

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Healthy Campus Plan 2025 - 2028

SUPPORTING HEALTH
AND WELLBEING



Healthy Campus Plan

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1. Introduction- DkIT President

I am delighted to introduce the inaugural DkIT Healthy Campus Plan. The positive health and wellbeing of our staff and students is the key driver to the completion of this plan. Through a whole of campus approach, we wish to create a learning environment and organisational culture to promote positive health and wellbeing to allow our students and staff to realise their full potential. Our staff and students spend a significant amount of time on our campus and we want that to be an environment where they can flourish.

In 2023, DkIT established a Healthy Campus Working Group to implement the Higher Education Authority Healthy Campus Charter and Framework. This group has representation from across our campus community and input from a number of relevant stakeholders including the HSE and Healthy Louth. Partnership and collaboration are key to the success of this work. There are many examples of positive health and wellbeing initiatives already active on campus. This Healthy Campus Plan seeks to further enhance and complement these activities by further promoting what we already do well; through collaboration and consultation developing additional initiatives and most importantly ongoing communication with our staff and students about DkIT Healthy Campus. The consultative process undergone by the Committee has ensured that the priority areas identified by our staff and students shall be further developed in the timeline of this plan.

This plan identifies a number of critical actions across five themes. When completed, these actions will lead to clear tangible and beneficial outcomes for our staff and student health and wellbeing. On behalf of our Executive Board, I would like to confirm support for the work documented in this plan and acknowledge the effort of many staff will be needed to achieve these stated outcomes.

We commit to using evidence-based approaches to help us further identify gaps in our health and wellbeing efforts to help us achieve a healthy campus community. Finally, I would like to thank the Working Group and sub-groups for their work to date and we look forward to the outputs from this plan.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diarmuid O'Callaghan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Diarmuid O'Callaghan
President Dundalk Institute of Technology

2. Executive Summary



“Healthy Ireland” is a national Framework (2013-2025) for action set out by the Department of Health to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland. The vision is one where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility. The HEA Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter and Framework was co-created, through a consultative process, by Higher Education Institutions, the Department of Health, PCHEI (Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education in Ireland), and the HSE.

In 2022 the Framework was officially transferred to the Higher Education Authority, supported by Healthy Ireland. The Framework offers guidelines to third-level institutions to build on existing wellbeing actions and assists with the integration of health and wellbeing across the whole campus including teaching and learning, student supports and services, staff development, policies. As part of the evidence of the commitment of a higher education institution to the [Healthy Campus Framework](#) the Higher Education Authority have created a Healthy Campus Charter. The Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter for Ireland is aligned with the principles and calls to action contained in the Okanagan Charter an International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges.

At DkIT we value the importance of the health and wellbeing of our students and staff on our campus and the importance of fostering an ethos of care, compassion and inclusion. With this in mind through the signing of the Healthy Campus Charter by DkIT in 2023 we embarked on a process to develop this Healthy Campus Plan (2024-2027). This strategy has been developed through an inclusive and co-ordinated approach in line with the principles of Participation, Partnership, Evidence based approach and Sustainability.

The Healthy Campus Plan outlines actions and outcomes under the five themes which have been identified as priority areas by staff and students in DkIT –Physical Activity; Sexual Health; Mental Health; Nutrition & Healthy Environment. The plan shall be implemented through the specific Action Plans for each of the 5 themes and the progress monitored on a regular basis.

This Healthy Campus Plan is about consolidating the great work that is already being accomplished in DkIT and enhancing our campus to make it an environment that fosters the health and wellbeing of all of its community.

Dr. Edel Healy
Chair of DkIT Healthy Campus Steering Committee

Our Vision

DkIT will be recognised as an organisation that adopts a holistic understanding of health, takes a whole of campus approach and aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of all of our community and enables people to achieve their full potential. With this approach, we hope to raise awareness of the resources that are available to support students and staff in their pursuit of health and wellbeing while making the best possible use of the array of facilities, knowledge, and services already in place.



Our Mission

Our Mission is to have a campus community where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported and is everyone's responsibility.

What is Healthy Campus?

A Healthy Campus adopts a holistic understanding of health, takes a whole campus approach and aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.

3. Development of the Plan

On March 2nd 2023 DkIT officially signed the Healthy Campus Charter. By signing this Charter DkIT committed to support staff and students in all areas of health and wellbeing through a campus wide approach. A cross campus Healthy Campus Working Group was formed to co-ordinate the DkIT Healthy Campus Initiative. The committee contains representation from a wide range of areas within DkIT including staff and students. In addition, representation from the HSE and Louth County Council is included to foster collaborations with relevant external agencies.



