

MINUTES

NSE MEETING // 14/08/2020 // 11:00-16:00

Present:

- Reuban Murray , President
- Yvonne Farrell, International Officer (present for the second half of meeting)
- Tara Toye, Student Council Support Officer
- Emer Neville, Communications Officer
- Alicia O’Sullivan, Education Officer
- Luke Casserly (present for first half of meeting)
- Matthew Ryan, Welfare Officer
- Ciara Fanning, Honorary President
- Katie Halpin-Hill, Oifigeach na Gaeilge
- Beth Doherty, Sustainability Officer

Apologies:

-Matthew Colgan, Secretary

Absent:

-Saoirse Exton, Equality Officer

In attendance:

- Alison Dervan, Student Voice Development Manager

1.1 - Arrival & Welcome

- The President welcomed everyone and hoped they were all keeping well.
- Hon. President noted thanks to the Sustainability Officer for the MIRO template provided for the upcoming Digital Sustainability Consultation.
- President noted thanks for all of the work on this consultation by the Sustainability Officer and other N.S.E members' contribution to this.

1.2 - Minutes from Last Meeting

- Minutes proposed as accepted by Deputy President and seconded by Welfare Officer.

1.3 - Matter Arising from Minutes

- N/A

2 - Officer Updates

2.1 Student Council Support Officer

- The SCSO provided updates on the Student Council handbook which is nearing completion. The established working group are currently reviewing to be finalised for distribution in mid-September with a possible launch at the Extraordinary General Meeting (date tbc)
- SCSO informed the N.S.E due to COVID-19 it was likely that Regional Councils would need to be held online in the coming academic year. Work is underway with the Student Council Coordinator and the ROB on organising these events.
- SCSO proposed approval for 22 redeveloped regional structures.
- Unanimous approval was given by the N.S.E to incorporate the new regional structures.
- SCSO in conjunction with the President will be sending a letter to all schools encouraging democratic student council elections.
- All regional officer calls have been completed. There is a small number proving difficult to contact.
- SCSO will be developing a Regional Officer guidelines booklet.
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2.2 Sustainability Officer

- The Sustainability Officer reminded the N.S.E that the Digital Sustainability Consultation is to take place Saturday the 15th of August. All aspects of event organisation and facilitation have been put in place. Any N.S.E officers facilitating in the event are encouraged to contact the Sustainability Officer if they have any queries remaining.
- Sustainability Officer noted they are currently working alongside the International Officer on Sustainable Development Goals action

week and will have more updates to follow nearer the time of the event.

- Sustainability officer informed the N.S.E of an upcoming project where they will be working in collaboration with Focus Ireland on improving the sustainability of public transport in Ireland.

2.3 Oifigeach na Gaeilge

- Oifigeach na Gaeilge noted the language scheme for ISSU was near completion and would be ready for the next N.S.E meeting.
- Oifigeach na Gaeilge noted they have provided essential translations for all social media posts, publications and the newly updated website. This work has progressed the organisation in becoming fully bi-lingual .The student council handbook will also be translated which is a very substantial piece of work.
- Obhair na Gael Linn working group is currently being set up and available to join through the reach out section of the ISSU website.
- There will be a poster campaign in September with Conradh na Gaeilge on collaborative projects with ISSU.

2.4 Welfare Officer

-Welfare Officer informed the N.S.E that the first draft of the Drug Education and Awareness booklet , done in collaboration with the Education Officer, would be ready by the 19th of August.

-Welfare Officer conducted a meeting with BeLongto in advance of establishing a working group on getting sanitary products available for free in schools. The applications for this working group closes on the 16th of August at midnight.

-Attended a meeting with the National Educational Psychological Services, alongside the President, about welfare services for students returning to school.

2.5 Communications Officer

- Communications officer , alongside the Student Council Coordinator, rebuilt and redesigned the ISSU website. Currently working with Oifigeach na Gaeilge to ensure the website is bilingual with the hope of officially launching the new website soon.
- Communications officer noted that they have completed a Brand guidelines document , distributed to all N.S.E officers before the meeting.
- Also noted was the Communications officers role in designing the Drug Education and Awareness booklet, Mental Health booklet and all social media posts and publications.

