

Archive of President's Bulletin

Email Message



University College Dublin
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath

President's Bulletin
Professor Andrew Deeks

President's Special Bulletin #2 - 29 March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

On Friday 27 March, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced a further intensification in the social distancing measures to be undertaken to combat COVID-19 for the period through to Easter Sunday (12 April). These measures intend to keep everyone in their homes to the greatest extent possible, while continuing the provision of essential services and an effective response to the current health crisis. The University Management Team met yesterday and today to consider the implications of these latest measures on the operation of UCD, and I write to you today to update you on the changes to our operations which are now required.

Since January, when we became aware of the potential impact of COVID-19 through our colleagues in our Beijing Global Centre, we started to make contingency plans for responding. Our China operations were the first to operate remotely, and we quickly found learning alternatives for students studying at our Chinese campuses and students due to travel to China. We have kept our on-campus residences open to our students and have made self-isolation provision for those who need it. We took the decision to transfer all our teaching, assessment and supports for the remainder of the current trimester from campus to at-distance. The scale of this transfer is enormous, and I am deeply appreciative of all the work undertaken by faculty and by support and professional staff who have enabled and assisted faculty to now deliver online, allowing us to support the academic progression of our students. I am also deeply appreciative of the work being done throughout our employee community to minimise the impact of this crisis on the experience of our students, to support them, and to continue the operations of the University to the greatest extent possible.

In my recent bulletins I have also thanked and praised our healthcare community – faculty, staff, students and graduates – who are on the frontline. Once again, on behalf of the entire UCD community, I want to express our pride and appreciation to each of you.

The new restrictions on movement and gathering require that everyone remain within their homes, with the following exceptions:

- to travel to and from work, or for purposes of work, only where the work is an essential health, social care or other essential service and cannot be done from home
- to shop for essential food, beverage and household goods or collect a meal
- to attend medical appointments and collect medicines and other health products
- for vital family reasons, such as providing care to children, elderly or vulnerable people
- to take brief individual physical exercise within 2km of your home, which may include children from your household, as long as you adhere to strict 2m physical distancing
- for farming purposes, i.e. food production and/or care of animals

As was stated in previous guidance, all employees should work remotely from home if at all possible.

Education is not in the list of essential services for which commuting to work will be allowed, so I now ask faculty to make sure that you can deliver your teaching and assessments from home, and to the greatest extent possible can continue your research from home. If you have been using campus facilities such as web streaming, please make alternative arrangements. There will be a grace period until 6pm on Monday 30 March for people who need to make necessary arrangements to wind down their on-campus activities in an orderly way. This should however be done in a way that minimises travel and personal interaction as much as possible. If you intend to access the campus on Monday, please contact Estate Services at estates@ucd.ie to let them know when you intend to come in and which building you will be accessing.

From Tuesday 31 March until 12 April 2020, in keeping with the Government directive, all employees will work entirely from home, with the exception of those involved in delivering the following essential services, where delivering that service requires presence on the campus:

1. Delivery of a COVID-19 related service and other services to the community included on the Government list
2. Student residence services, including catering and support services
3. Security and essential maintenance
4. Critical support for animal, organism and plant facilities
5. Continued operation of critical infrastructure for the support of remote operation of the University
6. Preservation of resources that are critical to the research process and not easily reproducible (e.g. biobanks, frozen cell and tissue cultures, etc.)

7. Support for cryogenic research equipment and other equipment where temporary decommissioning would create major difficulties
8. Hazardous waste management
9. Equipment oversight for critical safety purposes and checking of facilities for any operational issues including floods, power outages and temperature fluctuations
10. Safety walk-throughs by technical staff
11. Emergency response
12. In a small number of exceptional cases of essential scientific research, for example where the research directly supports the response to COVID-19, or where a long-running and critical set of experiments would be invalidated were the research to be interrupted.

The campus residences will remain operational, but students may not have external visitors and must follow social distancing protocols. The Estates team, Student Health and Student Advisers will continue to look after the students who are living here, and I would like to thank each of you for your commitment and dedication at this time.

Employees who must attend campus for one of the reasons above must obtain a letter to this effect from their head of unit. Employees commuting to the campus under these arrangements must carry the letter and UCD identification with them for inspection by the Gardaí. A pro forma letter has been developed for this purpose. Unit heads will soon be receiving instructions as to how to process these requests.

Faculty who wish to request access to the campus to continue research under point 12 should, after gaining the approval of their Head of School, apply for permission to our Vice-President for Research, Innovation and Impact, Professor Orla Feely, noting that permission will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances, or where the research is directly supporting the fight against COVID-19.

I know that working and studying in the current circumstances is very difficult, and has now become more difficult, but we can and will come through this. I ask that you stay safe and take care of yourselves and those close to you, and I thank you for your continued cooperation and contribution during these truly unprecedented times.

Kind regards,

Andrew

Professor Andrew J Deeks

President, University College Dublin



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