

Some important points and reminders as we begin the Fall Term 2020-21

Monday, Sep 7, 2020, 10:10AM

Dear Students,

Welcome back from the Summer, and, for those who are joining us for the first time, a special welcome to HKUST! A new academic year begins today. I am writing to wish you all the best for this new year, and with a few important tips and reminders.

Mode of instruction

You may have already noted that all classes will begin the Fall term in real-time interactive online mode. As mentioned [earlier](#), if the situation improves and allows, f2f office hours, Q&A meetings, and other avenues for f2f interactions with faculty and teaching staff will be provided. With the recently improving situation in Hong Kong, the University has now decided that some classes will switch to “mixed-mode” delivery (i.e., students participate in a class either in-person or online) while still observing the social distancing measures and other relevant guidelines, after the 3rd week of the term (i.e., September 28 onwards). Different programs face different situations, and so the exact arrangements will vary. However, all classes with enrolments greater than 75 will remain online, as will all Language classes. Some other classes may also remain online in the interest of educational quality, e.g., due to the nature of class interactions, group work, etc. The details for specific classes will be announced by instructors later.

These arrangements will not disadvantage students who are physically outside Hong Kong or feel uncomfortable in coming to campus. Students, regardless of local or non-local, are not required to be physically on campus to complete the class and examination arrangements and are advised not to make travel plans just because of the optional mixed-mode arrangements. Also, opportunities for f2f interactions and mixed-mode delivery in classes will depend on the pandemic situation and restrictions may need to be imposed at any time.

If you are new to HKUST, we have prepared a [video](#) (use [this link](#) if you are in the Mainland) which shows you how to get an HKUST Zoom account and join the live interactive online classes securely. These steps are essential to maintain cybersecurity and engage smoothly in class. Also, we are sympathetic that first year undergraduate students may need extra allowances as they settle into University life, and so if you are feeling the pressure at any time during the semester, please contact your academic advisor or Program Office for assistance in figuring out a plan for you.

Active engagement for effective learning

During the unprecedented challenges we faced last year, as a community we have all worked very hard to pull together. Together, our students and faculty members have gained invaluable experience in online education and it was reassuring that the feedback last Spring was largely positive. Of course, there is a lot of scope for improvement, and we have been working hard over

the summer to collect and share good practices that everyone can adopt to collectively enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Some of the main points applicable to everyone are:

1. As a community, we all learn together. Last term we rolled out the [one-stop feedback system](#), which everyone can use to give quick input if something is not functioning properly. This innovation worked well so we are continuing it. Please use it if needed.
2. One major lesson from this past Spring is that interactivity is critical for online classes. Therefore, if the course instructor says so, then it is necessary for students to turn on their videos in class. The virtual background feature provides privacy if desired. Correspondingly, for classes with participation scores, students with video turned off should expect lower participation scores. If interested, please explore appropriately professional templates such as these [UST themed virtual backgrounds](#), presentations, and other options.

Academic Integrity

Another critically important issue is Academic Integrity. All HKUST members should uphold a high standard of academic integrity, which is the first point among the [5 Core Values of HKUST](#). As an educational institution, one of our objectives is to inculcate integrity in graduates, enabling them to be responsible citizens and accountable leaders of society. Hence, HKUST has zero tolerance for cheating and any student found compromising academic integrity will face severe penalties, including termination of study. While the vast majority of students do indeed conform to these high standards, we regret that cases of academic dishonesty were found in the online assessments of Spring 2019-20. These cases have been dealt with severely.

Regulations governing academic integrity can be found [here](#) and more details for different groups of students are available at:

- Undergraduates: <http://ugadmin.ust.hk/ug-guide/index.html>
- Research Postgraduates: <https://rpghandbook.ust.hk>
- Taught postgraduates: <https://tpghandbook.ust.hk>

FAQs on Academic Arrangements

To address some common inquiries on the academic arrangements, we have recently updated the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) on academic arrangements](#) for your reference.

Finally, I wish you all a great and rewarding Fall term. These are unprecedented times so let us all put our best foot forward as we step out on this new journey together. Have fun!

Best,

Prof. Anirban Mukhopadhyay
Associate Provost (Teaching & Learning)

Enquiries:

1. Student records, registration, examinations and graduation:

ARO <https://arr.ust.hk/reg/index.html>

2. Specific programs and courses including laboratory courses:

Respective Schools/Departments and Program Directors

3. Student Housing: SHRLO shrloinfo@ust.hk

<https://covid19info.ust.hk/faq-student-housing>

4. Quarantine Arrangements: <https://covid19info.ust.hk/quarantine-arrangements>

5. Campus Health and Safety: HSEO safety@ust.hk