



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

# USI Policy File

*Policy Due to Expire*  
2023

## EM (AA) 20 – 3: COVID-19: Protect our Students

Proposed by CIT Students' Union

Congress notes with concern

The impact COVID-19 has had on students due to the closure of campus, adjustment of assessments, introduction of online exams and all other adjustments that have occurred as a result of government restrictions during this unprecedented time.

Congress also notes with concern

The impact COVID-19 has had on the mental and physical wellbeing of students throughout the nation as a result of unprecedented pressure to undertake exams under new circumstances, as well the effects of adhering to government restrictions.

Congress therefore mandates

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to support students and MO's with regards to the exam appeals and repeats process to ensure that it is fair to all students who have been negatively affected academically as a result of COVID-19.

Congress also mandates

That the USI Executive Team protects all students throughout this time to ensure their needs and concerns are heard, supported and advocated for when engaging with national stakeholders in COVID-19 related committees and to work to undertake research amongst third-level students on how COVID-19 has impacted their experience to inform their lobbying on this issue.

Congress also mandates

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to advocate to protect students on return to college by working with the HSE to ensure safety measures are adhered to

## EM (AA) 20 – 6: On Internet and Infrastructure Access for Distance Learning

Proposed by NUIG Students' Union

### Congress notes

The significant challenges the third level and FE students have faced in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Students are experiencing significant strains on their mental, physical and financial health currently.

### Congress further notes

With the move to online learning and assessment in recent months, students have faced significant barriers to accessing their education due to internet access, adequate study devices, family commitments or separate work/study space.

### Congress also notes

Educational resources in general are increasingly moved online, from course learning materials to assessments. Regardless of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, access to reliable, affordable internet connections is a key barrier to equal access to education.

### Congress believes

With the likelihood of a move to online and blended learning for the coming year, students are going to need significant software and hardware resources to engage to the best of their ability.

### Congress mandates

The VPAA, in consultation with the regional officers, to undertake research on the extent to which proper access to adequate internet and study devices has impacted students' academic activities.

### Congress further mandates

Following research on the impact of access to adequate internet, The VPAA and regional officers lobby to expand access, through subsidies and other actions where possible and relevant.

## 20 AA (NC) 2: Accreditation for Participation

Proposed by the USI Executive Team

### Congress recognises

The importance of student participation in extra-curricular activities such as clubs & societies, Students' Unions, volunteering and civic engagement during their time in college, and the benefits that engaging in such activity brings about in terms of the overall personal development of the student.

### Congress further recognises

The continued promotion by Students' Unions of students getting involved in these activities, and the associated advantages which can be conferred on students who have been active in these areas when seeking future employment.

### Congress notes

The development of modules and recognition within programmes which exist in some Higher Education Institutions to accredit students for their involvement and participation in these activities, in order to facilitate, recognise and encourage their non-academic as well as academic development whilst in college.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to research best practice across Higher Education Institutions in this area, with a view to developing USI policy on Accreditation for Participation which may be presented to the appropriate College bodies by Students' Unions who wish to do so.

## 20 AA (NC) 4: Student Nurses and Midwives Campaign

Proposed by the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes with concern

The considerable problems experienced by student nurses and midwives while on placement. The issue of the grossly unfair trainee wage imposed on them. Exploitative graduate programmes, emigration, working 39 hours a week, bullying and lateral violence and burnout are emerging as other key concerns.

### Congress applauds

The research done by USI Officer Board into the issues experienced by student nurses and midwives while on placement.

### Congress acknowledges

From the research conducted by USI that it was found that 51.8% of student nurses and midwives feel that placement has had a negative impact on your performance in aspects of your study. 57.3% feel placement has had a negative impact on physical health while 51.9% feel placement has had a negative impact on mental health. 81.9% feel that working as a nurse or midwife led to burnout as a result of working long hours during placement. 92.5% have thought about emigrating when they qualify as a nurse or midwife. 49% have experienced bullying or harassment while on placement while 18.3% have been bullied into working longer hours while on placement. 47.9% have considered dropping out of college as a result of a negative experience while on placement. When asked "what aspects of being a nurse and midwife would prompt you to emigrate?" 72.3% said payment was the key issue.

### Congress Mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to strive to work with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) the relevant trade union to mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, emigration, bullying and lateral violence.

### Congress mandates

Co-operation between the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), students' unions, student nurses and midwives and relevant trade unions on the remuneration and treatment of student nurses and midwives while on placement.

### Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective on the issue of pay and financial support.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns to work on implementing a comprehensive evidence based campaign and programme to erase the negative culture of bullying and harassment on placement by collaborating with the INMO, relevant trade unions, governmental departments, students' unions, hospitals and higher education institutions.

## 20 AA 2: Next Steps for NStEP

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Academic Affairs

### Congress notes

The National Student Engagement Programme [NStEP], which was officially launched in 2016 as a joint initiative between USI, the Higher Education Authority [HEA] and Quality and Qualifications Ireland [QQI], to embed student engagement practice through championing meaningful staff-student partnerships in Irish Higher Education. The work that has been undertaken so far through the NStEP programme including the roll-out of the class rep training programme, and the creation of National Projects, focused on specific areas within student engagement in Higher Education.

### Congress further notes

That NStEP launched a new Strategy in November 2019, which sets out its strategic objectives until December 2021, focusing on;

- Strengthening the value of student engagement nationally
- Developing the leadership capabilities of students in Irish Higher Education
- Supporting staff and students across the sector to foster a culture of partnership

### Congress believes

That student partnership is an important model in adopting effective student engagement practice.

### Congress further believes

NStEP plays a vital role in ensuring that student partnership and engagement is at the centre of discussions within the sector, and in supporting students' unions to improve partnership with their respective institutions.

### Congress calls for

NStEP to continue to be supported beyond its current funding window of December 2021, in order to ensure that student partnership continues to play a vital role in the student-learning experience nationally.

### Congress mandates

The USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other members of the Executive Team continue to support the delivery of NStEP in its current guise, and to lobby for the continuation of its funding beyond December 2021.

## 20 AA 3: Quality Assurance - Looking Forward

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

### Congress notes

The USI policy on Quality Assurance as set out in 09 ED 15, which outlines USI's principles on quality assurance.

### Congress further notes

The extensive involvement of students within external quality assurance processes in Irish Higher Education, as demonstrated by the long-standing Student Quality Reviewers pool operated jointly between NStEP, USI and QQI, and the centrality of students within QQI external quality review processes.

### Congress notes with concern

That in spite of the principles outlined in the aforementioned policy, there is still a notable lack of student involvement in internal quality assurance mechanisms within institutions, as detailed in QQI's "Quality in Higher Education 2019" report.

### Congress also notes

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee structure adopted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, in the UK, to embed the student voice within the work of QAA, as the national quality assurance agency.

### Congress believes

That in order to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms are working effectively in favour of the student experience, students should be involved and represented at all levels of quality assurance, including but not limited to, internal and external quality assurance review processes.

### Congress further believes

There is scope to further widen student engagement with QQI's core work - taking into account best practice from other national quality agencies, such as QAA UK.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with QQI, and other relevant stakeholders, including members of the Academic Affairs Working Group, to improve student involvement in internal quality assurance mechanisms across Irish Higher Education institutions, and to develop further student engagement with QQI's own work, modelled on the QAA student engagement structure.

## 20 AA 4: Wellbeing in Education

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Academic Affairs

### Congress notes

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

### Congress further notes

The work that has been carried out within the UK Higher Education sector on embedding wellbeing into the curriculum, most notably the 2017 report by Advance HE on embedding mental wellbeing in the curriculum.

### Congress believes

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

### Congress mandates

The USI Executive Team, in particular the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to lobby the Department with responsibility for Higher Education to initiate work on the area of Wellbeing in the Curriculum through the creation of a national working group on this issue. The USI Executive Team to support NUS-USI members to explore the area of mental wellbeing in the curriculum within their own jurisdiction.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to undertake research on, if and how wellbeing and extracurricular activities are facilitated within the academic calendar in all MOs, and to push for this to be considered as part of national discussion on Wellbeing in the Curriculum.



