

Appendix XLI: Protocol for Learner Absence due to Covid 19

Policy Details	
Policy Title:	Appendix XLI – Protocol for Learner Absence due to Covid 19
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Revision History		
Previous Version No.	Summary of Amendments	Reviewed Version No.
N/A	Initial Issue	1.0
1.0	Policy amendments including updates to contact details and the relevant forms. Policy updates also include the removal of references to ‘Contact Tracing Centre’ and the list of HSE requirements for self-isolating.	1.1

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1. Policy

South East Technological University Carlow (SETU Carlow) is committed to ensuring that learners are treated in a fair and inclusive manner and given the opportunity to achieve their academic goals in a supportive learning environment. In order to support this commitment, IT Carlow shall endeavour to provide the necessary supports and facilities that learners may need as required by the Disability Act, 2005, Equal Status Act, 2000, the Equality Act, 2010.

2. Background

The global pandemic caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus, Covid 19, resulted in education providers switching to alternative methods of online and remote teaching, learning, assessment and learner support since March 12th 2020. At the start of the academic year 2021/2022 education was deemed an essential services and on-campus teaching resumed for the majority of students, learners and staff. On the 28th of February 2022 Ireland moved into the “Living with Covid-19” phase and most public health measure for COVID-19 were lifted.¹

3. Scope

SETU Carlow has articulated requirements for Attendance at Classes and Medical Certificates which can be found in the Student Handbook².

The aim of this document is to expand existing University requirements and practices in circumstances where an absence occurs because of Covid 19 sickness or hospitalisation, or because of a requirement to Self Isolate and/or Restrict Movements, and to articulate the protocol that the University will follow if a student contacts the University to advise that their reason for absence is due to one of the following related to Covid 19;

1. Absence due to confirmation from the relevant professional or HSE that the learner has a positive test result for Covid 19.
2. Absence due to a requirement to self-isolate due to circumstances outlined by the HSE

This protocol will be in place until such a time as the University deems the requirements of the protocol to be unnecessary, as informed by Government policy and prevailing health advice.

The Protocol for Learner Absence due to Covid 19 shall address the following areas:

1. Inclusion
2. Attendance at Classes
3. Notification of Illness or Requirement to Self Isolate and/or Restrict Movements

¹ https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/covid19/living_with_covid19_plan.html

² <https://www.itcarlow.ie/student-life/student-resources.htm> ; section 11.3.14 and section 11.3.15

4. Documentation Required
5. Support Services for Learning and Examinations
6. Teaching and Learning
7. Health and Safety - Physical Access
8. Dissemination

4. Protocol

4.1. Inclusion

IT Carlow shall ensure that all facilities are accessible to all learners insofar as is practicable and appropriate. This includes physical accessibility to and within the buildings including maintenance and refurbishment as well as access to information.

4.2. Attendance at Classes

As outlined in the IT Carlow Student Handbook section 11.3.14, learners are required to attend classes and to notify their Faculty Office (Appendix I), in writing, any reasons for absence.

4.3. Notification of Illness or Requirement to Self Isolate and/or Restrict Movements

- 4.3.1. People with a diagnosis of Covid 19 and those who have been advised by the relevant health professional to Self Isolate and/or Restrict Movements must inform the relevant University authorities as outlined below and not attend on campus classes until such a time as their Self Isolation and/or Restrict Movement period ends.
- 4.3.2. All learners are expected to take personal responsibility for their health and to adhere to health advice given to them¹.

4.4. Documentation Required

- 4.4.1. It is the learner's responsibility to provide adequate and relevant documentation pertaining to the reason for absence from appropriate qualified professionals. Disclosed information shall be treated in the strictest confidence. IT Carlow shall require explicit, informed and written authority for the giving of consent in respect of the processing of any sensitive personal information which is disclosed.
- 4.4.2. In line with requirement for all absences, learners who have a tested positive for Covid 19 must contact their Faculty Office (Appendix I) to advise that they are absent due to Covid sickness. They must complete a Learner Absence due to Covid 19 Self Declaration Form (Appendix II) and provide the Faculty Office

¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/60083-covid-19-reframing-the-challenge-continuing-our-recovery-reconnecting/>

with a medical certificate, notification of a positive PCR test result or notification of an uploaded positive antigen test result.

- 4.4.3. In line with requirement for all absences, learners who are unwell due to having symptoms¹ of Covid 19 must contact their Faculty Office (Appendix I) to advise that they are absent due to sickness and complete a Learner Absence due to Covid 19 Self Declaration Form (Appendix II) and provide the Faculty Office with a medical certificate, notification of a positive PCR test result or notification of an uploaded positive antigen test result.
- 4.4.4. Learners self-isolating (with coronavirus symptoms) will not be permitted to attend on-campus classes and may be unable to attend online classes as normal. Learners in these circumstances must inform their Faculty Office who will record the absences as medically certified illness.

