



BUDGET 2018



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

INTRODUCTION

Education is a public good and should be treated as such. Properly funded third-level education is the foundation of job creation, social equality, and a thriving economy.

Meaningful investment in higher education is necessary if we are to meet a myriad of state objectives, such as having a highly skilled workforce which will subsequently attract foreign direct investment, or to be a country which in world-renowned for research and innovation.

The third-level sector has struggled to perform during many years of austerity. USI believes that the sector should be praised for its efforts to deliver a quality education during a sustained period of under-investment and uncertainty. However, what is necessary as a response to crisis is not sustainable as a long-term model. It's time to match talk of economic recovery with strategic investment in this essential public service.

As you will no doubt be aware, a key concern of hundreds of thousands of students and their families is the ever-rising cost of third-level education. Dramatic increases in accommodation costs, a persistent shortage in appropriate part-time work, and the burden of €3,000 fees contribute to a significant annual cost of around €11,000 to attend third-level. Against a backdrop of drastically reduced family incomes, this arrangement is not sustainable. Further, there has been no increase in the sufficiency of core student supports while these costs have risen. Students and families are actively and demonstrably struggling to make ends meet.

Last year, a number of options were put on the table to tackle the higher education funding crisis. Now is the time to act. We need an ambitious government who is determined to give education the priority it deserves after years of savage

cuts and underinvestment. Higher education is under threat, not only due to the current insufficient levels of funding, but also because of the spiralling costs incurred by a students and their family. No person who wishes to pursue an education should be locked out due to either financial or societal barriers. We must strive for a higher education system that is valued by both government and society, and live up to our reputation of being an island of scholars.

In this document we outline a number of key areas in higher education we see as being crucial for investment in. The quality and accessibility of higher education is a key concern for many, and without proactive measures, we fear we will be faced with an underperforming, two-tiered higher education sector.

We encourage you to read this document and to take on board our recommendations. Over the coming weeks representative from students' unions will be reaching out to meet with you on behalf students who are in your constituency, and we ask you to meet with them and to hear what they have to say.

With pride,



Annie Hoey

Annie Hoey
President 2016/2017
Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

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CORE ASKS

Proposal: For the Government to reduce the Student Contribution Charge by a minimum of €250 and invest €1.26bn into higher education over the next decade.

Costing: €17.5m per €250 reduction per annum

Proposal: For the Government to restore grant for student teachers' attendance at mandatory Gaeltacht courses

Costing: €1m

Proposal: For the Government to overturn the decision in Budget 2014 to impose the new pro-rata Student Contribution and reinstate the State contribution to fund apprenticeship fees.

Costing: €3m to remove apprenticeship college fees annually

Proposal: For the Government to commit to part-time and further education students receiving the same supports that would be available to full-time students in similar circumstances and make a hardship fund available for students who are studying part-time and in further education

Costing: €5m and €2.5m

Proposal: For the Government to commit to increasing the threshold and allocation given through the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant scheme.

Costing: €12.3m

Proposal: For the Government to reinstate the 2011 Adjacency Rates

Costing: €27 million

Proposal: For the Government to reinstate Postgraduate Grants

Costing: €53 million

Proposal: For the Government to begin phased restoration to 2012 rates of SAF to reflect the real costs attached to participation in Higher Level Education in Ireland.

Costing: €1m

Proposal: For the Government to ring-fence funding of €37.5m annually and to put emphasis on local 24/7 crisis intervention services.

Costing: €37.5m

Proposal: For the Government to invest in third-level mental health counselling

Costing: €3m ring-fenced for student counselling and supports per annum

Proposal: For the Government to set the rate for all people under the age 26 to currently on reduced Jobseekers rates should have their payments set at the minimum adult rate of €188 per week either immediately or over time

Costing: €24m or €149m

THIRD-LEVEL FUNDING AND FEES

Subject:**Publicly Funded Higher Education For All****Proposal:**

For the Government to reduce the Student Contribution Charge by a minimum of €250 and invest €1.26bn into higher education over the next decade.

Rationale:

Budget 2018 can reduce the financial burden on families until the deliberation of the Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills has concluded. The Student Contribution Charge jumped from €1500 to €2000 in Budget 2011 and continued to increase in increments of €250 until it reached €3000 in 2015. A decrease in fee level would come at a relatively small cost to the state and alleviate pressure on the payment of fees that have doubled over a period of six years. The Student Contribution Charge is abnormally high by European standards, and second only to the United Kingdom within in the EU.

