

Smoke-free Campuses

Third-level institutions Survey

Background

A target date of 2025 has been set for Ireland to become tobacco free, i.e., less than 5% of the population smoking¹. A key recommendation of Tobacco Free Ireland is to “promote tobacco free campuses for all third-level institutions in consultation with key stakeholders”¹.

Establishing smoke-free campuses in third-level institutions is an important step in de-normalising smoking and acting as a deterrent to young people first taking up smoking while in third-level education.

In order to record the number of third-level institutions that have implemented or plan to implement a smoke-free campus in Ireland, Irish Heart Foundation conducted a survey of third-level institutions in Ireland.

Methods

Sample

A list of Health Promotion Officers or other individuals responsible for healthy campus life was identified by internet research and referrals. Using this list, the Irish Heart Foundation emailed the contacts in the third-level institutions with a questionnaire in relation to their policies on a smoke-free campus.

Response Rate

A total of twenty-seven third-level institutions around the island of Ireland were identified and sent questionnaires via email between April and May 2019. Ten full responses were received from the first round and one additional response was received from the second round. No other responses were received thereafter, giving a total of 11 out of 27 responses (41% response rate).

¹ <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/TobaccoFreeIreland.pdf>

Data requested

Each questionnaire to the third-level institutions included the following questions:

1. Is your University/College/IT a smoke-free campus? (if no, please skip to question 9, N/A will apply for intervening questions)?
2. If yes to the above, in what year did it implement a smoke-free campus?
3. Is the smoke-free campus enforced? If so, please describe how.
 - a. Please describe the levels of compliance and describe how this is measured'
4. Do you know how many of your students/staff smoke?
5. How welcoming are or were the students and staff to having a smoke-free campus?

	Very welcoming	Slightly welcoming	Neutral	Unwelcoming	Very unwelcoming
Undergraduate Students					
Postgraduate Students					
Academic staff					
Non-academic staff					

6. What were the top 5 complaints/challenges against implementing a smoke-free campus? (e.g. where do smokers go, how will it be enforced?)
7. What were the top 5 benefits? (e.g. Reduction in litter in smoke-free campus?)
8. Have there been any unintended or unforeseen consequences arising from having a smoke-free campus? (e.g. people congregating in one area just outside the campus premises to smoke, etc.)

9. If the University/College/IT has not introduced smoke-free campus yet, is it planning on becoming a smoke-free campus and if so, by what year?
10. If the University/College/IT is not planning on implementing a smoke-free campus, what are the reasons behind this?

Results

1. Is your University/College/IT a smoke-free campus?

Of the eleven responses received, three third-level institutions replied that they had implemented a smoke-free campus (11% of all third-level institutions or 27% of those that responded). The remaining eight third-level institutions that replied stated that they did not have smoke-free campuses.

2. If yes to the above, in what year did it implement a smoke-free campus?

All three third-level institutions that had implemented a smoke-free campus had initiated it in different years – 2013, June 2015, and 2019

3. Is the smoke-free campus enforced? If so, please describe how

Compliance is enforced in two out of three third-level institutions that have smoke-free campuses. In the first of these institutions, there are student and staff inductions and thereafter Estate and Support Services actively enforce the policy. The second institution enforces compliance by having a blue line that everyone is asked to go outside the line if they wish to smoke. At the third institution, compliance is not enforced but rather requested by ambassadors who circuit the campus four times per week reminding people of the policy.

- 3a. Please describe the levels of compliance and describe how this is measured?

Of the three third-level institutions with smoke-free campuses, one reported an 83% compliance to tobacco free zones, the second reported that compliance is normally very good and that CCTV is used to observe boundaries and anyone observed breaching the

policy is spoken to and asked to move away from the campus. The final of the three institutions reported that compliance is not measured but that smokers congregate at the gates outside the designated blue line so people have made the permanent switch to smoking off campus.

4. Do you know how many of your students/staff smoke?

Only one of the eleven institutions that responded to the questionnaire provided information on this question. They provided details of student smoking but stated they do not have data on staff.

5. How welcoming are or were the students and staff to having a smoke-free campus?

All three third-level institutions that had implemented a smoke-free campus reported a generally welcome approach to smoke-free campuses by the student and staff body. One institution reported that initially the support was neutral 50:50 but rose to 71% by 2019.

6. What were the top 5 complaints/challenges against implementing a smoke-free campus?

Two of the three third-level institutions that had implemented smoke-free campuses provided data on this question. A summary of the complaints/challenges faced can be seen below:

- Where do residents go at night
- What about people using the 24-hour library. If they go off-campus they can't get back on
- What about banquets and conferences on campus
- What about on-campus pub
- What about visitors or tourists who visit the campus?
- Shelter for smokers
- How to enforce the policy, deal with non-compliance
- Whether to include vaping

7. What were the top 5 benefits?

Two of the three third-level institutions that had implemented smoke-free campuses provided data on this question. A summary of the benefits reported can be seen below:

- Opportunity to raise smoking as an issue when people are becoming addicted rather than in 20 years' time (most 20-year olds are 40 before they stop)
- Clean campus
- Fresh air
- Obtain budget for health promotion in general
- Healthier workplace
- Nice to walk in the doors without having to walk through a crowd of smokers as happened in the past
- More support/promotion of quitting
- People report they have cut down/quit
- It came in time to prevent the use of vaping on campus, before this habit became so commonplace

8. Have there been any unintended or unforeseen consequences arising from having a smoke-free campus

All three third-level institutions that had implemented smoke-free campuses reported consequences arising from having a smoke-free campus. Some of these consequences are summarised below:

- Cohort of undergraduate students who were not interested in the policy and continued to smoke
- Students congregating just outside the designated smoke-free campus and smoking there – often nearby other businesses, buildings and hotels
- 'Hidden' areas where smoking takes place around campus
- Cigarette ends, coffee cups and other litter accumulating in these areas where smokers are congregating

9. If the University/College/IT has not introduced a smoke-free campus yet, is it planning to and if so, by what year?

Eight of the eleven third-level institutions that had responded reported that they had not implemented a smoke-free campus. Of these eight:

- Two stated they were planning to implement smoke-free campuses in the 2019/2020 academic year
- Four stated they were in the early development/consultation process of implementing a smoke-free campus
- The remaining two had ambitions to one day become smoke-free campuses but had no plans in place yet

10. If the University/College/IT is not planning on implementing a smoke-free campus, what are the reasons behind this?

Some of the reasons reported by third-level institutions are as follows:

- Staff would resist it
- Smokers find it discriminatory
- The institution fears that it could not attract future students
- Where would the smokers go?
- No security to enforce it
- Student union shop sells cigarettes
- Students union had no interest in pursuing it when raised
- Other issues of higher priority taking precedence

Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

Of the 27 third-level institutions surveyed during the period May – June 2019, 41% responded (n=11).

- 11% (n=3) reported that their campuses were smoke-free
- 7% (n=2) reported that they were planning to implement a smoke-free campus in the 2019/2020 academic year)
- 15% (n=4) reported that they were in the early development/consultation stages of implementing a smoke-free campus
- 7% (n=2) reported that they had no plans in place yet to implement a smoke-free campus but stated they hoped to achieve it one day