



Rith i gcomhair AMLÉ  
Run for election in USI

# INFORMATION BOOKLET ON RUNNING FOR USI ELECTIONS 2021/2022



**Union of Students in Ireland**  
*Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn*

## **Welcome!**

We have put together this booklet as a means to provide guidance on running in USI elections to be on the Executive Committee. Putting yourself forward for an election can be daunting, but a really rewarding and memorable experience. This booklet aims to provide a step by step guide, as well as answer some frequently asked questions, and provide additional resources.

## **Glossary of terms**

**MO** - Member organisation (Students' Union who is an affiliated member of USI)

**USI** - Union of students in Ireland

**SU** - Students' Union

**DP** - Deputy President

**VP** - Vice President

**IOT** - Institute of Technology

**TU** - Technological University

**Free Vote** - Up to each individual delegate to decide how they will vote

**Mandate** - When you have to vote a certain way based off of majority vote at class rep / student council

**Hustings** - A husting is a meeting at which candidates in an election address potential voters.

**Delegate Leader** - Each Member Organisation delegation will appoint a delegate leader, this may be the President of the Students' Union or another member of the delegation.

**Stipend** - A fixed / regular sum paid

## **About USI**

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 374,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience. The goal of USI is to work for the rights of students and a fair and equal third-level education system in Ireland, and to better the lives of students at all levels of society.

USI is a full member of the European Students' Union (ESU) which represents students from 46 National Students' Unions in 39 countries.

## **USI Elections: Key dates for your diary**

- Nominations open: 18th January
- Nominations close: 24th February
- Final date to withdraw from the ballot: 3rd March
- USI Congress: Tuesday 6th to Thursday 8th of April where official Congress hustings and elections will take place.

## **Officer roles and descriptions:**

The Executive Team of USI is made up of 11 members (10 full time and 1 part time). You can run for any of the positions below.

The stipend of the President currently is €28,523. All other paid officers have a stipend of €27,398 full time and allocated pro-rata for part-time officers according to the hours of work agreed for part time officers. All figures listed are gross salary figures, before any income tax.

We have included information about the roles but this is not exhaustive. It's recommended you talk to the officer in the role to get insight, you'll find their contact details on the last page of this booklet. Further details on these roles can also be found on the USI website.

### **The President:**

- Responsible for overall work of the organisation and delegating work and areas of policy to other members of the Executive Team.
- Chief spokesperson for the organisation
- Manages the human resources of the Union
- Responsible for drafting annual budget in consultation with Finance Committee
- Reporting work of the Union to National Council and Congress

### **Vice President for Academic Affairs:**

- Policy officer with anything related to the area of Education
- Supports and works closely alongside Education Officers in Students' Unions across the country.
- Works with the Vice President for Campaigns and other members of the Executive Team to roll out Education campaigns such as Class Rep campaigns, and Exam Destress.
- Leads USI's International Affairs work, organizing and leading delegations to meetings of the European Students' Union four times a year
- Sits on the Board of Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning, alongside other relevant national committees
- Other areas of work include: Quality Assurance, Academic Integrity, Teaching & Learning, and Student Partnership.
- Chairs the Academic Affairs Working Group at National Council.

### **Vice President for Welfare:**

- Has the main responsibility for student welfare policy, publications and submissions.
- Links in with Welfare Officers in Students' Unions across the country to offer support and guidance.
- Works with the Vice President for Campaigns, and sometimes external organisation to roll out Welfare campaigns around mental health, sexual health, physical health.
- Other areas include; accommodation, finances, consent, drugs & alcohol and other addictive behaviours, body positivity, eating disorders and bullying & cyberbullying.
- Chairs the Welfare working group at National Council to address local and national issues and plan national welfare campaigns.
- Sits on the following boards: Student Affairs Ireland, National Advisory Committee for Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education, SUSI Advisory Committee, THEA Promoting Consent and Prevention Sexual Violence Steering Group, alongside other national committees.

### **Vice President for Campaigns:**

- Main responsibility for organising USI campaigns, in collaboration with relevant officers.
- Has the responsibility to organise and prepare campaign strategies and plans of action.
- Works with external organisations on campaigns and integrates the student voice.

