**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.
* 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** | Dundalk Institute of Technology. |
| **Who lead the initiative?** | Dr. Sinéad O’Connor, Dr. Seán Kilroy, Noeleen Gregory and Fiona Hackett: The BSc (Hons) in Health and Physical Activity lecturing team from the Department of Life & Health Sciences. |
| **Date and timeframe of the initiative** | The academic year 2024 – 2025 and ongoing. |
| **What was the reach of the initiative?** | In total, 26 teams, comprising 170 individuals (55% Staff & 45% Students) registered to participate in a 4-week steps challenge. |
| **Initiative Title** | “DkITs Fittest” STEPS Challenge |
| **Aims/ Objectives** | The aims of “DkITs Fittest” were as follows:   * Use a settings-based approach to promote physical activity engagement in both staff and students of DkIT. * Promote an increase in sustainable physical activity by encouraging physical activity engagement in a fun and inclusive manner. * Generate a greater awareness of the positive impact of physical activity on both physical and mental health. * Foster and encourage staff and student development, as well as the growth and strengthening of relationships between both cohorts, in a meaningful way. |
| **The rationale for the action, including any identified health needs** | This challenge event adopted a settings-based approach in the promotion of physical activity engagement in both staff and students of DkIT. This is in line with the Healthy Campus framework by “*aspiring to create a learning environment and organizational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of its’ community*” (Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter & Framework for Ireland 2020-2025). |
| **Identify all frameworks, policies, or strategies this initiative aligns to**  **(internal, local or national)** | Department of Health (2013). *Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025*: [healthy-ireland-framework.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/healthy-ireland-framework.pdf)  Department of Health (2021). *Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025*: [healthy-ireland-strategic-action-plan-2021-2025.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/healthy-ireland-strategic-action-plan-2021-2025.pdf)  Department of Health (2020). *Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter and Framework for Ireland*: [Healthy-Campus-Charter-and-Framework.pdf](https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2023/03/Healthy-Campus-Charter-and-Framework.pdf)  DkITs Healthy Campus Framework  International Conference on Health Promoting Universities and Colleges (2015). *Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges*: [Okanagan Charter](https://open.library.ubc.ca/media/stream/pdf/53926/1.0132754/7)  World Health Organisation (1998). *Health Promoting Universities: Concept, Experience and Framework for Action*: [Health promoting universities: Concept, experience and framework for action](https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/108095/9789289012850-eng.pdf?sequence=1) |
| **Summary** | “DkITs Fittest” STEPS Challenge 2024 used a settings-based approach to promote physical activity engagement in both staff and students of DkIT. 26 teams, including 170 participants (both staff and students), cross-campus, took part in the Steps Challenge over a 4-week period. Over 10.5 million steps were logged (cumulative total of daily averages achieved), demonstrating a clear collaborative effort from both staff and students involved. During this period, motivational emails (including relevant health information, weekly leaderboards) were sent to all involved in the challenge to encourage and motivate participants to stay engaged. Participants said that these emails acted as an incentive for them to stay engaged. Also, participants themselves identified that being part of a team-based challenge encouraged them to engage with the challenge. In addition, participants were encouraged to upload active photos of themselves, with the majority of these showing the participant outside enjoying nature, with the mental health benefits of exercising in nature being well documented. A finale and prize-giving ceremony celebrated the end of “DkITs Fittest” STEPS Challenge 2024 and was a lovely opportunity to celebrate everyone involved and to encourage participants to sustain their modified / new physical activity behaviours into the future. |
| **Did you collaborate with internal and/or external stakeholders to deliver?** | Internal: DkITs Healthy Campus group  External: Healthy Louth |
| **How was the initiative organised?** | The BSc (Hons) in Health and Physical Activity lecturing team applied for a funding call from Louth County Council (Healthy Ireland) in May 2024 to implement an initiative to increase the % of adults meeting the physical activity guidelines. Healthy Louth stipulated that the funding associated with the project had to be spent between September and December 2024. Therefore, upon securing the funding, the team trouble-shooted some ideas and following some research, settled upon a 4-week STEPS Challenge for staff and students, to run for the month of October 2024. |
| **What resources did you need?** | Financial: €1000 funding was received from Healthy Louth. This was used to employ a graphic designer to generate promotional material and social media content, as well as the securing of prizes for the winning teams.  Personnel: 4 lecturing staff of the BSc (Hons) in Health and Physical Activity degree programme to market the challenge on an on-going basis, to log the team’s weekly step counts and to organise and host a finale and prize-giving event. |
