



ACTIVE WELLBEING REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/25



ACTIVE
WELLBEING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Active Wellbeing programme at Heriot-Watt University is driving a culture of physical activity and wellbeing across all global campuses. In its second full year, the programme has **engaged over 3000 students and staff** through a broad range of inclusive activities, supported by evidence-based practice and strategic alignment with **University priorities**.

Key achievements include:

- **Active Residencies:** over 600 students participated; expansion planned with new activities and strengthened partnership with Residence Life.
- **Couch to 5K and Health Promotion Events:** strong ongoing staff engagement and impactful health campaigns reaching 100+ participants.
- **Educational Integration:** delivery of Brain Breaks with 85% of students reporting improved wellbeing.
- **Mass Participation Events:** Colour Run and Santa Dash events fostered visibility and community connection.

Looking ahead, the programme will scale through **enhanced delivery**, a new **'Learn To'** programme and development of **referral pathways** in collaboration with internal services. A **policy review and wider sport strategy work** will continue position Active Wellbeing as a **core contributor** to institutional health and wellbeing, student experience, and community belonging.

OUR VISION

The vision of Active Wellbeing at Heriot-Watt University is to support more students and staff to be more active, more often across all global campuses. To achieve this work, we set out a number of workstreams to define and align our actions.

Changing Lives via delivery of activity across all campuses.

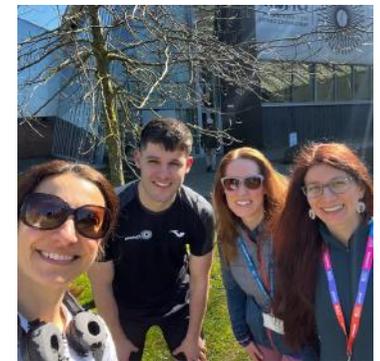
Developing People through training opportunities and a rewarding volunteer programme.

Moving the Rules by thinking outside of the box, specifically in the learning and teaching space.

Enhancing & Activating Spaces through an Active Wellbeing lens, supported by a global audit of infrastructure.

Communication & Advocacy of the benefits of being active, for physical, mental and social health.

Data & Impact to underpin all that we do, demonstrating community impact and sense of belonging.



OUR AIMS

In the first year of Active Wellbeing, focus was placed on identifying key areas of impact. Over the past year, a consistent timetable of activity has been delivered, new initiatives launched and positive impact on staff and students demonstrated.

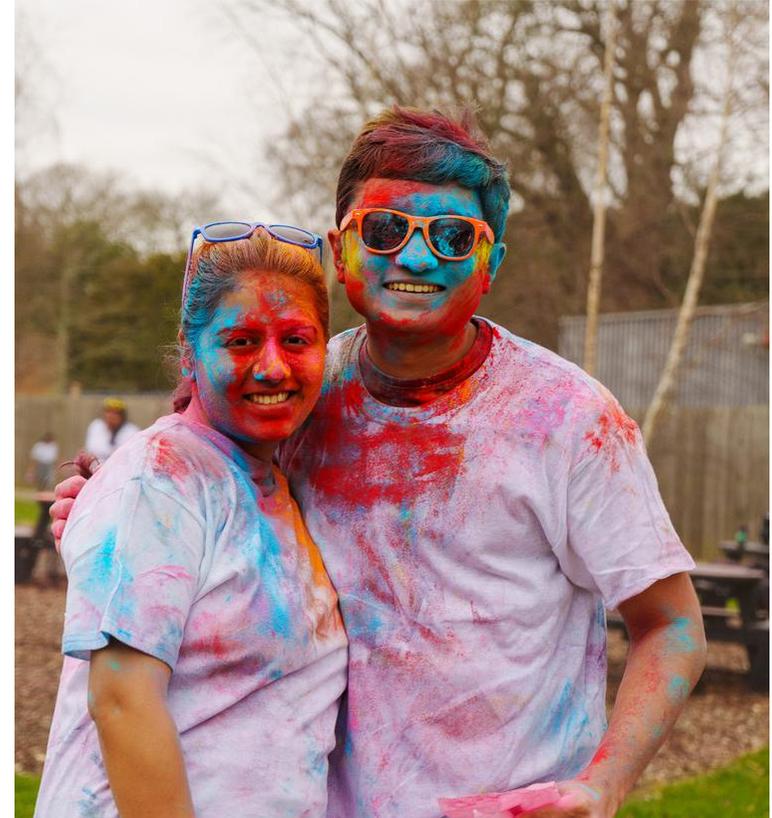
The **key goals** focused on:

Launch **Active Residencies**; a free physical activity programme aimed at those living in halls of residence, with sight to build sense of belonging.

