Officer Report of the Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor of Maynooth Students' Union (MSU) to Student Senate



Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor

Tionólaí Dhámh S & E

PERIOD OF WORK: 1ST JULY 2022 – 18TH OCTOBER 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Image Description: My official Officer Photo. I am standing in front of the Arts Annex in a leaf patterned shirt. There are vibrant yellow and green plants surrounding me and I am smiling. My hair is being blown slightly by the wind and my beard is a lot shorter than it is now!

It's good to be back Senate!

For those of you who I haven't worked with before, hello! My name is Gavin Fanning, and I have been elected to be your Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor for this Academic Year and the Seventh Sitting of the MSU Student

Senate. I've been a member of Senate since the Third Sitting back in the 2018 – 2019 Academic Year, when I was DARE Senator for the first of three terms. I was elected to my current position for the first time last December in a bi-election, before re-running for the position in the March elections. As you might have been able to gather the Senate and also the Union as a whole have been a major part of my university experience, so I am delighted and honoured to once again have the chance to give back to this wonderful organisation.

This Officer Report covers a massive timeframe, with the bulk of the workload for my own position of Faculty Convenor coming in the period from the start of the academic year to now. I was required to attend some meetings during the summer months, and as I live in Maynooth I was able to dedicate time during the summer to coming to the office and helping out wherever I could with the preparations for the academic year.

The major bit of preparatory work that was carried out was for the Academic Representative elections that took place at the start of the semester. We had a tight timeframe to promote the elections and get as many Academic Reps as possible for the start of the semester. As such I have a number of people I wish to give a quick thanks to here for their help with this massive project. I'd firstly like to thank the VP Education Alex Balfe and the Academic Representation Administrator Seán Masterson for their amazing work in

organising recruitment and the elections for all three faculties. Any work I did was only to help lighten the massive load they were lifting, and as such I am eternally grateful to them as without the hours of behind the scenes work they put in preparing the infrastructure of the elections I wouldn't have a single Rep. I'd like to also thank the ASCP Faculty Convenor Kyla Henry and the Social Sciences Faculty Convenor Carrie O'Neill. We're all very busy balancing being Part-Time Officers with being Full-Time Students, so having the support of my fellow Faculty Convenors on the ground recruiting students when I was unable to was a major help and I hope I was able to pay it back in kind! In a similar vein I'd like to thank all of the students who got involved with Academic Rep recruitment this year. The time ye took out of your own time to volunteer to help man the stands and give lecture addresses will pay major dividends for this Union. In particular I'd like to thank Jessica Lennon, Ben Holmes, Luka Pranciliauskas and Conor Cronin for getting directly involved in recruiting Science & Engineering Reps despite not being in the Faculty themselves. I know it's tricky enough to go to your own classes and speak to the class about Reps, but to go to a whole other Faculty and successfully recruit Reps in an amazing achievement and ye should be proud of yourselves!

Other than Rep recruitment I've been involved in the planning for and have attended the events related to the #WheresMyLevy Campaign. In all my time in the Union I have not seen a bigger or more important movement, so please I urge you if you haven't been getting involved please do. Every action we take now will have a major impact on the future of our University and also our Union, so if you have even a spare few minutes to help get signatures on a petition, or even just read up on the situation to be able to explain it to your friends, it would be of massive value to the Union. To us.

Senate I'm going to try and keep these brief as I'm aware that you have the other Officer Reports to get through, so I'll finish up with one last thank you. I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read this document. I put a lot of effort into it and hope that the passion and heart I put into my work in the Union shines through it.

To my fellow Executive Officers, I look forward to the rest of the year ahead working with you, especially my newly elected colleagues who have yet to be elected as of the time of my writing this. I hope I am able to be a valuable member of the team as well as a confidant and a friend whenever I'm needed.

And to you Senators, both new and returning, I hope I serve you well as Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor. I hope that you are pleased with

the work I carry out, and that I can answer any questions you may have about said work. I also hope that if you have any questions about your own role that you'd feel comfortable coming to me for advice and guidance. With all the years I've been in the Union I'll definitely be able to find you someone who actually knows what they're doing to talk to instead of me!

