

**NUI, Galway Students’ Union Council**

**Comhairle Comhaltas na Mac Léinn, OÉ Gaillimh**

6:00pm, Monday 26th November 2018

Venue: Kirwan Theatre, Concourse

**Present:** Megan Reilly (President), Eibhlín Seoighthe (Vice President for Education), Clare Austick (Vice President for Welfare & Equality), Adhna Nic Dhonnchadha (Oifigeach na Gaeilge), Chuka Paul Oguekwe (Mature Students’ Officer), Brandon Walsh (Societies Chairperson), Sabrina Vaughan (Students’ Union Council Chairperson), Rían McKeagney (Convenor of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies), Scott Green (Convenor of the College of Science), Liezel Ravenscroft (Convenor of the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences), Clodagh McGivern (Convenor of the College of Business, Public Policy & Law), Roshan George (Convenor of the College of Engineering & Informatics), Alex Coughlan (Gender and LGBT + Rights Officer), Muireann O’ Sullivan (Disability Rights Officer), Victoria Chihumura (Ethnic Minorities Officer) and Cameron Keighron (Postgraduate Taught Officer).

**Apologies:** Ryan Guilfoyle (Clubs’ Captain), Jibran Abbbasi (Postgraduate Research Officer) and Daniel McFadden (International Students Officer).

**Minutes / Miontuairiscí**

**Introduction to Council/ Fáiltiú:**

S. Vaughan (SU Council Chairperson) commenced council with a 3-minute survey, asking attendees to write one good thing about NUIG, and one thing they would like to change.

**Minutes\_/ Miontuairiscí:**

The Chair proposed the minutes from the previous council from the 12th of November 2018. The minutes were seconded by C.Murphy (2BC1).

They will now be available on the NUIG SU website.

**Matters Arising / Nithe ag Éirí Astu:**

There were no matters arising from the previous council on 12/11/18

**Speakers / Cainteoirí:**

Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh, Registrar and Deputy President (NUI Galway)

Aidan Hart (NUI Galway- University Sanctuary)
Andrew Forde (VP of Postgrad Affairs for the Union of Students in Ireland (USI))
Voted in unanimously

**Officer Reports / Tuairisc na nOifigeach:**

Officer Reports that were sent out in Council email were taken as read by each officer in SU Council.

C. McGivern (Convenor of the College of Business, Public Policy & Law) stated that her officer report was submitted late but gave a brief run-through of her report.

A. Coughlan (Gender and LGBT + Rights Officer) updated us on Athena Swan (working with Convenors for Arts & Science, and had a meeting with the Vice Dean).

They also stated that their officer report was submitted late but gave a brief run-through of their report.

E. Seoighthe (VP for Education) gave their report.
Cian O Shaughnessy (LLM) asked if outstanding reports from the previous council had been released yet?
The Chairperson stated that late reports would be included and circulated in the next period.

**Speaker 1/ Cainteoir 1**

Andrew Forde (VP for Postgraduate Affairs for USI) speaking on behalf of Barry Clohessy (VP for the BMW Region USI).

Mr. Forde started out by explaining USI, and what they do which include advocating with the government and support Students’ Unions across the country.
Highlighted two big campaigns that USI have undertaken which include advocating for education (Publicly funded education… targeting Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil) and housing (Student built accommodation. Information from Galway housing statistics driving legislation within the Oireachtas)

N. O’Brien (Final Law) asked if USI include private colleges also?
R: USI is a membership organisation to which SU’s apply to; private colleges are included in USI.

Andrew Forde wished all members of council good luck with their upcoming exams.

*bmw@usi.ie*

**Speaker 2/ Cainteoir 2**

Aidan Harte (University of Sanctuary NUIG) Aiming to make university
Racist incidents around council. Proposing a collaboration between SU and sanctuary showing solidarity against discrimination.

