



THE UNIVERSITY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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Office of the Vice Chancellor

TO: Students

Covid-19 – Friday 3 April 2020

National Developments...

At the national level, the National Parliament has extended the State of Emergency (SoE) by another two months. However, the details of how this extension is going to be administered are not clear as yet, especially with regards to the operations of the University. The DHERST is in the process of preparing a guidance paper to be sent to the Prime Minister to advise him on what they think should be done during the extended SoE period. I will share with you the details of the way forward once they have been revealed.

Institutional Developments...

At the institutional level, today we had another very significant session of the Covid-19 Emergency Committee given that we now know that the State of Emergency has been extended by another two months. This Committee has now developed as a strong voice for the University and will be able to advise Senate at a point where it needs to make serious deliberations on a number of key issues related to Covid-19. Today's meeting saw several issues emerge as significant themes across the University as each School and Service Department gave an update on status as it affects staff and/or students in the current State of Emergency.

All Schools gave assurances that they have plans in place to ensure that students can complete semester one if necessary by remoted and distance learning. The University now needs to consider the logistical issues for enabling staff and students to enable teaching and learning through the blended learning modality.

The most significant issue to arise this morning, however, was that of the immediate future of residential students following the government's extension of the current two-week State of Emergency for a further eight weeks. This raises significant issues for our students and staff as there is growing concern that, if some level of infection is eventually inevitable, they do not wish to be at the centre of a large, close-nit population where disease spread would be inevitable. Also, they worry about the risk of carrying the virus to their home areas should the University close at too late a stage. So the overwhelming message from all Schools and Student Services was that they believe an early rescheduling of the academic year is necessary to permit students to return to their homes pending further developments in the national scene.

That being said, there are indications, not yet confirmed, that the advice from government relating to the State of Emergency may advise that learning should resume early next week in a mode which ensures social distancing. As I said, above, we are working hard on our Technology Enhanced Learning provision. However, very significant challenges will emerge

if we adopt a blended learning approach where face-to-face teaching is combined with online learning. As you know, despite daily advice, those of you who are residential students appear not to be able or willing to grasp the message of the importance of social distancing at all times. Also, our teaching accommodation and the availability of lecturers would make increasing the numbers of small-group classes required to replace large lectures extremely difficult.

However, we need to await the government's clear advice and will give you more details on Monday. I want to assure you that we will be advocating for all our staff and students in terms of getting the best outcome.

In the meantime, could I please encourage you all to stay positive and observe the policies and regulations pertaining to the consumption of alcohol, drugs and betelnut on campus? Please respect one another and keep our campus a happy place to be in.

Stay safe, stay on campus and save lives...stay blessed always!

And the daily repeat of a very important message...Please make sure you...

- ... activate your UPNG email account if you have not already done so – this is the means by which the University will stay in touch with you.
- ...practise social distancing by keeping at least 1.5 metres between you other people.
- ...wash your hands as often as possible and use hand sanitiser when it is available.
- ... cough or sneeze into your bent elbow – not into your hands
- ...avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- ...try to avoid social gatherings and crowded place

The University is taking steps to make sure that Environmental Hygiene is practised to ensure the health and safety of those remaining on campus.

With best wishes and a blessed weekend to you all,