- Supports officers in the roll out of events
- Chairs the campaign strategy committee and oversees the work of the committee. This committee coordinates the largest national campaigns of USI.
- Chairs the campaigns working group which discusses the implementation of campaigns with National Council
- Has responsibility for the coordination of Union Development with the President.
- Has responsibility for USI's publications and communications.

#### **Vice President for Equality and Citizenship:**

- € Policy officer with responsibility for anything related to the areas of Equality and Citizenship and has the main responsibility for Equality and Citizenship policy and publications.
- € Lead organiser of Equality events; Pink Training, Women Lead, EMpower, the Conference for Students with Disabilities, the Mature Students' Seminar.
- € With the Vice President for Campaigns, runs Equality related campaigns such as Voter registration and Disability awareness.
- € Sits on the Board of AHEAD Ireland and ICOS (Irish Council for International Students)
- € Chairs the Equality and Citizenship working group at National Council.
- € Co-chairs of the USI/AHEAD Students with Disabilities advisory group.

#### **Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Regional:**

- Regional officer who works with the following colleges: Maynooth University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, NUI Galway, Institute of Technology Sligo, St. Angela's College Sligo, and Letterkenny Institute of Technology.
- Communication between the Executive team and the Colleges in their region.
- Engages with colleges in the region with the roll out of local and national campaigns, communications, trainings, PTO's and class rep councils and is a source of source and advice and support where applicable.
- Chairs the BMW regional working group at National Council.
- Communicates with local radio and media outlets specific to the region.
- Supports leading policy officers on the implementation of congress mandates throughout the year.
- Sits on various boards and committees specific to the region such as One Galway and the I-Note steering committee.

#### **Vice President for the Southern Region:**

- Regional officer who works with the following colleges: Munster Technological University, University College Cork, Waterford Institute of Technology, Limerick Institute of Technology, Institute of Technology Carlow, Carlow College and Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training.
- Communicates between the Executive team and the colleges in their region
- Assists colleges in the region with the roll out of local and national campaigns.
- Chairs the Southern regional working group at national council

#### **Vice President for the Dublin Region:**

- Regional officer who works with the following colleges: Dublin City University, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design, National college of Art and Design, National College of Ireland, Technological University Dublin and Trinity College Dublin.
- Communicates between the Executive team and the colleges in their region
- Assists colleges in the region with the roll out of local and national campaigns.
- Chairs the Dublin regional working group at national council

### **An Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge:**

- Policy officer with responsibility for all Union activity on the Irish language
- Chairs the Coiste Cultúrtha and the USI Irish language Working Group
- Runs the annual Seachtain na Gaeilge campaign
- Works with other Irish language organisations on anything related to third level students
- Oversees use of Gaeilge in other USI campaigns not related to their own remit.
- Oifigeach Polasaí atá freagrach as an nGaeilge in AMLÉ
- Cathaoirleach an Choiste Cultúrtha - grúpa oibre na Gaeilge in AMLÉ
- Eagraíonn Seachtain na Gaeilge gach bliain
- Oibríonn le heagraíochtaí Gaeilge ar chúrsaí a bhaineann le mic léinn tríú leibhéal
- Cinntíonn úsáid na Gaeilge i bhfeachtais eile de chuid AMLÉ nach mbaineann lena ról féin.

### **The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (part-time)**

- Responsibility for anything related to the area of Postgraduate students
- Works closely with the Vice President for Campaigns to roll out USI campaigns on Postgraduate issues.
- Chairs the National Postgraduate Working Group
- Leads on the USI National Postgraduate Symposium
- Leads on the USI/SIPTU Postgraduate Charter campaign
- Builds Postgrad capacity within local Students' Unions and HEIs

*Please note: the President of NUS-USI (representing students in Northern Ireland) is also on the USI Executive Team, but they are elected at NUS-USI Conference. See <https://nus-usi.org/> for more details*

### **Who can run?**

Any member of USI can run; so if your college is affiliated to USI then you're good to go! The only experience you need to run is to be a student. You are the expert on the student experience. If you want to bring that to a national scale, then USI is for you.

### **Why run?**

- ***Shape the voice of the National Student movement***
- ***Represent students across the country***
  - USI has a lot of influence at Governmental level and with other national organisations.
- ***Work in an interesting and exciting environment***
  - USI is an ever changing environment with a large dynamic team. One day you could be on a campus doing voter registration, the next in a Government

Departmental meeting about a sexual health campaign, the next day at a photo launch, the next writing a submission. No two days are the same!

