
Comhdháil

MMXXIII

3-6 April | Sligo



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

CD1

Motions | Rules | Clár | Explainers

Comhdháil Social

Comhdháil Social events are opportunities to meet and enjoy the crack / craic with students from colleges all across the island. There is no obligation to attend these events, but we'd absolutely love to see you get stuck in to all Comhdháil has to offer.

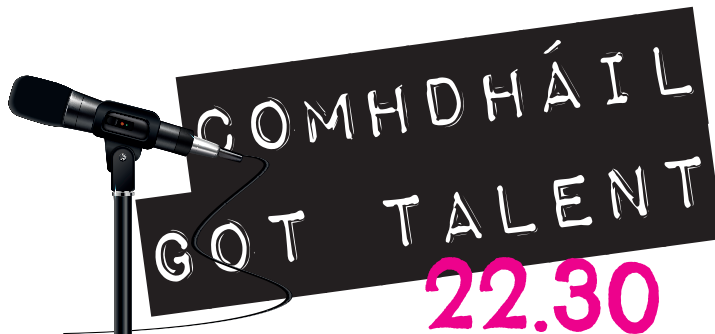
Monday



Tuesday



ALCOHOL FREE EVENT



Wednesday



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Steering Awards 2023



What now?

Each year, during the Congress Dinner (Wednesday night) the USI Steering Committee nominates and presents ten (or more, or fewer, we don't tell them what to do because we're a little afraid of them) awards to delegates and delegations at Congress. To stand a chance of winning a pitifully small prize (HINT: it's an Easter Egg) and the bragging rights, remember to state your name and college any time you speak.

Protip: Your name and college are printed on your delegate card.

Fáilte Ón Uachtarán

Beth O'Reilly



A chara,

On behalf of the USI Coiste Gnó, welcome to Comhdháil 2023! Over the next four days you will have the opportunity to shape the policies of the national student movement and network with delegations from across the island of Ireland.

“Take the breaks you need to, get some sleep, and eat all your soup.”

As cliché as it sounds - Comhdháil is a marathon, not a sprint. There are around 80 new policies being proposed this year, so that's 80 different debates – plus all of our policies due to expire!

Take the breaks you need to, get some sleep, and eat all your soup.

If this is your first time engaging with USI, I truly hope you will continue to stay active and involved in our campaigns and events.

Hold your officers to account (yes, that includes me) and fight to make this a union that represents your needs and wants as a student. A union is only as strong as its members, so ask questions, engage in debate and learn from the experience of the hundreds of other student delegates attending Comhdháil.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Le bród,

Beth O'Reilly
USI President
22 March 2023

USI Staff at Comhdháil

USI staff are present at USI Comhdháil to support the delivery of the event and to speak to delegates about the programmes run by USI.



Martina Genockey Public Relations & Communications Manager

Martina Genockey is USI's Communications and PR Manager and has responsibility for maximising coverage of USI activities, events and campaigns, along with the President, Vice President for Campaigns and the rest of the Coiste Gnó. Martina manages USI's social media accounts and will be live Tweeting and posting all the news from Comhdháil throughout the week (and yes, it's up to her who gets on the Tweet wall, so be nice!).

Martina holds a Master's degree in Journalism from TU Dublin, a professional diploma in Digital Marketing from the Digital Marketing Institute and an honours degree in English and History from the University of Maynooth and has a range of journalism, communications and public relations experience. She is really looking forward to a great week of coverage for the student movement and the work done by USI and SUs across the island.

Hello from The Congress Director

Ben Archibald



Dear Delegate,

On behalf of the staff of USI, It is my delight and pleasure to be one of the many (many, many) people welcoming you to USI Comhdháil 2023.

Comhdháil is a special event. You represent more than 1,000 students from your institution, and it's your job to contribute your voice, intellect and passion on behalf of those who can't be here to represent themselves. As a result, you have a special place in the Union, and a special responsibility to your classmates. We have no doubt that, just as in past years, you'll do them proud.

We have rules at each USI event to keep the event safe and smooth. With 260+ delegates, it's necessary to ensure that everyone's aware of them and committed to upholding them. We and your fellow delegates will thank you for your adherence to the **Code of Conduct**.

Anything not happening on Congress Floor is my responsibility - if you have any problems or queries about the hotel, catering, delegation management, sleeping arrangements or registration, come to me.

I'm also proud to lead a team of staff who will work to ensure your needs as a delegate are met. When you meet USI staff, you'll see the dedication they have to the democratic heart of USI you're taking part in.

