

# MATURE STUDENTS' SEMINAR

SEIMINEÁR NA  
MAC LÉINN AIBÍ  
2019

 @TheUSI

 @USI.ie

 USI.ie



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



## **Union of Students in Ireland**

Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

# **WHAT IS USI?**

The Union of Students in Ireland is the national representative body of over 374,000 students.

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 374,000 students across the island of Ireland, North and South.

Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience.

Some of the main activities that we do as an organisation are:

- Educating and training students and Students' Union officers.
- Fight and protest for the rights of students to a decent standard of living, including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland through lobbying the government.
- We defend and promote all democratic and human rights.
- We represent the interests of the students of Ireland at international level.



**KINDLY SPONSORED BY THE HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY (HEA)**

**HEA** | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

# FÁILTE

*A chara,*



You're most welcome to the Mature Students' Seminar 2019! This is an annual event that started in 2016 in Waterford, and has grown from strength to strength every year.

This is an important space for you to come together and to share experiences with other mature students from across the country. The mature student experience can be unique, and we can always push our institutions to do better and to provide adequate supports across our campuses. We can also strive as local and national Unions to make our events more accessible and inclusive, as well as having specific policies that relate to mature students, while making sure we have mature student representation in our structures.

We have a range of experts lined up throughout the day to give talks on various areas of college life, as well as a great panel of mature students here to share their stories.

We would like to thank the Access Section of the HEA in particular for providing sponsorship for the seminar, and for their continuing commitment to widening access to education. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Maynooth Students' Union (MSU) for their assistance with the organisation of this event. And lastly, we would like to thank Mature Students Ireland (MSI) for their guidance and support in the lead up to the event.

We hope you get a chance to network, learn from others, share your own stories, and come away from the day with an increased drive to improve the holistic college experience for mature students across the country.

Is mise le meas,



**Darren Malone**

Vice President for the Southern Region,  
Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

✉ [south@usi.ie](mailto:south@usi.ie)



**Megan Reilly,**

Vice President for Equality and Citizenship,  
Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

✉ [equality@usi.ie](mailto:equality@usi.ie)

# FÁILTE



*Hi All,*

My name is Ciarán Watts and I am the Vice President Welfare and Equality here in Maynooth Students' Union and it is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to our campus for the Mature Students' Seminar.

Coming back to education as a Mature Student can be daunting, and often the Mature Student perspective can be missed, which is why I think events such as these are so important in facilitating Mature Students to get the most out of their college experience!

This seminar is a great opportunity for you to develop your skills and network with other mature students from other colleges all around the country. We in the Students' Union love to see students getting involved in every aspect of college life, be that getting involved in the representative structures of your Students' Union, becoming involved in your Ents or Welfare Crew or by joining the Clubs and Societies in your college.

I hope that you will enjoy the workshops today, and make use of your experience to be the leaders in ensuring that the Mature Student voice is heard on college campuses across the country!

**Ciarán**

Vice President for Welfare and Equality,  
Maynooth Students' Union



# SCHEDULE



#MATURE19

## TIME

## CONTENT

09:30am

Registration

10:00am

Welcome

10:20am

Neil McDermott  
Higher Education Authority (HEA)

10:35am

Mireia Guardino Ferran  
Keynote Speaker

11am

Kate Acheson  
Leadership and Communications

11:45am

Tea break

12:00pm

Cat O'Driscoll  
Time Management and Self Care

13:00pm

Networking Lunch

14:00pm

Gerard Maguire  
Academic Support

14:00pm

Sara Dowling  
Postgraduate Discussion

15:00pm

Trish Bourke  
Mature Students Ireland (MSI)

15:15pm

Panel discussion

16:00pm

Breakaway groups (Interactive Session)

16:45pm

Close and Goodbyes



## Keynote speaker: Mireia Guardino Ferran



Mireia a Barcelona native was 37 years of age when due to her involvement as a community volunteer she enrolled in a Community Development & Leadership diploma through the Kildare LEADER program at Maynooth University. She wanted to continue in community development, this time expanding her knowledge of the earth sciences but she realized she needed to further her studies. After finishing the diploma above and with her increase in academics confidence she decided to enrol into a BA in Int. Development & Geography at Maynooth University. In her first year, she co-founded the MU EnviroSoc, put herself forward as the Student's Union Green Campus Senator, started helping the Maynooth Green Campus Group and had the chance to assist in a research project with Professor Mary Gilmartin from the Geography Department.

Nevertheless, Mireia was struggling to present assignments and her exam results were bringing down her grades. On her second year, Mireia's struggle with academics finally was root caused as dyslexia. It was an immense relief in the sense that she then could avail of help from the Access Office. It also helped her realise that her academic struggles were 'real' and that she was able to achieve anything with the right supports. Mireia sees herself as a leader that likes to 'get things done', this was very helpful when it came to group work and encouraging younger students to speak up. Her eagerness for helping people has grown stronger and her passion for protecting mother earth has brought her to where she is today as the Maynooth Green Campus Coordinator. Although it is at present a part-time position, she is hopeful that her career would be in this area and it is thanks to her going back to university as a mature student that she has come full circle.

## Introduction from the HEA: Neil McDermott



Neil McDermott is Senior Manager in the HEA's Access Policy section and has been in this role since October 2018. He has worked in other roles in the HEA since 2005.