M. Reilly (SU President) asked for Mr. Harte to explain the campaign and how it is going.
R: Initiated in 2007 in the UK, refugee seeker supports not in place. Collaborated with local groups and councils. Spread to Wales, NI and Scotland. 2015 DCU was declared first university of sanctuary.
Galway hoping to become not only a university of sanctuary but also a community.
Developing projects and events and workshops and different societies.
To get involved contact C. Austick (VP for Welfare & Equality) su.welfare@nuigalway.ie

Sean Guinan (Final Anatomy) Asked for more details regarding racist events happening on campus.
R: A student using a derogatory term towards a minority. There was an incident in the library and an incident off campus, both involving students.

*sanctuarynuig@gmail.com*

**Speaker 3/ Cainteoir 3**

Professor Pól Ó Dochartaigh (Registrar and Deputy President NUIG)
Spoke how the university structure was highly centralised.

New President 🡪 devolving authority and involvement to the colleges. There were great imbalances, conflict with staff and is trying to level this out.
Accommodation crisis, another block of 400 beds in 2020, and possibility of a third block.
Employability, graduate attributes, student input. Appointing a Dean of Students, there is several applicants for the role. SU president will be on interview panel.

ISSE 🡪 NUIG participation rates are good

Wants to show ISSE makes a change on campus.
Another project was the NStEP project. Student participation (quality review every 7 years)
Key point that the structures in the university are changing and growing, moving away from a highly centralised model to a more democratic model.

C. Keighron (Postgrad Taught Officer) stated that there is too much strain on student services to look after students and asks that the Dean of Students’ be a bit more inclusive of postgrad taught students.
R: Wasn’t here whilst the president was talking but that the Dean of Students will be there for ALL students and was explicit that Postgraduate Taught students won’t be falling through the cracks.

A. Coughlan (Gender and LGBT+ Rights Officer) 1 in 500 students affected by Financial Aid Fund, still no statement from the university. Told not to appeal and would receive an email. Received an unofficial call.
Students applying to financial aid are most marginalised/ in need. Ignores sheer level of stress and strain. No declaration of wrongdoing from university.
R: Knows there was a mess up, will work to make sure it doesn’t happen again
A. Coughlan: SU has been calling for a full review, would you commit to this review
R: Stated that this was up to UMT, not him. There will be a review regardless.

R. McKeagney (Convenor of Arts) 10 credit module failed means repeat, would you support motion
Supports for those studying 1 module and then going to 6.
R: Already convened a working group. Students should be able to carry up to past 10 credits. Need to make sure we get it right and properly.
Gave German as an example and stated that those who failed a Beginner language module could not carry it alongside an Advanced language module.
For those struggling to get 60 credits in one year, 70 credits in another year might be too much pressure and too large a workload.

A. Reaves (Science) stated that for those deferring exams will have to sit them in August, and will not receive a second chance.
R: Should be able to go into second year anyways. Stated that mercy marks are given, marks are generous compared to what he has seen elsewhere. Occasionally though “life intervenes”.

S. Guinan (Final Anatomy) compared pass rate to other colleges. Higher pass rate compared to others but a lower rate of Q1’s.
R: Hasn’t gone any further. Slightly lower average entry points? Tradition in arts of tightness around high marks, annoy your lecturer if your ambitious and want a higher mark. Focusing on different things first.

L. Ravenscroft (Convenor of Medicine): Stated that the VP for Student Experience is being replaced by the Dean of Students and felt that this is a bit of a downgrade. Then asked how to ensure students are going to be well represented.
R: Student Services now report to John Gill (COO), no downgrading at all, but will represent beyond an academical perspective.

S. Green (Convenor Science) asked about the emphasis on building buildings on campus.
R: Moving away from an emphasis on building, although doesn’t mean we’ll stop building altogether. Currently aiming for a new library.

A. Coughlan (LGBT Gender) wondering how he sees the student/staff relationship expanding
R: Haven’t thought about it, conversation needed with UMT, praised the Trinity document derived from Scottish SPARKS programme. Putting together a working document, open to going back to SPARKS and is open to improving all ideas.

