



Comhaltas na Mac Léinn,  
Ollscoil na Gaillimhe  

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University of Galway  
Students' Union

## Miontuairiscí (Minutes)

Comhairle Chomhaltas na Mac Léinn 30/01/2023

### **18:06** Introduction

*Cathal Sherlock*, **Chairperson** introduces Student Union Council/Comhairle

Comhaltas na Mac Léinn. [Comhairle]

*Sai Gujulla*, **President** [Uachtarán] proposes to extend guillotine by fifteen minutes.

Motion passes by majority; guillotine extended to 20:21.

### **18:08** President Address & Updates

Uachtarán outlines procedural motions 9A—9F.

*Joe Mee*, **Vice President for Education** [VP for Education] provides info about Comhairle.

- Explains that the venue of Comhairle has been changed to the Bailey Allen Hall and the layout of Comhairle is now circular tables is to promote interaction.

### **18:05** Officers Updates

- *Sai Gujulla*, **President**

Officer report taken as read but highlights parts of report including:

- Accommodation pilot model progress continues.
  - Details accommodation registry programme which results in €1000 reduction of on-campus accommodation for a limited number of students.
- Seeking to centralise Student Union [SU] events and make it more available for general students to organise events
- Mascot still in works, lots of student input
- Car park spaces for students progressing
- Seeking to create campus placement opportunities in University of Galway following student graduation.
  - *Fionn Sexton-Connolly*, **3rd BA Law w/ Arts** questions whether the university has been receptive towards placement

opportunities and if the university will engage constructively with the SU regarding placements.

- **Uachtarán** confirms the university has been cooperative and that the Careers Development Centre has been involved in this process.
- *Barry Ó Siochrú, Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge [Vice President For The Irish Language]*

Report taken as read but urges students to contact him with any issues they may be having at [[su.gaeilge@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie](mailto:su.gaeilge@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie)]

- *Joe Mee, Vice President for Education*

Highlights parts of report including:

- International student introduction
  - Campus tours, nights out in SULT
- SU secured dedicated venue for Student Pantry starting 2023/24 academic year
- New catering tender agreements for non-SU owned cafes
  - Microwaves will be maintained as per this agreement
- Spotify bite-sized info for exams

[Late apologies offered by **Chairperson** on behalf of *Tahsin Kamal, Clubs Captain* and *Rain Puiman Yan, Convenor of The College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences*]

- *Jack Reidy, Convenor of The College of Science And Engineering*

Report taken as read but highlights

- Been in contact with science school regarding career support for students
- *Raimey O'Boyle, Postgraduate Taught Officer*

Outlines officer's report in entirety.

- *Malena Thren, Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Officer*

Report taken as read but highlights:

- Environmental sustainability policy

- Society competition
- Enlight universities. Check social media @Malena\_EV
  - Notes all social media posts shared by main SU social media accounts.

- *Julia Egan*, **International Students Officer**

Report taken as read but but highlights areas of report:

- Planned internal quiz night in collaboration with VP for Education and Uachtarán
- Met University of Limerick representatives to discuss buddy system

[Late apologies offered **Chairperson** on behalf of *John Walsh*, **Gender and LGBT+ Rights officer**]

- *Benjamin George*, **Mature Students' Officer**

Report taken as read but highlights

- Attended Mature Students and Adult Learners Information Evening
- WHEF Conference on Science and Innovation in Higher Education
- Accessibility issues in access to learning in engineering

- *Seánie Ó Gáibhín*, **Oifigeach Na Gaeilge Páirt-Aimseartha**

Report taken as read but highlights:

- Worked with Leas-Uachtarán and rest of executive SU team

- *Holly Leech*, **Convener of the Colleges of Business, Public Policy and Law**

Notes officer report *was* submitted for council, but were not sent due to technical issues. Report taken as read but highlights

- Discussed exam reports arising in school

- *Vickie Popoola*, **Societies Chairperson**

Report taken as read but highlights

- Working on Black History Month which starts Wednesday [01/02/2023]
- Auditor's group chat has been set up and very successful, with multiple collaborations arising from such.

Reports accepted.

### **18:25** University President Q&A

Vote to allow *Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh*, **President of the University of Galway**

[Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh]

Vote passes by majority. Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh admitted to Comhairle.

*Niamh McGrath*, **4BA (Children's Studies)** questions if there was a definitive reason winter exam results were released via Blackboard as opposed to regular method of student portal.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh states he is unaware of reasoning, if any.

