



# Healthy Campus Case Study



**HEA** | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

# ‘Connect Café’

**Name of institution and initiative lead**  
Maynooth University (MU)  
The Maynooth University Healthy Campus Team in collaboration with the campus Mental Health Nurse and the Clubs & Societies Co-ordinators.

**Date and timeframe**  
Four Connect Cafés took places across Academic Year 2023 – 2024, two in Semester One and two in Semester Two.

**What was the reach?**  
An open invitation to the Connect Cafés was issued to all students via the Healthy Campus, Student Services and Clubs & Societies social media accounts, and the campus wide student eZine.

**Aims and Objectives**  
The overarching aim was to improve mental health literacy and decrease stigma regarding mental health, in addition to increasing students’ sense of connection with self/others/the campus community.  
Objectives:  
Normalise talking about mental health by having regular cafés on campus where students can come together, and the topic of mental health is spoken about openly.

**Aims and Objectives**  
Increase students coping skills through promotion of the Mental Health Ireland ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ tool at each café.  
Increase awareness of the mental health supports on campus and beyond by having an Information Stand at each café with information, flyers, and handouts available for students to take.  
Increase students sense of connection and belonging to campus by providing a space for them to relax for an hour where they can avail of free tea/coffee and healthy snacks (e.g. fruit, yogurt and granola), mingle with each other and chat with/ask questions to the Healthy Campus Team, Mental Health Nurse and Clubs & Societies Co-ordinators about what supports/services are available to them.

**Aligned frameworks, policies, or strategies**  
The National Healthy Campus Charter and Framework  
Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025  
The National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework  
The Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2023-2028

**Project Collaborators**  
Internal collaborators were the Student Services Department who provided handouts and leaflets with information on their services such as Counselling and Student Advisory. External collaborators were Mental Health Ireland (from whom the Connect Café concept originated) who provided advice, sample questions, bunting and informative handouts for the events.

**Key Learning Points**  
**The importance and value of a partnership approach to student wellbeing** – the collaborative work between the Healthy Campus Team, the Health Centre (Mental Health Nurse) and the Clubs & Societies Department enabled a higher standard of service delivery and a broader reach across the student population. We did reach out to the Maynooth student Mental Health Society and invite them to become involved, but they did not have capacity this year. We are hopeful they will be able to get involved in AY 24/25 and feel this will add a further richness, reach and depth to the events.  
**The importance of the student voice** – while we did illicit qualitative feedback from students who attended, this was not done in a structured, quantitative way. Our goal for next semester is, not only to have students involved in the running of the events, but to have a structured feedback mechanism for attendees (e.g. a QR code linked to a satisfaction survey that we invite all attendees to complete).

Healthy Campus Process	Whole Campus Approach	Topic	Population Group
Create	Campus Environment (Facilities & Services)	Healthy Eating / Food	Students
	Campus Culture & Communications	Mental Health & Wellbeing	
	Personal & Professional Development		



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

