THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

**Irish Section**

**Section Honorary Officers**

**CHAIRPERSON SECRETARY TREASURER**

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## Annual Section Meeting

**1.30 pm, 15th June 2023**

**Douglas Hyde Lecture Theatre, TUS Athlone**

1. Professor Alison Gallagher noted that the minutes from the 2022 Nutrition Society Irish Section ASM had been circulated in advance of the meeting. No changes were made, and the minutes were approved by Professor Alison Gallagher and seconded by Dr Sharleen O’Reilly.
2. Matters Arising: Actions from minutes: acted upon or part of current agenda as ongoing action.
3. Officer’s Reports:

a. Treasurer’s Report:

Dr. Kirsty Pourshahidi noted that the accounts showed a healthy balance, with £ 8,094.96 in the Sterling account and € 20,212.51 in the Euro account as of 6th June 2023. Dr. Pourshahidi also thanked all local organising teams who successfully secured sponsorship for recent meetings which has supported our Irish Section activities. It was added later by Professor Mary Ward, that this was to be commended given the current economic climate.

**Bursaries**

The Irish Section are pleased to have been able to support 25 bursaries in 2022, collectively worth over £/€10k.

Dr. Kirsty Pourshahidi highlighted that during 2022, the continued support from *safe*food facilitated the Irish Section with the flexibility to award 6 *safe*food bursaries allowing attendance at a variety of events, including training courses and conference or webinar attendance.  All applicants have submitted evidence of attendance, receipts, end of visit reports, and have been reimbursed for costs incurred. Funding for the current year is still available (application via main society website). Dr. Pourshahidi expressed her thanks on behalf of the committee to *safe*food for their continued support and flexibility in awarding this funding to our members. Additional thanks were also expressed to *safe*food for making additional bursaries available this year for specific conferences being held on the island of Ireland. KP noted that 2 bursaries are available to attend the upcoming UKCO meeting, 14th-15th September in Belfast in September. Those interested can contact Dr. Pourshahidi or any other member of the committee for details of how to apply.

A total of 3 ENLP bursaries, each to the value of £1000 were offered for participation in ENLP 2023. Awards were gratefully accepted by participants. End of visit reports and proof of attendance are due by early July. Additional travel expenses were also offered for a fourth, newer member.

In 2022, the Irish Section supported a total of 9 students in their attendance at various conferences. For 2023, two different levels of funding were made available, depending on location of the event (in or outside UK/Ireland). The closing date was 31st May 2023, and 14 applications are currently under review.

Dr. Kirsty Pourshahidi reminded the section that funding remains available from the Irish Section for Ambassador Activities to promote membership and wider Society activities (approx. £250/€300 available per institution). Again, to avail of these, members can contact Dr. Pourshahidi or any member of the Irish Section Committee.

It was also noted that the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) dues for the current year have not yet been requested. Finally, Dr. Pourshahidi noted that all bank statements, receipts, invoices, other paperwork and accounts for year end 2022 have been sent to the Nutrition Society for audit and analysis. Professor Alison Gallagher thanked Dr. Pourshahidi for her work overseeing the finances of the society for the year.

b. Membership Report:

Dr. Emma Feeney presented the update on behalf of Dr. Marianne Walsh, Membership Secretary. The Irish Section of the Nutrition Society has a total of 329 members (collated on the 31st May 2023). This is down slightly from last year’s ASM where 346 members were noted. Student and graduate members currently account for approximately 58% of current IS membership. There are 77 NI members and 252 ROI members.

The Members Connect platform continues to be used to share events and opportunities that are relevant to Irish Section members. Since the last meeting, three items were posted on the platform and social media. It was highlighted that engagement with *Members Connect* is low vs. previous email communications strategies.

It was noted that clarity has been sought from the society on how Irish section members were recorded. It was noted that currently, the system only recognises single region membership because it is assigned according to an individual’s postal address. However, if an individual specifically wants to be listed under more than one section, they must request this so that any additional correspondence can be sent to them manually. Members should be encouraged to register using a postal address for the region which matches the section to which they prefer to belong.

To promote membership of the Nutrition Society, Dr. Marianne Walsh contacted Dr Paul Higgins, of Atlantic Technical University, Letterkenny, in March, to share the Membership Benefits infographics, news of the upcoming conference in Athlone and a membership discount code for students. Unfortunately, no new student members availed of the code. It is hoped that new initiatives on student membership will encourage more new members to join.

C. Secretary’s Report:

Dr. Emma Feeney expressed congratulations to Professor Mary Ward as incoming President of the Society, and extended thanks to Professor Julie Lovegrove for all her efforts and dedication to the society over the last number of years. It was noted that considerable discussion has taken place around society sponsorship, and it was highlighted that the council is currently updating their policy on this. A consultation process with members and sponsors will be held.

Efforts continue on behalf of the society on ways to enhance engagement and increase membership. A recently-conducted survey noted low engagement with Sports and Industry nutritionists in particular. While there was discussion around setting up a Special Interest Group (SIG), on Sports Nutrition, it was felt that more detail is required on what individuals are seeking from Society membership.

