



**etbi**

Education and Training  
Boards Ireland  
*Boird Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Éireann*

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## **Further restriction of onsite Further Education and Training activity in response to deteriorating COVID-19 situation.**

The Minister for Further and Higher Education Simon Harris TD has confirmed further restriction of onsite activity in response to the deteriorating COVID-19 situation. Minister Harris confirmed that further and higher education institutions are operating primarily online with most activities delivered remotely during this academic year.

Institutions have used some limited discretion to identify and schedule essential onsite activities, including during the last period of Level 5 restrictions up to the start of December. Onsite scheduling has included teaching and research in laboratories, practical tuition and skills-based workshops with a focus on activities that cannot be replicated online. Institutions have also provided direct onsite engagement to meet the needs of learners who are vulnerable or lack supports. Institutions have been very careful and adaptable in using this discretion in planning onsite activities, taking account of the public health situation nationally and locally including the most recent deterioration.

Minister Harris said: “The Covid-19 situation is continuing to deteriorate significantly and we must all play our part. This has been an incredibly challenging year for our colleges, students, our community educators but we all must restrict our movements to stop the spread of Covid-19. I know this is a particularly stressful time for students, many of whom are doing assessments and assignments at the minute. I want them to know this will not be forever. The college experience will not always be like this. If you are finding it difficult, please reach out and seek assistance. There are supports available.”

Level 5 of the Plan is available here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2dc71-level-5/>

### **Further Education and Training**

During the immediate period ahead, ETB further education and training centres will again adapt and use their existing discretion to restrict onsite attendance further, only allowing the most essential work to take place onsite. Onsite activity will focus on those activities that are not capable of being delivered through alternative means and are time-critical for learners during this period. Further Education and Training programmes will primarily move to emergency remote delivery as scheduled and will accommodate on-site delivery as

appropriate, for time-critical practical elements that cannot otherwise be delivered by the teacher/tutor/instructor/resource person only such as teaching in laboratories, practical and skills-based tuition, workshops that cannot reasonably be deferred for a number of weeks.

Youthreach services will resume as scheduled with provision primarily online but with additional support onsite where necessary to meet the mental health and welfare needs of learners.

Final year Leaving Certificate / Leaving Certificate Applied learners enrolled in FET Centres including Youthreach/BTEI/VTOS etc. will receive the same provisions in relation to on-site learning as second level schools.

Apprenticeship services, inclusive of the registration process, will be delivered online, with primary focus on the theory element of the programme. Exceptions may be made where it is demonstrated that there is a time critical practical element of the programme requiring immediate focus which cannot be reasonably deferred. *(Please refer to Appendix 1 for further information).*

CTC, STP, adult, community education and literacy programmes will resume as scheduled with provision primarily online.

### **Emergency Remote Delivery of Teaching and Learning**

- It is important to remember that emergency remote delivery is not suitable for all learning groups as they may not be able to adapt or adopt emergency remote delivery.
- With respect to emergency remote delivery and Level 5 and current restrictions, all teacher/tutor/instructor/resource person non-tuition duties should be undertaken from home, unless the teacher/tutor/instructor/resource person requests access to the workplace for resources i.e. the use of Wi-Fi, Photocopying etc. On-site activity should be minimised and remote working encouraged where possible.
- FET learning practitioners should undertake emergency remote delivery from home, unless access to the workplace is requested, and sanctioned for resources i.e. the use of Wi-Fi, Photocopying etc.
- FET learning practitioners who have practical components for delivery may request to deliver in the workplace. In such circumstances, they should show a demonstrable need for on-site tuition i.e. time-critical provision.
- FET learning practitioners will consult with management regarding the emergency modes of delivery to be selected, synchronous/asynchronous or otherwise, having regard to their own professional judgement in relation to the appropriate mode for their learners and/or the module being delivered, as well as having regard to the resources available to both the staff member and the learner GDPR and ICT/data security requirements.

- Staff will also consult with management on any changes to that mode thereafter, having regard to the resources available to both the staff member and the learner and GDPR and ICT/data security requirements. Management will co-ordinate with staff on any other supports that may be required to support learner engagement.
- FET learning practitioners will keep management apprised of learner engagement and will forward any concerns to management, including any concerns relating to a need for on-site support.
- All requests from staff to engage in on-site provision must be the subject of risk assessment, consultation and agreement with management.

FET Stakeholders will continue to meet on issues related to emergency remote delivery and any contingency tuition/assessment arrangements that are/will be required and further advice will issue as these discussions progress. In the event that any issues arise pertaining to these guidelines, it is requested that an attempt be made to resolve these on a local basis. If this cannot be realised, then the matter should be referred to the Stakeholder Group for oversight.

### **Protective Measures**

All appropriate protective measures will be maintained to support onsite activities, where it is necessary, and to avoid congregation.

## **Appendix 1**

### **SOLAS Update to all providers of off-the-job training on national craft apprenticeship programme**

Dear colleague,

We would like to thank you for successfully commencing off-the-job training for Phase 2, 4 and 6 apprentices this week. It has been very impressive to see all providers continue to maintain apprenticeship provision in line with Level 5 protocols agreed in November, offered in safe socially distanced environments in line with public health guidelines. The commencement of new blocks of apprenticeship training was an important step in supporting induction for these apprentices, in integrating them with their wider class, and in introducing them to the practical training setting and the equipment which will be critical to their learning and development. There is now scope to allow these apprentices, and those about to commence Phase 2, to undertake their training online in the period to end January and to schedule practical training which can only be delivered onsite for the middle and end of their current training blocks. In keeping with Government advice to minimise movement until the end of January, and in line with the approach set out above to maintain apprenticeship provision, we are therefore asking all off-the-job training for craft apprentices to move to primarily online delivery for the month of January.

Craft apprentices who commenced Phase 2, Phase 4 or Phase 6 training this week will continue their training online. Providers are asked to communicate this update to their apprentice classes.

Craft apprentices due to begin off-the-job training next Monday 11 January and in subsequent weeks will commence their training online, inclusive of the registration process.

There will be a focus on theory-based elements of the curriculum during this period. Teaching and learning supports will be provided by Education and Training Boards, Institutes of Technology and the Technological Universities. Advice and guidance will be provided by SOLAS and the HEA, with implementation meetings to be convened before the end of this week.

SOLAS will provide updates on [www.apprenticeship.ie](http://www.apprenticeship.ie) as well as communicating directly via text message and email with craft apprentices and employers.

**SOLAS 07 January 2021**