



Union of Students in Ireland
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

USI Policy File

2024-2025

Note on naming conventions.

After 2017, the USI motion naming conventions changed to make them more easily searchable across operating systems. Names now have the following format:

Year [TAB] Category [TAB] Origin (Optional) [TAB] Number When Passed [TAB] Motion Title

Note on Formatting.

The document is font-agnostic.

Motions are now formatted as follows:

Category: H1

Year, Category, Motion Name: H2

Member Organisation: H3

Clause Identifier: H4

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Academic Affairs

2024 AA CN 1 Motion on Proctorio

Comhdháil notes:

Proctorio is an example of online proctoring software. The primary function of software like this is to police academic performance by monitoring academic integrity during online examinations.

Comhdháil also notes:

This technology has raised considerable concerns amongst the third-level education community worldwide, and that across the world, students, staff and institutions have decided against Proctorio due to how problematic it is, like the University of California, Berkeley.

Comhdháil is concerned:

There are serious concerns about welfare, privacy, accessibility and bias that may result from the Proctorio-required recordings, including recordings of a student's home environment, image, audio, and computer screen while they are taking the exam. Discriminating factors with software like Proctorio include economical, gender, culture, race and disability status.

Comhdháil notes with great concern:

It is biased against certain skin colours. It has been reported that it struggles to recognize people of colour.

The scanning of a student's room and the collecting of information about a student's home environment as a breach of privacy. Students become vulnerable by showing their homes to unconscious or conscious bias and future discrimination, bullying or even harassment. An examiner viewing a student's personal living space and living condition, decorations/posters, and potential iconography is unacceptable.

The detection system for flagging alleged academic dishonesty is unreliable and discriminates against living conditions. For example, if a student lives in a shared arrangement, and there are multiple people in the room, or noises are heard due to overcrowded apartments, this will trigger the system.

Acquiring the right infrastructure, including affording a private room, a computer, web-camera and microphone and stable internet at home is stressful and expensive for audio and visual proctoring.

Students with caring duties might find it difficult to find someone to take care of their children while they are sitting an exam or making clear that they are under no circumstance be disturbed which induces anxiety.

Being monitored in this way places extraordinary stress on students, and this may affect academic performance as well as general welfare.

Comhdháil regrets:

That some universities, like Trinity College Dublin, have tried to implement Proctorio in certain faculties, as well as that individual lecturers are requiring the use of this software.

Comhdháil further notes:

The opposition of student unions to visual and audio proctoring for exams, and the need for the USI to support student unions in this and the use of Universal Design for Learning approaches to assessment.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

USI to adopt a stance against the use of visual and audio proctoring of exams by third-level institutions in Ireland. That the USI VP for Academic Affairs and President to support MO's whose institutions are under threat of the implementation of such proctoring within their assessment schedule.

2024 AA CN 2 Motion to Cut Ties with University Rankings

Comhdháil praises:

In recent times, Utrecht University, a member of the League of European Research Universities (LERU), made the commendable decision to opt out of the Times Higher Education World University Ranking for 2024.

Comhdháil understands:

This decision was taken because Utrecht University prioritizes collaboration and open science, while university rankings often emphasize competition, which is in contrast to their values. Concerns were also raised regarding the one-sidedness and methodological practices of university rankings in general. It was also mentioned that they are ceasing the approach of using impact factors in research assessment, instead aligning with a commitment to open science and responsible research evaluation, and the national and international movement behind it.

Comhdháil praises:

The efforts of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (COARA), which Utrecht University is a member of, and its strategy to reduce reliance on rankings.

Comhdháil further understands:

That university rankings perpetuate social exclusion and promote a managerial approach that relies on numbers rather than holistic education. The corporate ethos present in these rankings pushes for the neoliberalization of our institutions, fostering a world of unequal opportunities and elitism.

Comhdháil also understands:

That university rankings can reflect colonial legacies, favoring former colonial powers and perpetuating inequalities in higher education. This inherently biased system influences the desirability of alumni within the job market and pits institutions against one another without considering the local context or individual countries' unique needs.

Comhdháil is specifically concerned:

Numerous Western universities were built and rose to prominence on the back of slavery and the profits extracted therein. University rankings represent a form of intellectual imperialism, a "captive mind" in which universities outside of the Western world are forced to conform to Western corporatized ideas of what a university is and conform to the worldwide market of universities that is embodied by the idea of competitive university rankings. The requirement to conform to a paradigm stands at odds with the needs of local contexts and individual countries, as well as to the principles of academic freedom, and represents neo-colonial encroachment by Western institutions on universities in postcolonial countries. The rankings force universities worldwide to conform to a prescribed framework, irrespective of their unique purpose or context. This, in turn, places pressure on universities to participate in the global knowledge production business, publish research in international journals (often inaccessible to the local population), and invest in endeavors far removed from the needs of their local societies

Comhdháil notes:

It is time for Irish universities to re-evaluate their participation in university rankings.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

That the USI VP for Campaigns and VP For Academic Affairs and President write to all third-level institution presidents asking them to re-evaluate their participation in the university rankings system.

2024 AA CN 3 Motion on eBook licensing

Comhdháil states

The USI is concerned at the state of the e-book publishing and licensing scene. The multinational companies that have monopolized the market have hiked license fees, draining the taxpayer, our libraries and our institutions out of money, while leaving authors out of pocket. There are also severe restrictions on what libraries can do with e-books once purchased, such as simultaneous viewing limitations. Arbitrary limitations, sudden price increases and lack of access – our libraries are being held hostage by publishers.

Libraries cannot buy eBooks and eAudiobooks, they can only licence them. This means they have to accept the restrictions that publishers place on these items, something they do not have to do with print books.

Not all publishers make eBooks available for licensing to libraries. Unlike with print, parts of the universe of eBooks are off limits to libraries, through the decision of private companies. This situation does not exist with print as the copyright framework, through the first sale doctrine and its equivalents, enables libraries to buy whatever books they want. As libraries are no longer free to buy whatever they choose, collection development is impacted upon leading to a dearth of content in non-English languages, or titles for specific user groups.

The #ebooksos campaign has highlighted the unfair practices of publishing companies. The campaign that was originally started in the United Kingdom has reached Ireland and has resonated across the world with libraries. Knowledge should be accessible, but increasingly it has been turned into a commodity. For example, textbooks that cost “£44 for a print copy are £423 for a single e-book user and £500 for three users”. This is a ridiculous situation which shows that regulation is needed in the industry. By August 2023, more than 5,000 people, students and academics, have signed the open letter put forward by the #ebooksos campaign, including the Library Association of Ireland.

Last year, higher education and public libraries spent in excess of €3 million on ebooks.

Librarians in Ireland have demonstrated that some high-profile e-books are twenty times more expensive than their print equivalent, and a price differential of three to ten times is quite typical.. As well as this, in Ireland too terms and conditions attached to the e-books purchased by libraries can be **Kafkesque**.. related to this issue is the academic publishers – students know all too well the issue of when writing an assignment and being hit with a paywall and lack of institutional access. As a result, and in recognition of this situation, many student unions, such as Trinity College Dublin Students’ Union have motions in support of open access. The situation is one in which neither libraries, authors nor students and institutions and their researchers come out positively. The taxpayer, and the government, is also held hostage to the whims of big publishing companies, and the subsidization to keep our libraries afloat in light of extortionate publisher pricing is a big burden on the exchequer.

Comhdháil endorses

The demands of the Library Association of Ireland, specifically:

- Significant reductions in annual database, journal subscription and open access costs, not increases or price freezes to recognise the reality of library budgets.
- Increased transparency and sustainability in ebook costs and licensing. In public libraries, the average cost of an ebook is three times the cost of a print book, with far greater restrictions on how it can be used. In academic libraries the situation is even worse – academic ebook costs can often be ten times as much as for the same paper book. Price rises are common, sudden and appear arbitrary. The CIAEM cites examples of well-known publishers increasing costs for a single-user ebook by 200% or more with no warning in 2020.
- A deep discount on ebooks and e-textbooks where their print equivalents have been purchased in recent years. Instead at present ebooks are almost always more expensive, and frequently significantly and prohibitively so.
- Publishers to make all currently available and forthcoming books and textbooks available in accessible electronic format to libraries. At present approximately 20% of titles are available in e-format but this is much lower in certain disciplines. In some cases, a book is available as an ebook to an individual to purchase, but not available to a library to purchase.
- More flexibility in content selection to allow libraries to disaggregate collections.
- Ending ‘exploding licences’ – time-based licences that force books to be deleted from collections after a certain period of time.
- More government support for the creation and use of Open Education Resources (OER) and the associated curation infrastructure to ensure sustainable access.

Copyright law reform to:

- Remove the requirement for libraries to purchase versions of ebooks licensed specifically for library use which are subject to the aforementioned pricing and licensing obstacles.
- Allow libraries to scan whole books they own in print where ebooks are unavailable or unaffordable for preservation and for controlled access to support research and learning.

2024 AA CN 4 Postgraduate Taught Funding

Comhairle Náisúinta Notes

That Postgraduate Taught students not eligible for the postgraduate tuition fee grant have limited means with which to fund for their education, with major funding bodies such as SFI/IRC typically only providing grants for Postgraduate Researchers.

Comhairle Náisúinta Further Notes

That the fee reduction announced for the 2024 Irish Budget does not affect Postgraduate Taught Fees. In addition, many Postgraduate Taught programmes offer research projects as part of the degree programme, and that these projects often entail a high bench fee for access to resources, materials etc. These projects are often as time consuming as full-time PhD/MRes projects, reducing opportunities for students to work part-time jobs to support their education.

Comhairle Náisúinta Believes

Postgraduate Taught students should have greater access to funding opportunities from governmental and research funding bodies to support their education.

Comhairle Náisúinta Mandates

The USI VP for Postgraduate Affairs and VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to extend future fee reductions to Postgraduate Taught students, and to investigate the feasibility of extending existing grants and developing new grants for these students.

2024 AA 2 Hidden Costs Support and Transparency

Proposed by Academic Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil notes:

That many students are required to pay additional costs, on top of the student contribution/tuition fee. This includes but is not limited to materials charges, field trips, uniform costs, software costs, and medical costs. These can range from 10s to 1000s of euros/pounds.

Comhdháil further notes:

In many cases, there is limited, or no information provided to students in advance of enrolment on the additional costs that they will be required to pay throughout the course of their studies, especially when specific paid software is used for teaching, but not made available for students. These costs are also often not covered by grants made available to students, such as SUSI.

Comhdháil further notes:

That these materials may sometimes be made available on devices owned by the HEI (for example, in computer labs), but not for use on students' personal devices.

Comhdháil believes:

That this is not an acceptable solution, especially for students who may have long commutes, who must work part time, or students with disabilities. These spaces are often also being used close to capacity, meaning that students have a very limited window in which to use them outside of class hours.

Comhdháil further believes:

Hidden additional costs serve as a further reminder of the marketized Higher Education system that students across the island are being subjected to, and may further inhibit students from progressing in their education particularly where these costs are mandatory.

Comhdháil mandates:

The USI President and Vice President for Academic Affairs engage with key stakeholders, including the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, to require institutions to provide full transparency of all additional costs within their institutions to prospective students.

Comhdháil further mandates:

The USI President and Vice President for Academic Affairs engage with key stakeholders, including the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, to provide adequate funding to institutions so that these costs do not need to be levied on students.

Comhdháil further mandates:

The USI Coiste Gnó to support MOs in raising awareness of additional course costs within their colleges, and in lobbying for the reduction or abolishment of all additional costs. The USI Coiste Gnó to support NUS-USI members in ensuring that institutions in the North continue to comply with CMA requirements around the publication of additional costs.

Comhdháil Repeals: 2021 AA 1: Hidden Course Costs

2024 AA 4 North South Mobility Education Entry for Students

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil Notes:

Students both north and south lack information on how to pursue further and higher education outside of their jurisdictions. Students in the Republic of Ireland are unfamiliar with UCAS and writing personal statements, and students in the North find the CAO challenging.

Comhdháil Regrets:

There is a lack of accessible information available to students on how to study over the border.

Comhdháil Further Regrets:

The difficulties of grade requirements faced by students in the north when applying for the CAO with their A levels which act as a barrier to students' mobility.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The Vice President of Academic Affairs with the help of the Coiste Gnó to liaise with NUS-USI, the Irish Second-level Students' Union (ISSU) and the Secondary Students' Union of North Ireland (SSUNI) to push for better information and resources to allow for north-south mobility for all students. USI will also reach out to Universities Ireland on this.

2024 AA 5 Apprenticeship Representation in Ireland

Proposed by Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil Recognises:

The Department of Further, Higher, Education Science, Innovation & Research has created more apprenticeships across many fields throughout the country.

Comhdháil Welcomes:

Apprenticeships as a means of education, allowing for more people to become learners in a way that best supports them.

Comhdháil Notes:

Currently apprentices have no representative body to protect and advocate for better conditions and further their rights as learners. Currently, there is no democratically elected voice for apprentices in the South of Ireland, this is fulfilled in the North of Ireland by the National Society of Apprentices (NSoA)

Comhdháil Mandates:

The VP for Academic Affairs with the in assistance of the Coiste Gnó to pursue an appropriate representative structure for apprentices. The VP for Academic Affairs will liaise with apprentices and appropriate bodies. They will also ensure democracy is at the core of this structure.

2024 AA 6 State Supports for Students Fleeing Conflict Zones

Proposed by the Vice-President for Campaigns

Comhdháil Notes

That in most cases where students fleeing conflict zones arrive in Ireland and subsequently wish to continue their education, such cases are dealt with on a case-to-case basis in the absence of a national policy to inform the approach taken when such cases arise.

Comhdháil further notes

That specific conflicts where EU policy informs the approach taken by third-level education actors in respect of students displaced from those conflicts, there remains a need for a national policy for such cases, and current schemes for the enrolment of students in such cases do not cater to those with dual-citizenship that have not lived in EU/EEA States long enough to satisfy the residency requirement associated with the 'free-fees initiative' but have been forced to return to Ireland as a result of conflict in their country of residence.

Comhdháil notes with concern

The increasing impact of global conflicts on education, often seeing higher education institutions being partially or completely destroyed

Comhdháil believes

That all students fleeing conflict zones that have been granted international protection in Ireland, or in the case of those holding a dual-citizenship, have returned to Ireland, must be supported by the State in continuing their education in Ireland.

Comhdháil further believes

That students in such situations often have gone through a traumatic experience leaving considerations like tuition fees, making available official documentation and finding student accommodation to be extremely burdensome to resolve.

Comhdháil commends

The various institutions, individuals and groups that have supported the enrolment of students in such situations in Irish HEIs.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP Academic Affairs and the VP Campaigns to lobby the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, the Irish University Association, the Technological Higher Education Association, and Universities Ireland to produce a policy for the supported enrollment of students that have fled conflict zones and sought refuge in Ireland whether they wish to commence or continue third-level education in Ireland.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP Academic Affairs and the VP Campaigns to highlight the need for such policy to mitigate issues including but not limited to: fee status, student supports, financial support, measures to ease integration of the students into HEIs and the inability of students to produce official documentation from their home institutions.

2024 AA7 NStEP Oversight and Engagement

Proposed by Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil 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 Institutions. 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.

Comhdháil Believes: The National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) is a valuable programme which assists Member Organisations greatly with the training of class representatives and can remove some pressure from SU officers.

Comhdháil Notes with Interest: USI assisted in spearheading NStEP's foundation and implementation to ensure class representatives are trained in areas such as representation, governance and signposting.

Comhdháil Mandates: The VP for Academic Affairs to ensure a strong relationship with the NStEP Programme Manager and their team- this should include regular communication, updates and quarterly meetings. This will be to ensure the contents and materials that NStEP produces are student centric, accessible and encourage class representatives to take part in student democracy.

Comhdháil Further Mandates: The VP for Academic Affairs to ensure the continued funding of NStEP to benefit class representatives for years to come by keeping in regular contact with the HEA and QQI.

Repeal: 20 AA 08

2024 AA 8 Accreditation for Participation

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

Comhdháil recognises:

The importance of student participation in extracurricular 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil Believes:

That involvement in these activities presents benefits for students both inside and outside of formal teaching, and that this should be reflected in the formal awards conferred on students.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs to research best practice across Higher Education Institutions in this area, both nationally and internationally, with a view to developing USI policy on Accreditation for Participation which may be presented to the appropriate bodies in HEIs by Students' Unions who wish to do so. This should include where participation in these activities can result in ECTS credits being awarded to students.

Comhdháil Repeals:

20 AA (NC) 2: Accreditation for Participation

2018 AA 4: Accreditation for Volunteering & Participation

2023 AA 1: Creative Student Representation

Proposed by NCADSU

Comhdháil notes

Creative arts students are facing the intersecting crises of the underfunding of both the arts and higher education. As well as this, the unique needs of creative arts students often go unconsidered in high level discussions around higher education funding.

Comhdháil further notes

The number of students in the creative arts and entering the workforce is increasing each year, with funding for arts staying relatively similar. There is a growing difficulty in accessing grants or funding and the Arts Council funding is not available to undergraduate students.

Comhdháil further notes

Students in Creative Arts courses are required to spend significant amounts on additional course costs in software and material fees.

Comhdháil believes

There is a need for informed discussions within USI, as well as interdepartmental communications to ensure that these students are not continually disadvantaged by a lack of collaboration between the Department of FHEIRS and the Department of TCAGSM.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns to support and facilitate MOs that specialise in creative arts in organising an annual campaign educating student artists and designers on issues relevant to their professional practice, and the rights of creatives on the island of Ireland. The campaign should also seek the following;

- Additional funding to cover material costs in all Higher Education Institutions.
- Introduction of Arts Council funding for ungraduated artists to avail of outside of term time.
- The continuation of the Universal Basic Income for Artists scheme following the pilot, and further expansion of the scheme so that students in creative courses may avail of it.
- Increased mental health funding for art and design schools.
- An end to the disparity between the funding for creative arts courses in comparison to more traditional courses.
- Allocation of funding to cover the costs of industry standard technology.

Comhdháil further mandates

The creation of 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 student representatives/freelance artists.

Comhdháil also mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide targeted support to member organisations with creative arts courses to promote and ensure representation of students at a local level.

Repeals 2022 AA 3

2023 AA 2: Academic Integrity

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Vice President for Campaigns to develop an academic integrity campaign, this campaign should provide information on what academic integrity is and the types of academic misconduct exist. The VP Academic Affairs should work with the National Academic Integrity Network to send up to date resources and materials about academic integrity to local students' unions. Graphics should be sent to member organisations as students prepare and undertake assessments during repeats, semester one and semester two. The VP Academic Affairs should also create a step by step guide with the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) for students to understand how and when they should report academic misconduct to QQI under section 43a of the Quality and Qualifications Act 2019.

Repeals 20 AA 6

2023 AA 3: Universal Design

Proposed by the USI VP for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil recognizes

The importance of universal design for learning in education for students. UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn, including students with disabilities. UDL aims to improve the education experience for all students. This is done by institutions introducing more flexible methods of teaching, learning, assessment and service provision to cater for how diverse learners are in education.

Comhdháil further recognizes

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning's open access digital badge initiative, AHEAD and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning have created the digital badge for Universal Design in Teaching & Learning. The principles are as follows:

Provide multiple means of Representation such as;

- Perception
- Language, mathematical expressions, and symbols
- Comprehension

To stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning by promotion various ways of engaging with material. This is the "why of learning".

Provide multiple means of Action and Expression such as;

- Physical action
- Expression & Communication
- Executive functions
- Present information and content in a variety of ways to support understanding by students with different learning styles/abilities.

This is the "What of Learning".

Provide multiple means of Engagement such as;

- Recruiting interest
- Sustaining effort & persistence
- Self-regulation
- Offers options for students to demonstrate their learning in various ways (e. g., allow choice of assessment type).

This is the “How of Learning”.

Comhdháil notes

Many member organizations have expressed concern that the principles of UDL haven’t been carried out in their institution. Some have expressed that there have been cases where some lecturers haven’t provided lecture notes to students. AHEAD has posted a press release online urging teaching staff to put their lecture notes online – stated “By putting lecture notes online, students with visual and other impairments can prepare for lectures where note taking is not an option for them”. Additionally, choice is not offered to students to demonstrate and share their knowledge unless the disability support services on campus state otherwise for individual students.

Comhdháil mandates

The VP Academic Affairs shall submit a Freedom of Information request to survey the number of staff in an institution vs the number of UDL badges in the institution.

The VP Academic Affairs shall submit a Freedom of Information request to survey the number of teaching staff in an institution vs the number of UDL Badges teaching staff have obtained.

The VP Academic Affairs shall develop a survey asking students to define what they think Universal Design is and whether they feel the practices are adequately carried out in their institution.

The VP Academic Affairs shall develop a Universal Design best practice guidelines for member organizations to introduce as policy.

The regional officers shall help conduct the Universal Design survey and promote it to students in their respective regions.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to write a report on the findings and present the information to the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the Higher Education Authority. The VP for Academic Affairs should also work with the NUS-USI President to ensure the results are shared with them and they can present the findings to their relevant bodies.

2023 AA 4: Postgraduate Engagement and Participation

Proposed by the USI VP for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhdháil notes

Due to the nature of postgraduate programmes, there are often distinct challenges and opportunities for postgraduate engagement. Postgraduates’ experiences and needs differ in many ways from undergraduate learning experiences. PGT students often study one-year courses. PGR students do not enrol on courses in a taught environment. Moreover, postgraduate cohorts often have high levels of part-time or distance learning study and large numbers of mature and international students.

Comhdháil believes

Postgraduate taught students (PGTs) and postgraduate researchers (PGRs) representation and engagement in member organisations (MOs) as well as on relevant committees/boards in higher education institutions (HEIs) benefit the quality of postgraduate education and research experiences.

Comhdháil mandates

Vice President for Dublin, Vice President for the Southern Region, and Vice President for the BMW Region to support member organisations in enhancing engagement with Postgraduate taught students (PGTs) and Postgraduate Researchers and building their communities.

Comhdháil further mandates

Vice President for Dublin, Vice President for the Southern Region, Vice President for the BMW Region, and Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to establish and enhance support frameworks for member organisations regarding postgraduate representation in member organisations' elections, class representative councils and institutional committees/boards.

Comhdháil further mandates

Vice President for Dublin, Vice President for the Southern Region, Vice President for the BMW Region, and Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to arrange postgraduate support and engagement sessions with the cooperation of member organisations.

Comhdháil further mandates

Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to work with Postgraduate Student Engagement Working Group, QQI, NStep and other stakeholders to map, analyse and report on the current PGR engagement practice in HEIs in the areas of

- (i) Governance and management,
- (ii) Student representation,
- (iii) Quality assurance and enhancement, along with working on the development of the National Postgraduate Student Engagement Network.

Comhdháil further mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby for an increased representation of postgraduate Researchers in relevant national forums, groups, boards and stakeholders related to postgraduate policies and reforms.

2023 AA 5: Placement Campaign

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil notes

Many students must complete mandatory placement as part of their studies. Some placements are between 12-36 weeks with many students working up to 40 hours a week while on placement. Most students are not paid for their placements or else they are paid very little.

Comhdháil further notes

Some students need to commute long distances for placement or will have to sort additional accommodation to carry out their placement. This can leave students in financial difficulty.

Comhdháil recognises

The recommendations made by the McHugh Report in 2021. The USI Placement and Work-Based Learning Strategy 2021-2024, and the USI Submission to Longer Term Review of Student Nurse & Midwife Matters, and the motion Summer Time Placement (2021 AA 5).

Comhdháil mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to establish a placement committee to be made up of sabbatical officers, student representatives and students who are on/have been on placement including but not limited to teaching, social care, nursing & midwifery, allied health sciences and more.

Comhdháil mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns to run a national placement campaign based on the findings from the placement survey that was conducted in March 2023. The findings of the survey should be used to lobby for a living wage, or at least financial assistance for students who have to go on placement as part of their degree. The findings of the survey should be shared with, but not limited to member organisations, trade unions, higher education institutions across the island, accrediting bodies who have students on placement and the Department of Higher Education.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Campaigns should also meet with trade unions who have high levels of students on placement in their field. The campaign should also be based around the inputs from the placement committee and information provided by the respective trade unions.

Repeals 20 AA 12, 2022 AA

2023 AA 6: Leaving Cert Results

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil notes

Leaving Certificate results are traditionally issued in mid-August. Since the Covid-19 Pandemic they have been released in September for the past three years. The 2023 Leaving Certificate results are expected to be delayed again this year. There has been frustration across the board due to this. Members of ISSU have expressed disappointment in the delay. The Higher Education Sector, including USI, Higher Education Institutions, lecturers and students have expressed their frustration with the expected delay this year. The State Exams Commission have stated the delay is due to: The provision of a deferred sitting of the examination for candidates who experience close family bereavement or who are unable to sit their examinations due to serious accident, injury or illness; or on public health grounds due to Covid-19 Addressing the impact of shortages in the numbers of teachers required to fill examiner positions to mark the written examinations (while marking has already started, the SEC is continuing to recruit examiners noting that Covid-19 is also having an impact). The requirement to be a corrector for state examinations is to have

- 1) a degree in education or
- 2) be currently doing a professional Master of Education (PME).

In advance of the issue of the results, sufficient time must be allowed for an extensive range of checks and quality assurance procedures which are required in the resulting process to ensure that the highest standards possible are maintained.

Comhdháil further notes

The negative impacts of Leaving Certificate results being delayed includes, but is not limited to:

- Issues with students being under pressure to secure safe and affordable accommodation for that academic year.
- Issues with orientation, traditional first year students started back the week before all students returned to campus. The earlier start was established to show students around campus, educate them on the support and services that exist on campus so they are aware where they can get assistance. The delayed orientation has negatively impacted this process for institutions and student unions.
- Issues with students in Ireland who are opting to attend education outside of the Republic of Ireland as they will have been conditionally allocated spaces by a certain starting date and could potentially lose their space or have to defer the year due to the delay.
- Disruption to student learning due to possible shorter, more condensed first semester and changes to how first year students are typically accessed in those modules.

- Due to the delay there will be a tight timeline between results and the beginning of the academic year, with issues for students who may wish to appeal grades and consider second and third round offers.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Vice President of Academic Affairs to submit a Freedom of Information to the education institutions across the Republic of Ireland. The FOI should ask for;

- the number of first year students accepted from 2013-2023,
- the number of first year students that withdrew from their course between 2013-2023 and,
- the number of students who opted to defer their course between 2013-2023.

The VP for Academic Affairs should submit also submit a Freedom of Information request to education institutions in the North of Ireland asking for;

- the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who applied to attend their institution from 2013-2023,
- the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who were offered spaces to attend their institution from 2013-2023,
- the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who accepted their offers to attend their institution from 2013-2023,
- the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who withdrew from their course between 2013-2023 and,
- the number of students from the Republic of Ireland who had to defer their course between 2013-2023.

The aim of the FOI requests will be to investigate whether the delay of Leaving Certificate results has impacted retention rates in education. The VP for Academic Affairs should also gather focus groups of students who started first year pre-covid and post-covid to compare the experience of starting for both cohorts and record the opinions that were stated.

The VP for Academic Affairs should then present the findings to the relevant bodies in education, with a particular focus on the findings being presented to the Department of Education.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP Campaigns to run a campaign advertising how students can apply to be a state examiners, what the minimum requirements are to be a state examiner and what they will earn if they are recruited as a state examiner.

2023 AA 8: Artificial Intelligence

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil notes

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become topical this year as OpenAI created ChatGPT and released it on November 30th 2022. It is a language model of AI, which means that it can take in and incorporate background information, sources, quotations and lists of ideas. It creates a series of words based on its statistical analysis of huge volumes of text pulled from the internet.

Comhdháil further notes

Artificial intelligence is something that will continue to grow and we must decide if this is something higher education should embrace or reject. However, the use of artificial intelligence has become increasingly popular in work places. Therefore, it is the view of the Union of Students in Ireland that this is something we should be proactive about.

Comhdháil mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to run a campaign providing information to students COMHDHÁIL MMXXIII 35 Notáí about what artificial intelligence is and the strengths and limitations of using this tool in higher education. This campaign should include ethical uses of artificial intelligence in assessment that align with principles of academic integrity.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to lobby for a move towards teaching AI literacy to staff and students in institutions across Ireland, such as but not limited to, the introduction of an accredited optional module or an online course.

The VP for Academic Affairs should also work with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) to develop ways in which AI can be incorporated into teaching, learning and assessment and present them to member organisations, to try combat institutions reverting back to traditional forms of assessment i.e., end of year closed book exams. The information should then be shared with NUS-USI.

2023 AA 10: HEA Review of Student Charge

Proposed by the Presidents' Working Group

Comhdháil notes

In 2010, the HEA (Higher Education Authority), requested by the Minister for Education and Skills, published a review of the Student Charge (also commonly called a Student Capitation Charge' and a Student Services Charge').

Comhdháil Further Notes

The review identified the income and expenditure associated with the student charge, the internal allocation process for the student charge, and the additional charges that are levied on students outside of the student charge.

Comhdháil Applauds

The HEA Review of Student Charge (2010) made several recommendations to HEI's (in receipt of recurrent funding from the HEA) that were beneficial to Students' Union, such that there should be appropriate student involvement in the allocation of the Student Charge, accessible annual reports detailing student charge income and expenditure, consultation processes with local student bodies, and that the consent of the student body should be achieved before the introduction of any levies.

Comhdháil notes with Concern

The HEA Review of Student Charge (2010) is outdated, referring to a multitude of IOT's (Institutes of Technology) that no longer exist, as well as Student Charge committees that no longer sit. Furthermore, the Student Charge is what funds the majority of Students' Unions in HEI's across the island of Ireland, but in many cases, is allocated without appropriate student input.

Comhdháil believes

An updated HEA Review of the Student Charge would provide up-to-date information on funding arrangements in HEI's across the island of Ireland, as well as highlight failures in HEI's that do not have the recommended student involvement and transparency in the allocation of the Student Charge.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The President and Coiste Gnó to lobby the appropriate ministers in the Irish Government / the HE to undergo and publish an updated review of the Student Charge in HEI's.

Comhdháil further mandates

The President to;

- Place this issue on the agenda of the HEA board,
 - To encourage all delegates at Comhdháil and SUT (Students' Union Training) to send off drafted emails to the relevant ministers demanding a new review as well as the current concerns around Students' Union funding across HEI's,
 - To publish an open letter to the relevant Ministers demanding the same, and all other actions requested at Comhairle Náisiúnta deemed necessary to achieve this review.
-

2023 AA 11: Open Access and Subscription Costs

Proposed by the VP for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhdháil notes with Concern

That the Irish Libraries Association (ILA) has warned of an electronic content crisis facing libraries and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ILA has said "We are deeply concerned about the rising costs and unfair licensing conditions for such content training".

Comhdháil recognises

The need to increase and improve access to the output of research. The freedom of researchers to publish wherever they feel most appropriate.

Comhdháil believes

Access to education is a fundamental right and with the rise in misinformation, it is crucial that all people should have access to research, especially those funded through public investment and/or conducted through public institutions for the public good.

Comhdháil Further Believes

That the soaring costs related to subscription, publication and dissemination of research output that students and libraries are facing create a further barrier to education and take quality material out of the reach of the public and students.

Comhdháil Further Believes

Research must be freely available to the public, permitting any user a free to read' and a 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.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to lobby the government to take swift action to combat the extortionate subscription costs of publishing and access.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs, alongside the Vice President for Academic Affairs, to organise a campaign to highlight this issue and encourage postgraduate students and academics to opt to make their work publicly available.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to develop a position paper on open access. T The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to collaborate with EuroDoc and other relevant groups to lobby for open access.

2023 AA 12: Exceptional and Extenuating Circumstances

Proposed by Queen's Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

Students have unexpected circumstances out of their control during their studies and they have the right to receive the right support from their institution throughout a stressful time in their life. Different institutions often have completely different systems and for students it is difficult to navigate these and have access to the right information.

Comhdháil further notes

Often students are unaware of whether any mitigation will be given to them, and the uncertainty may exacerbate stress they are experiencing. Flexibility of studies should be built into assessments in consultation with students.

Comhdháil mandates

The VP Academic Affairs to conduct research with each MO as to their exceptional or extenuating circumstances system. The VP Academic Affairs to advocate for students to be able to self-certify without the use of extensive paperwork.

2023 AA 13: Postgraduate Research Rights Charter

Proposed by the Postgraduate Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil 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 with 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.

