



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

# **Mandates Manual June 2020**

Errors and Omissions Excepted.

Version 1.0

USI Policy is passed at USI Congress each year. Policy has a life of three years at which time it may be extended for a further three years. All policy and policy extensions now have validity for 3 years.

Whilst we are engaged in a process of standardisation, policies with novel formatting are preserved with that formatting in order to retain the integrity of the policy as considered at Congress.

Nothing in the policy file should be taken to mean any mandate on the President of NUS-USI, who may only be mandated by NUS-USI Conference.

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The USI Policy Manual 2015 details all motions passed at USI Congress.

USI policy has a three-year life span before it lapses.

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS & QUALITY ASSURANCE

### EM 20 – 3: COVID\_19: Protect our Students

#### **Motion proposed by CITSU**

#### **Congress notes with concern:**

The impact Covid\_19 has had on students due to the closure of campus, adjustment of assessments, introduction of online exams and all other adjustments that have occurred as a result of government restrictions during this unprecedented time.

#### **Congress also notes with concern:**

The impact Covid\_19 has had on the mental and physical wellbeing of students throughout the nation as a result of unprecedented pressure to undertake exams under new circumstances, as well the effects of adhering to government restrictions.

#### **Congress therefore mandates:**

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to support students and MO's with regards to the exam appeals and repeats process to ensure that it is fair to all students who have been negatively affected academically as a result of Covid\_19.

#### **Congress also mandates:**

That the USI Executive Team protects all students throughout this time to ensure their needs and concerns are heard, supported and advocated for when engaging with national stakeholders in Covid\_19 related committees and to work to undertake research amongst third-level students on how Covid\_19 has impacted their experience to inform their lobbying on this issue.

#### **Congress also mandates:**

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to advocate to protect students on return to college by working with the HSE to ensure safety measures are adhered to

### EM 20 – 6: On Internet and Infrastructure Access for Distance Learning

#### **Proposed by NUIGSU**

### **Congress notes**

The significant challenges the third level and FE students have faced in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Students are experiencing significant strains on their mental, physical and financial health currently.

### **Congress further notes**

With the move to online learning and assessment in recent months, students have faced significant barriers to accessing their education due to internet access, adequate study devices, family commitments or separate work/study space.

### **Congress also notes**

Educational resources in general are increasingly moved online, from course learning materials to assessments. Regardless of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, access to reliable, affordable internet connections is a key barrier to equal access to education.

### **Congress believes**

With the likelihood of a move to online and blended learning for the coming year, students are going to need significant software and hardware resources to engage to the best of their ability.

### **Congress mandates**

The VPAA, in consultation with the regional officers, to undertake research on the extent to which proper access to adequate internet and study devices has impacted students' academic activities.

### **Congress further mandates**

Following research on the impact of access to adequate internet, The VPAA and regional officers lobby to expand access, through subsidies and other actions where possible and relevant.

## 20 AA (NC) 2 Accreditation for Participation

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress recognises:**

The importance of student participation in extra-curricular activities such as clubs & societies, Students' Unions, volunteering and civic engagement during their time in college, and the benefits that engaging in such activity brings about in terms of the overall personal development of the student.

### **Congress further recognises:**

The continued promotion by Students' Unions of students getting involved in these activities, and the associated advantages which can be conferred on students who have been active in these areas when seeking future employment.

### **Congress notes:**

The development of modules and recognition within programmes which exist in some Higher Education Institutions to accredit students for their involvement and participation in these activities, in order to facilitate, recognise and encourage their nonacademic as well as academic development whilst in college.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to research best practice across Higher Education Institutions in this area, with a view to developing USI policy on Accreditation for Participation which may be presented to the appropriate College bodies by Students' Unions who wish to do so.

## 20 AA (NC) 4 Student Nurses and Midwives Campaign

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress notes with concern:**

The considerable problems experienced by student nurses and midwives while on placement. The issue of the grossly unfair trainee wage imposed on them. Exploitative graduate programmes, emigration, working 39 hours a week, bullying and lateral violence and burnout are emerging as other key concerns.

### **Congress applauds:**

The research done by USI Officer Board into the issues experienced by student nurses and midwives while on placement.

### **Congress acknowledges:**

From the research conducted by USI that it was found that 51.8% of student nurses and midwives feel that placement has had a negative impact on your performance in aspects of your study. 57.3% feel placement has had a negative impact on physical health while 51.9% feel placement has had a negative impact on mental health. 81.9% feel that working as a nurse or midwife led to burnout as a result of working long hours during placement. 92.5% have thought about emigrating when they qualify as a nurse or midwife.

49% have experienced bullying or harassment while on placement while 18.3% have been bullied into working longer hours while on placement. 47.9% have considered dropping out of college as a result of a negative experience while on placement. When asked “what aspects of being a nurse and midwife would prompt you to emigrate?” 72.3% said payment was the key issue.

**Congress notes with concern:**

The Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to strive to work with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) the relevant trade union to mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, emigration, bullying and lateral violence.

**Congress mandates:**

Co-operation between the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), students’ unions, student nurses and midwives and relevant trade unions on the remuneration and treatment of student nurses and midwives while on placement.

**Congress also mandates:**

The Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective on the issue of pay and financial support.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Campaigns to work on implementing a comprehensive evidence based campaign and programme to erase the negative culture of bullying and harassment on placement by collaborating with the INMO, relevant trade unions, governmental departments, students’ unions, hospitals and higher education institutions.

## 20 AA 1 USI Participation in ESU

Proposed by Technological University Dublin Students’ Union

**Congress recognises:**

That many policies and initiatives developed and agreed at European Union and European Higher Education Area level effect the Irish Higher Education system and our students.

**Congress also notes:**

That progress is accelerating in the creation of European Universities transnational alliances that will become the universities of the future, promoting European values and identity, and revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education. Several HEIs in Ireland have secured funding for this project, with many following suit.

**Congress believes:**

As a member of the European Students' Union, USI has an important role in the shaping of international policies and has the opportunity to inform national and local policies with international best practice.

**Congress mandates:**

The Executive Team members who attend each bi-annual ESU Board meeting to present a report to the following meeting of National Council including explanations of the policies proposed and voted on by USI. They should also provide a comprehensive information session to Students Union offers about the work of ESU at SUT each year.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to co-ordinate a delegation, selected from National Council participants, to attend each bi-annual European Student Convention. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is also tasked to investigate funding opportunities to cover the associated costs.

**Congress also mandates:**

That USI ensure the student voice of each HEI is incorporated into each EU University application, and that USI provide support to each MO who is involved in the process.

**Congress Repeals:** 14 AAQA 19

## 20 AA 2Next Steps for NStEP

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Congress notes**

The National Student Engagement Programme [NStEP], which was officially launched in 2016 as a joint initiative between USI, the Higher Education Authority [HEA] and Quality and Qualifications Ireland [QQI], to embed student engagement practice through championing meaningful staff-student partnerships in Irish Higher Education. The work that has been undertaken so far through the NStEP programme including the roll-out of the class rep training programme, and the creation of National Projects, focused on specific areas within student engagement in Higher Education.

### **Congress further notes**

That NStEP launched a new Strategy in November 2019, which sets out its strategic objectives until December 2021, focusing on:

- 1.Strengthening the value of student engagement nationally
- 2.Developing the leadership capabilities of students in Irish Higher Education
- 3.Supporting staff and students across the sector to foster a culture of partnership

### **Congress believes**

That student partnership is an important model in adopting effective student engagement practice.

### **Congress further believes**

NStEP plays a vital role in ensuring that student partnership and engagement is at the centre of discussions within the sector, and in supporting students' unions to improve partnership with their respective institutions.

### **Congress calls for**

NStEP to continue to be supported beyond its current funding window of December 2021, in order to ensure that student partnership continues to play a vital role in the student-learning experience nationally.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other members of the Executive Team continue to support the delivery of NStEP in its current guise, and to lobby for the continuation of its funding beyond December 2021.

### **Congress therefore repeals**

16AAQA 3

## **20 AA 3Quality Assurance - Looking Forward**

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

### **Congress notes**

The USI policy on Quality Assurance as set out in 09 ED 15, which outlines USI's principles on quality assurance.

### **Congress further notes**

The extensive involvement of students within external quality assurance processes in Irish Higher Education, as demonstrated by the long-standing Student Quality Reviewers pool



operated jointly between NStEP, USI and QQI, and the centrality of students within QQI external quality review processes.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That in spite of the principles outlined in the aforementioned policy, there is still a notable lack of student involvement in internal quality assurance mechanisms within institutions, as detailed in QQI's "Quality in Higher Education 2019" report.

### **Congress also notes**

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee structure adopted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, in the UK, to embed the student voice within the work of QAA, as the national quality assurance agency.

### **Congress believes**

That in order to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms are working effectively in favour of the student experience, students should be involved and represented at all levels of quality assurance, including but not limited to, internal and external quality assurance review processes.

### **Congress further believes**

There is scope to further widen student engagement with QQI's core work - taking into account best practice from other national quality agencies, such as QAA UK.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with QQI, and other relevant stakeholders, including members of the Academic Affairs Working Group, to improve student involvement in internal quality assurance mechanisms across Irish Higher Education institutions, and to develop further student engagement with QQI's own work, modeled on the QAA student engagement structure.

## **20 AA 4 Wellbeing in Education**

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

### **Congress notes**

The findings of the USI Mental Health Survey which recommended that consideration be given to embedding mental wellbeing into the curriculum in higher education, in order to ensure that all students had equal access to information on wellbeing within their academic programme. This survey also found that just over half of respondents (51.4%) were involved in activities outside of their academic course, and that those who were involved in external activities were less likely to be extremely severely anxious, depressed or stressed.

### **Congress further notes**

The work that has been carried out within the UK Higher Education sector on embedding wellbeing into the curriculum, most notably the 2017 report by Advance HE on embedding mental wellbeing in the curriculum.

### **Congress believes**

That in order to fully tackle the mental health and wellbeing crisis within Higher Education, an all-institution approach must be sought, which takes account of the role that the academic curriculum has to play in supporting the wellbeing of students. Whilst support services are of vital importance in addressing the needs of students, they must not be seen as the only part of an institution with responsibility for the wellbeing of its students.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI Executive Team, in particular the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to lobby the Department with responsibility for Higher Education to initiate work on the area of Wellbeing in the Curriculum through the creation of a national working group on this issue. The USI Executive Team to support NUS-USI members to explore the area of mental wellbeing in the curriculum within their own jurisdiction.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to undertake research on, if and how wellbeing and extracurricular activities are facilitated within the academic calendar in all MOs, and to push for this to be considered as part of national discussion on Wellbeing in the Curriculum.

### **Congress repeals**

AA-19-1 and 18-WEL-6

## **20 AA 5 Student Complaints**

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

### **Congress notes**

That all HEIs, as well as other public service providers in the Higher Education sector, including HEAR, DARE and SUSI are required to have an internal Complaints procedure.

### **Congress further notes**

That, if dissatisfied with the response received through the formal procedure, students are entitled to submit a complaint through the Ombudsman.

## **Congress believes**

Student Complaints processes can often be time-consuming, confusing and frustrating, leading many students to withdraw complaints they have submitted. To date, there has not been a lot of interaction between the Ombudsman and student representatives meaning that there is a lack of clear information on the Ombudsman process, and how Students' Unions can best support students wishing to make a complaint through this process.

## **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide guidance notes for Students' Unions on supporting students throughout an internal complaints process, and to work with the Ombudsman to develop guidance for students, and for Students' Unions on the Ombudsman complaints process.

## **20 AA 6 Academic Integrity**

Proposed by Academic Affairs Working Group

### **Congress notes**

Section 43a of the updated Quality and Qualifications Act 2019 which provides Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) statutory powers to prosecute those who:

- assist learners to cheat by completing, in whole or in part, any piece of work required of the enrolled learner for their programme of study, or sit an exam or facilitate the sitting of an exam by someone other than the enrolled learner or provide answers for an exam;
- advertise cheating services;
- publish advertisements for cheating services.

### **Congress further notes**

That in preparation for the enactment of this part of legislation, QQI have established a National Academic Integrity Network, which aims to identify and disseminate good practice in dealing with contract cheating, inform a dedicated communications strategy and develop a culture of positive academic integrity within Irish Higher Education. This Network includes representation from all Irish Higher Education institutions, as well as representation from USI, and from a number of Students' Unions. The Communications Group working as part of the network will be chaired by the USI Vice President for Academic Affairs.

### **Congress believes that**

It is only through effective dialogue with students, and the adoption of student-centred learning approaches, that the sector can work towards building a culture of positive

academic integrity. It is critically important that positive engagement with students on this issue is placed at the centre of the network's priorities, and that any student-facing communication that is developed is accessible, proactive and student-centred.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work closely with QQI, other sectoral agencies, and all members of the National Academic Integrity Network to ensure that the work of the National Academic Integrity Network places the needs of students at its' core. The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with members of the Academic Affairs Working Group, and members of the Academic Integrity Communications Group to ensure that student-facing communication on this topic is proactive, accessible and student-centred.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Vice President for Campaigns to work with the National Academic Integrity Network to develop campaign resources for local students' unions to roll out their own awareness campaigns on Academic Integrity.

## **20 AA 7 Postgraduate Specific Supports on Campus**

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

### **Congress Notes:**

The lack of dedicated services in relation to mental, physical and financial wellbeing of Postgraduate students across the Island of Ireland.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That services on campus can often be inaccessible to Postgraduate students, with many HEIs excluding PG students from the remit of their on campus initiatives aiming to improve the education experience of students.

### **Congress Recognises**

The increase in the amount of Postgraduate Students reporting poor mental and physical health and significant financial strain.

### **Congress, therefore Mandates**

The VP for Postgraduates to work with the VP Welfare and VP Academic Affairs to research what supports are currently available on campus specifically for Postgraduate Students.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

The VP for Postgraduates, the VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to lobby for a national strategy of support services specific for Postgraduate Students across Ireland.

## 20 AA 8 Postgraduate Representative Training

Proposed by the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

### **Congress recognises**

That there is a recognised lack of Postgraduate representation across Higher Education Institutions and in their Student Unions.

### **Congress further recognises**

A need for greater support and encouragement of active Postgraduate Class Reps and SU Officer roles. Specific training is needed for Postgraduate Class Reps to build up wider engagement with their Unions and better inform the understanding of Postgraduate matters.

### **Congress notes**

A training initiative should focus on the culture of postgraduate engagement in the absence of formalised structures. It would help participants develop tools for taking up representative roles, and encourage inclusive diversity of leadership across all Postgraduate levels

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, in collaborative partnership with NStEP (the National Student Engagement Programme) to develop a training initiative to support Postgraduate Class Rep and SU Officer elections.

## 20 AA 9 Learning in a Digital World

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

### **Congress notes**

The advancements that have been made in digital learning & teaching in Ireland over the last number of years, and the increasing interest in digital delivery of courses including, but not limited to, blended learning and fully online programmes.

### **Congress further notes**

A number of initiatives exploring the field of digital and online teaching & learning have been launched within the sector over the last year, including, but not limited to, the Irish Universities Association's 'Enhancing Digital Teaching and Learning' project, and the Innovative Opportunities Transforming Education' (INOTE) project being conducted by the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (GMIT, IT Sligo, Letterkenny IT). Local Students' Unions, and USI have been a key stakeholder in these projects, and other local initiatives exploring the theme of digital learning.

### **Congress welcomes**

The work that was carried out by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Autumn 2019, surveying over 25,000 students in Ireland on their experience of digital learning, and which will publish a national report of the findings in May 2020, as well as providing each institution with their own individual data to enable them to produce institutional reports on the survey.

### **Congress believes**

All of the above initiatives demonstrate the currency of digital and online learning in the current Higher Education environment, but also show that there is still a lot of work to be done in improving the digital experience of students in Ireland, in order to ensure that digital tools are used for the betterment of the student learning experience, and not simply to tick a box.

### **Congress further believes**

Online and blended-learning can provide a flexible route into higher education for students from a range of backgrounds, and for international students wishing to access the Irish Higher Education system from their own home country. However, it is vitally important that students on online and blended-learning programmes are offered equal access to support, personal development and other opportunities that are afforded to on-campus students. This should include access to the free fees initiative and SUSI funding.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide resources to support MOs in engaging with online students, including support for Students' Unions who are not currently funded to support their online students and advice on embedding student representation within online and blended-learning programmes. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, President and other members of the Executive Team to work with sectoral bodies and the HEA to put in place further support for students enrolled on online and blended learning programmes, including lobbying for full access to SUSI funding and the free fees initiative for those enrolled on fully online programmes.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with the National Forum, and with MOs, to build upon the findings of the INDEX survey, and to call for further action to improve the digital learning experience of students. The USI Executive Team to continue to engage with, and support national projects focused on digital learning & teaching

## **20 AA 12 Placement Campaign**

Proposed by UCCSU

**Congress Recognises:**

The huge value that placement in courses has for students.

**Congress notes:**

That students may face barriers when it comes to engaging in placements from finding a suitable placement, travel/accommodation, financial reasons and others.

**Congress Notes:**

Many students undergo placements throughout their time in higher education institutions and that several of said placements are outside of their hometowns and away from their institutions. Many students have to source their accommodation for said placements in workplaces and are not paid or reimbursed in any form for said expenses or if they are they, not in a sufficient way.

**Congress Further notes:**

Previous research was done by USI for Student Nurses, Pharmacy Students and Student Teachers to gather data from those cohorts of students, including information on placement, that has led to the formation of successful campaigns and lobbies. The gap in overall research for all students undergoing placement and the need for the development of a campaign(s) stemming from the experiences gathered.

**Congress Recognises:**

The need to support students who are undergoing unpaid placements or paid placement where they are receiving less than the minimum wage. This is too little to live on as there is currently a massive disparity with the minimum and living wage

**Congress Believes:**

All students should be paid when they go on placement and receive at least a living wage and that many students are financially exploited.

**Congress, therefore, mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Campaigns to conduct a national survey to gather data around student experiences on all placements.

**Congress further mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Campaigns to create a campaign(s) from the collected data on their experiences, included but not limited to, a campaign to lobby for a living wage or, at least, financial assistance for students on placement

## AA 19 - 2 College Awareness Week

Proposed by Vice President For The Dublin Region

### **Congress notes**

That College Awareness Week is a national campaign which aims to promote the benefits of going to college, to help students of all ages to become college-ready and to showcase local role models.

### **Congress mandates**

USI Officer Board to promote College Awareness Week.

### **Congress further mandates**

Where possible, USI Officer Board to arrange a talk in a secondary school in their local area and to give advice about going to college.

## **AA 19 - 3 The creation of a Charter for Postgraduate Research Students**

Proposed By The Vice President For Postgraduate Affairs

### **Congress Recognises**

That there is a lack of consistency within the Higher Education sector on what rights postgraduate student have within their institution.

### **Congress Further Recognises**

That there is a need for clarity on a range of issues from access to the HR department in the case of a work place dispute to access to staff printing.

### **Congress Notes**

That the “USI/SIPTU Postgraduate Survey on Working and Economic Conditions” provides sufficient evidence in this regard.

### **Congress Mandates**

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to try to work with SIPTU to develop and promote a Charter of Rights for Institutions to sign up to, which will set out best practice for a healthy working environment for postgraduates.

## **AA 19 - 4 The creation of National Minimum Stipend rate.**

Proposed By The Vice President For Postgraduate Affairs

### **Congress Recognises**

That the stipend rates received by Postgraduate Research Students varies dramatically.

### **Congress further recognises**



That the cost of living is rising whilst stipends remain relatively stagnant.

### **Congress mandates**

That USI Officer Board lobby for the creation of a National Minimum Stipend Rate.

### **Congress further mandates**

That this objective be pursued with the ambition of paring the National Minimum Stipend Rate to the cost of living.

## **AA 19 – 5 Postgraduate Funding in Northern Ireland**

Proposed By Postgraduate Working Group

### **Congress Notes:**

- The Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan in Northern Ireland which only entitles students to £5,500 towards the cost of postgraduate taught course.
- Tuition Fees for standard Masters courses in Northern Ireland are set to rise to £5,900, with many other Masters programmes costing much more but tuition fee loans will not automatically rise in line with this.
- Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK to cap tuition fee loans for Postgraduate students at £5,500, meaning that students are offered no maintenance support.
- That many postgraduate students in Northern Ireland opt for part-time study in order to be able to work alongside their degree.
- The insufficiency of the current funding system for part-time students where the loan must be split equally across years regardless of whether there are differential fees within the course, resulting in some students being left with a shortfall in their second or third year, which has led to some students being forced to withdraw from the programme.
- Due to the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive in 2017, there is currently no Minister in place to approve an increase in the tuition fee loan available to Postgraduate students or to commission any change to the current Postgraduate Funding system.

### **Congress Believes:**

- The current funding arrangements for postgraduate students in Northern Ireland are wholly inadequate, providing no maintenance support whatsoever and not covering the entire cost of standard Master's programmes, or any programmes with higher fees.
- A review of postgraduate funding in Northern Ireland must be commissioned, in order to improve the support offered to students there and improve the coherency of funding arrangements for part-time students.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to work with NUS-USI and its' members to lobby for a review of postgraduate funding in Northern Ireland with a view to increasing available support whilst continuing to strive towards lobbying for publicly funded education, accessible to all.

## **AA 19 – 6 The legal status of a PhD student.**

Proposed By Postgraduate Working Group.

### **Congress notes**

That currently PhD students are classified as students.

### **Congress further notes**

That there are many benefits to this status, such as exemption from tax.

### **Congress further notes**

That there are also a range of problems with this student definition. Inclusive of but not limited to; no application of a minimum wage and access to HR in the case of a dispute.

### **Congress acknowledges**

That Ireland and the United Kingdom are an outlier when compared to other European States and our fellow members of Eurodoc.

### **Congress mandates**

The VP for Postgraduate Affairs to continue to investigate options to secure more rights for Postgraduate students by lobbying for a change to the definition of a postgraduate, whether moving to define them as an employee or a hybrid status between employee and student.

## **AA 19 – 7 Academic Calendars and Repeat Results implications**

Proposed By Waterford IT Students' Union

### **Congress Notes**

Academic Calendars within Higher Education Institutions can cause a lot of difficulties for students on the ground. Some Institutes may use the Academic Calendar as an instrument to move Exams to wherever they like.

### **Congress Acknowledges**

The lack of a “perfect model” when it comes to Academic Calendars. But also, the lack of Best Practice when it comes to creating an Academic Calendar.

### **Congress Believes**

Working with MO's and Trade Unions to form a joint approach on Academic Calendar Best Practice would help all Institutions and SU's make sure that the needs of students are met academically.

### **Congress Recognises**

The release of Repeat Examinations 2-4 weeks into a semester has a serious impact on Student Mental Health and that to release Repeat Examination Results earlier may help tackle retention in HEI's.

### **Congress therefore Mandates**

The VP for Academic Affairs, alongside the Regional Officers, to consult with MO's and Trade Unions to develop a best practice when it comes to Academic Calendars. The VP for Academic Affairs should also investigate the possibility of an Academic Calendar sub-committee of National Council who will report their findings to National Council.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

The VP for Academic Affairs to investigate the effects on students having repeat examinations results released so late in term and use that to lobby the relevant bodies to get Repeat Examination results released earlier and if possible, before the semester begins.

## **AA 19 - 8 The Future of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement**

Proposed by Waterford IT Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

That the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) is now well recognised across Irish Higher Education, having launched in 2013 after a number of years of lobbying from USI to ensure colleges across the country saw the value and need to gather empirical data from students.

### **Congress further notes**

That USI, Students' Unions, and students have worked hard to ensure that the survey is recognised and engaged with by students, and have advocated to ensure the data is readily available for students to interpret through institutional quality assurance and enhancement processes. This further manifested itself in the development of the postgraduate research ISSE which launched in 2018.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That despite the huge efforts of students and rising response rates that institutions are still largely failing to distil the data in to user-friendly formats, that they have not created

thorough processes for involving students in interpreting the data they created and understand, and have in some cases blocked students from seeing any results.

There are also very low response rates for the survey in a number of HEI's.

### **Congress believes that**

ISSE data should be readily available to students in appropriate formats to allow them to interrogate the data and seeks ways to enhance and improve education in Ireland. Furthermore, Students' Unions are often the main driving force behind promoting the survey, using their own human and financial resources, and should have a partnered role in using the data.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to lobby the ISSE Steering Group to develop and publish an updated report (furthering on from 2015's report) on the promotion of the survey, a review on how involved individual SUs are on each campus, and on how the data is being used by students in each HEI. Alongside this, a review on why response rates are low needs to be covered in this work also, which may in turn lead to a restructuring of the overall survey.

The report should contain key recommendations on the role of Students' Unions and students in promotion and in the use of data by students for quality enhancement.

### **Congress further mandates**

That the VP Academic Affairs explores ways to develop best practice on the use of ISSE data by students, including ways in which the data can be viewed, distributed, and engaged with by students and staff in partnership.

## **AA 19 – 9 Best practice for MO Council Meetings**

Proposed By IT Tallaght SU

### **Congress notes:**

The differing structures for Council or equivalent class representative meetings.

### **Congress believes:**

The introduction of Best Practice in Council (or equiv.) training would be beneficial for not only MOs but also class representatives

### **Congress further notes:**

The implementation of these structures would also benefit class representatives unfamiliar with USI Congress procedures.

### **Congress mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs, in conjunction with Regional Officers, to facilitate training for structures and procedures within these bodies.

## AA 19 – 10 Student Representation in Accreditation and PSRBs

Proposed by Vice President Academic Affairs

### **Congress notes**

That professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) oversee accreditation and standards across many programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland, ensuring that the students who enter these programmes receive qualifications that qualify them to practice in their chosen profession.

### **Congress further notes**

That PARN (Professional Associations Research Network) carried out a project with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2016/17 on the impact of accreditation bodies in Irish HEIs, but that the subsequent report did not contain any information on the role of student representation and voice.

### **Congress believes**

That issues arising in degree programmes in disciplines such as teaching, pharmacy, and social work, to name a few, have demonstrated that the student voice is often sidelined in the setting of standards and guidelines by PSRBs.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to liaise with the QQI to ensure that student representation is recognised and strengthened in quality assurance and enhancement processes that involve PSRBs. This work should draw on international best practice and involve students from across a range of degree programmes, in order to ensure that the diversity of experiences of students is captured and acted upon.

### **Congress further mandates**

That part of this work should be to utilise the QQI's engagement with regulators to open dialogue on the importance of student representation in their processes and procedures.

## AA 19 – 11 HEI Student Success Strategies

Proposed by Vice President Academic Affairs

### **Congress notes**

That every public HEI must have a Student Success Strategy in place by 2020 under a requirement of the HEA System Performance Framework.

### **Congress further notes**

That USI was involved in the HEA Student Success Working Group that considered how to ensure student progression, retention, and completion became integral to the existing work on access stemming from the National Access Plan. The work of USI and others such as the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning ensured that the definition of student success was not limited in scope, and should encompass all aspects of the life of students in and outside of college.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That HEIs seem either unaware of the need to produce such strategies, or that they do not see these strategies as a priority, despite the short amount of time required to develop them. HEIs also seem unaware that student success has a wider remit than access initiatives, encompassing (but not limited to) everything from the background and personal lives of individual students to the student services they need, to teaching and learning, extra-curricular activity, academic supports, health and wellbeing, student representation, and finances.

### **Congress believes**

That the inclusion of student success by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning as one of four major strategic priorities and their upcoming development of national guidelines as key to overcoming these challenge.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to consult with MOs to include the student perspective on what success means, taking due regard of student diversity, and to develop tools and resources alongside the National Forum for member Students' Unions to use to ensure that they are central to developing HEI Student Success Strategies as partners in the process.

### **Congress further mandates**

That the VP Academic Affairs should consider all such relevant USI mandates that contribute to the success of students before, during, and after their time in college, in order that the work of the National Forum is fully informed by USI.

## **AA 19 – 12      Grade Inflation**

Proposed by Vice President Academic Affairs

### **Congress notes**

That there is a rising conversation in Ireland and globally in Higher Education about the issue of 'grade inflation', which refers to improving grades across the student body.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That the debate on grade inflation and its causes has excluded the rising standards in teaching and learning, the changing nature of assessment, the rise of student engagement and partnership, and more active attempts to improve student-centred learning and feedback.

### **Congress realises**

That there are valid concerns on many of the potential causes for grade inflation, including a lack of clarity around grading practices and external examination, however this should not give rise to anti-student rhetoric and attempts to deny students their hard earned academic success.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to ensure that any work on grade inflation in Ireland, undertaken by any national body, includes student representation and takes full account of the changing nature of the teaching and learning environment.

### **Congress further mandates**

That USI Officer Board challenges and counters anti-student rhetoric in the grade inflation debate.

## **AA 19 – 13 Best Practice Framework for Student Rights**

Proposed by Academic Affairs Working Group

### **Congress Notes:**

The framework for assessment and examination guidelines vary between each Institution in Ireland. Many member organisations run a version of my rights campaign which encompasses student rights within their institution.

### **Congress further Notes:**

Due to this, it is difficult for USI to run a national my rights campaign with generic and national student rights information. This can lead to students being unaware of their basic rights within their respective courses.

### **Congress Believes:**

That a standardisation of assessment and examination guidelines would benefit not only the everyday student, but also the frameworks would better facilitate these students when transferring between Institutes.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs to seek a framework for best practice of student rights across all institutions with the view to standardisation of these campaigns. This should be completed end of the 2019/20 academic year.

## AA 19 – 14 Student Feedback and TUI

Proposed By Dublin IT SU

### **Congress Notes:**

Student feedback on assessments and modules is vital to the upkeep of standards of quality assurance in all third-level institutions.

### **Congress further Notes:**

Student feedback is vital for implementing change in the relevant module and course, in order to keep up with the development of courses.

### **Congress therefore Mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the TUI on student feedback and encourage relevant officers in member institutions to implement similar feedback structures locally.

## AA 19 – 15 Creative Arts Networking

Proposed By National College Of Art And Design Students' Union And Trinity College Dublin Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Within many of the USI MOs there are Creative Arts courses that are underrepresented locally, as well as nationally, and offer unique issues to their students. Networking within the Creative Arts is essential for progression and identification of further development.

### **Congress further notes:**

Graduates from Creative Arts courses tend to have fewer employment opportunities available in their field. There is a lack of information directly available to creative arts students about specific financial supports available to them.

### **Congress recognises:**

The need for support and promotion of such a network for creative arts students in all MOs.

### **Congress repeals:**

2018 AA 6

### **Congress mandates:**



The VP for Academic Affairs, and VP Campaigns to create a Creative Arts subcommittee that tackles issues that are exclusively faced by Creative Arts students. This subcommittee will consist of the VP for Academic Affairs, VP for Campaigns, at least one representative from each MO that specialises in Creative Arts, and any other representatives.

