

Dear Colleagues,

Following on from [the announcement by the Government on Tuesday 31st of August](#), we would like to outline our detailed plans for the students and staff return to campus and for business continuity for the Institute. A Return to Campus for the 2021-2022 Academic year - Staff and Students is also available on the DkIT [website](#). The next phase will see the majority of restrictions lifted and the Government has given that date as the [22nd of October](#).

A joint statement issued by the IUA, THEA and RCSI dated August 3rd, detailed a whole-of-sector approach to the safe return to campuses with maximum on-site presence. It is centred on the overwhelming desire of students to get back on campus and is facilitated by the classification of higher education as an essential service and the fact that the vast majority of adults, including students, will have been vaccinated this month. The statement is available [here](#).

This statement builds on the Safe Return Plan published by DFHERIS in June. DkIT committed to a range of mitigation measures that will be implemented across the sector to provide for a safe on campus experience. It is recognised that each individual HEI will adapt mitigation measures to their own local context which DkIT has now done.

All of the arrangements being put in place are done in the expectation of personal responsibility by all staff while on campus, for their own behaviour and its impact on friends and colleagues, during the coming academic year and beyond.

Return to campus has been ongoing since the beginning of August. We expect that staff presence on campus will continue to increase as we facilitate the return of students and the commencement of the new academic year. In the context of the public health measures outlined below, there is no longer the same requirement for pods or social distancing.

To ensure the safety of all staff and students, the following measures are being put in place in line with Public Health Guidelines.

Public health measures in place:

As we return to campus, the Institute is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all of our staff and students, and will adhere to [government guidelines](#).

Vaccination:

The Delta variant has caused understandable concern, but the national vaccination programme is proving to be very effective with very strong uptake across all age cohorts. It is on this basis that the Government had moved forward with the re-opening of education as an 'essential' service and the now planned re-opening of society. Vaccination is a matter of individual choice, however if you have not already availed of the opportunity to be vaccinated against COVID-19, it is encouraged you to do so now - the public health advice is clear that take-up of vaccines is the best way we can protect one another and open up activities, including those in higher education.

We need your cooperation and support in the period ahead with the following:

- Students and staff are required to wear face coverings in all buildings on campus. If they are unable to do so due to medical condition, they must make their Head of Department of Function Head aware of this.

We expect most students to be compliant and faculty/staff are not required to enforce mask wearing but are asked to encourage it. However remind students at the start of class that they are expected to wear a face covering during class and that it should be covering nose and mouth for the duration of the class. Thank them for wearing the mask and doing their bit to protect themselves and their classmates.

- A large order of face masks has been placed with the HSE and those will be available for free to all student and staff across the campus.

- The HSE has now clarified that it is not required to have attendance records for classes over 60 minutes in duration. To facilitate air exchange, lectures can start from 5 mins past the hour to 10 mins before. This time can also be used to assist with the cleaning down of seated areas and work stations.

- Movement of people into, within and out of buildings will require your cooperation to avoid congestion. We would ask you to follow all the directional signs on campus. Please keep to the left.

- Wash your hands regularly. Hand sanitization stations are being provided at the entrances to all buildings and at regular intervals around the campus.

- Enhanced cleaning protocols have been maintained.

- Anti-viral wipes are provided to wipe down work areas. COVID-19 protective equipment supplies (face coverings, anti-viral wipes/spray etc) are available in each school office and from Estates via the Estates Request System.

- We would ask all students to return home when they have completed their daily classes. Students who have no timetabled in-person events on a given day will be requested not to attend the campus so as to manage overall on campus numbers. We hope that this situation can be revisited after the 22nd of October but until then, time spent on the campus should limited to class time.

Buildings & Offices:

The provision of good quality ventilation is key to the resumption of near normal activities not just on campus but in society in general. A comprehensive and detailed ventilation risk assessment has been carried out by the Estates department in DkIT. DkIT has natural ventilation (windows and vents), mechanical ventilation (fans & air handling units – AHU) and combination of both on campus.

A brief synopsis on room ventilation.

In **Mechanical Ventilated** spaces fresh air is taken into a space via the use of an air handling system. In DkIT mechanical systems operate on a full fresh air supply and 'used air' is not actively recirculated. Mechanical ventilation systems provide fresh air at a constant rate. Ventilation systems are designed and installed in accordance with the building regulations. All mechanical ventilation systems in DkIT are subject to a strict schedule of service and maintenance. Systems have been set to run for longer periods than would normally be the case, both starting earlier in the day and running for longer periods in the evening where appropriate. This is in accordance with the latest COVID-19 ventilation guidelines.

In **Naturally Ventilated** spaces fresh air is introduced into an area via an open window (and in some cases an open door). In rooms that are naturally ventilated windows can be opened for the duration of occupancy. Consideration should also be given to the opening of windows before and after use of any occupied areas to maximise ventilation in the space.

All of the health and safety measures outlined are in place to ensure all our campus facilities and operations are managed in a safe manner.

Post [DkIT's risk assessment report and ventilation audit](#), CO2 monitors will be installed in areas that have been identified as being compromised when it comes to ventilation. [Please note this is still in draft form.]

Safe Campus Environment:

There will be an on-going COVID-19 awareness campaign for students and staff. Anyone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home and follow HSE advice. More [information](#) on what to do if you contract COVID19 or experience symptoms

We await guidance from the Government as to whether rapid antigen tests will also be available as an additional measure.

