USI Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy 2016-2019



# About USI

 "The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 354,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience."

# Objectives of the Union of Students in Ireland1. 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 realize their full potential. 2. An education and training system which truly serves the interest of the people of Ireland. 3. The right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland. 4. The defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights. 5. The provision of student services for the benefit of the membership on the principle that control of student service should lie with the membership. 6. To represent the interests of the students if Ireland at international level.

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### USI Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy

This strategy aims to provide a framework for good practice for the support of students, the promotion of well-being and prevention of gambling dependency difficulties, to be implemented by both the Union of Students in Ireland and local Students’ Unions.

The USI Vice President for Welfare must follow the USI Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the beginning of each year.

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# Collaborations and Partnerships

# *USI acknowledges the importance of collaborations and partnerships when it comes to organisations working to reduce gambling related harm. USI recognises the need to work with others in the sector to further our aims and ambitions.*Objectives:

# To build support for the work that USI does in the area of gambling harm reduction.

# To develop new initiatives through collaborations with students’ unions and external organisations.

# Actions:

# Seek support from external organisations to strengthen campaigns on the issue.

# Collaborate and consult with students’ unions, student groups and external organisations to support and develop new campaigns, resources, research and training.

# Support unions in establishing local links to support their work in the area of gambling harm reduction.

**Suggested Action For Students’ Unions:**

* To aim, where possible, to establish links with local organisations and resources and promote local supports to students in campus community.
* To support the development of local coalitions and committees that aim to promote gambling dependency supports, resources and preventions.

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# Training and Supports - Students’ Unions*USI encourages students’ unions to run campaigns and/or distribute information to students on gambling and associated harm so that students can make informed decisions and take necessary precautions.*

**Objectives:**

* For Students’ Unions to be equipped with the skills and information to form campaigns to promote support services and gambling awareness.
* To equip officers to support students at risk of developing gambling dependency.

**Action:**

* Provide a training module for relevant officers during the summer term on the issue of gambling awareness and harm reduction.
* Support officers in establishing links with local, community based support services.
* Provide Students’ Unions with resources and training opportunities where possible both locally and nationally.
* Students’ Unions to be equipped with the skills and information necessary to develop and review campus policy and to represent students on management committees.

Training shall not be undertaken by an agency with a vested interest in, or one that is funded by, the gambling industry.

**Suggested action for MOs:**

* Where possible, attend training events promoted or organised by USI.
* Seek, where possible, representation on campus decision making boards/committees in relation to health promotion.
* Aim to develop and review new or existing campus health policies.

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**Prevention**
*USI notes the addictive nature of gambling and how easily accessible gambling can be with development of apps such as Paddy Power and the close proximity of betting outlets to third level campuses.*
 **Objectives:**

* To raise awareness amongst the student population on harm prevention and gambling cessation and to encourage Students’ Unions to run local campaigns on the issue.
* To reduce the incidence of problem gambling by aiming to discourage students from developing problems with their gambling and reduce the prevalence of problem gambling by making available assistance to students who may have a problem with their gambling.

**Action:**

* Continue to work with national bodies to source accurate information that is relevant to the student body.
* Co-ordinate a national campaign to promote awareness of gambling harm and promote help seeking.
* Support unions in promoting and developing resources to inform their students of the harms associated with gambling.
* Support unions in rolling out training modules for gambling harm reduction for student leaders.
* Liaise with external organisation to report on online promotion and use of online gambling facilities by students.

**Suggested Actions for Students’ Unions:**

* Where possible aim to promote campaigns and initiatives that reduces stigma and encourages an open attitude towards the treatment of gambling dependency.
* Source accurate information that is relevant to the student body in relation to gambling.
* Promote resources to inform students of the harms associated with gambling and support relevant national campaigns and initiatives that aim to do the same.
* Facilitate, with support from USI, training modules for gambling harm reduction for student leaders.
* Aim to introduce advertising restrictions for on campus promotion to reduce the level of student-targeted promotions from the gambling industry.

**Screening, Treatment and Support Services**

# *The availability and quality of appropriate campus and community support services is vital in the promotion of student well-being. The promotion of these services is equally important to inform students of their availability and encourage them to seek help when needed.*

**Objective:**

* To improve access to good quality support services for students.
* Promote help seeking to students in need.

**Action:**

* Liaise with the HSE and other relevant bodies to map support services available to campuses across Ireland.
* Support unions in creating a referral path for students affected by gambling and at risk of developing an addiction.
* Provide training, where available, for relevant officers in the area of gambling harm reduction.
* Lobby for the funding of support services for gambling dependency.
* Lobby for the regulation of student targeted gambling promotions on campus.

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Establish a referral pathway for students affected by gambling and at risk of developing addiction.

# Students’ Union Officers should aim to partake, where possible, in lobbying opportunities with support from regional officers locally and the VP Welfare on a national basis.

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# Research, Monitoring and Evaluation*It is vital for USI to review progress under the Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy on an annual basis. By providing basic annual progress reports on the action points outlined in the strategy, progress and effect can be tracked and with the provision of annual reviews, updates or changes can be suggested if deemed necessary.* Objectives:

* To monitor the impact of USI campaigns to reduce gambling dependency among students.
* To evaluate and review each campaign yearly and to update the strategy accordingly.
* To continue to collaborate and partner with organisations to collect research and data to guide USI’s work in gambling harm reduction.

**Actions:**

* Map progress of the strategy and produce a yearly progress update document.
* To review all campaigns and evaluate impact with support from external expert groups.

**Suggested Action For MOs:**

* Where possible, review local campaigns on campus level to ensure messaging is effective, appropriate and relevant to students.

**Previous Mandates:**

* The Vice President for Welfare to work with the relevant organisations to develop a campaign to inform students of the effects of gambling and recognising an addiction.

**Reporting and Progress**
To ensure transparency, accountability and ongoing priority is placed on the health and wellness of students in Ireland clear and consistent communication on the progress of the implementation of the USI Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy and its initiatives is vital. The strategy’s progress will be documented in USI’s annual report, along with highlighting individual campus initiatives as they are launched throughout the year.

The strategic objectives for Gambling Harm Reduction in 3rd level between now and July 2019 are set out in this strategy and reflect the ambition and intent of the Union of Students in Ireland to deliver on its mandate for its members.

*In preparation, a range of significant / strategic risks facing the strategy’s implementation were identified.*

* Budgetary and Insufficient or inadequate budgets to meet campaign delivery costs.
* USI having to discontinue work and downsize campaigns/Officer resources
* Failure to achieve collaborations on the action points set in the strategy. For the strategy to be effective USI will need to foster support from external organisations and establish links with institutions and external stakeholders.
* Failure to ensure that the strategic and operational policies of the USI are properly developed and implemented, and that targets are met.

**Risk Mitigation:**

The Union of Students in Ireland will, over the life of this Strategic Plan, evaluate the above risks and will ensure that all actions and initiatives undertaken manage these challenges pro-actively, with actions being identified and implemented without delay, so that our mandate can be pursued and effectively delivered for our members.