

# Gregory Shiel's Manifesto for UL Student Life President

My name is Gregory Shiel, and I am asking for your vote to be elected as the student president for the Academic Year 2025/2026.

*YOUR UNIVERSITY, YOUR REPRESENTATION*

## ***SHIEL TO SEAL THE DEAL***

I'm a 23 year old from Tullamore, Offaly. I'm in my final year of study as an undergraduate in BSc. Music, Media and Performance Technology. I came to UL for its reputation for the student experience, much to my surprise I grew in all aspects of my life. I loved my time in the university and would love an opportunity to give back and work as hard as I can to improve and maintain the student experience and university integrity.

Throughout my time here in UL, I was involved in a lot of volunteering. This spans from Clubs and Societies to The Great Limerick Run. During my time here I joined a number of Clubs and Societies, Boxing, CES and Music, even rugby for a number of weeks in second year! However I always had an affection to the UL Music Society. I became the Head of DJs and then the president of the society. During my first year as the chairperson, I earned the 'Most Improved Society' award at the Clubs and Societies Awards and got an opportunity to represent the university at the Board of Irish College Societies, which is the equivalent to recognising the contribution at a national level. What I loved about being the chairperson of the music society was the ability to grow the UL Music Society (ULMS) community, the ability to volunteer my time and create a welcoming environment for all while teaching DJs. I was also the first to organise a female only line-up on 'Techno Tuesday'. Equality and creating welcoming environments is one of my core beliefs. I strongly believe in equality of opportunity.

Complimentary to my experience with the UL Wolves, I'm also the Student Affairs Councillor on the student council. I put myself forward for this role in September. It was at this point I was considering the UL Student Life Presidency role. I wanted to learn about how the system works and to see if I could fit into it. I know it's a job I can do, but not only do, but do *exceptionally*. I have plenty experience in negotiation as the ULMS Chairperson, from financial to grievance negotiation. As your president I will stand my ground to represent the student body for causes I believe in, these are outlined in my manifesto below.

## Accommodation & Student Support

Now, the biggest issue that faces the university and our community is the overcrowding of students. However, the university is being forced by the government to expand student population. I will lobby the government to ensure there is no student population growth without adequate accommodation and parking systems put in place to handle the surge. I will also continue the work of Ronan's commuter hub by expanding this in the new student centre with a bigger budget, allowing this to run everyday Monday-Friday. I will establish a **Student Support Forum for Accommodation Issues**, giving students leverage against landlords and ensuring fair treatment. Regardless of paying rent 'off the books' or being registered with the RTB. I will work with UL to **create an official, university-backed accommodation support hub**, centralising the student supports, accommodation sites, emergency support and resources available both on and off campus, not only this I will ensure this information is easily accessible making it a top priority for appearing on the UL Student Life channels as well as the official university channels. The primary priority to deal with the current crisis is **lobbying the government** to increase funding for higher education institutions to prevent growth without adequate student housing.

## Prioritising the Student Experience

I have had the opportunity to work closely with the events and entertainment team in the university during my time on the ULMS committee. I have also worked with the bars on campus too where I ran a number of events. I hear you, I know everything is too expensive. I will work with these venues to ENSURE we see a rise in student numbers at these events. I promise to constantly interact with the student body to grow these events into what you want them to be.

I promise to work with on-campus venues to provide entertainment throughout the year. Whether this be 'Techno Tuesday' returning or providing live music every week of the semester, I will ensure this takes place. I will work closely with the campus bars to ensure fair and reasonable pricing. Should the situation continue to worsen I will re-enact Maeve Rutledge's price freeze on campus.

Where possible, we will work with our local student businesses to grow our community and ensure fair pricing for quality produce.

