

The Monitoring and
Advisory Committee
An Chomhdháil
Bhliantúil 2023

April 2023



Annual Report of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) 2022-2023 Term, April 2023

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Foreword

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) 2022/23 are pleased to present this report evaluating and reflecting on the work of the Irish Second-Level Students' Union over the 2022/23 term.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to praise the work of Coiste Gnó na nDaltaí 2022/23 in what has been a very productive year for the ISSU. We thank the Regional Officer Body, ISSU School Representatives, Working Groups, Board of Directors and every other body, officer, and student that has contributed to the work of the ISSU in the 2022/23 term. Finally, we would like to thank the ISSU Secretariat (Luke Daly, Maeve Richardson, and formerly Suzanne Coombs, Emma Sweeney and Áine Daly), without whose support this year's work would not have been possible.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee this term was composed of Eoin Connolly (former Rúnaí), Quinton Kelly (former Communications Officer, Regional Officer and School Rep), Shane O'Connor (former Working Group member), Christopher O'Sullivan (former School Rep), and Darragh Walsh (former School Rep).

The purpose of this report is to provide a transparent analysis of key themes of ISSU work this term and an honest reflection on the work of all elected officers in the ISSU. As per the ISSU Constitution (April 2022), the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC), "*ensures that the work of elected student officers is constitutional and in line with ISSU policies, ensuring that the ISSU is held accountable to its membership*". The Constitution also outlines that the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) "*provides support and consultative guidance to elected officers*". This final report is the culmination of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC)'s role this term.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as a member of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee but we are indebted to the support and patience the Coiste Gnó has given us this past year in working together for the betterment of students.

We sincerely hope that these findings and honest recommendations given in this report, will be of assistance and guide to how we truly feel will keep the organisation moving forward into the 2022-23 term and ensure the ISSU continues to go from strength to strength.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh uile, le dea-mhéin,

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee 2022-23

Union Growth

The commendable growth of ISSU's influence this term cannot be ignored. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) applauds the Coiste Gnó on their tireless efforts continuing to spread the ISSU message and agenda. The ISSU went from win to win this year whether it encompassed Government Policy and meeting with individual stakeholders or holding consultation events the ISSU excelled from all.

On the matter of membership growth, we have seen a 6% increase in overall membership this term. The number of member schools as of April 2022 was 564 compared to 598 member schools in April 2023. Although we are positively looking at an increase in overall membership, we must note that in the previous Coiste Gnó term of 2021-2022, the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) had reported an increase of 14.5% beginning with 564 member schools as of April 2022 compared to 490 schools at the end of the 2020/21 term. This is an overall decrease in the number of new members looking over the last two years.

However, while the increase may have slowed, using the most recent published data from the Department of Education in 2021 there were 728 Secondary schools, and with an estimated 8 new schools established since then, a record 81.25% of Secondary schools are now registered members of the ISSU.

Membership as of April 2022	Membership as of April 2023
564 Members	598 Members

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) recommends that ISSU makes a strong position on the development of its grassroots structures. We feel that to enhance and focus on improving grassroots campaigns

and strategies, the union will be awarded an influx of engaged students and willing schools eager to become dedicated members of the ISSU.

This development includes a strong focus on the implementation of school representatives in each of the now nearly 600 member schools. This would be a tremendous success if implemented and executed well. We would suggest finding new ways in giving independent member schools the autonomy and resources to elect school representatives without direct oversight of the ISSU. This would look at the implantation of a required elected position to be filled in all schools nationwide, the position of ISSU School Representative.

However, we understand that to ensure this is a success, a dedicated focus for Regional Officers and the RLSO, alongside the other officers of the Coiste Gnó, will be set out and develop permanent and sustainable engagement programs over the next year. The Regional Officers will lead these programs to liaise with School Representatives, building up support and networks in the community.

Furthermore, the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) recommends that an increased effort be made to reach out to areas with low ISSU engagement and membership. This will look at various outreach campaigns and events that will directly engage with the students in those areas, building relationships and networks in areas with little or no engagement.

Union Influence

As previously mentioned ISSU worked in collaboration with numerous stakeholder bodies over the course of the year. We would like to thank each member of the Coiste Gnó, Regional Officer, and School Representative for their time and engagement when in a representative capacity within the ISSU, as the levels that we have seen of the respect you have shown your stakeholders have helped us to get to where we are today. We would now like to outline how far the ISSU influence has stretched.

Influence

1. Working with the Department of Education

- Attended the Children's Rights Alliance Ukraine Briefing with the DES
- DES Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Advisory Group
- Interdepartmental Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Steering Committee
- EPSEN (Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs) Act 2004 Advisory Group
- Meetings with the Minister for Education Norma Foley
- LC helpline consultations with the DES and NPCPP
- NCCA Junior Cert SPHE organisations consultation event
- NCCA SPHE SC consultation
- Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying
- Advisory Group for the Planning of the State Examinations
- Bilateral engagements with Minister Foley regarding Paper 1

2. Government TDs and Senators

- Meeting with Deputy Annie Hoey alongside the Uachtarán Oinigh and Rúnaí for the student voice policy platform
- “Future of Education” panel
 - Malcolm Byrne TD (Fianna Fáil)
 - Richard Bruton TD (Fine Gael)
 - Rose Conway Walsh TD (Sinn Féin)

- Senator Pauline O'Reilly (Green Party)
- Councillor Ronan Moore (Social Democrats)
- Ivana Bacik TD (Labour)
- Debate Your Decision Makers
 - Patrick Costello TD (Green Party)
 - Richard Boyd Barret TD (People Before Profit)
 - Senator Pauline O'Reilly (Green Party)
 - Jennifer Whitmore (Social Democrats)
 - Thomas Pringle (Independent)
 - Catherine Connolly (Independent)
 - Ged Nash (Labour)
 - Aodhán Ó Ríordáin (Labour)
 - Senator Eileen Flynn (Independent)
 - Denis Naughten (Independent)

3. Other Union organisations (OBESSU/USI/SSUNI etc)

- SSUNI meeting with Welfare officer regarding the Mental health report
- Worked on the Narrative Report which was submitted to OBESSU
- OBESSU Summer school
- Council of Members for the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions.
- Traenáil na nOifigeach in Belfast in conjunction with SSUNI.