- ***Gain invaluable experience on policy, campaigning, and events, at a national level***
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- ***Work with national organisations to advocate for the rights of students***
- ***Personal development***
  - Being a national officer allows you infinite scope to develop your skills.

### **The rules**

Currently the only rule that exists in USI elections is a spending limit of €350. There is an elections sub committee, which runs the elections, and an electoral committee which set and oversee any regulations in relation to USI elections.

### **Step by step; how to run in USI Elections:**

#### **Step 1: Getting nominated**

- The first thing to do is get nominated to run by at least two Member Organisations (MOs) of USI.
- This needs to be done by the President of a Students' Union.
- You need to email the President of the SU to request that they nominate you, and if they agree to nominate you then they need to email [elections@usi.ie](mailto:elections@usi.ie), with a letter on Union headed paper saying they nominate you, and include your name, email, phone number and the position you are running for.
- If you are running for a regional officer position, you can only be nominated by MOs in that region.
- We have included a list of the emails of Presidents below
- It is recommended that you contact Presidents beforehand, even arrange a call with some of them, to let them know you are running and what your ideas are for the position. It's always a good idea to gather other opinions on your manifesto points as well.

#### **Presidents' Emails:**

##### **Dublin**

Trinity College Dublin Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@tcdsu.org">president@tcdsu.org</a>
TU Dublin Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@tudublinsu.ie">president@tudublinsu.ie</a>
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design, and Technology SU	<a href="mailto:presidentiadt@gmail.com">presidentiadt@gmail.com</a>
National College of Ireland Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@ncisu.ie">president@ncisu.ie</a>
DCU Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@dcusu.ie">president@dcusu.ie</a>
National College of Art and Design SU	<a href="mailto:ncadsu@gmail.com">ncadsu@gmail.com</a>

##### **South**

Waterford IT Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@witsu.ie">president@witsu.ie</a>
UCC Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@uccsu.ie">president@uccsu.ie</a>
MTU Cork Students' Union	<a href="mailto:supresident@cit.ie">supresident@cit.ie</a>
MTU Kerry Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@ittraleesu.ie">president@ittraleesu.ie</a>
Carlow College Students' Union	<a href="mailto:supres@carlowcollege.ie">supres@carlowcollege.ie</a>
IT Carlow Students' Union	<a href="mailto:supresident@itcarlow.ie">supresident@itcarlow.ie</a>

Carlow College of Further Education\* [cifestudentcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:cifestudentcouncil@gmail.com)

\*Please note that as candidate members, Carlow College of Further Education cannot nominate or vote currently. It is still worth reaching out to them as a college of Further Education to see the issues their students are facing.

**Border, Midlands and Western Region:**

NUI Galway Students' Union	<a href="mailto:su.president@nuigalway.ie">su.president@nuigalway.ie</a>
GMIT Students' Union	<a href="mailto:supresident@gmit.ie">supresident@gmit.ie</a>
IT Sligo Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@itssu.ie">president@itssu.ie</a>
Letterkenny IT Students' Union	<a href="mailto:supresident@lyit.ie">supresident@lyit.ie</a>
St. Angela's Students' Union	<a href="mailto:suprez@stangelas.nuigalway.ie">suprez@stangelas.nuigalway.ie</a>
Athlone IT Students' Union	<a href="mailto:supres@ait.ie">supres@ait.ie</a>
Dundalk IT Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@dkitsu.ie">president@dkitsu.ie</a>
Maynooth Students' Union	<a href="mailto:president@msu.ie">president@msu.ie</a>

**NUS-USI Colleges**

Ulster University SU	<a href="mailto:president@uusuu.org">president@uusuu.org</a>
Queens University Belfast SU	<a href="mailto:su.president@qub.ac.uk">su.president@qub.ac.uk</a>
St Mary's SU	<a href="mailto:supres@stmarys-belfast.ac.uk">supres@stmarys-belfast.ac.uk</a>
Stranmillis University SU	<a href="mailto:president@stran.ac.uk">president@stran.ac.uk</a>

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**Sample nomination letter: For SU Presidents**

FAO USI Elections Sub Committee,

A chara,

I wish to nominate Ms. Josephine Soap to run for the position of President of USI in the upcoming elections. Her email is [joforpres@gmail.com](mailto:joforpres@gmail.com) and she can be contacted on 086xxxxxxx.

