

THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Academic Arrangements under the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak 2020

(Updated on 31st March 2020)

The list of answers to FAQs in this document is meant for general reference only. In light of the fast development of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the information contained herein is subject to change. Please refer to the University Announcements and Press Release of the HKSAR Government for latest update. You are also advised to check with individual School/Department for the latest arrangements.

Teaching and Learning Arrangement

1. Why does the University adopt on-line teaching?

The University is making every effort to provide quality teaching and learning in alternative modes. Switching to interactive on-line real-time teaching mode enables students to continue their studies no matter where they are, while safeguarding the health and safety of our community. This is particularly important for students who have difficulty returning to Hong Kong. In light of the current outbreak of COVID-19, universities not only in Hong Kong, but also in Mainland and overseas countries have also adopted on-line learning.

We have been conducting evaluation from users of on-line learning so as to improve and optimize on-line learning experience. The live interactive on-line learning facilitated by Zoom to be adopted in Spring encourages students to actively participate, ask questions, receive instant responses and take part in group discussion.

The on-line teaching mode is also adopted by some top universities in the US even for accredited degrees. Participating in on-line learning is becoming a generic skill for students to cope with the future job challenges in the digital society and globalized economy.

2. Why does the University not further delay the classes to a time when the epidemic subsides?

The start of the Spring Term has been postponed for 2 weeks. Further delay may affect the planned summer activities such as internships and job placement, and students' graduation on time. The current academic arrangements aim at protecting the health and safety of the entire University community while students can also progress in their studies and/or to graduate without serious delay. Unless the situation is seriously out of control, we will make all attempts to keep the planned schedule.

3. Is it possible for students to enroll courses with schedule conflict under the new teaching arrangement in Spring 2019-20?

Students are not allowed to enroll in courses with clashed schedule. Live interactive on-line classes take place according to the original scheduled class times and students are expected to join the live interactive session, just like going to a physical classroom. Hence, students cannot enroll in two classes with schedule conflict.

4. Why are there still barriers in the class enrollments? Could the course enrollment quota be released since the classes are conducted on-line and limited size of classrooms is no longer an issue?

Appropriate class size is a key factor to effective teaching and learning, irrespective of whether teaching is conducted on-line or face-to-face. It is not only related to the room capacity, but also a lot of factors like manpower for managing and supporting on-line teaching activities and interaction such as tutorials and discussions, attending student feedback and marking of assignment without compromising quality of teaching. Whether extra quota will be added to a course is at the discretion of the Departments or the course instructors. You may approach the course department for enquiry of course quota. During the add-drop period, students may change their course choices and are therefore advised to make timely decision according to the enrollment situation.

5. Could students sit-in the on-line courses without course enrollment?

During the add-drop period, students may contact the course instructor requesting the meeting ID to join the individual Zoom class via Canvas. The meeting ID of individual courses would also be available at <https://w5.ab.ust.hk/wcq/cgi-bin/1930/>.

Joining the Zoom classes does not imply proper enrollment to the course. Students must register for courses with SIS according to the regular class enrollment procedures established by the Academic Registry. Students who participate in a course for which they are not registered will not be awarded any grade for the course.

If you want to join the course as “auditing”, please refer to the related UG regulation as stated below: With the permission of the course instructor, students may register in a course as an auditor and attend the course and participate in course activities. Auditing students will not be awarded a grade or earn credits. Subject to satisfactory completion of requirements set by the instructor, the course will be designated AU on the student’s transcript. Otherwise the course will be removed from the registration record.

6. When is the add-drop period?

According to the revised academic calendar, the add-drop period for the Spring Term will be from February 19, 2020 to March 10, 2020. Please refer to the revised academic calendar (https://registry.ust.hk/calendar_dates/dates19-20confirmed.pdf) for details.

7. Why does the University adopt on-line examination? Are there measures to ensure no cheating in on-line examination?

The on-line examination arrangement is to cater the needs of students who cannot be physically on campus under this special circumstance. Alternative assessment may also be adopted by individual course instructors where appropriate.

