# 

# Motions due to expire 2014

# Prioritised Section

## 09/ ED 18 POST GRADUATE WORKING GROUP

**Congress notes**

That postgraduate students are often very limited in the amount of time they can dedicate towards ancillary roles in local unions and USI itself.

**Congress further notes**

That the issues that postgraduates face are often hindered by a lack of continuity from officer to officer, and that issues that occur nationwide could be solved by an effective communication network between postgraduate officers.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The education officer to create a database of postgraduate issues that arose, and how they were addressed at local and national levels. This database should be made available to all postgraduate and education officers nationwide.

**Congress also mandates**

The education officer to ensure that contact details of all postgraduate officers are available in the database.

**Congress further mandates**

The education officer to organize meetings with the postgraduate officers, if necessary, to address their issues.

## 09/ ED 28 POSTGRADUATE CAMPAIGN

**Congress notes**

The growing population of postgraduate students within USI

**Congress regrets**

That many postgraduate students feel disconnected from USI

**Congress therefore mandates**

The education officer to organise a promotion campaign within the first semester of each year, to highlight the success and the services of USI to postgraduate students specifically

## 10/ ED 7 STUDENT FUNDING

**Congress notes**

That with the economy struggling, students need all the help they can get in securing funding in the form of grants, scholarships and other non-traditional forms of supports for college degrees.

**Congress believes**

That USI needs to lobby the Department of Education to compile a list of all forms of funding for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees that is available to students in every third-level institute in the country.

**Congress notes**

That the studentfinance.ie website is a great resource for students and prospective students, and that it should be utilised more to help people looking for financial information before going to college.

**Congress mandates**

The Education Officer to lobby the Department of Education to publicise the aforementioned list of funding available on the studentfinance.ie website.

## 10/ ED 9 MEETING FEEDBACK

**Congress Notes**

That USI, as the National Union representing most students studying at third-level colleges in Ireland, holds seats on all the bodies charged with policy, funding quality assurance and regulation of the third level sector, such as the HEA and NQAI and others.

**Congress Notes with Concern**

The lack of institutional memory in USI with regard to issues discussed at these meeting.

**Congress Further Notes**

The importance of this high-level involvement for the constituent members of USI who pay an annual affiliation fee to USI.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President and Education Officer to create effective briefing and reporting communication channels, pre and post these meetings which USI attends (Pre meeting to consist of a notification of agenda items, and what stance USI plans to take on each, and an aide memoir post meeting of the discussion of each topic, what USI represented to the meeting and what the outcomes was.) on behalf of CO‟s, and where matters relevant to the COs are decided upon.

## 10/ WEL 2 STUDENT PREGNANCY

**Congress notes**

The lack of policy and support in the area of student parenting, both for student mothers and students Fathers.

**Congress further notes**

That while staff who fall pregnant are recognised under equality law, students exist within a grey area of legislation in this sector and subject to discrimination as the college chooses in terms of concessions and special accommodations.

**Congress applauds**

The efforts of institutions such as Mary Immaculate College in the formation of a student parent liaison officer.

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officers to research best practice policies on student parents both within Ireland, the UK and beyond with a view to formulate a template for local COs to negotiate with their institutions.

The Welfare and Equality Officers to meet and work with relevant organisations with a view to formulating a policy document for Welfare officers and other relevant CO officers as to how best to support student parents and what supports are needed. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 14 - - 14 -

The Welfare and Equality Officers to HEI authorities for better provisions and rights for student parents.

## 09/ WEL 2 ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

**Congress notes**

That USI is mandated to lobby the government and other relevant bodies to develop greater access to abortion services for all women within the state (06/WEL 6 Abortion).

**Congress further notes**

That USI’s involvement in this debate in the past (SPUC vs. Grogan) led to the changing of legislation so that information about abortion could be distributed freely in the state.

**Congress recognises**

That in many student unions abroad and indeed in many organisations worldwide the issue of abortion is viewed as an issue of equality and women’s rights .

**Congress further recognises**

That the issue is one of concern for Welfare Officers around the country.

**Congress acknowledges**

The establishment of the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign which aims to end the hypocrisy of exiling women in crisis pregnancy that choose to have an abortion. The campaign includes various strands, including a litigation strand, a public awareness strand and a national and international advocacy strand.

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officer to work with the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign to once again make this issue a priority for Irish Women.

**Congress further mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officer to raise awareness of the Safe and Legal (in Ireland) Abortion Rights Campaign to USI members and to support the campaign in any of its actions.

## 10/ WEL 6 CERVICAL CANCER

**Congress Notes:**

The expense of this vaccine amounts to approximately €550, including VAT and GP fees for non-medical card holders.

**Congress Mandates the Welfare Officer:**

To lobby the HSE to provide this vaccine in all college and university health centres at an affordable price.

## 10/ WEL 8 ANTI- SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

**Congress recognises**

The fact that a minority of students are causing problems, for local residents and for other students as well. These problems need to be tackled seriously.

That students‟ unions have a key role in educating future generations of tenants – both in the rules they should abide by, and the rights they have too.

Solving issues brought about by some students in local communities is about forming solid, long-lasting partnerships with other stakeholders, such as the local council, the Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 16 - - 16 - third level institutions, local residents‟ groups etc. in which the students‟ union is seen as a valued and respected player.

Social pressure between students can alleviate a lot of problems, rather than discipline. It is about social regulation of students by students.

**Congress mandates**

The deputy president/campaigns officer, the welfare officer and the area officers to assist local students‟ unions to tackle issues that arise from anti-social behaviour.

**Congress also mandates**

The forementioned officers run a national information campaign to promote the idea of positive community involvement to the student body.

## 10/ EQ 1 CIVIL PARTNERSHIP BILL

**Congress Notes**

That the proposed Civil Partnership Bill falls short of offering members of the LGBT community many of the same rights and responsibilities offered by Civil Marriage to the heterosexual community.

**Congress Further Notes**

That as it currently stands the Bill is unacceptable to the LGBT community.

**Congress Recognises**

That the LGBT campaign is an integral part of USI and many LGBT students would like to see a national campaign on this issue.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Deputy President, the Equality Officer and the LGBT Rights Officer to work together to roll out a national campaign highlighting the issue and to lobby the government on this issue.

**Congress Further Mandates**

That the Deputy President, Equality Officer and LGBT RO work with other LGBT interest groups on the Civil Marriage campaign, for example LGBT NOISE and Marriage Equality.

## 09/ EQ 2 AHEAD

**Congress notes**

Previous policy (08/EQ6) which mandates the President and Welfare Officer to open discussions with AHEAD with a view to working together on common areas of interests.

**Congress further notes**

That the Equality Officer, who has the responsibility to support the autonomous disability campaign, and the Disability Rights Officer are best placed to build links with AHEAD.

**Congress acknowledges**

The work of the Equality Officer and Disability Rights Officer this year in achieving the above aim.

**Congress further acknowledges**

The current work being done by USI and AHEAD in relation to compiling a guide for student union officers on how best to develop policy and services for students with disabilities.

**Congress recognises**

That in the past number of months, support services for students with disabilities as well as the ‘Fund for Students with Disabilities’ have experienced cuts due to the current economic climate.

**Congress mandates**

The Equality and Disability Rights Officers to:

* Continue to build links with AHEAD;
* Work with AHEAD to develop initiatives which can counteract the current cuts to support funds for students with disabilities;
* Oppose any further cuts to support services for students with disabilities;
* Promote and assist the development of student societies for students with disabilities;
* Work with AHEAD to organise an annual one day event for students with disabilities;

## 09/ EQ 4 USI RAINBOW WEEK

**Conference Notes**

That “Rainbow Week” is not thoroughly recognised within all affiliated colleges.

**Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBT RO to communicate with the Students Unions and the LGBT societies and assist in the organisation of the Rainbow Weeks to those colleges that need assistance.

(Note that the work assigned to the LGBT RO here will be given to the VP E&C)

## 10/EQ 9 NUS-USI Collaboration

**Conference notes**

That NUSUSI coordinates an equality campaign for the Northern Area

**Conference notes**

That the structure of the NUSUSI campaign is similar to the structure of the USI Equality Campaign

**Conference believes**

That it would be beneficial to both NUSUSI and USI if officers involved in both campaigns communicated regularly and shared ideas and experiences

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to organise one meeting per semester between the two campaigns to discuss possible collaborations and to provide support, if requested, to the NUSUSI Equality Campaign

**Conference further mandates**

All members of Equality Working Group to keep in regular contact with counterparts working in the NUSUSI Equality Campaign

## 10/ GE 1 Reclaim the Night

**Conference notes**

The success of the ‘Reclaim the Night Marches’ organised in the UK between the London Feminist Network and the National Union of Students in the UK (NUSUK) to highlight the issue of sexual violence against women

**Conference is disappointed**

By recent research from the Rape Crisis Network Ireland (December 2009) which outlined a poor conviction rate for crimes of rape and sexual violence in Ireland, inaccurate stereotypes of rape as well poor treatment of victims by members of An Garda Siochana

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to organise an annual ‘reclaim the night march’ for students to raise awareness of sexual violence against women in Ireland

**Conference further mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to contact the Rape Crisis Network Ireland to explore possible collaborations on the issue of sexual violence against women.

## 10/ GE 3 Childcare Facilities

**Conference notes**

That access to affordable childcare is difficult in Ireland

**Conference also notes**

That access to flexible and affordable childcare is difficult for students

**Conference is aware**

That some third level institutions have crèches on or close to campus and that a number of places in said crèches are reserved for students

**Conference is also aware**

That childcare/crèche subsidy schemes exist in different colleges

**Conference believes**

That all third level institutions should provide a childcare facility for students

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer, Gender Equality Office and Mature Student Officer to lobby all relevant authorities to establish childcare facilities on all third level campuses. Such childcare facilities should include both crèche and after school care facilities and should be affordable for students. Furthermore a majority of places in these facilities should be reserved for registered students of the institution.

## 10/ IS 4 Finance for International Students

**Conference notes**

That International Students face hefty fees for studying in Ireland

**Conference also notes**

That there is a lack of transparency surrounding these fees and how they are costed

**Conference believes**

That financial stress, caused by such large fees and the expense of living in Ireland, has a negative impact on the student experience for international students

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer & International Students Officer to always lobby for transparent costings of all fees charged to international students and that these fees are advertised well in advance of a student arriving in Ireland. Where possible, officers should lobby for a decrease in the amount charged to international students.

## 09/ NA 4 ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN

**Congress applauds**

The current USI policy on increasing the student vote

**Congress notes**

That a general election in the near future is very likely

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to immediately begin lobbying all political parties with regard to student issues, specifically funding of third level education

**Congress further mandates**

Officer Board to prepare information regarding each party’s policies which relate to students so as to inform USI’s members

**Congress also mandates**

The President and Officer Board to immediately begin a campaign to improve student access to voting – through lobbying for weekend voting, on campus polling stations and re-instating the right to be registered at home and at college.

## 10/ UO 19 MANIFESTO UPDATES

**Congress notes**

Important issues highlighted in the manifestos of elected members of officer board can be neglected as the year progresses.

**Congress also notes**

The importance USI members place on the strength of the leadership of USI officer board and much of their confidence in an individual stems from the issues they pledge to attack/defend/promote in their manifestos.

**Congress Mandates**

Each member of officer board to outline the progress they have made on their manifesto issues at national council twice annually.

## 10/ UO 21 CAMPAIGN HISTORY

**Congress notes**

USI has a long and proud tradition when it comes to running effective campaigns which gather media attention and brings our issues to national attention.

**Congress also notes**

We rely on anecdotal memory of what photo stunts/campaign strategies have been used in the past. Often the issues are the same for example, fees, equal rights etc.

**Congress mandates**

The Deputy President to compile a database of previous campaigns under relevant headings. By doing this, we are building on our knowledge of what USI has achieved to date. Also, we can learn from what media campaigns have worked in the past and why.

## 10/ UO 26 UNION ORGANISATION

**Congress notes**

That it is essential that each constituent organisation of USI can hold USI Officer Board to account.

**Congress further notes**

That the current system of accountability is not adequate in ensuring that each member of Officer Board is meeting their mandates.

**Congress believes**

That in the same way that Higher Education Institutes should offer a quality assurance scheme to its students; USI should provide its own quality assurance scheme as part of this effort for greater accountability.

**Congress mandates**

Officer Board to establish a system of accountability, as detailed below, as part of an effort to improve accountability and quality assurance across the organisation.

Once elected, each member of Officer Board should present the first sitting of National Council with a plan of work for the year ahead, complete with key milestones and targets and displayed on a Gantt Chart, as is the industry standard for project management. This plan of work should reflect the policies laid down in the USI Policy Manual together with the tasks implied in the officer‟s job description and these should be prioritised accordingly.

The National Council have the option to accept the proposed plan of work , or reject it in which case the officer must return to the next National Council with a new proposal.

Progress on each item against the original plan of work must then be made known to all Constituent Organisations by means of a newsletter from each member of Officer Board on a fortnightly basis.

Failure to meet these targets, within 20 percent of the overall time allocation of each item, should then result in the Officer being held to account at the next sitting of National Council, The Officer will be fully entitled to due process in line with Article 5.8 of the USI Constitution and the law of the land.

**Article 5.8 USI Constitution**

The right of the students, through their Constituent Organisation, to call to account and instruct those charge with office, within the Union, to discipline and ultimately dismiss those who fail to carry out their responsibilities**.**

## 09/ UO 11 PART TIME OFFICER NETWORKS

**Congress Notes**

That issues which come under the remit of the part-time officers are highly important in the operation and relevance of the Union.