Deliver **Student Minds Mental Health in Sport** to upskill student leaders.

Launch **Brain Breaks** and the **Active Wellbeing Toolkit**, with sight to educate and inform students and staff on the importance of physical activity.

Develop **data gathering process** to demonstrate the impact of Active Wellbeing across all campuses.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

SPORTS UNION

From volunteers to the Sport & Active Wellbeing Strategy, there is a strong partnership between Active Wellbeing and the Sports Union. Both teams work together to deliver activity for students, with Active Wellbeing taking a lead to support with the recreational aspects of activity. Volunteers have been a key area for collaboration, with the well recruited Sports Union Ambassadors utilised to support an Active Wellbeing workforce.

ORIAM

Where facility space is required, Oriam are a key partner and supporter. The partnership work extends beyond physical space, utilising booking systems and marketing expertise to support Active Wellbeing aims. On the other side of this partnership, Active Wellbeing look to provide physical activity opportunities within the facility, which encourage and support individuals to take a step into many of Oriam's offering such as group exercise, PAYP sport and gym memberships.

RESIDENCE LIFE

Since the launch of the Active Residencies programme, the working partnership with Residence Life has gone from strength to strength. Utilising Warden's as coaches for recreational sessions not only develops their skills as a leader, but enhances the student experience through peer led activity. The teams work closely to align activity throughout the year, specifically cultural events such as Holi.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

LEARNING & TEACHING

Throughout the learning and teaching project, Brain Breaks, many learning & teaching professionals, globally, have endorsed and supported Active Wellbeing. Partnerships are established between the Learning & Teaching Academy, as well as Heriot-Watt Online, and a number of academics across a variety of schools who have supported the project year on year. In recent ventures exploring the possibility of an Active Wellbeing learning toolkit, the above teams have continued to support.

A number of partnerships have also been made across the University to embed within course projects and materials. Examples for AY 2024/25 are listed below.

MSc Applied Psychology, Applying Psychology in Real-World Contexts - consultancy based project, 2 students.

MSc Sport Psychology, The Psychology of Community Sport - workshop delivery, 15 students.

MA Marketing, Marketing Research - consultancy based project, 20 students.

HR REWARD & WELLBEING

Looking towards increased presence in the staff wellbeing space, a positive partnership has been established with the HR Reward and Wellbeing team. From joint communication to staff activity, both teams benefit from the insight and support of one another. Future aspirations of this partnership include pilot projects of Brain Breaks within staff meetings and enhancing the activity offer, including a staff referral programme.

CORE ACTIVITY - DELIVERY



The **Active Residencies** programme ran its first full year with great success, seeing over 500 students take part across 3 weekly activities. This programme will expand into next AY, increasing to 4 weekly activities; basketball, badminton, table tennis and football alongside a monthly dance session.

Couch to 5k remains a staff favourite, with two programmes running each AY. Each programme attracts up to 20 attendees, with sessions taking place twice per week. Activity will continue into next AY, with a focus on retaining participation numbers throughout the 9-week block.

With a more educational focus, **Health Promotion and Screening** activity has proved popular. Blood pressure testing and cancer awareness events took place in semester 2, capturing over 100 participants and raising the profile of physical health checks. This activity will continue each October and February, engaging staff and students across Edinburgh and Scottish Borders campuses.

The **'Learn To'** programme is a new addition for AY 2025/26, with funding granted through the Student Events Group. Three activities will be offered; swim, cycle and run, for 8-week blocks in each semester. It is anticipated that the programme will be popular, with capacity for up to 50 students across all three activities per block.

Staff Sport was trialled throughout semester 1 however due to poor uptake, was pulled in semester 2. Following a consultation and re-evaluation, a weekly programme of activity will return for AY 2025/26.

