



Mardyke Arena

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

Information Update to all Members

The 12th March 2020 was the beginning of the first COVID 19 Pandemic Lockdown and little did we imagine at that time that in February 2022 we would still be talking about COVID and have experienced 3-lockdowns and significant upheaval in our family, work, and social lives. It has been a challenging time for everyone, and I would like to thank you and all our members for your patience, understanding and support throughout the past 2-years. I would also like to thank the staff team here at the Arena for their support, flexibility, and honest commitment during this time. Together with you, our members, it has been a remarkable journey.

At last, we appear to be emerging from the worst days of the COVID Pandemic and the big question on everyone's lips, inside and outside of the Mardyke Arena UCC is 'will we, it, everything be returning to normal'. Great question however, we must think back as to what we accepted as normal pre-COVID, what we have learned over the past 2-years and how we might find a 'new normal' that presents far better opportunities to each one of us in ways that the 'old normal' did not offer.

Over the course of the past 2-years we have made many physical changes to our facilities, most notably the location of a new fitness gym on the 2nd floor indoor running track area. This initiative has proven to be extremely popular with our members and will remain in place going forward. We will maintain a 1-metre distance between all equipment in both the Blue and the Green Gym and currently we are investigating ways of increasing the free weights area in both gyms. We hope to be able to improve this aspect of the Blue and Green Gyms in the coming months. We will also relocate some upright cycles on the walkway to the Blue Gym, as pre-COVID 19.

At the start of the COVID 19 Pandemic, we closed our Team/Squad Gym on the ground floor and opened the entire floor space to a dedicated weights gym, our Red Gym. This initiative was implemented to comply with social distancing requirements and to greatly improve the Health & Safety aspect of the gym area. This gym has proven to be extremely popular and with a capacity of 55, it is always in high demand. We initially relocated the Team/Squad Gym to Cork City FC's ground in Curraheen and currently we are leasing a small unit at Dennehy's Cross for Teams/Squads. We will lodge a planning application in the coming weeks for a dedicated Squad/Team Gym to be constructed here at the Arena later this year.

And so, to recap on our Fitness Gyms offering going forward; the Red Gym on the ground floor will remain available to book by members only, no teams or groups will be permitted usage of this area. We will maintain a 1-metre distance between equipment. We will also endeavour to meet the needs of our members by increasing the free weights offering in the Blue and Green Gyms and this we believe will provide you with a facility and service that will be difficult to equal by other facilities in Cork or further afield. We will continue to work with you in maintaining the high standards of hygiene, cleanliness and safety that was consistently achieved throughout the past 22-months.

Our current Booking and Queuing System was introduced when we reopened on 13th July 2020 following the ending of the first lockdown. At that time strict restrictions were imposed by the Government and the HSE on occupancy levels in swimming pools and gyms. We were very fortunate in that we have 3-fitness gyms, and this allowed us to provide access to 3 times the recommended occupancy levels. For us to fully comply with the occupancy requirements we had no choice but to introduce a check-in and queuing system. This operational model has worked well over the past 22-months. We do understand that a small percentage of our members have not been happy with the booking system however, we should point out that most of our members have been happy with the operational model and considerable numbers have been asking us to retain a booking system going forward.

Currently the Arena is catering for an average of 9,000 fitness gym visits per week, 3,500 swimming pool and additional visits for children attending swimming lessons, patrons attending fitness classes, patients attending the Arena Clinic, students attending UCC Sports Clubs and patrons visiting the café.

The key advantages of a booking system as indicated by our members have been,

- ✓ No issues with car parking
- ✓ No overcrowding in the swimming pool and changing facilities
- ✓ No queuing and waiting for equipment in the fitness gyms

We will conduct a survey where we will ask our members to tell us their preference for the operational model going forward.

The following are the Operational Options that we are asking you and all our members to tell us your/their preference. We will go with the majority decision.

Option 1

Cancel the Booking and Queuing System and return to pre-COVID 19 Operational Model. Effective from Monday 21st February 2022.

Explanation: Option 1 will mean,

1. that you will no longer have to book a time in the Swimming Pool, Green Gym or in the Blue Gym.
2. for health & safety reasons and for the control of numbers, booking will be required for the ground floor Red Gym.
3. members who book a time in the Red Gym will not be required to queue for entry, on arrival they can go directly to the Red Gym where they will be checked-in by a staff member

Option 2

Continue with Booking System, no queuing required for the Fitness Gyms and Swimming Pool. Effective from Monday 21st February 2022.

Explanation: Option 2 will mean,

1. that you will continue to have to book for the swimming pool and the fitness gyms
2. there will be no queuing on arrival
3. arrive anytime before or after your booked starting time and swipe through the turnstile
4. Blue Gym and Green Gym booking slots will be 2-hours in duration, i.e., 1 hour and 45 minutes (currently 1 hour and 15 minutes) followed by a 15 minute closure for cleaning.
5. Red Gym will continue at 1 hour and 15-minute sessions
6. the longer timeslot will give you the option to be flexible with your starting time
7. irrespective of your chosen starting time each session will finish at the designated end of session time
8. staff will check you in during your activity
9. booking timeslots in the swimming pool will remain as present

Option 3

Continue with Booking System for the Fitness Gyms only, with no booking required for the Swimming Pool. No queuing required. Effective from Monday 21st February 2022.

Explanation: Option 3 will mean,

1. that you will continue to have to book for the fitness gyms
2. that you will not have to book for the Swimming Pool
3. timebands will no longer operate in the Swimming Pool
4. there will no queuing on arrival
5. check-in will be conducted in the fitness gyms during your session
6. no check-in required for Swimming Pool
7. fitness gym sessions will be as outlined in option 2
8. members with pool and gym membership will be able to go swimming after gym session

Scan this QR code
to access the survey



Other information

During the past 22 months we have taken the opportunity to refurbish our saunas and steam rooms, and these are now fully operational again.

We always put your safety and the safety of all members and our staff as an absolute priority and therefore we have been cautious in our approach to re-starting certain activities and services and indeed increasing occupancy levels. We are now pleased to let you know that we are gradually increasing occupancy levels in our gyms, swimming pools, fitness class programmes etc. Our children's activities programmes will be re-introduced in the coming weeks and months with occupancy in swimming lessons increasing, mid-term multi activity camps, children's birthday parties, school tours and summer camps all slowly getting back to full operation.

Operational costs have dramatically increased over the past 2-years, in particular hygiene and sanitising supplies, paper towels, additional staff (check-in staff), increased energy costs and general inflation of 5% plus. Like all Irish businesses we are very grateful for the support of the Governments Employee Wage Subsidy Scheme, without it our business would have struggled to survive. The coming months will be a critical time for our business, the EWSS is due to end, the time to re-grow our services and activities to reach pre-COVID income levels will be a challenge, will energy costs and inflation levels drop or increase, these are the real issues that we like all other Irish businesses are facing in the months ahead.

We are pleased to let you know that we are committed to maintaining our current pricing as is until at least September 2022.

We sincerely appreciate your patience and co-operation,

Staff and Management,

Mardyke Arena UCC

