance manual)**

**Congress amends Article 9.4.2**

Remove: 'Finance Committee' and replace with 'Governance Committee'

**Congress amends Article 9.4.3**

Remove: 'Finance Committee' and replace with 'Governance Committee'

## Amendment to Schedules

### Amend Schedule A 5.1

Replace 'Finance Committee' with 'Governance Committee'

### Amend Schedule A 6.1

Replace 'Finance Committee' with 'Governance Committee'

### Amend Schedule B

Replace each reference to 'Finance Committee' to 'Governance Committee'

### Amend Schedule C

Replace each reference to 'Finance Committee' to 'Governance Committee'

### Amend Schedule F:

Include preamble note at start of Schedule:

In 2020, USI amended its constitution to vest the authority of the Finance Committee in the Governance Committee. References to Finance Committee in this schedule should be read as references to Governance Committee.

## Congress Replaces Schedule J with

### New Schedule J

## Governance Committee Membership and Conduct of Business

J.1 Recognising the desirability that the Governance Committee contains a range of skills and attributes from its members, it is desirable to have the following skillsets represented among the four 'external' members on the committee

- Governance experience within a non-profit organisation
- Financial management experience
- HR Management experience
- Experience of legal compliance/risk management
- Knowledge of USI

### J.2 Selection

National Council appoints a total of 4 sabbatical officers to Governance Committee annually, in accordance with the provisions for election of members to subcommittees in the constitution

President and Students' Unions are asked to actively seek external members with relevant skills and attributes



USI President and Presidents of the Member Organisations may nominate candidates for external member positions and independent chair according to the process described in the Governance Manual. External members and chair are appointed by National Council, by voting if necessary

A sub-committee of Governance Committee will review all proposed members to ensure they meet all selection criteria prior to them going to National Council for approval/vote.

## J.3 Terms of office and provisions for the transition period

As per the USI Constitution, Governance Committee members who are sabbatical officers of USI member organisations may serve a term of one year. External members of Governance Committee serve a term of three years. At the end of three years they may be nominated to serve a second term of three years. At the end of their second term they must step down from the Governance Committee

The Chair may serve a maximum of two three year periods before stepping down as Chair and may not be re-elected as Chair for a period of three years.

No member can serve for more than 6 years consecutively without a three year break

Provisions should be made to ensure that all serving external members do not retire at the same time.

In the first period of operation, it is desired that one member of the current Trustees and one of the current Finance Committee members be recruited to the Governance Committee for a two year term, for the purposes of continuity and the retention of institutional memory. In the case of these members, taking into account their previous service as Trustees and Finance Committee members, they would at the end of the two year term be considered to have served six consecutive years as per the break period above.

## J.4 Governance Sub-committees

Governance Committee identifies sub-committees as needed and drafts terms of reference to be agreed by National Council

Governance Committee selects the members of sub-committees and the President proposes these members to be ratified by National Council

Each sub-committee includes one National Council member and one external member of Governance Committee, who is responsible for chairing the sub-committee and reporting on the work of the sub-committee to Governance Committee

## 20 CA 5     Advisory Panels

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

**From Article 7.2.1 of the Constitution, replace:**

7.2.1 Not later than the second National Council each year the VP/Academic, VP/Welfare and VP/Equality shall each present National Council, for their ratification, with a list of nominations of people they deem appropriate to advise them in relation to specific areas of their portfolio. These nominations, once ratified, shall constitute an Advisory Panel that the Officer may convene, in whole or in part, to assist them in their work during their term of office.

**With**

7.2.1 Not later than the second National Council each year the VP for Academic Affairs, VP for Welfare, VP for Equality & Citizenship, VP for Campaigns, VP for Irish Language, VP for Postgraduate Affairs, and the VP with responsibility for the Entertainments, Marketing and Commercial committee/policy shall each present National Council, for their ratification, with a list of nominations of people they deem appropriate to advise them in relation to specific areas of their portfolio. These nominations, once ratified, shall constitute an Advisory Panel that the Executive Team member may convene, in whole or in part, to assist them in their work during their term of office.

**And add the following to** Schedule H: Members of Advisory Panels.

H4 VP for Campaigns

H4.1 A person with experience/knowledge of campaign strategy

H4. 3 A person with experience/knowledge of running events H4. 4 A person with experience/knowledge of communications

H4 5 A person with experience/knowledge of Union Development

H4. 6 A person with experience/knowledge of non-violent direct action

H4. 7 A person with experience/knowledge of Higher Education Funding Policy

H4. 8 A person with experience/knowledge of Accommodation Policy

H4. 9 Such other persons as the VP for Campaigns may feel are necessary

H5 VP for Irish Language

H5.1 Such persons the VP for Irish Language may feel are necessary

H6 VP for Postgraduate Affairs

H6.1 Such persons the VP for Postgraduate Affairs may feel are necessary

H7 VP with responsibility for the Entertainments, Marketing and Commercial committee/policy

## USI Congress 2020

H7.1 A person with experience/knowledge of Commercial Activity

H7.2 A person with experience/knowledge of Events

H7.3 A person with experience/knowledge of Entertainment

H7.4 A person with experience/knowledge of Communications/Marketing

H7.5 Such persons the VP with responsibility for the Entertainments, Marketing and Commercial committee/policy may feel are necessary

### 20 CA 6 The Creation of a Full-Time Postgraduate Affairs Officer

#### Proposed by the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

##### Replace

5.12.1 The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (hereinafter referred to as the VP/Postgraduate) shall have responsibility, in a part-time capacity on the Union's Executive Team, for the Union's work on policy and engagement with postgraduate students.

##### With

5.12.1 The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (hereinafter referred to as the VP/Postgraduate) shall have responsibility for the Union's work on policy and engagement with postgraduate students.

# Unprioritised

## Unprioritised Motions

These motions have not been prioritised by any Member Organisation for debate at USI Congress 2020. This does not mean they are abandoned, and if there is time they may be debated in the order below. They are arranged in order of submission, in thematic divisions according to the USI Constitution.

### Welfare

#### 20 WEL 10 Mature Student Support

Proposed by Vice President for the Southern Region

##### Congress notes

The large numbers of mature students attending third level education and the specific needs and supports they may require.

##### Congress also notes

Previous Mature Student Seminars run by USI have not had great engagement nor attendance due to other commitments of potential attendees.

##### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President for Campaigns to create a support document for local MOs which should include, but is not limited to, information on running their own mature student events, information to help development mature student supports on campuses and other links to mature student organisations.

##### Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to work with Mature Students Ireland and the HEA on working on the recommendations outlined in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education.

##### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to continue their work in supporting the development of mature student officers and societies in MOs.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to create an online forum for mature students in order for them to still obtain the benefits of networking at a regional and national level.

## Congress therefore repeals

10 MS 2

2018 EQ 2

20 WEL 15 Broadening the views and language around disablement/disability

Proposed By St Angela's College Students' Union

## Congress notes

According to the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), 13.5% of the Irish population have at least one disability/impairment. The DFI also highlights that only 20% of disabled people/people with a disability complete higher level education compared to 36% of the general population.

## Congress further notes

While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was ratified by Ireland in 2018, many Irish governmental and non-governmental institutions are still embedded in the Medical Model of disability (also known as the Charity Model of disability) and this has kept many of the barriers in place stopping disabled people/people with disabilities achieving full equality. Many organisations highlight promoting a rights-based Social Model of disability that has disabled people at its core and is led by disabled people as the best way to ensure these barriers are removed and will help increase the diversity of language used around disablement.

## Congress applauds

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) continuing efforts to change the perception of what disablement/disability is and the work done in conjunction with AHEAD and the DFI in holding the national forum, The Power of Disability in January 2020.

## Congress mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to work the social model of disability into its campaigns around disabled students/students with disabilities and ensure that disabled students/students with disabilities are central in the shaping and in the delivery of these campaigns.

## Congress further mandates

That the Union of Students in Ireland Executive will receive training to increase their knowledge around the social model of disability to ensure that the diverse views of what

disability is and that a diverse use of language around disability will be central in all USI campaigns.

## 20 WEL 16 Accessibility to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities

Proposed by the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

### Congress notes

The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) conducted a survey in 2017/2018 which notes that 14,720 students with disabilities enrolled in third-level education, representing 6.2 percent of the total student population. This notes a 17% increase in one year. USI applauds this increase, yet notes that access to third level education is still very restrictive, and students with disabilities still form a minority within the overall student body.

### Congress notes

The need for an in-depth study on numbers of students with disabilities accessing third level education in Ireland, and the Institutional barriers faced by students with disabilities.

### Congress further notes

That Students' Unions can play a vital role in the encouragement of more students with disabilities enrolling in third level education, highlighting areas of Institutional inaccessibility on campuses and lobbying their Institutions towards greater support of students with disabilities.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to work with MO's to highlight the need for, and resources required to greater enhance the numbers of students with disabilities accessing third level education in Ireland.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to lobby the government for greater investment in disability services across existing Higher Education Institutions on behalf of students with disabilities at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. "

## Union Organisation

## 20 UO 2 Solidarity Fund

Proposed by the President

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress recognises

The importance of supporting Students' Unions with fewer resources engaging with USI events such as National Council, Congress etc.

## Congress notes

Congress previously wished to establish a pathway to support particular member organisations that met specific criteria to engage in all USI activities.

## Congress applauds

The intention of a previous motion but recognises that it does not work in practice and needs to be reviewed.

## Congress mandates

The USI President to undertake a review of similar models used by other National Union of Students, the European Students' Union and Trade Unions and bring a motion to Congress 2021.

## Congress therefore repeals

16 AF 1 "

## 20 UO 4 Irish Language Working Group

NOTE: this appears to be a duplicate of GAE4

Proposed by IT Sligo Students' Union

## Congress notes

The position of Leas - Uachtarán don Gaeilge became a full time position in congress 2018-2019 as congress believed it was important to have a full time officer to roll out the various tasks throughout the year. Since the introduction of the role as a full time position Congress has seen the great work that has been done by the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and how the Irish Language has grown since the full time position has been put in place.

## Congress further notes

That other full time officers in the executive team are allocated time to roll out working group's at every National Council.

## Congress therefore mandates

The President to allow for an Irish Working Group in the National Council schedule and The Irish Language Officer / Leas - Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to run an Irish working group at every National Council."

## 20 UO 15 Panel of External Members

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

### Congress notes

That some MOs have it as part of their democratic structures the need to appoint external members to their boards and committees, such as an Independent Chairperson.

### Congress recognises

The importance of governance and accountability in Students' Unions to ensure the Union is run effectively and efficiently for the benefit of students.

### Congress believes

That through USI and other MOs, there would be a wealth of past Sabbatical officers that would have the knowledge and interest to serve as external members of boards and committees of Students' Unions.

