



**Students' Union Council – Draft Minutes to be approved at SU Council on the
20th January 2020**

6:00 pm, Monday, 25th November 2019

Venue: Large Lecture Hall, Human Biology Building

Present:

Clare Austick (President) (She/Her), Cameron Keighron (Vice-President / Education Officer) (They/Them), Brandon Walsh (Vice-President / Welfare & Equality Officer) (He/Him), Pádraic Toomey (Clubs' Captain) (He/Him), Mairtin Mac Gabhann (Convenor of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies)(He/Him), Scott Green (Students' Union Council Chairperson) (They/Them), Avery Fenton (International Students' Officer) (She/Her), Oissine Moore (Societies Chairperson) (He/Him), Emily Tock (Postgraduate Research Officer) (She/Her).

Alex Coughlan (Disability Rights Officer) (They/Them), Kenny Cooke (Convenor of the College of Science) (He/Him), Clodagh McGivern (Convenor of the College of Business, Public Policy & Law) (She/Her), Sachi Sinha (Convenor of the College of Engineering & Informatics) (She/Her).

Apologies:

Aisling Fitzgerald (Convenor of the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences) (She/Her), Dheeraj Gudluru (Postgraduate Taught Officer) (He/Him)

Absent: Erin Mac An Tsaoir (Oifigeach Na Gaeilge) (He/Him), Torri Chihumura (Ethnic Minorities Officer) (She/Her).

Minutes (Miontuairiscí) for SU Council 11/11/2019:

Introduction to Council/ Fáiltiú:

Welcomed to Council.

Agenda outlined by Chairperson.

Seconding of minutes from last SU council:

Proposed by: Kelsey Bruce (1MS01, Regenerative Medicine)

Seconded by: Cameron Keighron (Vice-President / Education Officer)

Acceptance of apologies passed by unanimous vote.

Speakers / Cainteoirí:

Professor Ciaran O hOgartaigh (NUIG President)

Speaker voted in with unanimous vote.

Professor shared his email address welcoming all student queries:

president@nuigalway.ie

Zhonna Gonzalez Davis (1st year Law):

In relation to NUIGs new 10 yr contract with Coca-Cola, plastic bottles in vending machines and on our aim to turn towards sustainability and reducing plastic use...Possible conflict of interest. How would that affect our relationship with the company?

Answered: Aware of the difficulty with contract with Coca Cola, currently in discussions, new requirements will made at contract renewal, hopeful that something can be done before then as well.

Rose Connelly (1st year Spanish)

Is there a way to influence Bhiann to lean more towards use of normal plates and cutlery, opposed to plastic disposable cutlery that is widely on offer, as the goal shouldn't be the use of single use items? It is disappointing to see this, and something should be done to encourage use of reusable plates and cutlery.

Answered: Realises importance, will be developing policies in 2020 on travel, reusables, consumables, etc.... Setting goals and policies, reachable values per year, etc.

Kenny (Final Year Soc and Pol):

Professor, you have repeatedly said that you want 'us' to keep pushing staff, shouldn't you be doing that as well...Enquired about power dynamic between the NUIG President and the Academic Staff....

Answered: Presidents have a 'certain amount' of influence (not unlimited) ...Goal is to be carbon neutral by 2030. He wished to together with us,

aggressively pursue a path towards more sustainable ways. We the students are the proxy and are potentially much more influential...

Cameron Keighron (Education Officer) envisaging more student representation in PGR, issues and roles, conscious that the student voice (both of taught and research) must be more heard...

Answered: Concern is heard. (Importance of student voice is echoed)

Unknown

Improvements are needed on accessibility to college, including accessibility to An Bhalann...door stomps to open the doors etc.

Answered: Improvements have been made in the Maths building, etc many places are now accessible, for those that need more accessibility please email him and send him a list of venues that need more door stops etc.

Alex (Disability Rights Officer)- following on from the previous question.... There are inaccessible push open doors on campus, attention of relevant people was raised, and the reply from multiple directions was "we don't have a budget". How can we (the SU) keep pushing, when the universities answer is "a no budget", despite it being legal requirement to provide accessibility, etc....

Answered: Budget could be gotten, of course it should be done, issue hasn't come to his attention, invited us to email him about these issues and provide detail. University can apply for funding for capital projects, etc.

Oissine Moore (Societies Chairperson)

Could you explain the relationship between the university and Galway 2020, the lending of student facilities and block bookings for external use...and priority given away to Galway 2020 causing disruptions to student exams in semester 2.

Answered: NUIG is supporting Galway 2020...use of Bailey Allen Hall was booked for the summer exam, but speaker is not aware of any other booking or disruptions. As far as he knows the Bailey Allen Hall is not block booked. Will get back to Clare with a confirmation.

