

Message on vaccination / regular testing

Friday, May 21, 2021, 10:15AM

Dear Members of the University,

Over the last three semesters, the pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our lives. Our mission of advancing knowledge through research, teaching, and learning relies heavily on a campus life grounded in face-to-face communication and collaboration, which has been largely unavailable for far too long. To fulfil our educational objectives and to undertake our institutional responsibility, we are making every effort to resume normal operations in the coming Fall Term. In doing so, we must do our utmost to safeguard the interests of all our members and, above all, to contain the spread of COVID-19.

While the pandemic is far from over, the availability of effective vaccines has transformed our ability to manage the public health issues around the pandemic. The evidence in favor of vaccination as a primary deterrent to the spread of the coronavirus is clear.

- While the efficacy of each vaccine varies, the difference in outcomes for vaccinated and unvaccinated groups is unequivocal. In particular, the rate of infection, the need for hospitalization, and the likelihood of serious medical consequences or death are enormously reduced for those who are vaccinated.
- Members of HKUST need to consider not only their individual well-being but also the health of our entire community as well as that of the wider public. Vaccination is an act not only protecting ourselves but those around us.
- Even for countries and regions where COVID has been well-controlled, we have seen that the situation can change rapidly. Regions which have experienced limited infections must not become complacent in their vaccination efforts: as other parts of the world become vaccinated, areas with low vaccination rates will be vulnerable and continue to be isolated from international exchanges and collaboration. This scenario applies to Hong Kong.

It is a consensus of medical professionals and public health experts worldwide that, except for individuals with certain medical conditions, vaccination has benefits that far outweigh any risk, and is our best approach to stopping COVID-19.

In order to return to the ideals of our community and resume normal teaching and learning and other campus activities this Fall, we encourage all students, faculty, staff, and contractors working on campus to get vaccinated by the Fall Term. If anyone cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, regular COVID-19 testing with results submitted to the University for confirmation will be required. Details of testing and reporting requirements will be announced later.

- For any member who experiences financial hardship in meeting the requirements mentioned in the paragraph above, the University is ready to provide assistance.
- For anyone who needs assistance to vaccinate, the University is prepared to help as well. We are currently coordinating with the Government to arrange on-site vaccination service.
- For employees and students who are new to Hong Kong, per our standard practice, the University will offer assistance to them as needed.
- In parallel, a survey will be conducted to help assess our members' current status, plans, and needs for assistance.

- We understand that many countries and regions are still struggling under a surge of new COVID-19 infections. We will do our utmost to accommodate the needs of our students who may be unable to come to Hong Kong in the Fall.

It has been two difficult and challenging years in Hong Kong. Many of us are stressed and fatigued as we face an uncertain future. We will continue to do our best to be supportive and vigilant. Let us work together so that everyone's health can be reasonably protected. It is our sincere hope that many years from now, as we look back on our response to the pandemic, we can take pride that all members of HKUST stepped up to support one another willingly and responsibly.

With warm regards,

Wei SHYY, President

Lionel NI, Provost

Mark HODGSON, Vice-President for Administration and Business

T C PONG, Vice-President for Administration and Business (Designate)

Nancy IP, Vice-President for Research and Development

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Andrew COHEN, Acting Dean of Science and Director of HKUST Jockey Club Institute for Advanced Study

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