I've been to 18 Congresses as a delegate, officer, Steering Committee and Congress Director. My advice, for what it's worth? There are hundreds of fellow students around you to talk to, learn from and have fun with. Not everything will go the way you want it to - but this unique event in the life of students can be a place you make memories for the rest of your life. There's a thought.

Ben Archibald
22 March 2023

“Eat the mints. Drink the water. Accept that some people won't agree with you, and leave the debate on the floor.”

Sarah Hughes Mental Health Programme Manager

Sarah Hughes is the Mental Health Programme within the Union of Students in Ireland. Sarah works directly on any mental health research projects within the organisation and works alongside Government Executives such as the HSE to create positive change and ensure students' mental health is at the forefront of conversation at all times. Sarah is currently running the Open Up national student mental health campaign, and is available during Comhdháil to provide a safe space should anyone need it



Hannah Kelly NStEP Programme Manager

Hannah (she/her) is the current Manager of the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP). NStEP is a joint initiative of QQI, HEA and USI and aims to promote and encourage student engagement in HEIs through the Steps to Partnership Framework. Before beginning her role with NStEP, Hannah worked with AHEAD with her work there focusing on disabled student engagement. Outside of her work with AHEAD, Hannah is a board member of Dublin Lesbian Line and is a public speaker, particularly in the areas of intersectionality and inclusion.



Welcome from the chairperson of Steering & Elections Committee



Niamh Murtagh

On behalf of the Steering Committee I would like to welcome you to Comhdháil AMLÉ 2023!

Comhdháil is at the very core of everything USI does. It is the driving force of our democratic, inclusive student movement. As such, debates and voting on motions is a huge part of what Comhdháil is about.

The Steering Committee's role is to be an impartial moderator for debates and to ensure that everything on the debate floor runs smoothly. If you have any questions about procedural motions, points of order or information, how votes are taken or elections are conducted, just ask any member of Steering!

You are here this week representing thousands of students that depend on you to be their voice and their vote, so it is so important to engage in the debate and vote on the motions brought forward by you and your fellow students from across the island of Ireland.

Respect is a fundamental principle of USI. You have every right to fundamentally disagree with a speaker, however all speakers deserve respect at all times on the debate floor. Similarly, speakers should take care to give other delegates their due respect.

Comhdháil is a wonderful event and is filled with opportunities to network, debate and challenge your own ideas as well as everyone else's.

Enjoy the week and make the most of it!

Is mise le meas.

Níamh Murtagh

Welcome from the Returning Officer Barry Clohessy



Dear Delegate,

Firstly, we like to congratulate each candidate for putting themselves forwards for election to the Coiste Gnó. Many (if not all) of us at Comhdháil know what it's like to run for election, and at this point, we would like to remind delegates to please respect each candidate as we come to the final stages of Lead USI 2023.

The function of the elections sub-committee is to ensure that the election of the USI Coiste Gnó at Comhdháil is independent and impartial. It's there to ensure that you have confidence in the conduct of the election at both the polling and counting stages.

A smooth running of the elections is important to ensure an accurate result in a timely manner, so I ask delegates to please ensure that you have your student card in your possession. At the same time, your identification is verified during registration; however, the sub-committee will be conducting spot checks to ensure that each delegate voting is a current registered student.

At the close of polling, the Elections Sub-Committee, with the assistance of USI HQ, will ensure that the ballot boxes are securely stored until the counting of the ballots. At the election count, a representative for each candidate (or the candidate) may be present but will be subject to strict confidentiality to ensure there is no premature release of results.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated in ensuring an efficient running of this election. We hope you have a productive and engaging Comhdháil 2023.

Barry Clohessy
USI Returning Officer and Chair of Elections Sub-committee

Steering & Elections Committee Who's Who?



Niamh Murtagh - Chairperson, Steering & Elections Committee

Hi everyone! My name is Niamh Murtagh and I am thrilled to be the Head of USI Steering. I am a coffee fiend, dog lover, and I hail from the pale (aka Dublin)! But Kerry definitely became my second home. I was first involved as a Students' Union Officer in 2011 in a part time role as Communications Officer in IT Tralee Students' Union (now MTU Kerry SU) before serving as Societies Officer in 2013-2014 and being elected for two terms as the Vice President for Welfare there from 2014-2016.

I then went on to serve two terms with the Union of Students in Ireland as the Vice President for the Southern Region 2016-2017 and the Vice President for Welfare 2017-2018. I look forward to seeing all the great contributions you will make this week.