Current Members of DkIT Healthy Campus Working Group:

- Dr Edel Healy, Head of School Health & Science (Chair)
- Mr Alan Conlon, Pastoral Care Co-Ordinator
- Ms Linda Murphy, Academic & Student Affairs Officer
- Ms Loretto Gaughran, Freedom of Information Officer / HR Officer Employee Assistance Programme
- Mr Ryan Duffy, Marketing & Communications Department
- Ms Patricia Smyth, Health Unit Nurse
- Ms Bronagh McGrane, Clubs & Societies Officer
- Dr. Sean O Connell, Head of Student Mental Health & Counselling
- Ms Holly Lambe Sally, Student Welfare Officer, Students Union
- Dr Adele Commins, Head of CAMM, School of Informatics & Creative Arts
- Dr. Martin McHugh, Head of Visual & Human Centred Computing
- Ms Paula Keenan, Healthy Louth Promotion, Louth County Council
- Ms Olivia McGeough, Health Promotion & Improvement Officer, HSE

DkIT's Healthy Campus Working Group aims to:

- Integrate a commitment to and vision of health within the Institute's plans and policies
- Provide leadership at the various levels of the Institute for the initiative
- Develop, and leverage the work completed, by various individuals and committees, to date across the Institute, to ensure the Institute is a supportive and healthy workplace
- Support the health, social and personal development of both students and staff
- Create health promoting and sustainable physical environments
- Increase understanding, knowledge and commitment to multidisciplinary health promotion across the Institute, allowing equal access for all students and staff
- Collaborate with key agencies externally, particularly the HSE
- Support the promotion of sustainable health within the wider community, informed by and based on evidence of 'what works'

The DkIT Healthy Campus Working Group followed the HEA Healthy Campus process outlined in the Healthy Campus Charter which promotes an inclusive, co-ordinated approach to improving health and wellbeing.



In Q2, 2023 surveys and focus groups were carried out with DkIT staff and students. The aim of this review was to consult with DkIT staff and students as to what they considered to be a healthy campus, whether they believed DkIT to be a healthy campus, and what areas of campus health and wellbeing should be prioritised. After the data was analysed five key themes of the DkIT Healthy Campus Plan were identified:

Mental Health

Healthy Environment

Physical Activity

Nutrition

Sexual Health

Sub-groups were then created for each of the five key themes and staff and students were invited to volunteer to participate in one of the five groups. Each group then developed an Action Plan for their respective areas. The membership of the priority area subgroups is included in Appendix 1.

The Actions Plans were then reviewed by the Healthy Campus Working Group and the Healthy Campus Plan completed. For each of the five themes key action areas and outcomes were identified.

4. Action Areas and Outcomes

Theme 1: Mental Health

Action Areas:

The Healthy Campus Framework highlights that positive mental health enables individuals to realise their abilities, manage life's stresses, work effectively, and contribute to their communities. This approach shifts focus from what can go wrong to what supports a flourishing life.

We aim to enhance awareness of the mental wellbeing supports available to staff and students. Through collaborations with external stakeholders, we aim to provide additional tools and resources. We will review and develop policies supporting mental health and integrate wellbeing into ongoing DkIT initiatives (e.g., Athena Swan, EDI, Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Working Group).

Outcomes:

1. Embed mental health considerations into daily college life through policy development and wellbeing initiatives, creating a lasting positive impact across the entire DkIT community
2. Consolidation of existing mental health programmes for staff and students and enhanced signposting to relevant internal and external resources
3. Enhance staff wellbeing by equipping them with the skills to support distressed students effectively.

Theme 2: Healthy Environment

Action Areas:

Healthy Environment' is based on all stakeholders enjoying our campus whilst being mindful of the need for sustainability and well-being.

We aim to increase the use of our campus by exploring the introduction of walking trails on campus, promote travel methods to college that increase physical activity and promote smoking reduction initiatives.

Outcomes:

1. Increased Physical Activity of staff and students through enhanced utilisation of the natural resources of the DkIT campus and more sustainable travel methods to campus.
2. Reduction in the levels of smoking and vaping on campus.
3. Alignment of healthy campus activities to DkIT Green Campus initiatives.

Theme 3: Nutrition

Action Areas:

A healthy diet is crucial to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

We aim to educate staff and students of the benefits of a balanced nutritional diet through the provision of practical information such as recipes and skills to produce healthy meals. We shall review the food available on campus through our vending machines, retail outlets and college events and explore options for staff to make their own food choices on campus.

