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

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| **HEALTHY CAMPUS CASE STUDY** |
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| **Name of Institution/ Organisation** | Maynooth University (MU) |
| **Who led the initiative?** | The Maynooth University Healthy Campus Team in collaboration with a Project Group comprised of representatives from: * The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Office (EDI)
* The Maynooth Students Union (MSU)
* The Maynooth University Estates Office/Green Campus Team.
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| **Date and timeframe of the initiative** | This is a 3-year pilot project that launched in Feb 2024.  |
| **What was the reach of the initiative?**  | This project is for all staff and students of Maynooth University who menstruate.  |
| **Initiative title**  | The ‘Period Dignity’ Project |
| **Aims / objectives** | The overarching aim of this project was to reduce period poverty and increase menstrual health literacy and dignity among students and staff. Objectives: * bring awareness to the topic of menstrual health, in particular the issue of period poverty.
* provide information on campus supports regarding menstrual health (Student Health Centre and Staff Wellbeing Resources), and signpost to external supports and resources (e.g. HSE).
* provide free, eco-friendly, organic cotton, toxin free products which are kind to the body and the planet for staff and students.
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| **The rationale for the action, including any identified health needs** | * ‘Period poverty’ is a serious injustice that effects people all over the world. The term refers to a lack of access to period products, to information on menstruation and to appropriate sanitation facilities. It can cause problems such as physical discomfort, missing work/study, having to choose between groceries or period products and not being aware of how your body functions.
* According to research undertaken by Irish period product company Riley 90% of people who mensurate run of period products when they need them and almost two-thirds feel their period symptoms have been disregarded. Furthermore 86% started their periods unexpectedly in public without the supplies they needed, 79% were forced to use toilet paper or other materials as a makeshift pad, 62% had to buy supplies during work hours, while 39% immediately went home to get period products.
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| **Identify all frameworks, policies, or strategies this initiative aligns to****(internal, local or national)** | * Healthy Campus Charter and Framework
* Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive (the ESVH Framework)
* National Sexual Health Strategy
* The Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2023-2028
* Athena Swan
* Maynooth University Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2026
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| **Summary**  | Maynooth University strongly believes no-one should have to experience period poverty – no-one should have to struggle to access safe period products, go without period products or sacrifice their dignity. In response to this issue, Maynooth University are proud to partner with Riley and present a 3-year pilot project ‘#PeriodDignity’ where free eco-friendly, organic cotton, toxin free products which are kind to the body and to the planet are provided for staff and students at several locations across campus. In addition to the provision of physical period products, there will be on-going campaigns to raise awareness on the topic of menstrual health and signpost staff and students to relevant supports and resources.  |
| **Did you collaborate with internal and/or external stakeholders to deliver?**  | * Maynooth Students Union – building on their ‘Destress’ campaign which included offering free period products.
* The Law Society spearheaded a ‘Fighting Period Poverty’ campaign where they provided free period products across campus and in student-frequented venues in Maynooth Town with the support of MSU.
* Similarly, staff within the Maynooth Access Programme (MAP) launched a ‘Positive Periods’ campaign to provide free period products to staff and students in their building.
* We were also delighted to partner with Riley as our supplier, and with the Maynooth Estates Office and Noonan’s Cleaning Company to organise installation and maintenance of product dispensers.
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| **How was the initiative organised?** | * Approval to fund this 3-year pilot project was gained by the EDI Office from the University Executive.
* In the spirit of the Healthy Campus Charter and Framework we then took a ‘whole-campus’ approach and worked in partnership with key stakeholders to form a diverse Project Group. This group met regularly to agree the aims, objectives, and an implementation plan.
* Consultation meetings were held with the Law Society and MAP representatives to establish how we could best build on the two existing campaigns they had already created.
* Research was conducted into different product suppliers. Riley was identified as the preferred supplier for HEIs, and collaboratively co-branded graphics for the product dispensers were created.
* A Launch Event was held on campus. The Law Society and MAP were guests of honour who gave inspiring speeches, a panel discussion with Riley, the MSU, the Student Health Centre and Green Campus was held, and there was a raffle with prizes to be won by attendees.
* Following the launch 2 x ‘pop-up’ Information Stands were held on campus this semester to spread further awareness of the project.
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| **What resources did you need?** | * Funding for the 3-year supply of period products was awarded to the EDI Office by Maynooth University.
* Funding for the Launch Event and promotional campaign came from the Healthy Campus Team.
* Implementation of the project was led by the Healthy Campus Team in partnership with the Project Group.
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| **Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?**  | Period product dispensers are in place in 5 x locations across campus since Feb 2024 with 3,652 sanitary products provided to date. Full evaluation will be undertaken at the end of each year of the project.  |
| **Any future plans, including the sustainability of the initiative?**  | This pilot project was initially set to run for 3 years. With the announcement in May 2024 from the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Patrick O’Donovan of €500,000 funding to provide free period products for students nationally, it is likely this project can and will be extended. We await further details of this funding and will it arrive.  |
| **Key Learning Points** | * The importance of a holistic understanding of health – as noted by the HSE, sexual health is an important part of overall health. Sexual health doesn’t just refer to disease, infections, contraception, and fertility, but also to things like identity, pleasure, well-being, knowing how your body functions and the ability to enjoy safe, fulfilling relationships that are free from violence and discrimination.
* The importance and value of a partnership approach to health and wellbeing – it was the collaborative work between EDI, Healthy Campus, MSU, the Law Society, MAP Representatives, Estates, Noonan’s, and Riley that enabled this project to succeed. Going forward our goal for the next Academic Year (24/25) is to extend this partnership approach and have student ‘Sexual Health Champions’ who can assist in the promotion of this project and others under our Healthy Campus key area of ‘Sexual Health & Wellbeing’.
* The importance of evaluation - while we have not yet had the time to get structured feedback from students and staff, we understand that regular evaluation is key to the continued success of this project. As such, we plan to complete a yearly evaluation.
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**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 [x]  |
| Coordinate [ ]  | Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) [x]  | Substance Misuse [ ]  | Staff [x]  |
| Consult [ ]  | Campus Culture & Communications [x]  | Healthy Eating / Food [ ]  | Wider community [ ]  |
| Create [x]  | Personal & Professional Development [ ]  | Mental Health & Wellbeing[ ]  | Other [ ]  |
| Celebrate & Continue [ ]  |  | Sexual Health & Wellbeing[x]  |  |
|  |  | Tobacco Free Campus[ ]  |  |
|  |  | Physical Activity / Active Transport[ ]  |  |
|  |  | Wellbeing on the Curriculum (can also fall under ‘Personal & Professional Development)[ ]  |  |
|  |  | Health & Sustainability [x]  |  |
|  |  | Other [ ]  |  |

**Contact Details**

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| **Links** | [Sexual Health | Maynooth University](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/student-services/healthy-campus/sexual-health)[MU launches Period Dignity campaign | Maynooth University](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/news-events/mu-launches-period-dignity-campaign)[Maynooth University Healthy Campus (@healthycampusmu) • Instagram photos and videos](https://www.instagram.com/p/C2wkTUGgmu1/)[Maynooth University Healthy Campus (@healthycampusmu) • Instagram photos and videos](https://www.instagram.com/p/C2rcbz8tk54/?img_index=1)[Maynooth University Healthy Campus (@healthycampusmu) • Instagram photos and videos](https://www.instagram.com/p/C217O08t1fd/)[Maynooth University Healthy Campus (@healthycampusmu) • Instagram photos and videos](https://www.instagram.com/p/C3PfaPitrtB/?img_index=1)  |