

Dear colleagues,

Thanks to everyone who attend the Town Hall meeting last Tuesday. If you missed it, follow this [link to watch a recording](#) of the meeting. A written reply to the questions submitted was promised so I have grouped them into topics with the response below:

1. *Staff Pulse Survey Results*: The summary report from this survey is available in the [Remote Working section](#) of the COVID-19 SharePoint site.
2. *Virtual Confering*: The Ceremonies Office with members from academic and support staff is working closely with the Vice Presidents and engaging extensively with students to recognise and mark graduations during 2021 in a way that is both safe and mindful of public health. Consideration is being given to a wide range of events. However, UL will be guided by public health advice and regulations at all times.
3. *UL@50 Consultation Process / Strategy*: Consultations have begun to ensure that staff have a voice in determining the University's strategic objectives. The Executive wants to hear your views and you can share them by downloading and completing the [Individual Consultation Form](#) and sending it to consultation@ul.ie and / or by taking part in a consultation with colleagues in your area. More information is available on the UL@50 Consultation SharePoint site
4. *Home Working Policy*: HR are currently reviewing the possibilities that will work for the University, taking account of recent government announcements and will advise the campus of any new policy in this area as it comes closer to completion.
5. *International Student Protocols*: All international students including PhD students are covered.

At the Town Hall, the President acknowledged the challenges facing staff with caring and other responsibilities. She also confirmed Executive's commitment to support managers and staff in developing flexible arrangements for remote working under the Level 5 restrictions.

The Executive realises that there are colleagues facing similar challenges who are working on campus. The Human Resources Division is working with individual staff members and line-managers to help develop flexible arrangements to make reasonable accommodations. If you fall into this category, please discuss your circumstances with your line manager in the first instance. Your HR Business partner is also available to provide advice and support and may be contacted by following this [link to HR Contacts](#).

Home Working Equipment Collections

A reminder to everyone who has been notified to collect their Home Working Equipment that there is just **1 week** left before the distribution point closes on 12th February. The backlog should then be cleared. You are allowed to travel beyond the 5km for essential work purposes, which includes third level education. The collection of home working equipment falls into this bracket. Just be sure to bring your UL ID and a copy of your notification email.

We've been doing some work on the FAQs page on the HR Website, creating a new tab for Leave and another directing you to everything you might need to know about Research. There is also one for Staff where you can find information about sourcing [Home Working](#)

[Equipment](#) for new and existing staff now that the campus-wide distribution scheme has ceased.

Access to UL Buildings

The [Restricted Building Access](#) procedure will continue for the duration of the Level 5 restrictions. The library is open from Monday with limited access to users. Go to the Glucksman Library website for details.

Communication

There was also some feedback to Town Hall about communications to staff and students. In relation to this email, there has been a request to issue it on Monday mornings so that the topics raised don't linger in the mind over the weekend and I think that's probably a good idea. Occasionally, there may be necessary updates on Friday but from next week, expect this missive on Mondays.

As you know, the Provost is keeping all students updated in relation to teaching, labs and campus operations under Level 5 restrictions, and has regularly reminded them of their responsibilities as regards minimising the spread of COVID-19 off-campus. These are by their nature mass emails. For those of you in regular contact with students through online teaching, if the opportunity arises it would be no harm to reinforce this message.

Similarly, the limited library reopening next week has been arranged to help final year and postgraduate students and, again, if this could be stressed to your student cohort, I think it would help our library staff.

Finally, one of the two guiding principles the Executive recommended to assist staff working remotely is to have regular team meetings - at least once a fortnight – giving all a chance to get updates and to offer feedback. Doubtless, many departments, divisions and areas are already doing this and if so, there is no need for duplication. What we want to do is to combat any sense of work or, indeed, social isolation that some staff might be feeling.

Can I remind you in relation to this, that there are resources on the HR website for staff. The [Be Well@UL](#) seminar series is on-going and the [Employee Support Service](#) is a free confidential counselling and advice service to assist all of us in dealing with personal issues that could pose a threat to our health, well-being, relationships or employment.

Finally, I came across these lines from Seamus Heaney – must be Biden's influence, one of his final poems called Postscript. It is set in a moment on the Flaggy Shore in Co. Clare when... *You are neither here nor there / A hurry through which known and strange things pass / As big soft buffeting come at the car sideways / And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.*

I think Heaney captures that feeling we all have at the moment of things happening beyond our control and his advice seems to be to roll with it. For this weekend at least, I'm happy to take that advice.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. [unclear]". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial letter.