

PETER FOR PRESIDENT

VOTE #1 12TH MARCH

THE REAL DEAL

**A New Departure
for the Students'
Union**



Introduction

A Chomh-Mhic Léinn,

If you have made it to this manifesto, fairplay!

Almost three years ago, I came to Galway. I ran for Class Rep because a number of Students' Union personalities had captured my imagination in my first few weeks of term. I found community, interest and craic within the SU. And it is those three things that still motivate me today as I run for President. If I can get your support for this campaign of all campaigns, we can get this place moving again. Reading Weeks. Union Cups. Rent Registries. None of this can happen without you!

For so long, the candidates have been divided between popular policy and progressive politics; I hope to unite these two philosophies in this manifesto. Everything from Charity Jersies and Union Cups, to Class Rep Reform and Housing Action are contained within this document, as I believe the SU needs a popular mandate and mass-engagement with students in order to enact any real semblance of change in this town. If a student comes for the craic and learns their rights at the same time, that's a win-win in my book. Our democratic foundation must be absolutely solid given the amount of money we handle.

I hope you enjoy reading this manifesto (short version on the next page) and feel free to reach out to me @peterforpresident26 to discuss finer points. Seamus Heaney's line of '**Let hope and history rhyme**' motivates me, for it's not just about what we go on to do, but what we can do right now. If you vote for me this March 12th, this will be our SU, our year, and our little bit of history...

