



lyit

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Leitir Ceannainn
Letterkenny Institute of Technology

Programme Delivery

Academic Year 2020/21

(15 June, 2020)



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2020

1. Principles and Guidelines for the delivery of Higher Education Programmes in the 2020/21 Academic Year in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic

1.1 Background

This short guidance document has been prepared by THEA, to facilitate contingency planning in the Institutes of Technology for the 2020/21 academic year. It is framed on the basis that the existing public health requirements to combat the Covid-19 virus pandemic, including the maintenance of physical or social distancing and personal hygiene measures, will continue in some form into the new academic year.

In this context, it seeks to provide assurances to learners that the academic environment is safe, and that their interests will be at the forefront of all measures undertaken by the institutions to maintain academic delivery during the pandemic. While it is anticipated that certain features of the existing public health requirements may change and be lessened as the summer progresses, it is also the case that some new measures may be introduced, such as the wearing of face coverings in certain circumstances. Mindful of this evolving situation, Institutes must nonetheless plan to deliver their programmes on the basis of the best information currently available to them, and these guidelines are attended to assist them in this work. The document will be kept under review ahead of, and during, the 2020/21 academic year, and will be amended as and when necessary.

1.2 Overarching Principles

- The health, safety and wellbeing of their students and staff is the paramount concern for all Institutes of Technology. Institutional leaders will ensure that the planning for the delivery of programmes in 2020/21 is informed by this principle at every stage.
- Institutes of Technology will endeavour to maintain and protect as fully as possible the quality of the student experience and the academic integrity of their programmes and awards, against the backdrop of the necessary public health measures.
- Communications with staff and students should be clear, frequent and informative and should endeavour to provide assurance about the measures being taken to protect the health and wellbeing of the community, the quality and integrity of the academic offering, and the protection and reinforcement of the institution's sense of community.
- There are a multitude of tools, practices and procedures that combine to protect the health and welfare of the communities in our institutes. Institutes of Technology must balance the various tools, practices and procedures available to them to maximise their commitment to health and safety and to deliver an appropriate learner experience. This necessitates a risk-based approach to operations and academic delivery.
- Institutes of Technology will endeavour to maintain an inclusive approach in the delivery of their programmes, and that all measures introduced to combat the Covid-19 virus will be proportionate and designed to protect the needs and interests of the entire student cohort.
- Public health requirements issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team and other Government bodies will be embedded in the measures adopted by Institutes of Technology for the delivery of their programmes in 2020/21.
- Each Institute of Technology is best placed to evaluate the needs of its students and staff, and the possibilities and limitations of its facilities and resources, in delivering its academic portfolio.

- Contingency and scenario planning must necessarily take place at the institutional level, and it will be mindful of the particular requirements of the academic disciplines in which it teaches and conducts research. It will likely involve the participation of a wide-range of institutional functions to determine the feasibility of different scenarios/options, including, but not confined to, academic planning/affairs, estates (for spatial/workflow planning), human resources and student welfare/health functions.

1.3 General Delivery Guidelines

- Institutes of Technology are mindful that their students aspire to preserve the on-campus student experience. We are supportive of that aspiration, while working within the constraints of public health guidelines. The sense of community and collective learning that underpins the higher education student experience is appreciated and valued.
- Institutes of Technology recognise that scientific knowledge about the Covid 19 virus is steadily growing and that, in response, public health measures to combat it are subject to constant review and adaptation. In this context, the parameters for planning and delivering the 2020/21 academic year are necessarily fluid and will change over time.
- Institutes of Technology, in these circumstances, will adopt a flexible approach to their provision in the 2020/21 academic year, in which they will adjust and adapt their teaching, learning and assessment approaches as and when necessary, and in a manner that is
 - appropriate and proportionate
 - linked to public health advice
 - supports all learners in meeting the learning outcomes of each programme
 - ensures the safest possible environment for their communities, while prioritising the student experience
 - and moves towards maximising onsite provision and the resumption of the regular academic calendar.
- A more blended academic offering will be necessary in 2020/21 to maintain the quality of the student experience, preserve academic integrity and ensure the safe delivery of programmes. This may entail replacing some face-to-face or in-class delivery with online or remote delivery. The relative volumes of face-to-face and online/remote delivery will vary across institutions, and will be dependent on such factors as:
 - the identified needs of individual learners and groups of learners, including those at particular stages of programmes (First Year, Final Year etc.) and those with special needs
 - the particular teaching and learning needs of individual academic disciplines
 - the overall student population
 - the available physical spaces
 - and the general layouts of individual campuses.
- Training will be provided to staff and students — including specifically tailored Covid-19 induction programmes for students, academic staff, support staff, and management — to help the college community adjust to the altered campus experience, and to support the wellbeing of all members of that community.
- Appropriate and proportionate measures will be adopted to assure the quality of refashioned programmes.
- The transition experience of new entrants is of primary importance in establishing a positive student experience more generally, and particular care must be taken to ensure

that the transitions dimension is central to all planning in providing a blended academic offering in 2020/21.

