

STUDENTS' UNION



University of Limerick

*an Focal*

University of Limerick Students' Union

# Committee to Review Honours Education Degrees

**A committee is to be established to review awarding of honours education degrees based on teaching practice grades**

**Declan Quinn and  
Duncan O'Toole  
report**

At a recent Academic Programme Review committee, the Students' Union called on the University to establish a

committee to review the plight of final year students in the college of Education. There are students in their final year with QCA's that ordinarily would warrant honours degrees being prevented from being awarded honours degrees because of what the Students' Union describe as an "unfair misrepresentative regulation". The regulation says that anyone who

fails to be awarded an honours in teaching practice will not be awarded an honours degree. The proposal to set up a review committee was supported by the committee (Chaired by the University Registrar) and it was requested that the committee have representation from the Students' Union C.E.O. and Student Teacher Officer as well as relevant faculty members.

The real problem is that if a student only achieves a pass grade on T.P., then he/she may only qualify with a pass degree despite whatever Q.C.A. they are on. Due to Teaching Practice being weighted 12, this particularly affects grades of C or C+'s. The Students' Union has already heard of a few cases where student teachers got a C+ grade (this grade is not regarded as honours in teaching) on teaching practice and have a Q.C.A. of greater than 2.7, despite this they will be unable to graduate with an honours degree. Is it fair that these students should only graduate with a pass degree?

For many students of education their degree is only a stepping stone to a different career many of which are not

## Strut Your Stuff on the Street!!

*by Lorna Kerin, Deputy President*

Add the Belltable Arts Centre, Kick up the Arts and Limerick Corporation together and the end product is a delicious, daring concoction known as 'The Umbrella Project'. It's purpose of existence is to provide Limerick with an indigenous street theatre company, using the medium of street theatre and they want YOU! So what's it all about? Turn to page 5 and find out inside

Week 3  
Semester 2 '96

Wedding  
Day Blues

Artsing



# News

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## University Legislation: Who speaks for Whom?

by Brian Synnott

This is an update on the issue of the proposed university legislation. The serious implications for UL were outlined in this newspaper before Christmas. If the legislation goes through unaltered the democratic ethos of the university will be undermined. You may remember that one of the key issues is that of the separation of powers between management and the governing body of this institution. The opportunity for objective, representative, policy initiatives is lost to a narrowly focused management driven core.

So what is the current state of play? The governing body has overwhelmingly rejected the proposals and this strong stance has been conveyed to the Minister for Education. But what of Academic Council? If you have been reading An Focal over the last few years you will be aware that this august body has, on numerous occasions, been the bane of the students' union. Many a time has it shown itself to be obsessed with management minutiae rather than forecasting the wider implications of its actions. So what exactly was the opinion expressed on the legislation. With the exception of the SU there was barely a whimper of protest. Only two or three of the thirty or so staff present raised their heads to speak against. So what? Where is the significance in that you may ask. The key point is that a petition calling for changes to the legislation has been signed by over 400 staff, many of whom were at the

meeting. Also a staff gathering in the concert hall attracted over 200 people, again including many present at council. So why didn't people speak out. Was it a coincidence that the meeting was chaired by the president of the university-Dr Ed Walsh? This is where the issue crystallises. It is precisely this blurring of the distinction between management and proper representation that could lead to serious damage for the university.

### Presidential Spindoctoring

As the chair of Academic council can be such an influential position it is important that there are checks to control abuse. At present the governing body fulfils this role. Dr Walsh used the chair to outline 'his interpretation' of the document. This painted a very optimistic view of life under the

Breathneach plans. Precisely the same tactic had been used at the governing body but the huge difference was there was an independent chair. When Dr Walsh finished at Academic council there was a deafening silence of acquiescence. At governing body the chairman listened patiently and then used the memorable phrase; 'that's all very well, now lets talk about the document.'

The question is one of whether this university wants an open policy approach. Does this institution have confidence in itself to reflect the views of all its members or do they have to be told what is good for them. Shades of the Scott report!?