4.5. Support Services for Learning and Examinations

- 4.5.1. It is the responsibility of the Heads of Faculty/Department/Campus to ensure that each learner's absence is forwarded to the relevant programme directors, lecturers. Programme boards shall consider the report and agree on possible mechanisms of support to facilitate the learner's learning including but not limited to learning supports, missed study opportunities, continuous assessments and terminal exams.
- 4.5.2. Any learner who discloses ongoing medical complications in relation to contracting Covid 19 is encouraged to contact the Access Office who may, in consultation with the learner and relevant staff complete a standardised Needs Assessment in order to determine what supports and accommodations will be required throughout the learner's programme of study until such a time as the learner has fully recovered. The Needs Assessment is strictly confidential and the Access Office shall seek signed consent from the learner to release any details within IT Carlow as required.
- 4.5.3. IT Carlow shall apply the principle of reasonable accommodations to all learners deemed eligible for terminal exam accommodations through review with the Head of Faculty/Department/Campus or through their Needs Assessment. These reasonable accommodations may include but are not limited to: extra time, spelling & grammar waiver, instructions required, quiet room, printer, reader, rest periods, scribe, use of a computer, and the use of voice activated software, or other assistive technology.
- 4.5.4. Where the accommodations required are such that they would not be considered reasonable, the learner may be required to defer or withdraw as appropriate.
- 4.5.4. The Needs Assessment is a working document and can be revised at any point throughout the learners programme of study.

¹

https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html?gclid=EAlaIqobChMI76jQx__R6gIVF-DtCh3D6Q8BEAAYASAAEgKy3PD_BwE&gclid=aw.ds

4.6. Teaching and Learning

- 4.6.1. IT Carlow shall ensure that, when drafting and reviewing programmes, the principles of UDL will be considered and that equal access will be provided to all learners wherever possible. This should be reflected in the proposed/existing programme documentation
- 4.6.2. Academic departments, in conjunction with Learner Support and Students Services and the Teaching and Learning Centre, shall plan, design and adopt teaching and learning strategies, which make the teaching of the programme as inclusive as is possible and, where reasonable, allow adaptation and assistive technology to accommodate the needs of learners with additional needs.
- 4.6.3. IT Carlow shall ensure that, wherever possible, learners with disabilities and medical conditions have equal opportunity to access placements or to study abroad.
- 4.6.4. Opportunities for staff development in inclusive teaching, learning and assessment shall be made available to all staff involved in teaching and supporting learners.

4.7. Health and Safety - Physical Access

- 4.7.1. Learners are required to adhere to the requirements to Self Isolate and/or Restrict Movements should they receive a positive test result for Covid 19.
- 4.7.2. Following a period of illness or self-isolation related to Covid 19, learners must contact their Faculty Office for permission to recommence attendance on-campus.
- 4.7.3. Should a learner have concerns about a physical access issue, they are encouraged to report it to the Access Office/ Head of Department immediately so that the concern can be dealt with.

4.8. Dissemination

- 4.8.1. This protocol document shall be located in the Quality Assurance Handbook and is publicly and electronically available.

5. Appendices

5.1. Appendix I – Faculty Office Contact Details

Faculty of Business & Humanities

Faculty Administrator

Tel: 059 9175302

Email: business.cw@setu.ie

Faculty of Engineering

Faculty Administrator

Tel: 059 9175295

Email: engineering.cw@setu.ie

Faculty of Science

Faculty Administrator

Tel 059 9175502

Email: science.cw@setu.ie

Wexford Campus

Faculty Administrator

Tel 053 9185803

Email: wexford.cw@setu.ie

5.2. Appendix II – Learner Absence due to Covid 19 Self Declaration Form



Learner Absence due to Covid 19 Self Declaration Form

Name	
Programme of Study	
Programme Code	
School/Department	
Student Number	
Current Address	

Details of COVID Illness

Positive test date	
Method of test e.g. PCR or antigen	
Isolation period start date	
Isolation end date	
Date for return to campus	

Details of any continuous assessment or terminal exams that occur during isolation period	
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By completing and signing this form I declare that I have tested positive for Covid-19 and the details are correct.

Signature:

Date:

5.3. Appendix III – Definitions

Access Office – Refers to the Access Office on the Carlow and Wexford Campuses.

The Child Care Act 1991, the Children Act 2001 and the Mental Health Act 2001 define a “child” as a service user under the age of 18 years, “other than a service user who is or who has been married”.

COVID-19 - is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV' (WHO, 2020¹).

HPSC – Irish Health Protection Surveillance Centre

HSE – Irish Health Service Executive provides all of Ireland's public health services in hospitals and communities across the country (HSE, 2020²).

High Risk Groups - There are 2 levels of higher risk: very high risk (also called extremely vulnerable) and high risk. There is different advice to protect people in each group (HSE, 2020²).

Hybrid Model of Learning – Combination of online and on campus classes.

Novel Coronavirus – See ‘COVID-19’ definition above.

Reasonable Accommodation - any action that helps to alleviate a substantial disadvantage due to an impairment or medical condition (AHEAD, 2020).

SUSI - Student Universal Support Ireland is Ireland's national awarding authority for all higher and further education grants.

Terminal exam - Formal end of module exam.

¹ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

² <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/>

UDL - Universal Design for Learning.