Repeals 2021 AA 8, AA 19 – 6

2022 EM (AA) 1: Motion to support graduate entry medicine students gain access to loans.

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes with Concern:

In the past week Bank of Ireland, who are the primary provider of Graduate Entry Medicine loan schemes in Ireland. Bank of Ireland announced this week that they will cease this loan scheme. This announcement was devastating to many students whose only way of funding their studies was via this loan scheme.

Comhdháil also Notes

Access to study medicine is extremely difficult due to the financial constraints associated with entering the medical field - whether it be the cost of study, accommodation or fees. This will be massively impacted by the announcement of Bank of Ireland ceasing their Graduate Entry Medicine loan - the only suitable loan of this kind in the country. From July onward, it will be phased out.

Comhdháil believes

All students pay extortionate fees, but in particular students attempting to enter graduate entry medicine who can pay thousands of euros and pounds between the 5000-16000 region.

Comhdháil Further Believes

Graduate Entry Medicine often leads to a more diverse field of students.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns is to work with and campaign with the Association for Medical Students in Ireland, Irish Medical Council and other major stakeholders to lobby for a solution where graduate entry medicine students can access student loans until such a time where education is affordable in Ireland/Northern Ireland.

2022 EM (AA) 3: College Awareness Week

Proposed by TCDSU

Comhdháil Notes:

That College Awareness Week is a national campaign which seeks to offer encouragement, support, and information to people of all ages about post-leaving certificate educational opportunities by showcasing and celebrating local role models.

Comhdháil Acknowledges:

The continuing need to tackle educational disadvantage and the absence of equal opportunities as seen by the expansion of the DEIS school programme announced on March 9th 2022.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The Coiste Gnó to endorse and promote the national annual campaign: College Awareness Week.

Comhdháil Further Mandates:

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to seek to collaborate with the Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU) in support of College Awareness Week and its events.

2022 AA 7: Study Abroad & Erasmus Accessibility

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

International exchange opportunities for students continue to grow, with a significant number of students studying abroad during their degree. However, there can be significant social, physical and financial barriers preventing students from availing of these opportunities.

Comhdháil Believes

There are great benefits for students engaging in study abroad programmes.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President and Vice President for Campaigns to lobby for the increased funding of student exchange programmes and availability of grants.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to lead to work with, and 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.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and Vice President for Academic Affairs to work with member organisation representatives to ensure their Higher Education Institution clearly communicates the available supports and physical accessibility of their partner institutions and to push for HEI's to continually lobby for improved accessibility for students with disabilities in their partner institutions.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to support MO officers in lobbying for the standardisation of application processes and grade conversion tables in HEI's across the country.

2022 AA 8: StudentSurvey.ie

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

The StudentSurvey.ie is well respected and recognised across Irish Higher Education Institutions having been launched in 2013, and the Postgraduate Research survey in 2018, following years of lobbying from USI. The survey was created to ensure the gathering of empirical data from students in colleges across the country.

Comhdháil Further Notes

The USI and Students' Unions have worked to ensure the StudentSurvey.ie is recognised and engaged with by students, and are often the main driving force behind promoting the survey, using their own human and financial resources. StudentSurvey.ie data should be readily available and accessible to student representatives to allow them to examine the findings and seek ways to action them through their institutional processes. The expectation or burden of data analysis should not be placed upon student representatives. USI and StudentSurvey.ie should aid Student Representatives to advocate for their role in strategy and decision making, using the findings of the survey.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern

The success of this valuable national initiative hinges on the power of the data generated to bring about positive, meaningful and long-lasting impacting the participating institutions. Despite significant efforts of student representatives and rising response rates, collaboration between student representatives and institutions is not always facilitated and sabbatical officers in most cases, do not have access to the institutional data. Students often do not understand the importance of the StudentSurvey.ie and as a result, some HEI's struggle with poor response rates.

Comhdháil Believes That

If students are empowered to understand the available data, and how this can facilitate change within their institution, they are more likely to engage in the survey.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to complete a review, with the support of the Regional Vice Presidents, to present to the StudentSurvey.ie Steering group no later than June 2023, which includes;

- How member organisations work in partnership and collaboration with their institution on the promotion of the survey with a view to continually increase institutional response rates and address any barriers to student engagement with the survey
- Good practice recommendations on the role of Students' Unions, including ways in which the StudentSurvey.ie data can be viewed, distributed, and engaged with by students and staff in partnership

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to promote the availability of accessible and relevant reports and resources following the analysis of data each year as a member of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Campaigns to co-ordinate a briefing session with the StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager for all officers, prior to the launch of field work each year, to inform on the StudentSurvey.ie processes and idea share for promotional opportunities. Also, to support MO's to work in partnership with their registrar or designated nominee, throughout the fieldwork period, return of results and analysis.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to facilitate a training session, following the publication of results, to support officers' ability to engage with the results and recognise the possible strategic actions arising from the survey findings. This should include the provision of a template for an institutional action plan arising from the findings of the survey for officers to utilise and crossover to their successors each year.

2022 AA 4: Connecting Creative Arts Students

Proposed by the Creatives Working Group

Comhdháil 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 and support within the Creative Arts is essential for progression and further development.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil Recognises:

The need for support and promotion of such an event for creative arts students in all MOs.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The VP for Academic Affairs, VP Campaigns and regional officers to organise a one-day support and networking event for Creative Arts students to discuss and educate artists on issues such as, internships, international opportunities, funding grants. This event should also provide information on tax and finances.

2022 AA 9: Examination Best Practice

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

Following the swift transition to online learning during the pandemic, we saw the flexibility of the sector and assessment practices.

Comhdháil Believes

The accommodations made available should where possible, stay in place to support students with disabilities, caregivers, those completing part-time work etc.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Vice President for Academic Affairs to support officers in lobbying for the expansion of deferrals, flexible repeat scheduling and any other accommodations.

Comhdháil Mandates

Vice President for Academic Affairs and Vice President for Welfare to conduct a review, in collaboration with member organisations on HEI policies and procedures including, but not limited to exam scheduling, repeats, illness support, extensions and provision of feedback, with the intention of creating a best practice framework for assessment in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders.

2021 AA 14: Subsidies on Textbooks

Proposed by NUI Galway Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

Students year in year out are forced to buy textbooks as part of their core reading lists. These are generally only relevant to the student for one year. These books can range in price from €10 anywhere up to the €100 mark. This adds an extra barrier for students to access education as it is another major expense on top of accommodation and equipment. Some of these books cannot be bought second hand due to a specific code on the inside which is used for course work and assignments which means it cannot be stocked in the library. These libraries already have limited resources. This year students have been forced to do their entire course predominantly online with limited access to their library, study spaces and other areas on their campus which they are paying for through their tuition and levy. The libraries across the country are doing all they can in terms of providing a click & collect and scan & deliver service but for some students, this is insufficient due to the lack of books and the slow turnover. During this pandemic, there has also been a limit in students purchasing second-hand books which normally reduces the costs of books. Students who cannot afford these books are at a disadvantage in their degree to those who can afford it.

Comhdháil Commends

All the work that is being done by the USI and MO's on the "Education for All campaign". In the year that's in it, this is one of the campaigns that has been pushed the most and engaged students.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI Academic Affairs Officer to work with MO's to lobby the Department of Higher Education, Innovation and Science to secure subsidies for students who are paying more than €50 a year for books.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

USI Academic Affairs officer to lobby for more Open Educational Resources and e-books to be used on reading lists rather than formal textbooks

2021 AA 17: Back to Education Allowance Reform Strategy Paper

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Comhdháil notes

That the Back to Education Allowance Reform Strategy Paper (2018 AA 2) is due to expire at Comhdháil 2021.

Comhdháil believes

That the commitment to review the BTEA in the Programme for Government allows for an opportunity to address the current shortfalls within the current BTEA. Given the current economic climate the BTEA will allow for greater support to students returning to education.

Comhdháil Adopts

The proposed [Amended Back to Education Allowance Reform Strategy Paper](#)

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

Proposed by the USI Executive Team

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil applauds

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

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil Mandates

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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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 9: Learning in a Digital World

Proposed by the Academic Affairs Working Group

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

AA 19-5: Postgraduate Funding in Northern Ireland

Proposed by the Postgraduate Working Group

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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 (NC) 19 2: Career Guidance Review

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil 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 USI aided Indecon in circulating a number of surveys for Further and Higher Education students, and that USI submitted its own written submission in June 2018.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

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.

Welfare

2024 WEL 1 Mandate on the provision and distribution of menstrual products.

Proposed by CMLOnG

Comhdháil 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 menstrual products.

Comhdháil notes with concern

Students' Unions have quite often borne the financial burden of buying menstrual products for students and distributing these, and that this financial burden disproportionately affects smaller Unions with lesser budgets.

Comhdháil also notes with concern

New menstrual 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.

Comhdháil believes

That these products should be provided free of charge as a necessary provision of healthcare for anyone who needs them, and should be widely available across campuses, nationwide.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to campaign the governments, HSE and NHS for free menstrual products to be provided nationally, North and South of the border.

Comhdháil also mandates

The Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Equality to collaborate with period product disrupters and key stakeholders to create a streamlined process in which Student Unions can avail of menstrual products at a substantially reduced charge, with focus on supporting smaller unions and unions who do not have a free menstrual product scheme in place yet, but to continue to lobby for products to be available for no charge at all, similar to the free national contraception scheme. The provision of these products should encompass a wide variety of choice.

2024 WEL 2 Student Mental Health Funding Policy

Proposed by Vice President for Welfare

Comhdháil Notes

The important role campus counselling services play in the lives of students. On-campus counselling services do trojan work, often without adequate resources.

Comhdháil Believes

That USI has an important role to play in lobbying for additional resources for campus counselling services. There is a need for USI to have a policy regarding the funding of student mental health services so that we can lobby politicians and speak on campus counselling funding in the media. PCHEI, the representative body of Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland has provided invaluable information and support in informing USI's student mental health funding policy.

Comhdháil Mandates

The adoption of the USI Student Mental Health Funding Policy, and that this policy be reviewed by the Vice President for Welfare each year.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Vice President for Welfare to continue to work with PCHEI in the area of student mental health and collaborate on areas of common interest.

2024 WEL 4 SUSI Grant Reform 2024

Proposed by Vice President for Welfare

Comhdháil Notes

Equity of access to higher education is a core component of USI's work. The USI SUSI policy 2021-2024 has been used to inform our lobbying, particularly our pre-budget submission. However, this policy needs to be updated.

Comhdháil Proposes

The adoption of the USI SUSI Grant Reform Policy 2024. This is an update to our 2021-2024 policy. Policy on thresholds and rates has been clarified. Policy on residence, estrangement, reckonable income, document translation, dependent children and more have been expanded upon. Any outdated policy has been removed.

Comhdháil Further Notes

This policy is not exhaustive and does not preclude additional policies or mandates regarding SUSI from being adopted by Comhdháil/National Council. Of note, there is specific policy coming forward regarding postgraduate SUSI grants as per 2023 WEL 4: Reforming SUSI: Eligibility Criteria for Postgraduates. Out of a desire to avoid policy duplication, postgraduate SUSI grants are not covered within this paper's scope.

Comhdháil Mandates

The adoption of the USI SUSI Grant Reform Policy 2024.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Welfare and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to run a public consultation with students to update USI's SUSI policy each year. This can be via a town hall event, survey, social media, working groups and/or National Council. Based on the consultation, the Vice President for Welfare and the Vice President for Academic Affairs should update USI's SUSI policy.

2024 WEL 5 Men's Health: Movember

Proposed by Vice President for Welfare

Comhdháil Notes

That many male students experience specific health challenges, which deserve tailored campaigns and advocacy (Men's Health in Numbers, MHFI). These include but are not limited to late presentation to health services, higher mortality rates, and a higher risk for developing preventable diseases. The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is a charitable all-Ireland organisation which works to enhance the health and well-being of men and boys. Our engagement in this forum to date has ensured we are up to date on developments that benefit male students.

Comhdháil Further Notes

Many students' unions across Ireland participate in the annual "Movember" campaign to raise money for charity and promote men's health. In 2023 USI became involved in the "Movember" campaign and provided support to member organisations for their own "Movember" campaigns, particularly through our "OpenUp" mental health campaign. This has been a positive, fun and engaging way to promote male students' health, including mental health.

Comhdháil Mandates

For the USI Vice President for Welfare to continue engagement with the Men's Health Forum Ireland.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

That the USI Coiste Gnó supports the international "Movember" campaign with a focus on both physical and mental health. Specifically, that the Vice President for Welfare and Vice President for Campaigns co-ordinate "Movember"

resources with interested member organisations. The required resources are at the discretion of officers and Welfare Working group but could include social media graphics, fake moustaches, cardboard cutouts, competition facilitation, etc. USI should host a planning meeting by early October to establish interest and get sign-ups.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The VP Dublin, the VP South and the VP BMW to reach out to Students' Unions in their region to provide support for "Movember" campaigns where this is wanted.

2024 WEL 7 Problem gambling in students

Proposed by TUS SU

Comhdháil notes:

Ireland is currently in the grips of an unrecognized epidemic, 1 in 10 third-level students in Ireland have a gambling problem and The Irish Institute of Public Health found that adolescent gambling in Ireland is 2-3 times greater than that of adults.

Comhdháil further notes:

Gambling addiction has grown in recent years largely due to the increase in online betting apps, Half of people who bet through their smartphones become problem gamblers, according to a recent University of Galway study. According to the ESRI, 46% of all gambling industry revenue in Ireland comes from people who gamble harmfully or problematically.

Comhdháil notes with regret:

That there has been little to no work or awareness brought to this issue by the Union of Students in Ireland.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

For the VP Welfare & VP Campaigns to run a campaign and work with relevant organizations to highlight the negative impact of gambling and to highlight supports and resources available to those who suffer from gambling addictions through the campaign.

Comhdháil also Mandates:

The regional officers, VP Dublin, VP South, VP BMW to highlight supports around the time of student race days to Member Organizations by offering them information and resources to help students with gambling addictions.

Comhdháil Further Mandates:

The VP Welfare with the help of VP Campaigns to lobby the government to restrict the use of online gambling apps and reduce the risk of problem gambling in students. The VP Welfare & VP Campaigns at their discretion may liaise with similar organizations to assist in these lobby efforts.

2024 WEL 9 Anti-Smoking and Anti-Vaping Policy

Proposed by VP BMW

Comhdháil Notes:

The widespread knowledge of the harms of smoking.

Comhdháil further notes:

While the long-term effects of vaping are not yet known, in the short-term vaping causes inflammation or irritation in the lungs. This is linked to scarring and narrowing of air vessels (Cleveland Clinic, 2024). Additionally, a 2019/20 outbreak of EVALI (e-cigarette, or vaping, product use associated lung injury) killed at least 68 and hospitalised thousands (Cleveland Clinic, 2024).

Comhdháil further notes:

Circa 1 in 5 people under 18 are currently vaping (HSE, 2022). The bright colouring and variety of flavours are particularly marketable to young people.

Comhdháil further notes:

The environmental damage caused by disposable vapes, including lithium entering water tables. Furthermore, there is no standard for the ethical sourcing of lithium.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates:

The VP for Welfare to lobby the HSE and other relevant government parties to maintain their anti-smoking campaigns and to incorporate information on the dangers of vaping.

Comhdháil Further Mandates:

The VP for Welfare to lobby the Minister for Health and the HSE to ensure vapes are in unbranded packaging with health warning, as cigarettes are already.

2023 WEL 1: Digs and Rent-A-Room Scheme Protections

Proposed by the USI VP BMW

Comhdháil notes

If a student lives in an owner-occupied home there is no legislation in place to protect them, meaning they are at significant risk of eviction, mistreatment and having their basic human rights infringed upon.

Comhdháil further notes

Due to the lack of accommodation this year there was a push on the rent-a-room scheme by the government.

Comhdháil recognises

Implementing legislation to protect these students will likely infringe upon homeowners' rights and that is why the legislation is not currently in place.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Coiste Gnó to continue to lobby the government, specifically the Minister for Housing and Minister for Higher Education and their teams, on behalf of students living in digs / rent-a-room schemes until such time that legislation/protections are put in place to give these students rights.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Coiste Gnó to conduct an annual survey on digs/ rent-a-room schemes until such time that (a) legislation is passed by the government for protections of students living in owner occupied homes or (b) a staff member is hired to work on housing and they undertakes this. This survey could be included within a student accommodation survey.

2023 WEL (NC) 2: Abolishment of Non-Disclosure Agreements in Third-Level Institutions in the Cases of Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

Comhdháil Notes

The use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs), which can be sometimes be called a "Severance Contract/End of Contract Agreement/Compromise Agreement", can be used in cases of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination between staff and students to silence students from speaking up about the issues. In most cases students are not aware of what an NDA is.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That NDAs in third-level institutions can still be used for other applications such as intellectual property and confidential information.

Comhdháil Mandates

The VP for Campaigns to campaign to raise awareness around NDAs and the VP for Welfare and VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the government to abolish the use of NDAs in the cases of sexual harassment, bullying and discrimination to prevent these issues that students may face from going unseen and unheard and to reach out to SpeakOut to assist with the removal of NDAs on campus.

2023 WEL 3: Give Us The Night

Proposed by CMLOG

Congress Recognises

Give Us the Night's tireless efforts to support, nurture and reframe the conversation around nightlife in Ireland since their beginning in 2011.

Congress Notes

The effect of not only the archaic legislation we have in Ireland but also the effect of COVID-19 lockdowns on our country's nightlife. What was already a difficult industry to work in has become a much more limited space.

Congress Supports

Give Us the Night's aims to:

- Highlight the economic value and societal benefits of a diverse and vibrant Irish night-time industry.
- 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.
- Ensure that Ireland adopts a more progressive European approach to nightlife, that reflects the wide range of lifestyles and working hours here.
- This includes the reformation of Ireland's archaic licensing laws not limited to but including the abolition of special exemption orders and the introduction of a night mayor for major cities.

Congress Mandates

The VP for Campaigns to;

- Actively support GUTN's efforts to reform nightlife structures in Ireland including support for the proposed new legislation of extended opening hours and the introduction of night mayors for Irish cities.
 - Liaise with give us the night to see how best the student movement can support the campaign.
 - Encourage MOs to support and promote nightlife in their community.
 - Support MOs to run social events on campus.
-

2023 WEL 4: Reforming SUSI: Eligibility Criteria for Postgraduates

Proposed by CMLOG

Congress notes with Concern

The eligibility criteria for postgraduate students applying for SUSI is greater than that for undergraduate students.

Congress mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to undertake a review of the current SUSI eligibility criteria.

Congress further mandates

The review of the SUSI eligibility Criteria to be presented to and approved by Congress in 2024. The changes should then be proposed to government and campaigned for.

2023 WEL (NC) 6: Operation Transformation

Proposed by TU Dublin SU

Comhdháil Notes

Operation Transformation is a weight loss TV show aired by RTE and sponsored by the Department of Health under the 'Healthy Ireland' Campaign. It has been estimated that RTE received over €500,000 over a two-year period. Operation Transformation say that their aim is to promote a healthy lifestyle for participants and viewers but, is an entertainment show that promotes unsustainable weight loss, encourages disordered eating behaviours and cultivates weight stigma.

Comhdháil Further Notes

National eating disorder organisation Bodywhys noted in their statement regarding Operation Transformation that fact that hospital admissions for young people with eating disorders have risen by 66% and that shows like Operation Transformation can have a detrimental effect on mental and physical health. It is also well known that many students are young people who may be vulnerable to the messages that are promoted by these weight loss tv shows. The emphasis on dieting, body weight and shape does little to long lasting weight loss and health goals.

Comhdháil Recognises

Bodywhys and grassroots activists like @intuitive.eating.ireland and Binge Eating Dietitan have campaigned and petitioned RTE and the Department of Health in recent times to decommission the show or offer a more inclusive approach to the show, changing the focus from weight loss to a more holistic view to lifestyle changes.

Comhdháil Regrets

RTE, the producers of Operation Transformation and the Department of Health have done little to engage with the campaign. RTE has effectively ignored the experiences of previous participants who shared stories of the lack of support during the airing of episodes and aftercare. Research shows that dieting does not result in long term weight loss for the vast majority of people. Operation Transformation does not provide follow-up studies to monitor long term success in its participants.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The VP Welfare and VP Campaigns to include information on Operation Transformation during the already mandated Eating Disorder Campaign. The VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Welfare to issue a public statement to RTE and the Minister for Health to address previous concerns and concerns regarding the impact Operation Transformation has on students and the viewing public.

The regional officers; VP Dublin, VP South, VP BMW to discourage Member Organizations from promoting Operation Transformation on their campuses.

2023 WEL 7: Femicide in Ireland

Proposed by the USI VP for Welfare

Congress notes

Since the heavily publicised death of Ashling Murphy, there have been 15 cases of femicide in Ireland.

Congress condemns

Any act of violence against women and believes that we all have a vital role to play in ending violence and femicide against women.

Congress notes

That at the time of this motion being written, figures tracked by Women's Aid state that there have been 254 reported incidents of femicide which have seen women die violently at the hands of men in Ireland since 1996.

Congress therefore mandates

The VP Welfare to commemorate victims of femicide annually.

Congress also mandates

The VP Welfare and VP Campaigns to consider the act of femicide in already mandated campaigns on ending violence against women.

2023 WEL 9: SUSI Reform

Proposed by the USI VP for Welfare

Congress notes

The fact that the cost-of-living crisis is putting students under additional financial and mental stress.

Congress further notes

That, as of October for the 2022/2023 academic year, there were 84,008 applications received by SUSI for financial support, which was 44,889 new applications and 39,119 renewals.

Congress recognises

That the SUSI Maintenance Grant is available with the intention that it will help students with day to day living costs. According to the SUSI Advisory Group updates in October of 2022, the expenditure on maintenance grants to the academic year is projected to be a161.6 million.

Congress welcomes

The once off measures from SUSI in the 2023 budget to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, which were a once-off double payment, a once-off increase in Postgrad Fee Contribution by a1,000 (that once off payment was then a4,500), and a Once-off reduction to the Student Contribution rate.

Congress acknowledges

That these once off measures, however, are not a sustainable measure to tackle the cost of living for students in Ireland.

Congress therefore mandates

The VP Welfare, VP Academic Affairs and VP Equality and Citizenship to lobby for continued annual funding for SUSI to ensure that the maintenance grants reflect the cost-of-living.

2023 WEL 10: National Student Mental Health Survey

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

USI conducted the first National Student Mental Health Survey in 2017/2018 in collaboration with HSE Mental Health and the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP). This led to the publication of the first USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education. We have used this report for awareness-raising and lobbying purposes. However, the student mental health landscape has changed since 2018/2019 due to factors such as the pandemic, and this report is now outdated.

Comhdháil believes

It would be beneficial to conduct a second national student mental health survey to represent the current student body. The existing partnership between USI and the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) is the most appropriate way to conduct this research. This would also ensure the survey maintains high research quality and ethical standards.

Congress mandates

The USI Vice President for Welfare to: conduct a National Student Mental Health Survey From the results, compile a report on Student Mental Health in Ireland.

Congress further mandates

The President, the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Welfare to: Run an awareness campaign publicising the survey to students in order to receive a high response rate Heavily publicise the results of the report in the media and use it for government lobbying purposes within 30 days of the report launch.

2023 WEL 12: Bring Back the SHAG Packs

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

Comhdháil notes

USI traditionally distributed approximately 30,000 SHAG packs every year to students in Ireland during the annual SHAG campaign. This was a fantastic opportunity to get crucial sexual health information out to thousands of students across the Island of Ireland.

Comhdháil further notes

That SHAG packs were not distributed this year due to difficulties securing funding.

Comhdháil believes

SHAG Packs are a vitally important part of USI Sexual health promotion and every effort should be made to secure funding for the continuation of this initiative.

Comhdháil mandates

The Vice President for Welfare in conjunction with the President, and the Vice President for Campaigns to make every effort to secure funding from the HSE or an alternative funding partner to ensure the continuation of SHAG packs for future students.

Comhdháil further mandates

If the Coiste Gnó can secure funding, that the Vice President for Welfare, the Vice President for Campaigns and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, should include but not limited to the following in the SHAG packs;

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

Repeals 20 WEL 5

2023 WEL 14: Student Childcare Research

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

Congress notes

There are an increased number of parents and students with dependents enrolling in third level education. These students face significant barriers due to childcare/ dependent responsibilities. There are limited specific resources available for this cohort of students. Students requiring childcare are finding it increasingly difficult to access or afford childcare services to allow them to attend college. Childcare services are in high demand, therefore the industry is in control of how they deliver these services and who they deem eligible. Student parents therefore compete with full time working parents who are deemed more eligible given their circumstances and avail of the same policies and benefits despite the necessity for equity and not equality. The cost of childcare services is high for any parent, and this is increasingly unattainable for those who do not work full time. If student parents do not get their first choice of childcare provider, as is often the case, they are faced with an increased commute and issues with work life balance in that their ability to work flexible part time hours is reduced.

Congress Recognises

Accessibility of education is a priority for USI, and the barriers to accessing child care significantly impacts students with children/dependents', and their choice to engage with third level education. Financial difficulties should not be a reason to not attend university. There's a gap in policy in providing support for student parents. Student parent's have an extra factor of responsibility while attending third level education which they have no revolutionary support

for. This increases the dropout rates in this cohort. The Welfare Working Group is currently going through the procedures in order to create a National Student Childcare Survey with the assistance of the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) in National College of Ireland to collect data on this issue.

Congress mandates

The Coiste Gnó, specifically the Vice President for Welfare with the help of ELI, to publicize the National Student Childcare Survey to MOs in order to gather data on the issue, analyse and take action. In addition, as a result of the survey if the MOs require support with their action plans, the Welfare officer will assist them.

2022 WEL 1: Sexual Harassment Policies in HEIs

Proposed by CMLOÉG

Congress Notes

That there are major downfalls in sexual harassment policy documents, as well as a high number of students reporting sexual harassment or violence (34% - over 1,100 students, according to a national survey). The USI must take a zero-tolerance approach to gender based violence, rape, sexual assault and intimate partner abuse.

Congress further understands

Students who are failed by their university policy have no course for appeal and often deal with the severe consequences of this failure in isolation. The disciplinary process for cases of sexual harassment should not be developed on an ad-hoc basis nor should cases of sexual harassment be assimilated into standard disciplinary process that deals with cases of plagiarism, drinking etc. Furthermore, there must be oversight and transparency regarding the implementation of sexual harassment policy.

Congress Therefore Mandates

That it shall be the position of USI to recommend the implementation of national standards regarding sexual harassment policy, developed with the input of those working in the fields of trauma informed care, sexual violence, women's rights and minority rights. USI shall recommend that these standards should consider the following, amongst more in consultation with these groups:

- Minimum standards of training for all parties involved in conducting disciplinary procedures including first contacts, investigators and disciplinary committee members.
- Special accommodations must be outlined for students taking cases of sexual harassment which consider, how many times a complaining student must recount their experience of abuse, whether a complaining student can have someone speak on their behalf, whether the complaining student must face their accused, giving fair warning to the complaining student of exactly when the accused will be notified of the case against them and so on.
- A support worker should be assigned to assist students who are taking a complaint through the disciplinary process. This role of the worker should include helping students to write and edit complaints and appeals; assisting students to compile supporting documentation; accompanying students to disciplinary hearings; assisting students in communicating with the disciplinary committee and appeals board; and keeping in touch with students to inform them of each step in the process. All support workers must receive adequate training.
- Students making complaints of sexual and gender-based violence should be entitled to submit all relevant evidence for consideration. A lack of corroborating evidence is a major reason for cases to fail, students who have witnesses of their assaults are not allowed to have this evidence considered at any point in the disciplinary proceeding.
- There should be no time limit on taking cases of sexual harassment/ violence beyond the requirement that all parties remain students/ staff of the university
- Policy on sexual harassment should not contain sections on false complaints nor should they include a threat of retribution for complaints that lack evidence.
- Complaining students must be kept informed of any and all updates to their case. The disciplinary committee should be in regular contact with the complainant, take on board any concerns regarding the handling of the

case, make a genuine effort to provide any extra accommodation that is requested and reply to any communications from complainants in a timely manner.

- The reasonable length of time that a case of sexual harassment should be dealt within must be outlined. Where there are delays, this should be justified by an objective reason and this reason should be clearly communicated to the complainant.
 - These standards should be made available to all complaining students as soon as they register a complaint.
 - A permanent member of staff, separate from the disciplinary committee, should be tasked with overseeing the implementation of policy and ensuring that standards are met.
 - Reports should be issued to a body external to the university.
 - Where the handling of a sexual harassment complaint falls below best practice, the complaining student should have an option to register a complaint regarding this to the university and/or a body external to the university.
 - Aggregate data regarding the number of cases taken in a university, the portion of successful/ unsuccessful cases, the time taken to conclude cases, the number of complaints made regarding the process, the number of cases taken by students against staff, the number of rejected appeals and so on should be made available to students.
-

2022 WEL (NC) 2: Expansion of Provision of Free HIV Supports

Proposed by Trinity College Dublin Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

The HIV epidemic is an intersectional issue affecting people of all walks of life, including the students we represent, and its continued presence in Irish Society for over 30 years alongside the many preventative measures we have available to us.

Comhdháil further notes

The inequalities of the HIV epidemic have been exacerbated by the Covid 19 pandemic, and the closure of the Gay Mens Health service, deeming it not a priority of our government.

Comhdháil recognises

The work done by many organisations such as HIV Ireland and MPOWER Ireland to make available free PrEP and free Rapid HIV testing kits.

Comhdháil mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns, the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, and the Vice President for Welfare to work with HIV Ireland and MPOWER Ireland and work with and lobby the HSE to expand the provision of free rapid HIV testing kits and PrEP within Colleges for every student who needs it.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The relevant Executive Team members lobby for extensive informational and educational resources to be more expansive, readily available and easily accessible.

2022 WEL 5: National Stalking Awareness Campaign

Proposed by IT Sligo Students' Union

Congress Notes

The many victims of stalking in Ireland.

Congress Further Notes

Many studies suggest that most cases of stalking occur between the ages of 18 and 24 years old, directly coinciding with the typical age demographic of students of third level education.

Congress Recognises

The continuous work that many organisations, including Stalking Ireland and others are doing to create awareness and combat this area of concern within Ireland

Congress Further Recognises

Currently (March 2022), Stalking is not recognised in current legislation - the work of Senator Lisa Chambers, Eve McDowell, Una Ring and others to create the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Bill (Stalking Bill), will hopefully result in Stalking being recognised by law in the near future.

Congress Mandates

The Vice President for Welfare rolls out, in collaboration with the Campaigns Working Group, a national informational and awareness campaign for all students regarding Stalking. This campaign will collaborate with local and national campaigns where appropriate. This campaign will coincide with the 2018 WEL 12: Abusive Relationships, Sexual Violence & Harassment campaign if applicable.

2022 WEL 6: Night-Time Safety

Proposed by the USI VP Welfare

Congress Notes

The night-time industry is an integral part of the student experience. Unfortunately, the night-time industry in Ireland is in need of urgent reform at a governmental level to ensure that those engaging and participating in the industry are safe and are able to enjoy themselves.

Congress also notes

In late 2021, there was a clear rise in the number of cases relating to spiking, including the worrying trend of 'needle spiking' within the Irish night-time industry.

Congress also notes

The slow return of the Nitelink services in Dublin following the easing of restrictions (and a lack of services all together elsewhere), a service which many students rely on to get home after standard public transport options have ceased. This has resulted in an increased demand on the taxi industry, and an increased number of people attempting to get home at the same time, a clear barrier to keeping our population safe.

Congress Acknowledges

The incredible work done by MOs and external organisations to ensure that students engaging with the night-time industry in any capacity are safe.

Congress Mandates

The VP for Welfare to engage with relevant stakeholders in the night-time industry nationally (inc. N.Ire) working to ensure the safety of patrons, and to continuously explore potential partnerships with new organisations.

Congress also Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby the Government to introduce further supports to protect students engaging with the night-time industry, including but not limited to: further public transport supports outside of traditional hours, a review of legislation surrounding opening hours, further protection for students working in the night time industry.

2022 WEL 7: Drug Harm Reduction and the Decriminalisation of Drugs

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Welfare

Congress Notes

In July 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 the Coiste Gnó to lobby for decriminalisation, and in 2018, Coiste Gnó had developed connections with external expert groups to promote and produce information surrounding the use of drugs with a harm reduction focus and to promote decriminalisation models. Since 2018, the VP for Welfare has continued to engage with relevant stakeholders and endeavoured to ensure that any work being carried out by the Coiste Gnó referencing drugs has a harm reduction centred approach.

