

AN FOCAL

THE OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE STUDENTS' UNION

University of Limerick

Exams? See exam pullout p13

Class reps veto Bebo



BY DEIRDRE O' SHAUGHNESSY
EDITOR

THE Students' Union's highest decision-making body, Class Representatives Council, last week voted to implement a policy banning Bebo from certain areas of campus between 9am and 6pm. The vote was close, at 53 reps to 43, but it is almost certain to be challenged at a future sitting of Council.

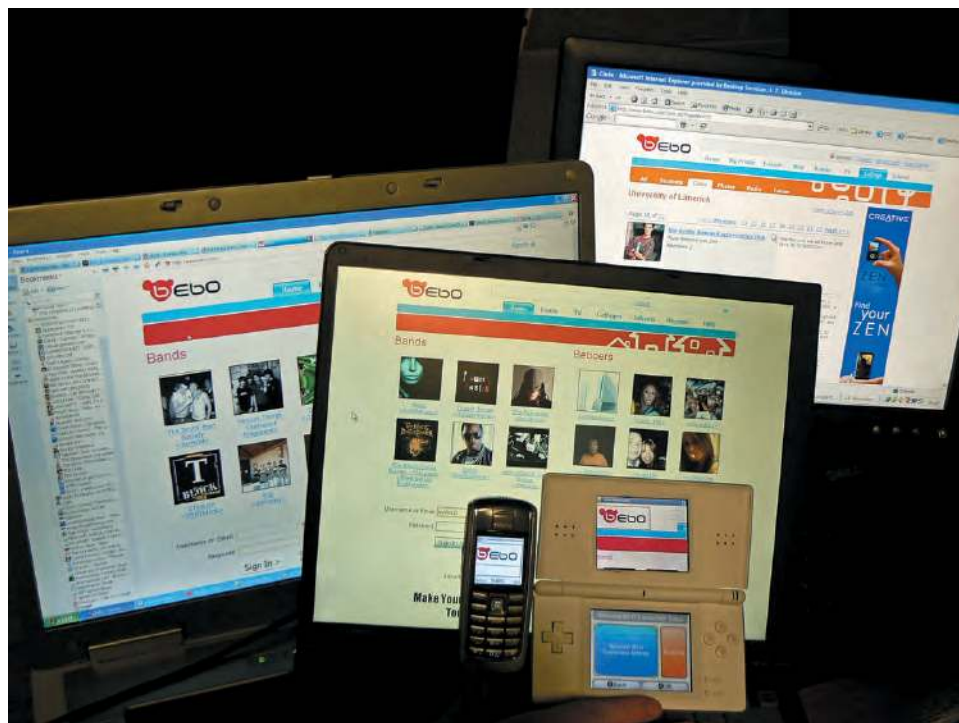
It is now left to Education

Officer Alan Higgins to implement the policy through consultation with the University IT department. Last year Mr Gordon Young, Head of ITD, told An Focal that UL rarely banned websites. However, upon being informed of last week's decision, he said that 'if the students desire it and it comes as a request from the Students' Union we would certainly take that very seriously. It is very easy to bypass such banning however.'

2nd Year HPSS student, Andrew Cleary, who proposed the policy, is 'glad that the proposal was backed by Class Reps Council.' He thinks the Council made the right decision. 'Bebo is preventing access to computers for academic purposes - most people I talked to about it beforehand were very happy

that I was bringing it before council, and basically they found it very difficult to gain computer access on campus.' When asked if he thought the policy would be challenged, Mr Cleary said he was confident that Class Reps would make the right decision again if it is questioned. He added that he 'has nothing against Bebo', saying 'I use it myself, but I think education should take priority over entertainment in computer labs'.

However, other students are not so happy with the idea. Several Class Reps have already announced their intention to challenge the policy, although they have been asked to refrain from doing so while the Education Officer investigates the possibility of implementing it as it currently stands.



Bebo
Photo: Hugh O'Brien

Construction begins on state of the art boathouse



BY ALAN OWENS
CHIEF NEWS CORRESPONDENT

by University of Limerick students, co-ordinated by the Students' Union, driven by the student Clubs and Societies and supported by the University. Construction is expected to be completed by May 2007.

The Boathouse will house the only Indoor Rowing Tank of its kind in Europe, and this

facility will bring training opportunities for rowers to an international standard. The new Boathouse will be home to the UL Rowing Club, Kayak Club, Mountain Bike Club and Sub Aqua Club and will include a launch jetty, pontoon and a café area on the riverbank, which will be open to the public.

President of UL Students' Union, St.John Ó Donnabháin, stated that 'UL students have shown their vision with this project and their commitment to it through serious financial investment, and this is the realisation of all that hard work.'

Dr Joe Skelton, Vice President Administration and Secretary at the University, believes the new Boathouse will be 'an important social, sporting and amenity development for Limerick. It is also a great example of the initiative and capabilities of UL students.'

According to Colin Byrne of the UL Rowing Club, one of the clubs which will benefit from the Boathouse's

construction, 'The Rowing Club is extremely grateful to the Students' Union for enabling this project to come to fruition; from the first coffee table discussions to the finance referendum, through to design and building of the Boathouse, the SU has played a pivotal role in success of our growing club.'

Ruan Dillon McLoughlin of UL Kayak Club told An Focal that the Boathouse 'will be fantastic for the Kayak and other Clubs, giving us much better facilities. This project has been in the pipeline for seven years so we are delighted that construction has begun.'

The project is being led by KCM Ltd and American

company Stillwater Designs is fitting out and designing the indoor rowing tank. Limerick architects John Thompson Ltd. are also working on the structure.

To date the financial contribution to the University's infrastructure by the students in relation to the University Sports Arena, the Student Centre and the Boathouse stands in excess of €12m, a tremendous credit to students past and present. This latest addition enhances the University's reputation as a leader in sporting excellence and reaffirms Limerick's reputation as the 'City of Sport'.



CONSTRUCTION has begun on a new state of the art Boathouse, the first of its kind in Europe, by the River Shannon on the University of Limerick campus. Building contracts worth over €4.3 million relating to the construction are due to be signed in the very near future. The project is funded entirely

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SUPERQUINN

EDITORIAL



BY DEIRDRE O' SHAUGHNESSY

ANOTHER fortnight down and I can hear the sounds of 'The Annual Christmas Charity Event' reverberating from the Stables through the window of my office. It's at this time of year that UL and its students are most in conflict... the choice between work and play is more stark in December than in any other month.

After various conversations over the past week I've come to the conclusion (not, I acknowledge, an original one) that Christmas is an invention of early SAD sufferers to try and fight through the fog of winter with some glitter and plenty of unaccustomed food and drink. The revelry currently going on in the Stables seems to affirm that - why walk from college to library to home in the rain and cold when you can spend the day in a warm, bright, room full of like-minded people who love to sing Christmas songs and forget the outside world?

Of course, the traditional reason for the ACCE - or 'Christmas Daze', the more common, but unofficial name - is the misery of having exams casting their shadow over the real Christmas and New Year celebrations. And this reason will soon be obsolete. After suffering through three years of damped-down Christmases (coop provides a brief respite), I am happier than I can express for the generations of UL students to come who can enjoy their Christmas celebrations at the normal time of year, without becoming leper-like figures to their non-UL family and friends.

To those of you who will experience the change - enjoy! And to those of you who, like me, feel cheated that you missed out on three Christmases, remember all the 'Annual Christmas Charity Events' you went to, and ponder on how life could have been so very different!

Quotes of the fortnight

- **'The vote has been cast now so your questions are kind of pointless'** Chair of Class Reps Steve O' Brien telling class reps how it is.
- **'We're trying to protect you'** Education Officer Alan Higgins justifies the union policy on hoodie slogans...
- **'There was a slogan which suggested that student nurses might be involved in inappropriate behaviour in their professional context'** Alan at Class Reps Council explaining why a nurses' hoodie had to be withdrawn.
- **'Let's just break the law. Even if it's not illegal, let's pretend it's illegal, it's cooler that way.'** Second year HPSS Class Rep Andrew Cleary gets a bit carried away at the campaigns working group.
- **'I don't like the disrespect.'** Education Officer Alan Higgins speaking about a certain University committee he sits on and how its other members view him.
- **'SHAG Week has taken it right out of me.'** Welfare Officer Sinéad Hickey at the SHAG Week debate.
- **'I think it's an indirect warning to Enda Kenny - come after me again and I'll kick the **** out of ya.'** Member of Boards.ie in relation to Bertie's honorary Tae-Kwan-Do Black Belt.

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An Focal would like to thank Patrick Mannix for all his hard work and dedication during the semester, and wish him the best of luck on coop.

IN THE UNION THIS FORTNIGHT:

- " Class Reps controversially voted in a limited ban on Bebo, an event which got national coverage in the Examiner and on 2fm.
- " I&E College Day.
- " Launch of LASU calendar in the Trinity Rooms (now on sale)
- " Class Reps voted to continue with the car parking campaign
- " SHAG Week - workshops, talks, free condoms, puppet shows and more.
- " An Focal and Review magazine published.

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The end of exams before Christmas



BY ALAN OWENS
CHIEF NEWS CORRESPONDENT

FROM next year, exams will take place before the Christmas break, meaning that the academic year will begin two weeks earlier. This is an issue that a majority of students have been long in favour of, and brings UL in line with most other Universities in Ireland.

The structure of UL's academic year and in particular the scheduling of exams after Christmas has always been an issue for UL students. The process to effect this change has been a long one, and the decision was taken at the end of the last academic year to change it. The proposal was made by Vice-President Academic Don Barry and approved by the relevant Faculty Boards. This took place following a survey

undertaken by the Students' Union and the UL Quality Unit that indicated that 70% of UL students favoured the change.

The reasons for this change were given at the meeting of the quality board. It was felt that UL should be more in line with other Irish Universities, there was evidence that it was an issue the students felt strongly about, and it was mentioned that sufficient revenue could be collected from American students who would be more inclined to come to UL if they could return home for Christmas following exams.

Vice President-Academic Don Barry spoke to An Focal and outlined the reasons behind the change. 'I think that this change is a good example of the University responding to the wishes of the student body. In the various faculty board meetings that I attended for discussion of this item, the most decisive argument in favour of the change was that a survey of students had shown a two-to-one majority in favour of examinations before Christmas.' He added that 'I hope that the change, when it happens next year,

will enable students to have a more relaxed and enjoyable Christmas break.'

The change now means that next year's semester will begin two weeks earlier on the 10th of September. There will be an Easter break, and significantly, conferring will take place at the end of August in future.

Alan Higgins, Education Officer in the SU, feels the change is a positive step, but one that must be studied to see how it works. 'The survey of students is important to take into account. Students may have previously felt it was difficult to study over Christmas and this change should help that' he said. He points out that 'We won't see the implications or knock-on effects until it is applied. We in the SU will be monitoring it from the student's perspective to see how it turns out.'

Alan also feels that there is a 'concern about the awareness of this change on campus, it is fair that the change is happening, but it is important that people know that it is happening, and this is something the SU will be looking at.'

Minister Coughlan Meets with Con Colbert Cumann



BY DEREK DALY

MINISTER for Agriculture, Mary Coughlan, TD visited UL on Thursday November 30th to pay a visit to Dr Michael Wilkinson who is leading research on salt levels in processed food. The Minister has sponsored this research to the tune of €3 million this year. The Minister was then received by Acting President John O'Connor at Plassey House.

Minister Coughlan and

her adviser (iar Leas-Cathaoirleach Ógra - Michael Shovlin) followed their period in Plassey House with an informal chat with members of the UL Cumann of Fianna Fail, where she discussed how she balances her busy work and home life. Her interest in the members of the Cumann and their backgrounds showed all present the caring and warm nature of the Minister.

Having graduated from UCD with a degree in Social Science (including politics) in October 1986, Minister Coughlan was first elected to Dáil Éireann in February 1987 and has been re-elected in each election since. Her motivation to enter into politics was initially a family one, her family having been heavily involved in politics (both her uncle and her father

were TDs). She was appointed Minister for Agriculture and Food in September, 2004. Previously she had served as Minister for Social and Family Affairs and Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. She was opposition spokesperson on Educational Reform between 1995 and 1997.

Minister Coughlan's view on politics is one of making change, making a difference and bettering society in the true republican spirit that is central to Fianna Fail's own ideology and raison d'etre.

The Con Colbert Cumann wishes to sincerely thank Minister Coughlan and Michael Shovlin for the hour taken from their busy schedule to meet with members.



Front L-R: Máire O'Donoghue, Maria Reck, Minister Mary Coughlan, Niamh O'Donovan, Brian Fitzpatrick. Back L-R: Denis Murphy, Derek Daly, Susan Whelan



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Fás 47% ar bail na Cumainn Gaelach



BY BREANDÁN Ó HÉAMHAIGH

De réir tuairisc atá foilsithe ag an nuachtán Lá le déanaí tá fás 47% tar éis teach tar mead Baili atá ag na Cumainn Gaelach go náisiúnta! Ó na firicí atá curtha ar fáil ag na Cumainn go léir tá sé soiléir go bhfuil an-chuid daoine ag glacadh leis an nGaeilge san Ollscoil. De réir urlabhraí Na

Gaeil Óga Luimnigh, is rud iontach é seo. Tá Óg Ghluaiseacht na gaeilge neartaithe de réir an mead daoine atá pairteach sna Cumainn Gaelach sa tír. Bhí a cúpla clár radio faoi ar Radio na Gaeltachta agus Radio na Life. De réir na Mic léinn a bhí ar na cláracha sin tá níos mó daoine gníomhach sna Cumainn anois. Tá níos mó chomhoibriú idir na Cumainn Gaelach sa tír, de réir fás Na Gaeil Óga agus an tionnchar atá acu ar muintir óg na Gaeilge.

Luaigh daoine Spraoi Luimnigh a d'eagraigh an Cumann Gaelach Ollscoil Luimnigh mar rud a thug an-thacaíocht don neartú seo. Tá na cumainn i dteagmháil le

chéile anois, rud nach raibh ann riamh lasmuith de Baile Átha Cliath.

De réir an Cumann Gaelach anseo tá níos mó ag tarlú anois, tá na cuirí ag teacht isteach an t-am ar fad chun dul chuig imeachtaí éagsúil sna coláistí eile. Támuid ag taisteal go Baile Átha Cliath ar an Déardaoin seo chun buaileadh leis na Cumainn ó Baile Átha Cliath, agus tá na rudaí seo go maith mar saigheas 'Brainstorming'.

Tá sé soiléir anois go bhfuil i bhfad níos mó daoine gníomhach sna cumainn Gaeiligh. De réir gníomhairí teanga tá an taoide ag chasadh, agus is cosúil go bhfuil.

Common Room in desperate need of student attention

ALANNAH TURNER

It was brought to the attention of the Students' Union recently that the common room is being abused by students who use the space. The common room, situated upstairs in the Students' Union building, is frequented daily by a large number of students. People use the space to relax and enjoy their lunch and are facilitated in doing so by the provision of couches, tables, a jukebox and vending machines. However, it appears that students are abusing the liberties they have been given in the space by not cleaning up their rubbish after them. There are seven bins located in the

common room and yet people are failing to use them to dispose of their rubbish.

A number of suggestions have been put forward in an attempt to tackle this problem. Putting more bins in the space is the main suggestion. However, it is doubtful that this will reduce the extent of the litter problem. There have also been suggestions to hire a person at lunchtime to clear away people's mess after them. Again, this does not tackle the root cause of the Union's predicament, people being too lazy to put their rubbish in the bins provided. The last suggestion was to impose a fine on people caught littering. This tackles the attitude some

people have towards rubbish in their common room.

Diarmuid Healy, 1st year New Media and English student questioned 'how lazy can someone be when there is a bin six feet from your chair?' When questioned about the state of the common room 3rd year Law and Accounting student, John Leonard, stated; 'It's pretty bad. A bin at every area where there are chairs would be welcomed'.

President of the Students' Union, St. John Ó Donnabháin; 'We do our best to provide a good service for students but they have to play their part too. It's not too much to ask people to put their rubbish in the bins provided.'

Climate Change - A planet under threat

BY CONOR PAYNE

CLIMATE Change, the oil crisis and nuclear energy were all topics up for discussion at a recent public meeting hosted by the UL Socialist Party. The meeting attracted people with varying views on how the planet can be saved, leading to much debate.

