

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: 16Ú SAMHAIN IÚIL 2022 – 9Ú NOLLAIG 2022
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A chairde,

To summarise, the past month has been extremely case work heavy, planning for January DeStress and also planning Academic Rep trainings. As well as this, I attended my University Committee meeting and had two brilliant opportunities to co-present once at the National Student Engagement Network where I discussed diversity in student representation and then at the Irish Conference on Engaging Pedagogy where I got to give insight into what teaching and learning approaches work best.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best of luck in any upcoming assignments and January exams. Don't forget to set boundaries, take study breaks and get those 8 hours sleep.

Besides the study, I hope we can all join together and have mince pies and mulled wine on the ground floor of the TSI building in the near future. To those who celebrate, Nollaig Shona, Merry Christmas. To those who don't, please take the opportunity to get a well earned rest at the end of this semester.

I look forward to seeing you all during my DeStress campaign in January, don't be afraid to swing by!

Go dti 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 am a member of the Maynooth University Steering Group for the Strategic Plan. As part of this, I attended the "Deep Dive" Session on Blended and Online Learning. This took place in TSI on Monday December 5th at 1-3pm. At this deep dive session, we discussed
 - o To what extent should blended learning be implemented at an undergraduate level.
 - o To what extent should blended learning be implemented at a postgraduate level.
 - o How MU can use technology to internationalise their studies.

Overall, the session was extremely informative and it is great to see Maynooth University look to modernise and make education more accessible.

- I have been engaging with the student success initiative. Through my involvement with this, I was on the editing committee of the **"Teaching, Learning and Curricular Activity Pillar"**.

This initiative is now in its final stages and will soon be brought to the Maynooth University Academic Council.

- I kept students up to date about the Library's consultation session and encouraged students to attend as it is vital to have the student's voices heard at these forums.
- I was in contact with the exams office and they have uploaded their exams timetable. I shared this on social medias to ensure students had access to their timetables. As well as this, personalised exam timetables will be made and circulated to students individually.
- In a meeting with Moodle support, they asked how their physical presence can be optimised where they can reach the most students. The MSU Info Centre is often the first port of contact for students when they have questions, this is why the Moodle Support team have been and will be in the MSU Info Centre for every Tuesday in December.

As well as this I've been working on:

- Fees issues
- Issues with Academic staff
- Attending academic committees

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 been dealing with a lot of academic related casework in this period of work. I have referred students to relevant supports when needs be.

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 have been no changes in the education system or changes within the educational structure of the University that I am aware of.

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

Please see the "Mandates" section to see the work I do on developing and executing educational campaigns and policies throughout the year.

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.

I attended the 2nd meeting of the Faculty Assemblies.

Chomh maith leis sin, as well as this, over the past 2/3 weeks I have noticed trends in where Academic Reps have been struggling with their roles. Mar thoradh ar sin, as a result of this, the Academic Rep admin and I worked to develop some further trainings for the elected Academic Reps.

This training had many benefits:

- It allowed academic reps who were elected through the by election to get trained and get a greater insight into their roles.
- It gave all reps the chance to ask questions now that they have settled into their roles.
- It gave reps a chance to get to know each other.

We also provided NStEP training. Reps could chose times that suited them. It was facilitated by student trainers who have come from different positions with a lot of experience who gave an insight into the reps role by using examples from their own experiences.

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.

In my capacity as Vice President Education and Deputy President, I have attended the meetings which I was able to attend and sent apologies to the ones I couldn't attend. Please see the "Committees" section of this report for more information.

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

I have done this when possible through representing students at various USI meetings.

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 since my last report. I am unable to attend the December sitting as I will be on annual leave.

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.

- My plan of work overlap with my manifesto initiatives. Unfortunately, I have not been in a position this month to advance many of these as I have been focussing on a lot of case work. I will incorporate the two sections in my next report.

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.

Continue the work which I did last year as ACSP FC with the VPE to work towards implementing blended learning campus

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 - o To what extent should blended learning be implemented at an undergraduate level.
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 - o How MU can use technology to internationalise their studies.

Overall, the session was extremely informative and it is great to see Maynooth University look to modernise and make education more accessible.

This session was extremely insightful for me. I learned a lot about postgraduate courses and it was great to see the overall consensus of the room was that blended learning is something which should be adopted to the MU campus. It is something that is easier applied to PG degrees rather than UG.

