

# USI Comhdháil 2023

## Unprioritised list of new motions and interim policies for consideration by USI Comhdháil 2023. (PCD2)

06/03/2023 14:24

### Notice of Errata

This list is prepared subject to amendment and **will** contain errors from transcription, omission, formatting and editing, in addition to errors committed during the drafting of the motions. Furthermore, it is possible that legitimate amendments to motions have not been caught for this draft. They will be updated in later builds.

It contains the motions newly proposed to Comhdháil 2023 and interim policies adopted by USI Comhairle Náisiúnta.

Motions based on current interim policy are marked (CN).

Additionally, the topic areas wherein motions are contained are subject to amendment by USI Steering Committee until the publication of the final Comhdháil Document (CD1).

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## Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance

### AA 1 Placement Campaign

#### the Academic Affairs Working Group

##### *Congress notes*

Many students must complete mandatory placement as part of their studies. Some placements are between 12-36 weeks with many students working up to 40 hours a week while on placement. Most students are not paid for their placements or else they are paid very little.

##### *Congress further notes*

Some students need to commute long distances for placement or will have to sort additional accommodation to carry out their placement. This can leave students in financial difficulty.

##### *Congress recognises*

The recommendations made by the McHugh Report in 2021. The USI Placement and Work-Based Learning Strategy 2021-2024, and the USI Submission to Longer Term Review of Student Nurse & Midwife Matters, and the motion Summer Time Placement 2021AA5.

##### *Congress mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to establish a placement committee to be made up of sabbatical officers, student representatives and students who are on/have been on placement including but not limited to teaching, social care, nursing & midwifery, allied health sciences and more.

##### *Congress mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns to run a national placement campaign based on the findings from the placement survey that was conducted in March 2023. The findings of the survey should be used to lobby for a living wage, or at least financial assistance for students who have to go on placement as part of their degree. The findings of the survey should be shared with, but not limited to member organisations, trade

unions, higher education institutions across the island, accrediting bodies who have students on placement and the Department of Higher Education.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns should also meet with trade unions who have high levels of students on placement in their field.

The campaign should also be based around the inputs from the placement committee and information provided by the respective trade unions.

Therefore congress replaces: 20 A 12: Placement Campaign & 2022 A 2: Travel Allowance for Placement Students

## **AA 2 Leaving Certificate Results the Academic Affairs Working Group**

### *Congress notes*

Leaving Certificate results are traditionally issued in mid-August. Since the Covid-19 Pandemic they have been released in September for the past three years. The 2023 Leaving Certificate results are expected to be delayed again this year. There has been frustration across the board due to this. Members of ISSU have expressed disappointment in the delay. The Higher Education Sector, including USI, Higher Education Institutions, lecturers and students have expressed their frustration with the expected delay this year.

The State Exams Commission have stated the delay is due to:

The provision of a deferred sitting of the examination for candidates who experience close family bereavement or who are unable to sit their examinations due to serious accident, injury or illness; or on public health grounds due to Covid-19

Addressing the impact of shortages in the numbers of teachers required to fill examiner positions to mark the written examinations (while marking has already started, the SEC is continuing to recruit examiners noting that Covid-19 is also having an impact). The requirement to be a corrector for state examinations is to have 1) a degree in education or 2) be currently doing a professional masters of education (PME).

In advance of the issue of the results, sufficient time must be allowed for an extensive range of checks and quality assurance procedures which are required in the resulting process to ensure that the highest standards possible are maintained<sup>1</sup>

### *Congress further notes*

The negative impacts of Leaving Certificate results being delayed includes, but is not limited to:

- Issues with students being under pressure to secure safe and affordable accommodation for that academic year.
- Issues with orientation, traditional first year students started back the week before all students returned to campus. The earlier start was established to show students around campus, educate them on the support and services that exist on campus so they are aware where they can get assistance. The delayed orientation has negatively impacted this process for institutions and student unions.

- Issues with students in Ireland who are opting to attend higher level education outside of the Republic of Ireland as they will have been conditionally allocated spaces by a certain starting date and could potentially lose their space or have to defer the year due to the delay.
- Disruption to student learning due to possible shorter, more condensed first semester and changed to how first year students are typically accessed in those modules.
- Due to the delay there will be a tight timeline between results and beginning the academic year, with issues for students who may wish to appeal grades and consider second and third round offers.

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

The Vice President of Academic Affairs to submit a Freedom of Information to the higher education institutions across the Republic of Ireland. The FOI should ask for the 1) the number of first year students accepted through CAO from 2013-2023, 2) the number of first year students that withdrew from their course between 2013-2023 and 3) the number of students who opted to defer their course between 2013-2023.

The VP for Academic Affairs should also submit a Freedom of Information to higher education institutions in the North of Ireland asking for 1) the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who applied to attend their institution from 2013-2023, 2) the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who were offered spaces to attend their institution from 2013-2023, 3) the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who accepted their offers to attend their institution from 2013-2023, 4) the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who withdrew from their course between 2013-2023 and 5) the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who had to defer their course between 2013-2023. The aim of the FOI requests will be to investigate whether the delay of Leaving Certificate results has impacted retention rates in higher education.

The VP for Academic Affairs should also gather focus groups of students who started first year pre-covid and post-covid to compare the experience of starting for both cohorts and record the opinions that were stated.

The VP for Academic Affairs should then present the findings to the relevant bodies in higher education and post-primary education, with a particular focus on the findings being presented to the Department of Education.

#### *Congress further mandates*

The VP Campaigns to run a campaign advertising how students can apply to be a state examiner, what the minimum requirements are to be a state examiner and what they will earn if they are recruited as a state examiner.

### **AA 3 International Students in Full-Time Elected Roles**

#### **TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Congress notes*

International students are involved in Students' Unions in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, members, class representatives, part-time officers).



### *Congress notes with Concern*

Information around visa provision following graduation from a programme can often be complex, and lead to lack-of-clarity around whether an international student can run for full-time elected positions in both local MO (member organisation) and USI elections.

### *Congress further notes with Concern*

This lack of clarity can be a barrier to international students becoming full-time elected officers in the student movement, resulting in non-optimal representation and diversity within said student movement.

### *Congress therefore mandates*

VP for Academic Affairs to generate and present a short paper regarding the feasibility of international students running for full-time elected positions in a Students' Union, and to provide recommendations for local MO's/USI should major concerns be highlighted.

## **AA 4 Creative Student Representation**

### **NCAD Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Creative arts students are facing the intersecting crises of the underfunding of both the arts and higher education. As well as this, the unique needs of creative arts students often go unconsidered in high level discussions around higher education funding.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

The number of students in the creative arts and entering the workforce is increasing each year, with funding for arts staying relatively similar. There is a growing difficulty in accessing grants or funding and the Arts Council funding is not available to undergraduate students.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

Students in Creative Arts courses are required to spend significant amounts on additional course costs in software and material fees.

#### *Comhdháil believes*

There is a need for informed discussions within USI, as well as interdepartmental communications to ensure that these students are not continually disadvantaged by a lack of collaboration between the Department of FHEIRS and the Department of TCAGSM.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns to support and facilitate MOs that specialise in creative arts in organising an annual campaign educating student artists and designers on issues relevant to their professional practice, and the rights of creatives on the island of Ireland. The campaign should also seek the following;

- Additional funding to cover material costs in all Higher Education Institutions
- Introduction of Arts Council funding for ungraduated artists to avail of outside of term time
- The continuation of the Universal Basic Income for Artists scheme following the pilot, and further expansion of the scheme so that students in creative courses may avail of it
- Increased mental health funding for art and design schools

- An end to the disparity between the funding for creative arts courses in comparison to more traditional courses.
- Allocation of funding to cover the costs of industry standard technology.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The creation of a Creative Arts subcommittee that tackles issues that are exclusively faced by Creative Arts students. This subcommittee will consist of the VP for Academic Affairs, VP for Campaigns, at least one representative from each MO that specialises in Creative Arts, and any other student representatives/freelance artists.

#### *Comhdháil also mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide targeted support to member organisations with creative arts courses to promote and ensure representation of students at a local level.

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We propose to redact 2022 A 3: Creative Student Representation and replace it with the proposed altered version above.

## **AA 5 Academic Integrity** **the 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 develop an academic integrity campaign, this campaign should provide information on what academic integrity is and the types of academic misconduct exist.

The VP Academic Affairs should work with the National Academic Integrity Network to send up to date resources and materials about academic integrity to local students' unions. Graphics should be sent to member organisations as students prepare and undertake assessments during repeats, semester one and semester two.

The VP Academic Affairs should also create a step by step guide with the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) for students to understand how and when they should report academic misconduct to QQI under section 43a of the Quality and Qualifications Act 2019.

Therefore congress repeals: 20 A 6: Academic Integrity

## **AA 6 Artificial Intelligence**

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

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become topical this year as OpenAI created ChatGPT and released it on November 30th 2022. It is a language model of AI, which means that it can take in and incorporate background information, sources, quotations and lists of ideas. It creates a series of words based on its

statistical analysis of huge volumes of text pulled from the internet. There has been a lot of speculation that students will use and have used ChatGPT to a cheat' in their assessments.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

Google has launched its own artificial intelligence-powered chatbot due to the success of ChatGPT (Microsoft and potential Bing integration). Due to this, artificial intelligence is something that will continue to grow and we must decide if this is something higher education should embrace or reject. However, the use of artificial intelligence has become increasingly popular in work places. Therefore, it is the view of the Union of Students in Ireland that this is something we should be proactive about.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to run a campaign providing information to students about what artificial intelligence is and the strengths and limitations of using this tool in higher education. This campaign should include ethical uses of artificial intelligence in assessment that align with principles of academic integrity.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to lobby for a move towards teaching AI literacy to staff and students in institutions across Ireland, such as but not limited to, the introduction of an accredited optional module or an online course.

The VP for Academic Affairs should also work with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) to develop ways in which AI can be incorporated into teaching, learning and assessment and present them to member

organisations, to try combat institutions reverting back to traditional forms of assessment i. e. , end of year closed book exams. The information should then be shared with NUS-USI

## AA 7 Universal Design

### Vice President for Academic Affairs

#### *Comhdháil recognizes*

The importance of universal design for learning in education for students. UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn, including students with disabilities. UDL aims to improve the education experience for all students. This is done by institutions introducing more flexible methods of teaching, learning, assessment and service provision to cater for how diverse learners are in education.

#### *Comhdháil further recognizes*

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning's open access digital badge initiative, AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning have created the digital badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. The principles are as follows:

Provide multiple means of Representation such as

- Perception
- Language, mathematical expressions, and symbols
- Comprehension

To stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning by promotion various ways of engaging with material. This is the "why of learning".

Provide multiple means of Action and Expression such as

- Physical action
- Expression & Communication
- Executive functions
- Present information and content in a variety of ways to support understanding by students with different learning styles/abilities.

This is the "What of Learning".

Provide multiple means of Engagement such as

- Recruiting interest
- Sustaining effort & persistence Self regulation
- Offers options for students to demonstrate their learning in various ways (e. g. , allow choice of assessment type).

This is the "How of Learning".

### *Comhdháil notes*

Many member organizations have expressed concern that the principles of UDL haven't been carried out in their institution. Some have expressed that there has been cases where some lecturers haven't provided lecture notes to students. AHEAD has posted a press release online urging teaching staff to put their lecture notes online – stated "By putting lecture notes online, students with visual and other impairments can prepare for lectures where note taking is not an option for them". Additionally, choice is not offered to students to demonstrate and share their knowledge unless the disability support services on campus state otherwise for individual students.

### *Comhdháil mandates*

- The VP Academic Affairs shall submit a Freedom of Information request to survey the number of staff in an institution vs the number of UDL badges in the institution.
- The VP Academic Affairs shall submit a Freedom of Information request to survey the number of teaching staff in an institution vs the number of UDL Badges teaching staff have obtained.
- The VP Academic Affairs shall develop a survey asking students to define what they think Universal Design is and whether they feel the practices are adequately carried out in their institution.
- The VP Academic Affairs shall develop a Universal Design best practice guidelines for member organizations to introduce as policy.
- The regional officers shall help conduct the Universal Design survey and promote it to students in their respective regions.

### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to write a report on the findings and present the information to the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the Higher Education Authority. The VP for Academic Affairs should also work with the NUS-USI President to ensure the results are shared with them and they can present the findings to their relevant bodies.

## **AA 8 Parity of Funding for Technological Universities**

### **Presidents' Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Virtually all IOT's (Institutes of Technology) across the island of Ireland have now merged to become TU's (Technological Universities).

#### *Comhdháil notes with Concern*

Despite some progression in the borrowing capacity of TU's, significant disparities still exist between the ability of TU's to borrow money (from the government) compared to so-called a legacy institutions'. One of the major disparities includes the higher interest rates charged to TU's compared to so-called legacy institutions

#### *Comhdháil further notes with Concern*

Elevated interest rates are one of the primary factors preventing TU's from investing in PBS (Purpose-Built Student Accommodation) due to the significant costs that would subsequently need to be covered via excessive rent towards students.

### *Congress believes*

Decreased interest rates towards TU's when borrowing money for the construction of PBS would remove barriers to the construction of PBS within TU's, allowing for greater equity across HEI's on the island of Ireland, as well as alleviate pressure of the housing crisis on third-level students.

### *Congress therefore mandates*

The President and Coiste Gnó to lobby the appropriate ministers in the Irish Government / the HE to reduce this interest rate for TU's, and bring them in line with legacy institutions.

### *Congress further mandates*

*The President to place this on the agenda of the HE board, to encourage all delegates at Comhdháil and SUT (Students' Union Training) to send off drafted emails (draft prepared by the President) to the relevant ministers demanding that the interest rates associated with borrowing for TU's to be decreased and bring them in line with legacy universities, to publish an open letter to the relevant Ministers demanding the same, and all other actions requested at Comhairle Náisiúnta (with appropriate majority of votes) deemed necessary to achieve this parity of funding for TU's.*

### *Repeals*

2021 A NC 8

## **AA 9 HEA Review of Student Charge**

### **Presidents' Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

In 2010, the HE (Higher Education Authority), requested by the Minister for Education and Skills, published a review of the Student Charge (also commonly called a Student Capitation Charge' and a Student Services Charge').

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

The review identified the income and expenditure associated with the student charge, the internal allocation process for the student charge, and the additional charges that are levied on students outside of the student charge.

#### *Comhdháil Applauds*

The HE Review of Student Charge (2010) made several recommendations to HEI's (in receipt of recurrent funding from the HEA) that were beneficial to Students' Union, such that there should be appropriate student involvement in the allocation of the Student Charge, accessible annual reports detailing student charge income and expenditure, consultation processes with local student bodies, and that the consent of the student body should be achieved before the introduction of any levies.

### *Comhdháil notes with Concern*

The HE Review of Student Charge (2010) is outdated, referring to a multitude of IOT's (Institutes of Technology) that no longer exist, as well as Student Charge committees that no longer sit. Furthermore, the Student Charge is what funds the majority of Students' Unions in HEI's across the island of Ireland, but in many cases, is allocated without appropriate student input.

### *Comhdháil believes*

An updated HE Review of the Student Charge would provide up-to-date information on funding arrangements in HEI's across the island of Ireland, as well as highlight failures in HEI's that do not have the recommended student involvement and transparency in the allocation of the Student Charge.

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The President and Coiste Gnó to lobby the appropriate ministers in the Irish Government / the HE to undergo and publish an updated review of the Student Charge in HEI's.

### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The President to

- Place this issue on the agenda of the HE board,
- To encourage all delegates at Congress and SUT (Students' Union Training) to send off drafted emails to the relevant ministers demanding a new review as well as the current concerns around Students' Union funding across HEI's,
- To publish an open letter to the relevant Ministers demanding the same, and

All other actions requested at Comhairle Náisiúnta deemed necessary to achieve this review.