Jack Leahy - Chairperson, Comhairle Náisiúnta

My name is Jack Leahy and I am the chair of the USI Comhairle Náisiúnta.

I was a sabbatical officer in TCD Students' Union in 2013/14 and was elected to serve as USI Vice President for Academic Affairs and Deputy President between 2015 and 2017.

Since my time in the student movement ended, I have assisted as a trainer, a chair for the MSU Student Senate and a chair of the European Students' Union board. In my time as a student representative I was known for my deft use of procedural motions, so I'm looking forward to being impressed!



Barry Clohessy - Chairperson, Elections Subcommittee

Dia dhuit Comhdháil 2023. I am Barry, and I am delighted to be attending Comhdháil 2023 as part of the Steering Committee and as Returning Officer, particularly at the home of my alma mater. I have been involved with the movement since 2012 and have served as Vice President and President of IT Sligo SU and later as VP for the Border, Midlands and Western Region of USI. I have many fond memories of attending Comhdáil, and I hope you do after a fantastic few days debating at the democratic heart of USI.



Sean Gordon Dalton - Deputy Chairperson, Comhairle Náisiúnta

I am a Politics and Sociology graduate from Trinity College Dublin, and a proud Kilkenny man (hon the cats!). While at Trinity, I served for two years on TCDSU's electoral commission, facilitating the union's elections and council meetings. Currently, I work in political communications in the Oireachtas, where I also provide administrative support to senators, backbench TDs and political staff. Alongside my role on steering, I am also the Deputy Chair of Comhairle Naisiunta.



Cat O'Driscoll

After studying Microbiology in UCC in my hometown I was elected Education Officer in 2011. I then served two terms as USI VP for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance before being elected to the ESU Executive. I ran NStEP from its establishment in 2016 until 2019 when I recruited and trained the first crisis volunteers for Text50808. I was coopted to Dublin City Council a week before Covid arrived in Ireland - great timing!



Fun Fact - If you laid all the members of Steering Committee end to end, you still couldn't get them to agree to moving a red guillotine.

Steering & Elections Contd



Aoife Deasy

Is mise an chéad duine a bhí tofa sa ról mar Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge (íochta!) Roimhe sin bhí mé mar Uachtarán, Oifigeach na Gaeilge agus Leas-Uachtarán do Leas don Aontas i gColáiste San Aingeal, Sligeach. Ina dhiaidh sin chaith mé bliain ag obair le Seanad na Mac Léinn go páirtaimseartha in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad. Is múinteoir meánscoile mé anois i nGaelcholáiste i mBaile Átha Cliath.

I was the first person to be elected into the full-time, paid role of Vice-President for the Irish Language with USI. Before that I was the President, VP for Welfare and Irish Language Officer in STACS SU. I was the chair of MSU Senate for one year and am now teaching through the medium of Irish in Dublin (but I am from Cork and am happy to talk all things Cork!)



Aaron Frahill

My name is Aaron Frahill. From July 2018 to June 2019, I was the VP for Education on UCC Student's Union. In addition to this, I served three years as a Part Time Officer on UCCSU during my BAJ undergrad degree and MSc. Finance masters, which included two years as Student Council Chair.



Ryan Carey

I am a graduate of Trinity College Dublin (BA History, M.Phil Public History & Cultural Heritage). Currently, I work in post-entry support for College Connect in DCU, a partnership of higher education institutions and community groups assisting underrepresented groups in accessing University. I was involved with TCDSU throughout my time in college, holding various positions ranging from faculty convenor to gender equality officer. I am the external member to the TCDSU Oversight Commission, the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of union policy and mandate.

USI elections

USI Elections use the system known as Single Transferable Vote. STV systems allow the voter to vote for every candidate in order of their preference.

In the Voting Booth

Vote for candidates in order of preference. Mark the ballot paper by putting 1 by the name of your first-choice candidate, 2 by the name of your second-choice candidate and so on.

If your first choice candidate is eliminated during the count, your vote 'transfers' to your next choice, and so on, until one person meets the 'quota' and is deemed elected.

Only one of the preferences in your vote is active at a time. If your vote is transferred, it passes to your next highest preference for a candidate who is eligible to win.

During the Count

Ballot papers will be sorted by 1st preferences and counted together to calculate the *quota*.