- Particular care must be taken to provide a positive induction element to first year students, including international students, and must incorporate some face-to-face elements.
- In line with their commitment to providing access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, Institutes of Technology will endeavour to maximise on-campus engagement for vulnerable students to ensure a positive learning experience. In circumstances where this is not possible additional measures will be taken to protect their interests.
- Institutes of Technology will adopt a range of measures based on a formal risk assessment of the type and requirements of the learning environment for each cohort of students. These measures may include:
 - Preventing the entry of the virus into circulation in the community and isolating potential cases in a proactive manner;
 - Putting in place procedures for the provision of learning to those at risk and unable to enter the physical environment;
 - Establishing campaigns to promote appropriate social behaviour including in relation to non-attendance when symptomatic; hygiene and hygiene etiquette; social distancing behaviour; and broader awareness on expectations of community behaviour and incident reporting;
 - Strengthening the medical offering to support institutional identification of potential cases of Covid-19, and appropriate student behaviours;
 - Creating protocols on contact tracing and virus spread prevention;
 - Creating a formal policy on student activities and events that supports social distancing norms and appropriate measures for their enforcement;
 - Physical redesign of the spatial layout to minimise social contact where students are in transit;
 - The application of classroom rules on social distancing based on the needs of the discipline and the physical environment;
 - Procedures that support students to access lecturer materials if they are unable to attend, and the removal of all mandatory attendance requirements unless required for professional accreditation.
- Based upon institutional risk assessments, the nature of any class room activity will be reviewed to ensure the appropriateness of
 - the size of the group/class;
 - the duration of lectures/tutorial or laboratory activity;
 - the range and type of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) necessary to support the activity.

Where necessary and appropriate, it will also facilitate the creation of permanent class/teams/groups to limit unnecessary interaction.

1.4 General Health and Hygiene Guidelines

- Students and staff exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms, including fever (temperature), cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties, must not attend campus and participate in face-to-face teaching and learning activities. They must self-isolate for fourteen days.

- Staff and students who are in ‘at risk’ groups, or are otherwise vulnerable, should be supported to attend campus and participate in face-to-face teaching and learning activities. Additional protective measures should be put in place to facilitate their participation or, when necessary and as needed, alternative and temporary provisions made for off-site participation. Student support structures, medical facilities and general management structures should be available to engage with individuals on their particular situations and to assess their individual needs.
- Hand hygiene remains one of the most effective measures in suppressing the virus and Institutes of Technology will put in place hygiene stations throughout their campuses to enable staff and students to wash their hands regularly and thoroughly while onsite participating in teaching and learning activities.
- Students and staff will be reminded continually to maintain cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene measures, including coughing and sneezing into the sleeve or elbow, and disposing of tissues.
- Wearing of face coverings will be mandatory for certain teaching and learning activities, in line with current public health advice.
- The expectation that staff and students will act responsibly when exhibiting symptoms, and in adhering to the required hygiene measures, should be communicated regularly and directly, and the assistance of staff and student representative bodies should be utilised in such communications.
- The requisite social distancing measures will be adhered to and will inform planning for academic delivery in terms of the numbers of students allowed on campus each day, and the numbers allowed in particular spaces for individual teaching and learning sessions. Scenario planning will consider options for delivery with both two metre and one metre separation requirements. It is generally recognised that a separation requirement of no more than one metre, if sanctioned, would better facilitate planning, and the maintenance of a quality student experience.
- Thorough cleaning and disinfection of all frequently touched objects and surfaces, both in teaching spaces and communal areas, will be maintained throughout the academic year.

2. LYIT Blended Delivery Model

The ambition of the Institute is to provide where possible the maximum face-to-face delivery of programmes with the aim of achieving 50% on campus delivery.

- Blended learning model with a combination of remote/online learning and face-to-face delivery.
- Different departments and programme boards will design delivery models to facilitate the optimal student engagement experience.
- Onsite provision will be initially prioritised for learning that cannot take place online and for key student cohorts. The balance of face-to face versus remote/online should be higher for earlier years of programmes, especially first years.
- Flexible and adaptable provision linked to changing public health advice and over time, and subject to restrictions, moving towards maximising onsite provision and returning to usual schedules.