Public benefits include the additional income tax as a result of higher earnings, additional social security contributions and low reliance on social welfare; and lower social transfer expenditure. Many supportive public representatives have expressed a hesitation that the state cannot afford an immediate investment of €1.26bn, which has been identified by the 'Investing In National Ambition' as the amount of additional public funding required to run a high-quality higher education sector. USI emphasises that the investment is required over a period of 14 years as the charge is removed.

The DIT Campus Life Cost of Living Guide (2015) estimates the cost of living while studying at third-level at €11,000 per annum. The sum is made up of many different costs, of which the Student Contribution Charge is the second largest after rent. The only cost of attending third-level that can be directly addressed in the budget is this charge.

Access to higher education, if it is to deliver the maximum public utility and return on investment for the whole society, should be broad based and without distinction according to socio-economic background. Access should not simply be about getting more people into higher education, but about creating pathways for the most people to the best form and level of education for them, their communities and the society. Prospective students from lower-income groups appear to be more debt-averse. These groups are more likely to be uncertain about the risks and returns on educational investment and more likely to reject the accrual of significant debts such as are envisaged in any post-pay system for education. Debt aversion is a class issue and a deterrent to prospective students, even outweighing aspiration, career-work objectives, encouragement and other social factors.

Student debt has proven to be a deterrent to lenders in other jurisdictions where student loans have been introduced. Additionally, repayment of student loans restricts the ability of a graduate to save for deposits. This has significant impacts on the ability of future graduates to secure mortgages, car loans or own their own homes. A reduced cost of third-level will have positive consequences for student retention, participation, and mental health, as well as raising standards of living and reducing over-dependence on part-time employment. USI proposes that the government further subsidise higher education institutions by a minimum of €17.5m in order to deliver a reduction in the Student Contribution Charge of at least €250.

One method to fund this is to increase percentage of tax revenue as a per cent of GDP (currently at 30% to the OECD average of 34% through progressive taxation measures. This can be in the form of spending, income or revenue. If people can graduate debt free, they will immediately begin to save and spend more while contributing to the labour market. Evidence shows that those 40 years old or younger households with student debt have far less wealth than those without student debt.

To add, USI are asking that the Government increase funding for Higher Education Institute's running multiple campuses. The HEA review revealed high costs associated with the delivery of education in these smaller campuses and revealed campus deficits of €1.3mn for Killybegs (run by LYIT); €2mn at Castlebar and €700,000 at Letterfrack (run by GMIT); and €1mn at the National Maritime College (run by CIT). These deficits make a major contribution to the overall deficit position of these institutes. USI ask that the increase in funding be allocated to protect these campuses.

Costing: €17.5m per €250 reduction per annum

Responsibility: Department of Education

Subject: **Gaeltacht Placement Fees**

Proposal: For the Government to restore grants for student teachers' attendance at mandatory Gaeltacht courses.

Rationale: Students starting their programme of initial primary teacher education since the 2012/13 academic year have been required to self-fund fees relating to three weeks of mandatory Gaeltacht placement. These costs had previously been covered by a €637 state grant for the three-week placements. With roughly 1350 participants, the overall cost of the grant was in the region of €860,000 per annum.

In May 2012, a Gaeltacht Placement Working Group report to the Teaching Council warned that the withdrawal of government funding for student teacher placement was "a matter of serious concern and may deter persons from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds from enrolling on programmes of initial teacher education" (Report of the Gaeltacht Placement Working Group to the Teaching Council, p. 3). In September 2014 the Minister for Education acknowledged "that the funding of the Gaeltacht Placement is a significant cost to students and their families" (Written Answers, 25 September 2014) and estimated the cost of restoring the grant for the extended four-week placement at €1 million.

Students engaged in programmes of initial teacher education have between 18 and 30 contact hours per week, with additional responsibilities in mandatory placement periods and lesson plan preparation. The very nature of the programmes restricts access to consistent employment. Before Gaeltacht placement costs, students face annual costs of attending college of up to €11,000. (DIT Campus Life, 2016). A previous Minister for Education and Skills (Written Answers, 1 July 2014) had indicated that support is available to these students through Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) but is only available to students who already receive maintenance payments through SUSI. USI proposes the reinstatement of the state grant to cover all four weeks of mandatory placement for students and supports submissions made by the INTO on this matter.

