Studying in Maynooth University
A guide for students studying in 2020-21 in response to COVID-19

3 September 2020

Contents:

The university campus has been closed for on-campus teaching since mid-March because of the public health measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We are planning to reopen in September 2020, with orientation for new incoming students on the week of 21 September, and most on-campus teaching resuming on 28 September.

This document is intended as a guide to what to expect when studying at Maynooth University with COVID-19 protective measures in place. This describes the situation and our plans at the moment, but these may be updated at any time as the situation changes.

Preparing the Maynooth University Campus.

Over the summer we have done extensive work to prepare the campus for the return to teaching for staff and students. An individual risk assessment has been conducted for each department. Based on these assessments, and the current public health guidelines, physical work has been done throughout the campus. These include:

- Signage in all buildings to remind you of the measures in place.
- Sanitizers throughout the campus to enable you to sanitize your hands frequently.
- Floor marking as a guide to where you should walk, and to encourage separation.
- One-way systems in places, to increase separation.
- In offices open to callers, we have installed Perspex barriers.
- In the Phoenix restaurant, in the library, and in other areas, we have reduced the density of seating to enable separation.
- In teaching spaces (lecture theatres and classrooms) we have arranged the seats to enable separation. Where seats are moveable, the locations are marked on the floor.

Illustrations of these measures are in the pictures on the next page.

Signage to remind you of the measures in place.

Floor marking to encourage separation.

Your responsibility as a student.

The key to reducing the spread of infection is how you behave. We are asking you to play your part in protecting yourself, and others by four simple actions:

1. **Stay away:** You should not come on campus if you have symptoms of COVID-19, or if you have been advised to self-isolate or restrict your movement. This is the most important action you can take to protect others. If you start to have symptoms when you are on campus, call 01-474 7999 and our security team will guide you to an isolation space where you can get medical advice and wait to be collected.

2. **Social distance:** Stay away from others as much as you can. Maintain a distance of 2 metres wherever possible, and always maintain at least a 1 metre distance.

3. **Keep it clean:** The basic hygiene measures you should take are to wash and sanitise your hands regularly, and to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. When you take a seat in a classroom you should wipe down the desk in front of you, and when you sit in a computer room, you should wipe down the mouse and keyboard. As a courtesy to the next person, please also wipe them down when you finish.

4. **Wear a face covering:** Wearing a face covering can give added protection to others, so we are asking you to wear a face covering in class and when inside buildings. We know that some people are unable to wear face masks for medical reasons. If you are unable to wear a mask, consider wearing a face shield. If you cannot do either, then you may still come on campus, but you should take extra care to avoid being close to other people, and try to maintain 2 metre distance at all times.

It is really important that you maintain these procedures consistently. The greatest risk is likely to be in social activities where you are more relaxed. We are asking you to take responsibility for your actions. If you think a room is overcrowded, take the initiative and leave.

When you register you will be directed to a safety briefing designed to explain these precautions. Please watch this carefully, and make sure you understand it before proceeding to register. Further information for students will be updated at:
https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/coronavirus/students

Facilities on campus

We expect to have as many facilities as possible in operation on campus. However most will have reduced capacity because of social distancing requirements.   While most offices will be open as normal, we will ask you to make contact by email or phone as much as possible, and to call in by appointment where possible.

- The Phoenix Restaurant will be open, but with reduced capacity.

- The Starbucks in the library will be open, but with reduced capacity.

- The University Library will be open for book borrowing and as a reading space, but the number of reading spaces will be reduced.

- Computer rooms will remain open, but we will ask that you wipe down the mouse and keyboard before and after use.

- The Student Hub will be open and provide access to the Health Centre and Counselling services.

- Clubs and societies will operate under new guidance, aligned with the guidance for each sport or type of activity.

Reduced seating in the library

Perspex screen in an office.

Teaching spaces.

We have rearranged our teaching spaces in line with the public health guidelines for higher education. This means that:

- Most seats are arranged with at least one metre spacing. In rooms where the seating is mobile, there are floor markings to indicate where the seats should be. Please do not move the seats from these positions.

- A proportion of seats are laid out at 2 metre spacing. These seats are intended for students who are high risk, and those who are unable to wear a face covering for medical reasons. If you are not in one of these categories, please allow those who need them to have access to these seats.

