

Officer Report
of the Vice President Education & Deputy
President
of Maynooth Students' Union (MSU)
to Student Senate

Tuarascáil Oifigigh den Leas-Uachtarán
um Oideachas agus Uachtarán Ionad
Aontas na Mac Léinn, Má Nuad do
Sheanad na Mac Léinn



Alex Balfe
Vice President Education & Deputy President
Leas Uachtarán Oideachais & Uachtarán Ionaid

PERIOD OF WORK: 1Ú SAMHAIN – 15Ú SAMHAIN
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seanadóirí,

I hope you are coping well with assignment season.

This Officer Report is going to be relatively short as the previous work period was reported until the 7th of November.

The report is fairly short so go on, give it a read. If I haven't updated on something, it means I haven't had enough time to effectively progress on the item. Please refer to my previous report for the most up to date progress on certain things in the report.

Go dtí sin,

Alex Balfe

VP Education & Deputy President

LU Oideachais & Uachtarán Ionaid

CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Article 10.7 of the MSU Constitution sets out the constitutional responsibilities of the MSU Vice President Education. I have outlined my constitutional responsibilities below and have commented on my progress in fulfilling them.

List of Constitutional Responsibility:

The Vice President Education shall be responsible for dealing with issues of academic interest and general academic advancement of the student body of the University.

I have continued to deal with issues of Academic Interest and Academic Advancements within MU and SPPU when I was able to.

This involved case work and attending committee meetings.

One significant thing is that the Dean of Teaching and Learning in the ACSP Faculty asked if it is possible to elect Academic Reps sooner, I communicated the difficulties that surround this issue. These are:

- Constitutionally, we have two weeks for nominations followed by two weeks of campaigning.
- If we move the notice of elections earlier, students will not be on campus when nominations are open.
- We could elect continuing students but we would face difficulties if students do not pass to the subsequent year or if something happens throughout the summer to those elected.
- If the above point is practiced, we would have to put additional time and resources the future VP Education may not have into elected 1st year students.

As a member of the CRRC, this is something I will be exploring.

Be responsible for dealing with all academic-related casework by:

- (a) Acting as a point of peer-provided guidance**

(b) Acting as a listening & referral service

I have continued to offer peer support and to act as a listening and referral service, especially as it is assignment season, I am finding myself referring a lot of students to various supports and services on campus.

They shall be responsible for updating members on changes in the education system or changes within the educational structure of the University which are relevant to students.

There has been no changes during this period however, I continue to represent students on various academic committees .

They shall be responsible for developing and enacting all Union educational policies and campaigns.

Tuesday October 8th I hosted a baby DeStress campaign. The plan of this campaign is to welcome students back to campus after reading week with a daytime social event followed by informational graphics.

On Tuesday October 8th, The Woolly Pet farm visited campus. I did an ethical research on various farms. This included:

- Research on the background of the farm
- Animal Safety Policies
- Animal Welfare Policies
- Distance animals would have to travel to get to campus
- Animal safety regulations when they visit campus

As well as ethical research, I researched and reached out to a great number of animal sanctuaries, however none of them had appropriate measures and documents for attending campus.

It was great to see vibrant groups of students outside Maynooth Students' Union on the day.

From the informational point of view, following the University's Governing Authority announcement, I didn't want to overload the MSU social media and I didn't want the messaging of the student centre or assignments to get lost in the feed which often happens when multiple posts are uploaded at once. As a result of this, Sunday, Nov 13th, I uploaded informational graphics.

The aim of these graphics were to:

- Give students the facts about essay mills.
- Tell students impact of using essay mills.
- Offer alternative solutions to consider in order to succeed when writing essays.

Overall, in my opinion, the campaign was a great success, especially the graphics as they reached 7,165 Instagram accounts and received almost 100 saves.

The graphics were as follow:





Do **not** engage in
Essay Mills this
assignment
season.



ESSAY MILLS:

THEY WILL **SLIDE** INTO YOUR DM AND OFFER
TO WRITE YOUR ESSAYS.

THEY'RE **FAKE**, YOU WILL NOT RECEIVE AN
ESSAY IN RETURN FOR YOUR MONEY.

THEY WILL **DRAIN** YOU OF YOUR MONEY AND
BLACKMAIL YOU.



FOR AN EASIER ASSIGNMENT SEASON:

Use the Turnitin Self Check.