**Congress further mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs and VP Campaigns, to organise a one-day networking event for Creative Arts students to discuss and educate artists on issues such as, but not limited to, funding, internships, and taxes as a freelance artist.

## AA 19 – 16 Erasmus Rights

Proposed By ITBSU

**Congress Notes:**

The large number of Students who study abroad during the course of their studies.

**Congress Regrets:**

Many students can feel lost or unsupported before and during their time abroad.

**Congress Mandates:**

The VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the European Students' Union (ESU) to provide general resources for participating Erasmus+ institutions (e.g. info on accommodation, finance, transport links) and to investigate flaws in the current Erasmus+ system.

## AA 19 – 17 Amendment to the FE Development Strategy

Proposed by the Southern Regional Working Group

**Congress recognises**

The importance of ensuring all students in both further and higher education are fully represented within the Union of Students in Ireland.

**Congress applauds**

The work was undertaken to develop the USI FE Strategy that was passed by Congress in 2018.

**Congress mandates**

The following section to be included in the FE Strategy under the “Our Further Education Members in NUS-USI” Actions Section

“Vice Presidents for the Regions to conduct study visits to FE colleges who are members of NUS-USI to learn about the structures and procedures. Vice Presidents for the Regions can use this learning in helping to develop FE colleges to become full members of USI.”

## AA 19 – 18 Clarity around the borrowing and recognition status of Technological Universities and Borrowing Models for IOTs

Proposed by Limerick IT Students’ Union

### **Congress notes**

Given the fast pace development of Higher Education in Ireland our regional IOTs must be protected. For years IOTs across the country have continued to suffer a deflating financial state. As it stands IOTs cannot borrow money in the such ways Universities can; there is a lack of clarity around the borrowing capacity of the newly developed Technological Universities.

### **Congress further notes**

This raises significant concerns and issues for IOTs, regarding their progress and status advancement in the same way of Universities and that expressed by Technological Universities.

Due to the inability to borrow and minimal funding from the HEA, IOT’s will continue to struggle in delivering adequate modern higher education: digitalisation, investment in modern STEM equipment and campus development.

Furthermore, the inability to access additional funding inhibits IOTS to help combat the accommodation crisis, as they cannot build, forcing them to rely on external development.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The USI President as a member of the HEA board to seek clarity around the borrowing and recognition status of TUs in comparison to IOTs.

To highlight same with the HEA and to lobby the Government for IOTs to access additional funding, in line with Universities and Technological Universities.

### **Congress therefore deletes**

17 AA3

## AA 19 – 19 Student Teacher Campaign

Rúin Ón Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge

### **Congress Notes**

The teacher supply shortage in Ireland and the high cost of teaching courses

## **Congress Further Notes**

The benefit of data produced from the USI Student Teacher Report in 2017/2018

## **Congress Mandates**

Officer board to review the data from the Student Teacher Report and expand the existing online forum for student teachers.

## **AA (NC) 19 – 1 Open Access Policy**

Proposed by: VP Postgraduate Affairs

### **National Council notes:**

The freedom of researchers to publish wherever they feel most appropriate. The need to increase and improve access to the output of research. The increased digitisation of literature. The increased price of subscriptions and barriers to access.

### **National Council believes:**

Research must be freely available on the public internet, permitting any user 'free to read' and 'free to re-use' access. The only constraints on open access should be that it is achieved whilst satisfying the principle that authors be acknowledged through citation for their work, and maintain control over the dignity of their work.

### **National Council mandates:**

The VP for Postgraduate Affairs to develop a position paper on open access. The VP for Postgraduate Affairs to collaborate with EuroDoc and other relevant parties to lobby for open access.

## **AA (NC) 19 - 2 Career Guidance Review**

Proposed by: Vice President for Academic Affairs

### **National Council notes:**

The Career Guidance Review announced by the Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, in early 2018. That this review aims to examine all aspects of Career Guidance, including at secondary and third-level.

That an external Consultancy firm, Indecon, is carrying out this review, and that USI aided Indecon in circulating a number of surveys for Further and Higher Education students, and that USI submitted it's own written submission in June 2018.

### **National Council believes:**

That this Review is an important opportunity to consider the role of good career guidance for transition, progression, retention, success, and wellbeing.

That the specific focus of the Review on enterprise engagement should not detract from the views of students in shaping the outcome of the Review.

**National Council welcomes:**

The Career Guidance Review and the number of opportunities provided to gain the views of students, however, it would have been preferable for the Review to be held during term-time.

**National Council believes that:**

The Review should conclude that career guidance must be considered as a continuous process, and that a National Strategy should clearly link each level of education and each pathway to promote lifelong learning, supports, and informed decision-making.

The Review must include the need to invest in significant resource, including employing more specific Career Guidance Teachers/Counsellors in Schools after cuts during austerity years, as well as resourcing for Careers Offices at third-level.

**National Council mandates that:**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs should lobby that any National Strategy or approach requires a new agency for oversight and implementation, that can also create best practice and support continuous professional development in career guidance. This agency should also develop, maintain, and support an online resource that can replace or revamp Qualifax and other tools.

## EM 1 (AAQA): Merging Students' Unions

Proposed by WIT Students' Union

**Congress Notes:**

The recent enactment of the Technological University Act has put forward the imminent establishment of Technological Universities in Ireland.

**Congress Further Notes:**

The merging and restructuring of Students' Unions will be expected during the process of two or more IOT's merging.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs of USI to research and write a best practice for merging Students' Unions document based on examples of third level institutes who have already merged in the past to be completed by SUT+ 2018.

## NC18 AAQA 1 : Engaging Postgraduate Issues

Proposed by: Vice President for Academic Affairs

### **National Council recognises**

That the USI membership includes a large body of postgraduate students, and that there is currently no dedicated event or campaign focused on their issues.

### **National Council further recognises**

That in order to fully represent postgraduate students, to engage them in our work, and to build the capacity of our Member Organisations (MOs) in this crucial area of union development, it is imperative that there is an annual event focused on those issues.

### **National Council mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, alongside the Officerboard, to run an event aimed at engaging postgraduate students in the work of USI, developing the postgraduate student voice nationally, and building the capacity of MOs to represent postgraduate issues. This annual event should take place in the second semester of the academic year.

## 2018 AA 1 : Integrated Pharmacy Masters Campaign

Proposed by University College Cork Students' Union

### **Congress Notes:**

A new integrated Pharmacy Masters' degree has been introduced in Ireland, beginning with the Pharmacy class of 2020. As a result of the new masters, Pharmacy students are no longer authorised to receive payment for their mandatory placements in every phase of the degree. Additionally, they are no longer able to take an international placement, thus driving up the competitive nature of the placements in Ireland for many students. Fees have also increased substantially for the final year of the course to €7500; this fee increase places it in direct contrast with medicine students, who pay the same fee for all 5 years of their degree.

### **Congress Further Notes:**

This issue affects all three schools of Pharmacy in Ireland, which includes students in University College Cork, the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, and Trinity College Dublin.

### **Congress Believes:**

That all students should be paid a fair wage for the placement work they undertake as part of their degree courses, and that, following on from successful campaigns for nursing students in recent years, pharmacy students are entitled to the same right to payment, as they have been in the past.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates:**

That USI campaign in favour of the restoration of paid placement for Pharmacy Students nationwide, and lobby relevant parties for the reduction of fees of the final year of Pharmacy Masters.

### **2018 AA 2 : Back to Education Allowance Strategy**

Proposed by Galway - Mayo Institute of Technology Students' Union

#### **Congress:**

Repeals 16 AA

#### **Congress Adopts:**

The proposed Amended Back to Education Allowance reform paper.

### **2018 AA 3 : Placement and work based learning Strategy**

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

#### **Congress notes**

The significant number of students who complete placement or work-based learning elements in order to progress in their programme of study.

#### **Congress further notes**

The significant value that quality placement opportunities can have for students, but that they can also create pressure on students academically and personally.

#### **Congress Adopts**

The USI Placement and work based learning Strategy

#### **Congress Deletes:**

13 AA

### **2018 AA 4 : Accreditation for Volunteering & Participation**

Proposed by IT Tallaght Students' Union.

#### **Congress recognises:**

The importance of student participation in extra-curricular activities such as clubs & societies, Students' Unions, volunteering and civic engagement during their time in college, and the benefits that engaging in such activity brings about in terms of the overall personal development of the student.

**Congress further recognises:**

The continued promotion by Students' Unions of students getting involved in these activities, and the associated advantages which can be conferred on students who have been active in these areas when seeking future employment.

**Congress notes:**

The development of modules and recognition within programmes which exist in some Higher Education Institutions to accredit students for their involvement and participation in these activities, in order to facilitate, recognise and encourage their non-academic as well as academic development whilst in college.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with the National forum for the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education and other relevant statutory agencies to develop a national approach to accreditation to student volunteering and participation in other extra-curricular activity

**Congress Repeals**

Policy 13 AA

## 2018 AA 7 : Class representative best practice

Proposed by IT Carlow Students' Union

**Congress recognises:**

Class representatives are the backbone of a Students' Union in terms of providing a student voice on institutional activities.

**Congress notes:**

Class Representatives in some member organisations do not fully recognise the power they command.

**Congress further notes:**

The role of Class Representation, their elections and their implementation operates differently in each individual member organisation.

**Congress mandates:**

The VP Academic Affairs to coordinate a piece of research that establishes best practice across all third level HEIs in terms of electing, training and empowering Class Reps to perform their roles on a local level, bearing in mind the challenges posed by institution type and size.

**Congress further mandates:**

The VP AA and VP Campaign to develop a campaign, based on feedback from member organisations, to encourage students to run for class representative positions.

**Congress therefore repeals 17AA6**

**2018 AA 8: USI Grant Reform Policy**

Proposed by Vice President for the Southern Region

**Congress Approves:**

The adoption of the USI Grant Reform Policy.

**Congress therefore repeals:**

17 AA 1, 15 AA, 14 AAQA, 11 ED 19, 10 ED 5, 16 WEL 2, 15 We 20

**2018 AA 9: Further Education and Training Strategy**

Proposed by Union Development Working Group

**Congress Adopts**

The Further Education and Training Strategy.

**2018 AA 11 : Academic Supports for International Students**

Proposed by the Vice President Equality and Citizenship

**Congress notes**

The increasing number of international students, from different countries, backgrounds and experiences, studying in Irish institutions.

**Congress further notes**

A lack of tailored support for international students, who face significant pressures of integration and often feel excluded in our institutions, including academic supports such as language and communication.

**Congress recognises**

The huge contribution our international students make to the social and academic life of our institutions, and the need to ensure their needs are catered for so that they can unlock their full potential.

**Congress mandates**



The Vice President Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President Academic Affairs to research and examine practices in institutions in academic support for international students.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President Academic Affairs to lobby the Department for Education and Skills for international student access to tailored academic supports, including language support within the curriculum, without financial or other barriers.

## **2018 AA 12 : Anonymous Marking**

Proposed by: Institute of Technology, Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

Anonymous marking is the correction of examinations by a lecturer without knowing the learners name first hand.

### **Congress further notes**

Leaving Certificate students entering into third level education will have already had their leaving Certificate examinations corrected anonymously.

### **Congress Believes**

Anonymous marking may reduce the perception of bias marking be it accidental or otherwise.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to assist MOs in lobbying for anonymous marking within their own HEI.

## **2018 AA 13 : Postgraduate Students Strategy**

Proposed by the Postgraduate Affairs Working Group

### **Congress adopts**

The Postgraduate Students Strategy.

## **2018 AA 15 : The Marketisation of Third-Level Education**

Proposed by the Vice President Academic Affairs

### **Congress notes**

Efforts by Governments and Higher Education Institutions, both in Ireland and internationally, to create a competitive environment in third-level education, especially in Higher Education.

### **Congress further notes**

That this effort to marketise education damages the ethos of education as a social and public good.

### **Congress recognises**

The USI's efforts to campaign and lobby for publicly funded education and protect education as a public good.

### **Congress believes**

That in Ireland the student movement is not proactively discussing or raising the dangers of marketisation and commodification of education, and must be better equipped to do so.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President Academic Affairs to develop clear policy guidance on the negative consequences of marketisation both locally and nationally, and to work with the Vice President Campaigns to create toolkits for Member Organisations to recognise and campaign against marketisation in their institutions.

## **2018 AA 16 : The Quality of Teaching in Irish Higher Education**

Proposed by the Vice President Academic Affairs

Repeals 14 AA 10

### **Congress notes**

The efforts of USI to support the work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to date, and the strong partnership that the two organisations have fostered with one another.

### **Congress further notes**

USI's involvement with significant work around teaching quality, including: the National Learning Impact Awards, especially the Teaching Heroes Awards; collaboration on the enhancement of assessment; developing the Student QA Reviewers Pool; and supporting the development of the National Student Training Programme.

### **Congress applauds**

The significant work of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education to develop The National Professional Development Framework for All Staff Who Teach in Higher Education, based on the model of reflective practice.

### **Congress believes**

That the National Professional Development Framework should be recognised by students as the national tool for improving and enhancing teaching quality and academic staff support.

### **Congress further believes**

That the National Professional Development Framework requires cultural change within our institutions, and in order for it to be implemented effectively, it requires significant buy-in from across the sector, including senior managers, statutory agencies, institutional staff, and Students' Unions.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President Academic Affairs to work to support and lobby for the implementation and resourcing of the National Professional Development Framework.

## **2018 AA 17 : European Education Area**

Proposed by: Vice President Academic Affairs

### Congress notes

The proposed European Education Area (EEA) and new "Sorbonne Process".

### Congress notes with concern

That this new EEA is being developed by the European Union, and may potentially create conflicts of interest with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the further development of the Bologna Process, of which USI is highly supportive.

### Congress believes

That judgement on the EEA should be reserved, and that without concrete proposals from the European Commission, the EEA may create a "two-tier Bologna" that will inevitably further a destructive agenda of competition in Higher Education across Europe.

### Congress further notes

The potential creation of a European Student Card under this new process, and the pilot initiative, in relation to the potential roll-out of the card, currently being undertaken by the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland (CSSI).

### Congress notes with concern

That the purpose and parameters of this Student Card has not been clearly defined, and may represent a move to hold student data at a European level, without real consultation from students.

Congress mandates

The Vice President Academic Affairs to liaise with the European Students' Union (ESU) and continually update National Council on developments of the EEA.

Congress further mandates

The Vice President Academic Affairs and Vice President Welfare to ensure the voice of USI members is heard through the Irish pilot of the European Student Card being rolled out by the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland.

## 2018 AA 18 : National Student Partnership Agreement

Proposed by: Academic Affairs Working Group

Repeals 17 AA 5

Congress notes

Efforts to date to enhance student engagement in their education through the work of the National Student Engagement Programme, of which USI is a proactive partner.

Congress further notes

The increasing awareness of the concept of students as partners in their education, and developments both locally and nationally to embed the student voice in all aspects of our institutions.

Congress believes that

Developing 'Student Partnership Agreements' between Institutions and Students' Unions is a positive and constructive avenue through which student participation, representation, and engagement can be fostered, while ensuring the ethos of Students' Unions as autonomous decision-making organisations is protected.

Congress further believes that

There is significant appetite to take a national approach to student partnership.

Congress recognises

The commitment by the Minister for Higher Education to work with USI to develop a national approach to the student voice, both through a Framework on Supporting Students' Union, and through the exploration of Student Charters and Partnership Agreements.

Congress mandates

The USI President and the USI Vice President Academic Affairs to work with the Department for Education and Skills, and all other relevant stakeholders, to lobby for and develop a National Student Partnership Agreement.

Congress further mandates

That any development of a National Student Partnership Agreement should proactively engage students at every stage.

## 2018 AA 19: Class Rep Recognition

Proposed by Academic Affairs Working Group

Congress believes

Class Representatives form the backbone of SU and institutional activities in terms of providing a representative student voice within an institution.

Congress notes

The role of class representatives is increasingly being recognised by the HEA and QQI, through national initiatives such as the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).

Congress further notes

Class Representatives involvement is crucial to the success of such programmes and this involvement needs to be commended and recognised.

Congress recognises

Student time is becoming increasingly scarce due to the nature of semesterisation, and that therefore it is not always possible for them to fully and actively engage with programmes such as the NStEP, and the other functions associated with the role of a class representative.

Congress therefore mandates

The USI VP Academic Affairs to work with the HEA and QQI to look into the feasibility of rolling out formal recognition in the form of accreditation for the position of class representative, similarly to how standard modules are accredited. This accreditation would not replace credits required to complete the learning outcomes but would however add on the the students' degree as additional credits.

## 17 NC/AA 05 Early Education and Carers Campaign

### **National Council Notes:**

Early years workers and providers are dedicated and passionate about delivering a quality

service that focuses on the needs of children and realising their full potential. Workers are paid too little and are struggling to make ends meet. The cost of Early Years services in Ireland are among the highest in Europe, an average of over €750 per child per month. However most early years educators are earning less than the living wage.

**National Council Applauds:**

The 'Big Start' campaign led by SIPTU and the efforts to build a coalition of organisations and groups on the issue.

**National Council Acknowledges:**

A lack of State investment where Ireland spends only 25% of the European average investment in early years services. Lack of empirical evidence to show that early education and carers students and graduates are looking for recognition of the sector and a living wage and if other issues exist.

**National Council Mandates:**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to work with the relevant trade unions, and other organisations, to assess the issues that may exist and to further mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, work, and recognition of the sector.

**National Council Also Mandates:**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

## 17 AA3                      Borrowing model of IOTs

**Congress notes**

There is a huge crisis in relation to the current financial state of many IOTs across the country. IOTs are not allowed to borrow money in the such ways Universities can. According to recent reports in the media, currently there are six Institutes of Technology in a vulnerable state.

**Congress further notes**

This causes huge issues for IOTs regarding progress and helping to advance their status the same way Universities can. This can also come into effect as IOTs cannot borrow money to help with the accommodation crisis, and they cannot borrow money to build.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The USI President as a member of the HEA board to highlight with the HEA and lobby the government for IOTs to access additional funding the same way Universities can access it.

## 17 AA4 Student Participation in Governance

Congress:

Repeals 15 AAQA 8 and 14 AAQA 6

### **Congress notes:**

That student participation in the academic governance of their institution is integral to ensuring that the perspective of the learner is embedded and reflected in decision-making.

### **Congress further notes:**

Tertiary-level education is becoming increasingly marketised and competition-driven, with HEI Management engaged in strategic work around recruitment, marketing, and internationalisation. Students are increasingly denied a role in academic governance, creating a democratic deficit in our institutions.

### **Congress believes that:**

Students and student representatives are partners in their education, and should have a key role to play in governance throughout structures in their institutions.

### **Congress recognises:**

- The experiences of MOs in student participation and institutional democracy is varied.
- The work to date with NStEP on institutional analysis and academic representation.
- The work to date with the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning on partnership.

### **Congress mandates the President and the VP Academic Affairs:**

- To carry out diagnostic work with MOs to get a broader picture of institutional democracy and student representation in governance structures.
- To create resources around best practice examples of democratisation and decentralisation of institutional governance structures.
- To work with individual MOs, as appropriate, to support efforts to improve student participation in academic governance.

## 16 AAQA 4 Non-EU fee regulation - Re-adopted 2019.

### **Congress Acknowledges**

That a large number of third level institutions have responded to a contraction in state funding by endeavouring to attract students of “nonEU” fee status. These students do not qualify for the HEA “free fees” scheme and, as such, pay a much higher fee to attend higher education in Ireland.

### **Congress Regrets**

That these students are, in effect, regarded as “cash cows” by institutions, which in many cases fail to distribute the appropriate resources to support services and student organisations to cater their activities towards a more diverse student population.

### **Congress Also Regrets**

That these students do not enjoy a significant degree of fee level certainty, such is the wont of institutions to increase fee levels on an almost annual basis. As well as representing an issue of esteem, many non EU students from countries prioritised for recruitment take large commercial loans to fund their education in Ireland. These students are particularly affected by changes in fee level as they will have been required before starting college to budget up to six years in advance (in the case of longer courses).

### **Congress Asserts**

That non EU students deserve, at an absolute minimum, full certainty as to their fee obligations for the entire course of their degree.

### **Congress mandates**

That USI, as an organisation, is opposed to the current national policy of unregulated non-EU fees.

### **Congress also mandates**

The VP Equality & Citizenship and the VP AAQA to research the effects of unregulated non-EU fees on the non-EU student population and to present a report on the issue to National Council before the end of 2016.

### **Congress further mandates**

The President to present the findings of the research to the Higher Education Authority.

## 15 AAQA 5 Universal fee payment dates

RENEWED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress notes**



That there are a number of different ways in which students are expected to pay their Student Contribution Charge, depending on the institution.

**Congress Further Notes**

This may create confusion among students. Furthermore some systems are more sympathetic to students than others.

**Congress Mandates**

VP AAQA and VP Welfare to work with Students' Unions and the relevant groups to establish universal payment dates in institutions.

**Congress Further Mandates**

VP AAQA and VP Welfare to work with Students' Unions and the relevant groups to set a universal payment method in institutions.

**15 AAQA 7 Technological university supports**

RENEWED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**Congress acknowledges:**

The work, which has been done to date with MO's going through the Technological University (TU) process.

**Congress also acknowledges:**

The integral role of Students' Unions in these MO's to informing students of their rights and safeguarding them in the TU process.

**Congress mandates:**

The Regional Vice Presidents to assist in the merging of Students' Unions involved in the TU Process

**15 AAQA 10 Cross-border student mobility**

RENEWED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**Congress believes:**

Currently there is very low cross-border student mobility between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

That education should be free and fairly funded- this also goes for the students who chose to travel over the border for their education

Every student should be able to access support for travel, course costs, maintenance support and studying cross-border should not be a barrier to support.

**Congress notes:**

In 1996/97, almost one in 10 students in the NI colleges were from the Republic - 9.3%, but in 2012/13, this fell to just 5.5%.

The number of RoI domiciled students enrolled in NI Higher Education Institutions in 2012/13 was 2,835 and the number of RoI students studying in FE institutions in 2012/13 was 3,324.

In 2012/13 only 980 students from NI travelled over the border to study in Irish institutions.

RoI students in NI often have trouble accessing the right information about the SUSI grant which is available to them, which can then lead to financial hardship.

**Congress mandates:**

VPAAQA to work with the NUS-USI President to explore ways we can increase cross-border student mobility

VPAAQA to work with NUS-USI to lobby the respective governments to provide adequate financial support for students studying over the border

[OUTDATED] Congress notes:

That legislation creating the Technological Universities has been enacted and that the development of the Dublin TU is now moving ahead quickly.

Congress further notes:

The agreement in principle from the three ITSUs in question to work together by way of a steering group, chaired by the USI President.

Congress affirms:

That student consultation in this development must be thorough and meaningful, with a view to students being seen as the key stakeholders at the table.

Congress mandates:

The USI President to continue to assist in ensuring that this steering group is recognised at HEA and DoE's level as the collective representative voice of the three ITSUs.

## 14 AAQA 12 FEES FOR STUDENT APPRENTICES

### **Congress notes:**

The publication of the Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland, and the consistent focus on the importance of work-based learning and apprenticeships as part of the dialogue around the Youth Guarantee.

### **Congress condemns:**

The decision taken in Budget 2014 to impose a new pro-rata Student Contribution fee burden on student apprentices.

### **Congress welcomes:**

The collaboration between the USI and the TEEU in launching the 'Axe The Tax on Training' campaign this year.

### **Congress mandates:**

The President, Vice-President for Campaigns and Vice-President for Academic Affairs & Quality Assurance to lobby to overturn this decision in Budget 2015 and reinstate the State contribution to this fee, in conjunction with the TEEU.

## 10 ED 4 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

REAPPROVED 2015

### **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 11 APPRENTICES

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 (with amendments) – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**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

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**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 write an explanatory memorandum of the impacts of the budget on student and communicate it to all CO's.

## 09 ED 2 STUDENT LOANS/GRADUATE TAX

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **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 11 BOLOGNA PROCESS

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**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 fit for purpose. Learning outcomes must be used to create a student-centred learning environment and may not be used to create a box-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**

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **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

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

REAPPROVED 2015 (With Amendments) and 2018 (With no further amendments) – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **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.

## **WELFARE**

### **EM 20 – 1: Support for student renters during Covid-19**

Proposed by QUBSU

#### **Congress acknowledges:**

The Union of Students in Ireland's support for Rent Strikes carried out across Ireland to protest universities who increased rents in campus accommodations, along with standing with those campaigning for an end to the housing crisis in Ireland, north and south.

#### **Congress also acknowledges:**

That rent strikes have been organised by tenants unions and students collectively across Britain and Ireland to fight universities and private landlords who are exploiting student renters during a global health emergency and incoming financial crisis.

**Congress notes:**

The demands laid out by these tenants unions, groups of student renters, and NUS-USI to ensure the protection of student renters during the Covid-19 pandemic which include:

An immediate Rent Suspension during the Covid-19 crisis with no subsequent repayments, with this backdated to cover the month of March to provide security for those out of work and financially insecure during this crisis.

An 18 month freeze on rent increases to protect current and future students against landlords who may opportunistically exploit the current and coming crises.

Early contract termination without penalty as students cannot be held to ransom over rent for a house that they cannot live in while this crisis is ongoing.

A ban on all Covid-19 caused evictions, to protect the most vulnerable students during this period of uncertainty.

Clarity from Higher and Further Education regarding plans for the 2020/21 academic year to allow students to make decisions early relating to their accommodation.

Guidance for those students who still need to access any belongings left behind after promptly leaving their accommodation early due to government Covid-19 guidelines.

**Congress supports:**

The above demands laid out by organisations working directly with student renters.

**Therefore, congress mandates:**

The USI Executive to support the establishment and growth of tenants unions in the wake of the Coronavirus crisis

**Congress further mandates:**

The USI Executive, primarily the VP Campaigns and VP Welfare to work with and support students and tenants' unions in their campaigning and lobbying efforts, including rent strikes in the form of withholding rents from either university campus accommodation and/or private letting agents and landlords.

### **Congress notes**

That students have been excluded by the criteria of SUSI. Many aspects of the application restrain students from receiving adequate financial support. The criteria is outdated and does not reflect the reality of struggling students.

### **Congress further notes**

That BTEA (Back to Education Allowance), distances, and other forms of eligibility can be the direct cause of people dropping out of college.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

USI to lobby for the eligibility criteria to be changed to suit students and lobby for radical reform with the support of relative organisations."

## **20 WEL 2 PrEP Accessibility**

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

### **Congress notes**

PrEP (Pre Exposure Prophylaxis) is a drug taken to prevent the contraction of HIV and is now available in Ireland.

### **Congress further notes**

That PrEP is primarily aimed towards the MSM (men who have sex with men) group and meanwhile HIV does not discriminate against who it targets and can be contracted by anyone. The accessibility of the drug is also very limited in the sense of who can and cannot access this for free.

### **Congress notes with concern**

That studies in countries where PrEP is available has shown an increase in the likes of Syphilis, Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia and that this is due to the lack of sexual health education that goes with the drug.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the Executive to lobby the government for increased accessibility of PrEP for all and furthermore to campaign to promote education of still using protection even while on PrEP.

### **Repeals**

2017 WEL 18"

## **20 WEL 3 Celebrating and Supporting Recovery Through Harm Reduction and Support**

Proposed by TU Dublin SU



### **Congress notes**

Addiction is not defined solely with substance use/misuse. That an effective way of reducing issues around drug use lies not solely with anti-drug policies rather also include harm reduction and the promotion of recovery.

### **Congress further notes**

However, people living with addiction have overcome huge mountains with the current system that doesn't offer adequate support and should be celebrated in all ways whenever and wherever.

### **Congress recognises**

The work done by USI with regards to harm reduction and the MO's from around the country on some amazing work done to reduce harm.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to encourage celebration for anyone going through recovery, adopt a harm reduction policy and help Students' Unions set up forums for people to celebrate and share their experiences and living with addiction.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to organize a Harm Reduction roadshow that is to include study drugs and other forms of addiction recovery (such as gambling and others).

### **Repeals**

2018 WEL 4"

## **20 WEL 4 Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign**

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

Currently USI runs multiple campaigns during the year, relating to various issues (eg. SHAG week/Re:charge/etc.)

There are many mandates in the USI policy book in relation to the running of a number of campaigns relating to different Welfare issues, namely:

- WEL 19 - 4 Undetectable = Untransmittable
- WEL 19 9 Second-hand Smoke
- WEL 19 7 Excessive alcohol consumption campaign for secondary and third level
- WEL 19 13 Men's Mental Health
- 2018 WEL 4 : Drug awareness and harm reduction campaign
- 2018 WEL 11 : Smoking Cessation Campaign
- 2018 WEL 12 : Abusive Relationships, Sexual Violence & Harassment
- 17 WEL 18 PrEP Availability in Ireland

- 17 WEL 22 Social Inclusion Campaign
- 17 WEL 25 Personal Safety Campaign during Freshers' Week
- 15 WE 25 Gambling
- 14 WEL 10 WATER SAFETY
- 12 WEL 3 SEXUAL HEALTH WEBSITE
- 12 WEL 5 EXAM STRESS PACKS
- 12 WEL 6 DRINK RESPONSIBLY CAMPAIGN
- 12 WEL 7 SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN
- 12 WEL 14 EXAM STRESS CAMPAIGN
- 09 WEL 2 ABORTION RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

### **Congress applauds**

The effectiveness of the #BreakTheBarriers campaign (a campaign that compiles multiple issues faced by students in relation to accessing education ie. Accommodation, Fees, Grants, etc.)

### **Congress notes with concern**

That coupled with the numerous campaigns that are run locally in MOs, the various campaigns that USI run may get lost among the many campaigns that students see during the year.

### **Congress believes**

That a generic health campaign, promoting all aspects of health (physical, sexual, mental, etc.) should replace the specific campaigns, and be rolled out across all MO campuses during the year.

That a Student Health and Wellbeing campaign that takes into account the many issues related to Welfare that students' face, and brings them under an umbrella campaign, would be the best way to ensure that the Welfare related campaign activities of USI are identifiable on a national level.

### **Congress further notes**

That some campaigns avail of funding from external bodies (such as the HSE) and it is unknown how the combination of multiple campaigns may effect this funding

### **Congress mandates**

The VP Welfare alongside the Welfare Working Group to investigate the feasibility of running a single, year long Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign, which incorporates the many issues under the remit of Welfare.

The VP Welfare to use student feedback to decipher how the campaign should be run.

### **Congress further mandates**

That should the VP Welfare and the Welfare Working Group deem the running of a single, year long Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign feasible, that a mandate will be put to Congress Floor at the next Congress. This mandate shall be to repeal all mandates in relation to the running of welfare campaigns, and to replace these mandates with a single mandate relating to a year long Student Health and Wellbeing Campaign

## 20 WEL 5 SHAG packs

Proposed by: Vice President for Welfare.