Costing: €1m

Responsibility: Department of Education and Skills

Subject: **Apprenticeship Fees**

Proposal: For the Government to overturn the decision in Budget 2014 to impose the new pro-rata Student Contribution and reinstate the State contribution to remove apprenticeship fees.

Rationale: The decision taken in Budget 2014 to impose a new pro-rata Student Contribution fee and for SOLAS to cease making payment to the Institutes of Technology of 70% of the fee is a burden on student apprentices. The decision should be reversed in order to foster the growth of apprenticeships and reach targets set out by the Department of Education and Skills (Priority Questions, 19 May 2016). Institutes of Technology levied the student contribution in respect of apprentices since 2004, with FÁS and SOLAS paying up to 70% of the contribution and apprentices paying the remainder (Dáil Éireann Written Answers Nos. 134-145, 25 May 2016) before the introduction of the new pro-rata Student Contribution fee of €1,000 per annum.

The Programme for Government (p. 47) states that in partnership with the Apprenticeship Council and industry the Government will double the number of apprenticeships to provide a total of 31,000 places by 2020 through an annual call for new 47 proposals and will target over 100 different apprenticeship schemes spread across sectors of the economy and in every region in Ireland. Annual registrations increased by 40% from 2013 to 2014 with a further increase of 17% in 2015 bringing to the total number of apprentices to 3,153 (Dáil Written Answers, 19 July 2016) and is forecasted to grow to 5,089 by 2018 (Priority Questions, 19 May 2016).

The publication of the Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland (p. 90) discussed that “many countries are newly adopting apprenticeship systems based on dual modes of learning, combining workplace learning in an enterprise with classroom teaching in an education or training setting”. This focus on the importance of work-based learning and apprenticeships is important for the Youth Guarantee (2015).

The European Commission has confirmed that the Department of Education and Skills is in a position to obtain a portion of the Youth Employment Initiative Funds (with a reservation of €68m for Ireland) to cover the fees currently being charged to apprentices (Sinn Féin MEP Lynn Boylan, 19 January 2016). USI believe that no plans to abolish either the PLC participant charge or the Annual Student Contribution for apprentices (Written Answers Nos. 145, 12 April 2017) despite the reservations available would hinder the expected growth of apprenticeships and will cause the Department for Education and Skills to fail in reaching its target of 50,000 people registered. Apprentices undertake two phases of apprenticeships training in Institutes of Technology with the average cost per student of the Annual Student Contribution fee being €1,000 per annum.

In Germany modest annual tuition fees of €1,000 introduced in some states over the past eight years prompted an angry backlash and led to fierce nationwide protests. Tuition fees were subsequently phased out and were completely abolished by the start of the 2014-15 academic year. The success of apprenticeships is due to the German economy currently being vibrant and the recognition of higher education’s public returns and benefits. With the lowest youth unemployment rate in Europe, Germany’s dual VET system is highly recognised abroad. Germany’s apprenticeship system provides 344 certified trained occupations, designed by the government and industry. Almost 90% of large companies employ apprentices with about 455,000 companies take part in vocational education training and more than every fifth German company employs apprentices.

Costing: €3.8m to remove apprenticeship college fees annually (Written Answers Nos. 145, 12 April 2017)

Responsibility: Department of Education and Skills

GRANTS

Subject: **Support and Funding for Part-Time and Further Education Students**

Proposal: For the Government to commit to part-time and further education students receiving the same supports that would be available to full-time students in similar circumstances and make a hardship fund available for students who are studying part-time and in further education.

Rationale: A number of support funds, including the Fund for Student with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) and the Maintenance Grant are only available for students studying on a full-time basis in recognised Higher Education Institution. Part-time students are currently not able to avail of the same supports (despite the National Access strategy recommendations). The same restrictions apply to students in further education, of which there were 127,165 students enrolled in 2016 (SOLAS, 2016)

The participation rate of Students with Disabilities in part time courses (5.9%) is almost 5 times the participation rate in full time courses (1.3%). There are likely many complex reasons for this, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it is due to the lack of funding for disability supports in the part time sector (AHEAD, 2014). It is unfair to punish students who are trying to further themselves through studying but due to circumstance cannot commit to attend a higher education institution in a full-time capacity. A student who is deaf but is studying part-time cannot access the current fund for students with disabilities, and has no access to support for costly sign language interpretation, and thus it is impossible to compete at a level playing field with their peers.