## 20 AA 5: Student Complaints

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

### Congress notes

That all HEIs, as well as other public service providers in the Higher Education sector, including HEAR, DARE and SUSI are required to have an internal Complaints procedure.

### Congress further notes

That if dissatisfied with the response received through the formal procedure, students are entitled to submit a complaint through the Ombudsman.

### Congress believes

Student Complaints processes can often be time-consuming, confusing and frustrating, leading many students to withdraw complaints they have submitted. To date, there has not been a lot of interaction between the Ombudsman and student representatives meaning that there is a lack of clear information on the Ombudsman process, and how Students' Unions can best support students wishing to make a complaint through this process.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide guidance notes for Students' Unions on supporting students throughout an internal complaints process, and to work with the Ombudsman to develop guidance for students, and for Students' Unions on the Ombudsman complaints process.

## 20 AA 6: Academic Integrity

Proposed by 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 work with the National Academic Integrity Network to develop campaign resources for local students' unions to roll out their own awareness campaigns on Academic Integrity.

## 20 AA 7: Postgraduate Specific Supports on Campus

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

### Congress Notes

The lack of dedicated services in relation to mental, physical and financial wellbeing of Postgraduate students across the Island of Ireland.

### Congress Further Notes

That services on campus can often be inaccessible to Postgraduate students, with many HEIs excluding PG students from the remit of their on campus initiatives aiming to improve the education experience of students.

### Congress Recognises

The increase in the amount of Postgraduate Students reporting poor mental and physical health and significant financial strain.

### Congress, therefore Mandates

The VP for Postgraduates to work with the VP Welfare and VP Academic Affairs to research what supports are currently available on campus specifically for Postgraduate Students.

### Congress Further Mandates

The VP for Postgraduates, the VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to lobby for a national strategy of support services specific for Postgraduate Students across Ireland.

## 20 AA 9: Learning in a Digital World

### Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

#### Congress notes

The advancements that have been made in digital learning & teaching in Ireland over the last number of years, and the increasing interest in digital delivery of courses including, but not limited to, blended learning and fully online programmes.

#### Congress further notes

A number of initiatives exploring the field of digital and online teaching & learning have been launched within the sector over the last year, including, but not limited to, the Irish Universities Association's 'Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning' project, and the Innovative Opportunities Transforming Education' (INOTE) project being conducted by the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (GMIT, IT Sligo, Letterkenny IT). Local Students' Unions, and USI have been a key stakeholder in these projects, and other local initiatives exploring the theme of digital learning.

#### Congress welcomes

The work that was carried out by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Autumn 2019, surveying over 25,000 students in Ireland on their experience of digital learning, and which will publish a national report of the findings in May 2020, as well as providing each institution with their own individual data to enable them to produce institutional reports on the survey.

#### Congress believes

All of the above initiatives demonstrate the currency of digital and online learning in the current Higher Education environment, but also show that there is still a lot of work to be done in improving the digital experience of students in Ireland, in order to ensure that digital tools are used for the betterment of the student learning experience, and not simply to tick a box.

#### Congress further believes

Online and blended-learning can provide a flexible route into higher education for students from a range of backgrounds, and for international students wishing to access the Irish Higher Education system from their own home country. However, it is vitally important that students on online and blended-learning programmes are offered equal access to support, personal development and other opportunities that are afforded to on-campus students. This should include access to the free fees initiative and SUSI funding.

#### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide resources to support MOs in engaging with online students, including support for Students' Unions who are not currently funded to support their online students and advice on embedding student representation within online and blended-learning programmes. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, President and other members of the Executive Team to work with sectoral bodies and the HEA to put in place further support for students enrolled on online and blended learning

programmes, including lobbying for full access to SUSI funding and the free fees initiative for those enrolled on fully online programmes.

#### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with the National Forum, and with MOs, to build upon the findings of the INDEx survey, and to call for further action to improve the digital learning experience of students. The USI Executive Team to continue to engage with, and support national projects focused on digital learning & teaching

## 20 AA 12: Placement Campaign

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

### Congress Recognises

The huge value that placement in courses has for students.

### Congress notes

That students may face barriers when it comes to engaging in placements from finding a suitable placement, travel/accommodation, financial reasons and others.

### Congress Notes

Many students undergo placements throughout their time in higher education institutions and that several of said placements are outside of their hometowns and away from their institutions. Many students have to source their accommodation for said placements in workplaces and are not paid or reimbursed in any form for said expenses or if they are they, not in a sufficient way.

### Congress Further notes

Previous research was done by USI for Student Nurses, Pharmacy Students and Student Teachers to gather data from those cohorts of students, including information on placement, that has led to the formation of successful campaigns and lobbies. The gap in overall research for all students undergoing placement and the need for the development of a campaign(s) stemming from the experiences gathered.

### Congress Recognises

The need to support students who are undergoing unpaid placements or paid placement where they are receiving less than the minimum wage. This is too little to live on as there is currently a massive disparity with the minimum and living wage

### Congress Believes

All students should be paid when they go on placement and receive at least a living wage and that many students are financially exploited.

### Congress, therefore, mandates

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Campaigns to conduct a national survey to gather data around student experiences on all placements.

### Congress further mandates

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Campaigns to create a campaign(s) from the collected data on their experiences, included but not limited to, a campaign to lobby for a living wage or, at least, financial assistance for students on placement

## 17 NC/AA 05: Early Education and Carers Campaign

Proposed by the USI Coiste Gnó

RENEWED 2020

### Congress Notes:

Early years workers and providers are dedicated and passionate about delivering a quality service that focuses on the needs of children and realising their full potential. Workers are paid too little and are struggling to make ends meet. The cost of Early Years services in Ireland are among the highest in Europe, an average of over €750 per child per month. However most early years educators are earning less than the living wage.

### Congress Applauds:

The 'Big Start' campaign led by SIPTU and the efforts to build a coalition of organisations and groups on the issue.

### Congress Acknowledges:

A lack of State investment where Ireland spends only 25% of the European average investment in early years services. Lack of empirical evidence to show that early education and carers students and graduates are looking for recognition of the sector and a living wage and if other issues exist.

### Congress Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to work with the relevant trade unions, and other organisations, to assess the issues that may exist and to further mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, work, and recognition of the sector.

### Congress Also Mandates:

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

## 17 AA 3: Borrowing model of IOTs

RENEWED 2020

### Congress notes

There is a huge crisis in relation to the current financial state of many IOTs across the country. IOTs are not allowed to borrow money in the such ways Universities can. According to recent reports in the media, currently there are six Institutes of Technology in a vulnerable state.

### Congress further notes

This causes huge issues for IOTs regarding progress and helping to advance their status the same way Universities can. This can also come into effect as IOTs cannot borrow money to help with the accommodation crisis, and they cannot borrow money to build.

### Congress therefore mandates

The USI President as a member of the HEA board to highlight with the HEA and lobby the government for IOTs to access additional funding the same way Universities can access it.



## 17 AA 4: Student Participation in Governance

RENEWED 2020

### Congress notes

That student participation in the academic governance of their institution is integral to ensuring that the perspective of the learner is embedded and reflected in decision-making.

### Congress further notes

Tertiary-level education is becoming increasingly marketised and competition-driven, with HEI Management engaged in strategic work around recruitment, marketing, and internationalisation. Students are increasingly denied a role in academic governance, creating a democratic deficit in our institutions.

### Congress believes that

Students and student representatives are partners in their education, and should have a key role to play in governance throughout structures in their institutions.

### Congress recognises

- The experiences of MOs in student participation and institutional democracy is varied.
- The work to date with NStEP on institutional analysis and academic representation.
- The work to date with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning on partnership.

