

Student Wellbeing & Mental Health

*E-Module Training for Skills and
Resilience of Student Volunteers*



Harnessing the power of students to promote student wellbeing and mental health:

- Promoting Volunteering Opportunities
- Empowering student led Societies

Hello!

Dia dhuit !

(pronounced *dee-ah gwit*)

Student Volunteer Ireland

- ***Dr Lorraine Tansey, University of Limerick***

Board of Irish College Societies (BICS)

- ***Riona Hughes, University of Galway, BICS Training & Development Officer***
- ***Laura Woods, Munster Technology University (MTU), BICS Chairperson***
- ***Mary O'Toole, University of Galway, BICS Treasurer***



The Irish Higher Education Landscape

- About **278,880 students** were enrolled in publicly funded HEIs in 2024/25
- 7 traditional Universities
- 5 Technological Universities
- 2 Institutes

CAO
www.cao.ie

Map of campus locations for participating Higher Education Institutions

Campuses are numbered by location beginning in the North West (top left of the map)

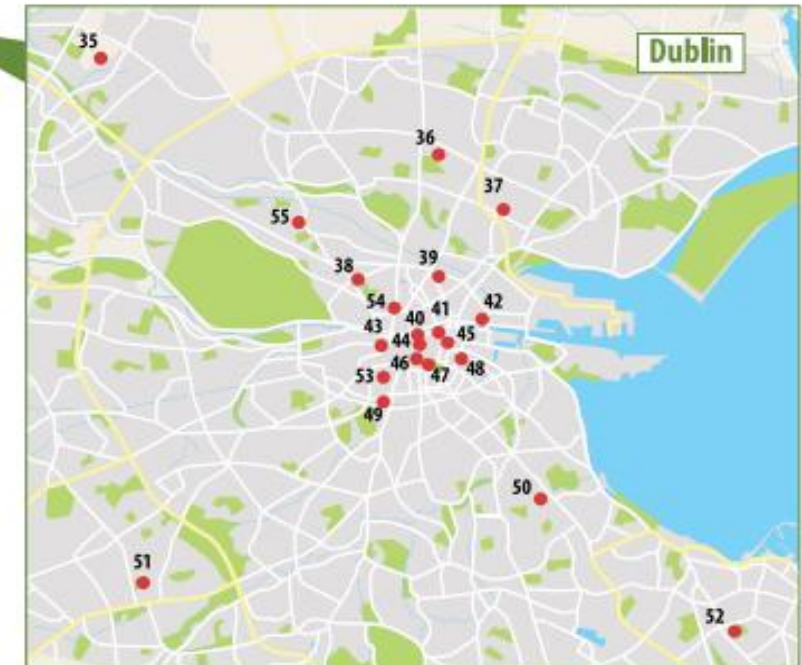


1 ATU Donegal Letterkenny
2 ATU Donegal Killybegs
3 ATU Sligo
4 ATU St Angela's
5 Dundalk Institute of Technology
6 ATU Mayo
7 ATU Connemara
8 ATU Mountbellew
9 TUS Athlone
10 St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth
11 Maynooth University
12 ATU Galway City, Dublin Road
13 ATU Galway City, Wellpark Road
14 University of Galway
15 Galway Business School
16 TUS Ennis
17 Shannon College of Hotel Management
18 TUS Limerick
19 Mary Immaculate College Limerick
20 Griffith College Limerick
21 University of Limerick
22 TUS Thurles
23 Mary Immaculate College Thurles
24 Setanta College Thurles
25 Carlow College
26 SETU Carlow
27 MTU Tralee
28 TUS Clonmel
29 SETU Waterford

30 SETU Wexford
31 MTU Cork
32 University College Cork
33 Griffith College Cork
34 MTU National Maritime College Ringaskiddy

DUBLIN

35 TU Dublin Blanchardstown
36 Dublin City University
37 Marino Institute of Education
38 TU Dublin City Centre
39 Dorset College
40 IBAT College
41 CCT College
42 National College of Ireland
43 NCAD
44 ICD Business School
45 Trinity College Dublin
46 Dublin Business School
47 RCSJ University of Medicine & Health Sciences
48 American College Dublin
49 Griffith College Dublin
50 University College Dublin
51 TU Dublin Tallaght
52 ADT Dun Laoghaire
53 TU Dublin Aungier Street
54 TU Dublin Bolton Street
55 TU Dublin Grangegorman



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025

July 2025

Second National Strategy on
Education for Sustainable Development



Outline

I. Our Collaboration: National Open Courses Repository

Our Aim: Create a suite of e-Modules to build student's community leadership skills impacting Mental Health, Wellbeing & Belonging

II. We provide Two Student Engagement Pathways:

Board of Irish College Societies

Student Volunteer Ireland

III. Our Impact: Student Voice

Open Courses & Digital Badges for Student Wellbeing



Support Your Learning and Professional Development

Take part in Open Courses and earn nationally recognised digital badges that support your learning and recognise your achievements.