3. Specific Actions

Actions	Responsibility	Update Monday, 15 June
<p>Programme Board engagement and training (June and September) and student training (September)</p>	<p>Head of Flexible and Online Learning and SL1 Teaching, Learning and Student Engagement</p>	<p>This training should focus on the pedagogy of online learning.</p> <p>The Head of Flexible and Online Learning has met with the majority of academic departments at this stage.</p> <p>The Head of Flexible and Online Learning and SL1 Teaching, Learning and Student Engagement are scheduling further staff training for September 2020.</p>
<p>Technology Plan to support digital learning. Support for staff should be identified through an audit of what equipment is currently available to individual staff members.</p> <p>Review resource requests/requirements.</p>	<p>IT Manager and Head of Flexible and Online Learning</p> <p>Executive Board</p>	<p>The IT Manager and Head of Flexible and Online Learning presented a costed technology plan on Monday, 8 June. This is under consideration by Executive Board and a prioritised plan will be presented at the next Governing Body meeting.</p> <p>It would be useful to identify a number of locations on campus from where staff can teach their programmes for the new semester online. Both online and face-to-face could be supported by additional use of social media.</p>
<p>Proposal with technology and banking partners to support student laptop purchase scheme.</p>	<p>The VP for Finance and Corporate Services and IT Manager</p>	<p>This is currently being pursued with AIB and also with laptop providers.</p>
<p>Quantification of timetable capacity in all teaching spaces (2.0m., 1.5m. and 1.0m.) scenarios and any overall limitations on the number of students who can attend campus at any one time.</p>	<p>Heads of Department and Estates Manager</p>	<p>The sectoral position is that all planning should continue on a maximum of 1m social distancing.</p>

Programme Boards to meet to plan for blended delivery	Heads of Department/Programme Boards	The feedback from these meetings has been articulated through the meetings with academic managers and at Executive Board.
Review options for additional teaching space (e.g., An Dánlann MPC and Canteen)	Estates Manager and IT Manager	Proposal to allow An Dánlann MPC to be repurposed as an emergency teaching space has been developed by the Estates Office.
Timetabling issues.	Executive Board	<p>Form a timetabling project team to strengthen the central administration of timetabling. The support of Dr Jim Morrison in this space is much appreciated. The current timetable should be rolled over to allow experimentation on proposals for the next academic year.</p> <p>Room capacity on the timetabling package should be modified to reflect the 1m social distancing.</p> <p>Timetabling in day-long teaching blocks (e.g., 6 hours spread over an 8 hour day), Monday - Friday (9.30 – 5.30).</p> <p>Work on the basis of specific class groups being assigned to specific classrooms.</p>
Consider alternative assessment, in the first instance for semester 1 2020/21 (similar to approach taken in Semester 2, 2019/20).	Executive Board and Academic Council	September 2020

Scenario Planning

It was announced on Friday 10 April that the Leaving Cert Exam (LCE) 2020 had been deferred until late July and would take place over a longer time period. The tentative schedule was for the LCE to start on 29 July, with results to CAO in early-mid October, resulting in first year students being unable to start until mid/late November. On Friday 8 May this decision was reversed and an alternative to the LCE was proposed, based on calculated grades. The resultant CAO schedule has yet to be finalised but it is likely that this will allow first year students to begin on Monday 28 September 2020. The cancellation of a written LCE has increased the risk associated with the proposed staging repeat exams in the Institute in August – it is now proposed that repeat exams will run in early September.

The earlier start date means that other categories of first year applicants (LYIT access students; mature students; FE applicants; NI students; International (non-EU)) are not disadvantaged by having to wait until November to commence their studies. This also means that the academic calendar can run largely as planned in semester 2, but with some implications for semester 1:

- Repeat exams from 1-9 September, Exam Boards 16 - 17 September
- Delayed registration, extended induction
- Delayed start date for all years – 28 September (originally scheduled for start 14 September)
- 12/12.5 weeks available to Christmas (including Halloween week)
- Ongoing social distancing requirements and restrictions (see below)

Social Distancing – implications for room capacity

Summary % of existing capacity remaining

	2.0m spacing		1.5m spacing		1.0m spacing	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Lecture Theatres	10%	17%	11%	28%	20%	36%
Classrooms	16%	29%	24%	31%	43%	53%

Source: LYIT Estates Office

Potential Scenarios**Scenario 1: Delivery ‘as normal’**

- Would require a significant improvement in the health situation and relaxation of most or all restrictions
- Additional hygiene protocols in place
- Limitations to some student activities (sport, clubs and societies, gym, etc.)
- This scenario is unlikely, especially in respect of semester 1

Scenario 2: Blended delivery

- Relaxed social distancing requirements – e.g., reduce from 2.0m. to 1.5 or 1.0, with or without other measures such as temperature checks or wearing of face coverings
- Physical capacity (lecture theatres, classrooms, labs and other common spaces) reduced

- Requirement to limit numbers on campus at any time
- Limitations to many extra-curricular student activities and large hosted events (e.g., Open Day, Careers Fair)
- Blended delivery model: 33-50% of programme delivered remote/online
- For example:

<i>Module contact hours</i>	<i>Face-to face</i>	<i>Remote/online</i>
3	2	1
4	2	2
5	3	2

Scenario 3: Substantially remote/online delivery

- Current social distancing requirements retained or strengthened
- Physical capacity (lecture theatres, classrooms, labs and other common spaces) very significantly reduced
- Requirement to limit numbers on campus at any time to a very small number
- Limitations to most/all extra-curricular student activities and all hosted events
- Online delivery model: 67-80% remote/online
- For example:

<i>Module contact hours</i>	<i>Face-to face</i>	<i>Remote/online</i>
3	1	2
4	1	3
5	1	4

Collective Statement from the THEA Council of Registrars Reinforcing and monitoring the quality of our provision in the academic year 2020/21

Introduction

The technological sector recognises that the evolving extraordinary situation in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted and is impacting on the lives and work of our Institutes, our staff and our students. Throughout this emergency, we have followed and are following the advice of the public health and education authorities in relation to the crisis. In so doing, we have put in place measures to ensure continuity of service to our stakeholders.

