



NUI Galway
Students' Union
Comhaltas na Mac Léinn
OÉ Gaillimh

Minutes as prepared by secretary of Students Union Council, Fionn Sexton Connolly.

Agenda for Students' Union Council 14/12/20

Officers in attendance: Pádraic Toomey, President, Emma Sweeney, VP/Education, Róisín Nic Lochlainn, VP, Welfare and Equality, Kirsty Moran Clubs captain, Clare McHale Arts Convenor, Evan, MArtin Post Grad taught, Seb Bierma, Postgrad research, Aoife Buckley, Trish, Michelle, Erin Mac an tSaoir, Irish Officer,

- **Welcome / Fáilte**

SU President and VP welcome representatives, students and officers.

- **Seconding of Minutes**

Taken as read and seconded by secretary, no action from the chair.

- **Acceptance of Apologies**

Michelle Mitchell

Maeve Arnup

- **Caroline Loughnane, Secretary for Governance and Academic Affairs. And Michelle Millar, Dean of students - Amendment to the Code of Conduct**

VÓTÁIL: Motion passed, speakers permitted entry.

Michelle Millar and Caroline Loughnane enter the meeting.

Caroline Loughnane: Thanks the council for support and patience all year. It was great to have SU input. Thanks to the officers. We are doing our best to respond to the feedback from students.

Study space is open, they want to see how much is needed in January. Process in place to monitor demand, monitoring of spaces is active. Booking system is clunky, library will switch time to 8am. Not great, but better than midnight. Yes

We are very constrained by the restrictions on face to face support. Thanks to the academic council and the members of the SU executive.

Marks and standards will be changed and voted on at council, capping will be removed. Will return next year.

The exam results last year were great. Fail rates down, higher grades.

We are at 90% capacity, the rate of claims of space aren't great. When they will return, there will be a relative scale up, and demand is monitored and space made available tailored.

Changes in the code of conduct for this term aren't permanent, actual code isn't being changed, it is just suited to the public health guidelines. Clear signal to students that public health guidelines are important, vast majority observe these guidelines, but some are breaking the rules.

Michelle Millar: This is to keep everyone safe, in her experience it is important to educate everyone as to what is against the code of conduct.

David Kong (in the chat): Why only now?

Caroline Loughnane: It has been in discussion for a long time.

Michelle Millar: it takes a long time.

Zeiad Elmallah: Masks should be made available, Self isolation should mean that students get support to learn, space to spread out is much more useful in that case.

Caroline Loughnane: Masks provided by university during orientation, we will provide masks. Point on self isolation, we have briefed lecturers on this there will be leniency or arrangements granted by module leaders.

Michelle Millar: Chaplaincy has been assisting hugely for students in need of welfare, i.e. shopping.

Róisín Nic Lochlainn: What is the process for discipline?

Michelle Millar: Any alleged breach is referred to me, I will meet the student, per the code of conduct I warn, dismiss or take action. Fine is 5% of arts fee, 150€.

Caroline Loughnane:

- Avoiding referral is preferable, we don't want to see students there, very formal process. Students are given notice of a hearing and may bring a supporter.
- 10-15 members, each college is represented on it and the SU is represented.
- Fair procedure is applied, the student comes in and the chair introduces people, the case is set out, the student is asked to give an advance reply, may opt this out, they are questioned and a case is made against them, student may go outside and return to receive the sanction. Lowest sanction is a warning and a fine, highest is exclusion from the university. The aim is to avoid this stage.

If the academic council approves this proposed modification on the 15/12/2020, it will be implemented.

Erin mac an tSaoir: Doesn't agree with third part of the conduct, reports may flood in and it could cause a wave of reporting. Concerned that the university is an enforcer. Says the role SU isn't the safety of students, it shouldn't have to provide facemasks, it is the universities job.

Caroline Loughnane: Agrees on the facemasks, the SU helped allocate them but the university paid for them. Section three of the code, we take the point of there being public laws like this, we don't want students to be on the wrong side of the law. As per excessive reporting, it goes to the dean and is subject to her judgement. We are talking about large congregations.

Michelle Millar: First action is to dismiss a claim, and an alleged breach will be viewed as such. They will likely be dismissed.

Wesley Wilders: Agrees with speaker previous to him, fines should be in line with the legal fines. Facemask exemptions be qualified or not?

Michelle Millar: Max fine is 150, will not always be applied to people and the fine goes to the hardship fund. Students offered an instalment plan. They will be given identification to show whether they have an exemption from the mask, and just that.

