

# SDG Accord Case Study



## Integration of SDGs in

- Institutional governance/strategic level
- SDGs in research
- SDGs in campus operations
- SDGs in curriculum development
- SDGs in student engagement activities
- SDGs into community activities
- SDGs at a whole-institution level

## Focus on

- Goal 1 - No poverty
- Goal 2 - Zero hunger
- Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing
- Goal 4 - Quality education
- Goal 5 - Gender equality
- Goal 6 - Clean water and sanitation
- Goal 7 - Affordable and clean energy
- Goal 8 - Decent work and economic growth
- Goal 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities
- Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities
- Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production
- Goal 13 - Climate action
- Goal 14 - Life below water
- Goal 15 - Life on land
- Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions
- Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

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## **Summary:**

Following the conclusion of a Work Positive Survey in 2018, the University of Galway identified that there were opportunities for improvement with respect to Health and Wellbeing of staff. The HR team researched how we might improve and proposed the use of the KeepWell framework to the University Management Team and it was accepted. The University strategy 2020-2025 confirmed the Institutions commitments to the Health and Wellbeing of Staff and the KeepWell Mark with the following goal: *We will develop and implement a holistic strategy for staff health and wellbeing, building on the WorkPositive initiative, and achieve accreditation through the KeepWell Mark (AR11)*

The KeepWell framework has a set of health and wellbeing standards that are based on international best practice and evidence based. The standards can be achieved through the promotion of wellbeing in the workplace. The framework revolves around 8 key areas: Leadership, Mental Health, Health and Safety, Smoke Free, Absence Management, Intoxicants, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. The University received KeepWell accreditation in 2019 and has successfully maintained the accreditation and is committed to moving from bronze to gold standard by 2025.

There has been significant progress across all the standards. Some examples are:

- Leadership – participation in Leading Irelands Future Together (LIFT) programme, introduction of coaching programme and team coaching, introduction of mentoring scheme. Introduction and support of Hybrid working.
- Intoxicants – introduction of Intoxicants policy, Intoxicants awareness training for staff and managers.
- Physical Health – focus on making being healthy the easier choice by increasing the number of bicycle shelters/showers etc. building exercise gyms on campus, placing outdoor water fountains across the campus.
- Mental Health – Introduction of a team of Mental Health First Aiders. Introduction of Bereavement Policy and Grief Awareness training for staff and managers.

## **Outline the 3 key benefits of integrating this theme:**

### **1. Enhances the Health and Wellbeing of our Staff.**

There is strong evidence to show how having a healthy workforce can reduce sick leave, lower staff turnover and boost productivity. This is good for employers, workers, and the wider economy. Participating in the KeepWell mark means We are part of a national monthly wellbeing forum which keeps us informed about best practice and initiatives.

### **2. Supports our ambition to be an Employer of Choice.**

There is almost full employment and employees have greater expectations from employers than ever before. To be an employer of choice, employers must be attractive to employees and meet their needs. Work life balance policies such as Hybrid Working, access to annual leave above the statutory amount, flexible working hours/options as well as a strong focus on Health and Wellbeing is essential to attract potential employees and retain existing ones. Being a part of the KeepWell community means we are published in the 'Top 100 company

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index for 2023 in Ireland. This is a good signal to prospective employees about our commitments to Health and Wellbeing.

## **3. Makes good business sense**

There is strong evidence to show how having a healthy workforce can reduce sick leave, lower staff turnover and boost productivity. This is good for employers, staff and the wider economy. Additionally, Health, safety and wellbeing must be managed in accordance with various pieces of legislation. The KeepWell Mark helps to keep abreast of these rules and ensure all our legislative duties are adhered to.

## **Outline the barriers or challenges encountered in integrating this theme and how you overcame these:**

### **1. Staff engagement in initiatives**

In order to increase the numbers of individuals involved in initiatives we did a number of things. Firstly, we requested Health and Wellbeing volunteers from our community. They took on an awareness creation role and encouraged colleagues to get involved. We asked members of the leadership team to lead by example with respect to health and wellbeing and then encourage their own teams to get involved. For example, the University Management Team all participated in a LIFT course. We offered small incentives such as vouchers to attend and participate in events. We tried to communicate through several means including visually with changes to our campus such as outdoor gyms.

### **2. Availability of ongoing funding**

We submitted an application with plans for our strategic goals to the University Strategic fund initiative and we were successful.

### **3. Culture Change**

Ultimately, we are trying to build Health and Wellbeing into the fabric of everything we do. This includes updating our performance management system, our policies, changing the way we manage, support and engage with people. Introducing changes which challenge the traditional working environment takes courage, persistence and time and is not something that will change overnight so this is an ongoing journey for us.

## **Please outline your conclusions and recommendations to others (Max 200 words):**

Within the Higher Education (HE) sector, employers must ensure the quality of educational services delivery. A quality service can be delivered if employees are well. Working to a best practice framework ensures that the organisation is doing all it can to create the foundation for a great organisation with respect to staff health and wellbeing.

Organisations who actively promote health and wellness are seen to be 3.5 times more likely to be innovative and creative. Being innovative and creative are crucial in our environment. For the first time we (and most organisations) have five generations of employees in the workforce, the one thing all these generations have in common is an expectation that an organisation will look after their health and wellbeing.

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A sustainable workforce is key to a sustainable university. The KeepWell Mark drives and nurtures best practice and high standards of supporting employees. Accreditation places you and your workforce at the forefront of Ireland's collective efforts to improve workplace health and wellbeing. Working to the KeepWell certification ensures staff feel valued and involved.