## **AA 10 Open Access and subscription costs**

### **Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs**

#### *Comhdháil notes with Concern:*

That the Irish Libraries Association (ILA) has warned of an electronic content crisis facing libraries and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The IL has said aWe are deeply concerned about the rising costs and unfair licensing conditions for such content training.

#### *Comhdháil recognises:*

The need to increase and improve access to the output of research. The freedom of researchers to publish wherever they feel most appropriate.

#### *Comhdháil believes:*

Access to education is a fundamental right and with the rise in misinformation, it is crucial that all people should have access to research, especially those funded through public investment and/or conducted through public institutions for the public good.

*Comhdháil Further Believes:*

That the soaring costs related to subscription, publication and dissemination of research output that students and libraries are facing create a further barrier to education and take quality material out of the reach of the public and students.

*Comhdháil Further Believes:*

Research must be freely available to the public, permitting any user a free to read' and a free to re-use' access. The only constraints on open access should be that it is achieved whilst satisfying the principle that authors be acknowledged through citation for their work and maintain control over the dignity of their work.

*Comhdháil therefore mandates:*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to lobby the government to take swift action to combat the extortionate subscription costs of publishing and access.

*Comhdháil further mandates:*

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs, alongside the Vice President for Academic Affairs, to organise a campaign to highlight this issue and encourage postgraduate students and academics to opt to make their work publicly available.

*Comhdháil further mandates:*

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to develop a position paper on open access. T The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to collaborate with EuroDoc and other relevant groups to lobby for open access.

*Comhdháil repeals:*

A (NC) 19 a 1: Open Access Policy

2022 A 6: Open Access Policy

## **AA 11 Exceptional and Extenuating Circumstances**

### **Queen's Students' Union**

*Comhdháil notes:*

Students have unexpected circumstances out of their control during their studies and they have the right to receive the right support from their institution throughout a stressful time in their life.

Different institutions often have completely different systems and for students it is difficult to navigate these and have access to the right information.

*Comhdháil further notes:*

Often students are unaware of whether any mitigation will be given to them, and the uncertainty may exacerbate stress they are experiencing.

Flexibility of studies should be built into assessments in consultation with students.



#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

The VP Academic Affairs to conduct research with each MO as to their exceptional or extenuating circumstances system.

The VP Academic Affairs to advocate for students to be able to self-certify without the use of extensive paperwork.

## **AA 12 Postgraduate Engagement and Participation**

### **USI Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Due to the nature of postgraduate programmes, there are often distinct challenges and opportunities for postgraduate engagement. Postgraduates' experiences and needs differ in many ways from undergraduate learning experiences. PGT students often study one-year courses. PGR students do not enroll on courses in a taught environment. Moreover, postgraduate cohorts often have high levels of part-time or distance learning study and large numbers of mature and international students.

#### *Comhdháil believes*

Postgraduate taught students (PGTs) and postgraduate researchers (PGRs) representation and engagement in member organisations (MOs) as well as on relevant committees/boards in higher education institutions (HEIs) benefit the quality of postgraduate education and research experiences.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

Vice President for Dublin, Vice President for the Southern Region, and Vice President for the BMW Region to support member organisations in enhancing engagement with Postgraduate taught students (PGTs) and Postgraduate Researchers and building their communities.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

Vice President for Dublin, Vice President for the Southern Region, Vice President for the BMW Region, and Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to establish and enhance support frameworks for member organisations regarding postgraduate representation in member organisations' elections, class representative councils and institutional committees/boards.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

Vice President for Dublin, Vice President for the Southern Region, Vice President for the BMW Region, and Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to arrange postgraduate support and engagement sessions with the cooperation of member organisations.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to work with Postgraduate Student Engagement Working Group, QQI, NSteP and other stakeholders to map, analyse and report on the current PGR engagement practice in HEIs in the areas of (i) Governance and management, (ii) Student representation, (iii) Quality assurance and enhancement, along with working on the development of the National Postgraduate Student Engagement Network.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby for an increased representation of postgraduate Researchers in relevant national forums, groups, boards and stakeholders related to postgraduate policies and reforms. Union Organisation

# Citizenship Motions

## CZN 1 End Collaboration with Policing

### Queen's Students' Union

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

There are 2 main police forces on the island of Ireland: An Garda SAochAna (the GardaA) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (the PSNI).

USI currently already has limited contact with these police forces, with its main form of interaction coming via the Campus Watch programme, an initiative aimed at protecting students against crime, which involves communication and partnership between USI and the GardaA.

USI also has opportunities for interaction with policing at national levels in terms of policy and advocacy work.

Individual MOs will have various individual relationships and interactions with policing.

#### *Comhdháil notes with Concern:*

There is a growing body of academic work which is multidisciplinary in nature which indicates that policing as an institution is inherently harmful, discriminatory, and violent. Students as a population are consistently overpoliced and treated with contempt by police forces, and a number of populations will disproportionately fall victim to policing harms, including:

- Ethnic minority people
- LGBTQIA+ people
- Disabled people
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Women
- The Traveller community

#### *Comhdháil recognises:*

Individual police officers should still be respected as members of the community and should not be targeted, harassed, or subject to violence in any form.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

USI as an organisation should end any relationships, formal or informal, with policing bodies. They should not commence any new work with police forces. Any signposting resources provided by USI should not include the Garda or the PSNI.

The VP for Equality & Citizenship should pursue relationships with existing policing alternative and police abolition initiatives and seek the facilitation of policing alternative and police abolition education at USI events.

The USI Coiste Gnó should advocate against policing at a political level.

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Campaigns should work with MOs to re-evaluate and reconsider their individual relationships with policing.

## **CZN 2 Commuter Student Survey**

### **Southern Region Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

This year the Vice President of Equality and Citizenship worked hard to organise a national commuter student survey. However, following the resignation of this officer this job has been adopted by the Vice President of Campaigns.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

That survey be completed no later than the beginning of December in future years by one of the officers on the Coiste Gnó.Citizenship

## **CZN 4 International Student Visa Waiver Scheme Within the Irish State**

### **Postgraduate Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

The number of international students studying on the island of Ireland continues to increase. International students contribute enormously to student life and should not experience any undue or unfair restrictions on their lives while studying. The Common Travel Area (CTA) does not apply to international students who do not hold UK or Irish citizenship. Many international students studying in the both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland / north of Ireland face visa-based restrictions on travel within the Irish state. The current immigration system requires many international students to apply for short-term visas to attend events/activities within the Irish state, which is onerous, overly bureaucratic, time-consuming, and limits participation in student life.

#### *Comhdháil recognises*

The current policy does not address the visa issues faced by international students and Student Union officers studying and working in the Republic of Ireland, respectively.

#### *Comhdháil believes*

International students should not face additional barriers to travel or to participate in opportunities on the island of Ireland. International students studying in both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland / north of Ireland should be able to travel without restriction on the island to participate in educational, social and student experience activities.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and USI Coiste Gnó to secure the implementation of a travel visa waiver - or visa exemption - system within the Irish state for all international students registered as studying in further or higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland / north of Ireland.

#### *Comhdháil repeals*

2022 I 4: International Student VIS Waiver SchemeCitizenship

## **CZN 5 Political Engagement Strategy 2023-2026**

### **the USI Campaigns Strategy Committee**

#### *Comhdháil adopts:*

The USI Political Engagement Strategy 2023-2026

#### *Comhdháil repeals:*

15 CZN 7, 2022 N 3, 2021 UO 10

## **CZN 6 Reforming Immigration Policy**

### **CMLOG**

#### *Congress notes:*

The “New Immigration Regime for Full Time Non-EE Students” was written in January 2011 is outdated and needs reform.

#### *Congress further notes:*

The policy does not accommodate international students from taking Full Time roles in a Students’ Union.

#### *Congress mandates:*

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to undertake a review of the “New Immigration Regime for Full Time Non-EE Students” and suggest changes to ensure International Students can fully engage with their Students Union and that their rights are supported.

#### *Congress further mandates:*

The review of the “New Immigration Regime for Full Time Non-EE Students” to be presented to and approved by congress in 2024. The changes should then be proposed to government and campaigned for Citizenship

## **CZN 7 Living Wage for Student Workers**

### **UCC Students’ Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes that*

There is an ongoing cost of living crisis, across accommodation, transport, food, and fuel. More and more students have to take part-time and full-time work to meet the demands of these crises, affecting their study and well-being.

Many Students’ Unions (SU) and Higher Education Institutes (HEI) employ students in various capacities; for example, University College Cork employs students on part-time (16 hour/week max) contracts at a special aStudent Helpa Rate of Pay, which in 2023 is currently equivalent to National Minimum Wage (NMW; 11.30 euro/hour).

The USI has this year began important work in mapping the landscape of salaries and wages in it’s own Member Organisations (MO), with a view to ensuring Officers of MOs are paid a wage which reflects their hard work.

#### *Comhdháil believes that*

Even without regard to the rising cost of living, all workers are entitled to a wage which affords them a socially acceptable standard of living. The Living Wage Technical Group (a working group of economic institutions and trade unions; livingwage. ie) calculate this to be 13.85 euro/hour in 2022/23 for the south of Ireland, while the Living Wage Foundation (a UK based equivalent working group) calculate it to be 10.90 GBP/hour for the north of Ireland.

Poverty wages are deleterious to the wellbeing and academic performance of our members, and fighting together with student workers will pay dividends in increasing student engagement and informing the wider student body of their rights as workers.

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

That Regional Officers, with the support of the VP Campaigns and President, will investigate these issues and collect data regarding student employment at MOs and HEIs, with specific reference to hourly rates of pay and numbers of students employed.

That Regional Officers will support MOs to engage students who work within their HEI or SU in this exercise, and develop campaigns to achieve a Living Wage.

That the Coiste Gnó engage with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science (DFHERIS) to introduce a floor to the HEI Salary Scales no less than the Living Wage as calculated by the Living Wage Technical Group. Citizenship

## **CZN 8 Free Transportation for Students**

### **Dublin Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

Students continue to struggle with the cost of education from extortionate fees to the ever-rising costs of accommodation. Transport is an additional large cost burden for students.

Students are commuting at high rates but the commutes themselves can be almost as expensive as renting in certain cases. Students who have the option to avail of public transportation should be encouraged to use it as it is more environmentally friendly and does not require parking spaces in the vicinity of the college, which is not offered in some institutions.

#### *Comhdháil celebrates*

The cities and countries across the globe who offer free transport for students including Strakonice Czechia, Catania Italy, Cascais Portugal, the Netherlands and Germany.

#### *Comhdháil acknowledges*

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

Additionally, the National Transport Authority (NTA) have created a temporary lower fare for young people and students.

In the north of Ireland the Secretary of State announced a rise in transport fares by 7%.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to include free transportation for students in each pre-budget submission until it has been attained.

The VP Campaigns to include a demand for free transportation in any cost-of-living campaign until the demand has been met.

VP Campaigns to contact NUS-USI and do relevant research to ensure that the campaign includes information for students in the north.

This motion replaces 20 N (NC) 5 Motion on Free Public Transport for Students Citizenship

## **CZN 9 Solidarity Initiatives for Residents in Direct Provision**

### **Dublin Region Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil believes*

Direct Provision and the institutionalisation of asylum seekers in Ireland, is a violation of human rights. Many residents in direct provision are given substandard food which they can only avail of at certain times. The current policy regarding direct provision residents, means that any asylum seeker arriving in Ireland, will not be given emergency accommodation, leaving asylum seekers in a vulnerable position, relying on supports from community groups.

#### *Comhdháil recognises*

That USI and their member organisations spend time travelling to regional communities for Comhairle Náisiúnta and Comhdháil.

#### *Comhdháil Celebrates*

The 2022 ComhAirlé Náisiúnta in TUSSU Athlone which asked member organisations to bring items for donation to their local direct provision centre, Esker House and the Midlands Simon Community for Christmas.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

The relevant vice presidents for Dublin, South and BMW shall assist host member organisations of Comhairle Náisiúnta to set up collections for local direct provision and local refugee communities.

#### *Comhdháil also mandates*

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to circulate an updated document every year with reputable organisations that take donations and other relevant contacts for local communities to USI member organisations.

## **CZN 10      Menstrual Leave**

### **Dublin Region Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

Period pain, or dysmenorrhea, is common; more than half of menstruating people experience pain for at least one or two days every month. For some, the pain is so severe that they are unable to perform normal activities for several days, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

#### *Comhdháil celebrates*

Spain has legislated two days of menstrual leave every month in February 2023, as well as the standing legislation in Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and Zambia.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

The president to work with the USI governance committee to develop a report for the possible outcomes of a two day menstrual leave for coiste gno and staff.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The USI president shall present the report to comhairle náisiúnta upon completion which must be at or before the 2024 crossover comhairle náisiúnta.

## National Affairs

**SOME MOTIONS IN THE NATIONAL AFFAIRS SECTION MAY REQUIRE AN AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF 66%+1 TO BE PASSED BY USI COMHDHÁIL. A FINAL RULING ON WHICH MOTIONS FALL INTO THIS CATEGORY WILL BE MADE PRIOR TO COMHDHÁIL.**

### NA (NC)1: Government Financial Aid for Students Who Do Not Qualify for the Free Fees Initiative

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

That the Budget 2023 provided a €1000 refund to those who had paid their €3000 Student Contribution Charge in full; anybody who were due to make a payment and/or made a payment in any way towards their Student Contribution Charge received a form of credit, reduction or refund if they qualify under the free fees scheme as an undergraduate student.

#### *Comhdháil Applauds*

The refund was a step in the right direction toward the abolishment of fees for students in Ireland. Although a one-time, cost of living measure, this was achieved after years of lobbying by USI, MOs, and countless Pre-Budget Submissions.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

The Irish Government has done a disservice to students who are studying part-time, who are postgraduates, repeating, or those who are paying non-EU fees did not qualify for this reduction or refund. This gap in the budget shows the lack of awareness from the Irish Government surrounding the many types of students here and the struggles they face.

#### *Comhdháil Regrets*

Students in the north continue to face extremely high fees and student loans. Students are still ignored by the UK Government in a cost-of-living crisis.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby the Irish Government to give a refund, discount or reimbursement to students who are not undergraduates who do not qualify under the free fees scheme.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to include fee discounts as well as fees abolishment in future Pre Budget-Submissions throughout the Cost-of-Living crisis.

#### *Comhdháil Also Mandates*

The USI to support NUS-USI in its efforts to campaign for fairer education costs.

### NA (NC)2 Student Accommodation Crisis

Proposed by the Campaigns Working Group

#### *Comhdháil Regrets*

That the worsening student accommodation crisis is preventing access to third level education.

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

That the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already existing financial hardships students experience and has intensified the fall-out from the all island accommodation crisis with a

severe drop in the amount of student beds available post-pandemic. As well as this, tourist specific accommodation has saturated the housing market.

#### *Comhdháil Believes*

That the governments in both jurisdictions of the island of Ireland must take urgent and immediate action to address the student accommodation crisis and believes the crisis should be deemed an emergency.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The President and Vice President for Campaigns to lobby the Ministers for FHERIS and Housing to develop an up to date student accommodation strategy that is reflective of the actions needed to alleviate the stress and pressure placed on students.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The President to lobby the Minister for FHERIS and the Minister for Housing to ensure the continuation of the Interdepartmental Working Group on student accommodation.

#### *Comhdháil Also Mandates*

The President and Vice President for Campaigns to work closely with NUS-USI in lobbying for a Student Renters Bill from Stormont, which guarantees all students safe, affordable, good quality accommodation, whether it is purpose-built or in the private rental sector.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The Vice President for Campaigns to review and amend the USI Student Accommodation Strategy 2019 to ensure it is up to date and fully reflective of the current student accommodation crisis. Amendments provided should be no later than crossover Comhairle Náisiúnta 2023.

## **NA (NC) 3 Mandate for a National Student Walk-out over the Accommodation Crisis**

### **Proposed by UCC Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

The ongoing accommodation/cost of living crisis and its effect on students. This crisis creates further barriers to education.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The VP for Campaigns to coordinate a national student walk-out for the 13th of October, in conjunction with a press statement to be released at the same time.