2.6 Deputy President

- Deputy President attended the Department of Education Advisory Group meeting in July focused on the Calculated Grading Process and the Reopening of schools
- Attended a meeting with Senator Annie Hoey
- Is currently developing a lobbying plan for the work of the N.S.E for the year 2020/2021
- Developing the Vote @ 16 campaign , in collaboration with the Equality and Welfare Officers. The campaign and working group, to be discussed as a later agenda item, is intended to be launched the week of Skills Academy
- The Deputy President noted that the Examcraft project was complete and thanked the other officers involved for their work.
- Deputy President, alongside President, presented at the USI training, for third-level officers, centred on challenges for incoming first years.
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2.7 President

- President informed the N.S.E on the upcoming Leaving Certificate Helpline in collaboration with the NPCPP and IGC. The Communications officer is working closely with the President to run the ISSU social platforms on the day.

- President has sent communications about getting Regional Officers seconded onto all ETB training boards.
- Updated on the current registrations for the upcoming Skills Academy and external organisations that will be involved on both days.
- Attended all the Department of Education Advisory Group meetings from June to date, focused on the Calculated Grading Process and the Reopening of schools.
- Attended separate meetings with Senator Annie Hoey and Senator Malcolm Byrne.
- Letters have been sent to all Irish study aids to encourage discounts and/or free services for students who will need to sit Leaving Certificate examinations at the proposed November deadline. A press release/statement will be compiled to inform students of the available services and published on the ISSU website for easy access.
- Alongside the International Officer, the President has lobbied European ambassadors in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Italy to accommodate Irish students who have applied for third-level in the respective countries but may be denied a place due to results release delay
- President informed the N.S.E of representation on numerous media engagements centred on the return to school and calculated grading.

2.8 Honorary President

- Updated N.S.E on recent appointment to the board of NYCI
- Currently working on the workshop 'Women for election' for Skills Academy.
- Supporting the Sustainability officer for the Digital Sustainability Consultation and the Welfare Officer in establishing the Sanitary Products working group
- The Honorary President informed the N.S.E that they are working on a project to catalogue student activism over the last fifty years

in order to create and launch an event celebrating student voice and activism during the last half century.

- Honorary President played a key role in assisting with the establishment of the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland and will continue to support and form a collaborative link between SSUNI and ISSU.

2.9 Education Officer

- Education officer attended a meeting with TD, Jennifer Carroll Mc Neil, to discuss Relationship and Sexual Education curriculum in Irish second-level schools. Alongside this the Education officer is working to create a strategic plan, to be submitted to the NCCA, highlighting the short, medium and long term goals for reforming the RSE curriculum in Ireland.
- Collaborated with the Welfare Officer in drafting the Drug Education and Awareness booklet.
- Currently working in collaboration with College aware on inclusivity in education. They are developing a discussion panel to discuss access to third-level for ethnic minorities and researching the possibilities of creating a scholarship for a member of the travelling community to access higher education.
- The Education Officer has been working on a Mental Health booklet which is discussed later in the agenda.

2.10 International Officer

- International officer has contacted ambassadors across Europe to ensure current Leaving Certificate students will be permitted to accept third-level places as a result of delayed results release
- Attended OBESSU GA discussed at a later stage in the meeting
- Currently working with the Student Council coordinator on the 100 million campaign
- International officer has supported the Sustainability officer in organising the Digital Sustainability Consultation.
- Noted Sensory rooms progress later discussed.