4. Education Stakeholders

- National parents council post-primary President meeting
- TUI x ISSU Senior Cycle Reform Consultation
- Teachers Union Ireland
 - - in-person meeting with the Assistant Secretary-General
 - - Bi-lateral meeting met with; TUI's Secretary General,
 - President, Education Officer
- ASTI bilateral meeting
- Education Partners and Chief Inspector
- Féilte Teaching Council event

- Met with support staff from Limerick Clare Education and Training Board to discuss the ISSU Student Council Charter.

5. Other Organisations and NGOs

- Liaison with the Trans Equality Together Coalition when the ISSU agreed to sign their complaint to RTÉ
- Active Consent Event in UOG
- Ombudsman for Children 'Beyond Limits' Youth Advisory Panel
- Belong To the Education Sector Advisory Group
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child Report
- BodyWhys BIAS event in UCD
- Mental Health Supports Informal Consultation
- Conradh na Gaeilge Coiste Oideachais meeting
- Young Fine Gael second-level network
- Moonú - helping to bridge the gap between those able to afford grinds and those who cannot
- ISSU x UCC Nurturing Bright Futures
- TY Expo

6. Government Consultations

- Joint Oireachtas Submission on Mental Health supports
- Advisory Group for the Planning of the State Examinations
- OECD rural development Conference
- Climate Action Short Course Advisory Board
- Lifelong Guidance Consultation

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to acknowledge the accomplishments that the union achieved this year. As you have read the sheer amount of consultations and other meetings was meritorious. Over the course of the last year, the ISSU continued to spread its influence on every aspect of advocacy and was in tandem with other organisations to fight for the rights of every young person in Ireland and even in Europe. It goes without saying that we are extremely proud of each of the elected representatives and working group

members who have engaged with stakeholders and represented the view of their fellow students in the face of the ISSU.

We would like to ensure going forward that these connections and relationships with stakeholders are only improved on and maintained to the best of our ability unless the relationship infringes on the constitutional rights and beliefs of the ISSU values.

We recognise that a review of these close relationships should be underway in the future to ensure that student beliefs and grassroots opinions are the centre focus for discussion between stakeholders and that elected representatives do not lose touch with the students on a grassroots level when dealing with stakeholders of such importance. We have seen how this has led to the dissolution of the past versions of this union and we would be conscious to ensure that history does not repeat itself in the future and that ISSU officers ensure they are truly representing the viewpoint of students facing these issues when making decisions or have discussions with stakeholders.

Union Stakeholder Engagement

Work with the Department of Education

- The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) recognises the work and collaboration with the DES.
- We are glad to see the ISSU's continued involvement with the ESD Advisory Group and encourage the ISSU to uphold its vital commitment to this role
- The ESPEN Advisory Group was a new committee the ISSU became involved with this year, which was sat on by the Disability Officer.
- The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) welcomes this new involvement and is hopeful for what young voices can bring to this platform
- The NCCA SPHE consultation was of great importance as it allowed the ISSU to voice their concerns on the curriculum

changes and the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) comments on the CG on their participation in this.

- The Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying which was launched back in December was attended by the RSLO. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) recognises the vast amount of work that went into the preparation of this.

Government TDs and Senators

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) recognises the vast number of government officials that were liaised with over the course of the year. From opposition TDs and government ministers, the ISSU had contact and multiple meetings with them all. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would also like to note the high presence of government officials at ISSU events for example at DYDM and the ISSU women's conference where there was high government support and direct consultation and communication.

Other Stakeholders and Organisations

The ISSU has continuous collaboration with various stakeholders and organisations over the year. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) comments on the CG on their work with organisations such as BelongTo, OBESSU, SSUNI, the OCO office and much much more. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would also like to note that it was brilliant to see ISSU play a role with the UNCRC which was a great achievement for second-level students in Ireland.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would also like to commend the work and progress made in nurturing connections with the youth wings of major political parties.

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to take this opportunity to express their gratitude for ISSU's continuous support and involvement with major stakeholders in the Irish education system. We express our gratitude to the elected officers for their respect in dealings

with stakeholders and for fairly representing students in these discussions and decision-making situations.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would recommend that the elected officers of the ISSU investigate new ways or continue to suggest ways to ensure that their stance and the stance of the ISSU are always truly representative of the member students and member schools.

We would suggest that the elected officers hold town hall events, national surveys and ballots of the memberships in a more widely utilised capacity to ensure that the views and opinions of elected officers when in a representative capacity accurately represent the students they were elected to provide a platform for. We have seen the suggestion in the past of national surveys and in particular, townhall events have had in influencing the decisions and actions taken by the Coiste Gnó over this term and many terms before them, therefore, we suggest these actions and engagement techniques should be implemented at a wider and more everyday practice in student representation.