CORE ACTIVITY – LEARNING & TEACHING

Learning & Teaching has become a key area of work for Active Wellbeing. A stronger focus has been placed on activity out with traditional spaces, with the academic setting being an area of priority. Many positive working relationships have been established through this work, contributing to the initial successes of the project.

BRAIN BREAKS

The pilot phase of **Brain Breaks** was beneficial and allowed an initial data set to be collected. Now at the end AY 2024/25, a **full data set** has been recorded, primarily via the **End of Semester Survey**, shared in both semesters. The number of programmes and modules remained relatively consistent throughout the year, however the feedback and input from staff and students grew **stronger**. Of the 3010 students surveyed **globally**;

73% of students stated Brain Breaks have a **positive impact on physical activity** levels.

85% of students stated Brain Breaks had a **positive impact on their wellbeing**.

83% of students stated Brain Breaks enhanced their **productivity, concentration** and **focus**.

FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

To support the roll out and development of Brain Breaks, engagement has been maintained with the Learning & Teaching Academy, presenting at their annual **Conference** and preparing resource for their **Get Set for the Academic Year** events.

As an extension to this project, the **Active Wellbeing Toolkit** is ready to launch to all staff and students ahead of AY 2025/26 induction.

MASS PARTICIPATION EVENTS

ACTIVE WELLBEING COLOUR RUN

The Active Wellbeing Colour Run has become an annual activity, enjoyed by students and staff of the University. Two events were hosted in AY 2024/25; October to mark **World Mental Health Day**, and March in celebration of **Holi Festival**. A strong partnership has been established with ResLife and the Indian Society to deliver a hybrid physical activity and celebration style event, seeing great engagement from students who may not otherwise take part in organised physical activity. Each event pushes **200 participants**, from both students and staff, and will continue to grow in years to follow.

SANTA DASH

As part of a wider Student Union hosted **Winter Fest**, the Santa Dash was established to create a further opportunity for students and staff to be active, whilst building a sense of community and belonging. The inaugural event was a success, with **over 50 participants** showcasing their Santa Hat across campus.

THE SCHOOLS CUP

This year marked the launch of the **inaugural Schools Cup**, a new event aimed at fostering friendly competition and cross-school connections through sport and team challenges. Over 40 students took part in 3v3 basketball, indoor football and a campus-wide treasure hunt. After a series of close contests, the **School of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS)** claimed the first-ever Schools Cup title. Developed through the Student Experience Action Plan, with strong support from **DLTs and Oriam**, this successful pilot sets the stage for growing tradition with even greater reach in future years.

UNIVERSITY CAMPAIGNS



Working to align with the University and global campuses, a conscious effort is made to engage with University campaigns and deliver a programme of activity. This past AY, two globally aligned weeks were supported.

Wellbeing Week featured inclusive activities such as First Aid Basics, free group exercise sessions, Students Minds' Mental Health in Sport training, and open Active Residencies sessions. **Over 50 students** took part across the activities, and as a first-time initiative, the programme has laid a strong foundation for future growth and continued student engagement.

Working in partnership with the Sports Union, **Women in Sport Week** was marked by the inaugural 'Watt A Woman', hosted at Oriam, offering inclusive taster sessions from self defence, to squash tasters and Learn to Lift sessions. The event attracted **over 50 students** and it set to continue moving forward.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

PLACEMENT STUDENTS

Over the course of AY 2023/24 and 2024/25, the team have been supported by two placement students; one internal, and one external. An external relationship has been built with **Edinburgh Napier University BSc (Hons) Physical Activity & Health**, supporting an 8-week placement for one student.

Internally, one **Heriot-Watt University BSc (Hons) Sport & Exercise Science** student is invited to complete a 12-week placement with the team, providing great input as well as gaining the opportunity to experience a working environment.

Across both opportunities, the students are given the opportunity to **deliver, research and input** on existing projects, as well as establish their own physical activity initiative.

ACTIVE WELLBEING STAFF DEVELOPMENT

For the Active Wellbeing Officer, both **Level 3 Certificate Assessing Vocational Achievement** and **Level 3 Award in Education and Training** have been completed and passed, with a view to support delivery of BSc (Hons) Sport & Exercise Science programmes such as Level 2 Gym Instructor. As well as this, the **Oriam Leaders Programme** was completed, with a view to develop leadership skills both within the current role, and as part of the wider Oriam team.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

SPORTS UNION WELLBEING OFFICERS

A commitment was made to support the Sports Union in their delivery of training for their club Wellbeing Officers. **Student Minds Mental Health in Sport** was delivered to 32 out of 34 clubs, with sessions focused on the role of a wellbeing officer, recognising signs of poor wellbeing, developing effective communication skills, and signposting appropriate support.