3. Vote @ 16

- The Deputy President noted the opportunities with the newly formed government to achieve a successful campaign for the voting age to be reduced to 16.
- A meeting took place with the Equality Officer and the Monitoring Committee on how to progress the campaign
- Encouraged N.S.E officers to get involved and provide any suggestions

4. Extraordinary General Meeting(EGM)

- A proposal to hold an EGM before the end of 2020 was brought forward to the N.S.E
- Noted in discussions was the preference to have an in person meeting however due to the restrictions and health risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic it was unanimously agreed that it must be held online.
- Noted that a specific time frame is needed to allow for a full constitutional review by the N.S.E, original Constitutional Reform working group and Board of Directors before bringing to the E.G.M
- The Directive Policy introducing a new 'Arts Officer' was discussed and the steps needed to implement this policy.
- President proposed a motion for a date in November and more in depth discussion on officer roles and current directive policy.
 - Motion was passed with 8 votes majority and to add a discussion point to the next N.S.E agenda on officer roles within the Constitution.

5. Legislative Agenda

- President requested specific areas of legislation and policy to advocate, introduce, improve or ensure implementation on behalf of students from the N.S.E. The following topics were chosen collectively:

- Climate Legislation -ensuring it is revised and implemented accordingly
- Completion of the policy on Sanitary products outlined in the current programme for government
- Gaeilge curriculum reform
- Publicly funded higher education
- Vote @ 16
- Student voice legislation reform

6. Skills Academy

- There are currently fifty registrations to date for the Skills Academy event. There will be continued work and publicity over the coming week to increase this number.
- The President has asked that finalised plans for Skills Academy from officers be submitted by the 18th of August, the plan is to be located in the shared folder.

7. Mental Health Booklet

- Education officer is working with an education team, composed of two Regional officers, to develop an ISSU Mental Health booklet for the Ombudsman for Children website.
- A draft is to be submitted on the 14th of August with the finalised manual intended for publication on all ISSU media platforms and distributed to education stakeholders.
- Alongside this a physical and mental health campaign is being developed for the return of students to full time schooling in September.

8. Return to School

- President updated officers that the Department of Education has specified there will be no continuous assessment implemented for the incoming examination years 2020/2021
- A number of concerns were raised by officers around continued issues on communication, wellbeing, guidelines not clarified for students and families (specifically those who are high risk and

immunocompromised) and curriculum for students returning to school.

- It was suggested that a submission would be collectively developed highlighting all concerns, queries, possible solutions and recommendations. This submission would be directly sent to all education stakeholders and the Department of Education and Skills.
- Action Item : President to create initial document and set up a working group.

9. Brand guidelines

- Communications Officer noted that a Brand guidelines document has now been completed and provided to all members of the N.S.E
- Communications officer requested feedback as soon as possible on the document.

10. Membership policy

- The Sustainability Officer noted that a number of students had made contact concerning barriers to joining as members of ISSU
- A discussion took place on reviewing the current membership procedures outlined in the ISSU Constitution to ensure that the organisation is fully representative across second-level education
- An important factor to consider is how voting rights would be distributed to remain fair and equitable
- Any changes would need to be reviewed by the N.S.E and then brought to the Board of Directors before changes could be submitted to a formal meeting of members.
- Action items: International Officer to contact European counterparts to review how membership works in different countries
- Action item: President and Sustainability Officer to initiate an internal review of membership. All N.S.E officers to be participants in the review and to assist in establishing a draft constitutional amendment to be brought before the BOD.

11. OBESSU General Assembly

- The President and International Officer attended the two day event online.
- International Officer noted congratulations to former ISSU officers elected to the OBESSU Board and Monitoring Committee
- The International officer noted OBESSU have been in contact with the EU Commissioner on the impact of COVID-19 and returning to school

12. Sensory Rooms

- International Officer noted that an email was sent to the Minister of Special Education and Inclusion to ensure a safe space is created in schools for students returning in line with department recommendations. The communication also included the request for ISSU to be involved in developing actionable guidelines on how schools can create Sensory rooms or safe spaces using their own resources.
- International Officer, Equality Officer, Welfare Officer, Secretary and President all contributed to the email communications

13. In person meetings

- President informed officers of the guidelines required to host an in person meeting.
- Sustainability officer noted to include any venue used would have windows for more sufficient ventilation
- A discussion on the feasibility of an in person meeting took place. A number of officers noted there is a need for this to improve communications and engage in group bonding.
- Concerns were expressed for those who are themselves and/or living with high risk vulnerable people. Officers would not be made to travel to any in person meeting should they feel it is not safe for them or any of their family members.
- President noted that due to the current restrictions and government guidelines it would not be feasible to host a meeting in person this month but the plans would be developed to host a possible in person meeting in September.