The Socialist Party speaker began by outlining how the recent report on climate change by Nicholas Stern, as well as the new documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" have put the threat of environmental disaster in focus. He pointed out that the 10 hottest years ever recorded have fallen in

the last ten years and have smashed the arguments of companies like Esso, who denied global warming.

Another topic of the discussion was nuclear energy. This year has seen a renewed push by the media and politicians towards nuclear energy as a miracle cure. Quite ironic, considering this is the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster and that there is no way to safely store the radioactive waste for the 100,000 years necessary.

The debate however was mainly concerned with the big question: what is the alternative? Some pointed to international treaties and eco-taxes as solving the problem. But what

about the failure of the Kyoto Treaty, which was only a drop in the ocean and was rejected for being harmful to the profits of US big business.

Others argued that all we could do is be environmentally friendly ourselves and hope it catches on. Whilst all agreed that we should all try to do what we can, the socialists argued that, given the scale of the problem, a global solution was also needed, which would put a stop to the pollution of big business.

For more info or to get active with the UL Socialist Party see: www.SocialistParty.net

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Protests against Israeli Ambassador

BY ZOË LAWLOR

LAST Tuesday 28th November the Israeli Ambassador made a surprise visit to Limerick where he was greeted by the Mayor of the city, Councillor Joe Leddin. On a freezing afternoon members of Palestine support groups gathered beside City Hall where large banners were mounted. The banners depict an Irish tenant farmer house being demolished in the 1880s and a Palestinian house being bulldozed recently. They also show a Palestinian woman walking beside the illegal apartheid wall, the scale showing how terrible an edifice the wall is. The group also built a 'graveyard' which consisted of children's t-shirts held up on bamboo rods. The t-shirts all bore the names of the children massacred by Israeli shells into their homes in Beit Hanoun in November. Candles were lit and Palestinian flags flown.

As the Ambassador drove in, protesters moved to the side of the road and held banners proclaiming: No to Israeli Apartheid. The protest was quiet and dignified. The Ambassador was with the Mayor for at least an hour. As the visitor drove back out, the

group moved again to where the car would drive by and held their banners and flags, chants of Free Palestine were also to be heard.

In response to an email protesting about the Ambassador receiving a civic welcome in Limerick, Mayor Leddin stated he felt it was his duty as mayor to show courtesy and respect to the new Israeli ambassador but that he had raised his own concerns and those of people

in Limerick with him and asked him specifically to bring those concerns to the highest level of government.

The ULPSS and IPSC stated that it is of the utmost importance that the Israeli Ambassador be made aware of people's concerns about 'Israel's illegal actions and their policy of ethnic cleansing in Gaza.'

The Israeli Ambassador visited the University the following day but not having

had any notice or warning of the visit, the ULPSS had no protest arranged and a spokesperson stated her disappointment at such a situation and her distress at seeing the Israeli flag flying on campus.

For further information on joining please contact: ulpalastine@eircom.net or visit www.skynet.ie/~ulpalastine.



Members of UL Palestinian Solidarity Society outside City Hall

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Car park gets go ahead



BY DANIEL SULLIVAN

The application to build a new car park between the back of the Schuman building, College Court and the new boathouse building has been conditionally approved as of November 30th. The precise nature of the conditions that will apply were not available at the time of going to press.

The original planning application had been made in

February of this year, but due to notices being removed from the public viewing area the application had to be resubmitted, resulting in a delay. The County Council planning department have noted that an increasing number of applications by UL suggest that a master plan instead of the 'piece meal approach' that has been used so far should be put in place.

The College Court Residents Association has lodged objections and submissions against the application. The residents have suggested that the car park be a multi-storey rather than a ground level development. Their submission pointed out that the planning notices for the

development were not placed in a position where they could be seen from College Court. They expressed concerns about previous beautification efforts which were to surround other development on campus that were not delivered. They also noted that the access routes into College Court from the campus, which they believe are illegal, are indicated on the maps.

Any further delay in the completion of this project would mean that 2007/08 could be the year that car parking as a general issue finally breaks out. There now exists a situation where there are more permits for staff places than there are parking spaces. Members of staff are disinclined to represent the

University at off campus events during the day, as they will lose their space upon their return.

The remote and isolated nature of this new car park is a matter of concern. There are fears amongst potential users due to the shielding from public view of the area and personal security at this location. As security appears on the verge of being overwhelmed in the task of securing the current number of car parks on campus, it is possible that this location may be underutilised or that it could become a primary hunting ground for thefts and assaults.

Kilkenny Chess Congress 06

THE 30th Kilkenny Chess Congress took place in the last weekend of November. Players from around Ireland and the world participated in the event. These included who has competed in Kilkenny on many occasions. In the blitz Tournament on Sunday night, UL chess Club president, Teresa O'Rourke got the opportunity to play against world number 9 Grandmaster Michael Adams. She was unable to grab a draw or victory from the jaws of defeat in this contest like she did in the main event over the weekend.

Former UL chess club president, Tom Cooper returned to tournament play after a long absence. However his rustiness in play showed with a few opportunities of victory overlooked in games. Former Sports Bar employee, Fergal Kelly was also present. He lost his opening game but went on to win the remaining 5 games and finished in second place.

At an early stage in the challenger's section, it appeared that a battle between the two UL players would decide victory in the event. Both Diarmaid and Brendan Mulvey got off to great starts by winning their first three games. Diarmuid unfortunately lost out on round 4. What certain members refer to as 'Boring Diarmuid openings' were then replaced by more aggressive play which was very entertaining to watch.

On the Saturday evening, many games of blitz and kamikaze chess were played. Irish youth chess association secretary, Steve Stokes joined in for a few games also. On Sunday morning Brendan Mulvey continued as he had been for the whole tournament with another victory making it 5 wins from 5 games.



Stephen Stokes concentrates fiercely on his next move.
Photo: UL Chess Club

While all this was going on Colin Mac Sweeney, UL's most senior player at the tournament had an easy victory in round 1. In the Second Round, he saw an improvement in the standard of play. He had some notable scalps in the blitz tournament on Sunday night but lost in the battle of UL against Diarmaid Mulvey.

Chess Training continues on Thursday evening at 7 in EM010. All are welcome. The Intervarsity will be taking place in Belfast this year. UL will be travelling to this in the hope of being the first university to win the event 2 times.

An Focal Briefs

Robbery in College Court

Yet another laptop has been stolen from a student in the Castletroy area. Jean-Charles Di Fusco, a French Erasmus student, had his laptop stolen from his house in College Court Drive last Tuesday. Mr Di Fusco told An Focal that both the front door and that of his bedroom were locked when the equipment was stolen. Money and other items were also stolen from his housemates. Although the matter was reported to the police, it is unlikely that the laptop will be recovered, meaning that much of Mr Di Fusco's coursework has been lost irretrievably, particularly as he is a Music, Media and Performance Technology student.

Green Fair

Week 9 saw The Green Fair being held in the Stables Courtyard and comprised of ten or so stalls selling various goods, from second hand books to handmade Irish woollen products. The Irish Music Society joined by Enviro Soc in the afternoon, provided musical accompaniment that complemented the overall atmosphere of the day perfectly. The Enviro Soc and the Socialist party had information stalls for anyone wishing to have a slice of politics with their Fairtrade coffee and homemade cake. The 'Cake for Ghana' stall that run in aid of Co-Op students going to Ghana in February was a huge success. As for Ciara's homemade jewellery and tie-dye stall, she's now taking orders for Christmas! If you were there on the day and didn't buy enough of that organic vegetable soap that smells like chocolate or missed out on the multi-coloured woolly hats that look like St. John designed them, don't panic. Most of the traders present on the day can be found in the Milk Market in the city on Saturday mornings.



UL Environmental Society in conjunction with the Socialist Party and Gan Ainm in the Stables courtyard in Week 9.
Photo: Andrew Cleary

OUT in UL's Christmas Bash: 'Santa's Big Gay Snowballs'

You can't have missed all the posters around the University over the past two weeks advertising OUT in UL's Christmas night out. It was held in BAR3, on Bedford Row on the 30th of November 2006. The event was open to the gay and straight students from UL, Mary I, the Art College and LIT as well as the general gay community in Limerick. Members from all college plus locals were present and a candy cane and free punch was provided for all. The decorating, a joint effort between OUT in UL and BAR3 set a fantastic atmosphere for the great night in store. The huge turnout raised money that will be used to fund QUEERBASH 4 next semester.

All in all the night was a major success, people were laughing and joking and getting down and funky to the non - Christmas music (before 12 p.m), and the Christmas music afterwards (well it was officially the Christmas season at that stage). By the end of the night all were singing and swinging to the music.

OUT in UL would like to thank all those who attended the event and made it so much fun. It is always a pleasure to host an event that is appreciated and from what we've heard, it was a major success. So thanks for coming and we look forward to seeing you all at QUEERBASH 4!



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Pink Training 2006

BY NIALL JORDAN

PINK Training, organised by USI, is an event primarily aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students from colleges all over Ireland. This year training took place in DIT Aungier Street from the 17th to the 19th of November. Although aimed primarily at LGBT students Pink Training is open to all regardless of sexual orientation or gender.

To open the weekend 'Gloria', the LGBT choir, treated delegates to a performance on Friday 17th.

The weekend is packed with useful workshops, talks and discussion groups all geared at the individual. This year Pink Training included workshops in, 'Coming Out', Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Workshops, Equality and Law, sexual

health, mental health, and media relations.

Guest speaker Senator David Norris was regarded as the highlight of the weekend when he appeared Saturday afternoon to speak to the delighted delegates. Steven Conlon, the LGBT relations-officer of the USI, presented an award to Senator Norris for his years of service to the LGBT community

It wasn't all work and no play for delegates as Friday and Saturday night provided the chance to let our hair down and socialise with other delegates from other colleges.

Members from Out in UL, the LGBT Society, went along to Pink Training. And we're delighted to say the event was a huge success! It was a fantastic opportunity to meet students from other LGBT societies and we look forward to next year's gig.



The candlelight vigil for AIDS in Africa in the Contemplative Centre, Thursday Week 10. Photo: Sinéad Hickey



**SU WELFARE & EDUCATION OFFICERS
HEALTH SCIENCE BUILDING
EVERY WEDNESDAY 11:30-12:30**



FOR ALL QUERIES & QUESTIONS

Postgraduate News



Hello Everyone,

It seems that everyone is very busy at the end of the year. In the PSA we are currently working on the Postgrad Ball that will be organized in the next semester. I also attend many meetings and take care of day to day office activities like book keeping, responding to queries, and financial help. Our meeting with Pasty Ryan planned for Thursday 30th of November had to be rescheduled for the new semester since there were not enough participants. Thus a meeting with Postgraduate Career Advisor will take place at the beginning of semester 2 when everyone is relaxed and people start thinking about their career choices.

Social Events

Lodge Party on Sunday 3rd December

On Sunday 3rd of December we had our Mid-Term Postgrad BBQ Party held in the Lodge Bar in the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel. Unfortunately, only those who got there early had a chance to enjoy the evening those who planned to call over later were not that lucky. Lashing rain and hale stones stopped many people from joining those in the bar. From 30 people who were planning to come only half managed to get to the Lodge in time before the weather broke. However



those who came had a great time, as promised there was a Jenga game with no winner this time so the Storm Cinema voucher will be passed on to another occasion. Multinational group enjoyed the evening eating delicious chicken wings in BBQ sauce and listening to live music.

Due to little interest in the social events the PSA will take a different approach to organizing postgrad events in the next semester.

Multi-Cultural Day

We are planning to hold the event in the PSA common room at the start of the new semester. There are a few postgrads interested in taking part in our Multi-Cultural Day. That is great news, however, in order to call it a successful event we need more people. If you come from a distant part of the globe or live just around the corner and want to tell others about your national dish become a host of the Multi-Cultural Evening. Introduce others to the traditional music and culture of your country. Maybe you will influence someone's summer plans. You might be from a very distant country but you bring a piece of your homeland here and let other experience it.

PSA Deputy President & Postgrads

FOCUS GROUPS – for research postgrads – we are interested in your opinion

The Graduate School, in conjunction with the PSA, is organizing a series of focus groups. The purpose of this project is to assess postgraduate knowledge about the Graduate school and its services as well as identify key issues of concern amongst students engaged in postgraduate research degrees.

Proposed topics for discussion are:

- Funding availability
- Space allocation
- Student Visa's and Cost of Living
- Access to supervisors
- Attendance/presentations at conferences and papers published
- Training opportunities
- Teaching experience
- Access to administration facilities (e.g. printing/photocopying)

Focus groups will be comprised of 6-8 postgraduates and will last approximately two hours.

For participation in the session, you will be offered a token gift. Discussion will not be limited to the above topics only, so you are free to express your concerns. This is a unique opportunity to voice your opinions regarding the experience of postgraduate research students at UL and to help to improve your experience and the experience of your colleagues. This is your chance to make a change.



You are doing great

Uaneen Module - Sham, Scam or Brilliant Plan?

BY AOIFE FINNERTY

I can see the reaction of the majority of faces as they read the title and I can hear the question being asked, 'What is the Uaneen Module?!' Well, put simply, the Uaneen Module is the DCU plan, which gives those who take part in extra-curricular activities the option of using this participation as an elective in forth year. Students can be awarded a 1st or 2nd class honour or pass in the module depending on performance and dedication. Each student must meet the criteria set down by the Module in order to pass and attain marks; students must be actively involved in their chosen extra-curricular activity, not just on paper, must complete an in-depth portfolio based on the activity and may have to sit an interview. So to the question at hand, is this Module a sham, scam or brilliant plan?

The thinking behind the DCU Module is quite basic, they wish to encourage

students to think past the academic and look at a broader, more rounded education. But is this really happening? Or is this Module just an excuse for those already involved in predominantly student union activities to benefit from their choice to stray away from the basis of college, that basis being academics?

The opinions of some UL students were as always, mixed; 'I don't think it's a good idea. I just think it's an excuse to let people who chose extra-curricular activities over college to get ahead. These people are already pretty balanced; they shouldn't be rewarded for the time that they give up voluntarily. That's their own business,' was the view of one second year Law and Euro student. This opinion seems to be quite common amongst some students but so to is the defence of the module. 'I spend a huge amount of my own time working for the society. I've my mobile permanently attached to my

ear or I'm sending emails. It's nice that I can use my dedication to further my degree and it's great that hard non-academic work is being recognised', was the quote from one of the society chairpersons.

The SU Education Officer, Alan Higgins, argues: "In a changing academic and employment environment, learning outside of the classroom is becoming of increased importance. What we are looking to establish is a means by which there is recognition for extra-curricular participation and learning and its interaction with more traditional forms of academia."

The success of the proposed Uaneen Module will depend hugely on the personal opinions of the UL student body. There will always be people who don't believe students should be awarded for extra-curricular involvement but there will always be those who believe an education is more than books and lectures.



Do000000n!

An Focal and Review are seeking an

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE

The job entails securing advertising from local and national companies.

Interested candidates should:

- Study a marketing/advertising related discipline.**
- Have some experience (preferably coop) in sales or marketing.**
- Have an excellent telephone manner and communications skills.**
- Be self-motivated and innovative.**

Interviews will be held during the three-week break in February.

This position is part-time and commission-based, with huge earning opportunities.

Send CVs to deirdre.oshaughnessy@ul.ie with 'advertising representative' in the subject line.



Looking for a stocking filler?

**Limerick Association of Students' Unions
2007 Calendar**

**NOW ON SALE AT THE STUDENTS UNION!
ONLY €5**

All profits go to the Red Ribbon Project



WEEK 13

**ALL
OVER
CAMPUS**

**GET
YOUR
FREE
HUG
IN THE
LEAD
UP TO
EXAMS**



CHECK OUT

WWW.FREEHUGSCAMPAIGN.ORG

STUDENT SPEAK

Thomas Dee asks the people: *What do you think of the Bebo Ban?*



Johnny Campion - 1st year Business: 'Check out my Bebo page, xxxjohnny-sexymanxxx!'



Amy O Connor - 2nd year Mental Health Nursing: 'This is worse than the time someone stole my fake leg!'