Beir bua agus beannacht,

Peter

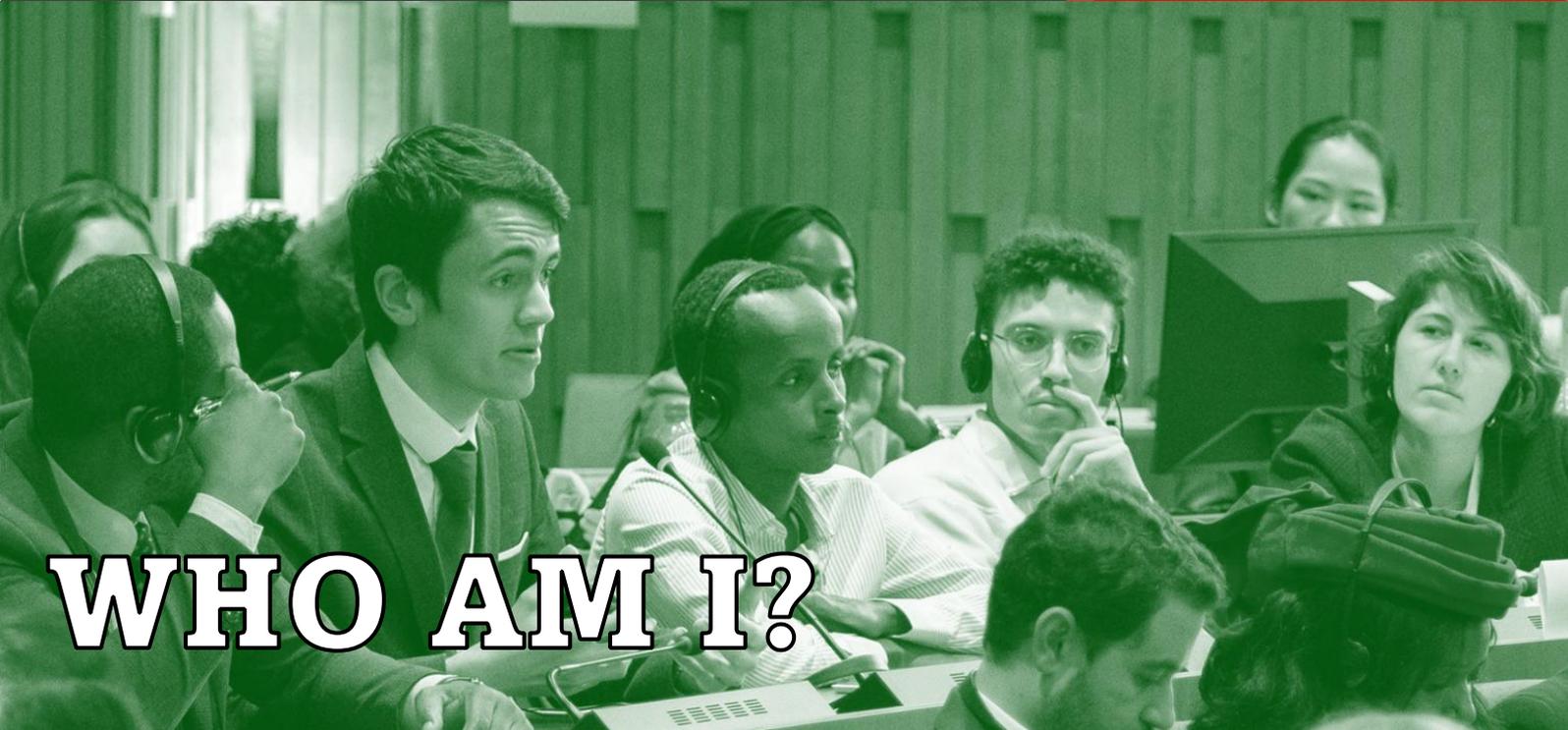
INDEX

- **Who Am I?**
- **Key Values**
- **Collective Action**
- **Culture & Community**
- **Gaeilge**
- **Postgrads**
- **National Issues & Sustainability**
- **Credits and Thanks**

The Shortform Real Deal:

- Bring Back Reading Week
- Corn an gComhaltas/Union Cup, incl. Battle of the Bands
- A 4 Day Week/Hybrid Friday
- Strengthening ties with trade, credit and tenants' unions
- Making the Union more accessible to commuters
- Campaigns against short-term lets, esp. re: Gaeltacht
- Student money, controlled by student hands; transparency at every level
- Student Rent Registry
- Fight to scrap the Resit Fee
- Fulfil BDS and end Coca-Cola Monopoly on campus
- Class Rep Discounts
- Referendum on a Full-Time Postgrad Officer
- Promoting Student Art & Talent
- Advocate for options as Gaeilge at every level
- Develop insurance and fuel discounts like other membership groups

No matter who you are, the **Real Deal** has something for you!



WHO AM I?

Hello there! My name is Peter Ó Neill, and I'm running to be an **Uachtarán an Chomhaltais na Mac Léinn Ollscoil na Gaillimh**/*President of the University of Galway's Students' Union*. I'm a final year **History and International Development** student from North-East Galway, and I've been an activist in various forms for five years. Here's a few of the highlights:

- **Youth Advocacy:** I found my voice on **youth issues, mental health, and sustainability** through youth advocacy and writing for websites like spunout, and gained experience **lobbying** TDs.
- **National Youth Assembly of Ireland:** Represented rural youth at national assemblies for **18 months**; worked with **government departments** and campaigned around issues with **rural living, A.I and climate change**.
- **UNESCO Youth Ambassador for Ireland:** Represented Ireland at a **U.N** forum in Paris; worked with young people from Palestine, spoke on '**just transitions**' for rural communities Gave out to the Chinese Minister for Children, was some craic.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Officer 24/25:** I've been a Class Rep for three years and a Part-Time Officer for one. Highlights included the implementation of **reusable cups** on campus (which encountered some very unique opposition).

My Key Values

Identity, Inclusion & Independence

The early leaders of this union recognised the need for us to **maintain our independence**, as it is the only way to keep the University **accountable**. I am acutely aware of a current trend towards SUs being viewed solely as **service-providers**, or the concept of **Student Life** committees, and I see these trends as a **dilution of student rights**. Likewise, I am not a member of any **political party** and will be an SU officer first and foremost. The ongoing **Technion contract** has highlighted that we have a responsibility as a union to hold the University **to account** over their **promises** and proclaimed **values**. An Ó Neill led union will not just be there for the photo, but for **the follow-up and the fight**.

