USI Physical Health, Healthy Eating and Body Confidence 2016-2019

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# About USI

"The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is the sole representative body for students in Ireland and represents 354,000 students in over thirty member colleges across Ireland, North and South. Throughout its history, USI has worked relentlessly in the pursuit of student rights in all areas of the student experience."

# Objectives of the Union of Students in Ireland 1. An education and training system open to all, irrespective of any consideration, including consideration of national origin, ethnic background, age, ability, sex, sexuality, creed, political beliefs or economic circumstances, so that each individual can realize their full potential. 2. An education and training system which truly serves the interest of the people of Ireland. 3. The right of students to a decent standard of living including the right to adequate financial support, proper housing and future prospects of employment in Ireland. 4. The defence and promotion of all democratic and human rights. 5. The provision of student services for the benefit of the membership on the principle that control of student service should lie with the membership. 6. To represent the interests of the students if Ireland at international level.

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### USI Physical Health, Healthy Eating and Body Confidence

This strategy aims to provide a framework for good practice for the support of students, the promotion of physical well-being to be implemented by both the Union of Students in Ireland and local Students’ Unions.

USI aims to promote physical activity, healthy eating and a positive body image and fight for access to health information, education and services for students.

All third level institutions should be encouraged to adopt the concept that they should be a ‘health promoting college’. Colleges could actively address issues concerning healthy eating, drinking behaviour and the need to live an active lifestyle. If in this way we can ensure young people of college going age live in a positive health culture, we will go a long way towards ensuring that the next generation is a healthy one.  
  
The USI Vice President for Welfare, with support from the Vp Equality and Citizenship and Regional Officers, must follow the USI Physical Health, Healthy Eating and Body Confidence Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the beginning of each year.

# Collaborations and Partnerships

*USI acknowledges the importance of collaborations and partnerships when it comes to health promotion. USI recognises the need to work with others in the health sector to further our aims and ambitions.*  
 **Objectives:**

* To build support for the work that USI does in the area of physical health, healthy eating.
* To build support for the work that USI does in the area of body confidence.
* To develop new initiatives through collaborations with students’ unions and external organisations.
* To promote initiatives and investment to encourage more sustainable and active forms of transport by students as a means of increasing overall physical activity levels and reducing carbon emissions in partnership with Smarter Travel Campus.

**Actions:**

* Seek support from external organisations to strengthen campaigns on the issue.
* Collaborate and consult with students’ unions, student groups and external organisations to support and develop new campaigns, resources, research and training.
* Sustain links with Bodywhys and Student Sport Ireland.
* Sustain partnership with SpunOut in delivering a national healthy eating campaign and roadshow.
* Support initiatives to increase student physical activity levels.
* Support the implementation of programmes to promote the benefits of physical activity and sport to students.
* Support Smarter Travel Campus in promoting sustainable and active forms of transport by students.

**Suggested Action For Students’ Unions:**

* To aim, where possible, to establish links with local organisations and resources, and promote local supports to students in campus community.
* To support the development of local coalitions and committees that aim to promote sexual health and consent supports and resources.

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# Training and Supports - Students’ Unions

# *USI encourages students’ unions to run campaigns and/or distribute information to students on physical health, healthy eating and body confidence.*

**Objectives:**

* To Support Students’ Unions in developing campaigns and initiatives to promote physical exercise.
* Support Students’ Unions in organising campaigns and events to encourage healthy eating among the student body.
* Support Students’ Unions in influencing positive health promotion policies on campus.

**Action:**

* Liaise with Student Sport Ireland to facilitate a training event with Students’ Union officers to equip them in promoting physical activity on campus.
* Provide support and training to officers in organising campaigns on healthy eating and home-cooking.

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Where possible, attend training events promoted or organised by USI.
* Utilise appropriate resources and supports provided through USI or locally by relevant organisations and support services.
* Aim to establish local links with community based services and identify a referral path for students in need.
* Seek, where possible, representation on campus decision making boards/committees in relation to health promotion policies.

**Support Services and Health Promotion Initiatives***The availability and quality of appropriate campus and community support services is vital in the promotion of student well-being. The promotion of these services is equally important to inform students of their availability and encourage them to seek help when needed.*

**Objective:**

* To inform students of available supports in relation to physical health, healthy eating and body confidence.
* To promote physical activity to non-participants to engage in physical activity.
* To encourage students to partake in home-cooking and healthy eating.
* To promote support services to students experiencing body confidence issues.
* To ensure students with a disability can be better catered for in terms of access and provision of opportunities.
* narrow the gender gap in the provision of sport through clubs.