Dr. Emma Feeney reminded the section that expressions of interest continue to be sought for member-led meetings (MLMs), for the amount of £2,500 sterling, or less. There was a query on the amounts available for this. It was confirmed that the society can support up to £2,500 sterling per meeting, but noted others have also sought external sponsorship in addition to the main society support. Professor Alison Gallagher also highlighted that there is an opportunity to submit a paper to *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* following a member led meeting.

Finally, members were also reminded of the upcoming FENS conference in Belgrade later this year (14-17 November). It was highlighted that abstract submission has been extended again, and currently, remains open until 23rd June 2023.

1. Student Representative Update

Maria Wesolowska presented the Student Representative Update on behalf of the Irish Section Student Representatives (Maria Wesolowska and Lisa Kelliher). It was highlighted that the Spring newsletter was distributed to members of the Irish Section mailing list and promoted on Twitter. The issue covered a brief summary of the Irish Section Postgraduate Conference, along with a spotlight for the student prize winners. Upcoming conferences, career and networking events, and The Nutrition Society Academy were all promoted. Data showed that approx. 50% of students engaged with the Newsletter. A further issue is anticipated in early September 2023.

The 2023 Annual Postgraduate Conference was hosted by the School of Food and Nutritional Sciences at University College Cork on 8-10th February. Over 70 delegates attended the conference with 39 postgraduate delegates presenting their work along with four keynote speakers from industry and academia. 3 student engagement prizes were awarded, for Best Question (Oonagh Lyons, FSAI); Best Picture (Rachel Moore, QUB) and Best Tweet (Barbara Bray, MBE, QUB).

Maria Wesolowska and Lisa Kelliher both attended the Nutrition Society student section meeting in May 2023 to provide updates and to discuss involvement strategies. It was agreed to continue the Irish Section Twitter Takeovers on the NS Student Section Twitter account on Monday and Fridays. The student representatives have promoted job openings, events, conferences, webinars, and bursaries online, and will continue to promote bursaries and key events over the upcoming months. It is also intended to introduce Student Representatives and ambassadors in the future months through a newsletter and via a twitter series.

Finally, it was noted that Lisa Kelliher is coming to the end of her term, and Maria Wesolowska expressed thanks on behalf of Lisa to the Irish Section Committee for all the hard work and dedication and noted that it has been a pleasure working with them. Professor Alison Gallagher also thanked Lisa for all her efforts during her time on the committee and wished her well in the future on behalf of the group.

1. Committee Turnover

Outgoing Ordinary Member Professor Mairead Kiely and outgoing Student Representative Lisa Kelliher, were both sincerely thanked by Professor Alison Gallagher for their work, commitment, and dedication to the IS Nutrition Society Committee over the years. It was announced that Dr. Eamon Laird will join the committee as Ordinary member and Cliona Ní Chonnacháin as Student Representative. The new members were warmly welcomed to the committee.

1. Meetings of the Irish Section

The Irish Postgraduate Meeting 2023 was held at the Metropole Hotel in Cork on 8th-10th February, organised locally by Lisa Kelliher, Ursula Leonard, Sarah Kate Walsh and Aidan O’Sullivan, along with academic organisers Dr. Alice Lucey and Professor Mairead Kiely. It was a very successful meeting, with a total of 71 registered attendees, and 39 postgraduate speakers. Professor Alison Gallagher congratulated the team on a successful and lively meeting. Professor Gallagher also congratulated Dr. Patricia Heavey and the team at TUS Athlone for their detailed organisation of the Summer meeting, currently underway. It was noted in particular how relevant the theme is, and how informative the impressive line-up of speakers had been so far. The 2024 Irish Section Nutrition Society postgraduate meeting will also be hosted by TUS Athlone, during February 2024, with final dates still to be confirmed. The local organising committee includes 3 postgraduate students Ciara Goland, Miriam Murphy and Omid Eslami. Dr Geraldine Cuskelly will also support them. Further planning will continue during the summer.

The 2024 Summer meeting was discussed, and it was noted that this will be the Inaugural Annual Summer Conference, replacing the current Summer Conference. This will be a longer-format conference, moving towards a congress-style meeting, with opportunities for other societies to present, alongside the usual Nutrition Society awards and lectures as well. In a change from the older format, the meeting is not affiliated with any particular institution but rather any large conference venue is sought. This restructured Annual Summer Conference will be held in Belfast in 2024, with the local scientific organizing committee chaired by Dr. Anne Nugent and Professor Jayne Woodside. The venue for this meeting has been confirmed as the Assembly Buildings, Belfast, and will be held on 2nd - 5th July 2024. The theme of the conference is confirmed as ‘Nutrition Science in 2024: new data-focused approaches and challenges’. A draft programme has been prepared by the team and is currently taking shape. Oonagh Lyons queried how long the new conference is. Professor Alison Gallagher explained that the duration of the meeting (held over 4 days) would allow for additional symposia and presentations. Professor Woodside confirmed that there are 6 symposia in total.

There was also discussion of the 2025 Irish Section Summer Meeting which will take place in TUD and the local organisers will be Dr Liz O’Sullivan (and Dr Eileen O’Brien). As per convention, the Postgraduate Meeting in 2025 will take place in Belfast, and in 2026 it will be hosted by TUD. Exact dates and organisers for these remain TBC.

1. A.O.B.

No other business was noted.