Communications

Campaigns and Stances

Several stances and campaigns were (under)taken by the ISSU in the Coiste Gnó term 2022 - 2023. These include

1. English and Irish paper 1 in 5th year: ISSU lobbied the government to delay their decision on this plan devised by the Department of Education. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) also commends the work achieved as they were even noted in the Irish Times, “The Irish Second Level Students’ Union (ISSU), which supports the principle of spreading assessment into fifth year, also had concerns about potential disadvantage for students who skipped transition year and questioned what would happen to students who dropped from higher to ordinary level between fifth and sixth year”
2. Shona Project Survey: ISSU worked with the Shona Project on a national survey for 12-19 females living in Ireland. This survey was advertised on Instagram with a 100-euro gift card voucher raffle. The survey aimed to get a better understanding of the needs and wants of Irish teenage girls. The survey was also supported by Youthlab
3. #Standup22: ISSU celebrated the 13th Stand-Up Awareness Week with Belongto and Transgender Awareness Week (14th to the 21st of November)

4. #Endorphanagerecare: ISSU endorsed the Put the child first campaign. The campaign entailed a call for family and community-based care for every child and that institutional care is harmful to children. The campaign also included a pledge not to visit or volunteer in orphanages.
5. #Gaeilge4all: ISSU took a stance on the broken Irish system and advertised a protest on the 29th of March outside Leinster House. The campaign outlined the issues with the lack of gaelscoileanna, senseless specifications/syllabi, exemptions and the amount of time for Irish in primary school.
6. Other campaigns included #internationalwomensday.

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) compliments the Coiste Gnó, Regional Officers and Working Groups on their multiple collaboration campaigns with various organisations. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) welcomes the idea and possibilities for future collaboration. We would recommend that for next year that officers are more inclined to work with new and exciting campaigns with new different organisations. This is to increase student outreach and participation, going back to the earlier point of membership engagement. It is vital to ensure that students of all backgrounds and interests are represented by the elected officers with the ISSU.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to encourage the use of statistical data in the future to help the betterment of future campaigns, events and causes.

We would note that there needs to be more online and physical advertising for survey or data-based campaigns. We have first-hand seen the increased visibility of the organisation in schools, media and between students when this form of overstating and engagement when has been successfully used in union promotion.

This critical data is vital in the progression of the student movement ahead of ISSU as it develops further. These results which have been collected through the introduction of the previously stated survey or data-driven campaign strategies are needed to make any meaningful impact on the students that the ISSU represent. Digital and physical advertising could include the future involvement of the elected officers to help campaign, repost and support any and all of the ISSU-supported initiatives. To engage and interact with other more public member students in a way that they feel comfortable and supported.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to stress the importance of ensuring that any of ISSU's stances taking on issues, relating to the students in which they represent, are publicly available and supported by the membership online and physically throughout schools nationwide. The ISSU should promote collaboration with other and new organisations on projects, campaigns and stances in the future to further the development and evolution of the growing public presence of the ISSU. We need to be accountable to our growing membership and ensure that our views fairly represent the projects and promotional material that we publicly release. We would suggest that ISSU officers look at further expansion of event and campaign collaboration, such as getting in contact with youth-led media outlets like podcasts, youtube channels and Tiktok pages.

BRANDING

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) praises the work of the Communications Officer, relevant Coiste Gnó officers, Secretariat and working groups in continuing previous work on the implementation of the ISSU brand guidelines, alongside the promotion done to highlight the change both internally and externally. As a growing organisation with an increase in the public view, the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) stress the importance of each officer involved with the adaptation of the ISSU brand guides in the work and creation of graphics, campaigns, events and projects. Therefore we wish to point out the importance that this document presents for the future development of the organisation. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to take this opportunity to compliment the amendments made to this document and commends the ISSU Communications Officer for these changes and the continuous implementation of the new ISSU branding that was brought in the past term.

We would also like to note that many ISSU events followed the ISSU branding guidelines to a sufficient level and many of our elected officers have adapted well to the changes in ISSU guidelines adopted by the ISSU over the past two years. This praise must be referenced back to the Communications Officer work their work in ensuring any and all promotional material published publically by the ISSU has followed the ISSU branding guidelines and that all content is approved by the communications officer.

The use of ISSU branding has remained quite strong throughout each of our ISSU events in themselves with a wide range of promotional materials used, both in-person and online. These various ways of

promotion include but are not limited to; screens being shared to outline the agenda item being discussed at online events that include the wide use of ISSU brand colours and logos displayed; the ISSU logo being shown on a big screen during break times; roll-up banner at all in-person events; officers using branded ISSU backgrounds in ISSU online meetings and events; ISSU elected officers wearing branded ISSU merchandise and clothing during times where they are in a position to correctly represent the capacity of an elected official.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) continues to note the importance of the Irish language Scheme and notices that this has been improved compared to previous years we have observed this many officers in the external communications of the union, that there have been improvements made in the use of the Irish language scheme both internally and externally over this term. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to congratulate the work of the Oifigeach na Gaeilge and the Communications Officer and their Working Group for the continuous update of the branding use and implementation to ensure that the public view of the organisation remains contemporary and student-friendly for a wide audience of students.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to compliment the Communications Officers for the continuation and development of the implementation of the ISSU accessibility guidelines. We have seen this year a dramatic increase in the number of ALT texts used in many of the social media graphics published online. This was something that was worked on last year by a number of directive procedures that were past in 2021, and we would like to employ praise for the current communications officer and relevant officers for the continuation of these policies, long after the original policy for the implementation of accessibility resources such as ALT text has continued into ISSU

everyday production of content and graphics. We believe that this is vital in the further outreach of student engagement and transparent communication for all. We wish that these practices continue and that the further development and use of the ISSU accessibility policy is continued long into the future of ISSU history.

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to enhance the continuous support and implementation of the ISSU Brand Guidelines into the future of the ISSU. Although the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) praises the work of the Communications Officer, relevant Coiste Gnó officers, Secretariat and working groups in continuing previous work on the implementation of the ISSU brand guidelines, alongside the promotion done to highlight the change both internally and externally.

