



USI Comhdháil 2022



Candidate

VP Postgraduate Affairs

Waqar Ahmed

Manifesto



congress.usi.ie/elections 



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn



A chara



Dear All!

My name is Waqar Ahmed (he/him). I am a Postgrad Research Student and Postgraduate Student Representative at Dublin City University.

I'm excited about the opportunity to represent postgraduate taught and research students across Ireland as Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (VPPGA) at Union of Students in Ireland (USI).

I have over 8 years of experience in policymaking, coordination, postgrad engagement, leadership, media practice, and strategic communication.

As VP Postgrad Affairs, I am campaigning on four agendas:

1. Accessible Mental Health
2. Postgrad Working Rights
3. Equitable, Inclusive And forward-thinking work environment for all
4. Postgraduate Student Engagement

We will need to fight for quality of stipend, mental wellbeing, living conditions, affordable housing, publicly funded education, better engagement for postgrads.

This online manifesto is a working document ahead of Congress. I want to hear your ideas, suggestions and criticism to make my policies achievable, effective and inclusive. Please feel free to engage with this manifesto and contact me.

Le dea-mhéin,

Waqar



852139794



waqar.ahmed3@mail.dcu.ie

ABOUT ME



QUALIFICATIONS

I am a second-year International PhD Communications student at DCU. I have a Postgraduate Research in Communications and a Bachelor in Communication Studies



WAQAR FOR USI VPPGA

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

- PhD and M.Phil Coordinator (Nov 2019–Oct 2020),
- Research Assistant (February 2018–July 2018)
- Teaching Assistant (Aug 2016–Jun 2018)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Associate Producer (Nov 2014–Apr 2016)
- Programme Coordinator (Jun 2014–Aug 2014)
- Trainee Reporter (May 2013–Jun 2013)
- Co-founder of OutsWork (Apr 2019–Jan 2022)

COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE

- Country Consultant (Jun 2018–Dec 2018) at GIZ Germany
- Event Management Volunteer (July 2013–August 2013) at LCCI

STUDENT UNION EXPERIENCE

- Postgraduate Student Officer (Oct 2021–present) at DCUSU.
- Member of Postgraduate Student Engagement Working Group (Dec 2021–Present) at the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).
- Member of Postgraduate Working Group (Nov 2021–Present) at USI.
- Society President (2010–2014) at GCS
- Faculty Manager of Students Societies (2015–2017).



01

Accessible Mental Health



- Postgraduate students have diversified mental health challenges according to the nature of their program, and circumstances.
- The high prevalence of mental health problems in Postgrad students is critical in terms of individual suffering, organizational and societal costs.
- I am concerned about the potential impact of current academic working conditions on mental health, particularly in PhD students.

FOR ACCESSIBLE MENTAL HEALTH, I WILL WORK WITH VP WELFARE USI AND POSTGRAD OFFICERS AT MOS FOR PUBLICLY FUNDED ACCESSIBLE AND DIVERSIFIED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS.



02

Postgrad Working Rights

- PGRs value teaching & demonstrating opportunities but feel undervalued by pay & conditions.
- The PhD stipend was 13k in 2001 and still varies from 14,000 to 18,000 in 2022.
- PhD students with families can't access working family payment (for families with low income) because their stipend isn't counted as income.

WORKERS' RIGHTS, AND A LIVING WAGE FOR ALL

Work with Postgraduate rights groups, worker alliances, IUA, and SIPTU to demand:

- Recognition of PhD students as research workers with contracts, hosting agreements and stipends based on the living wage.
- An end to unpaid teaching. A fair payment will also benefit undergraduates through improved teaching quality.
- Publicly funded education, accessible for all.

**POSTGRADUATE
WORKING RIGHTS
CHARTER**

03 Equitable, Inclusive And Forward-Thinking Work Environment For All



- Equal academic and professional opportunities for Irish, EU and non-EU, mature, disabled, marginalized, refugees, asylum-seeking and minority students.
- Campaign for transparency on EU and Non-EU postgraduate fees.
- To improve employability and opportunities for part-time postgrad students.
- Support final year students with funding extensions and post-study rights.
- I will liaise with the VP Welfare, MOSs' and Postgrad Officers to campaign for the rights of disabled postgrad students through forums where disabled students get together, express solidarity to fuel the policy of their interests.



04 Postgraduate Student Engagement

I aim to increase Postgraduate Student Engagement in MOs and USI.

- Better support and funding for postgraduate students to join societies.
- Better and accessible Postgrad Welcome and induction.
- I will develop a comprehensive training initiative to support Postgraduate Class Representatives and SU Officers to take part in societies, mobilise for their issues, participate in SU elections and organize social engagement events.
- Take forward the wonderful work done by current VP Postgrad Affairs on Virtual Community of Practice.
- Work with USI Executive, USI National Council, MO and Postgrad Officer to expand Postgraduate officer (s).