The situation is not helped when individuals state objections nationally rather than joining in the internal debate first. It is time to overcome the vanguard mentality of management and embrace the views of those who work and study in UL.

## Rag Co-Ordinators Picked

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# Rag Co-Ordinators Picked

This year, so huge is the task of organising Rag Week '96 in UL, that two co-ordinators have been assigned to be chained to the task for the next seven weeks. The lucky Mr and Mrs Rag Week team are Keith Pigott, 2nd Business, and Ruth Scott, 4th European Studies.

Holy rags! TWO co-ordinators??!! Yup, as if one screaming lunatic in Rag Week (excluding drunks) wasn't enough these two are already working flat out at bringing you bigger, brighter, ballsier eh, briallianter (?) rag week. And if you think that you are going to be lucky enough to be all squashed together whilst partying on-campus, then you'll have to redefine your mating plans because this year Rag Week is not only going to include the Stables Club and the courtyard but there are definite plans to put a marquee out at the sundial. Catering for the increase in the student population and for all the visiting hoardes means tighter security so that things dont start to resemble a bad-cheese-X-files Christmas Day kind of nightmare situation. This marquee will essentially mean that there will be two stages which - wait for it - will double the craic!

There's going to be twice as much going on.

Of course there'll be the regulars of the boat-racing, sumo-wrestling, tug-of-war, yard of ale, bonny babies, wine drinking, food-eating and the greasy pole but heads have been put together to come up with even more ideas to raise money for six charities which are in the process of decided on.

Last years theme days went so well that the idea is going to be kept on and developed. How about Thursday night in the Carribean Castletroy style? Friday in America? Ideas for other days are being tossed around and the biggest change will probably involve moving activities into town on Saturday finishing off the week with a mini carnival on Cruises St. and O'Connell St.

Booze cruise, Rag Train, bungee jumping, the possibilities are endless. We want your ideas too because much and all as we'd like to design the ideal Ruth & Keith week Rag Week is there to be enjoyed and if you know what you like then tell us and maybe we can do something about it.

Start saving those pennies!



# Brians Comment

This week I'd like to outline some of the plans for this semester. As I have commented elsewhere the university legislation issue is still of paramount importance. Although the timetable is vague it is still a very real possibility that the document will pass through the Oireachtas unchanged. It would be a disaster for students if this were to transpire. That is why it is important to keep the issue alive.

Regarding the Law issue there is a meeting on Friday in the student centre between representatives of each of the five unions (UL, UCC, DCU, UCG, TCD) to decide what action to take.

Week 5 sees the last UGM of the year so we hope to make it a hat-trick of quorate meetings. The thorny issue of our constitution will finally be tackled.

Be sure to catch the comedy nights in the Stables in week 3 and don't forget that there will be comedy videos each day in the student centre.

Ongoing projects include the "outlining" of the SU and most importantly a feasibility study on a new student centre.

Lastly, watch out for Rag week in week 9. Congratulations to Keith and Ruth who will do an excellent job.



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# PZAZZ

It's new and it exciting. At last, Pzazz, which is situated in Foxes Bow, in the heart of Limerick City has arrived. Pzazz specialises in hand crafted sterling silver and 100% bronze jewellery. Of the large range of stock here in Pzazz has been made in Limerick,

Cork, Clare, Galway and Mayo. This beautifully handcrafted jewellery retains certain uniqueness in that each piece is stocked to a limit of 2 to 3 pieces each.

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now.**

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# Strut Your Stuff on the Street!!

continued

The following is an interview with Brid Finn, one of the founding members of The Umbrella Project.

Me: So what is 'The Umbrella Project'?

Brid: It's an exciting attempt to get as many different types of people involved in Street Theatre. Street Theatre, as distinct from dramatic theatre, is more accessible for a variety of reasons. Performers or participants can select their own level to work at. Some people work full-time on several projects, others work on just one, others just chip in for the day and maybe others want to take a back seat and just steward on the day. Because of the sheer numbers that are needed for an Umbrella Project event, (sometimes up to 400 people) there's something for everyone to do.