Choose your pathway to get started.



I'm a Student

Explore Open Courses to support your digital skills, study skills and academic success

[Browse student Open Courses →](#)



I'm Staff

Explore Open Courses to support your professional development and teaching and learning practice

[Browse staff Open Courses →](#)

What is Open Courses?

- OpenCourses.ie is a national Irish platform offering **short, flexible online courses** for students and higher-education staff. These courses focus mainly on teaching, learning, and transferable skills, and most award a **National Forum digital badge** when completed.
- Our collaboration project focuses on supporting students building their **volunteering, Society leadership and community engagement skills** with visible, portable and formally recognized Digital Badges.

HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

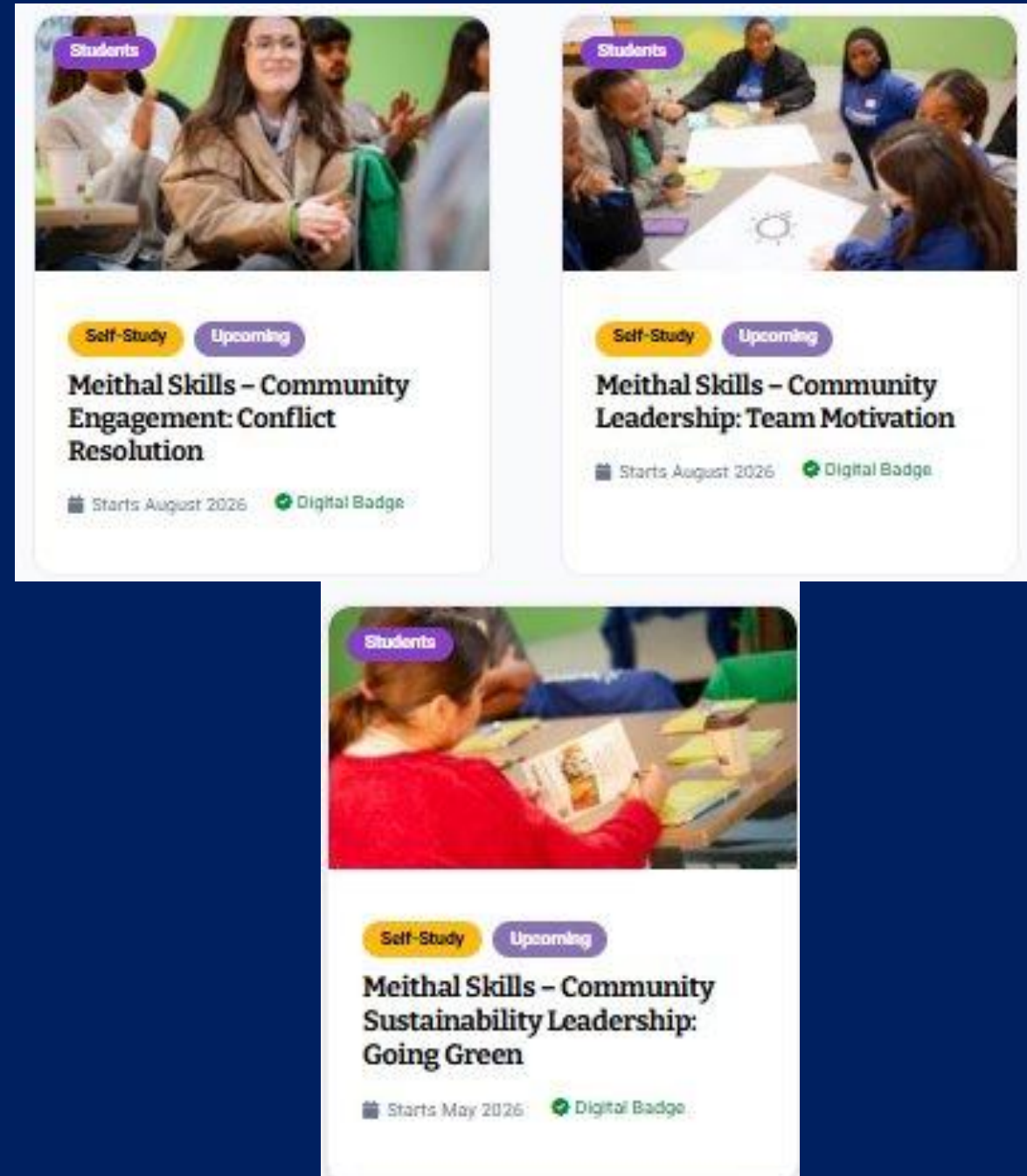
Suite of Modules

Open Learning Modules:	Title	Focus Area
Meitheal 1	Community Financial Leadership	Sponsorship and Fundraising
Meitheal 2	Community Inclusion	Disability Awareness and Promoting Inclusivity
Meitheal 3	Community Sustainability Leadership	Going Green with An Taisce
Meitheal 4	Community Advocacy	Public Relations and Promotion
Meitheal 5	Community Governance	Secretary Training and Managing Meetings
Meitheal 6	Community Engagement	Conflict Resolution
Meitheal 7	Community Voice	Team Motivation

