MIC COVID-19 Academic Response Plan

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Mary Immaculate College's COVID-19 Academic Response Group has been meeting regularly and consulting with our colleagues at the University of Limerick, in order to develop a coherent response to the range of challenges to programme delivery and assessment posed by the COVID-19 crisis. Given the scale and extent of uncertainty facing the entire HEI system, we have endeavoured to formulate a response which maintains the academic integrity of our programmes. We aim to ensure that MIC students will still be able to undertake assessments and complete their studies in a timely manner and progress to the next academic year or graduation. This response has been governed by two key elements – **flexibility** on the part of staff and students in meeting the challenges presented by the crisis and - **compassion** in recognising and responding to the particular difficulties being faced by all members of the MIC community at the moment. Given the challenging nature of the current situation, measures we have decided upon are provisional and may need to be reconfigured if required at short notice.

Mary Immaculate College will remain closed for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis which means that current programme delivery has moved online. Assessments will also be delivered through remote online methods. We recognise that working from home presents a range of challenges to both staff and students particularly in terms of internet broadband connectivity

CONNECTIVITY

It is recommended that staff and students engage in online programme delivery and assessment through Moodle, our virtual learning environment. The Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) Centre has already developed and circulated guidance to staff on programme delivery and assessment through Moodle.

Useful links from LEAD's Moodle Support Page for Staff include:

1. [Getting Started with Moodle](#)
2. [Setting up Self-Enrolment to allow Students to access Moodle Courses](#)
3. [Assigning a Colleague Non-Editing Teacher Access to your Moodle Course](#)
4. [Uploading Learning Material to a Moodle Course](#)
5. [Using Discussion Forums to Facilitate Communication with your Students](#)
6. [Setting up Online Assignments](#)

- If issues with connectivity seriously prevent a student from engaging with Moodle, we have provided for alternative forms of submission via **email.** Students experiencing these difficulties should contact their module co-ordinators to discuss these submissions and all submissions should be copied to the generic Faculty and School exam submission e-mail addresses.
- In exceptional cases, where online or email delivery is impossible, we will consider **postal submission**. This postal submission must be agreed with module co-ordinators and all submissions for modules undertaken on both the Limerick and Thurles campuses should be submitted to Academic Submissions (with module co-ordinator and title of module) at Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road, Limerick.
- Finally, there is scope to consider obstacles to submission which ultimately inhibit a student's capacity to submit assessments within the **revised I-grade** process which is outlined below.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF REVISED ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

- All terminal exams arranged at institutional level for May through Student Academic Administration will no longer go ahead.
- All other on-campus assessments, including oral examinations either planned or scheduled to occur later this semester, will no longer go ahead this semester.
- Continuous assessment continues as prior to the COVID-19 crisis. **End-of year-assessments** and remaining continuous assessment will be conducted

remotely and will replace formal sit-down examinations that should have taken place in May.

- All existing continuous assessments which can be completed remotely will go ahead as originally planned and within the timeframe communicated students. All continuous assessment already completed will be assessed and contribute to the final grade for the module.

- All alternative assessments will offer equivalent validity, reflect high standards, and address the learning outcomes as any award-related assessment ordinarily conducted on campus.

Dates

- To ensure we maximise the opportunity for students to complete all assessments, all remaining assessments (including any replacement for an end of semester exam) should be made available on Moodle and/or distributed via e-mail by **Monday 6 April.**

- Where module co-ordinators have set deadlines for existing assessments, they still apply. The **final deadline** for the submission of all **alternative assessments (including those replacing exams)** will be **Friday 15 May** – the final date of this current semester. This provides students with a six week window (06/04 until 15/05) to complete all required assessments. We ask academic staff to advise students in managing their workloads during this period and to encourage the early completion of assessments.

- Deadlines for alternative assessment submissions should be staggered across this six week window. Faculty administrators may request certain deadlines to be moved in order to avoid overload of the Turnitin system and overload of submissions for students. While we ask students to adhere to the deadlines indicated by module co-ordinators, we are suggesting flexibility with submissions up to and including the final deadline of May 15. No late penalties should be applied to assignments during this period. This model provides students with a six-week window (6/4 to 15/5) in which to complete all required assessments.

- All grades should be submitted by the **extended module grade entry** (MGE) deadline of **Tuesday, 9 June.**

Final Year Project and Dissertation

All final year projects and masters dissertations due for completion and submission between now and the end of the academic year will be offered remotely.