## **NA (NC) 4 Support of UCU and IFUT Industrial Action**

### **Proposed by UCC Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

The effect the cost of living crisis is having on workers in the Higher Education sector in Ireland.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

That working conditions in HE are the learning conditions for our members.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

The steps teaching unions for third level have taken towards industrial action. This includes the launch of the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) "UCU Rising" campaign, calling for UCU members to support a ballot for industrial action to secure concessions on casualisation, pension entitlements, and pay, amongst other considerations. The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) have also recently announced their intention to ballot members in September if an agreement on pay increases is not secured. An

#### *Comhdháil Further Resolves*

To publicly support industrial action taken by members of the UCU and IFUT in the Higher Education sector to improve their pay and conditions.

#### *To this affect Comhdháil Mandates*

That the Coiste Gnó release a public statement in support of the UCU Rising campaign and any industrial action of theirs or IFUT's members.

## **NA (NC)5 Student Accommodation Crisis**

### **Proposed by the Campaigns Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil Regrets*

That the worsening student accommodation crisis is preventing access to third level education.

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

That the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already existing financial hardships students experience and has intensified the fall-out from the all island accommodation crisis with a severe drop in the amount of student beds available post-pandemic. As well as this, tourist specific accommodation has saturated the housing market.

#### *Comhdháil Believes*

That the governments in both jurisdictions of the island of Ireland must take urgent and immediate action to address the student accommodation crisis and believes the crisis should be deemed an emergency.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The President and Vice President for Campaigns to lobby the Ministers for FHERIS and Housing to develop an up to date student accommodation strategy that is reflective of the actions needed to alleviate the stress and pressure placed on students.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The President to lobby the Minister for FHERIS and the Minister for Housing to ensure the continuation of the Interdepartmental Working Group on student accommodation.

#### *Comhdháil Also Mandates*

The President and Vice President for Campaigns to work closely with NUS-USI in lobbying for a Student Renters Bill from Stormont, which guarantees all students safe, affordable, good quality accommodation, whether it is purpose-built or in the private rental sector.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The Vice President for Campaigns to review and amend the USI Student Accommodation Strategy 2019 to ensure it is up to date and fully reflective of the current student accommodation crisis. Amendments provided should be no later than crossover Comhairle Náisiúnta 2023.

## **NA (NC)6 Climate Campaign**

### **Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

A campaign should be held that lobbies the government to respond to the urgency of climate change through appropriate policies. The campaign demands the government to make Irish Universities carbon neutral by 2030 instead of 2050, to support the Fossil Fuel Non Proliferation Treaty\* on an EU level, and to ask the government to set their policies in line with the 1.5 degree limit outlined in the Paris Agreement.

#### *Comhdháil Applauds*

The Climate Action Plan 2023 and the recognition for Loss and Damage payments are first steps to making the transition to a Carbon Neutral Ireland and regarding our global responsibility.

### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

The past 8 years have been the warmest on record. Climate change drastically impacts people all around the world and it might be the biggest threat to a stable present and future for young people today and to avoid further global warming, carbon emissions must be stopped.

\*About 91% of global CO2 Emissions originate from the burning of fossil fuels. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, signed by the WHO, Dalai Lama and more than 3000 scientists, calls for an end to the expansion of new fossil fuel infrastructure and production, to phase out existing production and use, and to fast-track solutions and ensure a just transition.

### *Comhdháil Regrets*

The Irish government has allowed enormous energy demand increases through Data Centres which are not in line with the climate targets. Furthermore, new LNG ports and gas power plants are given permission which create and sustain Fossil Infrastructure for decades to come. These projects are unjust, as they primarily benefit a small group of individuals while disproportionately impacting young and lower-income citizens.

### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby the Irish Government to make Irish Universities carbon neutral by 2030, to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty on an EU level, set their policies in line with the 1.5 degree limit.

### *An Comhairle Further Mandates*

USI to support campaigning for Carbon Neutrality and against Fossil Fuels.

## **NA (NC)7 Leaving Certificate Results**

### **Proposed by DCU Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

The unique pressures students are facing, with the accommodation crisis and cost of living increases being at an unprecedented level.

#### *Comhdháil Notes with Concern*

The uncertainty Leaving Cert students are facing in regards to the timeline of their results being released, and the subsequent impacts this will have on third level applications.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

That students entering courses in first year already face a disadvantage in sourcing accommodation, due to a lack of previous links in the local area.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

The importance of the initial weeks of a students' third level experience, and how the quality of these initial weeks are pivotal in a student's experience overall in third level, and their likelihood of completing their studies.

#### *Comhdháil therefore Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó, to work with relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to, the Irish Second Level Students' Union, Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education to provide clarity to students on when they will receive their results.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to advocate, in these discussions, for a return to a pre-covid timeline, ensuring that students can have certainty on their futures, obtain a full and complete orientation, as well as giving them adequate time to attempt to source accommodation close to their institution.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

USI to publicly call for clarity to be provided on the Leaving Certificate results, highlighting the benefits of the pre-covid timeline.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The USI President and/or VP Academic Affairs to provide an update on this matter at each Comhairle Naisiúnta, until the matter is either clarified or resolved.

## **NA (NC)8 Climate Campaign**

### **Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

A campaign should be held that lobbies the government to respond to the urgency of climate change through appropriate policies. The campaign demands the government to make Irish Universities carbon neutral by 2030 instead of 2050, to support the Fossil Fuel Non Proliferation Treaty\* on an EU level, and to ask the government to set their policies in line with the 1.5 degree limit outlined in the Paris Agreement.

### *Comhdháil Applauds*

The Climate Action Plan 2023 and the recognition for Loss and Damage payments are first steps to making the transition to a Carbon Neutral Ireland and regarding our global responsibility.

### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

The past 8 years have been the warmest on record. Climate change drastically impacts people all around the world and it might be the biggest threat to a stable present and future for young people today and to avoid further global warming, carbon emissions must be stopped.

\*About 91% of global CO2 Emissions originate from the burning of fossil fuels. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, signed by the WHO, Dalai Lama and more than 3000 scientists, calls for an end to the expansion of new fossil fuel infrastructure and production, to phase out existing production and use, and to fast-track solutions and ensure a just transition.

### *Comhdháil Regrets*

The Irish government has allowed enormous energy demand increases through Data Centres which are not in line with the climate targets. Furthermore, new LNG ports and gas power plants are given permission which create and sustain Fossil Infrastructure for decades to come. These projects are unjust, as they primarily benefit a small group of individuals while disproportionately impacting young and lower-income citizens.

### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby the Irish Government to make Irish Universities carbon neutral by 2030, to support the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty on an EU level, set their policies in line with the 1.5 degree limit.

### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

USI to support campaigning for Carbon Neutrality and against Fossil Fuels.

## **NA 1 Support for UCU Strike Action**

### **Queen's Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

That the University and College Union represents academics in the North of Ireland, alongside the UK. The UCU has been involved in pay, pension, and condition disputes with their employers and government. This has escalated through to strike days, with the potential to extend to a marking boycott.

#### *Comhdháil further notes:*

Initially, the UCU had called for eighteen strike days throughout February and March, however they reduced this number after reporting constructive talks with employers and the UK government.

#### *Comhdháil:*

The intense disruption to thousands of students in the North, with postgraduate and international students particularly affected.

*Comhdháil further acknowledges:*

The necessity of the strike action given the conditions of staff contracts, the attitudes of institutional management, and government policy, and that many members of the UCU are postgraduate students themselves.

*Comhdháil therefore mandates:*

That USI takes an explicit position of support of UCU strike action, and that the Coiste Gnó will support the UCU's strike action whenever opportunities arise.

## **NA 2 USI Green Network**

### **CMLOG**

Written by Sai

*Congress notes:*

Environment and Sustainability is one of the core areas of the student community. Especially in recent times the promotion of the environmental awareness and sustainability practices has become more important than ever. Individual Students' Unions and Member Organisations of USI have played a key role in the promotion of sustainable practices and environmental awareness in the student community.

*Congress believes:*

The creation of a USI Green Network will allow different Member Organisations of USI as well as but not limited to external organisations to come together to share ideas and organise campaigns and events around environment and sustainability.

*Congress mandates:*

The President and the Vice-President for Equality & Citizenship to create a USI Green Network with the Member Organisations of USI and other external organisations.

*Congress further mandates:*

The Vice-President for Campaigns to organise campaigns in consultation with the USI Green Network in promoting environmental awareness and sustainability practices.

## **NA 3 National Clubs & Societies Forum**

**Submitted by Events, Marketing and Commercial Working Group.**

*Comhdháil notes*

Many Students' Unions across the country have officers that have responsibilities for their Higher Education Institution's clubs and/or societies departments. Students' Unions who do not have responsibilities for their clubs & societies departments will often work with those departments on shared events and campaigns.

*Comhdháil further notes*

Students who are members of clubs and societies are engaged and active students. Clubs & Societies contribute to many Students' Union staple campaign weeks such as RAG Weeks, SHAG weeks, Freshers Fairs etcetera. This relationship is currently acknowledged by USI through the Student Achievement Awards Ireland (SAAls)

*Comhdháil recognises*

Many Students' Unions already collaborate with various clubs & societies as well as supporting awards and initiatives with the Board of Irish College Societies (BICS) & Student Sport Ireland

(SSI). Students who take part in clubs & societies are active and engaged members of student community. Hence, should have a strong relationship with their SU.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

The chairperson of the Events, Marketing & Commercial Working Group coordinating with the USI Coiste Gnó to host an annual national clubs & societies forum for clubs and societies members to network, share best practices and to find scope for collaboration with the student movement.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The creation of a clubs and societies network made up of sabbatical officers, part time officers, departmental student representatives who engage in sports and societies"<sup>4</sup>  
National Affairs

## **NA 4 Legalisation of Drugs**

### **Border Midlands and Western region Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil respects:*

That decriminalisation of drugs is a step in the right direction, but considering the benefits of a legalised approach, this only presents as a compromise.

#### *Comhdháil worries:*

That only Cannabis would be decriminalised, without the implementation of country-wide, easy-access drug identification & testing centres or harm reduction campaigns.

Some politicians & TDs may use this as a sign that they are "progressive" for their own personal gain, all the while disregarding the people who are directly impacted by the prohibition and war on drugs. Regardless, real-life examples of decriminalisation should be enough proof to start changing our drug policies, such as the case with Portugal with drug overdoses and imprisonment cases.

#### *Comhdháil recognises:*

That the legalisation of drugs allows for a completely regulated market that has oversight by the Government and its Departments. The benefits of this could be, but is not limited to:

- Reduction in crime, corruption and funding of criminal organisations.
- Access to safe drugs that are not contaminated or laced with other substances such as Fentanyl.
- Access to drugs with a labelled degree of strength/potency.
- Access to drugs for medical use.
- Access to better education and harm reduction services for all people who use drugs.

Supporting local businesses, farmers and other establishments with a local production & supply of drugs (such as the case with Peru and Bolivia's Coca industry).

Tax revenue that can be directed towards drug treatment services, education and harm reduction.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates:*

The Coiste Gnó to lobby the government for the legalisation of drugs.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates:*

The VP for Welfare and the VP for Campaigns to organise and hold campaigns lobbying for the legalisation of drugs.

## NA 5 Cannabis Regulation & Legalisation

### NCAD Students' Union

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

That cannabis and cannabinoids can be used for a multitude of therapeutic reasons, ranging from management of mental health, to treatment of chronic pain and seizures as well as recreational use.

#### *Comhdháil further notes:*

That alcohol and products containing nicotine, substances with significantly fewer benefits, are legal to acquire and comparatively much easier to access despite the indisputable risk they pose to general public health.

#### *Comhdháil further notes:*

That hemp is an incredibly important sustainable material alternative for the fabrics industry, but current legislation in the Republic has led to legally compliant companies and groups having their hemp and CBD products confiscated or damaged by Garda due to suspected trace amounts of THC.

#### *Comhdháil recognises:*

The process of decriminalising recreational drugs, the Portuguese Drug Policy Model being an example, has been shown to lead to a decrease in drug-related deaths, illnesses, and crime rates. It has also been shown to encourage drug users to seek treatment for addiction or illness if needed.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates:*

The Coiste Gnó to lobby in support of the passing of the Misuse of Drugs (Cannabis Regulation) Bill 2022 and support any future legislation that may lead and contribute to the legalisation of cannabis, either directly or through a larger effort to decriminalise & regulate recreational drugs.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates:*

The VP for Campaigns & VP for Welfare to organise and coordinate an informational campaign annually during the week of April 20th around cannabis use, specifically referencing the health and wellbeing benefits, debunking myths and false information and promoting safe and considerate usage. National Affairs

## NA 6 Legalisation of Sex Work and Support of Sex Workers

### VP Dublin

#### *Congress notes:*

Sex work is defined as the sale of any sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation. Due to a lower barrier of entry, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis, the number of young people who are engaging in sex work not known, but in all probability, very high.

#### *Congress further notes:*

The phrase a decriminalization of sex work' has been politically coopted by individuals who believe that the Nordic model is the only way to support sex workers. Under the Nordic model, sex buyers are criminalized while prostitutes are decriminalized; typically, prostitutes can sell their own services but auxiliary procurement services, such as pimping, brothel-keeping, and third-party advertising remain illegal. While this may sound reasonable, many individual sex



workers and sex work organisations have gone on record to say that the nordic model has been created under the false pretence that all sex work is abuse. These organisations and most sex workers do not confirm that view. They confirm however, that prohibitions, like the one of the nordic model, and stigmatization are the biggest problems for sex workers, which do cause real harm.

The Sex Workers Alliance Ireland undertook peer research of the Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act which brought the Nordic model to Ireland in 2017. Their most important findings are listed below:

This law has not prevented people from engaging in sex work.

It has negatively impacted safety measures making survival more perilous.

Instead of making workers safer it has made sex work much more dangerous and decreased faith and trust in Garda amongst workers.

Crime against sex workers has increased significantly under this law.

This law has failed to reduce numbers of clients but instead it has worsened behaviour of clients toward sex workers.

Sex workers have lost bargaining power and are therefore seeing clients they might have previously refused to see and engaging in acts they might not have previously considered.

Existing supports for workers are severely lacking and tend to be focused on workers that are actively trying to exit sex work.

#### *Congress further notes:*

An astronomical increase in the use of online sex work platforms like OnlyFans since 2020. On OnlyFans, new user and creator accounts increased by 75 percent from March to April 2020. It is imperative for USI to support member organisations in learning how to support students who engage in sex work.

#### *Congress mandates:*

The USI Coiste Gnó shall adopt an anti-Nordic model policy and investigate the stance of the organisations who they have active partnerships with.

The USI Coiste Gnó shall bring a report on these findings to the first National Council of 2024 with a decision on whether to continue engaging with each organisation that was investigated.

#### *Congress also mandates:*

The VP Welfare, VP BMW, VP South and VP Dublin shall work with the relevant expert organisations in creating a training for welfare officers on supporting students who engage in sex work.

#### *Congress further Mandates:*

The VP Welfare, VP Campaigns, VP BMW, VP South and VP Dublin to create a roadshow campaign that encourages students who engage in sex work to do so in a safe and healthy way while offering resources for additional support.

## **NA 7 Students' Union Bill**

### **President's Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

The HE Bill was signed into law (becoming an Act) in 2022.

#### *Comhdháil notes with Disappointment*

The HE Act fails to adequately define Students' Union (in particular, absence of the word a autonomous'), and provides virtually no other meaningful reference to them, save for the number of seats they hold on an institution's Governing Body / Authority.

#### *Comhdháil notes with Concern*

Students' Unions in the United Kingdom are significantly more advanced in a legal context, as they are constituted under section II of the Education Act 1994, with clear reference to their function and membership.

#### *Comhdháil notes with Regret*

Amendments to the HE Act 2022 would be difficult to attain at this time.

