

## Governing Authority Election 2025: Candidate Profile – Professional support staff



Ananda Geluk  
Student Services

### Candidate Biographical Details / Sonraí Beathaisnéise an Iarrthóra

Growing up in a rural Gaeltacht area from a minority background, becoming the first in my family to attend university, and realising my early-career dream of working with TG4, have given me first-hand experience of the power of education to transform lives. Motivated by a desire to work in a people-focused role, I began my career in student support as an Administrative Assistant with the School of Nursing & Midwifery almost 20 years ago. I joined the Career Development Centre in 2012 and progressed from work placement support to working in personal and professional development by qualifying as a Careers Adviser. My commitment to development also extends to staff – I contribute to the University community through initiatives such as LIFT, the staff mentoring scheme (as mentor and mentee) and, since qualifying as an executive coach, as a staff coach through the staff coaching initiative. I now work in a more central role in Student Services, working to smooth the transition to university for our first-year students as First Year Transitions Manager. I'm passionate about protecting and connecting with nature and I'm actively involved in my local community, working towards the creation of a community woodland in the area.

### Candidate Statement / Ráiteas an Iarrthóra

Bringing the perspective of professional support staff in a student-facing role, I have a 360-view of student experience in our University and would make an invaluable contribution to the University's decision-making processes. In my near 20-year career here, I have collaborated with colleagues across the University and engaged with staff through development initiatives such as LIFT, mentoring, and staff coaching. As such, I am well versed in the challenges and opportunities for professional staff within the University. Moreover, by working directly with our students I have a multi-layered knowledge of student success and a deep understanding of the importance of fostering belonging.

I care deeply about the experience of staff and the experience of our students and, ultimately, I intend to bring this motivation to Údarás to enrich the perspectives at the top table. My background in career development and coaching has given me a professional interest in positive leadership and organisational culture and I'm motivated to work towards positive change and win-win-win outcomes. The ultimate win being a University that functions



efficiently and contributes to the wider region and the world, while supporting its staff and serving its students within a positive organisational culture.

I have seen over the years how systems and processes can impact the staff experience and staff morale, and I intend to bring this awareness to the governance team and contribute to a respectful organisational culture where the experience of both staff and students are considered and valued. I'm confident that I would be a voice on Údarás that would represent perspectives and concerns relevant to all professional support staff, including staff in student-facing roles and contribute to considered decision-making informed by those perspectives and concerns.

Mar bhall foirne atá dírithe ar mhic léinn, tá tuiscint forleathan agam ar eispéireas na mac léinn san Ollscoil, rud a chuirfeadh go mór le próisis chinnteoireachta na hOllscoile. Le beagnach 20 bliain do thaití anseo, táim tar éis oibriú i gcomhar le comhghleacaithe ar fud na hOllscoile agus idirchaidreamh a dhéanamh leis an bhfoireann trí thionscnaimh forbartha mar LIFT, meantóireacht agus cóitseáil foirne. Mar sin, tá mé eolach ar na dúshlán agus na deiseanna atá ann don fhoireann tacaíochta gairmiúla san Ollscoil. Ina theannta sin, trí oibriú go díreach lenár gcuid mac léinn tá tuiscint dhomhain agam ar rathúlacht na mac léinn agus tuiscint dhomhain ar a thábhachtaí atá sé muintearas a chothú.

Tá an-ghean agam ar eispéireas na foirne agus ar eispéireas ár gcuid mac léinn agus, i ndeireadh na dála, tá sé i gceist agam an spreagadh seo a thabhairt don Údarás chun dearcthaí an lucht ceannais a shaibhriú. Tá suim ghairmiúil agam i gceannaireacht dhearfach agus i gcultúir eagraíochtúil de bharr mo chúlra i bhforbairt gairmeacha beatha agus i gcóitseáil agus táim spreagtha chun obair i dtreo athruithe dearfacha agus torthaí a bhaint amach ina mbíonn an bua ag chuile thaobh. Ceann de na buanna is mó atáim tiomanta a chur i gcrích ná Ollscoil a fheidhmíonn go héifeachtach, a chuireann leis an réigiún níos fairsinge agus leis an domhan, agus a thacaíonn lena foireann agus a fhreastalaíonn ag an am céanna ar a cuid mac léinn i gcultúr eagraíochtúil dearfach.

Tá sé feicthe agam thar na blianta an méid is féidir le córais agus próisis dul i bhfeidhm ar thaithí na foirne agus ar mheán na foirne agus tá sé i gceist agam an fheasacht seo a chur ar fáil don fhoireann rialachais agus cur le cultúr eagraíochtúil ómósach ina ndéantar taithí na foirne agus na mac léinn a mheas agus luach a léiriú orthu. Táim lánchinnte go mbeinn i mo ghuth san Údarás ina gcuirfinn san áireamh dearcthaí agus ábhair inní a bhaineann leis an bhfoireann tacaíochta gairmiúla ar fad, baill foirne ina measc i ról ina dtacaítear le mic léinn, agus go gcuirfinn le cinnteoireacht mheasta atá bunaithe ar na dearcthaí agus na hábhair inní sin.

### **Candidate Outline of Relevant Competencies / Cur síos an Iarrthóra ar Inniúlachtaí Ábhartha**

My experience has equipped me with valuable competencies to add to those required across the membership of Governing Authority, with my professional knowledge of the student experience standing out as a key competency. This has been developed through leading complex cross-functional initiatives, such as first year orientation. These require a deep understanding of what is essential to set students up for success from the outset and of the need to develop them in line with national policy and priorities, in particular, those related to access, participation, progression and success.

I have honed my strategic planning capabilities through active involvement in the development processes for the University strategy and the Student Success strategy. In particular, as First



Year Transitions Manager, I have been instrumental in shaping the ‘onboarding and transitions’ priority strand in the latter. I have proven leadership experience relating to EDI initiatives, demonstrated through my involvement with the introduction of the University of Sanctuary designation and the creation of career development programmes and events for LGBTQ+ students and students with disabilities, in collaboration with employer partners.

I bring extensive stakeholder engagement experience, including fostering relationships with employers to connect them with students and graduates through careers events and education. In my current role, I focus on collaborative engagement with students – co-creating support and engagement initiatives with current students and the Students’ Union.

Another competency I bring is fluent Irish, complemented by a strong connection to Irish language and culture, deepened through raising a future generation of native Irish speakers in the Conamara Gaeltacht. Combined with the competencies outlined above, my training as an executive coach means that I can facilitate effective communication and bring a quality of deep listening and succinct, measured responses to conversations which will ensure that I make a valuable contribution to board discussions.