‘A Healthy MTU’: An Investigation into the Dietary Behaviours and Alcohol Consumption Patterns of First Year Undergraduate Students During the Transition to Higher Education

**Aims and Objectives**
Aligned with a broader ‘Healthy Campus’ entity, the current case study aimed to examine self-reported dietary behaviours and alcohol consumption patterns amongst Year 1 undergraduate students in a multi-campus University in Ireland.

**Aligned frameworks, policies, or strategies**
- HEA Healthy Campus Charter and Framework
- Healthy Ireland Framework (2019-2025)
- The Okanagan Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges

**Date and timeframe**
September 2023-April 2024

**What was the reach?**
All registered Year 1 undergraduate students across six campuses of the multi-campus University were contacted to participate in a bespoke ‘health and wellbeing’ survey. The aim of the survey was to examine dietary behaviours, health parameters, and alcohol consumption patterns of students during the critical transition to higher education. The survey was disseminated during two successive academic years, as follows:
- 2022/2023: (Wave 1) Target: 5,077 Reach: 330 (6.5%)
- 2023/2024: (Wave 2) Target: 4,969 Reach: 1,580 (31.8%)

**Project Collaborators**
Cross-university collaboration with Academic and PMSS staff (as applicable) to enable and facilitate in-class participation during the second iteration of the survey.

**Key Learning Points**
- Sub-optimal dietary behaviours, and hazardous alcohol consumption patterns, similar to international research were prevalence across this multi-campus university setting.
- A high prevalence of overweight and obesity was observed.
- Utilising in-person recruitment methods not only boosts absolute participation rates compared to online email dissemination but also increases representativeness.