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

The President (and where relevant other members of the Coiste Gnó) to lobby Government Ministers, TD's and Senators to bring forward a Students' Union Bill that includes (but is not limited to) a comprehensive definition of a Students' Union, and guaranteed funding for Students' Unions via a per capita model.

Lobbying in this context includes (but is not limited to) mass emailing via delegates during Comhdháil & SUT/SUT+, publishing open letter(s), making this a priority during lobby days, protests/demonstrations if deemed necessary, and all other actions requested at Comhairle Náisiúnta (with the appropriate majority of votes).

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The President (and where relevant other members of the Coiste Gnó) to set up a working group to generate further items for inclusion in an aforementioned Students' Union Bill, and to subsequently lobby for these items in conjunction with the above mandate(s).

## **NA 8 Comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive Relationships and Sexual Education curriculum in Primary and Post-Primary schools**

### **Maynooth Students' Union**

#### *Congress notes:*

That Ireland's sex education system and curriculum has long been due for an overhaul and a re-write, and the government, in recognising this, carried out a review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post-primary schools in 2019 which has resulted in a draft new SPHE curriculum for Junior Cycle, which is where the majority of the RSE programme occurs. The draft of this proposed new curriculum has been in both public and private review since late 2022, with aspirations of it being implemented in the latter half of 2023.

#### *Congress further notes:*

That despite the effort to make this curriculum more inclusive and the addition of elements such as education on gender expression and identity and sexual orientation information, the RSE (Relationship and sexual education) element of this curriculum is still not detailed, comprehensive or holistic enough. It does not utilise inclusive language that respects all gender identities (use of he/she when referring to students), it is extremely vague about the

actual sexual health elements of the curriculum with no reference to masturbation and self-pleasure, to elements of sexual relations other than basic heterosexual intercourse, to legislation and consent issues for people with intellectual disabilities, to the intersection between disability and sexual health, to the dangers of substance abuse in combination with sex (chem-sex), and generally lacks specification about elements of the curriculum that should be included.

*Congress further notes with concern:*

That the lack of some of these elements puts young people, specifically young belonging to minority groups such as LGBTQ+ young people and students with disabilities, at risk, as it forces find the information and elements of the curriculum that has been excluded, exposes them to risk by forcing them searching online for further education or experience, and generally does not give young people a relationships and sexual health education that comprehensively reflects the present day experience and context of sex, relationships and sexuality in Ireland.

*Congress acknowledges:*

That one of the most prominent reasons for this curriculum overhaul was because of the review that was done and the noticed lack of comprehensiveness of the current RSE curriculum, yet this new proposed curriculum is still increasingly vague and ambiguous when it comes to the RSE programme within the SPHE curriculum. Though the improvements made thus far do an integral job in bringing more inclusion to SPHE education, and should most certainly be implemented, there is a need for continuous consistent review of this curriculum and the immediate necessity for the RSE programme to be more inclusive, clear and holistic.

*Congress mandates:*

The Coiste Gnó and specifically the VP Welfare to lobby the minister for education and the NCC (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) asking for an RSE curriculum that is more inclusive of the WHO's Sexuality education matrix alongside even further inclusion of holistic sexual health and sexuality practices and information that not only broaches the concept of sexuality and sexual health but also addresses wider aspects of sexuality such as sexual health and behaviour among the LGBTQ+ community, sexuality and sexual health for and with people with disabilities, self-pleasure and sexuality in the context of pleasure rather than just conception.

*Congress further mandates:*

That the USI Coiste Gnó push and lobby for the SPHE curriculum to have more specific guidelines for the RSE (Relationships and Sexual Education) programme within it in-order to give educators and schools a consolidated course that is not ambiguous or equivocal, ensuring that every student in Ireland receives a centralized and comprehensive relationships, sexuality and sexual health education. Alongside pushing for an increase of continuous education when it comes to RSE that does not concentrate all learning and information in the Post-Primary Junior Cycle curriculum.

## **NA 9 Student Housing Co-operative**

### **Ulster University Students' Union**

*Congress notes*

The current housing crisis on the island of Ireland. There remains both persistent and numerous issues with students being able to access affordable and quality accommodation across NI and ROI. This lack of supply was particularly evident in issues arising during the

summer of 2021 where Queen's University was over-subscribed to the point of being unlikely to provide lodging to any student within a 40-mile radius of the campus for the 2021-'22 academic year. The problems throughout the island of Ireland are well known and well documented.

Through lack of supply and high demand, many students are finding accommodation options extremely difficult to fund, leaving many locked out of accessing accommodation, or having to work alongside studies to afford basic living-costs.

#### *Congress further notes*

The transient nature of students makes the demographic one which can be easily exploited by landlords, as short tenancy agreements result in repairs often being indefinitely deferred to the next tenants. Furthermore, as many students arrive directly from high school and are unlikely to have received any education on housing rights, there is a lack of awareness about the quality of accommodation students are entitled to.

Accommodation is a hugely important aspect of the student experience, due to its impact on one's ability to socialise, foster positive mental health, and focus on academic goals, with each being interlinked. The World Health Organisation notes, that various aspects of housing are associated with, and potentially may reinforce or enhance, social pathologies such as depression, isolation, anxiety, etc.

#### *Congress recognises*

The democratic control over accommodation which co-operative housing models are based upon would help ensure students can most effectively have their accommodation needs met, especially regarding wellbeing, affordability, and sustainability.

Student housing co-operatives have been found to offer higher affordability and quality to current alternatives and can address numerous issues which students face regarding accommodation.

#### *Congress further recognises*

Student Housing Co-operatives also empower students to act towards a more sustainable future through equitable housing models. The likes of Edinburgh Student Housing Co-op recently renovating their empty garage into an events hub using only recycled and sustainably sourced materials demonstrates the capacity for environmental action which control over one's property enables.

Additionally, the a Independent Commission for Co-operative and Mutual Housing' found that co-operative housing consistently delivers long-term benefits with regards to community-building in communities impacted by a lack of trust.

Therefore, the world would have gained a step in the right direction for fairer and cheaper accommodation through founding a student housing co-op for students across Ireland.

#### *Congress mandates*

1. a a USI VP Campaigns and USI President to explore and research the business case around the foundation of a Student Housing Co-operative, and then to act on the findings of the business plan.

2. a a USI VP Campaigns and President to work with Student Co-op Homes, Co-operative Alternatives, Co-operative Housing Ireland, Member Organisations, and any other relevant stakeholders in the design of a potential pilot project.

3. a a If the housing co-operative is decided to be progressed and found to be successful through the business case and pilot project, USI VP Campaigns and Regional Officers are to encourage further expansion of the project across the Island.

## Union Organisation Motions

### UO (NC) 1: Constitutional Review Committee

#### Proposed by the USI President

##### *Comhdháil Notes*

The motions passed at Comhdháil 2022 (2022 UO 17 and 2022 UO 5) which call for a review of the roles of the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Regional Vice Presidents respectively.

##### *Comhdháil Also Notes*

The motion 2021 EM (CZN)5: CETA makes reference to a 2021/2022 Constitutional Review which did not take place.

##### *Comhdháil Believes*

That a constitutional review should not be limited to the examination of the roles of the Coiste Gnó and should aim to examine the democratic processes of the union as a whole, including but not limited to;

- Accountability structures within the union
- The elections process
- The role of the steering committee
- Constitutional interpretation
- Disciplinary processes within the union
- The roles and responsibilities of the Coiste Gnó

##### *Comhdháil Further Believes*

That a constitutional review should aim to gather feedback from a wide range of opinions and should not be limited to members of Comhairle Náisiúnta.

##### *Comhdháil Therefore Mandates*

The Regional Vice-Presidents' to chair focus groups in their respective regions focused on a specific aspect of the USI Constitution open to students and external stakeholders where deemed appropriate by the Regional Vice-President.

##### *Comhdháil Also Mandates*

The USI President to liaise with the NUS-USI President to establish similar focus groups in the NUS-USI Region.

##### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The formation of a Constitutional Review Committee to be comprised of the USI President as Chair, the USI Coiste Gnó as ordinary members and two elected representatives from each region. The election will take place at the October Comhairle Náisiúnta in line with the USI process on internal elections. The purpose of the committee will be to examine the minutes from the focus groups and utilise the feedback from the focus groups to develop the necessary referenda and/or schedules to bring to Comhdháil 2023 with a view to updating the USI

Constitution. This motion will lapse following Comhdháil 2023 given the time sensitive nature of the review.

## **UO (NC) 2 Motion on EU Employment Law**

### **Proposed by the VP for the Dublin Region**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

Throughout the year, USI plans many events and sends representatives to domestic and international events. Sometimes, like at European Student Union Board Meetings, there is an expectation that the USI Coiste Gnó will spend late nights and early mornings at meetings, often leaving individuals with less than 8 hours break during the night.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

Although many of the participants in the student movement are volunteers, USI sends full time employees who are subject to EU and Irish employment law. Chapter 2.3 of Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time notes 'Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that every worker is entitled to a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours per 24-hour period'. The relevant Irish law can be found in the The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The Coiste Gnó to allow any USI representatives who are attending events their legally required minimum rest period of 11 consecutive hours whether that be by taking meetings in shifts or by missing late night meetings.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The Coiste Gnó to allow 11 hours of consecutive rest at USI organised events between formal meetings (not including social events), regardless of whether the participants are employees.

## **UO (NC)3                      USI Accountability**

### **Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

It is one of the roles of Comhairle Náisiúnta to hold USI officers accountable.

#### *Comhdháil Believes*

That as a democratic organisation accountable to its members, it is important that Comhairle Náisiúnta is empowered to hold officers accountable to the full extent of its ability and knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative they understand how meetings of Comhairle Náisiúnta are run.

#### *Comhdháil Further Believes*

That a review of USI's accountability processes would allow for an opportunity to ensure that these processes and structures are up-to-date and effective and would highlight any areas for improvement.

#### *Comhdháil Therefore Mandates*

The USI President ensure an external review of the USI accountability process takes place.

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The USI President to ensure the circulation of standing orders to all members of Comhairle Náisiúnta before the first national council of any given year.

## **NA (NC) 4: Money Mule Awareness Campaign**

### **Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

A money mule is an individual who allows their account to be used for the transfer of other's stolen or illegal money.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes That*

Those aged 18-24, of which many are students, are the most commonly targeted age group by organised crime gangs to act as money mules.

#### *Comhdháil Regrets*

That penalties for this crime include a prison sentence of up to 14 years, a criminal conviction with a lifetime criminal record, extradition to the country where the predicate crime occurred, and not being permitted to open another bank account.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The VP for Welfare and VP for Campaigns to run an awareness campaign on the dangers of working as a money mule, particularly for third level students.

## **UO 1 Sustainability Audit to develop a new USI Sustainability Strategy the USI Campaigns Strategy Committee**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

That while general policy exists to mandate USI engagement is specific sustainability campaigns, a more rounded and holistic approach is required to ensure that the union is fulfilling its obligations to engage in sustainable work.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

That the USI Sustainability Strategy (2018) focused on actions that the organisation as a whole could take to develop more sustainable practices. This policy has since lapsed, and the USI has lost the funding for a designated Environmental and Sustainability staff member.

#### *Comhdháil believes*

There are many actions that USI can take on an organisation wide level that would result in more sustainable campaigns and events including;

Meat-free catering at USI events

Commitment to reduce waste at all USI events, in particular single use waste

Commitment to reduce the number of physical materials produced for campaigns

As well as this, USI should be leading the way in demonstrating what sustainability looks like for a students' union.

#### *Comhdháil further believes*

That in order to ensure that an updated Sustainability Strategy is not merely tokenistic in nature, expert input and advice is needed.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

The USI President to work with experts in the field of sustainability and climate action to conduct a full scale audit of sustainability practices within USI.



*Comhdháil also mandates*

*The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship to provide a full report of this audit, no later than December Comhairle Náisiúnta 2023.*

Comhdháil further mandates

The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship to develop an up-to-date USI Sustainability Strategy, based on the results of the audit to be presented to Comhdháil 2024. Union Organisation

## **UO 2 Living Wage**

### **Vice President for Campaigns**

*Comhdháil notes*

Many students have to work part-time and full-time jobs to make ends meet, due to the high cost of college, student accommodation crisis and other costs relating to a students' life

*Comhdháil notes with concern*

That students who are working under the age of 20 years old are paid under the current minimum wage, which for young people under 18 years old is only €7.91 in the Republic of Ireland and £4.81 in Northern Ireland

*Comhdháil believes that*

Everyone should deserve a living wage, that should not be based on age or experience, but rather the minimum to live based on the current cost of living and continue to work with trade unions under 2022 UO 8, including on developing a position paper on workers' rights

*Comhdháil mandates*

That USI should advocate for the living wage, according to the Living Wage Technical Group in the Republic of Ireland and the National Living Wage as currently set for those 23 and over in Northern Ireland to apply for all age groups.

*Comhdháil mandates*

The Coiste Gnó to lobby for the normalisation of wage rates under 20 years old in the Republic of Ireland and work with NUS-USI and other trade unions to achieve this on an all-island basis

## **UO 3 Student Accommodation Position Paper 2023 - 2026**

### **the USI Campaigns Strategy Committee**

*Comhdháil adopts:*

The USI Student Accommodation Position Paper 2023 - 2026.

Comhdháil Therefore Repeals:

20 N(NC)8, 20 N(NC)8B, EM 20 a 1, 2021 UO 16, 2021 UO 19, 2023 N(NC)1

## **UO 4 Officer Pay and Working Conditions Position Paper**

### **the USI President**

*Comhdháil adopts*

The USI Officer Pay and Working Conditions Position Paper 2023-2026.

## **UO 5 Mandates Manual and Policy File**

### **the USI President**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

According to the USI Constitution, there is two different forms of motions that can be submitted to Comhdháil; policy and mandates. However this distinction is not implemented in practice, as the vast majority of motions submitted to Comhdháil contain mandates. Currently, the USI Policy File and Mandates Manual contains 263 motions, each of which contains at least one mandate.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

Many mandates within the USI Policy File are incredibly vague, and do not follow the constitutional definition of a mandate.

#### *Comhdháil believes*

That in the interest of accountability, and in order to ensure that the Coiste Gnó can complete all mandates within their three year life span, motions should be split across a Mandates Manual and a Policy File.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The USI President to review the USI Policy File 23/24 to create a Policy File and a Mandates Manual. The Policy File will contain the overall views of the organisation to assist the Coiste Gnó in their lobbying efforts. The Mandates Manual will contain a list of all mandated actions, listed by the officer responsible for carrying out the mandate.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The President to brief the USI Steering Committee ahead of Comhdháil 2024 to ensure that all motions submitted must be categorised as either a policy or a mandate during the submission process.

## **UO 6 Dual Use of AMLÉ and USI**

### **an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

That USI has several policies on encouraging the use of the Irish language in multiple different areas, including naming conventions in Schedule N, and the ScAim Teanga 2022 which mandates the production of Irish language campaign materials.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

That the use of the terms aComhairle NAisiAontaa, aComhdháila and aCoiste Gnó as outlined in Schedule N has become the defacto norm among the USI team and our Member Organisations

#### *Comhdháil believes*

That there are several other terms that are frequently used within the organisation, as well as the organisation title itself, that could be referred to utilising the Gaeilge form.

#### *Comhdháil further believes*

That the Coiste Gnó regularly utilising Gaeilge terms within their work in the organisation assists with promoting the regular use of Gaeilge among our member organisations.

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to examine frequently used terms in the organisation to develop an update to Schedule N of the USI Constitution to include titles of the positions of the Coiste Gnó and other frequently used organisational terms.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Coiste Gnó to use both USI and AMLÉ when referring to the union in all of their work.

## **UO 7 Part Time Officer Working Group**

### **DCU Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Part time officers or roles with equivalent responsibilities (which will here referred to as PTO's) are an integral part to the running of any Student Union, working hard in the background helping students and many being the bridge between sabbatical officers and student representatives.

