



ISSU
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL
STUDENTS' UNION

**ISSU COISTE GNÓ
NA NDALTAÍ
ANNUAL REPORT
2022 - 2023**

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Uachtarán Foreword

A chairde,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Coiste Gnó Annual Report for the Irish Second-Level Students' Union. As the voice of over 400,000 students across the republic of Ireland, the ISSU has a vital role to play in advocating for the rights and voice of our members.



This past year has been an exceptional one for the ISSU, as we continued to navigate the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the difficulties, our team has remained dedicated to representing our members and ensuring that their voices are heard.

This report may be lengthy but I assure you will find detailed information on the activities and accomplishments of the Coiste Gnó 22/23. From student-led events to advocacy efforts at the national level, our organisation has worked tirelessly to make a positive impact on the lives of students across Ireland.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members, volunteers, and supporters for their hard work and dedication to the ISSU's mission. Without your contributions, none of our successes would have been possible.

I invite you to read this report and learn more about the important work being done by the ISSU. Together, we can continue to create positive change for students across Ireland.

Le meas agus buíochas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Caitlin Faye Maniti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Caitlin Faye Maniti
Uachtarán
Irish Second-Level Students' Union

Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí 2022/23

Uachtarán: Caitlin Faye Maniti

Leas-Uachtarán: Heather Doyle

Rúnaí: Andrew Victory

Welfare Officer: Anjelica Foley

Sustainability Officer: Jamie Mac Giolla Bhain

International Officer: Shari Irfan

Regional Liaison and Support Officer: Mohammad Naeem

Equality Officer: Rebecca Livingstone

Communications Officer: Aoibhín Ní Gleasáin

Oifigeach na Gaeilge: Gráinne Ní Ailín

Education Officer: Jack McGinn

Uachtarán Oinigh: Emer Neville

Disability Officer: Eva Grace

Individual Officer Reports

Uachtarán: Caitlin Faye Maniti

Leadership and support of the Coiste Gnó

As Uachtarán it is my role to lead the Coiste Gnó by providing support and guidance in every area of work. I had to make sure that I was leading and delivering resources to officers that were of the best of quality. I prioritised time to have regular check in calls with individual Coiste Gnó officers, by making sure I was accessible to officers anytime I welcomed feedback and any concerns the officers had. This communication was key to having a productive team of officers and helped build relationships.

Around the beginning of my term, I had met and interviewed four previous ISSU Uachtaráin and a few current and past third level student union presidents. I was able to ask advice specifically on leadership and team management for my term. I explored other forms of training and e-learning such as Chairperson training and inclusion training etc.

Nonetheless, making mistakes and listening to the other officers were crucial parts of the process. I believe that having a selfless and resilient attitude to challenges was the best way to move past challenges in leadership.

Strategic Planning

Ensuring the Union's longevity played a huge role in my work for this year. Having started the process of dialogue between the different bodies of the organisation in in-person strategic planning meetings. This is and will continue to be a long and tedious process but nonetheless one that is incredibly necessary to see the organisation retain a sustainable growth.

We all want the Union to strive and prosper so that the student voice will continue to represent, defend and uplift the student voice 5, 10, 15 years down the line. So I spent a lot of my time working internally on building a scaffolding within the organisation to prepare this development.

Right now, the organisation is in the process of setting up sub committees of the board to help work on recommendations to implement and develop a strategic plan in topic areas such as governance, funding, organisational development etc.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment - ISSU seat

The ISSU fought for a seat on the NCCA council, I am the first Uachtarán to hold this seat for a whole ISSU term. This was a huge learning curve that the organisation undertook in which I held responsibility to fulfil. Never would I expect that doing the work in the NCCA and meaningfully participating in the monthly meetings would be one of my favourite parts of the Job.

As soon as I could, dove right into everything and anything I could do to make sure that I would represent students to the best of my abilities and make attaining this seat worthwhile. I spoke with the executive and the CEO Arlene Forster on a regular basis. It definitely was not easy, I did a lot of research, asked many questions and learnt a lot while doing so. With the reading that is required every meeting, I made sure to put aside at least a whole day of preparation.

As I finish up for the year I have developed a rigorous handover process alongside the NCCA and the Department of Education this induction for the next Uachtarán will ensure a streamlined approach to our natural yearly turnover.

The relationship with the NCCA and the ISSU has definitely grown and strengthened. I organised and helped facilitate a consultation amongst the Coiste Gnó with the SPHE department of the NCCA, we were able to directly influence their approaches to the consultation process for the redevelopment of the Senior cycle curriculum.

United Nations Conventions on the Rights of a Child

I was co-opted into Climate Rights Ireland, in my time as Regional Officer 2021. I was also given the opportunity to sit on it whilst being Uachtarán. The UNCRC was holding a national review. Being part of this committee we held a review on the UNCRC on the views of climate change and how it has an impact on children's rights. Report can be found [here](#).

Unfortunately, due to my commitments as Uachtarán I was not able to attend the session in Geneva. However following that session a hearing took place in which the Irish Second Level Students Union was mentioned for being a huge figure for student voice.

External Events

On behalf of the ISSU, I have attended and spoken at many events promoting the student voice to many audiences such as education stakeholders, experts, politicians, students etc. Below is a list of the most memorable events I took part in.

Teaching Council - Féilte

I spoke in the " respect, remembering, reflecting, reimagining panel" at the Annual Teaching council event called Feilte. I highlighted the challenges that students and teachers have conquered within the covid period and the positive outcomes that came from its challenges. A recording of the panel can be found [here](#).

National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals Education Symposium

I gave an opening speech to education stakeholders and journalists on the important role that school leaders play in building a safe environment and fostering student voice. My speech can be found [here](#).

International Women's day

For international women's day, women for election had invited the ISSU to the Dáil Chamber. I was given the opportunity to address the chamber on behalf of the ISSU on the topic of gender equality. Speech can be found [here](#).

International Council of Principals - Global student Forum

I was invited to be a student voice representative for Europe at the International Council of Principals annual event in Singapore. I was not able to attend in-person, instead I recorded my address which was shown on the day, it can be found [here](#).

National Rural Youth Assembly

I participated in the Youth Assembly on Climate where I met and discussed with other youth activists what the government should do to tackle the climate crisis, Find the recommendations [here](#).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Following from the Youth Assembly, I was invited to represent the Assembly and ISSU at the OECD rural development conference. I spoke on the panel called Young People as Future Leaders in Rural Communities and presented the recommendations and highlighted how involving young people in dialogue for rural development can encourage young people to stay in rural areas.

Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action

I addressed the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action under the topic of youth perspective on the Circular Economy, COP27 including climate justice and Energy and Climate. Recording of this can be found [here](#)

National Women's Council: FemFest

I gave an opening speech highlighting my experience, the barriers I faced as a female and a person of colour and how I stepped out of the box that society had set for me. Speech can be found [here](#)

Cinealtas Action Plan on Bullying

I held the Uachtarán steering group seat for the development of this action plan. Having direct contact with the unit producing this incredible piece of work. It was an absolute pleasure to be part of this process. Many other organisations such as Women's Aid, BelongTo, Parents helpline etc were part of this group. Having experienced such genuine dialogue within the steering committee, we were able to make ambitious student centred recommendations which used a holistic approach to prevent bullying within schools. This piece of work has now been internationally recognised and will serve as a model for many other countries.

A huge win for student voice, as one recommendation sets out the establishment of a student voice and participation unit dedicated to ensure students have a meaningful input in department policy.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS); LC videos

NEPS invited myself alongside the Oifigeach na Gaeilge to the Department of Education and interviewed us on the tips and tricks that we use to help us prepare for exams and in my case, receiving the results. This was compiled into an educational video for all students to watch and learn about how to take care of themselves during a stressful period in their academic lives.

Inspectorate

I recognise the amazing work that the inspectorate is doing to increase the quality of student input and feedback that they get when holding inspections in schools. I was directly involved in consultations in regards to child protection policies for boarding schools and updating the inspectorate procedures for Youthreaches. I gained incredible insight on the work that the inspectorate carries out to ensure students learning is of a high quality and students rights are not being inflicted.

External relationship building

It was vital that I maintained and strengthened external relationships. This contributed to the Unions reputation and increased collaboration where we have mutual values as other organisations within student voice.

I have resourced an Uachtarán phone number which will ensure a more streamlined communication to the ISSU Uachtarán from year to year. This will prevent a constant changing of contact details, right now there is a standard Uachtarán email and a phone number including all the contact details from external bodies and stakeholders.

I have made an effort to facilitate in person introductory meetings to create a great start to building a relationship compared to online meetings . OECD, TUI, ASTI, NPC, INAR, NYCI, Department officials and education stakeholders are a few examples of external organisations in which I met in person and maintained in contact with them on a regular basis.