Additional outdoor social spaces is under consideration.

The measures we have put in place ensure that we can safely use our campus to deliver a near to normal experience to our students.

Use of campus for Teaching and Research:

Recognising that the function of this sector is essential onsite, the Institute has committed to a significant increase in onsite attendance in the new academic year. We will be delivering face-to-face teaching at normal levels for most modules on programmes which are normally campus-based, including for relatively large groups. The way in which air quality will be managed and monitored, allows us to safely use our teaching spaces up to these levels of occupancy.

Teaching for all continuing students will start on September 20th as planned. During that week, incoming first year undergraduate students will have orientation, and their teaching starts on Sept 27th.

Research facilities:

Researchers who needed access to equipment or specialist facilities have been on campus on an as needs basis during the pandemic, and others have been returning as part of the incremental return over the summer.

All researchers, including postgraduate research students who have not been back on campus are now being asked to plan to return. It has been a very difficult time for researchers and we look forward to welcoming this important student cohort back to campus once again.

Campus Services:

All academic, library, student support, finance and registry services will be operating on campuses.

We will be welcoming all DkIT students and staff to the De Chastelain Library. The library services and facilities are hybrid, that is available both on campus and online. To ensure adequate ventilation and space for social distancing the number of students using the physical library space is currently capped and access is by pre-booked appointment only system.

During September, the physical library will be open:
Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm.

From October 4th opening hours will be extended to:
9 am to 8 pm Monday to Thursday
9 am to 5pm Friday.

Click [here](#) to book your study space.

For details of online services, Ask A Librarian, Click & Collect book requests and Online Research & Information Skills classes and individual consultations see our [Using Your Library](#) guide.

If you would like to avail of DkIT Library membership to borrow books, access journal articles and e-books online etc. please complete and submit the form in the New Staff tab of our [Institute Staff](#) LibGuide.

As the situation evolves, we hope that from Nov 1st onwards, we will be able to relax regulations further to facilitate more in-person on-campus experiences.

The library offers a fully Virtual Helpdesk, if you have any questions please get in touch with them in any of the following ways:

Email: library@dkit.ie

Phone: +353 (0)429370310

Chat: [Ask a Librarian](#)

FAQs: [View frequently asked questions](#)

DkIT [sports](#) facilities are all open and will be operating in accordance with national COVID-19 guidance for that sector. Students' Union, Clubs & Societies and social activities will be facilitated in accordance with Government and Sport Ireland guidelines.

Catering:

Campus catering is considered essential and will be open for the start of the new term with reduced indoor seating capacities.

Please note that in keeping with Failte Ireland regulations, to sit in the restaurant, as a premises serving food, you will be required a Digital COVID Certificate and a DkIT staff/student ID card as evidence of identification. Students and staff will not require any identification or a COVID cert to take away food from the restaurant.

The restaurant will operate the following system:

- Entrance queue managed at point of entry with a max capacity of 30 allowed in the service area at any one time
- Once you're on the premises, we ask that you sanitise your hands when entering or leaving the building, always wear your face mask when moving around, including when visiting the bathroom and practice physical distancing
- All food will be served in takeaway containers and Proof of Immunity/Vaccination will be required AFTER Till Point to access seating areas. Seating is provided in groups of 4, 2 or single seat with a max capacity of 380. If you wish to sit together please try to arrive as a group
- At the beginning of the seating area a member of staff will scan your EU Digital COVID Certificate or you will be asked to present another proof of Immunity/Vaccination
- You will also be asked to show photo ID to prove that the EU Digital COVID Certificate/proof of immunity/vaccination is yours
- As part of our track and trace system everyone is required to provide a name and contact number
- If you are not able to use the seating area we ask that you please exit promptly, following the exit pathway

As per Government guidelines, businesses may refuse access where people cannot offer proof of vaccination or recovery or cannot demonstrate that their EU Digital COVID Certificate relates to them. If businesses do not operate on this basis, they may be liable for fines or closure.

Car Parking:

On campus car parking protocols return to pre-COVID.

This has been a difficult time for everyone. We would like to thank you all for your efforts and commitment over the past eighteen months. The success of the vaccination programme has allowed us to plan for an on-campus experience for students that will be the very best that we can offer.



In conclusion, we would like to add, DkIT values the well-being of all staff and is committed to maintaining and promoting a work environment that supports mental health and wellbeing of staff throughout their career. In the current context it is more important than ever that we take every opportunity to protect and enhance mental health and wellbeing of all our staff.

The DkIT Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a confidential service designed to support all DkIT employees and their immediate family members (over 18). You can contact them by phone on Freephone 1800 995 955 or email at eap@vhics.ie.

The EAP online portal has excellent support material and is updated regularly. It has webinars available in archive if you want to revisit any topic and you can access it and avail of the tools located there by going to the following link to the EAP Portal www.wellbeing-4life.com. Access code is VhiDundalkIT. Another great resource is the [staff well being hub](#).

This will be a challenging term, but we are grateful for the huge amount of work that has gone into preparing a safe return to campus. As of today, 90% of adults (18yrs+) are fully vaccinated so with positive news we must now navigate the pandemic with solutions and resilience, for our welfare, our families wellbeing, and for all our students, some of whom have never had an on-site experience.

We very much look forward to seeing you all in person again.

DkIT COVID-19 Task Force

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