

HEALTHY CAMPUS CASE STUDY	
<b>Name of Institution/ Organisation</b>	Atlantic Technological University (ATU)
<b>Who led the initiative?</b>	Margaret Mc Loone (PI) –Lecturer in Department of Health & Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Science, ATU Sligo Campus Machailla Mc Cabe – Postgraduate Researcher in Department of Health & Nutritional Sciences, Faculty of Science, ATU Sligo Campus Dr Gail Cummins – Lecturer in Faculty of Science and Health, ATU, Donegal Campus Renagh Linnane – Student Counsellor, Student Services, ATU Galway
<b>Date and timeframe of the initiative</b>	Jan 2022 - ongoing
<b>What was the reach of the initiative?</b>	Invited students from across all 8 ATU campus sites and St Angela’s College, Sligo to participate in this mental health research project

<b>Initiative Title</b>	Exploring definitions of Mental Health & Establishing Validated Assessment Tools for a Mental Health Situational Analysis amongst Student Populations within the 3rd Level Setting
<b>Aims/ Objectives</b>	<p>This research aimed to gather:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A baseline for establishing students' views and perceptions on what they perceive mental health is.</li> <li>- Students' perceptions on potential supports and challenges they face in relation to their mental health.</li> <li>- An understanding of identified key staff perceptions of student mental health supports and services and to seek clarity on the best approach for implementation of mental health supports by Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).</li> </ul>
<b>The rationale for the action, including any identified health needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Third level education is acknowledged as a significant life transition and can be extremely stressful time for students (USI, 2019).</li> <li>- It is reported that students are facing severe levels of anxiety, depression, and stress with almost one third of students having had a diagnosis of mental health disorder at some stage in life (USI, 2019).</li> <li>- With the significant concerns for student mental health within higher education institutes (Payne, 2022).</li> <li>- Reactive mental health services cannot meet all the demand and fail to address institutional and cultural processes influencing individual student mental health (Hughes &amp; Spanner, 2019).</li> <li>- With HEIs 94% revealed an increase in demand for counselling, yet only 48% of HEIs had appropriate mental health policies in place (Thorley, 2017).</li> <li>- Though mental health support services are in place for students within HEIs across Ireland, our research asks are support services adequate from a mental health staff professionals' perspective.</li> </ul>
<b>Identify all frameworks, policies, or strategies this initiative aligns to (Internal, local or national)</b>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The <i>Healthy Ireland Framework</i></li> <li>- <i>The National Implementation Plan for Healthy Ireland</i></li> <li>- <i>Sláintecare Implementation Strategy</i> (DOH, 2018) and <i>Sláintecare Action Plan</i> (DOH, 2019)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Project Ireland 2040, National Planning Framework</b> (Government of Ireland, 2018) This proposed project aligns well with strategic area 6 entitled 'People, Homes &amp; Communities' and specifically, Quality of Life &amp; Place, Healthy Communities and Childcare, Education and Lifelong Learning.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Mental Health Specific</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone</b> (DOH, 2020)</li> <li>- <b>Connecting for Life: The National Strategy</b> (DOH, 2015)</li> <li>- This research aligns with the recently published document known as the <b>National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework</b> (Dept of Further and Higher &amp; Education, Research, Innovation &amp; Science (DFHERIS), (2020).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summary</b></p>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adolescence and early adulthood is the peak time for the onset of mental health difficulties. It has been reported that 75% of all mental health disorders that persist into adulthood emerge before 25 years (Kessler et al., 2007).</li> <li>- Notably most full-time undergraduate students fall within that cohort according to the Higher Education Authority (2018). Resultant from this, students are identified as a high-risk group for mental health difficulties.</li> <li>- Understanding the wellbeing of young people in Ireland is critical to ensuring effective service provision and to ensure that young people reach their full potential.</li> <li>- Additionally, staff play another key factor within student mental health due to the student mental health supports and services in place. Though, are current student supports and services adequate from a staffs' professional perspective?</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion &amp; Recommendations – Students Perspective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students feel third level institutions need to consider the <b>overall ethos</b> of mental health within their setting. This cultivates an understandable attitude towards mental health through nurturing a community that openly discusses and supports student mental health. Our research findings recommend the following:</li> <li>- The Student Unions could support the development of more clubs and societies.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Academic staff and management could offer a more <b>flexible approach to the delivery of courses</b> where students are <i>“not stuck in a rigid schedule”</i>.</li> <li>- It can be concluded from our findings that the views of the student population illustrate there is <i>“no one size fits all”</i>.</li> <li>- It is crucial that we continue to allow the student voice to play a critical part in developing student supports and services for both mental health and mental ill-health.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion &amp; Recommendations - Staff Perspectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A key recommendation made by staff was the need for a <b>holistic and integrated approach</b> towards mental health among campuses. HEIs <i>“should be striving to provide more positive mental health supports”</i> (R07) to shift the emphasis from <b>‘treatment’ to ‘prevention’</b>. The opportunity to work with more external stakeholders should be encouraged as it would act as a valuable link and provide partnerships and <i>“coordination between services”</i> (R13).</li> <li>- Overall, it can be established that support and services depend on the <b>specific need</b> of the specific college campus. Though recommendations can be implemented and put into place, as a participant expressed: <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Will there ever be adequate mental health supports anywhere?”</i> (R20)</p> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Did you collaborate with internal and/or external stakeholders to deliver?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ATU Staff and Students</li> <li>- St. Angela’s College, Sligo Staff and Students</li> <li>- ATU Student Unions</li> <li>- St. Angela’s College, Sligo Student Unions</li> <li>- Special Interest Working Group in Mental Health specifically within the Association of Health Promotion Ireland (AHPI).</li> </ul>
