

## Important message on 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) pneumonia

Wednesday, January 22, 2020 9:08 PM

Dear colleagues and students,

The outbreak of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) pneumonia continues to unfold in China. As of today, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020, more than 400 confirmed cases have been reported. The disease has also spread beyond the city of Wuhan and the Hubei Province. Several countries or regions have reported confirmed cases of infections in travellers from Wuhan. According to the news, Hong Kong also has the first confirmed case this afternoon.

The VP-AB has formed a 2019-nCoV University Response Team to help manage related matters and disseminate information in a timely manner. After an initial meeting this afternoon, the Response Team would like to remind the campus community on the following points:

1. Staff and students currently in Mainland China or planning to visit Mainland China are reminded to strictly follow the health advice issued by the Hong Kong Government Center for Health Protection. A dedicated page at <https://www.chp.gov.hk/tc/features/102465.html> is updated daily. Please be vigilant against the risk of infection and perform hand hygiene frequently, avoid crowded places and high-risk areas such as wet markets where live animals are sold.
2. If feasible, one should avoid unnecessary travel to Hubei Province and the City of Wuhan. All official HKUST activities such as student exchange, study or business trips to the Hubei Province should be cancelled until further notice.
3. HKUST students or staff who are currently in Wuhan may be advised by Mainland authorities to refrain from travelling. If this happens, please follow the government instruction and notify your department to make special arrangement for classes, exams or work.
4. When coming back to Hong Kong from Hubei, you will be required to fill out a health questionnaire at the airport, in addition to the general screening for signs of fever. If, within two weeks of traveling, you develop fever or respiratory symptoms, please put on a surgical mask and go see a doctor as soon as possible. If the campus clinic is closed, you should go to the emergency room of any public hospital. The closest one to our campus is Tseung Kwan O Hospital (TKOH).
5. Staff and students are advised to monitor their own health including taking temperatures on a regular basis. Digital thermometers are available at the office of all student halls. More thermometers will be made available on campus, and the locations will be announced when they become available.
6. Campus management has already stepped up cleaning of communal areas and refilling of disinfectant hand-rub dispensers around campus. SHRLO has also strengthened cleaning of student halls. Preventive and monitoring measures have been implemented.

We would also like to recap the announced actions by the Government, as of today, 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2020:

1. Anyone with fever or respiratory symptoms, and fulfils one of the following criteria: travelled to Hubei or Wuhan; visited hospital in Mainland; in close contact with a confirmed patient of 2019-nCoV, will be considered a suspected case, and will be admitted to a hospital with isolation facility right away. Rapid testing for the new coronavirus will be conducted, with result to be available in 24 hours.
2. According to the latest information, close contacts of any confirmed case may be put into a temporary isolation facility set up by the Government for monitoring.
3. This means all suspected cases, confirmed cases and close contacts of confirmed cases will be taken care of by the Government in off-campus facilities. It also means that the University may have to make special accommodation arrangements on campus for close contacts of suspected cases, during the 24 hours when rapid test is being performed.
4. It is also worth mentioning that even if someone is infected, the risk of that person spreading the infection before any respiratory symptoms appear is considered low. Therefore as long as people follow the advice to immediately put on a mask and seek medical attention as soon as there are symptoms, we can minimise the risk and not be concerned about carrying on normal University activity.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to contact your supervisor, HSEO or Campus Medical Clinic for further advice. We will issue further communication as and when required.

Vice-President for Administration and Business  
Director of Health, Safety and Environment Office