



# Healthy Campus Case Study



HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas  
The Higher Education Authority

# SunSmart Campus Pilot

## Institution/ Organisation

University of Limerick

## Who leads/ led the project?

Sarah Kennedy, Healthy UL Manager, and Bernadette Mullins, HSE Mid West, Senior Health Promotion and Improvement Officer – Cancer Prevention, Health and Wellbeing

## Date and timeframe

Launched July 2025, ongoing 3 year pilot (2025 - ongoing)

## Project Rationale

Skin cancer is Ireland's most common cancer, with over 11,000 annual cases (NCRI, 2025), largely preventable by protecting skin from UV protection. Young adults under 50 face higher melanoma risk; the pilot promotes lifelong sun-safe habits on campus to reduce future incidence. While survival rates are now nearly 100%, around 270 people in Ireland die from skin cancer each year in Ireland.

## Project Overview/ Summary

The initiative was developed through a strategic partnership between Healthy UL, HSE Mid-West, the HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP), and Healthy Ireland, ensuring alignment with the Healthy UL Framework and national health priorities.

Implementation involved the rollout of free sunscreen dispensers at high-traffic campus locations, including the Student Centre, rooftop garden, sports pitches, and main buildings, to maximise accessibility and encourage regular use. The campaign also promoted the SunSmart 5 S's through campus-wide signage, communications, and educational messaging on UV exposure risks and the dangers of sunbed use.

Launched in July 2025 as the first pilot of its kind in an Irish university, the initiative also included targeted interventions for outdoor workers and educational activities during Health and Wellbeing Week for both staff and students. UL Sport has further strengthened the programme by installing sun safety boards at its pitches, supporting local community users, staff, and children who use the facilities throughout the season. A coordinated social media campaign, delivered with Healthy UL and Student Life, reinforced the 5 S's and helped extend the reach of the message across the university community.

Evaluation of the pilot is ongoing, with a focus on awareness, sunscreen uptake, and behaviour change among students and staff. The project also provides an opportunity to assess the impact of embedding sun safety into everyday campus settings. Through this work, UL is demonstrating leadership in skin cancer prevention by integrating sun safety into daily life and encouraging protective behaviours in shared outdoor spaces.

## Key Learning Points

A whole of campus approach is important in supporting sun safety, as it ensures that prevention is embedded across multiple settings rather than relying on individual choice alone. Easy access to protection, such as free sunscreen dispensers in visible and high traffic locations, can help encourage behaviour change among young adults, who may otherwise be less consistent in using sun protection. By removing practical barriers, the initiative makes the healthier option easier to adopt and helps normalise sunsafe behaviour across the campus community.

The approach is also strengthened by targeting priority groups, beginning with outdoor workers who are at greater risk of UV exposure. Early partnership with HSE is valuable in securing expertise, credibility, and resources, while starting with small and visible pilots can help build awareness and support institutional buy in.

Embedding the initiative within an existing framework such as Healthy UL allows it to be integrated more seamlessly into wider health and wellbeing strategy. This is particularly important because early prevention helps reduce the risk of skin damage and skin cancer later in life.



Limerick Framework for Action			Whole Campus Approach	Type of Evaluation
Ethos	Leadership	Students	Leadership, Strategy & Governance (Pillar 1)	Process Evaluation
Act	Culture	Research	Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) (Pillar 2)	Outcome Evaluation
Localise	Partnership		Campus Culture & Communications (Pillar 3)	Summative Evaluation
			Personal & Professional Development (Pillar 4)	
			Health Focused Area (Pillar 5)	