Bearing this in mind, the first presidents of our SU also noted the importance of promoting a **harmonious** relationship between staff, administration, and students, and I also believe in **cooperation**, caveated by **continuous action in good faith**. We will need cooperation across staff/student bodies to accomplish **academic boycotts** of Israeli universities and **EU projects featuring Israel**. I also welcome AMLÉ's memorandum of understanding with the **Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT)**. We are the **only** SU in the country that receives **no funding** from their university, and I will continue this lineage of **independence and autonomy**, which could include a review of the **Student Partnership Agreement** between the Uni and SU. By working with **all parties** on campus, I hope to provide a real deal for everyone!

Throughout my time in youth activism and the university, I've been lucky enough to meet some incredible people from **all walks of life**. Identity is incredibly personal, and every student should feel **safe in their chosen identity**, be it gender, ethnicity, religion, or culture, including **language**, and each student should feel comfortable to **develop their own identity**. The vitriol espoused last year was not a political or student issue; it was **paternalistic and authoritarian**. We have all become students to **improve our critical thinking** and to deepen our **understanding** of the world; a world that isn't as simple or clear-cut as some like to make out. Thus, including **minority voices and alternative points of view** is essential to reducing **inequalities** on campus, and they must be supported in the face of **intolerance**. I hope to grow this sense of inclusion to include **mature, commuting, and international students**, as well as those with **accessibility requirements**. I will tolerate **no compromise** on human and students' **rights**.

Ó Neill on Tour



Political Lobbying:

- Lobbied TDs & Senators on housing, education and commuting
- 18 months on the **National Youth Assembly**
- No **Political Party** card

Media Appearances:

- *Six One News* on housing
- *Galway Bay FM* on **Palestine** and **Climate**
- *Hotpress* on **student rights** and **SU History**
- *The 2 Johnnies TV Show* on... whiskey



Academic Appearances:

- **Conferences** in Prague, Tartu & Gottingen
- Speaker at **Heritage Ireland Summit** in Trinity
- Taiwanese Youth Parliament

Campus Appearances:

- Rag Ride 2026, y'up
- Dunk Tanked (~10 times)
- **Piss taken out of me on TikTok**
- Top scorer in 5-a-side (1 G/A, 1 xG)
- Eco Ó Neill glory days
- *Those* TikTok Ads



Collective Action

We are **powerless** as a students' union if we cannot organise ourselves as an organisation of **21,000 members**. A victory for one in the SU must be a victory for all, and I want to return to our **mass democracy** values. These following goals will not be achieved by one President, and I want more **people involved** in SU processes, making decisions **for us, by us**. If you are willing to help the Union, the Union should provide for you:



Rent Registry and Mapping

The provision of a **students' rent registry** will be my number one campaign if elected President. Rent action cannot wait, and I will pursue a more active strategy compared to the "Room for One More" approach of this year.

THE REAL DEAL: Collective Action

The Student Rent Registry will involve:

- Collecting monthly rent information from authenticated students
- Mapping it onto specific regions of Galway, while maintaining anonymity
- Using this data to lobby local government, share with the press, inform prospective international students, and identify major corporate landlords and their holdings

The Registry will rely on:

- Building trust in the Registry and the SU among union members
- Enhanced participation of Class Reps (See Community Section), including competition between class reps to promote the registry.



Fulfilling BDS and Breaking Coca Cola's Monopoly

In 2014, we voted as a Students' Union to support the **Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement** in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and in opposition to the continued occupation of Palestine by Israel. The ongoing cooperation between this University and **Technion** in Israel has brought Palestinian solidarity to the forefront on campus once again, and I believe the SU **can and must do more** to force the end of this contract.