The impact of this training has been significant, with many clubs establishing weekly wellbeing and study sessions, as well as utilising club open session to support both the physical and mental wellbeing of their communities.

SPORTS UNION AMBASSADORS

A shift was made in AY 2024/25 to recruit **Active Wellbeing Activators** from the pool of committed Sports Union Ambassadors. This has been a great system and allowed not only Active Wellbeing activity to run with a student focus, but also additional opportunity for Ambassadors to log extra hours and upskill in a new area.

Working closely with the Sports Union **Health & Wellbeing Executive** was crucial to this transition, ensuring the difference between Active Wellbeing and Sports Union activity was understood but still allowing for student engagement across both areas of work.



ACTIVE WELLBEING IN NUMBERS

LEARNING & TEACHING

6 SCHOOLS ENGAGED IN THE PROJECT.

85% OF STUDENTS REPORTING MORE POSITIVE WELLBEING FOLLOWING A BRAIN BREAK.

73% OF STUDENTS REPORTING POSITIVE IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS.

MASS PARTICIPATION

262 ACTIVE WELLBEING COLOUR RUN PARTICIPANTS.

54 SANTA DASH PARTICIPANTS.

50+ STUDENT VOLUNTEERING HOURS LOGGED ACROSS BOTH EVENTS.

1359

STUDENTS HAVE SEEN A BRAIN BREAK

2766

ACTIVE WELLBEING PARTICIPATIONS, GLOBALLY

611

ACTIVE RESIDENCIES PARTICIPATIONS

ACTIVE RESIDENCIES

3 WEEKLY SESSIONS DELIVERED.

150+ HOURS OF VOLUNTEERING TO DELIVER SESSIONS.

3 EVENTS DELIVERED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE K-POP SOCIETY.

OTHER ACTIVITY

794 STUDENTS ENGAGED WITH AW ACTIVITY THROUGH UNIVERSITY CAMPAIGNS.

1022 PARKRUN PARTICIPANTS PER MONTH.

112 PARKRUN VOLUNTEERS PER MONTH.

TESTIMONIALS

'GREAT. IT WAS WELL ORGANISED. THE MARSHALLS WERE ENCOURAGING AND HELPFUL. THERE WAS A SUPPORTIVE ATMOSPHERE AND IT WAS NICE TO BE WELCOMED BACK AT THE FINISH LINE. APPRECIATED THE BOTTLE OF WATER AND THE SANTA HAT MADE IT FEEL FESTIVE' - **SANTA DASH PARTICIPANT**

'A CHANCE TO COMPETE IN THE SPORT YOU ENJOY IS ALWAYS FUN. ESPECIALLY IN A DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCE THAN USUAL, I ENJOYED PLAYING ALONGSIDE SOME CLASSMATES THAT I WOULDN'T FIND MYSELF PLAYING A COMPETITIVE GAME WITH OUTWITH THIS' - **SCHOOLS CUP PARTICIPANT**

'THE PROGRAMME HAS GIVEN ME MORE CONFIDENCE IN MY PHYSICAL ABILITIES, GAVE ME SOMETHING TO FOCUS ON DURING A DIFFICULT TIME, AND I ENJOYED BEING ABLE TO CHAT WITH COLLEAGUES FROM DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE UNIVERSITY' - **COUCH TO 5K PARTICIPANT**

'I WAS PUSHING MY BOUNDARIES, AS AT LUNCH TIME I ALSO DID THE COUCH TO 5K SESSION AND DURING THE COLOUR RUN I TRIED TO RUN AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, WITH SMALL WALKING SESSIONS IN BETWEEN. RUNNING IN A GROUP IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN ON YOUR OWN!' - **COLOUR RUN PARTICIPANT**