Advocacy and representation

As the main spokesperson for the Union, I advocated on many issues with regard to education specifically on assessments. Consultation was key when it came to advocacy, as it is not my personal views I was advocating for but yours. Alongside Coiste Gnó, notably the education officer, I worked endlessly to review, research and consult with students to accurately represent your views in these discussions.

We specifically take special attention to those students who will be affected by these decisions that have been our commitment and we have always delivered on this.

From the beginning of the term, we negotiated adjustments for students sitting their Leaving Certificate in 2023. We were able to deliver those adjustments to students promptly which helped compensate for the loss of valuable class time due to COVID19. Junior Certificate results delays came as quite a shock to us and we expressed the students frustrations for the inconvenience this delay caused. Additionally the announcement of the minister for the spread of English and Irish Paper one to 5th year was a proposal that the ISSU. I invite you to read the details of this in our successes as it goes in greater detail. Accommodation crisis for students transitioning from Second-level to third-level was an issue that hit close to home, in which we support USI campaigns on.

With regard to the announcements and the public support or disapprovements the ISSU took. It was my responsibility to speak to journalists and media on these topics, I held many interviews on the subjects above with the following media; RTÉ, FM104, Newstalk, Kildare FM, Highland radio, Dublin Live, BBC, The Times, Donegal News, The Irish Times, The Independent, The Examiner and so forth.

Denis Lynch was elected on April 24th, he later resigned on the 22nd of October. Heather Doyle was elected at the Extraordinary Assembly on December 10th and has since taken up the role.

Leas-Uachtarán: Heather Doyle

A chairde,

On the 10th December 2022, I was elected to be your Leas-Uachtarán for the remaining time of the 2022/2023 Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí term. This meant that I came in a lot later than everyone else so I still have a lot I want to get done after An Chomhdháil Bhlaintiúil. Firstly, I wanted to ensure that all the Coiste Gnó officers were supported and I fulfilled this to the best of my ability during my term. I want to thank the students for putting their faith in me these past few months and thank the amazing Coiste Gnó for everything. I cannot think of a better group of people to work with. I couldn't do everything I have worked on justice in this report so I have compiled all my MEOW reports so far from my term and they can be accessed here. Serving as your Leas-Uachtarán was the honour of a lifetime and I wish the next person to take this role the best!

Is mise le meas,
Heather Doyle

Supporting Officers

One of the main things I wanted to work on as Leas-Uachtarán was to support Coiste Gnó Officers in their work to ensure they completed the projects they set out to do at the start of their term. The main things I gave support to were;

- Debate Your Decision Makers - Before I was elected I was helping with DYDM planning as a member of the RSS WG and ESD WG, led by the Sustainability Officer. This meant when I became LU it was easy for me to help out with the event planning. The main things I helped with for DYDM were, resource making, emailing TDs and creating facilitator packs. On the day, I acted as a mini sustainability assistant and welcomed TDs in while keeping table discussions moving!

- Communications - As a past member of the Digital Communications Working Group, I was aware of the ISSU Brand Guidelines, which meant I could help out with our social media. When the Communications Officer was OOO I would take up posting on the ISSU Instagram, Facebook and Twitter while also making graphics for updates such as the Paper 1 announcement.
- ISSU Women's Conference - When I joined the CG, it meant we were a female majority Coiste so I was ecstatic to help out our Equality Officer and the female Coiste Gnó officers in planning the ISSU Women's Conference. On the day, I helped by facilitating icebreakers for our guests and welcoming participants and panellists to the venue.
- Submissions - The Coiste showed me a new love of mine, writing submissions! Over my term I worked on a few submissions, however the main one would be the ISSU Oireachtas Submission on the future of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in Irish Education. I worked alongside the Education Officer and Uachtarán to plan this submission and completed its content with the Welfare Officer and Education Team. I loved working with others on this submission and was glad to see it be presented by the Uachtarán to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Liaising with An t-Uachtarán

Working with the Uachtarán was the biggest part of my job. When the Uachtarán was Out of Office I would take up their duties which meant I had to stay up to date on their very busy schedule. It was rare we went a day without a message and at least every 2 days we would meet about different projects, events or tasks. I tried to take unnecessary pressure or work off the Uachtarán wherever I could - one of these examples being the MEOW which the Coiste Gnó filled out every month so students could see the work they had completed. I took on the MEOW which entailed making sure every Coiste officer filled it out, I also emailed it to each island of our Union so they could circulate it to students. I also attended many meetings alongside the Uachtarán such as with Education Stakeholders and with the Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon to improve ISSU relationships.

Paper 1 Lobby Work

This year I was a TY student, which meant until Tuesday 28th February, I was due to sit English and Irish Paper 1 at the end of 5th year. Like many other students, I was unhappy with this for a range of reasons, so I made sure I helped the Education Officer and Uachtarán wherever I could to get these plans dropped.

Just days before the announcement that the plans would be deferred, the Uachtarán, Education Officer and myself met with Department Officials, the Chief Inspectorate and Minister for Education, Norma Foley in Leinster House to discuss students' point of view on the exams, where I spoke about the effect on TY these exams will have. On the day the announcement was made that the exams will stay in 6th year, I wrote the press release along with the Uachtarán and Education Officer.

TUI X ISSU Leaving Cert Reform Consultation Event

I supported the planning and hosted the ISSU x TUI joint consultation event on Senior Cycle Reform along with the Education Officer. At this event we invited TUI reps and ISSU officers to both discuss their unions' stances on Senior Cycle Reform. This resulted in more engagement between the ISSU and Department of Education.

Stakeholder Relationships

I developed a relationship with other Education Stakeholders in my term such as Department of Education Officials and the Department Chief Inspectorate. The planning of the joint ISSU and TUI event also led me to developing connections with the TUI President and Secretary-General. In March, I attended the ASTI Education Conference in Limerick alongside the Education Officer where I met ASTI officials and had discussions with them on Senior Cycle Reform.

Vote @ 16 and Voting Education

I have always had an interest in Vote at 16 within ISSU so I was delighted to become co-lead of the Vote@16 and Voting Education Working Group along with the Rúnaí. We have big plans for this WG in the coming months, but so far we have begun drafting a CB workshop on Vote at 16, started to discuss creating a PRSTV Student Council Resource and planning events to raise awareness for Vote at 16 and getting more support behind the campaign.

Grassroot Work

One of the main duties of the Leas-Uachtarán is to work with the Regional Officers on grassroots engagement. The start of this engagement began with me attending both the in-person and online days of the ROB 2023 Training. I offered support to the RLSO in organising and facilitating this training. To continuously uphold the ROB engagement, I help facilitate the fortnightly Regional Officer Body Support Meeting. This is where either myself, the RLSO or Uachtarán offer support to the ROs on anything they need. After An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil, I also plan to work with the Regional Officers in developing their Regional Projects and offer them and the RLSO support wherever I can.

Non-Mainstream Students Project

Since I was a Regional Officer I have tried to work on a way to get young people who are homeschooled into the Union. Home-schooled students do not have an opportunity to develop a Student Council which means they can not join the ISSU, which I believe to be unfair. As Leas-Uachtarán I worked further on this project researching how Home-Schooling works in Ireland and if there is a way we can add to the ISSU structure to represent these students. I also recently started to help out Mayo-Sligo-Leitrim Regional Officers on this project in their own region and I plan to continue this through-out the duration of my term.

Rúnaí: Andrew Victory

A Chairde,

Tá súil agam go bhfuil sibh i mbarr na sláinte. My name is Andrew Victory, and this year I have been your Rúnaí on the Coiste Gnó nDaltaí. It has been the pleasure of a lifetime to serve alongside the Coiste Gnó in order to best represent, uplift and defend the voice of students. The work we have produced this year is immensely important for the upkeep of students' voices, and I am incredibly proud to say I have been involved in such a wonderful organisation. As my term comes to a close, I wish to thank our membership and education stakeholders for their close engagement throughout the year, and I look forward to welcoming the incoming Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí after An Chomhdáil Bhliantúil.

Go Raibh Míle Maith Agaibh,

Andrew Victory

Mandated Events:

Over the course of my term I took a major lead on the preparation and development ISSU Mandated events. These events occur throughout the ISSU calendar and are of the utmost importance for maintaining engagement with students and creating legitimacy in our organisation. Our union is only as strong as our students and by directly engaging with students through these events, we have created a strong Students' Union.

- Skills Academy for Future Leaders: Skills Academy is one of our largest events in the ISSU calendar where 60 students gather for 3 days of workshops, events, trainings and feedback sessions in order to develop leadership and organisational skills which will help them with their futures.
- Regional Councils: Regional Councils are also another aspect of the ISSU calendar which take a lot of planning and development. Regional Councils allow for development of our grassroots communication and development and growth.