Mise le meas,  
Regina Adams,  
President, Ballybréag IT Students' Union

End\*

**Sample email: For candidates running in USI Elections**

Dear X,

I am writing to you this morning to request your nomination for the position of X, on the USI Executive Team in the upcoming elections.

If elected, some ideas I hope to bring to the role are X Y and Z.

I look forward to speaking with you all over the coming weeks, to gather your thoughts and ideas on how I can best support your Union's needs, if elected, and would love to arrange a call with you to discuss.

I'm still working on my manifesto but I will let you know when it's completed. I hope to receive your support to run in the upcoming election, and would be delighted if you would take the time to nominate me.

To nominate me, please fill in the attached document which includes my personal contact details, signed by the President and on the letter-headed paper of your organisation and email a scanned copy of the nomination document to [elections@usi.ie](mailto:elections@usi.ie) marked for the attention of USI Elections Sub-Committee (original posted or hand-delivered nominations will also be accepted).

Thank you for taking the time to read my nomination request.

Mise le meas,  
Seán Ó hEilít,  
Ballybréag IT Students' Union  
End\*

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## **Step 2: Writing a manifesto:**

From there, it's a good idea to start jotting down your points about what you'd like to achieve in the position. This is usually called a manifesto, and it sets out what you'd like to achieve and work on if elected. Here are some tips for putting together a manifesto:

- Read up on the role description. You'll find plenty of information in the [USI Constitution](#).
- Speak to the officer who is currently in the role; they'll give you a good idea of the ins and outs of the job and will be able to answer any questions.
- Search for previous manifestos online. If you facebook or google search for the positions you are running then you should pull up some results.
- Split your ideas up under sections of what the role you're running for deals with. Most of the roles are very multi-faceted, so for example a regional officer would deal with campus engagement, USI campaigns, and supporting MOs.
- Get a headshot taken. This can be done by a friend, but it's good to put a headshot on the front of your manifesto so people know your face.

## **The Election:**

The Election for USI Exec Team roles takes place at USI's National Congress. **This year Congress will take place online from the 6th to the 8th of April.**

Congress is the supreme governing body of the Union of Students in Ireland. It decides the policy of the union and holds the National Council, officers and committees of the union to account.



Every year, usually in April, the Union of Students in Ireland gathers representatives of all the member colleges together in one place, or in some years virtually, to decide on the policies of the union, the future plans of the organisation and to elect the core of its Executive Team – the group of officers whose job it is to lead the whole organisation. Each delegate at Congress represents 1,000 students.

You can find out more information about congress here: <http://congress.usi.ie/>

*Normally, if you are running as a candidate, you will go to Congress with the delegation of your MO. However, this is not always the case, and if for whatever reason you can't go with your MO Delegation then please contact [president@usi.ie](mailto:president@usi.ie)*

### **Delegate entitlement**

Each MO can send a number of delegates to Congress based on the number of members in each students' union. This will be communicated to the Students' Union President by the USI Congress Director. The voting entitlements for Congress are released one month before Congress on the 6th of March and will also be found on the USI website.

It's worth noting that colleges with a larger student population will have a larger voting entitlement and may have a bigger influence on elections, however it is still important to speak to as many SUs as possible when running your campaign.

### **Hustings and Mandates**

A husting is a meeting at which candidates in an election address potential voters.

The only official USI Election hustings is the one that takes place at Congress, but some SUs hold their own hustings before congress, to mandate their delegates on how to vote in each election.

Local hustings take place in the run up to Congress, at a Student Council/Senate, where candidates speak for between 3-5 minutes about what they would do if elected, and the issues they are passionate about. They may then be asked questions in relation to their manifesto, or how they would tackle specific issues relating to the SU they are addressing. Student representatives then vote on which candidate they think is most suitable for the position, delegates from that SU who attend Congress will be mandated to vote for the candidate who receive the majority vote from the Council/Senate.

USI does not get involved in any mandates/free vote discussions with individual SUs.