### **Congress notes**

USI distributes approx. 30,000 SHAG packs every year to students in Ireland during the annual SHAG campaign.

### **Congress further believes**

This is a huge opportunity to get crucial sexual health information out to thousands of students across the Island of Ireland.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, to have the following, but not limited to, in SHAG packs:

- Condom and Lube
- Support Services
- How to put on a condom and make a dental dam
- Consent info
- Abortion info

### **Congress therefore repeals**

19 WEL 1

## 20 WEL 6 Smoking cessation

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare USI

### **Congress notes**

According to the HSE, Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Ireland with almost 6,000 smokers dying each year from tobacco related diseases.

### **Congress also notes**

Despite a number of campaigns run by USI, HSE and DRUGS.ie on the dangers of drug use, more could be done to highlight the dangers of smoking tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes and how addictive they are.

### **Congress believes**

That educating students about the dangers of smoking regular tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes may lead to a decrease in use.

### **Congress also believes**

That there should be designated smoking zones on campuses across the country.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to carry out a national campaign on smoking cessation and the dangers of smoking.

### **Congress Also Mandates**

The Union of Students in Ireland to mark 'World No Tobacco Day' each year.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to support MO's in their efforts to introduce designated smoke zones across their campuses and any other smoking cessation initiatives.

### **Congress therefore repeals**

18 WEL11 19 WEL 9

## **20 WEL 7 Drugs and alcohol harm reduction campaign**

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

### **Congress notes**

Education for third-level students is crucial in terms of informing students about drugs and alcohol, and the consequences taking them may have on their future.

### **Congress further notes**

That alcohol and drug misuse are still huge issues among the student population. According to the National Student Drugs Survey 82% of students have tried illegal drugs. The National Alcohol Diary Survey showed that almost two-thirds of 18-24 year-old drinkers consumed six or more standard drinks on a typical single drinking session (anything over 4 drinks is considered binge drinking).

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to roll-out a national campaign on drugs and/or alcohol using harm reduction messaging. This campaign can be in collaboration with organisations such as, Irish Secondary-Level Students' Union (ISSU), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and any other suitable organisations.

**Congress further mandates**

: That the Vice President for Welfare supports MO's in writing local drug and alcohol policy, and offers training on drugs / alcohol awareness, and substance abuse to Students' Union officers at a time most suitable.

**Congress therefore repeals**

19 WEL 8 19 WEL 7 18 WEL 4 12 WEL 4 12 WEL 6

**20 WEL 8 Mental Health and casework training for Students' Unions officers**

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

**Congress notes**

The majority of Students' Union Officers are presented with casework on a daily basis. Therefore the skills of how to manage a student in distress and boundaries are essential.

**Congress believes**

Everyone has a role to play in suicide prevention and that Students' Unions should to be equipped with the skills to intervene if needed.

**Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to organise the following training, where and when possible, such as, but not limited to, SafeTalk, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Casework and boundaries training. These training sessions are to take place in a way that's most suitable to the Students' Union officers and informed by the relevant National Council working groups.

**Therefore congress Repeals**

17 WEL 3

17 WEL 10

14 WEL 3

14 WEL 4

14 WEL 16

## 20 WEL 9 Mental Health Awareness Days

Proposed by USI Welfare Working Group

### **Congress notes**

There are many mental health awareness days that take place every year, that USI recognise and support.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to coordinate an action, in partnership with relevant organisations, to mark the following, but not limited to, mental health awareness days such as International Men's Day, Suicide prevention day and World Mental Health Day. These actions can be, but not limited to, creating a toolkit for MO's, sharing a graphic of support, or to organise an on or off-campus action.

### **Congress therefore repeals**

19 WEL 13

12 WEL 7

## 20 WEL 11 Student Assistance fund

Proposed by the Vice President Border, Midlands and Western region

### **Congress notes**

The Student Assistance Fund is an extremely important resource for students to access if they are in financial difficulty. Often it can be the difference between someone staying in college or dropping out.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for: The SAF to be extended to postgraduate students The Vice President for Welfare to assist Member Organisations in their lobbying of their institutions to provide the applications for the SAF in the most accessible way for students, whether this be online or otherwise.

The Vice President for Welfare to work with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to seek inclusion for these students so they may be eligible to apply for the SAF. As currently students participating on a second qualification at the same or a lower level are not eligible for SAF funding.

The Vice President Equality and Citizenship to work towards the Student Assistance Fund being accessible to all students regardless of whether they are in receipt of SUSI or not across Institutions in Ireland.

The Vice President for Welfare to provide briefing to all MO's on all aspects of the SAF, and seek representation on all committees relating to SAF on their campuses, and to also continually lobby the HEA to redraft the guidelines for the SAF and to include recommendations to increase efficiency of systems.

The USI Executive team to campaign for increases and oppose any suggested cuts to the SAF.

**Congress therefore repeals**

18 AA 20

18 WEL 2

18 WEL 9

17 WEL 16

15 WEL 2

14 WEL 7

**20 WEL 12 JAM Card**

Proposed by DCUSU

**Congress understands**

that those with a communication barrier are often reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition. JAM Card allows people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily.

**Congress notes**

the recent success of the implementation of the JAM Card in DCU by the partnership approach taken by DCUSU and the University which has had a positive effect on the welfare of those students who sometimes may need an extra few minutes in certain situations.

**Congress mandates**

the USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to assist member organisations in the implementation of the JAM Card on their campuses to widen the accessibility of their services to their students and support the JAM Card initiative as a whole.

**Congress further mandates**

the USI Exec Team to undergo Jam Card training.

## 20 WEL 13 International Student Financial Support

NUI Galway Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

The huge financial struggle International students face when attending third level institutions across the Island of Ireland with the increase in International Student fees year on year.

### **Congress further notes**

The lack of financial supports available for students who are classified as International Students, with many leaving third level education with huge student loans or debt.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to research what financial supports are available for International Students across HEIs and FEs on the Island of Ireland.

### **Congress further mandates**

The VP Welfare and VP Academic Affairs to lobby for a national financial aid fund to support International Students.

## 20 WEL 14 Disordered Eating Support

NUI Galway Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

That students fall into a demographic who are often affected by disordered eating.

### **Congress further notes**

The lack of information for third level students around disordered eating and the stigma of shame and silence this creates.

### **Congress notes with concern**

The lack of visibility and funding for services and supports that are aimed at those with disordered eating available within HEIs, FEs and the wider community.

### **Congress mandates**

The VP for Welfare and the VP for Campaigns to work with relevant organisations to develop a campaign resource pack for MO's to utilise, as well as creating a survey that can be used as a lobbying tool for the USI.



## 20 WEL 17 Review USI Health Promotion Strategy

IT Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

The importance of having a streamlined health promotion strategy plan for USI as it provides a sense of direction and outlines measure goals for the VP Welfare and USI to achieve and evaluate.

### **Congress further notes**

With the growing awareness of one's health, it is important to have a holistic view on health. A health promotion strategy is a vital stepping stone in allowing USI and the VP Welfare to have clear, consistent, national objectives in relation to all aspects of health.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to review the USI Health Promotion Strategy 2017-2020 alongside welfare working group to develop a new USI Health Promotion Strategy that outline reachable and achievable strategic objectives that can be evaluated.

## WEL 19 – 2 Decriminalisation of Drugs

Proposed by VP Welfare

### **Congress Notes**

On July 17th 2015, USI National Council formally adopted a stance that called for USI to support a call for decriminalisation of drugs, with a view to taking a similar approach to the one in place in Portugal. Following the adoption of this stance, the VP Equality and Citizenship made a submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality as part of their Drugs Policy Review process. In 2016, USI Congress mandated Officer Board to lobby for decriminalisation, and in 2018, Officer Board had developed connections with external expert groups to promote harm reduction campaigns and promote decriminalisation models.

### **Congress Notes**

College is a time when many students are exposed to drugs. For many students, this exposure can happen at an even younger age. There is currently very little information being given to students at second or third level about drug consumption or risks. There is a culture of fear amongst wider society around talking about drugs in an informed and responsible manner.

### **Congress Also Notes**

That if a student gets a conviction for personal use, this can have lifelong implications. It can

prevent a student from accessing a visa to certain countries, a job which requires Garda vetting, certain types of insurance, and can impede them from availing of further education or training. A criminal conviction also limits an individual's chances of social mobility, which results in them becoming dependent on the state.

### **Congress Further Notes**

On July 1st 2001, Portugal decriminalised drug use, acquisition and possession of illicit drugs when conducted for personal use as part of a comprehensive new policy. This quantity of personal use amounted to up to 10 days' supply for personal use. The policy also included a significant expansion in drug treatment, including methadone maintenance, to help dependent users get away from injecting heroin.

### **Congress Believes**

There is a need for health professionals, parents and educators to acknowledge the fact that young people often engage in drug use, and at the very least will be exposed to drug use at some point in their lives. Drug use cannot be tackled by policy measures which are only aimed at controlling the supply of drugs. It is futile to only have supply reduction strategies in place of more cost-effective and evidence based investments in harm-reduction and education.

### **Congress Mandates**

Officer Board to lobby for the decriminalisation of drugs in line with the Portuguese Model. USI Officer Board should also lobby for investment into treatment and health facilities along with education about drug use and risk for young adults and those of school age.

### **Congress further mandates**

The VP Welfare, and VP Campaigns (with the aid of Officer Board), to run an information campaign for students to educate them of the need for this reform.

### **Congress further mandates**

The VP Welfare to provide appropriate information and supports to MOs to best understand these issues, and to promote such campaigns in their own unions, and to appropriate bodies in their own institutions.

## **WEL 19 - 3 Investment in Mental Health Care in Rural and West of Ireland**

Proposed By GMIT SU

### **Congress Notes:**

Mental Health supports and preventative ongoing care provisions are lacking in Ireland, leaving many without adequate, if any supports especially in rural and the west of Ireland. As well as this, gaps in the system and miss-information has seen students wrongly 'transferred' to services which aren't capable/exist for that purpose.

**Congress Further Notes:**

Ongoing Preventative Mental Health services are necessary for general wellbeing and not just for emergency cases where focus currently lies, increased investment in preventative services can help us stop of the loss of student lives in disadvantaged and under resourced areas, these people are the future of Ireland.

**Congress Recognises:**

The need for more investment and resources in early and ongoing care and awareness, with this also assisting in reducing the pressure on emergency services

**Congress Mandates:**

The USI Welfare Officer to lobby for ongoing Mental Health services in the west and rural Ireland inclusive of non-emergency services as well as bringing awareness to the current situation in order to highlight the need, and aid the lobbying for this investment.

## **WEL 19 - 4      Undetectable = Untransmittable**

Proposed By Trinity College Dublin Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

That there has been a significant increase in HIV diagnoses within Ireland in recent years. The level of new HIV diagnoses is the highest on record to date with at least one diagnosis being issued every 18 hours on average. The stigma surrounding HIV in Ireland prevents us from tackling the epidemic and lowering HIV diagnoses.

**Congress further notes:**

The "PARTNER 1" and "PARTNER 2" studies showed that if someone living with HIV, who are virally suppressed from antiretroviral therapy (ART) medication, cannot transmit HIV to a sexual partner. This is known as "Undetectable = Untransmittable," or "U=U".

**Congress mandates:**

The VP for Welfare to organise a national campaign, which would be brought to every MO, to highlight and educate students on the term "U=U," or "Undetectable = Untransmittable." This campaign should emphasise the increasing diagnoses of HIV in Ireland and highlight the benefits of knowing your HIV status.

**Congress further mandates:**

The VP for Welfare to produce a document containing information about STI checks, including, but not limited to, information regarding STI's, how, where and when to get STI checks, and how much they cost.

## WEL 19 - 5 Local Specialised Sexual Health Services.

Proposed By Athlone IT SU

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of students having local access to specialised sexual health services.

### **Congress further notes:**

The student cohort is a demographic most at risk of obtaining sexual health infections/diseases.

### **Congress mandates:**

THE VP for Welfare and the officer board to lobby the HSE and government to provide local access to Specialised Sexual Health Services in every town/city with a third level institution.

## WEL 19 – 9 Second-hand Smoke

Proposed By Dublin City University SU

### **Congress notes:**

The danger and damaging effects second-hand smoke can have on students

### **Congress believes:**

That college campuses should have smoke free zones.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Welfare Officer to put together a campaign which will be rolled out to all college's to introduce smoke free zones.

## WEL 19 – 11 USI Cost of Living Index

Proposed by Academic Affairs Working Group

### **Congress notes**

That the DIT Cost of Living Guide (now the TU Dublin Cost of Living Guide) for 2018/19 indicates that the annual cost of college while living away from home is €11,829 and is €6,780 while living at home.

### **Congress further notes**

That other colleges are attempting to put together similar guides or have lists of particular costs, include possible learning resources, in their marketing materials and websites.

### **Congress believes**

That these guides do not necessarily portray the actual costs of living in Ireland while studying in third-level.

### **Congress mandates**

That the USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Vice President for Welfare seek meaningful ways to explore the true costs of student life today in Ireland, including through the possible commission of research, taking into account regional pressures, soaring rents, and hidden course costs.

### **Congress further mandates**

That any new Index should act as a national guide for student budgeting and be underpinned by evidence that can be utilised in USI's ongoing lobby efforts, including to inform the further development of the Grant Reform Paper and campaign for increased SUSI grants and other student supports.

## **WEL 19 – 13 Men's Mental Health**

Proposed by Vice President for the Border, Midlands & West

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of empowering men to speak about their Mental Wellbeing and to seek help if they face a crisis.

### **Congress notes with regret:**

The lack of work in the area of Men's Mental Health within USI.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

In 2017 Ireland registered almost 400 suicides with eight out of those ten fatalities accounting for males.

### **Congress recognises:**

How the male population of students are vulnerable to mental health crisis and the stigma attached to seeking help.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to form a campaign specific to empowering men to speak about their Mental Health.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare & Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to coordinate an action to mark International Men's Day specific to Men's Health.

## **WEL 19 – 14 Adoption of the Consent Strategy**

Proposed by VP Welfare

**Congress Recognises**

The unacceptable rates of sexual harassment and sexual assault in HEIs, as well as in wider society.

**Congress Agrees**

That sexual consent is paramount to positive communications and relationships.

**Congress Welcomes**

The lobby that USI has done to introduce an infrastructure for consent in HEIs, and the subsequent, Consent in HEIs report, "Safe, Respectful, Supportive & Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions", of which USI were members of the inner working group writing the report.

**Congress notes**

That given the shifting culture, and external attitudes to consent, USI need to introduce a comprehensive strategy on how we can best support our students with these new structures.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The adoption of the 'Consent Strategy' Document

**Congress further repeals**

2018 WEL16 Expert Consent Advisory Group

17 WEL 8 Consent classes

## WEL 19 – 15 Casework Debriefing Provision

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

### **Congress notes**

The difficult casework which officers deal with on a regular basis; and often must rely on self-coping mechanisms between periods of little support.

### **Congress further notes**

That although working groups or spaces at NC can be useful to debrief, an OB member may not be adequately equipped to lead a facilitation session to help officers explore issues they have faced in their roles.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The VP Welfare to organise debriefing sessions, on the request of Welfare working group, in order to best help officers. Debriefing sessions should be lead by an appropriately skilled facilitator, and also encompass coping skills that officers can use in self-care exercises.

## WEL 19 – 16 Regional Finance & Accommodation Information Provision

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

### **Congress notes**

That the USI Finance & Accommodation guide is a useful tool for educating students on their accommodation rights, and how to manage their finances.

### **Congress also notes**

That given the accommodation crises, it has become more difficult to categorise accommodation information as one piece, given that different areas are hard to compare.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

That the VP Welfare would endeavour to provide the online version of the Finance & Accommodation guide which are more region specific.

## 18 EM 2 (WEL) : Fee Certainty

Proposed by TCD Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Non-EU and Postgraduate students pay significant fees annually for their education. There is no government regulation of fees for these students. Many of these students are multi-year students and precarious fee increases year to year has a negative impact on students.

**Congress further notes:**

Trinity College introduced a policy of 'fee certainty' for non-EU and Postgraduate students meaning new students will be aware of the entire cost of their degree programme, prior to commencing their studies. This will provide fee paying multi-year students with vital information often required when applying for loans and scholarships, as well as placing students in an improved position to budget for the duration of their studies.

**Congress mandates:**

That until such a time as higher education is free to all students, congress mandates the VP for Academic Affairs and the VP for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for the introduction of fee certainty policies for multiyear fee paying students in HEIs meaning the costs associated with the entire duration of a degree programme is determined prior to the student beginning their studies.

## 18 EM 3 (WEL) : Survivor Support Campaigns

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

Legislation, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, does not favour the victim and that there are very little provisions put in place to support survivors of sexual assault and rape.

**Congress further notes:**

Issues regarding consent, sexual assault and rape has been to the forefront of media attention as of late. This may have an impact on future victims coming forward to report an assault. The only way this can change is for legislation to be re-written and/or added to and an improvement of provisions to be put in place for victim support. This will in turn change Irish cultures and protect the victim from personal attack.

**Congress believes:**

That the student movement has always been one to inspire great change within society and incite progressive legislation. We should unite once again to demand a change and to demand better victim support for future crimes reported.

**Congress mandates:**



The Vice-President for Welfare and the Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to head up survivor support campaigns. This would unite MO's across Ireland to come together and lead a movement towards a better legal and support system.

**Congress further mandates:**

That these campaigns, lead by USI, would promote local support groups in regional areas for victims of sexual assault. Congress also mandates that these campaigns be run within the first semester of the academic term to provide the best most efficient support to students.

## NC 18 WEL 1 : ASRA

Proposed by the USI VP Welfare

**Council Notes**

The many issues facing students when looking for student accommodation which is of an acceptable standard.

**Council Notes with Concern**

The escalating number of cramped and substandard accommodation that students are living in posing a number of health and safety risks to students across the island.

**Council Also Notes**

That ASRA, the Association for Student Residential Accommodation, is the leading representative organisation for student accommodation professionals throughout the UK and Ireland. ASRA represents student accommodation providers on a range of statutory boards and in various housing related organisations.

**Council Mandates**

The VP Welfare to work with ASRA to collectively in order to promote good standards in accommodation provision.

**Council Also Mandates**

The VP Welfare to seek a place on their committee/boards with the aim of having a continuous student voice within the organisation.

## NC 18 WEL 3: One for Ireland

Proposed by Trinity College Dublin Students' Union

**Council Believes:**

That youth mental health and homelessness are pressing social issues in Ireland today.

**Council Recognises:**

The annual fundraising weekend (March 30 - April 2, 2018) organised by charity One for Ireland, which comprises of a nationwide network of volunteers and businesses seeking to raise funds for charities in the youth mental health and homelessness sectors.

**Council Notes:**

The innovative cash-free fundraising model pioneered by One For Ireland.

**Council Further Notes:**

That the aims of One For Ireland are very closely aligned, and that USI can be of significant assistance to One For Ireland in their fundraising effort.

**Council therefore mandates:**

USI's Regional Officers to support the work of One For Ireland in advance of their fundraising effort.

**Council Further Mandates:**

USI to support One For Ireland with promotion in advance of their fundraising effort.

## 2018 WEL 2 : Online Student Assistance Fund

Proposed by Institute of Art, Design and Technology Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

The Student Assistance Fund is distributed through different application processes across HEIs.

While some have the resources to accept applications online, many do not. This can cause a drain on resources dealing with applications for both institute staff and SU officers, and ultimately prolongs the amount of time it takes to provide students in financial need with support.

**Congress recognises:**

An offline application process can exclude some access students and students studying abroad from accessing the SAF.

Congress further notes:

SUSI's upcoming move to an online application process in the interest of a more accessible system for students.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice-President for Welfare to lobby the HEA to move towards providing an online system for SAF applications to institutions should they wish to adopt it.

## 2018 WEL 3 : Cap on Student Accommodation Prices on USI platforms

Proposed by Institute of Art, Design and Technology Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

That there is a national housing crisis and student accommodation shortage.

### **Congress applauds:**

That USI have launched homes.usi.ie and are a part of the national Housing Coalition.

### **Congress proposes:**

Alongside the excellent work that USI does at the moment regarding accommodation, they need to also set a precedent for the housing and economic conditions that they envision.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

USI impose a cap on the price of the accommodation that they will platform.

### **Congress further notes:**

That the price of accommodation fluctuates depending on the economy, and so this proposed cap will also fluctuate.

The amount can be amended accordingly by the VP Welfare each year in accordance to rental prices.

## 2018 WEL 5 : Crisis Counselling Access

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of young people to seek help from mental health services, despite the difficulty in accessing them due to unacceptable wait times.

### **Congress further notes:**

Short term free public crisis counselling services are inaccessible to those who are currently in the care of the HSE and awaiting appointments that are potentially months away.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to lobby the HSE to provide a list of mental health organisations that mental health professionals and case workers can refer people to when wait times are too long.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare to lobby the HSE to negotiate with short term counselling services to accept patients currently under the care of the HSE for counselling.

## 2018 WEL 8 : Regional Food Banks

Proposed by Waterford Institute of Technology Students' Union

**Congress notes**

Food banks acquire donations of edible but unmarketable food from the food industry. Food can be donated due to a wide variety of reasons; they may be mislabelled, overproduced, test -market items and products with short code dates or even sometimes at the end of the day canteens in colleges throw away food that is perfect for consumption.

**Congress further notes**

Students who are struggling financially could be able to get some food from a food bank at the end of the day.

**Congress mandates**

Regional Officers to assist local MO's in setting up food banks for students in financial hardship, with their college canteens or other external sources.

## 2018 WEL 9 : Student Assistance Fund Access

Proposed by Institute of Technology Tralee Students' Union

**Congress notes**

The essential assistance the SAF (Student Assistance Fund) provides to students.

**Congress further notes**

According to the SAF Guidelines "students participating on a second qualification at the same or a lower level are not eligible for funding."

**Congress notes with concern**

The barriers to accessing the SAF for these students could be detrimental to continuing their studies.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The VP Welfare to work with the HEA to seek inclusion for these students so they may be eligible to apply for the SAF

## 2018 WEL 10 : Engagement with Irish Student Health Association (ISHA) members

Proposed by: Institute of Technology, Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

That the health and wellbeing of the members of each MO is of great importance to USI.

### **Congress further notes**

Student health services are very important part of HEI's throughout country by caring for and engage with many students on a daily basis.

### **Congress Believes**

That engaging with member organisations of the Irish Student Health Association is very beneficial to ensure that health and wellbeing campaigns run by USI are fully exposed to students and one clear consistent message is communicated throughout the country.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to communicate all relevant health & wellbeing campaigns in advance with ISHA and member organisations of ISHA

## 2018 WEL 11 : Smoking Cessation Campaign

Proposed by: Institute of Technology, Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

USI, HSE & DRUGS.IE have run campaigns on the dangers of drug use, but have neglected to highlight the dangers of smoking regular tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes and how addictive they are.

### **Congress Believes**

That educating students about the dangers of smoking regular tobacco cigarettes and electronic cigarettes may lead to a decrease in use.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to carry out comprehensive national campaigns on smoking cessation and the dangers of smoking.

## 2018 WEL 12 : Abusive Relationships, Sexual Violence & Harassment

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare

### **Congress Notes**

The suffering that is caused by the many levels of abusive relationships, sexual violence and harassment.

### **Congress Recognises**

That several national organisations are doing work in the area of domestic violence, sexual harassment, violence, and emotional abuse, and the USI should build partnerships with them in order to ensure students are part of their target audiences moving forward.

### **Congress Mandates**

The VP Welfare to roll out a national information campaign that is inclusive of all genders and none around abusive relationships, dating abuse, sexual violence and harassment in a similar fashion to the the “Too into You” campaign.

### **Congress Also Mandates**

The VP Welfare & VP Campaigns to create a toolkit for MO’s on sexual harassment to be disseminated alongside an awareness campaign.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

The VP Welfare and VP Equality & Citizenship to develop a partnership with the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCII) in their project work nationally to end sexual violence and harassment at third level.

### **Congress therefore deletes**

17 EQ 4 - Expansion of “2in2u” Campaign.

## 2018 WEL 13 : Health Promotion Strategy

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare

### **Congress Notes**

The Health Promotion Strategy that was adopted by USI Congress 2016.

### **Congress Commends**

The work undertaken by Officerboard at that time in relation to this strategy.

### **Congress Mandates**

The adoption and implementation of the updated Health Promotion Strategy 2018-2021.

## 2018 WEL 14 : Cura Disassociation

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare

REFERRED AND PASSED AT NATIONAL COUNCIL. INTERIM POLICY, TO COME TO CONGRESS 2019.

### **Congress Notes**

The support that pregnant people may need during a crisis pregnancy is non-judgemental, unbiased and factual.

### **Congress Notes**

Cura does not provide contact details for abortion clinics, or information on abortion services.

### **Congress Notes with Concern**

That Cura only provides two options during pregnancy counselling which can cause unnecessary pressure and lack of knowledge to make an informed choice.

### **Congress Mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to ensure that all information disseminated from USI is from organisations that provide all options to those seeking counsel on information relating to pregnancy.

### **Congress also Mandates**

USI and the Vice President for Welfare to officially dissociate from Cura by ensuring information from them is not disseminated in any USI materials or campaigns relating to Cura.

## 2018 WEL 15 : Cyberbullying Policy

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

### **Congress Notes**

The adoption of the USI Cyberbullying Policy which was adopted at congress 2017.

### **Congress also Notes**

How quickly issues change in the cyber community and how USI policy must be kept up to date to reflect that.

### **Congress Mandates**

For the adoption of a new updated Cyber Bullying policy which will be reviewed every 12 months.

**Congress also mandates**

The deletion of the older version of the cyberbullying policy.

## 2018 WEL 16: Expert Consent Advisory Group

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

**Congress Notes**

Existing USI policy on Train the Trainer consent workshops to be rolled out by USI.

**Congress Notes with concern**

The severity of issues surrounding consent that students across the island of Ireland face on a daily basis.

**Congress also Notes**

The work undertaken by other organisations on consent and the level of expertise and experience they hold in this area.

**Congress Mandates**

The VP Welfare to organise an expert advisory group to advise on the roll out of Train the Trainer consent classes.

## 2018 WEL 17 : Financial Supports for FE Students

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

**Congress Notes**

That many students in Further Education suffer financial worries

**Congress also Notes**

The lack of supports available to students in FE institutions which can cause a lot of extra pressures.

**Congress notes with concern**

Students in FE institutions may be disadvantaged because of lack of financial supports such as ESF and the disability fund.

**Students also Notes with concern**



That it can create a barrier to students you may want to progress to Higher Education, further studies or training.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The VP Welfare to lobby the Department of Education and to extend financial supports to FE Students.

## **15 WE 13 Mental Health Awareness**

REAPPROVED 2018 WITH MINOR AMENDMENT – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress acknowledges**

The success of mental health awareness through the ‘Chats for Change’ and ‘See Change’ campaigns which have a significant focus on talking to someone about mental health and an individual’s well-being.

### **Congress notes**

That although talking is a crucial message to the campaigns, some individuals require the use of Anti-depressants or Anti-Anxiety medication etc.

### **Congress Further notes**

That the lack of information around the use of medication can lead to stigmatisation of individuals who use medication for mental health issues and can cause a great deal of distress for individuals who have the use of medication suggested to them upon presenting to a GP on a mental health issue.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice-President for Welfare to include information on medication in relation to mental health issues as part of their on-going mental health campaigns.

## **15 WE 25 Gambling**

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress notes**

The addictive nature of gambling and how easily accessible gambling can be with development of apps such as Paddy Power and close proximity of betting outlets to third level campuses.

### **Congress notes with concern**

Evidence of gambling that is frequently appearing on bank statements through Student Assistance Fund Applications and the number of students who are faced with growing debt problems due to gambling.

### **Congress further notes**

In an article on the Irish Examiner last March, Paul Mullins of Aiseiri, warns that among under-25s, as many as 90% start gambling on a handheld device. The alarming aspect of online gambling is that it reverses the trend of normal gambling given that it is overwhelmingly dominated by those under 25.

The Institute of Public Health said its studies indicated that gambling among young people was thought to be three times more prevalent than those aged over 21 years – a trend entirely attributed to online sites.

### **Congress 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.

## **12 WEL 3 SEXUAL HEALTH WEBSITE**

### **Congress notes:**

There is large amount of paper material distributed in conjunction with sexual health campaigns.

### **Congress recognizes:**

The lack of a one-stop shop for sexual health information and support services on line.

### **Congress mandates the Welfare Vice President:**

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.

## **12 WEL 5 EXAM STRESS PACKS**

### **Congress notes:**

That many students experience, incidences of elevated stress and anxiety around the examination period.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

The affects of increased stress and anxiety on students' physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, and the subsequent impact on their examination performance.

### **Congress congratulates:**

The Welfare Officer and members of Officerboard for their hard work in tackling issues surrounding students' physical, mental, and emotional welfare.

**Congress believes:**

That students should be provided with adequate support and guidance around the issue of stress and anxiety, including how to diagnose the condition, what affects it has on students, what self help techniques are recommended, and general management advice.

**Congress mandates the Vice President for Welfare:**

To develop and source a stress pack and booklet to be distributed to MO's before the winter and summer exams. These should be available for December 2012.

## 12 WEL 14 EXAM STRESS CAMPAIGN

**Congress notes:**

The work that MOs put into Exam Stress Campaigns across the Country in the run up to Exams.

**Congress further notes:**

The lack of support on a National Level to the roll out of these Campaigns and the lack of an overall Exam Stress Campaign.

**Congress mandates the VP/South, VP/BMW and the Welfare Officer:**

To investigate the possibility of sourcing the materials, supplying and distributing 'Exam Stress Packs' to the MOs along with a resource pack that contains information on support services for the students.

## 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.

## 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 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 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.

## 09 WEL 1 EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

**Congress 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.

## 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.

## EQUALITY

### 20 EQ (NC) 1 Migrant Education Access

Property of the USI Executive Team

**Congress notes with concern:**

That in the absence of a standardised residency test Irish third-level institutions apply an 'EU' fees' category which often means migrant students pay two or three times more than the typical fees charged. Young people who have grown up in Ireland (gone to secondary school here) are denied access to financial assistance and the free fee scheme upon entry to third level.

**Congress also notes:**

That young people who have secured citizenship during their time in third level are often unable to 'reverse' their fee status and have no choice but to continue to pay these high tuition fees for the remainder of their third level education. These young people are also often unable to secure higher education grants.

**Congress believes:**

That the Union of Students in Ireland needs to advocate for accessible education for all students and should lend support to the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland's Migrant Education Access Campaign, including that children of non EU migrants who have come to Ireland to join their families and should enjoy equality of access to third level Education.

**Congress notes with concern:**

The Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship to work with the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland on their Migrant Education Access (MEA) campaign.