### Congress mandates

The President to provide a contact list of external contacts which could act as external members for MOs committees and boards. This list should be updated on a yearly basis and provide details of their experience and involvement in Students' Union."

## 20 UO 7 No Platform Policy

Proposed by QUBSU

### Congress notes

The decision to offer someone a platform to speak implicitly classifies their views as a legitimate position, and requires resources and capacity to support any activity or event at the opportunity cost of another. Free speech is an important feature of both democracy and third level education.

The exchange of knowledge and ideas helps to educate, inform and clarify people's opinions. However, free speech is not the same as unlimited speech. USI has a long history of being a proudly progressive organisation, and as a national body representing students across the island of Ireland has a responsibility to balance the free exchange of ideas, with a moral responsibility to restrict speech that directly causes harm.

The 'No Platform' Policy is a policy that NUS UK first introduced in 1974. The policy prevents giving a platform to individuals or groups known to hold or support racist or fascist views. Universities and colleges are accustomed to debate and protest; and tensions can arise and sometimes erupt between different political, social and identity groups on campus.

'No platform' policies as well as equal opportunities policies are tools in which students' unions provide and maintain a safe environment for their members. Creating an environment that promotes multiculturalism and equality is not just, therefore, for the sake of some



students, but it is a tool for reducing potential conflict among the diverse communities that exist in campuses.

### Congress further notes

Racism can be defined as: The prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races and discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards members of another race. Fascism can be defined as: A system of government marked by centralization of authority under a dictator, stringent socioeconomic controls, suppression of the opposition through terror and censorship, and typically a policy of belligerent nationalism and racism.

That racism and fascism are still rife in all aspects of society and that it should be confronted wherever it is found. That students and students' unions have a long proud record of achievement in the fight against racism and fascism. USI should be at the forefront of campaigns to combat prejudice on the form of ethnic origin or religious belief, i.e. racism, fascism. That a no platform policy is a key element in the fight against racism on our campuses. No platform policies safeguard our members from being subjected to listen to the lies, bigotry and hatred of racists and fascists.

### Congress mandates

Not to allow any individual who is known to hold racist or fascist views from entering USI premises. Not to allow any individual who is known to hold racist or fascist, to speak at a USI event. Not to allow any individual who is known to hold racist or fascist from distributing any written or recorded material at USI events which expresses those views.

That no elected officer of USI will speak on a platform with an individual who is known to hold racist or fascist views. That the mandates above shall be known as the union's 'no platform policy'. To widely publicise this policy, to member organisations and the public.

To incorporate the no-platform policy into the USI's disciplinary procedure and use accordingly. It is the responsibility of the executive team to educate its members on what a no platform amounts to and the issues surrounding the policy."

## 20 UO 9 Student Sport Ireland

### NUI Galway Students' Union

#### Congress notes

USI represents many types of students which include students who play sport and are a part of clubs in colleges.

#### Congress further notes

As the governing body for third level sport in Ireland Student Sport Ireland works in partnership with national and international bodies identifying pathways for college

# USI Congress 2020

communities to participate, compete and develop through sport and physical activity. Its mission is to promote and develop third level sport in Ireland.

## Congress believes

USI have an opportunity to represent students on many national fronts across Ireland.

## Congress therefore mandates

That USI form a relationship with Student Sport Ireland to ensure there is adequate student representation for sport at a national level."

## 20 UO 11 Annual 'Protest'

Proposed by Cork IT SU

## Congress believes

USI should reinvent the annual 'protest' which takes place in Dublin each year

## Congress therefore mandates

the Vice President for Campaigns to review, challenge and change the annual protest.

## 20 UO 12 Recommended standard wage report for Sabbatical Officers.

Proposed by Cork IT SU

## Congress Mandates

The President to compile a standard wage report for Sabbatical Officers

## 20 UO 13 Student National Demonstration

Maynooth Students' Union

## Congress notes

The important influence the National Demonstration has on budget and government decisions.

## Congress Regrets:

The cancellation of this year's national demonstration due to adverse conditions.

## Congress therefore further notes:

The impact the lack of national demonstration had on our lobbying efforts.

## Congress mandates

That should the national demonstration be cancelled for any reason the national demonstration should be rescheduled in that same academic year by the VP Campaigns

## 20 UO 14 Position on Campaign Support for MOs

Proposed by TCDSU

### Congress notes

The difficulty that faces many Member Organisations in training activists and organising campaigns on their campuses.

### Congress further notes

That work pertaining to local issues and student representation can often take from the time available to Member Organisations to encourage activists to engage in campaigns.

### Congress understands

that with support from USI many MOs can increase their campaigning efforts. Congress Further Understands: That many activists first engage with campaigns through USI or their MO

### Congress mandates

The VP for Campaigns assist MOs in establishing and initially running a 'Campaign Support Network' on their campuses, as well as establishing a Facebook Group for these students to join.

## Equality

## 20 CZN 2 Boycott Aramark

Proposed by the USI VP for Campaigns

### Congress notes

Aramark are contracted by the Irish Government to run three Direct Provision Centres; Lissycollen, Athlone, Co.Meath, Knockalisheen, Co. Clare, and Kinsale Road, in Co. Cork.

### Congress further notes

That Aramark is profiting from the Direct Provision system. In 2018, Aramark received ,~5.89 million in investment from the Irish government to run the three centres.

### Congress notes with concern

In 2015, residents carried out a hunger strike in the Aramark run centre in Knockalisheen, after people were hospitalized with gastroenteritis as a result of the poorly produced food. A

year earlier a hunger strike occurred in the Lissywollen for similar reasons. There have been consistent complaints by those living in the centres as to how they are treated.

## Congress notes

That Ireland has a long history of boycotts (withdrawing from commercial or social relations with a country/organisation/person as protest). The word 'boycott' originated from the Irish Land League withholding rents in 1880 from Captain Boycott and again 100 years later in 1984 it was Irish Dunnes Stores unionized workers who lead the boycott of South African goods as a form of protest of South African apartheid (system of institutionalised racial segregation) policies which a couple of years later successfully led to Ireland implementing a ban of the goods.

## Congress further notes

The Trinity College Dublin 'Boycott Aramark' campaign was successful and catering services there have been returned to Trinity College Dublin Catering.

## Congress also notes

The important role students have played in other national equality issues with students at the forefront of advocating for change. The issue of substandard, profit-driven provision of services in Direct Provision is also an issue that affects students who are living in the direct provision centres and attending college.

## Congress mandates

USI to support and assist the boycott of any Aramark run restaurants, or services.

## Congress further mandates

The USI VP for Equality & Citizenship and the VP for Campaigns to assist MOs in campaigning for the removal of Aramark run services on their campuses.

## National Affairs

### 20 NA 2 Decriminalisation of Sex Work

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

## Congress notes

Sex work refers to escorting, lap dancing, stripping, pole dancing, pornography, webcamming, adult modelling, phone sex, and selling sex (on and off the street). Currently working in sex work alone indoors/outdoors is legal in Ireland whereas working in pairs, hiring security and advertising are illegal.

## Congress further notes

With the rise in living costs, the potential increase in tuition fees, the inadequacy of the maintenance grant, and various other personal reasons it is highly likely that some students do and will do sex work alongside their studies.

## Congress notes with concern

The current legal framework puts those involved in sex work in more danger and creates stigma in society.

## Congress applauds

In August 2015, Amnesty International voted to adopt policy to protect human rights of sex workers. The resolution recommended that they develop a policy that supports the full decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual sex work. The policy will also call on states to ensure that sex workers enjoy full and equal legal protection from exploitation, trafficking and violence.

## Congress believes

That there should be far more support for sex workers, both within the industry and for those looking to get out of it. Sex workers should be afforded safety in the work they do and also fully supported when seeking to leave the industry, especially through the opportunities to re-skill or upskill through education.

## Congress mandates

The Executive Team to support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work.

## Congress further mandates

The USI mark International Day against Violence against Sex Workers and to work with relevant Sex worker organisations to provide information to students on their rights as sex workers and to work together to improve the lives of sex workers in Ireland "

## 20 NA 4 Gender Quotas

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

## Congress notes

Gender quotas were introduced into Irish General Elections in 2011. The legislation stated State funding to parties would be halved unless 30 percent of their candidates at the next general election were women, with this target set to increase to 40% over the next few years. When these quotas were introduced, the percentage of women in the Dáil went from 16% to 22%.

## Congress recognises

the importance of grassroots and community organising. Gender quotas go some ways towards redressing this balance but must be accompanied by other measures. Women who are selected for election must be supported to get on the ballot and furthermore and the whole way through the process.

## Congress affirms

as a national student movement we must push for greater diversity including but not limited to gender in Irish elections. USI has seen success from events such as Women Lead, EMpower, the Conference for Students with Disabilities, and Pink Training which provide spaces for minority groups to come together, and that work is reflected in the leadership we see in Students' Unions. USI unequivocally supports targeted measures which encourage greater diversity and break barriers to leadership positions for women, disabled people, people from an ethnic minority background, the LGBT+ community, and more.

## Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for gender quotas to be extended to other Irish elections such as local elections, and to support increases in gender quotas at a national level.

## Congress further mandates

The USI Executive team to support targeted initiatives which increase diversity in leadership structures.

## Gaeilge / Irish Language

### 20 GAE 3 Imeachtaí d'Fhoghlaimeoirí / Events for Learners

Proposed by Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

#### Aithníonn an Chomhdháil

An deacracht a bhíonn ag daoine a bheith páirteach i gcur chun cinn na Gaeilge toisc nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu.

#### Creideann an Chomhdháil

Gur cheart go mbeadh tuilleadh deiseanna ag daoine gan mórán Gaeilge páirt a ghlacadh i gcur chun cinn na teanga laistigh den Aontas.

#### Mar sin sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

Go n-eagródh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge imeacht amháin trí Bhéarla maidir le cúrsaí éagsúla a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge gach bliain le níos mó daoine nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu a mheallfadh le bheith páirteach i gcur chun cinn na teanga.

## Congress Notes:

The difficulty some people have taking part in the promotion of Irish because they can't speak the language.

## Congress believes:

That there should be more opportunities for those who don't have Irish to take part in the promotion of the language within the Union.

## Therefore, Congress mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to organise one event a year through English which covers various aspects of Irish to encourage more people who don't have Irish to participate in the promotion of the language.

## Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance

20 AA 10 Lobby the Government to rearrange the TUI members leave to support an academic calendar that is supportive and effective for students in terms of academia and their mental health.

Proposed by Cork IT SU

## Congress mandates

The USI President to lobby the Government to rearrange the TUI's members leave to support an academic calendar that is supportive and effective for students in terms of academia and their mental health.

