

Dear colleagues,

Yesterday, the Irish Universities Association (IUA), Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) announced their joint approach for a safe return to campuses this September with maximum on-site presence. Higher education has been categorised as an essential service throughout the pandemic and it is anticipated that most if not all adults and college students will have been offered the opportunity to be vaccinated by September, enabling this return to happen. You can read the full text of the IUA, THEA and RCSI statement by following this [link](#) to the UL COVID-19 website.

Planning in UL for [A safe return to on-site further and higher education and research](#) continues ahead of our new academic year in September. It is expected that all departments, divisions and services in UL will be returning to campus in September, in the context of the joint sectoral approach, current public health guidelines and the recently approved UL *Remote Working Procedure*.

I have outlined some detail about how this will be supported further down in this notice. It is probable that national updates for our sector will continue throughout August and possibly even into September and information and guidance will be distributed to managers and staff to assist with decision making as soon as it is received by the University.

As we work towards being back on campus, the national Return to Work Safely protocol and UL's [COVID-19 Business Response Plans](#) are still in operation. If you do not know whether or not you were included in your area's Business Response Plan, you need to notify the Plan owner so you can be included. If you do not know who your area's Business Response Plan owner is, please talk to your line manager.

### **Mitigating the Spread of COVID-19 on Campus**

You will notice that actions to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19 continue to be implemented on campus. This is a collective effort and it is important to continue to follow public health advice, including not attending work if feeling unwell, washing your hands properly and often, maintaining a physical (social) distance of 2m, and wearing a face covering, amongst other measures to prevent transmission of the virus.

### Ventilation

Buildings and Estates are working with Health & Safety to ensure that ventilation in lecture theatres, classrooms, labs, multi-occupancy offices and meeting rooms is in line with public health guidelines. These ventilation levels exceed national guidelines and are a reliable approach to managing air-hygiene. Indoor ventilation is just one of a comprehensive package of measures that can limit the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, ventilation alone, even when correctly implemented is insufficient to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### Teaching Space Occupancy

UL is planning for normal classroom occupancy. Lectures with projected numbers of 300+ will remain online. Room occupancy numbers are being identified for all spaces on campus.

### Day Pass Portal

ITD led by David Gilbourne have done sterling work on updating the Student Day Pass portal for use by Clinical Placement Students in EHS and the School of Medicine. Some of the notable changes include:

- Student's Day-Pass expires at 23:59:59 each day, ensuring a new Pass must be requested daily if required.
- EHS Schools\Departments, Disciplines and Modules (where applicable) are now captured.
- Security permissions enabled, ensuring that each School\Department can only view the submitted Clinical Placements that are applicable to them.

This should be a significant administrative time-saver as it eliminates the need to capture COVID-19 related Clinical Placement detail on paper as was being done up until now.

#### Face Coverings

UL branded face coverings have been sent to UL Global and Student Life for inclusion in the welcome packs that will be issued to all international and first-year students in September.

Face coverings will be required indoors in accordance with prevailing public health regulations and guidance. For more information, go to the [FAQs](#) on the UL COVID-19 website.

#### **Remote Working Equipment**

If you are leaving UL or no longer have any use for the remote working equipment provided to you by UL, office chairs and/or IT equipment can be returned to UL through the Post Room, Tower 4 between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday, accompanied by the [HWE Returns Form](#), to be signed by the leaving/retiring staff member. The form needs to be submitted ahead of arrival on campus to [BEHomeWorking@ul.ie](mailto:BEHomeWorking@ul.ie) so the Post Room can be made aware of the return. The Post Room Team take a break around 10.30am and lunch is 1-2pm. Therefore, it would be best to phone before one comes to campus to ensure there is someone in the Post Room to meet them. 061 202123.

#### **Blended Working**

A reminder that the *Remote Working Procedure* for UL staff went online this week and can be accessed by following this [link](#) or go to the [HR Procedures, Processes & Forms A-Z](#) section on the HR website. The guiding principle of UL's *Remote Working Procedure* is to support a blended model of remote and onsite work where appropriate and where the needs and objectives of both staff and the University can be met.

To support this approach, the Executive Committee recently approved the establishment of a fund to facilitate the central procurement of office working equipment (essentially docking station, monitor, keyboard and mouse) so that staff who are working both on campus and remotely can continue to use their laptop as a single device.

An order for 100 such kits has been raised to start this process and any remaining kit from the remote working equipment initiative will be redistributed in the first instance. Some of the finer detail in relation to exactly how these kits will be allocated needs to be identified but staff are asked not to purchase such equipment themselves as it will be made centrally available.

Finally, to end on a positive note, Ireland now has one of the fastest vaccination rates in the world, according to the latest data with 73.4% adult uptake on full vaccination and 87.2% on one dose. So, there is scope for cautious optimism for our students to have a more conventional university experience this year.