- **Extraordinary Assembly:** Extraordinary Assembly 2022 was an event in which I had personally hoped to avoid, however, in line with the ISSU Constitution, and due to the vacancy of the Leas Uachtarán, myself and the Coiste Gnó voted unanimously to call an Extraordinary Assembly of members in order to fill the vacancy position. In this I supported the Union in organising EA.
- **An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil:** While by the release of this report the ISSU An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil (Annual Assembly) will not have been held yet, I was elected by the Coiste Gnó to lead on the preparation and organisation of the largest and most important ISSU event.

Minutes & Meetings:

As part of my responsibilities as Rúnaí of the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí I planned and organised meeting of the Coiste Gnó, the Coiste Gnó & Regional Officer Body, and the Coiste Gnó & Monitoring and Advisory Committee various times throughout my term. As Rúnaí I attempted to make meetings as accessible as possible by ensuring regular breaks were held and that they were at the best possible time for exam year students. As part of my remit, I published minutes both internally and externally of Coiste Gnó meetings. These documents were present in an accessible and easy to read format. As part of my promise to provide for a transparent union, the agenda of each meeting was included in the published document afterwards.

Vote@16 Campaign

One of my biggest interests and campaign promises was the introduction of the *Vote@16 and Voting Education Working Group* which was approved by the Coiste Gnó last Autumn and established by December 2022. I was the national lead of this project alongside the Leas-Uachtarán. Due to a number of setbacks including staff capacity and the call of an Extraordinary Assembly in December, the working group was slow to make progress however we are now progressing with a regional roll out lobbying as well as the design of a PR-STV Student Council Resource. A survey will also be drafted in the coming months regarding Civic Education.

Support & Assistance

As part of my election manifesto, I promised to bring support and assistance to the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí and other bodies within the Irish Second-Level Students' Union. As a whole, I supported the Coiste Gnó throughout various projects and events, especially with regards to the internal organisational aspects of the ISSU. While supporting the Coiste Gnó as a whole, I heavily supported the ISSU Uachtarán especially throughout busy periods in the ISSU calendar and the absence of the Leas-Uachtarán position for a number of weeks.

Development of the ISSU

Another aspect of my election manifesto was development within the Irish Second-Level Students' Union. Overall, membership has grown vastly throughout the term of the current Coiste which is incredibly important to the legitimacy and maintaining the presence of student voice across the country. We have also made massive strides both in terms of internal and external development.

We saw the beginning of Strategic Planning meetings in which the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí, Board of Directors and Secretariat improved internal structures through a series of meetings, in order to set long term goals and improve operations. We also oversaw the restructuring of the Regional Officer Body, in cooperation with the Regional Officer Body 2022, creating sixteen new and improved regions. Together the internal development we created throughout the year has led to major improvements in our Union and various proposals at An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil 2023

Accessibility and Transparency

The final area of my election manifesto was accessibility and transparency. Throughout my term I have always been an advocate for accessibility and transparency in all aspects of ISSU's work. I worked with the Disability Officer to ensure all ISSU documents are easy-to-read and accessible. I also advocated for and attended a number of internal accessibility workshops and training to improve on it. I have always believed it to be a crucial element of the ISSU. In discussion with the Coiste Gnó I often advocated for MAC consultation on the matter to ensure we were doing right by students and in line with the ISSU Constitution, ISSU policies and direct mandates. The inclusion of Coiste Gnó meeting agendas into the publication minutes was also a step taken to improve external transparency.

Working with OBESSU

Over the course of my term on the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí I had the absolute pleasure of working with the Organising Bureau for European School Students' Union:

- *Council of Members 2022*: In December, I attended OBESSU's Council of Members as the ISSU Official Delegate.
- *Annual Financial Contribution (AFC) Working Group*: I was appointed by the Coiste Gnó to join the working group on behalf of the ISSU as I was aware of the AFC system from COMEM.
- *Vote@16 Study Session*: As the national lead of the Vote@16 Campaign, I attended OBESSU's Vote@16 Study Session 'I have a say!' in Budapest.

Student Council Charter

The Student Council Charter is an ongoing, award-winning project which was handed over to the Uachtarán and myself from last year's Uachtarán Oinigh. The charter will provide for rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the local student council level. The project is ongoing and we hope to have it launched and on trial by September 2023.

Student Voice Policy Platform

The Student Voice Policy Platform was a project led this year by the Uachtarán Oinigh, in which the Uachtarán and myself worked heavily on. The platform was designed to be an agreement between the Irish Second-Level Students' Union and various political parties across the island of Ireland. After months of lobbying, on November 17th (International Student Day) the platform was signed by Sinn Féin, Labour, the Social Democrats, and People before Profit. This agreement promises the development of a new student voice bill, and enshrining the ISSU as the national representative body for second-level students in Ireland.

Welfare Officer: Anjelica Foley

Mo Chomrádaithe,

As my time as Oifigeach Leasa of the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí draws to a close, I find myself reminded of the quote “One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world.”

As I write this report, looking back on the past nine months has been nothing short of a whirlwind. At the beginning of my term I was the only officer who had never previously served as ISSU officer. Much like the Academy Award winning film, this year as an officer I was ‘Everything Everywhere All at Once’, from assisting with Oireachtas Submissions on the Future of STEM, writing Press Releases, and helping to organise events such as Skills Academy, EA and the ISSU Womens Conference and of course my remit-specific work. In this report I will summarise the work I have completed thus far in my dual role of being a Coiste Gnó member and holding the Welfare Portfolio on the Coiste Gnó.

For a more detailed account of my duties and work please refer to the MEOW reports found on the ISSU website. Please note that the February MEOW document is absent due to being out of office at the time of its publication.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Monitoring and Advisory Committee, the 2022 & 2023 Regional Officer Bodies, our Board Of Directors and in particular my fellow Coiste Gnó officers for their continued cooperation and trust in myself as an Officer.

Le gach beannacht,
Anjelica Foley

Intersectionality

My core philosophy as an officer is intersectionality, bringing Welfare into everything we do as a Union and as an officer I was no different helping my fellow officers whenever I could.

Sustainability Officer: Jamie Mac Giolla Bháin

Mo chairde sa ghníomhaíocht,

Ba mhór an onóir, an phribhléid agus an pléisiúr é a bheith i do Oifigeach Inbhuanaithe don Aontas Daltaí Iar-Bhunscoil na hÉireann don téarma seo. Mar mhacalla do mo chomh-Oifigigh ar an gCoiste Gnó, ba mhór an onóir ar feadh an tsaoil é fónamh faoi cheannaireacht gan mhacasamhail ár nUachtarán mar d'Oifigeach Inbhuanaithe.

Agus mé ag bogadh ar aghaidh go dtí an chéad chéim eile de mo thuras gníomhaíochais, tá a fhios agam go bhfuil mé ag fágáil an ADIÉ i lámha sábháilte. Tá lámh in uachtar ag daltaí anois in go leor cásanna polaitiúla, agus creidim go bhfuil an ADIÉ chun tosaigh i ngluaiseacht na daltaí, lenár ndhorn san aer.

Mar a deirim i gcónaí, oibrithe abú, aontais abú agus daltaí abú!

Slán agus beannacht,
Jamie Mac Giolla Bháin

Lobbying

I began my term by lobbying Irish MEPs to vote against an amendment to Taxonomy legislation before the European Parliament. I then began lobbying work on reducing transport costs for students. I continued to lobby for support on many issues relating to sustainability and education. Lobbying will form a large part of the remainder of my term as I fight to uphold the demands that came out of Debate Your Decision Makers.

Interdepartmental Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

In my position as Sustainability Officer, I hold a seat on the Interdepartmental Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Implementation of ESD to 2030 is co-sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The three Departments have established an overarching ESD to 2030 Steering Group comprising relevant Government Departments and lead agencies to oversee implementation of ESD to 2030.

Department of Education Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Advisory Group

As I took up office in the ISSU, I simultaneously took up my seat on the Department of Education Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Advisory Group. The ESD Advisory Group for schools provides a forum for progressing actions set out in the ESD to 2030 implementation plan 2021-2030 related to the school sector, raises awareness about ESD and the SDGs, highlights existing activity relating to ESD, new developments and resources, and shares best practice including through input to the ESD Newsletter and considered issues arising from the findings of ESD related research, among others.

Climate Action Short Course (CASC) Advisory Board

On the 8th August 2022, the Coiste Gnó voted to nominate me to the Advisory Board of the Climate Action Short Course. In this role, I act as the link between the ISSU and the CASC team. As we are main partners in the development of the CASC, this seat and the work undertaken on the board is vital to the continuation of the implementation program for the short course.

Pre-Budget Submission

I lead the ISSUs recommendation to the USI Pre-Budget Submission. In this submission, we noted the need for an increase in DEIS schools, an increase in the SUSI grant scheme, the cost of contraception and sanitary products and transport costs, among others. I am working with the staff and other officers to secure an ISSU Pre-Budget Submission for Budget 2024.