*Malena Thren*, **Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Officer** notes that she was made aware at the last sustainability meeting that while the university office approved a sustainability office, funding was not approved. No decision was made on funding in this group.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh responds that a 10% strategic fund was offered on an application basis. Claims 100,000€ was provided to two parties on basis that the "proposals would work together and come back...[to the office]", claims they did not return to office and new proposal provided with funds not provided [€100,000] and additional funds available. Additionally, he met with CUSP in summer and states no issues in cooperating; claims sustainability approach in the works. Believes it is better to encourage work ongoing than to begin new sustainability projects at current time.

*Fionn Sexton-Connolly*, **3rd BA Law w/ Arts** references University of Leister who have advocated for a "pure learning strategy" regarding a published academic strategy. Notes Ollscoil na Gaillimhe academic strategy refers to fully funding and expanding CEIM. Questions whether there are any updates or streamlining plans regarding these matters.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh states plans are in action regarding this.

*Unknown Representative* mentions hot drinking water is not accessible to students, claiming chapel is only location with hot drinking water [available to students] on campus. Notes Universities in India have access to hot drinking water available to all students. Chapel only place to get hot water on campus.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh notes increase in number of cold water fountains around campus, including pedal fountains outside. Claims he “doesn’t know” about hot water.

*Malena Thren, Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Officer* questions Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh regarding the newly-constructed outdoor meeting pods on campus. She questions the price per pod and when they will be available for students. Notes that online research revealed each meeting pod was approximately €10,000.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh states unawareness of price of pods. He asks students to inform him if they don’t like the pods or the price of the pods to contact him and “we can take them away.” Additionally states that if the pods do not work, to “let us know and we will take them down and get something else.”
- Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Officer replies that it would be great if they were open for use.

*Cian Fuery, 1BA Global Languages* asks whether Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh is aware that global languages students have had issues with non-optional classes clashing with each other, therefore impossible to make all mandatory modules.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh questions whether speaker has spoken to school.
- Speaker confirms school has been contacted but no solution has been reached.
- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh asks speaker to email him at [president@universityofgalway.ie.] and questions whether clash is due to restraint on language labs.
- Speaker outlines modules affected
- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh directs speaker to contact VP for Education

*Maresh, MSc in Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence* states that campus restaurants close too early considering many classes do not end until 19:00.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh claims campus cafeterias struggling due to lack of money being made and that the university is currently subsidising many cafeterias on campus such as Friars restaurant.
- **VP for Education** notes that SU is attempting to open facilities with extended hours. States requirements for later opening hours will be in new tender agreements with catering companies [as mentioned in officer's report]
- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh reiterates that Zinc and Friars are currently being subsidised

*Maresh, MSc in Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence* states that his MSc programme has joint class sessions with other MSc programmes and that the classrooms are too small to accommodate all students.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh directs speaker to contact programme director.

*Unknown Speaker, Geography Postgraduate* questions Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh on how often he meets with non-executive officer students.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh states that he is a teacher and has taught in five different universities. He also claims he has met more students than any university president he has "ever known". Additionally, he states that he does not know what speaker is implying by this question.

*Unknown Speaker* addresses that letter grades have been given for winter exams, but would numbered grades be available?

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh states this is an academic council issue.

*Joy, Unknown Class* addresses that heavy fire doors limit physical access to areas of the university. Individuals cannot access above the ground floor of the library, lecture halls and many disabled bathrooms. Both Goldcrest and areas of north campus are accessible but nowhere in south campus is available.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh states that the university is working on it.

- Speaker notes that many individuals with accessibility requirements can access all gender bathrooms, but not disabled bathrooms.
- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh advises for the SU executive to get buildings to come to Comhairle so these types of issues can be addressed.

Mary Thynan, **postgraduate representative** addresses the inconsistent dietary options on campus.

- Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh agreed there is no varied dietary options available on campus. Suggests dietary provision be included in new tender agreements.

Comhairle thanks Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh for attending. Uachtarán Ó hÓgartaigh urges students to contact him with issues at [president@universityofgalway.ie].

#### **18:47** Constitutional Amendment #1- House Keeping

**Chairperson** provides QR code to vote.

Uachtarán explains constitutional amendments and outlines purpose of this amendment; (1) to officially update SU name to University of Galway Students' Union / Comhaltas na Mac Léinn Ollscoil na Gaillimhe and to update all SU material to reflect this and remove National University of Ireland, Galway references; (2) remove reference to gender in constitution; (3) outline full time and part time roles in constitution so that students are more aware of who to contact and; (4) clarify role of vice president for education

Chairperson put motion to vote.

