

Healthy UCD Annual Report Year 9 (2024/2025)

September 2025

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FOREWORD BY CHAIR

Following the significant changes in the Academic Year 2023/24, this year has involved considerable learning and evolving for Healthy UCD. Changes in personnel have brought new energy and determination to advance the prioritisation of health and wellbeing on our campus. We have developed new partnerships within and external to UCD and have fostered new collaborations with Higher Education Institutions in Ireland through the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Healthy Campus Network.

One of the highlights of the year was the International Health Promoting Campuses Conference held in the University of Limerick in June. This provided an opportunity to network and hear from other Universities experiences of developing and implementing healthy campus initiatives, both nationally and internationally.



Figure 1 - Attendees at the International Health Promoting Campuses Conference in the University of Limerick in June

The work programme for Healthy UCD has primarily involved supporting our staff and student community either through direct initiatives, such as Healthy Eating Active Living Week (HEAL) and Smoking Cessation programmes, or through our extensive engagement with the Students Union, Student Services and UCD Estates. We have ongoing collaboration with UCD Culture and Engagement to support and promote health and wellbeing among our staff. This year we have developed new working relationships with UCD Global, Equality Diversity and Inclusion and with the Health Service Executive Community Leads for Health and Wellbeing.

I would like to recognise Mags Carey, Healthy UCD Co-ordinator, whose capacity to resolve complex issues while fostering strong professional networks has ensured the Healthy UCD Agenda is continuing to strive towards actualising a Healthy Campus in UCD. Several new members were invited to join our Healthy UCD Steering Committee bringing considerable new expertise and energy to progress our work. I would like to thank the Committee for their continued commitment throughout the year and for their dedication to support staff and student health and wellbeing. We look forward to engaging with the new UCD Strategy later in the year and work towards developing a new strategy for Healthy UCD which strives towards weaving health and wellbeing into the fabric of our community.



Dr. Celine Murrin

Chair, Steering Committee for Healthy UCD

INTRODUCTION

The Healthy UCD wheel, which will form the basis of the next strategy from 2026, identifies the health priorities of focus and we have highlighted the progress made under each of the health priorities below. This strategy will set out ambitious but achievable goals for the next number of years and will aim to consolidate and build on the contribution of Healthy UCD to healthy campus life.