<p><b>How was the initiative organised?</b></p>	<p><b>Student Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Granted ethical approval on 09/02/2022 by IT Sligo Research Ethics Committee, Sligo campus (IREC Reference No: 2021007).</li> <li>- Piloted study among 10 participants from basketball team in IT Sligo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Provided feedback form prior to completion of pilot study</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Emailed registrars within CUA sites to request permission for online distribution of phase 1 survey</li> <li>- Emailed each ethics committee with confirmation letter of ethical approval from IT Sligo’s research committee.</li> <li>- Emailed key contacts (lecturers and staff) to allow distribution within class time.</li> <li>- Met with Student Unions regarding potential support from the union in order to recruit participants for both questionnaire and focus group through email and via social media outlets.</li> <li>- Date of Distribution within STAC and ITS: Week of February 14<sup>th</sup> 2022</li> <li>- Date of Distribution within LYIT: Week of March 1<sup>st</sup> 2022</li> <li>- Date of Distribution within GMIT: Week of March 7<sup>th</sup> 2022</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Staff Study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data was collected by means of an online questionnaire (Qualtrics) form</li> <li>- Ethical approval was granted on 16/11/2023 by the ATU Research Ethics Committee, Sligo campus (IREC Reference No: 2021007).</li> <li>- Date survey distributed/opened: 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022</li> <li>- Survey closed online on: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022</li> </ul>
<b>What resources did you need?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connacht-Ulster Alliance bursary awarded 2021</li> <li>- Staff and students' participation</li> <li>- Postgraduate researcher, principal investigator, research partners</li> </ul>
<b>Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?</b>	<p>Both studies have been analysed – Overall discussion &amp; recommendations previously mentioned above within the case study summary.</p> <p><i>Though the fundamental dimensions mentioned above conveys the views of the general ATU student population, it must be noted that there is “no one size fits all”. In conclusion, findings show that many students do know what they want and what is needed for them to be supported appropriately in their college endeavors. Providing evidence that the ‘student voice’ plays a critical part when developing student solutions for mental health.</i></p> <p>Secondly, findings show that staff have differed views yet have similar views to students relating to the field of mental health within the third level educational sector. Staff provided fundamental factors of student mental health supports and services based on professional views in which provides a summary of the needs and gaps within the ATU and St. Angela’s College Sligo.</p>
<b>Any future plans, including the sustainability of the initiative?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When in concern, students turn to faculty staff with whom they have a relationship with according to Macaskill (2019) and Hughes et al., (2018).</li> <li>- Academic staff are often able to notice students with such concerns. Though, third level students are unlikely to seek help from their lecturers for mental health problems specifically (Reavley et al., 2012). Students may approach academic staff for assistance due to related issues such as “difficulties engaging with their studies” (Gulliver et al., 2018). Yet staff and personal tutors (allocated to students offering pastoral care/academic advice) supporting student mental health often go unrecognised.</li> <li>- There is a necessity to cover all aspects more specifically staff relating to student mental health and services across third level institutions to address this current issue.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Learning Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An integrated approach is needed for student mental health and wellbeing within the third level sector.</li> <li>- Including the overall ethos, culture, community, facilities, support, and services within an institution as well as staff training for dealing with potential student challenges.</li> </ul>

**Healthy Campus Framework Categories (please tick all that apply)**

Healthy Process	Campus	Whole Campus Approach	Topic	Population Group
Commit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Leadership, Strategy & Governance <input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol <input type="checkbox"/>	Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coordinate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Substance Misuse <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consult <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Campus Culture & Communications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Healthy Eating / Food <input type="checkbox"/>	Wider community <input type="checkbox"/>
Create <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Personal & Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/>	Mental Health & Wellbeing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Celebrate & Continue <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Sexual Health & Wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Tobacco Free Campus <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Physical Activity / Active Transport <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Wellbeing on the Curriculum <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Health & Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Other <input type="checkbox"/>	

## Contact Details

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