- The lecturer is 2 metres from the nearest student. This is because the lecturer is normally facing the class and normally doing a lot more talking than others, so we are taking the extra precaution of added distance.

We have also limited the maximum size of any venue to 50 people, in line with the guidelines.

Classroom with floor markings to indicate the location of seats

Door fitted with a hold open device which releases in the event of a fire alarm

Face covering in classrooms: In teaching situations we will ask that you wear a face covering. We know that some people are unable to wear face masks for medical reasons. If you are unable to wear a mask, consider wearing a face shield. If you cannot do either, then you may still come into classes, but you should take extra care to avoid being close to other people, and use one of the seats at 2 metre spacing.

Entering and leaving: We want you to maintain social distancing when entering and leaving teaching spaces.   Please do not congregate close together outside the venue in advance. When entering and leaving, please do so calmly and with a 2 metre separation, and avoid touching surfaces as much as possible.

In many of the theatres with multiple entrances, some doors will be designated as "in only" or "out only".   In many cases the doors will be fitted with door holds. The devices allow one person to open the door and keep it open, so that others can come in without touching the door. These will automatically release in the case of a fire alarm, and so are a safe way to hold doors open. These will be used on certain doors in teaching spaces, and in corridors.

Staggered starts: While we traditionally timetable lectures for 1 hour, we normally expect lectures to begin at 5 minutes past the hour and finish 5 minutes before, thus allowing 10 minutes to move between lectures.   This year we will ask lecturers to shorten their lectures by 5 minutes wherever possible, and we will have some venues starting at 5 minutes after the hour, and others at 10 minutes past. Each venue will have marked on the door whether it is a "5 past" or a "10 past" start time.   This is designed to reduce the congestion in corridors and allow more social distancing in entering and leaving venues.

Practical classes: There will be special measures in place for practical classes. These will vary depending on the practical, but in general the demonstrators will move around less than usual, and will normally wear face shields. The capacity of practical classes will be reduced and you will be asked to wipe down equipment before and after use.

Sanitizers at key locations.

Your timetable and on-campus activity.

These social distancing measures in teaching spaces will reduce the number of people in each venue and reduce the amount of time you will be on campus. Most of the large modules will be unable to fit in a single venue, so they will mostly take one of two approaches:

- Some will use streaming software, so that a proportion of the class will be invited to each lecture and the others will be able to view online, either live or later. So for example, if you are in a module with 90 students scheduled for 2 lectures per week, you might find that you are asked to attend one lecture in person, and watch the other one on the streaming system.

- Others will deliver a lot of the content remotely, and use the timetable slots to meet the class in groups for discussion/seminar sessions. In this model you will watch all the lectures online and attend when invited for an on-campus discussion.

In either approach you will be asked to attend a proportion of the classes in person, and the rest will be delivered remotely. The frequency of on-campus sessions will depend on the size of the module, and the public health advice in force at the time. At present the maximum in any venue is 50 people, so if you are in a large module you will be able to attend a smaller number of on-campus sessions.

How much will you be on-campus? That will vary a lot, depending on the subject you are taking, the size of the modules, and whether or not there are tutorials or practicals. For most students the time on campus will be significantly less than half what you would expect in a normal year. However, you should expect to be on campus for a number of classes each week.

In general we have retained the normal teaching timetable, so each module is assigned similar times and venues to last year. This means that:

a) The same subjects are compatible.
b) Lectures will be at the same times as usual.

We will release the online timetable on 11th September. This will be an indicative timetable, as there will be changes once the numbers in each module become clear. However, it will give you an indication of the times allocated to each module. It will tell you if a module is being delivered exclusively online. For modules with a blended delivery it will not tell you which activities are online and which you should attend – these will be arranged in a separate rota in each module, and you will hear from the module coordinators via Moodle.

We are preparing indicative samples showing how much time a student will be on campus in each module, and these will be published on the COVID-19 website as soon as they are available, and updated as needed. Check the site at:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/coronavirus/students

Communication about when to attend.

When to attend: Your lecturers will tell you when to attend and when we expect you to participate remotely. Our main methods of communication with you will be:

Moodle: We will use the Moodle site for each module to give you information about when to attend. Please make sure that you check the Moodle page for every module you are taking regularly for updates. You will get access to these Moodle pages after you register for the modules.