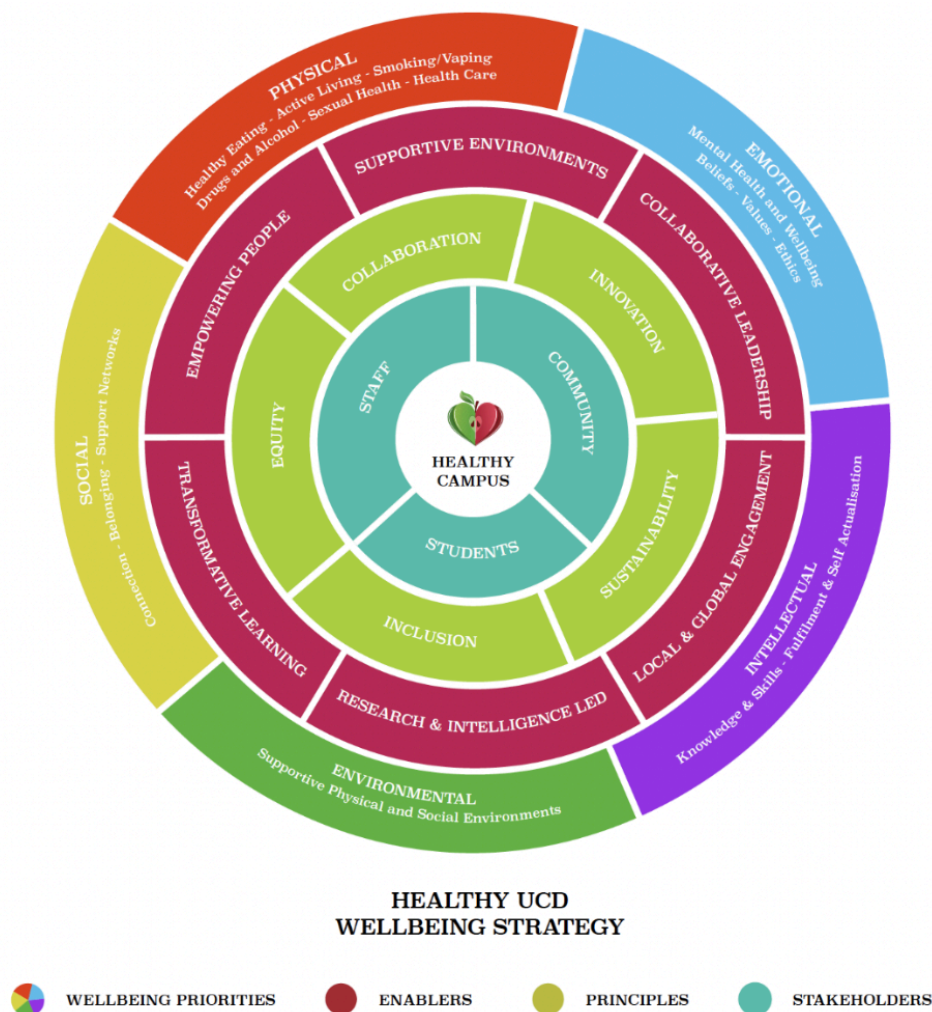


Figure 2 - The Healthy UCD wheel

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES

Student Health and Wellbeing Survey 2024-25

This year, Healthy UCD undertook a Student Health and Wellbeing Survey at the start of term, focusing on three of the wellbeing priorities:- Smoking and Vaping, Healthy Eating and Active Living. The data collated was invaluable in helping to understand the needs of students and prioritise initiatives accordingly.

PHYSICAL HEALTH: Smoking and Vaping

The Smoking and Vaping subgroup, led by Dr Kate Frazer, was keen to understand the smoking and vaping prevalence on campus. The Student Health and Wellbeing survey, which was carried out at the start of term, identified a smoking prevalence of 22.6% and a vaping prevalence of 8.9%, with 24.2% of smokers actively trying to quit.

HSE QUIT Programme

These findings highlighted the need for on-campus smoking supports and HealthyUCD, in partnership with the HSE and UCD Student Health, rolled out a 12 week on-campus pilot in February 2025 to address this need.

Of the 29 people who took part in the pilot, 31% were staff and 69% were students, and all were offered a weekly appointment including free Nicotine Replacement Therapy. By the end of the pilot, 6 people had fully quit. Healthy UCD is delighted to continue this partnership with the HSE and deliver the programme on an ongoing basis.



Figure 3 - HSE QUIT pilot on campus

PHYSICAL HEALTH: Health Eating

The Healthy UCD healthy eating subgroup, led by Dr Celine Murrin, has drafted a food policy for UCD, which will incorporate a set of principles for catering outlets on campus, focusing on areas such as sustainability and food poverty. Healthy UCD will continue to work closely with UCD estates to ensure that a variety of cost effective and nutritious offerings are available on campus and that the needs of those with specific dietary requirements are met.

Sustainable Food Workshops

Healthy UCD was delighted to run a series of sustainable food workshops throughout the year, in partnership with the PlanEat team, who are undertaking to better understand how environmental, social, cultural and individual factors affect people's food choices and co-design interventions to effectively reverse trends in dietary behaviour.



Figure 4 - Sustainable Food Fest with PlanEat

Healthy Eating Recipe Booklets

Healthy UCD launched their Healthy Eating recipe booklet in September 2024, outlining a series of easy and affordable breakfasts, lunches and dinner options. The binder format allows for additional recipes to be added over time and we will continue to collaborate with UCD Global to ensure diversity of options.



