**2025 – 2026**

**CONVENOR OF THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE, NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

A logo of a building

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**CANDIDATE:**

**DIANA DE SOUSA**

**Manifesto for Academic Excellence**

**& Student Support**

**We can create a more structured, inclusive, and student-centred academic environment through the implementation of these interventions.**

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION**

1. Timetables

Last-minute timetable changes create significant disruptions for students, often forcing them to alter their daily plans or cancel other commitments unexpectedly. Moreover, for students who rely on public transportation, sudden changes can lead to unnecessary costs and logistical challenges. If elected, I will push for a **minimum 24-hour notice** **policy for all class schedule amendments**. This will ensure that student timetables are well-structured and that lecturers are held accountable for maintaining consistency.

1. Grading Deadlines

Furthermore, assessment results, including examinations, should adhere to a **fixed release schedule**. Prolonged waiting periods for grades contribute to student anxiety and uncertainty. I will advocate for a uniform policy where results for all healthcare modules are **released simultaneously, reducing inconsistencies and ensuring transparency** in the grading process.

1. Assessment Feedback

As healthcare professionals in training, we learn best through practice & critique. That is why I believe that **each student should be entitled to feedback on all graded assessments (practical or written)**. This will help us to improve academically, to better prepare ourselves professionally for the future. If elected, written feedback on all assessments will be first protocol, then progressing to an in-person meeting, should students still find the written feedback unhelpful.

1. Reduced Repeat Examination Fees

**Reduced costs** encourage more students to retake their examinations which in turn, also improves learning outcomes. I want to do my part in helping students break away from the mental and monetary shackles of academic financial debt. “No student left behind!”

**MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME**

I am committed to the establishment of peer mentorship programs, where **experienced senior students can volunteer their time to guide and support junior students**. Unfortunately, not all courses provide equal opportunities to engage in this invaluable experience. These mentorship groups will consist of students from various academic levels (Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4, etc.), fostering an environment of mutual assistance. Mentors will offer guidance on coursework, clinical placements, and career pathways, equipping juniors with the knowledge and confidence they need to succeed. Additionally, this initiative will benefit senior students by allowing them to earn volunteer hours while reinforcing their clinical knowledge through teaching and discussion. Ultimately, these networks will extend far beyond graduation, creating lasting professional relationships.

**STAFF TRAINING**

To enhance the quality of education and student support, I will advocate for annual mandatory training for lecturers. This initiative will ensure that **educators remain well-equipped with modern teaching methodologies and inclusivity principles**. Training will include:

* Blended and Online Models – Preparing lecturers for hybrid and online teaching, ensuring flexible learning options without overburdening students with last-minute timetable changes.
* Special Education & Inclusion – Equipping educators with the necessary skills to support students with disabilities and foster an inclusive learning environment.
* Formative Assessment Techniques – Encouraging the use of continuous assessments to alleviate reliance on high-stakes final exams, allowing students to track their progress more effectively.
* Antibias and Equity Training – Helping educators recognize unconscious biases and implement fair, equitable teaching methods while fostering self-reflection and open dialogue on social justice in education.

**PLACEMENT SUPPORT, COMPENSATION & BENEFITS**

* 1. More Student Consultation in Decision Making

Most students get told that the placement they receive is given to them from a random lottery system. However, it is **crucial for the student voice to be heard** in terms *where* we will be placed, *what* is expected from us on placement, *how* we can budget for expenses and EARLY on in the year, *when* we will be going on placement (instead of 1 or 2 weeks before). Ensuring transparency at all times!

* 1. Accommodation

If elected, I will seek to **form partnerships between the university and places of accommodation**. Annually allowing students to stay there during seasons of placement, in rotation. Fighting for accommodation surety for all & minimizing the hunt for places to live.

* 1. Location

I will urge that **students be allowed to be sent on placement in an area that is located closer to their hometown** / family / friend relations. Overall, being more a convenient, comfortable and affordable option.