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

The Coiste Gnó to lobby for the decriminalisation of drugs in line with the Portuguese Model. USI Coiste Gnó 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 the Coiste Gnó), to run information campaigns for students to educate them of the need for this reform and on safe drug use.

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.

2022 WEL 8: Creation of a workshop to identify domestic abuse and red flags

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes with concern

That domestic violence cases are rising at an alarming rate since the beginning of the pandemic with Ireland reporting a 24% increase since 2020 alone.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That the creation of a workshop based off the model of the SafeTalk model could be beneficial in helping people recognize the signs of abuse in their own relationship while also providing tools on how to start a conversation with someone you are concerned about, how to start a conversation with someone to ask for help as well as providing information on how to seek help and get out of the relationship safely.

Comhdháil recognizes

The work USI, Students' Unions, Rape Crisis Centers and Networks have been doing over the decades to drive forward cultural change through sexual health awareness campaigns, consent education via consent workshops, offering disclosure training, coordinating rallies and protests to stand in solidarity with survivors and lobbying for policy development, both on a local and national level.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Welfare and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to coordinate a workshop like the SafeTalk workshops in conjunction with any relevant organisations to roll out nationwide."

2022 WEL 11: Community Action Tenants Union

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) Ireland is a union for communities and tenants, that is renters, council tenants, mortgage holders and people in emergency or precarious living situations. Over the past two years CATU has grown hugely as a union, successfully resisting evictions, defending the rights of its members, highlighting dereliction and the exploitation of landlords, and raising class consciousness amongst its membership and the wider population.

Comhdháil Also Notes

Students make up a significant proportion of the population of renters across Ireland, and the housing crisis and access to safe, affordable and adequate accommodation is one of the most pressing issues for students today. Public services and community infrastructure are also critical to supporting students and the areas they are living in.

Comhdháil Further Notes

The USI Executive, and in particular the VP Campaigns and VP Welfare, are already mandated to work with and support the establishment and growth of tenants unions. However, there is a need for more direct engagement with tenants unions through information sharing, supporting direct action and encouraging students to join tenants unions.

Comhdháil Believes

The knowledge, experience and resources from CATU, as well as their strength as an active tenants union, could have huge benefits to student tenants and the student union movement as a whole, and vice versa.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns to investigate the feasibility of developing a partnership agreement between USI and CATU, with the aim of supporting and strengthening both unions, facilitating joining campaigns and actions, and providing students with support as tenants. If the Vice President for Campaigns concludes that such a partnership is feasible then they should go about developing such an agreement with the support of the USI Executive.

2022 WEL 12: Public Diagnostic Services

Proposed by the USI VP Welfare

Congress Notes:

There is a distinct lack of publicly funded diagnostic services accessible to students who may need support for potential neurodivergencies. Currently students who are seeking diagnostic services for ADHD are forced to enroll in the private medical industry, which is often financially inaccessible for students, or be faced with long waiting lists.

Congress Mandates:

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby for increased publicly funded accessible diagnostic services that are accessible to students, and to keep this in mind when developing submissions (e.g. the prebudget submission).

Congress also Mandates:

The VP Welfare and VP E&C to develop a resource pack for MOs of publicly funded diagnostic and disability services accessible to students that is to be reviewed and updated at the beginning of each semester.

2022 WEL 13: Reflect - Supporting Students' Union Officers

Proposed by Welfare Working Group

Comhdháil Notes:

That Students' Union Training (SUT) and Students' Union Top-Up Training (SUT+) are extremely beneficial and useful to Students' Union Officers before the academic term begins. Sessions delivered during these training days allow Students' Union Officers to receive detailed knowledge on topics relating to their briefs, gain insight around potential challenges that may arise and focus on what they would like to achieve in the year.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern

That Students' Union Officers work in extremely stressful, highly pressurized and intense working conditions to adapt and react to the emerging issues around them.

Comhdháil Further Notes with Concern

That due to the nature of the workload many Students' Union Officers are at risk of experiencing burnout or a loss of motivation.

Comhdháil Believes

USI should facilitate and enable Students' Union Officers to work at their best capacity and feel supported by offering tailored training wherever deemed necessary.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Welfare with the support of the Regional Officers, to organise an event, in person or online, including the following topics, but not limited to; motivation, leadership, goal setting and re-prioritizing manifesto policies, self-care and wellbeing. The structure of the event should be planned in agreement with Welfare Working Group.

Repeals 2021 UO 3

2021 WEL 4: Regional Food Banks

Proposed by the Southern Region Working Group

Congress recognises

That financial hardship is an issue many students experience during third level education. Students often work multiple part-time jobs, commute from their family homes to campus to save on rent costs or skip meals to save money. Eating healthily and having access to sufficient meals is extremely important for a person's wellbeing.

Congress notes

Setting up a Food Bank requires you to rely on donations of products. Many organisations, including College Canteens, may throw out food at the end of the day for a number of reasons that include; being mislabeled, overproduced, are test-market items and/or products with short code dates. Most of the time this food is perfect to consume.

Congress further notes

Some charities currently work with supermarkets to collect foods and give them out to those in need. With the current economic situation, and the lack of funding for third level students, students' who are struggling financially may find Food Banks beneficial to them.

Congress mandates

The Regional Vice Presidents to investigate and produce a guidance document to assist MO's in setting up Food Banks. This guide should include information on external organisations that may be of help to MO's.

Congress further mandates

This guidance document should be discussed with local MO's when it is being produced to get input on what is currently in place in MO's. This should be updated and produced no later than October each year.

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.

Repeals 19 WEL 13, 12 WEL 7

20 WEL 12: JAM Card

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

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

Proposed by 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.

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

Proposed By GMIT Students' Union

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 Students' Union

Congress notes

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

Congress further notes

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

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.

Equality

2024 EQ 2 Transgender Healthcare (NI)

Proposed by: USI VP for Equality & Citizenship

Comhdháil Notes:

The main public health service for trans and gender diverse adults to access gender-affirming care in Northern Ireland is the Brackenburn Clinic. The service provides assessments, psychological supports and onward referrals, where appropriate, for hormone replacement therapy and surgery. The only way to be referred to the service is either via a GP or a mental health professional.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern:

Due to lack of funding, staffing issues, and a breakdown in the service, as of 2023 the waiting list currently has patients waiting up to 4-6 years for their initial appointment. The Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) had no patients being accepted to the service from 2018-2020, which has since resumed but now refuses new referrals due to the backlog of patients trying to avail of the service. Over the last few years, the NHS has been slowly becoming more privatised, which has led trans patients to turn to private healthcare and self-medicating (administering their hormone replacement therapy themselves). Despite GPs being allowed to provide bridging prescriptions for trans patients, a survey of users of private health provider, GenderGP, found that 80% of NHS GPs had refused, despite having no real grounds to do so.

Comhdháil Commends:

The work done by organisations such as Transgender NI and The Rainbow Project to highlight the current issues the face transgender healthcare and the community.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Welfare to engage with and supporting the NUS-USI President to:

- Invest in and reform local healthcare provision to:
- Eliminate waiting lists for mental healthcare.
- Ensure no disruption in care pathways when people turn 18 or move house and move across the UK.
- Update regulations in gender-affirming healthcare to give GPs and nurse prescribers the powers to prescribe hormones.
- Support and endorse trans organisations and activist groups in Northern Ireland.
- Lobby the Government and NHS to invest more funding to GIC's in Northern Ireland.
- With the VP for Campaigns, to run a "Trans Healthcare Campaign" to all the MOs in Northern Ireland to highlight the issues facing the trans community regarding transgender healthcare.

2024 EQ 3 Transgender Healthcare (ROI)

Proposed by: Equality & Citizenship Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

Transgender healthcare and Gender Affirming care in Ireland was ranked the worst in the EU among the 27 member states in October 2022. This ranking was provided by Transgender Europe (TGEU), a group funded by the EU, who campaigns for the 'complete depathologisation of trans and gender-diverse identities'. The ranking itself was based on the following six factors:

- Type of trans healthcare and coverage available in the country.
- Requirement for a psychiatric diagnosis before hormonal treatment or surgery.
- Waiting time for first appointment with a trans healthcare professional.

- Groups excluded or made to wait longer to access trans-specific healthcare.
- Youngest age for puberty blockers.
- Youngest age for hormones.

Each member state could score up to two points for each of the six criteria. Out of a potential twelve points, Ireland received just one.

Comhairle Notes with Concern

The National Gender Service (NGS) recently reported that they are “seeing people referred between three and three and a half years ago”. However, this statement is fundamentally misleading given the exponential growth of wait lists; statistical analysis of data accessed through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request indicates that those added to the list now may be waiting over 11 years to be seen.

Waiting times of this length, as evidenced by the myriad of surveys available, are increasing the risk of self-harm and suicide amongst an incredibly vulnerable population. Despite these abhorrent wait times, the NGS continues to advise GP’s not to prescribe Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), a life-saving intervention, to transgender and non-binary patients. This has, unsurprisingly, lead to increasing numbers of transgender people ‘self-medicating’ (taking HRT medications accessed through unregulated sources).

Comhairle Commends

There is significant work and advocacy being carried out by grassroots activist organizations in Ireland such as ‘Transgress the NGS’ and ‘Trans Harm Reduction’; the latter organization has pioneered the ‘GP Action Project’, organizes laboratory testing of HRT sources, provides injection supplies, provides a healthcare fund, and offers a peer support network.

Comhairle Mandates

USI to support and endorse organisations like ‘Transgress the NGS’, ‘Trans Harm Reduction’, ‘Trans & Intersex Pride Dublin’, ‘Trans Healthcare Action’ and ‘TENI’ i.e. publicise them and their events regularly on social media, encourage students to attend their events and direct actions, and ensure USI attendance (wherever possible) at these same events.

Comhairle further Mandates

USI to fully endorse and platform the recommendations of ‘Transgress the NGS’, ‘Trans Healthcare Action’, and ‘Trans Harm Reduction’ (e.g. in relation to GP’s prescribing HRT and blood tests to trans-identifying people), to platform their recommendations on the topic of Trans Harm Reduction, to fully denounce the NGS (National Gender Service), the HSE, and the 33rd Government of Ireland for its abject failure to adequately support Trans people, and to ultimately support the recommendations by TGEU & WPATH.

Comhairle further Mandates

The VP for Equality & Citizenship, in conjunction with the VP for Welfare, to:

Collate/Source a list of best-practice recommendations for college-run health services in line with the demands of Transgress the NGS (i.e. an informed consent model) that can be easily communicated to local health services via each local MO.

Work directly and regularly with local MO Officers to educate college-run health services on the life-saving benefits of prescribing HRT and blood tests, the risks of not treating those who self-medicate, and legal protections in place. Roll out a campaign & ‘handbook’ / shareable document, detailing information on ‘Trans Harm Reduction’, methodology of such, and areas where this can be improved via activism (e.g. such as platforming the GP Action Project).

Endorse, platform and promote the ‘GP Action Project’, run by Trans Healthcare Action in order to build a network of Trans-Friendly GP’s

Lobby all necessary parties (including but not limited to: Government / Minister for Health, Minister for Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, HSE, NGS) to overhaul the current trans healthcare model (centralised, pathology-based) in favour of the legislative and healthcare recommendations provided in TGEU’s (Transgender Europe’s) ‘Guidelines to Human Rights-Based Trans-Specific Healthcare, 2019’ and WPATH (World Professional Association for Transgender Healthcare) Standards of Care Version 8.

In conjunction with the VP for Campaigns, develop a comprehensive escalation plan (to be presented at the second National Council of the academic year (24/25), aimed at achieving point (4), which must include one targeted direct action (e.g. at Pink Training 24/25), before March 2025.

2024 EQ 4 Pink Training

Proposed by: TU Dublin Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes:

Pink Training is an annual event run by USI that brings together members of the LGBTQIA+ Community and allies to empower, explore and educate. Pink Training has played a critical role in establishing a safe space for student activism and change. Furthermore, Pink Training has paved the way for hundreds of delegates each year, to experience a place like no other in Ireland; a space where they can truly be themselves.

Comhdháil Applauds:

The response of USI's Pink Training event to critical issues of time that required strong student voices to shift narratives of the LGBTQIA+ community. This encompassed the promotion of safe sex, tackling the rise in HIV cases, promoting anti-bullying measures in schools, elevating Trans rights and campaigning for legislative change. This work and impact of Pink training has been imperative for the queer movement in Ireland in campaigning for social justice and equality for all members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Comhdháil Recognises:

Pink Training is organised by the VP for Equality and Citizenship each year and is a significant undertaking for the Officer. There is also currently a document in existence, drafted annually by the outgoing VP for Equality and Citizenship, that explains how the incoming VP for Equality and Citizenship should run Pink Training.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The VP for Equality And Citizenship and Coiste Gnó to continue to organise the annual USI Pink Training. This event should continue to include sessions that tackle nuanced LGBTQIA+ perspectives such as race, body positivity, disability, drug harm reduction, asexuality and other extended topics deemed relevant.

Comhdháil further Mandates:

The VP for Equality and Citizenship and any other Coiste Gnó member involved in the organising of Pink Training to continue to produce an annual Event Planning Document after the training each year, within three months of the Training, and pass it over to the incoming VP for Equality and Citizenship each year.

This motion therefore repeals 2022 EQ 5: Pink Training

2024 EQ 5 Motion in Support of Sex Workers and Engagement with the National Women's Council

Proposed by Comhaltas na Mac Léinn, Ollscoil Na Gaillimhe

Comhdháil notes

Sex work is defined as the sale of any sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation, including online sex work and pornography.

Comhdháil further notes

The phrase 'decriminalization of sex work' has been politically coopted by individuals, such as the National Women's Council, who believe that the Nordic model is the only way to support sex workers. Under the Nordic model, sex buyers are criminalized while sex workers are decriminalized, however, additional working supports such as hiring security, accountants or drivers remains illegal. Worryingly, it is also illegal under the Nordic Model for two or more

sex workers to live together, as under the Nordic Model this constitutes a brothel, and allows landlords to evict tenants should they discover that the tenant is engaging in sex work. Many individual sex workers and sex work organisations, such as Sex Workers Alliance Ireland, have gone on record to say that the Nordic model has been created under the false pretence that all sex work is abuse and always leads to sex trafficking and exploitation, without the model acknowledging that consensual sex work exists. They confirm however, that prohibitions, like the one of the Nordic model, and stigmatization are the biggest problems for sex workers, which do cause real harm. It was also reported on the 19/02/2024 that the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner agreed with sex-worker-led organisations that the decriminalisation of sex work will improve outcomes for sex workers. The Sex Workers Alliance Ireland undertook peer research of the Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act which brought the Nordic model to Ireland in 2017. Their most important findings are listed below:

This law has not prevented people from engaging in sex work.

It has negatively impacted safety measures making survival more perilous.

Instead of making workers safer it has made sex work much more dangerous and decreased faith and trust in Garda amongst workers. Crime against sex workers has increased significantly under this law.

This law has failed to reduce numbers of clients but instead it has worsened behaviour of clients toward sex workers.

Sex workers have lost bargaining power and are therefore seeing clients they might have previously refused to see and engaging in acts they might not have previously considered.

Existing supports for workers are severely lacking and tend to be focused on workers that are actively trying to exit sex work.

Comhdháil further notes

That a meeting was held with the National Women's Council, SERP, Ruhuma and the National Immigration Council on the 23/1/2024 in the National Women's Council offices in Dublin. This was attended by USI Officers, VP Academic Affairs, VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Welfare, as well as officers from MO's.

From this meeting, it was clear that the National Women's Council pro-Nordic Model stance still holds strong, and can only be changed through passing a mandate at their Annual General Meeting in June.

Comhdháil mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó shall retain an anti-Nordic model policy and that the VP Welfare and VP Equality and Citizenship attempt to engage further with the National Women's Council, through meetings, workshops and communications.

Comhdháil also mandates

That USI bring an anti-Nordic mandate to the National Women's Council 2024 AGM. Should this motion fall USI Coiste Gnó will consider disaffiliating from the National Women's Council, exiting before the next affiliation payment.

2023 EM (EQ) 1 Legal Gender Recognition

Comhdháil notes:

A person with Californian nonbinary recognition has started legal proceedings against the UK government. The Gender Recognition Panel had 'granted' their application due to their Californian gender recognition being on the list of approved territories for UK Gender Recognition - however they are refusing to issue a nonbinary Gender Recognition Certificate as the UK Government claims that, by law, a person's legal gender must be either male or female.

Comhdháil recognises:

The importance that self-identification of legal gender has on transgender and nonbinary students' ability to fully participate in college life and civil society.

Comhdháil further notes:

Trans adults south of the border who want a binary change in legal gender can self-identify this via a statutory declaration.

Comhdháil notes with regret:

Many other transgender and non-binary students face barriers in accessing legal recognition of their genders. Trans adults north of the border who want a binary change in legal gender do not have the right to self-identify this and must go through an invasive and pathologised process at the hands of the UK Government's Gender Recognition Panel in order to have their gender legally recognised. There's currently no non-binary gender recognition provisions north or south of the border. The government south of the border has yet to implement the recommendations of the Review Group for the Gender Recognition Act which would remove the requirements to go before the Circuit Family Court to prove medical intervention for trans youth aged 16-17 south of the border. Trans youth north of the border are unable to seek gender recognition.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship in conjunction with the NUS-USI President and Vice President for Campaigns to lobby the relevant governments and campaign for the implementation of self-identification of legal gender, including non-binary legal recognition

Comhdháil further mandates:

The USI Coiste Gnó to work with Trans advocacy groups north and south of the border (eg: TransgenderNI, TENI, Trans and Intersex Pride Dublin) to further campaign for trans and non-binary people's right to self-identify their legal gender, including when possible participation in calls for direct action

2023 EQ (NC) 2: Trans Equality Together Coalition

Proposed by the USI VP for Equality & Citizenship

Comhdháil Notes

Trans and non-binary people face many barriers in Ireland in the areas of discrimination, harassment and healthcare. Students' Unions have been advocates for the community leading on implementation of gender neutral toilets and many SUs joining the Irish Trans Writers Union boycott of the Irish Times newspaper.

Comhdháil Notes with regret

The Trans and Nonbinary community have been under intense unwarranted media attention as well being targeted by recent developments in sporting organisation.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to join the Trans Equality Together coalition led by BelongTo, LGBT Ireland and TENI (Trans Equality Network Ireland).

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Welfare to attend media training run by Trans Equality Together and/or TENI in order to be able to represent trans issues in the most update to date and correct way possible.

2023 EQ (NC) 3: Support for DADA Campaign

Proposed by NCAD Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

Disabled artists and disabled academics face unnecessary and restricting barriers while trying to establish an independent practice that, compounded with their disabilities, punish them for their efforts and prevent them from working autonomously.

Comhdháil also notes

The Disabled Artist & Disabled Academics (DADA) Campaign has made good strides in making the voices of disabled artists and academics heard, and is fighting for the right to be self-employed for all people with disabilities.

Comhdháil believes

Through support for DADA, employment rights for disabled people can be improved and, by extension, the wellbeing of disabled student artists and future self-employed disabled workers will be improved.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP for Equality & Citizenship to support DADA Campaign in their future endeavours to further the rights of disabled people by promoting their work on social media and engaging with them as necessary to further common goals.

2023 EQ 5: Ulster Scots (Ullans)

Proposed by Ulster University Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

Ulster Scots (Ullans) has been a significant and identifiable language within the island of Ireland for hundreds of years and has experienced a resurgence of interest in recent years. Concentrated within the island of Ireland, Ullans holds special historical significance in addition to being valued as an integral part of national identity.

Comhdháil further notes

Due to Northern Ireland polarisation, it can be intimidating for Ulster Scots speakers to fully integrate into USI, given the stigma which can be attached by communities. The Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 mentions Ulster-Scots, stating in part that: ... ALL PARTICIPANTS RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPECT, UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE IN RELATION TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY, INCLUDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND, THE IRISH LANGUAGE, ULSTER-SCOTS AND THE LANGUAGES OF THE VARIOUS ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, ALL OF WHICH ARE PART OF THE CULTURAL WEALTH OF THE ISLAND OF IRELAND... This statement indicates that formal recognition of Ulster-Scots is expected to play a role in the continuing Northern Ireland peace process. As part of the cross-border language body created under the Good Friday Agreement, the Ulster Scots Language Society and its magazine Ullans were founded in 1992 and the Ulster-Scots Agency was established in 1999.

Comhdháil notes

Ireland is a shared island, with much diversity, and Ullans has a part to play in this.

Comhdháil believes

Ullans should not be a divisive language given that it is spoken to various fluency levels across a cross-community basis and both Ullans and Gaeilge are able to co-exist peacefully and complementary of each other. In 1910, Adam Lynn demonstrated the linguistic fusion and positive relationship between Ullans and Gaeilge through his predominantly Ulster Scots poem, a Ireland for Me', which featured the well-known Irish phrase aErin Go Bragha (Airinn go BrAch/ Ireland forever).

Comhdháil further believes

Ulster Scots speakers from the northern part of Ireland should be made welcome within USI through inclusive USI practices.

Comhdháil mandates:

USI VP Equality shall work with NUS-USI in facilitating shared learning and practice between both institutions. Shared learning shall involve USI VP Equality leading on creating an Ulster Scots conference and training workshop. Furthermore, USI VP Equality shall create a resource bank for those wishing to learn more about Ulster Scots including a section providing Ulster Scots translations for Member Organisations and their Student Officer position titles. USI to recognize Ulster Scots in a positive, non-divisive way and promote awareness of Ulster Scots on the island of Ireland through inclusion, increasing awareness and training workshops.

2023 EQ 6: Student Guarantor Schemes and Housing Security

Proposed by Queens' Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

Housing security is a prominent issue for students across the island of Ireland and there has been a student accommodation crisis in recent years. Students moving into private sector accommodation are usually expected to have a Guarantor, an individual who signs on as liable to cover the students' rent if they do not pay. In the South, this person must be an Irish resident. In the North, this person must be a UK resident. In both cases, the Guarantor is almost always expected to be somebody with a good credit history and a steady income. This criteria is exclusionary to a number of groups, including but not limited to: international students, care experienced students, students estranged from their families, and students from a working-class background.

Comhdháil recognises

Housing guarantor schemes are becoming more common across the Education sector, particularly in the UK. These schemes entail a university or college signing on as a students' guarantor where they are unable to source an individual to do so. Schemes can traditionally operate in one of two ways: internally operated by a EI, or externally operated in partnership with a third-party provider. EIs that have adopted student guarantor schemes have seen high uptake and received a high volume of positive feedback from students.

Comhdháil mandates

VP Campaigns and VP Equality & Citizenship to provide resources and materials about guarantor schemes and housing security to MOs. VP Campaigns and VP Equality & Citizenship to encourage and support MOs in lobbying their EI to develop its own student guarantor scheme and look more generally at improving student housing security. VP Equality & Citizenship to lobby for wider protections for students in purpose built student accommodation, particularly financial and safety protections.

2023 EQ 7: Consultation review of the necessity of, requirements for, and importance of, interfaith spaces on campuses

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Congress notes

That religious and ethnic minorities tend to be under-represented within third level institutions and there is an even higher level of under-representation of these minorities within student representation and Student's Unions around the country. Unfortunately, the work that is done around providing comprehensive supports and facilities for these minority groups tends to be reflective of the fact that, for the most part, this work must be done by students that do not directly represent these minority groups and furthermore do not have a personal understanding of the work the needs to be done. There is a need for establishing a voice and giving light to the perspectives of these unheard portions of MO's student populations.

Congress further notes

That there is a need for further and more comprehensive interfaith spaces such as prayer rooms and worship centres on campus alongside interfaith forums and groups within MOs. And that there is a need to close the gap within Students' Union's between the lack of religious and ethnic minority representation within these MO's representative structures and the information and knowledge needed in order for Union's to push for the creation of these facilities and spaces and to be able to provide insights to their Universities and members on the requirements and necessities

of interfaith spaces. Also giving Union's the opportunity generally to push for the creation of spaces not only for just for prayer but spaces that also allow for more general and causal socialization and interconnection between people of similar faith backgrounds, giving these groups a forum to make friends, feel a sense belonging and engage in interfaith discourse, rather than just pray.

Congress acknowledges

That MO's could really benefit from a centralized specification document the outlined the requirements and importance of more of these interfaith spaces alongside the general consultation of these minorities nationally and within MO's universities in order to engage with and prioritize the needs of this portion of USI's membership, this document/review should be carried out and created in direct consultation with these religious and ethnic minorities.

Congress therefore mandates

The Coiste Gnó, in particular the VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Campaigns work on a consultation review regarding the needs of religious and ethnic minorities on MO's campuses specifically with regards to inter-faith spaces and facilities. This includes gaining this information from events and spaces such as EMPOWER and the Equality & Citizenship Working Group alongside directly engaging with MO's and religious and ethnic minority organisations to gain feedback and information, so a consolidated review document may be made that can advise MO's on the clear requirements for these spaces and facilities and outline the need for them.

2023 EQ 11: Reforms for Non-EU Postgraduate Researchers

Proposed by Postgraduate Working Group

Comhdháil notes

Non-EU postgraduate researchers face difficulties in pursuing postgraduate research and education in Ireland, such as higher fees and additional costs in the form of visas, resident permits and healthcare. The current process for an Irish Residence Permit (IRP) and private health insurance for Postgraduate Researchers coming from outside of the European Union is costly and repetitive.

Comhdháil further notes

There is unfair treatment regarding immigration status between Irish government-funded/HEIs-funded non-EU PhD researchers and EU/Marie Curie PhD researchers. Moreover, there are a number of visa refusals of PhD researchers and their spouses on insufficient funding grounds despite having scholarship awards from funding agencies and HEIs.

Comhdháil further notes

The time spent in postgraduate research by non-EU postgraduate researchers is not counted toward Irish naturalization and residency. The family member (s) accompanying PhD researchers do not receive access to the labour market or even part-time working rights.

Comhdháil also notes

Postgraduate researchers do not receive any disability benefits, health benefits, and paid maternity, paternity, and sick leave.

Comhdháil further notes

The dependents of the PhD researchers under the hosting agreement can have access to the labour market but the dependents of the PhD researchers who are not under the hosting agreement cannot have access to the labour market.

Congress recognizes

The current policies place multiple pressures on non-EU postgraduate researchers who come to Ireland to continue their education and research that they may not have been previously aware of.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Department of Justice and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to implement reforms to end discrimination against non-EU postgraduate researchers that include but are not limited to:

- Introduce reform for the unjust visa restrictions and refusals for postgraduate researchers and their spouses and dependent children.
- Abolish the recurrent cost of €300 for the renewal of the Irish Residence Permit (IRP) for PGRs.

- The fair provision of Hosting Agreement Schemes to non-EU postgraduate researchers.
- Sponsorship and processing fees for visas, Garda vetting, and residence permits should be adequately funded by the HEIs, funding agencies and the government.
- 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-EE postgraduate researchers.
- Provide access and assistance for healthcare, affordable health insurance, disability benefits, and paid maternity, paternity, and sick leave.
- Irish and international postgraduate researchers and students pursuing taught and research degrees should receive the same financial support and fee criteria.

Congress further Mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to work with the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, Vice President for Campaigns, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to organise an information campaign highlighting the additional costs of pursuing postgraduate education and research if travelling to Ireland as a non-EU researcher.

[Repeals 2021 AA 7](#)

2022 EM (EQ) 2: Improving Inclusion & Engagement of Ethnic Minorities in USI

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

Congress notes

UCD's recent anti-racist campaign reviewed on March 16th 2022. This campaign highlights the need for increased visibility, representation and, engagement of ethnic minorities in Further & Higher Education. It also calls for explicit anti-racist practices.

Congress further notes

That ethnic minorities at congress are under represented. They account for less than 10% of Congress when as a student body they account for 20% since the 2016 Census and has increased since.

Congress further notes

There are several benefits to increasing ethnic minority representation at Congress. Such as, allowing for ethnic minority students to share their lived experience.

Congress acknowledges

Much work has been done to improve the visibility, engagement, and representation of ethnic minorities since Congress began decades ago. However, campaigns must be created and task groups formed to bring representation in line with the population dynamics of the student population across our Island.

Congress mandates

The VP for Equality and Citizenship to build a strategy to inform ethnic minorities of their rights to be in attendance as a delegate and/or observer at USI Comhdháil.

Congress further mandates

The VP for Equality & Citizenship to coordinate with sabbatical officers on strategic plans to ensure ethnic minorities are prioritised as active members at USI events, especially USI Comhdháil.

2022 EQ 2: SUSI Proof of Estrangement

Proposed by Southern Region Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

Student Universal Support Ireland is a grant system that aims to help bridge the barriers to education for students from a lower socio-economic background. The SUSI maintenance grant has helped thousands of students access education, however there are still some barriers.

Comhdháil Recognises

Currently to prove estrangement students are required to have/provide documentation that can include a court order, a letter from a social worker or from TUSLA. This documentation has proven to be difficult to secure from students across the country, leaving them ineligible to apply for SUSI without submitting records from their parents/guardians.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The VP Equality and Citizenship and VP Welfare in conjunction with the VP Academic Affairs to work with SUSI and TUSLA to investigate other avenues to prove estrangement for students.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó members working on this should aim to begin lobbying prior to the commencement of semester one.

2022 EQ 5: T Fund

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

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, however 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 and other MOs 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 VP Equality & Citizenship 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.

Congress Further Mandates

The VP Equality & Citizenship to run a yearly campaign and work with relevant departments and ministers to introduce funding for all HEI's to be able to provide a T Fund for their trans students.

Repeals 2020 EQ (NC) 2

2022 EQ 6: Reproductive Justice & Abortion Rights

Proposed by the Equality & Citizenship Working Group

Comhdháil Acknowledges with pride

That on 25th May 2018, the Irish Electorate voted by a landslide in favour of removing the 8th Amendment (Ireland's constitutional ban on abortion). Following this, on 22nd October 2019, abortion was decriminalized in Northern Ireland. These are both historical moments in Irish history that many students and young people across Ireland played a role in.

Comhdháil Notes

That even after the recent victories of the repeal of the 8th Amendment in the Republic and decriminalization in the North, there is continued opposition to abortion access by many anti-choice groups throughout Ireland.

Comhdháil Further Notes with Concern

That despite these monumental changes in legislation, abortion access is still heavily limited across Ireland. 371 people travelled from the North and 194 travelled from the Republic of Ireland to England for abortion care during

the height of the pandemic. Due to a lack of commissioned abortion services in the North, abortion access is only currently provided for up to 10 weeks', through early medical abortion (EMA). Therefore, many pregnant people are still being forced to travel to Great Britain for Healthcare. If Northern Irish residents wish to access abortion services in the Republic of Ireland, they are required to pay to access care privately and must comply with the mandatory three-day waiting period. In the Republic of Ireland, only 1/10 GPs and 10/19 Maternity Hospitals currently provide abortion care. Combined with the medically unnecessary 3 day waiting period and strict 12-week limit, the small number of providers across the country also results in people from the Republic of Ireland travelling for abortion care.

Comhdháil Believes

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 across the island of 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.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship, in solidarity with NUS-USI, to continue to campaign for accessible reproductive healthcare and the removal of barriers to abortion access across the island of Ireland. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship should support relevant campaigns and organisations in the fight to 'Free, Safe, Legal and Local' abortion care.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

That the Vice President for Equality & Citizenship endeavours to support the decriminalisation of abortion across the island of Ireland and actively engage with NUS-USI to ensure our solidarity in the North is as effective as possible.

2022 EQ 7: Equality Events Advisory Groups

Proposed by the VP Southern Region

Comhdháil Recognises

The VP Equality and Citizenship organises many events every year including but not limited to EMpower, Pink Training, Women Lead, Power of Disability, Mature Student Seminar etc. These events are organised to support, mobilise, empower and engage with students within these events.

Comhdháil acknowledges

The VP Equality and Citizenship may not be a member of the community that the event is aimed towards. This can make organising the events difficult for the VP when ensuring that the events are effective.

Comhdháil Mandates

The VP Equality and Citizenship to set up advisory groups for every Equality Event. These groups should be populated with members of the community that the event is for.

2022 EQ 8: EMpower

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

Comhdháil Notes

The importance of recognising and celebrating voices from ethnically diverse communities in Ireland. Over several decades, Irish institutions have witnessed an increase in people of colour and those from Ethnic Minority background enrolling in institutions across the country. This will continue to rise.

Comhdháil Notes with concern

That students from ethnic minority backgrounds can be underrepresented in positions of leadership and representation. This can include, students' union positions, class

representatives, clubs, and societies committee positions etc.