To date the focus of this continuity has been the alternate delivery, predominantly online, and alternate assessment of our programmes. This has resulted in the impending completion of teaching, learning and assessment for programmes for 2019/2020 up to and including award stage.

In quality assuring this alternate delivery and assessment, a central pillar has been in assessing and corroborating the equivalence of provision. This in all instances has involved the consideration and redrafting of teaching, learning and assessment strategies by lecturers, programme boards and departments. These in turn have been assessed and confirmed through approval processes using committees of Academic Council and ultimately Academic Councils of our Institutes. In many instances these changes have also been considered and approved by external experts and examiners and/or also put forward following consultation with professional and regulatory bodies where applicable.

In so doing, our Institutes have maintained and delivered on full academic governance and quality assurance principles; operating within our approved scopes of provision and utilizing our policies, procedures and guidelines. We have monitored the implementation of contingency arrangements and recorded any issues arising and measures taken to address them. This monitoring has included consultation with staff, learners, academic councils/quality committees/programme boards, professional/regulatory bodies and any other stakeholders with an interest in our programmes.

Towards a new academic year

As the focus moves from concluding the academic year 2019/2020 towards the commencement of academic year 2020/2021, the emphasis on the prolonged and deeper challenges associated with this emergency situation are more pronounced given the scale and nature of this commencement.

In so doing and whilst accepting the autonomous nature of our Institutes, there are clear quality assurance and enhancement principles to which we adhere:

Programme Structure

Modification of programmes to account for this scenario are not expected to change the minimum intended programme learning outcomes or minimum intended module learning outcomes of the programme's constituent modules. While it is envisaged that the approved programme schedule will operate in line to that validated, it is accepted that within a stage, the sequence of delivery of modules may change.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

1. We accept there will be modifications to teaching, learning and assessment strategies within programmes and modules. These changes must be approved by the Institute's Academic Council, following review and recommendation in accordance with the Institute's academic quality policies and procedures. Academic Councils may put in place additional processes to consider and approve these changes. These may include establishment of new committees, use of existing committees or the use of external expertise to evaluate and recommend at any stage of this process.
2. Changes to approved programme schedules may not be necessitated; however, all changes to the teaching, learning and assessment strategies must be documented, approved and clearly communicated to learners, staff and other stakeholders as appropriate.
3. We recognise that within certain programmes and disciplines including *inter alia* creative and performing arts, design, architecture, additional challenges arise around altering teaching and learning strategies where process is a central tenet in the delivery. In such cases, particular focus and clear communication to address these concerns should be put in place.

Work-Based Learning

We commit to provision of work placement as defined within our programmes, with the support of our stakeholders, within public health guidelines. Where work placement opportunities cannot take place as planned, we will endeavour to establish alternative arrangements to enable the learner to meet the relevant learning outcomes. These arrangements, where put in place, will be approved through the Institute's QA processes and clearly communicated to learners and other stakeholders.

Student Support

In all we do, our Institutes recognise the impact of this emergency situation on our students' welfare. We remain committed to empowering and engaging with our students to enable them to perform to the best of their academic ability within our defined resources. In line with sectoral guidance issued to support the planning for the academic year 2020/2021, arrangements for student support and services as they impact directly on programmes and modules e.g. access to learning resources; learner support will be further set out. These will be documented, approved by Institutes and clearly communicated. In these instances, equivalence should be clearly set out e.g. provision of online journals, databases and e-books in the case of library.

Staff Support

We acknowledge that support may be required for staff to deliver on the necessary modification and delivery of the alternate teaching, learning and assessment strategies. This also applies to other staff involved in the provision of the services and business continuity to support the delivery of the strategies set out above.

Documentation and Review

We will continue to monitor the implementation of new arrangements. We will document any issues arising and measures taken to address them.

Guidance for the Tertiary Education Sector on Reopening in Autumn 2020:

Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

The Government/HSA Return to Work Protocol, published on the 9th May, sets out the steps that employers and workers must take before a workplace reopens and while it continues to operate. It is designed to support employers and workers in adapting their workplace procedures and practices to put measures in place, in compliance with the COVID-19 related public health protection measures identified as necessary by the HSE, that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace as the economy begins to open up, following the temporary closure of most businesses during the worst phase of the current pandemic.

Arising from the publication of the Protocol, the tertiary education sector stakeholders communicated a request for additional expert guidance as to how the principles and requirements set out in the Protocol should be applied to deal with some specific difficulties, issues and challenges which will arise for the tertiary system in order to safeguard the health and safety of students, learners, visitors and staff.