However, we have noticed some accounts of officers who believe it is ok to go against ISSU branding policies from the ISSU Brand Guidelines. We believe that this is truly unacceptable and has put an alarming amount of excess pressure and stress on those such as the Communications Officer who must enforce these policies alongside the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC).

As we have previously stated, ISSU is a growing organisation with an increase in the public view. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) stress the importance of each officer becoming more involved in the future with the adaptation of the ISSU brand guides in all work both internally and externally. This would include the creation of internal and external graphics, campaigns, events and projects as far as documents and emails. Therefore we wish to point out the importance that this document presents for the future development of the organisation. The

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would recommend the introduction of mandatory Communication and/or brand guidelines training. As this document is officially recognised in the ISSU Constitution, we feel this is vital in the progression of officers' work while working as an ISSU representative. We have seen multiple examples in recent weeks where the past ISSU logo used by the union before October 2021 has been used publically in both online and in-person campaigns, publications and promotional materials. We believe that this is appalling as this change was brought in over a year and a half ago. We have also seen multiple accounts of the use of non-ISSU branded colours, text and visual appearance used online in public campaigns and notices.

This is a major issue that needs to be addressed, therefore we believe that the future Coiste Gnó, Secretariat and working group members take great caution in the production of any and all ISSU content and material so that all included the branding of our policies. We believe the communications officers take action on the use of these outdated branding techniques.

We would like to recommend that physical promotional materials are revised and reviewed so that new or replaced material is in line with the current brand guidelines, in which a version has been in place for the past two to three years. Alongside this necessary action, the use of any outdated branding is not used in any future content published by the ISSU, and the Communication Officer continues to be the sole person to approve any and all content published by the ISSU. As the Communications Officer is directly accountable to this document in the ISSU Constitution, we need to ensure that is followed through on in the future.

We would also like to reiterate that although we note that many ISSU events followed the ISSU branding guidelines to a sufficient level and many of our elected officers have adapted well to the changes of ISSU guidelines adopted by the ISSU over the past two years. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would recommend that further focus is introduced to using up-to-date and inline with branding guidelines, material and content in all events held by the ISSU or where the ISSU is present in a representative or promotive capacity. This is critical to the success and value of our internal policies.

We feel that the continuation of the strong ISSU branding at events such as the wide range of promotional materials used, both in-person and online be used in all future events. These various ways of promotion include but are not limited to; screens being shared to outline the agenda item being discussed at online events that include the wide use of ISSU brand colours and logos displayed; the ISSU logo being shown on a big screen during break times; roll-up banner at all in-person events; officers using branded ISSU backgrounds in ISSU online meetings and events; ISSU elected officers wearing branded ISSU merchandise and clothing during times where they are in a position to correctly represent in the capacity of an elected official.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) continues to note the importance of the Irish language scheme, we believe that the ISSU needs to continue to improve on the use of the Irish Language scheme in the external communications of the union. The continuous update of the branding use and implementation of the Irish Language scheme to ensure that the public view of the organisation remains contemporary and student-friendly for a wide audience of students is an extremely vital point we would like to implore the use of in all work into the future.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to recommend the continuation of the implementation of the ISSU accessibility guidelines. The dramatic increase in the number of ALT texts used in many of the social media graphics published online has been extremely successful. We would like to employ continuation for the future communications officer and relevant officers for the continuation of these policies, long into the future in all ISSU everyday production of content and graphics. We believe that this is vital in the further outreach of student engagement and transparent communication for all. We wish that these practices continue and the further development of union accessibility.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

We would like to recognise the importance of the work the Communications Officer and relevant working groups, Coiste Gnó officers and Secretariat have taken in increasing and continuing the work of past officers to further the engagement levels of students online via all our social media platforms. Following the success of last year's large increase; in follower count; official verification; the introduction of new platforms, we would like to praise the work of the elected officers and working groups this year to further and upkeep this work in a professional and reputable manner.

The continuation of publication and collaboration on each of our five primary social media platforms have been a great success and we implore all involved with this positive reflection. In particular, we would like to recognise the continuation of content circulated on the growing Tiktok platform and the increase in followership on Twitter, Facebook and Tiktok overall. However, we would briefly like to acknowledge that Instagram following has dropped in followership engagement this year and will further discuss this in our recommendations.

<u>Platform</u>	<u>Number of followers (April 2022)</u>	<u>Number of followers (April 2023)</u>
Twitter	7,177	7,817
Facebook	6,231	6,548
Instagram	8,603	7,522
Tiktok	N/A	513

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to acknowledge the levels of follower engagement on relevant social media platforms. We now note that for both ISSU Facebook and Twitter pages we saw an increase in followership overall.

In the case of Facebook, there was a percentage increase of 5% over the last year, going from 6231 followers in April 2022 to now 6548 in April of 2023. When we look at the previous year, this was only a 0.7% increase in the previous year. We would like to applaud ISSU for the increase in follower engagement on this platform over the last term.

Moving on to the ISSU Twitter page, there was a percentage increase this year of 9% overall, going from 7177 in April 2022 to 7817 in April

Irish Second-Level Students' Union

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2022. Comparing this figure to last year, we saw a 38% increase in followers. We must recognise that although this year saw an increase in online Twitter followers, it does not compare to the sheer amount of increase we saw last year. Following this, we would recommend that the ISSU in the future focus more on engagement via our Twitter platform to further increase follower levels.

Now focusing on our ISSU Instagram page, there was a dramatic decrease in follower levels this year going from 8603 followers in April of 2022 to now 7522 followers as of April 2023. This is a large decrease of over 1000 followers on one platform, it is a decrease of 12.5%, compared to a decrease of 2% in the previous year. Last year we did see a smaller decrease from 8775 in April 2021 to 8603 in April of 2023.