Comhdháil Recognises

The importance of safe spaces for students of colour and ethnic minority students within their journey through third level education in predominantly white and settled institutions. These spaces allow for them to organise, create, and come together as a community in what can sometimes be an isolating environment.

Comhdháil applauds

The success of Pink Training, Women Lead, the conference for students with disabilities, and similar events in the promoting of minority students running for leadership positions. These events have shaped future leaders of Ireland.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to organise an event called EMPower. The aim of this event will be to encourage students of colour and ethnic minorities to take up leadership positions in their institutions, community, and professional lives. The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship should endeavour, that the event;

- Provides a safe space closed to ethnic minority students, where possible.
 - Incorporates aspects of culture and social life for ethnic minority students to engage in.
 - Is organised in partnership with people of colour and ethnic minorities to ensure the event is tailored to its respective target audience.
-

2022 EQ 9: Use of Name on Third Level Certificates

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

As per current policy of Higher Education Institutions in Ireland, certificates are awarded to students upon graduation with the students' legal name.

Comhdháil Also Notes

This system of using the legal name may be particularly harmful for non-binary, trans, and students with a gender beyond the binary of male and female. Particularly if a student is in/will be in the process of changing their name legally, and then after the change is made, the name on their certificate does not match their legal name.

Comhdháil Further Notes

This also extends to students who may have divorced parents, a name in Irish spelling, or a non-western name, and the name that they wish to have may be on their Higher Education Institution's records as being misspelt or incorrect. This can be morally and emotionally harmful if the student does not identify with their given name, or at least how it is spelled on the Higher Education Institution's databases.

Comhdháil Believes

That while attending/upon graduating from a Higher Education Institutions, students should be given the choice on the name that is used on their graduating certificate. This includes (but not limited to); the spelling of the name (both forename and surname), the use of certain characters (eg. fadas on vowels), the use of non-english characters, etc.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the Vice President for Welfare work with all relevant parties in the Higher Education Sector with an aim towards this option being implemented across all Higher Education Institutions.

2021 EQ NC 2: Accessibility to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities

Proposed by the USI VP Postgraduate Affairs

Congress Notes

The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) conducted a survey in 2017/2018 which notes that 14, 720 students with disabilities enrolled in third-level education, representing 6.2 percent of the total student population. This notes a 17% increase in one year. USI applauds this increase yet notes that access to third level education is still very restrictive, and students with disabilities still form a minority within the overall student body.

Congress Notes

The need for an in-depth study on numbers of students with disabilities accessing third level education in Ireland, and the Institutional barriers faced by students with disabilities.

Congress Further Notes

That Students' Unions can play a vital role in the encouragement of more students with disabilities enrolling in third level education, highlighting areas of Institutional inaccessibility on campuses and lobbying their Institutions towards greater support of students with disabilities.

Congress Mandates

The Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to work with MO's to highlight the need for, and resources required to greater enhance the numbers of students with disabilities accessing third level education in Ireland.

Congress Further Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs to lobby the government for greater investment in disability services across existing Higher Education Institutions on behalf of students with disabilities at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

2021 EQ 1: Equality Proofing of USI Campaigns and Events

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Congress Notes

That the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the national representative body for circa 374,000 students in Ireland to date. Amongst those students is a varied diversity of different minority & under-represented groups included but not limited to:

- Members of the LGBTQ+ community
- Mature Students
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students
- Migrants, Asylum Seekers & Undocumented Persons
- Traveller & Roma Community
- Transgender & Non-binary students
- Students of faith
- Students with disabilities
- Students with caring responsibilities

Congress further notes

That USI hosts a number of campaigns and events throughout the year in areas including but not limited to welfare, academic affairs, Gaeilge, postgraduate affairs, equality & citizenship. These campaigns and events reach various cohorts of students from different groups and backgrounds and highlight important issues and themes throughout the year.

Congress Believes

That USI should strive to have diversity at the forefront of its campaigns and events. Concerning the standards of equality, diversity, inclusion and interculturalism (EDI), the elevation of liberation voices and groups should be a priority; this requires a spotlight. There also is a necessity for USI campaigns and events to be equality-proofed, which is to say that campaigns and events within USI should strive to highlight and include the following:

- Gaeilge (the Irish Language)
- Representation of minorities
- Relevance to postgraduate students
- Accessibility

Congress therefore Mandates:

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Campaigns to work on an Equality-Proofing strategy that will ensure USI Campaigns and events are as inclusive and diverse as possible in highlighting:

- Gaeilge (the Irish Language)
 - Representation of minorities
 - Relevance to postgraduate students
 - Accessibility
-

2021 EQ 2: Understanding Privilege and Inclusion

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Congress Notes

Recent events within the island of Ireland have highlighted many incidents in relation to discrimination towards students with disabilities, the LGBTQ+ community, Traveller and Roma community. There is also increasing amounts of racism, as highlighted during the peak of the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020, towards BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic).

Congress Further Notes

That of the aforementioned, there are a number of different groups who are under-represented, mis-represented, and discriminated against. An active stance must be taken against this within and by USI.

Congress Believes

That 'PRIVILEGE' has been a theme that is misconceived within communities wide and far on the island of Ireland. Up until now, there has been a priority for narratives of teaching and learning within the student movement. Now, we must continue to uproot negative and false mindsets surrounding minority groups. We must continue the narrative of learning while also beginning the one of unlearning about PRIVILEGE & INCLUSION.

Congress therefore Mandates

The VP Campaigns and the VP Equality & Citizenship to work on an action plan that will focus on the unlearning of negative biases, decolonising minds to start afresh and liberate minorities across the island. The campaign should focus on not only helping SU officers and people to learn about differences in minority groups but equipping people with the tools to DO better.

Congress further Mandates

The USI Executive to ensure the action plan strives to educate, by providing educational tools that highlight privilege in ourselves and our communities. The plan should also recognise privilege and how it affects minorities. To train, by developing training on how to support marginalised groups in the social and learning environment. And, to support minorities, by working towards breaking down barriers to participation within minority groups and actively supporting the minorities to excel in positions of leadership. This should be done through developing campaigns and networks, but not limited to these. The plan should also highlight and celebrate the cultures and achievements of various liberation groups to celebrate and empower.

2021 EQ 3: Insurance for International Students

Proposed by the USI Vice-President for Postgraduate Affairs

Congress Notes

Current law dictates that those considered "ordinarily resident" in Ireland must pay additional health insurance costs. The Irish immigration service requires that all non-EEA students have at least a basic policy covering emergency medical expenses. Proof of insurance is required at the time of registration with immigration authorities. For students on short-term courses and newly arrived first year students, travel insurance may suffice in some circumstances. Medical insurance policies that meet the minimum immigration service requirements have increased in cost for international students as a result of a ruling from the Court of Appeal determined that because students studying in Ireland for more than one year are 'ordinarily resident' in the state and they are required to purchase more expensive 'community-rated' policies. This means that insurance policies sold to non-EEA students must comply with the rules and obligations set down in the Health Insurance Act 1994.

Congress Further Notes

The majority of education programs in Ireland are longer than one year in duration.

Congress Recognizes: The recent high court ruling around "ordinarily resident" status within the Health Insurance Act saw an average insurance cost increase of roughly 300% for international students from roughly €100 to a community-rated health insurance premiums will cost in excess of €700 for the year.

Congress Further Comments

The work conducted by the Alliance for Affordable Insurance for International Students (AAIIS) which USI are members of, for the work in highlighting this issue and lobbying the Department for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Department for Justice, and the Department for Health on this matter.

Congress is Deeply Concerned

With international students being classed as "ordinarily resident" for the purpose of insurance while not be classes as "ordinarily resident" for the purpose of fees, where international students are being disproportionately burdened with higher fees and costs to study in Ireland.

Congress Mandates

The USI executive to continue working with AAIIS in lobbying the Department for Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Department for Justice, and the Department for Health for a solution to this issue, including but not limited to the reversal of the high court decision on "ordinarily resident" status for international students.

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 of traveller culture and identity training, such as the STATUS toolkit.

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

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

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.

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 democratised – 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 incrementalistic 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 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.

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 – 7: Gender Equality

Proposed By IT Carlow Students' Union

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 – 9: Disability Awareness and Annual Conference

Proposed by the USI 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.

2018 EQ 1: Gender Recognition of Students

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

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.

Citizenship

2024 CZN 1 Extra-Curricular Activities Engagement

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

That engaging in extracurricular activities in leadership positions and/or attending events and activities run by Students' Unions, Clubs and Societies and Volunteering organisations can provide students with an improved student experience at university.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That engaging in extracurricular activities can come with hidden costs for students, and sometimes these costs can be a deterrence for students to engage in activities outside the classroom.

Comhdháil Believes

That as an organisation we should be pushing to increase participation in student activities, and reduce any barriers to students engaging in activities.

Comhdháil Recognises

That the level of financial support given to students to engage in extracurricular activities varies in each Member Organisation of USI.

Comhdháil Mandates

That the USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship along with the USI Vice President for Welfare conduct a research activity on assessing what financial barriers are in place for students to engage, including but not limited to; Clubs and Societies activities, Union activities; and volunteering opportunities in each Institution.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

That the USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship along with the USI Vice President for Welfare using their findings conducts a report on their findings and suggestions on removing barriers for student engagement, and present their findings to the Comhairle Náisiúnta after the report is finished and to the next Comhdháil after to be used for both local and national lobbying of HEIs, state and semi-state bodies.

2024 CZN 2 Reckonable Residency Reform

Proposed by: Equality & Citizenship Working Group

Comhdháil Notes:

Students and researchers attending Irish HEIs who are citizens of nations outside the EEA face many obstacles to remaining in Ireland after programme completion.

Comhdháil Further Notes:

Most non-EEA citizens pursuing higher education in Ireland are forced to maintain Stamp 2 (student) visas for the duration of their programmes, which restrict many rights while residing in the State.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern:

Stamp 2 visas do not count towards reckonable residency, which is used to determine eligibility for Irish long-term residency and/or citizenship.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The VP for Equality & Citizenship and VP for Academic Affairs to lobby the Department for Justice for Stamp 2 visas to count toward reckonable residency for the purposes of legally remaining and contributing to Irish communities long-term.

2024 CZN 4 BusConnects and the NTA

Proposed by the Dublin Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

The rollout of the BusConnects by the NTA (National Transport Authority) is a welcome change in the way public transport is operated, offering increased 24hr services, and increased connectivity between campuses. BusConnects impacts most higher education institutions in Dublin, and may affect other cities in Ireland in the future.

Comhdháil Further Notes

There have been significant delays in the rollout of the redesigned routes, in particular of the E-Spine that would connect multiple campuses across Dublin. The delays of these routes, and the removal of previous routes as part of the phased rollout, has a serious impact on commuting students and their commutes to their HEI, as well as travel between campuses of some institutions.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to endeavour to obtain a place on the relevant decision-making bodies within the NTA.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó, in particular the regional officers, to lobby the NTA to involve the student perspective and voice on these rollouts and to make sure considerations are taken that no area is forgotten.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to produce information on any new route introduced by the NTA that impact an MO campus to inform students of the changes and how it may affect students.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to report back at every second Comhairle Náisiúnta on updates surrounding public transport.

2024 CZN 5 Non-EEA Residency Permit Reform

Proposed by: Equality & Citizenship Working Group

Comhdháil Notes:

Students and researchers attending Irish HEIs who are citizens of nations outside the EEA face many obstacles to their legal status over the course of their programmes, particularly those of greater than one year in duration.

Comhdháil Further Notes:

Non-EEA USI members enrolled in multi-year programmes are required to attend annual interviews with An Garda Síochána to prove they are persisting through such programmes as originally intended, as well as provide proofs of residency, financing, and private insurance to varying extents.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern:

The cost to renew residency permits is €300 per annum, independent of the other financial burdens required per individual; immigration interviews are continually backlogged and difficult to obtain; and County Dublin allows for online permit renewals.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The VP for Equality & Citizenship, VP for Academic Affairs, and VP for Postgraduate Affairs to lobby the Government (such as the Department of Justice and any other relevant party) and advocate for:

- 1.) Online residency permit renewals available nationwide.
- 2.) Reduction of permit fees.
- 3.) Abolition of the annual renewal requirement for those enrolled in multi-year programmes.

2023 EM (CZN) 1: Net Zero Campaign

Comhdhail Notes

Temperatures as of recently have risen to 1.1 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This is a consequence of humanity's 200 years of being the leading cause in global warming. Weather events have become more frequent and extreme. UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted "take the bolder and stronger climate action that our world so desperately needs,".

Comhdhail Applauds

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report".

Comhdhail Further notes

Net zero is the reducing of all GHG (Greenhouse gases) emitted by human activity to near zero. and having any remaining gases re-absorbed from the atmosphere. This can be done via reforestation.

Comhdhail Mandates

The USI to investigate whether or not there is Government funding available to MO's to reach Net Zero on their campuses. If it is available, USI are to campaign for Government bodies to fund all MO's to reach NET zero.

Comhdhail Further Mandates

2023 CZN 1: Living Wage for Student Workers

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil notes that

There is an ongoing cost of living crisis, across accommodation, transport, food, and fuel. More and more students have to take part-time and full-time work to meet the demands of these crises, affecting their study and well-being. Many Students' Unions (SU) and Higher Education Institutes (HEI) employ students in various capacities; for example, University College Cork employs students on part-time (16 hour/week max) contracts at a special Student Helpa Rate of Pay, which in 2023 is currently equivalent to National Minimum Wage (NMW; 11.30 euro/hour). The USI has this year began important work in mapping the landscape of salaries and wages in it's own Member Organisations (MO), with a view to ensuring Officers of MOs are paid a wage which reflects their hard work.

Comhdháil believes that

Even without regard to the rising cost of living, all workers are entitled to a wage which affords them a socially acceptable standard of living. The Living Wage Technical Group (a working group of economic institutions and trade unions; livingwage.ie) calculate this to be 13.85 euro/hour in 2022/23 for the south of Ireland, while the Living Wage Foundation (a UK based equivalent working group) calculate it to be 10.90 GBP/hour for the north of Ireland. Poverty wages are deleterious to the wellbeing and academic performance of our members, and fighting together with student workers will pay dividends in increasing student engagement and informing the wider student body of their rights as workers.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

That Regional Officers, with the support of the VP Campaigns and President, will investigate these issues and collect data regarding student employment at MOs and HEIs, with specific reference to hourly rates of pay and numbers of students employed. That Regional Officers will support MOs to engage students who work within their HEI or SU in this exercise develop campaigns to achieve a Living Wage.

That the Coiste Gnó engage with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science (DFHERIS) to introduce a floor to the HEI Salary Scales no less than the Living Wage as calculated by the Living Wage Technical Group.

2023 CZN 4: Commuter Student Survey

Proposed by Southern Region Working Group

Comhdháil notes

This year the Vice President of Equality and Citizenship worked hard to organise a national commuter student survey. However, following the resignation of this officer this job has been adopted by the Vice President of Campaigns.

Comhdháil mandates

That survey be completed no later than the beginning of December in future years by one of the officers on the Coiste Gnó.

2023 CZN 5: International Student Visa Waiver Scheme Within the Irish State

Proposed by Postgraduate Working Group

Comhdháil notes

The number of international students studying on the island of Ireland continues to increase. International students contribute enormously to student life and should not experience any undue or unfair restrictions on their lives while studying. The Common Travel Area (CTA) does not apply to international students who do not hold UK or Irish citizenship. Many international students studying in the both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland / north of Ireland face visa based restrictions on travel within the Irish state. The current immigration system requires many international students to apply for short-term visas to attend events/activities within the Irish state, which is onerous, overly bureaucratic, time-consuming, and limits participation in student life.

Comhdháil recognises

The current policy does not address the visa issues faced by international students and Student Union officers studying and working in the Republic of Ireland, respectively.

Comhdháil believes

International students should not face additional barriers to travel or to participate in opportunities on the island of Ireland. International students studying in both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland / north of Ireland should be able to travel without restriction on the island to participate in educational, social and student experience activities.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and USI Coiste Gnó to secure the implementation of a travel visa waiver - or visa exemption - system within the Irish state for all international students registered as studying in further or higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland / north of Ireland.

Repeals 2022 IA 4

2023 CZN 6: Reforming Immigration Policy

Proposed by CMLOG

Congress notes

The “New Immigration Regime for Full Time Non-EE Students” was written in January 2011 is outdated and needs reform. Congress further notes: The policy does not accommodate international students from taking Full Time roles in a Students’ Union.

Congress mandates

The Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to undertake a review of the “New Immigration Regime for Full Time Non-EE Students” and suggest changes to ensure International Students can fully engage with their Students Union and that their rights are supported.

Congress further mandates

The review of the “New Immigration Regime for Full Time Non-EE Students” to be presented to and approved by congress in 2024. The changes should then be proposed to government and campaigned for.

2023 CZN 7: Free Transportation for Students

Proposed by the Dublin Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

Students continue to struggle with the cost of education from extortionate fees to the ever-rising costs of accommodation. Transport is an additional large cost burden for students. Students are commuting at high rates but the commutes themselves can be almost as expensive as renting in certain cases. Students who have the option to avail of public transportation should be encouraged to use it as it is more environmentally friendly and does not require parking spaces in the vicinity of the college, which is not offered in some institutions.

Comhdháil celebrates

The cities and countries across the globe who offer free transport for students including Strakonice Czechia, Catania Italy, Cascais Portugal, the Netherlands and Germany.

Comhdháil acknowledges

Ireland already provides free public transport for citizens aged 66 and older, and for certain categories of welfare recipients. Additionally, the National Transport Authority (NTA) have created a temporary lower fare for young people and students. In the north of Ireland the Secretary of State announced a rise in transport fares by 7%.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to include free transportation for students in each pre-budget submission until it has been attained. The VP Campaigns to include a demand for free transportation in any cost-of-living campaign until the demand has been met. VP Campaigns to contact NUS-USI and do relevant research to ensure that the campaign includes information for students in the north.

Repeals 20 N (NC) 5

2023 CZN 9: Menstrual Leave

Proposed by the Dublin Region Working Group

Comhdháil notes

Period pain, or dysmenorrhea, is common; more than half of menstruating people experience pain for at least one or two days every month. For some, the pain is so severe that they are unable to perform normal activities for several days, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Comhdháil celebrates

Spain has legislated two days of menstrual leave every month in February 2023, as well as the standing legislation in Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and Zambia.

Comhdháil mandates

The President to work with the USI governance committee to develop a report for the possible outcomes of a two day menstrual leave for Coiste Gnó and staff.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President shall present the report to Comhairle Náisiúnta upon completion which must be at or before the 2024 crossover Comhairle Náisiúnta.

2022 CZN 1: Student Cyclist Initiative

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Dublin Region

Comhdháil Notes

The merits of cycling as an alternative to other carbon intensive modes of transport. Cycling also promotes improved physical and mental well-being.

Comhdháil Celebrates

Improved cycling infrastructure nationwide making it safer and more attractive for citizens to commute via cycling.

Comhdháil Also Recognises

Government's commitment to incentivising cycling through significant investment in the sector, e.g. National Cycle Policy Framework, Budget 2022, Climate Action Plan 2021.

Comhdháil Regrets

That no scheme exists for students to offset the expense of buying a bike and necessary accessories as it can deter students from cycling to college.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby the government to target student cyclists in future initiatives via the establishment of "Cycle to College" scheme, subsidised City Bikes or otherwise.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to continue lobbying for improved cycle networks, particularly in rural areas.

2022 CZN 2: HEI Divestment from Fossil Fuel Industry

Proposed by the Vice President for the Dublin Region

Comhdháil Notes

Fossil fuel companies were responsible for 71% of global carbon emissions between 1988 and 2017. Since 2010 climate-related disasters across the world have displaced 21.5 million people annually.

Comhdháil Believes

The fossil fuel industry, by extracting, processing, promoting, and facilitating the use of, selling, and profiting from fossil fuels, as well as by having a major influence on government policy, is driving climate change and its catastrophic impacts. That university commitments to tackling climate change - such as carbon neutral / net zero strategies - should extend to their investment portfolios and policies.

Therefore, Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President and USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship to undertake research into Higher Education Institute's (HEI) existing investment portfolios and investments in the fossil fuel industry.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns, in conjunction with Regional Vice Presidents, to develop a strategy for a campaign highlighting the extent of the links between existing HEI investment portfolios and the fossil fuel industry, as well the potential benefit of divestment.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to liaise closely with special interest groups in the development of this campaign.

2022 CZN 4: Third Level Eco-Action Forum

Proposed by the Equality & Citizenship Working Group

Comhdháil Recognises

The important role young people and students have played in the fight against global warming. Climate change is here. As the impact of climate change intensifies over the coming few years, it is the children and young people of today who will face the worst effects. Young people across the globe have taken to the streets to protest the lack of action on the climate crisis by Governments across the globe. This sparked a global movement of school-age students demanding greater action from governments to fight climate change. Now millions are marching to demonstrate their support.

Comhdháil Notes

Governments across the globe are not taking action to fulfil the Paris agreement. Across the island of Ireland, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly continue to ignore their obligations and role in combating climate change. The Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2020 aims to pursue climate neutrality by 2050 but does not have to achieve it, and the carbon budgets do not have to be consistent with the 2050 objective. In February 2020, the Northern Ireland Assembly declared a climate emergency. Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK that does not have its own climate legislation, although it does contribute to wider UK targets on emissions reductions and has a Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024.

Comhdháil Further Notes with disappointment

The environmental/sustainability movement is largely made up of white, middle to upper class people. Much of the mainstream messaging around fighting climate change focuses entirely on personal responsibility. While this is an important element of societal change it often leads to elitism. The most necessary and effective changes (e.g., insulating a house for energy efficiency), are out of the reach of many, particularly those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Working class voices are under-represented, their needs unaddressed, and often feel unwelcome in the movement. BIPOC activists have repeatedly expressed discomfort within the sustainability movement. Racism and colonialism's contribution to climate change has long been ignored. The "third world" nations already feeling the effects have contributed very little to climate change, and their plight is ignored by international media.

Additionally, the sustainability movement often doesn't understand the needs of BIPOC activists and fails to make a welcoming space for these voices. People with disabilities have a particularly high stake in fighting climate change. Rising temperatures and biodiversity loss mean increased natural disasters, in which disabled persons are more vulnerable. Furthermore, these changes are linked to pandemics. The UK Office of National Statistics revealed 60% of their Covid deaths were people with disabilities. The concerns of disabled activists need to enter the mainstream.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and Vice President for Campaigns to develop a forum to centralise third level sustainability activism. The forum's purpose is to unite Students Union, Green Campus, environmental societies and third level institutions in pursuing systemic change. It will be an opportunity to coordinate efforts, strengthen a national movement, share knowledge and network.

The forum should launch in the first semester of the 2022/23 academic year. Prior to the launch of the forum, careful planning must be done to consult possible partner organisations (e.g. Eco-UNESCO) and to ensure that BIPOC, disabled and socio-economically disadvantaged activists are central.

Repeals 2021 CZN 4

12 CZN 2: Students in the Workplace

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.

2024 EM (NA) 1 National Affairs Supporting Student Voice and Growing the Student Movement

Proposed by DCUSU

Comhdháil Notes

As of this week, it was declared that Digital exam papers will be made available to Junior Certificate students with additional needs following a legal challenge taken by a student with a severe visual impairment, assisted by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Comhdháil Further Notes

The RACE Scheme (Reasonable Accommodations at the Certificate Examinations) which is revised every year, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) provides accommodations for students under this scheme. Many elements of its expansion have been campaigned for and pursued by the Irish Second-level Students' Union (ADIÉ-ISSU) and the underrepresented voices of students with disabilities in its membership.

Comhdháil Acknowledges

The hard work of the ADIÉ-ISSU since it's foundation in supporting the training of second-level students and campaigning for a better education system.

Comhdháil Further Acknowledges

The Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland (SSUNI) was founded in August 2020 as a group to lobby for adequate support and adjustments for second-level students in the wake of the pandemic.

Comhdháil Further Acknowledges

The work of SSUNI in furthering progress towards a number of student-related issues including Sexism and Sexual Harassment in schools, student-centred Shared Education, and mental health.

Comhdháil Believes

That students' union and student council activists in second-level are essential to growth and strengthening of the student movement in third level. And that uplifting, representing and defending student voice at second-level will only further empower students in third level.

Comhdháil Mandates

The AMLÉ-USI President and Coiste Gnó ensures that the Union of Students in Ireland where needed and possible supports the ADIÉ-ISSU in areas of joint interest, training and general support. Where appropriate, AMLÉ-USI will support endeavours for NUS-USI to develop and support SSUNI.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The AMLÉ-USI President meets with the ADIÉ-ISSU Uachtarán to identify areas of collaboration between AMLÉ-USI and ADIÉ-ISSU such as campaigns, lobbying opportunities and resourcing.

2024 EM (NA) 2 General Election

Proposed by TCDSU

Comhdháil notes

the resignation of Leo Varadkar from Fine Gael and as Taoiseach, as of March 20th 2024.

Comhdháil further notes

that the current sitting of the Dáil is not due for dissolution until February 2025, and that a new Taoiseach is to be instated without public approval.

Comhdháil regrets with concern,

as acknowledged by existing policies, that the failed Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, and Greens coalition has drastically worsened socioeconomic conditions in Ireland, felt particularly by students and HEIs.

Comhdháil acknowledges

with concern that these conditions, created by years of neoliberal policies, have resulted in the rise of the far-right, and that the lack of public input in the leadership of the government is fuelling this fire.

Comhdháil acknowledges

that the Union has taken a stance of no confidence in the government and their policies previously, but is not yet mandated to campaign for an immediate general election.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

that the VP/Campaigns launches an immediate campaign for the government to call a general election, which should include but is not limited to:

- Pressure current elected officials to join calls for a general election
- Working with MOs to ensure civic engagement amongst student bodies through voter registration and mobilisation efforts
- Engaging in a grassroots, on-the-ground campaign, utilising horizontal techniques to centre student voices
- Working with MOs to encourage similar grassroots efforts to be made on a local level
- Not platforming any individuals or parties which put our policies in question
- Demanding an immediate general election in the media; inclusive of print and audiovisual media, and the Union's social media platforms
- Deplatforming far-right views to ensure that reactionary groups do not take advantage of the timing of this election

2024 EM (NA) 3 Disengaging with the FF/FG/GP Government of Ireland

Proposed by VP for Campaigns/ USI Coiste Gnó

Comhdháil Notes

The mandate of no-confidence in the current government (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Green Party) as prescribed under "23 EM 6:No Confidence in the Government".

Comhdháil Further Notes

The union's position of no confidence in the government entails the union advising its membership not to vote for those currently in government to the series of successive failures of this government in respect of the national housing policy, the rise of far-right rhetoric, and since the passing of the original motion, its complicity in the genocide in Gaza.

Comhdháil Also Notes

The work of the USI/AMLÉ Coiste Gnó under this position since its ratification in respect of student accommodation, social justice issues and registering students to vote in the upcoming elections.

Comhdháil Also Notes

While the Coiste Gnó endeavored to effectively implement this policy through highlighting the failures of the government on policy matters that affect students and the society at wide, including the lack of a substantive solution for the student living crisis, the lack of any budgetary or legislative policy changes to the effect of making third-level education a public good and their failure to open the necessary pressure valves to demand a ceasefire in the genocide in Gaza, there has been a number of occasions where the Coiste Gnó publicly endorsed government policy and initiatives through public photos with government representatives and hosting government representatives at USI events to pitch their initiatives to attendees.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern

Activities that entail any public endorsement to the government's policies when done by the USI/AMLÉ Coiste Gnó or officers of member organizations portray a satisfaction with the government.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The USI/AMLÉ Coiste Gnó not engage in activities that may be interpreted as an endorsement to the government or any of its departments until such point that the Government of the 34th Dáil is elected. Such activities include, but are not limited to:

- Any photos with any ministers, minister for state, civil servants, and advisors thereof,
- Any recirculation of government publications through USI/AMLÉ channels for any purpose other than campaigning in accordance with the union's policies,
- Hosting any government representatives at union events,
- Providing speaking slots for any government representatives at protests, marches and demonstrations that the union organizes.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The VP/Campaigns, at the request of the President, to advise the Coiste Gnó on matters relating to the public affairs of the union given the VP/ Campaigns' overall responsibility over the union's campaigns and publications as provided by the union's constitution.

2024 NA CN 1 Motion on Housing Affordability Definition

Comhdháil believes:

Projects funded through capital grants to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), on the premise of affordability, lack clarity on the condition of 'affordability,' leading to potential inconsistencies and the misuse of State funds when such projects do not satisfy their purpose of providing affordable Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA).

Comhdháil is concerned:

That the undefined nature of the affordability condition poses a risk to student renters, and for it to be effective, there is a need for a clear definition, including a reference to a specific price ceiling that is enforced on those projects.

Comhdháil believes:

USI advocates for outlining affordability terms as a percentage of the minimum wage, until the living wage replaces it, taking into consideration students' part-time employment and realistic income levels.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

That while in the maximalist demand housing should be free, affordability should be defined by the USI in the minimalist demand as the monthly rent being up to 30% of a monthly national minimum wage net income, for both private and public purpose-built student accommodation.

Comhdháil also mandates:

That this definition of affordable housing be used not just for purpose-built student accommodation but for all housing by the USI, and that the USI holds the government accountable using this definition, while ultimately campaigning for free housing.

2024 NA CN 2 Motion on Legalisation of Drugs

Comhdháil respects

That decriminalisation of drugs is a step in the right direction, but considering the benefits of a legalised approach, this only presents as a compromise.

Comhdháil worries

That only Cannabis would be decriminalised, without the implementation of country-wide, easy access drug identification & testing centres or harm reduction campaigns. Some politicians & TDs may use this as a sign that they are "progressive" for their own personal gain, all the while disregarding the people who are directly impacted by the prohibition and war on drugs. Regardless, real-life examples of decriminalisation should be enough proof to start changing our drug policies, such as the case with Portugal with drug overdoses and imprisonment cases.

Comhdháil recognises

That the legalisation of drugs allows for a completely regulated market that has oversight by the Government and its Departments. The benefits of this could be, but is not limited to:

- Reduction in crime, corruption and funding of criminal organisations.
- Access to safe drugs that are not contaminated or laced with other substances such as Fentanyl.
- Access to drugs with a labelled degree of strength/potency.
- Access to drugs for medical use.
- Access to better education and harm reduction services for all people who use drugs.
- Supporting local businesses, farmers and other establishments with a local production & supply of drugs (such as the case with Peru and Bolivia's Coca industry).

Tax revenue that can be directed towards drug treatment services, education and harm reduction.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Coiste Gnó to lobby the government for the legalisation of drugs.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP for Welfare and the VP for Campaigns to organise and hold campaigns lobbying for the legalisation of drugs and make submissions on relevant consultations.

This should include work with NGOs in this area, specifically including writing legislation and working on organisations on informational campaigns.

2024 NA CN 3 Motion on Fair Pay for Fair Work

Comhdháil notes

That many working students under the age of 20 are paid less than the current National Minimum Wage, which for young people under 18 years old is only €7.91 in the south of Ireland and as low as £4.81 in the north of Ireland.

That the youth committees of Mandate TU, UNITE the Union, and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions established a campaign addressing this on the evening of Monday 29th May, with the intention of gaining support from like-minded bodies such as USI-AMLÉ before a public launch at ICTU's Biennial Delegate Conference in July 2023.

That this campaign seeks to abolish sub-minimum rates of pay – in practice and legislation – through campaigning and amendments to the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018, and the right to request additional hours of work.

That the ICTU Youth Committee has sought the support of USI-AMLÉ and its Member Organisations.

The passing of motion UO24 at Comhdháil 2023, indicating USI-AMLÉ's intention to develop closer links with ICTU to campaign on issues which effect young people.

Comhdháil believes:

That a Fair day's work deserves Fair pay, and sub-minimum rates of pay are a form of age-discrimination which uniquely affects young people, for whom we are one of the island's leading representative bodies.

That young people are entitled to more control over the hours they work, and employers must not abuse them by keeping large reserves of under-employed staff.

Comhdháil mandates:

That the USI-AMLÉ publicly support the young trade unionist lead campaign to abolish sub-minimum rates, and the right to additional hours.

That the Coiste Gnó and Regional VPs will cooperate with the campaign by encouraging MOs to engage.

2024 NA 1 General Election Campaign

Proposed by the Campaigns' Strategy Committee

Comhdháil notes

The opportunity presented at the time of a general election which, with effective campaigning, could yield favorable results for the student movement, particularly the asks that have shaped union policy on the long term.