Example Module

Community Inclusion: Disability Awareness Promoting Inclusivity

- Equality Diversity Inclusion University of Galway Mentoring in the Development
- Co-Designed with Students
- University of Galway Occupational Therapists Reviewed & Provided Content Development
- University of Galway Neurodivergent Staff Network
- Interactive Learner Experience



The image displays three example module cards for 'Meithal Skills'. Each card features a header image with a 'Students' label, a 'Self-Study' button, and an 'Upcoming' button. The first card is titled 'Meithal Skills – Community Engagement: Conflict Resolution' and starts in August 2026. The second card is titled 'Meithal Skills – Community Leadership: Team Motivation' and also starts in August 2026. The third card is titled 'Meithal Skills – Community Sustainability Leadership: Going Green' and starts in May 2026. All three cards include a 'Digital Badge' icon.

Module 1: Meithal Skills – Community Engagement: Conflict Resolution

- Students
- Self-Study
- Upcoming
- Starts August 2026
- Digital Badge

Module 2: Meithal Skills – Community Leadership: Team Motivation

- Students
- Self-Study
- Upcoming
- Starts August 2026
- Digital Badge

Module 3: Meithal Skills – Community Sustainability Leadership: Going Green

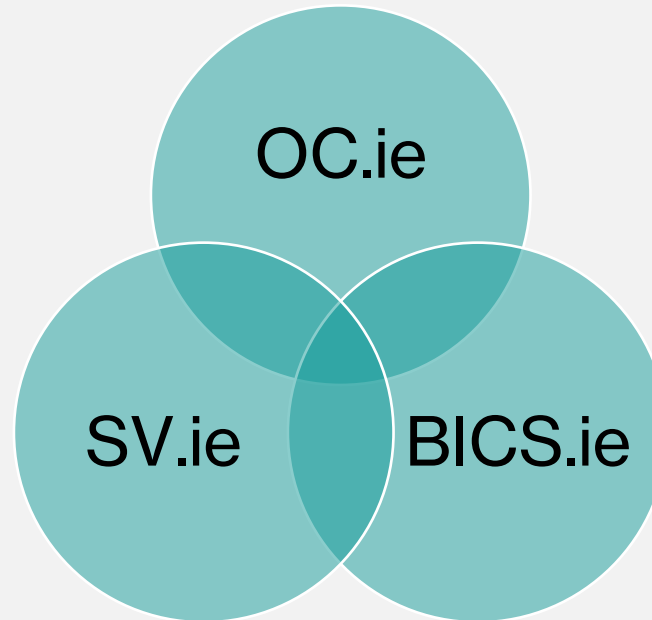
- Students
- Self-Study
- Upcoming
- Starts May 2026
- Digital Badge

Our Team: A Collaboration

HEA Open Courses:



Student Volunteer Ireland



Board of Irish College Societies



Two Engagement Pathways:

1. Student Societies

2. Student Volunteer Ireland

What are Student Societies?

What is a “Student Society”?

- Student-led, democratically elected committees
- Governance & Protocols
- Staff Support with Training, Funding, Infrastructure, Equipment, Promotion & Awards/Rewards.
- Out of hours support
- Events, Activities, Interest Groups



Why do students join Societies?



- Make Friends
- Find their niche
- Gain new skills
- Try something new
- Create memories
- Have fun/enjoyment
- Social Outlet / Break from Study
- Welcoming
- Sense of Belonging
- Networking
- Good for their CV

How Societies nurture Student Belonging, Wellbeing, Mental Health

- **Nurturing a sense of Belonging:** Societies are one of the easiest ways to meet people with similar interests.
- **Cultural exchange:** Many societies are based around cultures, hobbies, or causes, helping Students to learn from others.
- **Confidence building:** Taking part in activities, events, or speaking roles helps boost self-confidence and opportunities for practical skill building.
- **Leadership Skill Development:** Students take on roles like committee member, event organiser, or president/treasurer/Public Relations/secretary/Health & Safety
- **Memorable experiences:** Many of your best university memories often come from society involvement.
- **Discovering new interests:** A change of environment to build resilience, manage stress, feel more connected and less isolated.