**Congress acknowledges**

That any campaign is at its strongest when coherent and presenting a unified message, and that the sharing of ideas and methods between CO’s leads to a mutual improvement of campaigns throughout the country.

**Congress thus mandates**

The Part Time Officers to compile a list of their respectively similar Officers in CO’s throughout the country, as well as national and international institutions and agencies who operate in their respective areas of interest, and to establish forums for Officers in all CO’s to network and share their opinions and experiences for their mutual betterment.

## 10/ UO 10 AREA OFFICER ROLE

**Congress Recognises**

The difficulty for both COs and Area Officers in defining the role of the Area Officer and utilizing it to its full potential.

**Congress believes**

That in order for the role to be successful, the onus should be on both the Officer themselves and on COs. However, this is difficult as there are no definite guidelines as to what an Area Officer‟s role is.

The following should be the minimum expected from an Area Officer:

* A minimum of one visit to each CO in between National Councils.
* A minimum of one week‟s notice to COs about this visit (unless CO requests Area Officer in a shorter period of time).
* Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 30 - - 30 -
* To organise a number of bonding events throughout the year. This should be approved by all COs and ensure that all are available to attend. And if all COs cannot attend, that those not available are happy the event takes place without them.
* To assist COs whenever requested in the run up to or during campaigns.
* To organise a number of regional councils during the year - the calendar of these should be agreed on at the first Regional Council of the year.
* That when requested, the Area Officer will attend Class Councils to update class reps on what USI has been doing and what the future plans of the USI are. COs are asked to invite the Area Officers to at least two Class Councils in the year.
* To speak to the media on behalf of the region and act as the main spokesperson on issues effecting students of their relevant area.
* To provide a detailed weekly report on their activities, both to COs and the President and Deputy President.
* To assist the Deputy President in organizing any protests or rallies, which COs have requested.
* To keep Officers based in HQ informed of the issues and activities happening in their area.
* To give an adequate cross over consisting of any further advice gained from holding office to their successor outlining issues which may be ongoing in certain COs, the main issues they face as an officer that year and how best to interact with their COs.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Area Officer to outline their role to their COs at the first regional council of the year.

# Education

## 2010

**10/ED 1 FUNDING OF THIRD LEVEL COLLEGES**

**Congress notes**

That the current policy manual contains many motions concerning the funding of third level institutions, the registration fee, fees, graduate taxes, loans and other means of student contribution. Many of these motions are repetitive and some contradictory.

**Congress Further Notes**

The document entitled “USI: DEMAND A BETTER FUTURE” as published in February 2010. This document contains all previous relevant USI policies in relation to the funding of third level institutions and an explanation for them as well as up-to-date policies in relation to recent developments in this area.

**Congress Mandates**

That the Officers of USI adopt the document „USI: DEMAND A BETTER FUTURE‟ and the policies in relation to the funding of third level education contained therein as USI policy.

**Congress Also Mandates**

That the Officers of USI update this policy document if necessary and resubmit it to congress.

**Congress Repeals**

09/ED 1; 09/ED 2; 09/ED 7; 09/ED 9; 09/ED 10; 09/ED 17; 09/ED 22; 08/ED 7; 08/ED 8; 08/ED 12; 08/ED 17; 08/ED 20; 08/ED 21; 07/ED 7; 07/ED 10; 07/ED 11; 06/ED 7; 06/ED 9; 06/ED 12; 06/ED 17; 05/ED 3; 05/ED 12; 05/ED 19; 05/ED 23

**10/ ED 2 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROPOSED**

**Congress Notes**

That the current policy manual contains many motions concerning Quality Assurance, and that many of these motions are repetitive and some contradictory.

**Congress Further Notes**

The document entitled “USI: DEMAND BETTER QUALITY” as published in February 2010. This document contains all previous relevant USI policies in relation to Quality Assurance and an explanation for them as well as up-to-date policies in relation to recent developments in this area.

**Congress Mandates**

That the Officers of USI adopt the document “USI: DEMAND BETTER QUALITY” and the policies in relation to the Irish quality assurance system contained therein as UI policy.

**Congress Also Mandates**

That the Officers of USI update this policy document if necessary and resubmit it to congress.

**Congress Repeals**

09/ED 8; 09/ED 15; 08/ED 2; 08/ED 11; 07/ED 8; 07/ED 9; 07/ED 17; 06/ED 3; 06/ED11; 06/ED 19; 05/ED 6; 05/ED 16; 05/ED 17; 05/ED 20. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 20 - - 20 –

**10/ ED 3 MAINTENANCE GRANT**

**Congress Notes**

That the current policy manual contains many motions concerning the maintenance grant, student support bill and subsidiary relief, and that many of these motions are repetitive and some contradictory.

**Congress Further Notes**

The Document entitled “USI: DEMAND A BETTER GRANT” as published in February 2010. This document contains all previous relevant USI policies in relation to the Maintennence Grant, Student Support Bill and subsidiary relief and an explanation for them as well as up-to-date policies in relation to recent developments in these areas.

**Congress Mandates**

That the Officers of USI adopt the policy document entitled „USI: DEMAND A BETTER GRANT‟ and the policies in relation to the grant, student support bill and other student finance options contained therein as USI policy.

**Congress Also Mandates**

That the Officers of USI update this policy document if necessary and resubmit it to congress.

**Congress Therefore Repeals**

09/ED 3; 09/ED 6; 09/ED 16; 09/ED 20; 09/ED 21; 08/ED 1; 08/ED 13; 08/ED 15; 08/ED 16; 07/ED 5; 07/ED 6; 06/ED 1; 06/ED 4; 06/ED 10; 06/ED 20; 05/ED 4; 08/UO 8.

**10/ ED 4 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

Congress notes

That every year a substantial number of International Students travel to Ireland to study within our higher education system.

Congress recognizes

That these International students can pay large sums of money, on average €12,000 per year to study in our 3rd level institutions.

Congress further recognizes That there have been a number of issues with regards to these students arriving in Ireland with regards to Irish Customs.

Congress mandates

The President to work on behalf of the International students to put in place an International Student Charter detailing student rights and responsibilities in the third level CO’s where they are studying. By the development of the framework each IoT and University would become responsible for the treatment of International Students when travelling to Ireland.

**10/ ED 5 LEGAL PROFESSION**

**Congress notes**  
That to enter the legal profession in Ireland, one must overcome many financial and social obstacles.

**Congress further notes**  
That these obstacles mean that the majority undertaking a career in law are those who can afford it and who have pre-existing ties to the legal profession

**Congress notes with concern** That such obstacles include

* Exceptionally high costs for postgraduate study in the King's Inns, with a one year degree course costing €12,000. This course is also run during the day (as opposed to the evening diploma course) so people cannot work full time simultaneously.
* Barristers in their first year of practice must be able to afford to work for free during their year's apprenticeship, also known as 'devilling'. The apprenticeship must also take place in Dublin, thus increasing costs for candidates even further if forced to live away from home.

**Congress believes**  
That while the abolition of third level fees has delivered good progress in increasing access to education for people of all social backgrounds, more must be done to ensure that these artificial barriers to real educational equality of opportunity in certain professions are removed.

**Congress affirms its belief that**  
No profession should be the sole preserve of the wealthy and socially connected.

**Congress mandates**  
The President and the Education officer to give a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas committee on Education and Science on access to the legal system

The President and Deputy to campaign and lobby for the extension of the higher education grants scheme to those taking barrister and solicitor courses.

**10/ ED 6 YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT**

**Congress notes**

That Ireland currently has over 100,000 young people who cannot find work and are not in full-time education. Within this, the rate is a shocking 36.4% of people aged 15-19, and 23% of those aged 20-24, who are in neither full-time education or employment (CSO Quarterly Household Survey of July 2009).

**Congress notes**

That these figures are likely to worsen when more graduates are seeking employment this year, and that the persistent lack of opportunities for graduates of all disciplines is likely to lead to mass emigration, making future economic recovery more difficult.

**Congress further notes**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 23 - - 23 –

That up skilling of the workforce and capital investment is vital to secure the long-term stability of the country.

**Congress mandates**

The Union President, Deputy President and Education Officer to actively campaign and lobby for:

 Expand free third level tuition fees scheme to include part-time courses.

 Provide funding for third level institutions to create part-time courses in targeted areas for future national development such as green energy.

 Increase the number of, and capacity of HEA educational courses to upskill students in more sectors on a long-term basis.

 Increase the capacity and diversity of work placement and labour activation schemes.

**10/ ED 8 BTEA CAMPAIGN**

**Congress notes**

That the removal of the entitlement of Back to Education students to a maintenance grant will cost unemployed mature students in the region of €7,000 a year in expected income.

**Congress firmly believes**

That the decision to bring in this measure was wrong, unfair, and is not in the interests of this country, either financially or socially.

**Congress notes**

That for many people trying to go back to education, the Budget cuts represent a loss of over 25% in expected income Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 24 - - 24 –

**Congress mandates**

The Education Officer to organise a sustained campaign to reverse this decision before the Department of Education & Science finalises it‟s implementation over the summer.

**10/ ED 10 NUI LEVY**

**Congress notes**

The Minister for Education has decided to dissolve NUI.

**Congress also notes**

Each student who is attending a college associated with NUI pays a levy from their non-tuition fee to cover the cost of that office.

**Congress acknowledges**

That when NUI is completely dissolved, students affected will not be refunded their levy money and there is a risk that either the University or the Government will use that proportion of funding towards other resources without consulting students.

**Congress mandates**

The USI President to draft a policy on where this levy money could be put to use for students when the NUI is dissolved. This policy proposal should be presented at National Council for members consideration. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 25 - - 25

**10/ ED 11 APPRENTICES**

**Congress Notes**

That over the past number of years the increase within the trades industry with regards to Ireland.

**Congress Further Notes**

That with the economic downturn many of these apprentices have been left with no job and in some cases incomplete qualifications.

**Congress Recognises**

The need to provide further education opportunities in the face of the ever-changing employment landscape of Ireland.

**Congress Mandates**

The President and the Education Officer to lobby the Department of Education and the Higher Education Authority to clearly state, in a national framework, the eligibility of qualified apprentices to progress into relevant degree courses.

**10/ ED 12 BUDGETS**

**Congress Notes**

That the current volatile economic climate, each Budget is likely to have significant impact on students.

**Congress Further Notes**

That the fear and worry caused by budgets may cause avoidable harm to the welfare to Students.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The USI Education Officer, as soon as possible subsequent to the delivery each budget, to the write an explanatory memorandum of the impacts of the budget on student and communicate it to all CO’s.

## 2009

**09/ED 1 TUITION FEES**

**Congress notes**

That it has long been a core principle of the student movement that education should be accessible to all people.

**Congress recognises**

That tuition fees constitute a serious barrier to entry into third level education.

**Congress strongly believes**

That education is a public and social good, which benefits not only the individual but the wider society. It should therefore be paid through progressive taxation like all public services. Investing in education is one of the most important investments we can make; not only does having an educated population strengthen our economy, but graduates pay on average 70% more in tax and have thus directly repaid the cost of their degree through taxation within ten years. Importantly, providing a college education to all is an important factor in creating a fair and more democratic society with equal opportunity for all.

**Congress further notes**

That the OECD's “education at a glance 2008” lists Ireland at the top of selected industrialised countries for “providing the most equitable access to higher education”. This shows that the abolition of fees has had a significant impact on increasing equity of access, despite successive governments’ failure to follow up the success of free fees with a corresponding commitment to educational equality across the board.

**Congress further notes**

That in two decades Ireland has seen an increase in access to third level education from 20% to 55%, and that a large factor in this has been the abolition of third level fees.

**Congress believes**

That the economic crisis means that now, more than ever Ireland must make education accessible to all, in order to equip our people with the skills and knowledge that will help them innovate, create new jobs and attract foreign investment. Ireland’s future depends on investing in its people.

**Congress notes**

That the cost of going to college in Ireland is, according to bank of Ireland’s cost of college survey, €38,000 for a four year degree. This cost will rise significantly if fees are introduced.

**Congress condemns**

The proposals by minister for education and science to reintroduce third level fees, and his attempts to raise the registration fee to €1,500 per year, which is a tuition fee higher than almost any other European country charges for their public universities and colleges.

**Congress hereby reaffirms**

Its commitment to an equal, fair and accessible education system, and to the complete abolition of tuition fees, including the registration fee.

**Congress notes**

The huge campaigns in 2002/03 and 2008/09 run by USI to oppose tuition fees.

**Congress mandates**

USI officer board to redouble its efforts to fight fees in any guise and to continue to place this issue at the centre of its lobbying and campaigning efforts.

**Congress calls for**

A commitment by the government to fund third level education and all essential services through progressive taxation, where those on higher incomes pay the most.

**Congress urges**

All local students’ unions to recognise their central role in the national campaign against fees, and to make fees their priority as students’ union representatives and as members of the national union. The usi is not officer board – it is all members. Therefore all members are responsible for engaging with the campaign.

**09/ED 2 STUDENT LOANS/GRADUATE TAX**

**Congress notes**

That the principle that education should be accessible to all people, has always been a core value of the student movement.

**Congress strongly believes**

That education is a public and social good, which benefits not only the individual but the wider society. It should therefore be paid through progressive taxation like all public services. Investing in education is one of the most important investments we can make; not only does having an educated population strengthen our economy, but graduates pay on average 70% more in tax and have thus directly repaid the cost of their degree through taxation within ten years. Providing education to all citizens equally is fundamental principle for any fair society.

