



## ***Opening Statement to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills***

### ***Continuous Assessment in State Examinations***

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) welcomes the Joint Committee on Education and Skills' investigation of the potential use of the continuous assessment model in State examinations. USI has worked for many years on issues of quality and enhancement of education, primarily at third-level, but has often taken a view of the need for wider educational reform. USI is broadly supportive of efforts to develop continuous assessment at third-level, recognising and championing the need to develop a model of student partnership and is eager to see efforts expand beyond the post-secondary sector.

The Committee should be aware that USI has largely approached this Submission from the view of third-level, and throughout the Submission we have attempted to highlight the significant need for a more joined-up approach to educational reform in Ireland. Each phase (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary) cannot continue to be reformed in silos. Further, consultation and input from students, staff, relevant organisations, and the public, should be facilitated in a more informative and collaborative way.

The topic of continuous assessment across state examination presents an important opportunity to do just that.

I draw the Committees attention to the three key priorities listed in the overview. Namely, that the Committee should formulate a clear view of the value of continuous assessment, rather than view it as an international pressure; the Committee should embrace the opportunity to consult on this issue in a way that is inclusive of students, parents, and practitioners; and the Committee should utilise this opportunity to focus on transition from one phase of education to another, with continuous assessment as a key enabler to successful transition.

In conclusion I also want to reiterate that the Senior Cycle Review currently being undertaken by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and its relationship to the Committees work on continuous assessment needs careful consideration. I also want to encourage the Committee to involve the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU) in its work on this matter. USI and ISSU enjoy a strong partnership that represents a key example of how transition and an holistic approach to reform can be undertaken.