

Higher Education

# Healthy Campus

Charter and Framework  
Ireland



## SUPPORTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## Context and Evidence Base

This framework was co-created, through a consultative process, by Higher Education Institutions, Department of Health and the HSE.



**National Context** Education plays a central role in all aspects of the development of individuals, communities, societies and cultures.

Higher Education Institutions are uniquely placed to influence and transform society through research, teaching and learning, developing new knowledge and understanding about promoting health and wellbeing, leading by example, advocating to decision makers for the benefit of society and influencing the future decision-makers in society.

Developing as a Healthy Campus supports the vision of a Healthy Ireland:<sup>1</sup>

**“Where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential; where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility.”**

Health and wellbeing can be positively or negatively influenced by the organisations and systems where people live, learn and work. Higher Education Institutions already place a significant emphasis on the health and wellbeing of the campus community. This Healthy Campus Framework will support Higher Education Institutions in this work. Higher Education Campuses are a priority focus area in the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-25.<sup>2</sup>

## The Okanagan Charter

### What is Healthy Campus?

The Okanagan Charter<sup>3</sup> outlines the following vision and aspirations for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges:

**“Health promoting universities and colleges transform the health and sustainability of our current and future societies, strengthen communities and contribute to the wellbeing of people, places and the planet.**

**Health promoting universities and colleges infuse health into everyday operations, business practices and academic mandates. By doing so, health promoting universities and colleges enhance the success of our institutions; create campus cultures of compassion, wellbeing, equity and social justice; improve the health of the people who live, learn, work, play and love on our campuses; and strengthen the ecological, social and economic sustainability of our communities and wider society.<sup>3</sup>”**

Whilst there is little research evidence on Healthy Campus *per se*, it is possible to draw on learning from other educational settings, which suggest that holistic, multi-component, whole-campus approaches are more likely to be successful than isolated and fragmented activities. This requires a focus on leadership, strategy and governance, campus facilities and services, campus communications and culture and on the personal and professional development of staff and students.

# What is Healthy Campus?





A Healthy Campus adopts a holistic understanding of health, takes a whole campus approach and aspires to create a learning environment and organisational culture that enhances the health and wellbeing of its community and enables people to achieve their full potential.<sup>4</sup>



## Healthy Campus Framework Aims

- 1.** To create a shared understanding of a Healthy Campus to guide and inspire action by Higher Education Institutions.
- 2.** To support and recognise the work of Higher Education Institutions in improving the health and wellbeing of campus communities.
- 3.** To generate and disseminate knowledge for promoting health and wellbeing in Higher Education Institutions.

## Principles

-  **Participation**  
Where student, staff and the wider campus community are actively engaged in deciding on and implementing health and wellbeing promotion actions.
-  **Partnership**  
Where trans-disciplinary collaborations and cross-sector partnerships are fostered to create connections between health, learning and the campus structure.
-  **Evidence based**  
Where formulation of policies and practices are guided by evidence, and where knowledge is created through action and research.
-  **Sustainability**  
Where health and wellbeing of the campus community is infused in the everyday policies, teaching and learning, and research and innovation.

## Key Local and National Policies

**Healthy Ireland is designed to bring about real, measurable change and is based on an understanding of the determinants of health.**

Health and wellbeing are affected by all aspects of a person's life; economic status, education, housing, the physical environment in which people live and work.

A number of national policies and strategies have been developed to support the Healthy Ireland vision in the keys areas of physical activity, obesity, tobacco, sexual health, mental health and drugs and alcohol. Healthy Campus is a framework through which Higher Education Institutions can address locally identified needs and national health priorities using a whole campus approach.

## Whole Campus Approach

**A whole campus approach is reflected in a Healthy Campus action plan that is developed in the context of the following four key areas:**

- Leadership, Strategy and Governance
- Campus Environment (Facilities and Services)
- Campus Culture and Communications
- Personal and Professional Development

# Healthy Campus Process

An inclusive, co-ordinated approach to improving health and wellbeing

## 1. Commit

### Healthy Campus Charter

- Higher Education Institute Head signs Healthy Campus Charter (page 6).
- Executive Management team considers how Healthy Campus is integrated into governance, strategy and structures.

