



POLICY:	Healthy Eating Policy
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FIRST DRAFT:	
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ADOPTED:	BR2008#02
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AMENDMENTS:	None to Date
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REVIEW:	Due for Review
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HEALTHY EATING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 All policies, guidelines and protocols of Mary Immaculate College, will reflect the Colleges commitment to the promotion of equality and will be fully compliant with the provisions of prevailing equality legislation.
- 1.2 Mary Immaculate College is a Health Promoting College since 1996.
- 1.3 The College is conscious about health, striving to protect and improve the health of the whole College community.
- 1.4 Health is embedded into the structures, culture, climate and ethos of the College.
- 1.5 Healthy eating is thus viewed within the broader context of the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and a supportive environment for health.

2. RATIONALE

- 2.1 Healthy eating is a key lifestyle behaviour that can impact positively on the health status of an individual and of a population.
- 2.2 Healthy eating is a positive concept that emphasises a balanced and varied diet and appropriate portion sizes, evidenced by the Food Pyramid as a visual tool to guide healthy eating. Please see Appendix B.
- 2.3 Healthy eating has been a focus at Mary Immaculate College for several years, with a more focused organisational approach towards healthy eating in recent times.
- 2.4 The Catering Services Forum, a representative committee, was established in March 2004. The College restaurant attained the Irish Heart Foundation's Happy Heart at Work Healthy Eating Award in June 2007.
- 2.5 An assessment of needs relevant to healthy eating was conducted in 2007. This Policy has been developed to support the implementation of the recommendations

arising from that assessment and to ensure a systematic approach that combines individual and organisational strategies that promote and support healthy eating.

2.6 The Policy is evidence-based (*Appendix B*) and it reflects the College's commitment to sustainable and long-term change.

2.7 The Policy's emphasis on informed choice reflects traditional academic traditions of diversity of opinion and freedom of choice.

3. POLICY SCOPE

3.1 The Policy is aimed at all members of the college community, including visitors and it will operate all year round.

3.2 The Policy applies to the restaurant, vending machines, An Siopa and any activities in the College that requires catering services.

3.4 The Policy also applies to sponsorship from the food and drinks industry for any College related activities.

4. POLICY AIM

4.1 The aim of Mary Immaculate College's Healthy Eating Policy is to promote healthy eating and to make healthy eating an easy and informed choice for students, staff and visitors.

4.2 This aim will be met by a framework that considers two complementary pillars:

- Awareness raising, education and skills development
- A supportive environment for healthy eating

4.3 The aim will be supported by an Action Plan which outlines in detail the means by which the policy aim will be realised. Please see Appendix A.

Appendix A

ACTION PLAN TO ACCOMPANY THE HEALTHY EATING POLICY OF MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE

Specific individual and organisational objectives for each pillar of the policy aim are outlined below, and, where appropriate, specific strategies are suggested to operationalise the objectives. The Catering Services Forum will oversee the various strategies and will monitor and review the Policy and the Action Plan on annual basis. The Action Plan will be operationalised by Campbell Catering, An Siopa and the Health Promotion Office.

(1) Awareness raising, education and skills development - operationalised by the Health Promotion Office:

- Awareness-raising and profile strengthening of the Happy Heart Initiative
- Provision of information about nutrition and healthy eating
- Integration of nutrition education and awareness raising into the curriculum
- Development of skills relevant to healthy eating
- Provisions of heart health screenings
- Provision of healthy weight management programmes

(2) A supportive environment for healthy eating - operationalised by Campbell Catering and An Siopa:

- Maintenance of the criteria for the Happy Heart at Work Healthy Eating Award
- Provision of healthy options in the three catering outlets in the College, (restaurant, vending machines and An Siopa)
- Provision of choice of healthy options offered in menus for catering activities outside the three catering outlets
- Use of a pricing policy favouring healthy options
- Provision of access to healthy options for those with special dietary needs

Appendix B

FOOD PYRAMID TO ACCOMPANY THE HEALTHY EATING POLICY OF MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE



Appendix C

POLICY & RESEARCH CONTEX TO ACCOMPANY THE HEALTHY EATING POLICY OF MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE

Healthy eating is a key lifestyle behaviour that can impact positively on the health status of an individual and of a population. It was listed as a key topic in the most recent national health promotion strategy (Department of Health and Children 2000). Healthy eating is a positive concept that emphasises a balanced and varied diet and appropriate portion sizes.

The Food Pyramid is used as a visual tool to guide healthy eating (Health Service Executive 2006). Lifestyle research has found that national daily compliance with food pyramid guidelines varied between 69% for fruit and vegetables to 17% for the "top shelf" - fats, oils, sweets, etc. (National Nutritional Surveillance Centre 2003). Lifestyle research in the Irish college student population found that first-year students consumed a less healthy diet compared to third-year students, measured by intake of sweets, fizzy drinks, crisps, fast foods, salads and cooked vegetables (Hope et al. 2005).

Nationally, levels of over-weight and obesity are rising. Diet and physical activity are key behavioural factors; as they have many determinants ranging from individual to wider socio-economic factors, a population approach is required to address this new public health issue. Strategies already in place at Mary Immaculate College mirror recommendations of the Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity (2005) for third-level institutions and work places.

The college restaurant attained the Irish Heart Foundation's [IHF] Happy Heart at Work Healthy Eating Award in June 2007. In addition to striving for achievement of the award, the IHF (2001) also recommends that organisations develop healthy eating policies as evidence of their commitment to the concept. An investigation into attitudes, reported practices and assessment of needs relevant to healthy eating, sanctioned by the Catering Services Forum, was conducted in 2007.

References:

Department of Health and Children (2000) *The National Health Promotion Strategy 2000/2005*. Dublin: Stationary Office.

Hope, A., Dring, C., and Dring, J. (2005) *The health of Irish students*. Dublin: Health Promotion Unit.

Health Service Executive (2006) *Guide to healthy food choices*. HSE.

Irish Heart Foundation (2001) *Happy Heart at Work. Co-ordinator Resources*. Dublin: Irish Heart Foundation.

National Nutrition Surveillance Centre (2003) *Dietary habits of the Irish population: results from SLÁN. Annual report 2003*. Dublin: Health Promotion Unit and Department of Public Health Medicine and Epidemiology, University College Dublin.

National Task Force on Obesity (2005) *Obesity: the Policy Challenges. The Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity*. Dublin: National Task Force on Obesity.