

Message from the Vice Chancellor

Dear Student,

As you are already aware the entire country is locked down due to COVID 19 infection. More or less this is the situation in the entire world. I regret the disruption of your educational programmes in different stages at short notice while enjoying a very smooth educational environment for more than six months. It was based on a directive of the UGC following a policy decision made by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). This was beyond the control of university administration at that time. But, as you would have realized already this was an excellent health directive made by our country at that time of an impending crisis. Sri Lanka has saved hundreds of lives by this move already when one compares that with many other countries even in the developed world. As Vice Chancellor with a medical background, I have access to accurate firsthand information on COVID 19 situation in Sri Lanka. Hence, I felt this is the right time to communicate with all the students through our LMS what our expectations should be for the next few weeks.

Firstly, as at present I do not expect the universities to recommence the formal educational activities before the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. Earliest I am looking at reopening is the week starting from 20.04.2020. However, it may change depending on the developments during the next two weeks. The most important achievement by SL so far, is prevention of community transmission of COVID 19. If we can protect that status further for a period undefined at the moment, SL will be able to resume routine activities slowly in stages. This is a serious life and death situation. We should live first before thinking about anything else. I would appreciate, if all my students could understand the gravity of this situation. It is about lives of all of us, our loved ones especially parents who are old and young brothers and sisters who are especially vulnerable to die. That is the reason for my expectations after 20.04.2020.

We as UOR were able to successfully implement few initiatives to ensure you are kept focused on your education **while adhering to health directives of the GOSL**. Different faculties were in different stages of semesters at the time of the sudden closure. All faculties are uploading learning material into LMS. If you access these through University web site, it will be free of charge. You may have difficulties, but I suggest you try this as much as possible. We have also started doing live online lectures using zoom video conferencing facility. If you join, it will cost some money but very useful to keep focusing on education. UGC is trying to host zoom server in SL and then it will be free of charge for you. There are many advantages in keeping connected and learning this way as we could cut short the semester time if all are connected. That will ensure early graduation at the end, as disasters like this could happen in this world time to time.

I stay connected to all Deans, academic staff, administrative staff to ensure these developments and I would like you to appreciate your Deans, academic staff and non-academic staff helping to maintain these services. Some members of the Computer Science Department and office have come despite curfew to provide these services to you. Deans, members of the Senate met on video conferencing to implement these initiatives. We are the first state university to do so on a wider scale. I appreciate all of them.

We as a nation has faced many challenges in the past. Challenges are opportunities that will help us rise as a nation if we could work together putting behind the differences among us. I expect all of you to do this and give priority to education. Our academic staff is tracking all students to see if you or family members are affected by COVID 19. If so, please let us know. Any change of this thinking on the current

situation will be communicated to you in advance like this through the LMS. Once again please adhere to health directives of the GOSL and stay safe.

Senior Professor Sujeewa Amarasena

Vice Chancellor

University of Ruhuna

29.03.2020