Minister Harris confirms further restriction of onsite third level activity in response to deteriorating COVID-19 situation

From Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Published on 6 January 2021
Last updated on 6 January 2021

Minister for Further and Higher Education Simon Harris TD has today confirmed further restriction of onsite third level activity in response to the deteriorating COVID-19 situation.

Further and higher education are operating primarily online with most activities delivered remotely during this academic year.

Institutions have used some limited discretion to identify and schedule essential onsite activities, including during the last period of Level 5 restrictions up to the start of December. Onsite scheduling has included teaching and research in laboratories, practical tuition and skills-based workshops with a focus on activities that cannot be replicated online. Institutions have also provided direct onsite engagement to meet the needs of learners who are vulnerable or lack supports.

Institutions have been very careful and adaptable in using this discretion in planning onsite activities, taking account of the public health situation nationally and locally including the most recent deterioration.

Speaking today, Minister Harris said:

"The COVID-19 situation is continuing to deteriorate significantly and we must all play our part.

"During the immediate period ahead, third level institutions and providers will again adapt and use their existing discretion to restrict onsite attendance further, only allowing the most essential work to take place onsite. Local assessment will focus on activities that are not capable of being delivered through alternative means and are time-critical for students and learners during this period.

"In addition, Youthreach services can resume as scheduled with provision primarily online but with additional support onsite where essential.

"This has been an incredibly challenging year for our colleges, students, our community educators but we all must restrict our movements to stop the spread of COVID-19."
"I know this is a particularly stressful time for students, many of whom are doing assessments and assignments at the minute. I want them to know this will not be forever. The college experience will not always be like this.

"If you are finding it difficult, please reach out and seek assistance. There are supports available."