The *quota* is a threshold number of votes which must

be reached to secure the election of a candidate. It's calculated by dividing the total number of *valid* ballot papers by the number of seats to be filled plus one and, ignoring any fractional remainder, adding one to the result.

$$Q = \left(\frac{\text{Total Valid Poll}}{\text{Seats} + 1} \right) + 1$$

In USI Executive Team elections, each election has one seat available. Thus, a quota in a national USI election is calculated like this (with a total valid vote of 250 and one seat to fill):

$$Q = \left(\frac{250}{1 + 1} \right) + 1 = 126$$

USI Comhdháil tends to have an electorate of around 230-250 - so that's a reasonable estimate for a Policy Officer election where everyone can vote. Regional votes are all smaller.

Thanks to Sierra Müller-Owens for this explainer

USI Events Code of Conduct

USI wants all participants at events to have an enjoyable, productive and safe time. At the commencement of Comhdháil, attendees will have been deemed to have accepted this Code of Conduct and to be bound by it for the duration of the event.

People in charge of safety at USI Comhdháil

The Senior Staff Person

The senior staff person present will be introduced to attendees. They will be the person making decisions about the safety of the event and the conduct of the event.

The Senior Officer

The Senior Officer will be introduced to attendees. They will liaise with the Senior Staff Persons on decisions about the safety of the event.

Duty Safety Person

The Duty Safeguarding Person may be a member of USI staff, a person hired by USI for the purpose or a suitably trained person from another organisation. This will be made clear at the opening meeting of any event.

SU Delegation Leader

Your SU has a delegation leader (DL). This will usually be the Students' Union President, but it may be someone else on the delegation. The DL is responsible for supporting and leading the delegation of representatives from your SU, and for most circumstances will be your most useful contact. They should supply you with their phone number.

USI Safety Basics

USI residential events (events where USI arranges accommodation) may be attended by adults aged 18 and older only.

At a USI residential event, in your joining instructions and on your Event Wristband, you will find the telephone number for the Duty Safeguarding Person, who you can call at any time of the day or night to seek support or report anything which you think could be unsafe.

It is important that you understand that contacting the Duty Safeguarding Person doesn't get you or anyone else into trouble – we provide this number to ensure that the wellbeing of attendees at our events is protected. The safety of our members is our highest priority. If you need to call the number for yourself or on someone else's behalf, do so.

In an emergency

In what appears to be a medical emergency, you should immediately call for an ambulance by calling 112 and follow their instructions; you should then call the Duty Safeguarding Person to inform them that an ambulance is on the way.

If you witness or become aware of an incident of violence or assault, you should call 112 and ask for the Gardaí (Republic of Ireland) or Police (Northern Ireland). You should not take action which endangers yourself or anyone else.

Responsibility to others

At USI we believe that we each have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and to respect the space, integrity and needs of others. Every delegate, facilitator, trainer, committee member and member of staff of USI and its partners is entitled to a safe, enjoyable and productive event. We won't accept or tolerate any action which causes another person at a USI event to either be unsafe or to believe that they are unsafe.

Your Safety

You are the person primarily responsible for your own safety, and you have a responsibility to promote safety for everyone at an event. You must report anything you feel could endanger yourself or another delegate, and can expect your concerns to be taken seriously.

Protocols

Abusive, exclusionary, bullying or violent behaviour

- USI will not tolerate abusive, exclusionary, bullying or violent behaviour at any USI event.
- Anyone breaching this protocol at a USI event can expect to be removed from the event.
- Incidents of this sort should be reported to the Duty Safeguarding Person, your Delegation Leader or a member of USI Executive Team.

Respect for others

USI believes in the right to respectful freedom of expression for our delegates which recognises the right of others to a contrary opinion.

Debate about competing ideas is healthy and the basis of our policy process. We don't shout down others when they're speaking. We don't use personally insulting, threatening or offensive language and we don't stop others from expressing themselves.

Attendees at our events should be respectful of the freedom of expression of others, in particular relating to their identity; their gender and pronouns in particular should be respected by others.

Drugs and Alcohol at USI events

- It's not acceptable to share or supply drugs at a USI event.
- Use of alcohol and unprescribed drugs may be illegal, can impair a user's judgment and endanger personal safety and health, and by extension pose risks to other attendees.
- USI would prefer that you didn't take drugs at our events; national health guidance in Ireland advises that if you decide to take drugs, you should 'start low and go slow'.
- Any person engaged in activity which endangers another person or themselves at a USI event can expect to be excluded from the event (or any part of it) and not allowed to participate in future USI events.

Code of Conduct (contd)

Sexual conduct

USI has a zero tolerance approach to sexual misconduct and harassment.

USI expects all attendees at events to apply the highest standard of active consent.

