



Healthy Campus Case Study



HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

“DkITs Fittest” STEPS Challenge 2026

Institution/ Organisation	Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
Who leads/ led the project?	Dr. Sinéad O’Connor, Dr. Seán Kilroy, Noeleen Gregory and Fiona Hackett: The BSc (Hons) in Health and Physical Activity lecturing team from the Department of Life & Health Sciences, DkIT.
Date and timeframe	The first semester of the academic years 2024 – 2025, 2025 - 2026 and ongoing
Project Rationale	Following on from the success of “DkIT’s Fittest” 2024, “DkIT’s Fittest” 2025 adopted a settings-based approach in the promotion of physical activity engagement in both staff and students of DkIT in a sustainable way. This is in line with the Healthy Campus framework by “aspiring to create a learning environment and organizational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of its community” (Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter & Framework for Ireland 2020-2025).

Project Overview/ Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on from the success of “DkIT’s Fittest” 2024, “DkIT’s Fittest” STEPS Challenge 2025 continued to use a settings-based approach to promote physical activity engagement in both staff and students of DkIT. 28 teams, including 168 participants (both staff and students), cross-campus, took part in this year’s STEPS Challenge over a 4-week period. Over 9.5 million steps were logged (cumulative total of each team’s average weekly steps), demonstrating a clear collaborative effort from both staff and students involved. During this period, motivational emails (including relevant health information, and weekly leaderboards) were sent to all involved in the challenge to encourage and motivate participants. Participants
<p>said that these emails acted as an incentive for them to stay engaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also, participants themselves identified that being part of a team-based challenge encouraged them to engage with the challenge. In addition, participants were encouraged to upload active photos of themselves, with the majority of these showing the participant outside enjoying nature, with the mental health benefits of exercising in nature being well documented. A finale and prize-giving ceremony celebrated the end of “DkIT’s Fittest” STEPS Challenge 2025 and was a lovely opportunity to celebrate everyone involved and to encourage participants to sustain their modified / new physical activity behaviors into the future.

Key Learning Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating physical activity into the campus environment enhanced both the physical activity levels of students and staff, as well as fostering greater social interaction. Gaining insight into the motivators and barriers that influence sustained participation can inform the development of future health promotion initiatives aimed at creating a healthier campus community. Time Constraints: There was a lot of administration work associated with getting started and the logging of participant steps on a weekly basis was very time consuming. Moving forward with this challenge, additional administrative personnel would be recommended. Participant retention and long-term engagement: It is important to understand why some individuals disengaged from the challenge and how adjustments to the challenge in the future might help to negate this.



IT'S BACK!

DUNDALK
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
DHÚN DEALGAN

The Health and Physical Activity Programme (HPA) team are delighted to invite you to participate in a 4-week Staff and Student STEPS Challenge

Starts: Monday the 29th of September 2025

Finishes: Friday the 24th of October 2025

IT'S AS EASY AS:

- 1** Form a team of 4-8 people (staff only, students only, a mix of both).
- 2** Pick a team name and register your team (list all members) at dkitsfittest@dkit.ie by **Monday the 29th of September 2025**.
- 3** Activate the built-in health app on your phone, download a step-counter app or use a wearable device to track your steps / distance wheeled for our wheelchair users.
- 4** Record a summary of your weekly steps / distance wheeled, take a screenshot and post this picture to your allocated team folder.
- 5** Weekly updates will be provided.
- 6** All you need to do now is **"GET ACTIVE"**.

Fabulous prizes include:

Limerick Framework for Action			Whole Campus Approach	Type of Evaluation
Ethos	Leadership	Celebrate	Campus Culture & Communications (Pillar 3)	Outcome Evaluation
Act	Culture		Personal & Professional Development (Pillar 4)	
Localise	Partnership		Health Focused Area (Pillar 5)	