Costing: €7.5m with €5m allocated for the part-time education sector as a student assistance fund support and €2.5m allocated to students who are in further education as a hardship fund.

Responsibility: Department of Education and Skills

Subject: **Third-Level SUSI Grants Thresholds**

Proposal: For the Government to commit to increasing the threshold and allocation given through the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant scheme.

Rationale: The DIT Campus life survey details the on average the total cost to attend Third Level Education in Dublin, with the total cost coming around to €11,000 per annum. While USI expresses its gratitude in extending and increasing eligibility for grants in recent years - especially in Budget 2017 towards postgraduates. Unfortunately these measures don't go far enough. With the maintenance grant ranging from €30 per month on the lowest to €120 on highest non-adjacent grant, this is not sustainable for a student living under 45km from their desired college.

With the DIT campus survey outlining that a monthly expenditure excluding fees for a student living away from home is €889, the adjacent grant doesn't even support students living outside the 45km distance - as the highest possible grant being the special rate at €591.5 per month there has been an increase in the average rent nationwide of 13.4% in the year to April 2017 while a massive increase in travel and living costs. 'Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education' (2016) states that an additional €100 million would be needed to fund student financial aid. While this is highlighted previously, thresholds need to be adjusted to allow middle income earners to be able to access the SUSI grant scheme more allowing for students to be financially able to attend and apply themselves in third level.

PLC & Undergraduate Grant Levels (Maintenance Levels)

Levels of Grant	Maintenance Non-Adjacent Rate 2011/12	Maintenance Adjacent Rate 2011/12	Maintenance Non-Adjacent Rate 2017/18	Maintenance Adjacent Rate 2017/18 (€)
PLC & Undergraduate Grant Levels (Maintenance Levels)				
	€	€	€	€
Special Rate of Maintenance Grant	6,100	2,445	5,915	2,375
Standard Rate 100% Maintenance	3,120	1,250	3,025	1,215
Standard Rate 75% Maintenance	2,340	940	2,270	910
Standard Rate 50% Maintenance	1,560	625	1,515	605
Standard Rate 25% Maintenance	780	315	755	305

Source: <https://susi.ie/>

- Costing:

€12.3m
- Responsibility:

The Department for Education and Skills, The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- Subject:

Grant Adjacency Rates
- Proposal:

For the Government to reverse the decision taken in Budget 2011 and decrease the qualifying criteria for the non-adjacent rate of the grant from 45km to 24km.
- Rationale:

The current qualifying distance of 45km intends to take into account a reasonable distance which students may commute on a daily basis. However this puts many students at an disadvantage - especially those from outside major urban areas for various reasons. Reasons include some rural public transport links are poor to the point that students miss early or late lectures

Example: Birr Co. Offaly, population 5,800 is 40km from its nearest third level institution, Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). The earliest a student can arrive in AIT using public transport is 1.25pm.

The adjacent grant exists to provide maintenance for those who are capable of commuting and provides for students, the cost of travel may be comparable to a living cost in the college town, defeating the purpose of this rate.

Example: Killarney, Co.Kerry, population 14,219 is 36 km from its nearest third level institution, IT Tralee. The cost of using public transport to travel from Killarney to IT Tralee is €67.50 per week by bus or €69.99 per week by train. Student accommodation in Tralee is available from €60.00 per week (see IT Tralee Students’ Union Accommodation list 2016/17 -Kings Court Apartments), with private rented accommodation available from €55 per week according to Daft.ie in 2017.
- Costing:

€27 million (Dáil Éireann: Written Answers, 2016)
- Responsibility:

The Department for Education and Skills; The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Subject: **Postgraduate Grants**

Proposal: For the Government to fully reinstate the postgraduate grant in Budget 2018.

Rationale: The postgraduate maintenance grant was abolished in Budget 2012 and replaced by a postgraduate fee contribution of between €2,000 and €6,270 depending on income with thresholds of €31,500 and €22,703 respectively. Investing in National Ambition: A strategy for funding higher education stated “The removal of maintenance supports for postgraduate students is of particular concern and there is a real risk that some socio-economic groups could be locked out of a range of professions such as teaching as a result.”

The programme for a Partnership Government contained a commitment “to increase support for postgraduates with a particular focus on those from low income households.” USI welcome the introduction of the full maintenance grant worth almost €6,000 from September 2017 for 1,100 postgraduate students in the lowest income category. However, USI call on the Government to fully reinstate postgraduate grants to all those who would be eligible for a postgraduate grant in Budget 2018.

