

Hi all,

You may have read the e-mail from the ITService Desk, advising all staff that Skype for Business will be retired by Microsoft on 31st July 2021.

As the email states, Microsoft Teams provides a much richer offering than Skype for Business in terms of File Sharing, Screen Sharing and Collaborations. ITD reports show that many in UL have used Skype for Business on one or more communication engagements in recent times. With that in mind, it is important that we all make the transition from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams as soon as possible.

National Workplace Wellbeing Day – Be Well@UL

National Workplace Wellbeing day takes place this Friday, 30th April 2021. It is important throughout these current times that we do not neglect our health and wellbeing. With this in mind, the Be Well@UL Team in HR will be sending several communications this week to staff outlining various events that will be run throughout Friday as well as suggested activities. Do keep an eye out for these communications as the week progresses from BeWell@ul.ie.

I-Grade Portal Open Today

An I-Grade provides students with the opportunity to repeat assessment(s) over the summer with no academic penalty if a student has a crisis issue that prevents completion of assessments during the year. An email was sent to all students on Friday from the Provost's Office reminding them that the I-Grade portal will be open from today Monday 26th April (noon) to Wednesday 19th May (5pm).

To support students who may find themselves in an immediate crisis due to COVID-19 and, where relevant, have taken reasonable action, the institution has created a COVID-19 exceptional I-Grade, which covers all **non-health, non-counselling, and non-chaplaincy** issues related specifically to COVID-19. The regulations pertaining to the I-Grade process are covered within section 4.2.3 of our Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures, which is available [here](#).

UL FIFTY

At the start of April, the Chancellor of UL, Mary Harney, issued an invitation to all staff to send in ideas about how we might celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of UL in 1972. You can do this by following the [link to the Event Proposal Form](#) on the UL Fiftieth Anniversary SharePoint site.

Many thanks to everyone who has sent in their suggestions, some brilliant projects are already on the table. The deadline for this initial call for ideas is Friday 30th April but there will be more opportunities to send in proposals in the Autumn.

UL Student COVID-19 Day-Pass Portal

I wrote last week that the trial of the UL Student COVID-19 Day-Pass Portal was due to finish last Friday. However, the high number of students using the Portal has been welcomed by staff and this positive reaction across campus was communicated to members of the Space

Management Committee. Therefore, at the SMC meeting last Thursday, it was agreed that UL will continue to use the Covid-19 Day-Pass Portal, for all students attending campus for lectures, practical classes, project work or library study.

COVID-19 Update

While certain areas of the Irish economy are opening over the coming weeks, the recommendation for universities is to continue to work from home, unless your work requires you to be on campus. Third level education and research is a permitted essential activity. For UL building access and other information relating to COVID-19, UL and the Return to Work Safely protocol, please follow this [link to the COVID-19 SharePoint site](#).

National Poetry Day

This Thursday 29th April is National Poetry Day and the UL Arts Office have arranged the delivery of *Poetry Ireland Pocket Poems* to over 2000 homes in Counties Clare and Limerick. This year, they will also share the work of some members of the Masters programme in Creative Writing at University of Limerick.

As the vaccination rollout continues and the slow re-opening of Ireland under COVID-19 begins, the thoughts of our emigrants turn realistically to meeting family and friends once more. To finish today by marking National Poetry Day, here is a poem that evokes that spirit of coming home:

Leaving London for Belfast by Mícheál McCann.

Rather be parochial
than suitcase-weary
and tie-bonded
and slow to laugh
and desperate
to walk in the opposite direction,
quickly...

Rather be coastal
than coughing, slow in our going
than quiet with wanting.
Bless this plane, carrying
us over what we cannot swim.

My tired thighs hear
where we're going over the tannoy
and I can hear Jo Stafford smiling
as she sings. I missed you.
I hoak for a life vest under my seat
to realise I was wearing it all along.

Kind regards,

Eoin