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

**NOTES FOR COMPLETION**

* Case studies should relate to your institution's healthy campus initiative.
* Where possible send a photograph or illustration, links, or resources to accompany your case study.
* It is recognised that not all sections will be relevant to all case studies – the proforma is designed to offer consistency across a range of case studies.
* The HEA will invite selected institutions to present their case studies at the HEA Wellbeing Conference, in Dublin, on April 20th, 2023. All case studies will be printed and displayed at the conference.
* Case studies will be used as part of HEA communications including email, website, and social media.
* Case studies should be written in the third person and anonymous when it comes to participants’ names.
* Please be as **concise and clear** as possible and consider the use of bullet points to summarise information.
* Please submit your case study to [healthycampus@hea.ie](mailto:healthycampus@hea.ie).

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| **HEALTHY CAMPUS CASE STUDY** | |
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| **Name of Institution/ Organisation** | Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Donegal  Ulster University |
| **Who led the initiative?** | This initiative was led by the PIs for the I-SWAP project, Dr Louise McBride, ATU Donegal and Dr Elaine Murray, Ulster University, in collaboration with the research team and colleagues from the Curve in ATU, student wellbeing services and students living with ADHD who helped co-design the project. Dr Margaret McLafferty was the Research Fellow for the project based in UU. Natasha Brown was the Research Assistant based in ATU at the start of the project and was then succeeded by James Sweeney. |
| **Date and timeframe of the initiative** | The academic year 2022 – 2023 |
| **What was the reach of the initiative?** | This initiative was offered to students living with ADHD, attending either ATU Donegal or Ulster University. In total, 39 students took part in a co-designed Mental Health Literacy and Wellbeing Programme on campus or online. |
| **Initiative Title** | **Mental Health Literacy and Wellbeing Programme for Students Living with ADHD.** |
| **Aims/ Objectives** | The main aim was to trial a cost-effective intervention to help address the needs of students living with ADHD through the co-development, delivery and evaluation of a tailored Mental Health Literacy and Wellbeing Programme. |
| **The rationale for the action, including any identified health needs** | Despite the high prevalence of ADHD among university students and the associated social, emotional, and academic concerns, very few interventions are aimed at supporting students living with ADHD. Furthermore, mental health issues and suicidal behaviour are highly prevalent amongst this population and limited support is provided, particularly for those without a formal diagnosis. It is therefore vitally important to develop initiatives to support students living with ADHD in the college setting. |
| **Identify all frameworks, policies, or strategies this initiative aligns to**  **(internal, local or national)** | National Student Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Framework (Dept of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2020)  Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (DOH, 2020).  Northern Ireland Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031.  Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2023-2027 |
| **Summary** | **Background**  Developing strategies to address the increasing prevalence of psychological problems among students is a significant challenge faced by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Prior research has reported that students with ADHD have very high rates of mental health disorders and suicidal behaviour and often struggle in the college setting. To help address the needs of students living with ADHD the research team applied to the HEA North South Research Programme for funding to conduct a study known as the Irish Student Wellbeing and ADHD Project (I-SWAP).  The project aimed to study the link between ADHD and mental health, researching methods to ease the college transition for those living with ADHD, with the focus of developing a targeted, evidence-based programme aimed at improving psychological wellbeing and academic achievement.  **Key findings**  Mental health literacy and wellbeing sessions were co-designed, developed, implemented, and evaluated at Ulster University and ATU Donegal. On the recommendation of a student advisory group with lived experience, the programme was open to anyone who screened for probable ADHD, rather than only those with a formal diagnosis. The content of the programme was co-designed by the research team and the student advisory group. The study was implemented over an 8-week period by trained facilitators and delivered across 3 campuses. The sessions were also offered online one evening per week. Topics covered included managing anxiety and depression, emotion regulation, rejection sensitivity, hope and resilience. Overall, 39 students participated, with the majority completing all sessions.  A mixed-methods evaluation was utilised to assess the programme. Validated questionnaires were used to assess mental health literacy and wellbeing in participants pre and post programme. Weekly evaluations were also collected by survey and focus groups were conducted with students and facilitators after programme completion to assess the benefits and recommendations for improvement of the programme.  **Discussion and recommendations**  Survey results indicated that self-esteem and help-seeking behaviour increased while depression scores decreased among participants following completion of the programme, when compared to their pre-programme scores. Participants rated the programme highly and indicated an improved understanding of ADHD and how to cope with and respond to their symptoms. Students particularly liked the sense of community/belonging developed through the sessions. They recommended that it should be continued and offered to those without a formal diagnosis, as the waiting times to get a diagnosis can be extremely long. The programme provides a cost-effective means of helping students living with ADHD, allowing for more positive student experiences, quality of life, and academic and career success, which could be implemented across HEIs in Ireland. |
| **Did you collaborate with internal and/or external stakeholders to deliver?** | Stakeholders were students living with ADHD attending ATU Donegal or Ulster University, along with Student Wellbeing Services and Students Unions and colleagues from both institutions. External stakeholders were also involved, with Pneuma Healthcare providing facilitators to deliver the 8-week wellbeing programme and Resilio who developed content for the programme. |
| **How was the initiative organised?** | A steering group was set up for the project at the onset, along with a student advisory group who helped to co-design the initiative.  Ethical approval was obtained for the project from Ulster University and ATU Donegal.  The project commenced in Autumn 2022, and the Wellbeing Programme commenced in Spring 2023, running for 8 weeks during the second semester of the academic year 2023. |
| **What resources did you need?** | Funding for the project was secured from the HEA North South Research Programme, Shared Island Initiative. Costs for delivery of the wellbeing programme included payment of facilitators from Pneuma Healthcare who are trained facilitators, and catering costs. Participants received a small reimbursement for the time spent completing this research study. |
| **Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?** | A mixed-methods approach was utilised to evaluate the wellbeing programme. Validated measures were used to assess participants pre and post programme attitudes and intentions associated with help-seeking and mental illness, mental health literacy, resilience, mental wellbeing, and optimism. Depression significantly reduced following the programme, while help-seeking and self-esteem increased among this cohort. Online weekly evaluations of sessions were also collected, and focus groups were conducted with students and facilitators after programme completion to assess the benefits and shortcomings of the programme. The vast majority of participants indicated that they found the programme very beneficial, and that they would recommend it to a friend. |
| **Any future plans, including the sustainability of the initiative?** | The study identified a cost-effective means of helping students living with ADHD, allowing for more positive student experiences, quality of life, and academic and career success. The wellbeing sessions were refined and run again in Ulster University in Spring 2024. Plans are in place for the wellbeing programme to be run in the ATU campuses in the academic year 2024-25. It is envisaged that by sharing the findings and resources that other HEIs will adopt the programme for use with their students. |
| **Key Learning Points** | * High levels of mental health problems and suicidal behaviour are common among students living with ADHD. * Many students with ADHD find the transition to college difficult. * Those without a formal diagnosis generally do not receive the support required. * Mental health literacy and wellbeing sessions are helpful and provide a cost-effective way of supporting students living with ADHD. * Involving students in the co-design and development of initiatives will lead to interventions that are more relevant, engaging and useful to student users. |

**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    Neurodiversity |  |

**Contact Details**

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| **Links** | Please add links to any relevant pages/ documents. Please attach any items not in a link format with your submission.  @i\_SWAP\_ |