



**COVID-19 PLAN: A  
STUDENTS' UNION RESPONSE**

This document is a student union proposal towards the response of COVID 19. Within this document, you will find key points that will help bolster the student experience throughout the post pandemic world. As a students' union, we may have different opinions and views on what we perceive to be the most important way in navigating DKIT students through these harsh times. The points proposed were created through information feedback from students, other S. U's around the country and USI. It is crucial for students, academic staff and the local economy that students are on campus as much as physically possible which is outlined below.

## **1. Hygiene**

### **a) Wearing Masks**

Students, Academic Staff and anybody else on campus should be strongly advised if not mandated to wear a face mask. This will ensure the safety and security of everyone on campus. Masks should be encouraged in all circumstances whether it is in class, in cafes, restaurants, labs, recreational areas etc. More than protecting people from the droplets of others, it stops surfaces from being infected with the virus.

By mandating the wearing of face masks, enforcing physical distancing and providing hand sanitisers, soap and wipes, DkIT is minimising the risks to students of becoming infected with the virus. It is important that these measures are demanded of all students and staff, by doing all of these hygienic practises the campus can slowly return to normal, or as close as is possible.

### **b) Physical Distancing**

In addition to face masks, everyone on campus should be encouraged to keep the Government regulations on keeping a physical distance of 2 metres between themselves and the next nearest person. Where masks are not feasible, physical distancing should be mandatory.

### **c) Hand Hygiene and Coughing Etiquette**

The college should provide common hand sanitisations stations around campus as well as in classes. Students and staff should also be informed as to how to cough and sneeze in a hygienic way. Anti-bacterial wipes should be provided to wipe down surfaces between classes.

## **2. Learning and Assessments**

### **d) On Campus Learning + Online Learning**

College is as much about the social side as the academic side. By making the campus safe by ensuring mask wearing, physical distancing and good hygiene, DKIT can ensure that students can be on campus as much as possible. It is obvious that on campus learning times will have to be reduced but it should be maintained as much as possible and at all costs. Students need access to face-to-face interactions with staff and colleagues to ensure an optimal college experience. At the same time, students who are vulnerable to the virus should have access to have online learning.

### **e) Work Placements**

If work placements are crucial to students obtaining credits, then students should not be retroactively punished for circumstances beyond their control. For example, student nurses cannot work in two different healthcare settings while at the same time many student nurses can not go on placement without having a part time job. Courses with placements should be finding ways of accommodating these placements as normal in a safe way, or where this is not possible seeking alternative ways of allowing students to complete their studies on schedule.

### **f) Digital Inequality**

Not all students have equal access to digital resources such as computers and the internet to complete work from home. Students with reduced access to broadband have a lesser ability to attend video lectures and seminars. It will also take students longer to complete assignments if this is the case. The digital divide is a serious problem that disproportionately affects students in rural areas, from poor backgrounds, and students who are co-living. DKIT should ensure that these students have more access to on campus resources than students who have good access at home.

### **g) Library Loans**

Students taking resources from the library should be allowed to return them as they finish and should not be subject to fines and tight deadlines as students may need to hold on to books, laptops etc. longer than normal in these challenging times.

### **h) No Detriment**

Final year students should not be allowed to fall below their regular GPA for the previous years of studies. As long as students fulfil the specifications of their assignments, such as word count, hours worked, deadline date etc. They should not fall below the grade they would normally get if they had been doing in

the assignment in a pre-Covid 19 DkIT. This pandemic has been unfair to students currently studying, but this unfairness can be limited and curtailed in the next year.

#### **i) Deadlines and Assignments**

Academic staff should be more lenient with their expectations for when a student will have to hand in an assignment. In these circumstances, student who may have been expected to complete a 2000-word essay in week four should not be expected to this with all of the necessary public health restrictions that are being placed upon them. If this is not the case, students are more likely to defer and withdraw from their courses which is the worst possible outcome for everybody in DkIT.

#### **j) Repeat Fees**

Any exams/C. A that were failed in semester two should be free of charge to repeat due to the unforeseen circumstance's students had to endure within the past months. Institutes such as A.I.T, G.M.I.T, Carlow I.T, DCU, Maynooth, QUB, UU, UCC and Trinity have waived their repeat fees for the upcoming period. DkIT should be no exemption from this. Fifty euro to repeat an exam that was failed due to exceptional circumstances is unjust.

### **3. Student Centred Issues**

#### **k) Student Rent**

The issue of student rent has been a contentious issue for a number of years. If students are going to be on campus less, then rents ought to reflect this. If students who need to live in Dundalk for two days per week then their rent should reflect that. All interest groups should work together to ensure that students get a fair, reflective deal.

#### **l) TU Status**

It is crucial and in the best interests of students that TU status is pursued in the coming academic year no matter what the academic circumstances are. TU status is fundamental to the future of DkIT and should not be delayed amid these times. The DkIT SU would demand that the college continues on the trajectory towards obtaining TU status. The DkIT SU are of the opinion that good progress was made last year in the pursuit of TU status and it would be devastating for that good work to be lost amid this pandemic. The TU status would normally have been the biggest issue facing the institute this academic year had it not been for the pandemic. However, the TU cliff edge is nearing just as fast and it is crucial that the college secure the future of DkIT and join a TU.

## **m) Graduation**

Conferring is a special moment within your college cycle. Being able to show family, friends, and guardians where you made your best memories is a joyous occasion for all involved. Graduating on campus is also part of this joyous occasion. The S.U understands that circumstances may change within the coming months and the only certainty is uncertainty, however, we still believe that an on-campus graduation can be done while sticking to the COVID guidelines. Graduating online does not have the same feel as conferring on campus. The pandemic has taken away so much already, we would hope graduation is not added to that list.

## **n) Commuters**

Public transport is still a major concern. Buses and trains may not be able to accommodate the demand students bring with the COVID restrictions put in place at the time. This is a concern as we do not need students missing class due to public transport spaces being limited. When scheduling important tutorials/labs for students to attend, the college needs to communicate with students in an effort to find times that will suit commuters best i.e. away from rush hour times.

We hope you would consider all points mentioned above in DkIT's COVID plan. It is crucial that the Students' Union is involved in the creation of this plan as we represent the student body. If you have any queries over this proposal please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you.

DkITSU