**Congress also mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Education and Skills to take effective action to address the situation of young people who have secured Irish citizenship but are currently unable to reverse their fee status. This may require a re-examination of the criteria of access to the Free Tuition Fee Scheme currently administered by the Higher Education Authority and should result in code of practice or a revised set of criteria being outlined to all third level institutes in Ireland to ensure a coordinated, equitable and consistent response.

## 20 EQ (NC) 2T Fund

Property of the USI Executive Team

**Congress notes with concern:**

That according to TENI, 78% of trans people in the UK and Ireland have thought about ending their lives and 40% have attempted suicide. For many people, beginning and continuing social transition brings significant relief. College is filled with financial stresses and for many transgender students, name changes and other transition expenses are not an option, even though they are life-saving.

**Congress commends:**

NUI Galway for the introduction of the 'T fund' for social transition, aiding students financially with elements of social transition which may include gender affirming items, such as makeup, and dysphoria relieving items like chest binders.

**Congress also notes:**

That the USI has a proud history of fundraising for various causes, but more recently does not fundraise annually for charity.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The USI to develop a guidance strategy, based on best practice models, on how to establish a local fund, which USI will then circulate to all member organisations.

## 20 EQ (NC) 3 Period Products

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress notes with concern:**

-A person who has a period will on average have 507 periods throughout their lifetime, and will spend an average of €8100 in a lifetime on sanitary products.

-According to a survey of more than 1,100 young girls and women aged between 12 and 19 years by Plan International Ireland, nearly 50% of Irish teenage girls find it difficult to afford sanitary products; some 109 of the young women who participated in the survey said they were forced to use a 'less suitable sanitary product' because of the high monthly cost involved.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

-Students' Unions have quite often borne the financial burden of buying Sanitary products for students and distributing these.

-New period products such as menstrual cups and period underwear are still taxed at a higher rate of 23%, making them less affordable.

-Period poverty disproportionately affects student groups. The National Strategy for Women and Girls has identified students as an at risk group of period poverty.

### **Congress believes:**

That these products should be provided free of charge as a necessary provision of healthcare for anyone who needs them.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to campaign for free sanitary products to be provided nationally. The provision of these products should encompass a wide variety of choice.

## 20 EQ 1 Supporting the Traveller Community

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### **Congress notes**

The Traveller community is one of the most marginalised in Irish society, and often face systemic barriers to accessing third level education, as well as healthcare and housing amongst other things. The latest data shows there are only 61 travellers in higher education.

### **Congress welcomes:**



The National Access Plan for inclusion of travellers in third level education which aims to increase the number of travellers in third level education through targeted initiatives. Also, the Yellow Flag programme which does great work in terms of breaking down social barriers in educational institutions.

### **Congress affirms**

It's support for the Traveller community as an ethnic minority group.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI Executive team to mark Traveller Ethnicity day on the 1st of March every year, and to support events that recognise intersections within communities, such as Traveller Pride.

### **Congress also mandates**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support the expansion of the yellow flag initiative into third level.

### **Congress also mandates**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to provide resources to MOs on specific issues students in the travelling community may face, working with organisations that provide education and awareness traveller culture and identity training, such as the STATUS toolkit. "

## **20 EQ 2 20 x 20 campaign support**

Proposed by the Vice President for Welfare USI

### **Congress notes**

The 20 x 20 Campaign is a national, all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perceptions of women's sport by 2020. The campaign aims are: - 20% increase in media coverage of women in sport - 20% increase in female participation at all levels of sports - 20% increased in attendance at women's games and events

### **Congress further notes**

USI supports women in sport and the well-being of students in third level college.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Welfare to engage with the 20 x 20 campaign.

## **20 EQ 3 Reporting Racism**

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship working group

**Congress notes**

The recent development of reporting tools across HEIs, for example, sexual assault reporting tools, and role these tools play in supporting students.

**Congress notes**

The same structures are not in place in our campuses to tackle racism, despite anecdotal reports that racism does happen in third level institutions. Furthermore, until we have hate crime legislation at a national level, it is very difficult to report racist incidents in a formalised manner.

**Congress acknowledges:**

The success of the iReport tool launched by INAR which allows people to identify and report incidents of racism. As well as this, race neutral language is not effective and to truly have a conversation about racism in this country we must have conversations about race and our attitude to it.

**Congress mandates**

USI to promote the iReport tool and to lobby for its use across society.

**Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support MOs in their lobbying of their institutions to develop stronger protocol against racism.

**Congress further mandates**

USI Executive team to provide anti-racism training for officers.

## 20 EQ 4 Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

**Congress reaffirms:**

It's support for the LGBTQ+ Community.

**Congress notes**

There are particular challenges still facing the community and we cannot become complacent in tackling these.

**Congress therefore mandates**

All information sent out in USI materials must be inclusive of the LGBTQ+ Community. The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to send out information after Pink Training to LGBTQ+ Societies and Students' Unions that will assist them in the events and campaigns they may wish to run throughout the year. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, Vice President for Campaigns and Regional Vice Presidents to work with LGBTQ+ organisations in developing a framework that could be applied to colleges in order to give them a LGBTQ Friendly Campus status.

## **Congress therefore repeals**

14 EQ 4

14 EQ 5

12 EQ 7

11 EQ 1

11 EQ 2

11 EQ 3

11 EQ 4

## **20 EQ 5 International Decade for people of African descent**

Proposed by the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

### **Congress notes**

The Decade for people of African Descent (lasting from 2015-2024) sets out programmes of actions and stems from the Durban Declaration, the first international document from the first ever international conference to address racism experienced by people of African descent around the globe. It seeks to protect and promote the human rights of people of African descent, raise awareness of the issues faced by the group and to adopt national, regional and international frameworks for its implementation. It was acknowledged (in the document or the resolution) that due to the historical perception of people of African descent as slaves, prejudice exists to this day that manifests itself in day to day racism, institutional racism and discrimination in accessing services and employment which results in the group's development disproportionately lagging behind compared to other groups.

### **Congress notes with concern**

The Irish Government has yet to launch the decade. The decade is opt in and is not enforced but provides real opportunities to tackle racism in Irish society and have conversations about what can be done to overcome prejudice.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Equality and Justice to formally launch the decade, and to put pressure on them to put in place a programme that celebrates the decade.

### **Congress also mandates:**

The USI executive team to organise an action to celebrate the decade.

## EM 19 (EQ) – 1: Decolonising Education

Proposed by QUB Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

That a student-led occupation started on 12 March 2019 surrounding anti-racism & decolonization in Goldsmiths University. This ongoing occupation's demands from the university is grounded in the ethos of decolonizing education as the core of anti-racist work in tertiary/third-level institutions.

The #GoldOccupy movement has encouraged actions of solidarity from across the UK & Northern Ireland.

That USI and NUS UK work in partnership through the Trilateral Agreement and that the student movement across the world has a proud history of coming together in solidarity actions.

Student-led 'Decolonise education' campaigns have emerged across the UK since 2015's 'Why is My Curriculum White?' And 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaigns, and connect to a rich history of student radicalism.

Deep inequalities persist in education for students of colour, including-but-not-limited-to the attainment gap – these are exacerbated by the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance and Maintenance Grants.

The BAME Attainment Gap is a national crisis, with BAME students 20% less likely to achieve a first or upper second-class degree compared to their white counterparts, despite having been admitted into university with the same A-level grades.

According to NUS liberate the curriculum research 34% of BAME students feel unable to bring their perspectives as students of colour, to their lectures/seminars.

There is a lack of sufficient research, across the island of Ireland, into the issues resulting in the BAME Attainment Gap and how it affects BAME students of intersectional identities and liberation groups (i.e. Women, LGBTQ, Disabled).

University staff employed are not representative of the students that they teach or the national population regarding race and this is also a prevalent issue amongst university senior management.

BAME students are being severely disadvantaged because they are more likely to leave university unable to secure jobs and twice as unlikely to make use of their degree.

A truly liberated and antiracist education system must include racial justice for students, staff and workers within an institution.

University administration are vested in the racist and xenophobic climate of wider society, and embrace the marketisation of higher education to reduce their responsibilities towards workers.

Decolonising education means democratise – transformative change will not happen through seat-at-the-table politics, but by leveraging student-worker-community power against institutions, to wrest control over them from the hands of overpaid management and corporate interests.

A ‘movement-based’ approach, organising both in and outside the confines of SUs, and rooted in local communities, should be taken to build a democratic, dynamic movement of truly decolonising our curriculum and institution.

### **Congress Further Believes:**

Decolonise campaigns must, at core, confront the processes of marketisation, corporatisation and securitisation of education that have shut down universities as spaces to organise for radical change – not narrowly consider matters of curriculum and/or faculty diversity.

- ‘Decolonising education’ must necessarily be connected to-
- The demand for free education;
- The imposition of visa monitoring on institutions;
- The exclusion and gentrification of working class communities adjacent to many universities;
- The managerialism in the university, and shutting down of internal democracy
- Links between institutions and the arms trade/militarisation abroad;
- Ending Direct Provision.

We should seek where possible to connect with education movements for radical change in the global south.

Many local campaigns across the UK, led primarily by sabbatical officers and guided by NUS UK, have been co-opted by universities and re-routed into diversity initiatives, or incrementalist reformism. The aim of these campaigns should be transformative, not merely replacing one set of bourgeois intellectuals with another of a different hue.

Issues of ‘race’ inequality cannot be divorced from the other pressures affecting institutions and education on a national scale.

Addressing ‘race’ inequality goes hand-in-hand with campaigns for free education and the democratising our education - not band-wagoning on regressive government reforms because we’re promised crumbs.

### **Congress mandates:**

The President, Vice-President Equality & Citizenship, Vice-President Academic Affairs to work on investigating issues surrounding the attainment gap in Ireland.

### **Congress also mandates**

USI Officer Board to work on the ethos of this policy.

### **Congress reaffirms**

USI's stance on calling for free education, and that the democratising education is central to ensuring education is accessible for all.

### **Congress also reaffirms**

USI's solidarity with the Goldsmiths Anti-Racism Occupation.

## **EQ 19 – 1          International Students Access to Multi Re-Entry Visa**

Proposed By Dublin IT SU

### **Congress Notes:**

The large number of international students that come to Ireland every year to study, but are only in receipt of a single-entry visa.

### **Congress further Notes:**

the challenges in being granted a multi-entry visa in Ireland, which restricts students entering and leaving the country.

### **Congress Regrets:**

That this has a negative impact on students seeing family and friends whilst studying abroad.

### **Congress Believes:**

The importance of welcoming international students to Ireland to add to our already diverse and inclusive student environment.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The VP Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Justice and Equality and the Garda National Immigration Bureau for easier access to the multi-entry visa for international students.

## **EQ 19 – 2          Students in Direct Provision:**

Proposed by Equality and Citizenship Working Group

### **Congress commends:**

The work done to date by the Union of Students in Ireland and students' unions across the country towards ending the inhumane system of Direct Provision and working to protect and support students living in Direct Provision in their institutions.

**Congress notes:**

More and more asylum seekers are entering third level education, whether through access routes or Institution of Sanctuary scholarships. It is of great concern that College of Sanctuary scholarship students can be faced with deportation orders when they are in the middle of their studies.

**Congress applauds:**

The work done by DCUSU in particular around the Save our Shepherd campaign, and the incredible success of that campaign.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Justice to take a person's student status into special consideration when in the asylum process.

**Congress also mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to devise a national strategy on what to do in the case of a student being faced with a deportation order, and to develop materials and resources around this for Students' Union officers.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Minister for Education to extend domestic fee status to students who are asylum seekers across all third level institutions.

## EQ 19 - 3 Supporting Student Parents and Carers

Proposed By Ulster University Students' Union [UUSU]

**Congress Notes:**

The significant number of students in third level education in Ireland who have dependant children or other caring responsibilities.

The additional barriers facing student parents & carers which often interfere with their academic career and limit their scope to engage outside of the classroom.

The childcare costs incurred by student parents which normally cannot be fully met by grants which they are eligible for.

In spite of this, many institutions do not have sufficient services and facilities in place to support those with caring responsibilities such as creche facilities and funding support, and do not fully consider the needs of student parents in the coordination of timetables.

**Congress Believes:**

It is imperative upon students' unions and USI to support the interests of student parents and carers and help to support them throughout their academic career. Individual MOs can make more progress on this issue locally, when they work collectively on this issue.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to produce guidance notes for MOs on how to further improve the experience of student parents & carers in their institutions, focusing on areas such as class timetabling, childcare support and inclusivity of events.

**EQ 19 - 4            The abolishment of MSM blood donation deferral period**

Proposed by Waterford IT Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

The Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) needs 3,000 donations a week to supply 71 hospitals nationwide. Regular blood donations by a sufficient number of healthy people are needed to ensure that safe blood will be available whenever and wherever it is needed. Blood transfusions are needed for women with complications of pregnancy, many complex medical and surgical procedures and for those undergoing radiation or chemotherapy to name a few.

**Congress also notes:**

The IBTS have set strict guidelines for those who eligible to donate to ensure that all donations are safe to use and to protect donors and recipients.

**Congress further notes:**

The lifetime ban on gay men donating blood to the Irish Blood Transfusion Service (IBTS) was lifted in January 2017 and replaced with a 12 month abstinence deferral period which means that a man who last had sex with another man (MSM) more than 12 months ago is now be able to donate blood if he meets the other blood donor selection criteria.

**Congress notes with concern:**

Eligibility decided on sexuality is extremely discriminatory and no one should be denied the right to donate blood based on their sexuality.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The VP Equality and Citizenship campaign for the abolishment of the deferral period to ensure that MSM who meet all other eligibility criteria will be eligible to donate blood in Ireland.



## EQ 19 - 5      Accessibility audits

Proposed By NUI Galway SU

### **Congress notes:**

Many campuses are inaccessible in many ways to students with disabilities. Examples of this include physical infrastructure such as ramps and working lifts etc. as well as not having clear markings across campus for students with visual impairments.

### **Congress further notes:**

A lack of proper facilities can act as an ongoing barrier to students with disabilities towards completing their education.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to work with AHEAD to develop an accessibility audit template for campuses, which can be given to MOs to carry out across their own campuses.

## EQ 19 – 6      Hate Crime legislation

Proposed By NUIG Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Post the introduction of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, very little legislative changes have taken place in Ireland to further protect and defend minority groups from acts of hate crime.

### **Congress further notes:**

The Irish Council of Civil Liberties report *The Lifecycle of a Hate Crime: Country Report for Ireland*, launched in July 2018, found that Ireland has significant gaps in Irish law, policy and criminal justice practice regarding acts of discrimination against minorities, which go largely underreported. Ireland currently is one of a small number of EU countries that does not have specific laws around dealing with hate crimes.

### **Congress acknowledges:**

As we grow as campus communities, diversity is reflected in our student population more and more. Students from non traditional backgrounds may find their access to education restricted by such acts.

Many students from minority groups face discrimination; in particular, members of the Trans Community, students with disabilities, and those from Ethnic minority backgrounds can find themselves the targets of hate crime. This affects students across a range of issues of accommodation, transport, online interactions and many other areas of life.

Congress mandates: The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to ensure there is adequate student representation involved at a national level for any legislation being drafted.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby for hate crime legislation to be enacted in Ireland

## EQ 19 – 7 Gender Equality

Proposed By IT Carlow SU

**Congress Notes:**

The lack of policy in relation to transgender, non-binary and intersex students, and gender identity/expression inclusivity within higher education. Research from LGBTI Ireland Report (2016) found that transgender, non-binary and intersex people face additional challenges in their day-to-day lives such as being referred to/as by the wrong pronoun or gender and this can have an immensely negative impact on a person's mental health.

**Congress Believes:**

We need to lead the way in supporting transgender, non-binary and intersex students within higher and further education.

**Congress Mandates:**

VP Equality and Citizenship to develop a campaign in conjunction with relevant organisations such as ShoutOut, BeLong To and TENI to support Students' Union Officers in running a transgender, non-binary and intersex inclusivity campaign on campus for both staff and students which should include information packs, posters, workshop materials and leads to further resources.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

USI VP for Equality & Citizenship to gather and circulate all relevant HEI and SU policy relating to transgender, non-binary and intersex gender identity and expression policies.

## EQ 19 – 8 Supporting Students with Religious Beliefs and Rituals

Proposed By Dublin IT SU

**Congress Notes:**

All MO's have a very diverse community of student members who have specific religious beliefs and rituals.

**Congress Mandates:**

The VP for Equality and Citizenship to provide elected officers with information on how best to support students who have religious beliefs and rituals. This may include lobbying for improved facilities, catering services and supports.

## EQ 19 – 9 Disability Awareness and Annual Conference

Proposed by Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

**Congress notes:**

Reports released by the Association for Higher Education Access & Disability (AHEAD), of which USI is a board member, finds that while numbers of students with disabilities participating in higher education continues to rise, significant barriers remain.

**Congress notes:**

The Union of Students in Ireland is committed to removing the stigma from all disabilities, challenging perceptions and encouraging all members of our society to take a positive attitude towards understanding the nature of disability and overcoming prejudices.

A key part of this ongoing work can be done through student engagement and campaigns throughout the year, including a national-level event, to create a space for networking, dialogue, and empowerment to leadership roles.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to roll out a campaign informing students of many different disabilities and creating awareness of supports for students with disabilities.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to organise a conference and networking event for students with disabilities before the end of April in each academic year.

## EQ 19 – 10 Equality Strategy 2019

Proposed by Equality and Citizenship Committee

**Congress notes:**

The area of Equality and Citizenship is extremely broad and expands into many different aspects of the work of the Officer Board. For this reason, it is important that there is a roadmap to assist the work of the Union of Students in Ireland in how to best ensure the brief is effectively carried out, to the best ability.

**Congress mandates:**

The adoption of the proposed Equality Strategy 2019.

## EQ 19 – 11

## EMpower students

Proposed by The VP for Equality & Citizenship and Maynooth Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Ireland has become more diverse in recent years. There has been an increase in people from Ethnic Minority background enrolling in institutions across the country and this will continue to rise.

### **Congress notes with alarm:**

That students from ethnic minority background can be underrepresented in positions of leadership and representation. This can include, students' union positions, class representatives, clubs and society committee positions etc.

### **Congress applauds:**

The success of Pink Training, Women Lead, the conference for students living with disabilities, and similar events in the promoting of minority students running for leadership positions.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to run an event called 'Empower'. This event will focus on increasing Ethnic Minority representation in positions of leadership in institutions across Ireland.

## EQ (NC) 19 - 2 Solidarity with NUS-USI 'Trust Us' Campaign and Abortion Access in Northern Ireland

Proposed by: Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

### **National Council recognises:**

The collaborative efforts in campaigning for abortion access in Ireland by students all over Ireland.

### **National Council notes the following:**

The 1967 Abortion Act of the UK Parliament was never extended to Northern Ireland.

Abortion is available in Northern Ireland only where there is a risk to the life, or to the long-term mental or physical health of the pregnant person. This excludes cases where there is fatal foetal abnormality, or a pregnancy as a result of rape or incest. In most

circumstances, abortion is a criminal offence punishable by a maximum sentence of life imprisonment under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act.

The Northern Ireland Public Prosecution Service has initiated criminal proceedings under sections 58 and 59 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act for unlawful procurement of abortion and abortion pills in a minimum of three separate cases since 2016. An April 2016 case resulted in a suspended sentence of 3 months' imprisonment, and in January 2017 a couple received formal cautions for attempting to procure an abortion with pills.

In October 2017, the UK Department for Women and Equalities announced that it would cover the cost of treatment for pregnant people who travel from Northern Ireland to England for abortion care. As a result, pregnant people lawfully resident in Northern Ireland and registered with a local GP will now be offered free abortions at the point of access if they travel to England to exert that right.

Although abortion on request is now legal up to 12 weeks in the Republic of Ireland, this change does not mean that people in Northern Ireland will stop travelling to Great Britain for abortion. The current provisions for Northern Ireland residents accessing abortion services in the Republic of Ireland require Northern Irish residents to pay to access care privately and comply with the mandatory three day waiting period. Travelling to Great Britain remains the cheapest and least complicated method of accessing legal abortion for Northern Ireland residents.

It is expected that by the end of 2019, it will be possible for residents of England, Scotland and Wales to take abortion pills at home once they have been prescribed. Northern Ireland residents who have to travel to Great Britain to access early medical abortion will not benefit from the shift to home use: they will have to take both abortion pills in Great Britain before travelling home. Meanwhile an individual who induces an abortion with the same medications (Mifepristone and Misoprostol) at home in Northern Ireland is at risk of prosecution.

**National Council further notes with great concern that:**

Although people who travel from Northern Ireland to England to access a termination are eligible to receive free abortion care on the NHS as of November 2017, the cost and logistics of arranging transport, accommodation, time off work and childcare continue to present practical barriers to accessing abortion outside Northern Ireland.

Obtaining an early medical abortion by purchasing abortion pills online is a method of abortion which is frequently relied upon by people who face additional barriers when travelling to access abortion, or find it impossible to travel altogether. Victims and survivors of domestic violence, people with disabilities and people with caring responsibilities can find themselves in this position.

The criminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland deters people from accessing aftercare, for fear of being reported to the Police Service of Northern Ireland if they disclose that they induced an abortion with medication.

Students who move to Northern Ireland for study effectively sign away their abortion rights when they register with a local GP because access to abortion is so restricted on the Northern Ireland NHS.

**National Council believes that:**

Individuals who make the decision to terminate a pregnancy should be supported and cared for in their local healthcare system, rather than disempowered and isolated by having to travel elsewhere to do so.

Access to reproductive healthcare is a student welfare issue. The lack of access to abortion services in Northern Ireland can significantly impact the personal and academic lives of students with crisis pregnancies. The inaccessibility of safe and legal abortion in Northern Ireland places an undue burden on students in an already stressful situation.

Abortion should be governed by the same robust regulatory and ethical frameworks as all other medical procedures.

Abortion reform should be designed in a manner which is inclusive of women, trans men, non-binary and gender fluid people.

**National Council mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, in solidarity with NUS-USI, to campaign for accessible reproductive healthcare and the removal of barriers to abortion access in Northern Ireland.

**National Council further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support the NUS-USI 'Trust Us' campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion in Northern Ireland and actively engage with NUS-USI to ensure our solidarity is as effective as possible.

## 2018 EQ 1 : Gender Recognition of Students

Proposed by Institute of Art, Design and Technology Students' Union & the USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

**Congress notes:**

Trans and non-binary students have difficulty changing their name and gender on college records such as exam results, roll, student cards etc.

**Congress recognises:**

The considerable distress that not being able to be recognised as who they are can have on trans and non binary students.

**Congress Notes:**

The work ongoing of the Gender Recognition Act Review Committee examining the Gender Recognition Act 2015 due to be complete by Summer 2018.

**Congress applauds:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship recent submission to the Gender Recognition Act Review and the current work being done in MOs on Gender Identity and Expression Policies.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to campaign for a system-wide agreement from CAO level upwards, regarding the facilitation of name-changes as well as the inclusion of non-binary identities.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby the HEA (Higher Education Authority) to set up a working group with the USI, THEA (Technological Higher Education Association), the IUA (Irish Universities Association) and the Department of Education to identify a robust and agreed system-level framework, so that applications for name-changes while the student is attending their third level institution is met with a consistent response regardless of institution, rather than a case-by-case, ad-hoc, and discretionary reaction that often depends on the staff member the student speaks to.

## 2018 EQ 2 : Mature Student Campaign

Proposed by Vice President for the Southern Region

**Congress notes**

The large numbers of mature students attending third level education and the difficulties they face.

**Congress applauds:**

The success of events such as Mature Student Conventions/Seminars provided by USI in the past.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to run a Mature Student Seminar annually in the first semester of each academic year.

**Congress Notes**

That events for mature students may be inaccessible due to other commitments of potential attendees.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to create an online forum for mature students in order for them to still obtain the benefits of networking at a regional and national level.

**Congress also mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to continue their work in supporting the development of mature student officers and societies in MOs.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President for Campaigns to create a support document for local MOs which should include, but is not limited to, information on running their own mature student events, information to help development mature student supports on campuses and other links to mature student organisations.

**Congress repeals**

14 EQ 1, 12 OU 12, 15 OU 13, 12 OU 12. (SIC)

## 2018 EQ 3 : Transgender Health Care

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

Transgender and Non-Binary people are people who don't identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. These people may seek medical methods of transition.

**Congress further notes:**

The work done by transgender and non-binary activist groups and USI in their submissions to the Gender Recognition Act.

**Congress notes with regret:**

Transgender and non-binary people are currently unable to dictate their own need for hormone therapy, and need to be given a diagnosis under an outdated 'medical-diagnostic model'.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship lobby the HSE to provide training for healthcare professionals in Ireland in transgender issues and their healthcare needs.



**Congress further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship lobby the Minister for Health to replace the current medical-diagnostic model of treating transgender and non-binary people in place of an informed consent model, to allow people to receive the treatments they need.

## 2018 EQ 4 : Gender Equality Audit

Proposed by the Vice President for the Dublin Region

**Congress notes**

That self-defining women are still significantly under-represented in Students' Union politics, as well as politics nationally. For the year 2017/2018, less than 20% of Presidents in USI affiliated Students' Unions were women.

**Congress recognises**

The ongoing work being done within Students' Unions to encourage more self-defining women to run for elected positions within their Students' Unions.

**Congress applauds**

The Women Lead Projects rolled out this year and in previous years by USI and the continued growth in participation of these projects.

**Congress further notes**

The importance of data collection to further develop the Women Lead Project.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to conduct a gender equality audit of Students' Unions and their structures to support and inform the ongoing work of USI in this area.

## 2018 EQ 5 : Universal design for learning

Proposed by National University of Ireland, Galway Students' Union with an amendment also proposed by them

**Congress notes:**

Learning materials used in lectures, tutorials, and for study are frequently inaccessible to students with different requirements

**Congress recognises:**

The universal design for learning approach campaigns for more user friendly, varied and accessible materials for students who have a physical/ hidden disability, mental health condition, student parents, and students whose first language is not English.

**Congress mandates:**

The VP for Equality and Citizenship and the VP for Academic Affairs to work with relevant organisations to support the implementation of Universal Design for Learning wherever possible.

## 17EQ3 Integration of displaced persons into education

**Congress recognises**

The ongoing refugee crisis, in which over 20 million people have been displaced due to war, terrorism, and other conflicts.

**Congress asserts**

That education is an emancipator and affords people the tools with which to become independent and self-determinant.

**Congress calls on**

The Irish government to partake in the resettlement and relocation of displaced persons (such as refugees and asylum seekers) in numbers appropriate to the scale of the crisis.

**Congress calls on**

The education sector in Ireland to proactively support the integration of such displaced persons.

**Congress calls on**

The Minister for Education to extend “domestic” fee status to such displaced persons resettled in Ireland who wish to pursue their studies. This status should also extend to eligibility for the student maintenance grant and other student supports.

**Congress calls on**

Institutions of third-level education to follow the lead of Dublin City University and pursue “University of Sanctuary” designation.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The officer board to campaign for the integration of such displaced persons into education in Ireland with particular focus on access, student supports, retention, recognition of prior learning and cultural integration, the latter including the provision of English language lessons.

## **Congress also mandates**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to provide for student leaders, particularly elected officers, to become “No Hate Speech” ambassadors.

## **17 EQ4                      Expansion of ‘2in2u’ Campaign**

Jointly proposed by the VP Equality & Citizenship & WIT Students' Union

### **Congress recognises:**

The organisation Women’s Aid runs a successful ‘2in2u’ dating abuse campaign which is supported by the Union of Students in Ireland. This campaign helps young women to spot the ‘danger signs’ of dating abuse and provides information to combat online stalking and digital abuse, as well as signposting support services.

### **Congress notes:**

The campaign, whilst being very beneficial, has limitations in regards to the types of relationships and genders it focuses on.

### **Congress recognises:**

That several national organisations are doing work in the area of domestic violence, sexual harrassment, violence, and emotional abuse, and the USI should build partnerships with them in order to ensure students are part of their target audiences moving forward.

### **Congress mandates:**

That VP Equality & Citizenship and VP Welfare to work with Women’s Aid to expand their 2in2u campaign to become more inclusive of all genders and relationships. If this is not feasible, then a similar campaign and materials should be developed to compliment the 2in2u campaign which is more inclusive of gender and sexuality.

### **Congress further mandates:**

The VP Equality & Citizenship to develop a partnership with the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI) in their project work nationally to end sexual violence and harassment at third level.

## **15 EQ 1 Women in Leadership**

### **Congress notes**

that motion 14/EQ9 stated: “That women are still significantly under-represented in Student Union politics, as well as politics nationally. Only 20% of Presidents are women in USI member colleges are women. Only 33% of UK Students Union Presidents are women. In the Dáil Éireann the representation of women is even worse. Only 15% of TDs are

women. In local councils across Ireland the representation of women is below 20%. In Northern Ireland, only 19% of MLAs in Stormont are women Ireland ranks 23rd out of 27 EU countries for their percentage of women in parliament.

**Congress acknowledges**

that significant work has been undertaken by MOs in empowering women to run for leadership positions in the past year.

**Congress applauds**

the fantastic job USI Pink Training does in empowering members of the student LGBT community to run for SU leadership and also the grassroots engagement that exposes USI to a new generation of Student Leaders.

**Congress calls for**

the USI to expand the Women In Leadership campaign.

**Congress mandates**

the USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to take the template provided by USI Pink Training and adapt it to create a weekend training event with the aim of empowering Women not only in their SU's but in their college, community and careers.

## 11 EQ 5 DIRECT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**Congress notes:**

The effectiveness of the USI LGBT campaign in directly interacting with the USI membership through its links with student societies and USI Pink Training.

**Congress believes:**

The USI Equality campaign should follow a similar structure.

**Congress mandates:**

The Equality Officer to organise an annual intervarsity event for each of the equality sub sections.

**Congress further mandates the Equality Officer:**

To enhance links with existing equality based student societies and to foster the development of further equality related societies in each CO.

## 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 recognizes:**

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.

## 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 recognizes:**

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

REAPPROVED 2015

### **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 9 NUS-USI Collaboration

### **Conference notes:**

That NUS-USI 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

## 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.

## Mature Students

### 10 MS 2 Mature Students Officer

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **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 student 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.

## National Affairs

### EM 20 – 4: COVID\_19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment

Proposed by MSU

#### **Congress notes:**

COVID-19 has imposed strict restrictions, resulting in a large number of students being both temporarily and permanently laid off of their part-time employment. This mass lay-off has resulted in the government creating, and most of these students receiving, the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment, which is currently valued at €350/week.

#### **Congress further notes:**

The vast majority of Irish students would have taken on many more hours in employment during the summertime to pay rent, living expenses and to save for the coming academic year. The government's possible plans to either lower or means test this payment means students will be means tested and judged on their suitability for the payment by the average of their working hours from before the pandemic hit, not their increased hours planned for the summertime.

