

EOIN CROSSEN
For USI President

**Campaign
Manifesto**

2024/25



Who am I, and why am I standing for election?

I'm Eoin, I'm 24 years old. I'm in my second year as VP Academic Life in DCU Students' Union

I've been a passionate student campaigner for my entire time in DCU, from being an active class representative, to being class rep council chair in DCU for two years, to attending Comhdháil far too many times now. I've been an active supporter of USI's work, while still calling out what I think isn't right when I need to. I believe I have the passion, the drive, and the knowhow to deliver the change the student movement needs in the next year.



THE STATE OF PLAY FOR STUDENTS IN 2024

Put simply, it has never been harder to be a student than it is in 2024. We've seen shortages of accommodation like never before, the cost of living skyrocketing, chronic underfunding of institutions, students having to work longer and longer hours to make ends meet, and most importantly, a government that simply do not care.

The only positive is that we're looking at a general election coming soon, where we finally have the chance to demand the change we need, or show them the door at the polling stations. As well as this, Stormont is finally sitting again, which means that politicians will have to try a little harder to hide from us.



What I'll do

- Use our position of no confidence in the current government to demand they do better for students, and ensure they cannot avoid our voices.
- Be more active in holding ministers to account after meetings or PR stunts, such as those seen in relation to accommodation being built.
- Voter registration. Our biggest asset is our students being registered to vote, and using their vote.
- Hold the opposition to account, so they can't sell us our dreams just to get into government, and then forget about us.
- Ensuring strong national campaigns and advocacy work, alongside being visible on campus and mobilising students.

Cost of living

SU Foodbanks

Use the position USI has to start discussions with retailers and other companies to provide bulk discounts for Student foodbank or pantry services.

Public Transport

Lobby for free public transport for all students, at the very least for trips to and from their campus. It has often been a criticism that free public transport would be overused, so this would alleviate this concern. Private providers in certain areas may make this difficult, however transport costs can be huge for students.

Housing

Ensure that funding for affordable purpose built student accommodation is made a priority, rather than reliance on the private sector which has consistently proven unaffordable for students.

That funding be made readily available to TUs to build their own PBSA where applicable.

Digs Legislation

Continue the push for legislation for student renters in digs. While digs is far from an ideal situation, many students are left with no other choice but to live in these often precarious situations. It is vital that USI continue to push for legislation in this. If a landlord is able to make €14,000 tax free, there should be obligations on them to ensure a student has privacy, and minimum standards. The USI digs survey showed that many in digs situations do have an agreement, so legislation is required for the landlords who are simply looking to exploit students, and would not adhere to guidelines.

GRASSROOTS SUPPORT

Our students are our biggest asset, however it is our responsibility to engage with them, and mobilise them when needed. We need to also show them that we care about issues on the ground, and are ready to support them when need.

I want USI officers to be on the ground, speaking to students, and hearing their problems, concerns and feedback on USI. When we visit campuses, I want to hold workshops with students alongside the local MO, to hear about what they think of USI (even if it's not good) and how we can change this.



What I'll do

- Support grassroots actions by students and local MOs.
- Hold local campaign workshops with students on campuses across the country. Train up USI officers to facilitate these, with it being open to local MOs as well.
- Ensure our work is visible when we're visiting campuses, through physical materials and social media.
- Communicate our work better with local MOs, not just through council updates, or at Comhairle Náisiúnta.



USI NATIONAL SURVEY

Every year we carry out surveys on various topics, alongside unions doing their own surveys, resulting in survey fatigue from students. As StudentSurvey.ie is a highly flawed survey, and now showing signs of giving us the data we need, we should carry out our own survey every year.

This survey will take into account accommodation, commutes, mental health and other issues. This can be added to with other topics on a yearly basis based on what the union needs data or information on.



What I'll do

- Design a survey for all students, in collaboration with MOs, to be started in the academic year 2024/25.
- Ensure that MOs have access to the data so they can use it for their own lobbying purposes.



USI & NUS-USI

Explainer document for USI officers on the North

The landscape and system for higher education in the North varies greatly in a lot of areas. While not the fault of USI officers, there is sometimes a lack of understanding of issues or the system in the North on the part of USI officers. I want to work with MOs in the North to provide a handbook to officers which explains the system in the North, where differences arise, and explaining common terminology used that differs from language used in the south. This document will be updated on a yearly basis, however would require a good deal of time to initially prepare.

All Island lobby day

We have seen the benefits of lobby days with politicians in the south, however this should be extended to all politicians on the island, both in government and in opposition.

Support for local actions in the North

While USI has been fantastic at supporting local actions this year, more attention needs to be given to supporting local actions in the North, including both promotion and attendance.

What else I'll do if I'm Elected

SU Autonomy and legislation

- Seek to protect the status of Students' Unions under legislation (such as what exists in the UK) and to ensure their continued funding and autonomy.

HEA Board position

- With more and more projects being taken under the umbrella of the HEA, I think it's important that the student representation on the board is strong in order to avoid good student initiatives being lost (i.e. student associate assembly under the National Forum) as well as ensuring student consultation in changes that directly impact students (noting that some changes to the IRC did not receive broader consultation). The HEA board is also updated and consulted on relevant legislation, which it is important for student voice to be present at.

USI Electoral system

There are serious issues with the current electoral system. I propose to explore alternatives to the current system, to ensure that more students can have their say on who leads the national movement.

What else I'll do if I'm Elected

Sustainability

- This needs to be a focus of the National Union, including our own procedures. Printing of physical materials that are not used causes a lot of wastage over the course of a year. MOs should be contacted in advance asking if they want printed materials, and how many they want, before they are sent out. This should be the same with physical materials.
- Officers travelling in sustainable ways where at all practicable (public transport, carpooling etc.)
 - Create a policy on officer travel, which takes sustainability into account
- Messaging around the climate crisis, and what students can do about it. This can involve individual actions, as well as lobbying for change at government level, as large companies are ultimately the ones responsible.

Commercialisation where it benefits the long term sustainability of the union.

Commercial endeavours should be undertaken with the main view of ensuring that the union remains financially viable in the medium to long term, and provides a clear benefit to students. USI should only work with companies whose aims, objectives and ethos align with those of USI.

Benefits of being a member of USI

Explore expanding benefits of being a member of USI to students on the ground, such as trade union partnerships, discounts etc.