Comhdháil further notes

That during a general election time, organizations from across civil society will be working on securing favorable results for their cohorts through the production of general election campaigns that often include the production of organization manifestos, direct and collective lobbying, and effective voter mobilization.

Comhdháil believes

That the academic year 2024/25 will likely coincide with a general election campaign.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP Campaigns, through their work with the Campaigns' Strategy Committee, to produce a student manifesto for the upcoming general election based on current USI policy, in the form of budgetary and legislative asks, and for the final draft of the manifesto to be presented no later than the sitting of Crossover Comhairle Naísiúnta.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP for Campaigns to ensure the publicization of the manifesto through organizing launch events at various member organization campuses, the production of digestible promotional materials for circulation once the date of the general election is set, direct and collective lobbying, and organizing other national and local actions.

2024 NA 2 USI Student Accommodation Position Paper 2024-2027

The USI Campaigns Strategy Committee

Comhdháil adopts:

The [USI Student Accommodation Position Paper](#)

Comhdháil Therefore Repeals:

20 N (NC) 8, 20 N (NC) 8B, EM 20 a 1, 2021 UO 16, 2021 UO 19, 2023 N (NC) 1

2024 NA 4 Unethical Investments Audit

Proposed by the Campaigns Working Group

Comhdháil notes

That HEIs are public-private bodies that have autonomous investments through investment funds, endowment funds, staff pension funds, and other mechanisms.

Comhdháil further notes

That in their capacity as public bodies, HEIs fall under the scope of the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Comhdháil believes

That as such investments are a result of a mixture of student money and public funds, students must have full knowledge of where such money is being invested in, ensuring ethical considerations are at the core of such decisions.

Comhdháil further believes

That existing union policy advocates against unethical investments and for the campaigning of getting HEIs to divest from such unethical investments where they arise and which have been previously exposed to include investments in the fossil fuel and war industries, and in companies on the BDS list.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP for Campaigns leads an annual audit of the investment portfolios and external partnerships, whether academic or otherwise, of all HEIs through accessing such information under the mechanism devised under the FOI Act 2014 and to present the findings of such audit to the wider student population.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP for Campaigns, where the findings of such an audit show that a HEI has investments that would be considered unethical according to existing union policy in this area, organize a campaign to get the HEI to divest such investments.

2024 NA 5 USI taking a stance on abolishing direct provision

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Comhdháil notes with concern:

The alarming increase in hate crimes targeting refugees seeking asylum in Ireland in recent months. Individuals fleeing war-torn regions in search of safety and security, find themselves facing hostility and danger in a country that should offer them refuge.

Comhdháil notes:

Direct Provision was introduced as a short-term solution to help accommodate refugees, however, due to the failure of the Government, refugees have had to stay in Direct Provision for up to 7 years.

Comhdháil notes in conclusion:

That Refugees have been subject to hate crime and inhumane living situations whilst going through a multitude of traumatic experiences which include the process of seeking asylum itself.

Comhdháil applauds

The Abolish Direct Provision Campaign and Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI) for their efforts to raise awareness on the issues facing refugees in Ireland.

Comhdháil mandates:

The USI VP Equality and Citizenship, with the support of the VP Campaigns to advocate for improved conditions for those seeking international protection in Ireland.

Comhdháil further mandates:

VP Campaigns to work with the Campaigns Strategy Committee to produce a position paper on Direct Provision by the September 2024 meeting of Comhairle Náisiúnta as step in the direction to ultimately take a position in favor of abolishing direct provision.

2024 NA 6 Parity of Funding for Technological Universities

Comhdháil Notes

Virtually all IOT's (Institutes of Technology) across the island of Ireland have now merged to become TU's (Technological Universities).

Comhdháil Notes with Concern

Despite some (very limited) progression in discussions / governmental pressure surrounding the borrowing capacity of TU's, significant disparities still exist between the ability of TU's to borrow money (from the government) compared to so-called 'legacy institutions'.

Comhdháil Further Notes with Concern

The inability to borrow within TU's is one of the primary factors preventing TU's from investing in affordable PBSA (Purpose-Built Student Accommodation) i.e. without a framework, TU's cannot borrow to build, meaning they are entirely reliant on capital grants, which will likely never appear (evidenced in the 434 million announcement that exists only within the context of a long-term, low-interest, loan system which TU's cannot access).

Comhdháil Believes

The accelerated development of a Borrowing Framework for TU's would remove barriers to the construction of PBSA within TU's, allowing for greater equity across HEI's on the island of Ireland, as well as alleviate pressure of the housing crisis on third-level students.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The President and Coiste Gnó to consistently lobby the appropriate ministers in the Irish Government / the HEA to develop a Borrowing Framework before the 5 year limit on the ring-fenced '434 million' for student housing dissipates.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The President to draw this to the attention of the HEA, to request all delegates at Comhdháil and SUT (Students' Union Training) to send off drafted emails (draft prepared by the President) to the relevant ministers (list prepared by the President) demanding that a TU Dublin borrowing framework is expedited, given the implications on students across the island of Ireland, to publish an open letter to the relevant Ministers demanding the same, and all other actions requested at National Council (with appropriate majority of votes) deemed necessary to achieve this parity of funding for TU's.

Comhdháil Therefore Appeals the motion '2021 AA NC 8'

2023 EM (NA) 1 Representation and Living Wage for Apprentices

Comhdháil applauds

The recent decision (22/03/23) by the Scottish Government to enable all apprentices in the public sector to be paid a living wage as a direct result from lobbying from the National Society of Apprentices - a representative body for apprentices.

Comhdhail recognises

Currently in Ireland, the rate of pay for apprentices is widely varied - with some being paid far below minimum wage. In the North, the minimum apprentice rate of pay is £4.30 an hour - which is almost 50% lower than the standard minimum wage.

Comhdhail acknowledges par

That the USI Coiste Gnó have begun to work with the National Apprentices Organisation and currently sit on the National Apprenticeship Alliance, but a true representative structure for student apprentices similar to the National Society of Apprentices does not exist in the south.

Comhdhail Mandates

The USI President and Regional VPs to work with the National Society of Apprentices and NUS-USI to establish a feasibility study for a representative structure to be developed to ensure that apprentices are represented in stakeholder meetings.

Comhdhail Further Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby for the minimum rate of pay for apprentices to be raised to the living wage in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland - working in tandem with the NUS-USI President.

2023 EM (NA) 2 Seanad Reform

Comhdháil Regrets:

The elitist nature of the current state of the Seanad panels and the dire need for reform following the Supreme Court judgement (Heneghan -v- Minister for Housing, Planning & Local Government)

Comhdháil Notes:

This judgment will require that an Oireachtas expand the franchise for election of the 6 members elected by graduates of National University of Ireland (NUI) and University of Dublin (TrinityCollege).

Comhdháil Notes:

The NUI and Trinity Seanad registration process is currently administered at the discretion of the NUI and Trinity respectively. Presumably, with the effects of the supreme court judgement a new body/process will have to be set up to administer registration; giving a unique opportunity to redefine and reform how this is conducted.

Comhdháil Notes:

that pre-registration is available for register of electors in General Elections therefore providing a precedent for making pre-registration available for Seanad Éireann elections.

Institutes of further and higher education hold all of the necessary information to register a student for Seanad elections and the requirement to fill out a separate form is unnecessary.

Current postgraduate students may be eligible to vote in these elections.

The lack of representation of apprenticeships and further education colleges within the Seanad panels.

Comdháil Mandates:

the Equality & Citizenship Officer and Campaigns Officer to campaign for the complete upheaval of the Seanad voter registration process, and the introduction of a pre registration system or, preferably, an automatic registration on graduation.

Comhdháil Further Mandates:

the Equality & Citizenship Officer and Campaigns Officer to lobby for the amalgamation of the 6 University panel seats to a single constituency representing all students in 3rd level education in Ireland, and for the extension of suffrage to all graduates with a level 6 or higher NFQ qualification from institutes of further education and all graduates of 3rd level institutions, in Ireland. They should further explore the expansion of franchise to graduates of institutions in Northern Ireland. In the pursuit of these goals, they should examine and consider the use of judicial review as a tool to achieve this.

Comhdháil Further Mandates:

the Equality & Citizenship Officer and Campaigns Officer to form and implement a broad coalition and lobbying strategy aimed at influencing the decision making process of government from consultation and pre-legislative scrutiny stages to enactment of legislation to extend the franchise. USI will include this material for national lobby days and during electoral cycles.

2023 EM (NA) 3 No Confidence in the Government

Congress notes:

That the government in the Republic of Ireland has failed students, workers, pensioners, families and the ordinary people of Ireland.

Congress specifically highlights:

That this government has -

- Failed to deliver on housing, and the worsening housing and homelessness crisis is tearing apart the social fabric of Irish society and leading to the scapegoating of refugees and International Protection applicants.
- Failed to break with successive governments' developer-led, market-based provision of housing, which has inevitably deepened the housing crisis even further.
- Failed to halt the rise in housing insecurity, with record levels of homelessness since taking power. The lifting of the eviction ban highlights how little this government considers the needs of ordinary people.
- Failed to abolish Direct Provision and perpetuated and harmed migrants at many levels throughout society
- Failed to act on the climate crisis.
- Failed to act on the state of Irish healthcare
- Failed to properly provide adequate trans healthcare, with Fine Gael recently spouting anti-trans rhetoric.

Congress further notes that:

The successive policies of this government have damaged the Irish third-level sector, and have not met the demands of the Union of Students Ireland (USI) with regards to equitable, public and accessible education.

Congress highlights that:

As of 2022, 15,000 students are in rent or fee debt to their institutions, 88% of students worry about finances and 1/3 have considered dropping out. 50% of the workforce is casualized, PhD researchers have barely enough to live, and Irish third-level institutions are severely underfunded.

Congress acknowledges that:

On 13th October, thousands of students walked out of colleges across the country to protest against the lack of affordable accommodation and the negative effect it is having on their education.

Up to 20,000 people demonstrated on the streets of Dublin on 26th November 2021 at the Raise the Roof Rally for Housing, and demanded an end to homelessness; secure, affordable homes for all, and for the building of high quality public houses on public land

The government's catastrophic failure on housing is being exploited by the far right to whip-up racist and anti-refugee sentiment.

As a result of the lifting of the eviction ban, thousands more will be made homeless.

Congress notes that:

The Union of Students Ireland (USI) is a political body, but has so far not expressed a direct opinion on the government and has not advised its members to vote against them in the upcoming election.

Congress therefore resolves: To express no-confidence in the government publicly, and advise its membership to vote against the government.

2023 NA 1: Legalisation of Sex Work and Support of Sex Workers

Proposed by the VP Dublin

Congress notes

Sex work is defined as the sale of any sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation. Due to a lower barrier of entry, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis, the number of young people who are engaging in sex work not known, but in all probability, very high.

Congress further notes

The phrase a decriminalization of sex work' has been politically coopted by individuals who believe that the Nordic model is the only way to support sex workers. Under the Nordic model, sex buyers are criminalized while prostitutes are decriminalized; typically, prostitutes can sell their own services but auxiliary procurement services, such as pimping, brothel-keeping, and third-party advertising remain illegal. While this may sound reasonable, many individual sex workers and sex work organisations have gone on record to say that the Nordic model has been created under the false pretence that all sex work is abuse. These organisations and most sex workers do not confirm that view. They confirm however, that prohibitions, like the one of the Nordic model, and stigmatization are the biggest problems for sex workers, which do cause real harm. The Sex Workers Alliance Ireland undertook peer research of the Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act which brought the Nordic model to Ireland in 2017. Their most important findings are listed below:

- This law has not prevented people from engaging in sex work.
- It has negatively impacted safety measures making survival more perilous.
- Instead of making workers safer it has made sex work much more dangerous and decreased faith and trust in Garda amongst workers. Crime against sex workers has increased significantly under this law.
- This law has failed to reduce numbers of clients but instead it has worsened behaviour of clients toward sex workers.
- Sex workers have lost bargaining power and are therefore seeing clients they might have previously refused to see and engaging in acts they might not have previously considered.
- Existing supports for workers are severely lacking and tend to be focused on workers that are actively trying to exit sex work.

Congress further notes

An astronomical increase in the use of online sex work platforms like OnlyFans since 2020. On OnlyFans, new user and creator accounts increased by 75 percent from March to April 2020. It is imperative for USI to support member organisations in learning how to support students who engage in sex work.

Congress mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó shall adopt an anti-Nordic model policy and investigate the stance of the organisations who they have active partnerships with. The USI Coiste Gnó shall bring a report on these findings to the first National Council of 2024 with a decision on whether to continue engaging with each organisation that was investigated.

Congress also mandates

The VP Welfare, VP BMW, VP South and VP Dublin shall work with the relevant expert organisations in creating a training for welfare officers on supporting students who engage in sex work.

Congress further Mandates

The VP Welfare, VP Campaigns, VP BMW, VP South and VP Dublin to create a roadshow campaign that encourages students who engage in sex work to do so in a safe and healthy way while offering resources for additional support.

2023 NA (NC) 2: Student Accommodation Crisis

Proposed by the USI Campaigns Working Group

Comhdháil Regrets

That the worsening student accommodation crisis is preventing access to third level education.

Comhdháil Notes

That the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already existing financial hardships students experience and has intensified the fall-out from the all island accommodation crisis with a severe drop in the amount of student beds available post-pandemic. As well as this, tourist specific accommodation has saturated the housing market.

Comhdháil Believes

That the governments in both jurisdictions of the island of Ireland must take urgent and immediate action to address the student accommodation crisis and believes the crisis should be deemed an emergency.

Comhdháil Mandates

The President and Vice President for Campaigns to lobby the Ministers for FHERIS and Housing to develop an up to date student accommodation strategy that is reflective of the actions needed to alleviate the stress and pressure placed on students.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The President to lobby the Minister for FHERIS and the Minister for Housing to ensure the continuation of the Interdepartmental Working Group on student accommodation.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

The President and Vice President for Campaigns to work closely with NUS-USI in lobbying for a Student Renters Bill from Stormont, which guarantees all students safe, affordable, good quality accommodation, whether it is purpose-built or in the private rental sector.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns to review and amend the USI Student Accommodation Strategy 2019 to ensure it is up to date and fully reflective of the current student accommodation crisis. Amendments provided should be no later than crossover Comhairle Náisiúnta 2023.

2023 NA 5 (NC): Government Financial Aid for Students Who Do Not Qualify for the Free Fees Initiative

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Comdháil Notes

That the Budget 2023 provided a €1000 refund to those who had paid their €3000 Student Contribution Charge in full; anybody who were due to make a payment and/or made a payment in any way towards their Student Contribution Charge received a form of credit, reduction or refund if they qualify under the free fees scheme as an undergraduate student.

Comdháil Applauds

The refund was a step in the right direction toward the abolishment of fees for students in Ireland. Although a one-time cost of living measure, this was achieved after years of lobbying by USI, MOs, and countless Pre-Budget Submissions.

Comdháil Further Notes

The Irish Government has done a disservice to students who are studying part-time, who are postgraduates, repeating, or those who are paying non-EU fees did not qualify for this reduction or refund. This gap in the budget shows the lack of awareness from the Irish Government surrounding the many types of students here and the struggles they face.

Comdháil Regrets

Students in the north continue to face extremely high fees and student loans. Students are still ignored by the UK Government in a cost-of-living crisis.

Comdháil Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to lobby the Irish Government to give a refund to students who do not qualify under the free fees scheme. Comhdháil Further Mandates The USI Coiste Gnó to include fee discounts as well as fees abolishment in future Pre Budget Submissions throughout the Cost-of-Living crisis.

Comdháil Also Mandates

The USI to support NUS-USI in its efforts to campaign for fairer education costs.

2023 NA 12: Support for UCU Strike Action

Proposed by Queen's Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

That the University and College Union represents academics in the North of Ireland, alongside the UK. The UCU has been involved in pay, pension, and condition disputes with their employers and government. This has escalated through to strike days, with the potential to extend to a marking boycott.

Comhdháil further notes

Initially, the UCU had called for eighteen strike days throughout February and March, however they reduced this number after reporting constructive talks with employers and the UK government.

Comhdháil acknowledges

The intense disruption to thousands of students in the North, with postgraduate and international students particularly affected.

Comhdháil further acknowledges

The necessity of the strike action given the conditions of staff contracts, the attitudes of institutional management, and government policy, and that many members of the UCU are postgraduate students themselves.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

That USI takes an explicit position of support of UCU strike action, and that the Coiste Gnó will support the UCU's strike action whenever opportunities arise.

2023 NA 14: Cannabis Regulation & Legalisation

Proposed by NCAD Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

That cannabis and cannabinoids can be used for a multitude of therapeutic reasons, ranging from management of mental health to treatment of chronic pain and seizures as well as recreational use.

Comhdháil further notes

That alcohol and products containing nicotine, substances with significantly fewer benefits, are legal to acquire and comparatively much easier to access despite the indisputable risk they pose to general public health.

Comhdháil further notes

That hemp is an incredibly important sustainable material alternative for the fabrics industry, but current legislation in the Republic has led to legally compliant companies and groups having their hemp and CBD products confiscated or damaged by Garda due to suspected trace amounts of THC.

Comhdháil recognises

The process of decriminalising recreational drugs, the Portuguese Drug Policy Model being an example, has been shown to lead to a decrease in drug-related deaths, illnesses, and crime rates. It has also been shown to encourage drug users to seek treatment for addiction or illness if needed.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Coiste Gnó to lobby in support of the passing of the Misuse of Drugs (Cannabis Regulation) Bill 2022 and support any future legislation that may lead and contribute to the legalisation of cannabis, either directly or through a larger effort to decriminalise & regulate recreational drugs.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP for Campaigns & VP for Welfare to organise and coordinate an informational campaign annually during the week of April 20th around cannabis use, specifically referencing the health and wellbeing benefits, debunking myths and false information and promoting safe and considerate usage.

2023 NA 17: Student Housing Co-operative

Proposed by Ulster University Students' Union

Congress notes

The current housing crisis on the island of Ireland. There remains both persistent and numerous issues with students being able to access affordable and quality accommodation across NI and ROI. This lack of supply was particularly evident in issues arising during the summer of 2021 where Queen's University was over-subscribed to the point of being unlikely to provide lodging to any student within a 40-mile radius of the campus for the 2021-2022 academic year. The problems throughout the island of Ireland are well known and well documented. Through lack of supply and high demand, many students are finding accommodation options extremely difficult to fund, leaving many locked out of accessing accommodation, or having to work alongside studies to afford basic living-costs.

Congress further notes

The transient nature of students makes the demographic one which can be easily exploited by landlords, as short tenancy agreements result in repairs often being indefinitely deferred to the next tenants. Furthermore, as many students arrive directly from high school and are unlikely to have received any education on housing rights, there is a lack of awareness about the quality of accommodation students are entitled to. Accommodation is a hugely important aspect of the student experience, due to its impact on one's ability to socialise, foster positive mental health, and focus on academic goals, with each being interlinked. The World Health Organisation notes, that various aspects of housing are associated with, and potentially may reinforce or enhance, social pathologies such as depression, isolation, anxiety, etc.

Congress recognises

The democratic control over accommodation which co-operative housing models are based upon would help ensure students can most effectively have their accommodation needs met, especially regarding wellbeing, affordability, and sustainability. Student housing co-operatives have been found to offer higher affordability and quality to current alternatives and can address numerous issues which students face regarding accommodation.

Congress further recognises

Student Housing Co-operatives also empower students to act towards a more sustainable future through equitable housing models. The likes of Edinburgh Student Housing Co-op recently renovating their empty garage into an events hub using only recycled and sustainably sourced materials demonstrates the capacity for environmental action which control over one's property enables. Additionally, the Independent Commission for Co-operative and Mutual Housing' found that cooperative housing consistently delivers long-term benefits with regards to community-building in communities impacted by a lack of trust. Therefore, the world would have gained a step in the right

direction for fairer and cheaper accommodation through founding a student housing co-op for students across Ireland.

Congress mandates

USI VP Campaigns and USI President to explore and research the business case around the foundation of a Student Housing Co-operative, and then to act on the findings of the business plan.

USI VP Campaigns and President to work with Student Co-op Homes, Co-operative Alternatives, Co-operative Housing Ireland, Member Organisations, and any other relevant stakeholders in the design of a potential pilot project. If the housing co-operative is decided to be progressed and found to be successful through the business case and pilot project, USI VP Campaigns and Regional Officers are to encourage further expansion of the project across the Island.

2023 NA 18 (NC): Money Mule Awareness Campaign

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

A money mule is an individual who allows their account to be used for the transfer of other's stolen or illegal money.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That Those aged 18-24, of which many are students, are the most commonly targeted age group by organised crime gangs to act as money mules.

Comhdháil Regrets

That penalties for this crime include a prison sentence of up to 14 years, a criminal conviction with a lifetime criminal record, extradition to the country where the predicate crime occurred, and not being permitted to open another bank account.

Comhdháil Mandates

The VP for Welfare and VP for Campaigns to run an awareness campaign on the dangers of working as a money mule, particularly for third level students.

2022 EM (NA) 7: Cultural Revival of Our Island

Proposed by Comhaltas na Mac Léinn OÉ Gaillimh

Congress notes with concern:

The continued degradation of culture in our Island's towns and cities. This was highlighted by the announcement of the closure of Galway's last remaining nightclub on the 11th of March.

Congress further notes:

The wider negative implications on the student experience caused by the recent announcement of the closure of numerous cultural venues across the island of Ireland, including libraries, museums, bars, nightclubs and restaurants. In the Border Midlands and Western region DNA Galway, Mischief Maynooth, Golden Grill Letterkenny have closed or are due to close.

In the Southern region spaces such as Club C, Live at the Marquee, Sextant bar, Camden Place, and Kino bar in Cork have closed or are due to close. The Abbey Inn, Horan's nightclub and Fabric nightclub in Tralee have closed or are due to close. Shortts, Grady's Yard, the Dome Bar in Waterford have closed or are due to close. The sale of the Dun Mháire Theatre and the closure of multiple locally owned bookshops in Wexford. In the North, cultural spaces in towns and cities are continually under threat from government cuts, with the cultural scene becoming increasingly centralised in Belfast resulting in reduced support for other cities including Derry. This has a wider impact on transport infrastructure across the North. In the Dublin region, spaces such as Trinity's Science Gallery, the Smithfield vintage stores, Hanger Jam Park, District 8, Tivoli theatre, and more recently Richmond studios have closed or are due to close. This is not an exhaustive list and many other cultural resources have closed or are due to close all across the Island of Ireland.

Congress therefore mandates

The Vice President for Campaigns and the Regional Vice Presidents to;

- Support the development of cultural resources throughout the island of Ireland.
- Lobby for funding to support our cultural resources.
- Campaign against the further closures of our cultural resources.
- Work with trade unions working in the creative industry such as PRAXIS.

Congress Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to adopt an official stance supporting the #StopKillingDublin campaign, supporting the #SaveCathedralQuarter campaign in Belfast, continue to work with #giveusthenight campaign and work with external organisations and other campaigns supporting cultural revival across the island of Ireland.

2022 NA NC 1: Conversion Therapy Ban

Proposed by the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Comhairle Náisiúnta recognises

That the practice of conversion therapy is the harmful practice of attempting to erase, suppress or change someone's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Conversion therapy includes medical, psychiatric, psychological, religious, cultural or any other interventions that seek to erase, repress or change the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of a person.

Comhairle Náisiúnta notes

That conversion therapy is currently legal and is widely practiced in both jurisdictions on this island. In 1990, the WHO (World Health Organisation) removed homosexuality from the international classification of diseases. Yet, 31 years later attempts to 'cure' people who identify as LGBTQ+ continue across the island and globally.

Comhairle Náisiúnta further notes

The immense suffering experienced by, and lives lost within, the LGBTQ+ community due to this harmful practice. Conversion therapy has lifelong impacts on those who survive and for some who do not survive. The need for victim and survivor support is vital to support and protect the LGBTQ+ community across the island and globally.

Comhairle Náisiúnta acknowledges

There is a commitment in the Programme for Government to legislate to ban conversion therapy, alongside officials at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth confirming that they have prepared a scoping paper on banning conversion therapy and are currently engaging with the Department of Health to forward proposals on banning conversation therapy. On April 20th, Stormont passed a motion by 59-24, calling on the Minister for Communities to commit to bringing forward legislation to ban conversion therapy in all its forms before the end of the current Assembly mandate. MLAs also voted to reject an amendment from the DUP to remove a section reading "it is fundamentally wrong to view our LGBTQ community as requiring a fix or cure".

Comhairle Náisiúnta believes

That all forms of conversion therapy must be made illegal on an all-island basis and the Governments across the island must take action to ban this harmful practice. In order to support LGBTQ+ people across the island we need to introduce a full legislative ban, along with providing supports for victims and survivors and introduce public awareness, education and training.

Comhairle Náisiúnta therefore mandates

The President and the Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to support the NUS USI President in lobbying for the introduction of a full legislative ban to take place within the current Assembly mandate.

Comhairle Náisiúnta further mandates

The President and Vice President for Equality and Citizenship lobby and raise awareness of this issue nationally and lobby the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth ban conversation therapy in Ireland within the lifetime of this Government.

2022 NA 2: Parental Leave Implementation Review

Proposed by USI Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

Many external PhD funding bodies allocate paid parental leave for their postgraduate researchers. However, issues may exist where the tax-exempt status of PhD researchers means allocated funding cannot be provided through Higher Education Institutions. This is due to the fact that Universities Higher Education Institutions are not legally allowed to pay a de-registered student under the current framework.

Comhdháil Further Notes

Local arrangements can be implemented, but crucially these remedies sidestep the existing issue. An effective payment release mechanism for postgraduate students on parental leave is urgently needed.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

VPPGA and the Coiste Gnó to lobby through governmental channels for a review of the payment allocation scheme for parental leave for postgraduate researchers per institution to ensure that provided funding can be released effectively.

2022 NA 3: Electoral Reform

Proposed by: Campaigns Working Group

Comhdháil Notes that

Automatic voter registration does not exist in Ireland.

Comhdháil Further Notes that

The current system of Seanad voting leaves the majority of students and graduates without a vote, despite many attempts to reform this system.

Comhdháil Believes that

Automatic voter registration, and a democratically elected Seanad would increase voter participation among young people and facilitate better political engagement.

Comhdháil Mandates

The VP Equality and Citizenship and the VP Campaigns to develop a long running electoral reform campaign to which includes but is not limited to;

- Votes at 16
- Automatic voter registration
- The establishment of an electoral commission
- A democratically elected Seanad where all citizens have the right to vote
- The removal of the 11 Seanad seats nominated by An Taoiseach
- The introduction of the secret ballot for all Seanad voting

Repeals 2021 NA 2, 2020 NA 3, NA (NC) 19 – 7

2021 NA NC 1: Support for the Gaeltacht Regions

Proposed by: USI Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Aithníonn An Chomhdháil

An luach a bhaineann leis na ceantair Ghaeltachta agus a thábhachtaí is atá siad do thodhchaí na Gaeilge, agus do stair agus cultúr an oileáin seo.

Anuas Ar Sin, Aithníonn An Chomhdháil

Go bhfuil géarchéim ag tarlúint anois sna ceantair Ghaeltachta ó thaobh cúrsaí teanga de agus gmbíonn fadhbanna ollmhóra ag daoine óga fanacht sa Ghaeltacht mar gheall nach bhfuil deiseanna fostaíochta ann dóibh nuair a chríochnaíonn siad sa Choláiste.

Creideann An Chomhdháil

Go bhfuil sé ríthabachtach na Gaeltachtaí a chaomhnú agus gur ceart don Rialtas maoiniú sásúil a dhéanamh ar na ceantair seo ionas go mbeidh siad fós anseo i gceann deich nó fiche bliana.

Go dtacóidh AMLÉ, trí obair an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, le feachtas a bhaineann le caomhnú na Gaeltachta agus go gcuideoidh an LU Gaeilge le heagraíochtaí eile, stocaireacht a dhéanamh ar an Rialtas dul i ngleic leis an ngéarchéim sa Ghaeltacht.

Anuas Air Sin, Sanordaíonn An Chomhdháil

Go n-eagróidh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge grúpaí fócais le mic léinn ó na ceantair Ghaeltachta ar fad le plé a dhéanamh ar na fadhbanna is mó do dhaoine óga sa Ghaeltacht agus obair AMLÉ ar chaomhnú na Gaeltachta a stiúradh.

Comhdháil Notes

The value of Gaeltacht areas and their importance to the future of the Irish language, as well their importance in the history and culture of the Island.

Comhdháil Also Notes

That there is a language crisis happening in the Gaeltacht and that there are huge difficulties in keeping young people in Gaeltacht areas due to a lack of employment opportunities for them when they finish college.

Comhdháil Believes

That it is vital to preserve Gaeltacht areas and that the Government should provide adequate funding to these areas so that they are still in existence in ten- or twenty-years' time.

Therefore, Comhdháil Mandates:

USI, through the work of the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge, to support campaigns to preserve the Gaeltacht and to assist other Irish language organisations in lobbying the Government to tackle the ongoing crisis in the Gaeltacht.

Comhdháil Also Mandates:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to organise focus groups for students from all Gaeltacht areas, to discuss issues facing young people in the Gaeltacht and to shape USI's work on supporting the Gaeltacht.

2021 NA NC 2: Support for Dying with Dignity

Proposed By TU Dublin Students' Union

Congress Notes:

The Dying with Dignity Bill, is a bill in favour of introducing Assisted Dying in Ireland, which is a part of End of Life Care, often decisions made by those diagnosed with terminal illness or long term health implications that impact a person's quality of life.

Congress Further Notes:

The current bill proposed is currently going through legislation at the time of this motion being written up. The bill aims to legislate for the safe and monitored access to End of Life Care which includes the Right to Die. The current bill includes the provisional necessity for an independent medical practitioner to assess the case and safeguard against abuse, coercion or gaslighting.

Congress Recognizes:

The historic court cases taken by those who have sought a constitutional right to die or furthered this discussion, such as the abhorrent handling of the Cervical Check Cancer Scandal, or those who have sought to overturn legislation such as Marie Fleming, Gail O'Rorke and countless others.

Congress Believes:

That bodily autonomy is a basic human right, and bodily autonomy derives from the absolute sovereign authority to make decisions that is best for one's self and that End of Life care is included in Bodily Autonomy and autonomy over one's health, wellness and future.

Therefore, Congress Mandates:

The Vice-President for Equality and Citizenship in conjunction with the Executive Team to lobby in favour of the Right to Die and to actively support the Dying with Dignity Bill.

Congress Further Mandates:

The Vice-President for Welfare in conjunction with the Executive Team to work with lobbying groups who have an in-depth knowledge on End of Life Care that encompasses empathy, compassion and understanding.

2021 NA NC 3: De-Platforming and Rejecting Fascism

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Congress Notes:

Fascism is a form of authoritarian ideology that focusing on power that uses forcible suppression of opposing views and opinions. It is a regressive and violent ideology that has seen an increase in reporting over the past years and now has now manifested into a full platform in 2020.

Congress Further Notes:

Fascism actively harms minority groups, progressive movements, and grassroots community equity campaigns by any means available, using the guise of political stances to protect itself from de-platforming and rejection from societal based values.

Congress Recognizes:

That students come from all walks of life, opinions, and beliefs. Political beliefs and alignments vary in all students and it is important to recognize and support all students in their access, progression, and completion of their education and/or progression to life-long learning.

Congress Believes:

That as a representative body we must ensure the protection of those who are most vulnerable in our society. Fascism actively aims to harm that core belief. We must ensure that access, progression and completion of education and its further progression into life-long learning must be safe from violence, oppression or hinderance, particularly from those with harmful, deceitful, or aggressive intent.

Congress Further Believes

That as a collective Union we should seek to include as many diverse opinions as possible, that does not actively harm, disrupt or de-platform the vulnerable, marginalized or oppressed in our society.

Therefore, Congress Mandates:

The President in conjunction with the Executive Team actively rejects and de-platforms forms of fascism and to further re-invest resources into protecting the most vulnerable and/or marginalized students in our society.

Congress Further Mandates:

The Vice-President for Campaigns in conjunction with the Executive Team and Presidents' Working Group to engage in de-platforming actions such as counter-protests where safe, and to work with Organizations, Member Organizations and the relevant Executive Team officers to ensure training for officers in de-escalation, de-platforming and rejection of fascism is rolled out to all officers during key-training sessions.

deemed necessary, reach out to MO's if help and/or support is required by 'Give Us The Night' at a campus level.