Costing: €53 million

Responsibility: The Department for Education and Skills, The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Subject: **Student Assistance Fund (SAF)**

Proposal: For the Government to begin the phased restoration of the SAF to €11m over the next three Budgets.

Rationale: USI welcomes the additional allocation of €1million in the Budget 2016, but it is clear that this figure does not meet the needs required of SAF in our HEIs and a phased increase is needed.

Students apply for student assistance to help with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties that put them at risk of dropping out of college. The SAF provides an alternative source of funding for higher education students in addition to the student grant (SUSI) and often assists students who may not qualify under the SUSI structure by marginal amounts. Each year, the State allocates a specific amount of student assistance funding to all publicly funded higher education colleges based on the size of the college’s full-time student population, for example DCU received €352,161 in 2014 whereas St. Angela’s college in Sligo received €19,561 the same year (Written Answers, June 9 2016)

SAF funding is used up in the first semester or before Christmas each year but differs according to institution (although all are under severe strain in their allocations). SAF support is required to ensure that students are supported and continue in their studies. The DIT Campus Life Cost of Living Guide estimates the cost of studying at third level is a minimum of €11,000 per annum if a student is studying away from home, and €6,897 if a student is able to remain at home while studying. 15.2% of those living below the poverty line in Ireland are students while the cost of renting has increased by 13.9% nationally. The SAF is also not currently available to Further Education/PLC colleges or part-time students. In addition, Postgraduate students receive very little due to a priority given to undergraduate students.

Costing:

2018 Budget	+ €1m to €9m
2019 Budget	+ €1m to €10m
2020 Budget	+ €1m to €11m

MENTAL
HEALTH

Subject: **Mental Health Funding**

Proposal: For the Government to ring-fence funding of €37.5m annually and to put emphasis on local 24/7 crisis intervention services.

Rationale: USI calls on the Government to produce a detailed, time-lined action plan to continue the reform of mental health supports improving the mental health of the whole population in line with A Vision for Change (2006), Healthy Ireland Framework (2013) and Connecting for Life (2015). This will require adequate funding, structures for good governance and oversight in place. The implementation of a 24/7-intervention service within our health service and local communities is important, and should be a priority alongside annual ring fenced funding from Budget 2018.

The suicide prevention framework Connecting for Life (2013) has made a commitment to running out a national quality assured and co-ordinated 24/7 service for individuals in need of mental health care. Currently individuals are forced to use Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments in hospitals as an intervention service with staff and professionals not being adequately trained to respond and support someone in mental or emotional distress. A decade after A Vision for Change (2006), the recommendations to provide community based services, crisis homes and intervention support services are not available. Supports should be available on a 24/7 basis and should include the capacity to respond in a multidisciplinary way. It is proposed that there should be a 'crisis house' within each catchment area, offering brief accommodation to service users who need a safe place to recover their bearings and work with the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) (multi-agency teams consisting of different mental health professionals such as community mental health nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, support time recovery workers, administration workers, psychiatrists and psychologists) to evolve a care plan that will address the key factors that have precipitated a crisis ultimately forcing individuals and students to an A&E.

The environment of an A&E mixed with lack of present expertise surrounding mental and emotional health is severely damaging for students and anyone in distress. With almost 11,126 cases involving 8,708 individuals presenting to services in 2014 due to self-harm (National Suicide research Foundation Annual Report, 2014) and with 487 confirmed suicides in 2013 (and provisional figures of 451 suicides in 2015 (CSO)) ring-fenced funding towards services and community developments must be considered in Budget 2018. From the EU Youth Report (2015), Ireland is ranked within the top 4 for suicide rate among 15-24. This further confirms with CSO figures on suicides in 2013 by comparing the suicide rate of 14.4 per 100,000 to the UK at 7.6 per 100,000 (Suicide & Young People - the Irish Situation Dr Gary McDonald). USI with Mental Health Reform, propose the Government invest in mental health supports and services to allow them to adequately develop.