Zhonna D Gonzales (1st year law)

The Kirwan Theatre and many theatres on the concourse have several broken seats, there are students sitting on the stairs and the floor around the back.

Answered: Issue has been noticed and raised to the Buildings Office. Issues will be fixed in second semester.

We were welcomed to send him an e-mail with further arising issues or concerns and invited to attend the approaching symbolic lighting of the NUIG Christmas tree.

Cameron Keighron (Vice-President / Education Officer) (speaking instead of exam office)

Speaking in relation to exam scheduling issues. Welcomes e-mails on further exam and scheduling issues to compile a list of them to be passed onto and communicated to the Exams Office with problems to be avoided in next semester and in the coming years.

A slideshow of practical tips was sent out by the exam office, reminder to not forget to bring student IDs, regularly check exam timetable updates and amendments page, buses are scheduled to run 20 mins before and 20 minutes after the finish of the exams in Leisureland, if there are any special requirements needed that you have not been accommodated for, please get in touch. Happy to take and answer questions.

Leah Sherrils (Final year Soc and Pol)

Asking about update on a specific exam issue about the English module?

Answered: No sure if they can do anything about it but he will continue to push the exam office. Problem was not ignored, but there was no available slot, still waiting for reply, and pushing for solutions...

Kelly (2nd year English):

Question on exam venues assigned by disability support services....

Answered:

If you have an exam scheduled for the Bailey Allen, Kingfisher, Leisureland, and you happen to forget that your disability support services venue is elsewhere, try not to panic, there should be a few extra places available in the other venue, if you are late for an exam, you can still enter within the first 30 mins, make yourself known to one of the exam stewards and they will help you find your seat and get settled, they are aids people employed by the chaplaincy to help you if you feel overwhelmed...you are allowed to go to bathroom...do not bring your phone into the exam hall.

Mia Walsh (1st year German)

Why do we need to pay for buses, it is not our fault we need a bus to get to the exam venue that is scheduled in Salthill, off-campus...?

Answered: Aware of issue. Claire will provide follow up.

Sherlane / Cheryl Lane (Human Law)

Just in relation to the exams, do you still get a reading week if you have MCQs for the Christmas test? (Many exams are class based and happen before the study week...)

Answered (by Cameron Keighron): Aware of these structure issues, send an email, and will get in touch with the course director about the issue.

POI: Clodagh (Convenor of Business)

Issue was brought up to Charles O'M. and his reasoning behind it was, that there was a positive response from students to do it that way...

Officer Reports / Tuairisc na nOifigeach:

Question on officer report addressed to Brandon Walsh (Vice-President / Welfare & Equality Officer)

Kelsey Bruce (1MS01 Regenerative Medicine)

You mentioned in your report I believe it was, that are working on was the podcast, correct? Will there be any kind of online form for the general student population to recommend topics or do you want students to contact or email you directly?

Answered:

A question platform was put up on Instagram a few weeks ago and they did take issues to solution, and it can be done again as it was successful. Some sort of group or some sort of Google form that we could have up there.

He is more than happy to welcome speakers who are very passionate about a topic they want covered.

Questions addressed to Clare Austick (President)

Sherlane/ Cheryl Lane (Human Rights)

Some students in her course feel that they are not getting updates as regularly as they should. Is there anything that can be done, maybe to send out a bit more to remind people...

Answered: We are aiming to convey to and involve students more, it's an item on the agenda.

-Online campaign tell the SU

-Suggestion boxes are set up around campus welcoming any issues and suggestions from students

-Provision of weekly or biweekly updates and bullet-points on work done by SU is in plan for semester II. Updates and bullet-points could be shared to the Class Rep FB page and then the reps could further pass this onto and circulate to their classes.

Rose (1st year Spanish)

It has been expressed by members of her class that students are not too aware of who the class rep is. Many people do not know or care about who the class reps are, what can be done to change this dynamic?

Answered: For 2nd semester if people (class reps) are comfortable they could do an introduction for yourself, circulate templates and show class what is going on the SU as a lot of work is being done by the SU but often that is not communicated to the student body.

Joseph (1st year Engineering)

On the SU website perhaps a list of class reps could be constructed, with names of reps and the codes of the class they represent, etc.

Answered:

Class reps of students is available for view on Work Space. Every time a student logs on they can see who their class rep is.

All other officer reports are taken as read, no questions asked.

Matters Arising / Nithe ag Éirí Astu:

Constitutional Proposal Discussion by Cameron Keighron (Education Officer)

Seeking council approval on non-approval whether planned constitution changes should or should not go to referendum etc.

Points to be changed were emailed onto class reps and were read out loud by Speaker.

Sai (1st year Engineering)

Will the Equality officer be full-time /part-time position?

Answered:

Part-time.

Sai (1st year Engineering)

Since disability rights and LGBTQ and general rights will be merged into the work of one equality rights officer, wouldn't that be too many responsibilities for a part-time position?