What kind of weird and wild projects have you done in the past?

Brid: The first one was St. Patrick's Day parade which was a preview of the large scale parade as part of Limerick Paddy Expo. In all, 250 people took part in the Expo parade. Along with the fireworks designed by the Theatre of Fire, the enthusiasm of all those that took part made the parade a huge success. We've also been involved in events like Felle Brian Boru, which was a day long pageant of medieval style encampments climaxing in the staging of a battle between Boru's warriors and the Danes. In November we transformed St Mary's Cathedral by designing and producing the set for Island Theatre Company's production of Hamlet.

What type of people get involved?

Brid: All types of people. We've had 4 year old kids and 64 year olds adults. It's a great opportunity to meet so many different types of people that you probably wouldn't in the normal course of your daily life. We've worked with people from Rehab, the Limerick Travellers Group, St. Lella's children etc. Taking part is a great social leveller. Meeting with others and sharing a common experience is a

vital component of the whole experience of the Umbrella Project. In fact, it's the very essence of the word, isn't it, to bring together diverse elements under one umbrella. And that's what we're doing on an organisational level, in terms of the VEC representing the educational, the Belltable symbolising the Arts and the Limerick Corporation representing the political strand.

So what's next?

Brid: We've got the St. Patrick's Day Parade coming up and we want to give UL students a chance to get involved. It's such a great feeling being out there on the street, everyone's shopping and watching and clapping and there we are creating a lot of colour and excitement and fun for free!!!! Hopefully, students will dip into and learn things and skills that they never have before. It's a great confidence builder 'cos hundreds of people are looking at you and you don't give a shit! You're just too busy banging a drum or juggling or dancing or stilt walking or pushing a float or fire-breathing or whatever it is you're doing!!

So what kind of people, of students, are you looking for?

Brid: Enthusiasm is the most important quality that's needed. Everything else can be learnt! We do it to have fun, but at the same time it's vital to realise that if you give a commitment, you need to keep it. You could be doing anything from designing and making costumes, floats, sets or you could be a percussionist with a steel bin or a king in a chair or a singing mechanic or a wild warrior or anything the imagination can come up with!

So if people were to get involved, would you be conducting workshops?

Brid: Previously we've been involved in workshops on dance and percussion. We would hope to contin-

ue through with a string of such happenings. Indeed we would welcome any suggestions people may have on topics for workshops or experts to host them.

Who provides the funding for the Umbrella Project's productions?

Brid: The core members are the Belltable, the VEC and the Corporation. Can I do a quick plug here for FAS and how grateful we are to them for their support?

You just have. So how do students contact you to let you know they're interested?

Brid: Basically they just fill out one of our 'Umbrella Project' forms, available on the information stand in the main UL Canteen. The forms ask you what you're interested in doing, what you're experienced at, what you want to learn, how much time do you want to spend etc. You leave us a contact address or number and then we form a data base of names and contact you! Alternatively, you could contact the Belltable and ask for someone from the 'Umbrella Project'.

Finally, why would you urge students to get involved?

Brid: In essence it's a FUN, sociable, flexible, learning experience that doesn't require a huge time commitment. Sure, what more could students want?

## A Br

Hello boys and girls!

Well Blaithin is sick today so had to drop by to give you all some moral"ish" guidance from the Venus room.

The fact is, Kiddies that m



# U.L. isn't so bad?

The Erasmus experience.

Mike Neylen reports from Extremadura in Spain.

As students it is in our nature to both have problems, financial and otherwise, and to complain about them. That may be considered as pretty much universal.

This year, like many others, I am away from Limerick on Erasmus, spending (theoretically at least) the year studying (?) and learning Spanish in Cáceres, Spain.

