

Returning to Campus for the 2021-2022 Academic Year – Staff

Dear Colleagues,

We hope you are well. We wish to provide you with an update in advance of the start of the new academic year.

Introduction

The Institute is currently planning and preparing for the return to teaching and learning for Semester 1 in September 2021. Our Institute is committed to maximising and optimising the on-campus experience for students in the next academic year and we will do this in line with the sectoral approach to returning to campus activity, as outlined by the IUA, THEA and the RCSI guidance plan issued earlier this month. You can read more about the agreed whole-of-sector approach to “Implementing a Safe Return to Campus” <http://www.thea.ie/press-releases/higher-education-reopening-plans-confirmed/> and <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bcd91-a-safe-return-to-on-site-further-and-higher-education-and-research/#objectives>.

This coordinated approach, which has the support of government for national implementation and the endorsement of public health authorities, is centred on the clear intention for a ‘predominately on-site learning experience for students and learners’ for the year 2021/22. The Higher Education Reopening Plan Press Release confirms that both teaching and research are essential activities within Higher Education.

Many will be anxious ahead of a return to campus and this communication is intended to provide an update to our staff and student community as plans progress. As throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the health, safety and wellbeing of all of our Institute community has been and remains the priority throughout any planning. As always, any decisions will be guided by Government policy and public health recommendations. Regular updates will be communicated to you by email and posted on Social Media and Institute websites.

The Institute wishes to assure all staff and students that the Estates Department have taken great care to evaluate the risks posed by the spread of COVID-19 and have completed a thorough risk assessment of the Ventilation on the Institute Campus.

Semester 1 Start Dates and Induction

Start dates for the next academic year are as follows (see Institute Academic Calendar, <https://www.dkit.ie/study/current-students/academic-calendar.html>):

- Onsite Induction for second year undergraduate students: 16 & 17 September 2021.
- Onsite Induction for new undergraduate students: 23 & 24 September 2021.
- Start date for 2nd 3rd, 4th Year returning undergraduate students Monday, 20 September 2021.
- Start date for First Year undergraduate students: Monday, 27 September 2021, to allow time to process CAO applications in light of the delayed release of Leaving Certificate results (Friday September 3rd).
- Apprenticeships will commence on Monday 27 September with Induction on that date.
- The start dates for some undergraduate nursing and midwifery students differs to the above, students will be advised by the Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Early Years.
- Start dates for part time and postgraduate programmes will be advised by the relevant academic departments and/or Life Long Learning Centre.
- Please note that Academic timetables will be issued to all Staff and Students in early September.

Returning to Campus

As we are now planning for an expected return to a fuller on-campus experience for students and staff for the start of the 2021-22 academic year commencing in September 2021, we wish to update staff on our approach to returning to work on campus so that you can have time to plan and discuss your return to campus with your Head of School/Department/Function/Centre Manager.

Over the last 18 months, we have seen some positive aspects of remote working and we are currently awaiting the issuing of the new Government Remote Working policy which is currently under discussion with the relevant Public Sector unions and employee representative bodies. This document when issued will then be used to inform a new Institute Remote Working Policy. In the meantime, it is important that we plan for a return to campus, in line with the Public Health measures advised to us.

The purpose of this guidance document is to give help to Managers to manage the situation in their respective Schools, Departments or Functional areas. There is no one plan that will fit every area, each area should prepare what is most appropriate for them with the parameters outlined in this document. The health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students is paramount.

Main issues for consideration:

- In general, all academic staff, Professional, Management and Support staff (PMS) needed for in-person teaching and provision of services should be preparing to return for on-campus activity on a phased basis for Semester 1 which commences on 01 September 2021.
- Return to Campus plans are being currently updated by each individual School/Functional Area and Managers will engage with staff in respective areas in the finalisation of these plans
- Where a staff member is working from off-campus, it is expected they will be available to attend campus if required.
- Activities will be mainly onsite with the exception of large lectures of 150 persons or more. These may continue to be delivered remotely.
- Schools and Departments will continue to communicate with their staff in relation to these guidelines and the evolving situation regarding the return for on-campus activity and teaching.
- All Staff in each School, Department and Professional Support area should make themselves aware of the Return to Campus plan for their own area and the Institute when they are made available.
- Schools and Areas who have staff in at-risk groups should contact HR to have the staff member medically assessed as to whether they are high-risk or very high-risk to establish what if any accommodations are required. To arrange this, please email raywina.pickering@dkit.ie or gerald.odriscoll@dkit.ie.
- Staff will be required to complete a *Return to Campus* form at least 3 days before their return to work. The form can be assessed at the following link <https://www.dkit.ie/assets/uploads/DKIT%20Return%20to%20work%20-%20Declaration.docx>. The completed form MUST be returned to HR prior to any staff member who has previously not returned to campus since the introduction of the current lockdown phase in December 2020.
- HR will support Schools, Department and Functional areas to deal with challenging queries as they arise.

