



RCSI

UNIVERSITY
OF MEDICINE
AND HEALTH
SCIENCES

The SDG Accord

The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals

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

SDG Accord Reporting 2021 CASE STUDY

Good Health & Wellbeing and Sustainable Cities & Communities

[The Science of Health and Happiness](#)

Diseases of lifestyle are the leading causes of death in the modern world. According to the World Health Organisation, heart and lung diseases, cancers and diabetes are the world's largest killers accounting for an estimated 38 million deaths annually, with 16 million of these being premature. Lifestyle factors are heavily implicated in all these diseases and we as individuals can do a lot to prevent the development of such conditions. Based on the twin sciences of lifestyle medicine and positive psychology, the [RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology and Health](#) was established in 2019 to provide evidence-based resources to help enhance understanding of the critical role that our behaviour plays in optimising good health and well-being. In particular, the Centre is focused on how the mind, brain and body interact in the context of maintaining health and wellness.

In order to empower the public to optimise their own health and well-being, the Centre team developed an evidence-based free online positive health course: "[The Science of Health and Happiness](#)". The provision of this course reflects the RCSI's increasing engagement with public education and our mission to educate nurture and research for the benefit of human health. To date, 25,000 people, mainly based in Ireland, but with many from around the globe, have registered for the 6-week programme.

BENEFITS

1. The [RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology and Health](#) has created a hub of free authoritative resources based on scientific research that empowers people to optimise their health and well-being
2. The choice to make all learning materials freely available via an online learning platform means that people from all over the world can access the course at their own convenience, free of charge, creating a global community committed to improving their lives.
3. The [RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology and Health](#) has developed a proactive method of addressing the world wide issues of premature death and disability caused by lifestyle diseases as well as educating the public about advances in positive psychology aimed at improving mental health.

BARRIERS

1. For the staff involved, learning to use a new video editing technology (Panopto) presented a challenge at first but the resolution of this meant that the team was largely self-sufficient.
2. The lectures were challenging to develop as the audience was very broadly based. The lecturers had to ensure that a participant with no background in the health sciences could understand the material just as well as the many participants from the health professions.
3. It was important to provide an evidence-base for the lectures without demotivating the general participant. This was achieved by providing references aimed at a lay audience as well as more technical references for the expert participant
4. The course is being particularly well received in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which presents significant challenges to mental health across the globe

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CONCLUSIONS

We believe that it is incumbent on healthcare universities such as ours to provide, in addition to education for health professionals, authoritative education for the public and communities at home and overseas. This is particularly important in relation to health and wellness where the public are widely exposed to a huge range of materials and opinions, many of which have no scientific basis. The continuing rise of lifestyle diseases presents a growing and unsustainable challenge to resource-strapped health services. A new approach is required based on empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools to optimise their own health and well-being. The size of the uptake on our course was unexpected and reflects the public demand for access to reliable information about disease, health and well-being. The team found Panopto an excellent resource as the video lectures were easy to edit and could be recorded and stored online, requiring a simple email containing the link to be sent to the participants. It was also essential to establish a bespoke mailbox for communication.

Participant Feedback:

"I just wanted to take the time to let you know that I am sincerely grateful to you and your colleagues at RSCI for taking the time to put together The Science of Happiness Course and for providing it to the public. This course has helped me to start journey of self-discovery and is helping me believe in myself again after been down for many years due to domestic violence and homelessness. Myself and my amazing children are doing well and with people like you empowering people like me, I can see happy days ahead! Knowledge really is power. Thank you to you all for the phenomenal time and effort it must have taken to put this course together".