C. Austick (VP for Welfare & Equality): lack of seating on campus
R: Well voiced issue. Government asked for social learning spaces without people falling over each other. Modern learning space. Waiting for funding from government. Biggest problem is figuring out to fund projects. Dipping into reserves possibly? Books don’t balance every year and reserves are disappearing: don’t want future students to pay our bills.

*registarsoffice@nuigalway.ie*

**Items for information/ Le Eolas:**

1. **Post-Graduate survey** – C. Keighron (Postgraduate Taught Officer) Launching a survey looking at the past semester for all services regarding the university. Asked class reps to get onto their classes about them.
2. **Council Feedback Survey** – S. Vaughan (Council Chairperson) Sending out for feedback within the next week to be filled out.
3. **Updates**
1. Charity Fund Update – M. Reilly (SU President)

2. Financial Fund Update – C. Austick (before Charity) students have received emails and received funding. Calling for a full review next week.

3. Direct Provision Centre – V. Chihumura (Ethnic Minorities Officer) The Direct Provision Centre (The Eglington) in Salthill is being closed. V. Chihumura proposes to send one big letter with multiple signatures instead of multiple individual letters as to not lose its effect.

M. Reilly (SU President) trying to get answers, and asking if displaced residents will they be placed in Galway, lobbying for those not in a position to do so themselves.

C. Austick (Welfare and Equality) Brought to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee so hopefully university management will take a stance on this issue also.

4. Sustainability Strategy – M. Reilly (SU President) asking for ideas from everyone, wanting to keep the sustainability strategy on the agenda as a rolling item.
4. **Campaigns**
1. Mental Health Mondays – C. Austick (VP for Welfare & Equality) 9 weeks collaboration with GMIT students, handed out lots of free stuff across campus, asking for feedback and wants feedback as to how to improve.

2. The sit in – S. Green (Convenor for the College of Science) Lecture shout outs for days up until Thursday. Musical Chairs in the Quadrangle and then hand management the survey that was filled out.

M. Reilly (SU President) President has decided on a “social space” but she feels it’s a talk shop and may take months for management to take any action on this.

3. Elections Media – M. Reilly (SU President) stated that the three fulltime positions, and 16 part-time are to be filled for 19/20. Get into contact with those currently in those positions if interested. Elections happen early to mid-March. Looking to change elections, idea of being extending the election period slightly, allowing 1 week to have more time for hustings etc. and then 4 days for canvassing. Asked for feedback. To be proposed at the next council.

N. O’Brien (Final Law) talked about the environment and campaigns, and highlighted that leaflets scattered everywhere afterwards. Proposed that those running should remove their posters after the campaign.

S. Green (Convenor Science) stated that extra time would be beneficial.

S. Guinan (Final Anatomy) stated that hustings are an expense.
R: Full time and part time elections are separate and then disagreed that hustings are an expense as they can be held in a lecture hall.

4. Charity Christmas Jumper Night – M. Reilly (SU President) November 29th, money going towards Galway RCC and COPE Galway. Bands are €5 each from the SU and the money still goes towards charity even if purchased on the door.

5. Big Fat Charity Cake Sale and Pet Farm
11am – 3.30pm Wednesday 5th December in Áras na Mac Léinn. There will all sorts of animals, cake, tea, a raffle and tunes from Flirt FM. All funds raised going towards GRCC and COPE Galway
Volunteers needed for the event, contact Joanna Brophy (Volunteer Co-ordinator)

6. Christmas Tree Lighting
University this year are also doing an official Christmas tree lighting on the 5th of December. A good break from study and free food.

7. Christmas Exam Buses with City Direct
€2 per journey. Non-Stop Direct Service to Salthill Exam Venues (Leisureland/Galway Bay Hotel) Monday 10th December – Thursday 20th December 2018. Leaving University Road (Bus Stop Near Ward’s) 8:40 and 15:40.
Leaving Salthill (Leisureland) 11:40 and 18:40.