Figure 5 - Healthy UCD Recipe Booklet

UCDSU Collaboration

Free breakfasts and dinners were provided during revision/exam weeks, in collaboration with the UCDSU, which proved very popular and helped to ease the burden on students at this time. Early morning breakfasts for commuters also proved popular, not just in providing a nutritious start to the day for commuters but also in providing a safe and welcoming space for students facing long commutes.



Figure 6 - UCDSU Collaboration

Healthy Eating Active Living Week

Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Week took place during November and was coordinated by the students from the Masters in Nutrition & Dietetics and Masters in Physiotherapy programmes. Included in the activities on offer were PE classes, information stands on sugar-sweetened beverages, pop-ups of exercise “snacking” and cooking demonstrations. The students created a real buzz on campus, while also developing sustainable initiatives.



Figure 7 - Healthy Eating Active Living Week

PHYSICAL HEALTH: Active Living

The Healthy UCD Physical Activity subgroup, led by Dr Grainne O'Donohue, identified that only 65% of UCD students perform the recommended 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least 5 times per week. Healthy UCD collaborated with the Physio HUB to deliver a free 6-week exercise programme for inactive students and staff in UCD with the aim of helping them to increase their physical activity levels, with a particular focus on increased time spent doing strength training.

With this in mind, Healthy UCD organised several fun runs and woodland walks throughout the year. Healthy UCD was also one of the key stakeholders who organised the Walk for Life event on campus in April 2025. The aim of this lunchtime walk was to get as many people out on campus and raise much needed funds for the Irish Cancer Society.



Figure 8 - UCD Walk for Life

Staff Initiatives

A wide range of wellbeing activities for employees were delivered by Healthy UCD in partnership with UCD Culture and Engagement. In the autumn, an “Active Autumn” range of classes were offered, including yoga, pilates, desk to 5k and a learn-to-swim programme, which all proved very popular.



Figure 9 - Examples of UCD Culture and Engagement Collaboration

Healthy UCD worked with the SPHPSS to deliver an 8-week “Exercise Snacking” pilot for staff, aimed at increasing activity levels in sedentary staff through the introduction of manageable short exercise “snacks”. The results showed that exercise snacking is feasible, safe, and practical for the workplace and leads to significant gains in upper and lower body strength. The output from the pilot was a series of exercise snacking videos that people can follow in their own time, at their own pace.



Figure 10 - Exercise Snacking Videos

FitFeb took place in February and saw teams come together from across the University to compete in the walking challenge. This event proved very popular with over 60 teams registered and was a fun way to promote increased activity among staff. HealthyUCD was delighted to sponsor prizes for the event and provide healthy treats for the celebration lunch.



Figure 11 - FitFeb walking challenge

PHYSICAL HEALTH: Sexual Health and Wellbeing

Healthy UCD / HSE STI Campaign

The Healthy UCD Sexual Health and Wellbeing Subgroup collaborated with the HSE and UCD Student Health to design an STI awareness campaign that was rolled out on campus at the start of term in September 2024 and stayed in place for the duration of the academic year.



Figure 12 - Healthy UCD/HSE STI Awareness Campaign

A QR code linked to further information on access to free STI testing, where to find free condoms on campus and how to find out more information from the UCD Student Health Service. Healthy UCD carried out a survey at the start of term and again in April 2025, to assess the impact of the campaign - which showed that almost 80% of students had never done an STI test and 34% were more likely to test as a result of seeing the campaign.

PHYSICAL HEALTH: Medical Care



Visit
sexualwellbeing.ie

Scan this QR code for information about UCD Student Health Services and where to find free condoms on campus.





FREE
12 WEEK
STOP SMOKING
PROGRAMME
IN UCD

REGISTER NOW

STARTS 13 FEB

- ★ OPEN TO STAFF & STUDENTS
- ★ FREE NRT

You can
QUIT







UCD Student Health
Sláinte Mac Léinn UCD




Innscráilte i nGairneoireacht Sláinte Mac Léinn UCD

Healthy UCD partnered with the UCDSU to provide 200 clinical placement care packs to students. These care packs included many of the essential items needed during placement and were very well received by students at a time where increased demands were placed on them.



