

## Subject Header: Message to Students from Presidents of Irish Universities and Institutes of Technology

Dear student,

We have taken the unusual decision to write to you collectively in these extraordinary times. We urge you to follow the guidelines around social distancing, maintaining a distance of at least 1m between yourself and other people. We also particularly ask that you stay away from crowded places in the weeks ahead.

We ask you to do this for two reasons. Firstly, to protect yourselves from infection. Secondly, to slow down the spread of COVID-19 in order to protect others, some of whom may die. There are close to a quarter of a million students in Irish Higher Education and we are in a strong position to reduce the spread of the virus by acting collectively, and with care for others in our communities by using social distancing.

It is important to remember that if you do contract the virus, your health could be severely affected, but also you pose a great danger to the older members of society and those with weak immune systems. You could even be unwittingly responsible for putting others at increased risk.

Science tells us that it will take some time before COVID-19 can be contained. During this period, our hospitals run the risk of being overwhelmed. You can do your bit as an individual by keeping yourself healthy so that the health system can continue to function.

This does not mean that you should avoid the company of others completely. In fact, it is important for your mental wellbeing to continue to maintain contact with friends and family; just please do so maintaining social distancing by completely foregoing meeting in groups especially social gatherings in pubs or party environments.

You should also make a point of looking out for each other by checking in with students who might be lonely or isolated by phoning them, or Facetime, Skype, Zoom, or whatever system you use. You could also offer your services to volunteer organisations to collect shopping or prescriptions for elderly neighbours or walk their dogs.

You should also note that small social gatherings with enough space between participants to follow the HSE social distancing guidelines are still possible. But any events or activities that involve crowds should be avoided until further notice.

As a student, you are in a unique position. You are being taught online in many cases meaning that you do not have to come into work as many others have to do. All these precautions mean little if you do not stay away from crowds now that your college is closed.

Yours sincerely

Amanda McCloat (Acting President, St. Angela's College)

Andrew Deeks (President of UCD)

Annie Doona (President IADT)

Barry O'Connor (President CIT)

Brendan McCormack (President IT Sligo)

Brendan O'Donnell (President IT Tralee)

Brian MacCraith (President of DCU)

Ciarán Ó Catháin (President AIT)

Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh, (President of NUI, Galway)

David Fitzpatrick (President TU Dublin)

Des Fitzgerald (President of the University of Limerick)

Michael Hannon (Acting President GMIT)

Michael Mulvey (President DkIT)

Patricia Mulcahy (President IT Carlow)

Patrick O'Shea (President of UCC)

Patrick Prendergast (Provost of Trinity College Dublin)

Paul Hannigan (President LYIT)

Philip Nolan (President of the Maynooth University)

Vincent Cunnane (President LIT)