**Congress notes**

The 2005 study in the UK by Professor Claire Callender and Jonathan Jackson that shows that for those on lower or middle income backgrounds in the UK, the fear of debt is a significant barrier to entry to third level education in the UK. This is a result of the student loans system in the UK.

**Congress also notes**

The research by Professor Kathleen Lynch of UCD’s equality studies centre on the Australian HECS system, that shows the detrimental impact that a deferred loans system can have on equity of access to third level and on increasing student impoverishment.

**Congress notes**

That Australia’s education minister Julia Gillard has described the HECS student loans system as “at best complex and at worst anomalous, inconsistent and irrational”.

**Congress also notes**

That the fairest and most egalitarian way of paying for higher education is through a progressive taxation system.

**Congress condemns**

The suggestions by minister for education Batt O’Keeffe that an Australian-style student loans system might be introduced in Ireland, at the same time as the Australian government itself is recognising that the system doesn’t work.

**Congress also opposes**

The suggestions by some politicians for a graduate tax. Graduates already pay 70% more in tax than non-graduates, therefore a graduation tax is not necessary nor is it fair.

**Congress mandates**

USI officer board to continue to oppose fees in any guise, including student loans and a graduate taxation system.

**Congress calls for**

Investment through progressive taxation in a fair, equitable education system from primary to third level, whereby those on higher incomes pay higher taxes which funds all essential services. This is an investment in strengthening our economy as well as creating fairness in our society.

**09/ED 10 REINTRODUCTION OF FEES**

**Congress believes**

That USI should be in a position to fight for a fair and equitable access system to higher education in every circumstance.

**Congress therefore mandates**

Officer board to renew their fight for a fair grant system by researching and proposing a system that will work in a better way to the current System and in a way that will ensure equitable access for all to third level education.

**Congress further mandates**

The president to as much as possible ensure that USI gains a seat at any government or HEA organised group set up to look at the change of the current or introduction of a new grant system.

**09/ ED 11 BOLOGNA PROCESS**

**Congress notes**

That the bologna process has, since its inception in 1999, become one of the most important and dominant themes in further and higher education in Europe with significant reforms being introduced throughout Europe and here in Ireland as a result of the bologna process.

**Congress further notes**

That the reforms introduced as part of the bologna process have seen a dramatic transformation in further and higher education, much of which has been positive.

**Congress recognises**

That these reforms have, however, also introduced considerable uncertainty into further and higher education and there is a need to ensure that as part of the bologna process, the quality of education is not undermined.

**Congress welcomes**

That the union of students in Ireland has been involved at both a national and European level in the formation and development of policy in the key areas of the bologna process.

**Congress regrets**

That on an issue as critical as the bologna process, which is now entering second decade, USI does not have official, formalised policy on the bologna process.

**Congress believes**

That it is imperative that the national students’ union develop policy on an issue that is having and will have a profound impact on its membership.

**Congress further mandates**

USI to adopt the following principles on the Bologna process to be implemented by the president and the education officer

***Bologna process (general principles)***

USI welcomes the creation of the bologna process and the importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies.

The bologna process should be based on creating opportunities for mobility within higher education in Europe and should not be focused on purely developing a higher education system that suits the needs of enterprise and employers

USI strongly believes that the over-arching goal of the bologna process should be to create a student-centred learning environment that is flexible, transparent, accessible to all and encourages the development of lifelong learning.

Future development of the bologna process must be driven through consultation and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, which must include student representatives.

The bologna process should aim for significant and continuous improvement in the standard of education provided to students and that students are full and complete partners within institutions and at sectoral, national and European levels. Education must also be transparent with embedded and appropriate QA mechanisms focused on improving standards and academic provision.

Social dimension.

Participation in further and higher education must be widened and the demographic of these sectors should reflect the diversity of the population of the signatory countries to the bologna process.

Further and higher education is a public good and should primarily be publicly funded.

USI is opposed to any and all attempts to privatise further and higher education.

USI strongly welcomes the commitment enshrined in the bologna process to student services and will work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that student services are adequately resourced and improved in line with the needs of students.

All obstacles to participation further and higher education should be removed and

USI will campaign strongly on this.

The social dimension of the bologna process must continue to be one of the central action lines of the bologna process.

**Mobility**

Increased opportunities for student and staff mobility as a result of the bologna process is to be welcomed and contributes positively to the academic and personal development of students.

There should be a mobility target of 20% of the student population by 2020. The participative equity within this 20% must be improved and institutions must create measures to ensure that credits gained during mobility are recognised on return.

A central mobility fund should be created and contributed to by EHEA countries and financed according to the principle of public financing.

USI believes that higher education institutions should provide extensive language tuition to students to encourage and promote mobility.

The USI education officer and the USI equality officer shall campaign and lobby for the simplification of visa and work permit rules and procedures to allow for greater mobility and to prevent mobile students being subject to undue stress, difficulties and discrimination.

**Qualifications frameworks and recognition.**

USI supports the adoption and implementation of the ECTS credit system whereby each academic year is comprised of 60 ECTS with each module being in multiples of 5 ECTS (e.g. 5, 10, 15 etc.). An ECTS credit should represent 20 – 25 hrs of student input including, but not limited to, lectures, assignments, self-directed learning, study and practical classes and placements.

USI welcomes and supports the development of modularisation where a module represents a block of teaching and learning with a combination of linked modules constituting a programme.

Semesterisation, whereby the academic year is comprised of two equal length teaching terms, is welcomed by USI. However, there should not be a nationally standardised set of term dates.

USI welcomes the introduction of learning outcomes, defined as “learning outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning”. All modules, subjects and programmes must be designed around learning outcomes which are regularly quality assessed to ensure they are appropriate and fir for purpose. Learning outcomes must be used to create a student-centred learning environment and may not be used to create a b0ox-ticking environment.

USI continues to support the national framework of qualifications and shall campaign to ensure that learning outcomes align with the knowledge, skills and competencies associated with the relevant level of the NFQ.

All qualifications in further and higher education should be comparable and readable so that a student’s qualifications can be mapped on to both the European qualifications framework and the qualifications framework of all countries in the bologna process with ease. The comparability should be verified for the student by the relevant authority (such as ENIC-NARIC) free of charge.

The USI education officer shall run a campaign, in conjunction with constituent organisations, to raise awareness of the NFQ and to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by its operation.

USI Bologna Process Campaign

USI reaffirms that the bologna process is of extreme importance to the education that students will receive.

USI shall undertake all necessary effort, under the direction of the USI education officer, to assist constituent organisations in ensuring the proper implementation of all bologna process related reforms.

USI will promote awareness of the bologna process and of related reforms and opportunities to students through constituent organisations.

USI will work with all relevant stakeholders sectorally, nationally and internationally to ensure adequate student representation and that the bologna process develops in lines with the above principles.

The USI education officer will develop and regularly update a USI strategy on the Bologna process.

**09/ED 13 EQUITY OF ACCESS**

**Congress notes**

That the introduction of the ‘free fees’ initiative was designed to widen access to further and higher education for those from traditionally under-represented backgrounds.

**Congress recognises**

That while much progress has been made, with an overall participation rate of 55%, there are still a number of socio-economic and non-traditional backgrounds which do not participate in further and higher education at the level of other groups.

**Congress welcomes**

Recent moves to broaden the participation rate, in particular the creation of the national office for the equity of access to higher education and the publication of the *national plan for equity of access to higher education 2008 – 2013.*

**Congress reaffirms**

That one of the fundamental principles of the union is that it strives for an education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realise their full potential.

**Congress believes**

That in order to uphold and defend this principle, USI must have a co-ordinated policy on equity of access and encouraging the widening of participation in further and higher education.

**Congress mandates**

That USI adopts the following principles as its policy on equity of access to further and higher education to be implemented by officer board:

***Equity of Access (General Principles)***

USI shall campaign for an education and training system open and accessible to all.

All sectors of society should have equal opportunity to participate in further and higher education.

Further and higher education institutions should take all steps necessary to encourage and broaden participation

USI shall build links and work with all relevant stakeholders and organisations to widen the participation rate and address all obstacles that may prevent individuals from accessing further and higher education

The USI education officer shall develop and regularly update a USI strategy for equity of access to further and higher education

Targeted access funding and programmes must be expanded to ensure that all students who come from traditionally under-represented backgrounds are able to access further and higher education

USI fully endorses, supports and shall campaign to ensure the meeting of the targets as outlined in the *national plan for equity of access to higher education 2008 – 2013*

All cuts to the student assistance fund, access offices or strategic innovation funded access projects shall be vigorously opposed by USI

All constituent organisations shall be supported by USI in promoting access within their own institution and in supporting the proper representation of access students through policy development, practice, promotion and partnership

the USI education officer and the USI deputy president/campaigns officer shall develop a public campaign promoting access to further and higher education, highlighting the current obstacles and building momentum to have these issues addressed.

**09/ED 15 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**Congress notes**

That quality assurance is an increasingly important issue facing higher and further education and one which USI needs a strong, coordinated campaign on.

**Congress also notes**

That USI currently has eight existing motions relating to the area of quality assurance, each with different mandates and emphases.

**Congress recognises**

That while each motion covers an important topic, it has created a disparate and sometimes sectoral approach to quality assurance that prohibits the development of a coherent campaign that could affect real change.

**Congress also recognises**

That as USI represents students across all sectors of further and higher education, it must establish a common set of principles that will underpin and inform the organisation’s approach to quality assurance

**Congress further mandates**

That USI adopts the following guidelines as its policy on quality assurance to be implemented by the education officer:

***Aims and principles:***

‘Quality assurance’ includes processes such as evaluation, accreditation and audit.

Students have a right to a high quality of education and to have that education reviewed and assessed regularly

The interests of students as well as employers and wider society are served through good quality higher education

Institutional autonomy, tempered by a recognition that this brings with it heavy responsibilities

The need for external quality assurance to be fit for its purpose and to place only an appropriate and necessary burden on institutions for the achievement of its objectives

Centrality of student involvement and representation at all levels of the quality assurance process

QA mechanisms should result in demonstrative improvements and that these improvements should be communicated back to students

All elements of the QA process shall be transparent and accountable

***Quality Assurance of Modules, Programmes and Academic Units (General Principles)***

Institutions should have policy, procedures and formal mechanisms for the quality assurance of their programmes and awards

Institutions should have a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work

Each institution should have a central quality assurance office and/or committee that oversees the implementation of QA; this body shall have student representation

All panels formed to conduct a QA review should have student representation

All panels formed to conduct a QA review should have expert external representation

The quality of teaching staff shall be periodically reviewed as part of any programme, academic unit or institutional review and shall be commented on in the final report

The quality of education provided should be the central element in a review and each module and programme shall be assessed as to whether it is meeting its stated learning outcomes

The appropriateness of the stated learning outcomes as they support a high quality education should also be reviewed

Any and all QA reviews should also examine the quality of resources to support student learning including information systems, library resources and any and all other relevant services

Modules should be assessed annually with programmes and academic units reviewed on a cyclical basis with programmes reviewed at least once every three years and academic units at least once every five years

All quality assurance evaluations (module, programme, academic unit) should be made available online and all module and programme reviews be distributed to the students affected

Following each assessment an action plan and timeline to implement the recommendations should be produced and communicated to students

***External Quality Review of Institutions (General Principles)***

All institutions should be subject to review at least once every seven years

Panels should be chosen and overseen by the accreditation and/or awarding body

All panels should have student representation from a different institution with the pool of student representatives drawn up in consultation with USI

All panels formed to conduct an institutional review should have expert external representation

All panels should be fully independent and free of any influence or conflict of interest

Guidelines for institutional reviews should be drawn up by the accreditation agency based on standardised best practice, such as ENQA’s ‘standards and guidelines’

As part of the review process the institution should produce a self-assessment report which should include progress on the recommendations of the previous report

The effectiveness and suitability of the institution’s internal QA policies, procedures and mechanisms should be assessed

The review should also examine the overall quality of the student experience, learning resources, information systems, institutional culture (academic and professional) and academic structure

All institutional review reports should be made available online and all module and programme reviews be distributed to the students affected

Following each assessment an action plan and timeline to implement the recommendations should be produced and communicated to students and the institution

***Student Participation in Quality Assurance***

Student participation in quality assurance is essential in order to ensure that any QA system is credible

The institution seeks to enshrine the value of student participation in quality assurance activities at module, programme, departmental, faculty and institutional level.

Each institution should produce a guide for new students and should aim to produce a quality assurance handbook

Student representation on all QA fora is essential

The student representation system should be designed to afford opportunities for student engagement in decision-making and quality management arrangements

***USI Campaign on Quality Assurance***

USI will campaign to ensure high quality teaching and QA standards throughout the further and higher education sectors in accordance with the policies above

USI shall produce, or work with any sectoral body producing, a handbook for students on quality assurance detailing the rights of students and the importance of student involvement in QA

The USI education officer shall assist constituent organisations in developing and implementing QA policies in accordance with the above principles

The USI education officer shall assist constituent organisations in designing and producing materials to inform students about QA procedures and their right to a high quality education.

**09/ED 23 IREL INITIATIVE**

**Congress notes**

IREL is a national initiative by government agencies SIF and HEA to fund access to electronic journals, databases and e-books in science, technology and medicine, humanities and social sciences. It has proved to be an essential resource for students - both postgraduate and undergraduate. First set up in 2004 it is worth approximately €1 million per year to each of the 7 universities.

**Congress further notes**

It was extended this year to include the 14 institutes of technology however these institutes were only given access to 2 collections of journals – giving a total of €211,000 to be shared between them all.