Email: We will send information by email to your university email address (MUmail). Please make sure that you check your MUmail regularly. You should not forward your MUmail to another account, as this facility is being discontinued. The only email we will send to your personal email is the first email you will receive which tells you how to register for your programme.

Change of mind – changing modules.

For first year students in courses where there are multiple subject options, we allow a 4 week "change of mind" opportunity, so you can switch subjects. We will continue to offer this flexibility this year, but you should try to make your final decisions as early as possible. Making a late change of mind can mean disruption to the start of your studies and make things more difficult for you.

To help you make up your mind, you can join a module as a guest in the first few weeks – we call this "auditing" a module. This means that you are not properly registered for the module, but you can attend the online classes, and see if you like the subject. To arrange this please contact the relevant department and ask for the enrolment key for the module. You will find guidance on how to self-enrol on the Moodle support webpage at

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/technology-enhanced-learning/moodle

Please remember that if you enrol to audit a module you are a guest for the first four weeks and your audit enrolment will be suspended after the 23ʳᵈ October, so you will need to register for the module before that date if you wish to continue. You can do this via the **Student Web.**

Recording attendance for contact tracing.

We need to record attendance at classes for contact tracing purposes. This is separate from any attendance monitoring for academic reasons, and is an important part of the fight to stop the spread of the virus.

We will monitor attendance in three ways, but we need your cooperation in all three.

Classlists: If a student is tested positive for COVID-19 we may want to use the list of people who were scheduled to be in a class as a contact list. To make sure this works, please DO NOT attend any lectures or classes that you are not scheduled to attend, unless you have the agreement of the lecturer.

The COVID app: If a student is tested positive, the health authorities may want to use the data from the COVID-19 app to work out who was a close contact. To help with this, please make sure that you have downloaded the app to your phone.

The MU contact tracker: We are planning to have a Maynooth University location recording app. Once you have downloaded the app, you can scan the QR code in each location that you spend time, for example a classhall or a laboratory. The app will track your presence, and in the larger venues, will record what part of the room you are sitting in. This will provide valuable data to help us to trace close contacts if needed. Please help us by downloading this app, and making sure to use it whenever you go to an on-campus. Once this app is ready, we will provide further information on where to download.

Taking responsibility for your learning.

You will have less time on-campus, and yet you will be expected to complete the same modules and achieve the same learning outcomes. This means that you will have to take more of the responsibility for your own learning than ever. This will mean:

- Making sure you attend whenever you are expected to.
- Making sure you keep up with the remote teaching and assignments.
- Checking your own progress regularly to make sure that you are up to date with your work.

You may be tempted to miss lectures, especially if they are also available online. However you should make the effort to attend whenever you are expected to. It will be quite difficult to study fully remotely, without the benefit of in-person contact with your lecturers, and the opportunity to meet other students. In general, we think that students who try to do this are

much less likely to succeed. Learning is best achieved in a community, which is the essence of what a university is, so please take the opportunity to be part of the collective learning environment when you can.

The IT tools we will use.

For remote learning we will use a variety of tools and each department may have its own specialist software.   However there are three standard items that you will need to be familiar with:

Moodle: Moodle is the university virtual learning environment. There is a Moodle page for each module, and this should be your first starting point for information about the schedule, the content, and any task or assessments you are expected to complete. There is often a good deal of information in the forum associated with each Moodle page, so please read the questions and answers there both to keep up to date, and to avoid repeating questions that have already been answered.

Panopto: The Panopto software allows streaming of lectures. We expect that this will be used in a lot of modules, as it allows the lecturer to give the lecture to part of the class, while recording it for streaming either live or later (or both). If you are watching the lecture on a computer, you will be able to switch the picture between the slides and the lecturer, and other cameras too at times. If you are watching on a phone or mobile device, you will see the main camera but will not be able to select views. The system will add subtitles, and if you are watching later, the system will add a table of contents so you can review a part of the lecture easily.

This is a one-way system, so you can watch and hear the lecture, but you do not need a camera and you are never on screen. You don't need to download any software to watch, all you have to do is click on a link in the Moodle page for the module.   You will need a reliable internet connection, and a headset if you do not want to disturb others.

Teams: Microsoft Teams is a system that is used for multiple person video meetings. This will probably be used mostly for the smaller classes, where we expect that everyone will participate in the discussion. You can download Teams – it is free as part of your student Office 365 licence – and start to get familiar with its functions.

Students in at-risk categories.