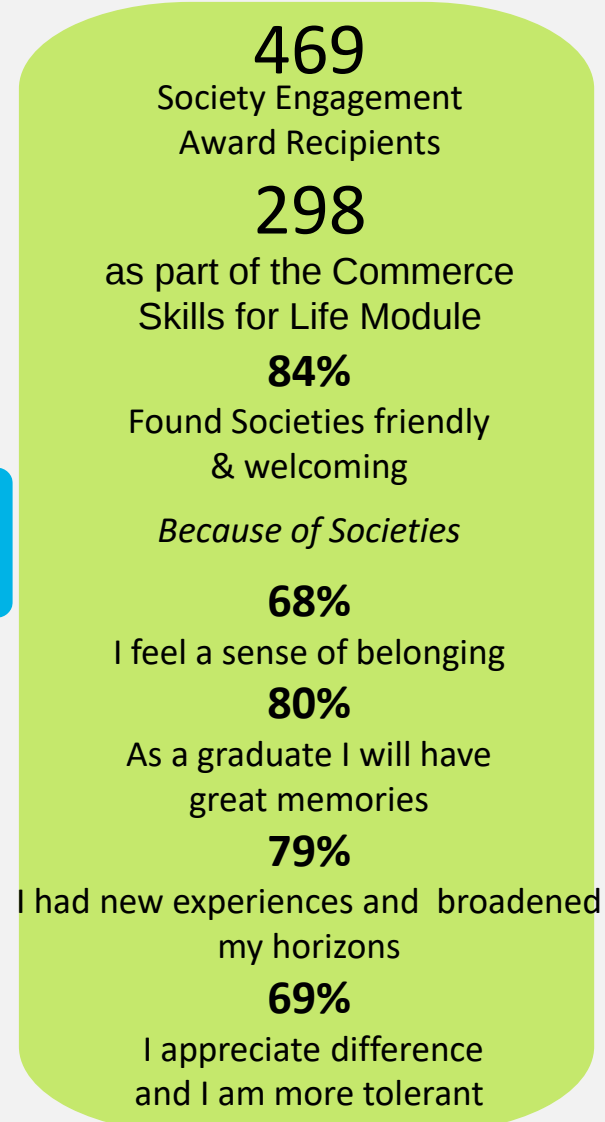
Societies Case Studies

University of Galway *20,000 Students*

Munster Technological University, Kerry *2,000 Students*



University 20k Students Societies



Rewards



Leadership Award



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

To Earn a badge:

The Society

- Have 100 members
- Have at least 4 committee members
- Have held at least 5 events, not including Socs Days or committee meetings
- Have completed all end of year reports
- Have an up to date constitution
- Have completed the Society leadership requirements:
- Completing the 3 start of the year questions in the leadership section: 'Mission', 'Aims 'and 'Society Charter'

Individual

- Set a goal
- choose a leadership skill to develop
- Attend training

At the end of the year

The Society

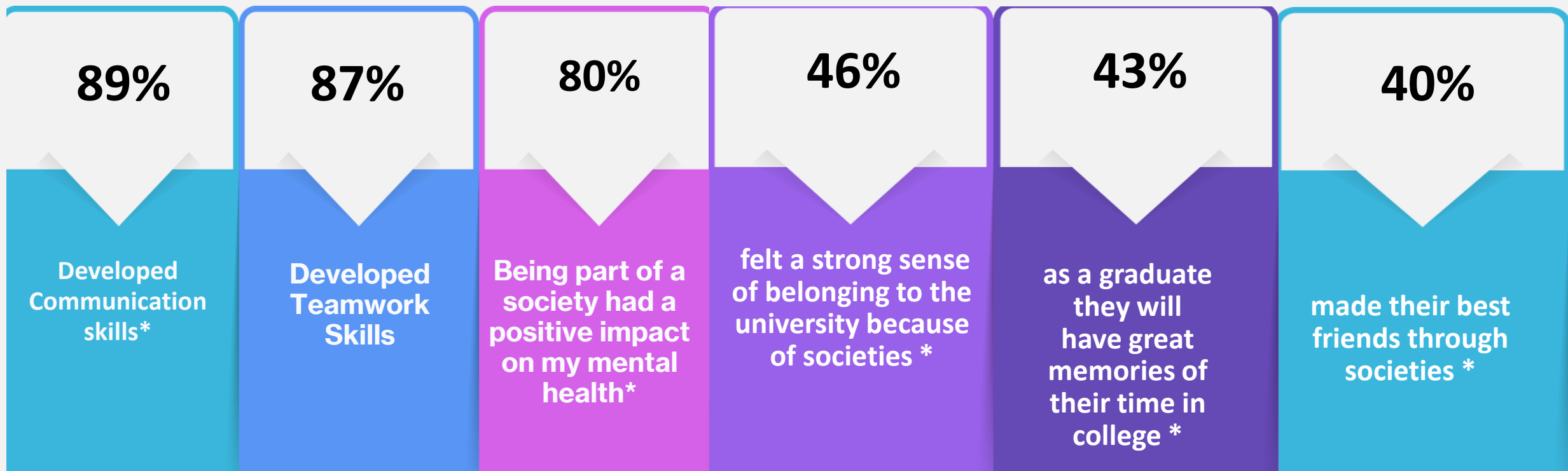
- Reflecting on your mission statement, how did your Society do this year?
- Did your Society achieve any of its aims, objectives and goals?
- What would you regard as your societies greatest success?
- What would you regard as your societies greatest challenge?
- Reflection on your Society Charter

Individual

Complete the survey which includes reflecting on your goal and leadership



Societies & Wellbeing



55% of committee members contemplated leaving college due to personal challenges of these

- > **37%** said that friends they had made in societies were their support
- > **25%** said societies had helped them cope with a personal challenge
- > **23%** felt a sense of loyalty and could not let their committee down by leaving.