**Items for agreement/ Le Socrú:**

1. None as of this date

**Items for discussion/ Le Bheith Pléite:**

**Topic 1/ Topaic 1 – Feedback from Experiments/ Assignments**

L. Philip (MSc Biomedical Engineering) Discussion regarding feedback on assignments from faculty.
in Biomedical Engineering department: large experiments and assignments. Not getting feedback, just grades. Not ideal for students with learning disabilities and students in general.

E. Hannon (4th Computer & science Tec) no grades for assignments throughout the semester, only getting them with grades at the end. Has caused problems in the past.

C. Foster (2nd Soc and Pol) same grade for every assignment, no feedback, even when going in during office hours. Lost in a large class. Hard to get actual feedback from your lecturers

E. Seoighthe (VP For Education) asked for those affected to email her or any others if these issues do arise so they can be escalated further.

R. McKeagney (Convenor for Arts) stated that the university has a policy on feedback and suggested that the university may need a renewal of said policy.
Andrew Forde (VP for Postgraduate Affairs for USI) stated that the Students’ Union could codify this.

**A.O.B/ A.G.E**

E. Walker (2nd Engineering Systems) Asked for a Fairtrade campus update on items being sold in SU shop.
R: M. Reilly (SU President) Wants the sustainability strategy to bring it forward and ensured that it is being looked at.

S. Guinan (4th Anatomy) Disposable cup on campus have taken step backwards as they are no longer compostable. Asking for an update on the sustainability report
R: Wasn’t aware of this and will take it up with the CEO of the Commercial Services.

R. McKeagney (Convenor of Arts) proposing: deposit and return scheme. In Germany a percentage of money back for returning bottles/cans.

E. Seoighthe (VP for Education) stated that the class rep hoodies have been delivered and are waiting in the SU office.

Unknown Speaker (Microbiology) Suggested an idea for the Christmas tree lighting 5 euro for a light for a remembrance of a lost love one and to use this money for charity on campus maybe.
C. Austick (VP for Welfare) agreed with this and thought it was a good idea.

Aoife Hughes (4th Environmental Science) Bialann still using single-use plastic forks and knives. Plant-based ones behind the counter but should be replaced by these throughout.
R: M. Reilly: Stated she would bring this up with COO of Commercial Services.

E. Kelly (Environmental Science) No interactions with people that are studying about the environment for the sustainability strategy.
R: M. Reilly: New sustainability officer coming into the university, which will provide a restructure of sorts.

N. Denaghy (Sustainability) asked for the students to staff ratio on the committee.
R: Bad ratio
R2: S. Green (Convenor of Science) propose that 2 year final years (studying sustainability/ the environment) sit on the committee perhaps.

J. Hallsburn (1BA) 50% less funding per person for the college. If the college can’t afford it not their fault.
R: M. Reilly: looking for publicly funded education. Higher Education section is struggling, but maybe they owe us a duty of care. Investing in the wrong buildings perhaps. Agreed with this point.

O. Murphy (1st Science) items not explained for exams not explained in lecture slides
R: M. Reilly: send an email to Eibhlín if this is an ongoing issue. su.education@nuigalway.ie

L. Henson (1BA Pol) full fees for 3rd year although it doesn’t count towards degree.
R: Rian McKeagney (Convenor of Arts) BA Connect big focus of his, focus group in second semester being put together in the hopes of sorting this issue.

M. Reilly (SU President) Wished everyone the best with exams.

S. Vaughan (SU Chairperson) Elections for chairperson are on the 4th of March, get into contact if they wished.

Wished everyone the best with their exams, happy holidays and a safe new year.

The chairperson then concluded the meeting at 7.45 pm

26/11/18

Minutes proposed by: Sabrina Vaughan (SU Council Chairperson).

Seconded by: C.Ó Seachnasaigh, LLM (international &comparative business law)

21/01/19

\*These minutes were prepared from a contemporaneous note taken by Dara Rickard (SU Council Secretary) at the meeting Monday, 26th of November 2018 at 6PM in the Kirwan Theatre and were typed into this memorandum style document (and edited by SU Council Chairperson, and SU Council Secretary) for the record of Council.