#### **Congress mandates:**

The USI President to immediately lobby the Irish government to take into account the hours students will forego this summer while reforming the criteria for receiving the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment.

### EM 20 – 7: Emergency motion for COVID funding gaps

Proposed by NUIGSU

#### **Congress understands**

Due to Covid-19, third level institutions and FEs will have lost a considerable amount of money due to the crisis and there will be a drop in funding from external sources.

#### **Congress notes**

Students services such as counselling, health units, disability services, academic supports as examples along with Students' Unions' funding could be under threat from funding cuts to cover the costs that Covid-19 brought and will bring.

#### **Congress recognises**

USI's opposition to any cuts to student services or Students' Unions.

### **Congress mandates**

The VP Campaigns and President to investigate the impact of funding cuts on third level institutions and FEs due to Covid-19.

### **Congress further mandates**

The VP Campaigns and President to lobby government officials to increase funding and cover any funding gaps due to the virus.

## **EM 20 – 8: Emergency Motion on Financial Barriers to Education**

Proposed by NUIGSU

### **Congress Notes**

That the majority of students in Higher/Further Education across the State must work, either part-time or seasonally, to fund, in full or in part, their Education and the associated living costs.

### **Congress Further Notes**

That a significant proportion of these students rely heavily on the Summer Months, when they can work full-time and not have to worry about being absent from lectures, laboratory classes etc.

### **Congress Believes**

That the financial burden, both directly and indirectly associated with accessing education is one of the greatest barriers to education, both nationally and globally.

### **Congress Recognises**

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, many students will find themselves under unexpected financial pressure, because of loss of employment/earnings, as most students are employed in the service/retail sectors which have been heavily hit.

### **Congress Further Recognises**

That many students will have been deemed eligible for the COVID Unemployment Payment, but many students will equally not have been deemed eligible due to a reliance on seasonal Summer work, or indeed due to taking time off to manage the heavy workload placed on students in February and March of the Academic Calendar, for example.

### **Congress Also Recognises**

That many students will struggle to return to education in the autumn, due to a greatly reduced amount of money saved, or may be considering deferring the year or leaving education, as a result of same.

### **Congress Mandates**

The President, along with the Executive Team, to lobby the Government to introduce an Emergency Financial Support for students, to prevent a potential Exodus from Education, or the unnecessary falling into personal debt of same.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

The Relevant Officers, working alongside the Individual MOs, to lobby individual Higher/Further Educational Institutes to take a more Lenient View of students who find themselves in Financial Difficulties, particularly in light of this crisis which we have faced, and continue to face, irrespective of wealth, class or other distinction. The Coronavirus does not discriminate, so why should Education.

## **20 NA (NC) 1 Decriminalisation of Sex Work**

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress notes**

Sex work refers to escorting, lap dancing, stripping, pole dancing, pornography, webcamming, adult modelling, phone sex, and selling sex (on and off the street).

Currently prostitution (the exchange of sexual services for money) is not illegal, but associated activities (soliciting in a public place, kerb crawling, operating a brothel) are.

### **Congress notes with concern**

With the rise in living costs, the potential increase in tuition fees, the inadequacy of the maintenance grant, and various other personal reasons it is highly likely that some students do and will do sex work alongside their studies.

### **Congress does not believe**

That anyone should be forced into sex work as a means of supporting themselves and that the current system fails those it affects directly: sex workers.

### **Congress applauds**

In August 2015, Amnesty International voted to adopt policy to protect the human rights of sex workers. The resolution recommended that they develop a policy that supports the full decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual sex work. The policy will also call on states to ensure that sex workers enjoy full and equal legal protection from exploitation, trafficking and violence.

### **Congress believes**

That there should be far more support for sex workers, both within the industry and for those looking to get out of it. Sex workers should be fully supported when seeking to leave the industry, especially through the opportunities to re-skill or upskill through education.

### **Congress believes**

Decriminalisation would ensure that sex workers feel able to report unsafe clients or violence at work without the worry of criminal repercussions, work together for safety, and that those who wish to leave the sex industry are not left with criminal records as a result of their job.

### **Congress mandates:**

Officer Board to support and campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work. This is to be done through the support of sex worker organisations who work to improve the lives of sex workers across Ireland.

## **20 NA (NC) 4 Motion on Insurance Reform**

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress believes**

Students are massively struggling with the cost of education, from the extortionate fees to the huge costs of accommodation. Transport is another cost we need to reduce for students.

Students are commuting by car more because of the high costs of education or lack of availability of public transport but the commutes themselves are almost as expensive as renting in some cases.

### **Congress notes**

That after Central Bank abolished releasing the PMIS report in 2015, that there is very little data available on specific stats in relation to insurance - including around young people/students and motor/travel insurance, making it very difficult to create a case to lobby on.

### **Congress believes**

According to anecdotal data, that students face a number of barriers when it comes to insurance including cost, getting insured on cars aged 10 years and older.

### **Congress believes**

That transparency is important in terms of real reform of this market and in order to lobby on this issue.

### **Congress acknowledges**

That there is a broad alliance of groups work on insurance reform called the Insurance Reform Alliance who are highlighting the negative impact of persistently high premiums and calling for real action to tackle the issue. Their aim is to leverage reforms that will quickly reduce liability and motor insurance premiums to affordable levels and keep them that way.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI Executive to join the Insurance Reform Alliance.

### **Congress also mandates**

The USI Executive to work on reducing the costs of insurance to students, including lobbying relevant bodies and building partnerships with companies to offer discounts.

## **20 NA (NC) 5 Motion on Free Public Transport for Students**

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress believes**

Students are struggling with the cost of education, from the extortionate fees to the huge costs of accommodation. Transport is another cost we need to reduce for students. Students are commuting more because of the high costs but the commutes themselves are almost as expensive as renting in some cases. This is a much more viable option for those who have the option to get a bus as it is better for the environment and does not require parking spaces in the vicinity of the college, which is not offered in some institutions.

### **Congress acknowledges**

By 2000, there were 27 free public transport systems in the world. That increased to 60 in 2010, 99 in 2017 and 114 today - the majority in Europe, according to Wojciech Keblowski, an expert on free public transport at the Free University Brussels.

### **Congress notes**

Ireland already provides free public transport for citizens aged 66 and older, and for certain categories of welfare recipients.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI Executive to lobby for the further reduction and in turn, the abolition of public transport costs for students.

## **20 NA (NC) 6 Motorcycle Safety**

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress notes**

That the Road Safety Authority do run campaigns in relation to vehicles of all types albeit more influence is placed on some more than others The Road Safety campaigns currently run by USI and MO's both locally and nationally and the increasing number of students choosing motorcycles as a mode of transport.

### **Congress notes with concern**

The rise in motorcycle related collisions and accidents on Irish roads. Based on figures from the RSA (Road Safety Authority) May 2019 the amount of motorcyclist involved in fatal collisions from 2005-2015 was 212 in comparison to cyclists during the same period was 47.

### **Congress notes**

The RSA has information available on motorcyclists but unfortunately they don't provide enough information for other road users on how to look out for motorcyclists. The need for MO's to highlight the importance of motorcycle safety is of paramount importance.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

USI to assist MO's where possible to roll out motorcycle safety and awareness campaigns geared towards students.

### **Congress also mandates**

The VP Welfare to look into collaborating with organisations such as the Road Safety Authority in promoting Road Safety (irrespective of vehicle – that all vehicles are included in their road safety, inclusive of cars, motorcycles, bicycles etc.) inclusive of all with a particular emphasis on students.

## **20 NA (NC) 7 Internship campaign**

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress acknowledges**

The work done by the Media Interns Alliance on highlighting the issues faced by interns working in media. The Media Interns Alliance is a grassroots alliance established in February 2019 comprised of media workers in Ireland, former interns, legal professionals and current interns campaigning for the abolition of unpaid or low paid internships. They believe that unpaid internships act as a barrier to students and graduates from working class, migrant, traveller and LGBTQ backgrounds on the basis that these people can not afford to work for free. Through the use of social media, the Media Interns Alliance have shared the stories of former and current interns in Ireland, unveiling the extent of the unethical and unlawful practise of unpaid or low paid internships. The Media Interns Alliance also offers workshops to students and recent graduates to explain their rights,



share stories and acts as a community for those who they feel have been taken advantage of by media organisations.

### **Congress believes**

That the practice of internships are critically under regulated in Ireland. It is common practise in many European Countries to have protections in place for interns in the workplace. No such protections are afforded in Ireland.

### **Congress believes**

That media companies in Ireland have been profiting off the backs of unpaid and low paid intern labour for many years, creating a revolving door style of precarious quasi employment for students and graduates.

### **Congress notes**

That the current practise of expecting job ready graduates to work for free with little mentorship and fulfil the roles of full-time staff members creates a free labour market to the detriment of students and graduates in lieu of sorely needed entry level positions. This also exacerbates inequality, as these unpaid internships are only accessible to those who can afford them.

### **Congress acknowledges**

that interns have no rights under current Irish law and therefore no legal protection from exploitation. The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011 which introduced the Job Bridge Scheme is the only time an intern is mentioned in Irish law. Under this legislation, the legal definition of an Intern is “not an employee” and therefore should not be adding value to a company. The Media Interns Alliance believe that they can prove that interns are in fact employees and adding value to numerous companies in many sectors and should therefore be entitled to at least the minimum wage and workplace legal protections.

### **Congress notes**

That unpaid or low paid internships exclude working class people, migrant groups, members of the LGBTQI community and other marginalised groups who simply cannot afford to take work with no or little pay to further their career.

### **Congress notes**

That many students and graduates rely on internships in order to gain work experience and build networks in their field with the plan to secure a job in the future.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns to engage with Media Interns Alliance, relevant trade unions and other groups of interns to develop a campaign together to improve the rights for interns.

## 20 NA (NC) 8 Rent Strikes

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress notes**

Following from the success of Rent Strikes in the UK and emerging Rent Strike groups in Ireland, rent strikes involve the withholding rent, typically from the college in college-owned student accommodation, in a form of protest of the cost of student accommodation with the objective that the college would reduce the rent.

### **Congress also notes**

Collective action and rent strikes have proven extremely effective. Victories include a £1.2 million rent cut at UK based colleges UCL and a 35% backdated rent cut at Goldsmiths, UK.

NUS (the UK National Union of Students') have been supportive of rent strikes in the UK.

### **Congress acknowledges**

Focussing on college-owned student accommodation, brings the fight for affordable student accommodation to the campus, creating a college that is more affordable and accessible for future students who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend college. Colleges should be working to remove barriers to attending college and the cost of accommodation is a huge barrier currently.

### **Congress mandates:**

USI to support campaigns involving rent strikes in campus accommodation.

## 20 NA (NC) 8 Student Accommodation Position Paper

### **Congress approves:**

Student Accommodation Position Paper

You can find the paper here.

## 20 NA (NC) 9 Industrial Relations Act 1990

Property of the USI Executive Team

### **Congress highlights**

The great work that the student movement and trade union movement do in tandem with each others' campaigns, create campaigns together and to support students as workers.

### **Congress notes**

That past campaigns where the USI and trade unions have had their members have worked together have been inhibited by the restrictions of the Industrial Relations Act 1990, particularly around secondary picketing, aside from the additional impacts it has on students as workers and future workers.

### **Congress notes**

The 1990 act was introduced to restrict and control trade unions. It is fundamentally flawed and is the worst dilution of workers rights in the history of the state. Since its introduction we have seen precarious employment, short term contracts, bogus self employment, the gig economy, privatisation, low pay and a general race to the bottom in workers rights which in turn has led to a decline in union membership. Decisions on industrial action should be left in the hands of workers and their unions without fear of repercussions.

### **Congress notes**

The work done by the Trade Union Left Forum (TULF) in the campaign to work towards the repeal of the Industrial Relations Act 1990.

### **Congress mandates:**

USI to engage with like minded unions and TULF to support them in the campaign to repeal the 1990 Industrial Relations Act and replace with legislation that allows secondary picketing but also gives union recognition, full collective bargaining rights and the right to union access.

## **20 NA 1 Climate Action Policy**

Proposed by the Vice President for the Southern Region,

NOTE: The Climate Action Strategy is available at

<http://congress.usi.ie/online-congress-2020/policydocs/>

### **Congress adopts**

The Climate Action Strategy

### **Congress therefore repeals**

2018 UO 20

2018 UO 19

UO (NC) 19 - 1

UO 19 18

2018 NA 2

EM 19 (CZN)

5 CZN 19

2018 CZN 1

## 20 NA 3 Campaign for Electoral Reform

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Dublin Region

### **Congress notes**

That automatic voter registration does not exist in Ireland.

### **Congress further notes**

The Written Submission to the Public Consultation on Modernising the Electoral Registration Process put forward by USI in 2019.

### **Congress recognises**

A number of students and young people were not able to vote in the 2020 General Election due to the election being called for a date; a week ahead of the publication of that year's electoral registration.

### **Congress understands**

The benefit that automatic voter registration would provide to Ireland's electoral system and political engagement.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship and Vice President for Campaigns to put a campaign together to push for electoral reform which includes but is not limited to; votes at 16, automatic voter registration, and the establishment of an electoral commission."

## EM 19 (NA) – 1: Support for Workers in Ballina Breweries - Coca-Cola

Proposed by USI VP for Campaigns

This requires two-thirds majority to pass

### **Congress Notes:**

SIPTU represents the majority of core production workers in the Coca Cola Company plant in Ballina Beverages, County Mayo. Since October 2014, they have been seeking union recognition for the purposes of collective bargaining. They have two Labour Court recommendations that state that the company should recognise SIPTU for those employees in membership of the Union. The company has shut down discussion on the Labour Court recommendations.

**Congress notes with concern:**

The company's human rights policy states 'where employees are represented by a legally recognised union, we are committed to establishing a constructive dialogue with their freely chosen representatives. The company is committed to bargaining in good faith with such representatives.' The company are clearly in breach of their own human rights policy by failing to engage in collective bargaining with SIPTU and its members.

**Congress also notes:**

Young people are the main target market for Coca Cola products and have great weight in this campaign.

**Congress further notes:**

The National Union of Students UK (NUS UK) wrote to Mr James Quincey, President and CEO of The Coca Cola Company, on the 12th March 2019, raising their concerns about the company's violation of their own human rights policy in relation to workers rights. Mr Brent Wilson, The Coca Cola Company Global Head of Workplace Rights, wrote back to the NUS on the 15th March 2019 offering to meet with the NUS on their concerns.

**Congress Mandates:**

USI officerboard to write a letter of correspondence to Mr Quincey in support of the SIPTU members in Ballina and raise their concerns over this breach of the human rights of Coca Cola workers in Ballina Beverages.

**Congress also mandates:**

USI officerboard to support SIPTU in their #TasteZeroRights campaign.

## EM 19 (NA) – 2: USI Strategy Paper on the British Exit from the European Union

Motion proposed by the VP for Academic Affairs

**Congress notes**

That the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union on 23 June 2016, but that voters in the North rejected Brexit in the referendum.

### **Congress further notes**

Previous USI mandates opposing Brexit, to support the efforts of NUS-USI in fighting the negative consequences of Brexit, and the previously stated support of USI to the NUS-USI call for a 'People's Vote'.

### **Congress notes with deep concern**

The political deadlock in the UK Parliament on the negotiated Withdrawal Agreement, which would prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland through the inclusion of the backstop, and the now looming prospect of a no deal Brexit.

### **Congress recognises**

That USI must now seriously increase its lobby and campaigning activity on the implications of Brexit for students across the island, and work more proactively with NUS-USI to protect peace and stability on the island, the rights enshrined under the Good Friday Agreement, and the right of access of all to education.

### **Congress therefore adopts**

The USI Strategy Paper on the British Exit from the European Union.

### **Congress also mandates**

That this Strategy is reviewed and considered at each National Council, as required.

## **NA 19 – 1 Garda National Immigration Bureau Process for non-EU students.**

Proposed By Postgraduate Working Group

### **Congress Recognises**

The current process for GNIB registration for students coming from outside of the European Union is costly and repetitive.

### **Congress further recognises**

That the high cost of renewing your application annually combined with the bureaucracy of the process is not fit for purpose.

### **Congress further recognises**

That the travel restrictions which activate through the GNIB process are counter intuitive to a postgraduate working and academic life.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to lobby the Department of Justice and Equality, and any party they deem appropriate, to reform the process and make it more accessible and equitable for students.

## NA 19 - 2 Post March 29th: Brexit Support

Proposed By Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU)

### **Congress Notes:**

At time of writing, the United Kingdom is set to exit the European Union on March 29th.

If a deal is not struck, the EU would begin to trade with the UK under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

Policy previously passed by Congress in 2016 which mandated USI to 'actively campaign to ensure that the rights and values of the student movement are not diminished or ignore'.

EU students studying in the UK and UK students studying in the Republic of Ireland have been guaranteed home fee status for 19/20, but no such guarantee has been made beyond.

### **Congress Believes:**

No-Deal Brexit could have disastrous consequences for the lived experience of students across the island, and will lead to uncertainty around fees, research funding and cross-border mobility amongst many issues.

Any future detrimental change to fee status for ROI or EU students studying in the North or vice-versa would be entirely unacceptable.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to support MOs to work with their institution in supporting students in their colleges who have been affected by the outcomes of Brexit.

The USI President to consult with the NUS-USI and NUS-UK Presidents to lobby institutions and government against reclassification of fee status for UK and ROI/EU citizens studying in ROI/EU and the UK respectively.

## NA 19 - 3 Integrated Education in Northern Ireland

Proposed by Ulster University Students' Union

### **Congress Notes:**

Education in Northern Ireland is divided and typically segregated along religious lines.

There are around 70'000 empty desks in the school's system across the North.

Divided education systems create a lack of consistency in the quality and content in the education received, particularly in areas such as religious education and sex education.

**Congress Recognises:**

That divided education isolates communities and does not contribute to progress towards a shared future in Northern Ireland.

That educating all children together at a primary and secondary level is an essential part of the reconciliation process and of building a society that celebrates respect, understanding and friendships across traditional divides.

Divisions cannot be expected to be healed if children are taught separately and don't meet someone of a different belief or background to themselves until they reach university.

**Congress Mandates:**

That USI President should consult with NUS-USI for fully integrated education at primary and secondary level within Northern Ireland whilst respecting people's right to choose where they send their children.

The USI Officer Board should work alongside stakeholders with similar interests and outlooks such as the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) to achieve this.

## NA 19 - 4      Expansion of student Leap Card

Jointly Proposed by GMITSU And NUI Galway SU

**Congress Notes:**

Most colleges have a large percentage of commuting students, especially since the price of renting accommodation has increased largely over the last couple of years. Public transport in most areas is acceptable but still needs more investment especially in rural areas.

**Congress further notes:**

The National Transport Authority (NTA) leap card has made the price of public transport cheaper within city boundaries but not from commuter towns and cities, meaning many students who commute everyday are forced to buy tourist tickets.

**Congress recognises:**

Cheaper and improved public transport would incentivise more students to use it and reduce congestion and the need for housing in most HEI towns/cities. More affordable public transport options also widens the radius of housing to students further out than just city boundaries.



**Congress Mandates:**

The USI President to negotiate with the NTA to improve and extend the limits of use for the Student Leap Card, making access to institutions cheaper and more accessible.

## NA 19 - 5 Protection of Employee Tips Bill Campaign

Proposed by GMITSU

REQUIRES A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY TO PASS

**Congress Notes:**

Currently in Ireland there is no legislation for ownership of tips for employees in the hospitality sector in which they work.

**Congress Further Notes:**

There is no legal obligation for employers to re-issue tips or to have a structure in place to ensure employees received their tips. This has allowed employers to place restrictions on the allocation of tips.

**Congress Recognises:**

That employers often capitalise on this fact to take tips that rightfully belong to the employee.

**Congress Further Recognises:**

The legislation will give transparency to where tips go, for the staff and customers who reward the tip!

**Congress Mandates:**

The USI President to lobby TD's to ensure that, "the Protection of Employee Tips Bill" that's passed through the Seanad gets through the Dáil to become Law and our students that work in that sector get what they're owed.

## NA 19 - 6 BusConnects - Dublin Area Bus Network Redesign

Proposed by Vice President For The Dublin Region

**Congress notes**

The recent BusConnects Dublin Area Bus Network Redesign Consultation Process.

**Congress further notes**

The impact that the redesign could have on students.

**Congress mandates**

The Vice President for the Dublin Region to inform MOs of the Dublin Area Bus Network Redesign when it is reviewed.

**Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for the Dublin Region to collect feedback from MOs on the Dublin Area Bus Network Redesign and collate it in to a report.

## NA 19 - 7 Privatisation of Public Transport

Proposed by Vice President For The Dublin Region

REQUIRES A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY TO PASS

**Congress notes with concern**

The recent privatisation of several Dublin Bus routes;

17a (from Blanchardstown to Kilbarrack)

33a (from Balbriggan/Skerries to Swords/Dublin Airport or Dublin City Centre)

33b (from Portrane to Swords)

45a, 45b (from Dún Laoghaire to Kilmacanogue)

59 (from Killiney to Dún Laoghaire Station)

63, 63a (from Dún Laoghaire Station to Kilternan Village)

75, 75a (from Tallaght to Dún Laoghaire)

102 (from Dublin Airport to Sutton Station)

111 (from Dalkey to Brides Glen)

175 (from Citywest to UCD)

184 (from Bray to Newtownmountkennedy)

185 (from Bray to Enniskerry)

**Congress further notes**

That in October, the National Transport Authority (NTA) announced its intention to tender out 10% of Bus Éireann routes.

Congress worries

That the continued privatisation of public transport will increase costs and have a negative affect on students.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President to make representations and lobby against the privatisation of public transport.

## **NA 19 – 8 Minimum Graduate Wage for Students Graduates**

Proposed By GMITSU

### **Congress Notes:**

Students are exposed to precarious work, zero-hour contracts and low wages whilst supporting themselves in college and early years of their careers

### **Congress Regrets:**

That the increase in the cost of living and a relatively stagnant minimum wage has grown the divide between what students earn, and what students need to earn to meet the cost of living.

### **Congress Recognises**

That a living wage provides for someone to earn the minimum required to live.

### **Congress Mandates**

The President of USI to initiate campaigns and lobbying efforts to increase the minimum wage of graduates.

## **NA 19 – 8 Right to Higher Education**

Proposed by The USI President

REQUIRES A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY TO PASS

### **Congress recognises**

That there is no constitutionally recognised right to Higher Education in Ireland.

### **Congress welcomes**

The ruling of the Irish High Court, who recognised that in order to be economically and socially prosperous, it was imperative that citizens have access to higher education.

### **Congress Believes that**

Ireland, as a signatory to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, should pursue improved access to Higher Education.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President to actively work to ensure that reference to that convention is throughout the work of the department and other agencies, and to explore ways and means to ensure

### **Congress Further mandates**

The USI President to lobby for the Higher Education Authority Act to reflect in its wording that third level education is a public good that must be accessible.

## **NA 19 – 10 Higher Education Funding Campaign**

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

### **Congress notes**

The formation of a Coalition for Public Funded Education in recent years, which was driven by USI and includes SIPTU, IFUT, IMPACT, TUI and ISSU. This collaboration with like-minded organisations, who support our funding position and see Higher Education as a public good, strengthens the campaign.

### **Congress mandates**

USI Officer Board to ensure the continuation of and engagement with the Coalition for Public Funded Education.

### **Congress notes**

The previous research done by the NERI institute in 2013 on Higher Education Funding, led by the USI-SIPTU partnership called 'We Need to Talk about Higher Education', which was adopted by Congress in 2013.

### **Congress notes**

The need for an updated single comprehensive and researched document on the public-funding model proposed through various USI policies. This will provide USI with credible, well-researched and solutions-based policy for which to advance the argument in favour of our ideological position on third-level funding.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President and Vice President for Campaigns to seek to update the previous research conducted by the NERI institute in line with the current situation in higher education and commission other areas of research that will also benefit the campaign where needed.

### **Congress mandates:**

The USI President and Vice President for Campaigns to create a sustained national campaign on Higher Education Funding, backed by research and supported by the

Coalition, to include investment in Higher Education, supports and towards a model of fully publicly funded education.

USI Officer Board to campaign and lobby extensively for the future funding of the Irish Higher Education system.

**Repeal:**

14 AAQA 1 USI/NERI THIRD-LEVEL FUNDING POLICY

14 EM 4 THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN- EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC GOOD

## NA (NC) 19 - 1 Air BnB Regulation

Proposed by: Trinity College Dublin Students' Union

**National Council regrets:**

As of the beginning of August 2018 there was a mere 1,400 houses available to rent in Dublin. At the same time there was in excess of 3,000 homes to let on AirBnB.

**National Council notes:**

The regulation of short-term letting through agents such as AirBnB in cities such as Amsterdam and Berlin tackled directly the congestion in the availability of housing.

**National Council therefore calls upon:**

The Government to introduce further regulation of this sector in line with that employed in Berlin in order to increase the availability of housing.

## NA (NC) 19 - 2 Separate Church and State

Proposed by: Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

**National Council notes:**

That people in Ireland have different religious and spiritual beliefs or none and we live in a pluralistic society.

**National Council notes with concern:**

The religious nature of Bunreacht na hÉireann and how it can further impact the advancement of positive change in Ireland.

**National Council believes:**

That Bunreacht na hÉireann and our laws should be secular and that religious or spiritual faith and practices should have no influence on our legislative processes or laws and that no one religion should have supremacy over others.

**National Council mandates:**

USI Officer Board to support campaigns and lobby groups working towards a separation of church and state. This includes but is not limited to supporting the provision of objective relationships and sexuality education in schools and removing the offence of blasphemy from Bunreacht na hÉireann.

## NA (NC) 19 - 3 Pay Equality for Newly Qualified Teachers

Proposed by: Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

**Council Notes:**

The financial difficulties faced by Newly Qualified Teachers due to the two tier pay system.

**Council Further Notes:**

Those who entered the profession from February 2012 have been placed on a severely-reduced starting salary which sees them generally earn over 21% less than those appointed prior to 2012.

**Council Mandates:**

USI Officer Board to support the campaign striving towards equal pay for equal work and to ensure that negotiations are inclusive of the student perspective.

## NA (NC) 19 - 5 Supporting the 'Use your brain, not your fists' Campaign

Proposed by: IT Tralee Students' Union

**National Council acknowledges**

The 'Use your Brain, not your fists' Campaign was run by An Garda Síochanna to highlight the devastation of violent attacks by young people on each other.

**National Council acknowledges**

That students could imperil themselves and others through violent attacks; and that they may not be aware of the risks or long term effects of their actions.

**National Council therefore mandates**

That the VP Campaigns & VP Welfare should liaise with An Garda Síochanna in future in relation to this campaign, and to work towards inclusion of key messaging around violent behaviour in future campaigns relating to personal safety.

## NA (NC) 19 - 6 Ownership of the National Maternity Hospital

Proposed by: Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

### **National Council recognises:**

The long history of the Union of Students in Ireland in campaigning for accessible abortion services in Ireland, and the recent victory in repealing the 8th Amendment from Bunreacht na hÉireann.

### **National Council notes:**

The continued opposition to abortion access by many religiously-based groups throughout Ireland.

### **National Council notes with concern:**

That abortion access could be extremely limited if plans for the National Maternity Hospital to be governed by a Catholic organisation go ahead.

### **National Council mandates:**

USI Officer Board to campaign for the National Maternity Hospital to be taken into public ownership, and that the new maternity hospital be governed by a new, secular charter.

### **National Council further mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Minister for Health on this issue.

## NA (NC) 19 - 7 ICCL Electoral Law Reform

Proposed by: USI President

### **National Council notes**

A law which was originally intended to prohibit large or anonymous donations to political parties is now being applied to the campaigning work of civil society organisations, preventing them from carrying out their legitimate human rights and social justice work.

### **National Council notes that**

Transparency regarding donations to charities and CSOs in general, and particularly during referendums or elections periods is imperative.

### **National Council notes with concern**

That the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPOC) is now applying the law to civil society's legitimate attempts to bring about change. This places Ireland in the same legal position as countries such as Hungary and Russia which prevent foreign funding of civil

society, although in our case these restrictions are the result of poor regulation rather than deliberate policy decisions.

### **National Council mandates**

The USI President to actively support the joint campaign calling for electoral act reform, along with the ICCL, Amnesty, Frontline defenders, Uplift, Transparency International and The Wheel.

## **NA (NC) 19 - 8 Support the fight for marriage equality in Northern Ireland**

Proposed by: Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

### **National Council notes:**

Northern Ireland is the only region in the UK where same-sex marriage is still not legally recognised, despite huge support among the public in Northern Ireland. According to a 2016 Ipsos MORI poll, 70% of the public in Northern Ireland are in support of marriage equality.

### **National Council notes with concern:**

That according to the Mental Health in Northern Ireland: Fundamental Facts research, reduced LGBT+ rights in Northern Ireland has led to a mental health crisis in the community, with 5% of LGBT+ individuals self-harming compared to 13% in rest of UK, 57% drinking to hazardous levels compared to 24% in England, and 25% attempting suicide

### **National Council believes:**

That everyone should have equal access to civil marriage, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

### **National Council mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support the Love Equality Coalition campaign for equal marriage in Northern Ireland.

### **National Council also mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the USI President to publish a statement of support for the Love Equality campaign in pursuit of marriage equality in Northern Ireland from the Union of Students in Ireland and encourage other LGBTQ+ organisations to do the same.

### **National Council further mandates:**



The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to endeavour to include opportunities for students to learn about the political climate with regard to marriage equality in Northern Ireland at LGBTQ+ training events.

## 2018 NA 1 : Coalition for Homelessness and housing policies

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

### **Congress notes**

The Coalition For Homelessness And Housing formed in 2016 with USI becoming members in 2017.

### **Congress recognises the coalition policies are:**

- The housing and homelessness situation should be declared an emergency.
- An end to economic evictions: No loss of principal residency due to economic distress.
- Regulation of the private rented sector. Security of tenure and rent certainty. Greater enforcement and inspection. Limit rent rises to a link such as the consumer price index. Public led provision of student accommodation. A charter of housing rights for all renters in the private sector (including students).
- A local authority led emergency response to the housing crisis addressing the issue of vacant units, including the use of compulsory purchase orders and the refurbishment of existing units to meet public housing targets.
- Public policy should aim to increase the output of public housing to an annual rate of 10,000 units per year by late 2018/early 2019 at an estimated cost of €1.8 billion per annum. At least three quarters of these must be provided by local authorities.
- Additional capital expenditure of €1,150 million in 2018 on top of 2017's planned €655 million provided from the fiscal space available for 2018 and additional tax measures such as the fast-tracking of the vacant site levy and by borrowing. Greater flexibility as regards the application of EU fiscal rules for investment in public housing.
- An integrated strategy of well-planned mixed income housing provided by the local authorities on publicly owned land.
- Redirect the billions spent on subsidising private landlords to the provision of public housing while continuing and improving necessary rent assistance.
- The development of a cost rental model as a matter of urgency. Adoption and adaption of NERI's March 2017 proposals for a European cost rental model.
- Land zoned for housing that is owned by local authorities should be used primarily to provide public housing by local authorities, instead of being made available to private developers.
- Decent pay and working conditions in the construction sector aiming for the use of unionised and direct labour.