To check similarity before you submit your assignments!

Stay on top of your deadlines.

Make a check-list, and make sure to tick them off when you complete them.

Keep note of the references you use.

Make sure to add references to ensure you have a sufficient bibliography.

Keep up to date on class content

Take notes. If you don't understand something, **ask** your lecturer or tutor.

Book an appointment with the MU Writing Centre.

To improve your writing style and potentially your grades

Reach out.

Maynooth Students' Union, Maynooth University and St. Patrick's Pontifical University all have supports for you.

They shall be responsible for the maintenance of an effective Student Academic Representative system, Academic Assembly and Faculty Assemblies, to include co-ordination of training and development for Academic Representatives.

The first Academic Assembly took place at Academic Rep training. The function of this meeting was fulfilled here and I will call for another Academic Assembly if it necessary.

Faculty Assemblies are set to take place this week and next.

I had hoped to get NStEP and Mental Health training for Friday Nov. 18th, however, NStEP Training will now take place on the W/S Dec 5th.

They shall endeavour to attend all meetings of committees of which they are member and to coordinate and maximise student representation on other appropriate academic structures.

I have attended all committees when I was available to. For more information, please see committees section.

They shall endeavour to represent the needs of students by campaigning at both local and national level.

This has been something MSU have been working on extensively via the #WheresMyLevy campaign. For a full outline of this campaign, please see this link for a full overview of this campaign : <https://www.msu.ie/yourlevyprojects/>

As this campaign draws to a close, here are the key points of this campaign:

- **Monday, 26 September 2022 | Maynooth University announced that construction on a new Student Centre project has been terminated, following a decision by the University's Governing Authority.**
- I was Present at GA when the contract was terminated. I was one of the voters who was voted against the termination.
- **RTÉ Drivetime interview**
- I was interviewed by RTÉ Drivetime and asked about the termination of the Student Centre Construction.
- **Monday, 3 October 2022 | MSU launches its Online #WheresMyLevy petition calling on the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (FHERIS), Simon Harris TD, to support the students of Maynooth**

in these demands and to aid them in bringing them to the attention of Maynooth University.

- We worked hard to circulate this survey to students and alumni.

- Monday, 3 October 2022 | The MSU President wrote to the Bursar seeking a freeze to the levy with no increases to the charge for a period of at least five academic years beginning 2023-24. The MSU President received no reply.

- Tuesday, 4 October 2022 | MSU launches its paper #WheresMyLevy petition calling on Maynooth University to:
 - 1) publicly state their commitments to delivering a student Centre and ensure its prioritisation over other capital developments on campus,
 - 2) freeze the levy, with no increases to the charge for a period of at least five academic years beginning 2023-24, and
 - 3) be transparent in its communication as to how the student levy is being used, prove their commitments to joint oversight of the fund, and work in good faith with MSU and the students of Maynooth to regain their trust.

- This part of our campaign involved countless hours of the Sabbatical team and volunteers as they got as many signatures as possible.

- Thursday, 6 October 2022 | MSU organises #WheresMyLevy #LevyWalkOut with hundreds of students walking out in support of the #WheresMyLevy campaign
- Thursday, 6 October 2022 | The MSU President and I met with Minister Harris to outline the concerns of the students of May.
- Tuesday, 25 October 2022 | Students walk to Riverstown to hand deliver the signed petitions to the MU President.
- Thursday, November 10, 2022, MU Governing Authority took place in the JH Board Room
- In this GA, the MU President proposed the Student Centre action group. All of the demands of MSU were met
- This was a significant campaign and now that it is finally coming to a close, I want to give a special shoutout to the MSU President and Director General for all of their hard work throughout this period.

For the time that the Union is a member organisation of the Union of Students in Ireland, the Vice President Education shall be a delegate to the National Council and Annual Congress of the Union of Students in Ireland.

There has been no Comhairle Náisiúnta in this work period.

PLAN OF WORK

At the beginning of this Executives term of office, we created a plan of work. The Plan of Work is the guiding document for the executive. Below is how I have contributed to the completion of the Plan of Work.

- I met with the MSU President on Sunday 13th November to adjust the Plan of Work and to have it finalised before the next week.
- This document has been circulated to senators to ensure they have adequate time to give their feedback with enough time for adjustments to be made prior to the next senate so a senate consulted Plan of Work can be approved at the next meeting of the MSU Student Senate.
- The MSU Executive are hosting drop in consultation sessions for senators to contribute to the Plan of Work. These will be mainly in person with one online to accommodate those on and off campus.