PTO's can sometimes feel disconnected from the on goings of USI without attending Comhairle Náisiúnta and find out most of what is happening from their sabbatical officers.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

PTO's can be some of the most passionate and hardworking members of any union, helping students on a daily basis. Every college has part time officers or the equivalent roles with varying responsibilities within their respective unions.

#### *Comhdháil recognises*

PTO's cannot attend every Comhairle Náisiúnta with this being a factor the PTO working groups would be mainly a hybrid option giving these officers the option to either attend in person or online and with having their own working group this may allow more PTO's to attend other working groups and become more engaged with USI.

#### *Therefore, Comhdháil mandates*

The Coiste Gnó to establish a PTO working group that would be done on a regional level, which would be held at each Comhairle NAisiAonta.

## **UO 8 Political Education for Sabbatical Officers**

### **DCU Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

That Political Education is essential for Students' Union Officers in the face of a housing and cost of living crisis which is crippling students across the country.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

That Political Education can equip Students' Union Officers to engage in campaigns and to lobby politicians with more efficiency and skill.

### *Comhdháil recognises*

That Students' Union Officers have a varying understanding and knowledge of the political landscape before entering their roles.

### *Comhdháil mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó organizes political education training for Students' Union Officers alongside training offered at SUT or SUT+.

Community Action Tenants Union - USI Partnership "Community Action Tenants Union Partnership

Vice President for Campaigns

### *Comhdháil notes*

Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) Ireland is a union for communities and tenants, that is renters, council tenants, mortgage holders and people in emergency or precarious living situations.

### *Comhdháil further notes*

How 2022 WEL 11 mandates the Vice President for Campaigns to investigate the feasibility of developing a partnership agreement between USI and CATU, and following meetings between the two organisations, this was seen as feasible with agreement.

Comhdháil celebrates

How CATU have achieved major wins for members of the union, including but not excluding to: protection from illegal evictions, member solidarity, support of actions and intersectionality of housing issues raised.

### *Comhdháil believes*

That USI and CATU have similar beliefs in tackling the accommodation crisis; with working together mutually beneficial following multiple conversations between the two organisations and to protect student renters across the island and improve union relations.

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The adoption of the USI and CATU Partnership Agreement

### *Comhdháil repeals*

2022 WEL 11

## **UO 9 USI Elections Campaigning Costs**

### **Campaigns Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

That elections should be open for all, and that barriers to running for election should be limited and removed wherever possible

#### *Comhdháil also notes*

That many of these candidates do run in USI elections, which include in-person hustings currently in cities across Ireland and that not all candidates are current sitting SU officers, which means they may not have the financial means to fund their campaign

### *Comhdháil regrets*

Due to a lack of a specific fund or campaigning budget, candidates are expected to cover their costs in expenses, which includes campaign materials, travel and accommodation, which can put those who may be students at a disadvantage

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The USI President to bring to the meeting of the Governance Committee, a proposal to examine the feasibility of a campaign budget that can be enforced by an external committee, as well as the feasibility of covering limited campaign costs based on the necessity for campaigning

## **UO 10 Counselling/Therapy Services for Coiste Gnó**

### **Submitted by Vice President for the Border, Midlands & Western Region**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Working as a sabbatical officer is strenuous, and many SU officers working in Higher Education Institutes have access to counselling services that are typically supplied to students.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

AMLÉ / USI to provide access to 3 counselling sessions per semester to the Coiste Gnó, provided by an external source.

## **UO 11 Accommodation Position Paper**

### **UCC Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes that*

The accommodation crisis is continuing with no end in sight. This is having a dramatic effect on many students, forcing them into increased working hours, long commutes, financial pressure, and having a negative impact on the overall student experience.

The Union of Students in Ireland / Aontas na Mac LAinn in Airinn (USI/AMLÉA) has previously (2019; 2016) published position papers on accommodation, forming the basis of our lobbying efforts. These documents have comprised extensive research into the contemporary housing situation, outlining options available to students, and the issues facing students.

#### *Comhdháil believes that*

The accommodation crisis is having a negative impact on both academic performance and well-being of our members.

International and local events such as COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis have changed the landscape of accommodation in Ireland, and made the crisis more acute.

new position paper is needed to reflect these changes and allow us to continue to represent our members.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The VP Campaigns and two other members of the Coiste Gnó nominated by the president to produce a new and updated position paper on accommodation, outlining our position on aspects of the contemporary accommodation situation, with the additional intention of educating MOs and students, and informing ongoing and new campaigns.

That the authors of the paper consult with MOs and students in all regions of Ireland to ensure the paper accurately reflects the experience of students.

That this position paper be completed for final consultation in December 2023, and to be publicised in such a way that it creates real engagement with students in these issues, both locally and nationally.

## **UO 12 Campaign Audits**

### **Campaigns Working Group**

#### *Congress notes*

MO's (Member Organisations) typically organise and run a variety of annual campaigns including (but not limited to) RAG (Raise & Give), SHAG (Sexual Health Awareness & Guidance), EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion), Black History Month, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Green Week, Mental Health Week, Exams [Campaign] and Class Representative Training.

#### *Congress Regrets*

No formal report or data collation system currently exists that comprehensively compares these events across HEI's, or subsequently highlights deficits, makes recommendations or details actions that MO's and/or USI can take to improve these campaigns.

#### *Congress believes*

Detailed campaign comparisons between HEI's could allow for enhanced service provision across HEI's, particularly for a smaller MO's that do not have a 'institutional memory' via staff.

#### *Congress also believes*

Data collation and dissemination initiatives like these can work towards the goal of a 'Union development', and in particular allow USI to better support smaller MO's.

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

The President (or designated nominee depending on the campaign area) to carry out and present annual audits of all the aforementioned major campaigns that occur across HEI's on the island of Ireland, which the allowance that National Council may agree by majority vote that specific audits on particular campaigns are not necessary. National Council may also vote for the audit of additional campaigns not listed in this mandate.

#### *Congress further Mandates*

These audits to include recommendations and actions that can be taken (by the MO and/or USI) to achieve these recommendations, and for these audits to be presented at National Council following their completion.

## **UO 13 Admin Training for Coiste Gnó and MO Officers**

### **Southern Regional Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

There is a lack of training for both members of the Coiste Gnó and MO Officers regarding administrative duties, specifically motion writing, chairing a meeting & minute taking.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

AMLÉA/USI to facilitate training for the Coiste Gnó and MO Officers about chairing a meeting, minute taking and how to write a motion, to occur in person before the academic year begins.

*Comhdháil suggests*

This training would occur at SUT or SUT+.

## **UO 14 Technological University & University working groups**

### **Southern Region Working Group**

*Comhdháil notes*

The majority of Higher Education Institutes within Ireland are now either Universities or part of a Technological University.

*Comhdháil Acknowledges*

There has previously been working groups for the newly formed Technological Universities, and we believe that these should return, with the addition of university specific Working Groups.

*Comhdháil mandates*

The introduction/reintroduction of a University working group, a Technological University working group, and a further working group for all other Higher Institutes of Education, with the intention that any remaining Institutes of Technology are welcome to join the Technological University working group.

## **UO 15 Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) x The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Partnership**

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

*Comhdháil notes*

The important work Trade Unions have done to protect workers rights. Trade Unions have played an active role in negotiating improved conditions for workers during their employment. The Union of Students in Ireland recognizes the importance of unions as they provide important information to it's members, provides its members with protection if issues arise and negotiate and lobby for better conditions for their members. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is the single umbrella organization for trade unions, representing a range of interests on ICTU members in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

*Comhdháil further notes*

It has been become increasingly popular for students to go on placement as part of their degree and the increased amount of students working part-time and full-time to afford third level education.

*Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Union of Students in Ireland to set up a partnership between them and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions

*Comhdháil further mandates*

The VP Academic Affairs and VP Campaigns to run a campaign in conjunction with ICTU. The aim of this campaign would be to give students a chance to meet ICTU, the trade union associated with their placement and/or place of employment while attending higher level education. The campaign ran by the VP Academic Affairs and VP Campaigns will give students a chance to hear about their rights while on placement and/or their rights as employees. The campaign will also give students a chance to ask any questions to their respective trade union(s) and find out information on becoming members"

## **UO 16 Centralisation of USI Hustings**

### **SETUSU WD**

#### *Congress notes*

That there is a number of hustings spread out through the country during the period of campaigning for an USI elections

#### *Congress further notes*

For a student to run for a position they have added the cost of commuting across the country while potentially missing classes. An SU Officer has the same cost with the added potentially of having to take annual leave (that they may not have) in order to attend these hustings while they may be running their own campaigns during this period causing them to miss these important hustings

#### *Congress mandates*

The President of USI to work with MO's presidents to look into the possibilities of centralised hustings to allow for better engagement in people to run for positions within USI and present their work at a national council about its feasibility

## **UO 17 USI Officer Salary Increase**

### **SETU SU WD**

#### *Congress notes.*

That the officers within The USI executive team are underpaid for the work they do and for the role itself, many of the officers must live in Dublin. The average salary for the officers is just over a27,000.

#### *Congress further notes*

Many of the officers that are elected to USI come from different parts of the country. Officers who are elected to a policy officer role are expected to work from the USI office in Dublin and this means most of them will move to Dublin and pay rent if they are already not from there. The average rent for a room in Dublin is €700 if you're lucky, this adds up to roughly 35% of the monthly income of the officer's salary, the price of most rooms will not include utilities when they are added onto the price of the rent it brings it up to over 40% of their monthly income. With that being said officers are going to have other hidden costs outside of their rent, therefore making it harder for officers to live off of the current USI salary.

#### *Congress mandates*

The President of USI to work with the Governance Committee to review the yearly salary of officers within USI and bring them up to the recommended Dublin living wage for the policy officers and to bring the regional officers up to the recommended living wage.

## **UO 18 Democratic Audit of Students' Unions**

### **TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Congress notes*

Significant variation exists between different HEI's (across the island of Ireland) in all aspects of their democracy, including (but not limited to) their systems, regulations, engagement, candidate numbers, and turnout for referenda, plebiscites, elections for full-time officers, part-time officers and class reps.



### *Congress further notes*

No formal report or data collation system currently exists that comprehensively compares the democracy across HEI's, or subsequently highlights deficits, makes recommendations or details actions that USI can take to improve these issues.

### *Congress believes*

Detailed democracy comparisons between HEI's could allow for better systems to be trialled and/or adopted by other MO's (Member Organisations), and allow USI to identify (and work to rectify) deficits that may exist within certain cohorts (e. g. larger MO's vs smaller MO's).

### *Congress therefore mandates*

The President (and where relevant other members of the Coiste Gnó) to carry out and present an annual democratic audit of Students' Unions across the island of Ireland, including (but not limited to) their systems, regulations, engagement, candidate numbers, and turnout for referenda, plebiscites, elections for full-time officers, part-time officers and class reps. This audit shall also include deficits, recommendations and actions that can be taken (by the MO and/or USI) to rectify these deficits.

## **UO 19 Capitation Fee Working Group**

### **UCC Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes that*

number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a student levy/capitation fee which students are required to pay in addition to their tuition fees. The concept of a student levy/capitation fee was originally a fee established by Students' Unions through referendum of their membership to fund capital projects for Students' Unions or the HEI such as Student Centres or Sports Facilities. It is assumed in the majority of HEIs that the collection and administration of this fee is done by the HEI on behalf of the Students' Union. It is noted that some HEIs have a Capitation Committee on which recipient bodies of the fee and the SU are represented.

In recent years, a number of controversies have unearthed in some HEIs around the administration of this fee. For example, in 2019 University College Cork attempted to unilaterally increase the capitation fee without a referendum of the student body. The University allegedly claimed that the setting of this fee was a reserved function of Governing Body under the 1997 Act, however the University later withdrew this alleged claim and refunded an estimated 2.4 million to students whom the increase had been imposed upon following lobbying from UCC Students' Union who intended to bring the matter to the High Court for Judicial Review.

More recently, there has been controversy in Maynooth University following a Governing Body decision to no longer proceed with the construction of a new student centre despite students paying for this capital project via the student levy since 2015.

#### *Comhdháil believes that*

HEIs are not only taking advantage of capitation fee/student levies to fund critical capital projects and essential student services, but are also demonstrating behaviour that is a cause for concern with regards to the oversight and the administration of these fees which are collected on behalf of Students' Unions and are ultimately student money.

Additionally, due to the complex nature and multi-year collection of these capitation fees/student levies and how they differ across HEIs, Student Union Officers may struggle to

address concerns they have with their HEI management regarding the administration and collection of these levies.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The USI Executive to establish a Capitation Fee/Student Levy Working Group which will be tasked with the responsibility of mapping out capitation fees/students levies across all HEIs, their history, what they are currently funding, and how they are being administered. Following this mapping exercise, this Working Group shall develop a framework for the oversight and administration of capitation fees/student levies in HEIs and lobby DFHERIS to adopt this framework for implementation in all HEIs.

The objective of this exercise should be to re-establish autonomy and oversight to Students' Unions and their membership in the administration of their respective capitation fee/student levy.

## **UO 20 Enhancement of Students' Union Training (SUT) [WIP]**

### **TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Congress notes*

USI organises annual training events entitled a SUT' (Students' Union Training) and a SUT+' (Students' Union Training Plus) during the summer months for Full-Time Officers.

#### *Congress notes Regrets*

These training events, while useful, are not nearly comprehensive enough in preparing Students' Union Officers for their one-year term.

#### *Congress Recognises*

The need for annual comprehensive training in the following areas:

- Management & HR (including Conflict Resolution)
- Negotiation (Funding, Partnership)
- Effective Lobbying (including Demonstrations, Protests)
- Governance (Governing Body, Academic Council)
- Irish Government / Politics (Laws, Legislation, Bills, Acts)
- USI Policy File and USI Annual Priorities (Bill Amendments)
- National Council Training (including Items for Discussion, Motions, Accountability)
- Students' Union Marketing, Branding, Social Media
- Event Organisation, Management, Execution
- Casework & Boundary Training (acknowledging staffing differences across MO's)

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

President to ensure SUT and SUT+ incorporates training in all of the aforementioned areas (with the understanding that this list is non-exhaustive), and for the outgoing President to ensure completion of this event prior to the end of their term-of-office (where relevant).

#### *Congress further mandates*

President to ensure a review of SUT and SUT+ prior to Congress 2024, and to subsequently amend this motion if required (i. e. to include/remove other sessions), with the goal of preventing additional motions that could be covered within this singular motion.

## UO 21 Sustainability Position Paper

### UCC Students' Union

#### *Comhdháil Notes:*

That USI has previously had a USI Sustainability Strategy passed in 2018. This policy has now expired and there is no overall policy that governs how USI can develop more sustainable practices, and assist MOs to develop similar.

#### *Comhdháil recognises*

That the loss of the Energy & Sustainability Manager has made it more difficult to engage in meaningful sustainable practices and being able to complete and action mandates.

#### *Comhdháil believes:*

That the climate crisis requires an urgent response from society and the USI/AMLÉE can have an impact in influencing Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and our own Member Organisations (MO). Additionally sustainability and climate action is integral to the actions, beliefs and behaviours of the USI.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

The VP Campaigns, VP Equality & Citizenship in consultation with the Regional Officers to lead out on developing a new USI Sustainability Strategy.

The development of this strategy should include consultation with MOs, environmental groups, climate activists, and students across the Island of Ireland.

This new strategy should be presented to Comhdháil for approval in 2024" 4

## UO 22 Deliberative Opportunities Policy

### Queen's Students' Union

#### *Comhdháil notes with Concern:*

- That the structures of democracy and student mobilisation have consistently been a topic of discussion both internally in USI and externally throughout MOs.
- That a lack of student engagement is fatal for ensuring the representation of student issues and in achieving wins for students across the island.
- That the general student population of member MOs are relatively unaware of the democratic structure or the workings of internal MOs and USI.
- That in order to promote transparent and safe democracy, it is essential that students are able to participate and understand the processes of USI.
- Groups that are severely under-represented in wider society and democratic structures and are disproportionately affected by a lack of representation.
- The growing polarisation of issues that specifically affect the aforementioned underrepresented groups which critically impacts the foundations of democracy.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

- The Coiste Gnó are mandated to increase in bottom-up opportunities for students to get involved with USI through deliberative practices, including citizen assemblies and polling.