Costing: 37.5m

Responsibility: Department of Health

Subject: **Counselling Services on Third-Level Campuses**

Proposal: For the Government to invest in third level mental health counselling and to ring-fence €3m for student counselling and supports per annum

Rationale: Ireland has some of the highest levels of participation in third-level education within the EU. The importance of promoting positive mental health among the large third-level student population cannot be underestimated with A Vision for Change (2006) showing a high percentage of students experiencing mental health difficulties. These difficulties include: depression, anxiety, loneliness,

substance misuse, and suicidal behaviour. This document also shows, almost 75% of all mental disorders first emerge between the ages of 15 and 25.

The provision of counselling services to meet the growing numbers and diverse needs of students has not kept pace. Waiting lists are currently seeing students waiting for up to six weeks. 61.6% of students are experiencing burnout attending third level education while 27.6% in college have dropped out due to stress (USI Student Dropout Survey, 2016). In light of the considerable demand students are experiencing and the fundamental importance to students in need, Higher Education Institutions' budget allocations for counselling services, infrastructure and mental health supports should be ring-fenced.

To invest in third level counselling services is to invest in the education and development of students and the institution. Figures from Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI) 2014-15 report outlines over 50% of clients stated that their difficulties were either negatively or very negatively impacting their studies. Over 17% of clients identified high to very high dropout risk at the time they first sought counselling. 8 of the 11 services ask clients to rate counselling's impact on their studies and retention and/or progression. 6 of these provided data. The data showed 27% of clients indicated counselling was a factor in their retention and/or progression (1,427 students), and 23% indicated counselling helped their academic performance (1,186 students). This is supported by the Reaching out in College Report - which indicates that nearly two thirds of students who took part in the survey (63%) would be likely to avail of one-to-one counselling on campus.

To achieve this, Government must invest in third level mental health counselling and ring-fence €3m for student counselling and supports per annum to tackle this issue and increase the academic experience for all.

Costing: €3m ring-fenced for student counselling and supports per annum

Responsibility: Department of Education and Skills; Department of Health

SOCIAL WELFARE UNDER 26

Subject: Social Welfare for Under 26

Proposal: For the Government to set the rate for all people under the age 26s set at the minimum adult rate of €188 per week.

Rationale: The current social welfare rates for under 26 year olds (introduced in Budget 2014) is a financial penalty for unemployed graduates and youths in Ireland with 39% of young people struggling to make ends meet nationally. The Programme for Government (38) states, “Before the economic collapse, Ireland had the highest rate of jobless households in Europe, facilitated by educational disadvantage, poor childcare, and a passive social welfare system”. In Budget 2017, the maximum personal rate for an adult aged 25 was increased from €144.00 to €147.80, while those aged 18-24 saw an increase from €100 to €102.70. The breakdown can be found below:

Jobseeker’s Allowance Rates from 2016 and from March 8th 2017 Beyond

	Aged 26 And Over		Aged 25		Aged 18 - 24	
Year	2016	March 8th 2017	2016	March 8th 2017	2016	March 8th 2017
Maximum Personal Rate	€188.00	€193.00	€144.00	€147.80	€100.00	€102.70
Increase For A Qualified Adult	€124.80	€128.10	€124.80	€128.10	€100.00	€102.70

Source: http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/1057_Jobseekers-Allowance.aspx

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 years (youth unemployment rate) was 12.9% in April 2017, a decrease from 13.7% in March 2011. Despite initiatives to incentivise young people to work with 3,250 places being created since 2013 there are 16,082 young people in long-term unemployment seeing majority of young people struggling on €100 p/w or €144 p/w and the will still struggle on the new rates with just a €2.70 increase a week.

Ireland currently has the fourth highest number of young people who are ‘Not in Employment, Education or Training’ (NEETs) in the European Union with 18.4% compared with the EU average of 12.9% (EuroStat, 2014). Even if young job-seekers entered the Labour Market earning minimum wage the weekly take home pay (minus USC) is approximately €329. This should be considered a financial incentive to work compared to the proposed €188 p/w rate (NYCI, 2016).

Despite efforts to implementing the Pathways to Work 5 Year Strategy, which aims to help 50,000 Long-Term Unemployed (unemployed for 12 months) people into jobs (Department of Social Protection, 2015), there are 179,500 persons unemployed. With young people lacking necessary experience in a competitive Labour Market, and a timeframe of up to 12 months being unemployed to enter JobPlus to further obtain employment and skills (Department of Social Protection, 2016), young people cannot survive on the current Jobseekers’ Allowances with the cost of living of a single adult being €184 pw (Vincentian Partnership, 2013). USI support NYCI’s claim to restore over time the Jobseekers’ Allowance starting with an immediate investment of €24m.