2021 NA 1: Supporting Students in Direct Provision

Proposed by NCI Students' Union

Congress Recognizes

That students in direct provision are at a greater disadvantage when it comes to educational, financial, and mental health supports. The current asylum-seeking process in Ireland needs to be dramatically modified and better resource the administration of the asylum process in Ireland in order to allow for a quicker asylum reception process. The last official statistics published by the RIA was in November 2018. The average length of stay in Direct Provision is 24 months, with some residents having spent up to 10 or 12 years living in these conditions.

Congress Notes

That a report in 2020 by Doras outlined that asylum seekers are five times more likely to develop mental health & psychiatric issues. International Protection applicants experience a disproportionately high rate of mental health difficulties. They are up to fifteen times more likely to be diagnosed with depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder and five times more likely to be diagnosed with a psychiatric illness.

Congress further notes

USI does not directly represent second-level students as they are not in third-level education but must recognize the inequality faced by these students in direct provision.

Congress Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Welfare to work with the Irish Second-Level Students' Union and relevant mental health organizations to provide mental health support and resources to students in direct provision.

Congress further mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to provide information resources to students looking to continue to third-level education. These resources should include institutes with sanctuary programs, mental health support services, and grants available to them.

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.

NA 19 – 8 Right to Higher Education

Proposed by The USI President

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 (NC) 19 - 2 Separate Church and State

Proposed by: Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Comhdháil notes

That people in Ireland have different religious and spiritual beliefs or none and we live in a pluralistic society.

Comhdháil notes with concern

The religious nature of Bunreacht na hÉireann and how it can further impact the advancement of positive change in Ireland.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

NA (NC) 19 - 6: Ownership of the National Maternity Hospital

Proposed by: Vice President for Equality and Citizenship

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil notes

The continued opposition to abortion access by many religiously-based groups throughout Ireland.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to lobby the Minister for Health on this issue.

International Affairs

2023 IA(NC) 1: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions

Proposed by TCD Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

A report released on 1st February 2022 by Amnesty International has analysed Israel's intent to create and maintain a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians and examined its key components: territorial fragmentation; segregation and control; dispossession of land and property; and denial of economic and social rights. It has concluded that this system amounts to apartheid.

Comhdháil further notes

Institutions across the island of Ireland are still invested in the arms trade and have other links to Israel and as students we have a responsibility to support the Palestinian people and campaign against this.

Comhdháil recognizes

The student movement has often been at the forefront of important societal change, both locally, and internationally, including standing together against apartheid in South Africa, fighting for civil rights in the USA in the 1960's and now organising collectively to tackle the growing climate crisis. USI was directly involved with Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, and engaged heavily with campaigns to release Nelson Mandela from prison. Student unions are also involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees and students remaining in Ukraine.

Comhdháil remarks

USI's constitution, and Article 3, clause 3.9, which states that one of the primary objectives of the USI is the "defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights as a core goal of the organisation".

Comhdháil believes

It is unconscionable for any third-level education institution to continue to invest in the arms trade, have links with Israel and be complicit in the violent dispossession of the Palestinian people.

Comhdháil notes

In 2005, Palestinian civil society called for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law, allowing the realisation of Palestinian rights.

Comhdháil appreciates

The work of activists like Trinity BDS, supported by the TCDSU, in campaigning for third-level institutions to adopt the principles of BDS, in solidarity with Palestine.

Comhdháil further appreciates

The stance of the global BDS movement which calls on Israel to end its human and civic rights abuses, and calls on Israel to respect the human and civic rights of all religions, races and nationalities and ethnicities. BDS respects the civic rights of all religions, races and nationalities and ethnicities. This in line with USI's other work on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and anti-apartheid.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

That the USI Coiste Gnó adopt a pro-BDS stance, in solidarity with Palestine, and denounce the apartheid that Israel is committing in Palestine.

Comhdháil further mandates

That the USI (VP Dublin, VP BMW, VP South) support local BDS branches in third-level institutions, and establish a toolkit for MOs and their members who would like to set up local BDS branches. The toolkit is to be based on, but not limited to, Trinity BDS's SU toolkit.

That the USI Coiste Gnó call on the European Students Union (ESU) to re-evaluate the membership of Israel and support any Palestinian efforts to engage with ESU.

That the USI Coiste Gnó to boycott Israeli corporations, institutions and companies and their products that are currently used by, or have relations with, the USI.

2023 IA 2: Solidarity with the University Of Manchester Rent Strikes

Proposed by the Border Midlands and Western Region Working Group

Comhdháil acknowledges

The amazing work being done by the University of Manchester Students' with their rent strike against the University's lack of support to students during the Cost Of Living Crisis.

Comhdháil further recognises

That there are over 150 strikers signed up on the strike, collectively withholding more than A200,000 from the university.

Comhdháil recognises

Their demands are:

Rent Strike Demands:

- 30% rent reduction on remaining payments this year for students in UoM halls
- 30% refund on rent payments already made this year for students in UoM halls
- Commitment from UoM to not increase rent in any halls for at least 3 years (rent freeze)
- Make 40% of UoM student halls meet the National Union of Students' definition of affordability (rent being no more than 50% of maximum student maintenance loan) within 3 years

Broader Cost-Of-Living Demands:

- One-off A1500 payment to every student at UoM to make up for the 11% real terms cut to maintenance loans due to inflation
- Genuinely accessible Cost-Of-Living support fund which meets the actual needs of struggling students (only 22 students have received the full award)
- Support the UCU demands

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to show solidarity with and support the demands of the Rent Strikes being held by University of Manchester students and publicly support the direct action being taken.

2023 IA (NC) 3: USI Position on Access to Education in Afghanistan

Proposed by Carlow College Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

Following the withdrawal of the United States and NATO from Afghanistan and the subsequent regaining of political control by the Taliban in August of 2021, civil and political liberties have been targeted by the Taliban administration.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern

A key example of such rights being targeted is the right of women to access education, in particular the decision of the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education in December of 2022 to indefinitely suspend the right of women to attend higher education. This decision has been met with both domestic and international condemnation, including acts of civil disobedience by male students and academic staff in protest.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó, in the tradition of international solidarity and human rights, publicly condemn the decision of the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education and will cooperate with the European Students' Union and other relevant bodies on the matter.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship, along with Regional Vice Presidents to support, where possible, MOs who are lobbying on the matter and to liaise with the Afghan community in Ireland who are protesting the erosion of civil and political liberties in Afghanistan.

2022 EM (IA) 4: Ukraine Aid

Proposed by the USI VP for the BMW Region

Congress Condemns

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian federation. The attempt to colonise by Russia to overthrow a democratic government of a sovereign state.

Congress Recognises

- The Ukrainians right to independence and self-governance. The huge generosity of the Irish community in donating to causes to help the Ukrainian population. That many people in Ukraine currently require and will require assistance from foreign governments and charitable organisations.
- The USI position against war.

Congress notes with urgency

- The increasing death toll in Ukraine particularly in areas such as Mariupol which is currently in the Tens of Thousands.
- The reports from the Ukrainian Government on April 12th about the Russian usage of chemical warfare against Ukraine.
- The needs civilians will urgently need to international aid.
- On Sunday 10th April Minister for Equality and Integration Roderic O'Gorman said more than 20 thousand refugees have already arrived in Ireland.

Congress Notes

The calls from many different organisations for support in fundraising for non lethal supplies to assist people in Ukraine.

Congress Mandates

- USI Coiste Gnó to provide resources to member organisations which wish to fundraise for non-lethal supplies to Ukrainian citizens.
 - The Coiste Gnó to lobby the Department of Higher and Further Education and Skills for students who were studying in Ukraine to be able to continue their studies in Ireland.
 - The Coiste Gnó to lobby the Department of Higher and Further Education and Skills for recognition to be given to students for prior learning prior to arriving in Ireland.
 - USI to continue to work with stakeholders to expand our capacity in Higher level Education to incorporate as many refugee students as possible.
-

2022 EM (IA) 9: Military Expansion and NATO Motion

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is an intergovernmental military alliance between 30 members states, 28 of which are in Europe and 2 of which are in North America.

Comhdháil Notes With Concern

A recent poll carried out by the Business Post published on March 26th 2022 indicated that 48% of Irish people are in favour of Ireland joining NATO, 59% said they wanted Ireland “to significantly increase” military spending, and 46% said they would support “a referendum for Irish troops to serve in a potential future European army.”

Comhdháil Further Notes

As an anti-imperialist and anti-war organisation, USI is opposed to Ireland:

- Joining NATO
- Increasing military spending
- Having a referendum for Irish troops to serve in a potential future European army

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to campaign and lobby against the above measures being implemented in Ireland.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó, at their discretion, to support and work with organisations that are campaigning and lobbying against the above measures being implemented in Ireland.

2022 IA 2: Anti-War & Expansionism

Proposed by Maynooth Students’ Union

Congress Notes with Concern

The recent invasion of the sovereign, independent and democratic nation of Ukraine by Russia, a separate and distinct territory, political entity, and nation and the humanitarian crisis that has arisen as a result.

Congress Affirms

The statement made recently by the European Students’ Union (ESU) where they stated a clear position of “no to war and expansionism, yes to peace and the protection of the human and social right to study in a peaceful context”

Congress Believes

That while the world’s focus is currently on Ukraine, there are other humanitarian crises occurring including, but not limited to, events in both Palestine and Yemen and we have seen motions on such crises in the past.

Congress Further Believes

That if the Union of Students in Ireland formally adopted an Anti-War and Expansionism position, the Irish Student Movement (Local and National) will be able to effectively mobilise and stand in solidarity against current and future crises such as these, unified as one under the USI.

Congress Therefore Mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to adopt an “Anti-War and Expansionism,” position.

2022 IA 3: Motion on Vaccine Equity

Proposed by DCU Students’ Union

Congress celebrates

The easing of public health restrictions that have allowed students to return to in-person lectures and a full social life.

Congress Notes with concern

How this is not a reality shared in most countries, particularly in the Global South and the continent of Africa where fewer vaccines have been administered due to unavailability and cost factors.

Congress Recognises

How there are over 100 factories in the African continent that would be able to produce COVID-19 and other life-saving vaccines and ensure students in those countries could access vaccines.

Congress Therefore Mandates

The VP for Equality & Citizenship to lobby the government to call for a TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and funding of the ACT-A accelerator, The VP should also lobby the minister to ensure Ireland meets its target of 0.7% of Gross National Income is spent on Official Development Aid to meet the Sustainable Development Goals

Congress also mandates

The VP for Equality & Citizenship to work with student health groups such as Students4VaccineEquity on vaccine and medicine equity.

Union Organisation

2024 EM (UO) 1 USI-AMLÉ Constitutional Assembly

Proposed by UCCSU

Comhdháil recognises:

That there are fundamental structural issues hindering the ability of USI-AMLÉ to secure buy-in from students, resulting in disenfranchisement among the national student body and ultimately risking redundancy.

Comhdháil notes:

Previous motions passed regarding constitutional review: 2023 UO 16 (NC): Constitutional Review Committee which makes reference to a committee was not formed; and 2021 EM (CZN) 5: CETA which makes reference to a 2021/2022 Constitutional Review which did not take place.

Comhdháil believes:

made to Comhdháil 2024 fail to address the substance of the structural issues that face USI-AMLÉ, due to their operating within a flawed system. USI-AMLÉ Coiste Gnó does not have the bandwidth to dedicate sufficient time to a comprehensive review.

- that innovative approaches are needed to address these issues and effectively reconnect with students.

- that the only way to fix these issues is to create a deliberative space for students, part-time officers, and sabbatical officers that will allow the structural reimagining of the union by way of a USI-AMLÉ Constitutional Assembly; this will be modelled on the Irish Citizens' Assembly in order to meaningfully reform USI-AMLÉ.

Comhdháil mandates:

Comhairle Náisiúnta, at its next meeting, to elect a member of USI-AMLÉ Steering Committee to act as an independent Chair of the Assembly (ex-officio members of the Steering Committee shall not be eligible for election).

The Assembly will consist of 100 members:

- a) The Assembly Chair, as elected by Comhairle Náisiúnta
- b) 33 union officers, of which half must be part-time officers, selected from USI-AMLÉ member organizations
- c) 66 ordinary student members, randomly selected from member organizations, so as to be broadly representative of the student body of Ireland and wider Irish society
- d) All members shall attend the assembly on an equal footing, entitled to contribute and vote in their own name only.

e) The Assembly shall be called to order no later than 45 days after the election of the chair.

Comhdháil further mandates:

the Chair of the Constitutional Assembly to conduct sessions of the constitutional assembly to consider and make recommendations on the following key issues including but not limited to:

- a) The role, aims, and basic principles of USI-AMLÉ
- b) Legal status, governance, and membership structure of USI-AMLÉ as an organization
- c) Reform of USI-AMLÉ elections, including universal suffrage
- d) Overhaul of accountability structures
- e) Grassroots engagement with the student body of Ireland and USI-AMLÉ's democratic legitimacy.
- f) Defining and opening up working groups and committees
- g) Engagement with part-time officers
- h) The composition and role of Coiste Gnó, including the role of regional officers
- i) The composition structure and role of Comhairle Náisiúnta and Comhdháil.
- j) The NUS-USI trilateral agreement *

The Assembly may also make general observations as to the constitution as it seems fit.

The Assembly shall be conducted in accordance with the Citizens' Assembly model, with a focus on considered deliberation. The Assembly shall invite and consider submissions from USI-AMLÉ member organizations and the wider student population, and the Assembly may invite presentations from relevant groups or individuals. The Assembly will agree its own rules of procedure for the effective conduct of its business in as efficient a manner as possible. USI-AMLÉ should make available whatever resources necessary for the effective functioning of the Assembly. All matters before the Assembly will be determined by a

majority of the votes of all present, other than the Chairperson who will have a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

The Assembly shall conclude its business no later than 60 days after it has been called. Following this, the Chair shall compile a fair and neutral report of the Assembly's recommendations and resolutions. This report shall be published in full and submitted to Comhairle Náisiúnta no more than 30 days following the conclusion of the Assembly.

The Assembly Chair shall be supported in the fair and neutral compilation of the report and effective running of the Assembly by the USI-AMLÉ Steering Committee. The Chair may also appoint an advisory group to support them in this capacity. Members of the advisory group should not be members of the Coiste Gnó, Comhairle Náisiúnta, USI-AMLÉ Member Organisation Executives or USI-AMLÉ Staff.

Comhdháil further mandates:

Comhairle Náisiúnta to establish a committee which shall be charged with the fair and neutral drafting of a proposed USI-AMLÉ Constitution derived from the recommendations of the assembly. This election must take place at the first meeting of Comhairle Náisiúnta following the completion of the Assembly's report.

This committee shall only be composed of:

- a) The Chair of the Constitutional Assembly
- b) 3 ordinary student members of the Constitutional Assembly, to be elected by the Assembly
- c) 3 elected members elected by Comhairle Náisiúnta (not Coiste Gnó)
- d) 1 past USI-AMLÉ President, to be elected by Comhairle Náisiúnta, who will act as Chair of the Committee
- e) In the interest of the separation of powers, members of the Coiste Gnó shall not be eligible for election to the committee.

The committee shall invite and consider submissions from USI-AMLÉ member organizations and the wider student population. The committee must submit the draft constitution in full to Comhairle Náisiúnta no less than 45 days after its election.

Comhdháil further mandates:

Immediately on receipt of the draft constitution, Comhairle Náisiúnta shall refer the proposed constitution and the Assembly's report to a Special Congress.

* The Trilateral arrangement is managed by the Presidents of NUS-USI, NUS UK and USI, a group of cross-ocean and cross-border officers which is officially convened 3 times a year minimum. This motion recognises that whilst discussions may take place in an Assembly, reflections will be provided rather than recommendations to respect the authority of the Trilateral Presidents group and members of NUS-USI

2024 UO CN 1 Motion on Cessation of Cooperation with Funders that do not pay Liveable Stipends

Comhdháil Notes:

The USI has collaborated with the Irish Research Council (IRC) since 2020 to run the "Why Research Matters" campaign, asking postgraduate researchers to submit posters and videos of their research for prizes up to €1,600.

Comhairle Náisiúnta Further Notes:

The IRC currently pays their funded PhDs 22 percent below the minimum wage.

Comhairle Náisiúnta Believes:

It is disheartening for struggling postgraduate researchers to see their union collaborating with funders that pay them less than a minimum wage.

Comhairle Náisiúnta Mandates:

USI should only collaborate with research funding agencies or other research funding bodies for competitions if that research funding agency or body pays their postgraduate researchers at a level equal or higher than the prevailing living wage and provide sick leave and parental leave to their PhD Researchers.

2024 UO CN 2 Motion on Electoral Reform

Comhdháil welcomes:

The increase in the number of non-sabbatical officers running for election in the last USI election season.

Comhdháil regrets:

The failure of the elections subcommittee to fulfil their duties to produce election regulations [D1.8, USI constitution]. As a result of this, there has been difficulty in ensuring equity in the running of the USI elections, particularly related to the running of unofficial hustings, campaign expenses and the resources available to candidates in contesting elections.

Comhdháil regrets

That these barriers and lack of clarity can prove difficult to overcome for sabbatical officers and students alike, and can be exacerbated by the cost of living crisis, and the access (or lack thereof) to MO resources.

Comhdháil also remarks

That the USI voting system is fragmented. Some unions have a free vote, whereas others have class rep mandates or student body vote mandates. However, the pre-mandated unions often have low turnout, calling into question the democratic legitimacy of the mandates. Similarly, it is clear from election results, that these mandated votes are sometimes not honoured by delegates.

Comhdháil notes:

“Ordinary students” running for election would benefit more from students like themselves getting to directly elect officers, rather than student union officers and class reps and PTOs, and this would also increase democratic participation in the USI and therefore mobilising capacity.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The USI President to commission a report into the running of the USI elections, including on hustings, equity and “ordinary” student participation and any financial barriers to the latter. The report should include recommendations related to how to ensure the fair and equitable running of elections. The Coisto Gno, as part of this, should also look into the feasibility of adopting universal direct election, specifically by considering the options listed within the strategy document presented to National Council on the 8th and Friday the 9th of December 2022, and any options outside of that it deems suitable.

2024 UO CN 3 Motion on Black History Month

Comhdháil notes

Black History Month began as a way of remembering important people and events in the history of the African and Caribbean diaspora, and is now globally celebrating Black excellence, the importance of remembering, uplifting and empowering an entire group of young activists.

Comhdháil further notes

The importance of recognising and celebrating Black History Month, given the significant lack of participation within student politics of black students, which invariably results in them feeling underrepresented.

Comhdháil applauds

The success of Pink Training, Women Lead and EMPower, amongst others, in encouraging and promoting a diverse range of students to run for leadership and representation roles.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP for Equality And Citizenship to run an annual Black History Month campaign, with the dual goal of celebrating African culture, as well as encouraging black students to take up leadership roles in their institutions, community & professional lives.

Comhdháil further mandates:

The VP for Equality And Citizenship to ensure that the campaign is organised in partnership with black students and Officers, that it includes various external speakers/bodies, and is tailored to its respective target audience.

2024 UO CN 4 Motion on PTO engagement

Comhdháil notes:

That part-time officers form an integral part of the work done by member organisations and by USI.

Comhdháil acknowledges:

That USI have a number of channels used to communicate with Union sabbatical officers such as mailing lists, working groups, newsletters and direct communication from the Coiste Gnó. This communication is necessary to ensure cooperation between USI and MOs, and subsequently proper connection with the wider student populations and members of USI.

Comhdháil believes:

That efforts to engage the student population should first start with ensuring engagement, communication and interaction with Union Executive officers, and that for training to be useful and enriching for part-time officers there has to be acknowledgement of the difference in roles and responsibilities for different PTOs where for example an academic affairs convenor and a sustainability officer have completely different responsibilities and experiences and would subsequently solely benefit from more specialized training.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

The USI regional officers to work to create and regularly update email list for PTOs across regions that could be used to communicate information about USI campaigns, Comhairle Náisúnta and provide a way for the USI Coiste Gnó to engage with PTOs separate to the more detailed and extensive communication that would be sent to full-time officers.

Comhdháil further mandates:

That the regional officers work to facilitate training for PTO officers that is remit and role-based rather than region based prior to the start of the academic year in September, this would include working with other members of the Coiste Gnó to deliver sessions across a number of areas as well as general introductory session(s) that PTOs could pick and choose which to attend based on their role.

Comhdháil further mandates:

The USI Coiste Gnó establishes each year a space for PTOs across regions to communicate with each other, this platform can vary from term to term but should be established with consultation from PTOs and what would suit them best.

2024 UO CN 5 Motion on Support of UCU and IFUT Industrial Action

Comhdháil notes

The effect the cost of living crisis is having on workers in the Higher Education sector in Ireland.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That working conditions in HE are the learning conditions for our members.

Comhdháil Further Notes

The steps teaching unions for third level have taken towards industrial action.

An Comhdháil Further Resolves

To publicly support industrial action taken by members of the UCU and IFUT in the Higher Education sector to improve their pay and conditions and engage with IFUT in how best USI can support their actions.

To this affect Comhdháil Mandates

That the Coiste Gnó release a public statement in support of the UCU Rising campaign and any industrial actions of theirs or IFUT's members.

USI should also promote and encourage MOs to engage with their local IFUT branches and promote links in the common issues their respective members face.

2024 UO 2 USI Accountability and MO Satisfaction

Maynooth Students' Union

Comhdháil notes:

That accountability functions should be at the core of the work done by a Union, and that the opportunity for member organizations to hold officers accountable should extend beyond officer reports, which realistically serve solely as an overview of past work, to include more comprehensive reporting and questioning functions and include on-going feedback processes.

Comhdháil believes:

That USI should strive to question where there are areas for improvement and whether the Union is providing adequate representation, support and resources for member organisations and that MOs, alongside their members, are satisfied with the efforts of USI.

Comhdháil acknowledges:

Consistent Union accountability and high MO satisfaction can be difficult to maintain with different MO officers and different Coiste Gnó officers coming into office each year and consistent changes in campaigns, work and organizational culture. Despite this, USI should strive for a level of consistency in the quality of its work.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

The USI President ensures an external review of USI's accountability processes is carried out, this review should focus on whether or not the accountability structures of USI are comprehensive enough, whether they are adequate in ensuring that the USI Coiste Gnó's is held to account on their work, and that there is an appropriate level of active participation in accountability processes from MO officers.

Comhdháil further mandates:

That the USI President holds a quarterly (twice per term of office) satisfaction consultation sitting of the Presidents' Working Group that would allow the Presidents of member organisations to give feedback on and highlight areas for improvement on the Coiste Gnó's projects, campaigns, and upcoming plans. Additionally, member organization Presidents can offer insights into their Union's satisfaction levels concerning various aspects of the Union's work, and express preferences regarding what should be prioritised in the Union's future work.

Comhdháil further mandates:

That in conjunction, the Coiste Gnó create and disseminate an anonymized satisfaction and accountability survey (at the start of the academic year and the beginning of the new calendar year) to officers and student representatives from MOs, allowing them to give feedback across different areas of USI operations. This should give a broader idea

of members' perspectives and views that can give context to USI's work going forward and develop the accountability function to go beyond work that has been done so far and look at what should be reformed, prioritized and focused on in the future.

Both the results of the survey and feedback from the consultation sitting should be consolidated and drawn up into summary reports that should be completed and presented to Comhairle Náisiúnta no later than the first Comhairle Náisiúnta in each academic term. The content of these reports should inform the Coiste Gnó's on-going work and decisions for a given quarter.

2024 UO 3 Grassroots Communication and Direct Action

Proposed by the VP for Campaigns

Comhdháil commends

The invaluable work of grassroots-level organizing facilitated by various unions in Ireland and internationally to build strategic and strong campaigns.

Comhdháil further notes

That grassroots organizing within the context of the student movement refers to a bottom-up approach to mobilization and advocacy, where the initiative for change originates from individual students or small groups rather than being imposed by top-down structures such as university administrations or external political organizations.

Comhdháil believes

That this approach to organizing has the input of students at the center of it, provides an opportunity for students to be involved in the planning stages of campaigning, and is characterized by its flexibility and ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP for Campaigns, where practicable, facilitate town hall-style meetings, activist training, organizers' assemblies and establish networks with students who wish to contribute to the organizing of the union on a certain issue.

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP for Campaigns to work with existing and up-and-coming grassroots groups such as Students4Change, BDS branches in HEIs, community action unions, and renters' unions to support their work and mobilize students for their initiatives where in alignment with USI policy.

2024 UO 4 VP Regional Bonding trips

Proposed by USI President

Comhdháil notes

The removal of the Regional bonding days in the Constitution.

Comhdháil believes

Regional Bonding trips are a vital part of the networking system within USI and should still be implemented.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Regional VPs to organize a bonding trip for the MO's in their specific region once a year before the commencement of the academic year where possible.

2024 UO 5 USI Service Provision

Proposed by USI President

Comhdháil notes

USI has access to all affiliated MO's throughout the country and USI can enable MO's to avail of services that businesses across the country provide. This service could be provided to give students at affiliated colleges throughout the country potential deals, access to services they may not have known about otherwise.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to:

Identify companies and organisations that align with the values of USI

Establish strategic partnerships and affiliations with these companies to provide exclusive benefits, discounts, and resources to member organizations.

Ensure transparency and accountability in all company affiliations, with clear guidelines in place to safeguard the interests of member organizations and uphold ethical standards.

Promotion and Communication:

Develop a comprehensive communication strategy to promote the newly expanded service provisions and company affiliations to member organizations.

Utilize various channels, including social media, newsletters, and direct communication, to raise awareness and encourage member organizations to take advantage of these offerings.

Evaluation and Feedback:

Implement regular evaluations to assess the effectiveness and impact of the expanded service provisions and company affiliations.

Solicit feedback from member organizations to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to better meet their needs.

2024 UO 6 Research and Data Collection Training at USI provided Students' Union Training

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

Comhdháil recognizes

The value brought by modern research tools that could be incorporated into the campaigning and lobbying efforts of student representatives.

Comhdháil notes

That data collection is a skill that assists building strategic and targeted campaigns, and that there is a multitude of mechanism for collecting data to supplement campaigning efforts.

Comhdháil further notes

That modern democratic tools for data collection such as Freedom of Information requests and other means of requesting information are governed by laws and rules that require technical knowledge to be effectively used.

Comhdháil recognizes

The legal and ethical considerations that must be considered when conducting primary research including surveys, questionnaires, and other means of collecting direct accounts from participants.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The President to ensure the provision of a session during Students' Union Training, organized annually by USI, that covers direct data collection methodologies (e.g. FOI Requests) , for the purposes of campaigning and lobbying.

2024 UO 7 USI Website Review and Reform

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Comhdháil notes:

That the USI website currently has an unfriendly and inaccessible user interface, layout and design and isn't mobile responsive. Containing a multitude of dead links, outdated information and articles and issues across different areas.

Comhdháil believes:

That communications and engagement systems are incredibly important in the work of USI, and that a website serves as a central location for members or people interested in the Union to go looking for necessary information, resources and reports.

Comhdháil acknowledges:

That there are many important things USI does, and a system such as the website might not traditionally be prioritized among other areas and aspects of the Union's work – but despite this, the fact the website's design, functionality and content actively impedes users engagement with USI as an organisation and stops them from accessing critical information or services is to the severe detriment of USI's functions across different areas.

Comhdháil therefore mandates:

The USI President ensures the consistent review and update of the USI website's content, usability and interface is carried out quarterly. Review and updates should occur consistently across a given year, and a reporting feature independent of the site should be created and disseminated to member organisations to report issues and outdated aspects of the website.

Comhdháil Repeals:

UO 18 (NC) USI Accountability

2023 EM (UO) 1 Part Time Officer Communication Network

Comhdhail notes

The recent restructuring of multiple USI MO's, including constitutional referendums in CMLOG and MSU and mergers between SETU SU Waterford and SETU SU Carlow that has resulted in additional part time officer briefs being developed across USI Member Organisations since the close of submission of motions.

Comhdhail regrets

That while students' unions continue to grow and develop, USI's communication with part time officers has been minimal.

Comhdhail recognises

The unique role of part-time officers as an invaluable part of students' union structures, and that the briefs and roles covered by part-time officers or other unpaid student representatives are varied across individual unions.

Comhdhail further recognises:

The democratic mandate of part-time officers and the responsibility of the USI Coiste Gnó to engage with these officers in a meaningful manner.

Comhdhail mandates

The development of a USI run communication network for all USI MO part-time officers with a view to developing further structures as decided by the part time officers.

Comhdháil further mandates

The regional VPs to give updates on the status of this communication network at each Comhairle Naisiunta until such a time as it has been developed.

2023 UO 1: Capitation Fee Working Group

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil notes that

A number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a student levy/capitation fee which students are required to pay in addition to their tuition fees. The concept of a student levy/capitation fee was originally a fee established by Students' Unions through referendum of their membership to fund capital projects for Students' Unions or the HEI such as Student Centres or Sports Facilities. It is assumed in the majority of HEIs that the collection and administration of this fee is done by the HEI on behalf of the Students' Union. It is noted that some HEIs have a Capitation Committee on which recipient bodies of the fee and the SU are represented. In recent years, a number of controversies have unearthed in some HEIs around the administration of this fee. For example, in 2019 University College Cork attempted to unilaterally increase the capitation fee without a referendum of the student body. The University allegedly claimed that the setting of this fee was a reserved function of Governing Body under the 1997 Act, however the University later withdrew this alleged claim and refunded an estimated 2.4 million to students whom the increase had been imposed upon following lobbying from UCC Students' Union who intended to bring the matter to the High Court for Judicial Review. More recently, there has been controversy in Maynooth University

following a Governing Body decision to no longer proceed with the construction of a new student centre despite students paying for this capital project via the student levy since 2015.

Comhdháil believes

That HEIs are not only taking advantage of capitation fee/student levies to fund critical capital projects and essential student services, but are also demonstrating behaviour that is a cause for concern with regards to the oversight and the administration of these fees which are collected on behalf of Students' Unions and are ultimately student money. Additionally, due to the complex nature and multi-year collection of these capitation fees/student levies and how they differ across HEIs, Student Union Officers may struggle to address concerns they have with their HEI management regarding the administration and collection of these levies.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The USI Executive to establish a Capitation Fee/Student Levy Working Group which will be tasked with the responsibility of mapping out capitation fees/students levies across all HEIs, their history, what they are currently funding, and how they are being administered. Following this mapping exercise, this Working Group shall develop a framework for the oversight and administration of capitation fees/student levies in HEIs and lobby DFHERIS to adopt this framework for implementation in all HEIs. The objective of this exercise should be to re-establish autonomy and oversight to Students' Unions and their membership in the administration of their respective capitation fee/student levy.

2023 UO 2: Sustainability Audit to develop a new USI Sustainability Strategy

Proposed by the USI Campaigns Strategy Committee

Comhdháil notes

That while general policy exists to mandate USI engagement is specific sustainability campaigns, a more rounded and holistic approach is required to ensure that the union is fulfilling its obligations to engage in sustainable work.

Comhdháil further notes

That the USI Sustainability Strategy (2018) focused on actions that the organisation as a whole could take to develop more sustainable practices. This policy has since lapsed, and the USI has lost the funding for a designated Environmental and Sustainability staff member.

Comhdháil believes

There are many actions that USI can take on an organisation wide level that would result in more sustainable campaigns and events including;

- Meat-free catering at USI events
- Commitment to reduce waste at all USI events, in particular single use waste
- Commitment to reduce the number of physical materials produced for campaigns

As well as this, USI should be leading the way in demonstrating what sustainability looks like for a students' union.

Comhdháil further believes

That in order to ensure that an updated Sustainability Strategy is not merely tokenistic in nature, expert input and advice is needed.

Comhdháil mandates

The USI President to work with experts in the field of sustainability and climate action to conduct a full-scale audit of sustainability practices within USI.

Comhdháil also mandates

The USI President and the VP Equality and Citizenship to provide a full report of this audit, no later than December Comhairle Náisiúnta 2023.

2023 UO 3: Officer Pay and Working Conditions Position Paper

Proposed by the USI President

Comhdháil adopts

The USI Officer Pay and Working Conditions Position Paper 2023-2026.

2023 UO 6: Sustainability Position Paper

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

That USI has previously had a USI Sustainability Strategy passed in 2018. This policy has now expired and there is no overall policy that governs how USI can develop more sustainable practices and assist MOs to develop similar.

Comhdháil recognises

That the loss of the Energy & Sustainability Manager has made it more difficult to engage in meaningful sustainable practices and being able to complete and action mandates.