Jokes aside I can't wait to get this year started!

Go raibh míle maith agat,

Gavin Fanning,

Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor.

CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Article 10.1-5 of the MSU Constitution sets out the constitutional responsibilities of the MSU Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor.

I have outlined my constitutional responsibilities below and have commented on my progress in fulfilling them;

1. The Faculty Convenors shall be the primary means of communications

between the students and student academic representatives in their faculty

and the Executive. In particular the Faculty Convenors shall be responsible

for raising awareness of issues specific to their respective faculties in all

appropriate fora including the Student Senate and Executive meetings.

I have been communicating with students on two major issues over this period of work; repeat exams and academic rep recruitment. The University saw an increased non progression rate this year, which had the knock on effect of a large number of students contacting me both via email and also my social media accounts with queries related to their exam results. I helped as many as I could with their queries, and sent those who I could not help onto the VP Education. I also guided some students to the University's supports if they had not gotten in touch with them yet or were unsure who to contact in the University.

(a) They shall be responsible for the distribution of information and for the implementation of the campaigns of the Union within their faculties.

I have been ensuring, with the help of former Academic Reps and friends within different departments within the faculty, that information relating to the campaigns being run by the Union is getting to Science & Engineering students. I have namely been focused on promoting the Academic Rep recruitment and #WheresMyLevy campaigns as I felt these campaigns were of great importance to students in the faculty. Other than word of mouth through the above contacts, I distributed the information related to the campaigns via lecture addresses, working the SU stand at Fairs' Day and standing on a bench.

(b) Recognising the non-sabbatical nature of the Faculty Convenor positions, the sabbatical officers and the Union generally shall endeavour to provide support to the Faculty Convenors in the discharge of their roles.

I am in consistent communication with the VP Education discussing upcoming duties I may need to fulfil and the practicability of me fulfilling them. The VP Education has been very understanding of the heavy workload of Final Year and has ensured that any support I may need to carry out my role is available from her.

2. They shall be responsible for the recruitment of Student Academic Representatives within their own faculty.

Over the summer I developed my own personal strategy for Academic Rep recruitment at the request of the VP Education. I compiled my strategy into a Powerpoint presentation, which I presented during a meeting of the Executive.

(a) They shall be responsible for organising the election of the Student Academic Representatives for the constituencies within their faculties.

Thanks to the work carried out by the VP Education and the Academic Representation Administrator my role within the organisation of the election of Science & Engineering Academic Reps was largely a promotional one, ensuring that potential Reps were aware of and interacted with the framework set out by my wonderful colleagues.

3. Each Faculty Convenor shall arrange for a Faculty Assembly meeting to occur in their respective faculties normally six times per academic year, normally with three meetings per semester.

The first meeting of the Science & Engineering Faculty Assembly for this academic year will take place on October 21st.

4. The Faculty Convenor shall be the Chairperson of their respective Faculty

Assemblies.

I plan to chair the upcoming meeting of the Science & Engineering Faculty Assembly, due to take place on October 21^{st} .

(a) A Deputy Chairperson and Secretary shall be elected from the Faculty

Assembly at the first meeting of the year.

Based on the number of Reps elected I should be able to fill these two roles at the first meeting of the Science & Engineering Faculty Assembly which is due to take place on October $21^{\rm st}$.

5. They shall, where practicable, undergo training during the summer months as organised by the Union.

I attended the Executive Crossover and Officer Training that was held on campus in June. I was able to attend every session that was relevant to my role. I particularly enjoyed the one-on-one crossover meetings with our predecessors, where I learned invaluable knowledge from last year's Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor Gavin.