Caitlin Hogan: Yes, if we're allowed to congregate in homes from Dec 18th (from 2 other households), why not on campus?

Michelle Millar: That is subject to HEA guidance.

Zara Campbell: Is this not the role of An Gardaí Síochána for infractions and fines to be imposed?

Caroline Loughnane: We work to avoid that.

Chloe*: o face visors qualify under face coverings? I know some people do have real medical reasons to not wear face masks but visors are proven to be less effective and may put others at risk

Michelle Millar: We encourage those wearing face coverings to wear safe and approved ones.

Zeiad Elmallah: We need more information on fines and how they are applied.

Michelle Millar: We will take them as they come.

Caroline Loughnane: This is for repeated breaches of conduct, and these serious infractions will result in fines appropriate to the action.

Erin mac an tSaoir: With regard to accommodation again, what provisions are being put in place to assist students, especially international students, to mix in a controlled safe environment. Students' mental health is being severely impacted and I believe that this lack of controlled space is pushing people into unsafe spaces to socialise or into a state of poor mental health.

Michelle Millar: We are working hard, as well as the international officers, to make sure there are safe interactions over christmas. CARA connect has been successful.

Wesley Wilder: Can landlords impose fines on tenants?

Caroline Loughnane: We dont believe so. We work with landlords closely.

T. Lakhdar: Are we talking about serious breaches only? Like throwing house parties? In this case there are already laws and huge fines in place. Otherwise we're risking finger pointing at "these 6 people met up" "this person was coughing in class, showing up with symptoms" "this person went to the NUIG library but they live 15km away (during a Level 5)" and it's too subjective

Caroline Loughnane: We are applying these sanctions on parties and serious breaches of the conduct, we do not want to see people reach the disciplinary hearing.

Fionn Sexton Connolly: Can Corrib village refer a student living in the village to the university? Can the data be shared between the 2 bodies?

Caroline Loughnane: Preliminary advice suggests so, that it is legal.

Adam Mullins: If something like this went through, will we all get an email updating us?

Caroline Loughnane and Michelle Millar: Yes.

Zeiad Elmallah: we need to make it more specific to make it fairer.

Michelle Millar: rather than amend the code each time there is a change in restrictions we have a broad wording to make it stand without constant changes.

VÓTÁIL: Motion passed.

- **Officer Reports / Tuairiscí na nOifgeach**

Taken as read.

- **Motions/ Rúin**

·Athrú Príomh-Ainm an Chomhaltais go Gaeilge/Change Primary-Name of the Union to Irish

Irish Officer presents motion.

Speakers against: Unclear if Mr. Wilder is against, spoke in a highly critical manner but did not call for either side.

Wesley Wilder: Asks why change it?

Erin mac an tSaoir: We are the only bilingual university, we should reflect that with the name of the university union.

Wesley Wilder: Is it to change the name to Irish?

Erin mac an tSaoir: Yes, to give recognition to university language

Wesley Wilder: Is it not more appropriate to change language to a more widely spoken language

Erin mac an tSaoir: It will give access to the Irish Language areas around galway

Manoj Kataram: Supports the motion, as it supports the Irish language among international students

Adam Mullins: Supports the motion, Irish is our language and we should expose people to this more.

Barry*: We are different to other colleges, we are bilingual and we are lucky to have this status, we can be the first to do this

Saoirse Connolly: Against, thinks that it is virtuous and we should not change it

Barry*: We are trying to give recognition to Gaeilge and not to erase english.

Wesley Wilder: Putting Irish first makes it seem more important, but english is more widely spoken. Both languages are represented.

William McCabe: In favour, we should recognise it and not treat it as a minority.

Callum Boyle: In favour, Putting it above isn't erasing any language.

Matthew Connolly: In favour, it is an exciting opportunity.

Seán Murphy: In favour, speakers against made many references to english being more widely spoken, but Irish isn't and we must work to change that.

Jodi Lafferty: It is the first language, and we should preserve our culture.

Finn McGlacken: For, doesn't take away from english and thinks its beautiful.

Robert Naughton: If it is to go ahead, will there be a cost?

Pádraic Toomey: We will have to change, all new things will be changed and the signs will be changed. In next term, likely. Funds taken from Irish Fund.

Manoj Kataram:, Wes has points, and agrees somewhat.

Finn McGlacken: Understands Wes, there is more english support, but Irish does need a hand up.

Wesley Wilder: It is already there, both languages, it would change how we do business and this will affect future orders of business.

Ellen* : It is symbolic of the support for the University Irish speakers

Saoirse Connolly: Against. We run the risk of confusion.