Some Society Highlights



Wins at BICS Awards: Botany Best Departmental & Best Green Event. Energy Soc: Best Green Initiative. Riona: Lifetime Achievement Award.



Wildlands Auditors Away Training Day



HST Soc donated €66k to hospitals in Malawi & Zambia



GUMS Musical won 6 Awards inc Best Production at Féile Ardan, Musical Intervarsity



Dramsoc won 5 Awards inc Best Production at ISDA.



Cheersoc win at Celtic Spirit



Cancer Soc: Boxing in Pink raised €30k for charity



Our Impact: Student Society Voices



Student Wellbeing

Taking part in these different Societies in the first few weeks of starting college helped me **settle in more**. I got talking to other first years and they felt the same as me. It made me feel more **connected and at home with the college**. And I felt it **bonded** me with other people in my course.

I developed more **confidence to ask questions** make **new friends**.

On a personal level I developed greater confidence and a deeper understanding of community service. Being involved in these Societies also helped me **grow as a person** fostering **empathy** and a sense of **responsibility**.

Quotes From Society Engagement Survey from students (Society members)

Impact of E-Modules and Experiential Learning

As Auditor, I learned a great deal about **group management** and **supporting individuals** in letting their strengths be seen through their work in the society. I developed my **communication skills**, as my role required me to interact with the committee, Society members, staff members, and those in other societies.

I feel that I achieved my hopes and aspirations for the year. I felt that our committee meetings this year were a **positive and open space where people felt comfortable to contribute and engage with each other**. Similarly, the Society as a whole, has been **an open and inviting space**, and I've had the pleasure of watching many **friendships flourish** and grow in both new and old members alike.



MTU

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University



Societies

- 2081 Students
- 28 Societies
- 863 Members
- 41.5% Student population
- 200 Events
- Our NAG Society got a grant of €1k and raised €25k for charity

*"Societies were the **lifeline I needed to stay in college.** Through Societies, I met some of **my best friends, learned invaluable skills** and most importantly found a place where I could just be myself"*
- Alan O'Brien, Secretary , LGBTQ+ Society

*" I had the honour of working with our three chosen charities last year as part of the NAG Society. One of which was Kerry **Mental Health Association.** Being able to run events such as our Morning Walk & Talk and November Swim Club as well as raising funds for a charity **doing so much for mental health in Kerry was the single most rewarding part of my time in MTU"***
- Patrick McGrath, PRO Nursing & Agricultural Society



MTU

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University

Societies



Nursing & Agricultural Society: Panel Discussion on Young People's Mental Health in Rural Irish Communities



MTU Kerry at the BICS Awards

International
Society Welcome
event



Board Games Society celebrate
World Down Syndrome Day

Christmas for International
Students



International Society
celebrate Eid



LGBTQ+ Society Flag Week



BICS

Supporting Student Societies



A National Network of Staff and Students:
Board of Irish College Societies

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
|  <p>UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
DUBLIN LINCOLN</p> <p>University of
Limerick</p> |  <p>TU DUBLIN
DUBLIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY</p> <p>TU Dublin
TUD Tallaght</p> |  <p>OXBRIDGE
CHALLENGE
UNIVERSITY
CLUB</p> <p>University of
Galway</p> |  <p>Institute of
Art, Design &
Technology
Dún Laoghaire</p> |
|  <p>DCU</p> <p>Dublin City
University</p> |  <p>MTU
MUNSTER TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY</p> <p>Munster TU Kerry</p> |  <p>TUS</p> <p>TUS Midlands</p> |  <p>TUD
TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
DUBLIN</p> <p>TUD
Grangegorman</p> |
|  <p>TUS</p> <p>TUS Midwest</p> |  <p>MIC
MAYNOOTH INSTITUTE OF
CONTEMPORARY ARTS</p> <p>Maynooth
College</p> |  <p>UCC
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK, IRELAND
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF THE SACRAMENTS</p> <p>University College
Cork</p> |  <p>MTU
MUNSTER TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY</p> <p>MTU Cork</p> |
|  <p>Maynooth
University
National University of Ireland Maynooth</p> <p>Maynooth
University</p> |  <p>TU DUBLIN
DUBLIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY</p> <p>TU City Campus</p> |  <p>RCSI
ROYAL COLLEGE
OF SURGEONS
IN IRELAND</p> <p>RCSI</p> | |