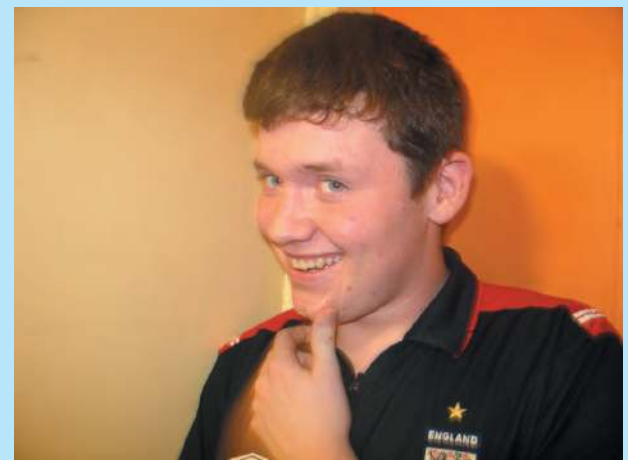
Conor McKenna - 1st year Equine Science: 'Well it's next to near impossible to get into the library in the middle of the day, so I agree'



Aine 'Eyebrows' Grisewood - 1st year Business & Japanese: 'To hell with Bebo, I just yell.'



Ned O' Brien - 1st year Law & Euro: 'Who will put up with my non-sense now?'



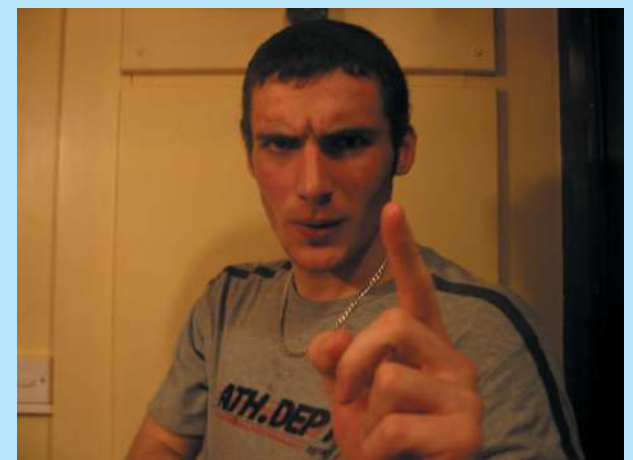
Paddy Sheehan - 1st year Health & Safety: 'Oh well. More time for porn.'



Ger Kirwan - Business & Eimear Condon - New Media and English: (Ger): 'we met through Bebo' (Eimear): 'I'm twelve'



Caoimhe Kelleher - 1st year Business: 'damn I'm losing channels to stalk Thomas Dee through'



Sean McTiernan - 1st year MMPT: 'Heads will roll!'

... so the final ULSU Ents Page of '06... and this issue has been left in the hands of the little one... while the big one is in New York... so for the Christmas addition of An Focal here's a little warm up to wrap up...

... Xmas Ball... details above!... €35 for a night of sparkling snow flakes... turkeys & cranberries... twinkling Christmas trees... winter tunes... pre-Co-Op celebrations and stylish Xmas festivities... before you retreat home for a few weeks of more turkeys & cranberries, glistening trees & family frolics!...

... and in Semester Two... *cue drum roll*... we've more Monday Movie Nights... Irish Live Bands... Wednesday Monnet gigs... Feckin Fivers in Trinity Rooms... Formal and informal Balls... Class Party excursions... and all sorts of entertainments brought to you by ULSU Ents & Ulster Bank *plug sponsor*... but best of all... R.A.G Week '07... but of course that's a BIG secret!...

... Happy Christmas & Merry New Year from all of us in ULSU Ents!...

XMAS BALL



Thursday December 14th
 South Court Hotel
 Dress Formal
 Buses from 6.30pm
 Meal served at 8.30pm
 Music til Late
 Tickets 35 euro from Students Union
 Includes 2 euro donation to Lisnagry Respite Fund



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It's Exam Time - Everyone Say Aaagh!



BY ALAN HIGGINS

WELCOME to the Christmas Exam Supplement of An Focal. It many only seem yesterday, but Week 1 is in the distant past and Week 12 has arrived with a vengeance! But never fear the SU is here. We thought it best to send the last set of Exams after Christmas in UL out with a bang, by put together a few nuggets of information and advice that will hopefully ease the

suffering. While nothing can be done to prevent the pending ordeal that is College Exams, remember the Students' Union, as well as the Counselling Service, Medical Centre and your Advisor are there to help you.

Three things to remember:

1. It's never too late to start studying.
2. You're not the only one, so ask for help.
3. Don't panic, it will be over quicker then you think and then you have three weeks off!

From everyone at the Students' Union we wish you the best of luck in the Exams and try and enjoy Christmas - bring on Semester Two!!



Wellbeing

With Sinéad Hickey - ULSU Welfare Officer

EXAMS can be nerve-wracking, and controlling your stress levels around this time can be difficult. However, there are certain steps you can take to help prevent it from taking hold:

Manage your Studying: Don't go mad and lock yourself in with your books 24 hours a day. Two to three hours is the maximum amount of time you can study before you stop really absorbing what you read. So, break up periods of work with periods of relaxation. And reward yourself for your hard work with small treats.

Eat Properly: Feed your head with healthy foods! For quick meal, pasta is an excellent choice or a risotto. Vitamin supplements might be worth trying for a few weeks.

Good sleep is Vital: Exam stress sometimes makes sleeping difficult. So, set a definite time to go to bed and stick to it. Sleep is vital otherwise you won't be able to concentrate in your exam.

Keep Busy: Keeping busy when you're not studying stops you dwelling on exam worries. Sports and other activities according to your aspiration, such as music, art and cooking, can make you feel more relaxed, as well as boosting

confidence. So, take regular breaks out of your studies to relax in this way.

Be Nice to Yourself: Self-affirmation works wonders! You may feel silly but tell yourself that you are great; you can do it, and generally psyche yourself up to feeling that you will come top. Why do you think professional sports people do it before a match?!!

Failure is Not the End: I know it's easy to say from here, but try to remember that although you want to do well; failing is not the end of the world.

If at any stage it all becomes too much, you need to talk or you think an I-grade is right for you, please call into me in the SU and I will try my best to help you out

Remember there are lots of different services available on campus for you around this stressful time. The Counselling Service, the Chaplaincy and us in the SU. If you need any help, please don't hesitate to call in

Best of luck in your exams!!
Sinéad

EXAM PULLOUT

The Lowdown On I Grades

SEAMUS RYAN

What's an I Grade?

An I grade is granted by the university to students who face 'an immediate crisis' (quoted from the current Handbook of Academic Administration). Essentially it exists to help students who because of physical illness, psychological reasons or immediate family bereavement can't sit their assigned exams. It should be noted, though, that regulations specifically prohibit an application for an I grade on the basis of work pressures.

How do I get one?

Partly to prevent abuse of the system, the university regulations are pretty strict on applying for one. Satisfactory evidence of the need for an I grade must be submitted through the Student Health Centre, Counselling or Chaplaincy services. If a certificate is submitted from outside the University, you must submit the cert in person to the Health Centre, Counselling or Chaplaincy unless the cert clearly states

that you are bed-bound. Any certs received by post must state that the student is bed-bound. Providing a cert doesn't automatically mean that you'll get an I grade but it can be reasonably expected that the I Grade Committee will follow the advice from the university doctors, counsellors and chaplains.

Certs must be presented within five working days of the end of the exam period. They must be dated, include reference to the period of illness/incapacity and the nature of the illness, and must state that the student is not fit to sit examinations (take note of this, the last part is very important!).

If I miss the deadline?

It's far simpler if you don't. However, if you miss the deadline for application, all is not necessarily lost. You can send a letter of appeal accompanied by medical documentation to the Student Status Committee. The Student Status Committee has the right to reconvene the I Grade Committee to consider the appeal. Should this happen, you must contact the

Health Centre or Student Counselling directly to arrange an appointment with the I Grade Committee.

What happens next?

The I Grade Committee meets and formally decides on the application. If the application is successful, the I grade must be cleared by the end of the repeat exams at the end of the summer. Contact the lecturer concerned to discuss how the grade is to be cleared. If the lecturer is unavailable, contact the relevant head of Department. Generally this will consist of taking the exam as part of the summer repeats but uncapped. There are a number of other possibilities (including a documented viva voce exam, or general performance in the module so far) but participation in the annual repeats is the usual method of clearing the grade.

Above all, if for whatever reason you're unable to sit an exam, don't panic! The people in the Health Centre, Counselling and Chaplaincy are available to talk to you and discuss any problems you might have.

The Exam Hall, not a Place to Get in Trouble

ALAN HIGGINS

ONE of my less pleasant duties as Education Officer is to sit on the Discipline Committee. Unfortunately after exams there is the inevitable series of cases in relation to Academic Cheating. The basic thing to be aware of is that if you are found to have material (notes, calculators or rulers written on or permitted text-logs table, constitutions with marking, etc.) you can be charged with alleged cheating. As it is extremely difficult to determine if there is an intention was to cheat or not, in the vast majority of cases students are found in breach of the code of conduct, which is usually accompanied with an 'F' grade (i.e. you will have to do a capped repeat exam).

First thing to be aware of is that the University operates a clean desk policy, which means that you can only have

the exam paper, answer sheets, pens, pencils etc. and a bottle of water. Avoid bringing anything else into the exam hall, if you are bringing in things like rulers, calculators, dictionaries, pencil cases, etc, make sure that there is nothing written on them and in the case of the pencil case that nothing is in them that shouldn't be there.

If you need to bring in notes before the exam make sure you put them away when your asked to do so and put them in a place where there can be no suggestion of having access to them. Under your chair may be the best place, but ideally try to avoid bring notes into the exam hall; leave them with your bag. If you need to make notes during the exam ask for rough work paper (the yellow sheets), the best thing is to ask for it immediately to save you time later in the exam, even let the person supervising the exam know before the exam starts

that you will need rough work paper. And remember to hand up all your rough work with your script, you never know the lecture may give you extra marks for something you saw in your rough work that you didn't get down in the exam. Remember only write on the exam paper and rough work.

Finally two things, prepare your thing the day before the exam-rushing only leads to trouble. Do your best and don't panic.

Best of Luck!!



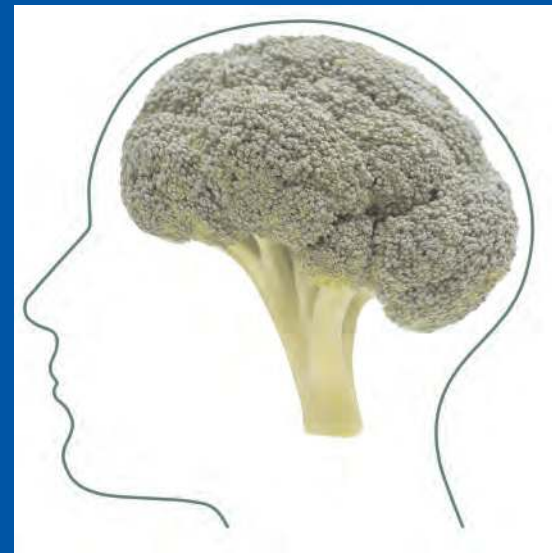
Brain Food

JASMINE GURBANI

EXAMS are coming! It's time to feed your brain. Junk food and frozen pizzas might well have been your companion for the last couple of months, especially when time got too busy with classes and extra workload from the term. But now it's time to consider a healthy diet again! It will never be too late for starting, even if it's just the morning before the exam, following a few of these hints will help you! - No miracles though.

First of all you should give up those frozen pizzas and ready to microwave foods. Also sausages should be avoided and no more colas or other high-sugar drinks. The best drink is either orange juice or similar juices low in sugars or just plenty of water. Oranges have lots of vitamin C which boosts you up. Also, do lower caffeine consumption, either in the form of coffee or tea. They might wake you up, but are no good for concentrating. Of course, no alcohol anytime - it well makes you forget all you've tediously learned!

For breakfast choose some low sugar cereals. You might prefer the ones with added vitamins and iron; else, traditional porridge is still the healthiest option! Cereals boost alertness, memory and stress resistance by supplying food components that are precursors of important brain neurotransmitters.



Also, food should include plenty of fish. Basically you would be looking for the omega-3 fatty acids which are crucial constituents of the outer membrane of the brain. Go for salmon, trout, plaice and cod. If you are not that much into cooking tuna, sardines and mackerel from the canned variety could do a good job as well.

When treating yourself, avoid candies or anything "sweet" that is not natural. If you have to grab for chocolate - which is acceptable, make it be the dark pure chocolate (above 70% cocoa solids). Milk chocolate would have too much fat and added sugar. It would give you a slump after half an hour making you to seek for more!

While you are studying and need extra food, grab for nuts. Avoid crisps or candy bars. No buns or double chocolate chips muffins. Walnuts, cashew nuts, almonds and Brazil nuts are said to be the best. Even seeds such as sesame and sunflower if you prefer those or dried fruits such as raisins, figs, apricots and prunes would help you get through and improve your performance.

For dinner good choices would be pasta, brown rice, lentils, beans, soy, whole meal bread (forget about the soft white one!) and above all, lots of vegetables and fruits! Broccoli, asparagus, spinach, avocados, lettuce, bananas, cantaloupe... And don't forget the eggs and milk derivatives like cheese and yogurt.

After so much food been mentioned it's just to be said that overeating is as bad as no eating at all, thus be moderate!

Using another of An Focal's unscientific research methods, we ask five well-known people who've been there and done that what they thought of the whole exam experience . . .

Alan Higgins, SU Education Officer

- Name:** Alan Higgins
- Qualification (or lack thereof):** BA Public Administration (it is a qualification!!)
- Where did you do your undergraduate study?** Good, old UL (obvious I know)
- How did you find the exams there?** Grand, once you get over the stressing out, the panic as you sat waiting of the invigilator to give out the paper and that your 'strategic' study will get you through.
- What was your approach to exams?** Were you a crammer or a plodder? Bit of a crammer, but I think done intelligently - exam papers were key, practice questions and I little bit of reading around the topic. It's not want you know, its making it look like you know!!
- Did you ever fail an exam in college? What happened?** No, thank God!
- Do you have any funny exam stories?** I was in one of my last exams in fourth year, at the point when you just want college to be over. I found myself spacing out and then suddenly remembering where I was!! But generally funny and exams generally don't go together.
- What was the worst exam you ever had? Why?** None really stick out. I generally have the habit of quickly forgetting exams-once they're done, they're done-and there is nothing you can do about it!!



Neosupervital

- Name:** Neosupervital
- Qualification (or lack thereof):** BA Communications, Msc Multimedia
- Where did you do your undergraduate study?** DCU
- How did you find the exams there?** Quite easily, they were on the desk
- What was your approach to exams?** Were you a crammer or a plodder? Oh shit, let's get away with as little study as possible and still pass
- Did you ever fail an exam in college? What happened?** Don't think so. A lot of the course work practical or continuous assessment anyway.
- Do you have any funny exam stories?** Exams are not the place for humour.
- What was the worst exam you ever had? Why?** The Leaving Certificate. Officially the most horrible experience you'll ever have to endure.



Dr. Don Barry, Vice President/ Academic & Registrar

- Name:** Don Barry
- Qualification (or lack thereof):** BSc, MSc and PhD (in Statistics)
- Where did you do your undergraduate study?** UCC
- How did you find the exams there:** Mostly fine - although right now I could not imagine myself spending three hours sitting at a desk writing answers to exam questions.
- What was your approach to exams?** Were you a crammer or a plodder? Definitely a plodder
- Did you ever fail an exam in college? What happened?** No. The only exam I ever failed was the driving test!
- Do you have any funny exam stories?** Exams and fun just don't seem to go together in my memory
- What was the worst exam you ever had? Why?** Algebra in UCC - I spent the previous night in hospital with suspected food poisoning - almost had to shoot my way out of the ward to get to the exam hall in time.



