



28 August 2020

Dear Student,

I hope you and your loved ones are well during this public health emergency. You will all have many questions about teaching during the coming year. Some of this is at the mercy of the changing public health situation and the government regulations that follow from that. Maynooth University is developing a blended approach to teaching for the coming year. The University will communicate with students about what this means for accessing campus and for conduct on campus.

For the teaching of Geography, this means that, insofar as the public health situation allows, we will try to offer some elements of in-person teaching alongside other materials provided online. The latest guidelines from the Health Service Executive mandate face covering plus a distance of at least one metre for activities that cannot be followed on the basis of 2m distancing. Lecturers will generally not be wearing masks to lecture so the distance between lecturers and students will be 2m or more for lectures. The current guidelines also mandate a maximum room capacity of 50 for indoor events.

The precise arrangements for each lecture course will vary with the size of the group taking the course and judgements we make about the most effective way to teach the content of that course. All courses will have some large degree of online learning so that the use of a laptop and access to a good internet connection will be very desirable.

Some of you will wonder if it is possible to follow your degree entirely online. The university official responsible for academic and student matters is the Registrar. Here are the words of the Registrar on remote learning, and we are following this leadership:

“Some students ask if they can study entirely remotely. For some, this is because of the difficulty of commuting or the cost of accommodation, while in other cases it is because of health concerns. Our position is:

- a) We are not a distance teaching university and we cannot commit that a programme can be completed remotely.
- b) It may be possible to complete some modules remotely. A Head of Department may give a student permission to do a module remotely, if it is clear that attendance will not be required for either teaching or assessment. However, that cannot be taken as a commitment that other modules, or subsequent years, can be taken remotely.
- c) Students who are planning to take a module remotely should be clear that this is a more limited experience and that it is not our recommended approach.
- d) In cases of serious medical issues, we can consider “splitting a year”, and allowing a student to take some modules this year and some the following year. This has implications for progression and grants, but may be preferable to deferral.”



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However, for some staff and some students health considerations will make attendance on campus too risky and we will facilitate, insofar as we are able, students having access to as much of our course content as possible via remote access. We will record as much as we can and place that online but of course some elements of teaching, such as field-walks, are very difficult to provide in an online form.

So, keep in contact with us and let us know of your needs and circumstances. We will develop an online form for this during the semester as part of our Personal and Medical Circumstances reporting. We will also be in touch closer to the start of the semester with the precise arrangements for the various courses we are offering

With best wishes

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Professor of Geography and Head of Department

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