Student Council Sustainability Resources

Both my ESD and RSS Working Groups helped me to write five student resources. The resources are as follows:

The 'Taking Action on Sustainability' Resource is a grassroots publication that breaks your student council into the vast and complex yet rewarding and necessary world of sustainable development.

The 'The Cure to Anxiety is Action' resource, combined with the four others in this collection, were created with students in mind, to provide a space for them to understand and explore the impact of climate change and to empower them with knowledge and tools to make a difference.

The next resource is the ultimate handbook to bring the Sustainable Development Goals into both your school and into reality for your fellow students and staff. 'SDGs ar Scoil!' dives into each SDG in depth, and provides the best techniques for amplifying student voice surrounding sustainability in your school.

'Be Kind to Biodiversity' focuses on a key aspect of human life and a core element of every school community.

Finally, the Student Council Sustainability Plan Template acts as a direct policy template that students can bring back to their student council to implement on a whole-school basis.

OECD Rural Development Conference

On Day 1 of the conference, we were addressed by the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD. Minister Humphreys, as a minister from my own county of Monaghan, is incredibly supportive of student voice and the continuation of the work towards adequate Sustainable Development that we are pushing to achieve in the ISSU. On the second day, I attended three parallel sessions on 'Reducing Gender Gaps: Improving opportunities for Women in the Rural Economy', 'Climate Change Impacts on Coastal Communities and the Blue Economy in rural regions' and 'Innovative Ways to Deliver Education and Skills Training in Rural Areas'. I also had the opportunity to network with many ministers, secretaries, policy makers and government officials from around the world who specialise in Sustainable Development and Rural Communities. Finally, I had the immense opportunity to talk with An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin about the Rural Development Conference, the future work of the ISSU and how we can build Sustainable, Resilient and Thriving Rural Places for all.

International Officer: Shari Irfan

A Chairde,

It has been an absolute privilege being able to serve as your International Officer on the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí. I look forward to welcoming the incoming International Officer.

Shari Irfan

Ukrainian Crisis

With the war in Ukraine Ireland has experienced an increase in Ukrainian refugees some of whom are now in secondary school. A common struggle among international students regardless of where in the world they come from is the struggle to grasp the Irish education system that is oftentimes quite tricky to understand. To make the transition for these students easier this year 'The Refugee/Migrant/Immigrant Ukraine Guide to the Irish Education Working Group' worked on creating the "Guide to the Irish Education System". A resource document that explained the Irish education system in simple terms. I would like to thank all the Coiste Gnó officers and members of the ROB for getting this important project over the line.

International Relations

The state of the ISSU's International relations has never been stronger. Over my term I have put a greater focus on building constructive and meaningful relations with other European students unions. I have individually met with over nine European students unions each of which led to follow up meetings. These meetings were used as an opportunity to exchange solutions to common problems. As I promised in my manifesto, I reached out to the All Africa Students Union (AASU) and Studio Matrix (Indian School Students Union) to establish a relationship and talked and met with representatives of both organisations. I worked closely with the Students Union of Northern Ireland (SSUNI) by having bi-weekly meetings with their International Officer.

Schools of Sanctuary:

Continuing on from our engagements with Schools of Sanctuary (SoS), I sat on their steering committee. Where I was responsible for representing the views of second-level students. One of the main goals of the steering committee was to increase the membership of schools involved with SoS and to redevelop the set of requirements that schools needed to join. I would like to thank Tiffany the president of SoS for being so welcoming and making sure that students are at the centre of this program.

ISSU's Mental Health Matters Report/Survey

Over my term I worked on ISSU's Mental Health Matters Report/Survey. This project included a survey and a report. The project was a collaboration between the Welfare Officer and International Officer of ISSU and the International Officer of SSUNI. As part of the data collection I held focus groups made up of regional officers. The survey focused more on "yes or no" questions, this was done to back up questions asked in focus groups with statistics. This project is still an ongoing process. I would like to thank Lauren from SSUNI for her help and guidance throughout and to the Regional Officers for their enthusiastic engagement with the focus groups.

Regional Liaison and Support Officer: Mohammad Naeem

A chairde,

As I come to the end of my second term as the ISSU Regional Liaison and Support Officer, I want to express my deep gratitude for the honour and privilege of serving as your representative. Working with three exceptional Regional Officer Bodies has been an incredible experience, and I have had the opportunity to work with so many wonderful people.

Providing support and skills development to both Regional Officers and grassroots members of the union has been a fulfilling role, and I am proud of the work we have accomplished together. It has been my pleasure to serve on the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí 2022-2023, and I am excited to see the new Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí continue to make progress towards our shared goals.

Thank you for the trust you placed in me, and I look forward to staying involved with the ISSU community in the future.

Is mise le meas,
Mohammad Naeem

Regional Councils

Myself and the Regional Officers (2022) held 16 very successful Regional Councils, throughout the months of October and November. Each event served several purposes. Each of their primary goals included the following, an introduction to the ISSU, electing the new Regional Officers, workshops on a range of topics and Regional Officer project consultation.

We had over 500 attendees across the 16 events which were a mix of online and in-person events. Electing 37 new Regional Officers! 22.5% of all member schools took part in some way, which was massive for engaging with the grassroots!

These events raised ISSU's profile and gained new member schools as a result. We also created relationships with Student Unions and organisations across the country, which will benefit the union massively in the run up to the next season of Regional councils. This huge task took up the majority of my first 6 months in office as per expected.

Regional Officer Body Restructuring

The Regional Officer Body (ROB) consisted of 23 Regions and 46 Regional Officers (2022 Term). The Regional Officer Body went an undertaking of reducing the amount of Regions in line with capacity of what the organisation could and could not within a reasonable extent resource effectively and to streamline the roles of the Regional Officers. I worked with the Coiste Gnó, Regional Officer Body, Secretariat and Student Advocacy Directors, to ensure all bodies were heard on the restructuring and where it was coming from.

This led to the Regional Councils being reduced from 23, to 16 and officers from 48 to 37 including a more streamlined, effective and transparent support and communication system.

Regional Officer Body Training

Organised and facilitated a training for the new Regional Officers who were co-opted in July alongside the RSVDO on the 3rd of August. These Regional Officers filled the positions of the Regional Officers who were elected at CB 2022.

Organised an in-person training for the Regional Officer Body which was held on the 17th of August 2022 in the Ombudsman for Children's Office. Regional Officers started planning Regional Councils at this event.

Organised a training for the new Regional Officer Body 2023 in early January which consisted of two days. One day was held online and the second in person at the Ombudsman for Children. We provided a huge range of workshops and training to ensure the new officers could get started in their new roles right away!

UCC x ISSU Nurturing Brights Future Training Day

I organised a training alongside UCC, about a programme that provides you with the opportunity to engage with the topic of your future, a potential college experience and many related themes and it will equip you with skills and tools that you can carry into your chosen degree when you start college.

Grassroot Communication and Development

I worked heavily with the Regional Officer Body 2022 & 2023 to ensure that we have good grassroots engagement, especially with the ISSU School Representatives. This also ensured Regional Officers have a link to each school in their region. And so that ROs could work on projects with their Reps, easily communicate with them and so they can hold cluster meetings. I held a training for ROB 23, on how to set up these rooms and how to engage the reps.

Further, the students that sign up on our 'Get Involved' form will now have an opportunity to join an ISSU Google Chat room.

Equality Officer: Rebecca Livingstone

A chairde,

It has been such an immense privilege to serve as your Equality Officer on the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí this term. I want to thank you, the students, for putting your trust and faith in me. I also want to thank the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí for everything this year. It has been an honour to represent, uplift and defend students' voices alongside you this year. I look forward to seeing what the next Equality Officer does with their term and also seeing them continue the work on our shared goals.

I am incredibly proud of the work I have done this year and the incredible organisation I have got the opportunity to be a part of.

Le meas agus buíochas,
Rebecca Livingstone

Religious Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Expression Stance

During the start of my term there was an increase in students that sought clarity on the ISSU's stance on issues such as the freedom of expression in schools. Due to this increased amount of enquiries, myself and the Welfare Officer created the freedom of expression stance. Once that stance was approved by the Coiste Gnó, we decided that there was a need for a stance that specifically focused on the freedom of religious expression. Both of these stances can be found here

ISSU Women's Conference

This year I had the privilege of leading the organising of this year's annual ISSU Women's Conference. This was done with the help of the seven other female identifying members of the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí and the support of Plan International Ireland, which was held in Fórsa Trade Union headquarters in Dublin on March 8th, International Women's Day. The main aim of the event was to empower ISSU membership that identifies as or with female and to encourage them to run for election and to highlight underrepresented fields such as STEM and Politics.

Equality Team

The Equality Team was set up to help the Equality Officer in the various aspects of the remit. My hope is that the Equality Team will continue as I believe it could relieve the workload the Equality Officer has with the various aspects of equality that the equality officer has to cover.