## 20 AA 11 Postgraduate Follow Up Training

Proposed by IT Sligo SU

## Congress notes

That postgraduate students require very different support and needs than the undergraduate students.

## Congress further notes

That elected sabbatical officers generally have limited knowledge in regards to how to support and engage postgraduate students. Therefore sabbatical officers require additional support alongside the Postgraduate handbook.

# USI Congress 2020

## Congress mandates

The VP for Postgraduate Affairs to organize a follow up post graduate training for sabbatical officers



# Officer Reports

## Officer Reports

Elected officers of USI account to Congress for the work they have done in the ten months since their election. They will answer questions in their session towards the end of Congress.

## President / Uachtarán

Lorna Fitzpatrick

I want to sincerely thank every single student and officer who has engaged with USI over the past year. We are a movement of individuals, who may have different priorities but we are all working towards the common goal of improving our education system and our society for the better. Below is a synopsis of the work I have done this year and while I can't go into detail, I would be happy to discuss it in more detail with any of our members.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your President this year and I want to thank each member of the team who put their everything into working on behalf of our membership every day.

## COVID-19 Response

While nobody could have expected the final few months of the academic year to end the way it did, I want to thank all those who followed the HSE guidance, everyone who worked throughout the pandemic to support our national response to COVID-19 and to the students who have continued to engage with USI on different issues so we could work on your behalf to find solutions to issues as they arose.

## Tertiary Education Sector Working Groups

Myself, the VP Academic Affairs and the VP Equality & Citizenship all sat on numerous different working groups that were coordinated by the Department of Education and Skills. These working groups were aimed at sharing information, highlighting issues and trying to find solutions, where suitable, to different issues that arose. We focused on immediate, medium and long term issues while also ensuring specific cohorts such as vulnerable students were considered with all discussions and decisions being made. USI attended all of these meetings and spoke on behalf of our members in every working group to ensure students voices were heard.

## #RefundTheRent

USI launched the Refund The Rent campaign, calling on PBSA's to issue refunds to students. We raised this as an issue within the TES working groups for college owned accommodation

## USI Congress 2020

and seen refunds being issued quite quickly by all our members colleges. We focused on private PBSA then, launching a petition with UpLift, collecting student stories, lobbying TD's and Senators, contacting all PBSA's, launching a Tell-A-TD element to the campaign and more. Thank you to all the students who engaged with the campaign and to all the SU officers that supported this campaign from development to contacting TD's etc. The campaign continues to grow and we will continue to push for refunds.

### Students on the front lines

USI is very aware that there are thousands of students working to support the national response to COVID-19. We wanted to raise awareness about the work these students were doing during such a difficult time. We wanted to focus on students working in all different areas. We will launch the campaign in the coming days. We will also use the stories gathered to lobby the Government on different issues affecting these students e.g paid placement, masters fees, living wage etc.

### USI Research

USI will be launching a piece of research to gather student views on many different areas of college life in the coming weeks. This will be in the form of a survey followed by a number of focus groups which will aim to gather qualitative data to support the quantitative data gathered by the survey. We will rely on your support to share that out once it is launched. We will use the research to lobby and inform practices for return to learning in the new academic year.

### Break The Barriers

### General Election

Ahead of the General Election, USI were involved in a number of campaigns targeting higher education funding. We also had our own Student Manifesto and put together a graphic with the responses from all the parties with their positions on the items in our Manifesto. We targeted manifesto writers in advance of publication and succeeded in having a number of the items within the Student Manifesto included in party manifestos.

### Higher Education Funding

### Education Futures

## USI Congress 2020

USI is a founding member of the Coalition for Publicly Funded Education which launched a new campaign called Education Futures. The aim of this campaign is for staff and students to join together and hold actions that supported the three main aims of the campaign:

End student fees & reform the grant system (Access)

Decent terms and conditions for those who work in the sector (Decent Work)

The necessary funding for a quality higher education system (Quality)

Many groups came together to hold hustings on their own campuses in partnership between staff and students and also through the campaign below with the Institution.

### Don't Fail Us Campaign

We partnered with the IUA and THEA to launch the Don't Fail Us Campaign ahead of the general election which called on election candidates and parties to commit to funding higher education. One key element of the campaign was a public hustings for all education party spokespeople which was held in TCD.

### Accommodation

We continued to engage with our comrades in The National Housing and Homelessness Coalition and Raise The Roof to push forward the issues of student accommodation and the impact of the housing crisis on students. We drafted a new Accommodation position paper which can be found [here](#) and we have intensively lobbied on that paper. We supported many Students' Unions who faced rent increases this year and are very grateful to the students who supported those campaigns and delighted to see many reverse the decision in the past few weeks. We will keep the pressure on to ensure all others do the same. We received additional funding from Government for the Homes For Study campaign but due to COVID-19, the original plan for this project has to be reviewed and we have begun that process now.

### Lobbying

As always USI lobbied intensely on publicly funded education, accommodation, SUSI, students in direct provision and seeking asylum, living wage and many more - many of these lobbies took place either directly with elected officials or staff members of those officials and others were through formal submissions which are available on our website. Some key highlights include:

Tell A TD - while the national demo on the 3rd of October could not go ahead due to weather warnings, we held an event calling every TD and Senator across the country to ensure students voices were heard

# USI Congress 2020

Oireachtas Committee for Education & Skills - Both myself and Ciara, ISSU President presented to the Oireachtas Committee on the need for SUSI reform and the full paper is available [here](#).

We have been in discussions with political parties about new legislation that will look at the development of PBSA that will further protect students and also lobbied to ensure students in digs style accommodation will have protections under law.

## Internal Practices

### Governance Review

As per a motion from Congress, USI has undertaken a full Governance Review which has been led by an external governance expert. The review was to further enhance our structures and to provide improvements where possible. This was a detailed and thorough review which has lead to a number of recommendations which will be put to Congress for debate. At each stage of the review, I reported to National Council and brought a number of documents to Council for discussion throughout the year along with a special session to discuss the proposals in detail, gather feedback from members and bring that back to the Governance Review Committee. A special thanks to the President of TU Dublin Students' Union who gave a lot of his time to improving USI structures as a member of the Governance Review Committee.

### Strategic Plan

Again, as per another motion from Congress last year, USI was to undertake a strategic review and develop a strategic plan for the organisation. This was another lengthy process but I am happy to say a Strategic Plan has been submitted to Congress for debate. Similarly to the Governance Review, I wanted to ensure that members were involved in each section of the development so I brought a number of updates to National Council throughout the year detailing the process and progress made. Thank you to all National Council members that engaged in the process.

### Affiliation fee review

As the organisation is going through a lot of change this year with the Governance Review and development of a strategic plan, I brought a proposal to members of National Council that we undertake a more strategic review of the affiliation fee. I conducted the initial review and put forward a number of key areas for consideration to National Council, which was agreed. A new motion requiring USI to conduct a formal and strategic review of affiliation fee is before Congress for debate.

## Policies & Procedures

We wanted to ensure that all members could access all of our democratic policies, strategies and Constitution so we developed a new section on the website which is easier to navigate. It also includes the policy tracker which outlines where our policy currently stands. Many of our policies will be ongoing policy as it is advocacy or mandates USI to be members of particular groups etc. Within USI, we have a number of operational procedures that needed to be reviewed. This work has begun and will continue over the coming months.

## Brexit

As we know, Brexit has caused significant changes many of our members and as part of the Trilateral, the three National Presidents supported by staff members travelled to Brussels to lobby on behalf of our members to ensure students were not collateral damage in the trade deals on Brexit. We were advocating for the EU to work with the UK to retain full participation in the Erasmus+ and the Horizon Europe programmes. They will also discuss immigration and cross-border movement on the island of Ireland and its affect on students. We met with the EU chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, MEPs and key civil servants.

## Vice President for Academic Affairs / Leas-Uachtarán do Chúrsaí Acadúla

Kevin McStravock

My term as Vice President for Academic Affairs has been an absolute whirlwind. From sitting on national committees, delivering training and providing support to your education officers, and developing new opportunities for the student voice to be heard more clearly, I've loved every second of it. As I write this to you, it's strange to think that my office for the past two months has been the sitting room in my family house in County Derry. Whilst we find ourselves in the midst of unprecedented times, something which has turned our normal ways of working on their head, and forced us to look out for one another by keeping our distance, the way in which students have responded to the crisis demonstrates exactly why the student movement holds such power. From adapting to new learning styles, to forming part of the frontline fight in a variety of essential roles, students have been an integral part of Ireland's response to COVID-19. I'm hugely proud to be a national officer, and whilst it has been a difficult few months, and indeed a difficult year for many students, I could not be prouder of the amazing people I've had the privilege to work alongside and represent over the past 10 months.

### COVID-19

Students, staff and SU reps have been forced to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and whilst that has brought with it numerous challenges, it has been thanks to the contributions made by students and student representatives that we have been able to overcome these challenges together. From sitting on Sector-Wide Working Groups to hosting briefings and webinars for your SU officers, Academic Affairs has been at the heart of the action over the last few months and will no doubt continue to play a central role in discussions taking place nationally about what higher education looks like going into the next term and beyond.

### Engagement and Collaboration

I've provided regular updates to the Academic Affairs Working Group on the work I'm undertaking at a national level, and sought where possible, to offer opportunities for officers and students to sit on committees and review panels. I refocused the regular Working Group to create space for local issues to be discussed, and have checked in with officers on a regular basis, and connected those working on similar issues with one another. I have also

provided briefings on a range of topics including CAO Results Day, Budget 2020, Institutional Review, European Universities and No Academic Penalties.

### Campaigns

I rolled out the Class Rep campaign with additional resources including new and updated briefings, and a new video. I also piloted an online Instagram session for prospective class reps to ask questions about the representative role. The VP Welfare and I delivered a joint Exam Stress campaign across both the pre and post-Christmas exam periods, with bilingual exam planners and other materials for SUs to give out as part of their local de-stress campaigns. This campaign was once again rolled out fully online over the spring/summer exam period. I also worked with the President, Vice President for Campaigns and Irish Pharmacy Students' Association (IPSA) to progress lobbying on the Pharmacy Masters Fee, and will be including this within USI's Pre-Budget lobbying for this year. I have continued the work of my predecessor in supporting members with the rollout of the Student Survey and contributed to the rebranding of the survey this year.

### Higher Education Funding

I've worked as part of the Campaigns Strategy Committee on the development of the Break The Barriers campaign - including supporting on-campus promotion for the protest and participating in the 'Tell A TD' initiative established as a result of the protest's cancellation (owing to an amber weather warning). I also used my connections in the European Students' Union to seek international solidarity on USI's campaign.