As we have recognised that our Instagram support is dramatically decreasing over the last two years, largely this year, we would advocate for the introduction of an Instagram-based focus on the review of the social media strategy.

This would include a revised focus on the engagement of posts and content published on our ISSU Instagram platform. We see that this will evoke students to come more engaged once again with our platform and see a future increase in followership.

We do understand that this disappointing level of student engagement could be down to a number of reasons however it is pivotal that we keep the concentration of material and content up on all social media platforms, but in this case, a focus on Twitter engagement and a large centre focus on revitalising our Instagram platform.

SOCIAL MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would also like to note that there was multiple partnership and advertising throughout the year on social media:

- ISSUxISIC Student Card
- The tuition centre (21 Day Maths Challenge 'Accelerate You' Workshop+Maths Online Revision course)
- Studyclix Giveaway
- Advertising Support Info (Text 50808)
- Junior Cycle Success (4schools)

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) praises the numerous collaborations that have taken place this year both online and in-person at our ISSU events. We now are hopeful that in the future ISSU continues to endeavour in more student-friendly and representative collaborations with relevant existing and new relations. Looking into the possibility of exciting and thought proking projects that draw more students to the forefront of the ISSU platforms.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) also expresses the most sincere gratitude and sense of pride in our elected officers for their work and dedication in developing and delivering extraordinary graphics that include the needed promotion and rightful inclusion of the Irish language and culture seen in the majority of all social media content and posts that were publically launched this year on behalf of the ISSU via our online platforms. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) advises the elected officers to take the success of this year's triumph in their stride and continue to utilise our support and resources to ensure that the Irish language is expressed via campaigns and translations in all of our online and physical content which include not limited to any and all promotional material, informative material and entertainment material, for the use of engagement. We wish the student officers to explore the further use of

social media platforms to increase inclusivity and interaction between all parties.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) also urges that the elected officers should continue to work on and develop the ISSU Tiktok account as although the current following on the ISSU account is quite low, we feel that it is a great opportunity. We believe that the Tiktok account is a key online platform stakeholder in the future engagement of student membership. As Tiktok has become the primary social media platform for student engagement we need to respectfully need to be present and promote content on our TikTok account. We feel this will connect to reach a new cohort of students, audiences young people, stakeholders and new member schools.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) also recommends that the elected officers find and discover new ways to collaborate with social media. We wish for future elected officers to endeavour in exploring the opportunities that may arise to collaborate with new and exciting organisations and influencers. This can range from going live with another organisation or content creator or could look at doing a video/podcast series to promote ISSU to a new audience and target students that we currently do not cater to, this is as we think that this could greatly benefit the ISSU as a whole going forward in the future.

Media

- The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) notes that various different media events took place over the year.
- Media covered all sections for example radio(FM104, Newstalk, TodayFM and RTE)
- There were publications in various newspapers and online resources (IrishTimes and RTE etc)
- There were also events where photography took place and was shared around for publication.

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to stress the vital importance of our media evaluation form. This is critical in that after an event takes place, where the media was involved in any capacity, the media evaluation form is filled out immediately each time for every event. Without this information, we can not successfully and accurately ensure that the work of elected officers is truly representative and in line with ISSU policy.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) further recommends that the Coiste Gnó stress the importance in their planning of training with both the Secretariat and external bodies, that every officer that will be interacting with media within all bodies of ISSU will receive appropriate and effective media training at the beginning of their term to adequately fulfil their responsibilities.

ISSU Events

Summer Sustainability Consultation

Regional Councils

Skills Academy for Future Leaders 22/08/2022-24/08/2022

Extraordinary Assembly - 10/12/2022

Debate Your Decision Makers - 15/02/2023

ISSU Women's Conference - 8/03/2023

Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) would like to commend the Coiste Gnó for their work in organising events this term. Events are the key way in which ISSU can directly engage its members so they must be held and well-run.

There was a Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Officer present to monitor most of the above events, and this report will present some general and some specific feedback on them.

Events were, in general, well attended, with some challenges early in the term as would be expected with students beginning to return to school. Attendees were from diverse backgrounds. The facilitation of workshops was of a high standard and the invited guests were also excellent.

Summer Sustainability Consultation

On 26/6/2022; for 4.5 hours The Sustainability Officer hosted the Summer Sustainability Consultation Online (Zoom) with exemplary support from fellow CG and ROB members.

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The aim was to hear from students and gain their suggestions and opinions on sustainability.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) commends the event's social media promotion for being bilingual. Promotion of the event began (during the Summer holidays) 12 days before the event on social media, with ISSU contacts on WhatsApp and the website. There were <10 attendees with the majority of them having *high levels of engagement*.

The facilitators were numerous(8), excellent and very engaging.

The MAC recommends improving participation numbers. A suggestion would have been to highlight the event sooner and if possible not when students are on holiday from school, and to include promotion in the monthly newsletter to increase ISSU school rep engagement

Skills Academy for Future Leaders

Skills Academy for Future Leaders was held on the 22nd of August 2022 in Dublin. Each venue used was well suited to the event, but having one for each of the three days posed challenges, with inconsistent travel times posing logistical issues. The accommodation venue of the generator continued to be well suited to the event, with the only issues there being due to renovations out of our control. Officers ran engaging workshops for participants and hosted excellent guests. Officers did often adapt well to challenges such as delays in the arrival of guests. Certain evening activities could have been planned better but were still overall good.

Extraordinary Assembly

An Extraordinary Assembly was held on the 10th of December 2022 to fill the position of Leas-Uachtarán. The decision to hold this was taken after Coiste Gnó sought MAC advice on how to fill the vacant position, and this decision was in line with that advice. The assembly successfully met the quorum and a new Leas-Uachtarán was elected.

