

Professor Xiang Zhang
President and Vice-Chancellor
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong

18 February 2020

Dear Prof Zhang

Following our email to you on 13 February 2020, concerning about the captioned subject, we have received several responses from colleagues.

Among these responses, we would like you to address the following one:

“Thank you for following up with the University on the safety and health concerns of employees during the outbreak of the Coronavirus. It is a responsibility of the University to provide a safe place for the employees to work.

While we understand that VP (T&L) has announced that all UG courses will have online teaching in March, and the tentative date for on-campus teaching will be on March 30, a flexible approach has been given to individual taught postgraduate programs. As far as I have learned, some TPG program will commence on-campus teaching starting March 2.

While the actual infection pathway of the new coronavirus is yet to be clearly known, there has been continuous outbreaks of local infections in the community, the virus seems to be highly infectious. In this respect, the University has yet to announce how we are to deal with on-campus teaching. Once a large number of students gather inside a small classroom, the risk of infection becomes high, especially when the ventilation of our classrooms are not equipped with suitable filtering equipment, and the air is mostly circulated air in the air conditioning system. If unfortunately one of the staff or students is diagnosed with the disease, the outcome may be quite disastrous. Therefore, I do not know if this is too risky to allow individual courses to start on-campus teaching two weeks later when the campus may not be ready and we are so uncertain if any additional safety measures would be provided to protect the staff and students.

I would be most grateful if you may convey my concern to the senior management for their consideration.”

Please note that the matter concerns with the health and safety of colleagues and you, as the leader of HKU, are expected to address it as soon as possible.

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Best regards,

SW Cheung
Chairman of HKUASA

Felix Ng
Chairman of HKUEU

c.c. All Staff

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> Professor Xiang Zhang
> President and Vice-Chancellor
> The University of Hong Kong
> Pokfulam Road
> Hong Kong

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> 13 February 2020

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> Dear Professor Zhang,

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> In response to the safety and health concerns from our colleagues, the
> Academic Staff Association of the University of Hong Kong (HKUASA) and
> the Hong Kong University Employees Union (HKUEU) raised their concerns
> to Professor Tien, Chairman of the Task Force on Infectious Disease,
> in an email on February 10, 2020 (please see email exchange below). We
> proposed implementation of essential safety and health procedures to
> reduce the possibility of colleagues being infected by the covid-19 virus.

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> It is regretted that, in Professor Tien's reply email, he failed to
> address our proposed suggestions without explanations. We, therefore,
> would like to draw your attention to our proposed safety and health
> procedures as colleagues' worries are escalating with the sharp rising
> of confirmed cases and death totals reported on each day.

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> We would much appreciate it if our proposed essential safety and
> health procedures can be implemented as early as possible to prove
> that you sincerely concern the health and safety of colleagues.

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> Best regards,

> SW Cheung

> Chairman of HKUASA

Felix Ng

Chairman of HKUEU

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> c.c. All Staff

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> bethchan at 2020/2/12 , 03:23 pm:

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> Message from the Chairman of the Task Force on Infectious Diseases in
> reply to your email of February 10, 2020

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> Dear Chairman of the HKU Employees Union and Chairman of the Academic
> Staff Association,

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> The University is very concerned about the health and safety of our
> colleagues and is making the best efforts in providing a safe and
> healthy work environment for colleagues to carry out their duties.
> Heads and Deans are charged with the responsibilities to make
> appropriate work arrangements for their staff (including adjusting
> operating hours of service, allowing flexible office hours and
> arranging staff to work in rotation in office and from home) in order
> to maintain their basic operation and to provide emergency support and
> essential services for the University community. Arrangements are
> being made to ensure adequate surgical masks are provided to
> colleagues at the workplace.

>

> Colleagues who have any concerns about their work arrangement should
> discuss with their Heads in the first instance. They may also seek
> advice from the Human Resources Managers.

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> The Estates Office will ensure all the common areas and washrooms are
> kept clean and properly sanitized.

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> As advised by the University Health Service, students and staff are
> advised to check their temperature before coming to the campus every
> day. Those with respiratory illnesses or fever (oral temperature
> higher than 37.5°C, or ear temperature higher than 38°C) should
> refrain from coming to the campus. They should wear a surgical mask,
> consult doctor promptly, and inform the doctor of their travel and
> exposure history.

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> We should all stay vigilant and continue to make personal health our
> top priority.

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> Regards,
> Professor Norman Tien
> Chairman, Task Force on Infectious Diseases

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> hkueu at 2020/2/10, 09:46 am:

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> Dear Professor Tien,

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> Thank you for your reply of February 7. Unfortunately, the Task Force
> has ignored our request for a meeting to discuss the safety and health
> concerns for our colleagues. To ease the worries from colleagues, we
> propose the followings:

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> To reduce the burden of the University to issue surgical masks, 1. the
> University should keep the work from home policy until teaching is
> resumed; and 2. the Task Force should clearly define the essential

- > services and the staff involved in departments, as we have received
- > complaints that this is not clearly defined by the Task Force.
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- > To reduce the risk of returning staff being infected, 3. all returning
- > staff must be provided with surgical masks on daily basis, which are
- > formally recorded by departments (staff not provided with surgical
- > masks due to shortage must work from home); 4. returning staff are
- > mandatory to wear surgical masks at all times; 5. departments must
- > keep records of returning staff their daily body temperatures when
- > entering their offices, and the records are submitted to HR for
- > records and monitoring; 6. staff with body temperatures over 37.5C
- > must be sent home and continue self-monitoring; 7. all toilets must be
- > sanitized twice daily (morning and afternoon); and 8. lift buttons
- > should be sanitized at 2 hours interval from 8 am to 6 pm.
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- > We would be grateful if these essential safety and health procedures
- > could be implemented as soon as possible.
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- > Felix Ng
- > Chairman of HKU Employees Union
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- > S W Cheung
- > Chairman of the Academic Staff Association
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- > c.c. All Staff
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