**Congress believes**

That it is unfair to institute of technology students as they do not have equity of

access to such resources.

**Congress mandates**

The education officer to lobby to ensure that the initiative as a whole continues as it is very cost effective through economies of scale and ensures that all university students have access to the same key resources.

**Congress further mandates**

The education officer to lobby the government to ensure the initiative is extended fully to the 14 institutes of technology.

**09/ED 25 POSTGRADUATE WORK PLACEMENTS**

**Congress notes**

The cost incurred by students entering into work placement positions. Often these placements take on the form of free labour for employers.

**Congress believes**

That all students entering into work placements should receive payment for the duration of the placement.

**Congress mandates the officer board**

To campaign for payment for these types of placement.

# Welfare

## 2010

**10/ WEL 1 SEXUAL HEALTH**

**Congress applauds**

The fantastic work done by the USI welfare officer and welfare officers across the country with sexual health promotion.

**Congress notes**

The enthusiasm, helpfulness and usefulness of agencies such as the CPA, and campaigns such as Think Contraception in the push towards safer sexual practices.

**Congress notes with concern**

The spiralling rate of STIs, particularly amongst young people with 60% of STIs, on average, diagnosed in people aged between 20 -29.

**Congress notes with horror**

The figures released by St. James‟s Hospital on World AIDS Day 2009 that revealed they have experienced a 20% increase in cases of newly diagnosed patients with HIV.

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare officer to work closely with national bodies concerned with this are to feed into all national education strategies to bring the emphasis in sexual health education on good health and consistent use of barrier methods of protection to prevent STI infection as well as regular STI Testing. The Welfare Officer to ensure that SHAG week material promotes sexual health testing and provides a list of local STI testing clinics in the vicinity of or on the campus of local Cos. The Welfare Officer to continue to make SHAG week inclusive of all sexualities and those for whom pregnancy is not a risk during sexual activities.

**10/ 02 STUDENT PREGNANCY**

**Congress notes**

The lack of policy and support in the area of student parenting, both for student mothers and students Fathers.

**Congress further notes**

That while staff who fall pregnant are recognised under equality law, students exist within a grey area of legislation in this sector and subject to discrimination as the college chooses in terms of concessions and special accommodations.

**Congress applauds**

The efforts of institutions such as Mary Immaculate College in the formation of a student parent liaison officer.

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare and Equality Officers to research best practice policies on student parents both within Ireland, the UK and beyond with a view to formulate a template for local COs to negotiate with their institutions.

The Welfare and Equality Officers to meet and work with relevant organisations with a view to formulating a policy document for Welfare officers and other relevant CO officers as to how best to support student parents and what supports are needed. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 14 - - 14 –

The Welfare and Equality Officers to HEI authorities for better provisions and rights for student parents.

**10/ WEL 3 STUDENTS & ALCOHOL**

**Congress Notes**

The consumption of alcohol in Ireland is an issue that is reaching problem levels.

Congress further notes The consumption of alcohol amongst the student population can result in illness, absenteeism, anti-social behaviour and bad press because of a minority of students who are unable to control their drinking or behaviour whilst under the influence.

**Congress observes**

The change in licencing laws resulting in 10pm closing time for off licences has changed the drinking culture in Ireland tremendously, with alcohol purchased earlier and in bigger quantities because of the lower prices in the off licences. Drinking at home has become a primary activity.

**Congress strongly believes**

That it is only with leadership at a national level that this problem can be tackled.

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare, Deputy President and Area officers to lobby the government to re-examine the licencing laws, and the laws surrounding the regulation of bartending certificates. The Welfare Officer to inverstigate alcohol awareness campaigns run abroad and how these can be adapted to Irish Campuses.

**Congress also mandates**

The Welfare, Deputy President and Area Officers to investigate the effectiveness of the introduction of minimum price measures in other countries as a means of combating drink culture.

**10/WEL 4 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

**Congress notes**

The following USI Policies: 09/Wel 2 (Abortion Rights Campaign), 09/Wel 11 (Crisis Pregnancy Agencies), 07/EM 1 (Crisis Pregnancy Information), 06/Wel 6 (Abortion), & 06/Wel 11 (Pregnancy Counselling).

**Congress welcomes**

The Human Rights Watch report published in January 2010 “A State of Isolation: Access to Abortion for Women in Ireland” and the recommendations outlined in this report.

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare & Equality Officers to campaign for the implementation of the recommendations as outlined in the Human Rights Watch report in order to achieve the mandates set by the membership in 09/Wel 2 (Abortion Rights Campaign), 09/Wel 11 (Crisis Pregnancy Agencies), 07/EM 1 (Crisis Pregnancy Information), 06/Wel 6 (Abortion), & 06/Wel 11 (Pregnancy Counselling). Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 15 - - 15 –

**10/ WEL 5 HEADSHOPS**

**Congress Notes**

The number of Smart Head Shops now opening across the country which sell psychoactive substances.

**Congress Further Notes**

The dangers which these substances impose on today‟s society.

**Congress Believes**

That more awareness of the components which form the base of the products sold in these stores should be highlighted to students.

**Congress Mandates the Welfare Officer**

To run an awareness campaign which will identify the dangers of the merchandise sold in these stores.

**10/WEL 7 SEXUAL HEALTH**

**Congress Notes With Concern**

The worrying lack of information and knowledge among Student Health Services and other college supports about issues pertaining to lesbian sexual health.

**Congress Further Notes**

That oftentimes, women who identify as lesbian, bisexual or queer are unaware of lesbian sexual health issues.

**Congress Mandates**

The Welfare Officer to work with the LGBT RO to ensure that the sexual health module at UOS also covers lesbian sexual health issues; so that the welfare officers can be equipped with the knowledge to deal with these issues.

**10/ WEL 9 TAX RELIEF ON ACCOMMODATION**

**Congress notes**

The existing Revenue policy that allows individuals to claim tax relief on rent in private rented accommodation.

**Congress notes**

The large amount of students living away from home in private rented accommodation, for which their parents/guardians may pay.

**Congress understands**

That in a case where a parent/guardian directly pays a landlord for rent on behalf of their child, they are not entitled to claim rent relief.

**Congress notes**

the policy on third-level tuition fees, which allows

parents/guardians who pay these fees for their children to claim tax relief.

**Congress mandates**

the Deputy President to develop a policy paper establishing

the Organisation‟s position on this matter, and to lobby members of the Oireachtas

for its implementation.

**Congress also mandates**

the Deputy President to investigate the feasibility of extending this scheme to students living in campus residences and „Section 50‟ apartments.

**10/ WEL 10 DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME**

**Congress notes**

That the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Governmentis conducting a review of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004.

**Congress notes**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 17 - - 17 -

The large number of students who leave home to attend third-level institutes and who live in private rented accommodation.

**Congress notes**

With grave concern the difficulties that students can encounter when attempting to rightfully retrieve their deposit. It is frequently reported that some unscrupulous landlords seek to withhold deposits in the hopes that students will not be fully versed in their rights and thus ignorant of the correct action they are entitled to take against these rogue landlords.

**Congress further notes**

The financial difficulties facing students in the currentprecarious economic environment, and that a lost deposit on private rented accommodation would constitute a serious financial blow to a student.

**Congress recognises**

The long-established and successful deposit protection schemes in operation in the UK, New Zealand and Australia, which offers a barrier to rogue landlords behaving in such a fashion.

**Congress therefore mandates**

the Deputy President to prepare a policy document on the implementation of a deposit protection scheme in Ireland similar to those in operation overseas, and to lobby members of the Oireachtas for its immediate introduction.

WEL 11: Non- Academic Services Proposed by DIT SU

**Congress notes**

The current lack of quality assurance systems with regards to an Irish National Policy Framework for non-academic students services provided by the third level institution, such as health centres, counselling services etc.

**Congress further notes**

The importance of quality assurance with regard to non academic aspects of student services.

**Congress recognizes**

The value of the overall student experience within the higher education system in Ireland.

**Congress mandates**

The President and the Welfare Officer to lobby the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education for the formation of a non-academic student services policy relating to quality assurance. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 18 - - 18 –

**10/ WEL 11 NON- ACADEMIC SERVICES**

**Congress notes**

The current lack of quality assurance systems with regards to an Irish National Policy Framework for non-academic students services provided by the third level institution, such as health centres, counselling services etc.

**Congress further notes**

The importance of quality assurance with regard to non academic aspects of student services.

**Congress recognises**

The value of the overall student experience within the higher education system in Ireland.

**Congress mandates**

The President and the Welfare Officer to lobby the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education for the formation of a non-academic student services policy relating to quality assurance.

**10/ WEL 12 MABS**

**Congress Notes**

The continuing financial strain that is being placed on our students and their families during this economic crisis.

**Congress Further Notes**

That these economic pressures are forcing students to withdraw from Third Level Education at an increasingly alarming rate.

## 2009

**09/WEL 1 EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION**

**Congress notes**

The continuing lack of Emergency Contraceptives available 'over-the-counter' in pharmacies in Ireland, and the continuing need for a doctors appointment for a prescription for the ECP which comes at an extra cost to the student.  
  
**Congress further notes**  
Dependant on location, time of week, travel plans, unforeseen circumstances (i.e. sex without consent or awareness) etc that availing of a doctors appointment for aforesaid prescription may not be possible, and that the efficacy of EC decreases significantly over a 72-hour period.  
 **Congress believes**  
That people are entitled to complete control over their sexual reproduction and fertility, and that freer availability of ECs in Ireland is essential to this intrinsic right.  
  
**Congress welcomes**  
Research carried out on the effects of the ECP introduction in Britain by the

*British Journal of Medicine* that reported:

a 10% decrease in the amount of teenage pregnancies with only a 2% increase in those using the ECP following its over-the-counter introduction

no reduction in the usage of other contraceptive methods

And the research document prepared for this debate on the myths, realities and physiological & health impacts of the different ECPs by UCC's Welfare Officer, Keith O' Brien.  
  
**Congress Mandate**

The USI Welfare Officer to co-ordinate with relevant groups to provide more comprehensive information on the different forms of EC

USI Officer Board to campaign for the introduction of 'over-the-counter' emergency contraception for people over the age of 17, as this is the age of consent.

**09/WEL 4 MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION**

**Congress notes**

That there is a stigma surrounding the issue of mental health amongst the student body, and in Irish society generally.

**Congress believes**

Welfare Officers of COs are very effective means of dispersing information to students regarding various issues, notwithstanding mental health issues; however issues around mental health still require coverage by Cos, mainly to provide factual information on various mental illnesses and to remove the stigmas associated with said.

**Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer**

To provide supports to individual Students’ Unions by way of centralised sourcing materials and information, targeting the stigma surrounding mental health issues

To further engage with relevant groups and NGOs to publicise the various means of dealing with mental illness to the wider student population

To run a campaign on the issues raised above

**09/WEL 5 COUNSELLING SERVICES**

**Congress notes**

The severe problem Ireland faces with a large population of alcoholic and drug addicts, some of whom are/will be parents.

**Congress further notes with concern**

The lack of supports put in place for the children of such parents, who in turn may be faced with mental health problems (such as depression etc.) that may affect them for the rest of their lives.

**Congress acknowledges**

The availability of AL-anon, AT-Teen, Barnardos etc services in Ireland for these children.  However the lack of supports from the HSE itself on a psychiatric & counselling basis along with an average 2 year waiting list for psychiatric evaluation, and how these psychological problems will affect the life of a student at 3rd level, must be realised and changed.

**Congress therefore mandates**

Officer Board to lobby the relevant bodies to put in place funding for the introduction of counselling services for the children of alcoholic and drug addicted parents.

**09/WEL 6 MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN**

**Congress Notes**

The huge increase in numbers of international students now studying a 3rd level here in Ireland and how diverse the student population has become

**Congress also notes**

The huge impact studying abroad can have on a person and that adapting to a new culture, language, society and surroundings can have a significant effect on a students well being

**Congress recognises**

The strength and accomplishments of this year’s Mental Health Campaign

**Congress Mandates**

The Welfare Officer to work in conjunction with the Equality Officer to design campaign materials for the Mental Health Campaign which are specifically aimed at International students and the Welfare Officer in conjunction with the Equality Officer to highlight the specific issues surrounding the specific stresses placed on international students.

**09/WEL 7 HEADSUP**

**Congress notes:**

The inclusion of student services on the HEADSUP text service which is run by Rehab.

**Congress further notes**

That ease of access to information is important for students in difficulty. This services offers information on resources that are available when students services are closed.

**Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To continue to work with and promote the HEADSUP service as part of the mental health awareness campaign.

**09/WEL 9 SHAG WEEK**

**Congress notes**

06 / WEL 6

**Congress recognises**

That throughout the year, and particularly during SHAG week, material is distributed by USI to students that contains contact information for crisis pregnancy agencies that only provide two choice information.

**Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To only provide information from three choice agencies.

**09/WEL 11 CRISIS PREGNANCY AGENCIES**

**Congress notes**

That there is no legislation controlling crisis pregnancy agencies in Ireland.

