



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Message for Third Level and Further Education Students
from President Michael D. Higgins**

As this academic year draws to a close, may I send my best wishes to all third level and further education students across the Island of Ireland and wish you good health and every blessing for the future.

This has been an unprecedented year, bringing new and complex challenges to all those currently undertaking further studies. With yourselves and your families I am well aware of the isolation and loneliness some of you will have experienced as lectures and tutorials moved online.

I am mindful of how problematic it has been for many of you to learn and study in cramped or unsuitable environments, while retaining a sense of structure and motivation during long periods of pre-recorded lectures and separation from fellow students.

Once again Covid has not impacted evenly on all, with those with lesser resources impacted disproportionately,

College years have, of course, been regarded as a time for forging new friendships, broadening social circles and joining societies and groups that allow the flourishing of talents and potential beyond the academic sphere. It is unfortunate that this enriching experience has not been possible, in the way it was in previous years, at this time because of the necessary response to the pandemic. I have no doubt its absence will have been a source of great disappointment to you all.

These have all been necessary sacrifices, in the interests of public health. But they have also been enormously demanding ones, requiring considerable wells of resilience and moral strength from all of you, who have endeavoured I want to recognise, with such generosity of conscience and assistance, to keep our most vulnerable citizens safe.

As President, I thank you for that spirit of citizenship and your genuine will, in response to that common threat to public health, to relinquish so much in order that we as a nation might navigate our way forward to better days. You will have missed opportunities to gather together in lecture halls, tutorial rooms and study groups, to engage in the spontaneous debate and discourse that is such an important part of the third level experience. You may have also been required to cancel or forego graduation ceremonies, social gatherings, musical and sporting events and so many other social activities that are integral to the memories others may have formed during their student years. But you will have the appreciation and memory of those who will never forget how you played your part in a great challenge to our people.

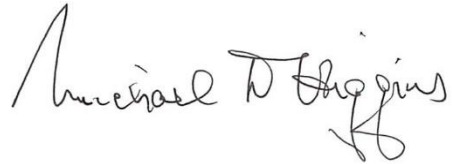
Some of you will, in the coming weeks, be completing your third level journey and considering the next steps you wish to take on your pathway through life. Others amongst you will be returning to your universities, colleges and institutions this Autumn in what I hope will be very different circumstances from the ones that currently prevail.

All of you, at whatever stage of your academic life you may be, can recall this past year with great pride, taking satisfaction from the fact that you so generously answered the global and local call for solidarity and strength at a most difficult, dangerous and challenging contemporary moment.

May I thank you for the spirit of endurance, humanity and community you have displayed throughout this testing time, a spirit which augurs so well for your futures as active and engaged citizens of whom we can be very proud.

I wish you well in all those futures, in any and every aspect of your lives, wherever they may lead you.

Beir beannacht d'on todchaí.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael D. Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a stylized 'H' at the end.

Michael D. Higgins

Uachtarán na hÉireann

President of Ireland