USI VP Equality & Citizenship/ **Leas-Uachtarán um Chomhionannas agus Shaoránacht**

This document provides a brief overview of the key aspects of the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship role. The day-to-day functions of any elected role will change in line with the key priorities at the time, and the policies which the role is mandated to carry out which change from year to year in line with the Annual Congress.

Role as per the constitution:

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship:

5.7.1   The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship (hereinafter referred to as the VP/Equality) shall have responsibility for the implementation and development of all Union policy in relation to issues of discrimination on the grounds specified in S.75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the grounds of the Equal Status Acts 2000-2004.

5.7.2   The VP/Equality shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns for the defence and promotion of student's rights in the areas of equality and citizenship.

5.7.3   The VP/Equality shall have overall responsibility for the running of Equality, Citizenship and LGBTQ training events such as Pink Training.

5.7.4   The VP/Equality shall be the chairperson of the Equality & Citizenship Committee.

5.7.5   The VP/Equality shall assist the VP/Campaigns in relation to campaigns on, and shall be responsible for; running events and campaigns relating to citizenship in areas such as the environment and civic, social and political participation, with particular emphasis on voter registration; working with community and voluntary groups etc.

Board membership

1.   AHEAD board

AHEAD is an independent non-profit organisation working to create inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities. The main focus of their work is further education and training, higher education and graduate employment.

2. [Irish Council for International Students](#)

ICOS promote the rights and welfare of international students who choose Ireland as a study destination, and support staff in colleges who work with them. ICOS also sit on the Alliance for Affordable Insurance for International Students. (AAIIS)

Committee membership

Higher Education Authority (HEA) Access Committees

1. Fund for Students with Disabilities: Chaired by the HEA Access division, Meets about twice a year and is a high level group that hears of any overarching issues with the fund. Membership includes AHEAD and DAWN (the disability officers group).
2. Student Assistance Fund Implementation group: Meets about twice a year. Reviews SAF guidelines- opportunity for input here. Mostly comprises of access office staff.
3. HEAR review working group: set up last year and has met several times, membership includes HEA staff and Access/Student Service staff.
4. Mature Student Steering Group Meeting: chaired by the HEA and is currently finalizing a report on mature students' participation within HE in Ireland.

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

1. National Access Plan Steering group: this group works on the development and implementation on the [National Access Plan](#) which is up for review in 2021. The National Access Plan outlines 6 target groups to support increased access and participation in higher education by six main target groups:
   a. entrants from socio-economic groups that have low participation in higher education;
   b. first-time mature students;
   c. students with disabilities;
   d. part-time/flexible learners;
   e. further education and training award holders; and
   f. Irish Travellers.
2. Action Plan for Increasing Traveller Participation in Higher Education: This group works on the [Action Plan for Increasing Traveller Participation in Higher Education](#). I have yet to have a meeting with this group to date in my term. This action plan was announced in Nov, 2019
3. Part-time/Flexible Subgroup: Facilitated by the Irish Universities Association. Hasn't met since May 2020, produced a position paper on current issues regarding part-time and flexible education in Ireland.
4. High level group on international education: This group is composed of Department officials and international offices.

Other committees or working groups may be established from time to time.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

1. National Strategy for Women and Girls

This group is composed of representatives from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and stakeholder representatives including the NWCI, Pavee Point and others. Meets biannually and brings forward issues that affect women and girls with the impact of COVID-19 being the focus of the last meeting.

    a. Period Poverty sub group

This subgroup is made up of members of a number of NGO stakeholders and representatives from the Dept. Of Health, Dept. Of Finance, Dept of Education, Dept of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and Dept. Of Justice. This group is working on a report on period poverty in Ireland which was presented to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and will now progress to a meeting between the Dept. Of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Dept. Of Education, Dept. Of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Dept. Of Health and the Dept. Of Finance.

Department of Employment and Social Protection

USI and the VP Equality and Citizenship engage with this Department through DEASP: Customer Representative Forums, Pre-budget forums and submissions.

Department of Justice

USI and the VP Equality and Citizenship engage in meetings and submissions for this Department, work this year included: a submission on the new Dept, Hate Crime and hate speech submission and launch of report and working on supporting international students.