'MET SOME GREAT WOMEN FROM DIFFERENT SUBJECTS AND YEAR GROUPS. IT WAS A GREAT WAY TO TRY NEW SPORTS AND GET SOME PERSONAL ADVICE TO FEEL MORE CONFIDENT IN THE GYM. ALL THE INSTRUCTORS WERE REALLY LOVELY AND HELPFUL. MADE BEING A BEGINNER FEEL SAFE AND FUN. WOULD ABSOLUTELY DO THIS AGAIN' - **WATT A WOMAN PARTICIPANT**

'THE USEFULNESS OF THE SESSIONS I ATTEND ARE TWOFOLD: A GOOD FOOTBALL TIME AND A CHANCE TO MEET AND CHAT WITH OTHERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEKEND!' - **ACTIVE RESIDENCIES PARTICIPANT**

'WE DID A MEXICAN WAVE EXERCISE WITH ABOUT 40 PG STUDENTS HALFWAY THROUGH A 2-HOUR LECTURE. I THOUGHT THEY RATHER ENJOYED IT, AND IT MIGHT HAVE KEPT THEM INTERESTED IN SECOND HALF' - **BRAIN BREAKS FEEDBACK (STAFF)**

'THEY HELP US CONCENTRATE OVER A LONG LECTURE, MUCH BETTER BEING ACTIVE THAN SITTING ON OUR PHONES' - **BRAIN BREAKS FEEDBACK (STUDENT)**

'IT MAKES IT EASY TO GET MOTIVATED AND STAY MOTIVATED WHEN THE OVERALL VIBE IS SUPPORTIVE AND CALM!' - **COUCH TO 5K PARTICIPANT**

'I NEEDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRAVE AN OUTDOOR RUN FOLLOWING A LONG TERM INJURY AND THIS WAS THE PERFECT REASON! I HAD A BRILLIANT TIME' - **COLOUR RUN PARTICIPANT**

'A CONCENTRATION CLEANSE' - **BRAIN BREAKS FEEDBACK (STUDENT)**

FOCUS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2025 / 26

There will be an effort to maintain the current programme of activity, with additional delivery support from Sport & Exercise Science MRes, as well as Year 3 Sport & Exercise Science placement student.

The **Active Wellbeing Colour Run** will take place for the fourth time, with a focus on mass participation and supporting Holi celebrations.

Santa Dash will return for its second year following positive feedback. This event is supported by the wider **Student Union Winter Fest**.

Couch to 5k remains a key activity, running two programmes across the academic year.

The launch of a series of '**Learn to**' activities will see students offered beginner sessions in running, cycling and swimming.

The **Active Residencies** programme is expanding, with two additional activities on offer. Additional support from Residence Life has been secured and the programme anticipated to grow.

Start of Semester activity will remain, with a core offering now established.

Referral Programmes will be of focus for the future, looking to support staff and students into physical activity. Links with Oriam Clinic, Fitness, Occupational Health, Student Wellbeing and the GP will all be utilised.

Learning & Teaching Research is due to expand in future academic years, looking at opportunities to conduct specific research internally, but also through academic links such as Sport & Exercise Science.

Following two years of successful roll out, **Brain Break Expansion** will be a focus to ensure concept and content stay relevant and fit for purpose.

Looking to expand recreational sport opportunities, a full review of **Active Residencies** will take place to consider the programme's next steps and target audiences.

To support all of the above, and future, programmes, it is suggested a **Policy Review** takes place to support understanding of wider University policies, and understand where Active Wellbeing activity can support and further deliver.

FOCUS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2026 / 27

Future focus moves beyond current delivery, and begins to explore the expansion of Active Wellbeing programmes. The team will return to full capacity, maintaining the support from a new cohort of Sport & Exercise Science students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We thank Heriot-Watt University's senior leadership and strategic partners, as well as our professional services and academic partners for their continued support of the Active Wellbeing programme.

Key contributions from:

- **Residence Life** and **Oriam** have enabled targeted delivery and health initiatives.
- **Academic Schools** and **Teaching Staff** played a critical role in integrating wellbeing into learning environments.
- The **Sport** and **Student Unions** provided strong collaboration on campaigns and mass participation events.
- **Sport & Exercise Science** students and staff enhanced programme delivery through placements and research.

This collective support has been vital in embedding Active Wellbeing as a core element of the University's commitment to student and staff experience.

We look forward to growing and developing the programme further.