

Motion: USI Postgraduate Researchers' Rights Charter

Proposed by Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhairle Náisiúnta Notes:

The existing USI Postgraduate Workers Rights Charter works at cross-purposes to the campaigns of several grassroots groups of postgraduate workers who are campaigning for the employment rights of postgraduate researchers. The exploitation of postgraduate researchers is most effectively challenged with a collective voice, and these divisions weaken the campaign for postgraduate researchers' rights.

Comhairle Náisiúnta further Notes:

That currently PhD students are classified as students.

Comhairle Náisiúnta Recognises:

To further develop the Postgraduate Workers' Rights Charter, the VP for Postgraduate Affairs coordinated postgraduate researchers and groups to highlight and protect the working rights of postgraduate researchers

Comhairle Náisiúnta believes:

That the USI will be able to effectively campaign along with postgraduate rights groups through the development of a new Postgraduate Researchers' Rights Charter.

Comhairle Náisiúnta adopts:

USI Postgraduate Researchers' Rights Charter

Comhairle Náisiúnta mandates:

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to lobby the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science on the USI Postgraduate Researchers' Rights Charter and for a change to the definition of a postgraduate, to define them as an employee.

Comhairle Náisiúnta further mandates:

Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to support and collaborate ~~grassroots~~ with groups organisations working on postgraduate researchers' rights where appropriate.

Comhairle Náisiúnta further mandates:

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns to run a campaign based on USI Postgraduate Researchers' Rights Charter.

Comhairle Náisiúnta repeals:

2021 AA 8: Clarification to the USI Postgraduate Workers Rights Charter
AA 19 – 6: The legal status of a PhD student.

The Union of Students in Ireland's

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS' RIGHTS CHARTER

The Union of Students in Ireland [USI] created a Postgraduate Researchers' Rights Charter to highlight and protect the working rights of postgraduate researchers . The Charter contains 16 points.

16 Points: -

1. Employee Status for all Postgraduate Researchers
2. Minimum Living Wage
3. Recognition and Payment of Work
4. Support for Teaching and Work
5. Access to Suitable Work Environment and Resources
6. Appropriate Supervision
7. Appeal and Grievances Procedures
8. Affordable and Suitable Accommodation
9. PGR Representation in Decision Making Bodies
10. Right to be Represented by Students, Teaching and Trade Union
11. Non-Discrimination
12. Rights of Non-EEA Postgraduate Researchers
13. Career Development Pathways
14. Equality of Opportunities
15. State Support for the Cost of Postgraduate Courses
16. Open Access

The Union of Students in Ireland's

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS' RIGHTS CHARTER

1. Employee Status for all Postgraduate Researchers

Recognize all postgraduate researchers (PhDs and postgraduates doing master's by research) engaged in research at Irish higher education and research system as employees with employee status, contracts of employment, and collective bargaining rights under the Irish Law. Contracts should include adequate and equitable social security provisions such as sickness and parental benefits, protective leave, maternity and paternity leave, contract extension under extenuating conditions, and pension rights.

2. Minimum Living Wage

Researchers at the postgraduate level should be paid at least a living wage. Annually, living wages should be reviewed while considering the cost of housing and living in each county.

3. Recognition and Payment of Work

All work allocated to postgraduate researchers should be recognized and compensated fairly in the contract. An average working week for postgraduate researchers should not exceed 48 hours, and duties outside of research projects should not exceed 8 hours. This should include time spent on research projects, training, lecturing, tutoring, demonstrating, preparation and marking, lab sessions, supervising students and administrative duties. Postgraduate researchers should have the right to decline duties outside of their research projects. Postgraduate researchers should receive statement of their terms of work before registration.

4. Support for Teaching and Work

Provide appropriate training, support, resources, and facilities for all postgraduates performing teaching and other work at the institution.

5. Access to Suitable Work Environment and Resources

Provide a safe, accessible, and healthy working environment for postgraduate researchers, including appropriate orientation, training, research expenses, dedicated workspace, meeting office, printing services, appropriate research equipment, tools, software, facilities, research travel funds, opportunities, and technical support.

6. Appropriate Supervision

The postgraduate researcher should have access to a qualified primary supervisor and/or secondary supervisor in the relevant research area. Supervision arrangements should clearly define that the proposed supervisor(s) have the time, knowledge, expertise, and commitment to offer appropriate advice and support to their supervisee. [A fair policy for change in supervision should also be developed.](#)

7. Appeal and Grievances Procedures

Postgraduate researchers should have access to transparent and independent appeal structures and processes to deal with issues of conflicts and grievances between postgraduate researchers, supervisors, and other bodies within an institution. Higher Education Institutions, Irish Funding agencies and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science should establish institutional and national rules and regulations, and appropriate procedures, possibly in the form of an independent ombudsman to ensure compliance with regulations, and contractual responsibilities and to act as a mediator for any disputes that may arise.

8. Affordable and Suitable Accommodation

Postgraduate researchers should have access to affordable, suitable student accommodation. The rent for postgraduate researchers should not exceed one-third of their income. The accommodation should be suitable for postgraduate researchers with families.

9. PGR Representation in Decision Making Bodies

Elected postgraduate representatives should be engaged and appointed onto institutional committees, review teams, and working groups on the PGR programmes, policies, regulations, and reforms. Ensure a clear governance and transparency both

within HEIs and the HEA in decision-making regarding matters relating to postgraduate researchers.

10. Right to be Represented by Students, Teaching and Trade Union

Postgraduate researchers should have a right to be represented by the teaching union, students' union, and trade union.

11. Non-Discrimination

Ensure that postgraduate researchers are not discriminated on any ground including but not limited to gender, age, ethnicity, race, colour, citizenship status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, family and marital status, accessibility requirements, language, locality, and economic condition.

12. Rights of Non-EEA Postgraduate Researchers

End discrimination against non-EEA postgraduate researchers by implementing reforms that include but are not limited to:

- Abolish the recurrent cost of €300 for the renewal of the Irish Residence Permit (IRP).
- The provision of Hosting Agreement Schemes to non-EU postgraduate researchers.
- Abolish the points-based system for funding agencies' scholarships based on the applicant's citizenship.
- Sponsorship and processing fees for visas, Garda vetting, and residence permits should be adequately funded by the HEIs.
- The time spent in postgraduate research by non-EU postgraduate researchers should be counted toward naturalization and residency.
- Provide working rights to the spouses of non-EEA postgraduate researchers.
- Provide access and assistance for healthcare, affordable health insurance, disability benefits, paid maternity, paternity, and sick leave.
- End the unregulated and higher tuition fees for non-EU postgraduate researchers and students.

13. Career Development Pathways

Abolish precarity in higher education and research. Ensure that postgraduate researchers in higher education and research, including those on part-time programmes, have clear and secure career pathways, resources, and support.

14. Equality of Opportunities

Improved access and support for all who wish to pursue postgraduate research and academic positions. This includes increases in funding to disability services to ensure HEIs are compliant with both the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Equal Status Act; ensuring compliance with the Athena SWAN charter in all HEIs; restoring funding to HEI health and mental health services to pre-2008 levels and expanding services to allow for universal, free healthcare for all postgraduates.

15. State Support for the Cost of Postgraduate Courses

Create a national policy to regularize, standardize and cease the cost of postgraduate courses. Irish and international postgraduate researchers and students pursuing taught and research degrees should receive the same financial support and fee criteria.

16. Open Access

Provide suitable training, resources, and financial support for conference presentations and open-access publications.