- VP Equality and Citizenship promotes democratic education on-campus to the general student population including campaigning and organising.

## **UO 23 Decentralisation of USI Offices**

### **Border Midlands and Western Region Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil recognises:*

The majority of Government offices are based in Dublin, and that AMLÉ have a lease on their current building, however we believe with the cost of living crisis, it is unfair to expect the majority of the Coiste Gnó to move to Dublin to perform their jobs.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

The President of USI to research the feasibility of moving the USI Offices out of Dublin

#### *Comhdháil further mandates:*

The President of USI to present findings to Comhairle Náisiúnta who will take a decision on further steps to be taken.

## **UO 24 Coiste Gnó Accountability**

### **Maynooth Students' Union**

#### *Congress notes:*

The importance of Comhairle Náisiúnta being equipped and empowered to effectively hold the Coiste Gnó accountable.

#### *Congress notes with concern:*

That there is no formal mechanism within Comhairle Náisiúnta to "pass" or "reject" Officer Reports offered by members of the Coiste Gnó, leading to an overall lack of accountability in USI's governing body.

#### *Congress recognises:*

How this creates a democratic deficit within USI's structures and disempowers Comhairle Náisiúnta from effectively holding the Coiste Gnó accountable.

#### *Congress further recognises:*

Given that no such mechanism yet exists, it is not as simple as mandating that this take place; it is a longer process that requires meaningful consultation with Member Organisations and an in-depth internal review.

#### *Congress believes:*

That voting on Officer Reports at Comhairle Náisiúnta is beneficial for accountability, and can only serve to benefit USI and their engagement with Member Organisations.

#### *Congress therefore mandates:*

The USI President to begin exploratory work on how to implement a mechanism for voting on Officer Reports at Comhairle Náisiúnta. This should include a survey consultation with Member Organisations about how they do this in their own governing bodies, how they would like to see it implemented at Comhairle Náisiúnta, and what structures they believe USI requires to deal with rejected reports.

*Congress further mandates:*

That, within the lifespan of this motion, the USI President will implement a mechanism for voting on Officer Reports at Comhairle Náisiúnta. This includes the creation of any necessary or relevant structures outside of Comhairle Náisiúnta such as a Disciplinary Committee to deal with rejected reports.

*Congress further mandates:*

That, to ensure each member of Comhairle Náisiúnta is equipped to engage with it effectively, the USI President will circulate the newly implemented Standing Orders of Comhairle Náisiúnta to them prior to their first sitting in any given academic year.

## **UO 25 Support for Small Unions**

### **IADT Students' Union/NCAD Students' Union**

*Comhdháil recognises*

That the everyday work of any Students Union Executive Team can be extremely taxing regardless of the size of the Executive team. As such small Unions do struggle with the difficulty of retaining institutional knowledge, and balancing the immense workload expected of them when concentrated upon a small Sabbatical Team, especially when there are no Union Staff to support them due to a small student population resulting in a smaller budget.

*Comhdháil further recognises:*

The considerable distress that this places on Officers over their term as well as how this can damage the effectiveness of the Member Organisation, which can consequently negatively affect students, their experience and life on campus, placing small MOs in an unsustainable situation.

*Comhdháil notes:*

Due to larger student populations resulting in more votes at Comhairle Naisiunta & Comhdhail, this usually results in representatives from larger MOs being more likely to win elections to the USI Coiste Gnó or win seats on sub-committees. While proportional representation is an important cornerstone of democracy, the lack of small Union representation within these positions leads to a lack of understanding of the needs of small MOs.

*Comhdháil further notes:*

Due to a series of institutions merging, the number of small Unions in Ireland is shrinking making it more difficult for small MOs to ensure that their voice is heard within USI.

*Comhdháil mandates:*

The President of USI along with Regional Officers to consult and coordinate with representatives of smaller MOs to identify their specific needs and requirements, the difficulties they face and strategise solutions at least once a year.

*Comhdháil further mandates:*

The USI Coiste Gnó to formulate a support system for small Unions consisting of a specific communication group set up at SUT for small MOs, a workshop at SUT focusing on the needs of and difficulties faced by small MOs and how to deal with them.

## Welfare Motions

### **WEL (NC) 1: Abolishment of Non-Disclosure Agreements in Third-Level Institutions in the Cases of Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination**

**Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

The use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs), which can be sometimes be called a "Severance Contract/End of Contract Agreement/Compromise Agreement", can be used in cases of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination between staff and students to silence students from speaking up about the issues. In most cases students are not aware of what an NDA is.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

That NDAs in third-level institutions can still be used for other applications such as intellectual property and confidential information.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The VP for Campaigns to campaign to raise awareness around NDAs and the VP for Welfare and VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the government to abolish the use of NDAs in the cases of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination to prevent these issues that students may face from going unseen and unheard and to reach out to SpeakOut to assist with the removal of NDAs on campus.

## **WEL (NC) 2 Operation Transformation**

### **Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

Operation Transformation is a weight loss TV show aired by RTE and sponsored by the Department of Health under the 'Healthy Ireland' Campaign. It has been estimated that RTE received over €500,000 over a two-year period. Operation Transformation say that their aim is to promote a healthy lifestyle for participants and viewers but, is an entertainment show that promotes unsustainable weight loss, encourages disordered eating behaviours and cultivates weight stigma.

#### *Comhdháil Further Notes*

National eating disorder organisation Bodywhys noted in their statement regarding Operation Transformation that fact that hospital admissions for young people with eating disorders have risen by 66% and that shows like Operation Transformation can have a detrimental effect on mental and physical health. It is also well known that many students are young people who may be vulnerable to the messages that are promoted by these weight loss tv shows. The emphasis on dieting, body weight and shape does little to long lasting weight loss and health goals.

#### *Comhdháil Recognises*

Bodywhys and grassroots activists like @intuitive.eating.ireland and Binge Eating Dietitan have campaigned and petitioned RTE and the Department of Health in recent times to decommission the show or offer a more inclusive approach to the show, changing the focus from weight loss to a more holistic view to lifestyle changes.

#### *Comhdháil Regrets*

RTE, the producers of Operation Transformation and the Department of Health have done little to engage with the campaign. RTE has effectively ignored the experiences of previous participants who shared stories of the lack of support during the airing of episodes and aftercare. Research shows that dieting does not result in long term weight loss for the vast majority of people. Operation Transformation does not provide follow-up studies to monitor long term success in its participants.

#### *Comhdháil Therefore Mandates*

The VP Welfare and VP Campaigns to include information on Operation Transformation during the already mandated Eating Disorder Campaign.

The VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Welfare to issue a public statement to RTE and the Minister for Health to address previous concerns and concerns regarding the impact Operation Transformation has on students and the viewing public.

The regional officers; VP Dublin, VP South, VP BMW to discourage Member Organizations from promoting Operation Transformation on their campuses.

## **WEL 1 Femicide in Ireland**

### **USI VP Welfare**

#### *Congress notes*

Since the heavily publicised death of Ashling Murphy, there have been 15 cases of femicide in Ireland.

#### *Congress condemns*

any act of violence against women and believes that we all have a vital role to play in ending violence and femicide against women.

#### *Congress notes*

that at the time of this motion being written, figures tracked by Women's Aid state that there have been 254 reported incidents of femicide which have seen women die violently at the hands of men in Ireland since 1996.

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

The VP Welfare to commemorate victims of femicide annually on January 12th.

#### *Congress also mandates*

the VP Welfare and VP Campaigns to consider the act of femicide in already mandated campaigns on ending violence against women

## **WEL 2 Spiking Awareness Campaign**

### **the USI VP for Welfare**

#### *Congress notes*

that spiking has become a prominent issue in Irish nightlife in recent years. Spiking can happen for a multitude of reasons, such as to carry out a sexual assault or rape, to carry out a physical assault, to carry out a theft, or for amusement, and can happen to anybody.

#### *Congress further notes*

that there are two main ways that people are being spiked: drink spiking and needle spiking. The most common substances used for spiking are alcohol, Gamma-hydroxybutyrate and gamma-butyrolactone (GHB), tranquillizers and ketamine.

#### *Congress believes*

People who have been spiked are reluctant to report the incident to An Garda SAochAna due to the stigma attached to spiking, and that limited drug tests are taken once a victim presents themselves to medical professionals.

#### *Congress mandates*

The VP Welfare and VP Campaigns to carry out a spiking awareness campaign.

#### *Congress further mandates*

The VP Welfare to lobby the government for additional funding to be allocated to expanding medical services to ensure that more tests can be carry out to see what drugs are being used in spiking cases.



## **WEL 3      SUSI Reform**

### **VP Welfare**

#### *Congress notes*

The fact that the cost-of-living crisis is putting students under additional financial and mental stress.

#### *Congress further notes*

That, as of October for the 2022/2023 academic year, there were 84,008 applications received by SUSI for financial support, which was 44,889 new applications and 39,119 renewals.

#### *Congress recognises*

that the SUSI Maintenance Grant is available with the intention that it will help students with day to day living costs. According to the SUSI Advisory Group updates in October of 2022, the expenditure on maintenance grants to the academic year is projected to be a161.6 million.

#### *Congress welcomes*

the once off measures from SUSI in the 2023 budget to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, which were a once-off double payment, a once-off increase in Postgrad Fee Contribution by a1,000 (that once off payment was then a4,500), and a Once-off reduction to the Student Contribution rate.

#### *Congress acknowledges*

that these once off measures, however, are not a sustainable measure to tackle the cost of living for students in Ireland.

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

the VP Welfare, VP Academic Affairs and VP Equality and Citizenship to lobby for continued annual funding for SUSI to ensure that the maintenance grants reflect the cost-of-living crisis.

## **WEL 4      National Student Mental Health Survey**

### **DCU Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

USI conducted the first National Student Mental Health Survey in 2017/2018 in collaboration with HSE Mental Health and the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP). This led to the publication of the first USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education. We have used this report for awareness-raising and lobbying purposes. However, the student mental health landscape has changed since 2018/2019 due to factors such as the pandemic, and this report is now outdated.

#### *Comhdháil believes:*

It would be beneficial to conduct a second national student mental health survey to represent the current student body. The existing partnership between USI and the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) is the most appropriate way to conduct this research. This would also ensure the survey maintains high research quality and ethical standards.

#### *Congress mandates:*

The USI Vice President for Welfare to:

Collaborate with the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) to conduct a National Student Mental Health Survey

From the results, compile a report on Student Mental Health in Ireland in collaboration with the HSE / NOSP.

*Congress further mandates*

The President, the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Welfare to:

Run an awareness campaign publicising the survey to students in order to receive a high response rate

Heavily publicise the results of the report in the media and use it for government lobbying purposes within 30 days of the report launch.

Welfare

## **WEL 5      National STI Testing Drive**

### **DCU Students' Union**

*Congress notes:*

The rise of Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) cases nationally. As of February 2023 there has been a 76% rise in the number of STIs recorded according to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in the ROI. The Chief Medical Officer in Northern Ireland has also spoken on the recent rise in STIs. STIs are highest amongst the 20-24 age group, but STI testing rates remain low.

*Congress believes:*

Students' Unions are uniquely placed to influence STI testing rates. We also have a proven track record in rolling out effective sexual health awareness and guidance (S. H. A. G) campaigns. Given the rise in STIs, a nationally coordinated competition between SUs is an effective and fun way to further support MO's STI testing initiatives.

*Congress Suggests:*

That the challenge takes place over the course of a month, to give MOs the chance to run an event on their campus. Up to the discretion of the USI Welfare Officer a title, certificate and bragging rights can be bestowed on the winner, eg. "Ireland's Sexiest Union".

*Congress mandates:*

The VP for Welfare in collaboration with the VP for Campaigns to run a national STI testing drive aimed at increasing STI testing rates among students. The testing drive should take the form of an inter- SU challenge, where MOs can compete with one another to complete the most amount of STI tests in proportion to the size of their union.

*Congress further mandates:*

The VP for Welfare, the VP for Campaigns and the Regional Officers to support the rollout of this campaign. This support should include but is not limited to distributing promotional materials on STI testing, linking MOs in with local GUMs, providing dynamic QR codes, demo STI kits, campus visits and social media materials.

## **WEL 6      Bring Back the SHAG Packs**

### **Welfare Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

USI traditionally distributed approximately 30,000 SHAG packs every year to students in Ireland during the annual SHAG campaign. This was a fantastic opportunity to get crucial sexual health information out to thousands of students across the Island of Ireland.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

That SHAG packs were not distributed this year due to difficulties securing funding.

#### *Comhdháil believes*

SHAG Packs are a vitally important part of USI Sexual health promotion and every effort should be made to secure funding for the continuation of this initiative.

#### *Comhdháil mandates*

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the President, and the Vice President for Campaigns to make every effort to secure funding from the HSE or an alternative funding partner to ensure the continuation of SHAG packs for future students.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

If the Coiste Gnó can secure funding, that the Vice President for Welfare, the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, should include but not limited to the following in the SHAG packs;

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

#### *Congress therefore repeals*

20 WEL 5

## **WEL 7 Wellbeing in Education the MTUCSU & SETUSU WD**

#### *Congress notes*

The findings of the 2019 USI Mental Health Survey recommended that consideration be given to embedding mental well-being into the curriculum in higher education, in order to ensure that all students had equal access to information on well-being 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 severely anxious, depressed or stressed.

### *Congress further notes*

The work of USI and the T&L Forum following the undertaking of research on how well-being and extracurricular activities are facilitated within MO academic calendars. There is also research from the UK Higher Education sector, most notably the 2017 report by Advance HE on embedding mental well-being in the curriculum.

### *Congress believes*

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 vital in addressing students' needs, they must not be seen as the only part of an institution with responsibility for the wellbeing of its students.

### *Congress mandates*

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare in cooperation with the NUS-USI President to run an updated Mental Health Survey as the last one was done Pre Covid-19. The findings of this study should be compared with the 2019 findings and used to strategize a new wellbeing in education approach.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare will work with the national working group created for the area of Wellbeing in the Curriculum following its creation in 2021 to push the creation of a well-being module to be done within colleges. The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Welfare to support NUS-USI members to explore the area of mental wellbeing in the curriculum within their own jurisdiction as well.

## **WEL 8      Give Us The Night**

### **CMLOG**

#### *Congress recognises:*

Give Us The Night's tireless efforts to support, nurture and reframe the conversation around nightlife in Ireland since their beginning in 2011.

#### *Congress notes:*

The effect of not only the archaic legislation we have in Ireland but also the affect of covid 19 lockdowns on our countries nightlife. What was already a difficult industry to work in has become a much more limited space

#### Congress supports:

Give us the night's aims to:

- Highlight the economic value and societal benefits of a diverse and vibrant Irish night-time industry.
- Contribute to the creation of jobs and sustainable indigenous businesses within the night-time industry, and to broaden employment opportunities for those operating in the creative arts.
- Ensure that Ireland adopts a more progressive European approach to nightlife, that reflects the wide range of lifestyles and working hours here.

- This includes the reformation of Ireland's archaic licensing laws not limited to but including the abolition of special exemption orders and the introduction of a night mayor for major cities.

#### *Congress mandates:*

The VP for campaigns to

- actively support GUTN's efforts to reform nightlife structures in Ireland including support for the proposed new legislation of extended opening hours and the introduction of night mayors for Irish cities.
- Liaise with give us the night to see how best the student movement can support the campaign.
- Encourage MO's to support and promote nightlife in their community.
- Support MO's to run social events on campus.

## **WEL9 Reforming SUSI: Eligibility Criteria for Postgraduates**

### **CMLOG**

#### *Congress notes with Concern*

The eligibility criteria for postgraduate students applying for SUSI is greater than that for undergraduate students.