On the basis of specialist expertise available to the Department for this purpose, specific issues were identified by stakeholders arising from the Protocol where more granular, expert advice would add value in the application and implementation of the guidance contained within the Protocol in the context of the various contexts, environments and scenarios in tertiary education and campus settings.

These sector-specific issues have been collated by the Department and have been considered by the specialist expertise available to the Department. Guidance in relation to those issues is set in the following pages in the form of answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). This advice is not intended to be prescriptive. Any unique approach being proposed by an institution should be the subject of a comprehensive risk assessment to be carried out by that institution and should be considered in the context of each institution's existing obligations as they relate to current health and safety regulations and currently available public health advice. The guidance also outlines some possible options which institutions may consider implementing, having regard to their individual requirements and settings.

The Department continues to engage with health authorities and this guidance may be revised on foot of that engagement. Additionally, as the public health advice evolves over the coming months, the guidance provided may require to be revised. Moreover, additional tertiary-specific issues may be raised which will require further clarification and guidance. In that context, it is anticipated that this document will be an iterative document, changing and adapting as necessary as the country moves through the reopening phases as set out in the Roadmap to Reopening Society and Business.

1. PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Does any flexibility exist in relation to the current recommendation of 2m social distancing to perhaps move to 1.5m or 1m, particularly if other mitigating requirements are put in place, such as the wearing of face coverings?

Physical distancing is an important part of the country's delay strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19 and to limit transmission of the virus. It does this by minimizing contact between healthy individuals and potentially asymptomatic, presymptomatic or mildly symptomatic individuals. In Ireland, this advice has proven to be effective in reducing the incidence of the virus and protecting those most at risk in Irish society. The current health advice, as reflected in the Protocol, is that the recommended distance to be maintained between people to minimise risk of transmission is 2 metres. While it is acknowledged that physical distancing may be difficult in certain situations, at present, there are no mitigating requirements which permit flexibility with regard to the current recommendation.

In that context, higher education and further education facilities are advised that physical distancing of 2 metres be maintained where possible and particularly in common areas and open circulation areas. The impact of physical distancing on capacity of teaching areas is acknowledged, however, this impact may be attenuated through staggered provision of classes/lectures and a widening of opening hour.

Is a relaxing of social distancing requirements envisaged after phase 4?

It is envisaged that as the country progresses through the stages set out in the Roadmap to Reopening Society and Business, that a relaxation in physical distancing requirements may be made. However, institutions should be prepared for the possibility that, depending on the level of transmission recorded, any relaxation of physical distancing requirements may also be reversed.

Can guidance be provided on whether, in light of the current health advice, the holding of formal graduation ceremonies can proceed in the Autumn or should they be postponed until early next year?

Any non-essential or unnecessary traffic onto a higher education or further education and training campus should be avoided. In that context, it is strongly recommended that graduation ceremonies which had been scheduled to take place in the autumn, should be postponed or replaced with virtual ceremonies. Institutions may consider holding multiple small, brief graduation ceremonies in venues which can accommodate 2m physical distancing requirements during periods where other students are not mingling with attendees (e.g. during mid-term breaks, reading weeks or through physical delineation of separate areas inaccessible to regular campus or institutional staff or students). Institutions considering this action should perform a specific risk assessment and ensure compliance with all public health advice.

Is there any guidance that can be provided to institutions in relation to recommencing educational trips, field work and facilitation of visiting students and teaching staff?

Educational trips and field work, where there is not an overnight accommodation aspect and where physical distancing can be maintained, may be undertaken but will require individual

risk assessment on a case-by-case basis by institutions. It will be necessary to keep a record of attendance and of close contact groups.

Visiting students and teaching staff should be advised in advance of the current public health advice in operation. Please refer to Section 5 International Students for guidance in relation to visiting students and teaching staff from abroad.

2. FACE MASKS

Can advice be provided as to whether higher education institutions and further education facilities may be included in the definition of “public spaces” for the use of face coverings?

The current public health advice is that face coverings are recommended in situations where it is difficult to practice social distancing such as on public transport, in retail settings and in crowded indoor public places. In a tertiary education setting, high numbers of staff and students move across campuses during the course of a normal day. In that context and from a practical point of view, there may be portions of tertiary education campuses where physical distancing cannot be maintained or where individuals may be occupying an enclosed indoor space with others for a prolonged period.

Should the wearing of face coverings be a requirement for all individuals (staff, students and visitors) entering campus areas, buildings etc across the sector?

While emerging science varies in relation to the benefits of wearing face coverings to curb the rate of COVID-19 spread, health advice currently advises the wearing of face coverings in instances where it is difficult to practice social distancing such as on public transport and in crowded public spaces such as retail stores and supermarkets.