Motion summated.

Poll opened **18:53**

Motion passed with **80%** in favour, **12.73%** against and **7.27%** abstaining.

#### **18:56** Environmental Policy

*Malena Thren*, **Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Officer**

[Environmental Officer] introduces the first draft of an Environmental Strategic Action Plan. Action plan outlines vision for sustainability and displays (1) key priorities, (2) key areas of interest and (3) key commitments. It has been discussed and planned with the sustainability crew and is heavily based on one other university as few student unions have environmental officers. Environmental officer highlights areas of plan including replacing parking on campus with meadows and the three year structure of the plan.

Environmental officer concludes by inviting students to attend next climate crew meeting [8.02.23] and to take part.

- *Gabriel*, **Erasmus Representative** questions whether removing car spaces is a class issue. Notes many individuals cannot live close to campus. Notes that "parking is decent at best as is". Requests that sustainability crew review parking income perspective.
- Environmental officer wrote "small priority basis". Notes this mainly focuses on car parking for staff because staff carparks get priority spots. Data from Transfer Spot showed most staff live in Galway compared to students as well as car ownership. Highlights that responsibility of next **Environmental Awareness and Sustainability Officer** to meet targets, that new targets can be added by new officers and that unmeetable targets can be taken out at Comhairle for more accountability.

*Shane Donnellan*, **Final Environmental Science** raises issue of more compost bins being needed on campus due to compost being put in general bins at the moment.

- Environmental officer has raised this with management. Management has stated that food is main contaminant in recycling. Hopeful towards discussions.



Again invites students to attend next climate crew meeting [8.02.23] and to take part. Location will be in SU weekly email, instagram and all socials media platforms. Invites students to contact her at [su.environment@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:su.environment@universityofgalway.ie).

#### **19:04** Comfort Break

#### **19:12** Motion to Ban Petting Farms at the University of Galway

Motion on Banning Pet Farms, proposed by *Jenna Lee*, **VegSoc Auditor**. MSc in Climate Change Culture and Food Security.

Speaker wants to lobby for a ban on pet farm events. Reason for putting motion forward is a concern for animal welfare. Understands event is held to help students relax.

1. Asks Comhairle to consider students who find pet farms distressing.  
Recognises
2. Recognises company chosen has animal welfare policy including to keep animals free from distress. Saw llama was agitatedly pacing, ducks had dirty water, pigs and baby goats didn't want to be held. Petting zoo chosen 1hr 40mns away so long drive for animals.

Wants council to leave animals be for their wellbeing. Consider yoga, meditation or dancing to help students relax.

#### Debate

##### **VP for Education**

##### **AGAINST MOTION**

Was partially responsible for organising first petting farm.

- Students liked petting farm.
- Takes points regarding animal welfare and went with chosen pet farm due to robust welfare policy.
- Instead of banning pet farms, suggests ensure ethical treatment of animals.
- Claims pet farms help people show compassion towards animals and show animals should be treasured.
- Notes food production for animals is very poor.

*Lottie Wilkins, Final BA (Children's Studies)*

IN FAVOUR OF MOTION

- Campus has no space for pet farm
- Therapy dogs better alternative
  - Suggests making available 1-1 setting with dog so dog doesn't become overwhelmed.

*Gabriel, Erasmus+ Representative*

AGAINST MOTION

- No hard line against motion
- Agrees petting zoo handled poorly
- Recognises popularity therefore may not be good to ban for personal ethics since we represent the students in our course.

*Jack Reidy, Science and Engineering Convener*

IN FAVOUR OF MOTION

- For profit zoos like this don't have animals interests at heart
- Consider charities and non-profits instead like ATU
  - Notes ATU brings Madra dogs to campus

*Reese McArdle, third BA*

**Proposes 9B due to vagueness of term "petting farms."**

- Could academic live animal labs could be considered pet farms?

*Jenna Lee, VegSoc Auditor*

PROPOSER

Claims motion is specifically for pet farms therefore specific enough.

**9b fails.**

*Fionn Sexton Connolly, 3rd BA Law w/ Arts* questions if speaker who proposed 9B  
[unintelligible]

*Unknown Representative*

AGAINST MOTION

- Recognises concept of pet farm is good idea
- Also recognises a good form of stress relief for students and, in personal experience, fine with students.

*Unknown Representative* provides Point of Order: Asks if the order can be supplemented.

Chairperson then explains 9C.