The HEA's Access Policy section is responsible for implementation of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education and its vision that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population. The HEA will also shortly commission a study on mature student participation in higher education.

## Leadership and Communications: Kate Acheson



Kate Acheson is a Freelance Consultant and has been working as a project manager, event planner, campaign co-ordinator, facilitator and consultant for over 10 years. Kate has worked within the corporate, political and charity sectors with US Multinationals, Government Departments and SMEs at local, regional, national and international level.

Kate is the Vice President of the Ireland United States Alumni Association. Kate is a former USI Deputy President and Vice President for the Southern Region. She also served two terms as the IT Carlow Students' Union President.



## Time Management and Self Care: Cat O'Driscoll



A native of Cork City, Cat became active in the student movement while studying Microbiology in UCC. In 2011/2012 she was VP Education in UCCSU and then went on to serve two terms as USI VP Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance. Cat finished up her time as a student activist with a term on the Executive Committee of the European Students' Union. Cat coordinated the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) from establishment in March 2016 until May 2019.

In June 2019 Cat joined the Crisis Text Line Ireland team as Head of Training & Quality. Funded by the HSE this service launches soon providing support to people in crisis, over text, helping them get from a hot moment to a cool calm. Cat is a member of the Social Democrats National Executive.

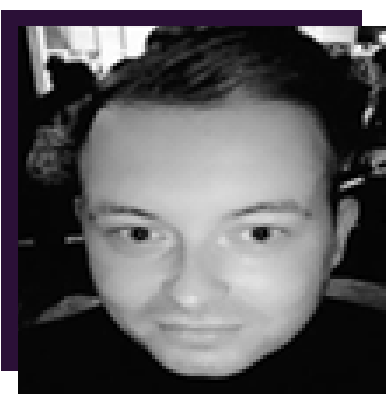
## Postgraduate Discussion: Sara Dowling



Sara is the USI Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs. She is based in Limerick, where she is an independent curator, and co-founder of PeakShow Exhibitions Project 2018-2019. She is a proud former graduate from Limerick School of Art & Design, and former President of LSAD Student Union. She has since completed an MA in Curatorial Practice, in the 2 year role of Curatorial Scholar with EVA International, Ireland's Biennial of Contemporary Art.

She has also worked for Athena Standards Residencies, Athens and as the Emerging Curator with the Creative Europe MagicCarpets Project, led by Kaunas Biennial Lithuania. As VPPGA, Sara leads the National Postgraduate Working Group.

## Academic Support: Gerard Maguire



Before undertaking studies with the law department, Gerard graduated from Maynooth University with a degree in Anthropology and Spanish. He became a student of the law department in 2015 entering the LLM International Justice programme prior to commencing his Ph.D. in 2016. Gerard's research interests are in the areas of International Humanitarian Law, Public International Law, International Human Rights Law and Genocide Studies. His current research focuses primarily on the rights of indigenous peoples.

While being an active researcher, Gerard has taught extensively on both undergraduate and postgraduate law programmes at Maynooth University, as well as being a tutor with the university access office and has taught on the essay writing course for mature students.

Most recently Gerard has begun a role within the Office of the Dean of Teaching and Learning at Maynooth University as a course instructor for the University's Critical Skills programme. He is a recipient of the 2019 International Communities Research Fellowship and as of October 2019 is now a member of the management committee for an EU COST action committee on Global Atrocity Justice Constellations

# SPEAKERS



# #MATURE19

## Mature Students Ireland: Trish Bourke



Trish Bourke is the Mature Students Officer for NUI Galway for 10 years. Had a varied career before joining NUI Galway such as teaching, IT training and running a small business. University opens many doors and some that you never expect!

Graduated from NUI Galway as a mature student in 2000 with a BA Honours degree in English and Irish. Recently completed a two year Diploma in Spanish and currently studying for a Masters in Professional Leadership and Development with NUI Galway.

Member of Mature Students Ireland and link person to USI. Manager of two Diploma in Foundation Studies Programmes. (Access Courses). Promotes and Recruits mature students to full-time degrees through regional and local events. Support person for all undergraduate Mature and Access Students at NUI Galway.

## STUDENT PANEL

Amanda Bowes

Jimi Donohoe

Natalie O'Regan

Maynooth University.

Trinity College Dublin.

University College Cork.

PAST MATURE STUDENT SEMINARS





# NOTES



# NOTES



# GET NETWORKING

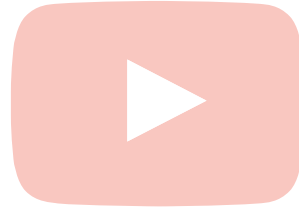


#MATURE19

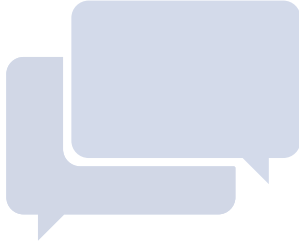


NAME

CONTACT



LinkedIn





@TheUSI



@USI.ie



USI.ie



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

The Union of Students in Ireland is the national representative body for the 374,000 students in third level education on the Island of Ireland. We are a membership organisation – our members are our affiliated Students' Unions around Ireland, North and South.

Find out more about what we do at [usi.ie](https://usi.ie)