

Healthy Trinity: Healthy Eating Policy

Background

Trinity College, the University of Dublin states in its Strategic Planⁱ that Trinity will promote student health as part of its “Promote Student Life” theme (A2.3). Extending this theme beyond students, this policy will focus on staff and visitors to College too.

Aim

Support the health of Trinity students, staff and visitors by making it easy to choose healthy food.

Objectives

The aim of this policy will be achieved through two objectives:

1. Creating a supportive environment for healthy eating on campus.
2. Encouraging critical thinking about healthy eating amongst the Trinity community.

Objective 1: Creating a Supportive Environment for Healthy Eating on Campus

Subject to resources, this policy will be open to providing healthy eating opportunities:

1. In College Catering outlets on and off campus
2. Through the provision of healthy options of the same price or no more expensive than the cheapest unhealthy option
3. In College vending machines
4. By ensuring that existing common areas and those to be developed under the College Strategic Plan “Student Environment” theme (A2.2) facilitate light food preparation
5. In College accommodation by providing the basic standards for cooking as stipulated in the National Rented Accommodation Standardsⁱⁱ e.g. a fridge, oven, hob etc.
6. By encouraging healthy eating policies at catered meetings and in workplaces
7. Via The Pavilions and Science Gallery menus
8. By facilitating breastfeeding/expressing of milk in College
9. By ensuring water is widely available on and off campus

Objective 2: Encouraging critical thinking about healthy eating amongst the Trinity community

The College’s Strategic Plan under the theme “Curriculum” (A3.1) calls for renewed attention to critical thinking. Students and staff will be encouraged to think critically about different schools of thought on healthy eating via this policy by:

10. Running a minimum of one flagship healthy eating event per annum
11. Providing education on the different schools of thought related to healthy eating via social media and the internet

Structures

The Healthy Eating Policy will be overseen and implemented by a Healthy Eating Committee. The Committee will consist of representation from College Health, Catering, Students’ Union, Graduate Students’ Union, Human Resources, Communications, Sport and other interested parties. The committee will encourage participation from students and staff who express an interest in its work or with whom they interact in College. The committee will meet a minimum of three times per year. Approximate meeting times will be:

1. Early in the academic year to review the previous year and plan for the upcoming one
2. Early in the new calendar year to review progress
3. Around health week to encourage and review progress

Approach

Defining “What is Healthy Food?”

The Committee will work within national recommendationsⁱⁱⁱ for healthy eating focusing particularly on the following recommendations:

1. Enjoy a wide variety of foods from the five food groups.
2. Find enjoyable ways to be physically active every day – balancing your food intake with active living will help protect you against disease and prevent weight gain.
3. Keep an eye on your serving sizes – choose smaller serving sizes and add plenty of vegetables, salad and fruit.
4. Plain wholemeal breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice provide the best calories for a healthy weight. Base your meals on these simple foods with plenty of vegetables, salad and fruit.
5. Eat plenty of different coloured vegetables, salad and fruit – at least five a day.
6. Drink plenty of water.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture^{iv} there is no widely accepted definition of what constitutes a good or bad individual food. Engagement by Healthy Trinity committee members with the Trinity community suggest that in College too, there is no widely accepted definition of healthy eating and indeed, healthy eating is a subject of interest to many within the community that easily provokes debate. Each year, the Committee will choose a Healthy Eating focus that fits within the national recommendations but that is of interest to those who attend the planning meeting and are willing to lead activities on campus to promote healthy eating.

Engaging the Community

The Trinity community is interested in healthy eating. To maximise engagement of that interest, the committee will be open to new ideas during the year and will encourage participation and leadership of activities by Trinity students and staff. Because time and resources are limited within College, the committee will support ideas from the Trinity community as much as possible but will expect those who raise an idea to lead activities insofar as is feasible.

Specifically, students will be engaged:

- Through social media and email before the annual planning meeting
- At Sport Volunteer Training
- On an ad-hoc basis throughout the year i.e. when committee members meet people who express an interest in being involved

Staff will be engaged:

- By email before the annual planning meeting
- On an ad-hoc basis throughout the year i.e. when committee members meet people who express an interest in being involved

Ottawa Charter

The committee will use a checklist prior to signing off on planned activities to ensure activities incorporate as many of the five pillars of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion^v as possible.

ⁱ <https://www.tcd.ie/strategy/strategic-plan-201419.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Dept of Environment (2009) *A Guide to Minimum Standards in Rented Accommodation* downloaded on 9 Dec 2015 from

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownload,33422,en.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Food Safety Authority of Ireland (2011) *Healthy Eating Guidelines – What’s new in healthy eating and active living in Ireland*. Downloaded on the 4/11/15 from www.fsai.ie/science_and_health/healthy_eating.html

^{iv} <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/arra/FSPFoodRestrictions.pdf>

^v <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>