### Congress mandates

The President and the VP Academic Affairs to carry out diagnostic work with MOs to get a broader picture of institutional democracy and student representation in governance structures.

To create resources around best practice examples of democratisation and decentralisation of institutional governance structures.

To work with individual MOs, as appropriate, to support efforts to improve student participation in academic governance.

## EM 20 – 1: Support for student renters during Covid-19

Proposed by QUB Students' Union

### Congress acknowledges

The Union of Students in Ireland's support for Rent Strikes carried out across Ireland to protest universities who increased rents in campus accommodations, along with standing with those campaigning for an end to the housing crisis in Ireland, north and south.

### Congress also acknowledges

That rent strikes have been organised by tenants unions and students collectively across Britain and Ireland to fight universities and private landlords who are exploiting student renters during a global health emergency and incoming financial crisis.

### Congress notes

The demands laid out by these tenants unions, groups of student renters, and NUS-USI to ensure the protection of student renters during the Covid-19 pandemic which include:

- An immediate Rent Suspension during the Covid-19 crisis with no subsequent repayments, with this backdated to cover the month of March to provide security for those out of work and financially insecure during this crisis.
- An 18 month freeze on rent increases to protect current and future students against landlords who may opportunistically exploit the current and coming crises.
- Early contract termination without penalty as students cannot be held to ransom over rent for a house that they cannot live in while this crisis is ongoing.
- A ban on all Covid-19 caused evictions, to protect the most vulnerable students during this period of uncertainty.
- Clarity from Higher and Further Education regarding plans for the 2020/21 academic year to allow students to make decisions early relating to their accommodation.
- Guidance for those students who still need to access any belongings left behind after promptly leaving their accommodation early due to government Covid-19 guidelines.

### Congress supports

The above demands laid out by organisations working directly with student renters.

### Therefore, Congress mandates

The USI Executive to support the establishment and growth of tenants unions in the wake of the Coronavirus crisis

### Congress further mandates

The USI Executive, primarily the VP Campaigns and VP Welfare to work with and support students and tenants' unions in their campaigning and lobbying efforts, including rent strikes in the form of withholding rents from either university campus accommodation and/or private letting agents and landlords.

## 20 WEL 1: SUSI Eligibility Review

### Congress notes

That students have been excluded by the criteria of SUSI. Many aspects of the application restrain students from receiving adequate financial support. The criteria is outdated and does not reflect the reality of struggling students.

### Congress further notes

That BTEA (Back to Education Allowance), distances, and other forms of eligibility can be the direct cause of people dropping out of college.

### Congress therefore mandates

USI to lobby for the eligibility criteria to be changed to suit students and lobby for radical reform with the support of relative organisations.

## 20 WEL 2: PrEP Accessibility

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

### Congress notes

PrEP (Pre Exposure Prophylaxis) is a drug taken to prevent the contraction of HIV and is now available in Ireland.

### Congress further notes

That PrEP is primarily aimed towards the MSM (men who have sex with men) group and meanwhile HIV does not discriminate against who it targets and can be contracted by anyone. The accessibility of the drug is also very limited in the sense of who can and cannot access this for free.

### Congress notes with concern

That studies in countries where PrEP is available has shown an increase in the likes of Syphilis, Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia and that this is due to the lack of sexual health education that goes with the drug.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the Executive to lobby the government for increased accessibility of PrEP for all and furthermore to campaign to promote education of still using protection even while on PrEP.

### Repeals

2017 WEL 18

## 20 WEL 3: Celebrating and Supporting Recovery Through Harm Reduction and Support

### Congress notes

Addiction is not defined solely with substance use/misuse. That an effective way of reducing issues around drug use lies not solely with anti-drug policies rather also include harm reduction and the promotion of recovery.

### Congress further notes

However, people living with addiction have overcome huge mountains with the current system that doesn't offer adequate support and should be celebrated in all ways whenever and wherever.

### Congress recognises

The work done by USI with regards to harm reduction and the MO's from around the country on some amazing work done to reduce harm.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to encourage celebration for anyone going through recovery, adopt a harm reduction policy and help Students' Unions set up forums for people to celebrate and share their experiences and living with addiction.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to organise a Harm Reduction roadshow that is to include study drugs and other forms of addiction recovery (such as gambling and others).

### Repeals

2018 WEL 4

## 20 WEL 4: Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

### Congress notes

Currently USI runs multiple campaigns during the year, relating to various issues (eg. SHAG week/Re:charge/etc.)

There are many mandates in the USI policy book in relation to the running of a number of campaigns relating to different Welfare issues, namely:

- WEL 19 – 4: Undetectable = Untransmittable
- WEL 19 – 9: Second-hand Smoke
- WEL 19 – 7: Excessive alcohol consumption campaign for secondary and third level
- WEL 19 – 13: Men's Mental Health
- 2018 WEL 4: Drug awareness and harm reduction campaign
- 2018 WEL 11: Smoking Cessation Campaign
- 2018 WEL 12: Abusive Relationships, Sexual Violence & Harassment
- 17 WEL 18: PrEP Availability in Ireland
- 17 WEL 22: Social Inclusion Campaign
- 17 WEL 25: Personal Safety Campaign during Freshers' Week
- 15 WE 25: Gambling
- 14 WEL 10: Water Safety
- 12 WEL 3: Sexual Health Website
- 12 WEL 5: Exam Stress Packs
- 12 WEL 6: Drink Responsibly Campaign
- 12 WEL 7: Suicide Prevention Campaign
- 12 WEL 14: Exam Stress Campaign
- 09 WEL 2: Abortion Rights Campaign

### Congress applauds

The effectiveness of the #BreakTheBarriers campaign (a campaign that compiles multiple issues faced by students in relation to accessing education ie. Accommodation, Fees, Grants, etc.)

### Congress notes with concern

That coupled with the numerous campaigns that are run locally in MOs, the various campaigns that USI run may get lost among the many campaigns that students see during the year.

### Congress believes

That a generic health campaign, promoting all aspects of health (physical, sexual, mental, etc.) should replace the specific campaigns, and be rolled out across all MO campuses during the year. That a Student Health and Wellbeing campaign that takes into account the many issues related to Welfare that students' face, and brings them under an umbrella campaign, would be the best way to ensure that the Welfare related campaign activities of USI are identifiable on a national level.

#### Congress further notes

That some campaigns avail of funding from external bodies (such as the HSE) and it is unknown how the combination of multiple campaigns may effect this funding

#### Congress mandates

The VP Welfare alongside the Welfare Working Group to investigate the feasibility of running a single, yearlong Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign, which incorporates the many issues under the remit of Welfare. The VP Welfare to use student feedback to decipher how the campaign should be run.

#### Congress further mandates

That should the VP Welfare and the Welfare Working Group deem the running of a single, yearlong Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign feasible, that a mandate will be put to Congress Floor at the next Congress. This mandate shall be to repeal all mandates in relation to the running of welfare campaigns, and to replace these mandates with a single mandate relating to a yearlong Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign

## 20 WEL 5: SHAG Packs

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Welfare

Congress notes

USI distributes approx. 30,000 SHAG packs every year to students in Ireland during the annual SHAG campaign.

Congress further believes

This is a huge opportunity to get crucial sexual health information out to thousands of students across the Island of Ireland.

Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, to have the following, but not limited to, in SHAG packs;

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

Congress therefore repeals

**WEL 1**



## 20 WEL 6: Smoking cessation

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Welfare

### Congress notes

According to the HSE, Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland with almost 6,000 smokers dying each year from tobacco related diseases.

### Congress also notes

Despite a number of campaigns run by USI, HSE and DRUGS.ie on the dangers of drug use, more could be done to highlight the dangers of smoking tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes and how addictive they are.

### Congress believes

That educating students about the dangers of smoking regular tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes may lead to a decrease in use.

### Congress also believes

That there should be designated smoking zones on campuses across the country.

### Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to carry out a national campaign on smoking cessation and the dangers of smoking.

### Congress Also Mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to mark 'World No Tobacco Day' each year.

### Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to support MO's in their efforts to introduce designated smoke zones across their campuses and any other smoking cessation initiatives.

## 20 WEL 7: Drugs and alcohol harm reduction campaign

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

### Congress notes

Education for third-level students is crucial in terms of informing students about drugs and alcohol, and the consequences taking them may have on their future.

### Congress further notes

That alcohol and drug misuse are still huge issues among the student population. According to the National Student Drugs Survey 82% of students have tried illegal drugs The National Alcohol Diary Survey showed that almost two-thirds of 18-24 year-old drinkers consumed six or more standard drinks on a typical single drinking session (anything over 4 drinks is considered binge drinking).

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to roll-out a national campaign on drugs and/or alcohol using harm reduction messaging. This campaign can be in collaboration with organisations such as, Irish Secondary-Level Students' Union (ISSU), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and any other suitable organisations.

### Congress further mandates

That the Vice President for Welfare supports MO's in writing local drug and alcohol policy, and offers training on drugs / alcohol awareness, and substance abuse to Students' Union officers at a time most suitable.

## 20 WEL 9: Mental Health Awareness Days

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

### Congress notes

There are many mental health awareness days that take place every year, that USI recognise and support.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate an action, in partnership with relevant organisations, to mark the following, but not limited to, mental health awareness days such as International Men's Day, Suicide prevention day and World Mental Health Day. These actions can be, but not limited to, creating a toolkit for MO's, sharing a graphic of support, or to organise an on or off-campus action.

### Congress therefore repeals

19 WEL 13, 12 WEL 7

## 20 WEL 11: Student Assistance Fund

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the BMW Region

### Congress notes

The Student Assistance Fund is an extremely important resource for students to access if they are in financial difficulty. Often it can be the difference between someone staying in college or dropping out.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for the SAF to be extended to postgraduate students.

The Vice President for Welfare to assist Member Organisations in their lobbying of their institutions to provide the applications for the SAF in the most accessible way for students, whether this be online or otherwise.

The Vice President for Welfare to work with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to seek inclusion for these students so they may be eligible to apply for the SAF. As currently students participating on a second qualification at the same or a lower level are not eligible for SAF funding.

The Vice President Equality and Citizenship to work towards the Student Assistance Fund being accessible to all students regardless of whether they are in receipt of SUSI or not across Institutions in Ireland.

The Vice President for Welfare to provide briefing to all MO's on all aspects of the SAF, and seek representation on all committees relating to SAF on their campuses, and to also continually lobby the HEA to redraft the guidelines for the SAF and to include recommendations to increase efficiency of systems.

The USI Executive team to campaign for increases and oppose any suggested cuts to the SAF.

## 20 WEL 12: JAM Card

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

### Congress understands

That those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition. JAM Card allows people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily.

### Congress notes

The recent success of the implementation of the JAM Card in DCU by the partnership approach taken by DCUSU and the University which has had a positive effect on the welfare of those students who sometimes may need an extra few minutes in certain situations.

### Congress mandates

The USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to assist member organisations in the implementation of the JAM Card on their campuses to widen the accessibility of their services to their students and support the JAM Card initiative as a whole.

### Congress further mandates

The USI Exec Team to undergo Jam Card training.

## 20 WEL 13: International Student Financial Support

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

### Congress notes

The huge financial struggle International students face when attending third level institutions across the Island of Ireland with the increase in International Student fees year on year.

### Congress further notes

The lack of financial supports available for students who are classified as International Students, with many leaving third level education with huge student loans or debt.

### Congress therefore mandates

The VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to research what financial supports are available for International Students across HEIs and FEs on the Island of Ireland.

### Congress further mandates

The VP Welfare and VP Academic Affairs to lobby for a national financial aid fund to support International Students.

## 20 WEL 14: Disordered Eating Support

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

### Congress notes

That students fall into a demographic who are often affected by disordered eating.

### Congress further notes

The lack of information for third level students around disordered eating and the stigma of shame and silence this creates.

### Congress notes with concern

The lack of visibility and funding for services and supports that are aimed at those with disordered eating available within HEIs, FEs and the wider community.

### Congress mandates

The VP for Welfare and the VP for Campaigns to work with relevant organisations to develop a campaign resource pack for MO's to utilise, as well as creating a survey that can be used as a lobbying tool for the USI.

## 20 EQ (NC) 1: Migrant Education Access

Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress notes with concern

That in the absence of a standardised residency test Irish third-level institutions apply an 'EU' fees' category which often means migrant students pay two or three times more than the typical fees charged. Young people who have grown up in Ireland (gone to secondary school here) are denied access to financial assistance and the free fee scheme upon entry to third level.

Congress also notes

That young people who have secured citizenship during their time in third level are often unable to 'reverse' their fee status and have no choice but to continue to pay these high tuition fees for the remainder of their third level education. These young people are also often unable to secure higher education grants.

Congress believes

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to advocate for accessible education for all students and should lend support to the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Migrant Education Access Campaign, including that children of non EU migrants who have come to Ireland to join their families and should enjoy equality of access to third level Education.

Congress notes with concern

The Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to work with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland on their Migrant Education Access (MEA) campaign.

Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Education and Skills to take effective action to address the situation of young people who have secured Irish citizenship but are currently unable to reverse their fee status. This may require a re-examination of the criteria of access to the Free Tuition Fee Scheme currently administered by the Higher Education Authority and should result in code of practice or a revised set of criteria being outlined to all third level institutes in Ireland to ensure a coordinated, equitable and consistent response.



## 20 EQ (NC) 3: Period Products

Property of the USI Executive Team

Congress notes with concern

A person who has a period will on average have 507 periods throughout their lifetime, and will spend an average of €8100 in a lifetime on sanitary products. According to a survey of more than 1,100 young girls and women aged between 12 and 19 years by Plan International Ireland, nearly 50% of Irish teenage girls find it difficult to afford sanitary products; some 109 of the young women who participated in the survey said they were forced to use a 'less suitable sanitary product' because of the high monthly cost involved.

Congress notes with concern

Students' Unions have quite often borne the financial burden of buying Sanitary products for students and distributing these. New period products such as menstrual cups and period underwear are still taxed at a higher rate of 23%, making them less affordable. Period poverty disproportionately affects student groups. The National Strategy for Women and Girls has identified students as an at risk group of period poverty.

Congress believes

That these products should be provided free of charge as a necessary provision of healthcare for anyone who needs them.

Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to campaign for free sanitary products to be provided nationally. The provision of these products should encompass a wide variety of choice.

## 20 EQ 1: Supporting the Traveller Community

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### Congress notes

The Traveller community is one of the most marginalised in Irish society, and often face systemic barriers to accessing third level education, as well as healthcare and housing amongst other things. The latest data shows there are only 61 travellers in higher education.

### Congress welcomes

The National Access Plan for inclusion of travellers in third level education which aims to increase the number of travellers in third level education through targeted initiatives. Also, the Yellow Flag programme which does great work in terms of breaking down social barriers in educational institutions.

### Congress affirms

It's support for the Traveller community as an ethnic minority group.

### Congress mandates

The USI Executive team to mark Traveller Ethnicity day on the 1st of March every year, and to support events that recognise intersections within communities, such as Traveller Pride.

### Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support the expansion of the yellow flag initiative into third level.

### Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to provide resources to MOs on specific issues students in the travelling community may face, working with organisations that provide education and awareness of traveller culture and identity training, such as the STATUS toolkit.

## 20 EQ 2: 20 x 20 campaign support

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Welfare

### Congress notes

The 20 x 20 Campaign is a national, all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perceptions of women's sport by 2020. The campaign aims are: - 20% increase in media coverage of women in sport - 20% increase in female participation at all levels of sports - 20% increased in attendance at women's games and events.