Ross McCormick of Delorentos

- Name:** Ross Mc Cormick
- Qualification (or lack thereof):** BSC In Multimedia
- Where did you do your undergraduate study?** Dublin City University
- How did you find the exams there?** I can't really complain too much about exams. Our course was based on continual assessment, so we had numerous projects throughout the year and then only a few exams to study for at the end of the semester, like media studies or cultural and historical perspectives...fun.
- What was your approach to exams? Were you a crammer or a plodder?** I have a pretty short attention span, so I found lectures quite difficult, but made sure to keep notes throughout the year and then did some major cramming as the exams approached! Also found myself starting a few 5000 word essays the day before they were due in, it's hard to write about technological determinism at 4am!
- Did you ever fail an exam in college? What happened?** I never failed a college exam... I came pretty close... but never failed.
- Do you have any funny exam stories?** There's nothing funny about exams.
- What was the worst exam you ever had? Why?** Discreet Mathematics was my worst college exam. Quite simply because I knew none of the answers...There's no logical reason as to why I passed this.



Conor O' Brien of The Immediate

- Name:** Conor O'Brien
- Qualification (or lack thereof):** I'm a graduate of Sociology and English. Does that make me an overly literate sociologist?
- Where did you do your undergraduate study?** University College Dublin
- How did you find the exams there?** I followed some people who looked vaguely familiar.
- What was your approach to exams?** Were you a crammer or a plodder? I was neither a 'crammer' nor a 'plodder' (?) .. I would do pockets of intense study, in between long bouts of semi-random exploration of the library. Jeez Louise I enjoyed those times... one book would point to another... and soon enough, you'd find yourself on a journey - some thing akin to romantic love.
- Did you ever fail an exam in college? What happened?** I'm almost ashamed to say that I never failed an exam in college. Sorry.
- Do you have any funny exam stories? Funny? FUNNY?!? Education is a SERIOUS matter! How DARE you!**
- What was the worst exam you ever had? Why?** I was a proper geek when it came to exam preparation, so I never really had any negative experiences. SAVOUR this opportunity! You are one of the lucky ones to have this access to these beautiful books! I'll always feel humbled and almost unworthy of the fact that I had the opportunity to go to college. Sermon over. Xx



EXAM PULLOUT

Sarah Moore - 'Nothing Replaces The Kind Of Help You Get From Your Fellow Students'

FINN MCDUFFIE SPEAKS TO UL'S STUDY GURU

SARAH Moore, UL's Dean of Teaching and Learning, has taught since 1989. She is an experienced team analyst and holds an award for excellence in teaching. She has also written one of the Open University Press's best sellers, 'How To Be A Student' with co-author Maura Murphy. Early last week, I caught up with Sarah for an interview.

Sarah studied psychology, saying 'I loved it from the very start... it was a nice foundation course to do'. Recounting her first impressions of university, she was 'very engaged as a student from the start' but sometimes felt 'isolated as a learner.' Sarah adapted quickly by 'clustering into study groups.' On clubs and societies; Sarah became involved in UCD's 'Drama Soc.' and the 'Literary and Historical Society' where they debated. She believes that 'It's important not to commit to too many clubs and societies,' she added.

So how did Sarah find exams? 'My group of mates and I developed a system where each of us would develop a theme... We'd hand our themes around.' She found it 'quite a direct way to learn' and it was this 'personal way of support which got her through.' She stressed the importance of building student to student relationships for support.

When asked if she was a crammer or a plodder, Sarah admitted she 'did pull the occasional all-nighter', generally involving lots of coffee. But she didn't do it all the time. 'I really enjoyed college and it's hard to balance social and study time,' she said. She stressed the importance of the social side of college but added, 'it's all about balance.' When asked if she kept a study timetable in college, Sarah said, 'Managing time became more important as I got through my undergraduate years.'

Sarah talked of the 'S.M.A.R.T.' method. 'Set goals that are specific, measurable,

achievable/ambitious, realistic and time-bound,' she advised, adding 'goal orientation and the setting of achievable targets is a better way to study. You don't have to be perfect. Nobody's perfect.'

Sarah recounted one exam experience. 'I remember going in and being very concerned,' she said. 'That rabbit in the headlights paralysis' hit her. 'By calming down and talking myself down I was able to deal with it,' she said. In preparation for exams, Sarah told readers to, 'stay positive and relaxed, but not too relaxed. It's good to get a bit of adrenaline.'

In a fail situation, Sarah said, 'students are very hard on themselves. They see [failure] as a testimony of their deficiencies. There has to be some tolerance for failing. It's how you manage your failure that's more of a challenge.' She added wisely, 'success is easy, it's failure that's difficult.'

When asked if attendance in week thirteen is advisable, Sarah replied 'Absolutely! Week thirteen is crucial. It's the time when you can really



get your head in the zone.' She advised students to talk to lecturers and tutors and really get the full benefit of the week.

For freshers, I asked how college exams differ from the Leaving Cert. exams. She answered, 'there are some similarities. For instance, the assimilation of information within tight timeframes.' She said, 'skills as a Leaving Cert. student will stand to you in first year. But you do tend to be engaged more critically. You have ownership of your own perspectives. You recognise a topic in more than one perspective and there are more of your own opinions.' She added, 'the importance of knowing where the evidence comes from as another key difference between the Leaving Cert. and college exams.'

Finishing the interview, she talked of her book, 'How To Be A Student.' She was motivated to write it because, 'students need simple advice to adjust to Uni. It's a much more holistic book.' While researching the book, Sarah discovered a whole range of challenges associated with university life. The book, 'talks to students in a way they can understand.' Sarah gave me a copy, and having read through it, I'd say every student should have one. It's full of essential tips and facts on elements of college life you'd never even thought about before. Sarah was a charming woman to interview and An Focal would like to thank her for taking the interview.

An Focal has one copy of 'How to Be a Student' to give away. To win, email deirdre.oshaughnessy@ul.ie with the answer to this question: 'Where did Sarah Moore do her undergraduate study?'

Pudding and calculus: Christmas for the UL student

SEAMUS RYAN

FOR UL students, Christmas has traditionally been a time for a strange mixture of festive cheer and hair-pulling stress. Fattening food, yes. Chocolate. Turkey. Brussels sprouts passed over to your younger sister while no-one is watching (yes, I'm not a kid any more but I'll do it until someone realises sprouts are evil). Piles of ice-cream topped with custard. Meanwhile there's a stacked reading list in an upstairs bedroom screaming for attention. Bite into your prawns and there's a small voice in your head as though your book pile is speaking to you: 'You brought us down home with you, we're not leaving till you read us'. Yes, more turkey, please: 'We're still here, reeeeead usssss'. Christmas pudding, man, oh yeah: 'Study time, ding dong, dumbass'.

And all the while you simply wish you could take the pile of books you brought with you and hurl them all in the fire. I've extremely limited experience of book-burning but

I imagine that legal texts and computer programming books burn particularly well. The satisfaction gained is probably even greater than the heat generated.

It wasn't always so. Until semesterisation arrived in 1994, UL had three sets of exams, in December, March and June. For various practical reasons, both students and university authorities supported the changeover from three terms to two and on the whole it's worked out pretty well. Teaching time is far less rushed, there's more time for activity by

clubs and societies (despite numbers in many clubs and socs dropping dramatically since the early 90s), social life has improved as exams can be as much as 17 weeks away rather than 10. The big downside for many students was that suddenly the Christmas holidays became a time of work rather than relaxation.

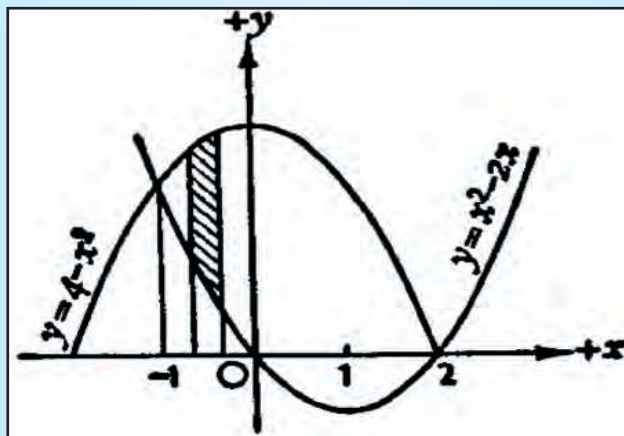
Personally I've always taken the path of least resistance. Taking books home is a wonderful way to alleviate stress. If I left them in Limerick, I'd feel guilty all over Christmas. If I take them home

with me, I don't feel stress till the day before exams, when the guilt arrives for not having read them over Christmas at all. However, there are some students who are far more conscientious than I am. Heck, probably a few thousand. People who are actually willing to pass up on reading Harry Potter volume 43 in favour of the latest hot edition of Stroud's Engineering Mathematics. Perhaps a few who manage to carefully balance a French grammar text on one knee while scooping lime jelly from a bowl carefully balanced on the other.

From next year, any Christmas exam-related stress will have disappeared as the start of the academic year is pushed a few weeks back into September, resulting in the sitting of exams just before Christmas rather than just after. It was an option explored and rejected in the early 90s but happily it's recently been revisited and adopted. There are still some problems to be overcome, notably aligning with foreign universities for Erasmus and Socrates but on the



whole it's a simple move of exams to before Christmas which should result in a better homegoing experience both for those who live far from home and look upon Christmas as the midyear time to actually see their families and those who live closer to or at home and might enjoy the idea of pulling a cracker without that guilty voice in their heads trying to convince them that they should be studying instead. Then again, they'll have no excuse to avoid the traditional Christmas afternoon television helping of Indiana Jones...



Class reps report...

The regular gathering of head boys and girls and housemasters of PigSpots University, (UL class reps council to you and me) has happened again since we last spoke. The numbers attending are quite good and generally up on previous years. However, let us not be fooled that quantity is any substitute for quality. At a previous meeting many folks got elected on behalf of Gryffindor house. We saw Jason, Mark, Claire and Eimear Griffin making successful bids for power. I'm not saying all these Griffins are related and that they will make some major power play over the year but it could be fun if they did.

We're beginning to see some interesting heads coming to the fore and curiously they tend to belong to people whose parents have active roles in the college itself. There's nothing like a bit of pull or inside information to build a profile. But remember the sins of the father and all that. Amongst the most heated topics for discussion at the meeting were cars, hoodies and social networking software.

Bebo...

Bebo - I said it before - the technology provided by the college is not to help you get a date. That is what hours spent doing makeup and the weights machines in the gym are for. As for what girls should do... The vote to experiment with a partial Bebo-out, from 9am to 6pm in parts of the campus IT infrastructure, was passed by just 53 to 43 votes. The tone of some of the discussion would have led one to believe that it was books or reading that were about to



Thethroat@gmail.com
Tell us everything, you know you want to!

outlawed forever. Of course, these will probably just result in an explosion of folks from UL on boards.ie or even politics.ie looking for other people to hook up with. (or what about ulsu.ul.ie? Ed.)

This issue has echoes from a decade or more ago, when those doing computing related studies found it impossible to get a computer, as business and humanities lecturers had started to insist on typed essays. This meant those for whom the computer was a necessary rather than optional part of their course, was found waiting, as someone struggled to distinguish between the function of CTRL-V and CTRL-C.

It could just be me but the idea that ITD might install desktop sharing software, and have someone remotely monitoring PC usage,

and when someone is messing about checking themselves on hotornot (I've a rating of 6.9), that they are moved by means of electrifying the seats, has some appeal.

Car parking woes

So the car parking campaign grinds on like an infantry advance across the plains of the old



USSR. It is kind of hard to see where victory might be achieved at this point, especially when most students are sufficiently indifferent to just cough up the cash and park. Perhaps the campaign should be about the car parking situation generally, rather than the charge per se. And we're given to wonder if the screw-ups regarding the new staff parking application on boathouse lane aren't deliberate. Given the lack of outrage and response from the college, perhaps it would suit them better to have the new car park delayed and to up the price of the pay car park by another €1 next year.

PSA on the back burner?

The re-integration of the post graduate students association into the SU seems to be on the back burner, or at least not getting the same attention that the USI issue is. Not sure if the postgraduates students are sufficiently bothered to oppose it, but any such Anschluss would presumably require a majority vote from the PSA, but also a valid PSA vote. And the same

again from the SU - How likely is that?

Election strategy?

Lastly, the coming year presents the most obvious means to get leverage. Currently the government has three seats in Limerick East. If the opposition were to gain a seat there, then that could tip things nationally. However, the idea that the student body might unite around endorsing one, or several candidates, and attempt to gain some leverage on local needs, seems to be a stroke too far for our students' union leaders.

Timber!!!

On Nov 28th it was announced that a campus resident was deemed to be a danger to our society, and would be subsequently removed from the UL grounds. The occupant in question has been here much longer than any of us, and has put down considerable roots in the area. The creature in question is the large beech tree beside the flag poles at the west gate entrance to UL

As part of the periodical surveys carried out on the condition of the trees on campus, this one was found to be in a dangerous condition, and no longer viable to maintain. The tree had



been frequently used as a notice board for planning applications by the University, and other campus residents such as the SU. There is not any indication at this time whether the repeatedly nailing had any contributory effect to the tree's demise.

The tree would make a nice seating, and perhaps the wood could be put to some good use around the campus. It could live on in the form of log benches, or handy rest spots placed about the campus. The work is to be done by a consultant arborist at the time of going to press, with no traffic disruption envisioned.

It would be suitably touchy feely, and somewhat romantic, if we could end this report with news that some undergraduate had proposed to their spouse under this tree. Alas, it will more than likely be remembered as a shelter spot whilst waiting for a lift. Of such mundane things are lives made.

UL Prevails!

El Presidente

Looking for UL's new President...

UL are looking for a new President. As looked at in the last issue of An Focal, the Presidential Search Process is well underway. Last week saw a huge step forward in this ongoing process, as we reduced the list of applicants from a longlist of 19, to 5 interviewees, who will be grilled by the Selection Committee next month. There were many very interesting candidates, both from Ireland and abroad, with different outlooks on how the University should be run - but confidentiality means I can't reveal their names. Instead, I'm going to look at how these decisions were arrived at, and just where students come in this process.

A consultancy/head-hunting group called Heidrick and Struggles was engaged to look for suitable people for the job. They did so under the following categories: leadership of organisations, academic profile, political networking within the Irish system, ability to make money, international emphasis and personal style.

The continued emphasis in the briefing and throughout the discussion was that the institutional greatness of UL was central, and that students were a side-issue. This is visible in a number of ways - mention of undergraduates was seldom, and was simply concentrated on increasing of numbers. Research as the almost sole focus of academics is a problem here - teaching is very much in second place - and this was shown during the process. This is strongly connected to revenue generation - cold, hard cash, and the short-sighted emphasis on simply getting more and more money, rather than taking a more rounded view of developing the University. UL is (or should be) a place of learning for all the students first and foremost, with the business side there to facilitate this. Put simply, the University seems to have its priorities backwards.

There were a number of candidates who spoke about working with students, having a student focus through the starting programmes with students in the community, working with Students Unions, consultation with students and so on. While there were many different factors in the decisions, it was notable that students weren't seen as very important, and many of these candidates were discarded.

While the profile of UL should be at the centre of the decision-making process, so should students - the University wouldn't even exist without us! There is a definite imbalance there. If we want to push UL forward, make it stand out from the pack, then we should be concentrating on students as the lifeblood of the college, the people who'll make it famous in years to come, and as such, there should be much more emphasis on working with students, and a creative relationship between them and the new President.

This article is not an attack on, or an attempt to undermine whoever becomes the new President of UL - best of luck to them, and I hope that they have a great time in office here. And I look forward to them placing students back at the heart of everything the University does, where we belong!



Letters to the editor

An Focal, UL Students' Union, UL, Castletroy,
Limerick.

Phone 061 202363, Fax 061 213476, Email deirdre.oshaughnessy@ul.ie

*An Focal will endeavour to accommodate all letters as far as legally possible.
All parties have a right of reply to letters printed herein.*

Madam,

I am writing about the Limerick City 308 and 308a Bus service. I would like Bus Éireann to stop calling this a bus "service" and to go back to simply calling it a bus "route" which more accurately describes it. A bus service has a timetable. A timetable, I hope, it intends to stick to. It has been a long time since I have seen any evidence to show this of the 308/a route.