The HSE has identified some groups of people who are particularly at risk from COIVID-19. Information about the at-risk categories can be found on the HSE website at:

https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html

If you are in the Very High Risk category: The HSE advice is that you should "cocoon" and therefore you should not come on campus. Unfortunately, in most cases this will mean deferring your study, as you will not be able to complete your programme without attending. However there may be some modules that you can work on remotely, and you should contact the relevant Departments to see what is possible.

If you are in the High Risk category: You should follow the HSE advice for high risk people and take extra precautions when on campus. You should use the seats that are spaced at 2 metres, make sure to wear a face covering, and wash or sanitize your hands thoroughly. If in doubt about whether it is appropriate for you to attend, you should consult your doctor for advice.

If you live with people in the very high risk category: You should follow the HSE advice for ? high risk people and take extra precautions when on campus. You should use the seats that are spaced at 2 metres, make sure to wear a face covering, and wash or sanitize your hands thoroughly.

The ethical code: proper use of material, proper behaviour online.

As you know, the rules of the university provide guidance on what is considered unacceptable student behaviour, and breaches of these regulations can result in disciplinary action and penalties. You can see the regulations on the university policies page at:

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/university-policies/university-regulations

The use of blended learning increases the risk of certain types of breach of the regulations, and so it is important to consider the following:

Improper use of recordings of teaching: All of our teaching materials are owned by the university and the staff who produce them, and you do not have permission to use them for any purposes other than your own study. We do not normally allow recording of lectures, but this year you may have access to recordings. This means you should be very careful not to allow these to be shared with others or used for other purposes. If you find that some material from a lecture is available where it should not be, please report it to the lecturer immediately.

Harassment of staff or students: As we are teaching remotely you may find that you have access to the email address of others in your class, or that you form additional channels through other media, and you may even have access to recordings of student participation in virtual classrooms. Occasionally we find that students misuse these channels to harass or abuse other students, or staff, with abusive material, racist or sexual material, or threats. Any abuse of students, or staff, on-campus or online, is a breach of the regulations and can result in disciplinary action. If you are abused online by a student, please keep a record of the material, and report this to campus security.

Plagiarism and academic integrity: When studying remotely, there might be more temptation to copy material from other sources. Please remember that any work you produce should be your own work, and that copying the work of others is a serious academic offence. The university library has a comprehensive guide on Academic Integrity. In this guide there is broad information on plagiarism and referencing.

You should also have some consideration for the staff who are supporting you in your remote studies. Most of the university staff did not expect to be teaching online, and it is a time-consuming way to teach. They often find that they type answers the same question multiple times, often questions they have already answered in lectures. Please try to watch the lecture and read the material before asking questions. Maynooth University academic staff are very committed to teaching. We are committed to looking after our staff by maintaining reasonable working hours, so please do not expect instant answers to your questions after hours or at weekends.

What to do if you have symptoms.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should follow the HSE advice. You should not come on campus, and you should limit your contact with others as far as possible. See:

https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/

If you have symptoms when on campus, you should call campus security at extension 7999 (01-474 7999). They will guide you to an isolation room where you can wait safely. While there you can contact your doctor or the Student Health Centre, and you can arrange to be collected to go home. If there is no-one to collect you, our team will help you to get home without risk of infecting others.

If you live on campus, our team may ask you to move to a separate room, to minimise the risk of passing on infection to others.

Further information

A university is a complex place, and we know we have not answered everything here. If you need more information, here is some guidance on who to contact.

If your question is about the specifics of your academic programme, you probably need to contact the academic department. See https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/departments	
Registration: If you question is about your registration, you should contact the Student Records Office. https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/records	records.office@mu.ie
Fees: If your question is about fees, you should contact the Student Fees and Grants office https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/student-fees-grants	fees.office@mu.ie
Accommodation – on campus: Contact the residence office https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/accommodation	residence.office@mu.ie
Accommodation – off campus: Contact Homefinder: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/student-services/Homefinder	homefinder.service@mu.ie
For questions about Moodle: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/technology-enhanced-learning/moodle	moodlesupport@mu.ie
For information about students services: Counselling, Health Centre, Creche, Budgeting advice, see: https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/student-services	student.services@mu.ie
Not sure who to ask? If you are not sure who to ask, contact the student helpdesk. studenthelp@mu.ie	studenthelp@mu.ie