THE REAL DEAL: Collective Action

The Essential Facts:

- Ollscoil na Gaillimhe is coordinating the EU-funded **Asterisk Project**, of which the Israeli **Technion Institute** is a partner
- The Technion contract has been opposed by several student and staff groups on campus, including the PSS and Campus Anti-Genocide Coalition, as well as the **Irish Centre for Human Rights**
- **Coca-Cola** has a **monopoly** on soft-drinks on campus, including Sult, Smokey's, and the SU shop and own all of the Hellenic vending machines
- Coca-Cola are now a **priority target** of **BDS**
- **Historical values** (including the UHG boycott of Coke in the 2000s & our anti-apartheid work) and our **referendum** dictate we need to remove the monopoly at soon as possible

What I Aim to Do:

- Demand that the University release their "**legal advice**" that is preventing them from leaving the Technion contract
- Call for a clear **chronology** of events on how the University entered the Asterisk Project
- Utilise the **Gigs for Gaza model** as an SU to bring greater public attention to the Technion deal nationally
- Clarify when the Coca-Cola contract will end, and **guarantee** that there will not be another Coca-Cola monopoly deal
- Pair this with a series of **student surveys** to ensure students tastes and wants are catered for in student businesses

Campaign for Insurance and Other Discounts for Our Members

The SU can deliver more **real benefits** to its members, and I want to take inspiration from **Macra na Feirme**, the young farmers association, who offer **fuel cards** (3c off every litre) and **insurance discounts** to their members. They have less members nationally than we do locally in our SU and pay the same **membership fee**. I want to take inspiration from their discounts to develop our own here in Galway, as well as with the national students union, **AMLÉ**, who have 350,000 members on this island and already have their **MyAMLÉ** voucher program.

Promotion of Union Spirit: Student, Trade and Credit

As an SU, we are uniquely positioned to promote collective action in students' working and personal lives. I've been outspoken on **housing rights** in particular (including speaking to **RTÉ** about accommodation conditions). If elected, I want to bring greater cooperation with housing rights groups such as **CATU** and **Threshold**, and challenge narratives in the media about students being **security risks**. I also want to recognise **working students** more in our SU and prevent **exploitation** and **union busting** through information and organisation. If this is successful, I hope to lobby for **cheaper membership rates** for SU members in **trade unions** and gather information on common forms of student exploitation in the city and share their stories.



Culture & Community

Community has always been incredibly important to me in this university. I found an incredible sense of belonging within our students' union, and I want more students to feel like they belong in the SU. I remember being told by a former officer of the union (and Ard-Rúnaí of Conradh na Gael) that we are a **Comhaltas**, not an **Aontas**, because Comhaltas implies a sense of fosterage and chosen family. Hopefully these policies will bring us together as a university community and bring back some of the excitement and atmosphere we had in days past.



Corn an gComhaltas (The Union Cup)

In days past, a variety of student games and competitions filled the university calendar, and I want to bring back the same spirit of friendly inter-collegiate rivalry that existed then.

An Corn an gComhaltas (The Union Cup) would challenge the colleges on campus (**Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies; Business, Public Policy and Law; Science & Engineering** and **Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences**) to win points as they compete in a variety of challenges such as:

University Challenge

11-a-side Soccer Matches

Multi-Sport Golf

Lip Sync Competition

Battle of the Bands

Pint Relay Races

Comhaltas Come Dine with Me

Student "Horse" Racing

The 4 Day Week/Hybrid Fridays

Working with students and lecturers, there is a common objective for **commuting** students and **sustainable** voices on campus: **Hybrid Fridays**. The addition of increased online options (as well as recordings) for lectures at the end of the week could help reduce **traffic**, make Friday lectures look more attractive, and improve attendance. This idea has been raised at a number of **staff and student meetings** I've attended previously, and I want to continue to investigate it if elected President.

Doing More For Commuters

I **commuted** for a good portion of my second year in Galway, and improving the lives of **commuting students** has been the number one concern expressed to me by students I've met on buses, trains, and footpaths. I have previously lobbied local government on issues such as increased **bus routes** and the provision of **park and rides/shuttle buses** on the outskirts of Galway for commuting students and will continue to do so with the national SU, **AMLÉ**. I will augment this fight with lobbying for **livestreams** of college carparking, more dedicated commuter radio on **FlirtFM**, and commuter '**breakfast clubs**' in all colleges.

