USI Sexual Health Strategy 2016-2019

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# 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 Ireland 1. 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 Sexual Health Strategy

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

“The World Health Organization describes sexual health as “a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence”. WHO.

USI aims to promote positive sexual health and wellbeing and fight for access to sexual health information, education and services for students.   
  
The USI Vice President for Welfare, with support from the Vp Equality and Citizenship and Regional Officers, must follow the USI Sexual Health Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the beginning of each year.

# Collaborations and Partnerships

*USI acknowledges the importance of collaborations and partnerships when it comes to sexual health organisations. USI recognises the need to work with others in the sexual health sector to further our aims and ambitions.*  
 **Objectives:**

* To build support for the work that USI does in the area of sexual health and consent.
* To develop new initiatives through collaborations with students’ unions and external organisations.
* To build a coalition for effective lobbying for sexual health supports and legislative change.

# 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.
* Consult with external expert groups to review STI home testing kits effectiveness and implications of promoting home testing.
* Sustain membership to committees, such as Sexual Health Advisory Group and National Sexual Health Communications Working Group under the HSE etc.
* Sustain working relationship with the DRCC, Rape Crisis Network and Smart Consent.

**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 sexual health and consent supports and resources.

# Training and Supports - Students’ Unions

# *USI encourages students’ unions to run campaigns and/or distribute information to students on sexual health and guidance as well as consent so that students can make informed decisions and take necessary precautions.*

**Objectives:**

* To equip Students’ Unions with the skills and information needed to form campaigns to promote sexual health and consent awareness.
* For Students’ Union to be equipped with the information needed to ensure campaigns are gender and LGBTQ inclusive.
* To equip officers in their work in relation to sexual health promotion and consent.
* For Students’ Union Officers to be equipped to support fellow students who have experienced sexual harassment or assault.

**Action:**

* Provide training for relevant officers during the summer term in sexual health and consent promotion.
* Liaise with NUS-USI to establish training that is suitable to member organisations in Northern Ireland.
* Liaise with the VP Equality and Citizenship to ensure all campaigns are gender and LGBTQ inclusive.
* Support officers in establishing links with local, community based support services.
* Organise relevant training for officers in relation to consent, such as disclosure training etc.
* Support unions in establishing local links to support their work in promoting consent and sexual health.
* Students’ Unions to be equipped with the skills and information necessary to develop and review campus policy and to represent students on management committees.

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Where possible, attend training events promoted or organised by USI.
* Utilise appropriate resources and supports provided through USI or locally by relevant organisations and support services.
* Aim to establish local links with community based services and identify a referral path for students in need.
* Seek, where possible, representation on campus decision making boards/committees in relation to sexual health promotion and consent.
* Aim to develop and review new or existing campus and student union led sexual health and consent policies.
* Aim to develop and review SU sexual health and consent campaigns and produce a yearly report.

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# Prevention

*High quality sexual health education promotes positive mental and physical wellbeing. Education and access to information is important throughout life, particularly for ‘at risk’ and vulnerable groups. (Leo Varadkar, Minister for Health, National Sexual Health Strategy 2015.).*  
  
**Objectives:**

* Reduce the rates of new Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and HIV among students.
* Increase sexual health and relationships literacy.
* Develop a culture to support sexual health and wellbeing.
* Promote an environment of openness among students to reduce the  
  negative impact of stigma relating to sexual health and wellbeing.
* To aim to co-ordinate sexula health campaigns, where possible, in semester one.

**Action:**

* Continue to work with national bodies on the issue of sexual assault and harassment.
* Co-ordinate a national sexual health and guidance campaigns to promote awareness and stigma reduction and include relevant messaging on consent.
* Include relevant information on different forms of contraception on SHAG.USI.ie and in campaigns and equip officers to include information in local campaigns.
* Promote the message of consent at USI’s Annual Congress.
* Actively lobby and campaign for mandatory consent classes or workshops to be delivered to every single class within the third level education system in their first semester of college.
* Promote STI screening services and awareness of getting tested.
* Promote the use of condoms as contraception among students and support the “Just Carry One” campaign.
* Promote the #AskConsent campaign during national sexual health campaigns.
* Include information on emergency contraceptive on SHAG.USI.ie and in national campaigns.
* Include information on EC as part of officer training in sexual health where necessary.

**Suggested Action for MOs:**

* Source accurate information that is relevant to the student body in relation to sexual health and consent.
* Facilitate, with support from USI, training modules identified for sexual health promotion and consent for student leaders.
* Where possible aim to promote campaigns and initiatives that reduces stigma and encourages an open attitude towards the treatment of sexual health and consent issues
* Include information on different forms of contraception in local campaigns, with support from USI.
* Liaise with services and local clinics to promote STI checks to students.
* Lobby for mandatory consent classes or workshops to be delivered to every single class within the third level education system.

**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:**

* Improve access to good quality sexual health services for students.
* Promote sexual health supports to students in need.

**Actions:**

* Assess, develop and implement guidance on STI and HIV testing for students.
* Promote services such as home testing to ensure more students get tested.
* Include stigma reduction material, in relation to sexual health in national campaigns.
* Lobby for funding to expand campaigns in sexual health promotion and consent.
* Lobby for investment into support services in relation to sexual health and consent, especially campus based services.
* Engage with other groups who are campaigning for maximum pricing for emergency contraception, including the Real Productive Health campaign, with the aim of setting a national maximum price for emergency contraception.
* Review the branding and marketing of SHAG week and consult with members to approve appropriate title and marketing.

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Establish a referral pathway for students in need of sexual health supports.
* 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 Sexual Health 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 promote sexual health awareness 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 sexual health promotion.

**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 Welfare to endeavour to hold Sexual Health Awareness week in the first semester.
* The VP Welfare to engage with other groups who are campaigning for maximum pricing for emergency contraception, including the Real Productive Health campaign, with the aim of setting a national maximum price for emergency contraception.
* The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate a campaign focused on sexual health in first semester, focusing on engaging first year students to promote positive attitudes towards sex in addition to SHAG Week each February.
* To develop an all-inclusive web site which will contain relevant information about sexual health that can be used in conjunction with sexual health campaigns.
* 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.
* To continue to work with relevant organisations to ensure that the mandate from 09/WEL 1 is fulfilled.
* The USI Welfare Officer to work to make EC affordable and accessible to all who need it.
* To run an information campaign about the Morning After Pill and to make it an integral part in future S.H.A.G campaigns.
* 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.
* The USI Welfare Officer to co-ordinate with relevant groups to provide more comprehensive information on the different forms of EC.
* To only provide information from three choice agencies.

**Reporting and Progress**  
To ensure transparency, accountability and ongoing priority is placed on the sexual health and wellness of students in Ireland clear and consistent communication on the progress of the implementation of the USI Sexual Health 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 Sexual Health 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.