



A Shared Approach to Language and Definitions in Student and Staff Health and Wellbeing



Definitions and Terms		Source
A Systems Perspective	Acknowledging interconnectedness and synergy between different components and viewing settings as complex dynamic systems with inputs, throughputs and outputs, it shifts away from a reductionist focus on single issues, risk factors and linear causality.	<i>Dooris & Doherty, 2010</i>
Anxiety Disorder	Characterised by excessive fear and worry and related behavioural disturbances. Symptoms are severe enough to result in significant distress or significant impairment in functioning.	<i>WHO, 2022</i>
Commercial Determinants of Health	Activities of the private sector, including strategies and approaches used to promote products and choices that affect the health of populations.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Depression	Depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life. During a depressive episode, the person experiences a depressed mood (feeling sad, irritable, empty) or a loss of pleasure or interest in activities, for most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks. People with depression are at an increased risk of suicide.	<i>WHO, 2022</i>
Determinants of Health	The range of personal, social, economic, and environmental factors that determine the healthy life expectancy of individuals and populations.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Health Behaviour	Any activity undertaken by an individual for the purpose of promoting, protecting, maintaining or regaining health, whether or not such behaviour is objectively effective towards that end.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Health Education	Any combination of learning experiences designed to help individuals and communities improve their health by increasing knowledge, influencing motivation, and improving health literacy.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Health Needs Assessment	A systematic procedure for determining the nature and extent of health needs in a population, the causes and contributing factors to those needs, the actions required to address those needs, and the human, organisational and community resources that are available in response.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Health Outcomes	A change in the health status of an individual, group, or population that is attributable to a planned intervention or series of interventions, regardless of whether such an intervention was intended to change health status.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Health Promoting Campuses	By embedding health, well-being, and sustainability across all aspects of higher education, Health Promoting Campuses (HPCs) empower students and employees to thrive, to strengthen surrounding communities, and advance the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (2) leading to a healthy planet, healthy places, and healthy people. Through a whole-campus approach, HPCs drive action-oriented implementation, foster inclusive participation and partnerships, and document progress to address current and future challenges in a rapidly changing world.	<i>International Health Promoting Campuses Network and University of Limerick, 2025</i>
Health Promotion	The process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants and thereby improve their health.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>

Definitions and Terms		Source
Health	A state of complete physical, social, and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.	<i>WHO, 1948</i>
	The extent to which an individual or group is able to realize aspirations and satisfy needs and to change or cope with the environment. Health is a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living; it is a positive concept, emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities.	<i>WHO, 1984</i>
Healthy Campus	A Campus that 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.	<i>Government of Ireland, 2020</i>
Healthy Cities	A values and partnership based political project and multi-level movement. It provides a platform and mechanism for engaging and working with local and municipal governments and communities on issues impacting health and well-being. Healthy Cities is considered as being well-positioned and recognised as an effective strategic vehicle for reaching out to local and municipal governments and local leaders and community stakeholders across multiple sectors.	<i>WHO, 2020</i>
Healthy Settings	Where health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life: where they learn, work, play and love.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Implementation Science	Focused on understanding and accelerating the integration of research findings and research-based innovations into everyday practice settings to improve health.	<i>Mitchell and Chambers, 2017</i>
Intergenerational Health	Quantifies the cumulative well-being of a population across successive generations, intrinsically linked to the sustained capacity of ecological and social systems to support life.	<i>Sustainability Directory, 2024</i>
Mental Health Difficulty / Issue	Broad terms that describe mental distress; may or may not be temporary and/or be related to a diagnosable mental health condition.	<i>HEA, 2020</i>
Mental Health Disorders/ Conditions	Characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour. It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning. Mental disorders may also be referred to as mental health conditions.	<i>WHO, 2022</i>
Mental Health Promotion	Mental health promotion that is concerned with achieving positive mental health and well-being at an individual, community, and population level. The focus of this multidisciplinary area of practice is on strengthening protective factors for good mental health, enhancing supportive environments and enabling access to resources and life opportunities for individuals and communities that will promote their social and emotional well-being.	<i>Barry, Clarke, Petersen, Jenkins, 2019</i>
Mental Health	A state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to realise their abilities, to learn well and work well, and to contribute to their community.	<i>WHO, 2022</i>