In line with this advice, higher and further education institutions may advise staff and students that the wearing of face coverings is recommended where it is difficult to practice social distancing, particularly in instances where very close contact cannot be avoided i.e. direct instruction requiring proximity of less than 1 metre. It should be noted that the wearing of face coverings is an additional measure to other public health guidelines which must also be followed such as hand washing, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements (where possible) and is not a substitute for correct working practices. In addition, the health advice also acknowledges that face coverings are not be suitable for all individuals, for example those with breathing problems or with special needs. Where such a recommendation is made, information must be widely available, either in the form of information posters or specific training, to inform staff and students of appropriate guidelines in relation to the wearing of face coverings e.g. washing hands before putting a face covering on and after taking it off, avoiding touching the face covering while wearing it, correct removal and disposal etc. Advice from the Department of Health on the safe use of face coverings can be found [here](#).

Would the wearing of face coverings have an impact on the determination on appropriate levels of physical distancing to be adhered to?

As highlighted above, the wearing of face coverings is an additional measure to other public health guidelines which must also be followed such as hand washing, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements (where possible).

In specific instances where close proximity to other people cannot be avoided e.g. in small laboratory groups, hairdressing instruction in a further education setting, a recommendation that face shields may also be worn is advised. Where proximity of less than 1 metre is envisaged/required, a face mask and a face shield may be recommended. Face shields may also be considered in place of face coverings in the teaching context, particularly if teachers or lecturers have concerns around voice projection or if there is a requirement for students to see their face etc.

Any changes in the public health advice in relation to the wearing of face coverings should be reflected at institutional level and policies revised accordingly.

3. EARLY REOPENING OF FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING FACILITIES

Can an opinion be provided on the feasibility of allowing access to further education and training facilities to carry out assessments which could not take place remotely from Stage 2 of the Government Roadmap i.e. from June 8th?

Due to the vocational and practical nature of some Further Education & Training programmes, it was not possible to create alternative assessments for all learners which could be undertaken remotely. ETBs, having carried out risk assessments in consultation with relevant awarding bodies, have confirmed the deferral of these until safe to do so in line with Government advice and protocols. However, cases remained for programmes where alternative assessment approaches could not be created without compromising the integrity of the award standard/qualification or where access to specialist equipment for the learner to complete assessments is necessary. Education and Training Board of Ireland (ETBI) are in the process of developing guidance to support the phased re-opening of facilities to enable the completion of these outstanding assessments, in advance of the agreed phased re-opening of institutions.

4. VENTILATION

Can advice be provided on the benefits/advantages of a fresh air intake versus a recirculated air intake in controlling the rate of virus transmission?

The National Protocol explicitly states that air conditioning is not generally considered as contributing significantly to the spread of COVID-19. The Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations (REHVA) has produced guidance on how to operate and use building services in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace which can be accessed [here](#). There is also a supporting webinar developed by REHVA available [here](#) which may be of assistance also. Where practical, open ventilation is recommended for areas other than toilet areas with the general advice being to supply as much outside air as reasonably possible.

5. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students are an important part of the tertiary education sector, increasing the social and cultural diversity of the sector as well as enriching the research and learning

environment. In addition, fee income from international students is an important funding source for many institutions. As a result, institutions are seeking guidance in relation to enrolling international students for the next academic year.

In light of the current public health advice, should tertiary education institutions quarantine international students coming into Ireland?

If travel restrictions are to be imposed on individuals coming into Ireland, would exemptions for international students be a reasonable prospect?

How can the risks be minimised in relation to students from countries with high incidence of COVID-19 coming to Ireland to study?

The Department is advised that international students and visitors to institutions from abroad should be treated in the same way as any individual travelling to Ireland and no exemptions can be considered. In that context, guidelines from the Department of Health (available [here](#)) should be followed in respect of international students and visitors travelling to Ireland which advises a 14 day period of self-isolation upon arrival into Ireland and a requirement to complete a COVID-19 Passenger Locator Form. Universities with halls of residence may be able to facilitate this self-isolation period for international students and visitors, however, this is a matter for the individual institution to decide as to whether this is feasible or not.

6. STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

What specific considerations and instructions are required in respect of student accommodation complexes, Halls of Residence and Dormitories?

Can advice be provided in relation to accommodation ratios and use of shared spaces as it pertains to student accommodation?

The risk of virus transmission is particularly acute in settings where there is a high density and close proximity of individuals. In that context, student accommodation presents a potential risk and institutions will need to consider carefully how best to manage that risk. The Department is advised that institutions will need to consider their student accommodation facilities on an individual basis taking into account factors such as the design and layout of its student accommodation facilities as well as the number of students in order to mitigate the risk of virus transmission. Given the diversity of such accommodation, this will entail a case-by-case risk assessment. Consideration should be given to the management of shared spaces such as corridors, recreation areas as well as shared kitchens and bathrooms in halls of residence/dormitories. Consideration may be given to housing students from the same study programmes together.