Answered:

Previously it was one role too, it was divided up later, however this was brought up as an issue 2 years ago, we have talked to other universities and organisations of similar size, the rationale behind proposed changes have been carefully considered, explained, and based on Maynooth's and UCC's SU model.

Alex (Disability Rights Officer)

Has serious concerns about merging equality back into one single position...15-25 hrs of work are done per week in the Disability Rights Officer position alone. Merging these positions is putting too much pressure on a single unpaid volunteer. Has concerns about the merge and the proposed equality working group, as the current proposal is, that only class reps can vote, removing the opportunity of many people from minority backgrounds across NUIG to vote for their own representatives. It also removes the equality position much smaller on the executive board itself. Finally, yes, we are a large executive, however NUIG is planning to increase its student body size from 19 to 26 000 students by 2025.

Answered by Cameron Keighron (Education Officer): Points are appreciated and taken on board. However, the task now is to decide what we want or do not want, but whether we (as a council) believe that our 19000 students should have the opportunity to vote on whether these changes should go through.

Point is argued that these changes were based on one meeting, they were not. People were given ample opportunities to feed into the topic over this year and the previous year, people felt confused, feedback coming back triggered the proposed changes, new system is based off

UCC's successful model to ease student engagement and reduce confusion.

Evie (4th year Microbiology)

If this is put forward to referendum will this be a single yes/no question, or will it be broken down into separate points and yes/no votes on each point?

Answered by Cameron Keighron: It will be one amendment, but if people want it to be divided into separate amendments that could also be considered.

Sabrina M. (4th year Arts)

Question in relation to scrapping of mature student officer. Will mature students in the future need to contact the equality officer or will they need to contact their class reps with their issues? Who will be their representation? And will changes be stated anywhere or communicated to them, so that they do not fall in through the cracks...

Answered: Mature students would need to contact their executive class reps with their academic questions. If changes are made it will be communicated to them by the Mature Student Officer, to ensure that students understand that adequate representation will be provided in the future.

Sabrina M. (4th year Arts)

Terminology question on Welfare & Equality Officer and Equality Officer... Will this not cause a confusion between the titles, e-mails, etc?

Answered: Student opinion has been taken on board.

Brandon Walsh (Welfare and Equality)

A lot of the burdens will be taken off, of the shoulders of officers with the aforementioned merge. Finds the changes manageable, UCC has a model that does work, and is proved to be manageable.

Alex (Disability Rights Officer)

Inquired about different models of other universities... It keeps coming up that we are changing to UCC's model, but how many other universities in the country have the model that mirrors NUIG's current and existing model.

Answered by Cameron Keighron (Education Officer):

Some do not, some do, and some are considering making similar changes to us... Many similar university systems were consulted, robust documentation and feedback have been collected, careful planning and discussions have been made to ensure that all students will continue to be equally represented with this proposal.

Padraic Toomey (Clubs Captain)

Perhaps we could invite the last equality officer of NUIG and ask and consult her/him if she/he was comfortable with the workload.

Brandon Walsh (Welfare & Equality Officer)

Representation is very-very important. We are here to represent all students, we need to strive for that, but we cannot allow things to get tokenistic, diluting

the cause, which can happen... Speaker does not believe that there must be separate roles for each of the minorities. The executive will be here to represent all students, no matter what...

Rian (final year Soc and Pol)

Based on personal experience of being a previous member of the executive, he knows that the work load can be tough, however believes that the re-merge should happen. Having one officer for all of these does not mean that students will be under represented. Supports merge.

Avery (International Students' Officer)

Will international students be given the same support as before?

Highlights concerns about difficulties and confusion around what extra paperwork etc needs to be filled out and what documentation needs to be done by international students and draws need to continued support.

Answered: We were meant to do that as a union anyways.... It should be a goal irrespective of the proposed constitutional changes to further aid international students.

Joseph (1st year Engineering)

Has been on a few different executives, this university has executive size of 19, which is ridiculously large, it really does dilute the role of officers, Speaker believes that merge is needed, without doing this, the officers get only so little power that might not be as valued in the university by stakeholders like university management...Speaker believes that with the merge if one person is representative of all these issues, they get a bit more power to actually change things.

Speaker believes merge will be an excellent step forward for the union.

Unknown

If roles are split.... If Welfare & Equality Officer is made into a full-time position and the Equality Officer is not.... That is 1 role, split into 2, shared between people... It doesn't seem to be fair that one person gets the money more, clash of interests, etc...

Answered:

Welfare & Equality and the Equality officers' role will not be the same, they will not be doing the same things.

Welfare and Equality Officer position will be more focused on paced work, policy making, collaborating and dealing with university management, etc. Their role requires a full-time commitment, while the Equality Officers work will be part-time and be focused on campaigns, raising awareness, etc.