MANIFESTO INITIATIVES

While running for the position of Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor, 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. Accessibility

I want to make sure that my Faculty, as well as our Union as a whole, is a Union for everyone. In my time in this Union, I have worked to represent many marginalised groups, specifically students with disabilities. While the role I am in currently is focused on the Science & Engineering Faculty, I also plan to continue my work with regards to disability accessibility, as well as fighting for equality across campus in all fields.

The major way I worked towards this goal was spending the summer working on the Launchpad Orientation Programme. I worked as a MAP Ambassador, with my main job in that role being to act as a liaison between the MSU President and the Access Office, I helped to organise spaces for MSU to be represented during the event, both in conception and the physical spaces on campus as well as making sure to promote the Union, the services it provides, and the then upcoming Academic Rep elections to any curious students. I would like to thank the President and the VP Education for taking

the time to attend the event, as their presence really helped to show the students present that our Union is a place for them.

2. Communication

I want to create a Union where everyone's voice is heard. I plan to work with my Reps to make sure they feel comfortable and supported in raising the concerns of the students they represent. I will do this by engaging in dialogue with them on both a formal and informal basis. I will extend this work to the larger Science & Engineering student body, making sure that they not only know who I am, but what work both I and the Union do and how we can help them when they need us.

In order to make my Reps feel comfortable, I have to make them exist firstly. In order to do this, I have been promoting the Rep elections non-stop, either via lecture addresses, on the ground at different SU Stands, or informally with friends and also semi-informally at Clubs & Societies. By my attendance at Societies such as Access, Games, Drama, Women in STEM, Computer Science, German, Arts, Crafts and Design, Anime & Sci-Fi, Mental Health, Chess and also Clubs such as Badminton, I've both promoted the Union, the Academic Rep elections, and the #WheresMyLevy campaign.

3. Experience

I want to use my previous experience from working in MSU to really make a change as Faculty Convenor, be that via aiding and encouraging the

Academic Representatives of my Faculty to get more involved in the Union and showcasing to them how to do so, helping Senators to become more familiar with the inner workings of the Union so that they better represent their students, or using my accumulated knowledge to help guide decisions within the Executive.

When nominations opened and during the nomination process I got chatting with a number of students who were either filling out forms to run for election or were still on the fence about running. I chatted to these students about being a Senator, answering their questions on the powers and responsibilities that come with the role. I was also able to provide key insight, along with the VP Student Life, on the campus environment when the student levy was first introduced. It is unfortunate that this information that should just be defunct memories is still relevant to the Union to this day.

MOTIONS & MANDATES

There are many motions & 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 Motions & Mandate:

1. MSU Position on Publicly Funded Education

As a member of the Executive I stand by any previous statements made by the Union on this issue. For the sake of brevity in my report I would ask you to either look back over these aforementioned previous statements or contact the MSU President for an up to date statement from the Chief Spokesperson of the Union.

2. International Student's Orientation

I am not currently involved in any plans to run an "International Students' Orientation Day" as described in this motion.

3. Irish Language Campaign Visibility

I have not run any campaigns this academic year, but I shall ensure that any campaigns I am directly involved in running will include campaign materials in Irish as well as English.

4. SU Support for the Implementation of a Coherent Anti-Bullying Policy for Maynooth University Students

I have discussed this mandate with the VP Welfare and Equality and plan to help them in the implementation of the workshops outlined in the mandate, drawing on my previous experience as DARE Senator to assist in the creation of the content that covers discrimination due to disability.

5. Direct Provision Reform

I intend to continue the work I did on this mandate as a member of the Executive last year, supporting students in DP as best as I can through my role as Faculty Convenor.

6. Accessible Documentation

When writing any documentation in my capacity as Faculty Convenor,

I ensure that it is accessible using the following metrics;

- Using the sans serif font Verdana
- Using font size 12
- Using Double line spacing
- Providing a description of any images included
- Using bold for important points

7. Active Engagement with National Climate Justice Protests

I fully intend to attend any National Climate Justice Protests that are being attended by the Executive that I am able to.

8. MSU Officer Neutrality in other Student Union Elections

As per the vote taken as part of this mandate, I am mandated to remain neutral in other Student Union elections. As a result of this I shall remain neutral in other Student Union elections.