- Full expenditure of improved funding for Traveller accommodation.
- Socially inclusive and energy efficient standards for public housing
- Steps taken to inscribe the Right to Housing in the constitution.
- An end now to emergency provision for families in bed and breakfast accommodation and the provision for them of suitable public housing. Improved and expanded hostel accommodation for homeless people on the street.

### **Congress therefore adopts**

The current policies (as of 23 February 2018) of the coalition, which is inclusive of student specific housing issues.

## **2018 NA 3 : 24/7 Cardiac Care for the South East**

Proposed by Waterford Institute of Technology Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Waterford and the extended South East including the student population have Cardiac Cover in University Hospital Waterford Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm.

### **Congress further notes:**

The People of the South East are at a serious risk as are students with the lack of this essential facility which is currently being provided in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway as a 24/7 365 days a year service.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The USI President and Welfare Officer to lobby the Minister for Health and any other relevant decision makers in the Government stating the absolute need for 24/7 365 Cardiac Care for the South East in UHW with the aim of this service being provided as soon as possible.

## **2018 NA 4 : Seanad Reform**

Proposed by the President of USI

### **Congress notes:**

Prior to the 7th amendment, it was a constitutional requirement that three members of Seanad Éireann, be elected by the graduates of the National University of Ireland and three by the graduates of the University of Dublin (Trinity College).

### **Congress further notes:**

The 7th amendment to Bunreacht na hÉireann passed by referendum on the 5th of July 1979 with a majority of 92.4%. This amendment allowed for six senators to be elected by the graduates of any institutions of higher education in any manner that might be determined by law by the Oireachtas (parliament).

**Congress notes with concern:**

That there has been no legislative change in reforming the University Constituencies since the passing of the referendum almost 40 years ago.

**Congress believes:**

That the current electoral system is elitist and is disengaged from the majority of citizens

**Congress applauds:**

The Manning report that was launched in 2015, recommending reforms to the Elections, powers and reforms of the Seanad.

**Congress mandates:**

The President to lobby the government to implement the recommendations from the Manning Report.

**Congress further mandates:**

The President to lobby for a proposed amendment to the constitution to reform the Seanad including, but not limited to, the removal of 11 seats being nominated by the Taoiseach and the stipulation that all voting be by secret postal ballot.

## 15 NA 7 Alcohol Advertising in Sport

**Congress notes**

The influence alcohol advertising in sport has on young people.

**Congress notes with concern**

In January 2015, plans to allow a legislative clause which would eventually allow for the banning of alcohol sponsorship of sports have been dropped.

**Congress mandates**

The Vice President Welfare to campaign with Alcohol Action Ireland for such a ban to be introduced.

## 14 NA 2 ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

**Congress notes with concern:**

The problems of Zero Hour Contracts, seeing them as exploitative, precarious and disproportionately altering the relationship between employers and employees, many of whom are students.

**Congress regrets:**

That this has additional problems in relation to families/ single parents, given the difficulties of combining Zero Hour Contracts and childcare.

**Congress mandates:**

USI to confirm its opposition to Zero Hour Contracts, and work with the trade union movements and sympathetic political parties to bring about the abolition of ZHC.

## 12 NA 1 CHILDRENS' RIGHTS

**Congress notes:**

The absence of legislation in Ireland in relation to the protection of children.

**Congress further notes:**

The contents of the Cloyne, Ryan and Murphy Reports.

**Congress recognises:**

That we, as a society, fail to protect vulnerable children.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

USI Officerboard to actively support the proposed referendum on children's' rights, to work with Campaign for Children and other organisations in favour of the referendum, and to actively encourage and facilitate MOs to get involved in the campaign. This motion shall continue to be in force for the next three years or until such time as the referendum has passed.

## 12 NA 2 CROKE PARK AGREEMENT

**Congress notes:**

The Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) imposes a moratorium on public sector recruitment and guarantees no compulsory pay cuts to public sector staff until at least 2014.

**Congress notes with concern:**

The lack of employment for graduates resulting from the recruitment freeze stipulated by the Croke Park agreement and that the public sector pay freezes have resulted in less

money being available in the budgets of Educational Institutions for non-pay expenditure such as student services.

**Congress believes:**

That the Croke Park agreement has had a negative effect on students' education and employment prospects.

**Congress mandates:**

That USI calls for the renegotiation of the Croke Park Agreement.

**Congress further mandates:**

The President to pursue a renegotiation of the Croke Park agreement at the Lobby of the Oireachtas & to propose a more student-friendly alternative which will still endeavour to respect the rights of public sector employees.

## 12 NA 3 PRIVATE SCHOOLS

**Congress recognises:**

That we as a student movement we must strive for true equality of opportunity at all levels in the Irish education system. We also recognise that whether or not a child will make it to third-level education is very often determined by the quality of their secondary education.

**Congress further recognises:**

That many potential students have not made it to third-level because they come from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and thus cannot afford private schooling, or because the public schools in their areas are not adequate.

**Congress notes:**

The growth of grind schools and private secondary schools in Ireland in the past two decades, and that this growth of the private school sector has led to a divided student body at second-level and beyond, and has also resulted in many good public schools struggling to fill places and stay open.

**Congress further notes:**

That students attending private schools have access to an education that is to a large extent publicly-funded, but which is only accessible to those who can pay the private fees which run into the thousands each year. This means that all taxpayers are being asked to subsidise an education system that is only accessible to those children lucky enough to be born into relatively well-off families, and that this private education puts them at a great advantage in attaining higher CAO points and thus places on third-level courses.

**Congress mandates Officer Board:**

To campaign for the removing of state funding for private primary and secondary schools, and for any monies saved in this process to be ring fenced and re-invested in the wider, publicly-funded and publicly-accessible education system including primary, secondary and third level education. This should be completed within the next year.

## 12 NA 5 REFORM OF THE IRISH CONSTITUTION

### **Congress notes:**

The inherently Catholic ethos of the Irish Constitution/Bunreacht na hÉireann.

### **Congress further notes:**

USI policy in the areas of marriage equality and abortion.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

That the Catholic nature of the Constitution prohibits any legislation which may seek positive, fair and just advancement in these areas, areas in which USI has campaigned tirelessly for decades.

### **Congress believes:**

That the Constitution of Ireland should be wholly secular in nature, and that no one religion deserves constitutional supremacy over all others, nor should any one religion influence the laws of the State.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby for a seat for USI on the soon-to-be established National Constitutional Review Committee and to make known USI's desire for a secular Constitution, lobbying to ensure that areas such as the definition of marriage etc. are in line with USI policies. This mandate must be fulfilled prior to the national Constitutional review taking place.

## 12 NA 7 ANTI-COUNTERFEIT TRADE AGREEMENT (ACTA)

### **Congress notes:**

The importance of copyright law and the protection of intellectual property rights and the need of the Irish government to act on this.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

The lack of public discussion on the ACTA Treaty and how it would be implemented in Ireland.

### **Congress further notes with concern:**

The potential impact of any legislation around ACTA on students' work, freedom of speech and civil liberties.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The VP/Campaigns to campaign and lobby on behalf of the students of Ireland to prevent the ratification of the Anti-Counterfeit Trade Agreement and the introduction of legislation to enforce it in Ireland.

**Congress further mandates:**

The VP/Campaigns to lobby and campaign for the next three years for a wider discussion on the issue of copyright infringement and counterfeit trade prior to the Irish government putting in place any legislation in this area.

## 12 NA 8 PUBLIC & CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT EMBARGO

**Congress notes:**

The difficulties caused by the current Public & Civil Service Recruitment Embargo and the employment control framework in operation in the Higher Education Sector.

**Congress further notes:**

That Ireland has a huge problem with Graduate Unemployment and that many of our best and brightest are being forced to emigrate.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President and VP/Campaigns to lobby for a root and branch review of all areas of the public and civil service. This review would enable the Government to create a public and civil service that is appropriate for a modern Ireland. By creating a modern civil and public service the Government would be in a position to lift the embargo and recruit graduates into frontline services and other areas appropriate for a modern Ireland.

## 12 / NA 9 GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT & EMIGRATION

**Congress welcomes:**

The progress made to the date on the implementation of the USI Reigniting the Smart Economy Policy adopted at Congress 2011.

**Congress also welcomes:**

The announcement of the Job Bridge, National Internship Scheme in June 2011.

**Congress notes with grave concern:**

Recent figures that over 100 Irish people are emigrating every day. Large scale emigration has hugely negative social and economic consequences for communities across the country.

**Congress mandates:**

The President and VP Campaigns to launch a large scale campaign to force Government to tackle the problems of Graduate Unemployment & Emigration and to create the appropriate environment for job creation.

**Congress further mandates:**

The President and VP Campaigns to lobby for the following amendments to the Job Bridge Scheme.

A reduction in the Job Bridge criteria from 12 weeks to 4 weeks.

The modification of the Social Welfare Code to enable employers to give a modest stipend to interns.

That Job Bridge interns under the age of 25 qualify for the maximum rate of Job Seekers Benefit.

Vetting of Internships on Job Bridge site.

This mandate shall expire after a period of 3 years if it is not re-approved by Congress.

## 12 NA 10 NATIONAL PROPERTY SERVICES REGULATORY AUTHORITY

**Congress notes:**

The findings of the Auctioneering/Estate Agency Review Group established by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform, that the existing statutory framework for the property sector in the Republic of Ireland is outdated, inappropriate and inadequate for the present day market and does not provide any ongoing official supervisory, disciplinary or consumer redress system.

**Congress further notes:**

That to address these shortcomings, the Review Group recommended the establishment of a Regulatory Authority to achieve uniformity and transparency in licensing, regulation and provision of information to the public in relation to the property sector.

**Congress understands:**

That the Minister for Justice and Law Reform has established the National Property Services Regulatory Authority (NPSRA) as the agency to carry out this function.



**Congress believes:**

That this is a hugely positive step by Government to regulate the property sector. At a time where many businesses are facing liquidation, receivership, and other financial difficulties, adequate governance is required more than ever. Furthermore, the enactment of this legislation to empower this regulatory authority would provide a significant support to our members along with all tenants nationwide.

**Congress mandates the President and Vice President for Welfare:**

To voice the support of the USI; before the end of the calendar year 2012, for the establishment of the National Property Services Regulatory Authority (NPSRA).

**Congress further mandates the President and Vice President for Welfare:**

To lobby the Minister for Justice and Law Reform; before the end of the calendar year 2012, to ensure the swift and secure enactment of this legislation.

## 12 NA 10 MORTGAGE REPAYMENTS

**Congress notes with concern:**

Recent figures that 1 in 7 householders are struggling to repay mortgages due to the economic crisis.

**Congress further notes:**

That many students and families across the country have to make stark choices as to whether to

pay the mortgages, pay colleges fees or simply put food on the table to provide for their families.

**Congress also notes:**

That many families are not in a position to meet mortgage repayments because they have been made redundant or have had to close their business due to the economic crisis.

At present, families are bearing the full responsibility, that is losing their homes, for what can now be described as excessive lending by financial institutions. It is estimated that 36,000 mortgages are in arrears of three months or more and that 17,000 households are receiving mortgage interest supplement.

**Congress is concerned:**

That the financial crisis being experienced by students and families across the country is resulting increased levels of stress, anxiety and mental health issues.

**Congress mandates:**

The President, VP Equality and VP Campaigns to work with external organisations to campaign and lobby the Government to introduce measures that support families in situations where they are unable to repay their mortgage and to ensure that families do not lose their homes.

## 12 NA 12 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS CAMPAIGN

### **Congress notes:**

The focus being put on producing work-ready, world-ready graduates by the 3rd Level sector.

### **Congress further notes:**

The lack of clarity for many students around what graduate recruiters and employers are actively seeking in graduates

### **Congress mandates:**

The Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Officer and the Campaigns Officer to roll out a nationwide campaign before June 1st 2013 with the aim to inform students on what skills make them more employable and opportunities they have to develop them.

### **Congress further mandates:**

The Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance Officer to investigate the feasibility of a national career guidance database/website for 3rd and 4th level students.

## 09 NA 4 Elections Campaign

### **Congress applauds:**

The current USI policy on increasing the student vote.

### **Congress 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 reinstating the right to be registered at home and at college.

## EM 19 (IA) – 1: Brunei Sharia Law Urgent Days of Action

Proposed by IT Blanchardstown SU / TU Dublin SU

This requires two-thirds majority to pass

### **Congress Notes**

That students have been a fundamental instrument and key contributor of driving the queer rights movement historically and that human right issues are tackled head on by students with power, vigor and enthusiasm.

### **Congress Notes With Alarm**

## Tha INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

t Brunei is a country in Asia, that is governed by Sharia Law. As of from this week a law took effect whereby anyone engaging in queer intercourse or adultery, would serve a sentence of death by stoning. This is not acceptable and a disgusting attack on human rights.

### **Congress Mandates**

That USI officer-board leads a day of action, that will see students mobilized to show solidarity with those affected in Brunei.

### **Congress Further Mandates**

That USI hosts a further day of action with letter drives calling the government to condemn and act as a lobbying power towards this to take a no tolerance stance on horrific, bigoted language.

## IA 19 – 1 Non EU International Students

Proposed By NUI Galway Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Within the confines of a severely underfunded Higher Education system, many institutions are looking to internationalise as a means to increase fee income.

### **Congress condemns:**

International students being used as a source of revenue, and the fact that there are not adequate supports in place for international students who study here.

**Congress notes with concern:**

Non EU international students are often excluded from funding pots, for example, funds for Students with Disabilities and Field trip funds.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Education and skills for funding streams to include non EU international students.

## NC18 IA 1 : To condemn the actions taken by the Government of Myanmar against the Rohingya population.

Proposed by: Carlow College Students' Union

**USI Notes:**

That due to ongoing 'Clearance Operations' in Burma, over 3000 Rohingya civilians have been killed, at least 140 villages have been burned down, and more than 200,000 people have been internally displaced, with a further 600,000 civilians having fled to Bangladesh.

**USI Also Notes:**

Little action has been taken at EU level to respond to the Rohingya Crisis.

**USI Therefore Mandates:**

The USI publicly denounce the ongoing 'Clearance Operations' currently being implemented by the Burmese Government.

The VP Equality & Citizenship to work with Amnesty International Ireland in the call to immediately end the military's campaign of violence and human rights abuses and ensure free and unimpeded access to Rakhine state to humanitarian actors, the UN, independent journalists and human rights monitors and ensure their security.

## 2018 IA 1 : Graduate USA Visa

Proposed by the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

**Congress notes:**

The popularity of the 1 Year USA Graduate Programme among Irish Graduates, which gives an opportunity to intern in the USA for 1 year without having any pre-arranged internship before travelling.

**Congress believes:**

The 1 Year USA Graduate Programme provides an excellent opportunity for Irish Graduates to gain invaluable experience in launching their careers.

**Congress further notes:**

The short timeframe graduates have to demonstrate their worth to employers, from beginning employment to requesting that employers being the sponsorship process.

**Congress also believes:**

Many participants of the programme are denied sponsorship by employers due to an insufficient amount of time to demonstrate their skills and worth.

**Congress mandates:**

The USI President to lobby the relevant Irish and US Departments (i.e. the US State Department, Department of Labour and Department of Homeland Security), to extend the one year limit to two years, if requested by a participant of the programme who is currently in employment.

## 2018 IA 2 : Justice and human rights for Palestine

Proposed by Queen's University, Belfast Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

That the state of Israel is involved in a brutal military occupation of the Palestinian territories

The occupation is responsible for systematic, widespread and ongoing human rights abuses against the local Palestinian population, including destruction of homes, theft of land and water resources, imprisonment without trial, torture of prisoners, and construction of Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land.

That the State of Israel is in violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. The settlements have also been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice and the UK government with Amnesty International stating that "Israel's settlement policy is inherently discriminatory and has resulted in grave human rights violations including destruction of homes, forced evictions, unlawful killings, arbitrary detentions and collective punishment".

**Congress believes:**

That Israel should end its occupation of the Palestinian territories and allow the return of Palestinian refugees in accordance with international law.

That the Palestinian people are entitled to the same human rights, dignity of person, self-determination, security and parity of esteem as all other peoples in the world today.

That a boycott of Israel's entire regime of oppression, including all of the Israeli companies and institutions that are involved in its violations of international law, is a reasonable non-violent activity that can be taken to register opposition to such crimes.

That the Palestinian led BDS campaign does not target anyone or anything based on identity, but rather based solely on complicity in denying Palestinian rights and that BDS is a strategy for effective solidarity, not a dogma or ideology and certainly not an attack upon Jewish communities or individuals.

### **Congress mandates Officer Board:**

To inform MOs of the background to the situation in Israel/Palestine and to commemorate Palestine Solidarity Day, working with any relevant groups such as student societies and civil society organisations local to each of our campuses.

To lobby to divest from and terminate any contracts with companies that are complicit in the occupation of the Palestinian territories and violation of Palestinian human rights more widely

To join the global movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it ends the occupation and complies with international law.

## **15 IA1 Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**

### **Congress notes with concern:**

The on-going negotiations between the European Union and the United States in relation to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, and the potential impact that it could have on Irish higher education, democracy and wider society.

### **Congress does not support:**

The lowering of any EU standards in regards to the environment, food safety, animal welfare and workers' rights.

In addition, Congress is especially concerned that under TTIP, the US would be allowed to export shale gas to Europe thus increasing fracking in the US and allowing US companies to challenge fracking bans in Europe under the Investor-State Dispute Settlement clause.

While Congress supports the EU's efforts in job creation we believe that TTIP jeopardises the health and wellbeing of those living in the EU and therefore call on the EU to use these negotiations to encourage the US to raise its standards rather than lowering its own.

### **Congress affirms**

that while it does not oppose free trade in principle, TTIP does not amount to a traditional free trade agreement but rather threatens to constitute an historic infringement upon democratic governance.

**Conference mandates:**

Officer Board to campaign against TTIP and to engage with like-minded organisations in Ireland and across Europe on the matter.

## UNION ORGANISATION

### EM 20 (UO) 5, COVID-19 Monthly Forum for MOs

**Proposed by TUDSU**

**Congress Notes:**

That the COVID-19 global pandemic has completely stunted some of the movements of the local students' Unions and acknowledges that there are huge engagement challenges coming up from September on that will not only affect engagement but will also significantly damage the commercial activities of our local Unions.

**Congress Applauds:**

The proactive work done by the National Union and officers on the ground in juggling through an unprecedented case.

**Congress Notes with Concern:**

Many colleges are not responding to the Union in such a way and with a recession coming and commercial growth being slowed down, the collective organization needs to be proactive and ahead of the curve.

**Congress Further Notes:**

That while National Council, Congress, Etc can be held online, the agenda for the next while will be dominated by COVID-19, possibly stunting further developments in other areas of the movement.

**Therefore, Congress Mandates:**

That the Executive Team sets up a monthly COVID-19 forum so that MOs may feed into, work on solutions and problem share.

### 20 UO 6 Constitutional Review

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

**Congress recognises**

The democratic review undertaken by USI this year which has brought a Constitutional amendment for a new governance structure for the organisation.

**Congress notes**

Article 10.9 states that there shall be a complete review of the Union's Constitution every five years effective from the date at which this Constitution was passed by Congress.

### **Congress further notes**

In light of the new governance structure being proposed, it is necessary that the whole Constitution is up to date and cohesive to this new structure.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The President to set up a working group that will oversee the process of the review of the USI Constitution. This Working Group shall be made up of Sabbatical officers and seek external expertise as deemed necessary.

### **Congress further mandates**

That the Working Group should provide updates at each National Council with a view to providing the proposed amendments to the December meeting for consideration before going to Congress 2021.

## **20 UO 8 Multi-campus support**

Proposed by the Vice President for the Border, Midlands and Western Region

### **Congress notes**

Nationally there are a number of multi-campus Higher Education Institutions and these campuses provide vitally important education to regional communities.

### **Congress further notes**

With the planned designation of additional Technological Universities and the continued merging of Colleges into Universities in the coming years, the number of multi campus HEIs is set to increase.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President, Vice President for Academic Affairs and other relevant members of the executive team to lobby the Government to prevent the closure of satellite campuses where the Students' Union is against the closure and highlight the value of multi-campus and satellite campuses and the need to support these campuses during mergers.

### **Congress therefore repeals**

17 AA8

## **20 UO 15 Panel of External Members**

Proposed by NCI Students' Union



This motion was submitted in accordance with rules and due to a technical issue was excluded from the pre-clár. As a result it has been assigned an automatic prioritisation.

### **Congress Notes**

That some MOs have it as part of their democratic structures the need to appoint external members to their boards and committees, such as an Independent Chairperson.

### **Congress recognises**

The importance of governance and accountability in Students' Unions to ensure the Union is run effectively and efficiently for the benefit of students.

### **Congress believes**

That through USI and other MOs, there would be a wealth of past Sabbatical officers that would have the knowledge and interest to serve as external members of boards and committees of Students' Unions.

### **Congress mandates**

The President to provide a contact list of external contacts which could act as external members for MOs committees and boards. This list should be updated on a yearly basis and provide details of their experience and involvement in Students' Union.

## **UO 19 – 1 USI Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

Proposed By Trinity College Dublin SU

### **Congress notes:**

The cyclical nature of student representative terms leads to a regular change in priorities and shifts in focus of the national movement. This often weakens the ability for the movement to gather momentum on the issues which lie at the core of the student movement.

### **Congress further notes:**

Changes made to Union structures are often made without strategic forethought.

### **Congress understands:**

Strategic planning is an organisational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organisation's direction in response to a changing environment.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The VP Campaigns and the President, in consultation with National Council, devise a strategic plan for the Union of Students' in Ireland to run from 2020-2025, and for this plan to be ratified by Congress 2020.

**Congress further mandates:**

A working group of National Council be established to oversee and inform the development of the strategic plan.

**Congress further mandates:**

The President to publish an annual progress report on this Strategic Plan and present it to annual congress.

## UO 19 – 2 Governance training modules

Proposed By Waterford IT Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

As sabbatical officers, we are expected to sit on a number of academic and governing boards within our HEI's and much of the discussion at these meetings can contain language that is new or uncommon for officers to have consistent knowledge of.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to introduce new governance training modules for SUT and SUT+ which cover business and legal terminology, negotiation skills and top things for SU Officers to look out for and query during meetings. More detail on the contents of this training can be covered in the SU Officers Handbook.

## UO 19 – 3 Regional Officer Support with Mergers:

Proposed By IT Tallaght SU

**Congress notes:**

There are a number of mergers that are either prior or post designation in many MOs across the country.

**Congress further notes:**

The merging of different MOs can be a difficult and an overwhelming process. The transition from being a single entity to becoming a part of a larger establishment can be daunting not just for the overall union but the officers involved.

**Congress mandates:**

The regional officers to liaise with the MOs involved in mergers to ensure that each of these MOs (and officers) feels represented, well-equipped and supported going through this transition.

### **Congress further mandates:**

The regional officers to establish a working group for MOs involved in a merger process. This would provide a space for the MOs to give advice on how they dealt with going through a merger.

## **UO 19 – 4 Sponsorship Agreements and Commercial Partnerships**

Proposed by Presidents Working Group

### **Congress Notes**

USI may wish to work alongside companies throughout the year based on shared interests or common goals. This can sometimes take the form of a partnership agreement between the employer and the USI which identifies their common interests and objectives. USI voted through UO5 USI Commercial Strategy last year, and this motion would add to that strategy.

### **Congress Further Notes**

USI has engaged increasingly with commercial organisations for sponsorship of USI events and support for venue hire, catering and materials.

### **Congress supports and encourages**

USI in seeking sponsorship in order to reduce costs and add value to events for members.

### **Congress Understands**

That the ability to seek out and secure sponsorship offers varies depending on the project involved and the financial benefit offered and is regularly time sensitive.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President and VP Campaigns to create a policy regarding commercial partnerships, following consultation with MO sabbatical officers and USI Officerboard. This policy would cover how partnerships are sought out, agreed upon, and the length of time they are active for.

## **UO 19 – 5 Strategic Review of USI**

Proposed By Dublin IT SU

### **Congress Notes:**

USI has not undertaken a strategic review of the organisation since 1999. In 2015, USI adopted a Union Development Strategy 2015 - 2020, which outlines a vision and strategy for developing not only Students' Unions but also USI as an organisation. This has yet to be fully implemented.

### **Congress Notes with Concern:**

That USI is not performing to its fullest potential and is becoming an organisation in desperate need of reform. Member Organisations continue to be frustrated at the lack of support from USI and question the value of being a member.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The USI President to carry out a robust strategic review of USI including, but not limited to, areas of governance, finance, democracy, political lobbying and campaigns. The review should be undertaken by an external consultant and must take into account the opinions and concerns of all current Member Organisations, as well as potential candidate Member Organisations where possible.

### **Congress further Mandates:**

That the USI President ensures that the strategic review considers the 2018 motion on USI Commercial Strategy. (2018 UO5) The review should provide a report to the December National Council in 2019 with a list of recommendations in which USI must adopt no later than July 2020.

Congress therefore repeals 17 NC UO 7

## **UO 19 - 6 USI in the North**

Proposed By Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU)

### **Congress Notes:**

The long-established trilateral agreement which entitles students, studying in Northern Ireland to be represented by NUS UK and USI, through its' principal representative body NUS-USI, with the former acting as managing partner for NUS-USI.

An estimated 200,000 of USI's 374,000 members are NUS-USI members of which approximately 160,000 come from FE colleges. The Further Education & Training Strategy, passed by Congress in 2018 sets out a direction of how USI ought to interact with FE members in the North.

Despite this, there is a lack of consistency in how USI engages NUS-USI members in its' work with FE members rarely being included in USI campaigns.

### **Congress Further Notes:**

Recent changes to NUS UK's operations have resulted in a reduction in staff support for NUS-USI, with representation now being provided by one full-time officer, supported by two full-time staff members.

### **Congress Believes:**

The reduced staff support puts significant strain on the NUS-USI President's capacity to represent and campaign on behalf of their 200,000 members in the North.

In light of this, it is imperative for USI to recognize its' role in supporting the interests of its' NI members.

**Congress Mandates:**

USI Officer Board to consult with NUS-USI to further extend its' engagement with members in the North, with each portfolio officer aiming to incorporate NUS-USI and its' members in at least one relevant campaign per year.

USI Portfolio officers to work collaboratively with the NUS-USI President and their counterpart members of the NUS-USI REC (Regional Executive Committee), where applicable, to support campaigns and events being run by NUS-USI.

USI Officer Board to consult with NUS-USI in extending its prominence within NI student affairs more generally.

## UO 19 – 7 Regional Officers

Proposed By Athlone IT SU

**Congress notes**

The benefit of having Regional Officers on campus.

**Congress further notes**

The experience and direction regional officers can give to local MOs is of great benefit.

**Congress mandates**

The Vice Presidents for the Regions to work with MOs before the beginning of the academic year to schedule at least four visits per semester.

## UO 19 – 8 Media Training

Proposed By Athlone IT SU

**Congress notes**

Students' Union officers are regularly sought for interviews with local and national media outlets.

**Congress further notes**

That training for all sabbatical officers is expensive and that Students' Unions may have to subsidise such training.

**Congress mandates**

The VP for Campaigns to provide opportunities for Media Training to officers who wish to avail of such.

## UO 19 – 9 Progress Report on mandates

Proposed By IT Tallaght SU

### **Congress notes:**

USI officer board has been mandated to take on a large number of motions. It is not realistic to complete all of these mandates in one year.

### **Congress recognizes:**

The hard work being put in by officer board to complete a large amount of motions.

### **Congress regrets:**

There is no transparent indicator of how far along these mandates have gotten.

### **Congress mandates:**

All officer board to produce a progression report in their officer report of the development of these mandates at each National Council.

## UO 19 – 10 Accommodating for Ents, Marketing and Commercial during SUT+

Proposed By IT Carlow SU

### **Congress Notes:**

SUT+ is additional training during the summer period of which this year amalgamated what was previously known as 'Top Up' training into the week too.

### **Congress Further Notes:**

Due to this amalgamation, there was little training for officers in areas revolving Entertainments, Marketing and Commercial Activities as this was not previously catered for in the 'Top Up' training schedules. When all officers are present for other elements of the SUT+ schedule, it is vital to use this opportunity to increase capacity of those officers.

### **Congress Believes:**

August is a vital time for bookings for events such as Freshers' Week and there should be a working group and/or top up training for these officers to make proper use of the time present at the event.

### **Congress Mandates:**

USI Officer Board to ensure that there is an Ents, Marketing & Commercial working group available at SUT+ and that there are training events available to Ents, Marketing and

Commercial officers that is relevant to the time of their work with big events approaching such as Freshers Week.

## UO 19 – 11 Check-ins with Ents, Commercial and Marketing Working Group

Proposed By IT Carlow SU

### **Congress Notes:**

Throughout the year, there are many events that can cause a lot of stress to the officers organising them.

### **Congress Further Notes:**

When organising these events such as Freshers Week or Raise and Give Week, it can impact on the mental health of these officers. The officers may feel like they are the only officers in that position. Also since it is such a busy time of the year, there may be a lack of communication with officers in Ents, Marketing and Commercial Working Group, so officers may not be able to communicate with other officers in the same position.

### **Congress recognises**

As many officers who are involved in organising events for their SU are part-time officers, working groups at National Council during term time may not be suitable.

### **Congress Believes:**

Following the success this year, video-call check ins have proven to be greatly beneficial to officers organising events, especially those officers that may not be able to travel to every National Council. A video-call may only take an hour out of each officers time, however it gives officers the platform to explain what they are going through and share experiences and advice.

### **Congress Mandates:**

USI Vice President over Ents, Marketing and Commercial Working Group to ensure that these video-calls happen at as regularly as needed with a special focus the busy times such as before September and February.

### **Congress Further Mandates:**

USI Vice President over Ents, Marketing and Commercial Working Group to have check-ins regularly to individual MO's that have busy time periods of organising events.

## UO 19 – 12 Re-think Campaign

Proposed By President, IT Carlow Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

That the USI have and will continue to do incredible work on behalf of the students across Ireland. That valuable work that is performed by officer board in conjunction with MO's can easily go un-noticed by the students that the USI represent.

**Congress Further notes:**

That a campaign to reconnect the USI with the students that it represents is greatly needed to bolster the great work that both officer board and local Unions do.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The VP Campaigns to develop a campaign to reconnect the national union to the students that they represent.