* 1. Transportation

A **university bus** travelling to and from different Galway hospitals for clinical rotations, or directly from bus / train stations to the university, will be one of my main priorities.

* 1. Compensation
* Stipends / Placement Grants: Direct financial aid to help cover living expenses.
* Hourly Wage for Work Done: Especially for final year, long clinical rotations where students contributes significantly to treating patients by themselves, assisting hospitals in greater patient intake.
* Travel & Transportation Allowance: Reimbursement for commuting costs to hospitals/clinics.
* Accommodation Subsidies: Reduced cost / housing near placement sites.
* Meal Allowances / Free On-Site Meals: Ensuring students are nourished during long shifts.
* Flexible Scheduling & Study Support: Avoiding overwhelming students with work & academic demands.
* Uniform Subsidies: Covering total/partial costs for scrubs and uniforms.
* Safe & Fair Working Conditions: Ensuring placements adhere to reasonable hours and workload expectations.

**MORE MICROWAVES**

It is among basic needs to ensure that students have access to **more facilities** such as microwaves, specifically in Aras Moyola & the Human Biology Building. Ones that **work for longer periods of time**, extending to after scheduled study hours. “Equal distribution of microwaves on campus”

**STUDY RESOURCE MATERIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

I want to enhance sustainable access to study materials. Those that cannot be found in the library or online, yet, highly recommended by lecturers for us to buy for our understanding; be bought for the students by the course as a whole and **redistributed each year in succession**. Not limiting students on study materials due to extra financial costs. Considering sustainability, we will **conserve resources, reduce waste and lower the environmental impact of paper production**.

**IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

If a student has accessed support services in the past, I will do my utmost best to ensure that they would be **regularly checked upon**, which is currently not being done.

It is important to **get individual feedback** from students, to flag signs of distress early on, that often go unnoticed by the students themselves.

* 1. Expand College Counselling Services & Hours

**Easy access to counselling** is important. Should I be elected, I will fight to **include more counselling sessions** tailored to the unique needs of every student. **Boarding on more counsellors if needed**. Additionally, more support for dealing with burnout and emotional strain. Also promoting flexible attendance policies for students with chronic conditions.

**Disability Support Services**

* 1. Better Communication & Accessibility

There are a number of available supports but they are often not communicated directly to the students who actually need them. Accessing them can be very challenging. If elected I will work closely with the *Disability Rights Officer* to address the need for **more direct communications**.

Urging for **more quiet study spaces and sensory-friendly areas** for neurodiverse students.

I will organize open to all **accessibility awareness workshops** for staff and students to promote more social inclusion on campus, that can be applied when caring for patients.

**International Student Support**

* 1. Regular Support Outreaches

As an international student myself, I am grateful for the regular support given to us in semester 1. However, there has been little to no contact in semester 2. Studying such demanding fields without in-person family support, can greatly influence homesickness. Should I be elected, I would establish consistency in **supporting the mental well-being of international students**. Highlighting the need for **regular outreaches of support in second semester** -when the time period before traveling back home is longer and the academic pressure is greater.

* 1. Prayer Rooms

I advocate for ALL students; therefore, students should be able to freely & comfortably practice their religious beliefs. Many international and local students would benefit from a **readily available prayer room within Aras Moyola**, instead of having to book rooms in advance and travel across campus multiple times a day.

**WELLBEING**

* + 1. Social Life & Events

Medicine, General Nursing, Mental Health Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Midwifery & Podiatry. I would love to create a more **balanced student experience by organizing end-of-year events** such college balls, and events in partnership with relevant societies where interdisciplinary courses have the chance to interact with one another and network, in a relaxed environment.

My goal here, is to **also bring about awareness & build knowledge on the various healthcare professions, through direct interactions**. Some are too frequently overlooked & not often recognized. Getting clients familiar with, and directing them to the correct healthcare professional, begins with healthcare professionals themselves; being able to recognise the value in each other and the entire healthcare team.