Working with other organisations

During my time as Equality Officer I have both sustained and created relationships with many organisations, including but not limited to; Herstory, BeLonGTo and TooIntoYou. During my term, I have started the groundwork on multiple projects with these organisations and I hope that the next Equality Officer can continue this work and relationships.

Traveller engagement

This year I have made more steps towards making ISSU a more intersectional and representative Union by working with the Irish Traveller Movement to make sure that traveller youth's voices are heard within our Union.

Trans Equality Together Coalition

This year I established ISSU as a member of the Trans Equality Together Coalition, thus making sure that we are doing as much as we can for the trans and non-binary students we represent everyday.

Communications Officer: Aoibhín Ní Gleasáin

A chairde,

With the publication of this report marking the end of my term as Communications Officer, I would like to take this time to extend a massive thank you towards you, the students. Thank you for putting your trust in me to be your Communications Officer this term and thank you for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime. I can only hope I carried out my duties to a high standard for you. With this being my final term within the ISSU I would like to thank my fellow Coiste Gnó Officers for their kindness and companionship during our terms. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for all their hard work and expertise gifted to the ISSU during our terms. As I say goodbye to this organisation I would like to strongly reiterate that the fight to represent, uplift and defend student voice is never over and it is up to us, every single student, to fight to have our voices heard.

Is mise le meas,

Aoibhín Ní Gleasáin

Brand Guidelines

With the evolving nature of comms and the rise of TikTok this term, I felt it was important to update our Brand Guidelines to accommodate how the ISSU may present itself via video format. These updates aimed to uphold how the ISSU is currently presented online, ensure we are maintaining our outstanding reputation as an educational stakeholder, and ensure we are as accessible as possible. The updated Brand Guidelines are available on our website!

Digital Communications Working Group

This year I was delighted to continue the Digital Communications Working Group. The working group aided me as Communications Officer in the creation of content for the ISSU. I'd like to extend a massive thank you to all members of the working group for their time, work and effort this year.

Gaeilge

This year alongside the Oifigeach na Gaeilge, we worked together to create as much of the ISSU's online content available bilingually. I'd like to extend a massive thank you to Gráinne for her services on this aspect of our remits.

Accessibility

This year, alongside the Disability Officer, I had strived to create the most accessible Union for our membership. Working under the Accessibility Guidelines we aimed to make the ISSU as accessible as we could, providing alternative (ALT) texts on posts made and spread via our social medias, including accessibility in all presentations made by the ISSU as well as maintaining previously established accessibility aids such as the accessibility bar on our website and easy-to-read versions of the most important ISSU documents. I'd like to extend a massive thank you to Eva for her services on this aspect of our remits.

How to be an Officer Online

A vital piece of work I carried out during my term was the creation of the 'How to be an Officer Online' internal policy. This policy outlined how ISSU officers, at all levels of the organisation, should interact and conduct themselves online. I created this as a key issue I found as Communications Officer is that there was no base line to guide elected officers on how they should conduct themselves as ISSU officers, so hopefully this document helps my successor in navigating this aspect of the remit!

Oifigeach na Gaeilge: Gráinne Ní Ailín

A chairde,

Bhí am den scoth agam i mbliana ag feidhmiú mar Oifigeach na Gaeilge ar Choiste Gnó na nDaltaí. Bhaineamar roinnt nithe amach i mbliana ó thaobh na Gaeilge de agus tá súil agam go rachaidh an Ghaeilge ó neart go neart san Aontas sa todhcaí.

It has been a privilege serving as Oifigeach na Gaeilge ar Choiste Gnó na nDaltaí this term. All in all, it was a very successful term for Gaeilge and I only hope that the momentum gathered can be brought on and continued over the next few years.

Tá an-bhrón orm agus mé ag fágáil an ról seo ach tá mé cinnte go rachaidh an Ghaeilge ó neart go neart san Aontas agus go mbeidh an Ghaeilge thar a bheith rathúil agus láidir san Aontas sa todhcaí.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil libh as an deis iontach seo a thabhairt dom, bhain mé an-taineamh as le linn na bliana.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh,

Gráinne Ní Ailín

Oireachtas Submission

I was invited to make a presentation on 'An Teastas Sóisearach T2 sa Ghaeilge 2022 - 'Páipéar T2 Ghaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí i mbliana agus amach anseo' to the Comhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus Phobal Labhartha na Gaeilge. This marked a very significant moment in ISSU history as it marked the first ever Oireachtas Submission as Gaeilge. It was a very enjoyable experience and a successful event as the changes we lobbied for will be implemented next year. Although the fight for Irish Language reform is nowhere near over we can be very content and happy with the changes the student voice lobbied for and achieved. I would like to extend my gratitude and thanks to the Uachtarán Oinigh and the Education Officer who helped me during this submission.

Páipéar 1 Ghaeilge

In March 2022 when changes to Leaving Cert Paper 1 Irish were announced there was immediate concern amongst Irish Language Stakeholders in regards to the consequences of this change on students and their ability to speak and use the Irish Language. Furthermore when the ISSU became heavily involved in these discussions I made it my priority to ensure that the best outcome possible was sourced for students and the Irish Language. With the worrying increase in Irish exemptions and the difficulties all students face in regards to the Irish language it was vital that this decision was heavily considered and not rushed. I would like to commend the entire Coiste Gnó on the work the Coiste did in regards to this issue and the work the Coiste did ar son na Gaeilge.

Traenáil na nOifigeach

Every year the Oifigeach na Gaeilge organises and partakes in the Seo Bóthair 'Traenáil na nOifigeach' which is run by Conradh na Gaeilge. This year was the most successful year yet as for the first time ever there were 4 workshops spread over 4 weeks in November and December and were held in Dublin, Galway, Cork and Belfast. Students from all over the country came and attended these workshops that discussed the Irish Language, activism and the cultural importance of the language too. Seo Bóthair also held a workshop for the participants of Skills Academy and I would like to thank the Seo Bóthair team for all the brilliant work that was done for these workshops

The workshop in Belfast also marked a very important and significant event as it was the first ever collaboration between the ISSU and SSUNI. I would like to thank SSUNI for their involvement and their contribution to the Workshop and it's organisation and I hope it marks the beginning of a strengthened relationship between the 2 organisations.

Conradh na Gaeilge & Radió Rí Rá

The relationship between Conradh na Gaeilge has gone ó neart go neart i mbliana. The year kicked off with the organisation of the Traenáil na nOifigeach workshops as mentioned above. In October I was asked to sit on a Painéal Iarchainteanna at Seiminéar an Oireachtais at Oireachtas na Samhana in Killarney. It was an excellent experience and I hope the future Oifigeach na Gaeilges will be able to avail of the same experience. I was also asked to become a Board Member of Radió Rí Rá and attended multiple Radió Rí Rá meetings during my term and enjoyed them immensely.

I became a member of the Coiste Oideachais as a part of my role and attended multiple meetings throughout the term and worked on various different educational issues such as Páipéar 1 Ghaeilge agus An tSraith Shóisearach T1/T2. The Coiste Oideachais is a vital part of the Oifigeach na Gaeilge's role and offers valuable resources and information that are invaluable to the Oifigeach na Gaeilge's role and the Coiste Gnó

Gaeilge4All

The working group Gaeilge 4 All was re-started around November of 2022 and the Oifigeach na Gaeilge of the ISSU became a member. The working group advocates and campaigns for a comprehensive Irish Language Policy from Pre-School to 3rd level. The working group organised a protest outside Leinster House on March 29th to demonstrate against the changes to Gaeilge in the Education system and to protest in support of a Irish Language Policy from Pre-School to 3rd Level. The protest was a huge success and we can only hope that changes are enacted and implemented quickly.

Education Officer: Jack McGinn

A chairde,

It's with a heavy heart that I write my officer report, marking the end of my second term as ISSU Education Officer. It has been the honour and privilege of my lifetime that you trusted me to represent you for two consecutive years.

While I have been in this role for the last two years, I will focus on my second term in this report. My term consisted of long nights, early mornings, back-to-back meetings, media storms, and long days. Throughout my term I stayed committed to my promise I made to you last year, to advance student voice.

I feel confident leaving this role, knowing that we have made a lasting change for students. It has been a pleasure serving on the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí 2022-2023, and we can be proud that we have advanced the ISSU internally, externally, and publicly.

Chun focal scór a rá, níl foireann ach chomh maith leis an duine is laige, agus chun comhairle a thabhairt don chéad Choiste Gnó eile, faigheann cos ar siúl rud nach bhfaigheann cos ina cónaí. Tabhair aire don ISSU.

