

Dear all,

Thanks to everyone who attended the Town Hall last Thursday. If you did not get a chance to join the event, it is now available to watch back [here](#).

The President gave an update on the UL@50 Consultation Report and the development of UL's sustainability strategy, both of which are feeding into Executive Committee's considerations around the recalibration of the University's strategic plan. The aim is to launch the recalibrated plan in 2022. Andrea Deverell, Futures and Foresight Lead, and Professor Ann MacPhail, PESS, spoke about the ongoing work on transforming UL into a sustainable university.

Professor Mey also thanked staff for their work and contribution to campus life in 2021, and a video of selected UL highlights over the year was played during the event. If you want to skip to this section, it begins at 05.52. To finish, Joseph O'Connor read his poem *Solstice at Newgrange*, so if you only have a few moments to spare, you might like to use them to listen to his reflection on this special time of the year at 37.17.

Antigen Tests

Just over ten days ago Minister Simon Harris announced funding to make free antigen tests available to students. At very short notice, Student Life and the Postgraduate Students Union distributed over 1500 tests and face masks to students returning home to their family at Christmas. This would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of Buildings and Estates, Academic Registry, and the Office of the Provost.

Antigen tests will be made available to staff coming on-campus in the new year. The distribution process will be available in the [PPE Folder](#) on the COVID-19 SharePoint site.

COVID-19 Updates

Currently, the plan for returning to work after the Christmas break is to continue with our approach from mid-November. Specifically, this means that staff should work from home unless it is necessary to attend the campus in person. Please consult with your Line Manager regarding your own specific role. Face to face teaching and research is to continue as per Government guidance and it is necessary for staff engaged in this work to attend campus in person. If you work in a single occupancy office, then you may continue to work on-campus.

Meetings should remain online rather than in person.

UL will continue to monitor and follow all current public health guidance whilst doing everything we can to ensure that the health, safety and well-being of our campus community remains our priority. If there are any changes to the national guidelines that may impact on UL, we will keep you informed.

The [UL COVID-19 International Travel Request Approval Process](#) has been updated. Specifically, the purchase order for travel must not be approved by the Line Manager until the International COVID-19 Travel Request is approved. Staff must not purchase flights via credit card until they have received their International COVID-19 Travel Request approval email confirmation. In all cases, even when travel has been approved you should keep up to date with the latest travel advice from the [Department of Foreign Affairs](#).

Campus Access

Access to University buildings will be restricted during the Christmas break and is subject to the process outlined in the [Building Access Control Procedure](#).

HRB-TMRN January Webinar

The Health Research Board - Trials Methodology Research Network in the University of Limerick 2021-2026: Funding, events & support. This is a collaborative initiative between a number of higher education institutes and centres with the aim of strengthening the methodology and reporting of trials in health and social care on the island of Ireland through four areas of activity: 1) Support and advice 2) Training and education 3) Research and innovation 4) Public involvement and engagement.

Following a funding award of approximately €205,000, the Health Research Institute will host a webinar by Dr Elaine Toomey on 20 January about the HRB-TMRN, upcoming events and funding calls, and ways to get involved. For more information to register your interest in attending, please email: elaine.c.toomey@ul.ie.

Healthy UL

A reminder that the Healthy UL team are surveying the health-related behaviours of staff and students and would appreciate if you could take five minutes to complete the [Healthy UL Staff Survey](#), which will inform the ongoing Healthy UL Action Plan

SilverCloud, the free to use online self-help well-being programmes for all students and staff can now be accessed via a number of pages on the UL website, included HR's BeWell@ul page [here](#). You can select and progress through the self-selected programmes at your own pace to develop skills and tools to feel better and stay better.

As the mid-winter break approaches, I would like to thank everyone who commented on and contributed to this (almost) weekly email. We are facing a Christmas of reduced social contacts but looking out at the cold, clear morning today, I am reminded of Patrick Kavanagh's iconic *A Christmas Childhood*, a six-year-old boy taking joy in the little things:

*One side of the potato-pits was white with frost –
How wonderful that was, how wonderful!
And when we put our ears to the paling-post
The music that came out was magical.*

*The light between the ricks of hay and straw
Was a hole in Heaven's gable...*

Happy Christmas,

Eoin