Academic Affairs Update, 3 September 2021

Dear Student,

We hope that you have had a good summer and that you had an enjoyable break after another challenging year.

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, there has been a very high level of engagement across all campuses to ensure the safety and welfare of our university community. As we move into a new phase, the ongoing support and co-operation of students and staff in the management of safe return to onsite activity will be very much appreciated.

Our planning for 2021/2022 continues to be informed by the following key principles:

- the health and safety of MTU students and staff
- the effective and consistent delivery of academic programmes maintaining the integrity and high academic and professional standing of our MTU awards
- the effective and safe continued operation of our research, enterprise and other outreach activities

With the successful roll-out of the national vaccination programme over the summer, MTU is planning for a substantially increased on-campus delivery in 2021-2022, in line with public health guidelines and specific government guidance for higher education. While we aim to achieve an overall consistent approach, there will be some variance in approach across the various campuses and departments. The increase in onsite activity will be managed on a phased basis in Semester 1, with the exact sequencing for individual student cohorts depending on factors including academic discipline, stage of programme, class size, and space considerations.

Consultation will remain a key priority of the MTU Covid-19 response, and there will be ongoing engagement with staff and student unions and management.

Operational matters

The University will issue information to staff and students early next week on matters including

- General return to campus process for students and staff
- Return to campus process for staff in the high-risk categories
• Procedures to be followed re dealing with symptoms of Covid-19, reporting of sickness, testing, and return to campus following illness
• Health & safety protocols, risk controls

Students are asked to comply with the Lead Employee/Worker Representatives and also with student leaders who are available on all campuses to assist with any issues.

No distinction will be made between vaccinated and unvaccinated staff and students in terms of attending on campus. This is considered personal medical information and can only be obtained by a registered medical practitioner.

MTU is putting a range of risk controls in place including ventilation, physical distancing, cleaning, face coverings, maintaining good hand and respiratory hygiene, and staying at home if feeling unwell.

Academic Delivery Model for Semester 1
While we aim to achieve an overall consistent approach, there will be some variance in approach across the various campuses and departments. The increase in onsite activity will be managed on a phased basis in Semester 1, with the exact sequencing for individual student cohorts depending on factors including academic discipline, stage of programme, class size, and space considerations.

Practical activities including workshops, kitchens, laboratories, performance, studio, and tutorials will be delivered in an onsite or blended remote/onsite format, depending on factors including the nature and requirements of the academic discipline, space considerations, and stage of programme.

Lectures can be delivered onsite, albeit within limits linked to reduced capacity of large lecture theatres/halls. For certain modules, it may be necessary to deliver lectures online initially, with the intention of a phased return to campus over the semester, contingent on prevailing public health guidelines and also depending on space considerations, class size, and stage of programme.

The specific academic delivery model for each given programme will be determined by the relevant academic unit. Specific department arrangements will be notified to students and posted on the relevant Covid-19 portal (https://covid19.cit.ie/; https://www.ittralee.ie/en/coronavirus/) before the start of semester.
Key dates for Semester 1/Term 1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment
Start dates for Semester/Term 1 in MTU are available here
Dates for reading week, assessment/examination, Semester 2, and conferrings are also at this link.

Semester 1 Assessment, 2021-2022
In general, examinations/timebound assessments will be scheduled before the Christmas break. In certain circumstances, it may be possible to set deadlines for submission of assignments for early January, subject to a balanced assessment workload for students. In particular, please note as follows:

**Full-time undergraduate programmes – Stage 1 only**
For full-time 1st year students, a 100% Continuous Assessment approach has been agreed by Academic Council for 2021-2022. Thus, classes will run to Friday 17th December. Please note that assessments (online and/or onsite) may be scheduled up to and including Wednesday 22nd December, depending on local circumstances and considerations.

**Full-time undergraduate programmes (Stages 2 and above); taught postgraduate programmes; all part-time programmes**
Classes will run to Friday 10th December. The Semester 1 Examination Session will run from Monday 13th December to Wednesday 22nd December inclusive.

Please see here for more details on Semester 1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Further information will be issued in due course.

**International Students**
A separate protocol for international students has been developed and is available at Protocol for Incoming International Students to MTU - COVID-19 Coronavirus Portal (cit.ie)

**Postgraduate research students**
All campus-based research activity will continue as normal.

**Work placement**
It is MTU's intention that work placement will go ahead for students in 2021/2022 in accordance with prevailing sectoral, Public Health and Government guidelines. Insurance and health and safety operational requirements must be met to satisfy risk management and insurance requirements.
In the event that a student has a medical condition or for any reason is not in a position to proceed with work placement due to individual circumstances related to Covid-19, the student should communicate these to the academic department at the earliest possible opportunity, under the relevant policy for IECs/mitigation.

Library
Opening hours and details regarding ‘click and collect’ and ‘scan and deliver’ services will be posted on the relevant library websites and Covid-19 portals. Please note that the Bishopstown Campus Library is currently closed due to essential maintenance works. It will open in late September/early October: updates will be posted here

Student services and supports
Student services and supports will continue to be available, both onsite and remotely, to assist and enable students over the coming year. It is anticipated that there will be substantially increased onsite activity in the area of sports, and clubs and societies from Semester 1.

These supports include the Student Assistance Fund (SAF). Given the ongoing importance of the Learning Management Systems (Canvas, Blackboard) over the coming year, students are reminded of the importance of access to a computer and internet connectivity to support their learning. Students experiencing financial difficulties in this or any other contexts are advised to apply for SAF support.
Details of all student services and supports are available on the relevant Covid-19 Portal and are updated regularly.

Communications
Please continue to email covid19cork@mtu.ie or covid19kerry@mtu.ie or covid.sicknesscork@mtu.ie for any queries relative to your campus.

Yours sincerely,

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