MANIFESTO INITIATIVES

While running for Vice President Education, I outlined several manifesto pledges. Throughout my term I will make progress on each of these promises to the best of my ability.

List of Manifesto Initiatives:

1. Online Grinds Advertisement
2. Provide sufficient Mental Health Training to elected Academic Reps
3. Work to ensure that MSU is a bilingual Union and to ensure that Gaeilge is not forgotten
4. Continue the work which I did last year as ACSP FC with the VPE to work towards implementing blended learning campus
5. Provide workshops and information sessions for students who are getting ready to enter the workforce

Online Grinds Advertisements

- I have been trying to work out the logistics of how to go about online grind advertisements. If anyone has any suggestions on how to do this, drop me an email.

Work to ensure that MSU is a bilingual Union and to ensure that Gaeilge is not forgotten

- The Oifigeach and I are resubmitting the Déan é as Gaeilge campaign which I completed last year to the next sitting of the student senate.
- The aim of this document is to ensure our representations structures have access to Gaeilge.
- The document include phonetics to make it as accessible as can be,

Provide sufficient Mental Health Training to elected Academic Reps

- I am currently working to reschedule Mental Health training for Academic Reps.

MOTION & MANDATES

There are many motion & mandates that require participation from my role.

Throughout my term I will make progress on each of these motion & mandates to the best of my ability. Below is a list of all active motion & mandates that require my participation, with updates on my progress with each one.

List of Motion & Mandate:

1. Mental Health Training
2. Disclosure of Lecturers' and Department Representatives' Personal Pronouns in Emails
3. 'How to Use your Union' Infographics
4. Student Virtual Safe Space
5. Sourcing Student Support
6. Agency and Consultation over Student Deadlines
7. Promotion of Supports for Students with Disabilities
8. MU & MSU Sexual Harassment Policy Review
9. Accessibility of Lectures VP Education to Lobby Maynooth University and St. Patrick's Pontifical University Staff to Provide Content Warnings in Advance of Triggering Lectures
10. Irish Language Campaign
11. MSU Position on Publicly Funded Education
12. Motion to Lobby Relevant Parties AGAINST the Proposed Leaving Certificate Irish Curriculum
13. Accessibility of Lectures
14. Comprehensive Mental Healthcare Provision
15. Continuation of Online Arrangements

Mental Health training

I am currently working to reschedule this training to ensure reps know how to look after themselves whilst in the student movement

Continuation of Online Arrangements

Meetings continue to be offered online, when possible.

COMMITTEES

I have listed the committees that I am a member of and have tried to give a description of their remit and some of the activities they undertake. I have also listed my contribution to these committees below.

Committee that the Vice President Education & Deputy President is a member of:

- Maynooth University Governing Authority
- Maynooth University Academic Council
- Maynooth University Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy
- Maynooth University Faculty of Social Sciences
- Maynooth University Faculty of Science and Engineering
- Maynooth University Academic Programmes Committee
- Maynooth University Strategic Plan steering group
- Maynooth University Student Success initiative
- Maynooth University Teaching and Learning Committee
- Maynooth Students' Union Executive Committee
- Maynooth Students' Union Student Senate
- Maynooth Students' Union Academic Assembly
- Maynooth Students' Union Student Charter Committee
- Maynooth Students' Union Student Engagement and Feedback Committee
- Maynooth Students' Union Academic Representation Review Committee
- Maynooth Students' Union Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy Faculty Assembly
- Maynooth Students' Union Social Sciences Faculty Assembly
- Maynooth Students' Union Science and Engineering Faculty Assembly
- Maynooth Students' Union, Constitution and Representational Review Committee
- Union of Students in Ireland Comhairle Náisiúnta

- Union of Students in Ireland Academic Affairs Working Group
- Union of Students in Ireland Borders, Midlands and Western region working group

1. Maynooth University Governing Authority

The Governing Authority has responsibility for the strategic direction of the University, the management and administration of its revenue and property and the general conduct of its affairs.

I attended GA on November 10th. You would have received an all student email with an update on the Student Centre. It is great to see all of the hard work of the #WheresMyLevy campaign pay off as all three of the demands of MSU were met during this meeting.