**Congress notes with concern**

That as a result a number of rogue crisis pregnancy agencies have started up

**Congress recognizes**

That a rogue crisis pregnancy agency is one where the sole purpose of the agency is to prevent a pregnant woman from having an abortion. They misinform and intimidate women to achieve their aim, using methods such as harassment, bullying and been given blatantly false information. [Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)]

**Congress acknowledges**

The work done this year by Choice Ireland in campaigning against rogue crisis pregnancy agencies

**Congress mandates the Welfare Officer**

To work with Choice Ireland, and other relevant agencies, to protest against these rogue crisis pregnancy agencies

**Congress further mandates the Welfare Officer**

To lobby for the introduction of legislation in this area

**09/WEL 12 VIOLENCE IN YOUTH RELATIONSHIPS**

**Congress notes with concern**

That violence within youth relationships is not part of any current campaign within USI

**Congress also notes**

That statistics surrounding the prevalence of violence in youth relationships is scarce

**Congress believes**

That this issue needs to be highlighted among students

**Congress therefore mandates the Welfare Officer**

* To work with various agencies to run a campaign on the issue of violence in youth relationships

**09/WEL 13 ALCOHOL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

**Congress notes**

08/ WEL 7 (Students and Alcohol) which mandates the prioritisation of the alcohol awareness/reduction campaign.

**Congress also notes**

The persistent difficulty in designing a campaign around alcohol awareness which is not patronising to or judgemental of students.

**Congress recognises**

That alcohol consumption and over consumption remains a key issue for students.

**Congress also recognises**

That students are best placed to assist the Welfare Officer in designing a campaign on this issue.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The Welfare Officer to hold 4 regional forums to gather student feedback, opinions and ideas on how best to approach this issue and to present a campaign idea to Welfare Working Group.

# Equality

## 2010

**10/ EQ 2 MIGRANT STUDENTS**

**Congress notes**

That Erasmus, EU and non EEA (European Economic Area) students have access to

dedicated support services in third level colleges.

**Congress further notes**

That there are clear policy guidelines on issues affecting Erasmus, EU and non EEA students with regard student fees, leave to remain in Ireland and the right to work while studying.

**Congress recognises**

That the same level of service and policy does not exist for migrants, children of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and/or children of same, some of whom are now completing primary and secondary education in Ireland.

**Congress believes**

That these groups are entitled to receive a third level education in Ireland.

**Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to investigate what government and HEI policies exist in this area and to collate the responses in a position paper accompanied by suggestions for future actions. Such a position paper should be presented to National Council prior to Congress 2011.

**10/ EQ 3 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Congress notes**

That in order to communicate with students with disabilities, the USI Equality Campaign is reliant on Disability Support Services and Access Offices in each third level campus. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 51 - - 51 –

**Congress further notes**

That this year there have been significant difficulties in reaching out to students with disabilities in third level colleges.

**Congress also notes**

That these difficulties are not specific to USI and are also experienced by other organisations working in this area.

**Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to make it a priority of 2010/2011 to design a system whereby USI Equality can connect directly with students with disabilities in third level and to seek assistance from members of Officer Board, USI staff and external organisations on how best to achieve this.

**10/EQ 4 Communicating with Part Time Officers**

**Conference notes**

That part time officers exist in each CO who work in the area of equality

**Conference also notes**

That these officers are elected at different times in different colleges and so it is difficult to organise a networking event at the beginning of the year

**Conference believes**

Part time officers stand to gain a lot from being involved with the USI Equality Campaign

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to meet individually with relevant part time officers once they are elected and outline the positive benefits getting involved in USI Equality can have.

**Conference also mandates**

The Equality Officer to maintain contact with part time officers by circulating a campaign update email once per fortnight

**Conference further mandates**

The Equality Officer to compile a contact list for part time officers and to circulate this to Equality Working Group as early as possible in the year

**10/EQ 5 Negative Stereotypes in Irish Media**

**Conference notes**

That often minority groups are represented poorly in both national and local print media in Ireland

**Conference regrets**

That over the past 12 months there has been an increase in the number of such articles, in particular on the issue of access of third level education

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and all members of Equality Working to respond and counteract negative images and stereotypes of minority students in the media through letters to the editor of the publication involved.

**10/EQ 6 Students Attitude to Equality**

**Conference notes**

The recent research by the Equality & Rights Alliance into Irish attitudes on equality

**Conference also notes**

The research is not specific to student attitudes

**Conference believes**

That the Equality Campaign cannot be effective in campaigning on equality until it establishes what students think about the issues involved

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to commission a nationwide student survey on attitudes to equality in third level education and to use the results of this survey to inform the equality campaign going forward.

**10/EQ 7 Online Campaigning**

**Conference notes**

The necessity for USI Equality to campaign through various online media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, Blogging.

**Conference also notes**

The increasing success of the current online activities of the USI Equality Campaign

**Conference mandates**

Equality Working Group to continue utilising online media to further the aims of the campaign

**Conference further mandates**

All members of Equality Working Group to write a blog on an issue relevant to the campaign at least once a month

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to run competitions through online media in order to encourage students to be more interactive with the campaign

**10/EQ 8 Branding USI Equality**

**Conference notes**

The success of the rebranding of the USI Equality Campaign in rejuvenating the image of the campaign among students, COs and NGOs

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and Equality Working Group to continue to use the new logos and colour coding in all aspects of the Equality Campaign

**10/EQ 10 Training**

**Conference notes**

That full time officers in COs are provided with in depth training at UOS

**Conference also notes**

That a similar event does not exist for part time officers and club and society committee members

**Conference acknowledges**

That the USI Activist Academy held this year provides a great forum and training opportunity for part time officers and club and society committee members

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer & Equality Working Group to run a training day for part time officers and club and society committee members at the start of each year and where possible to incorporate this training into an Activist Academy event. Topics for this training should include at a minimum: public speaking, campaign skills, running a society/club, chairing meetings and how to get involved in the USI Equality Campaign.

**10/EQ 11 USI Equality Newsletter**

**Conference notes**

The success of the USI Equality monthly newsletter which started this year

**Conference recognises**

That funding is an issue for USI

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to investigate offering commercial advertising space in the USI Equality Newsletter

## 2009

**09 / EQ 1 DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Congress notes**

The budget cutbacks that are occurring across most 3rd level institutions.

**Congress regrets**

That a lot of these cutbacks are disproportionately affecting vital frontline student services.

**Congress recognises**

The effectiveness and importance of disability support services for students suffering from both physical and intellectual disabilities.

**Congress opposes**

Any and all cutbacks in these disability support services across the country.

**Congress mandates**

The Equality, Disabilities and Education Officers to actively campaign to ensure the rights of support to these students by lobbying the appropriate national bodies to provide ring-fenced funding for these services.

**09 / EQ 3 FRIENDS OF THE ELDERLY**

**Congress notes**

That Friends’ of the Elderly is a voluntary, non-denominational organisation that brings friendship and social opportunities to the elderly, especially those who live alone.

**Congress also notes**

That many student members in the Eastern Area volunteer with Friends of the Elderly.

**Congress further notes**

That this year a pilot campaign entitled ‘Open to the Elderly Week’ took place in USI member colleges. The campaign consisted of organising one afternoon of entertainment for the elderly who lived near each college and was developed following the success of similar afternoons in UCD.

**Congress recognises**

That such a campaign helps to combat ageism in our society.

**Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to continue to work with Friends of the Elderly.

**09 / EQ 5 WORKING WITH DISABILITY**

**Congress Notes**

The excellent practices employed by the disability services in some higher education institutes

**Congress Further Notes**

The disparity that exists in disability services available to students in different higher education institutes

**Congress Mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Disability Rights Officer to investigate the various practices employed in by the disability services of institutes and, based on this, to construct a code of best practice for such services which shall be distributed to all COs and their relevant college authorities

**09 / EQ 8 IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT**

**Congress notes**

That there exists policy (08/EQ2) mandating the Equality Officer ‘to lobby the government for the full and speedy implementation of the recommendations and conclusions laid out in the Department of Education & Science Survey of Traveller Education Provision.’

**Congress also notes**

That while this motion is well intentioned, it does not provide the Equality Officer with a realistic mandate to address the issues facing members of the Traveller Community in third level education.

**Congress recognises**

The work of this year’s Equality Officer in building links with the Education Worker of the Irish Traveller Movement.

**Congress notes**

That the Irish Traveller Movement is **a national network of organisations and individuals working within the Traveller community.**

**Congress mandates**

That the Equality Officer continues to build links with ITM and to formulate a realistic strategy for addressing the issues faced by Travellers in third level education.

**09 / EQ 10 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

**Congress notes**

That the numbers of EU and non EU students in the Irish Higher Education have increased steadily over the past number of years

**Congress further notes**

That while these students share the same concerns as their Irish counterparts, they also need specific support in certain areas

**Congress recognises**

That these students receive a lot of support from both international education offices and international student societies

**Congress is aware**

That very few structures exist within both local students union and USI to cater for the specific needs of both EU and non EU students and that this has lead to very poor participation by international students at all levels of student representation (see USI Participation Working Group Final Report)

**Congress believes**

That Students Unions must cater for the needs of all their membership and that USI has a responsibility to support local unions in this and to lead by example

**Congress further believes**

That the current structures employed by students unions, both local and national, may need to be reviewed in order to serve the needs of these students more effectively

**Congress therefore mandates the Equality Officer**

To continue to sit on the board of the Irish Council of International Students (ICOS);

To work with ICOS to create support structures for EU and non EU students within local unions and within USI;

To compile best practice guidelines for local unions on how to make their union accessible for EU and non EU students;

To continue to monitor changes in governmental & HEI stipulations for EU and non EU students; to publicise these changes to the membership; to lobby against changes which will have a negative effect on students and to be proactive in seeking changes which will have a positive impact.

**09 / EQ 11 FORUM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Congress Notes**

That participation in third level education among students with disabilities has grown in the last number of years.

**Congress Believes**

That it is difficult to provide adequate support and representation for these students without their input into highlighting their specific needs.

**Congress Mandates**

The Equality Officer and Disability Rights Officer to setup a forum in which students with disabilities can advise USI on the Disability Rights Campaign.

# Disability Rights

## 2010

**10/DR 1 Disclosure at CAO**

**Conference notes**

That the CAO provides students with an option to disclose their disability.

**Conference further notes**

That many Leaving Certificate students may be uncomfortable making this disclosure, as they feel it may negatively impact upon them.

**Conference therefore mandates**

The Disability Rights Officer to work alongside the ISSU and other relevant organisations to highlight the positive effects of disclosure.

**10/DR 2 Know your Rights**

**Conference notes**

That funding cuts have affected all college services, including disability support services

**Conference also notes**

That Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have a legal responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities

**Conference believes**

That colleges must fulfil this legal responsibility to all students and that funding cuts do not absolve college authorities of this responsibility

**Conference mandates**

The Disability Rights Officer to work with AHEAD and other relevant organisations to run a ‘Know Your Rights’ campaign which highlights to students the legal responsibilities of HEIs to provide support and reasonable accommodations.

**10/DR 3 Information**

**Conference notes**

There are many different disabilities

**Conference also notes**

That sabbatical officers may not be aware of the different needs of all disabilities

**Conference mandates**

The Disability Rights Officer to provide information to sabbatical officers on different disabilities and the possible reasonable accommodations which a student may require

# Gender Equality

## 2010

**10/GE 2 Advocates for Sexual Knowledge**

**Conference notes**

That USI has numerous policies on issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

**Conference also notes**

That USI has worked closely with the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)

over the past number of years on SRHR

**Conference welcomes**

The establishment of a youth specific campaign (ASK – Advocates for Sexual Knowledge) within the IFPA

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and the Gender Equality Officer to work with ASK to progress USI policy on SRHR issues.

**10/GE 4 Lack of legal protection from domestic violence in youth relationships**

**Conference notes with concern**

That young people in dating relationships are not covered by current domestic violence legislation because of strict cohabitation criteria.

**Conference also notes**

That current Irish domestic violence legislation falls short of current UN Guidelines on Domestic Violence Legislation. These guidelines recommend that all individuals who are or have been in an intimate relationship, regardless of marital status or cohabitation, should be eligible for protection from domestic violence.

**Conference believes**

That protection from domestic violence should not be contingent on current or previous cohabitation, and therefore Safety Orders should be available to all parties who are or have been in an intimate relationship, as is supported by UN Guidelines on Domestic Violence Legislation.

An opportunity exists under the current Civil Partnership Bill to make amendments to the Domestic Violence Act.

**Conference therefore mandates**

The Equality & Gender Equality Officer to write immediately to all TDs and Senators to encourage them to support amendments to the Domestic Violence Act under the Civil Partnership Bill that would extend protection under domestic violence legislation to those who are or have been in intimate relationships regardless of marital or cohabitation status.

**10/GE 5 Copenhagen Declaration**

**Conference notes**

That USI has many motions and policy on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

**Conference also notes**

That members of USI Officerboard were involved in creating a pan European political statement on SRHR (known as the Copenhagen Declaration)

**Conference further notes**

The Copenhagen Declaration reads as follows:

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer to sign the Copenhagen Declaration on behalf of USI and to use it when lobbying on SRHR issues

**10/GE 6 Campaigning for Women**

**Conference notes**

That USI had a successful Womens Rights Campaign in the past

**Conference also notes**

That in recent years there has been very little policy on Womens issues

**Conference believes**

That there is a problem with female participation in USI

**Conference also believes**

That the creation of a gender equality officer position in 2009 was a positive step to increasing female participation in USI

**Conferences further believes**

That current officers could learn a lot from the experience of past female officers, particularly those who were involved in the womens rights campaign

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and Gender Equality Officer to convene a roundtable with interested ex officers to discuss how to progress womens involvement in the union.