Definitions and Terms		Source
Pathogenic Oriented Health	In western medicine, 'health' is predominantly pathogenic in orientation i.e. directed at understanding, preventing and treating disease.	<i>Hewis, 2023; Espnes et al., 2021; Lindström, 2010</i>
Person Centered	A whole system approach to health and social care that values people, innovation, learning and teamwork throughout the organisation and demonstrates appreciation and respect for the unique contribution that people make regardless of position or status.	<i>The Health Foundation, 2016</i>
Planetary Health	The achievement of the highest attainable standard of health, well-being, and equity worldwide through judicious attention to the human systems - political, economic, and social - that shape the future of humanity and the Earth's natural systems that define the safe environmental limits within which humanity can flourish.	<i>Whitmee et al., 2015</i>
Risk and Protective Factors	Risk factors are characteristics or hazards that may increase the possibility of a person developing a mental health difficulty or disorder, such as problematic drinking behaviour, low social support, or being bullied. Protective factors refer to a broad range of assets that may improve the likelihood that a person will respond successfully to life's stresses, and include high social support, high level of resilience, and self-esteem.	<i>Dooley et al., 2019</i>
Salutogenic Oriented Health	Focuses attention on the origins of health and assets for (positive) health, contra to the origins of disease and risk factors.	<i>Antonovsky, 1996</i>
Sense of Coherence (SoC)	A core concept in the salutogenic model of health, refers to a global orientation where life is understood as more or less comprehensible, meaningful, and manageable. A strong SoC helps individuals to mobilise resources to cope with stressors and manage tension.	<i>Moksnes, 2021</i>
Skills for Health (Life Skills)	Consist of personal, interpersonal, cognitive and physical skills that enable people to control and direct their lives, and to develop the capacity to live with and produce change in their environment to make it conducive to health.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Social Determinants of Health	Social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental conditions in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and their access to power, decision-making, money and resources that give rise to these conditions of daily life.	<i>WHO, 2021</i>
Societal Wellbeing	The creation of sustainable, equitable societies that prioritise the physical, mental, and social health of people and the planet over mere economic growth. It necessitates tackling social determinants of health - such as income inequality, structural discrimination, and environmental sustainability - to enable thriving communities.	<i>WHO, 2023</i>

Definitions and Terms		Source
Trauma Aware Campuses	PCHEI (Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland) define a trauma-aware campus as an educational environment that recognises that students and staff may have experienced trauma and that these experiences can affect learning, relationships, behaviour, wellbeing, and engagement. Rather than asking, "What is wrong with this person?", a trauma-aware campus asks, "What might have happened to this person, and what support do they need to feel safe and succeed?"	
Upstream Perspective	Metaphor used to challenge dominate perspectives on the causes of health inequalities and explicitly argue for a reframing of the problem in terms of underlying social and structural causes.	McMahon 2022
Upstream/ Downstream	<p>Metaphor referring to the root causes or fundamental upstream drivers of population health and how they produce downstream effects, consequences, and inequities.</p> <p>Downstream approaches to health promotion focus on individual-level behaviour change, whereas upstream approaches focus systemic behaviour change (e.g. through policy interventions, addressing the social determinants of health, etc.), with the aim of reducing the burden on health services by promoting positive health and wellbeing. Specifically, this river metaphor equates downstream activities with rescuers pulling people out of the water when they are drowning (e.g. through treatment), while upstream activities seek to understand why people are falling into the water and to prevent this happening.</p>	McMahon 2022, Braveman, Egerter, and Williams 2011
Well-being	A positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions.	WHO, 2021
Whole Campus Approach	<p>A whole campus approach seeks to move beyond fragmented health promotion interventions to include the scope of the whole institution. This includes a holistic approach to thematic activities and developing a strategic and cross-cutting health promoting campus environment.</p> <p>Reflected in a Healthy Campus action plan that is developed in the context of the following four key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership, Strategy and Governance• Campus Environment (Facilities and Services)• Campus Culture and Communications• Personal and Professional Development	Government of Ireland, 2020



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