Beir bua,
Jack McGinn

ISSU Successfully Negotiated Delay to Paper 1 Proposal

A major achievement of my terms was the work and lengthy negotiations with the Minister for Education, senior Department of Education officials, senior State Examinations Commission (SEC) officials, and fellow educational stakeholders. In March 2022, Minister for Education Norma Foley announced various reforms to be made to the Senior Cycle. One of these reforms was that Paper 1 examinations in English and Irish would be held at the end of 5th Year, starting for the 2023/2024 year.

There had been a concerning lack of engagement from the Department of Education with education stakeholders since March 2022. To rectify this and demand that student voice be listened to, I undertook a successful campaign of lobbying that applied media pressure on the Department of Education to reignite bi-lateral communications. I organised, and hosted the ISSU x TUI joint consultation event on Senior Cycle Reform where we invited TUI Regional Branch Officers and ISSU Coiste Gnó and Regional Officers to discuss, and debate their unions stances on Senior Cycle Reform. The event took place in the Ashling Hotel, Dublin on Saturday 21st January, where I spoke and hosted the event alongside TUI President Liz Farrell, General Secretary Michael Gillespie, and ISSU Leas-Uachtarán Heather Doyle. The event grew media attraction and immediately re-opened communications lines between ISSU and senior Department of Education officials, and laid the foundations for what is to come next.

This proposal, albeit with the intention of reducing stress on students facing their terminal examinations, had a number of problems with it. After lengthy discussions it was clear that the ISSU's concerns could not be addressed and therefore the ISSU came out against the plan. Losing the students' support laid a significant blow to support of the plan. I organised a meeting between the Coiste Gnó, the Minister for Education, Department of Education officials, and SEC officials on Tuesday 14th February regarding the proposal - a meeting between the full Coiste Gnó and the Minister for Education being a first for the ISSU. The following day I entered negotiations with the Minister for Education and Department of Education officials in Leinster House, Dublin (Wednesday 15th February) regarding the ISSU's position on the proposal, and if we would support the plan. ISSU's support was the 'make-it or break-it' factor in these plans going forward, or not. Sticking by both our stance on the proposal, and our commitment to engaging and supporting Senior Cycle Reform, I put forward the delay of at least one year to allow for more support, and discussions regarding the plan. ISSU successfully negotiated a delay to the Paper 1 plans, this being announced on Sunday 26th February. ISSU's position in the negotiations was captured in the following Irish Times' article.

"The concerns among student representatives, in particular, are understood to have played a key role in the decision to drop the reform plans for next year." - Irish Times: Plan to move some Leaving Cert exams to fifth year from 2024 scrapped

I spoke with Gavin Reilly on Newstalks' On the Record regarding the announcement that the plans would be delayed as a result of successfully lobbying by the ISSU.

UCC Nurturing Bright Futures

I assisted the RLSO in organising a training alongside University College Cork (UCC) for the Nurturing Bright Futures (NBF). NBF is a programme that provides you with the opportunity to engage with the topic of your future, a potential college experience and many related themes and it will equip you with skills and tools that you can carry into your chosen degree when you start college.

We held an in-person event on Tuesday 14th February, on the UCC campus, that was attended by Coiste Gnó officers and Regional Officers from all over the country.

Trinity College Dublins' Professional Masters of Education (PME) Programme

Delivered a submission on *"What the teachers of today need to be equipped with when entering the classroom"* for the Professional Masters of Education (PME) Programme in Trinity College Dublin.

ISSU Advertisements Programme

I created the ISSU Advertisements Programme in a bid to aid the ISSU's financial stability in the short run, to ensure we can deliver for students and our future officers in the coming months.

I created and completed a price list brochure, to ensure we were receiving adequate payment for advertising on notable platforms such as our social media, or our large in-person events. This resulted in trial runs and I sought feedback and amended the programme where needed. Next, I created and completed the setup of background admin (receipt templates, invoice templates, booking calendar, etc).

To date, I have secured multiple bookings for An CB, and monthly newsletters generating over €3,000.00 in the Programme's first month. The Coiste Gnó voted on the introduction of a trail run of the Advertisements Programme until December 2022. This is not intended to be a long-term solution.

Leaving Certificate Applied Report

I am nearing completion on the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Reform Report. This report is a follow on from the ISSU 2021 Senior Cycle Reform Report that will capture the current snapshot of LCA for students and what the ISSU needs to advocate for in future negotiations. A symposium will be held before the end of my turn, re-launching the ISSU 2021 Senior Cycle Reform Report alongside the launch of the ISSU 2023 Leaving Certificate Applied Reform Report.

Junior Cycle Results 2023

I engaged with the Department of Education and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) regarding the results day. I also engaged with educational stakeholders regarding the same. I managed incoming media, ensuring requests were met in a timely manner and managed the press release writing.

Advisory Group for the Planning of the State Examinations (Department of Education)

There was an Advisory Group for the Planning of the State Examinations held regarding the State Examinations 2021 / 2022 / 2023. ISSU's position was unanimously agreed across the board by all stakeholders and implemented by the Department of Education. Further, I monitored the issuing of results for LC2022 and CAO Round 1 day.

I attended an Advisory Group meeting on the 30th of August with the Uachtarán Caitlin Faye Maniti. We negotiated a successful outcome for JC & LC students 2023. We completed media prep work and liaison with the Department of Education as well as some internal communication. We wrote and sent out a press release on the matter. We managed incoming press requests for the weekend and any LC queries.

I am the youngest member of the Advisory Group, and the longest-serving student representative. I'd like to thank my colleagues from my previous term for their support and guidance, and those from my current turn for their engagement and enthusiasm. I'd like to especially thank our fellow education stakeholders who have always treated me with the same respect as any other stakeholder.

Assisting other officers

- **Uachtarán**

- I liaise closely with the Uachtarán on multiple projects throughout my term, specifically those relating to the education students receive and on the Paper 1 proposals. It has been a pleasure to work alongside the Uachtarán for the past year, and I hope that we have forged long-lasting change on the Irish education system together.

- **Leas-Uachtarán**

- Although a late addition to the team, I have worked very closely with the Leas Uachtarán since her term started. We hosted the ISSU x TUI Senior Cycle Reform Consultative Event and attended the ASTI Education Conference together. We have worked closely on the behind-the-scenes bits that are essential to running ISSU's Education 'wing'. I congratulate the Leas Uachtarán for integrating with the team so well and it has been a pleasure to work with her.

- **Gaeilge**

- I assisted the Oifigeach na Gaeilge with Oireachtas Submissions where needed. I provided training on use and set up of sampling frames for stratified survey responses to enhance engagement with our members in Irish-medium schools and provided training on use of SurveyMonkey in relation to stratified surveys. It has been very insightful working with the Oifigeach na Gaeilge, to witness her passion and love for the Irish language, and her determination for reform that ensures its survival. It's been a pleasure to work with the Oifigeach na Gaeilge and I hope to cross paths in the future.

Uachtarán Oinigh: Emer Neville

A chairde,

It's with a heavy heart that I write my final report as an ISSU officer. This organisation has played a key role in my life for almost 5 years. It has been long nights, exhausting days, ups, downs and some of the best moments of my life. Like every alum, I owe a lifetime of gratitude to ISSU. Rob O'Donnell put it best when he said "there really is something special in ISSU which both attracts and builds "doers" and "change-makers", with a drive to make positive change for others." There is something so special about the ISSU, and I look forward to seeing the work that comes from the organisation and how many lives it will continue to impact.

The role of the Uachtarán Oinigh is advisory. My role over the past year was to bring the experience and knowledge from my term as Uachtarán to the table in order to support the Coiste Gnó officers to be the very best they could.

Handover & Training

Part of my role was organising handover for the incoming Coiste Gnó. I wrote a detailed Coiste Gnó handover document that focused on being an officer and sharing knowledge of stakeholders rather than just positions. In addition, taking learnings from the Coiste Gnó I led, I put together a list of necessary training and worked with the Secretariat to secure them for the Coiste Gnó.

Support

The primary function of my role was supporting the Coiste Gnó. I attended many events in the absence of officers and supported others with their work. Having previously been a Communications Officer, I worked particularly with the current Communications Officer and Oifigeach na Gaeilge to support them in their work. This support varied from making graphics, helping draft submissions and everything in between.

Student Voice Policy Platform

I took over the work on the Student Voice Policy Platform and organised its launch. The document was signed by the Labour Party, Sinn Féin, Solidarity People Before Profit and the Social Democrats. A launch event was held in Fórsa and was attended by education stakeholders and political parties alike.

This work will be uptaken by the next Coiste Gnó to ensure that Government parties sign the document and uphold its contents.

Support

The primary function of my role was supporting the Coiste Gnó. I attended many events in the absence of officers and supported others with their work. Having previously been a Communications Officer, I worked particularly with the current Communications Officer and Oifigeach na Gaeilge to support them in their work. This support varied from making graphics, helping draft submissions and everything in between.