I happen to live on the island created between the 308 and 308a routes. If you happen to be one of these unlucky people you know that you cannot trust the number on the outside of the bus, the timetable, and in some circumstances the bus driver himself as to which route the bus will actually take. If you happen to live in Norwood, Lynwood, Granville, Woodlawn, or many parts of Garryowen, and the traffic is bad then the bus may drive straight through the parkway roundabout stranding you either there or in town, your choice. This scenario has happened to me quite often. This is just if you are heading home. Imagine trying to get to work on time if you work on Mulgrave Street and the bus is supposed to drop you just outside your place of work but decides to take the other route for some unfathomable reason. I can tell you from experience that it is a 10- minute sprint from the Dublin road to Mulgrave Street.

I have taken the following quote from the Bus Éireann website and underlined the important pieces.

"While every effort is made by Bus Éireann to ensure the full operation of all bus services advertised by them at all times, Bus Éireann will not be liable for any delay or interruption in any of its services where such delay or interruption is caused by reason of matters beyond its control, including, without limitation, interference by labour or industrial dispute, machine break-down or interruption in supply by others of power, materials or finished goods.

Bus Éireann services may be subject to alteration or cancellation without notice for reasons beyond the control of Bus Éireann. Intending passengers are,

therefore, advised to enquire before setting out on their journey for the latest information concerning the services.

On occasions where snow, fog, or other adverse weather conditions prevail, or the state of the roads is unusually difficult or if for any reason whatsoever roads or sections of roads are closed to traffic, it may be necessary to vary the times of Bus Éireann services, or to suspend their operation without notice. Bus Éireann shall not be liable for any loss, damage, delay or expense arising as a result of such circumstances outside the control of Bus Éireann."

I do not see it to be outside the control of Bus Éireann to follow its own bus routes. Another thing controllable by Bus Éireann is the fact that after waiting 50 minutes for the bus (as I did this morning) more than one bus shows up together. While on the bus today upon entering UL we came across another Bus Éireann bus picking up passengers. My question is how did it get past us if it did not overtake us? Obviously it broke from the 308 route. Most likely it took the left at the Groody roundabout and bypassed the previous stop we were at. How is it outside the control of Bus Éireann to adhere to its own timetable when two separate buses divide the route between themselves and run the route at the same time?

Today, as a postgraduate student, I was supposed to accompany a class on a fieldtrip very relevant to my project. Because I missed the bus (irony) they were forced to leave without me. This puts me in poor standing with my supervisor, faculty, and other researchers particularly the one who went in my place.

If you think a reliable bus service is outlandish consider this:

I waited 50 minutes for that bus this morning.

It's a 30 minute walk to UL.

*Frustrated,
Robert McKeown*

Madam,

I wish to take issue with those in the college who are promoting an anti-nuclear agenda. Why will I not just 'go with the flow' and add my signature to the petition proposed by the UL Environmental society? What about Chernobyl accident and the dangers posed by Sellafield? I believe that the dangers posed by nuclear power have been over hyped. A recent report by the I.A.E.A.(International Atomic Energy Agency) puts expected mortality over the next 20 years as a result of Chernobyl at approximately 4000. The annual number of deaths per year works out at about 200 per annum. Road deaths in Ireland this year have already exceeded this figure by over a hundred or so. Nobody, to my knowledge is circulating a petition calling for the abolition of all private motorised transport in Ireland. Clearly we all view the risks associated with driving in Ireland as tolerable.

In the real world risk, dangers and hazards can never be eliminated entirely. We can only reduce or minimise them. Get over it folks! A risk-free world is also known as Utopia. Welcome to the nuclear-free utopian world of the Republic of Ireland! Seriously though, we will have to give serious consideration to nuclear power as fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas are nearing depletion and becoming more expensive to burn as well as producing green-house gases which accelerate global warming of the planet. Renewable energy sources have a role to play too in the future, but it must be said that the efficiency of these sources -twenty plus years after the first oil-shock, remains dismally low. In conclusion, I believe we must keep all our options open and that may have to include living with the risks and dangers of the nuclear age. A nuclear-free future is moonshine!

Yours sincerely,

Michael Doherty (2nd year Biomedical & Advanced Materials)

Madam,

In response to Mr N. Griffin's letter of the 14th of November, I would like to express my annoyance at his lumping together of the Bismarck Model on display and the Slogan painted at the Main Entrance earlier this semester.

Firstly I would like to say I am in no way a supporter of fascism. Both my German/Dutch and English sides of my family suffered greatly because of the Nazi regime. My German Grandmother and her sisters were subjected to horrific torture by being outspoken anti-nazi protesters in Berlin before and during WWII.

Mr Griffin, I feel is unable to differentiate between weapons of war and the people who use them with their associated slogans and emblems. Yes, the Nazi regime used the Bismarck as a weapon in order to destroy the allied war effort in the Atlantic. The Americans and British used B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bombers and Lancaster bombers to kill a conservative figure of 80,000 civilians in two days during the bombing of Dresden. Where these weapon systems some how evil because of what they achieved? No. They were not. Do I respect the vehicle itself because of the skill and ingenuity of the people who built them? Yes. They were not used as symbols of ideologies as Mr Griffin suggests. They were used as weapons of war and were treated as such. Guns don't decide on killing people. People do that.

The Bismarck is probably the most widely recognized ship of the twentieth century behind the Titanic. That I feel was the justification of choosing it as a model by the Engineering students involved in the project. I don't see anywhere on the display any swastikas or red and black colours primarily used by the Nazi regime. No where in the display are there any Nazi party slogans. I do see how ever a remarkable feat of engineering skill and ingenuity that is rightly displayed in the context of a prestigious award to UL.

In the event this letter is published I wish to be made anonymous due to my families personal history divulged. Thank you.

Name and address with editor

Madam,

We are writing to you as members of the Kilmurry Residents Association, we read the article which was published in the last edition of An Focal, following a letter written to you by a Mrs Catherine Elder about anti-social behaviour in Elm Park caused by students on the night of Halloween.

You may be aware that a subsequent article was printed in last weeks' Limerick Post highlighting the same issue and views expressed by Ms Elder. We would like it known that Ms Elder is not a member of the Kilmurry Residents Association and as such we do not support the comments made by her. We have written to the Editor of the Limerick Post in relation to this matter.

If you feel it appropriate we would be grateful if you could include our thought in your next edition of An Focal.

Yours,

The Kilmurry Residents Association.

Editor's note: *The letter to the Limerick Post cannot be printed here for reasons of space, but it notes the cooperation between the KRA, UL and the Gardai and expresses the hope that these good relations will not be damaged. It also stresses that a small number of students are causing these problems and says that 'the majority of the residents get along very well with their student residents.'*

A Chairde Gaeil!

BHUEL, Seo é, deireadh le semestéar eile agus tá an Nollaig againn arís. Támuid tar éis semestéir iontach, agus táim ag súil le semestéir iontach eile I ndiaidh na Nollaig! I rith an semestéir seo bhí tús iontach ar an oíche chlárú agus tá níos mó baill againn anois ná riamh! Bhí Spraoi Luimnigh againn I Seachtain 3 agus bhí deireadh seachtaine den scoth againn, tá daoine sna coláistí eile fós ag labhairt faoi! Bhí Rónán Ó Snodaigh sna Stáblaí, agus bhí céilí againn, le traenáil agus tógáil foirne chomh maith! So gach rud san aireamh bhí deireadh seachtaine iontach againn. Cathaigh mé mo buiochas a gabháil arís chuig Paul, Patricia, St.John agus na Laidis as ucht an cabhair agus an tacaíocht a thug siad duinn!

So..... Cad é an Plean? Bhuel tá seachtain

na Gaeilge ag teacht, seachtain 4 agus 5 agus beidh seachtain den scoth againn. Beidh an bhliain seo níos fearr ná aon bliain riamh! Beidh na pleananna againn I ndiaidh na Nollaig!

Tá an Tolglann tar éis athrú anois, níos fearr ná riamh agus le níos mó daoine ag teach tar cuairt, táim an bhródúil as! Tá sé fógraithe I gceart anois agus tá sé iontach teacht isteach agus buaileadh le daoine anois! Tá an ciorcle comhra fós ar siúl, agus beidh cóisir na Nollaig againn I Seachtain 12, buail isteach ag a 6 ar an gcéadaoin!

So sin é, go dtí an céad semestéir eile, Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Maise is faoi Sheáin!

Meas Mhór!
Breandán

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Union of Students in Ireland (USI)



BY NIAMH CLOWRY

IN recent weeks there has been a widespread debate on whether UL Students Union should join the Union of Students in Ireland (USI). This has been a contentious issue for many years, as ULSU, along with many other Students' Unions nationally, left the organisation during the

early 1990s due to mismanagement and financial problems. Since then USI's structure has been changed.

The issue was discussed at the AGM earlier this semester and also at numerous Class Reps Councils. However joining USI will have implications both negative and positive for all students so it is essential that all students of UL are aware of what USI is, what USI does, what UL students will gain from joining and what is involved in membership of USI.

The Union of Students in Ireland is the sole national representative body for students in Ireland, and, according to its website,

represents over 250,000 students from over forty colleges across Ireland. The Main Principles of USI are enshrined in the union's constitution which emphasises the importance of education and welfare interests of students. The motto of USI is encapsulated in the following statements:

"An education & training system open to all"

"An education & training system that . . . truly serves the people of Ireland"

"The right of students to a decent standard of living".

Formed in 1959, USI has

worked continuously over the years for the advancement of education and fairness and equality for third level students. The main work of the Union is in education where it claims to have had a wide degree of successes over the years. A Drugs Survey undertaken by USI in 2002 was also referred to in the Annual National Report for Ireland produced by the Health Research Board, which was submitted to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in Lisbon. USI's vigorous campaigning regarding the proposed re-introduction of tuition fees led to the Government guaranteeing no introduction of tuition fees,

coupled with a 42 million euro investment in third-level grants and disadvantaged access.

Officers of USI are similar to those found in our own Students Union here in UL, and include the President, Education Officer, Welfare and Equality Officer, Language Officer and LGBT Officer. By joining USI students of UL would be represented at the national level in all areas concerned with student's needs and rights. A significant aspect of membership would however mean that certain issues such as SHAG week would be run in conjunction with national campaigns and in this respect a certain degree of autonomy

would be lost by UL's own students union. As with any membership of a national association there are both pros and cons to membership, luckily we live in a democracy and as such it is up to you the students of UL to decide whether or not you view membership as a positive or negative thing. In order to have your voice heard, it is imperative to inform your individual class reps of your opinion on this issue so that it can be a decision made by the majority of the student population at large. Only by making your voice heard can you make your opinion count.

YES!

Katie Morrisroe explains why €5 per student is a bargain

WHEN I first started working for USI my mother didn't know what it meant and still to this day she calls it the SUI. So most of you reading this are in the same boat as my dear old mother. You've heard USI mentioned but you don't have a clue what it means or what exactly they do except cost you, the students, money!

USI is the Union of Students in Ireland. Basically, it's the national organisation that represents it's members (student unions) across the country on national issues and helps out locally when the local student union needs help. Still, that doesn't sound like enough for you to pay a fiver a year to join?

Ok, so for less than the cost of a meal in the Stables you get national representation but you don't know what that means either? USI sits on the HEA (Higher Education Authority) the people who are in charge of resources that colleges get. It must be a good thing to have someone there arguing for students. USI also speak to the department of education about student issues. You can sit here and complain

that you still haven't gotten your grant but there's not much you can do about it, is there? USI are working with the departments involved to ensure that by next year the legislation that we were promised last year will go through, so you'll get your grant when you start the term.

This term we've been working on a Voter Registration campaign. We've been visiting universities, ITs and anyone else that will have us, encouraging students to vote and helping them fill out the forms. For anyone interested in equal rights then look at the LGBT autonomous campaigns. The LGBT work within USI to ensure that everyone in this country has equal rights. It's not fair that some people are denied their rights. It's discrimination and the LGBT working group are trying to have it changed. USI is working to try and bring equality to all students and to ensure that at a national level that our voice is heard. We may not be on the front of the newspaper everyday but we are working behind the scenes to ensure students get a better deal and get what they need for a real education.

UL and USI have both changed a lot since UL decided to leave in the early 1990's. The past shouldn't be

taken as a reason not to rejoin. Come on everyone, in the early 1990's we thought that MC Hammer was cool in those pants, George Bush Snr. was in the White House and Dubya was still in the background, we knew nothing about big brother or X-Factor and had awful fashion sense! UL can make a difference on the national stage and that can only benefit everyone here.

You might still think that a fiver is still too much money? That's your choice but you're choosing not to have a say on the national stage. You're choosing to ignore the issues that can only be sorted on a national level. You're choosing to whisper in your college rather than to shout with many other universities, ITs, and further education institutes for a better deal for students.

NO!

Daniel Sullivan tells us not to 'fall victim to the siren's song'

USI or to give it its full name the Union of Students in Ireland was according to the organisation itself founded in 1959 and currently represents 250,000 students in Ireland.

For roughly the last decade and a half UL has been outside the USI family after a vote to disaffiliate and while there have been periodic attempts to bring us back into the fold, we've not fallen to the siren's song. And we're not alone. Other colleges are outside USI and doing quite nicely thank you. However, when enquiries were made to USI as to who specifically is and is not affiliated the information was not forthcoming in time for publication.

Has this absence cost us anything? Certainly, an argument can be advanced for being involved in a national organisation which would assist the unions around the country. And in a sense the view can also be advanced that USI has comparatively recovered its head in recent years with a refocusing on more practical matters that are of particular interest to students. However, the fact that the organisation has made some reasonable proposals in the last few years shouldn't mean we are compelled to take the view that just because there is an option that we must jump at it.

The claim of representing 250,000 students is interesting in itself as it includes all students attending third level in Ireland whether they are affiliated or not.

And if they are happy to represent us when we aren't in why would we join?

What would we get for affiliating? Well, nothing really. USIT is a corporate plaything these days and there is no link between the two entities. Needless to say rejoining USI may give some of the student body a warm self satisfied feeling. USI with roughly over 100,000 students at €5 per head has a budget of over half a million euros. Not a bad sum but where does it all go? There are ten officers in USI at present, with many of those being fulltime positions. Indeed, its staff levels per student would compare very unfavourably with the National Union of Students in the UK. Naturally we're not privy to their salaries but it would be reasonable to assume they aren't on the minimum wage. A guesstimate of €30,000 per year would mean that roughly half their revenue goes on exec staff and their various travel expenses. This would seem to leave very little for other activities that would involve other colleges.

Of course, we shouldn't forget that a number of prominent figures have made their reputations in USI. Pat Rabbitte, Joe Duffy, Ivana Bacik amongst them. Now I'm inclined to say all power to the young bucks in their efforts to climb the greasy pole of public life. Yet, does it make sense for Ireland's students to be subsidising the political apprenticeships of wannabe Taoisigh?

So, the potential upside of

rejoining is non-existent. What might the very real downside be? Well, for starters there is the cost, almost €60,000, or €5 per student. This is rather a lot of cash when you pause to think about it. And the efforts of all the unions would be dragged into issues that the USI President of the day decided was of importance like the plight of Nicaraguan pencil cases or Scottish sofas.

And what will occur if we do not join? Well, they will go on claiming to represent all the students in Ireland whether they are members or not. So, as Homer J. Simpson said when informed that contributions to a museum were voluntary, 'Good luck with that buddy'.

While USI has made strides in recent years to ensure that their focus is on issues that affect primarily students and which other organisations are not addressing, that doesn't mean that such misdirection and misguided attempts to build profiles won't occur again.

The organisational structure of USI would seem to reflect the bygone world of the 1970s with its transplantation of a model from the trade union movement to another environment entirely. Being part of a loose federation with a rotating presidency would make far more sense than the top heavy model that USI have adopted.

Bye-bye Bebo!



BY TRACY LYNCH

'Bebo me!'... 'That's a profile picture!'... 'Check out my new flashbox!' If you're reading this and understand these statements then you are obviously one of the many people familiar with the Bebo phenomenon. If your reading these statements and haven't a clue how to 'bebo' someone, or consider seeing someone's 'flashbox' a little bit crude, then you need to come out from under that rock you've been living under for the past year! 'Bebo' has been one of the fastest spreading phenomena to hit Ireland

since the days of Tamagotchis in the playground!

As this article is for a college publication, I really don't think there's any need for an in-depth background and explanation of 'Bebo'. Simply put, it's a website where you can have your very own personal page with your blog, your photos, invite all your friends so you can access their page and leave comments for each other.

