



## Explainer for the Proposed NCI Students' Union Constitution

### **What is a Constitution?**

A Constitution is the rulebook that governs and sets the rules for how a democratic organisation should operate which is adopted by all the members that have signed up to be represented by that organisation.

### **What's being proposed here?**

The NCI Students' Union Constitution is being completely changed, and the referendum is proposing to repeal the current Constitution and a newer Constitution to be adopted by the students of NCI.

### **What is a referendum, and when is it taking place?**

A referendum is a question put the general student body to vote on, and the question that will be asked on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 is “....”

### **The following is a summary of the proposed changes:**

## **ARTICLES**

### **Article 1 – Title**

- This section gives the title of the Organisation, both in English and Irish, and the condensed form of what it shall be referred to in the document.

### **Article 2 – Mission Statement**

- This section outlines the purpose of the Union as the sole representative body of students in NCI, which includes supporting the education, welfare and social life of students

### **Article 3 – Aims and Objectives**

- This section explains the nine principles in which the Union would work to uphold in representing students of NCI

### **Article 4 – Membership**

- This section states that all registered students of the National College of Ireland are automatically members of the Union, including full time officers
- The Executive can award a Honorary Membership to a person or organisation as a gesture of appreciation

## **Article 5 – Structure of the Union**

- This section covers the Class-Representative system, which allows a class to have at least one class-representative elected by Union in accordance with the terms of the Constitution and Electoral Commission
- This section also includes the Class-Representative Council; which is the highest decision and policy making body in the Union, important for directing what work the elected officers should do and holding them accountable
- The Council is made up of an independent Chairperson (someone not in the Union or college), the elected officers and all the class-representatives
- The Executive is included in this structure as the term used to call the combined full time and part-time elected officers that manage and run the Union on a day to day basis

## **Article 6 – Officers of the Union**

- The President is a full-time paid position and is the chief spokesperson of the Union that sits on both the Governing and Academic Council as the student representative; two key decision making bodies in the College
- If the President is absent or temporarily incapacitated, the Vice President would take over their duties
- If the Vice-President is absent or temporarily incapacitated, their duties would be either delegated to the part-time officers or taken on by the President
- The term of office for both full-time officers and part-time officers is 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> June of the following year
- A person can only serve two terms in any one part-time position or three terms as a part-time officer in general, while it's also limited to two terms in any one of the full-time positions and three terms max as a full-time officer

## **Article 7 – Governance Committee**

- This is a new committee for the Students' Union that will oversee the financial, commercial, human resources and corporate governance matters of the Union
- The members include an independent Chairperson (someone not in the Union or college), the President, Vice President and two students elected by the Council each year
- The President is accountable and answerable to the Council when it comes to all financial matters of the Union

## **Article 8 – Electoral Commission**

- This committee in the Union will regulate and oversee all elections, plebiscite and referenda in the Union, and similar to the Governance Committee, is separate to the Council but answerable through the President
- The members include an independent Chairperson (someone not in the Union or college), the President and two students elected by the Council each year
- If any of the members are running for election, they immediately have to stepped down from the Commission, and replaced by other officer/students that aren't involved in elections

## **Article 9 – External Relations**

- The Union shall be a member organisation of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), and may choose to affiliate or disaffiliate at any time by amending this Article
- All delegates attending the Annual Congress of USI shall be selected by the Executive, and they have the authority under this Constitution to vote for the elected sabbatical officers of USI on behalf of the Union
- No policy of any external organisation, including USI, does not become a policy or position of the Union unless decided by the Council

## **Article 10 – Interpretation and Amendment**

- The Independent Chairperson of the Council is the only person who interprets the Constitution
- An amendment of this Constitution can only be brought to the Council, who will review and vote on if it will go to the student body in a referendum
- The quorum for a referendum is a minimum of 10% of the student body
- The schedules, which are an appendix to the Constitution, can be repealed or amended by the Council
- The Articles of the Constitution always take priority to the Schedules, even in a conflict of interpretation

### **Schedules**

#### **Schedule 1: Standing Orders of Union Meetings**

- This Schedule sets out the rules and procedure of how meetings and committees in the Union should operate in order to be fair, transparent and efficient
- All committees and meetings have to try their best to comply with this Schedule, except for the Class-representative Council, which must comply totally with this Schedule
- This Schedule sets out how and when agendas are set, rules on attendance external guests, decision making processes and procedural motions

#### **Schedule 2: Standing Orders of the Governance Committee**

- This Schedule sets out the rules and procedure of how the Governance Committee should operate in order to be transparent, efficient and comply with the law
- The Committee has certain responsibilities relating to finance, human resources and governance

#### **Schedule 3: Regulation of Elections**

- Any candidate seeking to run for an elected position have to be nominated by 30 registered students
- This Schedule sets out some rules for elections that the Electoral Commission would need to comply with, including notice period for opening of polls, nominations and canvassing.

#### **Schedule 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Officers and Elected Representatives**

- This section sets out in a bit more detail the roles and responsibilities for the President, Vice President, Clubs and Societies Officer, Entertainments Officer, Communications Officer and also a Class-Representative

## **Schedule 5: Regulation of Elected Roles**

- Sabbatical officers can't hold any other elected position in the Union, club or society in the College
- Part-time officers can't hold any other elected position in the Union, but can be a member of a club or society in the Union only
- This Schedule sets out the process in removing an elected representative or in the event they resign