Fight for the Elimination of Exam Resit Fees

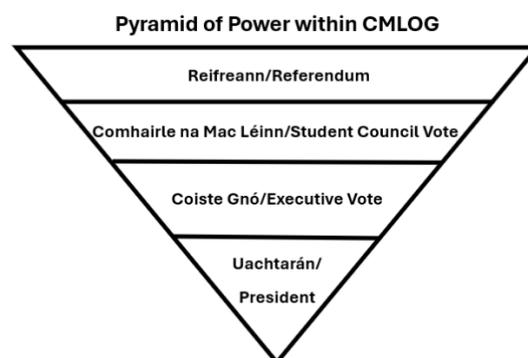
At the end of my first year in Galway, the exam resit fee was **reduced** from €280 to its current **€195**. Any resit fee is kicking students when they're already down, especially since the introduction of **capping** (being unable to get over 40% on a resit). I will push for the **reduction** and hopeful **elimination** of this **punitive** charge against students, as informed by previous years of lobbying and action.

Class Representatives

In my opinion, Class Reps are the backbone of the union and reliably go under-represented and -celebrated in our union. I want to change that. I want to **stream-line and publicise Class Rep elections better**, clarify their constituency and guarantee that every student knows who their class rep is, a simple objective that has been hard to achieve outside of 1st Year lecture halls. This will also be combined with a **campaign of decentralisation**. The SU cannot be arts-centralised, and I will diversify the range of **meetings, clinics, and townhalls** held across the four constituent colleges of this university to ensure **fair and equal representation**.

Another idea is the provision of a small **discount** on teas and coffee for class reps in Sult and Smokey's. Low turnout at **Comhairlí/Student Councils** have negated the value of free pints for class reps after those meetings. I'd like to implement 10c off teas and coffees for Class Reps to give another **tangible benefit** to being an active member of the SU, alongside their hoodies. Incredibly simple measures like **taking a group photo** with our class reps and publicising opportunities to sit on **SU Forums** should have been done before, and I will enhance these basic teambuilding experiences with a new **Union Night**.

As the diagram above highlights, our constitution gives more power to our 21,000 members and our Class Reps, than our President. Fundamentally, I want more students involved in our Union, not less. **Less ego, more eco**.



Promoting Student Art & Talent

I have always recognised the importance of **supporting up-and-coming artists**, in music, innovation, and design. With the rise of **AI**, the SU can be a proactive force in supporting human design, especially with regards to **SU merchandise and posters**. I believe there is space in our SU to support student artists through **paid-opportunities** to make posters for campaigns, as well as the updating of **artwork in Áras na Mac Léinn** to feature our current artists and contributions from societies across campus. Students have the right to be represented in every medium on our campus.

Lobby for Common Space in the Old Library

A simple priority for our members must be the procurement of more **non-commercial spaces** on campus, especially for Arts and Science students. The construction of a new learning commons could give us an **enhanced opportunity** to lobby for the old library to become study space (and perhaps a **common area**). Students should be able to exist in comfortable spaces without having to pay, and more study/common space would be of benefit to the entire college community. Arts and science students should have access to spaces of similar quality to the **Biz Hub**, and the library redevelopment could be the ideal opportunity (given the lack of corporate funding for Arts students in particular).



GAEILGE

We would not be here as an Ollscoil if it wasn't for **Gaeilge**, simple as. In 1929, our **special responsibility** to teach and provide work to those with Gaeilge saved us from closure. As a **Comhaltas**, we must move beyond performance and aesthetic alone, and augment our lobbying efforts on essential asks (including the **availability** of modules in every course as Gaeilge) with more tangible opportunities for students to represent themselves as Gaeilge:

Expand An Gradam Gaeilge

Our awards for students who have brought Gaeilge into their **clubs, socs and studies** could be **expanded** and publicised better to include our class reps. As part of my wider spirit of recognising class reps, an Gradam could put Gaeilge at the centre of our SU at all levels as well as our end of year celebrations.

