

Dear colleagues,

The Irish Government has confirmed that Level 5 restrictions are going to continue until 5th March, at which point the indications are that there may be an easing to Level 4. What this points to is that our current rules for staff working in UL will continue until the end of this academic year.

Space Management Committee (SMC) continues to meet weekly to oversee the co-ordination of UL's response to the pandemic. There is regular contact with the HSE, our Department, the IUA and other relevant agencies to ensure that we continue to be up-to-date in our protocols in relation to best practise Public Health guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Additional restrictions have been implemented on campus and I would remind you to use the [COVID-19 SharePoint](#) hub as your source for information for topics such as visitor management, sourcing PPE, home working, tax relief and much more.

A Town Hall is scheduled next Tuesday at 2pm with President Kerstin Mey, Provost Nigel Healey and Chief Operating Officer Gerry O'Brien to update you on campus operations and academic planning until March. If you have any questions you would like to be addressed at the meeting, please email them to officeofthepresident@ul.ie before 12pm on Monday.

Student Update re Academic Year

The Provost sent an [email](#) to our students today, informing them that in line with the current Level 5 restrictions, UL will be continuing with our existing blended learning model, but with enhanced protective measures for staff and students until at least 5th March.

It is planned to provide limited study spaces in the UL Library from 8th February on a pre-booked basis only. These spaces will be for final year undergraduate and postgraduate students only.

We continue to liaise and work with An Garda Siochana to remind all students, particularly those living in student accommodation in and around our campus of your personal responsibility to follow government and institutional guidelines and to be aware of the consequences of breaking current government COVID-19 restrictions.

Annual Leave

In the first half of December, I highlighted the fact that UL has implemented a new Annual Leave Procedure, which you can view and download from the [Quick Links](#) section on the HR website. The procedure applies to all staff who are entitled to benefit from annual leave under the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997.

Annual leave can only be requested and approved by all staff through the [CoreHR link](#):

- To access CoreHR while working remotely, you need to be logged into Remote Access on FortiClient.

- HR are currently reviewing 2020 balances that can, with your manager's approval, be carried-forward into 2021. These balances will be reflected in the 2021 carried-forward field and **must be used within the first six months of 2021**.

Historical Leave i.e. balances carried forward from years prior to 2020, will be removed from your 2021 carried-forward balance. Your historical leave balances will be stored separately and addressed through the Historical Leave Procedure, which is currently being developed. Access to historical leave balances will be available on CoreHR when the Historical Leave Procedure is finalised. If you have any queries, please email them to coreportalemail@ul.ie.

Accessibility of Online Communications

Two weeks ago, I suggested three general guidelines to bear in mind when communicating online. Continuing this theme, here are [Eight Tips](#) for making your online communications accessible to everyone. Some pointers to remember are to use the description facility for images, hyperlinks and tables, and ensure a strong colour contrast between your text and the background in which it is situated.

Finally, despite the move to remote-working and the impact of COVID-19 on everything from recruitment to the issuing of ID cards, like all of the other areas in UL, HR staff have shown great resilience in dealing with change as a result of the pandemic. You can see some of the highlighted achievements from 2020 [here](#).

I know that this flexible and collaborative approach to working was and continues to be mirrored across UL. This gives me confidence that we will continue to serve and respond to the needs of our students, colleagues and external stakeholders whatever the next few months bring.

Have a great weekend,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annam', written in a cursive style.