My group discussed not only the benefits but some of the difficulties MU would face if implemented, such as, there would have to be a common agreement across all lecturers of a minimum standard of what blended learning will be applied. When applied, it needs to be consistent and the requirements of not only the students but lecturers too need to be clearly laid out. This allows one another to hold each other accountable if minimum standard is not met.

I look forward to seeing the results of this deep dive session be implemented into the Maynooth University Strategic Plan. Accessibility and flexibility should be the key pillars in which approaches to teaching should rely on.

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

Continuation of Online Arrangements

I have ensured to continue online arrangements 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 have attended both of the GA meetings this year on November 10th. I also attended Governing Authority training.

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 the MU Academic Council meeting on 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 Faculty also has delegated authority from Academic Council to approve, where appropriate:

- 1. The award of research degrees;*
- 2. The appointment of external examiners for research theses;*
- 3. The appointment of external examiners for programmes and subjects.*

The Faculty is also an important channel for information sharing, discussion and debate, on matters relevant to the academic business of the constituent academic units and their disciplines. The Faculty shall elect members of the Academic Council, the Standing Committees of the Academic Council, and other University bodies in accordance with the University statutes and standing orders.

I attended all three Faculty meetings in this period of work.

4. Maynooth University Faculty of Social Sciences

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

I attended all three Faculty meetings in this period of work.

5. Maynooth University Faculty of Science and Engineering

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

I attended all three Faculty meetings in this period of work.

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.

There has not been a meeting of the Academic Programmes in this period of work.

7. Maynooth University Strategic Plan steering group

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

I attended two MU Strategic plan steering group meetings in this period of work, 23rd November, 7th December.

8. Maynooth University Student Success initiative

I attended one of the final meetings of the Student Success initiative on November 23rd.

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

There has been no sitting of the MU T&L Committee in this period of work.

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.

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 have attended all MSU Student Senate meetings

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.

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

This committee met for it's first time. Here we:

- Elected the committee
- Approved the plan of work for this committee for the year
- Began to review the Student Charter

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

This committee has since met twice. It has been extremely engaging. In order to optimise the committees potential, we will have 1.5hour long meetings.

At these meetings, we:

- Elected the committee
- Approved the plan of work for this committee for the year
- Discussed MU Feedback structures
- Discussed MU Engagement structures
- Discussed MSU Feedback structures
- Discussed MSU Engagement structures

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

This committee has since met twice. It has been extremely engaging. In order to optimise the committees potential, we will have 1.5hour long meetings.

At these meetings, we:

- Elected the committee
- Approved the plan of work for this committee for the year
- Began to review the constitution

I hope to bring suggestions to the CRRC

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

I attended all three Faculty Assemblies in this period of work.

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 attended all three Faculty Assemblies in this period of work.

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

I attended all three Faculty Assemblies in this period of work.

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

There has been no Comhairle during this period of work. The next one takes place on December 8th and 9th, I will not be in attendance as I am presenting at a different conference and I will be on annual leave the following day

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 Products for VP Welfare and Equality**

I continue to add period products to MSU Toilets

- **MSU End of 2022 quiz**

I co-wrote the questions for this quiz which took place in the bar. I presented one round, however, after this, I had to attend to a student instead of the quiz.

- **Co-present once at the National Student Engagement Network**

I was invited to co present at the National Student Engagement Network which took place in the MU Library. I co presented this session with MU Student Success Initiative. I spoke about diversifying student representation

- **Sat on Student Perspective panel at the Irish Conference on Engaging Pedagogy**

I was invited to sit on the Student Perspective: Making it Work panel. I had the opportunity to talk about what approaches to teaching and learning work and don't work.

I gave examples of my best learning experiences, what approaches to learning I don't like and then what makes up a good learning experience.

Academics then had the chance to ask questions where I responded to a number of questions.

It was really beneficial to attend this event, not only as a speaker but it was amazing to see some of the research being carried out by academics across the country. I got a greater insight into various aspects of teaching and learning.

One presentation, delivered by a lecturer in MTU Kerry was extremely insightful. He presented on traveller women and access to education and the difficulties which this women face on a day to day life, even that they are not entitled to various supports.