Similar to Limerick, Cáceres has a large student population of roughly eight thousand, which is split between the various faculties. The Arts faculty, where I am "studying", has about two thousand students and a lot of problems. The university as a whole is rather short of resources, and as usual the Art's faculty's budget is the one that gets the biggest cut, rather like in Limerick. However, in Limerick, though things may be tough, resources are maximised, which is not the case here. Why?

Unlike Irish universities, such as Limerick, Spanish universities do not have anything which would bear a resemblance to the S.U. They do have "student representatives", but nobody I've spoken to has been able to tell me what they do. The general impression is that they are only "representatives" of themselves, and most definitely not of the student body as a whole. They held elections here just before Christmas and none of the foreign students were able to vote! So much for democracy! The elections were so badly organised that nobody seemed to know who the candidates were, with candidates for Law appearing in Veterinary lists and vice-versa.

As for the institution itself.....

The faculty library has just about every single book a student could ever need. However it is practically impossible to use them. Apart from the fact that they are yet to computerise the catalogue, and one has to refer to awkward

and badly organised index cards, the system itself is awful. During the week it is possible to take out two books at a time, but these must be returned by lunchtime, when it closes. In the afternoon you can, of course, take out the same two books but they must be returned by closing time in the evening! "we are "allowed" to take books out at the weekend, but only one".

The end result, for the majority of students, is either to spend every waking hour outside classtime in the library or else to buy or photocopy the relevant texts. Never let it be said that Limerick's library is the best in the world. but it is far from the worst! However all the students seem to complain about is teachers borrowing books, the rest of the system stinks but nobody says anything.

Another beautiful example of the organisation here are the exams coming up in February. Similar to Limerick they are in the process of introducing semesterisation, which so far has only been introduced for first and second years. Those of us who are taking subjects from third, fourth or fifth year will thus be getting "unofficial" holidays for most of the month of February. Officially at least the

"university doesn't have enough space for both classes and exams, so they've decided to axe the classes".

In reality they probably could resolve the problem and use some of the space that they've actually abandoned, but as nobody says anything.....?

So what can I do? As an Erasmus student who doesn't matter to them I guess I'm being treated in pretty much the same way as they treat their own. I only wish that they would wake up and do something.

The point I'm trying to make is twofold;

1. Limerick may not be as bad as it seems to be.
2. The Students'Union, or any other representative body are essential.

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## Irish Universities Windsurfing Championships Dromineer 1996



### *Members of the Windsurfing Club and Student Heineken Rep. launching plans for the intervarsities*

The 1996 National Heineken Irish Universities Windsurfing Championships are being hosted for the second time by the University of Limerick Windsurfing Club. The competition will again be held in Dromineer - a well established and beautifully scenic windsurfing spot on the shores of Lough Derg, about three miles from Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. The event takes place over the weekend 23rd to 25th February 1996 and coincides with ULWC's 10th Anniversary reunion.

The competition involves three categories of competition, B-Fleet and Novice, encompassing every level of windsurfer from the beginner to the professional. All prizes for the events have been very generously sponsored by Heineken.

The event itself involves five Universities from all over the country; UL, UCC, UCD, DCU, Trinity and for the first time ever, the Royal College of Surgeons. This is the largest windsurfing event of the year with an estimated entry over 100. Racing will be held over the afternoons of Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th. Based on previous experience and providing that the weather holds up we expect a large turnout of local spectators to watch this exciting and colourful event.

Accommodation for the weekend will be provided by the Waterside Cottages, the newly refurbished Dromineer Bay Hotel and the Ottaway Lodge and Chalets. With full food and board and nightly entertainment arranged, especially the Heineken Roadshow on Saturday night we trust

the event will run smoothly and be thoroughly enjoyed by all.

This event also coincides with the University of Limerick Windsurfing Club's 10th year anniversary since its foundation. In celebration of this, past racers and members of ULWC will travel from far and wide back to their old windsurfing haunt. The reunion of these learned experts should add to the overall entertainment of the weekend.

Our sincere thanks goes to Heineken for their kind and generous support that has made this event possible.

For more information  
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