Using AMLÉ Deals to Help Gaeilge-using Business

Our national SU, **AMLÉ**, have already developed their own **discount service** for students, and I will lobby **MyAMLÉ** to support Gaeilge-using businesses across Ireland and promote these businesses or enterprises to more students.

Availability of PAs with Gaeilge

An issue I've had raised recently is the **lack of personal assistants** on campus with **Gaeilge**. As part of our wider values of **accessibility**, we must recognise the right of students to have assistants that can use their national language. This is an intersectional issue, which I will challenge by working with the students most affected. The system must work around the students, not the other way around.

Continue our Campaigns Against Short-Term Lets

I have previously supported motions and campaigns to **oppose** short-term letting like AirBnB. I will continue to be vocal on the damage of short-term lets, as both a Gaeltacht issue and a student housing matter. Our **Student Rent Registry** should be of major use to this aim.

Development of Student Broadcasting as Gaeilge

Student-focused public broadcasting is still lacking on RTÉ and TG4, and I've been inspired by my previous experiences on the Telly to push for dedicated student broadcasting, such as a **University Challenge**, with a particular emphasis on Gaeilge and TG4. Slightly more out there, but relevant nonetheless.

Ensuring SU Spaces As Gaeilge

The long running saga with Caifé na Gaeilge has proven that we need a **dedicated Gaeilge SU** space to complement Smokeys and Sult. Whether this comes through ensuring a **level of Gaeilge** amongst the SU staff in Smokeys, Sult etc. or through the opening of **new commercial spaces** in the future, guaranteeing a proper space following on from Caifé na Gaeilge will be my **priority**.



Postgrads

Postgrads are a major, and nonetheless underrepresented, constituent of our SU. We cannot allow the SU to represent undergrads alone, and over the last three years I've listened, learned and fought for the issues most prescient to our postgrads. Exploitation of any of members cannot be tolerated:

Referendum on a Full-Time Postgrad Officer

The creation of a full-time PG Officer is one of my primary objectives going into this election, given the scale of **issues** PGs experience, especially **researchers. Contracts, hours, pay, and taxation** are all points of **exploitation** for PGs, and I believe they deserve representation on par with Gaeilge as two essential areas of work on campus. The large cohort of international masters and doctoral students as well also means there is an enormous amount of fees tied up in our PGs, and all of these students deserve respect and assistance from **their own union**. I will support a motion to bring a referendum on a full-timer PG officer as soon as possible and let the students decide whether PGs will receive greater representation in this SU.

Taking Action on PG Researchers' PRSI

The issue of PG stipends continue to dominate SU debates, and it is my aim to advance the issue of PG PRSI contributions. Due to PGs being paid a **below minimum wage stipend** that is **untaxed**, PG researchers have been unable to claim basic PRSI benefits during or after their studies (including **unemployment, maternity, illness etc.**). I believe there is room here to take a **scope case** with the Department of Social Protection to test the waters on how PGs can receive **deserved benefits** for the work they do in this university. I will proceed on this matter with constant consultation with Postgrads, alongside our **national SU, AMLÉ**. Through test cases, our SU has previously achieved the **right to change constituency** during elections in the 80s. As such, we should be well positioned in this regard to fight for better conditions for the students doing the most to power our universities.

Campaign to Deprioritise Rankings

PG Researchers have also made it very clear to me that obsession with **academic rankings** is generally harmful to the university at large and obscures the very real issues taking place underneath the surface of research within institutions. The University has already signed the **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)** agreement, and I hope to campaign for continued moves away from quantitative measures alone, towards something more holistic, while recognising the exploitation of academics.

National Issues

Sustainability

Since my time as **ECO Ó Neill**, making sustainability a practical reality on campus has been one of priorities. If elected President, I will embark on the following objectives:

-Plastic-Free Services: Inspired by a recent trip to **UCC**, I believe we can replace the **plastic bottles** on campus with **cans** and **paper**. We have previously led out on initiatives like **reusable cups** as an SU, and this could be a sensible next step. UCC also have Cidona... another reason to break the **Coke monopoly!**

-Streamline Deposit Collection: Having previously organised collections of deposit bottles and cans for charity through the SU, I want to look into organising more collections, through dedicated bins, as part of **RAG** and **Wasted Week**.

