**HEA Healthy Campus**  **Case Study**

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| **HEALTHY CAMPUS CASE STUDY** | |
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| **Name of Institution/ Organisation** | University College Cork |
| **Who lead the initiative?** | Dr. Eithne Hunt, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy |
| **Date and timeframe of the initiative** | Ongoing |
| **What was the reach of the initiative?** | The Everyday Matters intervention has been disseminated widely including at conferences (Student Affairs Ireland, European First Year Experience Conference, NUIG Annual Health Promotion Conference, Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland). It has also featured on the Network SMARTEN blog, Thrive Global and the Flourishing Education podcast. This dissemination promotes this innovative Occupational Therapy intervention and enables Occupational Therapists and others to access educational content on the intervention. The intervention featured in a national seminar “Showcasing a Tiered Public Health Occupational Therapy Approach to Supporting Student Participation, Health, Wellbeing and Success in Higher Education” in June 2021 and a national seminar on “Curricular Approaches to Wellbeing in Higher Education” in May 2022. |
| **Initiative Title** | “Everyday Matters - Healthy Habits for University Life” – an innovative time use and wellbeing microcredential for UCC undergraduate and postgraduate students |
| **Aims/ Objectives** | Develop an evidence-based time use and wellbeing intervention to support the mental health, well-being and success of students. |
| **The rationale for the action, including any identified health needs** | University student mental distress, mental ill health, and low well-being are serious concerns nationally and internationally. Prevention and early treatment of mental health difficulties amongst university students are therefore key public health priorities globally. Mental health promotion, prevention and treatment in further and higher education are mainly facilitated through one-to-one counselling services. However, there are significant pressures on these services, with demand exceeding supply, despite enduring stigma around accessing mental health supports. As the curriculum is the only guaranteed point of contact between a university and its students, curricular approaches to well-being are particularly important and impactful. |
| **Identify all frameworks, policies, or strategies this initiative aligns to**  **(internal, local or national)** | Curricular  Jigsaw  Healthy Campus  HSE national  Healthy Ireland  UCC  NF  Student Mental Health  Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide, 2015-2020. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/connecting%20for%20life.pdf>  Price, A. Smith, H.A. And Kavalidou, K. (2019). USI National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education, Dublin: Union of Students in Ireland. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/publications/usi-student-mental-health-report-updated-.pdf>  HEA. (2019). Understanding and Enabling Student Success in Irish  Higher Education. <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NF-2019-Student-Success-report-web-ready.pdf>  Department of Health. (2020). Sharing the Vision A Mental Health Policy for Everyone  <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/mentalhealth/sharing-the-vision/>  USI/National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. (2021). Embedding wellbeing across the curriculum in higher education. <https://usi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Supporting-Wellbeing-in-Practice-October-2021.pdf>  UCC Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022)  <https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/currentstudents/keepwell/UCCStrategyFin.pdf>  Higher Education Authority. (2022). National Student Mental  Health and Suicide Prevention Framework. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2020/10/HEA-NSMHS-Framework.pdf>  HEA (2022). Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter and Framework for Ireland 2020 – 2025. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2023/03/Healthy-Campus-Charter-and-Framework.pdf>  Jigsaw/HSE Health and Wellbeing. (2023). Mental Health  Promotion in Higher Education Report on Roundtable Discussions,  25th April 2023. <https://jigsaw.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Mental-Health-Promotion-in-Higher-Education-Report-on-Roundtable-Discussions-25th-April-2023.pdf> |
| **Summary** | “Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life” (EM) is a novel, free, online, asynchronous, co-curricular microcredential now available to all 24,000 students at UCC. Over eight sessions (plus 2 synchronous online sessions) and informed by current scientific research and theory, students are guided to reflect on their time use across the day and how their time use influences their health and wellbeing, for good or ill. Habits of mind are also explored, as their presence or absence can enrich or undermine daily experiences. Participants earn their microcredential by completing a weekly quiz and submitting a short reflective paragraph, and receive a certificate of completion with personalised good wishes in addition to their digital micro-credential that they can add to their CV or LinkedIn profile. |
| **Did you collaborate with internal and/or external stakeholders to deliver?** | This innovative, low-cost, wide-reaching and scalable programme is a collaboration with the **UCC Skills Centre**, thus ‘mainstreaming’ the programme as a universal intervention, increasing its appeal for students. |
| **How was the initiative organised?** | This digital badge was approved by the UCC Digital Badge Sub-Committee in 2019. The intervention was piloted in Autumn 2019. In its first iteration, it was delivered as a face-to-face programme offered to first year Arts students, facilitated by Dr. Eithne Hunt in the UCC Skills Centre, located in one of UCC’s libraries.  A feasibility study (Hunt & Coombes, 2021) was conducted in parallel, using pre-test post-test quantitative methods. Anonymous pre- and post- questionnaires as well as evaluation/ feedback forms were completed by the consenting research participants (n=8) in session 1 and session 8, respectively. Statistically significant results emerged relating to improved levels of self-compassion, growth mindset and gratitude amongst participants.  A second in-person pilot was underway in Spring 2020 but had to be paused due to COVID-19 and resulting closure of the university. Due to the ongoing restrictions around in-person teaching in higher education in Autumn 2020, the programme was adapted and optimised for asynchronous online delivery, commencing 27th October 2020. |
| **What resources did you need?** | The content for EM was developed by Dr. Eithne Hunt based on her clinical background in adolescent mental health, her doctoral research on adolescent time use and wellbeing, her further training in mindfulness, self-compassion and growth mindset and her extensive academic experiencing teaching students about daily activities and wellbeing. The UCC Skills Centre provided some support with creating original video content, recruitment and promoting the digital badge. Now recruitment and administration of EM is managed by Dr. Eithne Hunt. The UCC Skills Centre assists with social media promotion.  EM is fully supported by University management but has been funded externally. Dr. Hunt secured corporate sponsorship [€20,000] to support the delivery/evaluation of EM 2021-2023. This allowed for the purchase of additional resources to supplement the content of EM and a Masters research student to examine the experience of doctoral students who participated in EM. |
| **Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?** | EM is a highly impactful programme that is now embedded within UCC infrastructure.  Participant feedback consistently shows how EM helps students to gain the most from their studies, with statistically significant improvements across all wellbeing measures.  EM was highly commended in a national Occupational Therapy award in 2021. |
| **Any future plans, including the sustainability of the initiative?** | Future plans include a content refresh to ensure the most up to date evidence informs teaching; securing accreditation for EM as a credit-bearing Microcred available within and beyond UCC; exploring partnering with UCC professional services units to offer targeted, in-person EM to known potentially at-risk student cohorts [e.g., mature students, international students] to support their wellbeing and success; pursuing funding for randomised controlled trial of EM. |
| **Key Learning Points** | Mental health and well-being are critical to student success in higher education and beyond (Leshner, 2021).  University student mental ill health, mental distress and low well-being are a serious concern nationally and internationally.  Despite enduring stigma around accessing mental health supports, demand for 1:1 counselling exceeds supply.  Developing and resourcing a range of evidence-based interventions targeting the mental health, well-being and success of students is critical across universal, targeted and intensive supports.  As the curriculum is the only guaranteed point of contact between a university and its students, curricular approaches to well-being are particularly important and impactful.  “Everyday Matters: Healthy Habits for University Life” is a novel, free, online, asynchronous, co-curricular microcredential available to all students at UCC.  This highly successful, innovative, low-cost, wide-reaching and scalable programme is a collaboration with the UCC Skills Centre. |