### Further Education and Training

Worked with the team to develop relationships with FET colleges and created new relationships within the FET sector which has contributed to the development of the paper on developing a National Student Partnership Agreement. FE members in the North were incorporated into the Class Rep campaign this year - and I have sought to ensure they are aware of the support that USI can offer them throughout the year.

### Brexit

Communication has been established with the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade with a meeting taking place in October where we established key elements of the Irish Government's position on student-related issues such as fee certainty, and Erasmus+



funding. MOs have been provided regular updates on this work - the NUS-USI President and USI team also worked with the European Movement on a Brexit Survey for students.

### Student Voice in the Sector

#### Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

I have improved engagement with the Student Quality Reviewer Pool, including working with NStEP and QQI to deliver a joint 'Student Leaders in Quality' training for both NStEP Trainers and Student Quality Reviewers. Provided student input into a number of QQI projects - on a review of Level 5 and 6 awards, and on referencing of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) against European frameworks. Led USI's involvement in the National Academic Integrity Network and secured chairpersonship of the Communications group, meaning USI will lead QQI's communications outputs, including the development of student-focused campaign resources. Worked to ensure a broad representation of student voices on this group.

### National Forum

Worked to support members with the roll out of the INDEx Survey, and secured funding from the Forum for additional promotional materials specifically for USI members contributing to just shy of 25,000 students filling in the survey. We'll be engaging with the Forum, and the wider sector over the coming months to establish how this research will be able to support the enhancement of digital teaching & learning, something that is of increased importance given recent developments. Established the first ever student panel for the National Forum Teaching & Learning Enhancement fund, something which we're going to work to establish on a more permanent basis going forward. Also co-chaired the Student Success Symposium in October. Working with the Forum to more formally document the partnership between both organisations. This document will set out how we work together - giving USI access to additional resources to work on a co-identified priority area of research. I have also supported the work of the National Forum's Student Associate Interns, and we're currently working on the recruitment of the first ever full-time twelve month intern.

### National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP)

We launched a new Strategy in November, as part of a hugely successful conference. Additional funding secured via the other partners, QQI and the HEA has led to the recruitment of a Programme Manager and Development Coordinator. A new Advisory Group structure has enabled further student involvement in NStEP's governance and a review and consultation of the Class Rep Training programme is ongoing. Supported the recruitment and training of the NStEP Student Trainers, and the Student Quality Expert Pool ensuring that

students have an opportunity to feed into quality assurance procedures at a national level. Chaired the Annual Conference and the Student Engagement Network, and will also be chairing an upcoming online event.

### Student Involvement in Governance

The Strategic Dialogue with the Department has been ongoing with a primary objective of establishing a National Student Partnership Agreement, and Framework for Supporting Students' Union. Additional documentation in support of this ask was requested by the Department, and one of the requested documents has been submitted as of April 2020. With the aid of research carried out amongst MOs by the Regional Officers, we will be putting together a paper outlining some of the key barriers facing Students' Unions over the next few months. USI submitted a response to the consultation on the Higher Education Authority reform, and I secured a follow-up meeting with the Department which other student representatives attended alongside USI. We're awaiting the next stage of consultation.

### International Affairs

The Vice President for BMW Region and I led this year's European Students' Union delegations. We placed a focus on enhanced awareness through detailed reports to National Council, and use of social media during events to update all of our members on the discussions being held. I put together more detailed guidance on ESU processes for all SU officers attending events to enable them to engage fully in the events. We have built considerable connections within ESU, facilitating a number of study visits for international counterparts, and accepting a number of invitations to speak at international events, including the European University Association's annual Learning & Teaching Forum. I also coordinated USI's response to the 'Bologna with Student Eyes' report due to be published in advance of the next Ministerial Conference in November 2020.

### SAAIs

Amongst other duties undertaken this year, I have led on the Student Achievement Awards Ireland, with the support of the Executive Team. We have secured more sponsorship income this year than ever before, and attracted just under 400 individual nominations. As a result of COVID-19, we successfully moved the event online, and will host it on Wednesday 27th May.

## Vice President for Welfare / Leas-Uachtarán do Leas

Róisín O'Donovan

I had the honour of representing third level students nationally this year in the area of welfare. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you all. I had a great year rolling out national roadshow campaigns on mental health and sexual health, delivering training and representing students on national committees. Here is a summary of the work I have done so far:

### Mental Health

The year for me was kicked off with launching the USI Mental health report in Trinity College in August 2019 and since then, we have been effectively using the report as a lobbying document at all meetings and events. The Minister for higher education ring fenced €2 million for mental health services in third level as a result of USI's lobbying efforts and recommendations from the USI report.. I created an implementation document for the Students' Union so they can implement the national recommendations from the mental health report, locally in their own Students' Unions.

Round two of Re:Charge began with three new themes, health eating, physical activity and talking about your problems. We travelled to TU Dublin SU (Blanch), Maynooth SU, GMITSU and IT Tralee SU for the roadshow. We gave out 3,000 badges, 500 notebooks, 500 water bottles, 15,000 support cards to students across the country. I rolled out a De-Stress campaign with the VP for Academic Affairs, which included distributing study planners (also available online) and highlighters to Students' Unions.

I marked Suicide prevention day on 10th September by creating a suicide prevention toolkit for MO's and talking about the language we use around suicide, using phrases like 'Died by suicide' are much better to use. We marked International Men's days, focusing on male suicide rates, with IT Sligo SU with the share the load action in partnership with 3t's organisation which started a lot of important conversations around men's mental health.

I attended the EU parliament, representing USI to speak about 'Suicide in young people and effective supports' on World Mental Health Day, October 2019. I spoke about our national campaigns and the recommendations from the USI Mental Health report.

## USI Congress 2020

I continued to work with Jigsaw on their peer education programme pilot in TU Dublin. We will be in the evaluation of the pilot and investigating whether this programme can be rolled out in other colleges.

We are holding, for the first time, a student consultation event, 'Connecting minds' with Waterford SU hosting, to get student feedback on USI's work on mental health and the national suicide prevention strategy for higher education. This event was a huge success, a report will be published soon, thank you for all those that attended the online consultation.

Working with the Welfare Working group and USI executive team, we submitted a proposal in relation to the €2 million funding that was announced and ring fenced for student mental health in third level.

In response to COVID19, we created a 'Mind Your Mental Health' section on the USI website to help support students during this time. We also did a collaborative video with Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland (PCHEI).

### Sexual health

SHAG 2020 was another accomplishment, we visited IT Carlow SU, IADT SU, NUIG SU and Athlone SU, talking about masturbation for the first time with a theme of sexual empowerment, where we gave out 33,000 SHAG packs. I improved the roadshow application process with more transparency around the marking scheme for MO's.

We launched the Sexual Experiences Survey in partnership with NUI Galway Active Consent to gain an insight to students sexual experiences and institutional responses. We received just over 5,000 completed responses, thank you to all those that took part and to the Students' Unions and colleges for promoting them to their students. A report will be published soon with the key findings. This will be a significant piece of work for future lobbying efforts around consent, sexual harassment / violence and needed supports in third level.

I was part of the launch of the National Condom Distribution Service (NCDS) with HSE and Minister Simon Harris and I ensured MO's feel supported with the new service. I worked with your VP for Equality and VP for Campaigns and held a day of action against gender based sexual violence on 5th March with the National Womens' Council as part of the It Stops Now campaign.

## Physical Health

I wanted to improve partnerships with Student Sport Ireland and support the 20 x 20 campaign this year for women in sport, the VP Gaeilge supported me with this. Another recommendation from the USI report was the mental health benefits of co-curricular activities such as sports. I made a submission to the department of Tourism, transport and sport on the national sport action plan and made recommendations such as provide free gym facilities or reduced the costs to third level students on site, proposing a universal system for supporting co-curricular engagement by keeping Wednesday afternoons free. USI is asking for a national approach to accreditation to student participation in sports and other co-curricular activities.

## Addictive behaviours

I was part of the drug use in the higher education report with the Minister for Higher Education, ensuring that the student voice and representation was reflected throughout the report. The report outlines that every HEI is encouraged to have a robust policy on drugs, a HEI lead staff member, gather data and share harm reduction messaging. The MiUse drug survey has to be postponed due to COVID19 but the project leads in UCC, hopes to roll out the survey in the new year.

I had a seat representing third level students on the HSE emerging drug trends and drug checking at festivals working group to ensure the student voice is at the table.

In the middle of developing a FAQ sheet on harm reduction with the HSE social inclusion office to ensure that both Students' Union and HEI's are aware of the evidence based approach around drug harm reduction. Also been sharing drugs.ie on USI social media throughout the year and supporting officers.

I share Bodywhys support services in January as that's a particular tough time for those dealing with eating disorders.

In response to COVID19, I worked with the HSE to create a blog with alcohol advice specifically for students during this time. We also organised a focus group with SU officers on perceived drug use and drug markets since COVID19 and are preparing a campaign for post COVID19 socialising.

## Accommodation / finance

## USI Congress 2020

I worked closely this year with your VP for Campaigns and submitted a proposal to the Residential Tenancy Board for funding to create another version of the Accommodation and finance guides which was successful. We are hoping to launch it in the Summer. I worked on the USI's Accommodation position paper with VP Campaigns and VP Dublin region. I made a submission to the department of education and skills with the President of USI on the SUSI grant highlighting crucial recommendations around the eligibility criteria, application process and appeals.

In response to COVID19, we created the #RefundTheRent campaign to fight for students refunds from the Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) providers. This included releasing statements, lobbying the government, emailing TD's and PBSA owners, launching an online petition and gathering students' stories for social media.

Working with your VP Dublin and VP Equality and Citizenship, we created a position paper on social welfare to lobby for more financial support for students.

### Personal safety

I completed a personal safety Freshers Campaign in September creating online graphics around drugs, alcohol and consent.

Other areas of work / supported areas:

Submissions to the government

Website content

USI Elections booklet

Trainings

USI Crossover Guide

## Vice President for Equality & Citizenship / Leas-Uachtarán do Chomhionannais agus Saoránacht

Megan Reilly

This role is vitally important to every part of work USI does. Access to Education for everyone is at the very core of why USI exists. It has been a great privilege this year to represent at a national level students whose voices don't always make it into the mainstream dialogue. Doubtless the strength in this movement comes from its relentless pursuit of equality for all our members. We must understand that true equality means levelling the playing field, not just providing the same to everyone. If I had one wish for the Equality and Citizenship brief going forward, it would be that the movement continues to recognise that in order to redress the balance of systemic oppressions that have happened to minority groups that targeted initiatives, events and campaigns are wholly necessary.

It has been a whirlwind of a year, (and a very strange one at times) with many pressing social issues, and I am proud to say USI has been front and centre. A particular thanks to all those who engaged with the Equality and Citizenship working group throughout the year. Of course there is a lot still to do, but below you'll see some of the work I did this year in the role.

