

## Institutes of Technology publish principles and guidelines for academic delivery in 2020/21

Presidents of Institutes of Technology strongly encourage incoming students to start and existing students to continue their higher education in the 2020/21 academic year



### Statement from the Technological Higher Education Association on behalf of the Presidents of the Institutes of Technology in Ireland

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.

The health and wellbeing of our staff and students is of primary importance and the preparation for the delivery of the 2020/21 academic year will have that principle at its heart in all of our Institutes of Technology. We recognise the clear message from students in Ireland that they are committed to preserving the on-campus student experience and we are fully supportive of that. The quality of the student experience is of paramount importance and we aim to protect that experience as much as possible while delivering academic programmes in a way that is safe, inclusive, supportive, and effective.

Our institutions are positioned throughout the country and are accessible by all. Students and their families have the opportunity for quality study at the highest level while remaining within their own regions. There is a diversity of provision and you can find the discipline, level, and mode of delivery within the system that best suits your requirements. The institutes are also highly focused on learner supports with dedicated professional teams available to assist throughout the learning journey. And the programmes are informed by innovative on-site research that is linked closely with regional enterprise thereby affording students real-life relevant and current experience.

To complement this commitment, each of our member institutions has evaluated the needs of their own students and staff and will issue specific information on how the return to campus will look in September 2020. Through THEA, we have published our guiding principles, which are common to all of our institutions, and which state that:

- *All Institutes of Technology are fully committed to delivering a fulfilling and enriching student experience while protecting the academic integrity of our programmes and awards and abiding by all public health guidelines.*
- *All Institutes of Technology will facilitate a substantial on-campus experience for students, particularly incoming first years, and are in the process of communicating directly with students in order to fully outline how their 2020/21 learning will take place.*
- *All Institutes of Technology are working towards a commencement date in September for the 2020/2021 academic year.*

Our institutions are particularly mindful of new students entering higher education for the first time. This is a cohort that has had its anticipated transition pathway significantly disrupted and our determination is that these students will be supported and assisted through the coming months in order to establish a positive student experience. The commitment of the institutions is to ensure that your education journey and the quality of your award is equal to that of graduates of any year.

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.”

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

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

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>