Personal space, privacy and the right to control over one's own body are key principles within USI. USI will not accept:

- Unwanted sexual comments, including about someone's body, gender, sexuality or private life
- Repeated unwanted sexual invitations or requests
- Unwanted touching or unwanted sexually motivated activity
- Sexual assault

No Pressure Events

Nobody owes an explanation to another attendee or to USI for sitting out part of an event, skipping a social event or taking some time and space for their own wellbeing.

You must not pressure anybody else into doing anything they are not comfortable doing.

"No." is a full sentence.

Accommodation and sleep

- USI provides accommodation at some events.
- Rooms provided by USI will often be shared between multiple delegates.
- Everyone at our events has a right to a good night's sleep in the room and the bed they've been allocated, with no exceptions.
- Delegates allocated to a room have responsibility for that room and are responsible for loss or damages there. Delegates should secure their rooms when absent to prevent loss or theft of personal effects.

USI Staff and facilitators

USI Staff and committee members work hard to deliver events. Delegates should feel comfortable with approaching staff for support and information.

USI Staff have no right to participate in the democratic bodies of USI, and no right to reply to public comments about their work.

USI staff should therefore not be mentioned or discussed during debates at a democratic event. Concerns or complaints about staff should be brought to the President. Any violent or abusive conduct towards staff will be treated with the utmost seriousness and if unresolved will lead to the withdrawal of USI staff from the event and the whole event's termination. You can expect such conduct to be reported to the relevant authorities in every case.

The same applies to staff USI has hired temporarily or employees of organisations with which USI works.

Steering Committee

Steering Committee members are independent of the organisation and entitled to the same respect as staff and delegates. Steering Committee are not responsible for the content of the Congress and have no responsibility to answer for the organisation or decisions they have taken, outside a session.

Investigations

If an allegation of misconduct is made to USI relating to which endangers or has endangered our members, USI will always support the right of an affected person to seek support from relevant authorities in whatever way it can.

If USI staff become aware of something which endangers attendees, you can expect the staff member to report it to the Senior Staff Person as appropriate.

Why would we eject a person?

In some circumstances, we might need to take the decision to eject a person from an event. Some of those circumstances include:

- If we feel that the wellbeing or security of participants at the event, or the perception of safety or security of participants would be reduced or imperilled by the person's continuing presence at the event.
- If otherwise the order of a democratic or training event would be impeded, where they have engaged in misconduct contrary to this code, or the standing orders of the event, or have threatened to do so.

Authority to eject

The authority to require a person at a USI event to leave the event (temporarily or permanently) in line with the Code of Conduct lies with each of the SU delegation leader of the person in question, the USI President, and the senior staff persons present. Any of these may take a decision to eject a person from an event.

The authority to direct that a delegate be required to leave the floor of a democratic event rests with the chair of the meeting.

The President or senior staff persons present may take whatever advice and make whatever consultations they feel are appropriate - their decision is final for the current event and no refunds may be made in respect of fees paid for attendance for an ejected person.

Banning from future events

In respect of a person who has seriously and/or repeatedly breached the Code of Conduct, appropriate action including banning an individual person may be taken by USI in the interests of the operations of the organisation and the protection of participants and staff.

Comhdháil Primer

Everyone at Comhdháil had a first time. There are rules to follow to ensure good order & ensure everyone gets a say.

Who is in charge in Congress debates?

On Congress Floor, **Steering & Elections Committee** is responsible for ensuring that things run smoothly and that motions are discussed fairly and properly.

They do not vote and they are not members of any delegation. **Steering** enforces the rules which Congress has adopted: they do not make the rules.

Their responsibility at Congress is to preside over the various sessions of debate and to ensure that speakers are not improperly interrupted. They also enforce time limits or other regulations and ensure that votes are carried out in a proper manner.

How do debates work and who proposes the motions?

The Officer or MO who put the motion forward initially, normally proposes the motions in each session. If the people who initially wrote the motion don't turn up, or don't want to speak, any delegate can start the debate by proposing the motion. If nobody speaks in favour of a motion, the motion will fall.

Once a motion is proposed, it is then open to the floor for discussion.

How often can I speak?

Unless you are the person who proposed the motion, you can only speak once on any motion. There is no set limit on the number of motions you can speak on. If you proposed a motion, or if you have an amendment to a motion successfully passed, then you can also sum up before a vote is taken. You may alternatively assign your summation to another delegate.

How long can I speak for?

The first proposer of a motion has **5 minutes** to introduce a motion, and all other speeches have a limit of **3 minutes**. Once a vote is called for, the Proposer has the right to sum up, unless an amendment to the motion has been passed, in which case, the proposer of the amendment has the right to 'summate'.