### Congress further notes

USI supports women in sport and the well-being of students in third level college.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to engage with the 20 x 20 campaign.

## 20 EQ 3: Reporting Racism

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### Congress notes

The recent development of reporting tools across HEIs, for example, sexual assault reporting tools, and role these tools play in supporting students.

### Congress notes

The same structures are not in place in our campuses to tackle racism, despite anecdotal reports that racism does happen in third level institutions. Furthermore, until we have hate crime legislation at a national level, it is very difficult to report racist incidents in a formalised manner.

### Congress acknowledges

The success of the iReport tool launched by INAR which allows people to identify and report incidents of racism. As well as this, race neutral language is not effective and to truly have a conversation about racism in this country we must have conversations about race and our attitude to it.

### Congress mandates

USI to promote the iReport tool and to lobby for its use across society.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support MOs in their lobbying of their institutions to develop stronger protocol against racism.

### Congress further mandates

USI Executive team to provide anti-racism training for officers.

## 20 EQ 4: Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

Congress reaffirms

It's support for the LGBTQ+ Community.

Congress notes

There are particular challenges still facing the community and we cannot become complacent in tackling these.

Congress therefore mandates

All information sent out in USI materials must be inclusive of the LGBTQ+ Community. The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to send out information after Pink Training to LGBTQ+ Societies and Students' Unions that will assist them in the events and campaigns they may wish to run throughout the year. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, Vice President for Campaigns and Regional Vice Presidents to work with LGBTQ+ organisations in developing a framework that could be applied to colleges in order to give them a LGBTQ Friendly Campus status.

Congress therefore repeals

14 EQ 4, 14 EQ 5, 12 EQ 7, 11 EQ 1, 11 EQ 2, 11 EQ 3, 11 EQ 4

## 20 EQ 5: International Decade for people of African descent

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

### Congress notes

The Decade for people of African Descent (lasting from 2015-2024) sets out programmes of actions and stems from the Durban Declaration, the first international document from the first ever international conference to address racism experienced by people of African descent around the globe. It seeks to protect and promote the human rights of people of African descent, raise awareness of the issues faced by the group and to adopt national, regional and international frameworks for its implementation. It was acknowledged (in the document or the resolution) that due to the historical perception of people of African descent as slaves, prejudice exists to this day that manifests itself in day to day racism, institutional racism and discrimination in accessing services and employment which results in the group's development disproportionately lagging behind compared to other groups.

### Congress notes with concern

The Irish Government has yet to launch the decade. The decade is opt in and is not enforced but provides real opportunities to tackle racism in Irish society and have conversations about what can be done to overcome prejudice.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Equality and Justice to formally launch the decade, and to put pressure on them to put in place a programme that celebrates the decade.

### Congress also mandates

The USI executive team to organise an action to celebrate the decade.

## 17 EQ 3: Integration of displaced persons into education

RENEWED 2020

Congress recognises

The ongoing refugee crisis, in which over 20 million people have been displaced due to war, terrorism, and other conflicts.

Congress asserts

That education is an emancipator and affords people the tools with which to become independent and self-determinant.

Congress calls on

The Irish government to partake in the resettlement and relocation of displaced persons (such as refugees and asylum seekers) in numbers appropriate to the scale of the crisis.

Congress calls on

The education sector in Ireland to proactively support the integration of such displaced persons.

Congress calls on

The Minister for Education to extend “domestic” fee status to such displaced persons resettled in Ireland who wish to pursue their studies. This status should also extend to eligibility for the student maintenance grant and other student supports.

Congress calls on

Institutions of third-level education to follow the lead of Dublin City University and pursue “University of Sanctuary” designation.

Congress therefore mandates

The officer board to campaign for the integration of such displaced persons into education in Ireland with particular focus on access, student supports, retention, recognition of prior learning and cultural integration, the latter including the provision of English language lessons.

Congress also mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to provide for student leaders, particularly elected officers, to become “No Hate Speech” ambassadors.

## 20 CZN 1: The Cost and Criteria of Irish Citizenship

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### Congress notes

The total fee to become an Irish citizen for an adult is €1145, consisting of an application fee of €175 and a fee to gain citizenship of €950. Furthermore the criteria to apply for citizenship includes having a period of 365 days\* (1 year) continuous reckonable residence in the State immediately before the date of application for naturalisation.

### Congress notes with concern

This high cost acts as a barrier to many young people and students who wish to apply for citizenship, excluding them from being able to vote in certain Irish elections. Also, the restrictive criteria of having to stay in the country for 365 consecutive days limits opportunities for people who are hoping to apply to become Irish citizens.

### Congress mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for a reduction in the cost of citizenship and to lobby for the continuous 365 residency in the state to be changed.



## EM 20 – 4: COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

### Congress notes

COVID-19 has imposed strict restrictions, resulting in a large number of students being both temporarily and permanently laid off of their part-time employment. This mass lay-off has resulted in the government creating, and most of these students receiving, the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, which is currently valued at €350/week.

### Congress further notes

The vast majority of Irish students would have taken on many more hours in employment during the summertime to pay rent, living expenses and to save for the coming academic year. The government's possible plans to either lower or means test this payment means students will be means tested and judged on their suitability for the payment by the average of their working hours from before the pandemic hit, not their increased hours planned for the summertime.

### Congress mandates

The USI President to immediately lobby the Irish government to take into account the hours students will forgo this summer while reforming the criteria for receiving the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment.

## EM 20 – 7: COVID Funding Gaps

Proposed by NUIG Students' Union

### Congress understands

Due to Covid-19, third level institutions and FEs will have lost a considerable amount of money due to the crisis and there will be a drop in funding from external sources.

### Congress notes

Students services such as counselling, health units, disability services, academic supports as examples along with Students' Unions' funding could be under threat from funding cuts to cover the costs that Covid-19 brought and will bring.

### Congress recognises

USI's opposition to any cuts to student services or Students' Unions.

### Congress mandates

The VP Campaigns and President to investigate the impact of funding cuts on third level institutions and FEs due to Covid-19.

### Congress further mandates

The VP Campaigns and President to lobby government officials to increase funding and cover any funding gaps due to the virus.

## EM 20 – 8: Financial Barriers to Education

Proposed by NUIG Students' Union

### Congress Notes

That the majority of students in Higher/Further Education across the State must work, either part-time or seasonally, to fund, in full or in part, their Education and the associated living costs.

### Congress Further Notes

That a significant proportion of these students rely heavily on the Summer Months, when they can work full-time and not have to worry about being absent from lectures, laboratory classes etc.

### Congress Believes

That the financial burden, both directly and indirectly associated with accessing education is one of the greatest barriers to education, both nationally and globally.

### Congress Recognises

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, many students will find themselves under unexpected financial pressure, because of loss of employment/earnings, as most students are employed in the service/retail sectors which have been heavily hit.

### Congress Further Recognises

That many students will have been deemed eligible for the COVID Unemployment Payment, but many students will equally not have been deemed eligible due to a reliance on seasonal Summer work, or indeed due to taking time off to manage the heavy workload placed on students in February and March of the Academic Calendar, for example.

### Congress Also Recognises

That many students will struggle to return to education in the autumn, due to a greatly reduced amount of money saved, or may be considering deferring the year or leaving education, as a result of same.

### Congress Mandates

The President, along with the Executive Team, to lobby the Government to introduce an Emergency Financial Support for students, to prevent a potential exodus from education, or the unnecessary falling into personal debt of same.

### Congress Further Mandates

The Relevant Officers, working alongside the Individual MOs, to lobby individual Higher/Further Educational Institutes to take a more lenient view of students who find themselves in Financial Difficulties, particularly in light of this crisis which we have faced, and continue to face, irrespective of wealth, class or other distinction. The Coronavirus does not discriminate, so why should Education.

