



Students4Change's Statement on Recent Events and the Way Forward for 2021–2022

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Thank you to Jody Druce from University Times for taking up the issue of broken promises made by Trinity College Dublin re. in-person lectures, and also to Jack Kennedy from Trinity News. Here are a few more thoughts to expand on our Chair's quote in the upcoming UT article and a few general observations on how we should approach the core issues facing us students and wider society, illustrated by the example of Trinity's botched re-opening plan.

Many students are overall disappointed with the low number of in-person lectures, and feel that the University did not communicate clearly and early enough the re-opening plans for the 2021–2022 scholastic year. As of the 12th of September 2021, already 130 signed [our petition](#) asking for partial refunds or some sort of compensation for those affected by the continued delivery of learning material solely online for bigger courses. This is exacerbated by the fact that Trinity's waiting times for counselling services average 40 days, meaning that many stuck at home are left to fend for themselves. These reports of lectures with below 50 people being online-only events come as another blow to students, especially since we were promised the opposite. It is not an administrative error but a conscious policy choice which was changed without much notice, and it is also likely that the seeming ineptitude and the general lack of proper communication originates from Trinity's efforts to safeguard its profits, as otherwise a sizable number of students would have deferred the year in light of the relative lack of in-person teaching. This issue is representative of a larger problem with how Trinity College Dublin views the provision of education and students – as sources of profit – which in turn is symptomatic of decades of commercialization of third-level institutions against the backdrop of successive governments failing to properly fund our universities. The conception of third-level education being for-profit institutions originates in the ruling mode of production, capitalism, and its intensified state, neoliberal policies.

Note that the profit motive is also the reason for the lack of lecture recording. This opposition comes from trade unions. If lectures are recorded and the copyright goes to Trinity (as it would currently do for certain remediable legal reasons), lecturers fear being let go by the University and their own recordings being used to teach instead, which is cheaper – absolutely dystopian. It is important to take away from this that in-person lectures and recorded lectures (for inclusivity reasons) are not mutually exclusive, but are presented to be contradictory due to the fragmented nature of a society lacking class consciousness, wherein issues are atomized so that their true solution is concealed from the masses. This supposed contradiction makes it difficult to advocate for a solution. The only way to unite the struggle is to realize that the ills associated stem from the profit motive, and the conclusion then can only be to overthrow the profit motive and dissolve the contradiction – as “man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life,

and his relations with his kind” (Marx).

This might seem reductionist, but it is a consequence of the momentum of history, not about the individual people in Trinity (or in any other institution) who want to or say they want to provide good education. It is not about the Provost or Management, but about the ruling mode of production which predetermines the victory of capital over individual’s intentions however good they may be in every societal institution. While there are individual variations in the extent of its intensification (spurred on by those in power), the yoke of capital is equally reactionary everywhere and impossible to resist by focusing our efforts *solely* locally. The only way to challenge the system is to challenge capitalism itself, rather than focusing only on fragmented and atomized single-issues and thinking that they are remediable by managerial means, i.e. we need to see the bigger picture. rather than focusing all our energy on this or that individual or policy.

Consequentially, it must also be understood that the way forward is to force the hands of institutions and of the ruling classes - after having exhausted all other means - through direct action (e.g. sit-ins, strikes, occupations, etc.). We need to make some noise and organize, and all organizations need to take part in this united front. For example, for the TCD Students’ Union, this would be an opportunity to provide support for students on the ground organizing, and a chance to prove that the union is not just a passive service provider but an active union which protects its members’ interests. A chance to overthrow the existing cultural and structural DNA of the union... at the moment, we and many other students are disappointed that the union, while negotiating at meetings, is not standing up more strongly for students affected by this issue.

With this in mind, let’s continue the struggle for our Universities and for a better society! We call upon Trinity College Dublin to:

- Apologize to students for the unclear and late communication concerning the re-opening plan, which conveyed a lack of care for students’ needs and a preoccupation with profit.
- Provide more in-person lectures through using TCD’s unused/underused real estate properties to hold classes provided the Covid-19 regulations allow, or alternatively, refund or otherwise compensate students for the loss of their in-person tuition and the educational experience that they paid for.
- Work together with the TCD Students’ Union, trade unions like IFUT and lecturers in addition to lawyers to find a solution for handing over copyright of recorded lectures to lecturers, so as to enact a democratically-approved policy of courses being recorded for inclusivity reasons.
- Increase mental health spending to fix 40+ days wait times at the counselling services instead of relying on the TCD Students’ Union as an arm of the College to make up for the lacking budget.



is an alliance of students from Trinity College Dublin focused on the housing crisis in relation to student accommodation, Irish neutrality, SU reform and other matters of student politics. Go on our website students4change.eu, follow us on social media or email us at contact@students4change.eu!