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PHYSICAL HEALTH: Addictive Substances

This year, the Healthy UCD Addictive Substances subgroup was established, led by Dr Sarah Morton. The group plans to document a Drugs Policy for UCD, which will coincide with the launch of the new National Drugs Strategy. The group also plans to raise awareness of the potential harms of addictive substances through a series of workshops and social media campaigns, in collaboration with the HSE's Drug Group, with the HSE Drugs Lead also a member of the working group.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH: Mental Health

The Healthy UCD Mental Health subgroup is led by Dr Amanda Fitzgerald. This year, the focus was a review and update of the mental resources available on the Healthy UCD website, which will be signposted as part of the Elephant in the Room initiative in the first term of 2025. A student focus group took place on eating disorders, which will be used to inform the ongoing messaging campaigns in this space.

INTELLECTUAL & VOCATIONAL HEALTH Expanding Knowledge

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning opportunities were provided to UCD students through a combined Healthy Eating and Active Living Week, which was designed and delivered by MSc Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics and MSc Physiotherapy students as part of a new interprofessional learning initiative between the two programmes, with support from Healthy UCD.

We were delighted to work with UCD Landscape Architecture and students from the Socio-environmental Studies elective module to scope the requirements for a sensory garden on campus. This idea originally came as a result of the recommendations from the UCD Neurodiversity Report, which was launched in April 2024, which highlighted the growing need for both indoor and outdoor neurodiversity-friendly spaces. A proposal has been submitted to the UCD Foundation and we are hopeful that funding can be secured to implement this important initiative.



Figure 15 - Collaboration with students from Landscape Architecture

Health and Wellbeing in the curriculum

The Student Health and Wellbeing elective module (PHPS10010) ran for the fifth consecutive year in the Spring Trimester with 31 students registered. Students conducted research for their final assignments on the UCD campus; researching and designing initiatives for students which could be implemented on the UCD campus. They worked on topics including healthy eating, physical activity, mental health, sexual health and drug/alcohol use.

Peer Mentor Programme

Healthy UCD developed a short presentation introducing the initiative for use in peer mentor training, which was used in the Orientation Brightspace module. We also collaborated with the Peer Mentors during their Healthy Eating week, advising on suitable content for their social media platforms.

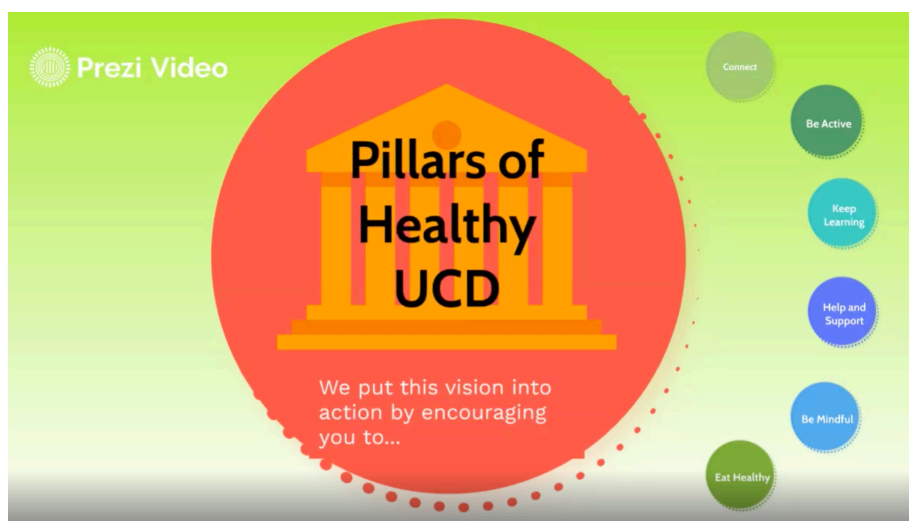


Figure 16 - PREZI for Peer Mentor Programme

Raising Awareness

During the past year, regular, high-quality content was produced for Healthy UCD's Instagram and X accounts which has contributed to sustained growth in followers. These mediums are an excellent channel to help disseminate information to students.