**10/GE 7 Objectification of Women in Posters**

**Conference notes**

That images used by clubs, societies and students union to promote events have become increasingly sexual and objectify young men and women

**Conference believes**

That clubs, societies and students union should be leaders in creating a campus environment that is free from such overt sexualisation and objectification

**Conference mandates**

The Gender Equality Officer to highlight the negative impact of objectification to clubs, societies and students unions and to create a best practice promotion guide that student groups can use when advertising events and activities

# International Students

## 2010

**10/IS 1 International Students Campaign**

**Conference notes**

That is important that international students have access to a campaign which represents their views to government and other relevant organisations

**Conference also notes**

That students should be able to access information about what colleges participate in the USI International Students Campaign prior to applying for a course of study

**Conference mandates**

The International Student Officer to highlight on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie) what third level colleges in Ireland are members of USI and active in the International Students Campaign.

**10/IS 2 Changing Circumstances for International Students**

**Conference notes**

That the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (DJELR) are currently reviewing immigration procedures for non EEA students

**Conference also notes**

That the Department of Education & Science (DES) has established a high level group to coordinate the international education sector in Ireland

**Conference further notes**

That USI has worked closely with ICOS to secure a student seat on the high level group and has made a submission to the DJELR on the immigration proposals

**Conference is disappointed**

That the DJELR considers it adequate to promote such changes through a statement on their website

**Conference encourages**

The DJELR to be more proactive in consulting with students, who are the main stakeholders in this issue

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer and International Students Officer to

1. seek a meeting with the DJELR to outline the need for proactive consultation with students on these issues and to establish such a system for consultation
2. continue to work with ICOS on representing student views to the high level group
3. seek student feedback regularly on proposals coming forth from either group/department
4. advertise changes clearly on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie) and through all other available media

**10/ IS 3 Information for International Students**

**Conference notes**

That many international students do not receive adequate information about Ireland and/or immigration procedures before they arrive here to study

**Conference believes**

This lack of information has a negative impact on the student experience for international students

**Conference mandates**

The international student officer to create an easy to read guide for international students on life in Ireland and immigration procedures and to make this available on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie)

**Conference also notes**

That many international students do not understand the role of the SU in the college environment

**Conference therefore mandates**

The international student officer to create an easy to read guide for international students entitled ‘What is a Student Union?’ and to make this available on [www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie).

# LGBT

## 2010

**10/LGBT 1 LGBT Interest Groups**

**Conference notes**

That the USI LGBT Campaign has been working closely with various LGBT interest groups over the past few years, to the mutual benefit of all organisations

**Conference applauds**

The recent USI roundtable meeting, which brought all these organisations together to the discuss the broader civil marriage campaign (which was the first meeting of its kind in over a year)

**Conference recognises**

That working with these groups is essential to the success of the campaign and as such should continue into the future

**Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to continue to work and liaise with the likes of MarriagEquality, LGBT Noise, EQUALS, GLEN (the Gay & Lesbian Equality Network), the NLGF (National Lesbian and Gay Federation), TENI (Transgender Equality Network Ireland) and BeLonG To, as well as any other group which they feel can further the USI LGBT Campaign

**10/LGBT 2 Homophobic Bullying**

**Conference notes**

That the results of the “LGBT Lives” survey (2009) show that 12 years old is the most common time for an LGBT person to come out to themselves, with 17 being the age most of them start to come out. This means most LGBT people are in secondary school while beginning their coming out process, or just starting college

**Conference further notes**

That over 58% of LGBT people reported homophobic bullying in their schools, and that 80% of LGBT people currently experience verbal abuse due to their LGBT identity in their day to day lives

**Conference believes**

That LGBT students can be victims of homophobic abuse in college

**Conference mandates**

The LGBTRO to work alongside the ISSU on a joint anti homophobic bullying campaign, covering both secondary school and college students to raise awareness of this issue

**Conference further mandates**

The LGBTRO to work with BeLonG To on this campaign, as they have established points of contact for the area of homophobic bullying.

**10/LGBT 3 Students’ Unions Involvement in the LGBT Campaign**

**Conference believes**

In order to have a real impact on student life, SU as a whole need to get involved with LGBT rights.

**Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to work closely with SUs as well as LGBT Societies.

**10/LGBT 4 Anti-homophobia Campaign**

**Conference believes**

It should be obvious to all students in USI colleges that homophobia will not be tolerated in any form on campus.

**Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to prepare information leaflets or pack for a campus-wide anti-homophobia campaign in all USI campuses on a certain day and to encourage all SUs to get involved.

**10/LGBT 5 Freshers Packs**

**Conference believes**

We constantly need to aim to reach all students who identify as L,G, B or T

**Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to prepare information for insertion by all SUs for a section in their fresher's booklets on LGBT issues specifically.

**10/LGBT 6 LGBT Working Group**

**Conference repeals**

The motion 09 LGBT 19 Working Group

06 LGBT SSC 6 USI LGBT Working Group Team Dynamics

06 LGBT 21 Sabbatical Officers on Working Groups

06 LGBT 22 Working Group Changeover

06 LGBT 23 Participation By Working Group Members

**Conference notes**

That the LGBT Policy Manual makes numerous references to LGBT Working Group.

**Conference further notes**

That this group no longer exists under the restructuring of the USI LGBT Campaign.

**Conference therefore mandates**

The LGBT RO to go through the manual and replace every instance of “the LGBT RO and Working Group” with “the LGBT RO”

**Proposed by USI LGBT Rights Officer**

**10/LGBT 7 Pink Training**

**Conference repeals**

The motions 09 LGBT 6 Financing of Pink Training

09 LGBT 07 Structure of Pink Training

08 LGBT 08 Lesbian Sexual Health at Pink Training

08 LGBT 12 Bisexuality Awareness at Pink Training

08 LGBT 19 Intervarsity Event Forum

08 LGBT 22 Pink Training Accommodation Requests

08 LGBT 23 Pink Training Workshops and Timetable

08 LGBT 25 Sexual Empowerment and Queer Studies at Pink Training

07 LGBT 03 Transgender Information for Welfare Officers

07 LGBT 10 Closed and Open Transgender Workshops at Pink Training

07 LGBT 11 Making Standing Conference More Accessible

06 LGBT 11 Biphobia

06 LGBT 12 Transgender Issues

06 LGBT 16 Pink Training

06 LGBT 2 Welfare Training at Pink Training

**Conference notes**

That over the past few years, repetitive motions relating to Pink Training were passed at various LGBT Standing Conferences, which lead to the LGBT Policy Manual becoming very disorganised.

**Conference recognises**

The importance of Pink Training as the single biggest gathering of LGBT people after Pride, and as such should cover many areas in which awareness needs to be raised.

**Conference also recognises**

That delegates can be too tired to participate fully after a certain time each day, which can lead to a lack of engagement.

**Conference further recognises**

That it can be difficult for new members to integrate at Pink Training. If a delegate is allowed specify one other delegate with whom they would like to stay, this may make the event less intimidating.

**Conference further notes**

That there may be Trans\* students in attendance, and that they may not be out to their friends or fellow society members. As such, they should be able to attend a closed coming out workshop running simultaneously to several other workshops to prevent them having to out themselves.

**Conference believes**

That the sexual health workshops are an integral part of Pink Training, and that these should all be run simultaneously with no other workshops at the same time, to ensure all delegates attend at least one workshop. Sexual empowerment workshops should also be part of the timetable, as it is important for delegates to be confident in their sexuality.

**Conference further believes**

That the bonding and networking aspects of Pink Training are essential to the Pink Training weekend. As such, ice-breakers and society networking events should be a part of the timetable.

**Conference therefore mandates**

The LGBT RO to:

1. Consult with LGBT Students prior to Pink Training in order to assess the kind of modules they wish to see for the weekend
2. Ensure that the Friday night consist only of opening speeches by the LGBT RO, the USI President and a guest speaker, and for these to be followed by ice-breakers
3. Plan the timetable so that the Sunday consist only of open spaces and light interactive modules to allow for winding down, and for these to start no earlier than 11am in order to facilitate students preparing to leave
4. Host a feedback session at the end of the weekend to assess delegates’ thoughts and feelings about the success of the weekend
5. Provide at least one meal which is to be included in the cost of the event
6. Timetable the coming out workshops to be an hour and a half long
7. That accommodation requests to share with a friend should be facilitated where possible

**Conference further mandates**

The LGBT RO to have, at a minimum, the following modules on the timetable:

* Bisexuality Awareness (Covering Biphobia)
* Sexual Health Workshops (Both Men’s and Women’s)
* Coming Out Workshops
* Sexual Empowerment
* Queer Studies/Queer Theory
* Trans\* 101 module, covering the areas of FTM, MTF, Intersex and Genderqueer.
* A closed Trans\* Coming Out Workshop, timetabled against several other modules to allow for privacy.
* LGBT Mental Health
* LGBT Drugs and Alcohol Awareness

## 2009

**09/LGBT 5** **DIGNITY AND RESPECT**

**Conference recognises**

the work done by COs to ensure that everybody feels equal.

**Conference notes**

that some COs have policies that are open to misinterpretation and this may lead to unintended discrimination.

**Conference believes**

that situations like this should never happen in any CO.

**Conference further believes**

that since it is against the law to discriminate, college officials should not be allowed to get away with doing so.

**Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to Draft up a generic policy on Dignity and Respect for use in CO’s that don’t have any.

**Conference further mandates**

the LGBT RO and WG to ensure that every CO’s Union is aware of the existence of such policies and to ensure that such policies are being applied to everyone.

**09/LGBT 6 FINANCING OF PINK TRAINING**

**Conference Notes**

That in previous years, many students who book places at pink training, never show up and as a result, never pay for the place they booked.

**Conference further notes**

That in most years, the LGBT Campaign and USI have lost money as a result of this non payment.

**Conference Believes**

That the LGBT campaign should not financially suffer due to a non payment.

**Conference recognises**

That it is a standard business practice that most costs allow a margin of error, onto the cost price, to allow for hidden costs and last minute dropouts.

**Therefore Conference Mandates**

The LGBTRO and the LGBT Working Group to include as part of the initial payment, a margin of error fee of no more than 5 euro, to allow for some non payment.

**Conference Further Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that any money raised is returned directly into the LGBT

Campaign Budget and is used for the printing of materials, attendance at a conference or any other event or training requiring financial assistance from the USI LGBT Campaign.

**Conference Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that, if the cost for pink training should ever exceed 90 euro,

that the five euro margin of error is not included as the cost would be too excessive for students.

**Conference Additionally Mandates**

That anyone who has not paid for more than two years or whose collective debts exceed 3000 EUR shall be refused entry to pink training until at least half of the money is paid off with a guarantee that the rest will be paid no more than one month after the event

**09/LGBT 9 ADOPTION POLICY**

**Conference notes**

The controversial nature of the issue of gay adoption within Ireland.

**Conference Applauds**

The work done in relation to this issue by organisations by way of debates and seminars.

**Conference Notes with concern**

the lack of protection to children offered by the civil partnership bill.

**Conference believes**

That policy needs to be clarified regarding USIs stance on adoption rights.

**Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO to ensure that USI lobby for better protections for children within the Civil Partnership Bill in the form of a Guardianship Rights Bill

**Congress Further Mandates**

The LGBTRO and the LGBT WG to form a campaign seeking to introduce full Adoption Rights and to only accept guardianship rights as a stepping stone towards full adoption rights

**Congress Also Mandates**

The LGBTRO to ensure that a brief synopsis of guardianship rights versus adoption rights are drawn up and distributed to the LGBT Societies and SUs to inform them of both the pros and cons of each system.

**09/LGBT 13 MSM BLOOD BAN**

**Conference Notes**

That the IBTS still has not reviewed its policies on Blood donation

**Conference Further Notes**

That the NAT test has reduced the window of detection of the HIV virus down to 12

days.

**Conference Notes with Concern**

The IBTS has passed obligation over to the Department of Health and the World Health Organisation. The IBTS will refuse to review the deferral criteria until the WHO and the Dept. require them to.

**Conference Believes**

That the IBTS should set up a working group to investigate the viability of reducing the deferral period from an indefinite deferral down to a more reasonable timeframe

**Therefore Conference mandates**

The LGBT RO and the LGBT Working group to:

Continue to letter lobby the Minister of Health, asking for a working group to be set up.

Write a submission to the Dept. Of Health, outlining current trends on HIV infection and HIV statistics and use this to seek a reduction.

Outline a deferral period of one year instead of a lifetime deferral

Conference further mandates

The LGBTRO to keep the information accurate and up to date with current statistics

Conference Also Mandates

The LGBT RO to lobby both the department and WHO for the setting up of a working group to review their own policies regarding blood donations from the MSM community.

# Mature Students

## 2010

**10/MS 1 Developing relationships with NIMSO & AONTAS**

**Conference notes**

That USI benefits from having a positive working relationship with a number of external organisations

**Conference believes**

That the USI Mature Students Campaign would benefit from creating links with both NIMSO (Network of Irish Mature Students Officers) and AONTAS (the Irish National Learning Organisation)

**Conference mandates**

The Equality Officer & Mature Students Officer to meet with both NIMSO and AONTAS and explore possible collaborations in order to create a coherent lobbying effort on behalf of mature students across Ireland.

**10/MS 2 Mature Students Officer**

**Conference notes**

The high increase in the number of mature students attending third level education

**Conference also notes**

That increasing access to lifelong learning and creating diverse student populations is to be welcomed

**Conference is aware**

That mature students have additional needs and that these are often not represented at local level in colleges

**Conference believes that**

In order to represent the needs of mature students, each student union should have a part time mature students representative

**Conference therefore mandates**

The Mature Students Officer to lobby local COs to create part time mature student officer positions and to assist all unions in the development of this position.