Gender Equality

I continued the work done during my term as Uachtarán with regards to Gender Equality. Part of this was working on the sexual harassment directive mandate. I built a relationship with the national Bystander Intervention Programme led by University College Cork to collaborate with them on the survey. This work will be passed on to the next Coiste Gnó.

In addition, I continued building relationships with other gender equality organisations to ensure the ISSU could continue to collaborate on various initiatives. I also attended various gender equality events throughout the year on behalf of the ISSU.

I handed over the ISSU Women's Conference to the Equality Officer and supported them with organisation.

Organisational Preservation

The preservation of the ISSU is the topic I was most passionate about this year. I researched and drafted funding applications and proposals for events and supported other officers in writing their own. I also researched different organisational structures, created templates for submissions and other areas of work and worked with the Rúnaí on event organisation while keeping note to ensure this information is available for future officers.

Having this knowledge available for future officers will aid them greatly in their work while supporting the future development and sustainability of the organisation.

Disability Officer: Eva Grace

A chairde,

It has been an absolute honour to be the Disability Officer of the Union this year. I have loved every second of it, and I wish the best to the next Disability Officer and Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí!

I would like to take a minute just to thank the absolutely amazing people I have worked with this term! From the Regional Officer Bodies of 21/22 and 22/23, the Monitoring and Advisory Committee, Secretariat (old and new!), the Board of Directors and of course my absolutely wonderful Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí!

I am so extremely grateful and proud for the opportunity to represent disability to such a high degree this term - “Ní neart go chur le chéile” and I cannot wait to see the future of Disability flourishing in the ISSU.

Is mise le meas,
Eva Grace

OCO Beyond Limits

Although I applied to this Youth Advisory Panel during my term as a Regional Officer, the majority of the work took place in my term as Disability Officer. Beyond Limits was an event run by the Ombudsman for Children’s Office for children and young people with disabilities that shows them the opportunities they have, discussing issues they want to discuss and highlighting inclusiveness.

As part of the YAP, I met with members of the OCO staff and members of the Advisory Group regularly to discuss the events, what we as young people with disabilities wanted to see at them, and our own contribution to the events. I met some wonderful young people with disabilities along the way! I created a speech about my life with a disability in sport, which I read at both events in Limerick and Sligo in October, and also interviewed Jack Kavanagh for the event in Limerick too! I appeared on RTÉ News after the events also.

EPSEN Act 2004 Review Advisory Group

As a member of the Advisory Group for the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act of 2004, I was invited to speak to the Advisory Group and members of the Department in the Gresham Hotel. I spoke of how flawed the system is, and how full implementation of the Act could help to relieve the stress and pain people face each day in education with a disability. Following this, I met bi-weekly with the Advisory Group and a survey was formed by the Department and sent around to those in ISSU and other organisations.

Disability Awareness Training

If there is anything I'm proudest of this year, it has to be this training. The Disability Awareness Training is a new, mandatory training that I created during my term as Disability Officer. Its main aims are to promote inclusion and accessibility within the Union, to help officers to become more aware of disability in the Union, life, and school and how to represent these students properly, to help officers to understand the terminology associated with disability and how to make events access-friendly. The training consists of an online workshop/video, a terminology booklet, a PowerPoint and a short quiz officers must complete in order to have finished the training.

Accessibility in Technology Workshop

The Accessibility in Technology Workshop is a workshop I created for Regional Councils, and later ran at Extraordinary Assembly 2022. The objectives of the workshop are: how to make accessible student council Instagrams, how accessibility is used on websites, what technology/devices are used for accessibility purposes and making accessibility guidelines for student councils.

Campaign Accessibility Guidelines

Something I had noticed from previous ISSU elections, was that some campaigns were often inaccessible for some students. As a union that strives to represent all students, it is essential that we follow through on our promises of accessibility and remind ourselves that we are a union for the many and not for the few. Thus, the Campaign Accessibility Guidelines were formed. I based these off of our own Accessibility Guidelines in the hope that this year's elections will see more accessible campaigns!

Successes

Strategic Planning

This year, for the first time in ISSU history, the Coiste Gnó engaged with the ISSU Board of Directors, alongside the ISSU Secretariat, in forming a five year Strategic Plan for the organisation. Key areas of focus are; improving communication between bodies, updating and creating policies and procedures, strengthening our governance, stabilising and expanding our financial position, advancing our human resources department, and broadening our skill set at governance level. This process has strengthened relationships between bodies in the ISSU, and this process will leave the ISSU in a better way than we found it, for future Coistí to come.

NCCA

ISSU acquired a seat on the NCCA Council in 2022, following Minister for Education Norma Foley signing a Statutory Instrument that solidified student voice at the highest educational board. This Coiste Gnó term, was the first full term where the Uachtarán held this seat on the NCCA Council. Many learning curves arose from this new opportunity, but the ISSU was more than capable to adapt to ensure our membership was afforded a seat on the NCCA Council. The ISSU gained a lot of insight and knowledge on the process of designing and developing curriculum and the ISSU is committed to continuing to work at the highest ability to engage with other Council members.

Guide to the Irish Education System Resource

The ISSU worked on a resource that aimed to support Ukrainian students transitioning into the Irish Education system, as well as any refugee, migrant, or immigrant students who may face similar challenges. Our efforts culminated in the creation of a comprehensive resource that provides guidance and support to these students during their transition into the Irish Education system.

The resource includes essential information about the Irish Education system, including how to access support services, and what to expect from the curriculum.

The launch of the resource is happening for April, with the support of the Ombudsman for Children. We are confident that this resource will make a significant difference in the lives of Ukrainian students and other students from diverse backgrounds as they navigate the challenges of transitioning into a new education system.

Paper 1 in 5th year

*This year brought its own unique set of challenges for the ISSU Education Team. Minister for Education announced in March 2022 that English and Irish Paper 1 examinations at Leaving Certificate level would be moved to the end of students' 5th Year. The ISSU monitored the situation, but after lack of consultation, communication and engagement with education stakeholders, and after consulting with our membership, the decision was taken that the ISSU would be **against** the holding of Paper 1 examinations, in English and Irish, at the end of 5th Year.*

Following this stance being formed, the Uachtarán Caitlin Faye Maniti, Leas-Uachtarán Heather Doyle, and Education Officer Jack McGinn undertook a strategic campaign to restore engagement with the Department of Education and to raise public attention surrounding the move. On 12th January 2023, the ISSU held a Senior Cycle Consultation Meeting with the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) that brought together Regional Officers from both unions. This event was hosted by Leas-Uachtarán Heather Doyle, Education Officer Jack McGinn, TUI President and TUI General Secretary. The event was hugely successful, after which communication channels between the ISSU and the Department of Education immediately re-opened.

Events

Skills Academy for Future Leaders

Skills Academy For Future Leaders ran from August 22nd to August 24th. The event was held in many different venues in Dublin City Centre including Liberty Hall Theatre, Fórsa Trade Union Building, Leinster House and the Conradh Na Gaeilge headquarters. The event had over 50 participants present between attendees and Coiste Gnó Officers.

The event had amazing workshops from people such as:

- Fiona Dunne who held a workshop on young peoples' rights in the workplace
 - Shari Irfan (International Officer) and Nadine Toye who held a workshop on OBESSU
 - Denis Lynch (Former Leas-Uachtarán) who held a workshop on Negotiations
 - Andrew Victory (Runaí) who held a workshop on Debating
 - Aoibhín Ní Gleasáin (Communications officer) who held a workshop on Grassroot Communication and Online Activism
 - Conradh Na Gaeilge who held a workshop on Gaeilge Activism
 - Ross Boyd (USI) who held a workshop on how to campaign
 - Shari Irfan (International Officer) who held a workshop on Lobbying
 - Jack McGinn (Education officer) who held a workshop on Strategic Planning
-
- On day one of Skills Academy, there was an Activism Panel, chaired by: Eva Grace (Disability Officer) with Guests:
 - Robbie Lawlor
 - Beth O'Reilly
 - Blessing Dada

On Day two of Skills Academy, A future of Education panel was held, chaired by: Caitlin Faye Maniti (Uachtarán)

With Guests:

- Senator Pauline O'Reilly (Green Party)
- Senator Malcom Byrne (Fianna Fáil)
- TD Ivana Bacik (Labour Party)
- TD Richard Bruton (Fine Gael)
- Councillor Ronan Moore (Soc Dems)
- TD Rose Conway-Walsh (Sinn Féin)

On Day three of Skills Academy, A 'Careers in Activism and Advocacy panel' was held, chaired by: Jamie Mac Giolla Bhain (Sustainability officer) with Guests:

- Maeve Richardson
- Dan O'Neil
- Alison O'Reilly
- Luke Daly

Participants not from Dublin or surrounding counties stayed in the Generator Hostel and the Coiste Gnó held night activities for them. Overall it was an incredibly well received event.