- The format of the project or dissertation may need to change where the original plan of work is not possible due to the restrictions related to COVID-19 and these changes should be discussed with project supervisors
- For Masters programme dissertations occurring over the summer, we will replicate the multiple Module Grade Entry processes in a similar way to AY 18-19 and facilitate a full Winter exam board.

Repeats

MIC will offer repeat assessments/exams. As we are preparing for all eventualities, academic staff have been requested to consider alternative models of assessment for annual repeats

Virtual Learning Environment: Moodle

- All module owners on *Moodle* should identify at least one other person as non-editing teacher who can access the module content if required
- All lecturers should assign an alternative faculty member as editing teacher to access to assessments if required in the event of illness.
- Where assessments are submitted by email, staff should ensure that the submission is sent to the relevant lecturer and copied to the Faculty's generic email address.
- Faculty administrators, Head of Departments, Course Leaders and Student Academic Administration should be aware of the deadline for each module in order to ensure that students do not have several final deadlines falling on the same day.
- Faculty should begin to put contingency plans in place for corrections and the inputting of grades in case of illness.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INCOMPLETE (I) GRADES

Clearly, during the COVID-19 pandemic the requirements for I-grades is highly unpredictable. As such, we will continue to operate the I-grade process as outlined in the UL regulations. In the case of a COVID-19 related impact that is not covered within our current regulations, a special (fourth) category will be facilitated. Details of this category as communicated to students are as follows:

'An expanded I-Grade process now been introduced to include a COVID-19 circumstantial category. This enables you apply for an I-Grade for your module if you encounter issues that impacts on the completion of your assessments, including but not limited to: changes in any home care arrangement; an inability to engage in remote assessment due to a change in personal circumstances; inability to access LENS-related learning supports remotely; or students who lack access to a digital infrastructure required for the completion of alternative assessments – this list is indicative only.

• Applications under the COVID-19 circumstantial category are based on self-certification, i.e. the application can be certified by the student themselves.
• I-Grades applications are for individual modules, not for individual assessments within modules.
• An I-Grade will allow the option for you to clear the I-Grade over the summer, and in time for the annual repeats period so as to enable progression to next year.
• An I-Grade can be cleared using one of the methods outlined within the regulations. There is no financial cost to clear an I-Grade.
• Where you feel that the impact of COVID-19 still remains in the summer and you cannot clear the I-Grade then, you can apply for 'double I-Grades' using the COVID-19 I-Grade category at the end of summer semester (i.e. annual repeat time).The impact of 'double I-Grades' will mean that you do not progress to the next year of your programme, and you must repeat those elements of the programme for which you received an I-Grade for; in some cases, the full semester, in other cases individual modules.
• It should be noted that you will automatically qualify for remission of link-in fees for modules in the event that you are granted double I-Grades.

Documentation linked to I-grades will be based around our current I-grade platform and processes.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

The extension of the module grade entry period to facilitate assessment of remote assessment points will impact on the academic calendar. This will impact the processes and/or committee meetings outlined below. It should be noted that these dates are provisional and are in line with dates outlined by the University of Limerick and are dependent on the impact of COVID-19 and containment measures on students and staff. Additionally, further changes to the AY 19-20 and AY 20-21 calendar may be required.

	Previous Date	New Date(s)
Deadline for students to submit assignments	15 May	6 April – 15 May
Deadline for all student assessment submissions		15 May
End of Semester Two	15 May	15 May
I-grade Committee meeting	20 May	8 June
Module Grade Entry (opening and closing dates)	26 May	5 May to 9 June
MIC Examination Board meeting for progressing and actionable students	19 June	22 June
MIC Examination Board meeting for graduating students	17 June	23 June
MIC Academic Council	5 June	24 June
UL Academic Council for ratification of awards		TBC
Release of examination results to students	22 June	6 July
Recheck application period for Spring Semester	22 June	Monday 6 July – Friday 17 July
Viewing Process		14-15 July
Student Status Committee meeting	1 July	15 July
Faculty Grade Recheck return date		24 July

MEMBERSHIP OF THE MIC COVID 19 ACADEMIC RESPONSE GROUP

Vice President Academic Affairs (Chair); Dean (Acting) of the Faculty of Arts; Dean of the Faculty of Education; Head of School Thurles; Assistant Registrar; Director of Teaching and Learning; Director of Student Life; Director of ICT; Director of Executive Operations, and several key Professional Services staff.