If, during your speech you realise you need more time, in the last minute of your speech you may once request **UP TO 2 minutes** additional. This will be subject to a quick indicative vote by Congress. If Congress rejects your request, you must keep to your default time.

In the case of a procedural motion, you may speak for **up to one minute**.

If you offer a 'point of information' to a speaker and they accept it, you may speak for up to **15 seconds**. They are under no obligation to accept it.

How can we control the debate?

Debate at Congress flows according to standing orders approved by the National Council and adopted at the start of the event. To move things on or alter the flow during the debate, you can use Procedural Motions.

What are procedural motions? How can

they be put?

To help ensure that debates run smoothly and as quickly as possible, procedural motions exist. A proposer must approach the Steering Committee and explain the motion they would like to propose. If such a proposal is in order, a speaker will, when called by the chairperson, have one minute to propose the motion. The following are the procedural motions and their effect, if passed:

(A) THAT THE QUESTION NOW BE PUT

If passed, the Proposer will summate and then an immediate vote will be taken.

(B) THAT THE QUESTION NOT BE PUT

If passed, no vote will be taken on the matter under discussion. The motion will fall and is considered dead.

(C) THAT THE QUESTION BE TAKEN IN PARTS

If passed, divides the motion or amendment into specified sections to be voted on individually. Used if there are sections that you do not agree with. This must be put in writing and handed into Steering Committee.

(D) THAT THE MATTER BE REFERRED BACK

If passed, refers the matter back to a specified time or a specified Officer, or a specified Committee, or to a National Council. It is therefore not voted upon at Congress.

(E) A CHALLENGE TO THE CHAIRPERSON'S RULING

You may challenge the Chairperson's ruling if they have made one. If passed, the Chairperson must change his or her ruling on an issue in accordance with the motion. A challenge to the Chairperson's definition of an objectively verifiable fact (like the definition of a minute) is not a valid challenge and will be rejected.

(F) NO CONFIDENCE IN THE CHAIRPERSON

If passed, the Chairperson will vacate the Chair for the remainder of the session and will be replaced by another member of Steering Committee. The Chairperson may chair further sessions.

Who do I go to if I have any questions?

If you have questions about debate or the policy process, go to Steering Committee, who should be able to help answer any query you may have.

What if I want to completely change everything?

USI's Congress rules have been developed over decades of practice and constant review. The Standing Orders cannot be amended during Congress.

What if I want to debate something not on the timetable?

Emergency motions may be submitted for debate on a matter having occurred after the deadline for the submission of motions which is not already dealt with in the Clár. The deadline was 26 February 2023.

The timetable is adopted by Congress, and can be amended by Congress by a 2/3rds +1 majority. Steering Committee will oppose this motion on behalf of the Congress.

Questions about the hotel and organisation of the event should be made to the Congress Director.

Comhdháil Glossary

Comhdháil is weird. Know the jargon and fit right in.

Proposer

The person who submitted the motion to Comhdháil and usually the first speaker on the motion. Not someone requesting one's hand in marriage, unless that happens.

Summation

The speech given to recap on the arguments and respond to other points made in the debate.

Procedural Motion

A technical proposal designed to alter the flow of the debate. Not bathroom related.

“Name and College!”

What Steering will say to you if you forget to tell them who you are.

Swear Bucket

If you speak in an unparliamentary manner during a debate, you will be fined €2 by the chair of the session. The money will be given to charity at the conclusion of the session. If you are fined more than once in a session you may be denied speaking rights, at the sole discretion of the chair.

“Order”

Good order is when the debate is flowing according to the rules. If the debate departs from standards of good order, the chair will give directions to end the disorder. If you are the cause of the disorder, STAHP.

Sedentary Position

You should not speak at Comhdháil while you are sitting down at your table. If you do, you will be asked to stop and return to good order.

Silent Vote

Counting close votes is difficult. If a vote is called and counted, you must sit silently as Steering Committee undertake a count. They may use their fingers and count out loud.

Staff Protocol

You cannot mention the name or deeds of USI staff during debates, because staff cannot defend themselves during debate. If you wish to thank or criticise a staff member, do it directly to the President or the staffer while not on Congress Floor and not during debate.

Congress Floor

The room where debates happen at Comhdháil.

RON

The obligatory alternative in every election. She doesn't even go here.