## 20 NA (NC) 1: Decriminalisation of Sex Work

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

Sex work refers to escorting, lap dancing, stripping, pole dancing, pornography, webcamming, adult modelling, phone sex, and selling sex (on and off the street). Currently prostitution (the exchange of sexual services for money) is not illegal, but associated activities (soliciting in a public place, kerb crawling, operating a brothel) are.

### Congress notes with concern

With the rise in living costs, the potential increase in tuition fees, the inadequacy of the maintenance grant, and various other personal reasons it is highly likely that some students do and will do sex work alongside their studies.

### *Congress does not believe*

That anyone should be forced into sex work as a means of supporting themselves and that the current system fails those it affects directly: sex workers.

### Congress applauds

In August 2015, Amnesty International voted to adopt policy to protect the human rights of sex workers. The resolution recommended that they develop a policy that supports the full decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual sex work. The policy will also call on states to ensure that sex workers enjoy full and equal legal protection from exploitation, trafficking and violence.

### Congress believes

That there should be far more support for sex workers, both within the industry and for those looking to get out of it. Sex workers should be fully supported when seeking to leave the industry, especially through the opportunities to re-skill or upskill through education.

### Congress believes

Decriminalisation would ensure that sex workers feel able to report unsafe clients or violence at work without the worry of criminal repercussions, work together for safety, and that those who wish to leave the sex industry are not left with criminal records as a result of their job.

### Congress mandates

Officer Board to support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work. This is to be done through the support of sex worker organisations who work to improve the lives of sex workers across Ireland.

## 20 NA (NC) 4: Motion on Insurance Reform

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress believes

Students are massively struggling with the cost of education, from the extortionate fees to the huge costs of accommodation. Transport is another cost we need to reduce for students. Students are commuting by car more because of the high costs of education or lack of availability of public transport but the commutes themselves are almost as expensive as renting in some cases.

### Congress notes

That after Central Bank abolished releasing the PMIS report in 2015, that there is very little data available on specific stats in relation to insurance - including around young people/students and motor/travel insurance, making it very difficult to create a case to lobby on.

### Congress believes

According to anecdotal data, that students face a number of barriers when it comes to insurance including cost, getting insured on cars aged 10 years and older.

### Congress believes

That transparency is important in terms of real reform of this market and in order to lobby on this issue.

### Congress acknowledges

That there is a broad alliance of groups work on insurance reform called the Insurance Reform Alliance who are highlighting the negative impact of persistently high premiums and calling for real action to tackle the issue. Their aim is to leverage reforms that will quickly reduce liability and motor insurance premiums to affordable levels and keep them that way.

### Congress mandates

The USI Executive to join the Insurance Reform Alliance.

### Congress also mandates

The USI Executive to work on reducing the costs of insurance to students, including lobbying relevant bodies and building partnerships with companies to offer discounts.

## 20 NA (NC) 5: Motion on Free Public Transport for Students

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress believes

Students are struggling with the cost of education, from the extortionate fees to the huge costs of accommodation. Transport is another cost we need to reduce for students. Students are commuting more because of the high costs but the commutes themselves are almost as expensive as renting in some cases. This is a much more viable option for those who have the option to get a bus as it is better for the environment and does not require parking spaces in the vicinity of the college, which is not offered in some institutions.

### Congress acknowledges

By 2000, there were 27 free public transport systems in the world. That increased to 60 in 2010, 99 in 2017 and 114 today - the majority in Europe, according to Wojciech Koblowski, an expert on free public transport at the Free University Brussels.

### Congress notes

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

### Congress mandates

The USI Executive to lobby for the further reduction and in turn, the abolition of public transport costs for students.

## 20 NA (NC) 6: Motorcycle Safety

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

That the Road Safety Authority do run campaigns in relation to vehicles of all types albeit more influence is placed on some more than others The Road Safety campaigns currently run by USI and MO's both locally and nationally and the increasing number of students choosing motorcycles as a mode of transport.

### Congress notes with concern

The rise in motorcycle related collisions and accidents on Irish roads. Based on figures from the RSA (Road Safety Authority) May 2019 the amount of motorcyclist involved in fatal collisions from 2005-2015 was 212 in comparison to cyclists during the same period was 47.

### Congress notes

The RSA has information available on motorcyclists but unfortunately they don't provide enough information for other road users on how to look out for motorcyclists. The need for MO's to highlight the importance of motorcycle safety is of paramount importance.

### Congress therefore mandates

USI to assist MO's where possible to roll out motorcycle safety and awareness campaigns geared towards students.

### Congress also mandates

The VP Welfare to look into collaborating with organisations such as the Road Safety Authority in promoting Road Safety (irrespective of vehicle – that all vehicles are included in their road safety, inclusive of cars, motorcycles, bicycles etc.) inclusive of all with a particular emphasis on students.

## 20 NA (NC) 8: Rent Strikes

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress notes

Following from the success of Rent Strikes in the UK and emerging Rent Strike groups in Ireland, rent strikes involve the withholding rent, typically from the college in college-owned student accommodation, in a form of protest of the cost of student accommodation with the objective that the college would reduce the rent.

### Congress also notes

Collective action and rent strikes have proven extremely effective. Victories include a £1.2 million rent cut at UK based colleges UCL and a 35% backdated rent cut at Goldsmiths, UK. NUS (the UK National Union of Students') have been supportive of rent strikes in the UK.

### Congress acknowledges

Focusing on college-owned student accommodation, brings the fight for affordable student accommodation to the campus, creating a college that is more affordable and accessible for future students who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend college. Colleges should be working to remove barriers to attending college and the cost of accommodation is a huge barrier currently.

### Congress mandates

USI to support campaigns involving rent strikes in campus accommodation.



## 20 NA (NC) 8: Student Accommodation Position Paper

*Congress approves*

**Student Accommodation Position Paper**

## 20 NA (NC) 9: Industrial Relations Act 1990

Property of the USI Executive Team

### Congress highlights

The great work that the student movement and trade union movement do in tandem with each others' campaigns, create campaigns together and to support students as workers.

### Congress notes

That past campaigns where the USI and trade unions have had their members have worked together have been inhibited by the restrictions of the Industrial Relations Act 1990, particularly around secondary picketing, aside from the additional impacts it has on students as workers and future workers.

### Congress notes

The 1990 act was introduced to restrict and control trade unions. It is fundamentally flawed and is the worst dilution of workers rights in the history of the state. Since its introduction we have seen precarious employment, short term contracts, bogus self employment, the gig economy, privatisation, low pay and a general race to the bottom in workers rights which in turn has led to a decline in union membership. Decisions on industrial action should be left in the hands of workers and their unions without fear of repercussions.

### Congress notes

The work done by the Trade Union Left Forum (TULF) in the campaign to work towards the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act 1990.

### Congress mandates

USI to engage with like minded unions and TULF to support them in the campaign to repeal the 1990 Industrial Relations Act and replace with legislation that allows secondary picketing but also gives union recognition, full collective bargaining rights and the right to union access.

## 20 NA 1: Climate Action Policy

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Southern Region

Congress adopts

[The Climate Action Strategy](#)

Congress therefore repeals

2018 UO 20, 2018 UO 19, UO (NC) 19 - 1, UO 19 18, 2018 NA 2, EM 19 (CZN), 5 CZN 19, 2018 CZN 1

## 14 NA 2: Zero Hour Contracts

RENEWED 2017 – REAPPROVED 2020

Congress notes with concern

The problems of Zero Hour Contracts, seeing them as exploitative, precarious and disproportionately altering the relationship between employers and employees, many of whom are students.

Congress regrets

That this has additional problems in relation to families/ single parents, given the difficulties of combining Zero Hour Contracts and childcare.

Congress mandates

USI to confirm its opposition to Zero Hour Contracts, and work with the trade union movements and sympathetic political parties to bring about the abolition of ZHC.

## EM 20 (UO) 5: COVID-19 Monthly Forum for MO's Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

### Congress Notes

That the COVID-19 global pandemic has completely stunted some of the movements of the local students' Unions and acknowledges that there are huge engagement challenges coming up from September on that will not only affect engagement but will also significantly damage the commercial activities of our local Unions.