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee would like to commend the Coiste Gnó for this success when there were concerns at the time that the quorum would not be met.

Debate Your Decision Makers

Debate Your Decision Makers was held on the 15th of February 2023 in the Mansion House in Dublin. The event gave the opportunity for students to talk to TDs and Senators on topics related to Sustainable Development Goals. The event was also addressed virtually by the Minister for Education Norma Foley and An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar. The event was very well organised, attended, and overall excellent.

ISSU Women's Conference

The ISSU Women's Conference was held on the 8th of March 2023. It began last year to commemorate International Women's Day. Unfortunately, a MAC officer was unable to attend to monitor the event, but it is good to see it continued as mandated.

Coiste Gnó

Analysis of Internal Structures

Coiste Gnó

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee wishes to note the difficulties presented to the Coiste Gnó based on officer inactivity and drops in engagement in union work.

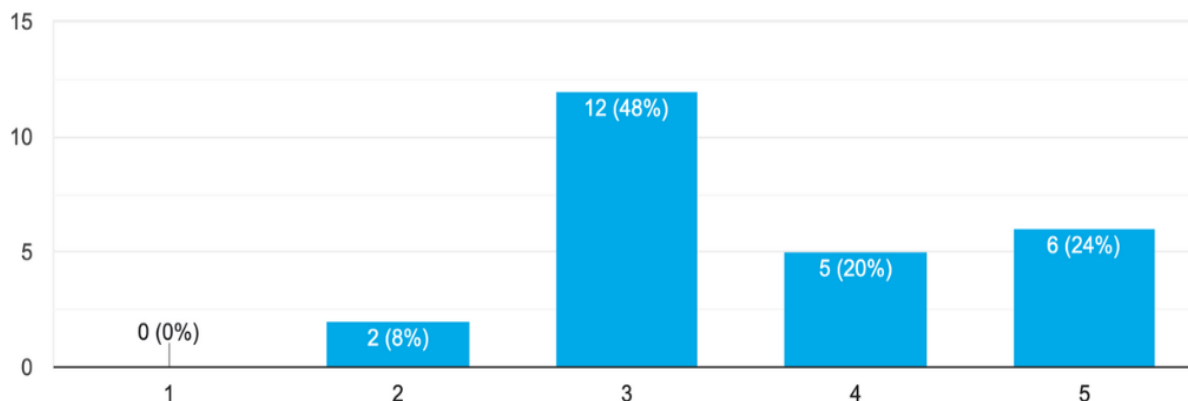
These findings and recommendations are based on the information provided to the MAC through our data-collecting mechanisms; however, as a result of this disengagement, the MAC wishes to note that there may be discrepancies between this report and the experiences of officers on the executive.

Performance Scales

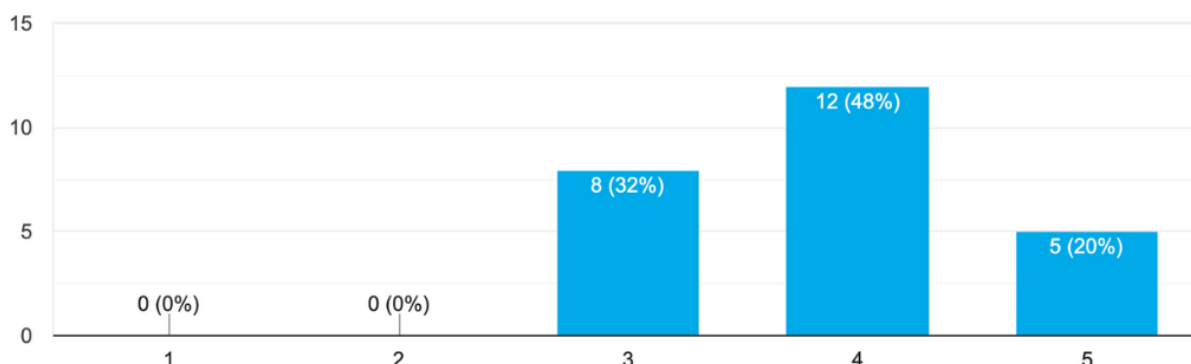
The following graphs indicate how Coiste Gnó Officers assessed themselves under various different headings relating to their work within the ISSU. These headings include confidence levels, productivity levels, energy levels/ motivation levels and stress levels.

Graphs are presented using a '1 to 5' rating scale, with '1' being the lowest value level of the respective performance rating on the x-axis, and '5' being the highest. For example, a '1' on the x-axis represents a weak feeling of confidence, a '5' on the x-axis represents a strong feeling of confidence, and the y-axis represents how the number of Officers over the course of the last term positioned themselves in relation to each performance.