**Healthy Campus Framework Categories (please tick all that apply)**

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| **Healthy Campus Process** | **Whole Campus Approach** | **Topic** | **Population Group** |
| Commit | Leadership, Strategy & Governance | Alcohol | Students |
| Coordinate | Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) | Substance Misuse | Staff |
| Consult | Campus Culture & Communications | Healthy Eating / Food | Wider community |
| Create | Personal & Professional Development | Mental Health & Wellbeing | Other |
| Celebrate & Continue |  | Sexual Health & Wellbeing |  |
|  |  | Tobacco Free Campus |  |
|  |  | Physical Activity / Active Transport |  |
|  |  | Wellbeing on the Curriculum (can also fall under ‘Personal & Professional Development) |  |
|  |  | Health & Sustainability |  |
|  |  | Other |  |

**Contact Details**

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| **Links** | <https://www.ucc.ie/en/skillscentre/news-and-workshops/everyday-matters/>  Hunt E, Coombes L. A feasibility study on a novel well-being intervention for university students. Ir J Psychol Med. 2021 Nov 24:1-5. doi: 10.1017/ipm.2021.74. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34814957/>  Prendergast, A., Usher, R., & Hunt, E. (2023). “A Constant Juggling Act”—The Daily Life Experiences and Well-Being of Doctoral Students. *Education Sciences*, *13*(9), 916. MDPI AG. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090916>  <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/resource/showcasing-a-tiered-public-health-occupational-therapy-approach-to-supporting-student-participation-health-wellbeing-and-success-in-higher-education/>  <https://hub.teachingandlearning.ie/resource/curricular-approaches-to-wellbeing-in-higher-education/> |