BICS Membership

Institute Name	Number of Students in your Institute	Number of Society members in your Institute?	% of students in societies	How many Societies are in your Institute?	In your HEI do Societies fall under the Students' Union or the Institution?	
DCU	18,000	8,135	45%	110	Institution & SU	Multi campus
Mary I	5,500	800	15%	25	Students' Union	Multi campus
Maynooth University -	17,334	5,346	29%	65	Institution	Single campus
MTU Cork	14,500	1,739	8%	47	Institution	Multi campus (4)
MTU Kerry	2,081	900	43%	25	Institution	Single campus
RCSI	4,833	1,960	41%	53	Institution	Single campus
TU Dublin	27,500	11,000	40%	50	Institution	Multi campus
TUS Midlands	15,000	1500	20%	115	Institution	Multi campus (7)
UCC	26,998	14,136	52%	108	Institution	Single campus
UL	19,740	4,494	23%	41	Students' Union	Multicampus
NCIRL	2,800	179	6%	19	Institution & SU	Multi Campus (2)
University of Galway	20,000	13,278	66%	132	Institution	Multi campus
IADT	2,500	975	39%	35	Students' Union	Single campus
ATU Donegal	3960	1250	32%	39	Institution & SU	Multi campus
Ulster University	27,000	5066	19%	122	Students' Union	Multi campus
Totals	207,746	70,758	26%	986		

- **17 Member HEIs**
- **71,000 Students in Societies**
- **986 Number of Student Societies in Ireland 986**

BICS Awards



In person training



Annual BICS Forum



BICS Badges Launch

Award Categories *Large & Small College Separate*

- Best Social / Cultural Society
- Best Civic / Charity Society
- Best Academic / Departmental Society
- Most Improved Society
- Best Event
- Best Individual
- Best New Society
- Best Fresher
- Best Intervarsity*
- Best Global Solidarity*
- Best Green Event*
- Best Green Initiative*
- Best Mental Health Promoting Event*
- Best Promotional Video*
- Best Poster*
- Best Photo*

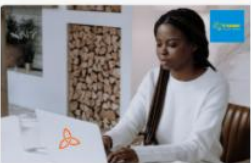
**Large & Small
College Combined*

Our E-Modules

Our Badges

E-learning Modules

Home » E-learning Modules

 An Taisce – Green Societies Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS Sponsorship and Fundraising Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS Disability Awareness Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS Society Secretary Training Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS & Student Volunteer Ireland Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS Teamwork Provider: Bics Badges
 BICS Public Relations Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS Conflict Resolution Provider: Bics Badges	 BICS Course Event Organising , Health & Safety Module 2025	 BICS Chairing and Leadership Module Provider: Bics Badges	 Spunout: Online Empathy 101 Provider: Bics Badges	 STAND: Global Solidarity 101 Provider: Bics Badges

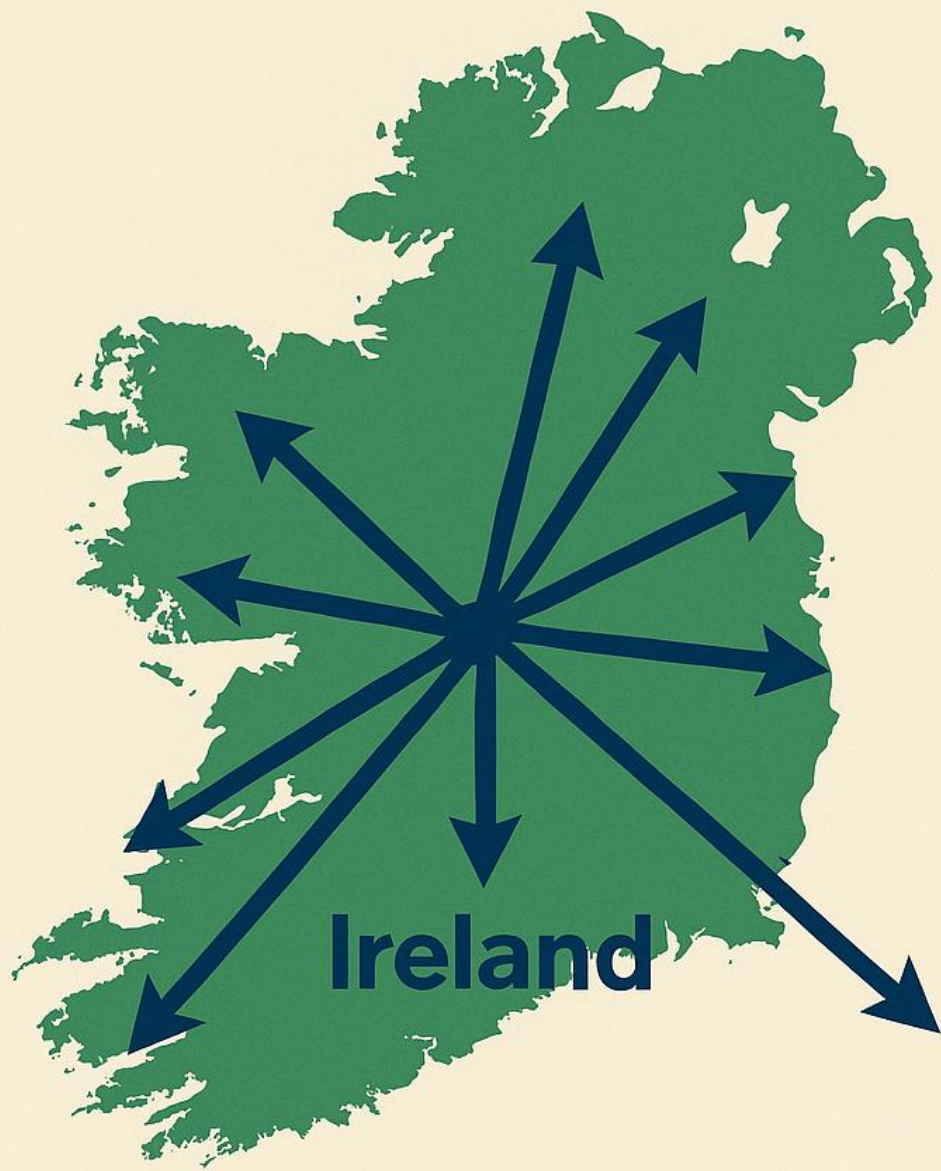
BICS Leadership
BICS Intervarsity
BICS Award Nominee
BICS Award Winner
BICS Award Adjudicator
BICS/STAND *Society Global
Solidarity Badge*
BICS/ An Taisce *Sustainability
Badge*
BICS/ Student Volunteer
Ireland *Community
Engagement Badge*