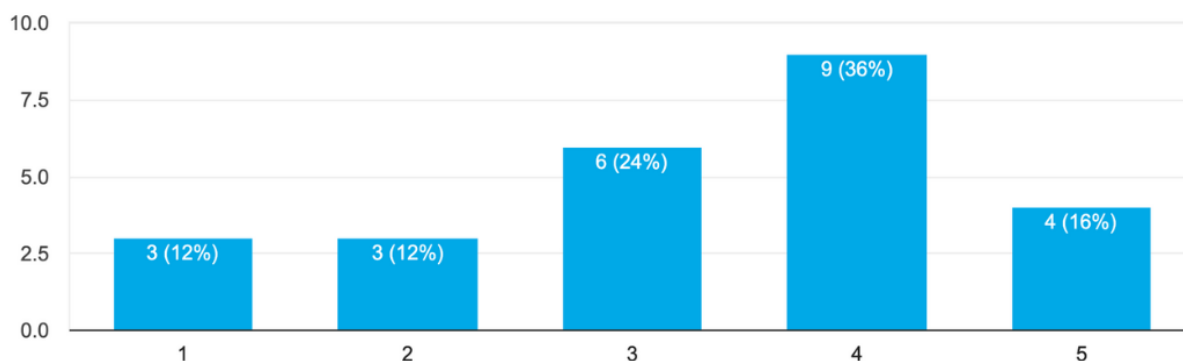
-Coiste Gnó Productivity Levels-



-Coiste Gnó Confidence Levels-



-Coiste Gnó Energy/Motivation Levels-



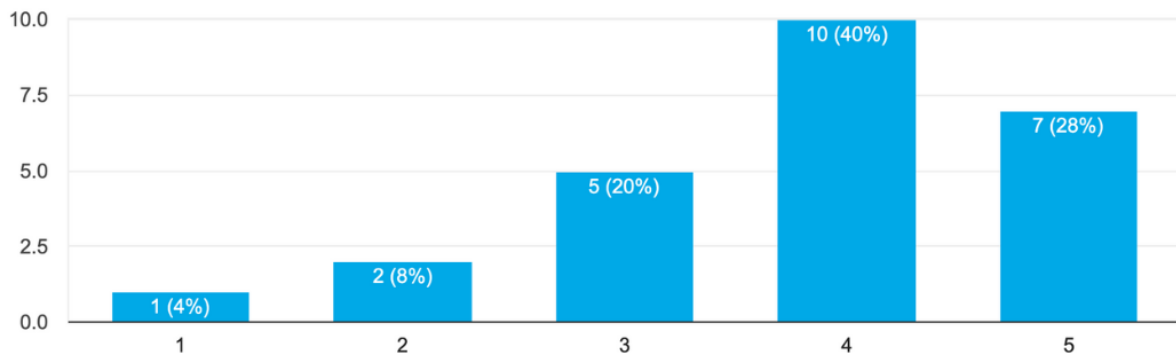
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-Coiste Gnó Stress Levels-



Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Comments

Coiste Gnó this term showed high-stress levels, officers in 6th year found overall commitments overwhelming and ISSU capacity was reduced when school commitments increased e.g mock exams.

Coiste Officer's productivity mode average was 3 indicating the majority($\frac{1}{2}$) of Officers did not feel like they were as productive as they were capable, However, $\frac{1}{4}$ of Respondents did feel like they were achieving the best they could.

On the other hand, relatively high confidence and motivation levels reflected the achievements of the Coiste Gnó 2022/23.

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Conclusion

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee is delighted to present this report in a positive light, following a year of development and advocacy by ISSU and its officers. However, this year has truly not come without its triumphs and tribulations as an organisation. As the Coiste Gnó is aware the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) set out to continuously work on improving itself and its functions, however, we have faced many hurdles and challenges along the way. It goes without saying that sometimes certain aspects of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) can and have been questioned for their relevance, importance and need in an ever-growing organisation. Some may say that certain aspects are unimportant and the role of a Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) member comes into question. However, over this past term, we have seen how crucial certain aspects within the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) role are truly integral to the ISSU as a whole. After now briefly outlining both sides of the experience we have faced as Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) members we feel obliged to become truly transparent with the overview of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC)'s functions over this past year.

As student officers, of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC), we are accountable to the membership and we feel that although this may not be of a traditional nature to report on our operations this year, we believe that is extremely important and relevant to ensure transparency and communication with our membership.

We also feel that our fellow elected officers in the ISSU under other bodies, in which our functions and actions have directly affected, deserve at the very least a full disclosure and explanation for these effects.

We will ask that you remain respectful and understanding while reading our point of view, as we understand wholeheartedly that each elected officer has felt the effects of our actions at many different levels. This again is from our point of view as Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) members and as students and does not reflect the whole picture of how it has affected each elected officer's individual side of this story.

Going into this term, many of the existing elected officers were aware of the past issues and structural barriers within the then Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) structure. The Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) system has existed in the ISSU for the last four to five years, with each year varying in structure, responsibilities and governance. As we grew exponentially as an organisation in the last three years, many radical changes were made to many aspects of the ISSU structure and function. To follow this trend many of these new, and at the time, brilliant ideas were brought into functions of the once Monitoring Committee (MC) and now Monitoring and Advisory Committee (Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC)). We do not feel this is the place to give an extensive word-to-word account of the many changes that have been made to the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) over the last few years, however, some elements are vital to the progress of how the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) has come to be and the problems they have caused. We will be referencing some of these changes for the wider context of the whole situation.

A group of five newly elected uncontested members all with various ranges of experience went head-on into facing and tackling these issues with a new mindset and outlook. Like some of these officers who had been in the past Coiste Gnó had felt the effects that the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) system of 2021-2022 had on their role. We set out to make changes to the internal Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) structure for the betterment of students. Beginning our term we set out a new and reformed Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) Internal Regulations that we felt was the solution to the ongoing problems within the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) for the year ahead. This was never intended to be a long-term solution and was solely to help organise and set the foundations for the incoming year ahead.

For the initial introductory months of our term, we believe that we carried through and had a triumphant start to our terms bringing an organised, effective and trustworthy Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) to the forefront of the organisation, however, we regrettably now state that this is no longer the case. During this period of time, we began to encounter the sole word that lead to our situation as of present; Capacity.

In the beginning, we already started to see the effects that one to two officers, own lack of capacity over the summer months began this cycle. Finding time to meet as a group of five individuals became near impossible and led to; postponed bonding calls; delayed passing of internal regulations; lack of implementation of resources and support for our officers.