## 2. Co-ordinate

### Appoint Healthy Campus Co-ordinator

- Appoint Healthy Campus co-ordinator(s), ideally a senior staff member working jointly with student union president.
- In-house project officers can support operationalisation of Healthy Campus.

### Form a Steering Group

- Form a of high level steering group with broad membership across services and disciplines (e.g. students, staff, departments, services)

## 3. Consult

### Map of Current Activity

- Consult with key stakeholders to identify and map current health related activity on campus.
- Identification of any current information that relates to health of campus community that could be used as a base-line for future evaluation.
- Identify health needs using campus wide needs assessment.
- Aim of Framework is to build on and embed existing health related work.

### Consultation

- Consult with staff, students and wider campus community to identify one or two priorities.

## 4. Create

### Action Planning

- Develop Healthy Campus action plan for the identified priorities across the four key areas of healthy campus.
- Implementation is based on the principles of Healthy Campus.
- Ensure an evaluation process (what is to be evaluated, how and by whom) is agreed prior to implementation.

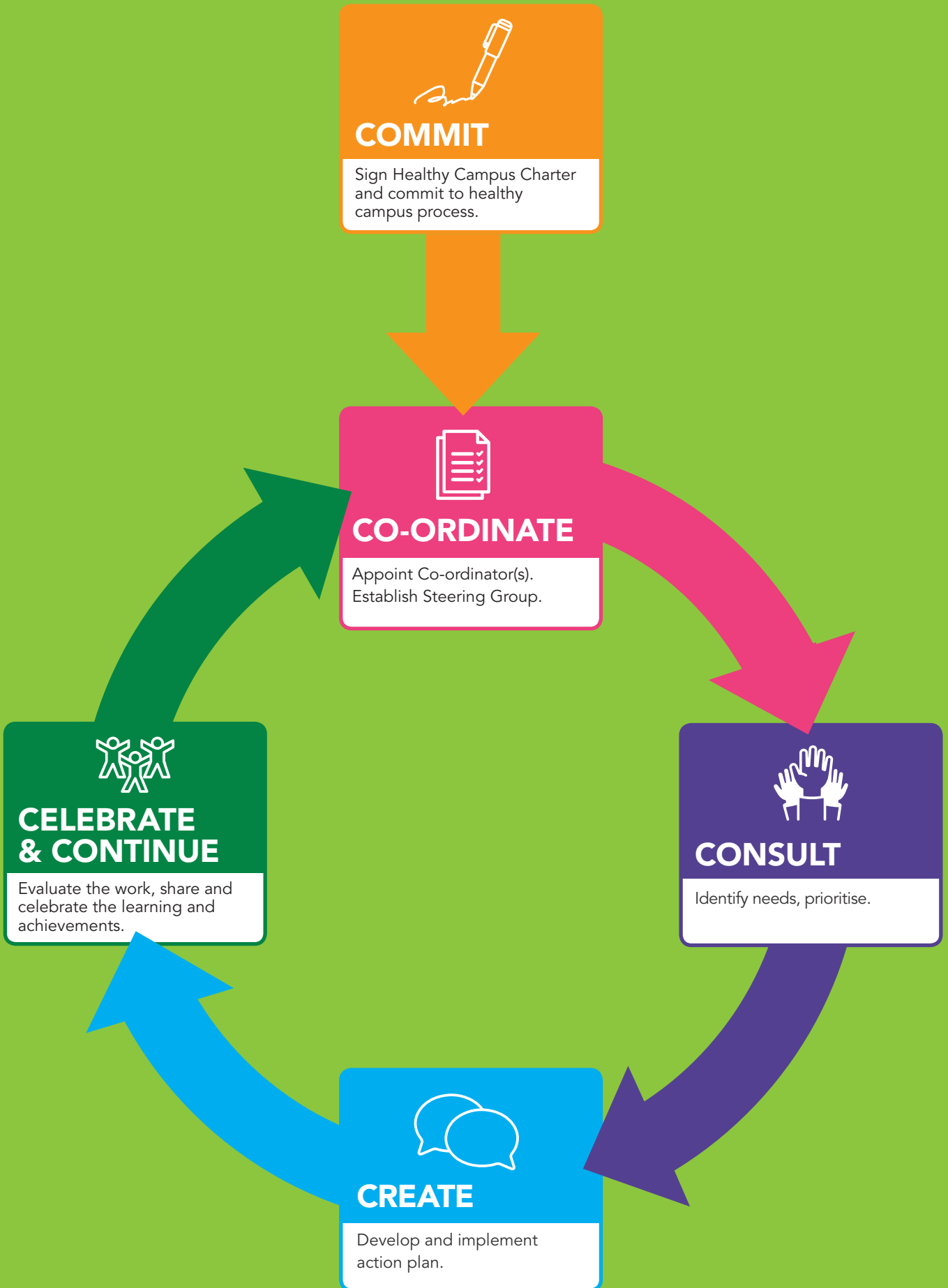
### Implementation

- Communication and awareness raising is essential for buy-in of campus community.
- Ensure working groups are linked into the Healthy Campus governance structure(s) – with regular reporting/monitoring to capture the learning.
- Ensure links with other key objectives on campus/locally, e.g. Green Campus, Healthy Cities/Counties, etc.

## 5. Celebrate and Continue

### Celebration

- Evaluate the work, share and celebrate the learning and achievements.
- Review process and plan for next phase of Healthy Campus.



# The Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter



The Higher Education Healthy Campus Charter for Ireland is wholly aligned with the principles and calls to action contained in the Okanagan Charter<sup>3</sup>, an International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges. We acknowledge our role and achievements to date in supporting the vision of a Healthy Ireland, *“Where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential; where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility.”*

## We will:

1. Promote the health and wellbeing of our students, staff and wider community through our institution’s mission, strategy, policies, plans and practices, in line with the International Okanagan Charter<sup>3</sup>.
2. Act to create empowered, thriving, connected campus communities that foster an ethic of care, compassion, equality and inclusion.
3. Identify and act on opportunities to support the health and wellbeing of students, staff and the wider community through the built, natural, social, economic, cultural, academic, organisational and learning environments in a sustainable way.
4. Identify and act on opportunities to integrate health and wellbeing into the teaching and learning, research and services of all Departments, thus ensuring the development of citizens with the capacity to improve health and wellbeing of the wider community in their future life and work.