Student Volunteer Ireland



Where Students and Community Connect



**Special
Olympics**
Ireland



COMMUNITY



HUMAN RIGHTS/
JUSTICE



ARTS/ CULTURE/
MEDIA



ENVIRONMENT/
ANIMAL WELFARE



HEALTH AND
WELLBEING



INTERNATIONAL



EDUCATION



SPORTS &
RECREATION

Our Impact: Student Volunteer Voices



Student Volunteering with Local Charities



“It felt **personally rewarding** to contribute to a charity directly helping vulnerable people, by turning donated goods into funds for essentials like meals and housing support.

...supporting shop operations by organising books, assisting customers, and maintaining displays.

Gained experience in customer service, **teamwork**, and **communication** while contributing to a community-focused organisation.”

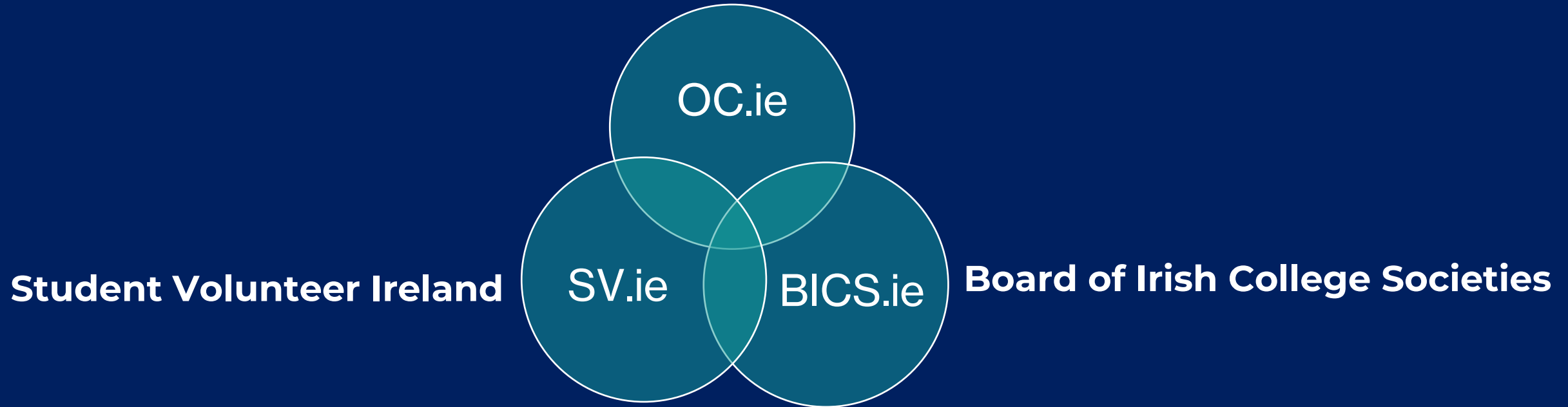
Student Volunteer, 1st Yr Medicine

Student Volunteering with Peer Support Programmes



“We have conversations with students to **understand their views** better and try to represent those views in monthly meetings with the Students Union.