9. Continuation of Online Arrangements

I plan to hold all of my Faculty Assembly meetings in a blended environment, with students able to join online if it suits them better. I hope to bring this blended method to any events I am involved in organizing.

10. Comprehensive Mental Healthcare Provision in Ireland

I will aid the rest of the Executive in the planning for lobbying government as laid out in this mandate.

11. Action on Decriminalisation of Drugs Referendum

I hope to use my position as Faculty Convenor to showcase the campaign to my Academic Reps. I will bring their feedback back to the rest of the Executive and use it to improve the campaign.

12. Migrant Rights

I share the sentiments of Maynooth Students' Union, both personally and constitutionally, on this issue. I look forward to working on this mandate over the year and finding the best way to lobby for the return of f Jus soli (birth right citizenship).

13. Opposition to Industrial Relations Act 1990

As with any mandate calling for the Union to take a stance, I stand with the official stance to by MSU. I will assist in campaigning on this issue as requested by the MSU President.

14. Clubs & Societies COVID-19 Booklet

In the interim between this mandate being written and the timeframe of this officer report the University have greatly improved their Covid-19 informational materials for Clubs and Societies. Given this and the current state of Covid-19 restrictions in Ireland, I believe that no further work is required on this mandate at this moment.

15. Motion to Lobby Relevant Parties AGAINST the Proposed Leaving Certificate Irish Curriculum

The window for consultation on this mandate (August 28th 2021) has already passed and as such no further work can be done on this iisue..

If a situation similar to this one occurs in the future I will use the lesssons and experience gained from this scenario to best help in future pushes against controversial changes.

16. The Organisation of a Trade & Tenant Union Fair and the Promotion of Trade & Tenant Union Membership

I will work with the relevant Sabbatical Officer closer to the potential date of the fair in order to ensure that the event provided is of the utmost quality. I will also be present as an extra pair of hands to help out with the running of the fair.

17. MSU Support of Seanad Reform

I, in my role as the Faculty Convenor, agree with the call of MSU for Seanad Reform, and shall use my role to educate the student body. I shall achieve this by discussing the issue with my Academic Reps, educating them on the issue, and then asking those same Reps to spread the word on the issue to their peers and across campus.

18. Voter Registration

As the next General Election is due to happen in 2025, I feel that there is not as high a demand to hold a Voter Registration Day this academic year. This may change in the event of a General Election being called in major advance of this date. In which case I will work with the rest of the Executive to find an appropriate day to hold this event and will assist in any way I can in the running of the event.

ACADEMIC REPRESENTATIVES

As Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor it is my duty to ensure that academic representatives are elected. Below you can find an update on my progress with this duty;

As of the 29th of March, 53 of the 90 Science & Engineering Academic Rep positions have been filled. This represents 58.9% representation, which is a 5.9% increase on the end of last academic year. This figure is correct as of 11:00 on the 18th of October 2022.

I plan to meet with the Academic Representation Administrator Seán

Masterson to discuss and strategise on how we can increase this number

even further after the elections have finished.

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;

List of Committees that the Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor is a member of:

- 1. MSU Executive
- 2. MSU Student Senate
- 3. MSU Science & Engineering Faculty Assembly
- 4. MSU Student Academic Assembly
- 5. MSU Academic Representation Review Committee
- 6. MSU Student Engagement & Feedback Committee
- 7. MSU Student Charter Committee
- 8. MU Faculty of Science and Engineering
- 9. MU Social Sciences Teaching & Learning Sub-Committee

MSU Executive

The Union Executive acts as a collective authority and are responsible for the day to day operation of the Union. The Executive has the power to take necessary decisions in between meetings of the Student Senate.

Executive Committee meetings take place every two weeks. I have ensured to attend every Executive meeting I can, and where I could not attend I have ensured to liaise with the rest of the Executive afterwards to discuss points of interest.

