

Academic Arrangements for the Spring Term

Thursday, January 30, 2020 8:02 PM

Dear students, faculty and staff:

This is a follow up to our message of January 25, 2020 that announced postponement of the Spring term. After reviewing most recent developments relating to the Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), the University has decided on the following academic arrangements:

1. The Spring term will commence on February 17, 2020. There are concerns that the Spring term will end unduly late due to the two-week postponement, which will affect the planned summer activities. To minimise the delay, the University has decided to start classes on February 19, 2020 instead of February 21, 2020 announced earlier, revise the duration of study break and final examination period so that the Spring term will end on June 2, 2020 (less than 1-week delay). These adjustments ensure that the Spring term will retain the same number of teaching days. Details are set out in the revised **academic calendar**. Some TPg programs may have alternative arrangements to accommodate the special teaching needs of their courses.
2. Under the circumstances, safeguarding the community's health and safety is the top priority. Following the Government's advice to avoid holding gatherings in crowded places to reduce the risk of infection, instead of face-to-face classes, live interactive on-line teaching will be delivered at the scheduled class time until further notice. The live sessions will be recorded for later access to accommodate students who are in different time zones. We will continually assess the development of the epidemic; and will adapt the mode of instruction in light of changing circumstances.
3. We understand that many students might have experienced difficulty with the teaching arrangements during the last two weeks of Fall term. Multiple measures will be put in place to ensure the quality of live interactive on-line teaching. Taking into consideration that simply distributing recorded video will not replace real-time class, live classes will be used instead, where all students can raise hands to ask questions, give instant responses, or even do project presentations. Faculty, TA/IAs, selected non-academic staff, and students will be trained to use these platforms; if needed, additional TAs familiar with the platform will be joining to help facilitate the classes. The bottom line is that we will ensure that the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning will not be affected.
4. In order to support some students' preferences for maintaining face-to face interactions in teaching, where facilities and technical capabilities permit, a mixed mode of teaching will be adopted for some courses/programs, where students can choose to join the face-to-face classes while students who choose not to or cannot do so can join the classes virtually via Zoom. This, however, requires classrooms to be larger than the normal capacity for students to be spaced out to avoid close contact. The University will try its best to provide support for different modes of delivery and monitor the effectiveness. Individual Schools/IPO will make separate announcements of these arrangements in due course.
5. The remaining final examinations of courses from the Fall term will be conducted via an on-line proctored mode (rather than in an examination hall) during the same scheduled time, except that examinations originally scheduled for February 19, 2020 (Wed) will be held on February 22, 2020 (Sat) during the same timeslots of the day. In other words, the examinations will be held on February 17, 18, 20 and 22, 2020. Professors/Instructors will notify students in their course about the details of the examination.

6. RPg Students are advised to consult their supervisors regarding their return to campus and research arrangements before their return. Supervisors are advised to give flexibility so that RPG students are not necessarily required to return to the University before February 17, 2020.
7. Students are advised to check with the organisers if any co-curricular activities they have signed up for will be held as scheduled.
8. While on-line teaching is conducted, students' eligibility for student halls will not be affected. The Library, sports facilities, canteens, and laboratories will remain open unless the epidemic escalates; and the University will make reference to the Government's direction in this regard.

This is a critical time at the University and in Hong Kong as a whole. Various offices are stepping up preventive measures and offering support to students and colleagues in need. We would like to thank all students, faculty and staff for exercising vigilance, patience, and understanding. Let's work together for the health and safety of our community.

Warm regards,

Lionel NI
Provost

Roger CHENG
Associate Provost (Teaching and Learning)