The University is very serious about upholding academic integrity. With the experience gained in the Fall Term and the in-depth review conducted by our faculty members and administrative colleagues, the University is working closely with the instructors to ensure that the invigilation process of on-line examination is at a rigorous standard. Multiple added measures such as real time on-line proctored arrangement will be implemented. Examination rules and guidelines will be announced by your instructors in advance.

The University has zero tolerance for academic misconduct. If anyone observes cheating during an examination, s/he should immediately report to the University.

8. Since the classes are conducted on-line, will our degree be devalued?

The University is committed to strictly adhering to quality assurance frameworks in teaching and learning. Despite the change of platform in the delivery of classes and examinations, accreditation of the degrees will not be affected. Please note that many top US universities have adopted such teaching mode, as mentioned in Question 1 above.

9. When will the University resume face-to-face classes?

In light of the rapidly growing situation pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University will continue with the current on-line real time mode for the rest of the Spring term. Face-to-face teaching will not be resumed.

10. Will laboratory courses still be available? What will be the arrangements?

For laboratory courses, some are modified to be conducted via on-line mode and still achieve the same learning outcomes, and some are moved to the Summer term or even next Fall. Students who are in Hong Kong may take the laboratory classes in person when situation allows us to run the lab with proper social distancing protocol. Special arrangements are also made to cater for students who will graduate after the Spring term. For example, for Final Year Projects (FYP) and laboratory courses that can be replaced by some literature review, or more written forms of work, the format of the courses has been converted so that the course can be undertaken remotely. For some 3-credit hour laboratory courses and FYP that require work in laboratories, students from the graduating class will be allowed on an exceptional basis to access the laboratories in the remaining of this term to complete it. However, the number of students entering the laboratories at any one time will be controlled. Students who are allowed to access the laboratories are required to observe the social distancing requirement and other precautionary measures set out by each laboratory. Should there be any further questions concerning the arrangement of laboratory courses, students should contact your Schools/Departments directly.

11. Will the tutorials, group projects, extracurricular activities, enrichment talks and other activities be available?

Please be assured that these activities are considered of high importance. The University will continually assess situation and resume these activities or make other arrangements once situation improves, including using on-line platforms.

12. Is the exchange program still available in the Fall Term 2020/21?

In light of the latest global situation pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, all exchange-in and exchange-out activities in the fall will be suspended. The University will actively explore possibilities of virtual exchange with overseas institutions; and provide more opportunities for alternative activities or shorter-term visiting opportunity when situations allow.

Should there be any further questions concerning exchange program, students can contact our Office of Global Learning (study.abroad@ust.hk) directly.

Tuition Fee

13. When is the deadline for the payment of the tuition fee?

As the Spring Term will be postponed for two weeks, the deadline for payment of the tuition fee (originally on February 4, 2020) will therefore be postponed to February 18, 2020.

14. Can I apply for refund of tuition fee?

With the adoption of the interactive on-line teaching mode, students can continue to earn academic credit towards their degrees via on-line teaching platform. Students can choose and decide whether to continue their studies before the commencement of Spring Term on February 17, 2020. Hence, once the term has started, **no refund, even partial, will be entertained.**

Students decide to withdraw or take leave from study before the start of Spring Term should follow the below guidelines set out by the Academic Registry (ARO) on the application procedures:

Program Withdrawal (i.e., complete withdrawal from the University)

- If ARO receives a written withdrawal request from the student **before the start of term** (i.e., before February 17, 2020), no tuition fees are payable, and any tuition paid for Spring Term will be refunded.
- If the written withdrawal request is received after the start of term, any fees paid will not be refunded.

