**Congress Clár Annual Report Template**

Name: Adam Clarke

Position: Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

As the 3rd Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs, this year has been one of challenges, opportunities, and unique experiences. It has been an honour and a privilege to have been elected by Congress to serve in this position.

### PhD Workers Rights

As we know, there are a broad range of issues that fall under the Postgraduate umbrella. There are so many different types of postgraduate study and many have very strong positions about how they are recognised and treated. I have worked this year to build relationships with groups across the postgraduate landscape, hear their concerns and work with them, where possible, to advance these issues. Postgraduates who are required or expected to teach during their course or research have faced serious challenges and are not provided with the supports or protections that they should be. I have worked with these postgraduates and with SIPTU to try identify potential ways of getting the Department to change their practices. One key avenue we have being working towards is the establishment of a Postgraduate Forum within the Department to address this and many other issues faced by those in postgraduate education.

I look forward to continuing to work with grassroots groups to further this work. We need to work together to achieve an overhaul of current practices.

### Postgraduate Representative Training

I have coordinated with NStEP’s Postgraduate Engagement intern throughout the entirety of their internship on improving postgraduate engagement. At the time of writing this report, her research report is being finalized and should be available publicly towards the end of March. Ideally the findings of this report can be used by USI and NStEP to improve postgraduate engagement within their academic experience, including communication and coordination with the wider USI.

### Postgraduate Symposium

At the time of writing, the USI Postgraduate Symposium 2021 is due to take place on the 18th of March via Zoom conference. It is my hope that the event will drive further postgraduate engagement with USI as we address a variety of issues affecting postgraduates, from supervisor relations, to post-PhD pathways, to accessibility within postgraduate education and research.

Postgraduate Funding in Northern Ireland

My objective was to ensure that USI engaged with the work of NUS-USI and affiliated MO’s in Northern Ireland on issues relating to postgraduates. The key issue that emerged this year was within postgraduate taught cycles wherein average costs of programs were rising, however available public funding did not rise alongside these increases, thereby making education less accessible. I coordinated with student activists to engage with and promote the #FundOurPostgrads campaign, attending and speaking at a town hall event regarding the issue, and calling on Minister Diane Dodds to address this major issue facing Northern Ireland’s postgraduate population.

International Postgraduate Affairs

My initial objective was to highlight the difficulty non-EU postgraduates face in terms of the financial and time costings of renewing their visas, as well as travel restrictions creating difficulty for a profession that requires a degree of mobility. Over the course of my year, in consultation with International Students for Change (ISC) and the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS), this goal expanded to highlighting inconsistencies with treatment of international students in Ireland. International students are subjected to additional fees in the form of visa renewal, but also must pay tax as though they are “ordinarily resident” in Ireland, two costs that do not correlate and drain already precious financial resources from struggling international students.

MO Capacity Building

My objective has been to assist member organisations build up their capacity in engaging and representing their postgraduate community. I created a survey at the beginning of the year to assess current levels of postgraduate representation across MO’s in order to identify the degree of work required within each campus for postgrad representation. Additionally, I have worked with individual presidents, education officers, and postgraduate officers to build upon current structures within their campuses to improve conditions for postgrads in the long-term.

Review of Postgraduate Affairs position

My objective has been to assess the role of VPPGA within USI while performing it, taking note of how USI facilitates the role and whether there is a need to move the role towards a full-time position at such a time, when this is financially feasible. I intend to create a more comprehensive report towards the end of May based upon my experience within the role.