

## **The University's Response to the Statement of Student Union Issued on 18 March 2020**

Thursday, 19 March 2020 6:48 pm

Dear Members of HKUST,

It was just yesterday that we learnt a member of our University was preliminarily diagnosed with COVID-19. As the pandemic continues to spread globally, and more students and faculty returning to Hong Kong from affected areas, it has never been more important that we stay united and continue our best efforts in fighting this pandemic. That requires mutual understanding and support, cooperation, empathy, and diligence.

Regrettably, it has come to our notice that the HKUST Students' Union (SU) called this disease "Chinese pneumonia" in a statement yesterday, coupled with divisive and ungrounded remarks. The World Health Organization (WHO) pointed out early during the epidemic (<https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-2019-ncov-on-11-february-2020>) that no disease should be named after a geographical location, an animal, an individual or a group of people. Doing so could not only promote discrimination and stigmatization, but also divert the public's attention and efforts in combating the disease, which is now affecting nearly the whole world. Let's all be clear that the official name of this pandemic adopted by the WHO is COVID-19.

Although SU is a separate legal entity and its views expressed do not represent the University's official stance, it is expected to support the well-being of all students in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. With our students now residing in many parts of the world, it was surprising and unreasonable for SU to fund only students of certain areas, but not others. SU is expected to represent and support all students of HKUST irrespective of origin, political views, or other differences.

HKUST can stay strong only when members care and support each other without prejudice - especially amid this difficult time.

Wei Shyy  
President