MSU Student Senate

The governing body of the Union is the Student Senate. The three core functions of the Senate are to formulate Union policy, mandate members of the Executive, and hold the Executive accountable.

The First Sitting of the Seventh Session of the Student Senate is due to take place October 26th.

MSU Science & Engineering Faculty Assembly

The Science Engineering Faculty Assembly provides a forum for discussions on all issues relevant to the education, welfare and student experience for students in the Science & Engineering Faculty.

The first Science and Engineering Faculty Assembly is due to take place on the 21st of October, during Academic Rep training.

MSU Student Academic Assembly

The Student Academic Assembly provides a forum for all academic representatives to provide feedback and advice on academic related issues to the VP Education and the Faculty Convenors.

MSU Student Academic Assembly has not met since my term in office began.

MSU Academic Representation Review Committee

The Academic Representation Review Committee advises the VP Education on the effectiveness and development needs of student academic representation.

MSU Academic Representation Review Committee has not met since my term in office began.

MSU Student Engagement & Feedback Committee

The Student Engagement & Feedback Committee reviews the mechanisms for students to provide feedback on the quality of their educational experience.

MSU Student Engagement & Feedback Committee has not met since my term in office began.

MSU Student Charter Committee

The Student Charter Committee reviews and develops the Student Charter between MSU and Maynooth University.

MSU Student Charter Committee has not met since my term in office began.

MU Faculty of Science and Engineering

The Maynooth University Faculty of Science and Engineering deals with all business relating to the departments of the Faculty. The Faculty makes decisions and recommendations on a range of internal and academic issues.

The MU Science and Engineering Faculty Assembly met on the 13th of September. This meeting was attended by the Registrar Professor Aidan Mulkeen. At this meeting a number of issues were raised, such as the accommodation crisis and the move away from online learning. The cancellation of the Student Centre was briefly mentioned while these issues were being discussed, with enhanced bus routes and potential future student accommodation building projects being mentioned as short and medium term solutions to the accommodation crisis. The new TSI building was discussed, with some issues being raised on the lecture hall layout, as well as the lack of blackboards. The MU Science and Engineering Faculty Assembly will next meet on the 18th of October.

MU Science and Engineering Teaching & Learning Sub-Committee

The Teaching & Learning sub-committee is a purely advisory body that gives recommendations to the Faculty. These recommendations are in relation to new academic courses, modules, and programs. The committee also discusses the standard of teaching and learning more generally in the Science & Engineering Faculty.

The MU Science and Engineering Teaching & Learning Sub-Committee has not met since my term in office began.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

The work of the Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor 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:

1. Work with the Maynooth Access Programme

As mentioned above, I spent a great portion of the summer working with the Access Office to incorporate the Union into the Launchpad Orientation Programme. I plan to continue this work coming into the academic year post Launchpad. I hope to get the Union more involved in the work the Access Office does and vice-versa, as I believe it will be of great benefit to both organisations.

2. Attendance at the MU Biology Athena SWAN Committee

I am sitting on the MU Biology Athena SWAN Committee for a second year.

This committee looks to increase gender diversity in the Biology department.

We are currently applying for the Silver Athena SWAN Award. I am one of three Undergraduate students who sit on the committee. Unfortunately due to timetabling clashes I have only been able to attend one of the three

meetings of the Athena SWAN Committee that have taken place this semester. Following on from my work on the committee last year, I plan to bring any materials brought forward as of interest to undergrads at the meetings to my Reps in order to help reach as many students as possible.

3. Attendance at the Women in STEM Society AGM

In my capacity as Science & Engineering Faculty Convenor, I was asked to attend the Women in STEM AGM by their President, Jemma Molloy, in order to speak to the members about my role in the Union and how the Union can help them.

4. Attendance at the #WheresMyLevy Walkout

I took part in the #WheresMyLevy Walkout, walking out of an English lecture in JHL2 as I did not have a lecture scheduled for the time of the walkout. Once outside John Hume I took part in the protest as one of the speakers. I spoke about how despite having been attending the University since 2017, I've seen no return on the investment of my student levy, and have only seen the slow erasure of student spaces on campus. I attributed this to be a major reason as to the increasing number of students dropping-out of Maynooth University.

