

Comhairle Comhaltas na Mac Léinn 29/11/21

Comhairle began at 6:06

Apologies: Jack

Absent: Kirsty, Ethan, Anita

Cathal Sherlock (Chairperson) welcomed everyone to the meeting and discussed standing motions and explained how voting on motions works.

Matters Arising: No matters arising were brought forward

Róisín took her report as read and welcomed any questions

Clodagh took her report as read- Clodagh told Council that the reading room opening hours will be extended from 8 am till 2 am from tomorrow 30/11

Cora's officer report from previous council was taken tonight, she accepted both as read.

Eímeair took her report as read

Kirsty's, Ethan's officer report was deferred

Faye, Sai, Krystian, Mairtín took their reports as read

Wes Wilder asked if Irish speech is translated to English following. It was confirmed it is.

Shane took his reports as read

Anita's report was deferred

Matt took their reports as read

Orlaith did not have an opportunity to submit her report- work carried out was Case work regarding students changing their names, helping out at sex toy bingo and helping at the trans remembrance vigil

Anne-Marie took her report as read.

Discussion: Leaving Cert Specifications

Róisín explained that Conradh na Gaeilge have been looking at reforming the specification for Irish in University. One of the possible solutions is to create a higher level of Irish which would accommodate for more students across the board, or to create a new subject of Irish literature and culture. Motion was passed to Eímeair. Eímeair explained that they are looking to split Irish into "Teanga 1" and "Teanga 2" which would allow for students to get more points for the higher class same as maths.

Wes Wilder, Economics BA-Said he was confused about the discussion and said would it not make more sense for students to have Irish as an optional subject rather than a mandatory subject.

Eímeair answered and said that this is unfortunately not an option for our discussion at present.

Clodagh, Education Officer- Says she feels maths is universal and northern students are only able to get a maximum of 600 students through conversion, and as such students from the north, with exemptions, and learning disabilities would be missing out on 25 points and therefore the splitting of Irish into Literature and language is beneficial.

Kevin Singleton, 1st Year History Rep BA: People felt animosity towards the language because of the study of literature, and it is the right decision to split the two up, and we are seeing that people are interested in learning the language as opposed to literature.

Kate Ní Ghacháin: An mbeadh cead ar muintir na gaeltachta an ard ard leibheal a deanamh.

Eímeair said she thinks the situation is based on the school, and the location and that is one of the issues Conradh found was that native speakers from non Gaeltacht areas cannot do the “Teanga 1” higher higher level. For closing comments Eímeair said she agrees with all points made.

Cleo Foley-Rep, BA International: Understands Teanga 1 is for native speakers but doesn't understand the difference in the Teanga 2 syllabus

Eímeair said it is similar to a higher and ordinary syllabus and thus part of the problem is not solved.

Sherlock closed the discussion.

Discussion: Semester 1 Exam Defferals

Clodagh: Says she finds the deferrals system for semester 1 exams makes no sense and would lead to student burnout. The university went ahead with the decision despite widespread disagreement from lecturers. Clodagh wants to write a letter of recommendation regarding exams from reps. Clodagh disagrees with weekend exams, and opened the floor to any comments.

Shane Post Graduate Research Officer asked would it be possible to lobby for a different deferral period as April and weekends are a bad idea. He said he knows there is a reason that we cannot hold deferrals in January but wants to know why we can't do the same.

Clodagh said not much was said but that January isn't suitable as students are returning, mid semester is too busy with assignments, and therefore the college decided on end of semester which she disagrees with, and wants student recommendations.

Shalom Mc Gillen 2nd Year Soc and Pol rep: Speaker finds it ridiculous that they are holding the exams in April when August has always worked prior. There is no logical reason for not doing

them in August, especially when now deferrals are cutting into semester 2 exams. Said that students who are deferring exams have concerns that are out of their control.

Matter Connolly Int Student Officer: A concern for international students who do not expect to be in Ireland following the summer, and therefore an earlier resit date is preferable.

Zara Campbell- 2 nd Year Law and Business Rep: Speaking to students she found January makes the most sense as content is still fresh and would have the least negative impact on results.

Eímeair Oifigeach na Gaeilge: January may not work due to students catching covid late in December.

Clare Robinson MA English: Covid should be taken into account due to the new variant and the further we push it forward the more unsure we are about whether exams will even go forward. Flexibility is needed for this problem.

Niamh Disability Rights: Burn out is a real issue and the April exam timetable will affect disabled students in particular those who aren't registered with DSS. Having the two together are unideal and perhaps February is a better time.

