

A MESSAGE BY THE VC ON COVID-19



Dear colleagues, students and friends,

The Prime Minister has announced the extension of the Movement Control Order (MCO) to 28th April. To many the MCO is a drastic move, affecting many aspects of our usual everyday life. But it is a necessary move in confronting this drastic COVID-19 pandemic which has disrupted the usual daily activities right across the world. This corona virus has proven to be easily transmitted from human to human, and many had required hospital admission, many had needed life support in intensive care, and many have died. Thus this pandemic cannot be taken lightly. I trust that everybody adopts the various safety measures such as stay at home, work from home, study from home, physical distancing, frequent hand washing and wearing the mask (if you need to venture out for food or medicine). We just cannot slip up on these preventive measures. Complacency is not an option.

The University has taken a number of measures to ensure firstly the safety of our staff and students. A Task Force led by the Registrar En. Bakar and assisted by two Working Groups (safety measures led by Professor Hoh Boon Peng and management of persons led by Mr Kumaresh) is working daily to ensure the safety. Students from overseas may feel particularly vulnerable in these times of crisis – Deputy Vice Chancellor Ir. Dr. Jimmy Mok and team are reaching out to our overseas students.

Our second objective is ensure that the University functions as optimally as possible under these trying circumstances. New ways of engagement need be adopted. For instance, online learning is adopted for the remaining classes of this Semester. We have also agreed that the Final Exams will be conducted online through various modalities such as exams and assignments. It is imperative that there is as little disruption as possible to Teaching and Learning, and that our students will not be delayed in graduating. Of course, these measures are new and incorporated in a quick manner. There would be some teething problems which we should all need to address and I would appeal for patience and understanding.

Our third objective is to support the national effort in this war against COVID-19. This virus is an affront to all of us. All of us should engage in whatever ways possible to clamp down COVID-19. The least that we could do is to adhere to all the measures announced by the Government, and not be one of the statistic announced by the Director General of Health every evening. But more can be done. Some of our overseas students were involved in translating materials to their own languages. Some of us are involved in social voluntary work in supporting the needy and assisting the frontline healthcare workers, while others in various NGOs to consolidate this national effort against COVID-19. We have been called upon to participate in testing for the virus. Under the leadership of Professor Hoh Boon Peng, we have prepared our Molecular Biology Laboratory for this task.

Our fourth objective is to build up our University's preparedness and resilience in facing the world post-COVID. COVID-19 is a game-changer and is pushing the world to a new norm. How does that affect Higher Education? How does that affect our University? How does that affect our staff, students and friends? And how can we be part of shaping that new future? For that, another Task Force is hard at working out various scenarios and searching for plausible solutions.

In ending this short message, I am indeed heartened and encouraged to see at how our staff and students are coping with this national and existential threat. I am grateful for all the consistent hard work done by our staff and students to mitigate and overcome this threat. A big **Thank You** indeed to everybody.

This is a new difficult challenge thrust on us and everybody else. We stick together, talk and discuss with each other to find solutions, and work hard to achieve those solutions. Take care. Be safe.

Go beyond; Be profound: Make a difference.

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