Institutions with apartment style student facilities should consider the designation of residents in such accommodation as close contact groups. In that regard, students residing in an apartment are treated as a household and should one student contract the virus, then all residents of that apartment should restrict their movements in line with Department of Health advice. Institutions operating accommodation will need to develop or adapt protocols to manage outbreaks in these situations. A particular concern exists in relation to shared rooms as the risk of transmission is more significant in such a setting. Consideration may also

be given to retaining vacant some units/apartments with en-suite bedrooms to enable relocation should an outbreak occur in accommodation with shared facilities.

Is there specific public health guidance to be provided to students on travel to and from the family home from their student accommodation during term time?

Students travelling to and from the family home from their student accommodation during term time should do so in line with the public health advice in relation to national travel restrictions in place at the time.

7. HAND HYGIENE STATIONS

Should the sector consider the installation of hand hygiene stations at all campus building entry points for use by all individuals?

Hand-washing continues to feature prominently in the Protocol as well as in general public health advice from Government. Adequate functioning hand wash facilities will support this in institutions. In that context, institutions should consider the introduction of hand hygiene/sanitiser stations. The location of these should include campus building entry and exit points, high touchpoint areas and high footfall areas but must not lead to bottlenecks/congregations of staff and students undermining physical distancing of 2m. Where bottlenecks are likely (e.g. “teaching buildings” with multiple lecture halls), institutions could consider multiple stations within a building. As campuses reopen, institutions are advised to pay particular attention to such locations, use effective signage and respond quickly to prevent any activity that impedes distancing.

8. PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC FLOW

Can advice be provided as to whether traffic flows patterns might usefully be adopted, for example, a one-way walk system in narrow corridors?

Specific to tertiary education is the circumstance where there is mass movement through buildings and facilities on a regular basis and often on the hour. It is advised that institutions adopt pedestrian traffic flow patterns in order to facilitate physical distancing and that all such initiatives should be supported and promoted. Actions in this area could include -

- Staggering times of lectures, etc starting and finishing so not all students are moving at the same time
 - Separate and clearly marked entrances and exits
 - Deploying a one way traffic as far as feasible
 - Separate traffic going up stairs and down stairs if possible
 - Avoiding bottlenecks in foyers
 - Considering tape or other floor markings of 2m at entrance and in foyers
 - Multiple hand sanitisers at entrance/exit and/or other appropriate locations
 - Good signposting
-

9. LECTURE/CLASS TIME LENGTH

Can advice be provided as to whether it is considered there exists a 'maximum' exposure timeframe e.g. 2 hours, after which the risk of infection is increased?

In a similar vein, is there considered to be a maximum exposure in terms of "time on site" per day and per week?

There has been recent speculation concerning the risk of virus transmission for individuals occupying the same room, even with physical distancing being maintained, for more than two hours. Recent clarification on this issue advises that if an individual were to develop COVID-19, any person who has spent a cumulative period of more than two hours during a 24 hour period in an enclosed space with that person would be considered a close contact and would be required to self-isolate for 14 days. However, the focus here should be to minimise exposure as much as possible. Therefore, the need for face-to-face meetings for staff and students should be minimised. Similarly, where possible, teaching scenarios, of less than 2 hours in duration and with appropriate physical distancing, are recommended. Where longer durations are necessary, teaching scenarios exceeding 2 hours may be permitted if institutions have assessed the risk attaching and have appropriate safeguards in place.

There is no requirement to limit the time spent on site per day or per week, however, staff and students should adhere to the public health guidelines in place while on site.

10. TEMPERATURE CHECKS

From a medical/scientific point of view, is there a value to implementing temperature checking (either on a voluntary or mandatory basis) for staff / students / visitors to tertiary education campuses?

The Department is advised that temperature checking is ineffective and it does not form part of the public health advice in Ireland at this time. It also risks creating unnecessary bottlenecks or congregations of staff. Staff should be advised that they should not attend work if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 (common symptoms include a fever, a cough of any kind, shortness of breath or loss or change in sense of taste or smell) or if they are self-isolating.

11. MONITORING

What type of protocol guidance should be issued to HEIs in the event that:

- a. an individual learner/lecturer/front line worker is diagnosed with COVID-19?***
- b. a cluster is identified within the HEI?***
- c. a cluster is identified within a student accommodation block?***

In the event that an individual learner/lecturer/staff member/front line worker is diagnosed with COVID-19 or if a cluster is identified within a tertiary education institution, responsibility for the on-site immediate management of an outbreak will be coordinated by local health authorities.

In the event that a cluster is identified within a student accommodation facility, direction and guidance from public health authorities will be issued to include identification of close contacts in conjunction with public health advice and requirements for self-isolation.

It is the Department's intention to engage with the health authorities in relation to specific scenarios which will be duly communicated to institutions.

12. CONTACT LOGS

Can you provide an opinion on what cohort of tertiary education staff you would consider as essential staff going forward and aligned to the Government Roadmap?

At present, the education sector campuses are not permitted to reopen for students until Stage 4 of the Roadmap commences i.e. 20th July 2020. At present, there are no further actions envisaged insofar as education provision is concerned over and above what came into effect for Phase 1.

