

March 24, 9.27pm

All staff email from Professor David G. Lloyd, Vice Chancellor and President

Dear Colleagues

At its meeting this morning the University Council was updated on the provisions, measures, responses and extraordinary efforts being made across the board to transition our education provision to online learning for our students and to implement the appropriate measures necessary for the management of the COVID-19 health crisis.

The Council formally recorded its commendation of our staff and students for their engagement, collegiality and understanding and I wanted to share that commendation with you.

As you're all aware, lectures have transitioned to online from Monday 23rd and we have targeted Monday 30th as our deadline for the transition to fully online tutorials.

We paused *all* face-to-face teaching on campus from midnight last night, with no return to face-to-face teaching before the 27th April, and only then in those exceptional circumstances where face-to-face delivery is the only mode through which this teaching can be done – and of course, only with appropriate social distancing in the workplace measures in place.

In other words, we are working to take *everything* online in the best fashion we can while we temporarily bridge the current health crisis, and where we can't, we will consider deferring or rescheduling those activities to later in the year – wherever that is in the interest of the health and safety of our students and staff.

I very much understand the anxiety of staff has significantly increased over the past week – particularly those who rely on catching public transport to and from the workplace, or who have dependents, children or older people living with them.

That anxiety has doubtless additionally heightened as we suspended face-to-face education from today and on foot of the news of a positive diagnosis among our student population this evening.

I signalled a couple of weeks ago (although it seems like many months ago now!) our intent to gradually migrate our focus from staff working on-campus to arrangements for working from alternate locations, including working from home. We have been steadily migrating critical core business functions to such alternate arrangements over the last two weeks, with great progress.

Tonight, following the decisions made at the most recent National Cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister has strongly encouraged the adoption of working from home practices, where possible, as another measure to impact on the spread of COVID-19.

We know that not everyone wants to or is equipped to work from home, but similarly some people would like or may have to, due to their circumstances. There's another grouping of others who are quite agnostic on the matter and could just as easily continue to work on site as they could from home. Clearly, there is not a 'one size fits all' solution which maps to

every individual's circumstances and that is also why we have not mandated anything in this domain to date.

I am keen to facilitate the provision of alternate working arrangements for those that wish to avail of them and whose role in the university enables them to transition from on-campus to an alternate working location while ensuring business continuity, whether they are a professional staff member, academic or researcher.

For those that do want to make this transition, I'd ask that you review the University's [Flexible working arrangements procedures](#). These are procedures which we need staff to follow if they are seeking to work from home.

An important consideration is that we must make sure that those who do work from home are not working in isolation from their teams, that they are geared to work successfully from home and that they have access to all the systems and supports that they need.

Ultimately, the most important question is 'can you perform the duties required of you from home' – and determining the answer to that question will, in all cases, require a conversation and recorded documentation with your line manager or supervisor before any change to your current work practice is enacted. We similarly will need staff to be available for work in all instances – regardless of location.

For some staff it may be that working from home is not the right solution right now, and there are many leave provisions in place which you may be better off accessing, as well as other flexible work arrangements that might be more appropriate in your circumstances – again this is a conversation to have with your line manager or supervisor.

There are also some staff who, for one reason or another, simply won't be in a position to set up and enable alternative or remote working arrangements. In those cases, we will work to provide solutions, which may include the staff member continuing to work from a campus location, but on a campus which is closer to their home, so as to minimise public transport travel usage or other considerations.

Your line managers and supervisors will continue to have conversations with you to determine which solution is the best for your situation and to ensure that we have appropriate business continuity in place in the coming weeks and months.

Minister Tehan has again restated his requirement for Universities to remain open for business during the current health crisis. The steps we are taking to bring our education and research activities online or to deliver them with all appropriate physical distancing considerations, together with a staged provision of alternate working arrangements for our staff will provide us with the means to deliver for our students and community, while simultaneously working to ensure the health and well-being of all.

The University's [COVID-19 Update](#) website provides a comprehensive list of FAQ's that relate to alternative working arrangements and regarding applications to work from home. It also contains up to date information on the management of the current health crisis and links to health advice.

As always, I re-iterate the current public health advice – **if you are feeling unwell, please do not attend at the university until fully recovered**, seek the appropriate medical advice as required and act to minimise the risk of infection for others.

These are trying times, I re-iterate and echo the commendation of the University Council – thank you for all that you are doing to support the university, our students and each other, as we work through this together