5. Consider how our planning and decision making for teaching, learning and assessment, research and knowledge exchange impact on health and wellbeing.
6. Adopt a strategic approach to promoting health and wellbeing on campus, that reflects locally identified needs and national health priorities, which is guided by the Healthy Campus Framework.
7. Engage in the National Healthy Campus Network to share our learning and work in partnership, as appropriate, to build evidence of effective approaches to developing a healthy campus.
8. Contribute to research and collaborations to promote health and wellbeing locally and globally in line with the Okanagan Charter.

# Definitions and References

## Definitions

In line with the WHO, Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013–2025 adopts a holistic view of health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

### Health

Health means everyone achieving his or her potential to enjoy complete physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Healthy people contribute to the health and quality of the society in which they live, work and play. Health is much more than an absence of disease or disability, and individual health, and that of the country, affects the quality of everyone's lived experience. Health is an essential resource for everyday life, a public good, and an asset for health and human development.<sup>5,6</sup>

### Wellbeing

Wellbeing is an integral part of this definition of health. It reflects the quality of life and the various factors which can influence it over the course of a person's life.<sup>7</sup>

Wellbeing also reflects the concept of positive mental health, in which a person can realise his or her own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and be able to make a contribution to his or her community.<sup>8</sup> Consideration of health and wellbeing requires a shift in focus from what can go wrong in people's lives, to focusing on what makes their lives go well.<sup>9</sup>

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Department of Health. Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing. 2013-2025.
- <sup>2</sup> Department of Health. Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025.
- <sup>3</sup> Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges. 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> Adapted from UK Healthy Universities [www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk](http://www.healthyuniversities.ac.uk)
- <sup>5</sup> WHO. Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion First International Conference on Health Promotion Ottawa. 1986.
- <sup>6</sup> WHO. Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organisation as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York. 1946.
- <sup>7</sup> WHO. Health 2020. Policy Framework and Strategy. 2012.
- <sup>8</sup> WHO. Strengthening Mental Health Promotion. Mental health is not just about the absence of mental disorder. Geneva. 2001.
- <sup>9</sup> Aked J, Michaelson J, Steuer N. The role of local Government in promoting wellbeing. Healthy Communities Programme. 2010.



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