We also meet with lecturers to report what we think is relevant ...I **welcome** international students, spend time with them and try to see if there is anything I can do to help them. I go to international Societies to meet them and **establish a link with them.**”
Student Volunteer, 2nd Yr Arts



Students hold leadership positions within their institutions and communities, they are uniquely placed to influence and support the wellbeing and mental health of their peers, contributing to a more supportive, inclusive, and mentally healthy student environment for the broader student population.



Thank you!

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bics.ie • StudentVolunteer.ie • OpenCourses.ie



INTERNATIONAL
VOLUNTEER
YEAR 2026

Bonus Slides

Student Volunteer Ireland

Supporting Student Development

Our Matching platform, training, & Conferences strive to support and recognise students, enhancing their personal and professional growth and academic development through community engagement.

Promoting Civic Engagement

Social justice, sustainability and inclusion through structured community building experiences for students.

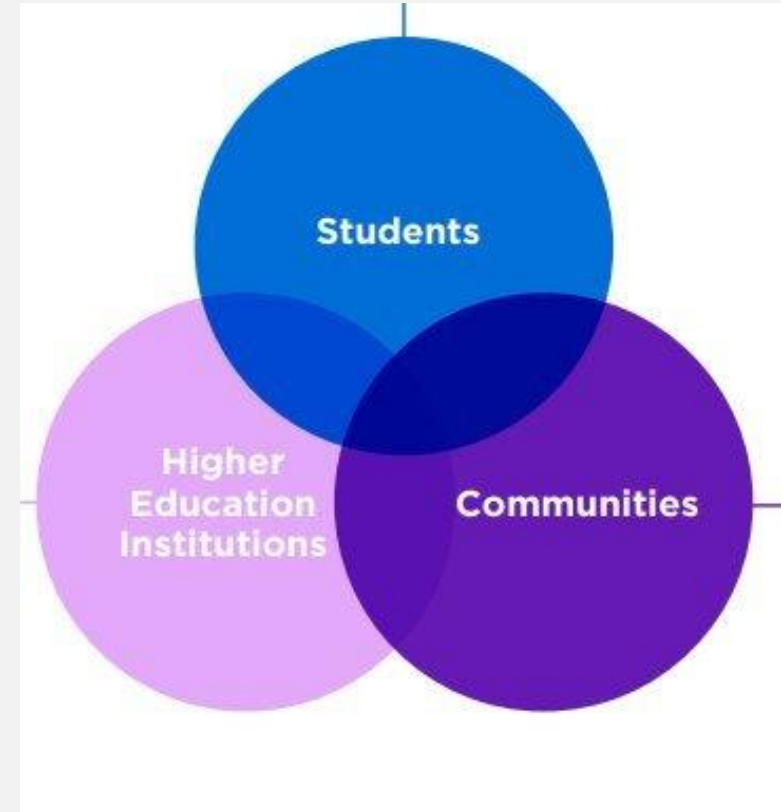
Enabling Staff Development

Our Community of Practice mobilises our experiences to share and build our skills. Our Digital Badge “Enabling Student Volunteering” is recognised by the Higher Education Authority.

Enhancing Higher Education Student Programmes

We are cost effective, concentrating resources on shared capability and national standards. We reduce administrative challenges to streamline engagement.

- Charter for Volunteering and Code of Practice for International Volunteering.



Student Volunteering with Peer Support Programmes



“I really enjoyed coming up with my **own idea** for an event as it pushed me to be creative and think outside the box. It also gave me a chance to **plan** and **coordinate** something from start to finish which really tested and strengthened my **organizational** skills.”

Student Volunteer, 3rd Yr Medicine

“Volunteering is a great opportunity to **make friends**, it broadens your perspective on the world, and makes you **appreciate** what you have. It’s an opportunity to put a smile on someone’s face” *Student Volunteer, 4th Yr Social Science*

Student Resilience Skills: what the students have to say

On a personal level, being involved in Societies helped me feel more **connected to the university community**. It made my student experience more enjoyable and balanced, it encouraged me to **step outside my comfort zone**. Overall my Society involvement helped me **grow both personally and professionally**.

Being actively involved in Societies has been one of the most **enriching** parts of my university experience. Through my participation I not only contributed to events and initiatives but also **developed skills that go beyond the classroom**.

My involvement in Societies has been one of the most **valuable parts of my university experience** both personally and professionally. Through active participation and leadership roles I have developed key skills such as **communication organisation and teamwork**.

Quotes From University of Galway Society Engagement Survey from students (Society members)

Impact of E-Modules and Experiential Learning: Student Voice

This year, we set out to **create a welcoming, vibrant space where members felt encouraged to get involved**. I truly believe we achieved that. Seeing **new faces grow into active participants** has been incredibly rewarding and how **enthusiastic the freshers were to be involved** was a testament to this. While there were hurdles along the way, **the sense of community we fostered proves that this is a place people love returning to** just as I have, year after year. I'm really proud to say that I had a part to play in this.

Quotes From University of Galway Society Committee members Leadership Questionnaire