#### *Congress mandates*

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to undertake a review of the current SUSI eligibility criteria.

#### *Congress further mandates*

The review of the SUSI eligibility Criteria to be presented to and approved by congress in 2024. The changes should then be proposed to government and campaigned for.

## **WEL 10 Student Childcare Research**

### **NCI Students' Union**

#### *Congress notes*

There are an increased number of parents and students with dependents enrolling in third level education. These students face significant barriers in accessing university and students' union resources, as well as engaging in student life to the same extent as their peers due to childcare/dependent responsibilities. There are limited specific resources available for this cohort of students.

Students requiring childcare are finding it increasingly difficult to access or afford childcare services to allow them to attend college. Childcare services are in high demand, therefore the industry is in control of how they deliver these services and who they deem eligible.

Student parents therefore compete with full time working parents who are deemed more eligible given their circumstances and avail of the same policies and benefits despite the necessity for equity and not equality. Student parents usually only require 2- 3 hours of care per day, however childcare services favor taking customers who will avail of their services for a full day. This therefore means parents in full time work are at an advantage. The cost of childcare services is high for any parent, and this is increasingly unattainable for those who do not work full time.

If student parents do not get their first choice of childcare provider, as is often the case, they are faced with an increased commute and issues with work life balance in that their ability to work flexible part time hours is reduced.

#### *Congress Recognises*

Accessibility of education is a priority for USI, and the barriers to accessing child care significantly impacts students with children/dependents', and their choice to engage with third level education. Financial difficulties should not be a reason to not attend university.

There's a gap in policy in providing support for student parents. Student parents have an extra factor of responsibility while attending third level education which they have no revolutionary support for. This increases the dropout rates in this cohort.

The Welfare Working Group is currently going through the procedures in order to create a National Student Childcare Survey with the assistance of the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) in National College of Ireland to collect data on this issue.

#### *Therefore, Congress mandates*

The Coiste Gnó specifically the Vice President for Welfare with the help of ELI, to publicize the National Student Childcare Survey to MOs in order to gather data on the issue, analyze and take action. In addition as a result of the survey if the MOs require support with their action plans, the welfare officer will assist them" 4

## **WEL 11 Digs and Rent-A-Room scheme protections the USI Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

If a student lives in an owner-occupied home there is no legislation in place to protect them, meaning they are at significant risk of eviction, mistreatment and having what would normally be deemed as having their basic human rights infringed upon.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

Due to the lack of accommodation this year there was a push on the rent-a-room scheme by the government.

#### *Comhdháil recognises*

Implementing legislation to protect these students will likely infringe upon homeowners' rights and that is why the legislation is not currently in place.

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Coiste Gnó to continue to lobby the government, specifically the Minister for Housing and Minister for Higher Education and their teams, on behalf of students living in digs / rent-a-room schemes until such time that legislation/protections are put in place to give these students rights.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The Coiste Gnó to conduct an annual survey on digs/ rent-a-room schemes until such time that (a) legislation is passed by the government for protections of students living in owner occupied homes or (b) a staff member is hired to work on housing and they undertakes this.

This survey could be included within a student accommodation survey.

# International Affairs Motions

## IA (NC)1 Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

### Proposed by TCD Students' Union

This motion will require a vote of 66%+1 to pass into policy

#### *Comhdháil notes*

A report released on 1st February 2022 by Amnesty International has analysed Israel's intent to create and maintain a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians and examined its key components: territorial fragmentation; segregation and control; dispossession of land and property; and denial of economic and social rights. It has concluded that this system amounts to apartheid.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

Institutions across the island of Ireland are still invested in the arms trade and have other links to Israel and as students we have a responsibility to support the Palestinian people and campaign against this.

#### *Comhdháil recognizes*

The student movement has often been at the forefront of important societal change, both locally, and internationally, including standing together against apartheid in South Africa, fighting for civil rights in the USA in the 1960's and now organising collectively to tackle the growing climate crisis. USI was directly involved with Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, and engaged heavily with campaigns to release Nelson Mandela from prison. Student unions are also involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees and students remaining in Ukraine.

#### *Comhdháil remarks*

USI's constitution, and Article 3, clause 3.9, which states that one of the primary objectives of the USI is the "defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights as a core goal of the organisation".

#### *Comhdháil believes*

It is unconscionable for any third-level education institution to continue to invest in the arms trade, have links with Israel and be complicit in the violent dispossession of the Palestinian people.

#### *Comhdháil notes*

In 2005, Palestinian civil society called for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law, allowing the realisation of Palestinian rights.

#### *Comhdháil appreciates*

The work of activists like Trinity BDS, supported by the TCDSU, in campaigning for third-level institutions to adopt the principles of BDS, in solidarity with Palestine.

#### *Comhdháil further appreciates*

The stance of the global BDS movement which calls on Israel to end its human and civic rights abuses, and calls on Israel to respect the human and civic rights of all religions, races and nationalities and ethnicities. BDS respects the civic rights of all religions, races and nationalities and ethnicities. This in line with USI's other work on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and anti-apartheid.

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

That the USI Coiste Gnó adopt a pro-BDS stance, in solidarity with Palestine, and denounce the apartheid that Israel is committing in Palestine.

### *Comhdháil further mandates:*

That the USI (VP Dublin, VP BMW, VP South) support local BDS branches in third-level institutions, and establish a toolkit for MOs and their members who would like to set up local BDS branches. The toolkit is to be based on, but not limited to, Trinity BDS's SU toolkit.

That the USI Coiste Gnó call on the European Students Union (ESU) to re-evaluate the membership of Israel and support any Palestinian efforts to engage with ESU.

That the USI Coiste Gnó to boycott Israeli corporations, institutions and companies and their products that are currently used by, or have relations with, the USI.

## **IA (NC) 1 USI Position on Access to Education in Afghanistan**

### **Proposed by Carlow College Students' Union**

*This motion will require a vote of 66%+1 to pass into policy*

### *Comhdháil Notes*

Following the withdrawal of the United States and NATO from Afghanistan and the subsequent regaining of political control by the Taliban in August of 2021, civil and political liberties have been targeted by the Taliban administration.

### *Comhdháil Notes with Concern*

A key example of such rights being targeted is the right of women to access education, in particular the decision of the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education in December of 2022 to indefinitely suspend the right of women to attend higher education. This decision has been met with both domestic and international condemnation, including acts of civil disobedience by male students and academic staff in protest.

### *Comhdháil Mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó, in the tradition of international solidarity and human rights, publicly condemn the decision of the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and will co-operate with the European Students' Union and other relevant bodies on the matter.

### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, along with Regional Vice Presidents to support, where possible, MOs who are lobbying on the matter and to liaise with the Afghan community in Ireland who are protesting the erosion of civil and political liberties in Afghanistan.



## IA 1 Solidarity with the University Of Manchester Rent Strikes

This motion will require a vote of 66%+1 to pass into policy

### Border Midlands and Western region Working Group

*Comhdháil acknowledges:*

The amazing work being done by the University of Manchester Students' with their rent strike against the University's lack of support to students during the Cost Of Living Crisis.

*Comhdháil further recognises:*

That there are over 150 strikers signed up on the strike, collectively withholding more than A200,000 from the university.

*Comhdháil recognises*

their demands are:

#### **Rent Strike Demands:**

- 30% rent reduction on remaining payments this year for students in UoM halls
- 30% refund on rent payments already made this year for students in UoM halls
- commitment from UoM to not increase rent in any halls for at least 3 years (rent freeze)
- Make 40% of UoM student halls meet the National Union of Students' definition of affordability (rent being no more than 50% of maximum student maintenance loan) within 3 years

#### **Broader Cost-Of-Living Demands:**

- one-off A1500 payment to every student at UoM to make up for the 11% real terms cut to maintenance loans due to inflation
- genuinely accessible Cost-Of-Living support fund which meets the actual needs of struggling students (only 22 students have received the full award)
- Support the UCU demands

*Comhdháil Therefore Mandates:*

The Coiste Gnó to show solidarity with and support the demands of the Rent Strikes being held by University of Manchester students and publicly support the direct action being taken. International Affairs

## Irish Language Motions

### GAE (NC) 1 Tascfhórsa Gaeilge NUS-USI

#### Proposed by the Gaeilge Working Group

(Whilst this was submitted as a UO motion, it has been moved to this section to ensure it can be debated amongst other Gaeilge motions. It will be cross-referenced in the policy file and mandates manual if it passes into policy)

*Déanann an Chomhdháil nóta de*

Bhunú Thascfhórsa na Gaeilge NUS-USI in 2018/2019. Bunaíodh an tascfhórsa seo chun obair a dhéanamh ar chur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus an Chultúir i mballeagraíochtaí NUS-USI.

### *Aithníonn an Chomhdháil*

Na bacainní uathúla atá os comhair eagraíochtaí atá cleamhnaithe le NUS-USI sa troid ar son chearta na Gaeilge agus infheictheacht na Gaeilge.

### *Tugann an Chomhdháil sainordú mar sin do*

Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge mar chathaoirleach ar Thascfhórsa na Gaeilge NUS-USI; Grúpa atá dírithe ar thacaíocht a chur ar fáil, oiliúint a éascú, agus feachtais a bhunú a bheidh dírithe ar an nGaeilge sa réigiún NUS-USI.

### *Comhdháil Notes*

The formation of the NUS-USI Irish Language Task Force in 2018/2019 This task force was established to work on promoting the Irish Language & Culture in NUS-USI affiliated member organisations.

### *Comhdháil Recognises*

The unique barriers facing NUS-USI affiliated members organisations in the fight for Irish Language rights and Irish Language visibility.

### *Comhdháil therefore Mandates*

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to chair the NUS-USI Irish Language Taskforce; a group aimed at providing support, facilitating training(s), and establishing campaigns focused on the Irish Language in the NUS-USI region.

## **GAE 1 Scéim Cónaithe**

### **Coiste Cultúrtha**

#### *Aithníonn Comhdháil:*

Na buntáistí iontacha atá ag baint le Scéimeanna Cónaithe

#### *Tréaslaíonn Comhdháil:*

Le Cumann Gaelach agus Aontas na Mac Léinn in Ollscoil na Banríona as ucht an obair iontach atá déanta acu chun Scéim Cónaithe a bhaint amach.

#### *Sainordaíonn Comhdháil:*

An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge chun taighde a dhéanamh ar an mbriseadh síos atá ag na Scéimeanna Cónaithe atá ann faoi láthair agus an t-eolas a chuir ar fáil do na bailleagraíochtaí

#### *Sainordaíonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh:*

Go gcabhróidh an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge leis na bailleagraíochtaí chun Scéimeanna Cónaithe a bhunú

## **GAE 2 Straitéisí Gaeilge in Ollscoileanna**

### **CMLOG & Coiste Cultúrtha**

#### *Aithníonn Comhdháil:*

Go bhfuil sé mar dhualgas ar institiúidí 3ú Leibhéal ó dheas Scéim Teanga nó Straitéis Teanga a bheith acu.

#### *Aithníonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh:*

Nach bhfuil institiúidí 3ú Leibhéal ar leith ag comhlíonadh an dualgas seo faoi láthair agus tá tio nchar ag seo ar meon na Gaeilge sna hinstitiúidí 3ú Leibhéal

#### *Sainordaíonn Comhdháil:*

An Leas - Uachtarán don Ghaeilge chun iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na hinstiúidí 3ú Leibhéal le fáil amach cén cinn atá Straitéis/Scéim Teanga acu nó na cinn atá as dáta agus an t-eolas a chuir ar fáil do na hAontais.

#### *Sainordaíonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh:*

An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le hobair leis an gComisinéir Teanga le hinstiúidí a chuir ar an eolas faoina ceartaí atá acu agus déan cinnte de go bhfuil na ceartaí á chomhlíonadh.

#### *Sainordaíonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh:*

An Leas - Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le hobair le hinstiúidí 3ú Leibhéal ó Thuaidh chun Straitéisí Gaeilge chuir le chéile le cuir I láthair go dtí Bainistíocht na hOllscoile agus Straitéisí Gaeilge a chuir le chéile go himheánach le haghaidh na hAontais.

## **GAE 3 Ag Tacú le hAistriúchán sna Balleagraíochtaí**

### **Proposed by UCC Students' Union**

#### *Aithníonn an Chomhdháil:*

An tábhacht a bhaineann le cáipéisí, foilseacháin, agus cumarsáid sheachtrach a bheith ar fáil go forleathan trí mheán na Gaoluinne, ionas go mbeidh an teanga sofheicthe i measc mic léinn ollscoile chomh maith le húdaráis ollscoile.

#### *Creideann an Chomhdháil:*

Nach chóir go mbeadh ról an Oifigigh Gaeilge dírithe ar an aistriúchán, ach a bheith dírithe ar chur chun cinn na teanga agus ar chosaint cearta teanga san ollscoil.

#### *Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:*

Go dtacódh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le Balleagraíochtaí teacht ar fhoinsí aistriúcháin inbhuanaithe agus fad-théarmacha le deis a thabhairt d'Oifigigh Gaeilge díriú ar fheachtaisí teangan.

#### *Comhdháil Notes:*

The importance of union documents, publications, and external communications being widely available through the medium of Irish, in order to promote the use of the language among university students and staff.

#### *Comhdháil Believes:*

The role of Irish-language Officer within Member Organisations should not be focused on translation of documents, but instead focused on the promotion of the language and protection of language rights within the university.

#### *Comhdháil Mandates:*

USI Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to support Member Organisations in sourcing sustainable long-term means of translation for union documents, publications, and external communications, to afford respective Irish-language Officers the opportunity to focus on campaigns regarding the language.

## **GAE 4 Raidió Rí Rá ar FM**

### **Proposed by Coiste Cultúrtha**

#### *Aithníonn Comhdháil:*

The work Raidió Rí Rá has done since 2008 in providing a radio station in the Irish Language and play chart music radio station for young people.

#### *Tacaíonn Comhdháil le:*

Raidió Rí Rá's efforts to be available on FM 24/7.

#### *Aithníonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh:*

Go léiríonn taighde nua ó Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann go bhfuil ceathrar as gach cúigear ag aontú go n-éistfidís le stáisiún raidió le níos mó den cheol a thaitníonn leo thar aon stáisiún eile

#### *Sainordaíonn Comhdháil:*

The USI Coiste Gnó, particularly the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the Vice-President for Campaigns, to actively support Raidió Rí Rá's efforts to get on FM.

## **GAE 5 Grant for students attending Gaeltacht courses**

### **the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

That the Gaeltacht regions are of significant cultural and historical importance to Ireland, and provide people with the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the Irish language.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

That while traditionally Gaeltacht courses are aimed at those in second level education, there are a wide range of courses specifically for adults and/or third level students

#### *Comhdháil believes*

That third level students should have the opportunity to attend courses in the Gaeltacht, and should not be prohibited by a costly barrier

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the Vice President for Campaigns to develop a promotional campaign aimed at highlighting the wide variety of Gaeltacht courses available for third level students.

#### *Comhdháil further mandates*

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to establish a fund aimed at supporting students who wish to attend courses in the Gaeltacht. This lobbying should include the production of a report that examines the current cost of Gaeltacht courses, as well as the inclusion of the ask in the USI Pre-Budget Submission.

# Constitutional Amendments

## CA 1 Language in USI

### Ulster University Students' Union

[Remove Article 10.6](#)

Insert:

[Article 10.6](#)

[10.6 Language in USI](#)

10.6.1 The Union's Constitution shall be held in Irish, English and Ulster Scots languages and may be referred to in whichever. In the case of a conflict of meaning or interpretation between the English, Ulster Scots or Irish translations, the English version shall be the definitive.

10.6.2 The Union has a bilingual policy, with regard to the Irish and the English languages. USI should give equal standing to both languages in all operations of the Union where practical to do so.

