



Healthy Campus Case Study



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Teaching Healthy Cooking in Practice: A Case Study of the Hospitality Department Demonstration Series at DkIT

Institution/ Organisation

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)

Who leads/ led the project?

Healthy Campus Nutrition Sub-Working Group and School of Business, Department of Hospitality Studies

Date and timeframe

2026

Project Rationale

This project was developed to support student mental health and wellbeing by addressing poor nutrition, low energy, stress, and social isolation. It responded to common barriers through accessible, hands-on cooking demonstrations. Sessions focused on healthy meals, nutritious breakfasts, high protein foods, and bread making, supported by short educational talks. The initiative aimed to build practical skills, confidence, social connection, and a culture of wellbeing aligned with the Healthy Campus framework.



Project Overview/ Summary

• Planning / Implementation:

The project was planned and delivered by the Hospitality Department at Dundalk Institute of Technology in collaboration with the Healthy Campus initiative and Healthy Louth. Planning focused on designing a structured, accessible series of cooking demonstration events that were both educational and engaging. Suitable facilities, including the professional demonstration kitchen, were scheduled across the academic term, and events were promoted campuswide to maximise participation. A series of hands-on demonstrations was delivered, each centred on a specific healthy eating theme, including healthy meal preparation, high protein foods, nutritious breakfasts, and bread making. Live cooking demonstrations were supported by short, evidence-based talks on healthy eating, enabling participants to develop practical skills and nutritional knowledge. The informal, welcoming setting encouraged discussion, tasting, and sharing ideas that students could apply at home.

• Engagement / Evaluation:

The initiative attracted strong participation from students across multiple programmes and the wider campus community. Hospitality students actively supported event delivery, gaining valuable practical experience while contributing to campus wellbeing. Evaluation was conducted using short online surveys accessed via QR code during events. Participants reflected on their experience, awareness of healthy eating, and any changes in energy, motivation, and social connection.

• **Outcomes:** Feedback was very positive. Participants highlighted the practical, hands-on nature of the sessions and the opportunity to sample healthy, affordable dishes. Many reported increased confidences in preparing healthy meals, improved nutrition awareness, and enhanced energy / motivation. The shared cooking and eating experience also strengthened social connection and a sense of belonging on campus.

Key Learning Points

- A key learning from this project was that hands-on cooking demonstrations are far more engaging for students than passive information sessions. Opportunities to observe, participate in, and taste dishes helped make healthy eating practical, enjoyable, and relevant to student life. Short educational talks effectively complemented the demonstrations, linking practical skills with nutritional knowledge.
- The setting also mattered. The professional demonstration kitchen provided a motivating and credible environment, while its informal, welcoming atmosphere reduced anxiety and encouraged social interaction.
- For similar initiatives, early cross departmental collaboration is essential. Involving academic staff, student services, and external partners improves quality and reach. Scheduling around student timetables, using affordable recipes, and actively involving students all enhance engagement and impact.

Limerick Framework for Action	Whole Campus Approach	Type of Evaluation
Culture	Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) (Pillar 2)	Process Evaluation
Students	Personal & Professional Development (Pillar 4)	Outcome Evaluation
	Health Focused Area (Pillar 5)	Summative Evaluation