- All officers present agreed that any future meeting must adhere to the government guidelines provided at the time of said meeting.
- International officer suggested that a colour code system, mirroring the new government plan, be adapted to effectively organise future meetings.
- All present officers agreed this would be useful.

14. Masks & Uniform in schools

- President opened the discussion on wearing masks and hygiene with uniforms for students returning to school.
- All present officers agreed that more clarification on the guidelines for wear masks and the cleaning of uniforms is needed from the Department of Education and Skills.
- All present officers agreed that no student and/or family should have to pay extra costs for additional uniforms, cleaning of uniforms daily, masks and all other items necessary for the health and safety guidelines to be implemented locally in schools
- Action Item: President to contact NAPD and all management bodies to give guidance to schools on this topic that ensures families will not be burdened with extra costs in returning to school. This communication should also include the queries about what can be done universally to get guidelines that ensure the hygiene measures required are feasible.
- Noted that the majority of officers present are in favour of mask wearing for the health and safety of the school community.
- All present officers agreed that further consultation of members and the Regional Officer Body is required to gauge what the ISSU stance on mask wearing and uniform hygiene is.
- President put forward the motion to have the R.O.B contact ten representatives from each council regionally to get their views.
- All officers voted in agreement of this motion.
- International officer also suggested a campaign to keep students informed of the government health and safety guidelines for returning to school. All officers present were in favour of this.

15. Child Protection Policy

- Student Voice Development Manager discussed the Child Protection policy of the ISSU and that this policy must be followed in every aspect of work within the organisation
- Officers were encouraged to read the CPP and Safeguarding statement to familiarise themselves and to bring any queries to the Student Voice Development Manager.

16. Podcast Communications

- Moved to the next meeting.

17. Reach Out section of Website

- President outlined the new 'Reach Out' section of the ISSU website established to increase grassroots involvement in ISSU working groups
- Requests of interest from students to join particular working groups will be directed to the N.S.E Secretary who will work collaboratively with the ISSU Secretariat in allocating suitability.
- Current open working groups include ; Sustainable Development Education, Sanitary Products ,Obhair na Gael Linn.
- The Inclusive schools working group will be continuing with the current participants.

18. Predictive Grading Results in the United Kingdom-Impact on Ireland

- President provided an outline of the calculated grading process that was implemented in the United Kingdom resulting in $\frac{1}{3}$ of students' grades being downgraded due to national standardisation.
- First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has since reversed the downgrading of results and restored student grades based on teacher predictions.
- All present officers agreed that there was serious concern about the impact on Irish students as a similar grading model has been adapted.
- All present officers agreed that it is unacceptable for a national algorithm to advantage and/or disadvantage students based on location, gender and school data from previous years. Students

should be awarded the grade provided by the professional judgement of their teacher based on the individual's work and achievements.

- Action item : President to draft a letter stating the ISSU response to these concerns and to engage in communications with the Minister for Education and Skills and the Department of Education and Skills as well as all education stakeholders.

19. A.O.B

- International Officer informed the N.S.E that OBESSU had requested the ISSU support the email campaign to ambassadors from Belarus in restoring democracy and condemning the extreme violence against the peaceful protests.
- All officers present voted in favour of this motion.
- Action item: International officer to attain OBESSU template and to email the Belarus consulate in Ireland.
- President asked all officers if the N.S.E tasks work plan was working effectively.
- All officers present agreed that it was working well.
- President noted that all officers must include task dates in work plans so a GANTT chart can be developed to monitor workload.
- President noted that internal communications had improved and requested feedback for further improvements
- As the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland is now established it is suggested that the officers are invited to Skills Academy to develop a strong working relationship. All officers present agreed and the Student Council Support officer offered assistance in collaborating with SSUNI based on location.

Next meeting date and time to be decided via doodle poll for September.