One critical aspect that we failed to acknowledge as a union at this time was the importance of training. Not a single Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) member received any form of training. No training in their role from past officers, training on event evaluations, monthly calls, report writing etc...this was training that we requested as a Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) to other bodies in the union but could not receive due to Capacity and a lack of resources at that time. We understand that this is an area looking back we should have referred back to, however, without the training we attempted to complete our work based on past experience in other roles and common knowledge. During the first initial months, this system worked as officers with past experience excelled in their work and could be in a capacity to train other Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) members while taking on additional responsibilities we promised in our reformed Internal Regulations. However, this was naive and looking back was not sustainable in the long term as many of the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) members were unsure or unaware of the future ahead of them and the additional responsibilities and pressures they would face.

We understand for some of you reading this may question why we would run for a position on the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) in the beginning if we were uncertain of our capacity in the future or were aware that our capacity would change. We also see the point of view, where students may be of the belief that Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) members should have resigned when their capacity was challenged to a degree that they were unable to fulfil their duties to a satisfactory level. However, in response to those statements, as the current situation regarding a complete lack of capacity grew from different Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) members' own capacity issues during different points of the term, after the EA for

Leas-Uachtarán took place, as the election was uncontested this would have left the Coiste Gnó in a position to hold multiple EA's over the last three months to fill one to two positions at a time, which we felt the union was not in a capacity to do so, meaning that the position would have remained unfilled.

Therefore, we, unfortunately, decided individually to remain in a very low capacity position that could be reachable when absolutely necessary rather than to leave our fellow officers in a more strenuous position where they would be completely on their own without any support, even if the support we provide now is extremely low. We are not justifying our actions, these situations in hindsight should have been better communicated with all officers involved to achieve the best possible outcome for all officers affected rather than leaving many uncertain.

We will now take this opportunity to apologise to all elected officers, affiliates of ISSU and our member students for a lack of engagement and commitment to our duties over the past few months. As explained this arose from a number of valid and unfortunate circumstances and we hope that you may be able to understand our point of view, knowing that it in no way will make up for the complete lack of responsibilities in our duties over the second half of our term over the past few months.

This report requires the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) to investigate, highlight and flag areas of concern that we fear could hinder the future progression of the ISSU.

Therefore, we would like to support Coiste Gnó in the future proposal to remove the current structure of the MAC from the ISSU with the intention to replace/reassign/delegate the roles and responsibilities of the existing MAC within the MAC Internal Regulations and Constitution

responsibilities to proposed new or existing bodies, officers or structures within the organisation.

For the last number of years, the ISSU has recognised that there have been numerous issues with the MAC body and subsequently has introduced changes internally and to the constitution year after year. After analysing these issues from our own point of view as members of the MAC this term alongside the opinions of past officers, Coiste Gnó officers among other relevant officers, we have come to the last straw with the current structure of the MAC.

We have come to the conclusion that we can not in good faith allow the body of the MAC, in its current structure, to continue into the future of the ISSU without hindering the progression of student's voices and creating a barrier in the progression of elected officers workload for the betterment of students. We regret and believe that this is the best way forward and would be in support of the removal of the MAC structure on the provision and promise that, the still vital, responsibilities of officer accountability to our governing policies such as the Constitution are carried on by new or existing officer('s) or body/bodies.

However, within this report, we would like to also focus on how improvements can be introduced to ensure that new ways and processes are in order to effectively evaluate the work achieved by the ISSU. Regardless of the constructive criticism that the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) presents, we wish to highlight that we do not take for granted the hard work and every progress made by officers this term to achieve their goals, aims and ambitions as student representatives. We would like to reflect on our actions and how they have hindered in some ways the hard work other elected officers have been able to undertake and that much of the constructive criticism we

have presented has been of our own doing. We think this does speak volumes about the successful work of the Coiste Gnó that was completed when these issues first arose and during the time until the present when they were put under extreme pressure by the lack of support, the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) could offer.

We would like to acknowledge that there has been an extreme lack of engagement between each body in the ISSU with the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC). These have included but are not limited to; a lack of elected officer engagement with monthly forms; a lack of elected officer engagement with monthly meetings. This lack of engagement from elected officers on the Coiste Gnó has subsequently left a complete lack of accurate data and statistics for the MAC to present in this report and during the year. We apologise to the Regional Officer Body for issues with bi-monthly reporting forms which have also led to a lack of accurate data and statistics for the MAC to present in this report and during the year. However, we would acknowledge that there has been a lack of engagement from regional officers in bi-monthly meetings which is our other source of information for report writing, without this data from these meetings we fail to accurately report on the work of both the Regional Officer Body, Coiste Gnó, Student Representative, Working Group. We do not blame one single body for this lack of representative data and reflect that all parties involved have played a part in the lack of data collected taking into account all aspects of the reporting process and the capacity of all involved over the last term.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Coiste Gnó and their tireless everyday efforts to keep the work of ISSU at such a high standard and distinction. Without the unwavering support and

dedication of our officers, ISSU would not be the same it is today and young people across the country would be left without their voices being heard. Alongside the exemplary wishes to the Coiste Gnó, the work of the Regional Officers, Working Groups, School Representatives and dedicated and engaged members can not and will not go unnoticed. We are one union, working together for a common goal. Without students from the grassroots up, working together, not one piece of the outstanding achievements in this document would be a possibility and never would have had the impact on student life that they have now had.

It has been a privilege for the Monitoring and Advisory Committee (MAC) to witness ISSU continue to develop and flourish. We look forward to seeing what the Union continues to achieve, and it has been an honour for those on the Monitoring and Advisory Committee to serve the organisation over the past year.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh uile, le gach dea-ghuí,

The Monitoring and Advisory Committee 2022-2023

*Eoin Connolly, Quinton Kelly, Darragh Walsh, Christopher O'Sullivan,
Shane O'Connor*