

Appendix XL– Learners in Covid 19 High Risk Groups



Policy & Procedure Title:

Learners in Covid 19 High Risk Groups

Effective Date	1 st September 2021	Version	1.1
Approved By	Senior Management	Date Approved	6 th July 2020 23 rd August 2021

Form(s)	Responsibilities/ Owner
	Learner Services/Access Office/Head of Department/Faculty/Campus
	Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar
Superseded or Obsolete Procedures	
Initial Issue	

Learners in Covid 19 High Risk Groups Policy

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. To support this commitment, SETU 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 and where the learner is particularly vulnerable to contracting and the effects of Covid 19 due to a medical condition which categorises them as high risk by the Health Service Executive¹.

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. As Ireland moves towards *A Safe Return to On-site Further and Higher Education and Research*² for the academic year 2021-2022, commitment has been made by government for mainly on-site education and research activity..

Definitions

AHEAD – Association for Higher Education Access and Disability is an independent non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for learners with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation.

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, 2020³).

¹ <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bcd91-a-safe-return-to-on-site-further-and-higher-education-and-research/#government-commitment>

³ https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

HSE – Irish Health Service Executive provides all of Ireland's public health services in hospitals and communities across the country (HSE, 2020¹).

High Risk Groups - Some people may be more at risk of serious illness from Covid-19 (HSE, 2021²).

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).

Terminal exam - Formal end of module exam.

UDL - Universal Design for Learning.

Scope

The aim of this document is to articulate the policy and procedure that the University will enact once a student self-identifies, or in the case of a child is identified by their legal guardian, as being in one of the 'Covid-19 High Risk Groups' as set out by the HSE and as verified by the relevant professional report.

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

The Learners in Covid 19 High Risk Groups Policy shall address the following areas

1. Inclusion
2. Disclosure and Needs Assessment
3. Support Services
4. Examinations
5. Teaching and Learning
6. Awareness and Staff Training
7. Health and Safety - Physical Access
8. Dissemination

¹ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/>

² <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/people-at-higher-risk/>

1. Inclusion

1.1 SETU 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.

2. Disclosure and Needs Assessment

2.1 As part of the student registration process every student will be required to confirm that they have read and agree with the terms of the 'Student Return to Campus Declaration Form (Appendix I)' which includes an undertaking to notify specified University authorities should the student be in one of the 'High Risk Groups' as identified by the HSE and to not present on campus until such a time as agreed by the parties.

Any student who is legally defined as a child at the time of completing the registration process is required by the University to submit a scanned 'Student Return to Campus Declaration' signed by their legal guardian to StudentServices@itcarlow.ie. Details of this requirement are set out in the 'Student Return to Campus Declaration Form (Appendix I)'.

SETU Carlow encourages learners to disclose the medical condition that places them in the 'High Risk Group' to the relevant University authorities, as non-disclosure would severely limit ability to access appropriate procedures, accommodations and supports.

2.2 It is the learner's responsibility to provide adequate and relevant documentation pertaining to the medical condition which places them in a 'High Risk Group' from appropriate qualified professionals. Disclosed information shall be treated in the strictest confidence. SETU 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.

2.3 After a learner discloses a medical condition, which places them in a 'High Risk Group', the Access Office, in consultation with the learner and relevant staff is required to complete a standardised Needs Assessment to determine what supports and accommodations may be required throughout the learner's programme of study. The Access Office shall complete a standardised Needs Assessment for all learners who disclose a medical condition from the High-Risk grouping including vaccination information. The Needs Assessment is strictly confidential, and the Access Office shall seek signed consent from the learner to release any details within SETU Carlow as required.

2.4 The Needs Assessment is a working document and can be revised at any point throughout the learner's programme of study.

3. Support Services

3.1 SETU Carlow provides services and personnel to support the academic and social inclusion of all learners, including those with disabilities. These services and personnel are listed in the student handbook, an updated version of which is provided to all learners at the beginning of each academic year and is available on the University's website

3.2 The Access Office assists learners with relevant information and advice pertaining to their medical conditions and assists SETU Carlow to deliver its agreed commitments.

3.3 Learning-related supports that are available to eligible learners include but are not limited to: access to lecture notes in advance, personal assistant/note taker, extra tuition (subject specific), dyslexia tuition, assistive technology, assistive technology training and sign language interpreter.