## UO 19 – 16 Part Time Officer Training

Proposed by the Southern Regional Working Group

**Congress recognises**

The importance and value of having part-time officers and executive members trained in skills that will help them to achieve their goals within their local Students' Union and on a National Level.

**Congress values**

The training possibilities within USI and external organisations that are offered to Students' Union part-time officers and executive members.

**Congress understands**

That each Students' Union team may have different part-time officers and executive positions and that these may require different training to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills to carry out their role.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The Vice Presidents for the Regions to carry out a needs-based assessment of training required for each Students' Union part-time officer/executive member and provide training in the manner which best meets those needs.

## UO 19 – 17 Students' Union Officer Handbook

Proposed by the Vice President for the Southern Region

**Congress recognises**



The role of a Officer within a Students' Union is a unique role. It is also very important to have a well-rounded understanding of how to approach your role as an Officer within a Students' Union and that a well-developed crossover is extremely valuable for newly elected Officers.

### **Congress understands**

It can be helpful to have a source of information provided to Students' Union Officers that cover areas they may find useful throughout their term in Office such as effective communication, event organisation, useful contacts and a jargon buster.

### **Congress mandates**

USI Officer Board to publish a Students' Union Officer Handbook before SUT each year to support newly elected officers.

## **UO 19 – 19 Give Us the Night Campaign**

Proposed by Ents, Marketing & Commercial Working Group

### **Congress notes**

The Give Us The Night is an independent volunteer group of professionals operating within the night-time industry, campaigning for positive changes to nightlife in Ireland, with particular regard to music venues. They endeavour to highlight the contribution of the night-time industry to culture, community and the economy in Ireland, and to raise the quality of nightlife to international standards. Their ongoing aim is to create debate and discussion about the licensing laws in Ireland, with a view to influencing legislative changes.

### **Congress notes**

The importance of such a campaign to students and Students' Unions who often play a part in an active nightlife on and off campuses.

Our members can see these effects in many areas including but not limited to;

- Organising events: SUs liaise with promoters/venues for events who are directly affected by these laws.
- Venue closures: Many students' unions have expressed concerns with their local nightclubs/late night venues closing in the recent year, this may be due recent to recent increase in costs in licences.
- Staggered closing times: after large events, safety issues can arise due to venues all closing at the same time - we would benefit from a staggered closing time and later opening hours.
- Employment: According to the USI survey conducted relation to the hospitality sector, 70% work in Food & Beverage and a further 7% in Events.

- Graduate employment: Many students who study courses such as music, sound engineering course would benefit from the employment opportunities that would result in the core aims of the campaign being realized.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI Officer with responsibility for Ents, Marketing & Commercial activity to support the Give Us the Night Campaign who's core aims are the following;

- To support, nurture and reframe the conversation around nightlife and the night-time economy in Ireland.
- To highlight the economic value and societal benefits of a diverse and vibrant Irish night-time industry.
- To contribute to the creation of jobs and sustainable indigenous businesses within the night-time industry, and to broaden employment opportunities for those operating in the creative arts.
- To ensure that Ireland adopts a more progressive European approach to nightlife, that reflects the wide range of lifestyles and working hours here.

### **Congress further mandates**

The USI Officer with responsibility for Ents, Marketing & Commercial to lobby relevant people to ensure the student perspective is heard in the campaign.

## **UO 19 - 20 Student Activist Groups**

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

### **Congress notes**

The importance of students at the core of the success of USI campaigns.

### **Congress commends**

The hard work of student activists throughout the year.

### **Congress further notes**

That students engaged in activism reap educational benefits such as developing a greater sense of social responsibility and identity. It is also important for teaching students about the importance of democratic participation, leadership and the ability to build coalitions amongst a wide variety of individuals on campus. (Barnhardt, Reyes, 2016)

### **Congress mandates**

For USI Officer Board to engage with student activists and grassroots campaigns, where possible, in the running of their campaigns and to actively seek out opportunities to engage with established student activist groups.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Campaigns to set up Facebook Groups for students who share common interests from all over Ireland to facilitate opportunities for networking, sharing information and easily mobilising students.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Campaigns to where possible, attend events and support the work of (what is currently known as) the All Ireland Student Activist Network and similar groups like it.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Campaigns to run non-violent direct action training, which is open to students, each year.

## **UO 19 – 21 Trade Unions Partnerships and Workers’ Rights Campaign**

Proposed by the Union Development Working Group

### **Congress Regrets:**

That there are incidents where abuses of workers’ rights are leaving students concerned about whether they will have enough work or finances to afford attending third-level or afford to live once they graduate.

### **Congress Notes:**

That there is a need for students to become aware of their rights as workers. Students should have the opportunity to work enough hours to be able to afford a decent standard of living.

### **Congress Welcomes:**

The SIPTU-USI Agreement, previously approved by the Executives of both Unions in 2013.

### **Congress Further Notes:**

That the knowledge and resources available from SIPTU, such as the Worker’s Rights Centre, and the Irish Congress Trade Union (ICTU) are valuable resources and partners to draw upon.

### **Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Campaigns to work towards an update of the SIPTU-USI partnership as needed and promote it to members.

### **Congress further mandates**

The Vice President for Campaigns to work towards building alliances with trade unions, similar to the SIPTU-USI agreement, in as many sectoral trade unions as possible with the aim to gain benefits for students. These partnerships should have a particular focus on free/reduced cost membership to access to the services of those trade unions that match their area of study or part-time work while studying.

### **Congress also mandates**

The VP for Campaigns to advocate for elected Students' Union officers and their staff to become members of a union.

### **Congress also Mandates:**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to endeavour to work with the relevant trade unions, and other organisations, to assess the issues that may exist and to further mobilise students on a campaign on the issues of: pay, work, and recognition of the sector.

### **Congress Mandates:**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns to roll-out an evidence-based Workers' Rights Awareness Campaign for students in conjunction with SIPTU and other trade unions.

### **Congress Also Mandates:**

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Officer Board to ensure that disputes, negotiations and political lobbying is inclusive of the student perspective.

### **Repeal**

16 UO 12 Worker's Rights Awareness Campaign

## **UO 19 – 22 the use of technological development to allow MOs to join national council**

Proposed by Limerick IT Students' Union

### **Congress notes**

There is an appreciation for USI's ethos of inclusive and rotary locations for their events. The various locations allow MOs to build informed comparisons to their own Institute or University.

### **Congress further notes**

In some cases, it can be difficult for MOs to travel to every location- particularly for the non-centralised MOs.

### **Congress mandates**

The USI President to thoroughly investigate an allowance for MO Representatives to join USI National Council events through technology, on giving notice.

This technological development should offer a capped number of times per year, for MO representatives to join same- in keeping with the benefits of face-to-face interactions at National Council events.

This capped number of times per year would be based on the Presidents' agreed schedule of National Councils

## NC18 UO 1: Road Traffic Act

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Welfare

### **Council Notes**

Research shows that alcohol is a factor in 38% of fatal crashes, yet Irish people continue to drink and drive. An average of 180 drivers are being arrested per week in 2017 on suspicion of driving under the influence.

### **Council also notes**

Under the proposed legislation, drink driving offences committed at BAC levels between 50mg and 80mg will incur an automatic disqualification of 3 months instead of the current penalty of a €200 fine and 3 penalty points.

### **Council Notes with Concern**

That the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017 proposed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport 13/07/2017 fell with the last government.

### **Council also Notes with Concern**

Some rural TDs have suggested it is unfair - particularly for those in rural Ireland who cannot easily get home from the pub and many vested interest groups and their supporters continue to deny the factual evidence about drink driving

### **Council Mandates**

The VP Welfare to actively lobby TD's to support the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017 and to collaborate with and support the work of the Road Safety Authority in striving to have the bill enacted.

## 2018 UO1 : Location of National Council

Proposed by Galway - Mayo Institute of Technology Students' Union

### **Congress believes:**

That all MOs should have an equal chance of hosting meetings of National Council

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to ensure that the location of National Council, should cycle between regions, ensuring that a full cycle of the four regions must be concluded before an MO from a previous host region may reapply. A lottery system should be used if more than 1 MO from a region is interested in hosting.

**Congress therefore deletes:**

15 UO21 National Council Decentralisation

## 2018 UO2 : Constitutional Development Support for MOs

Proposed by Trinity College Dublin Students' Union

**Congress notes:**

That all Member Organisations are governed by their constitutions.

**Congress Recognises:**

Constitutional drafting and reform is a specialist undertaking, which requires significant time and expertise.

**Congress notes with Concern:**

The lack of national infrastructure available to MOs considering Constitutional Reform.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to investigate the feasibility of developing a national infrastructure for Constitutional Reform for Member Organisations.

## 2018 UO3 : Union development intern

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

**Congress notes**

As per the union development strategy, it is the duty of USI to take lead on improving development of the local member organisations and the union as a whole.

**Congress further notes**

The union development strategy further outlines 3 phases over three years of work in this area. Currently this work is undertaken by the VP for Campaigns.

**Congress recognises**

The amount of work within union development in USI is not feasible to be looked into fully by one officer on their own.

**Congress therefore mandates**

The President to explore the possibility of hiring a union development intern to assist the VP for campaigns in implementing this strategy and to further develop the work in union development brief.

## 2018 U04 : Sub-committees of National Council

Proposed by IT Carlow Students' Union

Passed with Amendment submitted by the President of USI

### **Congress recognises**

The importance of having members of National Council elected to sub-committees with specific purposes.

### **Congress notes**

That these members are elected as representatives from each region to perform tasks such as but not limited to planning and evaluation. The members of National Council that are elected to sub-committees are accountable to National Council.

### **Congress further notes**

That USI runs many events to improve participation from underrepresented groups at events, in elections and other initiatives.

### **Congress mandates**

The President to ensure that minutes of sub-committees of National Council, including attendance registers, are made available to members of National Council.

### **Congress further mandates**

USI to promote gender balance on sub-committees of National Council.

## 2018 U05 : USI Commercial Strategy

Proposed by Vice President for the Southern Region

### **Congress believes**

That USI should create a Commercial Strategy for the organisation.

### **Congress also believes**

The implementation of this strategy is fundamentally important to the future development of USI, in terms of meeting strategic financial targets and adding value to USI membership.

### **Congress Mandates**

The President of USI to oversee the creation and implementation of a USI Commercial Strategy.

### **Congress repeals**

14 AF 2, 14 AF 3

## **2018 U06 : Access breaks at Congress**

Proposed by Dublin Institute of Technology Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

Long hours without breaks decreases attention span and productivity on Congress floor.

### **Congress further notes**

That the increase in productivity from short breaks improves delegate performance and engagement.

### **Congress acknowledges:**

That according to the constitution, "no formal business shall be conducted after 10:30pm".

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

That there must be a break each day during USI Congress between lunch and dinners. These breaks must not exceed 15 minutes.

## **2018 U09 : Student Levies**

Proposed by Maynooth University Students' Union

### **Congress Notes**

That many MOs assist in the delivery of student levies for the HEIs.

### **Congress Notes with Concern**

That sometimes promises or commitments made by HEIs in the lead up to student levy referendums are not always honoured or acted upon after the passing of referendums.

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The President of USI, or a nominee of the President of USI, to draft a set of guidelines highlighting an indicative list of guarantees or assurances MO's should seek and obtain from HEIs before deciding to engage in the implementation of a student levy for the HEI.

### **Congress Further Mandates**



The President of USI, or a nominee of the President of USI, to collate and maintain an annual dossier of details on the current and any known proposed levy models, including but not limited to levy rate, levy lifetime, percentage contribution of levy funds to projects etc, as to keep a record of developments and changes as they occur.

## 2018 U012 : Review of committee meeting preceding National Council

Proposed by the Presidents' Working Group

### **Congress Notes:**

That there are currently 10 constitution committees that usually take place the day of, or before a meeting of National Council.

### **Congress Recognises:**

The difficulty in holding each of these committee meetings in a short space without a significant number clashing.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

That part-time officers, who do not attend National Council are unable to engage with these committees.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to review the current structure of committees preceding National Council meetings.

### **Congress Further Mandates:**

The President to investigate the possibility of some of these committee meetings taking place separate to National Council with the option of Video Conferencing.

## 2018 U013 : Historical Record of the Mandate Manual and Policies

Proposed by the Presidents' Working Group

### **Congress notes:**

That currently, the USI Mandate Manual is a live document that is constantly changing.

### **Congress Recognises:**

The importance of organisational memory in USI

### **Congress Mandates:**

The President to ensure that a historical record of the Mandate manual for each year is recorded and made available online.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

That historical records of all policies and strategies are recorded and made available online after Congress each year.

## 2018 UO15 : Pre Budget Submission

Proposed by the Presidents' Working Group

**Congress notes:**

That the Government accept submission on budget proposals each year.

**Congress mandates:**

The President to ensure that USI submit a pre-budget submission, based on mandates from congress, and that a Lobbying day is organised to discuss this submission with members of the Oireachtas. This is to take place before the Dáil's Summer recess each year.

**Congress therefore deletes:**

11 UO 3

## 2018 UO16 : Gender Equality on Finance Committee

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

**Congress notes**

That gender balance at USI finance committee is an ongoing issue.

**Congress believes**

That USI should be a positive force for promoting the participation of our self-identifying female members at all levels.

**Congress notes**

The president nominates 4 people to finance committee; three qualified people from outside the Union, who are not members of the Union but may be serving Trustees, who can contribute by virtue of their experience, and one former President of the Union.

**Congress mandates**

The President insofar as practicable, to ensure their nominees are gender balanced.

## 2018 U017 : Cur Chun Cinn Teanga Comharthaíochta na hÉireann/Promotion of Irish Sign Language

Rúin an LU don Ghaeilge

### **Tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara**

Gur aithníodh Teanga Comharthaíochta na hÉireann mar tríú teanga oifigiúil i stát na hÉireann sa bhliain seo ag Dáil Éireann.

### **Anuas air sin, tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara**

Go bhfuil níos mó ná mionteanga amháin in Éirinn, agus gur cheart fáilte a chur roimh Teanga Comharthaíochta na hÉireann mar an tríú teanga oifigiúil.

### **Tuigean an Comhdháil**

Gur cheart don Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge bheith aireach ar mhionteangacha eile sa tír seo, agus gur féidir tacú leis an Teanga Comharthaíochta go héasca mar chuid d'fheachtasaíocht.

### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil ar**

An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge an Teanga Comharthaíochta a thacú ina ról, agus chun ar a laghad ócáid amháin a chur ar siúl a thabharfaidh léargas ar an teanga agus deis do lucht na teanga sin a dteanga a chéiliúradh.

### **Congress notes**

That Irish Sign Language has been recognised as a third official language in the Irish state in this year by Dáil Éireann.

### **Congress further notes**

That there is more than one minority language in Ireland and that ISL should be welcomed as the third official language of the state.

### **Congress understands**

That Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge should be mindful of other minority languages in this country, and it is possible to support ISL easily as a part of campaigning.

### **Therefore, Congress mandates**

That LU don Ghaeilge should support ISL in their role, and to at least organise one event that will give an overview of the language and give an opportunity to the users of the language to celebrate the language.

## 2018 U021 : Officer Report Transparency

Proposed by IT Tallaght, Dublin Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

That Officer report transparency is important when it comes to trusting the good work done by the Officerboard.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

Officerboard to provide their expenses claimed and taken on their officer report at each National Council.

## 2018 UO22 : An Coiste Cultúrtha a chruthú mar Fho-Choiste- An Coiste Cultúrtha as another Subcommitee of NC

Rúin an LU don Ghaeilge

**Tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara**

Gur éirigh leis an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge Choiste Cultúrtha a thoghadh i mbliana, tar éis easpa fada.

**Tuigeann an Comhdháil**

Gur éirigh leis an Choiste sár-obair a dhéanamh agus naisc luachmhaire a chruthú idir gaeilgeoirí agus lucht suime na Gaeilge.

**Anuas air sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil**

Gur cheart an Coiste Cultúrtha a chruthú mar ‘ad-hoc Fho-Choiste’ den Chomhairle Náisiúnta agus go mbeadh na baill tofa ag an chéad Chomhairle Náisiúnta achan bliain.

**Congress notes**

That the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge succeeded in electing the first Coiste Cultúrtha this year, after a long absence of such.

**Congress understands**

That the Coiste succeeded in doing good work and creating new links between Irish speakers and those interested in Irish.

**Therefore, Congress mandates**

That An Coiste Cultúrtha would be created as an ad-hoc subcommittee of National Council, and elected at the first National Council of the year, every year.

## 17 UO1 Independent Students’ Unions

**Congress notes with concern**

The creeping intrusion on students’ union democracy and independence occurring around the country.

### **Congress believes**

The backbone of the student movement is for students' unions to be allowed to democratically self-govern, and to be free from interference by outside bodies.

### **Congress further notes with concern**

The attempts to censor some students' unions, and encroach on their freedom of association.

### **Congress mandates**

The President to have the Independent Students' Union campaign as a priority campaign for the year, and to form a Committee, made up of the President and members of national council, and any external bodies that National Council see fit. This Committee is to report back to each National Council.

### **Congress further mandates**

The President to undertake an annual dossier of the current situation within individual students' unions, so as to keep a national record of developments and changes as they occur. This dossier is to occur no later than September 30th to allow for adequate time to analyse and respond to issues as they arise. The information provided within the dossier is to be kept confidential, and is only to be used as part of the Independent Students' Union campaign.

### **Congress further mandates**

The President to seek legal counsel in relation to proposing changes to Irish legislation to protect students' union independence, and to report findings and recommendations back to both National Council and the Independent Students' Union Committee.

## **17 U014 USI Calendar**

### **Congress notes:**

USI organise a number events over the course of the year.

### **Congress recognises:**

The dates and volume of events organised by the organisation may need to be adapted from time to time.

### **Congress believes:**

Students benefit from attendance at USI events.

### **Congress further believes:**

If students had sufficient notice in regards to the timing and location of events, attendance at these events would be increased.

**Congress mandates:**

The USI President in conjunction with the Officer Board to develop a set calendar of USI events and activities, including the location when known/available, for their term of office

**Congress further mandates:**

The USI President to make this calendar available to Member Organisations and students via the USI Website and other mediums they feel appropriate.

## 17 U015 Comparative Research Manual

**Congress Recognises:**

Students' Union Officers sit on a number of boards and committees within their respective institutions.

**Congress Notes:**

Students' Union Officers roles on these boards and committees is to represent students and to defend their rights predominantly.

**Congress Believes:**

Students' Union Officers need at their disposal statistics and figures from other member organisations to strengthen their arguments on a number of issues, for example but not limited to library opening hours, on campus catering prices etc.

**Congress Therefore Mandates:**

The Regional officers of USI to compile together a comparative research manual following a consultation process with students and the USI National Council in terms of which areas should be covered within this manual.

## 17 U018 Secretary for standing committees and action points

**Congress Notes**

that fluent discussion can come from standing committees of National Council.

**Congress mandates**

USI Officerboard to ensure that as part of standing orders for Committees, a secretary should be elected to take minutes and action points are created from these minutes, which track the work of these committees in an effective manner.

## 15 U03 Students' union staff training

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress notes:**

The unique work that is done by Student Union staff on a daily basis in each Students' Union in Ireland.

### **Congress further notes:**

The high standard of training provided by USI for Students' Union elected officers.

### **Congress mandates:**

Officer Board provide a training programme for MO staff. The aim being to strive for best practice; enable networking; champion equality and inclusion; and create a platform for the staff to understand thus communicate the benefits and supports provided by USI.

## 15 U018 Student manifesto

SPECIAL CASE: REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021. AMENDMENTS NOTED IN STRIKETHROUGHS AS THE POLICY ADOPTED IN 2018

### **Congress affirms:**

That USI must seek to make solutions to core student issues part of the next Programme for Government.

### **Congress notes:**

The process by which NUS and NUS-USI's '#GenerationVote' campaign sought to a) highlight the upcoming elections and the importance of students voting and b) gather student feedback on what a student general election manifesto should include.

### **Congress mandates:**

The VP Campaigns to arrange for an Irish student manifesto as part of the wider national campaign.

## 15 U019 Casework Recording Best Practice Policy

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress Notes:**

The vital need for a "Casework Recording Best Practice Policy" for MO's. Taking into extreme consideration data protection legislation and HEI data protection policies.

### **Congress Further Notes:**

The invaluable information provided by casework recording for data analysis in each academic year and the dire need for MO's to have a guideline to data recording and safe keeping.

**Congress also notes:**

The benefit of liaising with support services in each HEI so that we may gain a greater insight into the issues students face each academic year.

**Congress mandates:**

The VP for Welfare to produce a Best Practice Guideline/policy for MO's regarding the recording of issues faced by students. Taking into extreme consideration data protection legislation and HEI data protection policies.

**Congress further mandates:**

The VP welfare to investigate the feasibility for MO's to liaise with support services in each HEI to gather necessary data to analyse key student issues in each academic year.

## 15 UO 30 USI Transparency and Engagement:

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**Congress notes:**

The work of Officerboard goes mostly unnoticed by the wider student population.

**Congress applauds:**

Efforts made by Officerboard to increase transparency in its work over the past two years.

**Congress mandates:**

Officerboard to implement a weekly round-up of the work carried out during that week, which is to include policy and Manifesto updates, be distributed to Officers, and their Class Representatives.

## 12 UO 11 ACCESS & INCLUSIVITY

REAPPROVED 2015 and 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**Congress notes:**

That this year USI has made a conscious effort to create an inclusive working environment to all Officers.

**Congress further notes:**

How important it is to be at the forefront of an access and inclusivity for all officers.



### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to ensure that USI continues to ensure that it achieves appropriate and reasonable accommodations for all.

## **10 UO 10 AREA OFFICER ROLE**

### **Congress recognizes:**

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.

## 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.

## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

### 20 AF 1 Affiliation Fee Review

Proposed by the President

#### **Congress notes**

That affiliation fees for USI are currently based on registered students in each member organisation as agreed by the Higher Education Authority as outlined in the USI Constitution.

#### **Congress further notes**

The need to undertake a full and broad review in relation to the affiliation fee charged by USI and that this review should be ongoing so to ensure it is reflective of the current and future landscape

#### **Congress recognises**

The work currently ongoing by the USI Executive Team to develop a Student Partnership Agreement and Framework for Students' Unions with the Department of Education and Skills which aims to incorporate legal recognition and funding for Students' Unions.

#### **Congress further recognises**

This is a key development in relation to the affiliation fee for USI as it will have an impact on the funding provided to Students' Unions and also may impact how that fee is paid to USI by member organisations.

### **Congress understands**

The impact of a change to the affiliation fee will have on USI and wants to ensure the decision that is taken will not negatively impact the work of the organisation.

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The USI President to set up a working group to include sabbatical officers of USI member organisations and members of finance committee and the USI President to develop a long term impact analysis of a change to the USI affiliation fee in line with the following suggestions:

- Incremental cap on the affiliation fee
- Link affiliation fee with inflation (based on the average of 2018 - 2020)
- 30% reduction in affiliation fee

The working group will develop a terms of reference which will be brought to National Council no later than the September meeting.

### **Congress therefore repeals**

AF 19 1

## **20 AF 3 Financial Reporting & Accountability**

Proposed by the President

### **Congress notes**

Every year; the USI operates from a budget derived from the membership fees of the individual Member Organisations.

### **Congress further notes**

USI runs many large scale events throughout the year which are accounted for through the USI budget.

### **Congress recognises**

USI Congress approve USI financial accounts as proposed by Finance Committee each year.

### **Congress mandates**

That at every National Council financial statements showing cumulative income and expenditure from 1st July each year are presented up to the time of each meeting. These statements should be presented by a member of the Finance Committee or the President as an item for discussion.

### **Congress further mandates**

That the President present a projected budget for large scale events and campaigns to the National Council prior to the event and an actual budget for those large scale events and campaigns to the National Council just after the event as an item for discussion.

### **Congress also mandates**

The USI President to ensure that financial accounts are uploaded to the USI Website no more than 5 working days after being approved by Congress each year.

### **Congress therefore repeals**

17 NC/AF

14 AF 1

17 AF1

## **16 AF 1 Solidarity Fund**

Proposed by the President, USI

### **Congress notes:**

The Union of Students in Ireland has actively sought to expand its membership in recent years with a particular focus on postsecondary inclusion.

### **Congress further notes:**

Participation from new unions is significantly curtailed by a lack of funding. This essentially means that certain student groups are still unrepresented despite being members of USI.

### **Congress recognises:**

Solidarity is the cornerstone of unions and that every effort should be made to ensure our Union is as inclusive and engaging as possible.

### **Congress mandates:**

The introduction of a solidarity fund to allow for broader participation of underfunded unions in the national movement. This fund would operate on a voluntary basis and be used to allow for engagement in key national activity such as national council, congress and other decision making or training exercises organised by the union.

### **Congress further mandates:**

That the fund would only be available to unions that fulfil the following criteria:

Have a total annual budget of less than €18,000 per year.

Have less than two paid sabbatical officers.

It is the view of the National Council that they are not in a position to participate in the work of the national union due to financial constraints.

**Congress further mandates:**

The introduction of a levy on Students Unions of not more than 14c per student per year to finance the fund. The contribution of individual Students' Unions would be voluntary.

**Congress further mandates:**

Fees applied by USI for training, conferences etc be reduced, as appropriate, to allow participation in such events

**Congress further mandates:**

The President, and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance to seek alternative funding for FE colleges as soon as practicable.

## 16 AF 2 Living Wage

Proposed by the President, USI

**Congress recognises:**

The definition of the living wage as “a wage which is high enough to maintain a normal standard of living.”

**Congress recognises:**

The value of leading by example and the existing motion 14 NA 1 which outlines our comprehensive policy on the issue.

**Congress notes:**

The work undertaken by various representative groups, including USI, and some employers to ensure that workers be paid the living wage in order to maintain a decent standard of living.

**Congress further notes:**

That USI has a number of staff and officers working full time for the organisation.

**Congress mandates:**

That USI becomes a living wage employer and that Officer Board encourages other Students' Unions to do the same.

# IRISH LANGUAGE

## 20 GAE 1Athchóiriú na Gaeilge sa Chóras Oideachais / Reform of Irish in the Education System

Proposed by an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

### **Tugann an Chomhdháil faoi deara:**

An géarghá le hathchóiriú a dhéanamh ar an gcóras oideachais ó thaobh múineadh na Gaeilge de ón réamhscoil go dtí an tríú leibhéal mar a fheictear ón bhfeachtas #Gaeilge4All.

### **Tugann an Chomhdháil faoi deara chomh maith:**

Go mbíonn na meáin chumarsáide agus an pobal i gcoitinne de shíor ag gearán faoin mbealach a múintear na Gaeilge agus faoin easpa feidearthachtaí a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge lasmuigh den chóras oideachas.

### **Creideann an Chomhdháil**

Gur cheart go mbeadh an Ghaeilge riachtanach ag an mbunleibhéal agus ag an dara leibhéal agus gur gcuirfead tacaíocht breise ar fáil dóibh siúd a bhfuil deacrachtaí foghlama acu agus daltaí a bhog go hÉirinn ó thíortha eile.

### **Creideann an Chomhdháil chomh maith**

Gur cheart athchóiriú iomlán a dhéanamh ar an gcaoi a múintear na Gaeilge ón réamhscoil go dtí an tríú leibhéal, bunaithe ar an gCreatlach Comónta Eorpach ionas go mbeidh deis níos fearr ag daoine óga an Ghaeilge a bheith in ann an Ghaeilge a labhairt nuair a fhágann siad an scoil agus chothófaí grá don teanga iontu.

### **Mar sin sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil**

Go ndéanfaidh Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge stocaireacht ar an Aire Oideachais agus ar pháirtithe eile leasmhara leis an gcóras oideachais ó thaobh múineadh na Gaeilge de a athrú agus é a dhéanamh níos inrochtana agus níos uileghabhálaí do chách.

### **Mar sin aisghaireann an Chomhdháil:**

11 NA 3 14 GA 1

### **Congress notes:**

The urgent need for reform of the education system in relation to the teaching of Irish from preschool to third level a highlighted by the #Gaeilge4All campaign.

### **Congress also notes:**

The continuous negativity portrayed by the media and by the general public about the way Irish is taught and the lack of opportunities to use Irish outside of the education system.

**Congress believes:**

That Irish should be a compulsory subject in primary and secondary school and that extra support should be given to students with learning difficulties and to those who have moved to Ireland from other countries.

**Congress also believes:**

That there should be an entire reformation of how Irish is taught from pre-school to third level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) so that young people will have a better chance of being able to speak Irish when they leave school and also so that they can develop a positive relationship with the language.

**Therefore, Congress mandates:**

That the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge lobby the Minister for Education and other relevant interest groups to change how Irish is taught in the current education system and to make it more inclusive and accessible to all.

**Therefore Congress repeals:**

11 NA 3 14 G 1

## 20 GAE 2Scéim Teanga AMLÉ 2020 / USI Irish Language Scheme 2020

Proposed by Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

NOTE: The language scheme is available at

<http://congress.usi.ie/online-congress-2020/policydocs/>

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

An tábhacht a bhaineann le scéim teanga a bheith ag Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn agus í a bheith chomhtháthú in obair laethúil an Aontais.

### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith:**

Go bhfuil Scéim Teanga ag AMLÉ faoi láthair ina leagtar amach dualgais an Aontais maidir le cur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus úsáid na Gaeilge laistigh den eagraíocht.

### **Creideann an Chomhdháil:**

Gur cheart uasdátú rialta a dhéanamh ar Scéim Teanga an Aontais chun teacht leis na hathruithe rialta a tharlaíonn san Aontas. Ba cheart go mbeadh an Ghaeilge mar chuid



nádúrtha d'aon obair a dhéanann AMLÉ go háirithe in aon fheachtas nó imeacht de chuid an Aontais.

**Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Gur cheart an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus Uachtarán AMLÉ Scéim Teanga AMLÉ 2020 a chur i bhfeidhm agus bheith cinnte go bhfuil an Ghaeilge mar chuid d'obair laethúil an Aontais.

**Chomh maith leis sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Go ndéanfaidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge athbhreithniú ar an Scéim ar a laghad gach dara bliain chun mbeadh sé ag teacht le haon san Aontas nó ó thaobh reachtaíocht an Stáit de.

**Aisghaireann an Chomhdháil:**

2018 IL 2 2018 IL 3

**Congress Notes:**

The importance of USI having an Irish Language Scheme in order to promote the language through its integration in the everyday work of the Union.

**Congress Also notes:**

That USI has an Irish Language Scheme which outlines the responsibilities of the Union in promoting Irish and the use of Irish within the organisation.

**Congress believes:**

That any USI Irish language scheme should be regularly updated in line with any major changes which occur in the Union. Irish should be a natural part of any work USI does, especially events or campaigns run by the Union.