-Fundraise for the Corrib Otters: I have fought for (and with) the otters of the Corrib over the last 3 years, and I would love to develop a dedicated **fundraiser campaign** for Tuatha, Bród Soc or other relevant causes, either through **sustainably sourced** hats and scarves or a **student-designed poster** sale.

-Increased Vegetarian Options: Culturally and environmentally, we can do with more. Simple as.

Supporting International Students Better

Our large contingent of international students in OnaG continue to be underrepresented in our SU. I want to **enhance the participation** of EU and non-EU international students in our union through a variety of measures. These may take the form of a **dedicated forum** for international students to support our international officer, which should bridge the EU/non-EU divide too. The **Rent Registry** would be of express interest to international students too and could offer early, accurate **warning** for international students about the rent situation in Galway.

I want to gather the **experiences and expectations** of international students on campus better as well. Too many people are being let down and exploited, and **Global Galway** cannot just be a marketing ploy. We must protect our members and make the strenuous process of **visa-approval** as easy as possible for our members. Whether this comes from working with Global Galway to provide more **supports and clinics** or lobbying the Government to **decentralise the process** to reduce the number of trips to Dublin for our international students, I want to address the issues of our international students more directly than any previous President.

The issues of **working** on student visas continues to be a **thorn in the side** of many international students, and I am aware of the arguments being raised that this has stopped international students from fully participating in their **students' union**. I hope to improve our **democratic structures** to such an extent that we can meaningfully involve our international like never before by the end of my term.

Student Respect & Trans Rights

Students are constantly **infantilised** when it comes to interactions with government, media, and the university. I have sat in on too many meetings featuring the phrase “*Students and Adults.*” Our SU is **built** off of recognising the **voice** of students and our right to **represent ourselves**. I am particularly interested in **fighting** complaints of student accommodation being a **security threat**, having previously been advised that this could be seen as a form of discrimination against students as a population.

Directly related to this is the **treatment of trans students** within Irish society & the medical system. As I’ve previously enunciated, every student is the **master of their lives** and should be given the right support to feel comfortable in themselves. From my own friends, peers and our national SU, AMLÉ, in particular, I’ve **learned** from fantastic people from across the country about the nuances associated with being trans in this country, and what needs to be done to make **gender affirming care** safe, efficient and accessible in this country. On our end as an **SU**, I want to speed up the application and delivery of the T-Fund in Semester 1 on 2026/27 and use our seat at the AMLÉ to push against the **current NGS** and prioritise student autonomy at every stage.

As a student society of critical thinkers, I want to use the role of President to push back against new waves of **moral panic**, which have only **harmed students in the past**. This university of ours was once denounced as a ‘god-less college’ but I truly believe that students of all faiths, and none, have nothing to lose by being **accepting of their peers**. If the Real Deal happens, we will do it together.



Credits and Thanks

The **'Real Deal'** wouldn't be here without the fantastic contributions of student union members, past and present, to this campaign, and their hopes and concerns are interwoven with my own plans to achieve their aims and resolve their fears. A former president of this union from the 1980s once told me that one spell in the SU had left him with a list of things he wanted to change and a desire to make that change happen, and likewise, my time as Environmental Officer last year has left me with dreams of what I can bring to this union that has taught me so much already.

I will be forever indebted to those who have helped me so far, regardless of the results of the campaign. The whole Team Ó Neill has kept me going and deserves praise for their ingenuity and advice. Badges, bedsheets, tattoos, and t-shirts wouldn't have happened without them. Much love also to everyone who's said hello on the road, on campus, and on the town.

Especial thanks to my Chief of Staff and Director of Campaigns, who have proven that the Northwest is best. We've wound up the bell, it's time to hear it ring. Likewise, many thanks to Fionn O'Connor for his photography and making this mug look good. We'll do this yet!