Content warning *Sexual Harassment*

In AOB of GA, I raised a reoccurring Sexual Harassment issue which has been brought to our attention. I asked the MU President who to contact as the third party company's management are yet to respond to the complaints which have been filed. It is important to note this in my Officer Report and to flag this with the University. I will be following up with those who I was advised to contact

2. Maynooth University Academic Council

The Academic Council Office facilitates the co-ordination of business and liaison between the Academic Council and its standing boards/committees, and when required, the three Faculties and Governing Authority. It is responsible for the preparation and circulation of documents for meetings of the Academic Council and its boards and committees.

I attended Academic Council on Monday November 7th.

3. Maynooth University Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy

The Faculty is a forum for consideration of academic matters relevant to the Faculty. It may make recommendations to Academic Council on matters on which Academic Council is empowered to make decisions.

The ACSP Faculty has not met in this period.

4. Maynooth University Faculty of Social Sciences

The Description above (see ACSP Faculty) is relevant to all three MU Faculty meetings.

The SS Faculty has not met in this period.

5. Maynooth University Faculty of Science and Engineering

The Description above (see ACSP Faculty) is relevant to all three MU Faculty meetings.

The S&E Faculty has not met in this period.

6. Maynooth University Academic Programmes Committee

The function of the Academic Programmes Committee is to oversee on behalf of Academic Council the portfolio of programmes of the University, undergraduate and postgraduate, to ensure that they remain appropriate, relevant and of the highest possible standards. The Academic Programmes Committee will bring recommendations to Academic Council regarding the overall structure of the portfolio, the approval of new programmes, changes to programmes, the withdrawal of programmes and the academic regulations governing programmes. The Academic Programmes Committee will seek the prior approval of the University Executive before making any recommendation to Academic Council that has significant resource implications.

The Academic Programmes Committee has not met in this period.

7. Maynooth University Strategic Plan steering group

This committee looks at and reviews the feedback given at town halls relevant to the Strategic Plan.

The MU Strategic Plan steering group has not met in this period.

8. Maynooth University Student Success initiative

The Student Success Initiative has not met in this period.

9. Maynooth University Teaching and Learning Committee

The role of the Academic Council Teaching and Learning Committee is to make recommendations to Academic Council on matters of strategy and policy in relation to Teaching and Learning in order to enhance teaching, learning and assessment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and to oversee, on behalf of Academic Council, the development, implementation and review of the education strategy for the university, within the overall framework of the University Strategic Plan

The T&L committee has not met in this period.

10. Maynooth Students' Union Executive Committee

The Executive shall meet and act as a collective authority, and shall be collectively responsible for the day to day operation of the Union, in addition to each officer's own portfolio, and shall have powers to take necessary decisions in between meetings of the Student Senate. Any such decisions must be ratified at the next meeting of Student Senate and shall lapse and have no further effect if not so ratified.

As the Vice President Education, I am the secretary of the Maynooth Students' Union Executive.

I have attended each of the MSU Executive meetings.

This year, we have started to publish an *Achoimre* of the Executive meetings on the MSU website. I have some minutes and *achaimre* to finish, but when they are finished and approved by the Executive, they will be uploaded.

11. Maynooth Students' Union Student Senate

The governing body of the Union shall be the Student Senate. Subject to the provisions of the law, this Constitution, and to policies set by Policy Referendum, Union policy on matters shall be determined by the Student Senate at a validly called and quorate Student Senate meeting. Union policy shall include mandates for Union Officers and Union delegations.

The functions of the Student Senate shall include inter alia;

- 1. The formulation of Union policy*
- 2. The right to mandate the members of the Union Executive individually or as a body to undertake certain tasks in addition to any adopted policy;*
- 3. Ensuring that the members of the Union Executive are held accountable in the conduct of their respective roles*

I attended the MSU Student Senate on November 9th, 2022 in the John Hume Board room.

12. Maynooth Students' Union Academic Assembly

There shall be Academic Assembly to provide a forum to discuss issues related to academic affairs, teaching and learning, and quality assurance, as well as areas that

influence student learning, as they affect all students across the University so as to be in a position to advise the Vice President Education and the Union where necessary.

As the Vice President Education, I chaired the first Academic Assembly on Friday November 21st. For more information, see the Academic Rep training schedule previously outlined in the report.