Guillotine

The end of a session. In the past, the Guillotine could fall on a motion under debate, thereby killing it without a vote. But this was sneaky, and people used to draw out debates to use the Guillotine deliberately. Now, when the Guillotine falls, the chair will direct the debate to a summation and a vote.

Hard Guillotine

A guillotine which cannot under any circumstances be moved. Great name for a 17th Century themed metal band.

A Previous Speaker

We don't mention the name of anyone who spoke before us. We pretend they have no name. This is very useful for people with poor memories.

“Seal the Doors!”

When a vote is called, only the people in the room can vote. You can still go out, but nobody can come in until the vote is over.

Point of Information

15 seconds (max) of information intended to aid a speaker in making their point. Rise (if you can) to your feet and call out (once) ‘Point of Information’. If the speaker says ‘Yes Please’ then give them the POI. If they do not respond or say ‘No thank you’ then sit down and relax. It's up to them.

‘First Congress in the BMW Region’

This is said at practically every Comhdháil, despite 80% of all Congresses having been held in the BMW Region. If you are the first to say it at this Congress during a debate, the Congress Director will give you a Creme Egg.

Emergency Motion

A motion relating to something having occurred after the deadline for Comhdháil Motions. Not bathroom related.

Emergency “Emergency” Motion

This is an Emergency Motion which isn't really eligible for consideration as an emergency motion, but where a proposer realises after the deadline that they forgot something important, so they wait until Comhdháil and submit one on the pretext that someone mentioning the thing on the radio qualifies it. By all means, give it a go. Might work.

Congress TokTik / Instaface / Bebogram

Steering will give a prize (it's still an Easter Egg) for the best images taken (with the consent of all depicted) and sent to them. We'll use them at the Congress Dinner when VIPs and future employers are around, so keep it funny and lawful.

Typographical Error

A prize for whomever finds the funniest one. It's an Creme Egg.

“Could the occupants of Room XYZ come to meet the Congress Director”

We may not know what you did last summer, but we have a fair idea you will be working over next summer to pay for whatever you did to your poor bedroom last night.

Policies due to expire

USI policy lasts for three years before expiring. Member Organisations may opt to bring expiring policies back to Comhdháil for renewal.

The policies in this section have been selected for debate and, if passed, will become policy for another three years.

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.

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.

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.

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 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 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.

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.

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.

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 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 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 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 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

17 NC/AA 05: Early Education and Carers Campaign

Proposed by the USI Coiste Gnó

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.

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 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 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 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

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 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) 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 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

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.

New policy proposals & ratification of interim policy

Each member organisation may submit up to five motions to Comhdháil, each member of the USI Executive Team may submit up to three motions, and each committee of USI Comhairle Náisiúnta may propose motions too.

If these proposals are approved they will become policy of USI for three years, or until repealed by a future Comhdháil.

Comhdháil 
MMXXIII
3-6 April | Sligo

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

Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance

AA 1 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.

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

AA 2 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 3 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 4 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

AA 5 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.

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

AA 6 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

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 submit also submit a Freedom of Informations 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 examiners, what the minimum requirements are to be a state examiner and what they will earn if they are recruited as a state examiner.

AA 7 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 8 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 9 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 10 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 11 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 12 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.

Citizenship Motions

CZN 1 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.

CZN 2 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 3 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 4 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 5 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 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

Notaí

CZN 7 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 StudentsCitizenship

CZN 8 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 Náisiúntaand Comhdháil.

Comhdháil Celebrates

The 2022 ComhAirlé NAisiAont 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 Náisiúntato 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 9 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 naisuinta upon completion which must be at or before the 2024 crossover comhairle naisuinta.

National Affairs Motions

Some motions in the National Affairs Section may require an affirmative vote of 66%+1 to be passed by USI Comhdháil.

NA 1 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 procuration 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 2 (NC) Student Accommodation Crisis**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 3 USI Green Network**CMLOG***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

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

TU Dublin Students' Union

Comdháil 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.

Comdháil 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.

Comdháil 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.

Comdháil 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.

Comdháil 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 7 (NC) Mandate for a National Student Walk-out over the Accommodation Crisis

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 8 (NC) Support of UCU and IFUT Industrial Action

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 9 (NC) Climate Campaign

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 10 (NC) Leaving Certificate Results

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 11 (NC) Climate Campaign

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 12 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 13 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 notesa

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 (SAAs)

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" 4
National Affairs

NA 14 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 15 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 16 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 17 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.

NA 18 (NC): Money Mule Awareness Campaign

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.