So what's the big deal with it I hear you ask...well...to be honest, I don't really know. I check my Bebo account most days, leave comments on friends pages, put up photos from the night before, track down old school friends to say hi... the options are endless, so maybe that's what the big deal with Bebo is. You can spend hours on it uploading your photos, waiting for your comment to be replied to, searching for the best 'flashbox' and checking out all your friends' pages, and then their friends' pages! For some it can become quiet

addictive, putting their life and soul into creating the best homepage Bebo-land has ever seen!! For others, it's just a way of relieving the boredom (and maybe being a little bit nosy at the same time!).

There's no denying its popularity, a quick glance at the computer screens on any day around the library/venus labs/fishtank will easily prove this. Unfortunately, for its many UL users, the inevitable has happened...we've witnessed it happen to our fellow students in Cork and Waterford, and now the Big Brother governance has hit UL. Class reps have called for Bebo to go... to leave our University with its tail between its legs and to bring all the robbed photos of nights in the Lodge with it! It's true that the queues for computers is getting worse every semester and it's pretty frustrating when you have five minutes to your deadline and



UL Students just can't get enough of it
Photo: Hugh O'Brien

can't get a free computer to print off that essay because half the library are having a conversation via comments to half the Venus lab! But what about the promises to keep Bebo from last semester, when its popularity was at its height? What about our freedom of choice, to spend

our time doing what we want? But what about the students who need the computer to type up an essay instead of commenting on someone's party, or the student who needs to research their project online instead of finding the best recording on YouTube for their flashbox? In the end

that's what class reps council is there for, to look out for the best interests of the students. Unfortunately, when it comes to matters related to students, the academic side seems to always win out, as it has done with Bebo's spell in UL!

Child Protection - An Insight into the Oireachtas Report

DEREK DALY

THE Joint Oireachtas Committee on Child Protection was established in the aftermath of the Supreme Court judgment on May 23rd 2006; which allowed the use of ignorance as to age as a defence for the offence of statutory rape. The particular case involved a girl of only 13 years old and caused a terrible furore when the accused was acquitted of the crime. Peter Power TD chaired this committee.

Deputy Peter Power addressed the Con Colbert Cumann of Ógra Fianna Fáil on this issue last Monday evening December 4th. Deputy Power said it was an honour to be asked to chair this committee and he was interested to hear what members thought of the three main recommendations; of which there were 62 altogether.

The first is the recommendation that the age of consent to sexual intercourse be lowered to 16, below which an absolute zone of protection is upheld and sexual activity cannot be

deemed consensual. Cathaoirleach Niamh O'Donovan expressed her feeling that 16 was too young and that she was unhappy with the lowering of the age, to which Deputy Power replied that this is a reality that has to be accepted no matter what ideals we may have. He would certainly not like to see the recommendation to encourage all 16 year olds to have sex, but doesn't want to see those that do be criminalised. There was a lot of debate around this issue and Deputy Power explained that this had been the case in committee session also, but 16 was eventually agreed as the age of consent to be recommended. Treasurer of the Cumman, Eamon Quinlan congratulated Deputy Power and the committee for the report, which he felt was the best that can be done to give clarity and protection

The 2nd Recommendation, which concerns access to "soft information" for those wishing to work in environments where they would be in contact with children. This is a safeguard that would protect against

another 'Ian Huntley' (the Soham murderer) situation. It would allow prospective employers to check for charges against an individual rather than just convictions, which is the current situation. The most cunning, devious and dangerous rarely get convicted, but a stream of charges might indicate that they are unsuitable. All present agreed that this was an excellent recommendation. In addition to these two recommendations, the committee concluded that individuals in authority (teachers, coaches, parents, school staff etc...) should not be allowed to sexually engage with any person under the age of 18. The members of the Cumman, in attendance broadly agreed with this and were happy to see such a safeguard in the report.

The Con Colbert Cumann wishes to sincerely thank Deputy Peter Power. His time and contribution is greatly appreciated. Deputy Power joked when leaving that; "I'll be the one needing protection if I don't get home soon!!"

CIORCAL COMHRÁ

CÓISIR NA NOLLAG

Tá Coisir Nollag á reáchtáil ag Ciorcal Comhrá Gaeilge an Chumainn Ghaelaigh NGÓ, Ollscoil Luimnigh. Beidh comhrá agus pióga Nollag á roinnt idir cairde le Gaeilge an Céadaoin seo!!

Cén lá? Dé Céadaoin Wednesday
Seachtain a 12 Week 12
Cén t-am? 6 a chlog 6 o'clock
Cén áit? Tolglann na Gaeilge,
Aontas na Mac Léinn
Irish Lounge, Students' Union

Bring your little bit of Irish and we'll provide the mince pies and hot conversation! Tá fáilte roimh gach duine le suim sa Ghaeilge agus *NOLLAIG SHONA DAOIBH*

Let's talk about sex...

SIOBHÁN NÍ CHATHÁIN,
MARIA MCHALE &
GRÁINNE KEANE

YES, let's talk about sex. The SHAG week campaign has highlighted the importance of thinking and talking about sex in order to promote healthy sexual attitudes and behaviours. Unfortunately, however, there are some problems with the ways in which these messages are being put across. This came to our attention on a night out in a Limerick nightclub during SHAG week. We were chatting and having a few drinks with some friends when we noticed two women near the bar dressed in the distinct 'Playboy Bunny' outfit. We were soon approached by the women who presented us with small booklets with the word 'think' on the cover, and small boxes containing condoms. Before they moved on to another group nearby we asked the Bunnies whom they were working for, they said UL Students' Union.

This encounter provoked a few observations on the appropriateness of this promotion. The Playboy Bunnies were just one promotional tool employed by the SU in their SHAG week campaign. However, we believe that the use of Playboy Bunnies as tools of a sexual health promotion campaign seems contradictory and produces both intended and unintended effects.

Presumably the primary intended effect was to promote greater awareness of safe sex and condom use in a

light-hearted, attention-grabbing way. Any campaign involves marketing a message in a way that seems appropriate to the target audience. But how effective and appropriate is this approach? It's hard to estimate the extent to which the intended message got through, in the intended way, to the intended audience - "Hands up who changed their pattern of contraceptive use after being handed a leaflet and a free condom by a Playboy Bunny in the Trinity Rooms?" Ok, maybe that's a bit glib - it is possible that there are positive outcomes in terms of sexual attitudes and behaviours after repeated exposure to safe-sex messages in a variety of formats. The Bunny promotion could have played a role in positively reinforcing the safe sex message. We didn't witness anyone actually reading the booklets the Bunnies were distributing, although it's possible they took them home and read them later. We didn't get the chance to do so at our table, however, as they were collected with the empty glasses by a member of the bar staff within minutes. The fact that the safe-sex information booklets were treated as litter limits the potential effectiveness of the Bunnies promotion. Perhaps some of the condoms distributed on the night have since been put to their intended use.

And then there are the unintended effects of the Playboy Bunny branch of the SHAG week campaign... We believe that (considering that there were no male Bunnies) it's fair to say that this

promotion contributes to the objectification of women by reinforcing the notion that women are primarily sexual playthings for the pleasure of men. The two women employed as Bunnies for the night would be considered sexually attractive in conventional terms - slim, pretty and sociable. It must be assumed that they got their jobs based on their looks. One of us approached the women to test this assumption: Siobhan: "Did ye apply for this job with a CV?" Bunny: "No, we've done stuff for the SU before." Siobhan: "What kind of stuff...?!" Bunny: "We were sperms"...

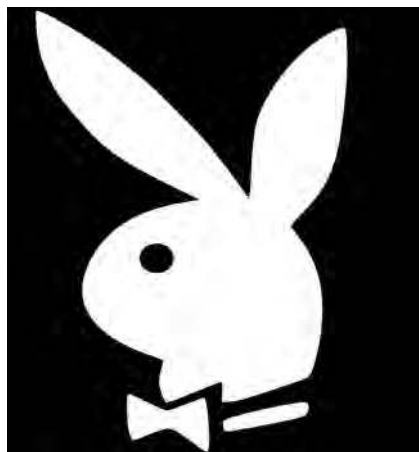
It's good to know that the two Bunnies didn't consider themselves exploited, but there are other ramifications for women and men. This kind of promotion can be seen as part of the mainstreaming of soft porn, contributing to its increasing social acceptability through its association with reputable organisations and benevolent safe-sex messages. Porn-lite language and images have become so normalised that those criticising the 'light-hearted' sexualisation of women and men are automatically labelled as prudes and kill-joys. What messages are being sent out to young women about female (hetero)sexuality? What contribution might this promotion make to expectations of how they should look, dress and

behave? What messages are being sent out to young men about young women?

It's hard to decipher whether, in this promotion, the SU was promoting the Playboy brand, or using the Playboy brand to promote their safe-sex message. Why should the SU voluntarily or involuntarily contribute to marketing the global porn brand of Playboy?

This isn't about shooting the messenger. There are very valid and worthy intentions behind the SHAG week campaign. We are aware that the SU is working very hard in the interests of students and hopefully SHAG will help improve the sexual health of the UL student population. But whatever the worthy cause and the good intentions behind this promotion, however unwitting or unforeseen the negative aspects, the SU must become more aware of, and take responsibility for, the unintended effects of their campaigns.

Playboy - not the best way of promoting the sexual health message?
Image courtesy of answers.com



BREANDÁN Ó HÉAMHAIGH

One thing that I can't understand is Students who get themselves into debt over their First car? Why spend €3 or 4k when you can spend an awful lot less and get an older car. I have recently noticed the sudden rise of low mileage late 80's early 90's cars on the market. Many of these cars are one owner, with barely any use, which can be picked up for around the €500 mark. Even less in some cases. I recently came across a nice 1991 Nissan Micra automatic with 59,000 miles from new and a fresh NCT that sold for €500. If Micra's aren't your cup of tea, you can pick up a nice Corolla for a couple of hundred euro, or a Sunny, Golf, whatever you fancy, it is out there. There is



also the idea that you can get something really nice and individual by buying an even older early to mid 80's car. There are still some nice 2nd generation Corolla's out there, and some nice early golf's. You can even pick up a nice Renault or Peugeot. The pre 1994 cars also have the added benefit of being easy to maintain from a DIY perspective. But what

should you look for? A must with an older car is to check for rust, wheel arches, under the doors, around the windows, and under the boot and bonnet. Make sure the car isn't damp inside and also make sure that the body has no crash repairs. Check the condition of lights and the brakes and make sure that the engine isn't leaking too much oil. This is also a time

to check that the engine hasn't been started before your arrival. And that the engine starts easily with no obvious knocking noises. The battery and oil lights should go out straight away, and if they don't, walk away! Other than that, be prepared for the lack of power steering and all those mod cons. Driving is the same as a modern. The main advantage of an old car is easy maintenance, and I have my car running on Bioethanol (biofuel) which is 86 cent per litre! Only a couple of small modifications needed, but there are major mods to run a newer car on it. I'll be writing a conversion guide after Christmas. So think about it, you can have happy and reliable motoring for less than the registration fee!

'SEX!!!'

THOMAS MULCAHY

THESE were the words uttered in The Stables by the sultry pink haired beauty clad in leather last Thursday. After setting off her panic alarm (Boy is that loud!) to attract attention, not that she needs it, she then shouts "Follow me!" which a group of drooling lads promptly do, letting her lead them into SU Room 3.

This seductress is none other than Billie, The Queer Community Support Worker for The Red Ribbon Project, who was using her 'assets' to draw in a crowd to listen to John Simons, The Red Ribbon Sexual Health Trainer, give a talk on safer sex. An intimate crowd was indeed drawn, and John created an instant rapport, particularly with our one and only Deirdre O' Shaughnessy, who shall hereby be referred to as 'Puss in Boots', whom he later rendered infertile through Chlamydia. (Not really. Ed)

The talk began with a brief history of the project before getting down to the dirty business of Sexually Transmitted Infections. Through role plays, aided by the more than enthusiastic Billie, we found out about the two most common STIs around at the moment. Firstly, the cauliflower like HPV (Human Papilloma Virus), more commonly known as Genital Warts, which can be responsible for cervical cancer. Described by him as "something out of the Alien movies", these spots, just like warts on your finger, will grow on you, and not in the nice way. Be warned, this is a virus, so even if you get treated (And it could take 8 months!), you'll still have the virus for life.

Then, we were told about Chlamydia, The Silent Disease. It was at this point that John had a one night stand with Billie. He then fell in love with our Puss in Boots, got married, bought a house together, decided they would start a family, but sadly realised that she couldn't have kids. He had given her Chlamydia, caught from his earlier shag. The worrying thing about this is that Chlamydia generally has no symptoms, hence the name, and it's reckoned that 1 in 4 sexually active women under

the age of 29 have contracted it, and probably don't know they have. But remember guys, just because it doesn't affect you, doesn't mean you don't have it.

We learned a lot more about herpes, syphilis and other appealing infections to make the body shudder, then found out that STIs have increased by 200% in the last two years. John also gave us a detailed analysis of the male psyche when it comes to sex (Score!!), female ability to 'drop the hand' on a guy (Crap!!), and generally picked on all audience members, including some who weren't even in the room.

All in all, the talk was good fun, with good participation from students and the sabbat officers. Free condoms and lube were aplenty, as were those bloody annoying panic alarms, and I made sure to make the most of the free tea and biscuits provided. I learned a lot, and definitely do not want to be caught with my pants down unless a rubber is at hand. So if you're not scared off sex for good, then be safe. And if you are scared off, bubble suits will be on sale from next week.

Important Numbers

- 21 The number of STIs up for grabs
- 7 The number of STIs without symptoms
- 4 The number of STIs that can kill you
- 200 The percentage that STIs have risen in the last two years
- 2,700 The potential number of sexually active students in UL with Chlamydia

Red Ribbon Project

Redwood House
9 Cecil Street
Limerick
061-314354

Confidential Helpline 061-316661

Climate change - a worldwide catastrophe

BARRY MCMACKIN

ON the 30th October this year we were warned the end of the world was upon us. Poverty, drought, floods and hunger are lurking around the corner from a world 'sleepwalking into an uncertain future.' Sir Nicholas Stern, former Chief Economist of the World Bank released a report highlighting the consequences of delayed action on climate change.

Climate change is the greatest market and environmental failure the world has ever seen and the Stern Report has given a timeline in which the world needs to act. Damage already caused is irreversible however how we react in the next twenty years will prevent further damage with outcomes similar to the social and economic situation that resulted from the great wars and economic depression of the first half of the 20th century.

Stern cautions that if no action is taken, greenhouses gases in the atmosphere could reach double their pre-industrial level as early as 2035, committing us to a global average temperature rise of over 2 degrees Celsius, with a 50% chance that this temperature rise would exceed 5 degrees Celsius. While a temperature rise of this sort doesn't sound that ominous, this is the equivalent to the change in average temperature from the last ice age to today.

No country will escape damage. The poorest countries, despite contributing least to the problem, will suffer earliest and greatest. The risk resulting from climate change will be the equivalent to losing 5% of Global GDP each year, forever. This figure could rise to 20% of GDP. The cost of prevention is a manageable 1% of global GDP. This will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change but only if action is taken immediately.

Three elements of policy are required for an effective global response. The first is

pricing of carbon, implemented through trading, tax or regulation. The second is policy to support innovation and the deployment of low carbon technologies. The third is action to remove barriers to energy efficiency, and to inform, educate and persuade individuals about what they can do to respond to climate change.

A choice need not be made between development and paying the costs of implementing recommendations. Stern himself indicates that combating climate change could become one of the world's biggest growth industries, generating around 372bn worth of business globally by the year 2050. Opportunities in low carbon energy technologies and other low carbon goods and services are possible.

The Green Party's finance spokesperson Dan Boyle has said: 'This report is valuable in highlighting not only the probable economic costs of failing to act on climate change, but also stresses the opportunities that would exist if we started taking effective, collective action on climate change now.'

Ireland has been placed amongst the worst performers in the EU (fourth from bottom) in terms of cutting out green house gas emissions by the European Commission. Environment Minister Dick Roche said it was 'unfortunate' that the commission did not acknowledge some of the commitments Ireland has taken under the Kyoto Protocol, however the figures show that Ireland's emissions are twice the increase allowed for under the Kyoto agreement.

