



USCG Levy Meeting

Thursday 15th 3pm

Request for Referendum | Foréileamh ar Reifreann

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REQUEST FOR REFERENDUM

We the (500 or more) undersigned members of NUI Galway Students' Union request that a referendum be held to vote on the following question:

“That with effect from 1st July, 2021 the members of NUI Galway Students’ Union approve the cancellation of the current Student Levy of €224 (adopted in 2006, updating a levy approved in 2003); and further approve its replacement with a new Student Levy of €140 (to be paid in that amount by full-time students and by part-time students on the Full-Time Equivalent basis) to create a Student Levy Fund with the total amount collected annually to be distributed on the basis of allocating 2.14% to Áras na Mac Léinn, 10% to CÉIM (to be paid to and administered by NUI Galway Students’ Union), 4.29% to Flirt FM, 17.86% to NUI Galway Clubs, 17.86% to NUI Galway Societies, 3.57% to the Projects Fund, 15.71% to the Student Health Unit, and 28.57% to NUI Galway Students’ Union; and also approve that the Student Levy of €140 adopted for the academic year 2021-2022 be increased thereafter in line with Consumer Price Index inflation.”



What is the proposed change?


Student Levy Proposal April 2021

	<i>Existing Levy</i>	<i>Proposed Levy</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Societies	€19.28	€25.00	€5.72
Clubs	€19.28	€25.00	€5.72
Students' Union	€25.14	€40.00	€14.86
Student Health Unit	€18.46	€22.00	€3.54
Áras na Mac Léinn	€17.23	€3.00	-€14.23
Flirt FM	€4.92	€6.00	€1.08
Student Project Fund	€19.69	€5.00	-€14.69
Sports Centre	€100.00	€0.00	-€100.00
CÉIM	€0.00	€14.00	€14.00
Total	€224.00	€140.00	-€84.00


[Students' Union Levy Report Here](#)

USCG Statement

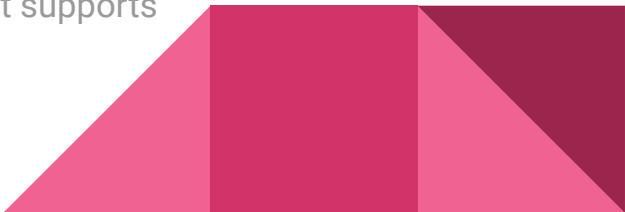
"The elected student representatives to the USCG welcome a reduced student levy. However, while the increase in society funding may seem like a positive, the proposed cut to the Áras na Mac Léinn fund is worrying. The building is the home of societies/students and this will force all student services that are located there to seek additional external funding to ensure the availability and maintenance of key resources/spaces for societies & students. The alternative source for this funding is likely to be more corporate events held in Áras na Mac Léinn which actively takes power from the student's hands. This will move the financial burden back onto students, not remove it. The long term effect on sporting clubs should also be considered. We implore students to consider the impacts these proposed changes will have on all aspects of student life prior to voting."



What's been funded from Aras na Mac Leinn Fund since the initial upgrade from a sports centre?

- Renovation of the Hub
 - installation and maintenance of the only student kitchen facility in the country
 - repurposing the commercial cafe to the ALIVE Office and upgrading the student common room
 - relaxation room with massage chair
 - Cube Seating Rig & mirrors for dancing, new storage.
 - Bailey Allen Hall phase 3 electricity and lighting rig to support student activities
 - Flirt FM upgrades to studio and office spaces
 - Redesign of Aras na Mac Léinn 2 Acoustic rooms to create:
 - 2 new acoustic rooms
 - A relaxation room,
 - Parent and baby room,
 - 2 piano rooms,
 - Band room,
 - Recording studio
 - AV equipment used by societies, SU and other units in all rooms (upgrade
 - Necessary checks and inspections in the Cube's technical facilities and all equipment and AV in the building
 - Expanding the health unit to provide for more students
 - SU Office remodel
 - College Bar remodel
 - Block R remodel
 - SU Cloakroom fitout
 - Shannon College student space
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What's been funded from the Student Projects Fund?

- €184k Student Counselling/Psychology Student Resilience Project
 - €233k Health Unit STI Screening & Mental Health Support initiatives
 - €442k Student Services Online wellbeing dev., health & wellbeing supports, Hub Central dev., Financial Aid systems dev., 'First Stop' initiative, Community Project,
 - €72k Student Services / Psychology Student Surveys on Health & Wellbeing
 - €145k Students Union T Fund, Events, Meal plan, Microwaves, Inclusive Teaching
 - €356k Student Services/Access Centre Access Centre dev., student supports
 - €146k Sustainability initiatives, CUSP
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What's been funded from the Student Projects Fund?

- €122k Access/ Disability Office Supporting disadvantaged students, at-risk students, Online Academic Supports, Occupational Therapy for Students with disabilities, Diversity and inclusion tr.
- €239k Chaplaincy Seas Suas student training, Student Social and Study Space.
- €300k Societies Yourspace dev, E-Learning dev. Health & Safety GDPR and Compliance training and dev, YourSpace expansion (CÉIM, ALIVE, Clubs, Mentoring Employability)
- €285k Student Counselling Social anxiety supports, wellbeing programme, suicide prevention training, supports training, online counselling system dev., mental health support initiative.
- €280k Accommodation & Welfare Training for Resilience, supports for financial counselling
- €903k Clubs Clubs equipment, High performance facilities, Outdoor facilities



Potential Negative Impact on Societies

Loss of autonomy of AnML

Loss Hub Well Crew and supervision of the Hub Space including the Kitchen

Loss of ability to apply for specific funding for projects going forward

Loss of money for kitchen upkeep/repair/renovation

Lose Mike/Aislings roles (Tech/Health & Safety/Health Promotion)

Disrepair of key technical spaces

Lose/unavailability of free society space

More corporate events in AnML - notice

Cost of student % of cleaning/maintenance/electricity/repair of building not covered by the Commercial use of the building*



The USCG posed a number of Questions relating to this Levy change proposal



Question from USCG to SU President

What process did the union undertake to arrive at the decision to make changes to the Levy

The levy has been worked on by several of the last SU presidents and I'm proud to say that's coming to an end.