### Congress Applauds

The proactive work done by the National Union and officers on the ground in juggling through an unprecedented case.

### Congress Notes with Concern

Many colleges are not responding to the Union in such a way and with a recession coming and commercial growth being slowed down, the collective organization needs to be proactive and ahead of the curve.

### Congress Further Notes

That while National Council, Congress, Etc can be held online, the agenda for the next while will be dominated by COVID-19, possibly stunting further developments in other areas of the movement.

### Therefore, Congress Mandates

That the Executive Team sets up a monthly COVID-19 forum so that MOs may feed into, work on solutions and problem share.

## 20 UO 8: Multi-Campus Support

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

### Congress Notes

Nationally there are a number of multi-campus Higher Education Institutions and these campuses provide vitally important education to regional communities.

### Congress Further Notes

With the planned designation of additional Technological Universities and the continued merging of Colleges into Universities in the coming years, the number of multi campus HEIs is set to increase.

### Congress Mandates

The USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other relevant members of the executive team to lobby the Government to prevent the closure of satellite campuses where the Students' Union is against the closure and highlight the value of multi-campus and satellite campuses and the need to support these campuses during mergers.

### Repeals

17 AA 8

## 20 UO 15: Panel of External Members

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

### Congress Notes

That some MOs have it as part of their democratic structures the need to appoint external members to their boards and committees, such as an Independent Chairperson.

### Congress Recognises

The importance of governance and accountability in Students' Unions to ensure the Union is run effectively and efficiently for the benefit of students.

### Congress Believes

That through USI and other MOs, there would be a wealth of past Sabbatical officers that would have the knowledge and interest to serve as external members of boards and committees of Students' Unions.

### Congress Mandates

The President to provide a contact list of external contacts which could act as external members for MOs committees and boards. This list should be updated on a yearly basis and provide details of their experience and involvement in Students' Union.

## 17 UO 1: Independent Students' Unions

RENEWED 2020

### Congress Notes with Concern

The creeping intrusion on students' union democracy and independence occurring around the country.

### Congress Believes

The backbone of the student movement is for students' unions to be allowed to democratically self-govern, and to be free from interference by outside bodies.

### Congress Further Notes With Concern

The attempts to censor some students' unions, and encroach on their freedom of association.

### Congress Mandates

The President to have the Independent Students' Union campaign as a priority campaign for the year, and to form a Committee, made up of the President and members of national council, and any external bodies that National Council see fit. This Committee is to report back to each National Council.

### Congress Further Mandates

The President to undertake an annual dossier of the current situation within individual students' unions, so as to keep a national record of developments and changes as they occur. This dossier is to occur no later than September 30th to allow for adequate time to analyse and respond to issues as they arise. The information provided within the dossier is to be kept confidential, and is only to be used as part of the Independent Students' Union campaign.

### Congress Further Mandates

The President to seek legal counsel in relation to proposing changes to Irish legislation to protect students' union independence, and to report findings and recommendations back to both National Council and the Independent Students' Union Committee.



## 17 UO 14: USI Calendar

RENEWED 2020

### Congress Notes

USI organise a number events over the course of the year.

### Congress Recognises

The dates and volume of events organised by the organisation may need to be adapted from time to time.

### Congress Believes

Students benefit from attendance at USI events.

### Congress Further Believes

If students had sufficient notice in regards to the timing and location of events, attendance at these events would be increased.

### Congress Mandates

The USI President in conjunction with the Officer Board to develop a set calendar of USI events and activities, including the location when known/available, for their term of office

### Congress Further Mandates

The USI President to make this calendar available to Member Organisations and students via the USI Website and other mediums they feel appropriate.

## 17 UO 15: Comparative Research Manual

### RENEWED 2020

#### Congress Recognises

Students' Union Officers sit on a number of boards and committees within their respective institutions.

#### Congress Notes

Students' Union Officers roles on these boards and committees is to represent students and to defend their rights predominantly.

#### Congress Believes

Students' Union Officers need at their disposal statistics and figures from other member organisations to strengthen their arguments on a number of issues, for example but not limited to library opening hours, on campus catering prices etc.

#### Congress Therefore Mandates

The Regional officers of USI to compile together a comparative research manual following a consultation process with students and the USI National Council in terms of which areas should be covered within this manual.

## 17 UO 18: Secretary for Standing Committees and Action Points

RENEWED 2020

### Congress Notes

That fluent discussion can come from standing committees of National Council.

### Congress Mandates

USI Officer Board to ensure that as part of standing orders for Committees, a secretary should be elected to take minutes and action points are created from these minutes, which track the work of these committees in an effective manner.

## 20 AF 1: Affiliation Fee Review

Proposed by the USI President

### Congress Notes

That affiliation fees for USI are currently based on registered students in each member organisation as agreed by the Higher Education Authority as outlined in the USI Constitution.

### Congress Further Notes

The need to undertake a full and broad review in relation to the affiliation fee charged by USI and that this review should be ongoing so to ensure it is reflective of the current and future landscape

### Congress Recognises:

The work currently ongoing by the USI Executive Team to develop a Student Partnership Agreement and Framework for Students' Unions with the Department of Education and Skills which aims to incorporate legal recognition and funding for Students' Unions.

### Congress Further Recognises

This is a key development in relation to the affiliation fee for USI as it will have an impact on the funding provided to Students' Unions and also may impact how that fee is paid to USI by member organisations.

### Congress Understands

The impact of a change to the affiliation fee will have on USI and wants to ensure the decision that is taken will not negatively impact the work of the organisation.

### Congress Therefore Mandates

The USI President to set up a working group to include sabbatical officers of USI member organisations and members of finance committee and the USI President to develop a long term impact analysis of a change to the USI affiliation fee in line with the following suggestions:

- Incremental cap on the affiliation fee
- Link affiliation fee with inflation (based on the average of 2018 - 2020)
- 30% reduction in affiliation fee

The working group will develop a terms of reference which will be brought to National Council no later than the September meeting.

### Repeals

AF 19 1

## 20 AF 3: Financial Reporting and Accountability

Proposed by the USI President

### Congress Notes

Every year; the USI operates from a budget derived from the membership fees of the individual Member Organisations.

### Congress Further Notes

USI runs many large scale events throughout the year which are accounted for through the USI budget.

### Congress Recognises

USI Congress approve USI financial accounts as proposed by Finance Committee each year.

### Congress Mandates

That at every National Council financial statements showing cumulative income and expenditure from 1st July each year are presented up to the time of each meeting. These statements should be presented by a member of the Finance Committee or the President as an item for discussion.

### Congress Further Mandates

That the President presents a projected budget for large scale events and campaigns to the National Council prior to the event and an actual budget for those large scale events and campaigns to the National Council just after the event as an item for discussion.

### Congress Also Mandates

The USI President to ensure that financial accounts are uploaded to the USI Website no more than 5 working days after being approved by Congress each year.

### Repeals:

17 (NC) AF 1, 14 AF 1, 17 AF 1

## 20 GAE 4: Irish Language Working Group

Proposed by IT Sligo Students' Union

### Congress Notes

The position of Leas – Uachtarán don Gaeilge became a full time position in Congress 2018-2019 as Congress believed it was important to have a full time officer to roll out the various tasks throughout the year. Since the introduction of the role as a full time position Congress has seen the great work that has been done by the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and how the Irish Language has grown since the full time position has been put in place.

### Congress Further Notes

That other full time officers in the executive team are allocated time to roll out working group's at every National Council.

### Congress Therefore Mandates

The President to allow for an Irish Working Group in the National Council schedule and The Irish Language Officer / Leas – Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to run an Irish working group at every National Council.