Leave from Study

- A student may request a Leave from Study **before the start of term** (i.e., before February 17, 2020). When a Leave from Study request is received by ARO before the start of term, any tuition paid for Spring Term will be used as a credit for fees due upon return to study. **NO credit is given for requests received after the start of term. NO refunds will be made.**

15. Is it still justified to charge the same amount of tuition fee, given that only on-line learning is conducted and students will not be able to use all the facilities?

Tuition fee, as agreed mutually at the time of University admission, is charged on the basis of the academic degree. The University is always mindful of quality of teaching and learning to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achieved and the academic degree paid for is value for money. Switching to the on-line mode of teaching demands extra resources and manpower to make it feasible. For example, redesigning course materials tailored for the on-line mode, deploying more TAs, hosting training sessions for users, license fee of Zoom and cost of technical set-up are all huge back-end efforts not obvious to students. Please also note that similar class arrangement was made during the SARS outbreak in 2003. Even though students at that time could only learn via pre-recorded lecture video without live interaction, no refund on tuition fee was made.

The temporary closure of facilities including the Library, Learning Commons, and sports facilities is unfortunate and totally unforeseeable. The decision is made based on safety consideration and making reference to the Government's latest measures. The University continually monitors the development of the situation and adjusts the arrangement of the

campus facilities appropriately to minimise the impact to all University members. Please pay close attention to the email updates.

Should there be any further questions concerning tuition fee, students can contact ARO (tuitionenq@ust.hk) directly.

Hall Fee

16. Can I apply for refund of hall fee?

In view of the current epidemic development, a one-off policy on refund of hall charges for Spring Term 2020 will be applied until 17 February 2020. For details, please refer to the latest announcement on the Student Housing and Residential Life Office (SHRLO) website (<https://shrlo.ust.hk/node/609>). Should there be any other questions concerning hall fee, students can contact SHRLO (shrloinfo@ust.hk) directly.

Other Matters

17. I am currently outside Hong Kong. When should I come back?

All non-local Undergraduates, Taught Postgraduates and Research Postgraduates who are now outside Hong Kong **SHOULD NOT** return to the City **until further notice**. This is to reduce your own risk of exposure to the virus during the journey and in Hong Kong. With rapid spread of COVID-19 around the world, we would like to reduce the risk to the student health to the greatest extent possible.

As for students with hostel places not currently living on campus, please note that check-in arrangements for student hostels remain suspended until further notice. In order to help manage campus-wide health, the population density within our halls should be reduced.

The HKSAR Government and the University are continually evaluating the situation and will issue updates. Please pay close attention to the Government's press release and University's announcements on the latest quarantine arrangement.

Should there be any questions concerning hall check-in, students can email to SHRLO (shrloinfo@ust.hk). Questions on the quarantine arrangement can be directed to VPABO (vpabo@ust.hk) or HSEO (safety@ust.hk).

18. I am an international student currently in Hong Kong. Considering the situation in Hong Kong now and the special academic arrangements for the Spring Term, should I go back to my hometown?

In light of the fast developing situation pertaining COVID-19, classes will continue with the current live on-line teaching mode for the rest of the term which allow students to attend the classes no matter where you are. Students are free to make their own decision if you are currently in Hong Kong. Alternatively, you can consult your School/Department and Office of Global Learning for advice on the best option that fits you.

19. Where can I get support from the University?

One-on-one counseling is available through flexible means and platforms (including on-line), based on need. Appointments can be made by calling (852) 2358 6696 or sending an e-mail to counsel@ust.hk. A variety of workshops themed, “Connect with Your Heart - Find the Inner Peace,” are provided (see [webpage](#)) including [Self-Help Library](#). A 24/7 Helpline for students continues to be in operation ((852) 8208 2688).

Some of our graduating students may be concerned about suitable employment opportunities and our Departments and Schools/Interdisciplinary Programs Office can provide assistance. The Career Center has moved its operations and services on-line (<https://career.ust.hk/web/home.php>), including postings of jobs, and recruitment talks and career development programs via Zoom or webinars. In addition, students can seek help from Career Advisors as well.