Kieran Donoghue MA Engineering: Presuming students can't have exams in January due to lack of venue as January is GMIT exam time.

Gad Mazinga 1st Year Soc and Pol Rep: It is debilitating for students when they need to defer and having resits overlapping semester 2 exams is not right. Students should have the option to sit exams in January or August and extensions be given to any students sitting January exams.

Sean Gavin 1st year BA Government: Noticed that college would be making decisions on certain cases that students can defer to autumn, would this be the case or not?

Laura McLoughlin 1st Year Commerce and French: Though it'd be good to note that the main concern for students is health risk with in person exams currently due to people not adequately testing.

Clodagh summated that resits before August are due to students doing resits and J1's and no student intends to catch covid. Found that exams need to be taken in the same manner in the initial exam and resit so therefore they would have to both be in person exams. SHE is currently working on getting semester exams online. She found that students appear to prefer an in person resit in January. Clodagh said she intends to make a working group to help solve the issues.

Discussion closed.

Motion: Supporting an Irish Act in the North.

Eímeair: In support of an Irish Language Act in the North and therefore OE Galliamh is in support of this Irish language act. An Irish Language Act would give Irish speakers more rights in the north such as being able to speak Irish to government officials.

Against: No one against

For: Uachtarain Róisín said as a Gaeilgeoir from the north she found this motion very important as people found it very embarrassing to speak our mother language, and still there are not many rights for Irish speakers in the north. All that Irish speakers are interested in is an equal life in the north. St Andrews act of 2006 promised an Irish language act 20 years ago and people are still waiting. Irish is completely hidden in the north.

Clare Robinson MA English asked what is the student union's impact on this motion in the north.

Sean Gavin 1st Year BA Gov: As an Irish speaker, people should be allowed speak the language they please, and to be able to communicate as is their right.

Wesley Wilders Ba Economics : Wants to check if we need to have so many people speaking in favour

Eímeair's summations: What the SU plans to do is go to support the leas uachtarain for gaeilge in USI as they have been doing a lot of work for this, as well as putting pressure on the organisations and politicians that are involved in this motion.

Council chair put the motion to a vote.

Motion Passed with 66 in favour and 2 against.

Motion: Online Exams

Avijit proposed the motions. Students want to move exams online due to fears surrounding covid and travelling to exam venues.

Against: No one spoke against

For: Sean Gavin 1 BA Gov: Noted that moving exams online is more complicated than it may seem. Wanted further clarification on the expectation for final exams.

Róisín Uachtarain CMLOEG POI: The motion mandates CMLOEG to speak with university management and try to urge to them to move exams online. Róisín noted that the executive committee are already doing this through being in touch with university management as well as speaking with ministers for health and higher education.

Orlagh 3rd year environmental science: Is aware of the exec's hard work in trying to get exams online and wanted to express the urgency of this motion.

Avijit finalised by saying this is a very important motion due to students' fears surrounding covid. He asked for updates whenever possible.

Council chair put the motion to a vote.

Motion Passed with 66 in favour and 3 against

Motion: Adding groups to the list of deplatformed groups

Orlaith LGBT rights officer proposed the motion, outlining this was a follow up of a previous motion with a more comprehensive list of groups to include in the list. The list included

- National Party
- Irish Freedom Party
- Identity Ireland
- Síol na hÉireann
- Direct Democracy Ireland
- Irish Democratic Party
- Anti-Corruption Ireland
- Pegida Ireland
- LGB Alliance Ireland
- Irish Women's Lobby
- Radicailín

Council chairperson received a 9B

Eoin put the 9B and referred to the fact that this motion had previously come to council and as such by adding this list would go against previous democratic vote.

Orlaith responded in saying some of the issues were remedied wherein groups have the potential to be removed or added under the democratic process.

9B went to a no vote and the debate continues.

Against: Kevin says from an objective point of view Article 40.6 allows for freedom speech and therefore, although on a personal level they disagree with the groups ideology they cannot take away from their right to speak. They said that the list appears incredibly "left wing" and asked why the list does not include far left parties.

For: Sean Egan 2nd Year DTP: Said that it comes from a position of privilege to give groups the right to spread hatred on campus. It is our job to defend students from the LGBT community, students of colour, female students, etc.

Wes Wilders BA Economics: Found the motion was a waste of time. Found the motion was discriminatory and ludicrous.

For: Róisín Nic Lochlainn CMLOEG Uachtarain urged council to vote in favour of the motion. A platform is a privilege and the motion is in order to prevent extremist groups from taking a platform through CMLOEG. Clarified that union is a left wing group.