**10/MS 3 Peer Support for Mature Students**

**Conference notes**

The success of peer support networks across Irish Third Level Institutions

**Conference also notes**

The difficulties faced by mature students returning to education

**Conference believes**

that other mature students are best placed to understand these issues and support mature students in first year

**Conference mandates**

The Mature Students Officer to lobby each college to establish a mature student’s peer support network.

**10/MS 4 Social Events**

**Conference notes**

That often college entertainments focus on pubs and nightclubs

**Conference also notes**

That this may not appeal to mature students

**Conference mandates**

The Mature Students Officer to work with Entertainments Officers to create events which are more welcoming for mature students.

**2010**

**10/ NA 1 TV LICENCE**

**Congress Notes**

* TV Licences are issued for 12 months
* The onus to pay the licence is not on the landlord
* The majority of students stay in student accommodation nine months

**Congress Further notes**

In England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland students can apply for a refund of an unused portion of their TV Licence. If you have bought a licence at the beginning of the Autumn and do not remain in College accommodation or lodgings over the summer, you are entitled to a refund of any unused quarter (three full calendar months).

**Congress mandates**

The Welfare Officer to lobby the Minister for Communication, energy and natural resources to implement a change in legislation that will provide students, and those who may be emigrating with a refund facility identical to the system used in England, Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**10/ NA 2 HEADSHOPS**

**Congress Notes**

The dramatic increase on the number of “headshops” opening around the country.

**Congress Further Notes**

That there is currently no regulation of the substances which are sold in these shops and the potentially harmful effects that these substances may have on a person.

**Congress Mandates**

The welfare officer to campaign for the regulation of these shops in line with the recent trends in other Countries

# National Affairs

## 2009

**09 / NA 3 ORGAN DONOR STATUS**

**Congress notes**

08/ NA 1 (Organ Donors) which mandates the area officers to promote the distribution of organ donor cards and organ donor information leaflets to each student member of USI.

**Congress also notes**

The successful implementation of this mandate by the Eastern Area Officer this year

**Congress believes**

That organ donor status should be included on student identity cards

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President and Welfare Officer to lobby HEI’s and any other relevant agencies for the inclusion of organ donor status on student identity cards.

# Union Organisation

## 2010

**10/ UO 1 STRATEGIC & QUALITY REVIEW**

**Congress notes**

The extraordinary progress of the national student movement in the past 50 years under the leadership of USI.

**Congress further congratulates**

The successive Officer Boards and ordinary members for their valuable contribution to political and social Irish life, which has directly impacted on the lives of students in Ireland.

**Congress believes**

It is important that the Union re-evaluates its position, strategic direction, and fitness for purpose, especially in the current economic and political climate. Furthermore, that to re-evaluate this position, input and buy-in from every stakeholder in the national movement must be considered.

**Congress mandates the President**

To lead a Strategic and Quality Review of the structure and operation of the Union of Students in Ireland, incorporating the views of external review bodies, similarly politically active organizations, ordinary members, past officers of Constituent Organizations, present officers of Constituent Organizations, current staff members, current members of Officer Board, and former members of Officer Board.

**10/ UO 2 USI NEWSLETTER PROPOSED**

**Congress notes**

The success of the monthly USI Equality Campaign Newsletter (distributed via email) in increasing the profile of the campaign among the student body this year

**Congress mandates**

The Equality Officer to continue to produce this newsletter on a monthly basis and to increase the circulation of the newsletter

**Congress further mandates**

The Deputy President to compile a quarterly newsletter on all USI Activities & Campaigns and circulate this to the membership

**10/ UO 3 PRESIDENTIAL VISITS**

**Congress notes**

The importance of area council meetings, to address regional problems and to build links with COs in the region.

**Congress further notes**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 27 - - 27 -

The need for the COs to have a direct link with the President of the USI.

**Congress mandates the President**

To attend, where possible, all area council meetings throughout the year.

**10/ UO 4 PAST WELFARE OFFICERS**

**Congress Notes**

That the newly instated USI Welfare Officer would benefit immensely from the advice and guidance of the outgoing, and other previous, welfare officers.

**Congress Acknowledges**

The vast amount of experience from previous welfare officers can be passed down to the newly instated welfare officer to assist them in carrying out their job efficiently and making improvements to the procedures involved in running welfare campaigns.

**Congress mandates**

The USI Welfare Officer to utilise Cairde USI to convene a meeting with past and present USI welfare officers to learn from their experience of the job and to prepare for the challenges that they can expect in the coming year.

**10/ UO 5 NON- AFFILIATES**

**Congress Recognises**

The difficulties in enticing Non Affiliates back into USI.

**Congress Believes**

That however while there are difficulties in luring back non affiliates a different approach needs to be taken.

**Congress applauds**

The work done by the President in completing an updated USI Re affiliation document this year

**Congress Mandates**

The President should make contact to the respective non affiliate Presidents and request to make a presentation to them, either in USI HQ or on the Non Affiliate Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 28 - - 28 –

Campus itself. The President and Deputy President to develop a Presentation outlining what USI does for it‟s members.

This should outline:

 Free Materials distributed

 Training Events Organised

 Representation on National Committees

 General help Officer Board provides to COs

 Testimonials from Sabbatical Officers in COs

 As well as any further information the respective officers feel is relevant

**10/ UO 6 TRAINING EVENTS**

**Congress notes**

The success of the Activist Academy and Green training hosted by USI this year.

**Congress also notes**

That Pink Training remains one of USI‟s most prominent and foremost events and remains a unique selling point of USI to non-affiliates.

**Congress mandates**

The President and members of Officerboard to

 Hold at least one Activist Academy and Green Training within the first two months of college terms.

 Present the dates for these events at the first National Council.

 Investigate holding more than one Activist Academy in the first semester.

 Heavily promote these two events for the years 2010 – 2012 in order to make it synonymous with USI

**10/ UO 7 NATIONAL CHARITY**

**Congress Recognises**

That each year USI chooses a National Charity which at the end of the year will receive any some of money raised by USI

**Congress Believes**

That there is huge potential to raise a very substantial amount of money for said Charity each year.

**Congress Mandates**

The Officer board, particularly the Deputy President to organise at least one large fundraising activity in the academic year, utilizing the large amount of students available from all across the country. The Deputy President will consult with all COs on this after the National Charity has been selected and will make a decision on when the event shall be held and what that event should be at the subsequent Campaigns Working Group.

**10/ UO 8 OFFICER BOARD TRAINING**

**Congress notes**

The value of training events such as UOS for CO Officers

**Congress Further Notes**

That a similar training does not take place for those who take up positions on USI Officerboard

**Congress Mandates**

The President to organise an in depth training specifically for Officerboard before UOS on such issues as structures of USI, time and resource management and office operations.

**10/ UO 9 TEAM BUILDING**

Congress mandates the immediate repealing and deletion from the Policy Manual of 07 / UO 31

**Congress Recognises**

The importance of having a strong Team Ethos on Officerboard in order to have a successful year and also the importance in developing trust among officers in order to work together successfully.

**Congress believes**

That the simplest way of achieving this is by having a team building event consisting of modules based around, but not limited to Teambuilding. And to also have a meeting on the Officerboard’s first day of Office to discuss the plan of the forthcoming year outlining specific campaign ideas and dates for these. Important Event Dates such as National Council schedule and other events such as possible dates for the Lobby of the Oireachtas, Activist Academy and Pink Training should be discussed and possible dates for these should be outlined.

**Congress Mandates**

The President to organise this event for the Officerboards first week in office.

**Congress Further Mandates**

The Officerboard to take part in a refocusing exercise in January consisting of a review of the first half of their term and lay out an updated plan for the remainder of their time in office.

**10/ UO 11 SOCIETY TRAINING PROPOSED**

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

Go n-eagraíonn Conradh na Gaeilge lá traenála do na hOifigigh Ghaeilge agus na Cumainn Ghaelacha i gcomhpháirt le Gael-eagraíochtaí eile.

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith**

An fás agus forbairt ar an lá traenála le cúpla bliain anuas agus buntáiste atá sa lá do Oifigigh Ghaeilge áitiúla

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil le h-aiféal**

Nach raibh AMLÉ i gcónaí páirteach i eagrú na traenála atá mar chuid thábhachtach de forbairt na teanga sna coláistí tríú leibhéal

**Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil**

Oifigeach na Gaeilge le Traenáil Ghaelach a eagrú i gcomhpháirt le Gael-eagraíochtaí eile Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 31 - - 31 –

**Congress Notes**

That currently Conradh na Gaeilge organise a training day for all Irish Language Officers and Irish Language Societies in conjunction with other Irish Language organisations.

**Congress Further Notes**

The growth and success of the training day in recent years and its benefit to local Irish Language Officers.

**Congress Regrets**

That USI has not always been involved with the organisation of this training which is a fundamental part in the development of the Irish Language in third level colleges.

**Congress Mandates**

The Irish Language Officer to organise Irish Language Training in conjunction with other Irish Language Organisations

**10/ UO 12 CAIRDE USI**

**Congress mandates**

The President and Deputy president to ensure that at least one Cairde USI social event is organised in the first semester of every year with the aim of:

 Engaging with the experience of past officers to develop the collective memory of USI

 Helping the current officers build a network of useful contacts

 Fundraising for the organization

**10/ UO 13 LOBBY OF THE OIREACHTAS**

**Congress mandates**

The immediate repealing and deletion from the Policy Manual of 08 / UO 22.

**Congress commends**

The success of the Lobby of the Oireachtas in past years.

**Congress mandates**

The Deputy President/Campaigns Officer to strive to organise two lobbies of the Oireachtas each year to give each local union an opportunity to meet and speak to their public representatives.

**Congress recommends**

That that the USI Lobbies of the Oireachtas take place in the run-up to a national General Election wherever possible, and in late Autumn to coincide with the pre-Budget submissions.

**10/ UO 14 Former Presidents Council**

**Congress applauds**

The organisation for fifty years of making a difference in students‟ lives. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 32 - - 32 –

**Congress believes**

That the fiftieth celebrations should be built upon and Cairde USI is a useful tool for the organisation in terms of institutional memory.

**Congress notes**

The large and diverse roll call of former presidents.

**Congress also notes**

That many of these presidents have offered advice, financial support, legal opinion, marketing expertise to our organisation at times when it was needed.

**Congress mandates**

The president to organise a council of former presidents who will meet informally at least twice a year to capatalise on the advice, services and goodwill of these former presidents to further the aims and objectives of USI.

**Congress further mandates**

The president to ensure that this council of presidents exists under the umbrella of „Cairde USI‟.

**10/ UO 15 FULL-TIME POST GRADUATE OFFICER**

**Congress notes**

The important role that a knowledge economy would play in strengthening Ireland‟s economic position and in providing opportunities for graduates.

**Congress welcomes**

The work undertaken by higher education institutions in promoting graduate study to current students, and their work in attracting international students to study here.

**Congress notes**

External commentary predicting the number of applicants to postgraduate courses to rise as a direct result of the economic recession, with employment opportunities at a low ebb and the increase in understanding that postgraduate qualifications greatly aid career prospects.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to investigate the necessity of creating a full-time postgraduate officer position based on these important developments in fourth-level education.

**10/ UO 16 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

**Congress Recognises**

The importance of a professional and easily accessed online presence for USI.

**Congress Realises**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 33 - - 33 -

That the current website and blogs for USI are quite fragmented and do not currently form a professional image for the organisation.

**Congress Recognises**

That many CO memberships have a high level of knowledge of online communication strategies.

**Congress Notes**

The advances in collaboration technology, including google groups, and tele-

conferencing that lessen the importance of face to face meetings.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President to form a working group on this issue, entitled “Cohesive Communication Strategy Working Group”, to be comprised of the president ex-officio, ordinary members of the organisation as nominated by their CO‟s, and external experts in the field, all to be approved at National Council, with a total membership of no more than 10 and no less than 3.

**Congress Further Mandates**

That this group be setup be the end of July 2010, with the group to present its final report to National Council within 18 months of its first meeting with progress reports to National Council every 6 months.

**Congress Further Mandates**

That this group be governed by their own terms of reference, and their remit to include, but not limited to, the search engine optimisation strategy, social networking, the current USI website and inter CO communications.

**10/ UO 17 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**Congress Notes:**

That change is a powerful force for good.

**Congress Mandates:**

The establishment of a Constitutional Review Board, membership of which will comprise of the President and Deputy President *ex officio,* three ordinary members from each of the four regions – to be nominated by COs, who will serve two year terms beginning July 2010 and ending July 2012, and ratified by their Area Councils and an Independent Chairperson, whose nomination will be ratified at National Council.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

That this group be advised by experts with experience in the construction of organisational constitutions, and shall seek advice from organisations with knowledge of students’ union constitutions e.g. AMSU.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

The Constitutional Review Board to undertake a full review of the USI Constitution, to have its first sitting by July 2010 and present the amended document to USI National Congress 2012 for voting.

**Congress Stresses:**

That the passing of this motion will not affect the ability of individual delegates to propose CAs.

**10/ UO 18 POLICY MANUAL REPORT**

**Congress notes**

The policy manual has many mandates which have not yet been fulfilled.

**Congress believes**

Officer Board must refer to the policy document on an ongoing basis throughout the year to ensure that the objectives outlined by their members at Congress are being actively pursued.

**Congress also notes**

Many incoming officers from around the country are not aware of the existence of the USI policy document and only become familiar with policies before congress.

**Congress Mandates**

The President to issue each CO with a hard copy of the policy document at UOS each year and the policy document should be explained at a UOS session.