*Fionn Sexton Connolly*, **3rd BA Law w/ Arts**

IN FAVOUR OF MOTION

- Just because something is good for students does not mean it is good for animal welfare.
- States that if there is a single question regarding animal welfare, that risk is too much. Would rather ensure animal welfare than remain uncertain.
- Unaware of how pet farm treats animals in interim

**Uachtarán proposes 9A**

9A carried.

*Jenna Lee*, **VegSoc**

PROPOSER

Summates.

- Reiterates if some students are upset by event, event should not go ahead.
- Other events would be cheaper

Motion passed with **53.03%** in favour, **36.36%** against and **10.61%** abstaining.

**19:34** Constitutional Amendment #2- Full Time Officer Committee

Uachtarán outline constitutional amendment #2 proposal.

- Highlights power structure remains the same but provides executive with decision-making abilities which this amendment would allow

*Unknown Representative* attempts to propose a 9C

Chairperson specifies pre-drafted constitutional proposals cannot be 9C'd but can be 9D'd

*Maresh, MSc in Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence*

AGAINST MOTION

Full time officers are getting funding allotment. Claims seven full-time officers would take away from students.

- **VP for Education** affirms no financial implications

*Barry Ó Siuchrú, Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge*

IN FAVOUR OF MOTION

- As union develops need for better structures.
- This motion will provide more accountability and allow executive and class representatives to question full time officers on their decisions.
- Reiterates these points.

*Seánie Ó Gáibhín, Oifigeach Na Gaeilge Páirt-*

AGAINST MOTION

**Aimseartha**

- Centralising Power in wrong direction by changing structure in making decisions.
- Structure of proposed motion will have executive make important decisions where current method of making those decisions is good enough

*Fionn Sexton Connolly, 3rd BA Law w/ Arts*

IN FAVOUR OF MOTION

- Attends every council
- Comhairle holds people to account already
- Executive not balanced at presence. No formal mechanism that part-time can question full time.
  - If motion passes, it should be bound by the collective response of the executive and he would appreciate being able to hold full-time to account.

*Roisin Nic Lochlann, BA*

IN FAVOUR OF MOTION

- Wants more accountability since executive funded by students.

**Environmental Officer** offers POI

- Wanted to get a lot done but decisions can't get done due to bureaucracy.
- With more accountability decisions will not be blocked, this full time council should be responsible for this.

**Uachtarán** summates

- Accountability will be enhanced since still answerable to students and executive committee

Motion passed with **70.69%** in favour, **13.79%** against and **13.79%** abstaining.

**19:48** Constitutional Amendment #3- Merge Postgraduate Officer

VP for Education outlines constitutional amendment #3 proposal.

- Lots of overlap in postgraduate officer roles as in line with USI and all other national unions.
- Social events overlap. Because of the overlap there is no clear call for which officer fills events, resulting in education officer filling the roles.
- Increases competition in elections since usually uncontested.

*Raimy O'Boyle, Postgraduate Taught Officer*

AGAINST MOTION

- USI discussing separating postgraduate roles, perhaps we shouldn't act on this at the moment

*Roisin Nic Lochlann, BA*

AGAINST MOTION

- Postgraduate taught officer have very different needs.
- Believes role should be full-time and should be discussed at councils.

*Chris Stewart, Geography postgraduate*

AGAINST MOTION

**representative**

- Only addressed at postgraduate council this week
- Consensus was against

*Benjamin George, Mature Students' Officer*

AGAINST MOTION

- SU had qualified and enthusiastic Postgraduate Research Officer who was required to step down due to workload of PhD
- Cutting representation would cause intense strain on remaining postgraduate officer and decrease representation for postgraduates

*Mary Thynan, postgraduate representative*

AGAINST MOTION

- Enrolled in taught postgraduate programme
- 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of stuff comes from modules. PhDs are students as well as staff members therefore taught postgraduates do not have the appropriate experience to represent research postgraduates
- Too much work for one individual

**VP for Education** summates

- Not excessive workload with two positions
- If merged it could be a full-time role.
- Lot of overlap with social events.
- No defined voice for postgraduates

Motion failed with **17.46%** in favour, **73.02%** against and **9.52%** abstaining.

**19:35** Religious Rights Officer Discussion

*Mercy Okojie, Believers Connect Treasurer* [Proposer 1] and *Blake Preston, Dochas Christian Society Treasurer* [Proposer 2]

*Proposer 1* introduces discussion

- Feels they are not represented on campus.

- Made to feel ashamed and disgusted due to their beliefs.
- Told to leave areas and told not to hand out flyers.