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 October 31st**

1ú Samhain – 2pm – Events and campaigns meeting

2ú Samhain – 12pm – Meeting with MSU President

3ú Samhain – 10am – Meeting with CPY- Threshold

3ú Samhain – 12pm – Full Time Officer Catch Up

- **Week starting November 7th**

7ú Samhain – 2:30pm – Democratic Affairs meeting

7ú Samhain – 3pm - MU Academic Council

7ú Samhain – 5pm – MSU Executive

8ú Samhain – 2pm - Events and campaigns meeting

9ú Samhain – 12pm – Meeting with MSU President

9ú Samhain – 3:45pm – GA Document reading session

10ú Samhain – 2:30pm – MU Governing Authority

11ú Samhain – 11am – MSU & MU Library Meeting

- **Week starting November 14th**

14ú Samhain – 11am – Meeting with ACSP, SS, S&E FC and ARR

14ú Samhain – 2:30pm – Democratic Affairs meeting

15ú Samhain – 10am – Working from home check in meeting

15ú Samhain – 2pm – Events and campaigns meeting

15ú Samhain – 4pm – Plan of work drop in session

16ú Samhain – 10am – Working from home check in meeting

16ú Samhain – 12pm – Meeting with MSU President

16ú Samhain – 4pm – Plan of work drop in session

17ú Samhain – 10am – Working from home check in meeting

17ú Samhain – 4pm – Plan of work drop in session

18ú Samhain – 10am – Working from home check in meeting

15ú Samhain – 3pm – Plan of work drop in session

- **Week starting November 21st**

21ú Samhain – 2:30pm – Democratic Affairs meeting

21ú Samhain – 4pm – Social Sciences Faculty Assembly

21ú Samhain – 5pm – MSU Executive Meeting

21ú Samhain – 6pm – Science and Engineering Faculty Assembly

22ú Samhain – 11am – MUSE award 2022/23 New Levels and Processes

Introductory/launch session

22ú Samhain – 4pm – National Student Engagement Network Breakout Session

Planning meeting

22ú Samhain – 5pm – Student Academic Rep Review Committee

23ú Samhain – 10am – Strategic Plan Steering Group

23ú Samhain – 12pm – Student Success Initiative

23ú Samhain – 4pm – Student Engagement and Feedback Committee

24ú Samhain – 10am – Cruinniú Choiste na Gaeilge

24ú Samhain – 11am – Meeting with Department Head

25ú Samhain – 6pm – Meeting with Department Head

- **Week starting November 28th**

28ú Samhain – 1pm – ACSP Faculty

28ú Samhain – 2:30pm – Democratic Affairs meeting

28ú Samhain – 3pm – SS Faculty

29ú Samhain – 2pm – Events and campaigns meeting

29ú Samhain – 3pm – S&E Faculty

30ú Samhain – 11am – Graduate Education Committee

30ú Samhain – 2pm - National Student Engagement Network Breakout Session

Planning meeting

1ú Nollaig - National Student Engagement Network event

1ú Nollaig – 4pm – Meeting with ACSP Faculty Convenor

2ú Nollaig – 11am – Student Charter Committee

2ú Nollaig - 12pm – Student Academic Representative Review Committee

2ú Nollaig – 2pm – Student Engagement and Feedback Committee

2ú Nollaig – 5pm – Constitution Steering Group

- **Week starting December 5th**

5ú Nollaig – 11am – Meeting with Campaign Support Co-ordinator

5ú Nollaig – 1pm – Blended learning “Deep Dives” session

5ú Nollaig – 3pm – Meeting with Campaign Support Co-ordinator

5ú Nollaig – 4pm – Meeting for MSU Big Christmas quiz

5ú Nollaig – 5pm – MSU Executive meeting

6ú Nollaig - 10am – Student Survey 2023 planning meeting

6ú Nollaig – 2pm – Events and campaigns meeting

6ú Nollaig – 4pm – Comhairle Náitiúnta review meeting

6ú Nollaig – 5pm – Facilitated Academic Rep training

7ú Nollaig - 11:30am – MILO Launch

7ú Nollaig – 2:30pm – MU Strategic Plan Steering Group

7ú Nollaig – 4:30pm – Governing Authority Training

8ú Nollaig – 12:30pm – Presenting at the Irish Conference for Engaging Pedagogy

8ú Nollaig – 2pm – Meeting with Campaign Support Co-ordinator and Academic Rep Administrator

9ú Nollaig – Annual Leave

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