Outcomes:

1. Increased provision of healthy food options for staff and students on campus
2. Resources made available to students to empower them to eat in a more nutritionally balanced manner
3. Promotion of healthy food initiatives to staff and students

Theme 4: Sexual Health

Action Areas:

DkIT, in conjunction with the Students Union and the Student Health Unit have already placed a significant emphasis on sexual health and wellbeing. Gaining a greater understanding of how sexual health and sexual relationships are conceptualised is an important aspect of this pillar.

We aim to consolidate the existing activities for students and staff, expanding where gaps have been identified and collaborating with external agencies e.g. Sexual wellbeing.ie; GUM clinic in Louth County Hospital etc. The Institute strives to reduce stigma and misunderstanding through the promotion of sexual health and wellbeing for all.

Outcomes:

1. Increased awareness of the sexual health services available and how to access them.
2. Creation of a supportive and informed environment for those facing unplanned or crisis pregnancies.
3. Enhanced understanding of sexual health and healthy sexual activities with an increase in services provided to students.

Theme 5: Physical Activity

Action Areas:

The Institute have a rich history of sporting success amongst its sporting clubs and societies with a lot of activities ongoing. We envisage a campus where all stakeholders have an opportunity to partake and become a little more active. It is hoped the significant momentum achieved can be shared more widely thus attracting more staff and students to join in these activities.

We aim to develop a communication mechanism where all staff and students are easily aware of what and where physical activities are taking place across the Institute and how they can participate in any of these activities. The Institute will increase the range of activities available to meet the needs of its diverse community including the development of initiatives and educational workshops that enable staff and students to increase their physical activity in their college day.

Outcomes:

1. Single point of communication to promote and enable students and staff to participate in the range of physical activities ongoing on campus
2. A range of activities (sport and non-sport) that meets the needs of all those who wish to be active.
3. An overall increase in the level of physical activity across all cohorts of staff and students.



5. Implementation

The implementation of this Plan shall be monitored by the Healthy Campus Working Group. The priority area sub-groups shall identify programmes of work for their respective areas. Once the plan has been launched it is intended to invite any additional staff and student representatives who may be interested in joining the priority area sub-groups to ensure maximum engagement by the DkIT campus community.

Synergies of the work of the Healthy Campus Working Group with related work ongoing on campus shall be identified through collaboration with relevant DkIT Committees such as the Campus Care and Respect Committee, Sustainability Council, EDI committee etc.

Our approach to measuring success shall be a cyclical process of collaboration, reflection, review and improvement. We will utilise the [HEA Healthy Campus Evaluation Tool](#) to evaluate our process.

Through the development of a dedicated web-page we shall celebrate and promote all the DkIT Healthy Campus Initiatives with staff and students. This DkIT Healthy Campus Plan shall help to consolidate all of the excellent work already ongoing in DkIT and create a structure to further implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives that enhance the health and wellbeing of staff and students who work and learn on the DkIT campus. For DkIT this is an ongoing and evolving journey to enhance the health and wellbeing of our campus community.



Appendix 1

Membership of Healthy Campus Priority Area Subgroups

Nutrition:	Physical Activity:	Mental Health & Wellbeing: (Staff)
Chair: Edel Healy 1. Bruna Pucci (Health & Science) 2. Orla Sherlock (Health & Science) 3. Sharon Courtney (Business & Humanities) 4. Eoin Clancy (Engineering) 5. Susanne Shevlin (Dietitian HSE) 6. Campus Catering KSG 7. Student Union president	Chair: Bronagh McGrane 1. Paula Keenan (Louth Healthy Ireland) 2. Student Union Welfare Officer 3. Derek Crilly (Student Services) 4. <u>Oonagh Giggins</u> (NetwellCASALA) 5. Fiona Hackett (Health & Science) 6. Claire Fallon (Careers and Employability) 7. <u>Qdhran</u> Doherty (Louth Sports Partnership)	<i>Note: Actions from the Student Mental Health Working Group shall inform student mental health & wellbeing</i> Chair: Loretto Gaughran 1. Alan Conlon (Pastoral Care) 2. Louise <u>McCaul</u> (Registrars Department) 3. Lorcan Dunne (Informatics and Creative Arts) 4. Seamus Harvey (NetwellCASALA)
Healthy Environment:	Sexual Health:	
Chair: Martin McHugh 1. Stephen Kneel (Health and Science) 2. Maeve Mc Ardle(School of Business & <u>Humanities</u>) 3. Raywina Pickering (Human Resources) 4. Stephen Molloy (Health & Science)	Chair = Holly Lambe Sally 1. Trish Smyth/Judith Bradley(Student Health Unit) 2. Olivia McGeough, (Health Promotion and Improvement (HP&I) Officer Louth) 3. Deirdre O'Malley (Health & Science)	

Note additional members shall be invited to join these groups in the implementation of the plan.

