

1 August 2020

Independent College Dublin - Contingency Plan/Arrangements - Coronavirus COVID-19 – Update 2

As per the QQI Coronavirus COVID-19 Update (QQI, 2020) this document sets out Independent College Dublin's (updated) overarching contingency plan/arrangements to be adopted.

Independent College Dublin closely monitored the situation regarding COVID-19 and began liaising with QQI regarding possible impacts on 02 March 2020. The College subsequently made preparations as to contingency planning and arrangements should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed on campus or the campus be required to close.

It is worth noting that Independent College Dublin has the latest version of Moodle and is very experienced in supporting its QQI learners via its virtual learning environment (VLE) and its professional learners via the VLE in the form of blended delivery. For example:

- All teaching and learning materials are made available to learners via Moodle.
- All assessment requirements are detailed on Moodle.
- All appropriate assessments are submitted electronically via Moodle (with inbuilt checking by Turnitin).
- Learners can communicate with lecturers via Moodle or email.
- Lecturers have the facility to create forums and quizzes (etc.) on Moodle as required.
- Independent College Dublin's Moodle's instance is cloud based therefore it is robust and can be supported off campus
- Independent College Dublin has delivered, and supported learners, on its FE1, Certificate and Diploma in Professional Legal Studies, and Diploma in Data Analytics programmes via blended delivery since October 2019.

Learners have been able to contact College staff via email and Moodle during the closure (in particular the Learner Experience and Careers Officer (LECO)). Staff have and continue to keep learners updated via a weekly newsletter, direct communications from the Head of Schools and the various social media platforms as appropriate.

College staff are able to contact the Head of Schools (HoS), Programme Leaders and the Assistant Exams Officer via electronic means and mobile telephone in case of queries.

Closure from 12 March 2020 until the end of semester (please see Appendix 1)

Independent College Dublin ceased traditional contact classes from close of business on 12th March and this restriction continued until up to and including the terminal assessment and exam board period.

Independent College Dublin continued to deliver online.

Lecturers continued to make themselves available to learners via electronic means if clarification on assessments was required (as would normally be the case).

Alternative forms of assessment were considered for all assessments except for final exams at the award stage of all programmes. Where alternative forms of assessment were

considered academic integrity/cheating checks were provisioned for (for example all submitted assessments are already automatically checked by Turnitin).

For the final exams at the award stage of all programmes, learners were required to attempt open book timed exams as appropriate. All exams were reviewed to ensure that teaching and learning had taken place.

All module learning outcomes were assessed as per regulatory requirements.

Our external examiners were consulted with regard to our revised assessment strategies and approval obtained.

Learners that did not have access, or had difficulty in connecting to online facilities, contacted the LECO. Each case was considered in light of the learner's stage of programme and the provisions of the Quality Assurance Manual (QAM).

Any learner who has medical evidence was deferred from the relevant assessment(s) as per the QAM and QQI/government advice.

It was Independent College Dublin's clear intention that no learner would be disadvantaged by the current extraordinary situation and feedback from learners would confirm this was the case.

Academic Council continued to monitor the situation related to COVID-19 on a frequent basis. The above arrangements were continuously reviewed and the lines of communication between all employees and with learners remained open.

Preparation for Autumn Semester (please see Appendix 1)

The College is planning to reopen for face-to-face delivery on 7th September with (re)induction sessions for staff and learners taking place the week before. Below is an outline of the College's plan in this regard.

Key Topic	The plan should include
Alternative programme delivery methods	The College intends to begin face-to-face delivery on the 7 th September 2020. This will be guided by advice provided by QQI and other relevant appropriate bodies (i.e HSE). The College has developed a contingency plan should it be necessary to move to a blended or other form of delivery (for example, all lectures will be streamed and recorded from the outset in the case that a learner needs to self-isolate). As with the previous semester, it is intended that the timetable of delivery will remain the same regardless of method of programme delivery.
Alternative assessments	In light of the current situation, it has been agreed by the external examiners at the summer exam boards and by Academic Council that all assessment will remain online for the Autumn 2020

	<p>semester. A review of the assessment methods for the Summer semester has demonstrated that all assessments either transferred online appropriately or the alternative assessment was deemed suitable by both staff and learners. In summary, the methods of assessment which will be used will be normal continuous assessment, online presentation, recorded presentation, extended timed assessment, open book exam all submitted via Moodle. Online practicals will also be used which will be recorded.</p>
Alternative arrangements for work placement	Not applicable.
Resource implications	<p>The College has continued to invest in additional sound and camera technology and every teaching space has the capability of face-to-face delivery, live streaming and recording of learning events. The College has enhanced its use of Moodle and Zoom and the integration of these systems. Each lecturer has their own personal college email account, Moodle account and fully licensed Zoom account.</p> <p>All lecturers have suitable IT equipment and connectivity to deliver their learning remotely if required.</p> <p>The College agreed a discounted price for laptops with an IT provider and this has been communicated to the existing learners. Each new applicant is asked to confirm that they have access to a computer, business software (e.g. MS Office), a webcam and broadband.</p>
Information to learners	Learners have received a regular newsletter via email and a number of communications from the Head of Schools via email regarding the preparation for the reopening of the College and the start of the next semester.
Induction of New Learners	Learners (and staff) will be invited to participate in a (re)induction prior to returning to campus for the new semester. This will be delivered face-to-face, streamed and recorded for later viewing.
Training / Support of Staff	<p>Staff received training prior to the change to delivery method in the Spring semester. This was quickly followed by a number of weekly sessions regarding changes to assessment.</p> <p>Lecturers have since received a number of online CPD events facilitated by Prof Jo-Anne Murray of Glasgow University focusing on delivery and assessment in a face-to-face, blended and online environment. These sessions were well attended and also recorded for all colleagues who could not participate due to prior</p>

	commitments or for review. These sessions have also been shared with colleagues from other colleges.
Monitoring arrangements	Feedback from staff and learners was sought regarding the effectiveness of the alternate arrangements during the last semester via questionnaire and the Student Senators. Similar feedback will be sought early in the Autumn semester to ensure the appropriateness of delivery and support.
Involvement of External Examiner	Regular contact has been maintained with the external examiners. Each appropriate extern was consulted with regard to any change to assessment and, as mentioned above, the decision to retain online assessment in the autumn semester was commended by the externs when proposed at the summer 2020 exam boards.
Approval by Academic Council	Academic Council has approved all appropriate contingencies / modifications / alternative arrangements including this update.

QQI. (2020, February 12). *Coronavirus COVID-19 Update*. Retrieved from QQI.ie: <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/COVID-19---Updates-from-QQI.aspx>

Date	Academic Calendar Autumn Semester 2020*	
31/08/20		(Re)Induction of staff and learners
7/09/20	Week 1	Normal delivery
14/09/20	Week 2	Normal delivery
21/09/20	Week 3	Normal delivery
28/09/20	Week 4	Normal delivery
05/10/20	Week 5	Normal delivery
12/10/20	Week 6	Normal delivery
19/10/20	Week 7	Normal delivery
27/10/20	Week 8	Normal delivery
02/11/20	Week 9	Normal delivery
09/11/20	Week 10	Normal delivery
16/11/20	Week 11	Normal delivery
23/11/20	Week 12	Normal delivery
30/11/20	Week 13	Revision Week Exams start on Friday 04/12/20
07/12/20	Week 14	Exams
14/12/20	Week 15	Exams

* Approved – subject to change.