Sustainability

1. Stop Climate Chaos: USI have been members of SCC since 2018/2019 and also engage with One Future through this membership.

    USI has a seat on the following sub-committees:

    a. SCC Action group

This group decides on the action and direct SCC will take and takes direct from the policy group.

    b. SCC Policy group

USI sits on the policy group which decides the policy developments and areas of focus for SCC.

2. Students Organising for Sustainability: USI are founding members of this organisation and attend bi-weekly and bi-monthly meetings with this group. SOS International supports student and youth groups globally to lead on sustainability and social justice, SOS has 13 member organisations at present.
3. The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education (strategic partnership with this organisation) New group we will be working with into 2021 and beyond. The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education (EAUC) is a British NGO that helps higher education institutions operate in a more sustainable way, and drive innovations in sustainability. This group have moved into working in the island of Ireland in recent months and you will find their partners listed here.
4. Green Week Ireland: This newly formed group will be creating an all-island Green week in 2021. USI are working alongside this newly founded group comprised of An Taisce, environmental society members and HEI environmental officers.

Equality groups

1. Irish Network Against Racism:
USI has been a member of a number of years and regularly engage in the network meetings and events.
2. NYCI Equality and Inclusion Network:
USI sit on this informal group that meet regularly to discuss equality and inclusion issues for young people. This group has membership from several different community-based organisations also.
3. National Women's Council of Ireland:

USI attend the AGM of NWCI and are voting members.

   a. National Advisory Committee (NAC), a committee of stakeholders, convened and chaired by NWCI, to end sexual violence and harassment in third level institutions. USI has three seats on this committee (USI President, VP Welfare and VP Equality and Citizenship)
      i. Sexual Harassment Policy and Practice subgroup:
      USI VP Equality and Citizenship leads on this subgroup which focuses on the policy and practice, previously the group focused on polices to support students the groups focus is now on HEI staff and postgraduates.
   b. Abortion sub committee:
   VP Equality and Citizenship is a member of this group which is compiled of people and organisations working to ensure safe and legal abortion access is available across the island of Ireland. This group meets every few months.

4. University of Sancturary Ireland group

USI have a seat on this group which is a group of student service officers within HEIs that work on their HEI University/Institute of Sancturary schemes .

5. Alliance for Affordable Insurance for International Students (AAIIS)

This is a group of organisations and individuals who are concerned with the increase in costs of insurance for international students, membership includes ICOS, International officers within HEIs and chaired by Cathal Lee from Instinctif Partners. USI has three seats on this group: USI President, VP Campaigns and VP Equality and Citizenship.

6. Irish Family Planning Association:
   USI sits on the AGM and the and the VP Equality and Citizenship is voting member of the IFPA AGM.

USI Student Advisory groups

USI established a number of advisory groups before Christmas to support our work and support the development of events and campaigns. These student advisory groups are made up of students with lived experience to ensure the work of USI is meaningful and inclusive and led by students from diverse backgrounds.

The members of these groups have highlighted the issues which they are facing within their HEIs and has supported our lobbying efforts.

1. AHEAD/USI Students with Disabilities advisory group
2. Trans and Non-binary student advisory group
3. Mature student advisory group
4. Parents and Carers student advisory group
5. Black student advisory group
6. Traveller and Roma student advisory group
7. LGBTQ+ student advisory group

Campaigns and Events

Events:

1. Pink Training - the largest LGBTQ+ training event in Europe which is held annually to support and create a community among LGBTQ+ young people across USI's membership.
2. EMpower – this event is in its second year and supports and empowers students from ethnic minorities to run for positions of leadership within their Colleges.

3. Women Lead – this event supports and empowers self-identifying women to run for positions of leadership within their Colleges.
4. Mature Student Seminar – this event is aimed at mature students and those wanting to support mature students during their time in College and aims to provide practical supports and encourage mature students into positions of leadership within their College.
5. The Power of Disability – this event is aimed at students with disabilities and those wanting to support students with disabilities during their time in College. While aiming to provide platform and encourage students with disabilities into positions of leadership within their College and community.

Mandated campaigns:

1. Voter Registration

This campaign focuses on increasing voter registration among students. Normally, the focus of this campaign is around September time in the lead up to the registration deadline.

If you would like any further information on this role, please contact Marie on equality@usi.ie.