Despite the common reaction that these reports on climate change have among those not interested in environmental issues, the Stern Report does highlight what is going wrong, how we can change it and when that needs to happen by explaining a worst case scenario that is becoming increasingly more likely. There are small things people can do to help achieve what's required without

becoming heavily involved in environmental issues. Awareness is what's required.

This report has the effect of forcing governments and companies into making huge alterations into how they operate. As mentioned this could result in a billion dollar market, paving the way for those educated in almost any area of study to avail of a multitude of opportunities to work in the restructuring process. From engineering to business and law to social sciences, this area has huge potential for informed students. But first things first, people need to be conscious of how their environment is faltering and need to make the simple choices that will help it back to its feet.

And you said Irish was dead?



BY BREANDÁN Ó HÉAMHAIGH

A massive blow was dealt to critics of the Irish language this month when Lá, the daily Irish Language newspaper published a report that there has been a 47% growth in the number of members in Irish Societies Nationally. At

present the national number of students involved in Irish Societies is 2592. When one takes into account the current membership of Na Gaeil Óga, the group which represents young Irish Speakers, which is over 1500, the trend becomes apparent. Young people are using Irish, and taking an interest. So why are people still talking about the death of the language?

I was recently talking to someone who told me that the language is dead and to just let it go. But here is evidence of young people around the country who aren't willing to let the language die. The upsurge in third level is in line

with the upsurge in other areas such as the growth of the Gaeilscoil movement, which is growing at a rapid rate. There are over 3,000 young people out there who agree, and over 13,000 people in general who have signed the petition against Fianna Geal's anti-Irish policy, quite a nice voting block. We are always told that the youth are the future, and if this is anything to go by, the Irish Language is in safe hands. By all accounts the language is growing and someday we will see an Ireland where the daily spoken language is an Ghaeilge, and that day is fast approaching.

Will this be the last time we see snow around the Shannon?
Photo: Courtesy of Eoin Stephenson, UL Photography Dept.



Campus Sport

Bohs Suffer Home Hiccup



BY TOMÁS MCCARTHY

UL Bohs missed out on a chance to grab first place in the AIB All-Ireland League by narrowly losing out to Cork Constitution on 2 December

in Thomond Park.

Aided by a strong breeze Cork Con took control in the first-half. They scored an early try through scrum-half Peter McKee. Richie Lane added two penalties to give Con an 11-0 lead at half-time. UL Bohs fought back in the second-half. Firstly Ben Martin struck a 53rd minute penalty to cut the deficit. Then at 68 minutes winger Ian Hanley went over for a try. This brought the score back to 11-8 and that was the way it remained. Bohs though did

have a last gasp chance to gain victory but Con's scrum-half McKee made a try saving tackle.

UL Bohs are now 4th in the table on 16 points after this bonus point defeat. Garryowen lead the way with 18 points followed by Shannon and Cork Con with 17 each. In the next few weeks Dungannon and Belfast Harlequins are on the cards for UL Bohs, both at home as they try to maintain their lofty position in the table.

Final Date For Senior Hurlers

TOMÁS MCCARTHY

UL are through to the Fitzgibbon League Final after edging past DIT in the semi-final on the 29th November.

DIT started brightly with the aid getting an early goal and racing into a four point lead. UL though came back with four points from David McCormack and one each from Paul O'Flynn, Brendan

Bulger, Ainle O'Cairealain and Ritchie Ruth. Despite a second DIT goal the half-time score was DIT 2-2 UL 0-8. UL started the second half well with points from Alan Kennedy and Ritchie Ruth. DIT responded though with a third goal to lead by three points. Following a number of astute changes UL finished the match strongly. Substitute Alan Egan got on the score sheet as Ruth and McCormack

added further scores. This gave UL a two point victory 0-19 to 3-7 and a place in the final.

Club PRO Peter O'Brien described it as a 'poor display' and that UL were 'lucky' to qualify for the final. Despite this forwards David McCormack who scored six points and Ritchie Ruth who scored four points are in top form and undoubtedly UL will give it a good lash in the final.

UL Archery Club hosts inaugural IAAA Shoot

BY PHILIP MURPHY

ON Sunday, 26th November, the UL Archery Club played host to shooters from clubs around the country for UL's inaugural Irish Amateur Archery Association (IAAA) competition. The main hall of the PESS building hummed

with the sound of arrows in flight, with over 40 archers competing at UL. Many of the competitors had not visited our club before. Shooters from Dolmen Archers and Cork Archers as well as more familiar faces from the intervarsity scene such as the GMIT Archery club all came to participate, a fantastic

turnout for our first hosting of this event.

As it was an IAAA event, only members of the IAAA were eligible for competition. Nonetheless, many of UL's novice members could be found observing the proceedings with interest, although it must be said a lot of the time was spent ogling

the bows on the equipment line, to be honest!

The IAAA is the national body for amateur archers in Ireland and has set itself the task of having at least one member club in every county, as well as a qualified coach in every IAAA-affiliated club in Ireland. UL Archery recently

consisted of four rounds with 30 arrows shot per round, with a potential maximum possible score of 1200 points. There were two categories for compound bows - male and female compound, and three categories for recurve bows - male +1100, male -1100 and female, as well as a junior category.

was won by Irish squad member Eoghan O'Donoghue (1123), with Eric Kelly taking second (1114) and Brendan Hanlon taking third (1095). Female recurve was won by Deirdre Rodgers (508) and the junior category went to Paul Connolly with a score of 929.

All involved were astounded by UL's success in hosting such a professional shoot. One senior archer from Cork remarked "We'll definitely come back next year". UL Archery would like to thank the Sports Bar for their generous sponsorship and Neasa O'Donnell for her support of the event.

If you would like to find out more about the IAAA, they maintain a website at www.archery.ie which is well worth a visit.

Our own website can be found at www.ulac.tk where you can keep updated with the latest news and discuss archery on our very own internet forum! See you there!

UL's Alan Jeffs at full draw Photo: Courtesy UL Archery Club



and enjoy the benefits available to over 30 clubs nationwide, representing more than 500 archers from around the country, including the right to shoot at other member clubs, as well as the opportunity to train with Hans Bloom, the coach for the Irish archery squad.

The full FITA competition

UL pulled off a shock result by sweeping the boards in the male recurve -1100 section, a fantastic performance considering that all of them were first-time IAAA competitors. Alan Jeffs took first with a score of 1007, Paul Collins took second with 990 and Thomas Sheppard took third with 988. Of the six UL archers competing, four brought home medals with Sarah Deegan securing second in female compound with 1025. The section was won by Patricia O'Sullivan (1093), with Vachn Gill taking third (708).

Male compound was won by Jack Nutan (1119), second place went to Eugene O'Sullivan (1117) and third place went to Joe Malone (1096). Male recurve +1100

UL Shotokan Karate in DCU

"UL Shotokan Karate Club" last week competed in the DCU Karate Open Championship. The competition standard was high but the UL club held its own. There has been much talk of late about how the club has never returned from a competition empty handed and so with every event, the pressure increases to maintain this tradition. It was looking difficult as although several karate-ka made it into their respective finals, the podium seemed to be just out of reach. That was until Stefanie Partmann stepped up in her debut tournament and demonstrated a truly tenacious performance that would see her as the only woman in the final 6 eventually going on to take second place overall in this mixed men's and women's kata category. Much praise has to be given to all the beginners who took part in the kata competition especially since it was their first competition and their nerves must have been wrecked but they did not let this stop them.

The junior kumite (sparring) category was probably the most difficult category of the day as it included beginner and mid grades, in effect placing white and orange belts against much more experienced purple belts. This meant that many members training with the club since October ended up competing against others with about 3 years experience. This did not quell the spirit of the UL squad who promptly despatched several of these more senior grades showing great promise for the many years of karate that lay before them. There were also notable performances from Leonard Skinner, Ross Googan and Chris Byrne, who showed us all how it's done, in the senior kumite category. Club chairperson, Leonard Skinner, was very pleased with the club's performance and even went so far as to say "how proud I am off all the members of the club, putting themselves out there, and in particular those new members



Leonard Skinner competing in the Senior Kata Category

who have not competed before, well done to all". This continues to be an overwhelming year for the club, now in its second year and UL's sole karate representative. Membership has grown enormously, and with it the success of the club both in and out of the dojo. This is down to the continued enthusiasm of the members, even to the point where the club has many brave and faithful souls, getting up every Monday morning for a 7.15am training session.

The club trains Tuesdays from 6:15 to 8pm, Thursdays from 8:15 to 10pm and yes, every Monday morning (if you're crazy enough) from 7:15am to about 8:30am. For more info go to www.ulkarate.com or email at info@ulkarate.com.

Changes were made at half time and the players that came in continued to put pressure on the UCC backs. Maria Kelly and Sarah Jane Cody scored two excellent goals and Breda Slattery continued to make good runs up the wing. Maria Kelly played half-back in the second half and she gave a plentiful supply of ball to the forwards and midfielders. UCC managed to score 1-4 in the second half but goalkeeper Clare Rooney and full back line of Jenny Johnston, Michelle Glynn and Jackie Moran snuffed out a lot of possession and made it very difficult for the UCC forwards to score. Another impressive victory for the UL ladies and they will now look forward to their next league game.

UL: C. Rooney, J. Johnston, M. Glynn, J. Moran, M. Liston, B. Stack, A. O'Dwyer, F. McHale, M. O'Donoghue, G. O' Flynn, A. O'Loughlin, L. Walsh, S. Egan, K. O' Driscoll, A. Herbert. SUBS: S. Kelly, M. Kelly, S. J. Cody, B. Slattery

Ladies football

WITH NORITA KELLY

UL 6-17 UCC 1-4

UL senior ladies continued their unbeaten run when they overcame UCC in Limerick on Thursday afternoon of Week 10. Despite missing some key players UL didn't take long to get on the score board. Sinead Egan was very dangerous and on the third minute she placed the ball neatly into the corner of the net. She quickly added her second and UL looked to be coasting. The ball rarely passed the half way line but when it did it was cut out by the solid half back line of Miriam Liston, Brid Stack and Ann O'Dwyer. The midfielders, Margaret O'Donoghue and Fiona McHale, were dominant throughout. Margaret made some excellent runs forward

and finished the game with a personal tally of three points. Each member of the forward line managed to get on the score board in the opening half. Kacey O'Driscoll received the ball in full forward after a wonderfully worked play up the field, she very smartly dummied around the goalkeeper and gave UL their fourth goal of the opening half. Laura Walsh at right half forward was very unlucky to hit the post on three occasions but still managed to sneak one past the keeper. Both Aoife Herbert and Geraldine O'Flynn kicked 2 points in the first half. Aileen O'Loughlin at centre forward was setting up a lot of plays and finished up with scoring 1-2. UCC were unable to get on the score board in the opening half and at half time the match as a contest was over as the score line read 5-10 to no score.

UL has many talented and successful athletes gracing its corridors and

Debra kicks back!



BY PATRICK MANNIX
SPORTS EDITOR

THERE are many sports which are considered endurance sports, from rowing to cross country athletics. It can be argued that there are no sports more physically demanding and competitive than kickboxing, but then again who would argue with World Kickboxing Silver Medallist Debra Donovan? Kickboxing is not yet recognised as an Olympic Sport but, with athletes like Debra who are so committed to the discipline, it is questionable why the International Olympic body would stand in the way of the sport.

As with any endurance sport sacrifices have to be made and this is not different for the young Abbeydorney lady. 'I train twice a day for four days in the week and once a day for two days'. This time schedule is similar to Olympic oarsman Paul Griffin but the only difference is that Debra is a full time student studying Woodwork Teaching. GAA and Rugby are the two most prominent sports in Ireland at present so it's hard to see what drew Debra to the gloves and gumguards. 'Well I started off doing athletics and used to compete in the shot-put and javelin events. I also played basketball for a while but the major turn towards kickboxing came in 1996 when I took up Taekwondo. This led to my eventual progression into Kickboxing in 2000'.

UL has many talented and successful athletes gracing its corridors and

now Debra can rank herself proudly amongst these athletes. Recently the Kerry woman kickboxed her way to a World Silver medal in Benidorm. This is a fantastic achievement considering the relatively small scale of kickboxing in comparison to other sports in Ireland. Backed by a vocal Irish crowd of friends and family, Debra progressed to the final of the world event after inflicting a knockout blow to her German opponent in the semi-final, after only the second round. This was a major advantage as with any endurance sport the time for recuperation is vital to the strength of the competitor's performance. Therefore Debra had a week to rest and prepare for the final which was held on Friday the 10th of November.

Any final for an athlete is the pinnacle of their long-term training, dedication and ambitions. Stress and excitement were just some of the emotions going through Debra's mind before the final but anxiety was fuelled even further when the match was delayed for over four hours due to a technical issue. The final consisted of three rounds, each two minutes of intense competition. Unfortunately Debra was defeated in the second round by another German who had been a previous winner of the competition. Two standing

eight fouls were all that stood between Debra and the gold medal. These fouls are accredited to a competitor when the referee deems the individual to be dazed and unsuitable to continue in the match. It is contentious however, according to Debra, if the second standing eight foul was correct. However, this does not take away from her achievement. Debra had already reached a personal feat, as this final was not her favoured section. The category in which she fought was the super-heavyweight low kick full contact division whereas Debra is more at home in the light heavyweight division where competitors must weigh strictly at 66Kg.

Following on from her accomplishments in Spain, Debra is now going to take a break from the sport for a while to recuperate. This fantastic athlete deserves a lot of credit. Debra and Tim Murphy have shown a lot of dedication to their sport and thanks to them the club in UL is growing strong since its foundation five years ago. So with all the training and competing what does Debra do in her spare time? 'I like to read Munster - The Road To Glory. Peter Stringer is a sporting idol of mine'. Quite apt when, to the brave and faithful Debra, nothing is impossible.



UL's Debra Donovan is awarded her Silver World Medal in Kickboxing

UL Student Athletes Lack Faculty Support



BY PATRICK MANNIX
SPORTS EDITOR

FOLLOWING my article in the last edition of the paper regarding UL clubs in trouble, it has come to my attention that there is also a lack of support for student athletes from faculty. During a discussion with Professor Michael Hayes on the matter, he commented on how he felt 'saddened by the lack of appreciation of the efforts of our students in all aspects of their extracurricular activities.' Prof Hayes added that this was in contrast to his previous university.

This was made apparent recently by a fantastic sporting weekend for UL athletes who excelled at the Intervarsity Athletics Championships in Nenagh. Over thirty people travelled to what turned out to be a massive success for the college. The men won five gold medals out of a possible fifteen, showing how competitive UL is on a national scale. Maurice Donoghue and David

McCarthy won gold in their respect categories the 400m and 800m but also competed in the 4 x 200m relay race. Liam Houlihan also set a new intervarsity record in the pole vault which is a marvellous achievement. As for the ladies they were also very successful with two gold medal winners, six silver and three bronze medallists. Helen Buckley, who is studying history, won gold in the high jump and 1st Year P.E student Cristina Broderick came first in combined events. Their hard work and dedication is supplemented by John Stacey, a Sports Science Graduate, who coaches persons in the explosive events, and much of UL's success can be attributed to him.

These successes were achieved despite the fact that UL was competing against numerous so-called scholarship athletes, especially from DCU and UCD. Mr. Hayes feels that 'we will need to consider how best we can maintain the excellent standards we have and yet still be able to compete (and to continue to win) against those who offer 'scholarship'/ bursary inducements'. Professor Hayes thinks that the so-called Academies at DCU and UCD are definitely having an impact, and has heard justifications for admitting students to these 'academies' with lowered leaving certificate

attainments. However he continues to maintain that 'we can compete with these as long as UL 'sets out its stall' as an Institution that strives for excellence, where admission will be through Academic Attainments only, but that their extracurricular achievements will be greatly appreciated.