### COVID-19

Since the pandemic started, I have been representing the national student voice on two departmental working groups. The Mitigating educational disadvantage is focussed on trying to alleviate the impact on groups of students such as mature students and student parents, those in Direct provision and from the traveller community. The International Education group looks at the specific issues being faced by international students around finance, accommodation, and teaching and learning. I have been an active contributor to both of these groups, ensuring the student voice is front and centre

I also spoke on an AHEAD webinar about online Teaching and Learning, and participated in ICOS member meetings about the pandemic. I co-authored a paper we sent to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection about social welfare issues affecting students during this time, and we released a joint statement with ICOS about the specific challenges facing international students. During this time I also helped convene the anti-deportation working group of the University of Sanctuary committee, starting work to protect the most vulnerable in the aftermath of the pandemic.

### Direct Provision, Asylum seekers and refugees

# USI Congress 2020

This year has been a year dominated by student deportations and issues surrounding students in Direct Provision. As part of my role we developed a guidance document for SUs around students in Direct provision, and we included it as a core part of our student manifesto ahead of GE2020. We have been present at every protest organised by our members against a student deportation, and we have directly lobbied the minister around Student Deportations. We successfully got a seat on the national University of Sanctuary committee. With the formation of a new Government we will make sure this is a key part of our lobbying; to end student deportations, to fund institutions of sanctuary, and broaden access to education for asylum seekers.

## Mature students

In this area I supported the VP for the Southern region in running the Mature Students' Seminar. I also worked with the VP South to develop a support document for Students' Unions on Mature Students. I sat on the National Access plan steering committee and helped to advertise their annual stakeholders forum which had a focus this year on mature students.

## LGBTQ+

It was a true honour to be the lead organiser on Pink Training, the largest LGBT+ Student conference in Europe (and possibly the world!), with 48 workshops spanning three days, empowering and educating the activists of the future.

USI also supported initiatives for legislation around hate crime and hate speech, making submissions and speaking at protests on the issue. We also ran a gender identity campaign alongside BeLonG To, attended prides across the country, and lobbied for Trans Healthcare.

On a wonderfully hopeful note, this year we celebrated Marriage Equality in Northern Ireland with our friends in NUS-USI!

## Gender

I was the lead organiser on Women Lead, an event for self defining women looking towards leadership in their SUs and further afield, where we saw two days of workshops from inspirational speakers.

I sat on the Abortion Rights Committee sub group to continue to lobby for free, safe and legal access to abortion, and we submitted to the consultation on legislation in Northern Ireland to lobby for the same.



I was also part of the National Strategy committee for Women and Girls, and as part of the work for that have included free period products in USI's lobbying efforts. USI has also submitted to the citizen's assembly on gender equality.

## Students with disabilities

I supported the VP BMW to run 'The Power of Disability, a national student forum' which was a resounding success.

As a member of the Board of AHEAD, I supported a proposal put forward for another student representative to join the board, and have been in discussions to work with them on an online student network.

In January, USI ran a week of Disability awareness which included a template for SUs to use to run an accessibility audit of their campus.

## Ethnic Minorities

I was the lead organiser on EMpower, a first time event for Ethnic Minorities. This is a really underdeveloped area of the USI Equality Brief, so it was an honour to run this inaugural event and have discussions around racism and the underrepresentation of Ethnic minorities in leadership.

We are network members of the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) and have linked in with their campaigns around anti-racism and online hate speech.

## International students

As a member of the Board of ICOS, I am hoping to put forward a proposal for another student representative sit on the board before I leave the job.

As part of the Alliance for Affordable healthcare for International Students, we have lobbied for a high court decision which would push up insurance premiums for international students to be overturned.

## Voter registration, reform and General Election

We ran #GenerationVote, a large scale voter registration campaign, from September onwards in colleges, building on work done by USI in previous years and getting thousands registered. This included a comprehensive resource pack for officers and support on campuses. Obviously General Election 2020 threw a spanner in the works with registrations, but Students' Unions across the country did trojan work in pulling together more drives, getting thousands on the supplementary register.

Since GE2020, we have gathered information from county councils about their voter registration numbers, and have collaborated with NYCI and Spunout to create media around the issues with registration.

## Other areas of work/Support areas

Elections booklet - I worked with the Vice President for Welfare to design the elections booklet which functions as a handy to use guide for running for USI, the first of its kind!

Sustainability -Supported the Vice President for the Southern Region with his work on building a climate action policy, as well as setting up the USI Climate Action network.

Student parents and carers - I have worked on the creation of a supporting document for new officers coming in.

## Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region / Leas-Uachtarán don Iarthar, Lár-tíre agus Teorainn

Marie Lyons

The role of regional officers ensures there is direct communication between USI and students in their campus. I want to thank the officers and students across each MO in the BMW for your support and engagement throughout my time as VP BMW and I want to commend the fantastic work undertaken by each officer this year. The regional role is vital to ensure the national union is aware of the issues facing students while also providing support to officers

throughout their term. I want to wish those moving on from the student movement the very best and I look forward to seeing all that will be achieved in the BMW this term. It has been a pleasure to be your regional officer and I look forward to passing on the role to a highly competent successor. To the greatest region!

### Support

I had the pleasure to work with the fantastic officers within the BMW region and support them in their role and in rolling out events and campaigns. At the beginning of the term I met with each sabbatical team and continued to have regular meetings with each team to discuss how the VP BMW could best support them. I want to commend the fantastic work undertaken by the SUs in the BMW this year and enjoyed every second on your campuses this year.

### Communication

One of my main priorities for this year was to ensure that officers and students were aware of the work being undertaken by USI. Therefore, I implemented a weekly update on what USI have done/are planning to which was sent to sabbatical officers and gave regular updates at Councils and Senates. Regular contact with officers and students ensured that members of the executive team could also support officers and students with issues facing students. I also focused on ensuring students in satellite campuses had the opportunity to engage with their regional officer and I provided updates at satellite councils and supported MOs with rolling out campaigns and events on these campuses.

### Council and Senate updates

I had the pleasure to provide an update on the work of USI at Councils and Senates and answer questions students may have on USI's work. I want to thank Class Representatives and Senators for their interest in the work of USI and circulating the support document that accompanied my presentation to their classmates.

### Student Teachers

I along with the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge attended a number of meetings with the Teaching Council with regard to the guidelines on Initial Teacher Education and the current Teacher Supply crisis and produced submissions based on these areas. We highlighted the findings from USI's Student Teacher Report along with highlighting the barriers which exist to pursuing a teaching career.

## International Affairs

This year I supported the Vice President for Academic Affairs in our work with the European Students' Union, I supported in the administrative functions for these Board Meetings and European Student Conventions including the application process, registration process and compiling all documentation for our delegation. I also was a member of the Mental Health Working Group, with the working group we compiled a comparative research piece on mental health services from each National Students' Union and we are currently compiling his data.

## Lobbying

I supported MOs in engaging with local representatives through gathering and sharing all contact information for Councillors, TD's and Senators for each MO. I supported MOs during the General Election campaign and aimed to support officers with the Student Manifesto. I supported MOs in linking tried to make sure that MO's fully understood the Pre-Budget submission and helped to link the overall ask to the local situation. I followed up with every TD and Senator that attended the USI lobby day which resulted in a number of follow up calls, emails and PQ's on the topics contained within our submission.

## Students with Disabilities

I was delighted to have the opportunity to lead on the 'Power of Disability - a national student forum' this year, where we placed a particular focus on empowering students with disabilities into student leadership. We also had a fantastic panel of student leaders and a policy development session which will develop the direct of USIs work going forward.

## Voter Registration

I supported MOs in voter registration during orientations and prior to the General Election and supported MOs with questions relating to voter registration.

## USI Campaigns and Events

I supported the USI Executive team in the roll out of campaigns, roadshows and events. I also supported MOs in rolling out USI campaigns and events on campus and ensuring MOs who did not host a roadshow could be supported in rolling it out locally. I also had the privilege to

support roll out their own campaigns and events and support them in the development of these campaigns and events.

### Further Education

I made contact with Further Education and Training colleges in the BMW region to encourage affiliation with USI and aim to support the development and/or creation of Students' Unions in these Colleges.

### National Campaigns

I had the opportunity to support the many fantastic campaigns organised by the Executive Team this year including: BreakTheBarriers, Re:Charge, SHAG Week and Seachtain na Gaeilge, I support campaigns in getting involved with these campaigns and those who did not get the roadshow in supporting them rolling out the campaign on their campus. I want to congratulate the team on these fantastic events.

### COVID-19

Since the introduction of restrictions due to COVID-19 I have been working remotely and working with the officers in the BMW region to support them in the transition to working remotely and supporting students at this time. I worked on a number of different projects and campaigns including issues facing student nurses on placement during COVID-19, the impact of COVID-19 on the state exams and student teachers and supporting the USI COVID-19 related campaigns. Both the Vice President for Academic Affairs and myself worked with the European Students' Union and other national unions to discuss and debate the implications and further steps for ESU as a result of COVID-19. I want to commend the officers in the BMW region for the commitment and support provided to their students since the closure of Colleges. The transition to online campaigns and supporting students through online means during a very difficult time was not an easy feat. I worked with SU officers in their local work while also ensuring their issues were brought to a national level and highlighted by the executive team at departmental meetings.

## Vice President for the Southern Region / Leas-Uachtarán don Deisceart

Darren Malone

The student movement holds a very special place in my heart. It has challenged me on many occasions but it has also given me wonderful opportunities that I will never forget. I have worked alongside fantastic officers and students from across the country and although I am sad to be leaving the movement, I am leaving with friendships that I cherish very much. It has been a privilege to be your Vice President for the Southern Region this year and I hope I did you all proud. Stay Saucey.

### Communication

One of the key roles of the Regionals Officers is to act as a bridge of communication between MOs and the USI Executive Team. I used different platforms of communication to check in on local issues and to inform on national matters. I also ensured that relevant information was shared with MOs and that the Executive Team were aware of local campaign and event dates that were taking place across MO campuses. I also made sure that the relevant policy officer was aware of any ongoing local projects so that they could support work where possible. I also prepared USI Updates that were presented to local council meetings to communicate the work of the national movement to the wider student community. I also made sure to keep the USI South Twitter account up to date with where I was and what I was working on.

### Support

In the first couple of weeks, I sat with each team to record their goals and concerns for the year so that I would be prepared to support them with their plans for the year. As the year went on, I had regular meetings and check-ins with officers to see if there was anything that I could do to support them as issues arose. A large volume of my work was done behind the scenes supporting teams with their day to day operations. Each team and individual officer has their challenges and I always made myself available to officers if they ever needed to have a chat about any work related problems they were experiencing.