Comhdháil believes

That the climate crisis requires an urgent response from society and the USI/AMLÉE can have an impact in influencing Higher Education Institutes (HEI) and our own Member Organisations (MO). Additionally sustainability and climate action is integral to the actions, beliefs and behaviours of the USI.

Comhdháil mandates

The VP Campaigns, VP Equality & Citizenship in consultation with the Regional Officers to lead out on developing a new USI Sustainability Strategy. The development of this strategy should include consultation with MOs, environmental groups, climate activists, and students across the Island of Ireland. This new strategy should be presented to Comhdháil for approval in 2024.

2023 UO 7: Mandates Manual and Policy File

Proposed by the USI President

Comhdháil notes

According to the USI Constitution, there is two different forms of motions that can be submitted to Comhdháil; policy and mandates. However this distinction is not implemented in practice, as the vast majority of motions submitted to Comhdháil contain mandates. Currently, the USI Policy File and Mandates Manual contains 263 motions, each of which contains at least one mandate.

Comhdháil further notes

Many mandates within the USI Policy File are incredibly vague, and do not follow the constitutional definition of a mandate.

Comhdháil believes

That in the interest of accountability, and in order to ensure that the Coiste Gnó can complete all mandates within their three year life span, motions should be split across a Mandates Manual and a Policy File.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The USI President to review the USI Policy File 23/24 to create a Policy File and a Mandates Manual. The Policy File will contain the overall views of the organisation to assist the Coiste Gnó in their lobbying efforts. The Mandates Manual will contain a list of all mandated actions, listed by the officer responsible for carrying out the mandate.

Comhdháil further mandates

The President to brief the USI Steering Committee ahead of Comhdháil 2024 to ensure that all motions submitted must be categorised as either a policy or a mandate during the submission process.

2023 UO 8: Dual Use of AMLÉ and USI

Proposed by an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Comhdháil notes

That USI has several policies on encouraging the use of the Irish language in multiple different areas, including naming conventions in Schedule N, and the Scéim Teanga 2022 which mandates the production of Irish language campaign materials.

Comhdháil further notes

That the use of the terms Comhairle Náisiúnta, Comhdháil and Coiste Gnó as outlined in Schedule N has become the defacto norm among the USI team and our Member Organisations

Comhdháil believes

That there are several other terms that are frequently used within the organisation, as well as the organisation title itself, that could be referred to utilising the Gaeilge form.

Comhdháil further believes

That the Coiste Gnó regularly utilising Gaeilge terms within their work in the organisation assists with promoting the regular use of Gaeilge among our member organisations.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to examine frequently used terms in the organisation to develop an update to Schedule N of the USI Constitution to include titles of the positions of the Coiste Gnó and other frequently used organisational terms.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Coiste Gnó to use both USI and AMLÉ when referring to the union in all of their work.

2023 UO 12: Democratic Audit of Students' Unions

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Congress notes

Significant variation exists between different HEI's (across the island of Ireland) in all aspects of their democracy, including (but not limited to) their systems, regulations, engagement, candidate numbers, and turnout for referenda, plebiscites, elections for full-time officers, part-time officers and class reps.

Congress further notes

No formal report or data collation system currently exists that comprehensively compares the democracy across HEI's, or subsequently highlights deficits, makes recommendations or details actions that USI can take to improve these issues.

Congress believes

Detailed democracy comparisons between HEI's could allow for better systems to be trialled and/ or adopted by other MO's (Member Organisations), and allow USI to identify (and work to rectify) deficits that may exist within certain cohorts (e. g. larger MO's vs smaller MO's).

Congress therefore mandates

The President (and where relevant other members of the Coiste Gnó) to carry out and present an annual democratic audit of Students' Unions across the island of Ireland, including (but not limited to) their systems, regulations, engagement, candidate numbers, and turnout for referenda, plebiscites, elections for full-time officers, part-time officers and class reps. This audit shall also include deficits, recommendations and actions that can be taken (by the MO and/or USI) to rectify these deficits.

2023 UO 13: Enhancement of Students' Union Training (SUT)

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Congress notes

USI organises annual training events entitled a SUT' (Students' Union Training) and a SUT+' (Students' Union Training Plus) during the summer months for Full-Time Officers.

Congress Regrets

These training events, while useful, are not nearly comprehensive enough in preparing Students' Union Officers for their one-year term.

Congress Recognises

The need for annual comprehensive training in the following areas:

- Management & HR (including Conflict Resolution)
- Negotiation (Funding, Partnership)
- Effective Lobbying (including Demonstrations, Protests)
- Governance (Governing Body, Academic Council)
- Irish Government / Politics (Laws, Legislation, Bills, Acts)
- USI Policy File and USI Annual Priorities (Bill Amendments)
- National Council Training (including Items for Discussion, Motions, Accountability)
- Students' Union Marketing, Branding, Social Media
- Event Organisation, Management, Execution
- Casework & Boundary Training (acknowledging staffing differences across MO's)

Congress therefore mandates

The USI President to ensure SUT and SUT+ incorporates training in all of the aforementioned areas (with the understanding that this list is non-exhaustive), and for the outgoing President to ensure completion of this event prior to the end of their term-of-office (where relevant).

Congress further mandates

The USI President to ensure a review of SUT and SUT+ prior to Congress 2024, and to subsequently amend this motion if required (i. e. to include/remove other sessions), with the goal of preventing additional motions that could be covered within this singular motion.

2023 UO 14: Support for Small Unions

Proposed by IADT Students' Union & NCAD Students' Union

Comhdháil recognises

That the everyday work of any Students Union Executive Team can be extremely taxing regardless of the size of the Executive team. As such small Unions do struggle with the difficulty of retaining institutional knowledge, and balancing the immense workload expected of them when concentrated upon a small Sabbatical Team, especially when there are no Union Staff to support them due to a small student population resulting in a smaller budget.

Comhdháil further recognises

The considerable distress that this places on Officers over their term as well as how this can damage the effectiveness of the Member Organisation, which can consequently negatively affect students, their experience and life on campus, placing small MOs in an unsustainable situation.

Comhdháil notes

Due to larger student populations resulting in more votes at Comhairle Naisiunta & Comhdháil, this usually results in representatives from larger MOs being more likely to win elections to the USI Coiste Gnó or win seats on sub-committees. While proportional representation is an important cornerstone of democracy, the lack of small Union representation within these positions leads to a lack of understanding of the needs of small MOs.

Comhdháil further notes

Due to a series of institutions merging, the number of small Unions in Ireland is shrinking making it more difficult for small MOs to ensure that their voice is heard within USI.

Comhdháil mandates

The President of USI along with Regional Officers to consult and coordinate with representatives of smaller MOs to identify their specific needs and requirements, the difficulties they face and strategise solutions at least once a year.

Comhdháil further mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to formulate a support system for small Unions consisting of a specific communication group set up at SUT for small MOs, a workshop at SUT focusing on the needs of and difficulties faced by small MOs and how to deal with them.

2023 UO 15 Decentralisation of USI Offices

Proposed by the Border Midlands and Western Region Working Group

Comhdháil recognises

The majority of Government offices are based in Dublin, and that AMLÉ have a lease on their current building, however we believe with the cost of living crisis, it is unfair to expect the majority of the Coiste Gnó to move to Dublin to perform their jobs.

Comhdháil mandates

The President of USI to research the feasibility of moving the USI Offices out of Dublin

Comhdháil further mandates

The President of USI to present findings to Comhairle Náisiúnta who will take a decision on further steps to be taken.

2023 UO 16 (NC): Constitutional Review Committee

Proposed by the USI President

Comhdháil Notes

The motions passed at Comhdháil 2022 (2022 UO 17 and 2022 UO 5) which call for a review of the roles of the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs and the Regional Vice Presidents respectively.

Comhdháil Also Notes

The motion 2021 EM (CZN) 5: CETA makes reference to a 2021/2022 Constitutional Review which did not take place.

Comhdháil Believes

That a constitutional review should not be limited to the examination of the roles of the Coiste Gnó and should aim to examine the democratic processes of the union as a whole, including but not limited to;

- Accountability structures within the union,
- The elections process,
- The role of the steering committee
- Constitutional interpretation
- Disciplinary processes within the union
- The roles and responsibilities of the Coiste Gnó

Comhdháil Further Believes

That a constitutional review should aim to gather feedback from a wide range of opinions and should not be limited to members of Comhairle Náisiúnta.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Regional Vice-Presidents' to chair focus groups in their respective regions focused on a specific aspect of the USI Constitution open to students and external stakeholders where deemed appropriate by the Regional Vice-President.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

The USI President to liaise with the NUS-USI President to establish similar focus groups in the NUS-USI Region.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The formation of a Constitutional Review Committee to be comprised of the USI President as Chair, the USI Coiste Gnó as ordinary members and two elected representatives from each region. The election will take place at the October Comhairle Náisiúnta in line with the USI process on internal elections. The purpose of the committee will be to examine the minutes from the focus groups and utilise the feedback from the focus groups to develop the necessary referenda and/or schedules with a view to updating the USI Constitution

2023 UO 17 (NC) Motion on EU Employment Law

Proposed by the VP for the Dublin Region

Comhdháil Notes

Throughout the year, USI plans many events and sends representatives to domestic and international events. Sometimes, like at European Student Union Board Meetings, there is an expectation that the USI Coiste Gnó will spend late nights and early mornings at meetings, often leaving individuals with less than 8 hours break during the night.

Comhdháil Further Notes

Although many of the participants in the student movement are volunteers, USI sends full time employees who are subject to EU and Irish employment law. Chapter 2.3 of Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time notes 'Member States shall take the measures necessary to ensure that every worker is entitled to a minimum daily rest period of 11 consecutive hours per 24- hour period'. The relevant Irish law can be found in the The Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to allow any USI representatives who are attending events their legally required minimum rest period of 11 consecutive hours whether that be by taking meetings in shifts or by missing late night meetings.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to allow 11 hours of consecutive rest at USI organised events between formal meetings (not including social events), regardless of whether the participants are employees.

UO 18 (NC) USI Accountability

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

It is one of the roles of Comhairle Náisiúnta to hold USI officers accountable.

Comhdháil Believes

That as a democratic organisation accountable to its members, it is important that Comhairle Náisiúnta is empowered to hold officers accountable to the full extent of its ability and knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative they understand how meetings of Comhairle Náisiúnta are run.

Comhdháil Further Believes

That a review of USI's accountability processes would allow for an opportunity to ensure that these processes and structures are up-to-date and effective and would highlight any areas for improvement.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The USI President ensure an external review of the USI accountability process takes place.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President to ensure the circulation of standing orders to all members of Comhairle Náisiúnta before the first national council of any given year.

2023 UO 19: Living Wage

Proposed by the Vice President for Campaigns

Comhdháil notes

Many students have to work part-time and full-time jobs to make ends meet, due to the high cost of college, student accommodation crisis and other costs relating to a students' life.

Comhdháil notes with concern

That students who are working under the age of 20 years old are paid under the current minimum wage, which for young people under 18 years old is only €7.91 in the Republic of Ireland and £4.81 in Northern Ireland.

Comhdháil believes that

Everyone should deserve a living wage, that should not be based on age or experience, but rather the minimum to live based on the current cost of living and continue to work with trade unions under 2022 UO 8, including on developing a position paper on workers' rights.

Comhdháil mandates

That USI should advocate for the living wage, according to the Living Wage Technical Group in the Republic of Ireland and the National Living Wage as currently set for those 23 and over in Northern Ireland to apply for all age groups.

Comhdháil mandates

The Coiste Gnó to lobby for the normalisation of wage rates under 20 years old in the Republic of Ireland and work with NUS-USI and other trade unions to achieve this on an all-island basis.

2023 UO 21: Accommodation Position Paper

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Comhdháil notes that

The accommodation crisis is continuing with no end in sight. This is having a dramatic effect on many students, forcing them into increased working hours, long commutes, financial pressure, and having a negative impact on the

overall student experience. The Union of Students in Ireland / Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (USI/AMLÉ) has previously (2019; 2016) published position papers on accommodation, forming the basis of our lobbying efforts. These documents have comprised extensive research into the contemporary housing situation, outlining options available to students, and the issues facing students.

Comhdháil believes that

The accommodation crisis is having a negative impact on both academic performance and wellbeing of our members. International and local events such as COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis have changed the landscape of accommodation in Ireland, and made the crisis more acute. new position paper is needed to reflect these changes and allow us to continue to represent our members.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The VP Campaigns and two other members of the Coiste Gnó nominated by the president to produce a new and updated position paper on accommodation, outlining our position on aspects of the contemporary accommodation situation, with the additional intention of educating MOs and students, and informing ongoing and new campaigns. That the authors of the paper consult with MOs and students in all regions of Ireland to ensure the paper accurately reflects the experience of students. That this position paper be completed for final consultation in December 2023, and to be publicised in such a way that it creates real engagement with students in these issues, both locally and nationally.

2023 UO 24: Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) x The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) Partnership

Proposed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil notes

The important work Trade Unions have done to protect workers' rights. Trade Unions have played an active role in negotiating improved conditions for workers during their employment. The Union of Students in Ireland recognizes the importance of unions as they provide important information to its members, provides its members with protection if issues arise and negotiate and lobby for better conditions for their members. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is the single umbrella organization for trade unions, representing a range of interests on ICTU members in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Comhdháil further notes

It has become increasingly popular for students to go on placement as part of their degree and the increased amount of students working part-time and full-time to afford third level education.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland to set up a partnership between them and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Comhdháil further mandates

The VP Academic Affairs and VP Campaigns to run a campaign in conjunction with ICTU. The aim of this campaign would be to give students a chance to meet ICTU, the trade union associated with their placement and/or place of employment while attending higher level education. The campaign run by the VP Academic Affairs and VP Campaigns will give students a chance to hear about their rights while on placement and/or their rights as employees. The campaign will also give students a chance to ask any questions to their respective trade union(s) and find out information on becoming members.

2022 EM (UO) 8: Inclusive Language in Motions for Students in the North

Proposed by QUB Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

In Northern Ireland, the current Assembly ceased to operate on the 25th March 2022. Without an Executive Government in session; lobbying efforts, and progress on a national level on behalf of Students' Unions in the NUS-USI region is severely impinged.

Comhdháil further acknowledges

That the USI does engage regularly with NUS-USI with campaign action. However, the NUS-USI President is supported by two full-time staff members, and USI has a responsibility to lobby on behalf of its membership in the North alongside the South.

Comhdháil also notes

The lack of inclusive language within motions proposed at the current Comhdháil, and underrepresentation of specific Northern Irish services and issues.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to promote inclusivity of Northern Irish student issues within the wording of motions submitted to Comhdháil, with exception for regional proposals for specific areas which would not have relevance.

2022 UO (NC) 1: Casework De-briefing Session

Proposed by WIT Students' Union

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil further notes

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

Comhdháil therefore mandates

Each Exec Team member with responsibility for a Working Group to organise debriefing sessions, on the request of that working group, in order to best help officers. Debriefing sessions should be led by an appropriately skilled facilitator, and also encompass coping skills that officers can use in self-care exercises.

2022 UO (NC) 2: Careers Fair for Outgoing Sabbatical Officers

Proposed by TUS Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

Every year near the end of term, some outgoing sabbaticals have difficulty about their next step when leaving the movement. USI and member organisations have alumni officers who might be able to assist in sourcing their next career opportunities.

Comhdháil Further Notes

The skills elected officers develop throughout their terms makes them excellent adaptable employees in a wide range of organisations. Many officers have gone on and shaped excellent careers who might be able to offer employment opportunities and advice for these officers.

Comhdháil Notes with Concern

That many officers can face unemployment for the few weeks or months after their term's finishes finding suitable employment.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The USI Executive team to organise a careers fair for outgoing sabbaticals no later than end of May each year.

2022 UO (NC) 3: USI Support for Equality for Children Campaign

Proposed by the USI VP Southern Region

Comhdháil Notes

LGBT+ people in Ireland are currently still being discriminated against when it comes to LGBT+ Families. LGBT+ Families are currently prevented from having a legal relationship with both of their parents.

Comhdháil Welcomes

The enactment of the Children and Families Relationships Act (CRFA) in Ireland. This Act allows for some LGBT+ Parents to have a legal relationship with their families.

However, Comhdháil Further Notes

The CRFA still discriminates anyone who falls into the below categories:

- Children born to male parents
- Children born via surrogacy
- Children conceived or born outside of Ireland
- Children conceived using at-home insemination
- Children conceived using known or anonymous donors

Comhdháil therefore Mandates

The Vice President for Equality and Citizenship to join and support the Equality for Children Campaign and support LGBT+ parents in fighting this discrimination.

Comhairle Further Mandates

USI President, Vice President for Equality and Citizenship and the USI Executive Team to call on the Government to end this discrimination by publishing an Assisted Human Reproduction Bill to include all children born to LGBT+ families; and by updating policy, supports, benefits and services that benefit children of heterosexual parents to also include children of LGBT+ parents.

2022 UO (NC) 4: Irish Times Boycott

Proposed by NUIG Students' Union

Comhdháil Believes

That the student movement on the island of Ireland exists to promote and defend the rights of all students studying across third level colleges and that this extends to that of all transgender students.

Comhdháil Notes With Disappointment

The content of the article "Bill to ban conversion therapy poses problems for therapists" published by The Irish Times on 9th August, 2021.

Comhdháil Notes

That the Trans Writers Union has initiated a boycott of The Irish Times, along with many other local Students' Unions.

Comhdháil Mandates

That the USI Coiste Gnó initiate their own boycott of The Irish Times in solidarity with the Trans Writers Union. This boycott will include, but is not limited to:

- The refusal to take interviews for The Irish Times by all officers of the Union.
 - The severing of any and all relations between the Union and The Irish Times
-

2022 UO 1: SU Autonomy

Proposed by Presidents' Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

That Students' Union autonomy has been compromised by higher education institutions for a number of years. It is unacceptable that some Students' Unions have had their funding withdrawn by their HEI which in turn has prevented many unions from operating to the best of their ability.

Comhdháil Notes with concern

The attempts of higher education institutions to censor some students' unions, and encroach on their freedom of association.

Comhdháil strongly believes

That Students' Unions should have the right to fully self-govern and self-direct union finances and governance structures and be free from interference from outside bodies.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President to ensure the continuity of the recently established Students' Union Autonomy working group with member organisations. The President should also collate information on the national picture of Students' Unions around the country which can be used to share best practices including, but not limited to funding allocations, internal and external governance structures, Students' Union composition, number of union staff, relationship with HEIs etc

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President and Coiste Gnó to devise a guidance document on the pillars of Students' Union autonomy in consultation with member organisations and key stakeholders. In addition, the Coiste Gnó should work with and lobby the Minister for FHERIS to implement legislation defining Students' Unions.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President to lobby the Minister for FHERIS and HEA to agree on an oversight body that monitors funding allocations from higher education institutions to Students' Unions and has a procedure in place to deal with any disputes.

Repeals 17 UO 1

2022 UO 2: USI Mandated Training

Proposed by Dublin Region Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

Through training, sabbatical and part-time officers are equipped with crucial skills that enable them to best represent students.

Comhdháil Commends

The existence of current mandated trainings on the USI policy file.

However, Comhdháil Also Notes

That existing mandates are spread across the policy file and it is therefore difficult to hold relevant USI Officers to account.

Comhdháil Believes

Mandated trainings would be better consolidated into a single mandate.

Therefore, Comhdháil Mandates

Members of the USI Coiste Gnó (outlined in []) to provide training on the following issues to fully prepare officers for their work;

- Lobbying [VP for Equality and Citizenship]
- Casework [VP for Academic Affairs and VP for Welfare]
- Bystander Intervention [VP for Welfare]
- Governance [USI President]
- Media Training [VP for Campaigns]
- Part-Time Officer Training [USI Regional Officers]
- Postgraduate Affairs [VP for Postgraduate Affairs]
- Suicide Prevention [VP for Welfare]
- Anti-Racism Training [VP For Equality and Citizenship]
- Personal Development Training [USI Regional Officers]
- Students' Union Staff Training [USI President]

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to provide further training on the following;

- Disclosure Training [VP for Welfare]

- Union Finances [USI President]
- Freedom of Information Requests [USI President]
- Crisis Response Training [VP for Welfare]

Repeals 2021 NC 5, 2021 UO, 2021 UO 5, UO 19 2, UO 19 8, UO 19 16, 2021 AA NC, 20 AA 8, 20 WEL 8, 21 UO NC 1, 15 UO 3

2022 UO 3: Higher Education Funding Campaign

Proposed by the Campaigns Working Group

Comhdháil Notes that

The USI has spent over a decade campaigning for the reduction of the Student Contribution Charge.

Comhdháil commends

The work of the Coiste Gnó and previous Coiste Gnó teams on campaigns for publicly funded education including; Cost of College, Education for All, Break the Barriers, etc.

Comhdháil Believes that

The yearly brand change of a higher education funding campaign where the messaging remains wholly the same is detrimental to student engagement with the campaign.

Comhdháil Believes that

A long running campaign would be more beneficial and would increase student participation in campaign actions.

Comhdháil Mandates

The VP for Campaigns and USI President to work towards continuing the Cost of College campaign, rather than rebranding the national Higher Education Funding Campaign.

2022 UO 5: Amendments to the USI Constitution for Regionalisation

Proposed by the USI President

Comhdháil Notes

That the organisation's constitution governs the ethos and operations of the entire organisation. It is imperative that the constitution is up to date, accurate and reflects the spirit of the organisation.

Comhdháil Further Notes

Institutes of Technologies are merging to become Technological Universities across the island of Ireland, spanning cross-county campuses, and larger student bodies. In addition, Technological Universities (TUs) have unique needs. Students' Unions are merging as a result of the creation of TUs, requiring a huge amount of resourcing, experience and advice.

Comhdháil Notes with concern

That while the current USI Regional Officers are absolutely integral to providing local MO support, their roles are not tailored to fit USI's requirements from member organisations when it comes to Technological Universities, and will not be able to represent all TUs coming down the line. One example of this is the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands and Midwest, which spans across two different regions.

Comhdháil Mandates

The President and Vice Presidents for the Regions to set up of a Constitutional Review Working Group to have a full review of the composition of the Coiste Gnó, role descriptions, schedules etc. This review should be completed no later than the December Comhairle Náisiúnta of 2023.

Comhdháil Further Mandates:

The USI President and Vice President for the Regions to collaborate and co-ordinate their engagement with member organisations until a new constitutional amendment comes into effect.

2022 UO 6: MO Support Directory

Proposed by Maynooth Students' Union

Congress Notes

USI was established to represent the students of Ireland but also to support local Member Organisations in their time of need and provide expertise and experience to make them stronger.

Congress further notes

USI is made up of Member Organisations who not only face a variety of challenges but all have varying levels of resources and supports to meet those challenges.

Congress Believes

That MO Presidents should be able to turn to their national union for support and guidance.

Congress Further Believes

That even USI officers are not always equipped to support officers as they may be new to the job however should have some form of institutional knowledge they can turn to.

Congress Therefore Mandates

The USI President to compile and maintain a directory of various supports (including but not limited to people, resources, information etc.) in different areas (including but not limited to Autonomy, Welfare, Human Resources, Legal etc.) in order to be able to assist MO's in their time of need.

2022 UO 7: Support Sessions for Officers

Proposed by the USI VP Welfare

Comhdháil Notes

The extreme stress that officers face on a daily basis as a result of their roles, as a result of the various forms of casework they may face and alongside further stress as a result of pressure put on them by their HEI, students and external organisations.

Comhdháil Also Notes

That officers often must rely on self-coping mechanisms due to the lack of tailored concrete supports in place for them.

Comhdháil Further Notes

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

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The VP Welfare and the VP Academic Affairs to organise regular debriefing sessions, in order to best help officers. Debriefing sessions should be lead by an appropriately skilled facilitator (where it is inappropriate for a Coiste Gnó member to lead), and also encompass coping skills that officers can use in self-care exercises. These are to include, but not be limited to: Casework debrief sessions, anger redirection sessions, and general informal spaces for officers to discuss their issues and stresses.

2022 UO 8: Trade Union Partnerships

Proposed by the Campaigns Working Group

Comhdháil Notes that

That there is a need for students to become aware of their rights as workers and interns, no matter what sector they are working in.

Comhdháil welcomes

The SIPTU-USI Partnership, renewed in 2019, as a means for furthering the work of USI on workers rights.

Comhdháil Believes that

The USI needs to actively seek out similar levels of partnership with trade unions that represent student workers who are not represented by the work of SIPTU; including creative arts students, student nurses and midwives, student media interns, etc.

Comhdháil Further Notes that

Partnership with trade unions plays a vital role in allowing the USI Coiste Gnó access to knowledge and resources surrounding workers rights.

Comhdháil Mandates

The VP for Campaigns to advocate for elected Students' Union officers and their staff to become members of a union.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Vice President for Campaigns and USI Coiste Gnó to actively seek out partnerships with trade unions that represent the different sectors of student workers and interns, and to provide updates on these partnerships to Comhairle Náisiúnta

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The VP for Campaigns to develop a position paper outlining the USI perspective on workers' rights across the multiple sectors of the students they represent. This position paper should be informed by students, students' union officers and trade unions.

Repeals UO 19-21, 20 NA (NC) 7

2022 UO 9: International World Days Standardised Calendar

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Congress Notes

That there are certain dates that USI & MO's mark or celebrate each year. Such as World Mental Health Day, Trans Day of Remembrance, and International Women's Day.

Congress Further Notes

That it would be beneficial to both USI and MO's if there was a standardised calendar for all to work from on a yearly basis.

Congress Mandates

The VP Equality & Citizenship and VP Welfare to compile a calendar of such days to be circulated to MO's before August 31st each year.

2022 UO 10: USI and STAND Partnership Strategy 2022 - 2025

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Equality & Citizenship

Comhdháil Notes

At the beginning of STAND and USI's collaboration in May of 2019, it was agreed that STAND staff would be present in the USI Office on a part-time basis, that STAND staff would facilitate Students' Union Training sessions and that they would attend Comhairle Náisiúnta meetings.

Comhdháil acknowledges

The partnership between STAND and USI is borne out of the mutual understanding of the importance of sustainability, the interconnectedness of local and global issues, and the role that young people must play in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Comhdháil applauds

The 10,000 Students Initiative which was launched in Autumn 2019 and has since grown into the primary collaboration between STAND and USI. This initiative highlights the detrimental effects of climate change, the battles of social injustices, economic disadvantages, and political uncertainties. It therefore challenges third level students across Ireland to come together and act for a better world.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The adoption of the [USI and STAND Partnership Strategy 2022-2025](#)

2022 UO 11: Coiste Gnó Plans of Work

Proposed by the USI VP Campaigns

Comhdháil Notes that

The Coiste Gnó provides a plan of work to Comhairle Náisiúnta at the beginning of the first semester, outlining the work that the Coiste Gnó member hopes to achieve during their term.

Comhdháil Regrets that

These plans of work are often prepared without consultation with other USI officers and do not accurately reflect the cooperative nature of the work done within the organisation.

Comhdháil Believes that

The USI Coiste Gnó plans of work are a beneficial way of holding officers to account during their term and should be reflective of the collaborative work of the Coiste Gnó.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President to work with the Coiste Gnó to provide an overall team plan of work to be presented to Comhairle Náisiúnta, outlining any work that will take place across more than one remit.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President to provide Plan of Work updates to each Comhairle Náisiúnta alongside updates provided in the Policy File Tracker.

2022 UO 12: Training Days

Proposed by the Presidents' Working Group

Comhdháil Notes

That the role of Students' Union Presidents and Deputy Presidents is incredibly vast, dynamic and reactive. USI must ensure that Presidents and Deputy Presidents are as best equipped and supported as they can be to lead their Students' Unions as effectively as possible.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That many merged Students' Unions and Students' Unions with satellite campuses have officers with specific or portfolio responsibilities on their campuses that may be additional to all other officers.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President and Deputy President to organise Presidents' & Deputies day no later than August 31st each year.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President and Deputy President to consult with member organisations on the trainings they would like provided.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President and Deputy President to include sessions for those officers with specific or portfolio responsibilities on their campuses.

Repeals 2021 UO NC 4

2022 UO 13: USI Awareness Campaign

Proposed by TU Dublin Students' Union

Congress Notes

That the student movement has been at the forefront of social change with significant involvement of USI.

Congress Regrets

That many students who are not directly involved with their union or USI are often unaware of who USI are and what they do for students. This is resulting in poor engagement from students with USI events and activities.

Congress Believes

That a widespread awareness campaign has the potential to increase awareness of USI and therefore increase the reach and engagement of campaigns and activities.

Congress Mandates

The VP Campaigns and the Regional VP's to develop an awareness campaign about USI with Member Organisations from each region.

Congress Therefore Mandates

That the awareness campaign be rolled out in person and online by USI in conjunction with all relevant MO's in October of the academic year.

2022 UO 14: ESU Participation

Proposed by the USI VP South

Comhdháil Notes

USI are members of the European Students' Union. This membership allows USI to have a vital role in shaping international policies and informing national and local policies with international best practice.

Comhdháil Recognises

Each year two USI Coiste Gnó members are assigned ESU Lead and Support. These officers attend European Student Conventions and Board Meetings on behalf of USI. Normally, the two officers can also bring a delegation with them to the events. The delegation represents USI and speaks on many topics pertaining to students.

Comhdháil Acknowledges

Some Member Organisations may have difficulties with participating in ESU events due to the costs (Flights, Registration Fees etc) associated with participation.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President to propose the two Coiste Gnó officers who are Lead and Support on ESU to Comhairle Náisiúnta by the second meeting of Comhairle Náisiúnta each year. These Officers must have a proficiency in social, academic and equality issues facing students. They shall be tasked with providing a comprehensive information session for Students' Union Officers on the European Students Union at SUT each year.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó Lead and Support for ESU to co-ordinate a delegation to each ESU event (Board Meetings, Student Conventions etc) where possible. Each delegation shall provide a detailed report on the event they have attended, which shall be circulated to Comhairle Náisiúnta at the following meeting.

Comhdháil also Mandates

The Coiste Gnó Lead and Support for ESU to investigate funding opportunities to cover the associated costs with attending ESU events.

Repeals 20 AA 1

2022 UO 15: Regional Officers

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Dublin Region

Comhdháil Notes

The benefit of having Regional Officers on campus and the experience and direction Regional Officers can give to local member organisations.

Comhdháil Further Notes

Local Student Councillor/Class Rep Council meetings are the beating heart of local unions and attendees typically represent a cohort of the student population that are most engaged in union activity.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

Vice Presidents for the Regions be obligated to attend local union council meetings, provided they are given a minimum of 3 days' notice, or otherwise send their apologies in advance.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice Presidents for the Regions to visit MO's a minimum of four times per semester.

Repeals UO 19-7

2022 UO 16: Motion on Unionisation Stance

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

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 2021 UO 5: 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 the USI Officer board. This policy would cover how partnerships are sought out, agreed upon, and the length of time they are active for.

2022 UO 17: Vice-President for Postgraduate Affairs

Proposed by the USI VP for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

The importance of USI Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (VPPGA) is that they represent over all postgraduate students across the island of Ireland.

Comhdháil Regrets

The existing workload for the VPPGA is onerous as the VPPGA must sit on/chair numerous working groups, boards and committees and carry out many administrative tasks within a 16-hour working week.

Comhdháil Believes

It is necessary to explore all options when revising the postgraduate role, some of which include but is not limited to;

Three part-time VPPGAs; one postgraduate taught representative, one postgraduate research representative and one postgraduate engagement representative to visit HEIs. These roles would represent both postgraduate student cohorts whilst supporting engagement, reduce isolation for the VPPGA in their work and allow for collaboration.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Union of Students in Ireland Coiste Gnó to conduct a strategic review of the VPPGA role before opening of nominations for Comhdháil 2023/24.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI VPPGA and Regional Officers to work together in consultation with MOs, postgraduate representatives and part time officers to review best practices to support part time officers.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI VPPGA to consult with Eurodoc on best practices of the postgraduate role and/or part time officer role in European Student Unions

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó to review finances and/or secure/seek funding to remedy the added costs of restructuring the role.

Repeals 2021 AA 13

2022 UO 18: Election Supports

Proposed by the USI Vice President for Academic Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

Member organisations run two major sets of elections each year, for class representatives and sabbatical officership elections.

Comhdháil Believes

The transition to online elections has improved the accessibility of many elections, but has also resulted in officers having less hands-on experience in orchestrating elections, including counting votes.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI Regional Vice Presidents to gather information on when, and how each member organisation conducts their elections each year and to coordinate with the Vice President for Academic Affairs in making best practice recommendations available to all member organisations.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI president with the support of the Regional Vice Presidents to collate a 'Returning Officer database' for those involved or previously involved in the student movement with a knowledge of voting systems to support member organisations with their elections.