**Therefore Congress mandates:**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the USI President to implement USI's Irish Language Scheme 2020 to ensure Irish is seen as a central part of the Union's day to day work.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to review and update the scheme at least every two years to comply with any changes to the Union or to State legislation regarding the language.

**Therefore Congress Repeals:** 2018 IL 2 2018 IL 3

## 20 GAE 4 Irish Language Working Group

Proposed by IT Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress notes:**

The position of Leas – Uachtarán don Gaeilge became a full time position in congress 2018-2019 as congress believed it was important to have a full time officer to roll out the various tasks throughout the year. Since the introduction of the role as a full time position Congress has seen the great work that has been done by the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and how the Irish Language has grown since the full time position has been put in place.

### **Congress further notes:**

That other full time officers in the executive team are allocated time to roll out working group's at every National Council.

### **Congress therefore mandates:**

The President to allow for an Irish Working Group in the National Council schedule and The Irish Language Officer / Leas – Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to run an Irish working group at every National Council.

## **20 GAE 5Cúrsaí Lán Ghaeilge ag an Tríú Leibhéal / Courses through Irish at Third Level**

### **Proposed by An Coiste Cultúrtha**

#### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

Go bhfuil an-chuid daoine le Gaeilge ag dul isteach in institiúidí ardoideachais nach mbaineann úsáid as a gcuid Gaeilge tar éis na scoile.

#### **Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith**

Go bhfuil easpa tacaíochta ar fáil i roinnt coláistí do chainteoirí Gaeilge, go háirithe cainteoirí dúchais, agus daoine a d'fhreastal ar an mbunscoil agus/nó an meánscoil trí Ghaeilge nuair a théann siad isteach sa tríú leibhéal. Tá easpa rogha acu maidir le cúrsaí iomlán trí Ghaeilge nach mbaineann leis an teanga féin agus mar sin ní fheictear dóibh gur cheart an teanga a labhairt a thuilleadh.

#### **Creideann an Chomhdháil**

Gur cheart go mbeadh níos mó cúrsaí ar fáil trí Ghaeilge ar fud na tíre nach mbaineann leis an teanga í féin, le freastal ar an bpobal seo a bhfuil Gaeilge acu ach ar mhaith leo a bheith ag obair in earnáileacha nach mbaineann leis an teanga féin mar shampla, Gnó, Dlí, STEM srl.. Mar sin bheadh níos mó daoine le Gaeilge ag obair in earnálacha éagsúla a bheadh in ann freastal ar an bpobal i gcoitinne go hiomlán trí Ghaeilge le cearta teanga faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 a chomhlíonadh.

#### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil**

Go rachaidh an LU don Ghaeilge i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachas, agus an Roinn Cultúr Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta le tuilleadh infheistíocht a dhéanamh i gcúrsaí lán Ghaeilge timpeall na tíre ionas go mbeidh deis níos fearr ag mic léinn a gcuid cumas sa teanga a chothú agus a bheith ag obair in earnálacha éagsúla trí Ghaeilge.

**Aisghaireann:**

12 G 1

**Congress notes:**

That there are many students with Irish entering third level education who do not use their Irish after school.

**Congress also notes:**

The lack of support given to students who have Irish, especially native speakers and those who attend primary and secondary school through Irish, when they enter third level. There is also a lack of choice in courses conducted through Irish which are not related to Irish itself and students don't see the value in speaking Irish anymore.

**Congress Believes:**

That more courses should be made available fully through Irish, which are not centred around the language itself, to cater to this group who speak Irish but who would like to work in areas outside of the language itself for example, Business, Law, STEM etc. Therefore there would be more people working in different sectors who have Irish, and who can deal with the general public through Irish and fulfill language rights provisions made under the Official Languages Act 2003.

**Therefore Congress Mandates:**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education and Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht to invest more in courses conducted through Irish throughout the country so that students have a better chance of maintaining their Irish and being able to work in various sectors through Irish.

**Repeals:**

12 G 1

## 20 GAE 6Tumoideachas Gaeilge / Immersive Education through Irish

Proposed by An Coiste Cultúrtha

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil:**

An méid daoine sa tír seo a dhéanann staidéar ar an nGaeilge sa Choláiste, idir an teanga féin agus a cúrsaí oideachais, nach bhfaigheann go leor tacaíochta ó thaobh labhairt na teanga de le linn céime.

### **Creideann an Chomhdháil**

Go bhfuil an- tábhacht leis an tumoideachas mar chuid d'aon chéim a bhaineann le teanga ar bith. Tá easpa deiseanna ag mic léinn úsáid a bhaint as a gcuid Gaeilge labhartha le linn na céime ach amháin nuair a théann siad chun na Gaeltachta nó má tá siad i mbun scrúdú béil. Ní leor an méid seo go mbeadh mic léinn líofa sa teanga go háirithe d'ábhair oide nuair ar ghá dóibh a bheith in ann an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh do pháistí.

### **Chomh maith leis sin, creideann an Chomhdháil:**

Gur cheart go mbeadh tréimhsí foghlama sa Ghaeltacht mar chuid de gach cúrsa a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge gan costais bhreise ar mhic léinn le freastal orthu. Ba cheart go mbeadh na Ghaeilge níos fite fuaite sna ábhair eile a dhéanann na hábhair oide mar shampla, ceol, ealaíon, corpoideachas ionas go gcloisfidh agus go labhróidh siad an Ghaeilge níos minice mar chuid den chéim.

### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Go rachaidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus an Leas-Uachtarán um Chúrsaí Acadúla i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachas, an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, agus Institiúidí Ardleibhéal le tréimhsí foghlama sa Ghaeltacht a tharraingt isteach mar chuid de chúrsaí a bhaineann le Gaeilge ionas go mbeidh an deis an mic léinn a bheith iomlán tumtha sa teanga.

### **Chomh maith leis sin, sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Go rachaidh an LU don Ghaeilge i mbun stocaireachta ar an Roinn Oideachais, an Comhairle Mhúinteoireachta, Ceardchumann na Múinteoirí agus páirtithe leasmhara eile leis an Ghaeilge a tharraingt isteach níos mó sna cúrsaí bunoidreachais chun go mbeadh níos mó Gaeilge á labhairt ag na hábhair oide le linn na céime.

### **Congress Notes**

The large number of people in the country who study Irish in college, between the language itself and education courses, who do not receive enough support when it comes to speaking the language throughout their degree.

### **Congress believes:**

That it is hugely important to have immersive education as part of any degree which involves learning a language. There is a distinct lack of opportunity for students to speak Irish during their degree with the exception of going to the Gaeltacht or oral exams. This is

not enough for students to become properly fluent in the language, especially for student teachers who should be able to teach children in Irish.

**Congress also believes:**

That learning periods in the Gaeltacht should be a part of any course which involves the Irish language without any extra cost to the student for attending. Irish should be further integrated into other subjects studied by student teachers for example music, art, PE, so that Irish will be heard and spoken more as part of their degree.

**Therefore Congress mandates:**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and HEIs to introduce Gaeltacht courses into any degree which involves learning Irish so that students have more of an opportunity to become immersed in the language.

**Congress further mandates:**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Department of Education, the Teaching Council, Teachers' unions and other relevant organisations to integrate Irish into ITE programmes so that student teachers will have more opportunity to practice their Irish during their degree.

## 20 GAE 8Students' Union Bilinguality

Proposed by **Maynooth Students' Union**

**Congress Notes:**

Many but not all MOs have an Oifigeach na Gaeilge, and some HEIs are bilingual institutions, making use of both Irish and English.

**Congress Further Notes:**

That many MOs would like to make the transition from a monolingual Students' Union to a bilingual one, but there is an absence of a definition as to what that entails, and many feel they do not have the support or resources to do so.

**Congress Applauds:**

The work of MOs around the country in efforts to increase the use of Irish on their campuses, and the work of the Oifigí Gaeilge and the LU Gaeilge in promoting the Irish language throughout the year.

**Congress Mandates:**

The LU Gaeilge to create a best practice guideline for Student Unions who wish to become a bilingual organisation. This guideline will set out the parameters of what it means to be a

bilingual Students Union, and will set out stages of bilinguality that Student Unions can work towards implementing.

**Congress Further Mandates:**

The LU Gaeilge to work to support MOs wishing to become a bilingual Students Union

## 20 GAE 9 An Ghaeilge ó Thuadh - New Decade New Deal

Proposed by An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil**

Na Céimeanna móra a rinne an Feidhmeannas ó Thuadh i gComhaontú New Decade New Deal Approach maidir le Gaeilge trí Choimsinéir Teanga a chruthú agus aisghairm na bpéindlíthe deireanach.

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil chomh maith**

An sár-obair gníomhaíochta a rinne An Dream Dearg agus mic léinn ó Thuadh leis an méid seo a bhaint amach.

**Creideann an Chomhdháil:**

Cé go bhfuil na héachtaí seo iontach dearfach, ní leor iad i gcomparáid leis an Acht Gaeilge a éilítear, go háirithe toisc nach luaitear aon rud faoi chomharthaíocht dhátheangach ann.

**Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Go leanann Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn ag tacú le hobair an Dream Dearg agus eagraíochtaí Gaeilge.

**Chomh maith leis sin sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Go bhforbródh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge feachtas in éineacht le NUS-USI agus balleagraíochtaí leasmhara le ciorraithe ar chúrsaí Gaeilge a sheachaint, go leathnófaí cúrsaí ionas gur féidir staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge le hábhair eile, go méadófaí infheistíocht i Ranna Gaeilge agus le tacaíocht a thabhairt do na Cumainn Ghaelacha agus d'Oifigigh Gaeilge maidir le cúrsaí eile Gaeilge ar champas.

## IL 19 – 2 Irish language: Use your Cúpla Focal

Proposed By NUI Galway Students' Union

Congress commends: The great work done by the LÚ Don Ghaeilge this year with the focail an lae on social media, and how this has encouraged a more mainstream approach to the Irish language.

**Congress regrets:**

Many people have Irish, but don't make use of the language.

**Congress mandates:**

The LU don Ghaeilge to roll out a 'Use your cupla focail' campaign

## IL 19 – 3 Cearta Teanga / Language Rights

Rúin Ón Coiste Cultúrtha

**Tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara:**

Go bhfuil neart plé sna meáin faoi Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

**Tuigeann an Comhdháil**

Go mbíonn daoine ar gearán faoi easpa cearta teanga go minic, agus go raibh feachtas an-éifeachtach (#nílsécg, #faighdofada) eagraithe ar líne.

**Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil**

Gur cheart don Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge tacú le feachais faoi na Cearta Teanga agus go gcaithfidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge dul i dteangmháil le hOifig an Coimisinéir Teanga chun nasc a chruthú leo.

**Congress Notes**

The constant media attention surrounding the Irish Language Act, and the upcoming Official Language Bill.

**Congress Understands**

There is regular cause for complaint due to the lack of language rights, with a very successful online campaign (#faighdofada, #nílsécg)

**Congress Mandates**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to support campaigns about language rights, and to contact the office of an Coimisinéir Teanga in order to build a connection.

## IL 19 – 4 Na Táillí Gaeltachta / Gaeltacht Fees

Rúin Ón Coiste Cultúrtha

**Tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara:**

Go gcaithfidh na hábhair oidí tréimhse a chaitheamh sa Ghaeltacht chun clárú leis an gComhairle Mhúinteoireachta

**Anuas air sin, tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara**

Go raibh feachtas éifeachtach eagraithe in 2018 (#GaelFees)

**Tuigeann an Comhdháil**

Go bhfuil an costas a bhaineann le na cúrsaí seo ró-ard agus go mbíonn na hábhair oidí faoi bhrú maidir leis an gcostas. Chomh maith leis sin bhí maoiniú ann roimh 2012 chun cabhrú leis an gcostas.

### **Mar sin, aisghaireann an Comhdháil**

12 AA 6

15 GA 3

### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil**

Gur cheart don Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge forbairt a dhéanamh ar an bhfeachtas #GaelFees in éinteacht le Conradh na Gaeilge agus go gcaithfidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge stocaireacht a dhéanamh faoin gcostas.

### **Congress notes**

Student teachers must spend time in the Gaeltacht in order to register with the Teaching Council

### **Congress further notes**

There was an effective campaign organised in 2018 (#GaelFees)

### **Congress understands**

The cost of these courses is very high, putting student teachers under financial pressure. There was funding available for these fees before 2012.

### **Thus, Congress repeals**

12 AA 6

15 GA 3

### **Therefore, Congress mandates**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to continue lobbying on the Gaeltacht Fees and to develop the #GaelFees campaign further

## **IL 19 – 5 NUS-USI Irish Language Taskforce**

Rúin Ón Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge

### **Congress Notes**

The formation of the NUS-USI Irish Language Task Force in 2018/2019

### **Congress Further Notes**

The training opportunities provided to Irish language Activists in 2019



## **This motion thus repeals**

14 G 4

### **Congress Mandates**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to provide continued support for the NUS-USI Irish Language Taskforce, member organisations and facilitate training when needed

## **IL 19 – 7 NUS-Cymru**

Rúin Ón Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge

### **Tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara:**

An obair atá ar siúl sa Bhreatain Bheag chun na Cearta Teanga a chur chun cinn

### **Anuas air sin, tugann an Comhdháil faoi deara**

Go bhfuil NUS-Wales agus na Coláistí sa Bhreatain Bheag ag déanamh an-iarracht chun na Cearta Teanga a chur chun cinn

### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil**

Gur cheart don Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge dul i dteangmháil le NUS-Wales, na coláistí sa Bhreatain Bheag, an Coimisinéir Teanga agus tuairisc a scríobh chun forbairt a dhéanamh ar scéim teanga AMLÉ

### **Congress Notes**

The work taking place in Wales in order to promote Language Rights

### **Congress Further Notes**

The hard work done by NUS-Wales and affiliated colleges in order to promote Language Rights

### **Congress Mandates**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to contact NUS-Wales, affiliated colleges and the Language Commissioner, create a report on findings in order to develop the USI Language Scheme

## **2018 IL 1 : Updating of Language and Terminology – Uasdhátú Téarmaíochta agus Teanga**

Rúin ón Grúpa Oibre/Motions from Irish Language Working Group

**Tugann An Comhdháil Faoi Deara:**

An sár-obair atá déanta ag an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le linn na bliana maidir le haistriúchán na dtéarmaí LADTA+ go Gaeilge.

**Anuas air sin, tugann An Comhdháil Faoi Deara:**

Go raibh an obair seo an-thábhachtach, agus in éineacht leis seo, rinneadh obair ag eagraíochtaí eile sa bhliain maidir le haistriúchán téarmaíochta go Gaeilge, mar shampla, téarmaíocht a bhaineann le cine.

**Tuigeann An Comhdháil:**

Chun reachtaíocht a scríobh in Éirinn, caithfear í a scríobh trí mhéan na Gaeilge, agus go bhfuil an leagan Gaeilge den dlí agus den bhunreacht mar ard-leagan dóibh.

**Mar sin, sainordaíonn An Comhdháil:**

Gur cheart don Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge obair leanúnach a dhéanamh maidir le haistriúchán na dtéarmaí atá chun cinn i gcúrsaí cothroime in Éirinn, agus gur cheart dóibh díriú isteach ar an téarmaíocht nach bhfuil mar fhócas i measc eagraíochtaí eile a bhaineann leis an Ghaeilge go speisialta.

**Congress Notes**

The excellent work done by USI VP for Irish Language this year regarding translating LGBTQ+ terms into Irish.

**Congress further notes**

That this work was very important, and that alongside it there has been work by other bodies this year translating terminology into Irish, such as terminology related to race.

**Congress understands**

That in order for legislation to be written in Ireland, it needs to be written into the Irish language, and that the supreme form of the law and constitution are the Irish Language versions.

**Congress therefore mandates**

That the VP for Irish Language work continually on translating terminology that is at the fore front of social justice issues in Ireland and that they focus on terminology that may not be the focus of other Irish Language groups.

## 2018 IL 4 : Tuairisc ar Oideachas na Gaeilge – Report on the Education of Irish

Rúin an LU don Ghaeilge

**Tugann An Comhdháil faoi deara**

Go bhfuil neart polasaithe ar an fhód maidir le foghlaim agus oideachas na Gaeilge i meánscoileanna an Phoblacht na hÉireann, agus gur chuimsigh na rúin seo mórlach na rún don LU don Ghaeilge go stairiúil.

### **Anuas air sin, tugann An Comhdháil faoi deara**

Go mbaineann tábhacht agus conspóid ar leith le teagasc na Gaeilge ag an dara leibhéal, le Gaelscolaíocht, agus le measúnú na teanga go ginearálta.

### **Tuigeann An Comhdháil**

Go bhfuil neart polasaithe a bhaineann leis an oideachas ar an fhód, agus gur cheart tuairisc nó polasaí amháin a chruthú, ag tarraingt ar an dáta is déanaí chun polasaí sruthlíneach amháin a chur ar fáil a théann i ngleic le ceist na Gaeilge sa chóras oideachais.

### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn An Comhdháil**

Ar an LU don Ghaeilge polasaí Oideachas na Gaeilge a chruthú ag cur ceist na Gaelscolaíochta, na hArdteiste, agus araile, san áireamh.

### **Congress notes**

That many mandates exist regarding the learning and education of the Irish language in the secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland, and that these motions have historically encompassed many of the mandates of the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge historically.

### **Congress further notes**

That the question of Irish language education is both controversial and important at the second level, in the context of Gaelscoileanna, and with the question of assessment in general.

### **Congress understands**

That many mandates related to education are currently in existence, and that it is right to produce one report or policy, drawing on the most recent data to create one streamlined policy that will deal with the question of the education of the Irish language.

### **Therefore, Congress mandates**

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to create a policy/report on the education of the Irish language, taking Gaelscolaíocht, the Leaving Certificate, etc., into account.

## **2018 IL 5 : Gaeltacht Requirement for Student Teachers**

Proposed by St Angela's College Sligo Students' Union

### **Congress Notes**

The high cost of attending courses in the Gaeltacht combined with the difficulties student teachers face when registering with the Teaching Council. When registering with the Teaching Council, obstacles facing students are not limited to cost. Students must prove their Gaeltacht experience in order to gain a teaching council number.

### **Tugann An Comhdháil Faoi Dheara**

Na deacrachtaí móra atá ann le haghaidh an mhic léinn mhúinteoireachta agus iad ag iarraidh clarú leis an gComhairle Mhúinteoireachta. Chomh maith leis sin bíonn sé an-chostasach dóibh. Ní hamháin teorainneacha airgeadais atá i gceist. Caithfidh an mhic léinn mhúinteoireachta fianaise a léiriú chun uimhir a fháil.

### **Congress Understands**

The need for clarity on what can be described as a verifiable Gaeltacht experience. Both work and study placements undertaken in the Gaeltacht have the capacity to enhance a students' academic and personal development.

### **Anuas ar sin, tugann an Comhdháil faoi dheara**

Cén sórt tréimhse Gaeltachta atá ag teastáil agus conas is féidir fianaise a thabhairt. Is féidir le tréimhse Gaeltachta cumais acadúil agus forbairt phearsanta na dalta a fheabhsú

### **Congress Therefore Mandates**

The VP for the Irish Language and the VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the Teaching Council and the Department of Education for achievable learning outcomes, clarity and increased financial support.

### **Mar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil**

An LU don Ghaeilge agus an VP AA stocaireacht a dhéanamh ar an Roinn Oideachais agus an gComhairle Mhúinteoireachta chun torthaí foghlama, soiléire agus níos mó tacaíocht airgeadais.

### **This motion repeals:**

15 GA 3 and 12 AA 6

## **2018 IL 6 : Inclusion of Irish in USI campaigns**

Proposed by National University of Ireland, Galway Students' Union with amendments also moved by them

### **Congress commends:**

All the work USI has done thus far on the promotion of the Irish language

### **Congress also notes:**

The need for Irish to be integrated into all campaigns run by USI

**Congress mandates:**

That the Leas Uachtaran don Ghaeilge work with relevant policy officers, in so far as is possible, to strive to include the Irish language in all USI campaigns and on promotional materials including but not limited to t-shirts, posters and cups and to also include the Irish Language in themed roadshows.

## 15 GA 1 Seimineár Gaeilge/ Irish Language Seminar

**Aithníonn an Chomhdháil:**

An tábhacht a bhaineann le Cumainn Ghaelacha ar dul chun cinn na Gaeilge, agus in úsáid na Gaeilge i gColáistí tríú leibhéal ar fud na tíre.

**Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:**

Leas-Uachtarán Ghaeilge seimineár bhliantúil a heagrú, i bpáirt le heagraíochtaí eile, agus Roinn na dTeangacha in Institiúidí Oideachais, agus béim speisialta a chuir in earnáil na Gaeilge, Meáin na Gaeilge, agus gníomhaíocht i saol na Gaeilge.

**Congress Notes:**

The importance that Cumann Gaelacha have in the usage, and promotion of Irish in 3rd level institutions across the country.

**Congress Mandates:**

The LU Gaeilge to organise an annual seminar, in conjunction with other organisations, and Language Departments in Educational Institutions, 3rd Level Students, with special emphasis on the Irish Language sector, Irish Language Media, and Irish Language Activism.

## 15 GA 4 Seachtain na Gaeilge

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

**Congress notes**

The importance social events have on the ability for student to practice, and use whatever Irish they have.

**Congress Mandates:**

The LU Gaeilge to organise an annual Seachtain na Gaeilge festival, in conjunction with Conradh na Gaeilge,

# CITIZENSHIP

## 20 CZN 1 The Cost and Criteria of Irish Citizenship.

Proposed by the Equality and Citizenship Working Group.

### **Congress notes**

The total fee to become an Irish citizen for an adult is ,-1145, consisting of an application fee of ,-175 and a fee to gain citizenship of ,-950. Furthermore the criteria to apply for citizenship includes having a period of 365 days\* (1 year) continuous reckonable residence in the State immediately before the date of application for naturalisation.

### **Congress notes with concern**

This high cost acts as a barrier to many young people and students who wish to apply for citizenship, excluding them from being able to vote in certain Irish elections. Also, the restrictive criteria of having to stay in the country for 365 consecutive days limits opportunities for people who are hoping to apply to become Irish citizens.

### **Congress mandates**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for a reduction in the cost of citizenship and to lobby for the continuous 365 residency in the state to be changed. "

## CZN 19 – 2 Irish Nationality and Citizenship

Proposed by Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

### **Council notes:**

In 2004, 79% of the public voted in favour of a constitutional amendment which would remove the automatic right to citizenship for children born in Ireland. The following was inserted into Bunreacht na hÉireann,

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, a person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, who does not have, at the time of the birth of that person, at least one parent who is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen is not entitled to Irish citizenship or nationality, unless provided for by law.

### **Council further notes:**

That this constitutional amendment leaves many who were born here and who have been resident in Ireland throughout their lives, facing an uncertain legal future and in some cases, the threat of deportation.

### **Council notes with concern:**

Nationality and citizenship has a huge impact on accessing education, considering the financial barriers facing those when classified as international students, although they were born in Ireland and have lived in the state since.

**Council therefore mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby for provisions to be made by the Oireachtas for jus soli citizenship and to support bills brought through the Oireachtas which would improve access to education for those living in Ireland.

## CZN 19 – 4      Deposit and return schemes

Proposed By NUI Galway SU

**Congress notes with concern:**

Ireland is failing to meet its 2020 carbon emission targets to combat climate change, and leaves itself open to large fines as a result.

**Congress recognises:**

Sustainability has been proven to be a massive student issue, this year the Student Movement was a leading force in Climate case Ireland, and SUs across the country are continuing work inside and outside their institutions on sustainability .

**Congress commends:**

Deposit and return schemes in many European countries. These schemes encourage people to recycle plastic in exchange for money.

**Congress welcomes:**

The Repack Machine in UCC allows recycling of plastic, while also raising money for UCCSU designated charities, and the positive impact this has had on their campus.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and USI President to lobby the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment to introduce a national deposit and return scheme, and to lobby for economic supports for the introduction of such schemes.

## CZN 19 – 7      Referendum on the Extension of Presidential Voting Rights

Proposed by Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

**Congress notes**

The upcoming referendum on the extending Presidential voting rights to Irish citizens living outside of the Republic of Ireland.

### **Congress recognises**

That Irish citizens, regardless of their location, should have the right to vote for their nation's head of state.

### **Congress mandates**

USI Officer Board to campaign in favour of extending Presidential voting rights to those living outside of the Republic of Ireland.

## **2018 CZN 2 : Ending Direct Provision**

Proposed by the USI Equality & Citizenship Committee

### **Congress notes**

Asylum-seekers and their children have spent years living in an institutional setting that was designed to be a short-term solution. They are accommodated by the State in residential institutions, under a reception system known as 'Direct Provision'. Direct Provision is intended to provide for the welfare of asylum seekers and their families as they await decisions on their asylum application. The majority of asylum seekers spend over 4 years in Direct Provision waiting for their application to be processed.

### **Congress further notes**

That there are thousands of children and young people currently within the system, many of them aspiring to attend a third level or further education institution in Ireland. There has been a very low uptake of the scholarships available to those in Direct Provision to attend third level.

### **Congress commends**

The work of Students' Unions around the country in raising this issue on their campuses and localities through direct action campaigns, protests, and working with campus student groups in targeting commercial operations associated with Direct Provision to condemn their complicity in the system and to educate the public and students eg. Aramark off our Campus and the USI 'Avoca Jam' in 2017.

### **Congress Condemns**

The system of Direct Provision as it currently stands in Ireland.

### **Council therefore mandates**



The USI VP for Citizenship & Equality and the President to campaign for the abolition of the system of Direct Provision, campaign for the end of deportations, and for the introduction of a humane reception system in line with international best practice

**Council Further Mandates:**

The USI VP for Citizenship & Equality and the President to campaign for the universal right to work and accessible education for those in Direct Provision.

**Council Further mandates**

The USI VP for Citizenship & Equality and the President to campaign for the full enactment of the EU Receptions Conditions Directive.

## 2018 CZN 3 : Support the 2018 Civil Society Repeal Campaign

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

**Congress commends**

The work of Students' Unions around Ireland as 'Students for Choice', and the lobbying effort thus far for an early referendum date in 2018, and to prepare students for the upcoming referendum in the Republic of Ireland.

**Congress notes**

USI's membership of the coalition to repeal the 8th amendment and the national women's council of Ireland, and the USI mandate to support the goals of the Abortion Rights Campaign, and the strategy for referendum laid out in the USI Students for Choice strategy.

**Congress further notes**

The need for USI to ensure that the voices of minority communities affected by the 8th amendment, including students, transgender and non-binary people, as well as migrants in Ireland, are to the fore of the public debate ahead of the referendum.

**Congress supports**

The civil society campaign led by the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment, the National Women's Council of Ireland, and the Abortion Rights campaign.

**Congress mandates**

USI to support the National Campaign, and the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship and Vice President for Campaigns to further the successful development of 'USI Students for Choice' as the leading national voice for students during the campaign to repeal the 8th amendment.

## 2018 CZN 4 : Voter Registration and Reform

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

### **Congress recognises**

There are several mandates regarding Voter Registration as part of the policy book.

### **Congress notes**

A strategy covering voter registration and reform would be more efficient for a USI officers work, and would comprehensively deal with the topic, making the process of lobbying on the content easier.

### **Congress adopts**

The Voter Registration and Reform Position Paper.

### **Congress mandates**

The President and the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to lobby the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government based on the USI Position Paper.

### **Congress therefore deletes**

12 CZN 4 Voting Rights for Citizens Living Abroad

15 CZN 8 Voter Registration System Reform

15 CZN 1 Lobby for 3rd Level Centre Polling Stations

14 CZN 2 SERD

## 2018 CZN 5 : Places of Sanctuary

Proposed by National University of Ireland, Galway Students' Union with an amendment also moved by them.

### **Congress notes:**

Places of Sanctuary Ireland is a network of groups in towns, cities, local communities and third level institutions which share the objectives of promoting the integration, inclusion and welfare of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants, by encouraging every sector of society to make a practical commitment to becoming places of welcome and safety.

### **Congress further notes**

Higher Education institutions play a key role in welcoming students from different diverse backgrounds, and creating inclusive and understanding communities.

### **Congress recognises:**

Many Universities and ITs have been awarded places of sanctuary/ University of Sanctuary status.

**Congress therefore mandates:**

The VP E&C to disseminate information on the places of sanctuary initiative to MOs and encourage MOs to apply for status where possible.

## 2018 CZN 6 : International Student Visa

Proposed by IT Tallaght, Dublin Students' Union

**Congress Notes:**

That international students have to get a visa every year regardless of the length of their academic tenure.

**Congress Further Notes:**

That international students studying in other countries such as the United Kingdom are given student visas for the full term of their academic tenure as opposed to an annual renewed visa.

**Congress Mandates:**

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and Vice President for Academic Affairs lobby the Department of Justice and Equality and the Garda National Immigration Bureau to provide international students in Ireland with visas that last the duration of their period of study under the course they applied to.

## 16 CZN 2 Students' Unions Multicultural Festival

Proposed by DITSU

**Congress Notes:**

That Ireland has become far more diverse and multicultural in the last 20 years.

**Congress Further Notes:**

That this promotes recognition, understanding and acceptance of people who come from different cultural backgrounds.

**Congress Further Notes:**

The importance of celebrating the many different cultures which have had a positive impact on Irish Society.

**Congress Therefore Mandates:**

That the VP for Equality and Citizenship and the VP for Campaigns, working with all the Equality Officers and/or Welfare Officers and the many different multicultural groups, institutions and organisations in Ireland to run an annual Students' Unions Multicultural Festival which celebrates these many different cultures, and promotes the excellent opportunities available within all Students' Unions.

## 15 CZN 7 General Election Campaign

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress notes**

That General Election will happen in the next 18 months with the likelihood of a new Government.

### **Congress also notes**

This is an opportunity for USI to lobby and assure students' interests are provided for in the next program for Government

### **Congress therefore mandates**

The VP for Campaigns, in conjunction with the USI President, to write 'the Student Manifesto' to highlight USI's key demands from political parties.

### **Congress also mandates**

The VP for Campaigns, in conjunction with the USI President, to write 'the Student Guide to the General Election' which will inform the general student body on the election relevant to student issues and interests.

## 12 CZN 2 STUDENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

REAPPROVED 2018 – UP FOR RENEWAL 2021

### **Congress notes:**

That in order to help fund their education, many students take up a part time job.

### **Congress welcomes:**

The decision to reverse the cut to the minimum wage, which targeted students in part time jobs who are already struggling financially.

### **Congress notes with concern:**

That in many of these jobs, trade union membership is absent and in some places discouraged. Furthermore, many students are unaware of what their rights and entitlements are in relation to time off, payment and hours.

**Congress mandates:**

The Vice President of Equality and Citizenship to better inform students of their rights in the workplace by providing information that is set out by the LRC, NERA and Employment legislation. This mandate should be completed within the first quarter of the Academic Year.