## 20 GAE 5: Cúrsaí Lán Ghaeilge Ag An Tríú Leibhéal / Courses Through Irish At Third Level

Proposed By An Coiste Cultúrtha

### Aithníonn An Chomhdháil

Go bhfuil an-chuid daoine le Gaeilge ag dul isteach in institiúidí ardoideachais nach mbaineann úsáid as a gcuid Gaeilge tar éis na scoile.

### Aithníonn An Chomhdháil Chomh Maith

Go bhfuil easpa tacaíochta ar fáil i roinnt coláistí do chainteoirí Gaeilge, go háirithe cainteoirí dúchais, agus daoine a d'fhreastal ar an mbunscoil agus/nó an meánscoil trí Ghaeilge nuair a théann siad isteach sa tríú leibhéal. Tá easpa rogha acu maidir le cúrsaí iomlán trí Ghaeilge nach mbaineann leis an teanga féin agus mar sin ní fheictear dóibh gur cheart an teanga a labhairt a thuilleadh.

### Creideann An Chomhdháil

Gur cheart go mbeadh níos mó cúrsaí ar fáil trí Ghaeilge ar fud na tíre nach mbaineann leis an teanga í féin, le freastal ar an bpobal seo a bhfuil Gaeilge acu ach ar mhaith leo a bheith ag obair in earnáileacha nach mbaineann leis an teanga féin mar shampla, Gnó, Dlí, STEM srl.. Mar sin bheadh níos mó daoine le Gaeilge ag obair in earnálacha éagsúla a bheadh in ann freastal ar an bpobal i gcoitinne go hiomlán trí Ghaeilge le cearta teanga faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 a chomhlíonadh.

### Mar Sin, Sainordaíonn An Chomhdháil

Go rachaidh an LU don Ghaeilge i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachas, agus an Roinn Cultúr Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta le tuilleadh infheistíocht a dhéanamh i gcúrsaí lán Ghaeilge timpeall na tíre ionas go mbeidh deis níos fearr ag mic léinn a gcuid cumas sa teanga a chothú agus a bheith ag obair in earnálacha éagsúla trí Ghaeilge.

### Aisghaireann

12 G 1

### Congress Notes

That there are many students with Irish entering third level education who do not use their Irish after school.

### Congress Also Notes

The lack of support given to students who have Irish, especially native speakers and those who attend primary and secondary school through Irish, when they enter third level. There is also a lack of choice in courses conducted through Irish which are not related to Irish itself and students don't see the value in speaking Irish anymore.

### Congress Believes

That more courses should be made available fully through Irish, which are not centred around the language itself, to cater to this group who speak Irish but who would like to work in areas outside of the language itself for example, Business, Law, STEM etc. Therefore there

would be more people working in different sectors who have Irish, and who can deal with the general public through Irish and fulfill language rights provisions made under the Official Languages Act 2003.

Therefore Congress Mandates

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education and Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht to invest more in courses conducted through Irish throughout the country so that students have a better chance of maintaining their Irish and being able to work in various sectors through Irish.

Repeals

12 G 1



## 20 GAE 6: Tumoideachas Gaeilge / Immersive Education Through Irish

Proposed by An Coiste Cultúrtha

### Aithníonn An Chomhdháil

An méid daoine sa tír seo a dhéanann staidéar ar an nGaeilge sa Choláiste, idir an teanga féin agus a cúrsaí oideachais, nach bhfaigheann go leor tacaíochta ó thaobh labhairt na teanga de le linn céime.

### Creideann An Chomhdháil

Go bhfuil an- tábhacht leis an tumoideachas mar chuid d'aon chéim a bhaineann le teanga ar bith. Tá easpa deiseanna ag mic léinn úsáid a bhaint as a gcuid Gaeilge labhartha le linn na céime ach amháin nuair a théann siad chun na Gaeltachta nó má tá siad i mbun scrúdú béil. Ní leor an méid seo go mbeadh mic léinn líofa sa teanga go háirithe d'ábhair oide nuair ar ghá dóibh a bheith in ann an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh do pháistí.

### Chomh Maith Leis Sin, Creideann An Chomhdháil

Gur cheart go mbeadh tréimhsí foghlama sa Ghaeltacht mar chuid de gach cúrsa a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge gan costais bhreise ar mhic léinn le freastal orthu. Ba cheart go mbeadh na Ghaeilge níos fite fuaite sna ábhair eile a dhéanann na hábhair oide mar shampla, ceol, ealaíon, corpoideachas ionas go gcloisfidh agus go labhróidh siad an Ghaeilge níos minice mar chuid den chéim.

### Mar Sin, Sainordaíonn An Chomhdháil

Go rachaidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus an Leas-Uachtarán um Chúrsaí Acadúla i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachais, an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, agus Institiúidí Ardleibhéal le tréimhsí foghlama sa Ghaeltacht a tharraingt isteach mar chuid de chúrsaí a bhaineann le Gaeilge ionas go mbeidh an deis an mic léinn a bheith iomlán tumtha sa teanga.

### Chomh Maith Leis Sin, Sainordaíonn An Chomhdháil

Go rachaidh an LU don Ghaeilge i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachais, an Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta, Ceardchumann na Múinteoirí agus páirtithe leasmhara eile leis an Ghaeilge a tharraingt isteach níos mó sna cúrsaí bunoidreachais chun go mbeadh níos mó Gaeilge á labhairt ag na hábhair oide le linn na céime.

### Congress Notes

The large number of people in the country who study Irish in college, between the language itself and education courses, who do not receive enough support when it comes to speaking the language throughout their degree.

### Congress Believes

That it is hugely important to have immersive education as part of any degree which involves learning a language. There is a distinct lack of opportunity for students to speak Irish during their degree with the exception of going to the Gaeltacht or oral exams. This is

not enough for students to become properly fluent in the language, especially for student teachers who should be able to teach children in Irish.

#### Congress Also Believes

That learning periods in the Gaeltacht should be a part of any course which involves the Irish language without any extra cost to the student for attending. Irish should be further integrated into other subjects studied by student teachers for example music, art, PE, so that Irish will be heard and spoken more as part of their degree.

#### Therefore Congress Mandates

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and HEIs to introduce Gaeltacht courses into any degree which involves learning Irish so that students have more of an opportunity to become immersed in the language.

#### Congress Further Mandates

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education, the Teaching Council, Teachers' unions and other relevant organisations to integrate Irish into ITE programmes so that student teachers will have more opportunity to practice their Irish during their degree.

## 20 GAE 9: An Ghaeilge Ó Thuadh - New Decade New Deal

Proposed by An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Aithníonn An Chomhdháil

Na Céimeanna móra a rinne an Feidhmeannas ó Thuadg i gComhaontú New Decade New Deal Approach maidir le Gaeilge trí Choimsinéir Teanga a chruthú agus aisghairm na bpéindlíthe deireanach.

Aithníonn An Chomhdháil Chomh Maith

An sár-obair gníomhaíochta a rinne An Dream Dearg agus mic léinn ó Thuadh leis an méid seo a bhaint amach.

Creideann An Chomhdháil

Cé go bhfuil na héachtaí seo iontach dearfach, ní leor iad i gcomparáid leis an Acht Gaeilge a éilítear, go háirithe toisc nach luaitear aon rud faoi chomharthaíocht dhátheangach ann.

Sainordaíonn An Chomhdháil

Go leanann Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn ag tacú le hobair an Dream Dearg agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge.

Chomh Maith Leis Sin Sainordaíonn An Chomhdháil

Go bhforbródh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge feachtas in éineacht le NUS-USI agus balleagraíochtaí leasmhara le ciorraithe ar chúrsaí Gaeilge a sheachaint, go leathnófaí cúrsaí ionas gur féidir staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge le hábhair eile, go méadófaí infheistíocht i Ranna Gaeilge agus le tacaíocht a thabhairt do na Cumainn Ghaelacha agus d'Oifigigh Ghaeilge maidir le cúrsaí eile Gaeilge ar champas.