

Dear all,

Quite a long email today as we have tried to gather as much information as possible in response to queries about our ongoing return to campus and working arrangements. From today, all other workplaces nationally are now returning to work on a phased and staggered basis in line with the government's Work Safely Protocol. UL has been operating to this protocol since it came into operation in May 2020 because third level education and research were designated as essential activities throughout the pandemic.

Thanks to everyone who attended the Town Hall last Wednesday and for your engagement with the Q&A at the end. Over seventy questions were submitted and Professor Mey, Professor Healey and Professor Moriarty answered as many as possible in the time available. There were some common threads to the questions, particularly around travel, ventilation, and the practicalities of the return to face-to-face teaching and students on campus and there are updates on these issues below.

In addition, there was considerable discussion around the difficulties students are having in finding accommodation in Limerick, and thanks to everyone for their suggestions about what might be done to help address this. If you have an idea or know of someone who may be in a position to offer a room to a UL student, please email accommodation@ul.ie.

If you missed the Town Hall, the recording is now available to watch [here](#).

Travel update for Staff

The Director of HR's memo on travel advice was approved by the Executive Committee last Wednesday. All essential travel on UL business can happen from 1 October but not before this date for insurance reasons. A definition of what constitutes essential travel is not available, however, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) notes that 'Higher and further education and training, and research are essential activities.'

From October, approval for essential University of Limerick travel must be sought by all staff from their Department / Division Head prior to booking. In line with its remit to manage the Work Safely Protocol, the Space Management Committee (SMC) will have oversight for travel requests.

Student Concerns

Student concerns about teaching and learning, facilities on campus or other issues are reported to Covid-19 Academic Monitoring and Planning Group (CAMPG) to be discussed and resolved. Where necessary – if there is a Health and Safety or Buildings and Estates aspect to their concern, items are referred to SMC. A number of issues have been addressed from their first few weeks on campus:

- *Online classes:* some students have raised concerns that a higher percentage of their courses are online than expected. An audit of all courses within AHSS, KBS and S&E was carried out by the Deans and ADAAs to assess the percentage of contact time that was face-to-face. Some tutorials and labs are being switched back to face-to-face in some modules to increase student engagement, but the audit revealed that apart from large lectures with 300+ enrolments (online to confirm with the DFHERIS guidance) most classes are face-to-face, with the percentage of face-to-face typically between 50% and 90%. If students have continuing academic concerns, they are encouraged to liaise with their academic officer studentacademic@ul.ie who sits on CAMPG.

- *Study spaces on campus:* B&E are installing signage to identify what study spaces are available on campus and how they can be identified. A list of the spaces is available in the [New and Existing Students'](#) section on the COVID-19 website. If you identify an issue with a common area or study space in UL, please email buildingsmaintenance@ul.ie.
- *Clubs & Societies:* from today, Monday 20 September, rooms in KBS, Schuman and Health Sciences buildings are now available for booking by Clubs & Societies so UL Student Life can now offer a range of activities to students outside of college hours. [UL Sport](#) is open fully for all activities for **staff and students** in line with Public Health guidelines as outlined by Sport Ireland. For all information about classes, bookings, schedules and more, download the [UL Sport App](#).

COVID-19 Reporting and Controls

- *Reporting:* Staff and students are reminded that if you test positive for COVID-19, you are asked to notify UL at COVID19Report@ul.ie as soon as possible with the date you were last on campus and when you were diagnosed. The information you provide will be received by the UL Health & Safety Unit and may be communicated to the relevant Head of Department, if required for HSE reporting purposes, and the Student Health Centre. Records will be deleted by UL after 30 days.
- *Close Contacts:* If a student or staff member is designated as a close contact, [HSE guidelines](#) are that if they are fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms of COVID-19, they do not need to get a test and do not need to restrict their movements. 89% of 16+ year olds in Ireland are fully vaccinated. If you have concerns about a number of close contacts in one class, please email COVID19Report@ul.ie for advice before taking any action to suspend or move the class online.
- *Case of COVID-19 in Class:* If you have a case or suspected case of COVID-19 in a class, do not contact students in the group to inform them. You should ask the student to contact Covid19report@ul.ie who will contact HSE if they believe that there is a cluster. The HSE is responsible for contact tracing. The student will be required to give details of all classes, tutorials, labs etc. including module codes and dates and times to facilitate contact tracing. If you have concerns about a positive case of COVID-19 in a class, please email COVID19Report@ul.ie for advice before taking any action to suspend or move the class online.
- *Signage on Campus:* Please note that B&E have done a check of the all of the COVID-19 signage on campus and to the best of their knowledge, there is no legacy signage in place. The government Work Safely Protocol still applies and therefore users of buildings should observe this signage insofar as is reasonable and practicable. If you have concerns about signage or buildings, please email: buildingsmaintenance@ul.ie.
- *Use of Showers:* Please note that showers should not be used on campus. There is no way of blocking access to the actual facility, but public health advice is that they are to remain closed.

- *Sanitisation in classrooms:* In addition to the increased cleaning regimes implemented on campus. Students should be reminded of the hand and surface sanitisation that are provided in teaching areas for use as required.

Ventilation

Buildings and Estates (B&E) assessed ventilation in centrally scheduled, non-centrally scheduled and multi-occupancy spaces in accordance with current ventilation guidance including [WHO](#), [REHVA](#), [CIBSE](#), [Work Safely Protocol](#) etc. This was a resource intensive and complex task involving multiple teams.

Where ventilation issues were observed, solutions were identified, implemented and verified with the objective being twofold: (i) to return spaces to normal occupancy and (ii) roll-out long-term fixes in the shortest timeframe possible. A list of centrally scheduled/non-centrally scheduled classrooms and lecture theatres together with their normal occupancy and the occupancy that the ventilation supports is available in the Buildings folder in the [Return to Campus Working](#) section of the COVID-19 SharePoint site.

B&E also provide information on the occupancy that ventilation supports in didactic teaching spaces as part of its response to submitted and approved COVID-19 Business Response Plans.

Staff Rooms

Units should include staff rooms/kitchenettes assigned to their departments in their Business Response Plan or if already submitted, contact their facilities manager who will ascertain ventilation and social distancing.

Regarding general use common rooms. the Millstream is in use as a 45-seat classroom while B&E will set up the other one near Starbucks at 2m distancing for staff. This will be opened and locked each day by B&E.

Performance and Development Reviews

The deadline for completion of Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) is 31 October for this year only. We recognise that the new start to this academic year has brought its own demands and hope that this provides some leeway for those not yet completed. Additional information is available on the [PDR web page](#), including an introductory presentation by the HR Director.

University of Limerick On-Campus COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics

University of Limerick and Public Health Mid-West will be running a walk-up vaccination clinic for students and staff on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 September 10-7pm in EG-010, Ground Floor, Main Building.

- No prior appointment or registration is required if you want to avail of this opportunity to receive your *first* dose of the Pfizer vaccine.
- If you are due to receive your *second* Pfizer dose, you can also get this at the on-campus vaccination clinic.

The walk-up vaccination clinic is also open to international staff and students who will need to self-declare their vaccination status to Public Health Mid-West. There may be cases where this cohort may have received a vaccine in their own country that is not yet recognised by the EU. Anyone to

whom this applies will be presumed to be in the unvaccinated category and they will need to receive the scheduled two doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

Follow up on-campus vaccination clinics to administer the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine will be arranged in October. Any health information received by Mid-West vaccination staff will not be available to the University of Limerick.

Have a good week,

Eoin