The absence of staff and students from campus over the past 18 months has had a significant impact on how we work and interact with colleagues. While it will take some time to reopen all office space, we look forward to seeing familiar faces back on campus and the sense of community that brings. Thank you for your patience as we continue to prepare to welcome you back safely to campus

Returning to Student Life (Information communicated to students)

Students can expect a return to a fuller on-campus experience for the start of the 2021-22 academic year commencing September 2021. We look forward to welcoming you all back. Our approach is designed to ensure the needs of all students will be considered in relation to on campus experience regardless of level, year or discipline.

Important points to note:

- Activities will be mainly onsite with the exception of large lectures of 150 persons or more. These may continue to be delivered remotely. The Institute wishes to assure all students that the Estates Department have taken great care to evaluate the risks posed by the spread of COVID-19 and have completed a thorough risk assessment of the ventilation on the Institute Campus.
- Lecture start and end times will be reviewed to minimise potential for crowding in corridors at those times.
- Entry and egress to buildings and facilities will be carefully managed via contra flow and other measures;
- 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 campus capacity.
- There may be a small number of students who, have unusual medical situations, and for whom attendance presents an undue risk. We will work with those students, and their medical professionals to seek an individual solution. This may involve additional protective measures or some additional supports. It may also involve deferring a year or some modules. These students should make their situation known to their Head of Department as a matter of urgency.
- Students will be required to complete a COVID-19 Health Declaration as part of Registration.
- Detailed induction timetables will be updated over the next few weeks, second year students and new incoming students who accept a place will receive a timetable for induction.
- Programme timetables are currently being finalised and will be made available over the next few weeks.
- Students will have much more opportunities to participate in societies, sport and social activities.
- The full range of student support services will be available including our Student Health Unit, Counselling Services, Pastoral Care, Disability Service, Careers and Placement Service, Maths Learning Centre, Student Learning and Development Centre, International Office and our Student Information Desk.
- Information in relation to Library Services will be communicated directly by the Library. Currently Library Services and Supports are hybrid combining virtual and physical collections, supports and services.
- Schools and Departments will continue to communicate with their students in relation to these guidelines and the evolving situation regarding the return for on-campus activity and teaching so please check your DkIT email on a regular basis.
- The Students' Union are elected representatives to represent you, locally and nationally throughout the year. They are located in the Faulkner Building (M114)

and are there to support you in any way they can, whether it be socially or academically throughout the year.

In addition, we encourage all students to engage with relevant updates which will be posted by our Marketing and Communications Team on our social media channels and website as students return to campus in the coming weeks.

Catering Outlets

The following are the intended opening times for catering outlets on campus:

Catering Outlet	Description
<i>Main Restaurant</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of Monday 23rd August 2021, the Main Restaurant will commence small hot breakfast adding deli and lunch over the following weeks with full service to resume on September 13th. Opening hours to revert to 08.00a.m. to 03.00p.m. from Monday 23rd August then extended to 04.30pm from September 20th.
<i>Coffee Dock and The Well</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coffee Dock service to resume from September 6th – 08.00a.m. to 03.00p.m. extending to 04.30p.m from September 20th. It is intended for the Well to resume week commencing September 13th and opening hours will be on the same basis as the Coffee Dock, These outlets will have no seating arrangements and will be takeaway only initially.
<i>Carroll's Building and Muirhevna Building</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resuming September 13th from 08.00 a.m. to 03.00 p.m. extending to 05.00 p.m. from September 20th. Limited seating will be available in these outlets.
<i>Regional Development Centre (RDC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resuming September 20th from 10.00a.m. to 12.00 noon initially.

Staff and Students Remaining Safe

Staff and students have a role to play in keeping our Institute community safe. At all times, please continue to comply with the prevailing public health advice. We will continue to comply with the Public Health measures to assure a safe return to campus, which includes enhanced cleaning protocols. Systems are being updated to deal with

management of disease incidence and investigation and control of outbreaks as we return to an increased on campus activity.

The Institute recommends that staff and students get vaccinated unless otherwise advised by their doctor. The evidence is that it protects both you and other people. If you decided not to get vaccinated you are increasing the risks to your own and other people's health, and you should take extra care with your behaviour. The HSE Vaccination portal for the age group 16 and older is now open and you can register at <https://vaccine.hse.ie>. To register online you will need your Personal Public Service (PPS) number, your Eircode, a mobile phone number and an email address. If you are an international student, or you don't have any of these, or if you don't want to register online, please call HSELive on 1800 700 700.

Please remember to:

- **Facemasks: All staff, students and members of the public entering any building on campus MUST wear a face mask unless they are excused for medical reasons.**
- Sanitise hands on arrival and wash hands frequently while on campus.
- Maintain physical distancing where possible and avoid congregating in groups, unless it is for an organised and controlled event.
- Remember to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Where possible open windows and doors.
- All staff and students should take personal responsibility for their behaviour and avoid risky situations.
- Any staff member, student or visitor who are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 must remain off Campus and contact their relevant Manager.
- Download the COVID-19 Tracker.

The Institute has remained open during the COVID-19 crisis and we all have come through challenging times together – challenging for many of us in so many ways – thanks to the dedication and determination of our students and staff. As we move towards the new academic year, we note the critical need for personal responsibility and shared collective responsibility to facilitate the safe operation of campus life in 2021/22.

DKIT COVID-19 Task Force

E. covidenquiries@dkit.ie W. www.dkit.ie/covid19