However, in terms of economic activity (i.e. "work"), Section 4 of the Roadmap sets out a number of considerations for a further phased return of workers subject to particular requirements and considerations and strictly in accordance with particular public health requirements. It is a matter for each institution to determine the cohort of staff which it deems essential or necessary to be on site whose phased return can be facilitated in accordance with these requirements e.g. researchers, cleaners etc.

Can you advise if contact logs are envisaged to be a requirement for all staff (academic and non-academic) and if so, how should it be implemented consistently across the sector? Should the sector consider maintaining contact logs at local unit level, for example, setting up managed entries so that student numbers can be collected at a single point of entry?

In relation to the maintaining of contact logs, institutions should advise staff and students to ensure they keep records of instances where they have been in close contact with other individuals. This may be facilitated through the keeping of class attendees lists and timetabling information.

Staff and students attending face-to-face meetings should keep their own record of such meetings and the attendees so as to facilitate close contact tracing if necessary. From a further education and training perspective, instructors should keep a record also of the groups they have interacted with.

Managed entries are not considered feasible given the potential for creating congestion and the difficulty in ensuring a consistency of approach across a potentially large number of different buildings.

13. EMPLOYEE CONSIDERATIONS (i.e. those living with those with higher-risk/underlying conditions)

Should the circumstances as outlined above be taken into consideration, particularly for scheduling for staff-student service points, and if the employee themselves has no identified underlying conditions?

The "Return to work" policy of institutions should be amended to include reference to COVID-19. As advised in the protocol, a pre-return to work form should be completed by all staff. The

pre-return to work form and any agreed individual plans arising may be useful in dealing with such cases.

The current public health advice is that there are two types of 'at risk' individuals- those that fall into the 'very high risk' group and those who fall into the 'high risk' group. There is different advice to protect people in each group. HSE guidelines in relation to people at higher risk of COVID-19 are available [here](#).

Staff who fall into the 'very high risk' group should follow the public health advice on cocooning while staff who fall into the 'high risk' group should work from home. If working from home is not possible, such staff must take extra care in the workplace to adhere to physical distancing requirements and hand hygiene.

For staff who live with individuals considered to be 'very high risk', upon their return to work, they should practice heightened vigilance with regard to hand washing, respiratory hygiene and use of personal protective equipment in order to minimize the possibility of infection. A risk based assessment should be carried out by an institution on a case-by-case basis and supplementary measures to minimise their risk of infection identified.

14. ISOLATION SPACES

Is it advised that isolation spaces need to be identified at a unit/building/campus level in this planning stage?

The Protocol advises that employees presenting with symptoms of COVID-19 while at work should be isolated and that there is a requirement for the provision of a space to isolate in advance of leaving the premises.

From a tertiary education perspective, the number of isolation spaces to be provided will be dependent on the size of the campus and numbers of students. Isolation spaces should be provided at campus level as a minimum and are also recommended in multi-use buildings on larger campuses (e.g. large building housing multiple departments/ faculties etc). An isolation space is not necessarily required in every department/unit. It is considered that generally one isolation space in a large building will suffice depending on the scale and occupancy levels of a building but a contingency plan must be in place to address a scenario of multiple individuals displaying symptoms at the same time.

15. CLEANING

Would there be a benefit to be realised in providing detailed training/guidance for cleaning teams and customer facing teams who would be doing this on a regular basis?

Can you provide any guidance in relation to the use of such cleaning products, for example, in terms of quality and grade of cleaning substances to be used?

Can you provide guidance/recommendation in relation to the implementation of cleaning regimes between classes/lectures etc?

The Protocol refers to the requirement for cleaning products to be used in respect of shared equipment e.g. PCs, printers etc as well as the implementation of cleaning regimes in places of employment.

New protocols will be required for campus and classroom cleaning services which will include twice daily cleaning of contact/touch surfaces such as table tops, work equipment, door handles and handrails implement thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. Institutions may facilitate cleaning services by minimizing the changeover of students where possible and the management of timetables to reduce movement by staff and students between teaching areas.

Shared equipment (e.g. computers, printers etc), by the nature of their use, would benefit from additional cleaning and institutions may consider requesting users to clean such equipment before and after each use.

There is a very useful guidance document produced by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) available [here](#) which provides guidance on environmental cleaning in healthcare and non-healthcare settings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. FIRST AID / FIRE MARSHALLS

Given that it is expected there will be lower numbers of staff onsite at any given time, would you recommend that additional staff should be identified/trained as onsite First Aiders and Fire Marshals to take this into consideration?

Should the First Aid kits include additional Personal Protective Equipment for those who might present with symptoms before leaving the premises?

In relation to the designation of additional First Aiders and/or Fire Marshalls, institutions should be cognisant of their requirement to comply with existing Health and Safety regulations. First Aiders with a specific role in acting as first responders should be provided with updated training on infection prevention and control principles including performance of hand hygiene and appropriate use of personal protective equipment when delivering first aid.

Further advice on first aid from the Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is available [here](#).



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