### USI Awareness

I promoted the work of USI at every opportunity given. Through engaging with the national College Awareness Week campaign, working with Trade Unions from across the region, sitting on various committees, flying a USI flag at events and protests and always having a USI pull-up banner with me at stands, I made sure that USI was seen and heard.

## Lobbying

At the beginning of the year, the Regional Vice Presidents followed up with every TD and Senator that attended the USI lobby day which resulted in a number of follow up calls, emails and PQ's on the topics contained within our submission. I encouraged MOs to connect with their local representatives, especially during the BreakTheBarriers campaign and when local issues arose.

## National Campaigns

Throughout the year, I was delighted to be part of the rollout of various national campaigns and roadshows. Whether it was BreakTheBarriers, Re:Charge, SHAG Week or Seachtain na Gaeilge, I tried to support MOs as best as possible in getting involved with the campaigns by making sure that they were confident with the materials and messaging. I also tried to engage with as many students as possible so that they could reap the benefits of the campaign and also see the importance of engaging with the campaign.

## Local Campaigns

From helping develop the campaigns to being out on the ground handing out materials, I was delighted to be able to support MOs at various stages throughout the year with their local campaigns. I also tried to link national campaign ideas and materials into local campaigns to expand the messages as much as possible.

## Voter Registration

I coordinated a number of voter registration drives on campuses at the beginning of the year at orientations and Freshers Weeks. When the General Election was called for February 8th, many of those students were not going to be able to vote as the election was taking place before the register of electors was updated. I then worked with MOs from across the country on running more voter registration drives and pushing out promotional material to get students on the supplementary register.

## Class Rep Trainings

At the beginning of the year, the Vice Presidents for the Regions worked together on developing an updated Class Rep Training presentation. I then would have attended all Class

# USI Congress 2020

Rep Training events across the region to give a presentation on who USI are, the work that we do and the benefits of being a member of USI. This was a fantastic opportunity to engage with newly elected representatives and to increase engagement with the wider student community.

## Technological University Support

I have supported MOs engaged in the process of TU Mergers through regular check ins and meetings with SU teams. Any concerns and matters related to TU Mergers, I have passed on information gathered to the President to allow for further communication with Ministers, HEA and others.

## FE & Non-Affiliate Engagement

I liaised with Further Education and Training colleges across the region to encourage affiliating with USI.

## Comparative Research Manual

I worked quite closely with the other two Regional Vice Presidents on preparing the Comparative Research Manual and collating all the data to be disseminated to officers. This research piece will provide MO's with statistics and figures at their disposal from other MO's of USI to strengthen their arguments on a number of issues.

## Mature Students

I worked with the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to organise the Mature Students Seminar. This event involved talks for Mature Students to equip them with skills and knowledge on areas such as engagement, academic support, the National Access Plan and much more. We also developed a supporting document for MOs on how to work with mature students on their campuses.

## Sustainability & Climate Action

This year, I was delighted to work on our climate action and sustainability policies with other members of the Executive Team. With the help of the newly established Climate Action Working Group, we have developed a robust 'Climate Action policy' which will guide USI in



## USI Congress 2020

this area and it will form the basis of all our lobbying efforts in the future. I also have worked on the promotion of the various global climate strikes that took place throughout the year. I was also delighted to work with STAND on creating a webinar on 'What does COVID-19 mean for Sustainability' that was open to all members.

### COVID-19

Since the pandemic, I worked closely with teams on issues such as rent refunds, no academic disadvantage and student mental health. This has been an exceptionally challenging time for us all and I supported officers with their transitions into working remotely and continuing communication with their teams and students. I also worked quite closely with the policy officers on ensuring that local matters were highlighted in departmental meetings and that important updates and information was fed back down to officers. I also had several radio interviews on how COVID-19 is impacting on students to highlight key issues on a regional level as well.

## Vice President for the Dublin Region / Leas-Uachtarán do Átha Cliath

Craig McHugh

In the last 10 months, it has been my pleasure to represent and work for the students of the Dublin Region. It's been a year filled with plenty of highs and many more surprises. From doing my bit in the rebellion against rent hikes to just being a pal for SU officers. It's been intense, wonderful, chaotic, lovely and definitely every other adjective possible at different parts of the day. Let it be said though, not one regret is upon me; I've loved it all and I tear up at the thought of having to step back from it on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Looking after the region

It has been an honour to work closely with the Students' union teams across the region. From lending a helping hand to assisting in the organization of demos and events, I've loved it all. Sabbatical life can be tough and very unexpected at times, I've done my best to use my time as a sabbat to assist officers in navigating through their workloads and dealing with the institutions. I would like to pay tribute to the incredible officers within the region who have all in their own respective ways thrived in their roles this year.

### Campus Engagement

I've been on campuses year round promoting USI campaigns and initiatives as well as assisting in MOs in their own. From SHAG to Re:Charge , it's been a pleasure talking to students about what we're doing and the conversations we're trying to encourage. My highlight was certainly our work for Break The Barriers. I visited campuses every day for two weeks to raise awareness of the major issues facing students and trying to maximise the turnout at our national demonstration on October 3rd (which was unfortunately cancelled due to extreme weather)

### Student Accommodation

Another year has passed and the situation has gotten worse nationwide. This year, I assisted the VP campaigns around Student Accommodation and Housing Crisis Lobbying. I have sat on both the Raise The Roof and NHHHC committees to push student issues to the forefront of the two leading housing campaigns. Beyond the wider crisis I have lobbied numerous spokespeople and TDs on the issue of student accommodation and used speeches and interviews to speak about this crisis. I also worked alongside the VP Welfare and VP Campaigns in drafting the USI Student Accommodation position paper which sets out our

stall on where students stand on the issues but also our recommendations to government and business on how to address the crisis.

### Give Us The Night

I've chaired the Ents, Marketing and Commercial activity working group this year and placed a particular emphasis on promotion of the Give Us The Night campaign. Earlier this spring, we rolled out the Give Us The Night student poster campaign. I've been working with SU officers to assist in their work regarding Ents, marketing and commercial activity. From going through resources with some officers to providing a second opinion to others. I've also assisted teams with trying to get more commercial activity in their union to generate revenue to fund events and campaigns.

### Class Rep Engagement

I've strived to attend as many Class rep councils of which I've been invited to this year to keep students in the loop as to what USI is doing for them. Councils are an excellent forum for not just getting feedback and questions but also starting conversations on the big issues such as rent hikes and the commodification of education. On top of this, I also attended a number of class rep training sessions too.

### Lobbying

As an organization, we engage in a significant amount of lobbying. I've really enjoyed sitting down with a number of TDs and spokespeople to outline the student situation (and position!) on issues. From everything around public transport to the need to tackle Student support systems. In fairness, they have all had an open ear, some very interested and others have even begun conversations in their parties around the issues facing students. One thing, I've grasped from this year is certainly that while many of our personal ideologies and opinions may not align – most politicians do genuinely care about society and the plight of students. It's merely a case of priorities, I see it as our job in USI to make sure students are prioritised. Our lobbying efforts I believe has yielded some solid results.

### Comparative Research and Union Development

Alongside the other regionals, I've been working on the CRM to assist unions to benchmark and make educated comparisons and arguments within their institutions. Furthermore, I've been working to assist unions in the development of their structures and processes.

## Demonstrations and pride

From blocking off front arch, to demanding our pals in the north have equal rights to those of us in the republic, it's been one heck of a year on the streets and I've held a megaphone probably too many times this year! I attended a number of prides and demonstrations this year across the island. My highlight however was probably the demonstrations we did against rent increases which grew every week (and still are!) . I think direct action this year has really shown people that we, as a movement clearly mean business!

## COVID-19

Since the onset of the pandemic and instruction to work remotely, I have been working to assist Students' Union officers through uncharted waters to assist students as they face daunting times. While we have moved much of our work now online, a major part of the regional role in terms of physical presence can now no longer be achieved, with this reality I have worked with my regional colleagues to ensure we provide the same level of support and assistance as we would year round. I have sought to think long term about the implications this will have on our movement, the issues we face and our way of working. I have also played a role in assisting the President and VP Welfare with the Refund The Rent campaign in trying to get students their unused rent back. I have also worked on a number of other issues with MOs such as no academic disadvantage policies, crossovers, adapting communication methods for the pandemic period, moving campaigns online and preparing for a virtual cross-over period. On a personal note, I feel this period has allowed me to adapt to the most bizarre of circumstances and I feel our team has supported each other very well through this very tough time.

## Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge / Vice President for the Irish Language

Clíodhna Ní Dhufaigh

Bhí sé mar phribhléid agam a bheith mar Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge i mbliana, mo chéad bhliain mar oifigeach lán-aimseartha in Aontas ar bith. An rud is ansa liom sa saol ná an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn agus tá an oiread sin deiseanna faighte agam i mbliana leis an méid sin a dhéanamh. Tá fíorthábhacht ag baint le ról lánaimseartha a bheith againn atá freagrach as an nGaeilge. Taispeánann sé seo d'eagraíochtaí eile go bhfuil AMLÉ tiomanta don Ghaeilge agus ba cheart go mbeimis bródúil as an méid atá bainte amach le blianta anuas ó thaobh chur chun cinn na teanga laistigh agus lasmuigh den Aontas.

### Feachtas 'Use Your Cúpla Focal'

Chruthaigh mé feachtas ar na meáin shóisialta leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn. Rinne mé focal an lae cúpla uair sa tseachtain agus bhí grafaicí 'Cúpla Focal' mar chuid de na feachtais eile a rinneamar in AMLÉ. Rinne sé seo an teanga a nórmálú in AMLÉ go háirithe dóibh siúd nach bhfuil mórán Gaeilge acu agus a raibh drochthaithí acu leis an nGaeilge ar scoil.

### Táillí Gaeltachta agus Socrúchán

Bhaineamar éacht ollmhór amach i mbliana agus an Rialtas ag geallúint go mbeadh na táillí Gaeltachta ar ais don bhliain acadúil 2020-2021 i gcánaisnéis 2020. Léirigh sé seo cumhacht ghluaiseacht na mac léinn agus na hiarrachtaí stocaireachta ar fad a rinneadh anuraidh agus i mbliana. Cuideoidh sé seo go mór le daoine atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste dul i dtreo na múinteoireachta agus gan gráin don Ghaeilge a chothú iontu agus iad ag íoc as freastal ar chúrsa riachtanach sa Ghaeltacht.

### An Ghaeilge sa Tuaisceart

I mbliana bhí deis agam freastal ar chruinnithe leis an Dream Dearg agus le hUachtarán AMNL-AMLÉ maidir le riachtanais Ghaeilge na mac léinn ó Thuadh. D'fhreastail mé ar trí agóid le linn na bliana a bhí bainteach na cearta teanga ó Thuadh, dhá cheann acu ag baint leis an gcomharthaíocht dhátheangach ar champas. Ba mhóir an onóir dom seasamh leis na mic léinn seo agus iad ag éileamh ceann de na rudaí is bunúsaí ó thaobh cearta teanga de.