10.6.3 The Union shall adopt the practice of naming internal bodies in line with Schedule N

## Equality Motions

### EQ (NC) 3 Trans Equality Together Coalition

Proposed by the USI VP for Equality & Citizenship

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

Trans and non-binary people face many barriers in Ireland in the areas of discrimination, harassment and healthcare. Students' Unions have been advocates for the community leading on implementation of gender neutral toilets and many SUs joining the Irish Trans Writers Union boycott of the Irish Times newspaper.

#### *Comhdháil Notes with regret*

The Trans and Nonbinary community have been under intense unwarranted media attention as well being targeted by recent developments in sporting organisation.

#### *Comhdháil Therefore Mandates*

The Union of Students in Ireland to join the Trans Equality Together coalition led by BelongTo, LGBT Ireland and TENI (Trans Equality Network Ireland).

#### *Comhdháil Further Mandates*

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Welfare to attend media training run by Trans Equality Together and/or TENI in order to be able to represent trans issues in the most update to date and correct way possible.

## **EQ(NC)2 Trans Healthcare**

### **Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil Notes*

Trans and Nonbinary people outreach to the National Gender Service to access gender-affirming medical services.

#### *Comhdháil Notes with regret*

The psychiatric-diagnostic model adopted by the National Gender Service is outdated, denies informed and consenting trans and nonbinary people access to its medical services, and does not provide them with sufficient care preceding their medical and/or social transition.

#### *Comhdháil further notes with regret*

Transgender and Nonbinary people do not receive sufficient support when accessing mental health services, a medical transition, and primary care services that are sensitive to their experiences.

#### *Comhdháil Therefore Mandates*

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby the Minister for Health to ensure the National Gender Service and/or equivalent minister(s) and service(s) in Northern Ireland implements Version 8 of the WPATH Standard of Care and that such services can be provided at a local level.

## **EQ (NC) 3 Support for DADA Campaign**

Proposed by NCAD Students' Union

### **Comhdháil notes**

Disabled artists and disabled academics face unnecessary and restricting barriers while trying to establish an independent practice that, compounded with their disabilities, punish them for their efforts and prevent them from working autonomously.

### **Comhdháil also notes**

The Disabled Artist & Disabled Academics (DADA) Campaign has made good strides in making the voices of disabled artists and academics heard, and is fighting for the right to be self-employed for all people with disabilities.

### **Comhdháil believes**

Through support for DADA, employment rights for disabled people can be improved and, by extension, the wellbeing of disabled student artists and future self-employed disabled workers will be improved.

### **Comhdháil therefore mandates**

USI to support the DADA Campaign's Pre-Budget 2023 Submission by adding it to their own Budget 2023 Submission, and for the VP for Equality & Citizenship to support DADA Campaign in their future endeavours to further the rights of disabled people by promoting their work on social media, and engaging with them as necessary to further common goals.

## **EQ (NC) 4 Irish Blood Transfusion Service Blood Ban**

### **Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group**

#### *Congress notes*

Regular blood donations to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) by a sufficient number of healthy people are needed to ensure that safe blood will be available whenever and wherever it is needed. Blood transfusions are needed for women with complications of pregnancy, many complex medical and surgical procedures and for those undergoing radiation or chemotherapy to name a few.

#### *Congress also notes*

The IBTS have set strict guidelines for those who eligible to donate to ensure that all donations are safe to use and to protect donors and recipients.

#### *Congress further notes*

The recent deferral period of gbMSM (Gay & Bisexual men who have sex with men) donating blood to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) was lifted in March 2022 and replaced with a 4-month abstinence deferral period. This means that gbMSM (Gay & Bisexual men who have had sex with men) more than 4-months ago is now able to donate blood if he meets the other blood donor selection criteria.

#### *Congress notes with concern*

Eligibility decided on sexual partners is extremely discriminatory and no one should be denied the right to donate blood based on their sexual partners.

#### *Congress therefore mandates*

The VP Equality and Citizenship campaign for the abolishment of the deferral period to ensure that gbMSM (Gay & Bisexual men who have sex with men) who meet all other eligibility criteria will be eligible to donate blood in Ireland.



## EQ 1 Ulster Scots (Ullans)

### Ulster University Students' Union

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

Ulster Scots (Ullans) has been a significant and identifiable language within the island of Ireland for hundreds of years and has experienced a resurgence of interest in recent years.

Concentrated within the island of Ireland, Ullans holds special historical significance in addition to being valued as an integral part of national identity, as recognized by recent Westminster government legislation, with official minority language status, protection and recognition granted therein. ([www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-acts-on-identity-and-language-legislation-for-northern-ireland](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-acts-on-identity-and-language-legislation-for-northern-ireland))

#### *Comhdháil further notes:*

Due to Northern Ireland polarisation, it can be intimidating for Ulster Scots speakers to fully integrate into USI, given the stigma which can be attached by communities.

The Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 mentions Ulster-Scots, stating in part that:

**... ALL PARTICIPANTS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECT, UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE IN RELATION TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY, INCLUDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND, THE IRISH LANGUAGE, ULSTER-SCOTS AND THE LANGUAGES OF THE VARIOUS ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, ALL OF WHICH ARE PART OF THE CULTURAL WEALTH OF THE ISLAND OF IRELAND...**

This statement indicates that formal recognition of Ulster-Scots is expected to play a role in the continuing Northern Ireland peace process.

As part of the cross-border language body created under the Good Friday Agreement, the Ulster-Scots Language Society and its magazine Ullans were founded in 1992 and the Ulster-Scots Agency was established in 1999.

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

Ireland is a shared island, with much diversity, and Ullans has a part to play in this.

#### *Comhdháil believes:*

Ullans should not be a divisive language given that it is spoken to various fluency levels across a cross-community basis and both Ullans and Gaeilge are able to co-exist peacefully and complementary of each other. In 1910, Adam Lynn demonstrated the linguistic fusion and positive relationship between Ullans and Gaeilge through his predominately Ulster Scot's poem, 'a Ireland for Me', which featured the well-known Irish phrase 'aErin Go Bragha (Airinn go BrAch/ Ireland forever).

#### *Comhdháil further believes:*

Ulster Scots speakers from the northern part of Ireland should be made welcome within USI through inclusive USI practices.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

USI VP Equality to work with Northern MO's to encourage the formation of Ulster Scots societies on their respective campus to provide students with a greater sense of belonging within MO's and with USI. This can be achieved through on the ground Freshers' visibility

whereby USI Coiste Gnó supplies informative language material and gathers names to connect those interested.

Additionally, USI VP Equality shall work with NUS-USI in facilitating shared learning and practice between both institutions. Shared learning shall involve USI VP Equality leading on creating an Ulster Scots conference and training workshop.

Furthermore, USI VP Equality shall create a resource bank for those wishing to learn more about Ulster Scots including a section providing Ulster Scots translations for Member Organisations and their Student Officer position titles.

USI to recognize Ulster Scots in a positive, non-divisive way and promote awareness of Ulster Scots on the island of Ireland through inclusion, increasing awareness and training workshops.

## **EQ 2 Student Guarantor Schemes and Housing Security**

### **Queens' Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

Housing security is a prominent issue for students across the island of Ireland and there has been a student accommodation crisis in recent years.

Students moving into private sector accommodation are usually expected to have a Guarantor an individual who signs on as liable to cover the students' rent if they do not pay. In the South, this person must be an Irish resident. In the North, this person must be a UK resident. In both cases, the Guarantor is almost always expected to be somebody with a good credit history and a steady income.

This criteria is exclusionary to a number of groups, including but not limited to: international students, care experienced students, students estranged from their families, and students from a working-class background.

#### *Comhdháil recognises:*

Housing guarantor schemes are becoming more common across the Higher Education sector, particularly in the UK. These schemes entail a university or college signing on as a students' guarantor where they are unable to source an individual to do so.

Schemes can traditionally operate in one of two ways a internally operated by a HEI, or externally operated in partnership with a third-party provider.

HEIs that have adopted student guarantor schemes have seen high uptake and received a high volume of positive feedback from students.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

VP Campaigns and VP Equality & Citizenship to provide resources and materials about guarantor schemes and housing security to MOs.

VP Campaigns and VP Equality & Citizenship to encourage and support MOs in lobbying their HEI to develop its own student guarantor scheme and look more generally at improving student housing security.

VP Equality & Citizenship to lobby for wider protections for students in purpose built student accommodation, particularly financial and safety protections.

### **EQ 3 Consultation review of the necessity of, requirements for, and importance of, interfaith spaces on campuses**

#### **Maynooth Students' Union**

##### *Congress notes:*

That religious and ethnic minorities tend to be under-represented within third level institutions and there is an even higher level of under-representation of these minorities within student representation and Student's Unions around the country. Unfortunately, the work that is done around providing comprehensive supports and facilities for these minority groups tends to be reflective of the fact that, for the most part, this work must be done by students that do not directly represent these minority groups and furthermore do not have a personal understanding of the work the needs to be done. There is a need for establishing a voice and giving light to the perspectives of these unheard portions of MO's student populations.

##### *Congress further notes:*

That there is a need for further and more comprehensive interfaith spaces such as prayer rooms and worship centres on campus alongside interfaith forums and groups within MOs. And that there is a need to close the gap within Students' Union's between the lack of religious and ethnic minority representation within these MO's representative structures and the information and knowledge needed in order for Union's to push for the creation of these facilities and spaces and to be able to provide insights to their Universities and members on the requirements and necessities of inter-faith spaces. Also giving Union's the opportunity generally to push for the creation of spaces not only for just for prayer but spaces that also allow for more general and causal socialization and interconnection between people of similar faith backgrounds, giving these groups a forum to make friends, feel a sense belonging and engage in interfaith discourse, rather than just pray.

##### *Congress acknowledges:*

That MO's could really benefit from a centralized specification document the outlined the requirements and importance of more of these interfaith spaces alongside the general consultation of these minorities nationally and within MO's universities in order to engage with and prioritize the needs of this portion of USI's membership, this document/review should be carried out and created in direct consultation with these religious and ethnic minorities.

##### *Congress therefore mandates:*

The Coiste Gnó, in particular the VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Campaigns work on a consultation review regarding the needs of religious and ethnic minorities on MO's campuses specifically with regards to inter-faith spaces and facilities. This includes gaining this information from events and spaces such as EMPower and the Equality & Citizenship Working Group alongside directly engaging with MO's and religious and ethnic minority organisations to gain feedback and information, so a consolidated review document may be made that can advise MO's on the clear requirements for these spaces and facilities and outline the need for them. Equality

## **EQ 4 Advocating for and Supporting Trans**

### **IADTSU**

#### *Comhdhail recognises*

In the last year, the rise in transphobia across the Island of Ireland has caused a massive rift in the lives of queer students. Reports of anti-trans rhetoric, hate crimes and TERF language being used in colleges has made the college space feel unsafe for trans students.

#### *Comhdhail further recognises*

Recent instances of transphobic stickers, TERF ideology and hate crimes have caused both students and student union officers to feel unsafe and disrespected in both the academic and professional spaces.

#### *Comhdhail notes*

The current policy in support of LGBTQ+ students is very concise and useful, however, while MOs across the country have shown their support of queer students, more actions need to be taken to show support to our students in uncertain times.

#### *Comhdhail therefore mandates*

The VP for Welfare and VP for Campaigns to create and run an informational awareness campaign that debunks transphobic myths and includes supportive information about what being trans is, towards students in support of trans and queer students across the island, with assistance from the VP for Equality and Citizenship.

#### *Comhdhail further mandates*

The USI Coiste Gnó to actively speak against transphobic rhetoric in the media frequently.

## **EQ 5 Support for DADA Campaign**

### **NCAD Students' Union**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

Disabled artists and disabled academics face unnecessary and restricting barriers while trying to establish an independent practice that, compounded with their disabilities, punish them for their efforts and prevent them from working autonomously.

#### *Comhdháil also notes:*

The Disabled Artist & Disabled Academics (DADA) Campaign has made good strides in making the voices of disabled artists and academics heard, and is fighting for the right to be self-employed for all people with disabilities.

#### *Comhdháil believes:*

Through support for DADA, employment rights for disabled people can be improved and, by extension, the wellbeing of disabled student artists and future self-employed disabled workers will be improved.

#### *Comhdháil mandates:*

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Campaigns to support DAD Campaign in their future endeavours to further the rights of disabled creatives by promoting their work on social media, and engaging with them as necessary to further common goals.

#### *Comhdháil also mandates:*

that DAD be promoted and supported in any USI campaigns concerning students with disabilities.

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*We propose the original motion first proposed at Comhairle Náisiúnta on Friday August 19th 2022 be redacted and replaced with the above altered motion.*

## **EQ 6 Formation of USI Anti-Racism Group**

### **Submitted by Equality & Citizenship Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes:*

That there has been a rise in the far right presence in Ireland, where people of colour and refugees have been a target.

#### *Comhdháil further notes:*

That USI is committed to fighting racism and is committed to campaigning for equality in our society.

Comhdháil celebrates:

USI Events like Empower that provides a safe space for students from minority ethnic backgrounds to talk about issues like race and discrimination

#### *Comhdháil therefore mandates:*

That the Vice President For Equality and Citizenship sets up a USI Anti-Racism group for officers and students to join, that will provide a safe space for students all year round to discuss issues like racism and discrimination and to organise anti-racism demonstrations and solidarity actions. Equality

## **EQ 7 Reforms for Non-EU Postgraduate Researchers**

### **Postgraduate Working Group**

#### *Comhdháil notes*

Non-EU postgraduate researchers face difficulties in pursuing postgraduate research and education in Ireland, such as higher fees and additional costs in the form of visas, resident permits and healthcare. The current process for an Irish Residence Permit (IRP) and private health insurance for Postgraduate Researchers coming from outside of the European Union is costly and repetitive.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

There is unfair treatment regarding immigration status between Irish government-funded/HEIs-funded non-EU PhD researchers and EU/Marie Curie PhD researchers. Moreover, there are a number of visa refusals of PhD researchers and their spouses on insufficient funding grounds despite having scholarship awards from funding agencies and HEIs.

#### *Comhdháil further notes*

The time spent in postgraduate research by non-EU postgraduate researchers is not counted toward Irish naturalization and residency. The family member (s) accompanying PhD researchers do not receive access to the labour market or even part-time working rights.

#### *Comhdháil also notes*

Postgraduate researchers do not receive any disability benefits, health benefits, and paid maternity, paternity, and sick leave.

### *Comhdháil further notes*

The dependents of the PhD researchers under the hosting agreement can have access to the labour market but the dependents of the PhD researchers who are not under the hosting agreement cannot have access to the labour market.

### *Congress recognizes:*

The current policies place multiple pressures on non-EU postgraduate researchers who come to Ireland to continue their education and research that they may not have been previously aware of.

### *Comhdháil therefore mandates*

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Justice and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to implement reforms to end discrimination against non-EU postgraduate researchers that include but are not limited to:

- Introduce reform for the unjust visa restrictions and refusals for postgraduate researchers and their spouses and dependent children.
- Abolish the recurrent cost of a€300 for the renewal of the Irish Residence Permit (IRP) for PGRs.
- The fair provision of Hosting Agreement Schemes to non-EU postgraduate researchers.
- Sponsorship and processing fees for visas, Garda vetting, and residence permits should be adequately funded by the HEIs, funding agencies and the government.
- The time spent in postgraduate research by non-EU postgraduate researchers should be counted toward naturalization and residency.
- Provide working rights to the spouses of non-EE postgraduate researchers.
- Provide access and assistance for healthcare, affordable health insurance, disability benefits, and paid maternity, paternity, and sick leave.
- Irish and international postgraduate researchers and students pursuing taught and research degrees should receive the same financial support and fee criteria.

### *Congress further Mandates*

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to work with the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, Vice President for Campaigns, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to organise an information campaign highlighting the additional costs of pursuing postgraduate education and research if travelling to Ireland as a non-EU researcher.

### *Comhdháil repeals*

2021 A 7: Equality of access to Postgraduate education and research for Non-EU residents  
Equality