What is the rationale behind the proposed changes ie the changes to the funding % for the different funding recipients.

We knew it was important that the likes of clubs, socs, the SU, the health unit could do a lot with increased funding. They are vital services to students that make all our lives better.

What consultation process did the Union take with all the parties who will be impacted by the changes.

Last year, we saw focus groups being completed on the levy which outlined a lot of what we see today. This year using the work of my predecessors, we surveyed students to find a cost they found more acceptable and the outstanding number is what we have at €140 with its split. It then would have gone to the executive and SU council multiple times over the years as well.

On a final note, I believe it's important to mention that Socs or Clubs weren't seen as leading this change as we were worried if they would be targeted negatively by management over changes. Our autonomy from the university allowed us to lead this change to help students.



Questions of Various Services

The USCG asked the following questions of services who have used the projects fund and AnML fund for the impact of the levy on their services.

- what consultation process your unit underwent with the Students Union in relation to the proposed changes to the referendum.
- what implications the changes will make to your unit.
- Has your unit availed of funding through the Projects Fund and Aras na Mac Leinn fund.



Responses

Careers, Chaplaincy, Health Unit, Alive, Societies Office, Sports Office

- what consultation process your unit underwent with the Students Union in relation to the proposed changes to the referendum.
- All responded **No Consultation**



Quotes From Other Services - What implications the changes will make to your unit?

“The fact that the SU is involved in reviewing submissions (for the Student Project Fund), and making decisions on how the funding is spent is another positive element.....decision making on how the 60% is spent may in future be made centrally /by UMT with no student input in the decision making process”

Josephine Walsh, Careers Development Centre/Student Services

“The proposed increased funding on its own, would not fully cover what the Student Health Unit would need to facilitate us in providing an optimal clinical service to meet the current mental health needs and requirements of our students” **Eoin McDonnacha - Health Unit**

“Significant implications for our shared spaces in Aras na Mac Leinn and the ALIVE space.” **Lorraine Tansey, ALIVE**




Quotes From Other Services - Has your unit availed of funding through the Projects Fund and Aras na Mac Leinn fund?

“We have previously received funding through the Student Projects Fund. The two most important projects funded were the introduction of the role of a Mental Health Support Worker (MHSW) and the piloting of specific Asymptomatic STI Screening Clinics. The MHSW role subsequently became a permanent aspect of the SHU service.” **Eoin McDonnacha - Health Unit**


“Yes the disused cafe in Aras na Mac Leinn was refurbished to create the ALIVE workshop space. The student health and well-being space in the Hub was a partnership across many units in Aras na Mac Leinn made possible by the fund.” **Lorraine Tansey, ALIVE**



Proposed questions from USCG

1. What is the impact of the proposed reform on the potential increase of student fees; particularly focusing on postgraduate students yearly fees?
 2. Is there a possibility of postponing the referendum for this year, engaging in a robust consultation process with relevant services and students and bringing it back next year?
 3. Could the referendum not be separated into two parts - 1. Dealing with the 100e for the sports unit and 2. Dealing with the proposed reform to relevant services? The current proposal appears to conflate the two together, although we believe these to be two separate issues.
 4. Have you engaged with students about what they actually need versus what you believe they need? It appears that the proposed increases have been made arbitrarily, without engagement with students and relevant services as to what they actually need.
 5. Members of SU are claiming that Socsbox staff are being manipulated by university admin staff - is this true?
 6. Will societies lose priority access to the building? Will costs be cut such as utilities?
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Proposed questions from USCG

1. How do you propose we maintain a space, such as Aras na Mac Leinn, without sufficient funding?
 2. Have you/the university a plan for funding practical items such as flood lights, health & safety issues etc on campus that would usually come from these funds?
 3. Have you/the university considered that there may be additional costs for students down the line as a direct result of this referendum? If so, how do we propose to support students to pay them?
 4. What exactly does the 40e per students that the Students' Union is proposing to receive do? Can you provide a detailed breakdown of this cost and its need?
 5. If we are not able to fund the upkeep and maintenance of Aras na Mac Leinn, who will ultimately control the building at this point? There is a worry that more conferences/corporate events will be placed into the building to cover costs and ultimately students will lose control/access to their student space.
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Proposed questions from USCG

1. A lot of funding is going through the SU as per the new levy, will this give more power to the SU to decide what projects get funded, and are there any protections for societies on this?
 2. Why won't the SU accept the 50% reduction which allows less of an allocation in funding to the sports centre, and still save students money which was offered by the bursar?
 3. Why is Céim getting funded and not the other mentoring programmes such as ATS Mentoring which benefits a larger cohort of students?
 4. Why is there no minimum number of votes for the referendum as one person voting could dictate an answer?
 5. What systems are in place to ensure that members of the executive will not put certain causes, (such as issues of disadvantaged and minority groups, controversial topics etc.) at risk if the SU gains this power?
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