So what about the relationship between the faculty and the students in sporting circles? 'I have missed only one championship, indoor or out, in the past eight years. Thus I have had the opportunity to mingle with students from all of our Universities and Institutes. It has been a pleasure to associate with our UL athletic young men and ladies. They are, and have been the finest ambassadors for our University, in my view the finest I have experienced in Ireland. They ask for little, but they are deserving of the appreciation of our Community of Scholars. That applies for all of our teams and sports persons'. However this interaction is not the case with all members of faculty. Mr. Hayes commented that he is extremely saddened by the lack of appreciation of the efforts of our students in all aspects of their extracurricular activities. The Universities that he has been involved with outside Ireland are in the top 60 or so in the world and he feels the calibre of student we

have in UL would be welcomed in the top 10 Universities in the UK. Not every pupil is going to get to know their lecturers personally but Mr. Hayes sees the seeds being sown at tutorials. 'A majority of students tell me that they never had a meaningful (or any) discussion with their tutors. I would consider it as essential that every tutor knows his/her tutees, and knows (and encourages) their extracurricular interests and involvements'.

A vital question in the promotion of sport in the college, that has cropped up time and time again, is the removal of sporting activities from the student timetables and their replacement with college hours. If our athletes are just about able to manage their lifestyles to balance college and yet be considered to be seriously competitive in sport then why doesn't the college aim to help them in anyway possible? Despite all obstacles UL's competitors still strive on our sporting fields, which bodes well for future Irish stars. 'The condition of athletics in Ireland at this time is good, and improving. All sports in the country are on the up but are there future medal prospects? Professor Hayes seems to think so; 'We have future Olympians here'.

2006- What A Year!

TOMÁS MCCARTHY

WITH Christmas and the New Year I thought it is necessary to look back at the year that was in sport. So after racking my memory here are a selection of highlights, lowlights and a few headbutts thrown in for good measure!

Rugby

- Munster's magnificent Heineken Cup victory over Biarritz in Cardiff to finally become kings of Europe. Who can forget Stringer scampering around Betsen for that glorious try? This was definitely the sporting highlight of 2006. It was an unforgettable journey including the hammering of Leinster at Lansdowne Road. Sweet!
- Another Triple Crown secured for Ireland after Shane Horgan's last-minute try in the corner to squeeze past the English at Twickenham.
- Leinster's display of flair and outstanding back play to destroy Biarritz in the Heineken Cup quarter-final. Come on we have to give them some credit.
- Brian O'Driscoll's pass to set up Shane Horgan for Ireland's final try against South Africa.
- New Zealand's continuing dominance of world rugby and doing it in style.

Soccer

- Barcelona giving Chelsea a lesson in football in the last 16 of the Champions League. Samuel Eto'o scored the winner to secure a 2-1 win on a ploughed up Stamford Bridge.
- Fabio Cannavaro almost single-handedly steering Italy to the World Cup with a series of sterling defensive displays.
- The number of stunning goals in the World Cup. Think of Tomas Rosicky against the USA, Torsten Frings against Chile, Joe Cole against Sweden, the list is endless.
- Derry City and St Pats serving up probably the best FAI Cup Final ever. On a windy December Sunday Derry emerged victorious 4-3 after extra-time coming from behind three times.
- Portsmouth's miraculous escape from relegation with Harry Redknapp again working his magic.
- The emergence of strikers. Kevin Doyle at Reading and Anthony Stokes at Falkirk the two best things to happen to Irish soccer this year.
- Roy Keane's appointment at Sunderland. Full credit to him for turning relegation fodder into play-off contenders.

GAA

- Kieran Donaghy. The beanpole basketball player turned into a GAA summer sensation at full forward for Kerry.
- Henry Shefflin. This guy just gets better and better. He consistently delivers for Kilkenny on the big day and is now the best player in the country.
- Mayo v Dublin in the All-Ireland semi-final. Thrills and spills from start to finish. Right from the very start with the dispute on Hill 16 this game was a thriller. Mayo made an amazing second-half comeback to pip the Dubs. Ciaran McDonald curling a glorious winner under the Hogan Stand to secure a one point win.
- Eoin Kelly's one man shows in the Munster Championship. 0-14 against Limerick and 2-9 against Waterford speaks for itself.
- Ger Loughnane taking charge of Galway. At last some excitement in the hurling world.

Other Notable Achievements

- Europe's demolition of USA in the Ryder Cup at the K Club.
- Pdraig Harrington finally claiming the European Order Of Merit. A richly deserved accolade given his hard luck stories down the years.
- Derval O'Rourke claiming a silver medal at the European Championships.

Disasters

- After so much hype Brazil failed to deliver at the World Cup.
- The All-Ireland Football Final. It was over after 20 minutes.
- Zinedine Zidane's act of madness to headbutt Marco Materazzi and get sent off on the biggest stage in football, the World Cup Final.
- The International Rules. This was an absolute disgrace not a sporting contest at all and must now be scrapped.
- Tyrone v Dublin in the National League renamed 'The Battle Of Omagh'. A display of the growing indiscipline in the GAA, it should have been called off.
- Cyprus 5 Republic Of Ireland 2.



Peter Hutton of derry
FAI trophy 06

Magic Numbers

TOMÁS MCCARTHY

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| <p>0 The number of swear words used in the first podcast of 'Give It A Lash'. Well done George.</p> <p>1 Liverpool recorded their first away win of the season crushing Wigan at the JJB. It's too little too late for Liverpool as it is now December. They now find themselves 16 points behind Man United in the table. 16 points, Mannix!</p> | <p>3 The number of Southend supporters who flocked to The Arena Sportsbar for their historic win over Man United.</p> <p>8 Crossmaglen and Ballinderry could only muster 8 points between them in their Ulster Club Football Final. The final score was 0-5 to 0-3 in favour of Crossmaglen.</p> <p>11 Anthony Stokes has notched an incredible 11 goals for Falkirk to make him top scorer in the SPL.</p> | <p>15 the largest number of Leinster ladyboys on the pitch at any one time</p> <p>26 Out-half Paddy Wallace struck 26 points in a man of the match display against the Pacific Islands. Still not good enough though to fill O'Gara's shoes in my book.</p> <p>65 It was the story of the 65s when Erin's Own lost to Toomevara in the Munster Club Hurling Final. Erin's Own were</p> | <p>denied a 65 at one end in the dying minutes while seconds later Ken Dunne converted a 65 to give Toome victory by a point.</p> <p>60,000 The salary Henrik Larsson will reportedly earn when he joins Man United during the January transfer window. Talk about grand larssony at its peak!</p> |
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Liverpool: A Reappraisal



BY PATRICK MANNIX
SPORTS EDITOR

IN the last issue of this paper an article was published criticising Liverpool's season so far. Firstly the article claimed there was much hype about Liverpool's title challenge during the pre-season. This comment was true but this hype was only created by a blood-thirsty, ill-informed media.

Rafa Benitez

It is easy to see why the Spaniard is idolised. Benitez has delivered four trophies to Anfield in two years. Chelsea is the only team in England who can compete with this haul recently. The article claimed that Benitez does not know his best side. This is only a statement led by media discussion over the last year. Of course Benitez knows his best team, it's just he makes the lives of media pundits harder as they can't guess his line-up. As for the gelling of the squad and the rotation of

the strikers and Gerrard, the Liverpool defence was the best defence in the Premiership last season which shows a clear bond of communication between the players. Crouch was only bought by Benitez to provide a different option away from home. Therefore his most prolific pair is Kuyt and Bellamy and this was proved against Wigan in a 4-0 drubbing.

Poor Signings

Liverpool has not made poor signings this summer. It was claimed that Agger, Pennant, Aurelio, and Gonzalez were by no means world class. Agger was a magnificent buy and is proving to be a strong contender for young player of the year and will be a good replacement for Hyypia. The others were not big name signings but in the long run will make good squad players. Benitez's signings such as Alonso, Sissoko, Reina and Bellamy were not mentioned which means that he must be doing something right. As for signing Duff and Johnson, Benitez was right not to read the papers over the summer and do his own business. Duff has been a flop since his second season at Chelsea and Johnson started well but has faded away into the backroom behind others like Kevin Doyle.

Steven Gerrard

Firstly, Gerrard has not struggled this season. This accusation was made on the basis he hasn't scored enough goals. Gerrard can score from anywhere. Most of his 20 goals last season were from the right-wing even though he's a central midfielder. Imagine him in the centre all the time. Throughout Liverpool's great cup runs Gerrard came up against some of the best midfield players such as Nedved, Makelele, Vieri even Keano himself and has come out on top on numerous occasions.

Strikers

Robbie Fowler was bought to act as a mentor figure by Benitez, not to bank 20 goals a season. Crouchie wasn't bought for his golden boots but for his annoyance to defenders away from home. With tradition comes knowledge and Liverpoolians will never make comparisons to a Kop legend like Kenny Dalglish unless it's well observed. Kuyt is very similar to the Scotsman and was

an astute signing by Benitez and will yet form a formidable partnership with Bellamy. As for Bellamy, he can now settle down and concentrate on football and Wigan are testimony to the flying Welshman's pace. Liverpool has more options in attack compared to their title rivals, more options in the sense that they can adapt to any of the Spaniards changing tactics. I'd much prefer Kuyt or Crouch to the bemoaning Drogha.

Away Form & Weak Defence

One sentence says it all.

Liverpool's low position in the league at the start of December is only because they have played all their hard games at this early stage of the season. They were bound to lose points at United, Chelsea, Arsenal and Bolton away. Obviously they weren't meant to lose all these key games but at least these are out of the way and Liverpool at home is a formidable team. Starting with Arsenal in the FA Cup, key ground can be made up in the title race. December and April are key months for the Reds where they can build up a consecutive run of wins

against the minnows at home. They have started well with a 4-0 drubbing of Wigan away from home. Defence is a bit shaky but with the arrival of the 'Great Dane' Agger they can build once again a lean, mean defence. As for away form, the Champions League shows that this is only a myth. Two wins away from home, qualification secured and only one goal conceded so far. Liverpool in trouble? Doesn't sound like it.

Celebration after 2nd vs Villa



The Stevie G Affair

TOMMY TUOHY

WITH Liverpool recently enduring a difficult period in the league, pressure has mounted on Rafa Benitez to restore captain fantastic Steven Gerrard to his preferred position of centre midfield. The English press have been particularly vociferous in their demand for the man they affectionately refer to as Stevie G to be moved into the centre. Benitez has been slow to break up the midfield axis of Alonso and Sissoko which served the

team so admirably last season. However, injury struck the club's best two midfielder which forced Benitez to give Gerrard another shot in the middle. Gerrard's recent half decent performances in the middle have led some pundits to lavish yet more undeserved praise on the self-proclaimed midfield dynamo.

Firstly, it must be noted that Gerrard is an extremely talented footballer. He has all the attributes that are needed to be a world class player, except one: a brain. Gerrard plays the midfield role in a manner that suits no one but

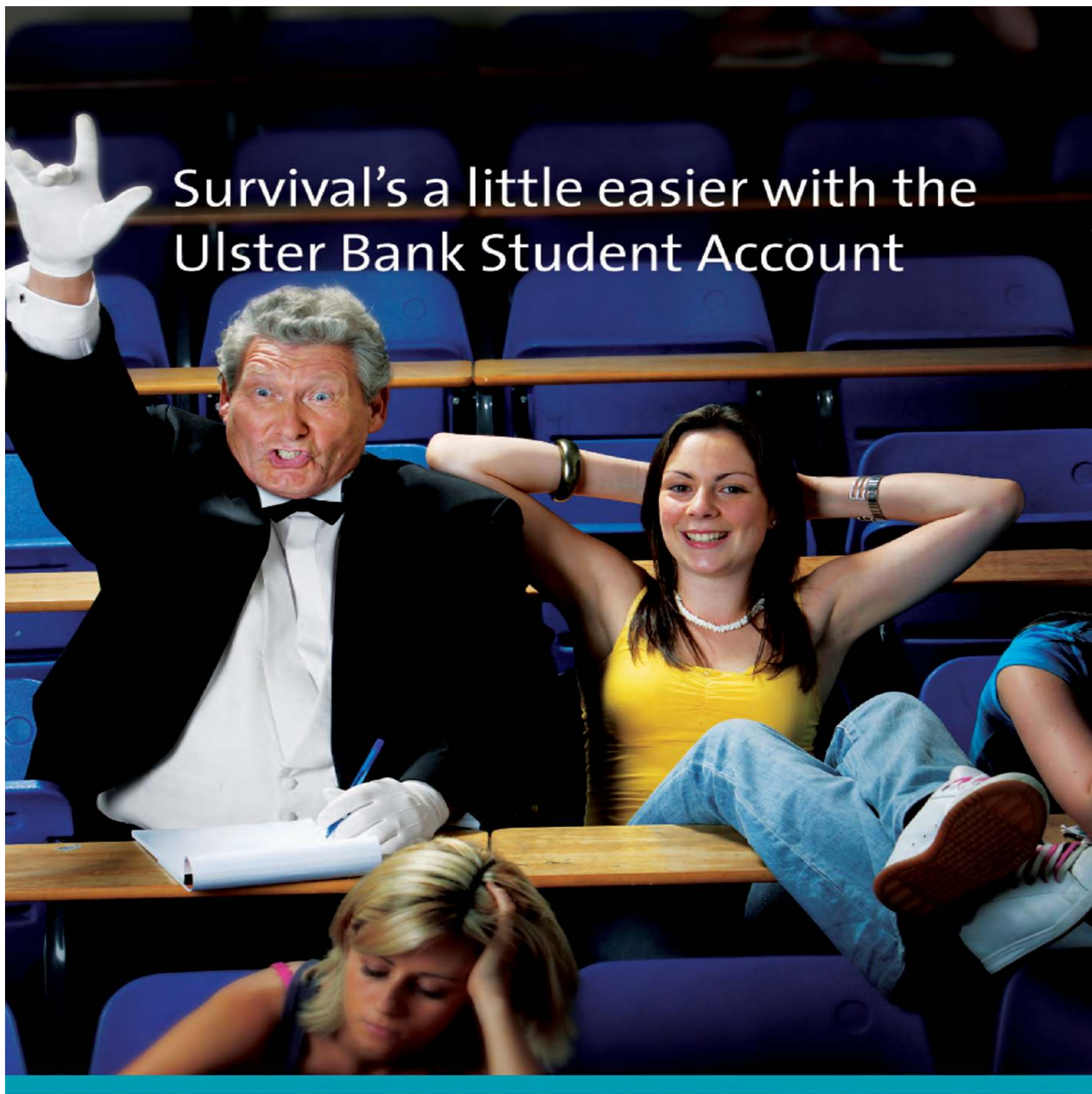
himself. While considered by many pundits clad in their best three lions' attire to be the complete midfielder, this is far from the truth. Not defence-minded enough to play in the 'Makelele' role in front of the back four; he also does not have the guile necessary to the play in the hole behind the striker. This leaves the manager in a very difficult position as the free role with no responsibilities is undoubtedly the role that suits him best. Gerrard maintains his best position is in the middle and all his media buddies such as Andy Gray

and Alan Hansen are more than happy to nod their heads in agreement with England's great white hope. They are quick to criticise Benitez and his Spanish ways despite somehow managing to win the European cup with the worst team since, well, Porto.

But this would all be acceptable if it were not for one thing; Gerrard's attitude. When under Houllier's wing Stevie G was in his element, basically doing as he pleased. Houllier cleverly understood the fans' misplaced admiration for the player and proceeded to strip Hyypia of the

captaincy in favour of Gerrard. Gerrard loved the favourite son approach adopted by Houllier. He was in for a shock when Rafa took over the reigns. Here came a real manager with one aim, to win trophies for the club. He made it clear that it was the team and not Gerrard that would take centre stage. Clashes between the two have taken place with Benitez having a clear preference for Alonso's style of play and it seemed as if a move to Chelsea was imminent the season before last. Gerrard claimed that the club could not match his ambition and Benitez did not seem overly concerned about his departure. Unfortunately the move fell through and we had to endure his ego for yet another season. Gerrard's attitude was best

highlighted when he scored a goal against an average team in the league last year and he ran to the crowd pointing at his chest repeating the word 'me' in a fashion similar to Thierry Henry. Perhaps he would have been better served not to score against such average opposition and actually put in a performance against quality opposition. An attempt to control the game would be appreciated against real opponents when it matters. But as the man says himself in what the News Of The World described as the most explosive book of the decade, in reference to being handed the number nine shirt for an England game, 'Talk about pressure. That's a recipe for me being destroyed'. I could not have put it better myself.



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