Comhdháil Also Mandates

The USI President and Vice President for Academic Affairs to arrange Election Training prior to September of each year on including Electoral Commissions and election regulations, Referenda and Voting Systems and count

procedure such as single transfer voting. This training should also include support for election process reviews, resolving issues such as tie-breaking and the re-open nominations.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The USI President and Vice President for Academic Affairs to create a glossary of key terms and explanations for member organisations based on their requirements and training each year, including but not limited to the following;

- Constituency/Electorate
 - Ballots, Secret, Online/Paper
 - Quotas
 - Proportional Representation
-

2022 UO 19: Accessibility of USI Events; Rotation of CN

Proposed by Presidents' Working Group

Comhdháil Believes

USI events should be as accessible and accommodating as possible.

Comhdháil Notes

That it can sometimes be difficult for member organisations to attend all USI events in person based on the locations that are chosen.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

That Comhairle Náisiúnta will take place on a rotational basis in each of the four different regions. Where a member organisation can no longer host a Comhairle Náisiúnta, flexibility should be allowed to re-arrange Comhairle Náisiúnta going ahead in person.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President to agree with Presidents' Working Group on the locations of Comhairle Náisiúnta for the year, no later than the second Comhairle Náisiúnta in August.

2022 UO 21: Vice-President for Post Graduate Affairs and Coiste Gnó

Proposed by USI Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

There is a disparity in the stipend rates received by Postgraduate Research Students.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That the cost of living is rising whilst stipends remain relatively stagnant and are not fit for purpose.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

That Coiste Gnó to lobby for the creation of a National Minimum Stipend Rate.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

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

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to send out a stipend survey yearly to research postgraduate students to determine stipends nationally.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to carry out a comparative study on the stipend rate from year to year to determine if the actions taken by the Coiste Gnó, VPPGA and DFHERIS are addressing the disparities.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Coiste Gnó to report the comparative results back to the HEA Research Graduate Education Committee and the National Forum for Doctoral Education Advisory Forum.

Please refer to [Postgraduate Student Survey 2022](#)

Repeals AA 19 - 4

2022 UO 23: Regional Officers

Proposed by USI Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs

Comhdháil Notes

The benefits of the Regional Officers working closely with the Vice President for Postgraduate Affairs (VPPGA).

Comhdháil Further Notes

The VPPGA role is a part-time policy officer role and developing engagement amongst postgraduates can be difficult given the limited amount of time and resources.

Comhdháil Therefore Mandates

The Vice President for the Regions to compile a contact list of all postgraduate officers and any officers interested in postgraduate affairs no later than 31st October each year.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

The Vice Presidents for the Regions to work with local member organisations, postgraduate officers and officers interested in postgraduate affairs to develop engagement between USI and the member organisations.

2022 UO 24: USI Strategic Review and Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028

Proposed by National College Of Ireland Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

That as per UO 19-1, the cyclical nature of student representation often leads to an annual change in direction and shifts in priority as new Officers begin their term which is not conducive to long term organisational development or gathering momentum on key issues that the student movement contends with. Setting out a strategic plan which outlines a clear vision for the development of the USI as well as its Member Organisations is integral to the future growth and strength of our combined national voice.

Comhdháil Further Notes

As per UO 19-5, 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 but this is the last time such a plan was set out and a full strategic review is crucial to inform any strategic plan development.

Comhdháil Believes

That in order for the full potential of USI to be realised, we must adopt a long term vision for the organisation that future iterations of the Coiste Gnó and MO's can use to help guide their actions and ensure that we build, year on year, on the incredible work done by Officers within USI.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President to carry out a comprehensive strategic review of USI encompassing all areas of the organisation including but not limited to governance, finance, democracy, political lobbying and campaigns to be brought before December Comhairle Náisiúnta 2022. This review should be carried out in conjunction with an external consultant and in consideration and consultation of the thoughts and views of USI Member Organisations.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

That upon the completion of this strategic review, it helps to form the basis of the development of a strategic plan for USI to be presented and ratified at Comhdháil 2023. The USI President should publish an annual report on the progress of this strategic plan at Comhdháil each year for the duration of the plan.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

A working group of Comhairle Náisiúnta be established to oversee and inform the full development and implementation of both the strategic review and strategic plan.

2022 UO 25: Progress Reports on Mandates

Proposed by National College Of Ireland Students' Union

Comhdháil notes

USI Coiste Gnó can be mandated to take on a large number of motions and it is not realistic to complete all of these mandates in one year.

Comhdháil recognizes

The hard work being put in by the Coiste Gnó to complete a large number of motions and progress a multitude of these at any given time.

Comhdháil further recognizes

The need for an efficient and clear way of tracking the current status of all mandates.

Comhdháil mandates

That the Coiste Gnó submit a policy tracker as part of their reports to Comhairle Náisiúnta so MO's can see the current status of all mandates currently on the policy handbook.

EM 21 – 2: Suicide Intervention Training Promotion

Proposed by UCC Students' Union

Congress Recognises

That UCCSU organised the 'Ohana nomination campaign' in early 2021 which encouraged the student body and wider community to undertake an online 30 minute suicide prevention training course facilitated by Ohana ZERO suicide. The campaign resulted in an estimated 1000 students gaining practical skills and knowledge on how to support a friend, colleague, or stranger in need of intervention.

Congress Notes

Although there has been significant work done in the area of suicide awareness, to date there is no mandate that recognises the benefits of suicide prevention training among the wider student population rather than just sabbatical Students' Union members.

Congress Further Notes

That the need for students to identify the signs that someone may be suicidal, to employ the correct language in asking the appropriate questions, and to ultimately direct that person to the appropriate help where necessary, is as relevant as ever.

Congress Therefore Notes

The Samaritans annual report (published March 11th 2021) states that 73,000 hours worth of calls were made to the support service since the beginning of the pandemic, further indicating that such skills as those listed above are essential in the current climate.

Congress Believes

The USI Executive Team is well positioned to raise awareness of such training opportunities and their benefits to a wider level than local MOs could achieve independently.

Congress Mandates

The VP for Welfare and the VP for Campaigns to coordinate a national campaign promoting suicide intervention training in conjunction with interested MOs.

Congress Further Mandates

Each USI Executive Team to undertake the Ohana ZERO suicide training.

2021 UO 10: Pre-Budget Submission

Proposed by the Presidents' Working Group

Congress welcomes

The annual publication of the USI Pre-Budget Submission.

Congress believes

That this document is a useful lobbying tool that can be used throughout the year to lobby for increased investment but also legislative changes that are required.

Congress mandates

The USI President to ensure the publication of an annual pre-budget submission that includes budgetary asks and legislative asks so the document can be used throughout the year to support Students' Unions when lobbying members of the Oireachtas.

UO 19 – 17: Students' Union Officer Handbook

Proposed by the USI Vice President for the Southern Region

Congress Recognises

The role of an 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.

17 UO 1: 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 UO 14: 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.

2024 AF 1 USI Commercial Entities Engagement Strategy *

Proposed by DCU Students' Union

Comhdháil Notes

External commercial entities such as but not limited to event agencies, promoters, marketing agencies and brands often look to use Students' Unions and the Union of Students Ireland as ways to engage with new customers.

Comhdháil Further Notes

That engaging with such companies can provide a benefit to students and provide students with new opportunities.

Comhdháil Believes

That it is of utmost importance that there is a fair, transparent and clear procedure that aligns with the USI Constitution is accessible to all Member Organisations outlining the criteria of what external commercial entities USI engage with.

Comhdháil Further Believes

Engagement with commercial entities should, where applicable, provide USI with financial benefits directly to the organisation.

Comhdháil Mandates

The USI President develops a clear procedure on the selection and vetting of external commercial entities that USI will consider working with in the future. This procedure shall be presented to the next Comhairle Náisiúnta for discussion, and sent to the next Comhdháil for approval.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

Annually the USI President develops and reviews a costing rate guide for external commercial entities to engage with USI.

Comhdháil Further Mandates

That USI only works with commercial entities whose values align with stances approved by Comhdháil and the values of the USI Constitution.

20 AF 1: Affiliation Fee Review

Proposed by the USI 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.

Repeals AF 19 1

20 AF 3: Financial Reporting and Accountability

Proposed by the USI 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 presents 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.

Repeals: 17 (NC) AF 1, 14 AF 1, 17 AF 1

2024 GAE 1 Bunú Ról Oifigeach Gaeilge

Grúpa Oibre na Gaeilge / Gaeilge Working Group

Luann an Chomhdháil:

Go bhfuil sé de dhualgas ar an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, agus go mbeadh an Ghaeilge níos lárnaí i saol na hOllscoile do gach mac léinn.

Tugann an Chomhdháil faoi deara freisin:

Níl ach beirt Leas-Uachtarán le Gaeilge Lánaimseartha lasmuigh d'Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn; Comhaltas na Mac Léinn Ollscoil na Gaillimhe ó 2022 agus Aontas na Mac Léinn, Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath ó 2024. Léiríonn an bheirt seo go bhfuil suim ag mic léinn sa Ghaeilge.

Mar sin, ordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Leas-Uachtarán Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn oibriú le MOs nach bhfuil oifigigh Ghaeilge lán-aimseartha acu chun ról an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge a bhunú, agus do na MOs nach bhfuil oifigeach Gaeilge ar bith acu Oifigeach Ghaeilge a bhunú.

Comhdháil Notes:

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge is to promote Irish, and that Irish will be more central in University life for students.

Comhdháil Notes:

There are only 2 other full-time Leas-Uachtarán's don Ghaeilge outside of the Union of Students in Ireland; Comhaltas na Mac Léinn, Ollscoil na Gaillimhe from 2022 and Trinity College Dublin Students' Union from 2024. These 2 show that there is an interest in Irish.

Therefore, Comhdháil mandates:

That it is the responsibility of the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to work with MOs that don't have a full time Irish language officer to develop a full time role, and for MOs that don't currently have an Irish Language Officer to develop an Irish Language Officer's role.

2024 GAE 2 Ranganna Gaeilge a soláthar d'Oifigigh Aontas na Mac Léinn/Providing Irish Language Lessons for Student Union Officers

Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Aithníonn an Comhdháil:

Go bhfuil ról lárnach ag an nGaeilge ar oidhreacht cultúrtha agus féiniúlacht náisiúnta. Tá sé ríthábhachtach úsáid agus tuiscint na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn chun éagsúlacht teanga na hÉireann a chaomhnú agus a cheiliúradh.

Anuas ar sin, aithníonn an Comhdháil:

Tá ról ríthábhachtach ag oifigigh Aontas na Mac Léinn ar ionadaíocht a dhéanamh agus ag tacú le mac léinn uile, go h-áirithe iad siúd go bhfuil Gaeilge acu mar chéad teanga nó más mian leo dul i dteagmháil leis an Aontas trí Ghaeilge. Má chuirtear oiliúint sa Ghaeilge ar oifigigh Aontais na Mac Léinn, cuirfear lena gcumas cumarsáid

éifeachtach a dhéanamh le mic léinn a labhraíonn Gaeilge, tuiscint a fháil ar a gcuid riachtanais, agus inniúlacht ar an dteanga a chuir chun cinn laistigh de pobal na mic léinn.

Creideann an Chomhdháil:

Má bhíonn ranganna Gaeilge curtha ar fáil do Aontais na Mac Léinn, léiríonn sé a gcuid tiomantas don éagsúlacht teanga, cultúrtha agus do chur chun cinn an dátheangachais sna hinstitiúidí ardoideachais.

Mar sin, Sainordaíonn an Comhdháil:

An Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le Ranganna Gaeilge a chur ar fáil do bhaill an Choiste Gnó ar mian leo leas a bhaint astu agus eolas faoi ranganna gaeilge a roinnt leis na Balleagraíochtaí.

Anuas ar sin, sainordaíonn an Comhdháil:

Go n-oibreoidh an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge leis an gCoiste Gnó agus leis na hAontais áitiúla chun ranganna Gaeilge a fháilt ina gcoláiste/réigiún dóibh siúd ar mian leo leas a bhaint astu.

Comhdháil Notes:

The Irish language is an integral part of Ireland's cultural heritage and national identity. Promoting the use and appreciation of the Irish language is essential for preserving and celebrating Ireland's linguistic diversity.

Comhdháil further notes:

Student Union officers play a crucial role in representing and advocating for the interests of all students, including those who speak Irish as their first language or wish to engage with the union throughout Irish. Equipping student union officers with proficiency in the Irish language will enhance their ability to communicate effectively with Irish-speaking students, understand their needs, and promote inclusivity within the student body.

Comhdháil believes:

Offering Irish language lessons to student union officers demonstrates a commitment to linguistic diversity, cultural awareness, and the promotion of bilingualism in higher education institutions.

Comhdháil Mandates:

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to get Irish Language Classes for members of the Coiste Gnó who wish to avail of them and to share information about language classes with Member Organisations.

Comhdháil further mandates:

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to work with the Coiste Gnó and local Unions to get Irish Language classes in their college/region for those who wish avail of them.

2023 EM (GAE) 1: Tacaíocht do #Gaeilge4All

Aithníonn Comhdháil:

Go raibh agóid ag lucht #Gaeilge4All ar 29/03/2023 le fadhbanna leis an nGaeilge sa chóras oideachais ó dheas a árdú.

Aithníonn Comhdháil:

Go bhfuil an feachtas #Gaeilge4All ag éileamh ar an Aire Oideachais polasaí comhtháite agus comhleanúnach don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal a fhorbairt agus a chur i bhfeidhm.

Tá comhdháil buartha:

Go bhfuil Páipéar 1 Gaeilge na hArdteiste le bogadh go Bliain 5 ó 2025 ar aghaidh – cinneadh a bhfuil múinteoirí agus daltaí go hiomlán ina choinne, agus nach bhfuil aon bhunús oideachasúil leis.

- Go bhfuil 40,000+ dalta ag an dara leibhéal le díolúine ó staidéar na Gaeilge, agus an figiúir sin ag fás ina dhiaidh a chéile

- Go bhfuil na sonraíochtaí/na siollabais don tSraith Shóisearach nua ag teipeadh, agus tá an próiseas chun sonraíochtaí nua a fhorbairt don tSraith Shinsearach ina phraiseach.
- Nach bhfuil ach 7% de dhaltáí bunscoile agus 2.8% de dhaltáí iar-bhunscoile ag freastal ar an oideachas lán-Ghaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht. Tá easpa Gaelscoileanna agus Gaelcholáistí mar rogha dóibh siúd ar mian leo é.
- Go bhfuil an líon ama do mhúineadh na Gaeilge sa bhunscoil laghdaithe ó 3.5 huaire go 3 huaire in aghaidh na seachtaine sa chreat curaclam nua bunscoile fógartha ag an Aire Oideachais ar an 9 Márta. Ó Rang 1 ar aghaidh, bainfear 30 nóiméad sa tseachtain ó na daltaí, a fhágann go mbeidh siad thíos leis faoin am go dtéann siad ar aghaidh chuig an iar-bhunscoil.
- Nach bhfuil ach cúpla cúrsa tríú-léibhéal trí mheán na Gaeilge ar fáil in ollscoileanna ó dheas.
- Nach bhfuil plean bainteach leis an oideachas tríú léibhéal i bhfeidhm chun 20% d'earcaigh nua na seirbhíse poiblí ina nGaeilgeoirí a bhaint amach
- Nach bhfuil aon chiste tacaíochta d'institiúidí 3ú leibhéal leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn
- Nach bhfuil aon chosaint ag an nGaeloideachais ó thuaidh.

Tacaíonn Comhdháil:

Le haidhmeanna an fheachtais #Gaeilge4All go gcruthófaí polasaí cuimsitheach d'oideachas na Gaeilge ó dheas agus go ndéanfaí athmheasúnú ar pholasaí oideachais na Gaeltachta, polasaí oideachais na Gaeilge trí mheán na Gaeilge, agus polasaí oideachais na Gaeilge trí mheán an Bhéarla

Éilíonn Comhdháil:

Polasaí cuimsitheach don Ghaeilge sa Chóras Oideachais ón Réamhscoil go dtí an Tríú Leibhéal, leis na trí pholasaí a leanas san áireamh sa pholasaí:

- An polasaí oideachais na Gaeltachta reatha
- Polasaí don Ghaeloideachas
- Polasaí don oideachas atá ag feidhmiú i mBéarla
- Go mbeadh córas oideachais níos cuimsithí agus i bhfad níos oiriúnaí do níos mo daltaí scoile ag aon chumas Gaeilge
- Rannpháirtíocht ón bhfeachtas #Gaeilge4All in aon chomhrá faoin nGaeilge sa chóras oideachais ar na meán sóisialta nó traidisiúnta.
- Cosaint don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ó Thuaidh

Sainordaíonn Comhdháil:

Go n-éilíonn an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus Leas-Uachtarán um Fheachtais ar an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna agus ar an rialtas seasamh láidir a thógaint i bhfabhar polasaí cuimsitheach don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón réamhscoil go dtí'n tríú léibhéal. Ba cheart don Aontas brú a chur ar an Aire próiseas comhairliúcháin a chur ar bun láithreach bonn leis an bpolasaí a fhorbairt agus go mbeadh an próiseas seo déanta d'ardchaighdeán - go gcuirfí deis ar fáil don phobal aighneachtaí a chur fé bhráid an CNCM, go reachtálfaí cruinnithe poiblí maidir le gnéithe an pholasaí, go n-eagrófaí cruinnithe le geallsealbhóirí ó earnáil na Gaeilge agus an oideachais agus eile san áireamh sa chomhairliúchán.

Sainordaíonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh:

Go mbeadh an feachtas #Gaeilge4All mar mhír seasta ag an gCoiste Gnó i gcruinnithe nó imeachtaí le polaiteoirí agus go mbeadh na héilimh do #Gaeilge4All mar chuid d'Aighneacht Réamh Bhuiséad an Aontais.

2023 GAE 1: Ag Tacú le hAistriúchán sna Balleagraíochtaí

UCC Students' Union

Aithníonn an Chomhdháil

An tábhacht a bhaineann le cáipéisí, foilseacháin, agus cumarsáid sheachtrach a bheith ar fáil go forleathan trí mheán na Gaoluinne, ionas go mbeidh an teanga sofheicthe i measc mic léinn ollscoile chomh maith le húdaráis ollscoile.

Creideann an Chomhdháil

Nach chóir go mbeadh ról an Oifigigh Gaeilge dírithe ar an aistriúchán, ach a bheith dírithe ar chur chun cinn na teanga agus ar chosaint cearta teanga san ollscoil.

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

Go dtacódh an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le Balleagraíochtaí teacht ar fhoinsí aistriúcháin inbhuanaithe agus fad-théarmacha le deis a thabhairt d'Oifigigh Gaeilge díriú ar fheachtaisí teangan.

Comhdháil Notes

The importance of union documents, publications, and external communications being widely available through the medium of Irish, in order to promote the use of the language among university students and staff.

Comhdháil Believes

The role of Irish-language Officer within Member Organisations should not be focused on translation of documents, but instead focused on the promotion of the language and protection of language rights within the university.

Comhdháil Mandates

USI Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to support Member Organisations in sourcing sustainable longterm means of translation for union documents, publications, and external communications, to afford respective Irish-language Officers the opportunity to focus on campaigns regarding the language.

2023 GAE 2: Grant for students attending Gaeltacht courses

Proposed by the Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge

Comhdháil notes

That the Gaeltacht regions are of significant cultural and historical importance to Ireland, and provide people with the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the Irish language.

Comhdháil further notes

That while traditionally Gaeltacht courses are aimed at those in second level education, there are a wide range of courses specifically for adults and/or third level students.

Comhdháil believes

That third level students should have the opportunity to attend courses in the Gaeltacht, and should not be prohibited by a costly barrier.

Comhdháil therefore mandates

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the Vice President for Campaigns to develop a promotional campaign aimed at highlighting the wide variety of Gaeltacht courses available for third level students.

Comhdháil further mandates

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to lobby the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to establish a fund aimed at supporting students who wish to attend courses in the Gaeltacht. This lobbying should include the production of a report that examines the current cost of Gaeltacht courses, as well as the inclusion of the ask in the USI Pre-Budget Submission.

2023 GAE (NC) 3: Tascfhórsa Gaeilge NUS-USI

Proposed by the Gaeilge Working Group

Déanann an Chomhdháil nóta de

Bhunú Thascfhórsa na Gaeilge NUS-USI in 2018/2019. Bunaíodh an tascfhórsa seo chun obair a dhéanamh ar chur chun cinn na Gaeilge agus an Chultúir i mballeagraíochtaí NUS-USI.

Aithníonn an Chomhdháil

Na bacainní uathúla atá os comhair eagraíochtaí atá cleamhnaithe le NUS-USI sa troid ar son chearta na Gaeilge agus infheictheacht na Gaeilge.

Tugann an Chomhdháil sainordú mar sin do

Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge mar chathaoirleach ar Thascfhórsa na Gaeilge NUS-USI; Grúpa atá dírithe ar thacaíocht a chur ar fáil, oiliúint a éascú, agus feachtais a bhunú a bheidh dírithe ar an nGaeilge sa réigiún NUS-USI.

Comhdháil Notes

The formation of the NUS-USI Irish Language Task Force in 2018/2019 This task force was established to work on promoting the Irish Language & Culture in NUS-USI affiliated member organisations.

Comhdháil Recognises

The unique barriers facing NUS-USI affiliated members organisations in the fight for Irish Language rights and Irish Language visibility.

Comhdháil therefore Mandates

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge to chair the NUS-USI Irish Language Taskforce; a group aimed at providing support, facilitating training(s), and establishing campaigns focused on the Irish Language in the NUS-USI region.

2023 GAE 4: Scéim Cónaithe

Coiste Cultúrtha

Aithníonn Comhdháil

Na buntáistí iontacha atá ag baint le Scéimeanna Cónaithe.

Tréaslaíonn Comhdháil

Le Cumann Gaelach agus Aontas na Mac Léinn in Ollscoil na Banríona as ucht an obair iontach atá déanta acu chun Scéim Cónaithe a bhaint amach.

Sainordaíonn Comhdháil

An Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge chun taighde a dhéanamh ar an mbriseadh síos atá ag na Scéimeanna Cónaithe atá ann faoi láthair agus an t-eolas a chuir ar fáil do na bailleagraíochtaí.

Sainordaíonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh

Go gcabhróidh an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge leis na bailleagraíochtaí chun Scéimeanna Cónaithe a bhunú.

2023 GAE 6: Raidió Rí Rá ar FM

Coiste Cultúrtha

Aithníonn Comhdháil

The work Raidió Rí Rá has done since 2008 in providing a radio station in the Irish Language and play chart music radio station for young people.

Tacaíonn Comhdháil le

Raidió Rí Rá's efforts to be available on FM 24/7.

Aithníonn Comhdháil a thuilleadh

Go léiríonn taighde nua ó Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann go bhfuil ceathrar as gach cúigear ag aontú go n-éistfidís le stáisiún raidió le níos mó den cheol a thaitníonn leo thar aon stáisiún eile

Sainordaíonn Comhdháil

The USI Coiste Gnó, particularly the Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the Vice-President for Campaigns, to actively support Raidió Rí Rá's efforts to get on FM.

2023 GAE (NC) 7: Úsáid do Chúpla Focal

Molta ag Grúpa Oibre na Gaeilge

Molann an Chomhdháil

An obair iontach atá déanta ag an LU don Ghaeilge le blianta beaga anuas le 'Focail an Lae' ar na meáin shóisialta, agus conas a spreag sé seo cur chuige níos gnáiche i leith na Gaeilge.

Tugann an Chomhdháil sainordú don

LU don Ghaeilge chun úsáid a bhaint as feachtas cúpla focal atá dírithe ar leibhéal tosaitheoirí go cainteoirí líofa ag gach imeacht USI, chun an Coiste Gnó a spreagadh.

Tugann an Chomhdháil sainordú chomh maith don

LU don Ghaeilge chun acmhainní a eagrú do MOanna chun d'fheachtas cúpla focal a réachtáil go háitiúil.

Comhairle Náisiúnta Commends

The great work done by the LÚ Don Ghaeilge in recent years with the 'Focail an Lae' on social media, and how this has encouraged a more mainstream approach to the Irish language.

Comhairle Náisiúnta mandates:

The LU don Gaeilge to coordinate a use your cúpla focail campaign aimed towards beginner to fluent levels at all USI events, to encourage the COiste Gnó to use their cúpla focail.

Comhairle Náisiúnta further mandates:

The LU don Gaeilge to organise resources for MO's to run a use your cúpla focail campaign locally.

2022 EM (GAE) 6: Ag Tacú le Gaeilgeoirí ó Thuaidh leis an Lá Dearg/Support Gaeilgeoirí in the North with the Lá Dearg

Proposed by QUB Students' Union

Aithníonn an Comhdháil

Tháinig deireadh le cruinniú idir Conradh na Gaeilge agus an Aire stáit i mBéal Feirste ar 12 Aibreán 2022 nuair a dhiúltaigh an tAire am cinntithe a chur ar fáil i gclár ama Westminster chun an reachtaíocht Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm faoi mar a gealladh í sa chomhaontú Ré Nua Cur Chuige Nua.

Aithníonn an Comhdháil chomh maith

Bhí sé mar bhunchloch aitheanta sa chomhaontú sin, Ré Nua Cur Chuige Nua (Eanáir 2020), go dtabharfadh na páirtithe agus / nó na Rialtais reachtaíocht Gaeilge isteach laistigh de 100 lá. Faoi 17 Meitheamh 2021 bhí spriocdháta úr tugtha ag Rúnaí Stáit na Breataine Brandon Lewis MP o lucht Chnoc an Anfa, an reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach faoi mhí Mheán Fómhair 2021 nó go dtabharfadh a Rialtas féin an reachtaíocht fríd Westminster i

mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2021. Tháinig deireadh le mandáid Stormont i mí Márta 2022 agus ag an stád sin d'fhógair Rialtas na Breataine nach raibh sin chun an reachtaíocht a thabhairt isteach an taobh seo den toghchán.

Aithníonn an Comhdháil

Gur theip ar Tionól Thuaisceart na hÉireann a ghealltanas a chomhlíonadh chun Acht Gaeilge a chur in áit. Feachtasaíocht láidir Conradh na Gaeilge, an Dream Dearg, grúpaí pobail, aontais na macléinn, agus gníomhaíthe i dtreo Acht Gaeilge a fháil.

Creideann an Comhdháil

Tá Gaeilgeoirí sa Tuaisceart ag fanacht i bhfad ar Acht Gaeilge, agus gur chóir dóibh siúd atá ag rialú i dTuaisceart na hÉireann obair go gníomhach chun Acht Gaeilge a chur in áit.

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

An Coiste Gnó, le béim áirithe ar an LU don Ghaeilge agus LU d'Fheachtasaíocht, chun obair gníomhach a dhéanamh chun tacú leis an Dream Dearg agus an obair i dtreo Acht Gaeilge sa Tuaisceart.

Chomh maith leis sin sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil

Na hOifigigh Reigiúnda agus an LU d'Fheachtasaíocht chun tacú le baill taisteal go dtí an Lá Dearg ag glacadh páirte ar an 21ú Bealtaine i mBéal Feirste.

Comhdháil notes

A meeting between Conradh na Gaeilge and the Minister of State Conor Burns MP in Belfast ended early on the 12th of April 2022. This was after the Minister refused to give a specific parliamentary date for Westminster introduction of the New Decade New Approach Irish Language legislation.

Comhdháil further notes

The New Decade New Approach agreement (January 2020) committed parties and Governments to implementing Irish language legislation within 100 days. By 17 June 2021, the Secretary of State Brandon Lewis gave the Northern Ireland Assembly a final deadline of September 2021 to enact the legislation. Brandon Lewis committed publicly that Westminster would bring forward the legislation directly by October 2021. That deadline then changed to 'the end of the current Stormont mandate'. All deadlines have now passed and to date no Irish language legislation has been moved or has been scheduled to be passed at Westminster.

Comhdháil acknowledges

That the Northern Ireland Assembly has not fulfilled their repeated promises to introduce an Irish Language Act. The incredible campaigning of Conradh na Gaeilge, an Dream Dearg, community groups, students' unions and activists in the North towards securing an Irish Language Act.

Comhdháil believes

That Irish language speakers in the North have waited too long for the introduction of an Irish Language Act, and that those who govern in Northern Ireland must act immediately to introduce an Irish Language Act.

Comhdháil mandates

The USI Coiste Gnó, with particular mandate on LU don Ghaeilge and VP for Campaigns, to take proactive measures to support An Dream Dearg and the work towards an Irish Language Act in the North.

Comhdháil further mandates

The regional officers and VP for Campaigns to support MOs to organise transport to An Lá Dearg taking place on the 21/05/2022 in Belfast.

2022 GAE (NC) 1: Comhphairtíocht le Misneach/ Partnership with Misneach

Proposed by the USI VP for Welfare

Aithníonn an Chomhdháil seo

Is grúpa é Misneach a bhfuil luachanna an cosúil linne, mar ghluaiseacht, acu; mar shampla, ag obair i dtreo na dícholínithe, ag cur deireadh le géarchéim na Gaeltachta agus tsochaí a bhfuil cothrom do chách.

Creideann an Chomhdháil seo

Go bhfuil buntaistí le comhpháirtíocht a chrúthú le Misneach, chun dul i mbun feachtasaíocht, ag eagrú imeachtaí oideachais, pléphaineál agus traenáil d'ár oifigigh agus gníomhaithe.

Agus creideann an Chomhdháil seo

Gur chóir dúinne mar eagraíocht le 374,000 ball ardán a thabhairt don ghrúpa gníomhaíochta seo ag ár imeachtaí agus spásanna Gaeilge.

Mar sin, Glacann an Chomhdháil seo

Le comhpháirtíocht oifigiúil a chrúthú idir Aontas na Mic Léinn in Éirinn agus Misneach.

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil seo

Go n-oibríonn an Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge le Misneach chun tacú agus dul i mbun feachtais, agus imeachtaí a eagrú le chéile.

Comhdháil recognises

Misneach is a group whose values are very similar to our own as a movement; for example, working towards decolonisation, ending the crisis in An Ghaeltacht and creating a fairer and more equal society.

Comhdháil believes

That there are advantages with creating a partnership with Misneach, to get involved in campaigns, organising education events, panel discussions and training for our officers and activists.

Comhdháil also believes

As an organisation with 374,000 members, we should provide a platform for this activist group within our Irish language events and spaces.

Therefore, Comhdháil Approves

The creation of an official partnership between the Union of Students in Ireland and Misneach.

Comhdháil mandates:

The Leas Uachtarán don Ghaeilge work with Misneach to support and organise campaigns and hold events together.

2022 GAE 1: Use of Irish Language County Names

Proposed by NUIG Students' Union

Comhdháil Recognises

The original place names of our towns, villages and counties north and south, place names which have a greater meaning in their original form.

Comhdháil regrets

That most of our original place names were turned into nonsensical gibberish words as part of colonial anglicisation.

Comhdháil believes

That we lost part of the heritage and culture of our towns and villages as new colonial names were forced upon them.

Comhdháil applauds

Other decolonised nations who are reclaiming and changing back to their indigenous place names, such as Mumbai instead of Bombay in India or the former country of Burma changing their name back to Myanmar.

Comhdháil also applauds

Other organisations such as the GAA who encourage the use of our county names in Irish.

Comhdháil believes

That proactive measures should be taken over time to reclaim the prominence of our Irish language place names.

Comhdháil Mandates

USI Coiste Gnó to proactively use the Irish language versions of county names as much as

possible when referring directly to counties in order to help normalise their use. This mandate would apply to press releases, letters, submissions and social media, while excluding specific names of third level colleges and MOs.

2022 GAE 4: Scéim Teanga 2022

Proposed by Gaeilge Working Group

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.

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.

Sainordaíonn an Chomhdháil:

Gur cheart an Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge agus Uachtarán AMLÉ Scéim Teanga AMLÉ 2022 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.

Ceadaíonn an Chomhdháil:

[An Scéim Teanga 2022.](#)

Aisghaireann 20 GAE 2

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil Mandates

The Leas-Uachtarán don Ghaeilge and the USI President to implement USI's Irish Language Scheme 2022 to ensure Irish is seen as a central part of the Union's day to day work.

Comhdháil 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.

Comhdháil Approves

[The Scéim Teanga 2022.](#)

Repeals 20 GAE 2