2 Different roles, requiring different time commitments...

Sai (1st year Engineering):

Will the Welfare and Equality Officer have the final say on the decisions made by the Equality Officer.

Answered: Nobody has final say. These are separate and different roles, role is autonomous for the particular officer to move in whatever direction.

Owen (Final Year Bio)

Was there ever a meeting which everyone was invited to for the discussion of this merge?

Answered: All opportunity was provided to all executives to attend meetings and everyone who wanted to come in. People were allowed their opinion, discussions were made, wider consultations also happened.

Clare Austick (President) Following through with the democratic process

Highlighting that the question is not whether we are in favour of or against the proposed constitutional changes, but whether or not we wish to pass this onto a referendum, so that the wider student population can take a vote on the amendments upon the obtaining of the necessary number of signatures.

Scott Green (SU Council Chairperson):

“Do we as SU council agree that this proposal should be put forward to referendum upon the obtaining of 500 signatures?”

Yes. Passed by majority vote.

Sai (1st Year Engineering)

Will there be an electronic vote or physical booths, and if yes will there be any set up for engineering building, as last time booths were in the concourse, which is a less convenient for engineering students.... Where will the physical booths be?

Answered by Scott Green & Clare Austick:

Yes, to electronic vote. Yes, to physical booths which will be set up at An Bhiallan, Aras na Mac Leinn.... And further info on other locations will be provided.

Meghan (4th Micro)

How does the union plan on getting the 500 signatures? How are you going to go about getting the student body to engage to such extent?

Answered by Cameron Keighron (VP & Education Officer):

The 500 signatures will be collected by members of the executives, the signature collection and the referendum will be both advertised, open consultations will be held, executives remain open to ideas, and suggestions, if anyone has any ideas or suggestions, please do let the executive body know.

Sabrina (final year arts)

Will there be a quota or form of who needs to vote, minimum number of people who need to vote, etc...

Answered by Cameron Keighron (VP & Education Officer):

Voting will be as per the constitution, 2 further meetings looking into housekeeping and the constitution will be held.

Working Group Updates:

Clare Austick (President)

Waiting on information on the Aras na Mac Leinn project fund, will keep us updated.

Brandon Walsh (Welfare & Equality Officer) sustainability working group
Meatless Mondays, bottled water update, climate strike update to be provided.

Alex (Disability Rights Officer) Living Wage Working Group

Group meeting and session are still taking place, prioritising issues and tasks to be tackled in the next semester. Encourages student involvement in working group.

P.O.I.:

Clare Austick (President): On distribution of Key Cups

Cameron Keighron (Education Officer): Update on student engagement programmes, success strategy, online training for part-time and distance learners...ISS meeting, development of a downloadable app to show free PCS on campus (over 900 PCs on campus)

No questions asked.

A.O.B.:

Aoife (4th year physics)

Could a mental health first aider course be provided for class reps, etc?

Answered by Clare Austick (President): Regional USI officer is planning to assist in providing a training which is similar.

POI by Sabrina (4th year arts) offered to put a link on the FB page so that reps can be able to book or join similar workshops provided externally...Assist trainings/safe talk workshops/ awareness trainings, etc.

Zhonna D Gonzales (1st year Law):

Class rep minutes are online, but have not been updated since March of 2019, brings it to council's attention.

Answered by Scott Green (Students' Union Council Chairperson):

Apologies offered, forgot to send them in to be put onto website, but minutes cannot go up online until they are proposed and seconded on the next council meeting, so it is not possible to read minutes of the last council until they are seconded in the coming one.

Zhonna D Gonzales (1st year Law)

Not sure if it is SU jurisdiction, but would it be possible to introduce a reading week during mid-semester 1 or perhaps a revision session that could take place at that time? (To have a reading week similar to other universities like TCD, etc.)

Answered by Clare Austick (President):

If that was the case, the exam structure would change? Not sure on the issue, it is unlikely to be introduced or happen, but can of course bring it up again, etc.

Unknown

Issue with Pet Farm. Concerns of animal rights and treatment of animals were years last year as well. Wondering if there is a consideration on how that may present a conflict of interest with animal rights, is there an opportunity to cancel this event this year?

Answered by Clare Austick (President):

On the website, it is stated that animals are qualified in welfare and animal rights, information can be forwarded onto people concerned if needed.

Caoimhe (Final Year French)

Similar question referring to dogs specifically...and where the dogs will be "obtained" from?

Answered by Clare Austick (President):

Unsure on the topic. Does not know where we can get them from. Will get back on the question later.

With no other issues or concerns, meeting is concluded at 19:47 on the 25/11/2019.

Minutes were prepared by Szilvia Nemeth (SU Secretary, 1BF1) for the record of council.