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:

July 9th - July 15th

July 12th; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

July 12th; Meeting with Declan Markey of Access

July 14th; Communications Training

July 15th; MSU Executive Meeting

July 23rd - July 29th

July 27th; Meeting with Sandra Collins and Declan Markey of Access

July 28th; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

July 29th; MSU Executive Meeting

August 6th - August 12th

August 8th; Education Planning Meeting

August 9th; Activities Meeting

August 11th; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

August 12th; MSU Executive Meeting

August 13th - August 19th

August 13th; Meeting with Declan Markey of Access

August 14th; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

August 16th; Meeting with Sandra Collins of Access

August 20th - August 26th

August 22nd; MSU Executive Photos

August 26th; Student Handbook Review

August 26th; MSU Executive Meeting

August 27th - September 2nd

August 29th; Plan of Work

August 31st; MSU Executive Plan of Work Consultation

September 1st; Handbook Review

September 3rd - September 9th

September 6th; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

September 7th; Student Success Action Plan Workshop

September 10th - September 16th

September 13th; MU Faculty of Science & Engineering Meeting

September 16th; MSU Executive Meeting

September 17th - September 23rd

September 20th; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

September 21st; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

September 22nd; Meeting of Launchpad Planning Group

September 24th - September 30th

September 24th - Launchpad

September 26th; MSU Executive Meeting

October 1st - October 7th

October 5th; Women in STEM AGM

October 6th; #WheresMyLevy Walkout**October 8th - October 14th**

October 11th; Athena Swan Committee Meeting

October 14th; MSU Executive Meeting

October 15th - October 18th

October 18th; MU Faculty of Science & Engineering Meeting



Image Description: I am standing in the MSU Info Centre following my attendance at the #WheresMyLevy Walkout. I am holding my sign from the event, a giant print out of the Magic: The Gathering trading card "Bolas's Citadel". The artwork for the card has been replaced with artwork of the now cancelled Student Centre. I am wearing the same leaf patterned shirt from my Officer Photo. I am also wearing a green floral patterned hat and grey jeans. My beard is very full and fluffy and my hair is poking out from under the hat slightly.

EXPENSES CLAIMED:

To ensure that I am transparent and accountable expenditure below is an account of all expenses I have claimed;

No expenses claimed to date.

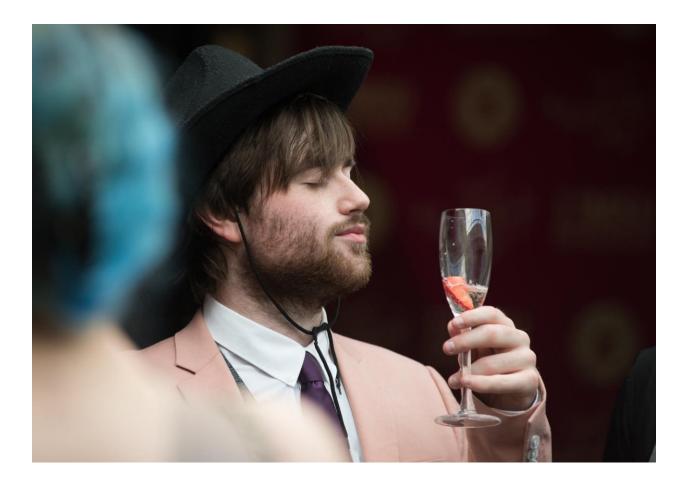


Image Description: A candid photo taken of me at the Student Life Awards. I am enjoying a glass of wine with a strawberry in it. I am wearing a salmon coloured suit with a white shirt, purple tie and a black cowboy hat. I have my eyes closed and there is a slight smile on my face as I savour the flavour of the drink. My beard is very light as I had shaved just the month before.