## Safety & Inclusion for All Students

For the students that are on campus, my top priority is keeping everyone safe, regardless of demographic. My role as the Student Affairs Officer has lead me to understanding the difficulty that students with disabilities face on a daily basis through my work with the Student Affairs and the Disability Services in the university. Ensuring there is an equality of opportunity for all students is an absolute top priority. Following up on Ronan's work, I want to keep security active and responsive around campus, keep all areas well lit, ensure all of the security checkpoints are working through **randomised testing**. I want to continue the work Dervla Ryan is doing with offering workshops for clubs and societies to establish safe student-led social spaces for all groups, ensuring inclusive events and environments. Where this be your majority student groups or minority groups, everyone deserves an opportunity to express themselves. Where needs be, integrating these resources to the relevant university branches to expose members to professional guidance.

One of the major issues that young adults face is the influence of illicit drugs, while I know the problem cannot be overcome, I will absolutely ensure that students have access to confidential services to help when in need and I will also tackle this problem through education, following up on much of the work previously carried out from previous presidents.

### **Cost of Living & Student Welfare**

As mentioned earlier, I will lobby the government to improve student parking, and transport accessibility. Keeping the pressure on for the public transport infrastructure we use every day in Castletroy. This is vital to ensure our students can study to their absolute potential. I will ensure to hold UL Student Life accountable to our initiatives addressing the challenges that students face and bring to us due to the cost of living.

Commuter students – many of you are not commuting by choice and you have every right to be angry. I will enter negotiations to abolish the on campus parking fees during term time class hours, having students pay for parking after already paying exorbitant rent and living expenses is **unacceptable** in the current cost of living crisis.

There has been some brilliant work from our student presidents over the past number of years when it came to the Food Philosophy and the vendor selection in the university. I will work to keep this work consistent by working towards providing accessible, reasonable food options for all students, whether this be vegan, vegetarian or halal food options, with current options being extremely limited. I will ensure food services remain student-focused.

I will work closely with the diversion and inclusivity officer to work on an improved accommodation system. The unfortunate reality of the accommodation crisis is unless you are aware of a student vacating their room you are out of luck. Revamping StudentPad so that landlords are drawn to advertising on StudentPad is my main priority. I will launch a full investigation into this to see if this is the best option for the landlords and students in the community.

### **Academic & Extracurricular Support**

The UL student experience is so essential for our community in the university, as a ‘big 5’ university (TCD, UG, UM, UCC, UL) I believe we should be outperforming our peers with the state of the art faculties we have on campus. I plan on achieving this by putting forward a motion to recognise **I-Grades for Clubs & Societies Contribution** - recognizing excellence in extracurricular involvement as an essential part of student life and ensuring that students are not academically penalized for active participation in improving the student experience is a top priority for me.

**Supporting Emerging Talent & Student Events:** From my experience running events both inside and outside of the university I know we have a lot of emerging talent that simply does not get the opportunity it needs to prosper. I want to engage with local businesses both on and off campus to highlight this. I will work closely with the Events and Entertainment officers to ensure we get **budget friendly events**. I will ensure that funding is transparent, especially for Charity week. I will use my experience in event planning from ULMS and external ventures to create new opportunities for students to showcase their skills, whether this be charity week events or term time events.

I want to review the AI ethics on academia in the university. I believe AI is to be used as a tool and should not be seen as an entirely negative method in academia. Similar to managing illicit substance abuse, AI can be managed effectively through education. I will ensure the university engages in large language model training as well as providing this for students. If we compare the influence of the internet on academics before it was available and widely adopted, covid would have shut down an entire academic year if not two of university operations. Integrating AI into students practice prepares them for the real world and future-proofs our education.

### **Why Vote Greg?**

I'm running because I have a **genuine passion** for improving UL and making student life better. I've been deeply involved in student organizations, event planning, and advocacy, and I know how to **get things done**. With my leadership, we'll ensure UL students have the support, opportunities, and resources they deserve. **Let's make it happen together!**

**Vote Gregory Shiel for UL Student Life President 2025/26!**

Issued by Lisa Fallon, campaign manager for Gregory Shiel.