



# Healthy Campus Case Study



HEA

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The Higher Education Authority

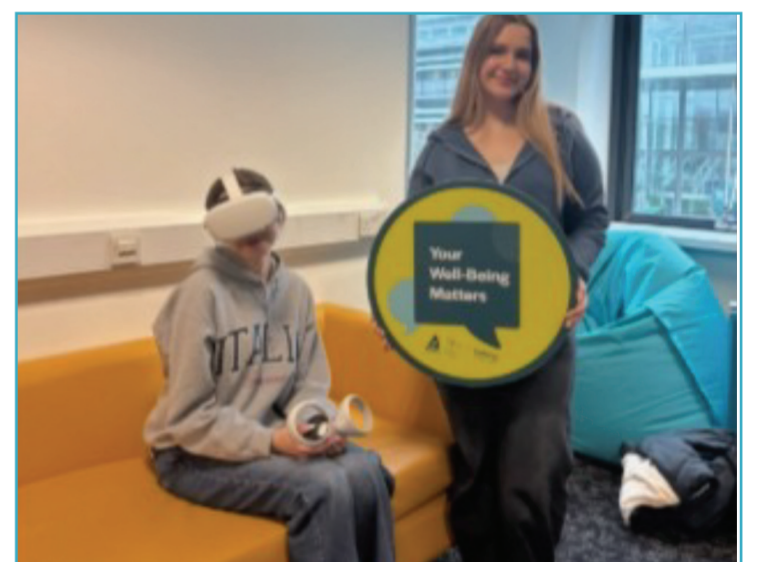
# Belong Room

<b>Institution/ Organisation</b>	Atlantic Technological University Sligo
<b>Who leads/ led the project?</b>	Mental Health Well-being Project Officer Sligo Campus & Head of Student Health, Well-being and Counselling
<b>Date and timeframe</b>	Started Sept 2024 and is ongoing
<b>Project Rationale</b>	The Belong Room was developed to address the growing need for inclusive, low-pressure social spaces that support student mental health and wellbeing within a third-level environment. Many students experience stress, isolation, and difficulty forming connections, particularly during busy academic periods. The Belong Room provides a safe, welcoming environment where students can take time out, relax, and engage socially in a supportive setting.



<b>Project Overview/ Summary</b>	
<b>Planning</b>	<b>Activities Delivered</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified need for a dedicated student well-being space.</li> <li>Designed the Belong Room to be comfortable, inviting, and flexible for different activities.</li> <li>Included soft furnishings.</li> <li>In collaboration with support services, established a plan for the room's purpose and operation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam results drop-in sessions.</li> <li>Board games and casual group activities.</li> <li>Hot beverages provided</li> <li>Cosy movie nights.</li> <li>Well-being workshops promoting positive mental health practices.</li> <li>Small group engagement sessions tailored to specific student groups.</li> <li>Structured study and focus sessions.</li> <li>Meditation sessions.</li> <li>VR-based sessions through Escape and Connect.</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established regular Hangout Hub sessions.</li> <li>Introduced Connect Café as an evening initiative to broaden accessibility.</li> <li>Delivered wellbeing workshops such as the 5 Ways to Wellbeing program from Mental Health Ireland.</li> <li>Facilitated small group sessions.</li> <li>Hosted lunchtime social groups and Quiet Focus sessions for neurodivergent students led by Disability and Learning Support.</li> <li>Pastoral Care facilitated meditation sessions.</li> <li>Delivered the Escape and Connect pilot program using VR technology.</li> <li>Organised cosy movie nights to encourage social engagement in a low-pressure setting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive student feedback highlighting the importance of having a space to "switch off."</li> <li>Strong engagement across daytime and evening initiatives.</li> <li>Positive response to workshops, meditation, and small group sessions.</li> <li>Increased demand for inclusive and neurodivergent-friendly spaces.</li> <li>Interest in innovative approaches such as VR to support wellbeing.</li> <li>Observed improvement in peer interaction and sense of community.</li> </ul>

<b>Key Learning Points</b>
<p>Creating simple, low-pressure spaces where students feel comfortable being themselves has been one of the key learnings from this project. Soft furnishings, relaxed environments, and accessible drop-in opportunities encourage students to unwind and engage at their own pace. Consistency is also vital. Regular initiatives such as Hangout Hub and Connect Café build familiarity, while supports like Quiet Focus groups, meditation sessions, and targeted social spaces promote inclusivity.</p> <p>The Belong Room was developed to address increasing student needs around mental health, stress, isolation, and difficulty forming connections. It offers a safe, welcoming space where students can relax, take time out, and connect socially in a supportive setting. Facilitated by Student Support Services, the room hosts initiatives including Hangout Hub, Connect Café, wellbeing workshops, and pilots such as Escape and Connect VR. It is also used across multiple support services, providing a holistic, flexible environment that fosters belonging and supports overall wellbeing.</p>



Limerick Framework for Action		Whole Campus Approach	Type of Evaluation
Leadership	Partnership	Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) (Pillar 2)	Process Evaluation
Policies	Students		Outcome Evaluation