13. Maynooth Students' Union Student Charter Committee

The Student Charter Committee is established by the Student Academic Assembly to review and develop the Student Charter

The first meeting of the MSU Student Charter Committee will convene after the Second meeting of the Faculty Assemblies.

This is because only two Academic Representatives were elected to the committee during the first Faculty Assemblies and to ensure effective representations, we will open nominations again in the next assembly.

14. Maynooth Students' Union Student Engagement and Feedback Committee

The Student Engagement & Feedback Committee is established by this Constitution and the Student Academic Assembly to review the mechanisms for students to provide feedback on the quality of their teaching and learning as well as the teaching and learning environment within the University

The first meeting of the MSU Student Engagement and Feedback Committee will convene the week starting 14th November.

15. Maynooth Students' Union Academic Representation Review Committee

The Academic Representation Review Committee is established by this Constitution and the Student Academic Assembly to review and advise the Vice President

Education on the effectiveness and development needs of student academic representation in the Union and University

The first meeting of the Academic Representative Review Committee will convene the week starting 14th November.

16. Maynooth Students' Union Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy Faculty Assembly

There shall be Faculty Assemblies to provide a forum for discussion on all issues of particular relevance to a particular faculty, including, but not limited to: academic programmes; all areas of teaching and learning; facilities; and all matters relating to the education, welfare and student experience of students in the relevant faculty

The ACSP Faculty Assembly has not met in this period.

17. Maynooth Students' Union Social Sciences Faculty Assembly

There shall be Faculty Assemblies to provide a forum for discussion on all issues of particular relevance to a particular faculty, including, but not limited to: academic programmes; all areas of teaching and learning; facilities; and all matters relating to the education, welfare and student experience of students in the relevant faculty

I was unable to attend the Social Sciences Faculty Assembly as it occurred at the same time as the ACSP Faculty Assembly.

The SS Faculty Assembly has not met in this period.

18. Maynooth Students' Union Science and Engineering Faculty Assembly

There shall be Faculty Assemblies to provide a forum for discussion on all issues of particular relevance to a particular faculty, including, but not limited to: academic programmes; all areas of teaching and learning; facilities; and all matters relating to the education, welfare and student experience of students in the relevant faculty.

The S & E Faculty Assembly has not met in this period.

**19. Maynooth Students' Union, Constitution and Representational Review
Committee**

I sit on CRRC as the Deputy President. The CRRC is yet to meet

20. Union of Students in Ireland Comhairle Náisiúnta

National Council is the National Executive of the Union of Students in Ireland. It oversees the management of the National Union and hears reports on the activities of the officer board in between Congresses of the Union

The USI CN has not met in this period.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

The work of [insert position] is not just confined to constitutional roles and manifesto initiatives. There is a wide variety of activities undertaken by me in the execution of my role. I have given a comprehensive list of these activities below.

List of some of the main other general activities undertaken:

- Period Product Campaign with the VP Welfare and Equality
- Meeting with Charity Partner of the Year
- Meeting with MU Library

MEETING SCHEDULE

Below is an indicative schedule of meetings that I have attended. This is shown to portray how often I have meetings and the level of consistency with which these committees meet at. There are also many meetings needed outside of those committees.

Meeting Schedule:

- **Week starting 31st October**

01st November – 2pm – Events and Campaigns meeting

03rd November – 10am – MSU & CPY

- **Week starting 7th November**

07th November – 2pm – Democratic Affairs meeting

07th November – 3pm – MU Academic Council

07th November – 4pm – MSU Executive

08th November – 2pm - Events and Campaigns meeting

08th November – 4pm – Executive prep meeting

09th November – 3:45 pm- Governing Authority Prep meeting

10th November – 9:30am – Governing Authority Prep meeting

10th November – 2:30pm – MU Governing Authority

11th November – 12pm – Meeting with MU Library

13th November – 3pm – Meeting with MSU President, Plan of work

- **Week starting 14th November**

14th November – 11am – VPE, FC, ARR

14th November – 2pm – Meeting with MSU President

14th November 2:30pm – Democratic Affairs meeting

15th November – 10am – Full time officer catch up

15th November – 2pm – Events and campaigns meeting

EXPENSES CLAIMED

To ensure that I am transparent and accountable for my expenditure below is a list of all expenses that I have claimed.

- a) I am yet to claim expenses