

Dear HU students

The current COVID-19 outbreak has grown to an unexpected and unprecedented pandemic crisis. Given the viral spread showing signs of being curbed after experiencing spikes in the number of cases in Japan, the Japanese government lifted the State of Emergency across the country in May. It is however too difficult to forecast how things will unfold at this stage with concerns over the new outbreaks of COVID-19 in the Greater Tokyo Area and another nationwide pandemic over the past few days. Although HU has implemented a range of measures to meet the pandemic demands, we must continue to stay alert with due attention to the changing circumstances and deal with them accordingly.

Our education which is your main concern steered to focusing on the aspects of health and safety in April when the current academic year began. HU has driven its education system to the phase where we learn to live with COVID-19 while revising this year's academic calendar, facilitating online classes, deliberating on the feasibility of education-related events, establishing a mental healthcare system and launching emergency financial support initiatives for students in need. Although the Alert Level in BCP (Hokkaido University Business Continuity Plan During Coronavirus Outbreak) was reduced from Level 3 to Level 2 on June 1, then to Level 1 on July 10, we have made the decision that most classes will remain online. HU has however partly resumed in-person classes under specific health and safety conditions, and the students are now allowed to come to campus to attend in-person classes or to use facilities where permission is given.

Despite the situation seemingly improving, I ask you to reacknowledge today's imminent threat of viral infection. Please look after your general health and pay attention to the health and safety issues which may affect your family and friends as well as local communities. Remain self-controlled every day and keep you motivated in and passionate about your field of study. Keep the words in mind "Be ambitions" and "Be gentleman" addressed to students by Professor William S. Clark who served as the first vice-principal at Sapporo Agricultural School, the predecessor of Hokkaido University. And, act with a sense of pride and responsibility as a good University citizen.

We are very concerned to hear that a lot of our first year students are confused and feel anxious about how things will unfold since they have not yet set foot on campus while attending classes online but not on-site. Given the severity of the current situation, we endeavor to support you during your time in the University. At the same time, I would like to ask for your cooperation with the faculty and staff as a member of HU's academic community to implement our measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

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