

Dear Student,

I hope that your summer is going well and that you are making the most of your time away from college. Following on from my e-mail of 24 June, I am writing to provide further clarity about plans for next semester. MIE staff have been working hard planning for various scenarios, including a special advisory committee on COVID-19 that has been meeting weekly for several weeks now. The Institute has been considering ways of providing an optimal educational experience for you in 2020-21 while prioritising your health and safety and that of the staff and members of the wider MIE community.

Commitment to face-to-face teaching

MIE is committed to providing the best possible academic and personal experience for all students. In our planning, the primary goal was to ensure as much on-campus face-to-face teaching and learning as possible for you complemented by online teaching and learning. We are delighted now to announce that each student will be on campus for either two or three days each week, and at least half of your classes will be in face-to-face classes on campus throughout semester one.

Shorter classes and longer breaks

Classes will be of 45 minutes duration rather than the usual 50 minutes and they may begin earlier in the morning. Four classes will be scheduled each morning and four each afternoon. The classes will be offered in two parallel timetables (A & B) to reduce the number of students congregating at any one time. You will attend classes either in the morning *or* the afternoon on days you are on campus. Class times will be as follows depending on which plan will be assigned to your course:

| Timetable Plan A | | Timetable Plan B | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 8:30 – 9:15 | Class 1 (followed by 15-minute break) | 9:00 – 9:45 | Class 1 (followed by 15-minute break) |
| 9:30 – 10:15 | Class 2 (followed by 30-minute break) | 10:00 – 10:45 | Class 2 (followed by 30-minute break) |
| 10:45 – 11:30 | Class 3 (followed by 15-minute break) | 11:15 – 12:00 | Class 3 (followed by 15-minute break) |
| 11:45 – 12:30 | Class 4 | 12:15 – 13:00 | Class 4 |
| 12:30 – 13:30 | Break | 13:00 – 14:00 | Break |
| 13:30 – 14:15 | Class 5 (followed by 15-minute break) | 14:00 – 14:45 | Class 5 (followed by 15-minute break) |
| 14:30 – 15:15 | Class 6 (followed by 30-minute break) | 15:00 – 15:45 | Class 6 (followed by 30-minute break) |
| 15:45 – 16:30 | Class 7 (followed by 15-minute break) | 16:15 – 17:00 | Class 7 (followed by 15-minute break) |
| 16:45 – 17:30 | Class 8 | 17:15 – 18:00 | Class 8 |

We will be following the Public Health advice on the level of physical distancing required in educational settings and students and lecturers will be required to wear face coverings when indoors.

The attached schedule (pdf) outlines which groups will be present on campus on which days and at which times. The attached “empty” timetables (Excel) give an indication of how classes will be divided between face-to-face and online classes for different year groups. However, please note that these are indicative only and they are subject to change as the timetable for semester 1 is developed. As you can imagine, this is a complex process.

The times when you are not scheduled for face-to-face classes will be used for online classes and a normal timetable will apply for these. On-line teaching will be ‘live’ or recorded on Moodle. You will need to be at a location where you have a reliable internet connection for these classes. This could be in your residence on campus, off-campus accommodation, or at home, based on what is practical and possible for you.

This calendar is based on the assumption that only classes in groups of 40 or fewer will be offered and no more than 300 students will be scheduled to attend face-to-face lectures on campus at any one time.

Accommodation

The attached document should help you decide about accommodation for the coming year. On-campus accommodation will be available on a flexible basis to you for the 2020-21 academic year; this means that you can rent your room on a two-night, three-night or seven-night basis for the entire year.

MIE recommends that students avail of on-campus accommodation insofar as possible. Staying on-campus where possible, will aid the formation of student bubbles and reduce potential health risks from students sharing off-campus accommodation. You can contact Eber (<https://eber.life/ie/mie/>) by e-mail at mie@eber.life to find out more about this.

Placement and Outside-class Experiences

Placements will take place only in semester 2 of the academic year 2020-21, provided that is possible and health risks can be minimised. Incoming and outgoing Erasmus visits will be deferred from the first semester of 2020-21. Extra-curricular experiences will only be possible where physical distancing and other relevant public health guidelines can be implemented.

Exams

Arrangements for end-of-semester exams have not yet been made and you will be advised of these as early as possible in semester 1.

Staying Healthy

In addition to the steps taken by the Institute, you can take additional precautions to minimise your risk of infection. This includes maintaining good hand hygiene, practising coughing and sneezing etiquette, and maintaining physical distance in most situations. MIE is urging all students to be responsible in their behaviour so as to ensure they and their colleagues remain safe and well.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or if you have been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19, please contact your doctor and do not attend the Institute. If you travel abroad, please remain in quarantine for two weeks following your return and do not attend college at this time. You may let your personal tutor know on a confidential basis if that applies to you.

Attendance

The usual rules for attendance at face-to-face and participation in online classes will apply throughout the semester. However, if you are advised by a medical practitioner to self-isolate or self-quarantine, please contact your personal tutor and this will be taken into account when implementing the attendance policy.

Flexibility

The above plans outline the most accurate information we currently have available. However, all such plans remain open to amendment in light of Government guidelines, advice from public health experts and requirements of the timetable.

I hope that this information is helpful for you in making plans for the coming semester. Although they are not ideal for you or for us, they are designed to provide the best possible education for you while minimising risk of infection. We look forward to welcoming you back to campus in September.

Yours faithfully,

Seán Delaney