

Dear all,

Many of us are back from annual leave this week and we are all aware that some questions remain in relation to our return to campus planning. This morning, the President, Professor Kerstin Mey circulated a **New Academic Year Guide for Staff**, that provides answers to many of the queries. However, we are aware that not everything has been answered because we are awaiting additional information or clarity on a sectoral or Public Health level.

As soon as we have these answers or other additional information, I will circulate it and update the *Guide* which is available in the [Return to Campus Working](#) folder on the COVID-19 SharePoint site.

The University's planning is being guided by the need to provide an on-campus learning environment in a way that is safe for staff and students, in line with the national [Work Safely](#) protocol. Therefore, if you are returning to campus you need to be included in your area's Business Response Plan. If your area completed a plan previously, it will probably need to be updated to include additional staff/ work locations/ work activities. Even if you previously submitted a Business Response Plan and it has not changed, you will need to re-submit to B&E. You can find the Business Response Plan template on the [COVID-19 SharePoint](#), along with other documents detailing the return to campus working process.

All staff whose department/unit's Business Response Plan has been approved may return to the campus from **30 August 2021**.

Safety on Campus

All staff and students are expected to follow Public Health guidelines to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. Preventing the transmission of COVID-19 can only be achieved on a cooperative basis with shared responsibility between staff, students and University management.

As a matter of course you should:

- Not attend work if you are feeling unwell or displaying any [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Wash your hands properly and often.
- Observe social distancing guidelines indicated by signage on campus.
- Wear a face covering in all University buildings unless in a single occupancy office.

Vaccination

UL cannot require staff or students to be vaccinated before coming on campus. In addition, as a general rule, a person's vaccination status cannot be checked or requested. However, the University recommends that everyone is vaccinated to protect against the coronavirus. [Follow this link](#) for more information about the vaccination programme in Ireland.

Blended / Remote Working Equipment

As I mentioned previously, a fund to facilitate the central procurement of office working equipment (essentially docking station, monitor, keyboard and mouse) has been approved. This is to enable staff who are working both on campus and remotely to continue using their laptop as a single device. The first order has been placed and a process is being developed to distribute this equipment which I will circulate as soon as possible.

If you have remote working equipment that you no longer need, here is the [link to the returns form](#). Please note that for auditing and accounting purposes, staff cannot redistribute equipment within their department. It must first be returned centrally.

Navigating the Transition Back to Campus

As well as the practical planning for a return to campus, there is a need to take account of the range of changes and challenges we have encountered in the past eighteen months. HR Learning and Development have arranged a workshop to give you a chance to reflect on how the pandemic has impacted on your working life. It will help to identify some of the potential pitfalls as we start to re-engage with colleagues in a hybrid working environment and be better prepared for these challenges. For more information follow this [link to the HR Training Programme and Schedule](#) or contact hrbookings@ul.ie.

Q&A Sessions for Managers

We will be hosting some short Q&A sessions for managers focusing on specific queries about returning to work on campus and the Remote (Blended) Working Procedure. I will circulate details of these as soon as the dates are confirmed.

Autumn Conferring Ceremonies

A reminder that as COVID-19 continues to have an impact on society, our Autumn Conferring Ceremonies started online on Monday. The conferring schedule is available [here](#) and the link to view the online conferring ceremonies available here: [Virtual Ceremonies | UL - University of Limerick](#). The link to each ceremony will not be live until 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the ceremony. I joined the ceremony on Monday and it is worth having a listen to the eloquent way many of the students talk about the impact of UL on their lives.

Mentoring@UL

The Cooperative Education & Careers Division recently launched their Mentoring@UL program, an initiative to foster meaningful relationships between students and alumni worldwide that leave a lasting impact on the UL community. It provides a unique opportunity for alumni to share their professional and personal experiences with students to help prepare them for a successful future. Follow this [link to their website](#) for more information and feel free to share this [post and video](#) on your own social channels. As an added bonus, there are some lovely shots of UL looking beautiful in the sunshine.

Speaking of our wonderful campus, every year around this time, I remember Seamus Heaney's *Blackberry Picking*. It orientates me to the seasons. If you have 1.44 to spare, take a moment to listen to him read it [here](#) as a brief escape from this busy period.

Best wishes,

Eoin