Barry* : We call the places as the Irish language, we already have Irish integrated

Clare McHale: We reiterate the last point, I don't want to speak english as the first language, we owe it to the future generations. Irish is our language, I endorse this motion.

Erin Mac an tSaoir: As Gaeilge, As an Irish speaker who wants to speak his native language Irish is viewed as extra, Irish should be put ahead of the english language to promote its use.

VÓTÁIL: Motion passes.

- **Items for Discussion/Míreanna Plé**

• NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, GALWAY Draft Substance Use POLICY

Róisín Nic Lochlainn: Draft NUIG policy on drug use and safety, encourages all students to look at that. Meeting held during MH week was inconclusive.

Fionn Sexton Connolly: I would encourage all students to look at and engage with this drug policy, it can save a friend, a brother or sister.

Emma Sweeney: Hoodies available from the SU Office.

- **Points of Information / Pointí Eolais**

• *Bye-Elections*

Padraic, Thursday Bye-Elections . Highest ever number of candidates. Information given on voting on the website. Encourage all to vote.

• *Teaching Hero Awards*

Going ahead for the second semester, please endorse someone for the award.

• *Academic Standing Committee - P.O.I - Capping and Exam Appeals Policy*

Will speak when Caroline is in.

• *Workshops*

Emma Sweeney: Many student workshops on this week, links sent out. Run by experienced people.

• *College Councils*

Happening this week, links to come out.

• *Procturing*

Students have gotten the email.

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

Voting procedure motion proposed by William McCabe: Proposer hopes we all are in favour of democracy, to make sure the votes are fair. Notes that the first election this year was unfair due to use of the 'First past the post' system.

Callum Boyle: Will this apply to all positions.

Pádraic Toomey: Yes, it already applies to all elected officers except the Secretary as that post is normally not contested.

Saoirse Connolly: Will this happen again?

William McCabe: Best to pass motion as opposed to an undemocratic vote.

Emma Sweeney: It is to make it fair.

Ciara O'Neill: Is this going to be a quick process?

Pádraic Toomey: Yes. Council had issues starting up online at first.

Zeiad Elmallah: Is this preference voting?

Emma Sweeney: Yes.

VÓTÁIL: Motion Passed

Pádraic Toomey: Fees for the med students are being reviewed, it sets a bad precedent. A fee must be changed by HEA and the levy by the SU.

Erin mac an tSaoir: There will be Irish classes for the refreshers course and to make more use of the Irish language in the social circles of the University. Deadline is the 21/12/20.

Wesley Wilder: we were only given notice for grade markings too late for us to know that it is important.

Emma Sweeney: We will push to have advance notice of grade markings changes, esp on continuous assessment.

Emma Sweeney: Disabilities rights office wants more funding, and there is a motion coming soon.

Manoj Kataram: Is there a survey going out on what works this year and what doesn't? This medium is very effective and we should survey what the SU should keep.

Emma Sweeney: You raise a really valid point and we will study the student survey, we will bring forward these things to the management.

Erin Mac an tSaoir: Irish in primary schools is in danger of having irish teaching times reduced. Link in the chat to give your feedback on that.

On the Irish committee, in the new year it will start hopefully. Gives thanks.

Georgia*: On campus meetings with staff for students with disabilities are very important.

Emma Sweeney: We will work with our disabilities rights officer and look into that issue.

Zeiad Elmallah: when will the survey results come out?

Emma Sweeney: We don't have access yet.

Pádraic Toomey: Should come in next week.

Wesley Wilder: I emailed a lecturer about an extension, per my LENS report, and denied me. Who do you talk to about that?

Emma Sweeney: Talk to the disabilities service, and I will seek more time with staff to work on this.

Caoimhe*: We need to get notice of when we have exams or not.

Emma Sweeney: Registrar does not want first years to have exams, email your course coordinator.

Manoj Kataram: Talk to course coordinator, Wesley.

Wesley Wilder: Should be so that when you present a LENS report you get what you need.

Erin mac an tSaoir: Who should people email for DSS?

Emma Sweeney: Not sure.

Georgia*: There are disabilities that make it hard to reach out so if you reach out and nothing is done, it can hurt. Responses need to be the norm.

Charlena*: On the 5 year strategic plan, is it still in place?

Emma Sweeney: It is still ongoing.

Pádraic Toomey: Budget withheld due to covid costs. We are still pushing them to follow through.

****Not all speakers stated their full names for the minutes, apologies from the secretary for any discrepancy or confusion arising from this.***

ENDS