| **Has it been evaluated? How successful has it been?** | Yes. Five weeks following the conclusion of the challenge, all participants were invited via email to complete a self-report survey designed to assess their physical activity levels during and after the challenge, the motivations and barriers influencing their participation, and the degree of social engagement among team members. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to survey completion. Of the 170 individuals invited, 51 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 30%. Among respondents, 88% reported increased physical activity during the challenge, with the primary motivators identified as a desire to become more active (48%) and team-based encouragement (41%). Following the challenge, 45% of participants indicated that they had maintained elevated levels of physical activity, with improved health and fitness being the most frequently cited reason (70%). Conversely, among the 55% who did not sustain increased activity, lack of motivation was reported as the primary barrier (40%). Enhanced social interaction among team members was reported across all team compositions, including staff-only, student-only, and mixed groups comprising both staff and students. |
| **Any future plans, including the sustainability of the initiative?** | We envisage making “DkITs Fittest” STEPS Challenge a yearly event with the view to promoting and encouraging the sustainable participation of both staff and students in physical activity through inclusion and socialisation. In particular, we plan on recruiting new, incoming students during induction week with the hope of making the new first-year students feel part of the DkIT community right from the beginning of their studies. The continuation of the initiative will be contingent on securing additional funding and recruiting additional personnel to operationalize the challenge. |
| **Key Learning Points** | * Integrating physical activity into the campus environment enhanced both the physical activity levels of students and staff, as well as fostering greater social interaction among them. Gaining insight into the motivators and barriers that influence sustained participation can inform the development of future health promotion initiatives aimed at creating a healthier campus community. * Time Constraints: As this was the first year of the challenge, there was an enormous amount of administration work associated with getting the challenge up and running in the first instance and secondly, the logging of participant steps on a weekly basis was very time consuming. Moving forward with this challenge, as the Health and Physical Activity team is small, there would be a need to recruit additional administrative personnel. We are also looking at technology to assist with the logging of steps in conjunction with a research centre at DkIT. * Participant retention and long-term engagement: Our retrospective research has helped us to understand why some individuals disengaged from the challenge and how adjustments to the challenge in the future might help to negate this e.g. the introduction of lunch time walking groups both during and after the challenge. |

**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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| **Contact Name/s** | Dr. Sinéad O’Connor |
| **Date** | 13/4/25 |
| **Email Address** | sinead.oconnor@dkit.ie |
| **Links** | Please add links to any relevant pages/ documents. Please attach any items not in a link format with your submission.  **Examples of Resources generated:**  Participation Invitation: [DkIT's Fittest Email Advert](https://studentdkit-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/oconnors_dkit_ie/EU-kNwa3yOhAoAllOv06nnoBii4qcrxJt20LDa-SLVk7ug?e=SDg0Gf)  Finale and Prize-giving Invitation: [DkIT's Fittest Finale Email Advert](https://studentdkit-my.sharepoint.com/:i:/g/personal/oconnors_dkit_ie/EQLFj3oyeRBMkQqLXT0Qx1gBxOd5a02HbcqJ52VNQ5Ib4A?e=6YSUcs)  Example of Weekly Leaderboard: [END OF WEEK 1 LEADERBOARD](https://studentdkit-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/oconnors_dkit_ie/EXdEovbJT3dFmyc3oj9f-ZoBzohGKJmE1K1uILs5vNz1LA?e=K7zZ92)  Link to video of early morning walk by one of our participants: [Early morning walk](https://studentdkit-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/g/personal/oconnors_dkit_ie/EcaagQjSy3JOvSLi1Orr1ywBn1nS1KOUE8hywd5UPjivTw?e=84qlcH&nav=eyJwbGF5YmFja09wdGlvbnMiOnt9LCJyZWZlcnJhbEluZm8iOnsicmVmZXJyYWxBcHAiOiJPbmVVcExpZ2h0U3BlZWQiLCJyZWZlcnJhbE1vZGUiOiJtaXMiLCJyZWZlcnJhbFZpZXciOiJwb3N0cm9sbC1jb3B5bGluayIsInJlZmVycmFsUGxheWJhY2tTZXNzaW9uSWQiOiJkYmMyYjYzYi02ZWQyLTQ2NzctYTU1NC0wOTJhZGVjMTNiODkifX0%3D)  **Write-up of “DkITs Fittest”:**  Dundalk IT website: [DkIT staff and students step up to the challenge to be crowned “DkIT’s Fittest” 2024 / News / DkIT - Dundalk Institute of Technology](https://www.dkit.ie/news/dkit-staff-and-students-step-up-to-the-challenge-to-be-crowned-%E2%80%9Cdkit%E2%80%99s-fittest%E2%80%9D-2024.html)  Local newspaper, Dundalk Democrat: [Dundalk IT holds 'DkIT’s Fittest' STEPS Challenge 2024 - Louth Live](https://www.dundalkdemocrat.ie/news/local-news/1649838/dundalk-it-holds-dkits-fittest-steps-challenge-2024.html)  Careers News.ie: [“DkIT’s Fittest” 2024 - Careers and Education News](https://careersnews.ie/dkits-fittest-2024/)  An evaluation of “DkITs Fittest” is being presented at the International Health Promoting Campuses Conference in the University of Limerick in June 2025. |