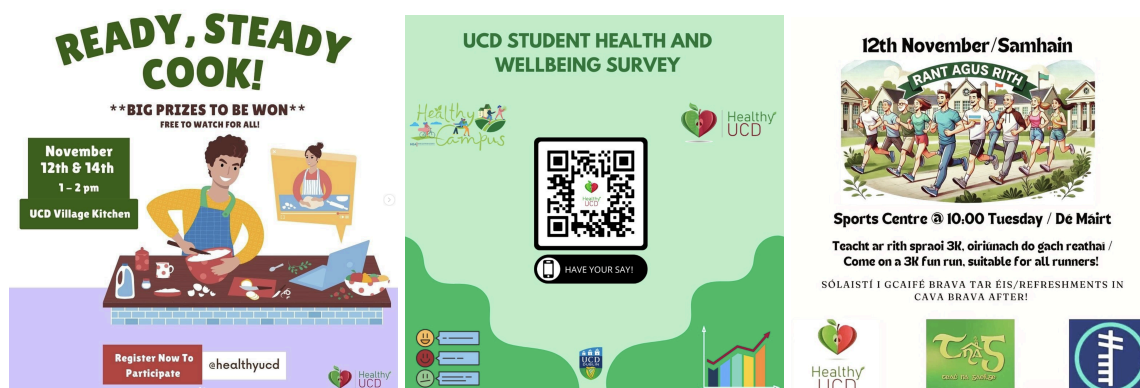


Figure 17 - A sample of social media posts during the year

Social Connection/Belonging

ORIENTATION WEEK

Orientation took place on-campus during a two-week period in September to facilitate the orientation of incoming first-year students. Healthy UCD had several stands in both Belfield and Smurfit, promoting upcoming events and growing followers on social media. Healthy UCD merchandise was given out at the stand including water bottles, pens and notepads, including information and signposting to various supports and services, to increase awareness of the initiative and all of the excellent supports available to students on campus.



Figure 18 - Healthy UCD during Orientation

UCD IN THE COMMUNITY

Healthy UCD was delighted to feature in this year's UCD Community Engagement report, highlighting all of the health initiatives that we are involved in on campus. The Healthy UCD submission was also featured in the UCD in the Community's exhibition, which was showcased around campus after the launch of the report.



Figure 19 - Healthy UCD featured in the UCD in the Community exhibition

ENABLERS

LOCAL AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT



Healthy UCD took part in the UCD Festival in June 2025 and took the opportunity to highlight the work being undertaken as part of the national “Sun Smart” campaign. The stand attracted many families, who learned how to protect their skin from the sun using Healthy UCD’s own SPF 50 and they also had the opportunity to play in the fun sand pit.



Figure 20 - Healthy UCD at the UCD Festival

Healthy UCD continues to engage with other Irish universities and colleges and takes part in regular network meetings aimed at supporting HEI's in the implementation of the HEA Healthy Campus Charter and Framework and the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework.

HEA Healthy Campus



Figure 21 - Healthy Campus Network at the International Health Promoting Campuses Conference

Professor Patricia Fitzpatrick continues to be the UCD Irish Universities Association representative on the Higher Education Authority Healthy Campus Framework and Charter Advisory Group. Mark Simpson from UCD Culture and Engagement, who is part of the Healthy UCD Steering Committee, also sits on the HEA Student and Staff Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group as the staff representative.

Intelligence Led

RESEARCH PROJECTS

The research and work behind providing experiential learning opportunities in UCD modules was presented both nationally and internationally, including at the International Health Promoting Campuses Conference in the University of Limerick in June, where Dr Celine Murrin presented on the findings of the Healthy Eating Active Living initiative. Isabelle Roche, the Healthy UCD intern for the year, carried out her research project on breakfast consumption in UCD students.