Union Organisation

UO 1 Capitation Fee Working Group

UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil notes that

A 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 aCapitation 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 2 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 3 Officer Pay and Working Conditions Position Paper

the USI President

Comhdháil adopts

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

UO 4 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 5 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 6 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 7 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 8 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 9 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 tants, 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 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 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 12 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 13 Enhancement of Students' Union Training (SUT)

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 14 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 Náisiúnta & Comhdháil, 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.

UO 15 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 16 (NC): Constitutional Review Committee
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 17 (NC) Motion on EU Employment Law

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 18 (NC) USI Accountability

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.

UO 19 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 20 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 21 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/AMLEÁ) 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.

A 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 22 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 23 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 24 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”⁴

UO 25 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 26 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.

Welfare Motions

WEL 1 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.

WEL 2 (NC) Abolishment of Non-Disclosure Agreements in Third-Level Institutions in the Cases of Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination 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 3 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.

WEL 4 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 5 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

WEL 6 (NC) Operation Transformation

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 Dietitian 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 7 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 8 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 prevents 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 9 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 10 National Student Mental Health Survey

DCU Students' Union

Notaí

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 11 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 12 Bring Back the SHAG Packs

Welfare Working Group

Comhhdháil 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.

Comhhdháil further notes

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

Comhhdháil 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.

Comhhdháil 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.

Comhhdháil 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 13 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 14 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 parent's have an extra factor of responsibility while attending third level education which they have no resolutionary 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

International Affairs Motions

All motions in the International Affairs Section require an affirmative vote of 66%+1 to be passed by USI Comhdháil.

IA 1 (NC) Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

TCD Students' Union

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.

Comdháil 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 2 Solidarity with the University Of Manchester Rent Strikes

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

IA (NC) 3 USI Position on Access to Education in Afghanistan

Carlow College Students' Union

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.

Irish Language Motions

GAE 1 Ag Tacú le hAistriúchán sna Balleagraíochtaí

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 2 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.

GAE 3(NC) Tascfhórsa Gaeilge NUS-USI **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 4 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 5 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 tionchar ag seo ar meon na Gaeilge sna hinstitiúidí 3ú Leibhéal

Sainordaíonn Comhdháil:

An Leas - Uachtarán don Ghaeilge chun iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na hinstitiúidí 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 hinstitiúidí 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 hinstitiúidí 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 himmheánach le haghaidh na hAontais.

GAE 6 Raidió Rí Rá ar FM

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.

Equality Motions

EQ 1 (NC) 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 2 (NC) Trans Equality Together Coalition

Proposed by the USI VP for Equality & Citizenship

Comdháil 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 3 (NC) 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 4 (NC) 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 5 Ulster Scots (Ullans)

Ulster University Students' Union

Comhhdháil 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)

Comhhdháil 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.

Comhhdháil notes:

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

Comhhdháil 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).

Comhhdháil further believes:

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

Comhhdháil 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 6 Student Guarantor Schemes and Housing Security

Queens' Students' Union

Comhhdháil 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 a 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 7 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 8 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 LBGTQ+ 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 10 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 11 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 a300 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

9.00				
9.30				
10.00		Academic Affairs	Equality Citizenship	Emergency Motions
10.30				
11.00		120	90	90
11.30	Comhairle Náisiúnta 60	Comfort Break 15	Comfort Break 15	
12.00		Const. Amendment 30		Officer Reports 90
12.30	Training & Conduct 60	Rúin Gaeilge 75	Undiscussed Motions 105	The President-elect
13.00				
13.30	Lunch 60	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14.00	Comhdháil Opening	ELECTIONS		
14.30				
15.00			Undiscussed Motions 90	
15.30	Policy Due to Expire	Union Organisation		
16.00				
16.30	Comfort Break 15	Comfort Break 30	Accounts 60	
17.00		ELECTION RESULTS		
17.30				
18.00	Welfare	National Affairs International Affairs 90		
18.30	135		Rest & Relaxation	
19.00				
19.30	Dinner	Dinner		
20.00				
20.30	Election Hustings	Undiscussed Motions 60	Congress Dinner	
21.00				

Notes on the timetable:

- Time allocated to a section is not an indication of its importance; it's a reflection of the number and complexity of motions to be discussed in the session.
- If a session completes all the motions before it, Steering may, at its discretion, return to any topic previously opened not having completed its motions.
- With the agreement of Comhdháil, Steering may open the next section to be debated if a section is completed before its scheduled time.
- The end of any session is termed the 'guillotine'. Any motion underway will be brought to a summation and followed by an immediate vote.
- A red line is a 'hard guillotine' which cannot be moved.