

GMIT PRESIDENT ADVISES STUDENTS TO CONTINUE THEIR HIGHER EDUCATION IN 2020/21
GMIT Academic year expected to commence 28 September for all GMIT students

The President of GMIT, Dr Orla Flynn, together with the presidents of Ireland's Institutes of Technology, encourages incoming students and continuing students across the country to continue their higher education in the next academic year (2020/21) and to progress with study toward careers that will be essential for the recovery of our regions.

The IoT presidents issued a statement today (Monday 15 June) through their representative body, the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), setting out how they will support students and communities over the coming months and through the next academic year.

The statement reads - The current global public health pandemic has impacted all and has shaken confidence and occasioned concern as to the future. This is particularly true for third level students who want to know what the coming academic year will look like and how, in a time of restriction with limited economic opportunity, they can best progress with appropriate study toward careers that will be essential as we forge a path through recovery. This statement from the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) on behalf of member institutions throughout the country sets out how we will support students and communities over the coming months and through the next academic year.

GMIT students were informed on Friday (12 June) that the new academic year will commence on 28 September, and that a new method of delivery will be blended, i.e. a mix of online lectures and onsite practicals and tutorials, in compliance with HSE/public health guidelines. Further communications will be issued directly to students by email and on GMIT's website in the coming weeks.

Dr Orla Flynn, President of GMIT, says: "We look forward to welcoming all our current students back to class on the 28th September, following a brief period of induction where we will appraise them of how the semester will work and prep them for the year ahead. Our new first years will also start on the 28th and even in the current pandemic it will still be an exciting time for them. We are doing a lot of work behind the scenes making sure our campuses will be safe; through social distancing, use of PPE where needed, and careful timetabling. The on-campus experience is important but our focus is on ensuring the health and wellbeing of the entire GMIT community; most theory classes will be delivered remotely."

Dr Joseph Ryan, on behalf of THEA and Institutes of Technology stated the following: "Our Institutes of Technology are particularly well placed to support students through the COVID-19 learning process, while maintaining a positive student experience. Our institutions are geographically well distributed throughout Ireland, specialise in small student group teaching, and are accustomed to more interactive learning. The innovation and dedication of our staff has been central to the successful completion of the 2019/20 academic year. This agility allows us to deliver this key message to students, both current and prospective: we will welcome you on to our campuses in September 2020. We encourage all Leaving Certificate students and those going through the CAO this year to accept their offer for higher education institutions in the knowledge that their student experience will still be exciting, dynamic, and stimulating as their institution contributes to the drive towards economic recovery. You will be fully supported as we all continue to demonstrate the resilience that is characteristic of our people.

"The commitment of the sector is to be solutions-focused. The scale of the task ahead is clear. Our determination is to work collaboratively with the Department of Education and Science, with the Higher Education Authority, and with the partner unions and other key stakeholders, and most centrally with our students at national and local levels, to put in place the necessary amended programme schedules and the infrastructure required for a smooth commencement in September, when we will welcome students to campuses across the country."

Chair of THEA and President of Limerick Institute of Technology, Professor Vincent Cunnane said, "We want students and their parents/guardians to know that we will take care of your students next year. We want them to come onto our campuses, where we will ensure their safety and provide them with a stimulating college experience.

"Because our model blends the theoretical with the practical, our students will be on campus for much of their learning. It may be happening in a different way, but it will be happening. The entire sector has been working to ensure that our students will be safe and will experience college life."

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) is the representative advocacy body for the Institutes of Technology in Ireland

Read THEA's full statement here; Student Experience statement:

http://www.thea.ie/contentFiles/THEA_student_experience_statement.pdf

See accompanying document: *Principles and Guidelines for the delivery of 2020/21 Programmes in the Institutes of Technology in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic* <http://www.thea.ie/contentFiles/THEA-COVID-principles.pdf>

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Galway-Mayo IT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT working together to become a TU for the West and North-West of Ireland

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