

What We Must Do Now to Help Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

The Governor of Hokkaido canceled his request for temporary school and business closures including universities on May 31st following the lifting of the State of Emergency for Hokkaido, Tokyo and three prefectures in the Greater Tokyo Area by the Japanese government on May 25th. Today on June 1st, Hokkaido University moves from Alert Level 3 (Restriction – High) to Alert Level 2 (Restriction – Medium) prescribed in the Hokkaido University Business Continuity Plan During Coronavirus Outbreak (BCP) in response to these government announcements. Please read the below page for the changes in measures to follow while we remain in Level 2.

["Hokkaido University Business Continuity Plan During Coronavirus Outbreak: Response Plan at Alert Level 2 \(June 1, 2020. Partially revised on June 19\)"](#)

I am aware that students are inconvenienced by being provided only online education with no face-to-face classes, in addition to facility closures including libraries. Newly enrolled students may be feeling more isolated because they have not had a chance to meet other students at all. Despite the restrictions being relaxed, most classes will remain online for the time being. Under the circumstances, however, we will put our maximum effort in improving the educational environment for students including the provision of physical and psychological healthcare. There are also students in need at our University due to having been financially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. We place great importance on supporting the continuation of their study as well.

With assistance provided by Hokkaido University Frontier Foundation, we have set up emergency grants for students. Visit the following page for details.

[Hokkaido University Emergency Student Grant Program](#)

I would like to express my gratitude to all faculty and staff members helping us facilitate online education, staggered work hours, remote working, and videoconferencing. My gratitude also goes to the medical and hospital workers on the frontlines who are working tirelessly to provide medical care to the persons with COVID-19 at Hokkaido University Hospital.

Amid the global pandemic, we see this unprecedented experience of the COVID-19 crisis as a wake-up call and an opportunity to increase our work efficiency and productivity. We will further our efforts to strengthen the education and research capacities of the University and consolidate the research

and education support systems. Your cooperation is appreciated and will allow us to continue to work towards the implementation of the above objectives.

After Hokkaido's declaration of the State of Emergency at the end of February, voluntary travel and social restrictions seemed to have helped stop COVID-19 infection spread. Unfortunately it did not last long before the second wave of COVID-19 hit our region in April. Hokkaido now recognizes itself as the only prefecture in Japan which experienced firsthand an outbreak that had seemingly ended quickly come back again if we do not stay alert. However, in the light of our own experience over the past few months, I have confidence in all of you who act responsibly to keep education and research activities going while preventing the spread of infection by following the Response Plan in our BCP and the "New Normal" – continued public health and social measures to which the nation needs to adapt.

As we are now witnessing, the rampant COVID-19 pandemic is bringing politics and economics to their knees and changing the practice of medicine in numerous ways. It is also urging us to reorganize our everyday lives, remodel the way we work, and change our perspectives and values. In the times like this, universities are faced with great societal expectations and demands as they are expected to pass on the knowledge and technology they have to the communities by employing the perspectives of experts in various disciplines. I truly hope that each one of us, as a member of the Hokkaido University community who makes contributions to solve challenges posed to the world, will do our own part in the best way possible to overcome difficulties and move forward.

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Masanori Kasahara
Acting President
Head of COVID-19 Task Force
Hokkaido University