For: Shane O'Connell Post Graduate Research Officer: Reiterated a distinction between deplatforming and freedom of speech. This motion allows the students to clarify what groups it finds unfavourable. Highlighted how you are entitled to bring any group you please to the list.

For: Clare Robinson MA English: Highlighted how we owe our students safety, both through online exams and through deplatforming of harmful groups.

Tom Forde highlighted that groups such as PEDIGA on the list have tried to repeal marginalized groups' rights when in power in the past and therefore we owe it to our students to deplatform these groups.

For: Gad Muzinga Soc and Pol Rep: Agrees that we need to set a precedent that we can't allow these groups a platform on campus.

Katie Blain 2 history: Feels the motion will benefit the union as we are honouring marginalised communities on campus.

Orlaith's summation: Apologised to the council for the lack of clarifications. Clarified that no far left groups fall into the list at present. Urged everyone to vote in favour of the motion

Council Chair sent the motion to a vote.

58 in Favour 8 Against

Motion: Make Online Learning More Inclusive for the Neurodivergent

Gad Mazinga Soc and Pol Rep: This motion mandates that accommodation be made for neurodivergent students especially in the time that we are experiencing currently.

Against: No one spoke against this motion.

For: Niamh McGrath: The biggest issues coming from lecturers is they are unwilling to put lectures online due to lower attendance.

Kevin: Offered full support of the motion

Sean Gavin Ba Gov: In favour of the motion. Wanted to know if the accommodations would be universal, and would the motion affect in person lectures also

Clodagh McGivern: Teaching and learning committee is working on such accommodations for students. Urges everyone to vote in favour of the motion.

Paul Byrne 1st year Commerce: Feels the motion is extremely important. As a neurodivergent and feels they are the ones who are most in need in the university and is concerned with how “Unconcerned” lecturers are.

Jessica Taffe 2nd Environmental Science: Feels the motions is great and hopes to see closed captions, feels the motion includes many non-diagnosed neurodivergent people. Said she struggled with online learning with no captions or recordings. Hopes the motion goes forward.

Gad Muzinga: Defined neurodivergence. Highlighted how important the topic is to him and how he would appreciate everyone’s yes vote. Clarified it would need further discussion with Clodagh and Niamh.

Chair put the motion to a vote

Motion passed with 61 in favour

Motion: The N6 Bypass

Criodain O’Murchu MA Science: Approx 20% of Dangan sports ground will be affected by this N6 bypass, as well as many homes being given compulsory purchase orders, as well as impacting much wildlife. The motion mandates that the exec seek a conversation with the staff involved in the process and protest the building of this ring road in the interest of student health, local health, wildlife conservation and sustainability.

Against: Sarah Maguire: She has no option for public transport and felt the motion was very polarising due to the fact that it is excluding many students by expecting them to be in favour of this motion.

For: Hannah Aris Auditor of Nuig Energy: She has worked with Criodan regarding this motion. She said that when the Quincentennial bridge was built many accommodations would be made for public transport and the same is being said about this bypass. More investment should be made into public transport.

Shane asked for a point of clarity about where this motion would be handled, would it be brought to GCC in person or via a letter.

Jessica Taaffe: When you look at the plans the current plans are to bulldoze and knock down houses in Dangan which seems unreasonable during the current accommodation crisis.

In summation: Criodan wants to go through the sustainability working group, as well as reaching out to Galway City Council as well as the University. Criodan also felt adding roads has never

solved the issue of traffic before and instead impact should be made on the importance of public transport in order to influence more people to use their cars less.

Chairperson brought the motion to a vote.

Motion passed

Motion: PhD Stipend

Postgrad Research Officer explained that he would no longer be proposing this motion as he is working internally to solve the issue and will bring an updated motion to the council.

Motion fell

AOB:

Welfare Officer updated from the USI Welfare group. A Taskforce has been created from Dublin club promoters win regards spiking. Cora is currently working on getting a list of Galway based venues in favour of this Taskforce.

Uachtarain announced that full time elections are opening on February 16th and welcomed any questions regarding the role.

Education Officer announced that CUSP will be holding an info night tomorrow at 6 pm and all information was shared in the chat.

Jessica Taaffe asked whether students have been approached about the student health unit turning away students who are getting in touch regarding mental health, wherein the student is being told by the student health unit that they are not interested in working with their issues. Cora offered assistance via email.

Kevin 1BA History: Would there be any interest within the council for a memorial for those who died in World War 1 on campus?

Róisín said she felt the issue is up to council and should be brought via a motion at our next council.

Gad Muzinga 1BA Soc and Pol: Gad informed council of the neurodivergent discord and welcomed anyone to join.