3.4 Information regarding the learning needs of specific learners shall be disseminated in the form of synopsis reports, which the Access Office shall forward to relevant Heads of Faculty/ Campus and copy to Heads of Departments and Faculty Administrators.

3.5 If there is a change to a learner's specific needs, the Access Office shall forward a synopsis report to the relevant Head of Faculty/Campus and copy to the Head of Department and Faculty Administrator.

3.6 It is the responsibility of the Heads of Faculty/ Department/ Campus to ensure that each learner's synopsis report (and any ensuing revisions) 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.

3.7 Should a Head of Faculty/ Campus/ Department and or lecturer require clarification as to a learner's identified needs and/or how to meet these needs, they are encouraged to seek advice through the Access Office.

3.8 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. Examinations

4.1 SETU Carlow shall apply the principle of reasonable accommodations to all learners deemed eligible for terminal exam accommodations through their Needs Assessment including but 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.

4.2 Where the accommodations required are such that they would not be considered reasonable, the learner may be required to defer or withdraw as appropriate.

5. Teaching and Learning

5.1 SETU 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

5.2 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 disabilities including medical conditions.

5.3 SETU Carlow shall ensure that, wherever possible, learners with disabilities and medical conditions have equal opportunity to access placements or to study abroad.

6. Awareness and Staff Development

6.1 SETU Carlow is committed to raising awareness amongst learners and staff in this area

6.2 Opportunities for staff development in inclusive teaching, learning and assessment shall be made available to all staff involved in teaching and supporting learners in the high-risk groups.

7. Health and Safety - Physical Access

7.1 The Access Office/ Head of Department/ Faculty/ Campus shall liaise with the Estates Office on a case-by-case basis to consider the physical access issues of learners with requirements due to their medical conditions.

7.2 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.

8. Dissemination

8.1 This policy shall be in the Quality Assurance Handbook and is publicly and electronically available.

Appendix I - COVID-19 Return to Campus Declaration Form

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 on campus every student must complete and sign this form before returning to campus. In so doing, you understand your obligations in contacting the relevant University staff should you be required to do so as outlined below.

Please note, that on confirmation that you have read, understood and agree with the requirements in this declaration, you will be permitted to continue with the registration process.

If you are under 18 years of age at this time, you are required to submit a scanned copy of this Declaration, signed by your parent/legal guardian, to Student.Services@itcarlow.ie

Questions	Yes / No
1. Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, difficulty breathing, loss or change in your sense of smell or taste now or in the past 14 days?	
2. Have you been diagnosed with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?	
3. Are you awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test?	
4. In the past 14 days, have you been in contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19? If YES, follow and implement current HSE advice on close contact requirements, https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contact-tracing/close-contact/	
5. Have you been advised by the HSE to self-isolate at this time?	
6. Have you been advised by the HSE to restrict your movements at this time?	
7. Are you returning from outside the Island of Ireland? If YES, follow and implement the advice issued from the Department of An Taoiseach available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b4020-travelling-to-ireland-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/	
8. Are there any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the above, which may need to be considered to allow your safe return to campus?	
9. Are you under 18 years of age at this time?	

NEXT STEPS

If you have answered yes to any one or more of the above questions then you **must** contact StudentServices@itcarlow.ie to discuss your options.

You **must not** present on campus until StudentServices@itcarlow.ie have given you permission to do so.

****** If your situation changes after you complete and submit this form, it is your responsibility to inform StudentServices@itcarlow.ie and do not present on campus until you have permission to do so.

Lawful Basis

Your personal information is collected directly from you and processed by us with your knowledge. The lawful basis under which your personal data is collected and processed is in the performance of a contract to which you are a party. In some circumstances, processing will be necessary in order to protect the vital interests of a person. For more information on your individual student rights, refer to the University's Privacy Notice for students which can be found at <https://www.itcarlow.ie/resources/data-protection.htm>

Tick box to say that the student has read, understood and agrees with the conditions set out herein.

FOR STUDENTS UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE ONLY

For students under 18 years of age on the date of registration, please print this form and send a scanned copy, signed below by your parent/guardian to Student.Services@itcarlow.ie

First Name of Student	
Surname of Student	
Date of Birth of Student	

I, being the Parent/Guardian of the above named person, confirm that the information provided is true and accurate and commit to contacting the relevant University authorities where outlined above.

Parent/Guardian Signature
(delete as appropriate)

Date