



Healthy Campus Case Study



HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

E-SHEILD: Enabling Students & Higher Education Institutions To Lead The Response On Drugs

Institution/ Organisation

University College Cork

Who leads/ led the project?

ESHEILD Project Team (School of Applied Psychology, Cork University Business School, School of Public Health, Dept. Student Health)

Date and timeframe

2025 - ongoing

Project Rationale

The ESHEILD project was developed to address the prevalence of drug use and associated harms among higher-education students in Ireland. The Drug Use in Higher Education in Ireland (DUHEI) study revealed that many students engage in substance use, often experiencing negative health, academic, and social consequences. Prior institutional responses were inconsistent and fragmented, and did not consistently take a whole campus approach, highlighting the need for a coordinated, evidence-informed approach.

ESHEILD combines behavioural science, digital innovation, and institutional support to reduce harms. The MyUSE platform delivers personalised, interactive guidance to promote safe behaviours and informed decision-making, while the ESHEILD project supports HEIs in implementing the national Framework for Response to Illicit Substances.

Project Overview/ Summary

ESHEILD is a comprehensive, multi-component initiative that combines digital interventions, institutional support, and community collaboration.

Its planning is grounded in evidence, stakeholder consultation, and national policy alignment. Its implementation embeds both student-focused behavioural interventions and systemic institutional strategies. Its evaluation ensures continuous improvement, sustainability, and the capacity to reduce drug-related harms effectively across 6 campuses, engaging with more than 150,000 students.

Planning Phase

The objectives of ESHEILD are to

- Reduce drug-related harms among higher-education students.
- Enhance institutional capacity to implement evidence-informed, student-centred harm-reduction strategies.
- Promote awareness, education, and supportive environments for all students.

Implementation Phase

- Six higher education institutions are receiving access to MyUse, a digital harm-reduction Intervention that provides an interactive, personalised, evidence-based tool for students.
- ESHEILD provides support to HEIs in developing institution-specific drug and alcohol

policies and action plans. It provides leadership guidance, staff training, and student engagement strategies to embed harm reduction into campus culture.

- Community Collaboration: Partnerships with local student health and support services, and regional Drug & Alcohol Task Forces.

Monitoring & Assessment

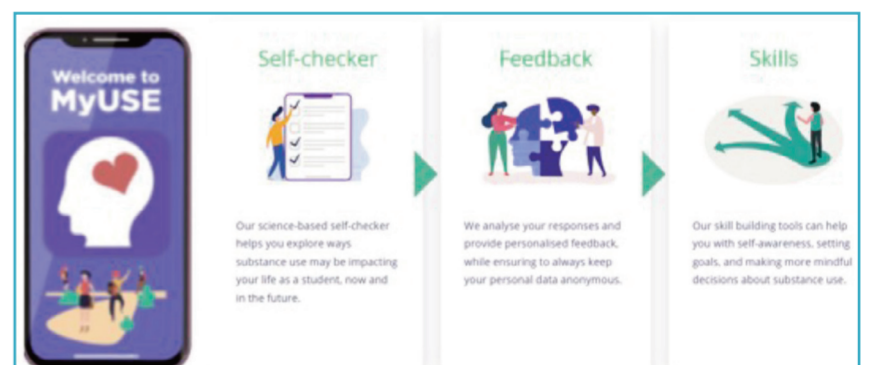
- Ongoing evaluation of MyUSE platform engagement, usability, and impact on student behaviour.
- Institutional assessment of policy implementation, action plan execution, and alignment with the national Framework and aligned with Healthy Campus Charter and Framework.

Key Learning Points

The ESHEILD project will run until 2027 and is currently in progress. Observations to date are that successful harm-reduction initiatives require both student-centred interventions and strong institutional commitment. Digital tools like the MyUSE platform can effectively engage students, raise awareness, and promote safer behaviours, but their impact is maximised when HEIs embed harm-reduction principles into campus culture, adopt clear policies, and invest in staff training.

Several aspects have contributed to ESHEILD level of success to date:

- Early engagement with stakeholders including students, student groups, staff, and community partners.
- A combination of individual-focused interventions with systemic approaches, linking digital tools with institutional policies and support services.
- Grounding the project in evidence and behavioural theory to focus on drug harm reduction as relevant to students
- Consider actions to embed practices into institutional structures and ensuring resources and monitoring mechanisms are in place.



Limerick Framework for Action			Whole Campus Approach	Type of Evaluation
Ethos	Policies	Research	Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) (Pillar 2)	Formative Evaluation
Act	Culture	Celebrate	Campus Culture & Communications (Pillar 3)	Process Evaluation
Localise	Partnership		Personal & Professional Development (Pillar 4)	Outcome Evaluation
Leadership	Students		Health Focused Area (Pillar 5)	