SUs who don't have a mandate will often refer to how they are voting as a 'free vote' which means it is up to each individual delegate to decide how they will vote. Some delegations may still have meetings before the vote at Congress to discuss how they may be voting.

Due to COVID-19 it is likely that SU hustings in 2021 will take place online, so it is important you are prepared for online hustings (have stable internet connection, no background distractions etc).

When you are nominated, you will receive an email with all the info about local hustings from the Students' Union class/student council secretary or the Students' Union President. It is important to make the hustings if you can but don't stress if you can't make it. Some SUs allow pre-recorded videos to be submitted instead.

## **Voting at Congress**

Voting at Congress takes place via secret ballot which means nobody knows how anybody else will cast their vote. The system used at Congress is PR-STV (Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote) which is whereby voters are given a ballot paper with a list of candidates, as well as RON, and are asked to rank candidates in order of preference by putting a 1 next to their favourite, a 2 next to their second favourite, and so on.

Where there are multiple candidates running for a position, elections can often be won depending on the number of 2nd and 3rd preference votes a candidate receives which is why voters are often asked to vote the whole way down the ballot sheet, although it is not required.

## **What's RON?**

Re-Open Nominations, often abbreviated to RON, is an option for voters at the bottom of a ballot paper. If a voter finds that none of the candidates standing for election are suitable for the position, they can vote to have nominations re-opened and allow other people to put themselves forward for the position. Therefore, even if an election only has one candidate, there is still another option for voters if they do not think the candidate running for the position is suitable.

## **Other campaign tips:**

### **Try meet with delegations before or during Congress:**

Ask the delegate leader can you grab a few minutes to chat to their delegates, especially where delegations are not pre-mandated or have not held a local hustings.

### **Use your imagination!**

Materials are allowed in USI elections, and while giving out fancy things never won an election, quirky campaign techniques are always memorable. In the past we've had candidates make little paper flags with their campaign slogan, and even someone who gave out tayo sandwiches! Be mindful if you are paying for materials that you don't go above the spending limit keep all receipts for purchases.

With Congress going online this year, social media will be your best friend, so try think of imaginative ways to use social media to promote your campaign. Sponsored ads or posts will also count towards to €350 spending limit.

### **Posters (physical Congress only)**

Typically, candidates in USI elections will get posters done for the campaign, and stick these in designated areas around the hotel where congress is held. The Congress Director will make clear where you can stick posters. This helps make an impression on the delegates, as they may never have met you before, and you might not get a chance to speak to everyone before the vote.

### **Don't stress about spending money**

By and large, elections are won on your ideas and how you get them across. The best way to win is by talking to people and hearing what they have to say.

## Current USI officers and their contact details

Position	Name	Email	Phone
President	Lorna Fitzpatrick	<a href="mailto:president@usi.ie">president@usi.ie</a>	0872763941
Vice President for Academic Affairs	Kevin McStravock	<a href="mailto:academicaffairs@usi.ie">academicaffairs@usi.ie</a>	0868165498
Vice President for Welfare	Clare Austick	<a href="mailto:welfare@usi.ie">welfare@usi.ie</a>	0860651226
Vice President for Campaigns	Craig McHugh	<a href="mailto:campaigns@usi.ie">campaigns@usi.ie</a>	0860284961
Vice President for Equality and Citizenship	Marie Lyons	<a href="mailto:equality@usi.ie">equality@usi.ie</a>	0864149758
Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region	Gary Tobin	<a href="mailto:bmw@usi.ie">bmw@usi.ie</a>	0860651225
Vice President for the Southern Region	Ciara Kealy	<a href="mailto:south@usi.ie">south@usi.ie</a>	0860284970
Vice President for the Dublin Region	Megan O'Neill	<a href="mailto:dublin@usi.ie">dublin@usi.ie</a>	0860651229
Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge	Clíodhna Ní Dhufaigh	<a href="mailto:gaeilge@usi.ie">gaeilge@usi.ie</a>	0860651227
Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (Part-Time)	Adam Clarke	<a href="mailto:postgrad@usi.ie">postgrad@usi.ie</a>	0860651228 (Available to call Wednesdays and Fridays)
NUS USI President	Ellen Fearon	<a href="mailto:ellen.fearon@nistudents.org">ellen.fearon@nistudents.org</a>	00447523189884