

Returning to Campus – Employee’s Advice Document

The University is working towards a plan for returning to Campus in September 2021 in line with the Government position to increase on site learning for students in Higher Education for the coming academic year.

With this in mind, I am sure that you will have a number of questions with respect to returning to campus. For some it will be almost 18 months since we last worked on campus.

We have put together some questions and answers in anticipation of some of the queries that may arise.

1. When will I Return to Campus work?

The logistics of returning to campus are now underway with the various Colleges, Schools, and Professional Service units. You will be contacted by either your Head of School/Unit, or Line Manager to advise you of the plans for your area.

2. What date are we likely to be coming back to Campus?

It is likely to be from 30 August 2021 onwards. It will depend on the area and the nature of the work. So some areas may come back before the 30th August and others may be after that date.

3. What if I am in a high risk category and do not wish to return to Campus?

Please familiarise yourself with (1) the at risk categories. If you are required to return to campus but fall into these categories, or you are pregnant and not yet vaccinated and believe, (2) you are unable to return you may be referred to our Occupational Health Service to be reviewed. Your Line Manager/Head of School/Unit will be asked to advise the level of on-campus activity you are being required to undertake. This will help to inform the Occupational Health Service to advise more clearly. Once a report has been received back from Occupational Health then the recommendations will be considered by your Line Manager/Head of School/Unit with support from HR. We will endeavour to consider any reasonable accommodation that can be made. If the work must be carried out on campus to meet the greater on campus activity for students, then alternative work or some amendment to contracted hours may need to be considered.

4. Will I be required to complete a Return to Campus form?

In compliance with Health and Safety Guidelines, all staff will be required to complete a return to campus form at least 3 days before their return to work. The form will be to ensure that they are not symptomatic, or required to isolate at that time. This year the form will have less questions and will not ask staff for medical status i.e. whether an employee is deemed high risk or not. Where an employee is high risk and has concerns these should be discussed directly with your Line Manager/Head of School/Unit. [You can find the form here](#) (note NUI Galway staff will need to log in with their Office 365 credentials to access the form).

5. What do I do if I have any symptoms

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu.

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you’ve noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), you should self-isolate, and phone your GP straight away to see if you need a free COVID-19 test. You should inform your Line Manager/Head of School/Unit that you are unwell, and have contacted your GP and awaiting a test. Where you can work remotely, you should continue to work if you are feeling well enough. If you are unwell, and unable to work then you will be required to provide a medical certificate.

Once you have the results of your COVID-19 test you should inform your Line Manager/Head of School/Unit and if you have a positive test, then it will be recorded as COVID related leave with pay. Any other absence will be recorded as normal sick leave.

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE Website. If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a COVID-19 walk-in test centre.

6. Can I continue to work remotely?

At this time, we are working on a Remote/Hybrid Working Policy that we hope will be approved by the end of September. In the meantime, we would see that in returning to campus for the coming academic year it is likely to be a hybrid-working model with staff working a number of days on campus and some days remotely at home. At this time, we are not being prescriptive in what that blended working arrangement should be, it would depend on the business needs. We are asking managers that if individuals have strong needs to return to campus on a regular basis, this will be given appropriate consideration. We have asked Line Managers and Heads of School to be as fair and transparent in any decision that is made. It is important however to note that whether you are working on campus or remotely, you are required to be residing in the Republic of Ireland.

7. What are the Public Health Measures to be in place for the return to campus?

The University will continue to comply with the Public Health Measures that are in place at the time. These may change over time, but we will continue to advise you on the measure applying to our sector. Face Coverings have been purchased for all staff and will be available through their area to support staff as we return to campus. Face masks must be worn in indoor on site shared settings in accordance with prevailing public health regulations and guidance.

8. What supports are available to me if I am worried or nervous about returning to campus?

The Occupational Health Provider (OHP) and Employee Assistance Service (EAS) are available to staff if they are worried or concerned about any aspect of returning to campus and wish to discuss those concerns and worries with someone.

9. Will my work area be cleaned regularly?

Each area will have the regular cleaning in place. In addition, each area will be provided with the necessary cleaning products for staff to clean down workstations within their area as required.

10. What is the UniCov project?

As a staff member you have the option to partake in the university study as NUI Galway is part of an important new on campus COVID-19 testing research study.

The aim is to assess rapid testing for COVID-19 and develop an early warning system for outbreaks in universities. Ultimately, the findings could prove to be a vital part in the planning for as many students and staff to be back on campus.

To succeed, we need staff and students to take part, even if fully vaccinated. You will have the opportunity to be tested twice a week.

Please consider participating in the UniCoV study. You can sign up here at <https://unicov.org/join-the-study-nui-galway/>

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11. What is the position with the Covid Vaccination?

We will not be requiring you to show if you have had a vaccination. We would of course encourage staff to avail of the vaccination.

The HSE Vaccination portal is now open and you can register at <https://vaccine.hse.ie/> To register online you will need your Personal Public Service (PPS) number, your Eircode, a mobile phone number and an email address.

After registering on the website or by phone, you will receive an appointment 3-7 days before your vaccination at a HSE vaccination centre.

12. Employee Responsibilities

- complete and submit the [Pre-Return to Work form](#) at least 3 days before returning to work.
- inform their employer if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to allow their safe return to work. For example, if they are in the very high-risk category.
- stay at home if displaying any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or feeling unwell.
- self-isolate or restrict their movements at home in line with their family doctor and/or public health advice.
- contact their family doctor promptly if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- undergo, as agreed, any voluntary COVID-19 testing that may be required in their workplace as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health and implemented by their employer.
- participate in any induction training provided by the employer on their return to the workplace.
- co-operate with their employer in relation to prevention measures including physical distancing, hand hygiene and wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where required.

Note: Employers and staff must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this will be updated on a regular basis.