Molaim go hard na mic léinn díograiseacha seo, chomh maith leis na gníomhaithe eile ó Thuadh atá fós ag troid ar son a gcuid cearta.

## Ceartha Teanga

An rud is mó a bhfuil mé bródúil as i mbliana ná 'Ceartha Teanga: Treoir do Mhic Léinn'. Is leabhrán é seo a thugann eolas do mhic léinn maidir lena gcuid Ceartha Teanga faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003. Rinneadh an-chuid oibre ar an leabhrán seo le hOifig an Choimisinéara Teanga agus tá súil agam go mbeidh níos mó mac léinn anois ag dul chuig an gCoimisinéir maidir le seirbhísí Gaeilge bíodh sé le gearán a dhéanamh nó ceist a chur faoi chearta teanga. Ní féidir a shéanadh ach go bhfuil obair Oifig an Choimisinéara fíorthábhacht le cinntiú go bhfuil ár gcearta teanga á aithint ag an Rialtas.

## An Ghaeilge in AMLÉ/Scéim Teanga

D'oibrigh mé go dian i mbliana leis an nGaeilge a threisiú laistigh den eagraíocht seo agus tá feabhas ollmhór tagtha ar an méid Gaeilge atá le cloisteáil agus le feiceáil in AMLÉ. Bhí grúpaí oibre agam ag an gComhairle Náisiúnta ina raibh deis agam plé a dhéanamh leis na hoifigigh lánaimseartha faoi na smaointe a bhí acu maidir leis an nGaeilge san Aontas. Thug mé cabhair do Choiste Ghnó an Aontais glacadh le tuairiscí go dátheangach ag an gComhdháil Náisiúnta agus an Ghaeilge a shníomh isteach ina gcuid oibre ó lá go lá.

Chomh maith leis sin rinne mé cinnte go raibh an Ghaeilge mar chuid d'aon fheachtas nó imeacht a bhí á reáchtáil ag AMLÉ i mbliana mar shampla, Bain na Bacainní, Traenáil Bhándearg, SHAG, Re:Charge, De-stress agus go leor rudaí eile. Cuidíonn sé seo leis an nGaeilge a nórmlú laistigh den eagraíocht agus daoine gan mórán Gaeilge a spreagach lena gcuid cúpla focal a úsáid. Chruthaigh mé graifaicí le haghaidh an feachtas 'Use Your Cúpla Focal' a thug focail éagsúla do dhaoine ag brath ar ábhar an fheachtais a bhí ar bun againn ag an am.

Chruthaigh mé scéim teanga nua don Aontas a chinntíonn go mbeidh an dea-obair seo fós ag leanúint ar aghaidh don Choiste Gnó sna blianta amach romhainn. Ardóidh seo an méid earraí le Gaeilge a chruthaítear mar chuid d'fheachtas AMLÉ.

## Coiste Cultúrtha

Bhí 15 duine ar an gCoiste Cultúrtha i mbliana agus bhí ról lárnach acu i stiúradh an Aontais ó thaobh na Gaeilge de. Bhualamar le chéile gach 6 seachtaine agus phléamar na fadhbanna a

bhí ann i ngach coláiste maidir le cur chun cinn na teanga de agus na pleananna a bhí acu ina gcuid cumann/aontas féin.

### Tacaíocht do BhallegeagraíocSeachtain na Gaeilge

I mbliana d'eagraigh mé an chéad seo bóthair riamh do Sheachtain na Gaeilge ó AMLÉ. Chuamar go ceithre champas timpeall na tíre le heolas a thabhairt do mhic léinn maidir leis an nGaeilge. Scaipeamar cóipeanna den leabhrán 'Cearta Teanga: Treoir do Mhic Léinn', an Foclóir Aiteach, Pleananna Staidéir agus suaitheantais le 'Tá Gaeilge Agam' agus 'Tá Cúpla Focal Agam' orthu. Spreagamar mic léinn leis an bhfocal is fearr leo sa Ghaeilge a scríobh ar phóstaer mór ionas go bhfeicfeadh daoine an méid Gaeilge atá timpeall an choláiste. An aidhm a bhí leis an Seó Bóthair ná freastal ar choláistí nach raibh cumann gaelach nó oifigeach na Gaeilge acu ar champas agus ócáid a réachtáil dóibh.

### An Ghaeilge sa Chóras Oideachais

I mbliana cuireadh tús leis an bhfeachtas #Gaeilge4All a iarrann ar an Roinn Oideachas athchóiriú a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón réamhscoil go dtí an tríú leibhéal. Shínigh 12,000 duine achainní le Polasaí don Ghaeilge sa Chóras Oideachas a chruthú ionas go mbeidh dréimire níos soiléire do dhaltai agus do mhic léinn leis an nGaeilge a fhoghlaim. Bronnadh an t-achainní seo ar an Aire Oideachais Joe McHugh agus táimid ag súil go mbeidh réiteach ar an easpa leanúnachas sa chóras oideachais maidir leis an nGaeilge.

### Sraith Ghaeilge ar líne

Le linn na paidéime, thugamar faoi dheireadh go raibh roinnt mhaith daoine ag filleadh ar an nGaeilge trí úsáid a bhaint as aipeanna cosúil le Duolingo. Mar sin beartaíodh sraith Ghaeilge a thosnú ar chuntas Instagram AMLÉ le cabhair a thabhairt do dhaoine agus iad ag iarraidh an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. Gach Máirt agus gach Déardaoin cuireadh físeán in airde maidir leis an nGaeilge. Ar an Máirt labhraíodh faoi ghnéithe éagsúla den Ghaeilge agus de chultúr na Gaeilge m.sh. An Ghaeilge sa Chóras Oideachais, an Ghaeilge ó Thuadh. Ar an Déardaoin rinneadh ceachtanna beaga agus tráth na gceist le deis a thabhairt do dhaoine a gcuid Gaeilge a mheas.





## Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs / Leas-Uachtarán do Chúrsaí larchéime

Sara Dowling

It has been an honour this year to represent Postgraduates at a National level. When I ran for VPPGA last year, the aim of my Manifesto was to help create a greater understanding and level of Postgrad care across the country - A sincere thank you to all our MO's, for helping to achieve this in so many ways. You have championed Postgraduate issues (some for the first time in your roles), and are now building Postgrad capacity on campuses, providing ongoing support, engaging with independent and grassroots groups on Workers Rights issues, promoting campaigns, building relationships between your Unions and Graduate Departments, and sparking huge change across the country. A special thanks to all those who have engaged with the National Working Group and helped to guide the work of this role in such a constructive, supportive and insightful way.

This year has been eventful to say the least, with so many local and global challenges to face - none more so than the current pandemic crisis we are facing. Amongst all the worry, I have been so humbled by the amazing dedication to Postgraduate Matters - in lieu of cancelled events and the move to working online, the level of support has been incredible. I encourage you all to help keep the Postgraduate voice heard going forward in the future.

### MO Postgraduate Capacity Building

This year I have prioritised building Postgrad capacity and understanding with our MO's within this role. I have encouraged MO's to consider new PG friendly campaigns and ideas, and many have created new initiatives or consistently supported PG activities nationally. This has led to stronger networks of independent PG groups across the country who now feel better supported by their Unions, and helped to build healthy and supportive relationships between PGs themselves, the Students' Union, Graduate Departments, and the Institutions. It has also led to the encouragement of PG Officer roles and elections, and I have supported those who have taken up new PG positions on a one to one basis.

I have received a lot of PG casework, and referred most directly back to their Unions for further support, supporting Officers case by case. COVID-19 increased this casework and influx of PG concerns, particularly in relation to funding and online teaching support. I sincerely thank all officers for their handling of PG casework this year, and remind you all once again on the importance of passing on the PG information you may have learnt, to your incoming officers during Crossovers. This will help strengthen your efforts and legacy of new postgraduate initiatives (as a team) going forward.

## Postgraduate Handbook Supplement and Campaign Guides

During the first semester, I created the Postgraduate Handbook Supplement. This was a specific guide to PG matters for MO's, to help guide them through the PG experience and any matters that may arise over the course of the year. This was issued through email and through the Working Group. Additionally, a separate Q & A document was created and circulated to MO's to help with any questions on the ground in relation to the USI/SIPTU Postgraduate Charter campaign. Both documents were used during campus visits for team meetings where the information was discussed in detail, presented at National Council Working Groups, referenced at talks and clinics, and over phone-calls and meetings with individual officers during specific casework enquiries. I hope these have been helpful when dealing with casework and concerns.

## SIPTU/ USI Postgraduate Charter Campaign

The USI/SIPTU Postgraduate Charter Campaign was launched at Liberty Hall in the first semester. I have worked closely with the VP for Campaigns and SIPTU Organisers to develop this campaign. The Charter has been discussed at several talks and National Council working groups, pushed online on both USI and SIPTU platforms, and discussed in several on-campus working groups and PG spaces for feedback. In February, a live Webinar took place with USI and SIPTU to further answer any Q & A's on this campaign. It was intended that a discussion featuring SIPTU organisers would take place at the planned Symposium event in March. However instead, the VPPGA is currently collecting data for an in-depth Survey and Campaign Report, with input from leading Postgrad experts, advisors and the PG Working Group, which will be circulated to MO's by end of the academic term. This is intended as a reference guide with stats, collected data and efforts made by the campaign so far addressing PG Workers Rights issues. This can be used as a lobbying document in the next stage of the campaign. Since working remotely as a result of COVID-19, a seat on the SIPTU District Council has also been arranged for the incoming 2020-21 VPPGA to further work on this campaign with the wider SIPTU membership.

Self-established student and workers independent groups across campuses, (namely in TCD, MSU and NUIG) are a leading strength of this campaign so far. I continue to support communications of these groups with their Institutions. I have seen some SU support greatly enhance these groups actions and raise much needed awareness, overturning restrictive Institutional decisions, attending and supporting protests, and providing safe spaces for meetings on campus. While this is a step in the right direction, Students' Unions collectively still have a more active role to play to activate change in regard to precarious working

## USI Congress 2020

conditions, especially when the COVID-19 affects on Postgraduate workers are still so unclear.

### USI Annual Postgraduate Symposium 2020

The third USI Postgraduate Symposium was due to take place on 19 March 2020 at TUD City Campus, Aungier Street, Dublin. An Open Call for interest by MO's to host was run out after Christmas and received great feedback. The event was due to feature three speaker panels discussing funding, academic pressures, postgraduate mental health, workers' rights, representation and union development, a professional Expo event, group workshops, and presentations by current postgraduate researchers on their work and practices.

