

# USI Postgraduate Working Group Minutes

Date: August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Time: 11-12 PM

Location: Zoom

Attendance:

Adam Clarke (USI) Rhiannon Kavanagh (WITSU) Lee Bennett (TUD) Moya Browne (TUD) Conor O'Reilly (NCI) Emma Sweeny NUIG Lucien Waugh-Daly (DCU) Cameron Keighron (NUIG) Rachel Sarsfield Ryan (IADT) Dajana Sinik (NCI) Luke Daly (TUD) Séan Farrelly (TUD) Pádraic Keane (TUD) Hamza Jama (TUD) Nicole PK (UUSU) Eimer Curtin (UCC)

Items for Discussion:

## 1. Introduction and Postgrad Specific Matters

- Lee Bennett- Deputy President, TUD Tallaght Campus, Education officer for two years so has experience with postgrad students. Can be difficult to get class reps as there are limited numbers of postgrads and many can be part time or evening so engagement can be lower. Looking at possible different online options for electing postgrad class reps.
- Moya Browne- Deputy President, TUD City Campus- Main issues to be aware of are regarding postgrad representation and electing postgrad class reps. Some research postgrad reps work throughout the summer however as a result of Covid this has been stopped. Recently got their building for postgrads reopen again but Covid has also led to difficulty with this too.
- Conor O'Reilly- VP NCI- Many postgrads here are part time, nearly as many as undergraduates. Mainly evening courses so engagement can be lower. Not many policies around student advisory issues for postgrads, therefore students are often left to fend for themselves with matters that may arise.
- Rhiannon Kavanagh- WITSU VP Education- Good communication with the Research Postgraduate Forum on Campus who are quite engaged. Main matter arising with postgrads is class rep engagement with postgrad students, often due to postgrad calendar running differently to undergrad. Hopes to aim campaigns and services as postgrads this year in order to

ensure they are aware we represent them and hopefully increase engagement with this cohort of students.

- Lucien Waugh-Daly- DCU Academic Affairs- Not much experience with postgrads as of yet however a potential issue arising at the moment with students looking for extensions on deadlines however difficulty with university granting these due to conferring dates.
- Cameron Keighron- 1<sup>st</sup> Year PHD Student NUIG- Potential difficulties arising re: registration and scholarships as the dates at the moment don't seem to align. Difficulty at the moment with some international PHD Students regarding start dates and orientation. Postgrads often very left behind in plans for orientation so maybe place a focus on this when in talks with your own Institution regarding this to ensure postgrads are properly represented.
- Emma Sweeny- Education Officer NUIG-Similar comments to Cameron regarding Orientation and representation of postgrads. Also ensuring Postgrads know the various services available and know they are represented is an important focus for the year ahead.
- Luke Daly- Deputy President, TUD Blanchardstown Campus- No education officer in Blanchardstown so therefore focus on postgrads come from the deputy role mainly. Main focus for the coming year is integration of postgrads as due to north and south campuses postgrads can often feel somewhat isolated. Ensuring postgrads know they are represented in the hopes of increasing engagement.
- Rachel Sarsfield Ryan- Education Officer IADT- Can often have quite low engagement with postgrads as they can often be in on Saturday and hours don't align with SU hours. Can be underrepresented as schedules often clash especially with Council etc...so allowances are made here particularly with attendance requirements.
- Dajana Sinik- NCI President- Similar issues to Connor above regarding policy so will look to work on implementing this over the coming year. No accessible, user friendly complaints procedure in place that's fair, transparent and accessible. Hope is to work on this to introduce a feedback loop this year. Postgrad representation from some schools can also be quite poor.
- Séan Farrelly- VP Education, TUD Tallaght.- Similar matters to Lee above. Hopes to work on Postgrad reps in particular and hopes that engagement with this group will improve over the coming year.
- Pádrac Keane- Welfare and Equality, TUD Blanchardstown- No major interaction first hand as of yet but keen to get involved with postgraduate engagement and work with Luke on this. Particularly in terms of integration of Postgrads.

- Hamza Jama- Education Officer, TUD City Campus- Engagement can be quite low with postgrads and class reps so hopes to increase this over the year.

## 2. SIPTU Charter Campaign

- USI has a strong relationship with SIPTU and last year began development of a charter for postgrad workers' rights.
- Work on this charter will continue over the coming year.
- Has not been publicly distributed as of yet as some finalisation of details is needed following feedback from relevant groups.
- Engagement will continue on this and there will be an update at the next working group.

## 3. Postgraduate Symposium 2021

- Normally takes place in February or March
- Unfortunately cancelled this year due to Covid but hopes are for a physical symposium next year. Contingency will also be looked at for an online symposium if a physical one cannot be held.
- Event for postgrads nationwide, can discuss postgrad matters, present research and hear from many different speakers in the area.
- Event 2021 will need a host. As TUD were meant to host last year they can possibly have first refusal of this but if there is interest from other Institutions, we can look at this in the coming working groups.
- TUD may not be in a position to host this due to their move to Grange Gorman however this can be discussed.
- USI VP Postgrad to liaise with host and VP Campaigns following evaluation of the USI Calendar in order to pick the most suitable date for all.

## 4. Eurodoc AGM Update

- Union of researchers in Europe outlining PhD Experiences.
- USI has a seat on Eurodoc along with IFTU who Adam has linked in with.
- Issue of Stipends in Ireland highlighted which can often be lower than the minimum wage in many cases.
- A briefing report has been prepared and following sign off from USI President, this will then be circulated to all members of the postgrad working group. Updates to following next meeting.

## 5. A.O.B

- USI VP Postgrad to follow up with both Lucien and Cameron separately over the coming week regarding postgrad specific matters that have arisen.