PRESENTATIONS

Healthy UCD presented at national conferences in the past year, as detailed below.

Table 1: Details of Healthy UCD presentations, 2024-2025

Presentation type	Conference	Details
Oral	IHPCC University of Limerick, June 2025	Dervan N, Carey M, Charles R, Corish C, O'Donoghue G, Shaw A, Murrin C. Embedding an on-campus experiential health promotion learning opportunity benefits students learning and contributes to a health promoting campus
Poster	IHPCC University of Limerick, June 2025	Carey M, O'Broin C, Gilmore J, Kelly H, Murrin C Developing partnerships to raise third level student awareness of sexually transmitted infections
Poster	SAI Conference, MTU June 2025	Nestor N, Frazer K, Carey M, Segurado R, Murrin C Smoke free campus – prevalence of active smoking, e-cigarette and exposure to secondhand smoke after implementing smoke and tobacco-free policies
Poster	Global Smoking Conference, Convention Centre, June 2025	Carey M, Frazer K, Segurado R, Murrin M Smoke free campus – prevalence of active smoking, e-cigarette use and exposure to second hand smoke after implementing smoke and tobacco free policies
Poster	AHPI Conference, University of Galway, June 2025	Carey M, O'Broin C, Gilmore J, Kelly H, Murrin C Raising awareness of STIs in a University setting

Collaboration

Collaboration with the Students' Union continued this year and this partnership continues to be very successful. A big focus for this year was to listen to the student voice and develop initiatives accordingly. We look forward to continuing this strong partnership again this year with the new SU President and Sabbatical officers.

Healthy UCD was delighted to be invited to sit on the Sustainability Education, Student Experience and Professional Development working group.

Relationships with many external partners have been strengthened, including the HEA, facilitating the formation of the Irish Universities Healthy Campus Network and the HSE, collaborating on initiatives such as the QUIT programme.

Health Priority Actions for the coming academic year 2025/2026

PHYSICAL HEALTH

1. Sexual Health and Wellbeing

Group Lead: Dr Cathal O’Broin

Supported by: Dr John Gilmore, Dr Eamonn O’Ceallaigh, UCD SU Welfare Officer, Mags Carey

Aim: To promote positive Sexual Health and Wellbeing among UCD staff and students

Objectives:

- 1.1 To collaborate with the UCDSU and UCD Student Health on health promotion initiatives
- 1.3 To continue the implementation of the Healthy UCD Sexual Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

2. Active Living

Group Lead: Dr Grainne O’Donoghue

Supported By: PhysioHUB, UCD Sport, ISH, Mags Carey

Aim: To facilitate Active Living and the incorporation of movement into daily life among UCD staff and students

Objectives:

- 2.1 To develop a PA action plan for the coming academic year including:
 - 1.2.1 To further collaboration with the PhysioHub
 - 1.2.1 To explore past successful initiatives such as Better Bones, Better Hearts and Get in Gear
 - 1.2.2 To further develop the Active Campus Europe intervention
 - 1.2.3 To incorporate the EIM approach to PA initiatives, targeting the most common chronic health conditions and how EIM can help in terms of prevention/management
- 2.3 To deliver HEAL week in collaboration with MSc Dietetics and Physiotherapy students, with a focus on sustainable active living initiatives
- 2.4 Continue to collaborate with UCD Culture and Engagement (WellUCD) in the provision of physical activity programmes for staff

3. Health Eating

Group Lead: Dr Celine Murrin

Supported By: Dr Eileen Gibney, Dr Aifric O’Sullivan, Dr Sarah Browne, Nicole Black, Mags Carey

Aim: To facilitate Healthy Eating among UCD staff and students

Objectives:

- 3.1 To launch the Food Policy for UCD, including a set of principles/guidelines for catering outlets
- 3.3 To work with UCD Estates on the implementation of these principles throughout the catering outlets
- 3.4 To deliver HEAL week in collaboration with MSc Dietetics and Physiotherapy students, with a focus on sustainable healthy eating initiatives
- 3.5 Collaborate with the Institute of Food and Health and UCD Sustainability on resources to support sustainable healthy eating
- 3.6 Continue to collaborate with the UCDSU on the provision of meals for students during vulnerable times
- 3.7 Pilot the delivery of a food pantry, accompanied by the delivery of the HSE Healthy Food Made Easy Programme on campus

4. Smoking/Vaping

Group Lead: Dr Kate Frazer

Supported By: HSE QUIT, Mark Simpson, Mags Carey

Aim: To provide a Smoke and Vape Free campus for UCD staff, students and the wider community

Objectives:

- 4.1 Continue the partnership with the HSE and UCD Student Health on the provision of in-house smoking cessation course and supports, including the collection of data to monitor the service delivery and outcomes
- 4.1 Develop resources on the impacts of vaping

5. Mental Health

Group Lead: Dr Amanda Fitzgerald

Supported By: Dr John Phillips, Niall Dennehy, Mags Carey

Aim: To support the Mental Health and Wellbeing of UCD staff and students

Objectives:

- 5.1 To develop a mental health action plan for the coming academic year
- 5.2 To collaborate with the existing Student Mental Health working group
- 5.3 To pilot the Elephant in the Room initiative to collate data on student mental health

6. Substance Use (Drugs/Alcohol)

Group Lead: Dr Sarah Morton

Supported By: Holly Dignam, Nicky Killeen, Mags Carey

Aim: To promote awareness of substance mis-use and provide support for UCD staff and students who identify as having harmful patterns of use.

Objectives:

- 5.1 To carry out/use existing research to collate data on substance use among UCD students
- 5.2 To develop a substance use action plan for the coming academic year

New provisional targets based on actions to be delivered in the short-term from the new Healthy UCD Strategy, 2022-2026	
Action (from strategy)	Target 2024/2025
3.1	Engage with other Universities to exchange research initiatives and methodologies and highlight opportunities for research collaboration.
3.2	Identify and prioritise indicators that are necessary to evaluate effective implementation of the strategy.
3.5	Where possible, use existing UCD sources of data and integrate with existing UCD data collection efforts to increase efficiencies.
4.3	Work with the new Healthy Ireland Third Level Network to identify ways to benchmark UCD's performance in this area.

Appendix: Healthy UCD Steering Committee 2024-2025

Name	Position
Dr Celine Murrin	Chair, Healthy UCD School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science
Dr Catherine Blake	Chair, Healthy UCD Research Committee
Mags Carey	Research Assistant, Healthy UCD
Dominic O'Keeffe	Director of Student Services & Facilities
Mark Simpson	Senior Manager, Engagement and Internal Communications
Dr James Matthews	Head of School, School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science
Dr Gráinne O'Donoghue	Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Sports Science
Aishling Kennedy Dalton	Facilities Manager, UCD Estates
Andrew Myler	Head of Customer & Management Services, UCD Estates
Nicole Black	UCD Commercial Director, UCD Estate Services
David Kelly	Bursar
Dr Amanda Fitzgerald	School of Psychology
Dr Kate Frazer	School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems
Dr Cathal O'Broin	School of Medicine
Dr John Kilmore	School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Systems
Dr Eadaoin Lysaght	Student Health
Dr John Phillips	Student Counselling
Dr Sarah Morton	School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice
Louise Griffin	UCD Sustainability
Tyler Schwaegler	Global Community Support Manager
Alessia Talarico	Senior Executive Assistant, EDI
Holly Dignam	Student Advisor
Saskia McCormick-Eiffe	Students' Union Campaigns & Engagement Officer
Ciara Donoghue	Students' Union Welfare Officer
Lauryn Roche	Nominee of Athletic Union Council
Josh Walsh	UCD Societies Council