



DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Press Statement

March 18, 2021

Continuation of the 2021 Academic Year for all Higher Education Institutions

After consultation with the State of Emergency (SoE) Controller Mr. David Manning, the Department of Higher Education Research Science and Technology (DHERST) has been instructed to notify all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that learning and teaching academic activities must continue as per their respective academic calendars.

We would like to clarify that the recent instructions released by the SoE Controller to reschedule learning and teaching activities for this academic year, at this stage only applies to Primary and Secondary Schools, not Higher Education Institutions.

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must ensure that the following instructions are adhered to:

- strictly follow and implement strategies approved by HEIs governing bodies to mitigate COVID-19 challenges;
- reschedule 2021 graduation ceremony (for example, if a HEI planned graduation was previously planned for March or April, the HEI is to plan the graduation to a later date);
- if possible arrange for contact classes to be in smaller groups with face-to-face teaching, for example, one/two hours' duration for each group. Consider allocating one additional hour of class contact time for each unit /subject offered at the institution;
- maximize the use of learning and teaching facilities by offering afternoon and/or evening classes. This approach will allow the HEI to manage smaller groups of students in the class/lecture rooms/library/laboratory, keeping to the requirements of physical distancing for students and staff;
- consider dividing the class in cohort(s) as such that non-residential students could have face-to-face contact classes in the morning to noon and residential students could have face-to-face classes in the afternoon;

- where online study is possible, it must be used to full capacity;
- consider a blended learning approach where online study is partially possible; and
- where there is no possibility for online study or a blended learning approach, handouts must be used and distributed to students to enhance their learning experience.

The following instructions must also be adhered to as per the State of Emergency orders and:

- Residential students or staff who have left a HEI's campus of their own accord must, upon return, be quarantined (by self-isolation) for a minimum of 14 days. If, however, the students and staff have been medically cleared of the COVID-19, they may be allowed to reintegrate into the campus. If a student's absenteeism is in breach of HEI's academic and non-academic policies, he or she must repeat the academic year;
- Each HEI must identify a clinic on campus or other suitable facility to provide healthy and quality quarantine or isolation.
- Through DHERST, the SoE Controller Mr. David Manning will assist us in getting PPEs that will be supplied and additional equipment to establish clinical isolation rooms if required;
- It is vital that bed numbers in HEIs medical services need to be increased as a precautionary initial treatment plan;
- Non-residential students should not be denied an education. Therefore each HEI must ensure that before those students enter the campus, they are adequately assessed. If they have any symptoms of cold and flu, the student(s) must be isolated. Otherwise, they should be allowed to continue their studies as mentioned above. No student should be left behind;
- All HEIs must maintain strict control and monitoring of campus access (in commuting to and from to the campus);
- All students enrolled in health and education academic programs whose studies require clinical or teaching practicum must complete the academic year 2021, including their clinical or practicum hours. Strict control measures must be facilitated by the HEI to ensure the students and staff safety is also maintained. Further advice concerning teacher education and health programs will be communicated to HEIs; and
- All HEIs should collaborate with their local health authority and the HEI alumnae to provide educational awareness in their surrounding communities.

No one can save us from COVID-19 but ourselves. We must do what is right to protect ourselves and those around us. Let us start right now by taking the sensible precautions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 Coronavirus.

On behalf of the Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology Hon. Wesley Raminai, MP, I take this opportunity to thank all the HEIs Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, Presidents, Directors, Principals, Academic and Non-academic colleagues for the continued support during the COVID-19 challenges. I also acknowledge students' continued support and cooperation during this unprecedented time the effort they made in their resilience demonstrated.

We pray to the Lord, in this time of uncertainty. We pray for His wisdom and peace. We pray for those who are sick that they would be healed. We pray for health care workers, that they would have the strength and energy to care for the sick. We pray for the wisdom of leaders as they navigate difficult decisions in protecting us all. We ask the Lord to use this time to unite us all and turn toward their neighbors with love and compassion. Please remember that the Lord goes before us, and we are not alone.

Thank you and I wish you all the best in the successful continuation of the 2021 academic activities.


Professor Fr. Jan Czuba
Secretary DHERST