**Actions:**

* Develop a new social networking initiative to provide friendship and support for non-participants to engage in physical activity.
* Promote a diversity, range and type of sports clubs provided in the light of the findings that some sports have particular potential to promote increased participation among students with disabilities.
* Co-ordinate a national campaign and roadshow to encourage students to eat healthy and learn to cook healthy affordable meals.
* Promote sports clubs that particularly appeal to female students to narrow the gender gap in sport.
* Promote opportunities for students to try new sporting activities as part of their progress through third level education and where possible expand the scope for students to avail of “taster” sessions.
* Promote appropriate fitness apps to encourage students to use technology to increase participation in physical exercise.
* Promote cooking demonstrations to encourage students to practice home cooking with healthy meals.

**Suggested Action for Students’ Unions:**

* Provide information to students on a campus level on physical health, healthy eating and body confidence.
* Promote campus based physical activity initiatives such as “Couch to 5k”, etc.
* Establish referral pathway for students experiencing body confidence issues.
* Support initiatives on campus to encourage students to eat healthy and learn to cook healthy affordable meals.
* Local Student Unions should work with their respective Sports and Recreation departments who not only have the skills and expertise in the area but also experience and access to resources and facilities.
* Lobby for the inclusion of dietary information or nutritional information on campus based food service menus.

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# Research, Monitoring and Evaluation *It is vital for USI to review progress under the Physical Health, Healthy Eating and Body Confidence Strategy on an annual basis. By providing basic annual progress reports on the action points outlined in the strategy, progress and effect can be tracked and with the provision of annual reviews, updates or changes can be suggested if deemed necessary.* Objectives:

* To monitor the impact of USI campaigns to promote physical health and healthy eating awareness among students as well as promoting body confidence.
* To evaluate and review each campaign yearly and to update the strategy accordingly.
* To continue to collaborate and partner with organisations to collect research and data to guide USI’s work in sexual health promotion.

**Actions:**

* Map progress of the strategy and produce a yearly progress update document.
* To review all campaigns and evaluate impact with support from external expert groups.

**Suggested Action For MOs:**

* Where possible, review local campaigns on campus level to ensure messaging is effective, appropriate and relevant to students.

**Previous Mandates:**

* The Vice President, Welfare to roll out Healthy Eating Campaigns every year, which include a drive to raise awareness of the various forms of eating disorders.
* The Vice President Welfare to work with various bodies like Student Sport Ireland to create a new Physical Health strategy.
* The Welfare Vice President to both follow the USI Physical Health Strategy and assist local officers in following through with its recommendations by disseminating the strategy at the start of the year as well as providing support and training throughout the year.
* To design a strategy document on physical health, making reference to the following:-  
  Stress Management, access to healthcare, Awareness of prevalent illnesses, Cost and value for money of student gyms, Availability of non-competitive sport, Diet and nutrition, Sports Clubs, Training at UOS for welfare officers, Relevance of physical health to mental health, Body image and eating disorders.
* The Vice President, Welfare to roll out Healthy Eating Campaigns every year, which include a drive to raise awareness of the various forms of eating disorders.

**Reporting and Progress**  
To ensure transparency, accountability and ongoing priority is placed on the physical health and wellness of students in Ireland clear and consistent communication on the progress of the implementation of the USI Physical Health, Healthy Eating and Body Confidence Strategy and its initiatives is vital. The strategy’s progress will be documented in USI’s annual report, along with highlighting individual campus initiatives as they are launched throughout the year.

The strategic objectives for Physical Health, Healthy Eating and Body Confidence of students in 3rd level between now and July 2019 are set out in this strategy and reflect the ambition and intent of the Union of Students in Ireland to deliver on its mandate for its members.  
  
*In preparation, a range of significant / strategic risks facing the strategy’s implementation were identified.*

* Budgetary and Insufficient or inadequate budgets to meet campaign delivery costs.
* USI having to discontinue work and downsize campaigns/Officer resources
* Failure to achieve collaborations on the action points set in the strategy. For the strategy to be effective USI will need to foster support from external organisations and establish links with institutions and external stakeholders.
* Failure to ensure that the strategic and operational policies of the USI are properly developed and implemented, and that targets are met.

**Risk Mitigation:**

The Union of Students in Ireland will, over the life of this Strategic Plan, evaluate the above risks and will ensure that all actions and initiatives undertaken manage these challenges pro-actively, with actions being identified and implemented without delay, so that our mandate can be pursued and effectively delivered for our members.