Age	Increase From/To	Costing
18-24 year olds	€102.70 to €132.70	€19.2m
25 year olds	€147.80 to €177.80	€4.8m
Total		€24m

Note, for a full restoration: €149m
For a gradual increase: €24m

Responsibility: Department of Social Protection

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ABOUT USI

USI is the national representative body for the 354,000 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. USI Officerboard are elected by it's membership at its annual Congress and support students in a full-time capacity.



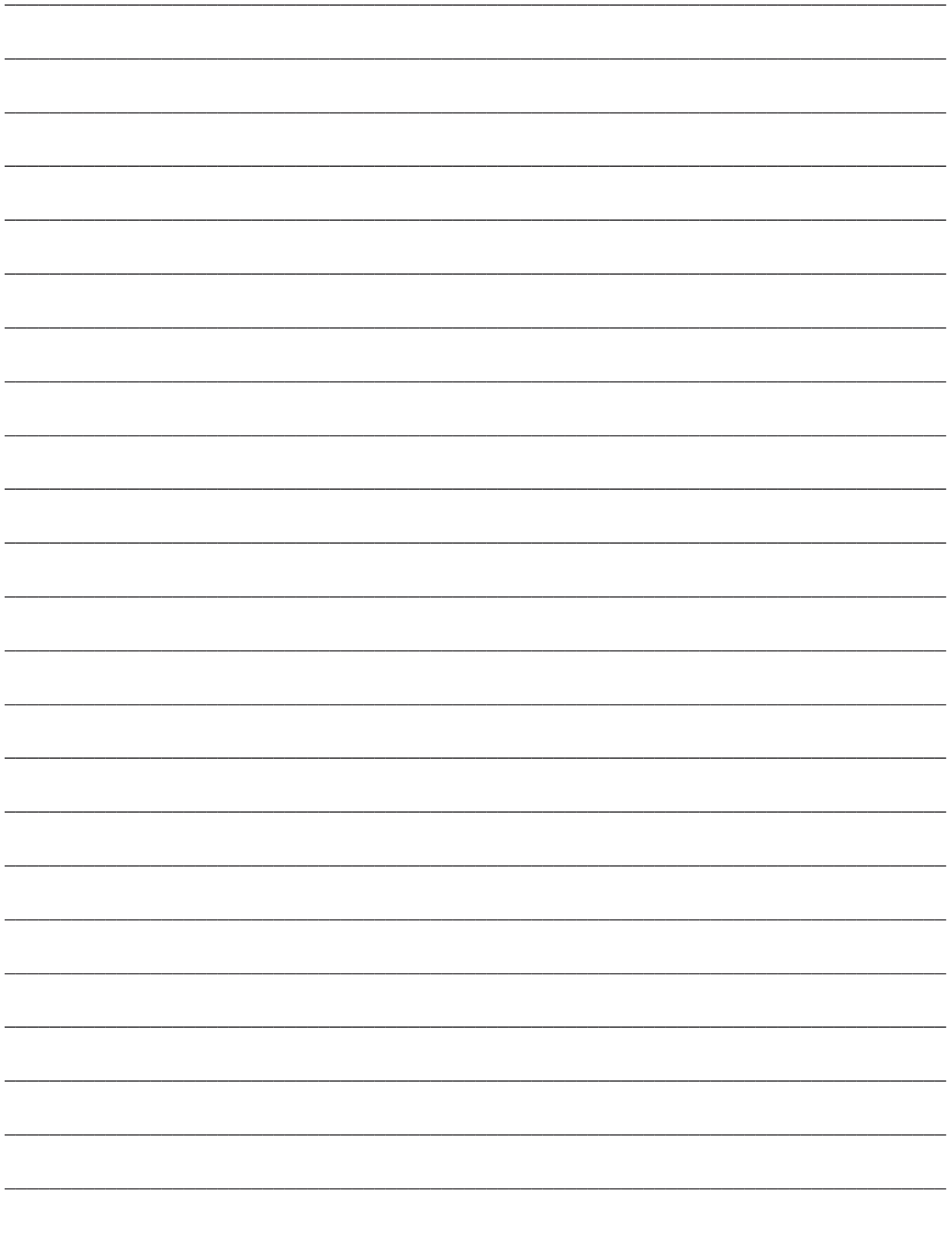
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