While this event was cancelled due to COVID-19, I wish to extend a huge thanks to TUDSU for their incredible support and partnership in planning, and to the PG Working Group which helped feed ideas into the event throughout the year.

At the time of writing, although an online Symposium event in its entirety has not been feasible, many other alternatively Postgraduate initiatives have been created addressing the themes of Academic pressures, Mental Health, workers rights, and postgraduate research visibility, in light of COVID-19. An ongoing new USI/IRC partnership with the Irish Research Council will soon see the launch of a new sponsored Research Video Presentation Competition. A series of videos and list of tips for postgraduates on how to mind your Mental Health, and best tips to work from home, were launched on the USI website as part of the teams COVID-19 response. The ongoing work for the USI & SIPTU Postgrad Charter Survey and Campaign Report highlights concerns, supported by gathered data, in relation to COVID-19 for student workers. Additionally, a proposed seminar on Workers Rights is soon due to take place, organised by the USI Regional officers.

### Other work done:

- Continued working relationships with NStEP, and advised on Postgrad training modules to further enhance PG Class Rep training

## USI Congress 2020

- Supported and attended many on campus PG Clinics, safe space meetings, talks, presentations and workshops.
- Led on the National Postgrad Working Group, updated members on PG related issues and held meetings at NC's and at USI HQ.
- Sat on the IRC Irish Research Council Committee Board and the StudentSurvey Editorial Board, making sure PG voices and matters are heard and recognised when it comes to feedback and funding.
- Worked to develop better working relationships with Graduate representatives in the North, including attending and speaking at events and supporting officers through issues and casework.
- Worked to create relationships with PG advisories to help support and inform the role of USI VPPGA.
- Worked closely with other members of the Exec team to help Postgrad proof USIs activities, attending conferences and campaigns across a variety of areas - in particular voicing PG concerns across campuses during the Break the Barriers campaign. An incredible thanks to all my wonderful fellow members of the Exec for their continued support, understanding and promotion of Postgrad matters throughout the year.

## NUS-USI President AMLN-AMLÉ Uachtarán

Robert Murtagh

Representing 200,000 students across N.I. in both higher and further education has truly been the most humbling and terrifying(!) experience of my life. Unfortunately, students are too often seen as 'snowflakes' and told 'you've never had it so good,' my job this year has been to change that conversation. In NI we have student mental health and accomodation crises, student support has remained static while the cost of living has risen. Alongside this, many of our FE Unions are being neglected by their colleges. We have also seen a cumulative total of 21 days of strike action from our comrades in UCU and had to push back the tide of a potential tuition fee increase. Despite the challenges, I believe we have tackled these issues head on, working with our member Unions and allies across society to give us the loudest possible voice.

The year also dramatically changed with the restoration of the NI executive which had been on a 3 year hiatus. It has been a busy year, but I am immensely proud of what we have achieved in that time frame and look forward to seeing the progress made in the coming years.

### TUITION FEES AND FREE EDUCATION

Within a week of the NI Executive being resorted the First Minister called for a 'positive debate' on increasing tuition fees. This was the first sign that the NI executive would consider increasing fees in order to plug a significant gap in University funding.

Our response was immediate, with a statement being released and a number of press inquiries across print, radio and TV over the weekend and following week. Our message was clear; the debate had been had, fees are not sustainable; we need to be knocking down barriers to access, not raising them up. On the Sunday Politics programme, the Deputy First Minister ruled out an increase in fees, quoting our statement. In the immediate aftermath of these comments, I was in the Assembly lobbying MLAs from all parties, and worked with Gerry Carroll PBP MLA to submit a motion to the Assembly ruling out an increase in fees. At the time of writing we are still working on getting support for this motion to be brought to the floor of the Chamber. We are also working with MLAs to ask questions of various government ministers on this issue.

## USI Congress 2020

We also held a seminar in the Assembly called 'The Case Against Tuition Fees' with our comrades in UCU. NUS Scotland President - Liam McCabe, UCU Organiser - Katharine Clarke, myself and Caoimhe Archibald MLA (Chair of Economy Committee and Sponsor of the event) spoke to a mixture of students, staff and MLAs on why tuition fees, and more explicitly - a tuition fee increase - is not a sensible approach.

We also worked closely with a Progressive Unionist Party Councillor, John Kyle, to bring a motion to Belfast City Council to write to the Minister for the Economy urging her to rule out a fee increase. This was an important move to show that the coalition of groups opposed to a tuition fee hike is broad and has cross-community support. The motion was seconded by SDLP Councillor, Gary McKeown and passed unanimously at Council, crucially with the support of the DUP. We also held a rally outside the City Council which was attended by member Unions, University Colleges Union, Irish Congress of Trade Unions and others. Although Belfast City Council has no power over tuition fees, it was an important symbolic step, and it also meant we were able to hear in public what the various political parties stances were on this issue.

This campaign is ongoing and we won't stop until a tuition fee increase is ruled out. We continue to keep the pressure on the executive parties, and ensure the political environment remains hostile to any increase. It is clear, increasing fees would be deeply unpopular and we've ensured it has remained so. We continue to work to gain cross party support for the motion in the Assembly but we are prepared to escalate our campaign if this is not possible.

The campaign for a truly accessible, funded and lifelong education system must be viewed through a long term lense. We need structural change within our tertiary education system, and it's important we ensure this fight is reflective of the wishes and needs of students. As part of the NUS Priority campaign we have run two 'Transforming Education Assembly' meetings at QUB and UUB, and hopefully there is more to come. These meetings have gathered the views and experiences of a diverse range of students which will be fed back in the development of the National Education Service campaign. A truly free and accessible education system should be our end goal, these values have underpinned everything I have done in my time as NUS-USI President.

## FE UNION DEVELOPMENT

One of my first acts as NUS-USI President was to engage with our FE Unions and update previously produced 'College Union Development Plans.' This was an important step in ensuring we understood the challenges FE Unions face, and to help the Union's see the progress made over the last few years and consider areas that still need to be worked on.

We have also been able to use these development plans to produce a briefing paper for what an FE Students' Union should look like, and to share this with the Department for the Economy. As a result, we have been included as an external consultee in the Department's Student Services Review which will be critical for us to begin ensuring Student's Unions' in FE colleges are embedded in the life of the college and are recognised as partners. Once again, this is not going to happen overnight, but important foundations, particularly a productive relationship with the FE division of the Department, have been laid for future work to continue championing the case for SUs in FE.

### BREXIT: NO TO NO DEAL & EDUCATION NOT ISOLATION: #SAVE ERASMUS

Brexit continues to be an ever evolving situation. Early in the academic year, as the stasis at Westminster grew with no clear majority for the Withdrawal agreement, there was an increasing likelihood of edging towards a cataclysmic 'No Deal' Brexit. A no deal Brexit would have had a profound impact on the economy, prosperity and crucially peace in NI. NUS-USI worked with colleagues across civic society in the Human Rights Consortium, NI Council for Voluntary Action, Trade Unions and other groups to develop our 'No To No Deal' campaign. This campaign highlighted the cross-community opposition to a no deal Brexit, and the concerns across various sectors. This campaign had hundreds of groups signed up, including member Unions across UK, NI and Republic of Ireland. As part of this campaign, I also had an Opinion piece published by the UK Independent Newspaper online on why the NI student movement was seriously concerned about a No Deal Brexit.

After the general election result, it became clear the withdrawal agreement would be passed and the UK would leave the European Union on 30th January. It has therefore been our priority to ensure the deal on the UK's future relationship with the EU is the best possible deal for students. Our concerns, as well as wider societal concerns around the economy, borders etc are on the future of the ERASMUS+ programme, Horizon Europe and rights for EU students. ERASMUS+ and Horizon Europe are incredibly important educational programmes, with the ability to study and live abroad and cross-country research collaboration.

In response to this, NUS-USI with our colleagues in NUS UK have developed our 'Education Not Isolation' campaign with #SaveErasmus as one of three key components (it also includes research and immigration). In NI, we have developed a #SaveErasmus workshop to deliver in our member institutions to show students what we have done so far, ideas for future campaigning, gather stories and testimonials and to gather a base of students for further actions. Due to the UCU strike, and the Coronavirus, at the time of writing we have delivered

this is to just one member Union, but will deliver in others as soon as possible. These workshops will give NUS-USI and member Unions a real opportunity to engage with students who may not normally engage with SUs. We also hope, through gathering stories and testimonials we will be able to show the British government the real value of the programme and why it should be continued. Outside of the workshops, we have gathered many testimonials online, and started an online petition. We have also been engaging with MPs and hope to work with the newly formed All Parliamentary Group on ERASMUS+.

As part of the tri-lateral, myself, NUS UK President - Zamzam Ibrahim and USI President - Lorna Fitzpatrick, spent 3 days in Brussels in March to engage with high level members of the European Parliament, the European Commission and diplomatic missions from NI, RoI and UK. This trip included bringing the concerns of students to the heart of the negotiations by meeting with the EU Chief Brexit Negotiator, Michel Barnier within a few days of the start of the negotiating period. Across all our meetings we reiterated our key message that we don't want students to be collateral damage in the negotiations between the UK and the EU, particularly if agreement on trade, fisheries, citizenship rights or other areas cannot be reached. This trip was incredibly useful in finding out information on the negotiations, key fault lines that may develop and where we can use internal European Parliament procedures and processes to keep our issues on the agenda.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is one of the priority issues for our member Unions, and with a lack of executive, movement on this issue has been slow. However, with the restoration of the Executive, NUS-USI has been invited to be a key stakeholder in the development of the 10 year mental health strategy, which is currently at the embryonic stages of being drafted. Being part of this strategy is a hugely important step in students being part of a national conversation on how we tackle the pervasive mental health issues within our society.

## OTHER AREAS

This year NUS-USI has continued to work with member Unions on issues as and when they have arisen, and have continued to support and develop Student Union Training and Festival. We have also been working through a number of staffing changes, and I'm pleased that we have managed to work through these changes positively.



## USI Congress 2020

Throughout the year I have also attended Sinn Féin and Alliance Party conference to speak to members and Reps on the issues affecting students. At the time of writing, we have met with all five main political parties in NI and most of the other parties and independents. We also have scheduled meetings with the Economy Minister and Finance Minister.

As NUS-USI President and part of the NUS FTO team I have had the privilege to represent over 7 million students in the UK at the European Students' Union. As part of this, I succeeded in making amendments to the social dimension paper reinforcing the view that loans (either for fees or maintenance) should not be considered, and we should be united in the fight for free education across Europe.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported me in this role, it has been hugely appreciated. I want to thank the USI executive team for their support and guidance, it's been a pleasure to work with you all.

## Congress 2020: Interim Policies for Ratification