*Proposer 2*

- Outlines protected groups.
- All religious societies believe having a religious officer would be nice.
- Feel their voices are being shut out.

**Roisin Nic Lochlann, BA questions**

- What would religious rights entail that role of Vice-President for Welfare and Equality doesn't cover?
- Religion protected under 7 grounds therefore religious students have a right to be on campus.
- Claims religious societies have been given disgusting flyers about abortion and marriage beliefs.
- Has seen Christian societies forcing beliefs down peoples throats.
- What would the role do?

**Barry Ó Siuchrú, Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge questions**

- Believes a lot of proposal comes under welfare but understands need for religious freedom.
- Biggest worry is how to constitutionally implement role to ensure all religions represented equally.
  - There are religions who oppose motions previously passed in council and may feel uncomfortable representing previous motions so incompatibility may arise due to committee needing to represent all students.

**Muaaz Bin Ejaz, Secretary for Islamic Society**

- Practical points:
  - Role important for more unity.

- Interfaith event next year and would like to liaise with other societies
- Prayer rooms not upkept. Lots of Muslims in Science department so bigger prayer room would be appreciated.

*Fionn Sexton Connolly, 3rd BA Law w/ Arts*

Student Union concept based upon apartheid separation of powers.

- Religious convictions should be separate from the state; there are those in society who would use their beliefs to oppress others.
- We are secular Union and have always been so.
- Under Constitution, religion is protected. Nobody is blockading the way to campus.
- Religious discrimination not so severe officer is required.

*Liam Murray, Final Computer Science* questions if there are any proposed structures in place to ensure equal representation of religions

*Benjamin George, Mature Students' Officer*

- Welfare officer exists to represent minority group who do not have access to 3<sup>rd</sup> level education, just like other officers.
- Officers represent regardless of views or religion.

*Zhonna Gonzalez Davis, Final B Civil Law*

- Why could proposers not liaise via SocsBox or Auditor's Groupchat created by Society Convener?

[Proposer 1]

- Committee rather than single officer.
- Agrees not denied access to church but cannot say "I love Jesus" without being told to stop.

[Proposer 2]



- Each religious society would have the right to have an officer on the committee.
  - Religious Rights Officer would respond to that committee and respond to welfare group.

*Unknown Speaker associated with Proposers*

- Alleges that they are being told "in some ways, that we cannot be told we can practice what we believe in."
- Want to have the same rights as everyone else. Strongly believes in Jesus and loves Jesus. Wants to be able to say as such without being called bigots.

*Fionn Sexton Connolly, 3rd BA Law w/ Arts* interjects point of order, defamatory allegation.

Chairperson tells interjector to not interrupt

*Fionn Sexton Connolly, 3rd BA Law w/ Arts* repeats twice.

**20:17** AOB & Suggestions

*Barry Ó Siuchrú, Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge*

Officer report taken as read but please ask questions after council, highlights:

- Politicians letter to issues we see for students to use as sign mark.
- Urges students to contact him regarding things they feel passionate about at [[su.gaeilge@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie](mailto:su.gaeilge@ollscoilnagaillimhe.ie)]

*Unknown Speaker, First BA*

Lighting on walk to and in Corrib Village, Goldcrest + Dangan not working. Feels unsafe.

- **Uachtarán** confirms new lights being set up

*Barry Ó Siuchrú, Leas-Uachtarán Don Ghaeilge*

- Urges students to take part in shave-off for charity; contact SU for dates or check weekly email.

*Zara Campbell, Third B Law & Business*

- Any update on vote taken on final council regarding removing external council chair?
- **Uachtarán** brought matter to executive committee. Will not be moving forward with it due to lack of signatures
- **VP for Education states** not enough signatures collected so it fell. Not 500 signatures therefore needs to be proposed again to be brought to council.
- **Roisin Nic Lochlann** alleges sufficient signatures achieved but never collected by Uachtarán therefore referendum must be run by executive.

*Macek, B Mathematical Science*

- Uachtarán mentioned lack of vegetarian and vegan options on campus. Any plans on expansion?
- **Uachtarán** confirms he is working with Anne Duggan on this.

**Uachtarán** notes USI Vice President for Equality and Citizenship has resigned.

**20:21** End of Comhairle

*Jimmy, Student Services Support Worker*

Outlines **Seas Suas Programme**

- Will train 200~ students
- 40~ spots left.
- 50 minutes each to discuss concerns with Rape Crisis Centre, Samaritans, Gardaí, and more.
- Urges Comhairle to apply and to spread the word

**20:24** End