**10/ UO 20 CENTRALISING NATIONAL COUNCIL**

**Congress notes**

That the cost in terms of money and time of attending USI meetings, and particularly National Councils, can be very significant for Students‟ Union officers.

**Congress believes**

That regular meetings between USI officers and Students‟ Union officers are essential to Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 35 - - 35 -

build trust between our organisations and to ensure students are united on issues of national importance.

**Congress mandates**

The President to examine the idea of holding all National Councils in one centralised location in order to cut down on travel time for Students‟ Union officers.

**10/ UO 22 IT DATABASE PROPOSED**

**Congress believes**

That good communications structures are essential for large federal organisations such as USI.

**Congress notes**

Information technology advances such as Google Documents has made taking advantage of IT easy and cheap.

**Congress therefore mandates**

Incoming members of Officer Board to, at the beginning of their term, create a list of policy documents and other such documents as they may deem fit which are in their possession and which may be of use to Sabbatical Officers in COs, and communicate this list to them as a matter of priority.

**Congress further mandates**

Members of Officer Board to update this list and continue to communicate it to CO Sabbatical Officers on a bi-monthly basis during their terms.

**10/ UO 23 Presidents’ Training Seminar**

**Congress notes**

The enormous benefits of a CO President who is able to provide team leadership and conflict resolution from the start of their term in office.

**Congress congratulates**

USI Officer Board on their efforts in providing and highlighting this issue at previous Presidents Working Groups. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 36 - - 36 –

**Congress mandates**

USI to offer to CO Presidents a full training program in Human Resource Management at UOS training conferences.

**10/ UO 24 NON- AFFILATED CO AT TRAINING EVENTS**

**Congress Believes**

That the benefits of USI are for its members and the services it provides such as pink training, activist academy and more importantly UOS.

**Congress Notes**

Currently non-affiliated colleges are allowed to attend such events and training seminars organised and facilitated by USI.

**Congress Further Notes**

It is affiliation fees which help maintain the organisation and which help to provide these services.

**Congress Does Not Believe**

That the fees charged for attending USI events such as UOS, reflects the true economic cost of hosting such events.

**Congress Therefore Mandates**

Officer board to take such steps as they deem necessary to ensure that only affiliated colleges attend USI training events and conferences except where the President of the non-affiliated student union has furnished the President of USI with a written statement stating the intention to hold a referendum to re-affiliate to USI. Once sought, the President of USI must obtain the consent of USI National Council to allow the non-affiliate to attend USI activities.

**Congress Further Mandates**

The President and Deputy President of USI to publicise the merits of affiliation to USI to incoming sabbatical officers in non-affiliated colleges.

**10/ UO 25 ANNUAL VISIT**

**Congress notes**

That the president of USI is strategically located in Dublin as it is the capital of the country.

**Congress further notes**

That residing in Dublin ensures the President of the USI is close to the organizations it petitions and lobbies on behalf of the students.

**Congress feels**

The president is a leader of a national organization and should be visible and known to all of its members inside and outside the Dublin region. This visibility would increase the effectiveness of the office of President and increase the knowledge about USI at ground level.

**Congress mandates**

That the president of USI makes visits to each CO during the year.

**10/ UO 27 UNION ORGANISATION PROPOSED**

**Congress Notes**

That USI and NUS UK work together on an ad hoc basis and that a semi-formal arrangement would be preferable.

**Congress Mandates**

The adoption of the following memorandum of understanding between USI and NUS UK.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING** Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 38 - - 38 -

Between the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom (NUS UK).

The USI and NUS UK recognise the need for inter-organisational communication and cooperation with a view to furthering both organisations‟ aims of promoting the interests of their members, building a strong national students‟ campaign and fostering strong local students‟ unions.

Due to the cultural similarities between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom and to the history of progressive cooperation between the USI and NUS UK, it is felt that the possibility of further collaboration could be of great benefit to both Unions.

**Historical Context**

In 1973, USI and NUS UK jointly established NUS/USI to promote student unity across the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland and is still seen as a hugely progressive and effective initiative.

Since then, informal systems for further cooperation and exchange of information and ideas have been arranged by officers of either Union on an ad hoc basis depending on the need.

**AIMS AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this memorandum is to formally recognise channels of communication and cooperation between USI and NUS regarding:

- Training events

- Conferences/Congress

- Policy development

- The European Students‟ Union

It is hoped that relevant officers would be mutually invited to significant training events and that officers would be able to share information and best practice and seek input in relation to the above.

In this way, the knowledge and experiences of both organisations can be mutually beneficial to both.

It is not expected that either organisation will adopt any policies of the other.

## 2009

**09 / UO 17 Increasing CO Participation**

**Congress notes**

The USI Participation Working Group investigated the participation of CO’s within the structures of USI.

**Congress recognises**

That for many officers USI represented creating links with officers in other unions and that the creation of such links was hugely beneficial as officers could brainstorm and problem solve together.

**Congress also recognises**

That the geographical location of some student unions creates a barrier to their participation within the democratic structures of USI.

**Congress is also aware**

That in order to ensure participation from student unions in Northern Ireland, USI Campaigns, particularly Welfare & Equality, must be more relevant to students in Northern Ireland.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to ensure a specific team bonding event, inclusive of all CO Officers and Officer Board, is organised to take place at UOS;

Area officers to organise area specific team bonding events before September of each year;

Officer Board to receive an induction training on NUSUSI before UOS takes place;

Officer Board to consult the Northern Area Officer on modules being organised at UOS, in particular modules related to Welfare & Equality, to ensure that UOS remains relevant to our members from Northern Ireland;

The Welfare & Equality Officer to consult NUSUSI when compiling materials for their respective campaigns;

The Deputy President to gather feedback from CO’s once per year on the barriers and incentives to participating in USI and to bring any recommendations coming from this feedback to Congress.

**09 / UO 20 COMMUNICATION SUCCESSES**

**Congress believes**

SU officers are the best placed to communicate the successes and strengths of USI to its members

**Congress notes**

That it can sometimes be difficult for SU officers to list off successes and on going work within USI for various reasons.

**Congress mandates**

The President to compile a brief list of achievements for distribution to all COs before the end of January in the second semester

**09 / UO 26 PROMOTING USI**

**Congress Notes**

The good work done by the Officer Board of Union of Students in Ireland in promoting student rights and views and in advancing the student movement

**Congress notes with concern**

That many ordinary members of Union of Students in Ireland are unaware of much of the work done by their national union and in many cases are unaware of whom their national elected representatives are

**Congress mandates**

The Officer Board to run a comprehensive USI awareness campaign for ordinary students detailing the structures, purpose and functions of USI and including information on the members of Officer Board

**Congress further mandates**

The Officer Board to produce a short monthly report which shall detail the current achievements, objectives and the month ahead in the Union of Students in Ireland to be provided to all Constituent Organisations for optional inclusion on their website or in their union publications

# Accounting and Finance

## 2010

**10/ AF 1** **USI MEMBERSHIP CARD PROPOSED BY EASTERN AREA OFFICER**

**Congress Notes**

The need for the Union of Students in Ireland to expand its stream of revenue. That the Union of Students in Ireland plays a great role in advocacy on behalf of its members, however in order to achieve a higher level of recognition it must look at additional ways of promoting the social and economic interests of its members.

**Congress Notes**

The lack of commercial activity on the part of the Union of Students in Ireland.

**Congress Believes**

That in working as both a union and a service provider USI and its day to day work will receive greater recognition. That USI‟s membership of over 200,000 students provides access to a huge market for potential commercial activity.

**Congress Notes**

Attempts by USI in recent years to either abolish the Student Travelcard or to tender for its licence.

**Congress Calls Upon**

USI to continue to tender for the licence for the travel card.

Failing that congress calls upon USI to set up its own discount card for students such a card could also act as a membership card.

**Congress Mandates**

 The President to set up a working group to investigate expanding commercial activity

 The President to tender for the Student Travel Card licence if possible

 The President to examine the possibility of establishing a USI discount card.

**10/ AF 2 AFFILIATION FEE**

**Congress notes**

Policy 07 / AF 2 USI Affiliation fee, which states:

**Congress notes**

For the Union of Students in Ireland to reach its full potential, Officers must be

supported by a full complement of support staff.

**Congress recognises**

That existing elected Officers would be better able to work on fulfilling policy if

the organisation had more administrative & support staff. Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 60 - - 60 –

**Congress mandates**

The President to propose to National Council to raise the Union of Students in

Ireland membership fee to €7 per full-time student and €3.50 per part-time

student.

**Congress further mandates**

The President to propose to Finance Committee to use this extra revenue to

employ a full time research executive and a communications / campaigns

executive.”

**Congress further notes**

That the economic climate is significantly different since this policy was adopted at National Congress in 2007.

**Congress regrets**

That that Live Register currently stands at 12.7 per cent, 100,000 graduates are unemployed and 60,000 people emigrated last year.

**Congress recognises**

That students and their families are under extreme financial pressure at the moment.

**Congress recognises**

That CO finances are also under considerable strain, and many of their commercial activities are facing difficulties. Cognizant of this;

**Congress repeals**

Policy 07 / AF 2 USI Affiliation Fee and in light of the above, mandates the President to liaise with the Finance Committee to investigate reducing the affiliation fee and report back to the first National Council of the 2010/2011

**10/ AF 3 ADDITIONAL SERVICES**

**Congress notes**

The breadth of the Organisation, spanning every corner of Ireland, encompassing over 20 COs.

**Congress recognises**

That the Organisation has immense power as a standing representative body, and has established itself as a formidable lobbying body within the political arena.

**Congress further notes**

that the Organisation has the ability to provide a number of additional services to its COs.

**Congress mandates**

Union of Students in Ireland Annual Congress 2010 Comhdhail Bhliaintuil Aontas na Mac Leinn in Eirinn 2010 - 61 - - 61 -

The President to conduct a feasibility study in conjunction with the Finance Committee and relevant staff, to assess the provision of additional services to COs. The results of this study must be presented no later than at the second National Council of the 2010/2011 academic year, and must include at least the following: Commercial services such as bulk-purchasing

Preferred suppliers of common services (e.g. printers, mobile phone providers, etc.)

Combined CO entertainments booking service.

# Emergency Motions

(These may not be reprioritised

## 2010

**EM1: THE NATIONAL MATHEMATICS SYMPOSIUM**

**Congress Notes:**

The appalling state of the teaching of maths in the Republic of Ireland, as noted in a report and at the National Mathematics Symposium on the 16th of March 2010, and that over half of maths teachers in the Republic of Ireland only have one year of third level maths.

**Congress Believes:**

That without proper focus on a vital skill such as maths graduates will be unable to compete internationally and domestically for jobs and opportunities.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Education Officer to lobby the new Minister of Education and Skills to ensure that adequate resources are put into the teaching of maths at second and third level.

**EM2: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

**Congress notes:**

The recent reshuffle of Government ministers and the reorganisation of the Departments of state.

**Congress notes with alarm and concern:**

The breaking up of the Department of Education and Science resulting in the move of responsibility for research and educational innovation to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to release a statement opposing this change and asking that it be reversed.

**EM3: NEW FUNDING MODEL**

**Congress notes:**

That three of the primary source of revenue for 3rd level institutes in the Republic of Ireland are: undergraduate numbers, research funding and international students.

**Congress further notes:**

That none of these sources bear a direct relation to the quality of teaching and learning at undergraduate or post-graduate level.

**Congress notes with alarm:**

That because of this situation institutions are actually encouraged to treat taught students as revenue generators to subsidise research.

**Congress also notes:**

This situation is resulting in a decline in the quality of teaching and learning in supports and facilities for taught students.

**Congress also further notes:**

That this competition for funding will worsen significantly given the recent division of funding responsibilities in the cabinet reshuffle.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Education Officer to lobby to bring in a new funding model which will be cognisant of the quality of teaching and learning as a factor in awarding funds to third level institutions.

**EM 4: STUDENT HOUSING**

**Congress Notes:**

The motion passed at the 2010 Sinn Fein **Ard** Fheis which calls for compulsory university regulated accommodation for first year students living away from home.

**Congress further notes:**

That the complete text of Sinn Féin Ard Fheis motion 149 (Education) reads:

*This Ard Fheis:*

* *Recognises the contribution of universities to the educational and academic life of the country.*
* *Acknowledges the negative experiences of communities such as the Holyland in South Belfast.*
* *is mindful of the potential for communities in North Belfast to suffer the same erosion with the relocation of the University of Ulster.*

*The Ard Fheis therefore adopts a framework policy for the protection of residential communities which neighbour universities, which contains the following components:*

* ***Provision of sufficient university accommodation to meet demand, with compulsory university regulated accommodation for first year students living away from home****.*
* *Compulsory landlord registration.*
* *Tighter control and regulation of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).*

**Conference recognises:**

That as Sinn Féin are members of the government in the North and have the potential to be part of a future coalition in the south that this posses an immediate threat to students across the island of Ireland.

**Congress Mandates:**

The USI President and Officerboard to actively oppose this policy by demonstrating that it is unfair, unworkable and unreasonably restricts a young person freedom of choice.

**Congress further Mandates:**

The USI President and Officerboard to lobby Sinn Féin elected representatives, both North and South, to secure a reversal this policy.

**EM5: DOMESTIC & SEXUAL ABUSE**

**Congress notes:**

That many students are, have been, and will become victims of sexual abuse in Ireland.

**Congress mandates:**

The Equality Officer to actively lobby for the increased awareness of the above issue, and of the supports available as well as the legal options for victims of abuse.