The ISSU Women's Conference

On March 8th (International Women's day), the ISSU held its second ISSU Women's Conference (IWC) in the Fórsa Trade Union building. The event was organised by the Equality officer in conjunction with the female identifying officer of the Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí. The event was an extreme success, with over 30 attendees all saying they would attend again!

The event was opened by our equality officer Rebecca Livingstone, followed by an address from Senator Annie Hoey. Then our Leas-Uachtarán Heather Doyle facilitated icebreakers for the participants. There were two workshops held on the day from Women for election and Plan International Ireland as well as two panel discussions on the topics of women in activism and advocacy and women in underrepresented fields. The first panel discussion Mná na hÉireann was chaired by our Equality officer and the second panel (Breaking Barriers) was chaired by Mayo - Sligo - Leitrim regional Officer Máirín Harding.

The panellists included; Blessing Dada (mental health activist), Ashley Westpheling (Plan International Ireland), Anjelica Foley (The Shona Project), Mary Hayes (#TooIntoYou), Colette Murphy (VP for Wellbeing at DCUSU), Dahab Sharaby (Teenturn), Allison O' Reilly (journalist), Caitlin Faye Maniti (ISSU Uachtarán) and Fiona Dunne (Fórsa Trade Union).

The day was facilitated by our female identifying Coiste Gnó members and a few of the Female Identifying ROB members.

Extraordinary Assembly

The Coiste Gnó called for an Extraordinary Assembly which was held on the 10th of December to hold an election to fill the vacant space of the Leas-Uachtarán position. We successfully managed to fill the position. Heather Doyle was elected as Leas-Uachtarán.

Regional Councils

The Regional Liaison and Support Officer and Regional Officer Body organised and executed a series of 16 Regional Councils. These events were held in the months of October and November and were a massive success. The primary objectives of each Regional Council were to introduce the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU) to attendees, elect new Regional Officers, provide workshops on various topics, and consult on Regional Officer projects.

With over 500 attendees across the 16 events, which were held both online and in-person, we successfully elected 37 new Regional Officers, which was a remarkable achievement. What's more, 22.5% of all member schools participated in some way, which was an incredible feat of grassroots engagement.

The Regional Councils also helped to raise the profile of the ISSU and attract new member schools. Moreover, we formed strong relationships with Student Unions and other organisations across the country, which would prove advantageous to the union in the future. These connections would prove to be incredibly beneficial as we prepared for the next season of Regional Councils.

Working Groups

Rural Sustainability Students WG

Lead: Jamie Mac Giolla Bháin, Sustainability Officer

Membership:

- Gráinne Ní Ailín
- Lucais Hill
- Máirín Harding
- Anjelica Foley
- Rosheen Sharma
- Ella Swan
- Cian Walsh
- Meabh McConalogue
- Heather Doyle
- Caoimhe Walsh
- Rebeca Ghinea

Overview: The Rural Students Sustainability Working Group has 12 members. This working group's focus was promoting Sustainability among rural students. This working group provided relevant experience of rural students and how they have witnessed sustainable development, but also how they can help change Sustainable Development for the better in rural communities.

Education for Sustainable Development WG

Lead: Jamie Mac Giolla Bháin, Sustainability Officer

Membership:

- Kate Devitt
- Josh McCormack
- Ava White
- Anjelica Foley
- Lauren Coffey
- Saidhbhe Concannon
- Aideen Hannath
- Heather Doyle
- Rafal Pavlak-Chiaradia

Overview: This working group's focus was on creating resources around Education for Sustainable Development and feeding into consultations on Sustainable Development.

Vote@16 and Voting Education Working Group

Lead: Andrew Victory, Rúnaí & Heather Doyle, Leas-Uachtarán

Membership:

- Anjelica Foley
- Shari Irfan
- Brian Hubbard
- Leo Galvin
- Lucais Hill
- Mohammad Naeem
- Jamie Mac Giolla Bhain
- Máirín Harding
- Rory Rusnak
- Sonia Daunt

Overview: The Vote@16 and voting education working group worked toward promoting and campaigning for the lowering of the voting age to 16, while examining a lack of civic/voting education in second-level education. We continued on the lobbying work that was established by the previous Leas-Uachtarán. Throughout our term, we planned for a civic education survey which we hope to launch in May 2023, alongside an event or two. In the coming weeks, we will be applying for funding in order to elevate this campaign.

Education Team

Lead: Jack McGinn, Education Officer

Members:

- Saidhbhe Concannon, Secretary
- Brian Hubbard
- Clodagh Lehane
- Heather Doyle
- Preston O’Keeffe
- Rebeca Ghinea

Overview: The Education Team worked to support the Education Officer in all aspects of his role. The Team led the ISSU 2023 Leaving Certificate Applied Survey, and the subsequent report that will be issued in May 2023. The Team wrote an Oireachtas Submission titled Examining of the Future of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in Irish Education, and assisted in the Department of Education’s Inspectorate Unit’s review of Youth Reach.

Digital Communications Working Group

Lead: Aoibhín Ní Gleasáin, Communications Officer

Members:

- Jessica Chen
- Shannon Ní Fhalluin
- Leo Galvin
- Máirín Harding
- Sarvani Kasibhatla
- Shane King
- Louisa Tyrrell

Overview: The primary focus of the WG has been the continuous creation of digital content for the ISSU. Throughout the year this has entailed creating posts for key ISSU events such as Debate Your Decision Makers, the Women's Conference and An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil as well as other projects throughout the year.

Guide to the Irish Education System Working Group

Lead: Mohammad Naeem, Regional Liaison and Support Officer & Shari Irfan, International Officer

Members:

- Anjelica Foley
- Aoibhín Ní Gleasáin
- Maha Shahzadi
- Rebecca Livingstone
- Caitlin Faye Maniti

Overview: The Regional Liaison and Support Officer set up an internal working group to work on the Guide to Irish Education System Resource. A resource which is aimed to support the transition of Ukrainian students into the Irish Education system and to support any Refugee Migrant and Immigrant students transitioning into the Irish Education System. The group are now organising the launch of the resource which is being held in April, with the support of the Ombudsman for Children.

Disability Delegation WG

Lead: Eva Grace

Members:

- Annabelle Nabuele
- Cillian Fitzpatrick
- Helena Healy
- Katelyn Kehoe
- Lucais Hill
- Rebeca Ghinea
- Rebecca Ryan
- Sarah Grogan

Overview: The Disability Delegation Working Group aimed to support the Disability Officer in their projects and campaigns during their term. This is an ongoing Working Group, currently working on the ISSU's Disability Stances and aims to make a total of 2 Student Council Resources by the end of the term.

Welfare Team

Lead: Anjelica Foley

Members:

- Aideen Hannath
- Clodagh Lehane
- Ella Okah
- Eoin Murphy
- Jason Tamayo
- Máirín Harding
- Rafal Pavlak Chairadia
- Rebeca Ghine

Overview: The Welfare Team was established to assist the Welfare officer in the various campaigns and projects. This is an ongoing group and has helped contribute to many external projects and consultations such as Jigsaw, the HSE, etc, all Organisations that better the wellbeing of young people in Ireland.

Press Releases

The following press releases were issued over the course of this Coiste Gnó term:

- ISSU Statement: Students' Union Welcomes News From EUNICAS - 03/08/2022
- ISSU Statement: ISSU Response to Leaving Cert 2022 & Announcement on Leaving Cert 2023 Announcement by Education Minister Norma Foley - 02/09/2022
- ISSU Statement : The ISSU Welcomes the Announcement of the Junior Certificate 2022 Results Date - 19/10/2022
- ISSU Statement: Second-Level Students' Union Launches Political Party Platform - 17/11/2022
- ISSU Statement: Students to Debate Politicians on Sustainability - 13/02/2023
- ISSU Statement: Debate Your Decision Makers Post Event Release - 17/02/2023
- ISSU Statement : ISSU Welcomes Delay in Paper 1 Exam Changes - 20/02/2023

Submissions

Oireachtas Mental Health Supports in Schools and Tertiary Education

Lead: Welfare Officer

Note: The Welfare Officer presented this submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in the Oireachtas in February at a roundtable discussion alongside other education stakeholders.

Oireachtas The Future of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in Irish Education.

Lead: Education Officer

Note: An t-Uachtarán presented this submission to the Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in the Oireachtas in March at a roundtable with other education stakeholders.

Submission to the State Examinations Commission's Statement of Strategy 2023-2027

Lead: Uachtarán, Disability Officer & Education Officer

Government Policy Framework for the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making

Lead: Uachtarán

NCCA submission to background paper on the consultation for Senior Cycle SPHE

Lead: Welfare Officer

Department of Education Consultation submission on Lifelong Guidance

Lead: Welfare Officer







ISSU
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL
STUDENTS' UNION



ADIÉ
AONTAS DALTAÍ IAR-
BHUNSCOILE NA HÉIREANN