

FOR INTERNAL RELEASE TO UG STUDENTS AND STAFF

UPDATE # 8 – SAFE MODE PROVISIONS FOR UG STAFF AND STUDENTS

RELEASE THROUGH SRMS AND HRMS

Contains 4 pages 1742 words

Dear Students of the UG Family:

RE: SAFE MODE PROVISIONS FOR UG STAFF AND STUDENTS

Let not your hearts be troubled, we are committed to getting through this with minimum difficulty.

It has been about three weeks since the first NCV 19 casualty was recorded in Guyana. and while we took immediate steps to physically protect you, creating a good system for taking academic systems online, in a comprehensive way, is taking a lot longer than the 3 weeks we have had so far.

We wish to genuinely express our thank those Lecturers, administrators and systems staff who have risen to the challenge even while battling very similar challenges as students. The fact is that no one was prepared for this and so very few have everything in place to deal with it in a seamless manner.

This is why we have solicited and analyzed your preliminary feedback using the internal channels set up for this purpose and on April 1 made a few decisions that we hope will be responsive to the real experiences and situations you have told us you are experiencing “on the ground” at this time.

NO ONE KNOWS HOW LONG WE WILL HAVE TO WORK IN SAFE MODE: *It should be noted that we do not know for sure if we will be able to return to face to face teaching in semester 1 , 2020-21 (Sept 2020). This may still be an online offering depending on the prevailing conditions.*

The following are measures agreed upon on April 1, 2020 to bring relief as far as possible for Undergraduate and Graduate courses scheduled in Semester II, 2019/2020.

SEMESTER EXTENSION: The current Semester II will extend to end of July 2020.

EXTENSION OF WORKING OFF CAMPUS: Following the government of Guyana’s announcement this week The University will now extend its period of working in **safe mode virtually until May 6th**.

SOME COURSES STILL NOT ONLINE: We are aware now that there are several courses which are still not online. We are addressing the challenges being faced by Lecturers to solve this now and we would expect that most of the courses will be online by the end of April 2020.

YOUR FEEDBACK DRIVING OUR DECISIONS: We thank you for candidly sharing your challenges regarding the move online. It has helped us to develop the following options for students and staff who report facing challenges with access, costs, time focus; competition for online resources at home; design of courses, form and regularity of instruction as well as the stress of the current global and national situation. **Bearing in mind that students are at different phases of their journey from first through second and**

third years and some in their final semester, we wish to remember that this globally disrupted semester is only one small segment (1 of 8 semesters for most). It must end.

So, our goal would be to get as many students, who can and would wish to finish through this semester, in the most robust way possible. Given the lived experiences of staff and students we also must provide a safety net for those who feel they must take some time away with some options with the least stress for everyone. These are highly unusual circumstances and as such we take unusual mitigation measures.

INSTRUCTION OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. **Continue online.** Finish as many courses as possible online this semester with an assessment model that is tailored for online delivery.
2. **Continue online but with a reduced load.** Choose which courses you wish to continue online now and defer the others to the next semester. Any fees paid will be prorated and held in escrow for the next semester. You will re-take ONLY those courses you did not complete this semester.
3. **Take a full leave of absence this semester only.** Discontinue any further lectures and instruction this semester. You can take the courses next semester with no new fees if fees were already paid and there shall be no other penalties.
4. **Withdraw completely.** This we do not advocate but ethically must let you know it is an option.

HOW to indicate an option: Send a formal note to: Your lecturer, Head of Dept, Asst Dean and Registry copied to fixug@uog.edu.qy. State your name. Student ID. Course, Faculty and the option you choose. If you choose option 2 – state which courses, you wish to complete this semester and the ones you wish to defer and complete later.

Students Who Cannot Get Online or Who are Trying to Go Home Where They May Be No Connectivity:

Though we continue to work on this, we have not yet finalized a comprehensive solution for students who have challenges with connectivity and instruments and who can't get online. **However, these students are urged to urgently indicate formally by calling or emailing the University.** We can assure you that we are working on finding a solution; **but need to know the numbers and exactly who and where these students are located and where they need to work from.** In the interim, we wish you to know that a solution to get you online is on the way in about 3 weeks. **While you may not make the assessment period for June 2020, you should be enabled to get online for a "Make-up Semester" from June to September 2020, if the conditions allow.**

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS: Please make use of 50 Emergency Off Campus lines which have been deployed to critical staff working at home during this period. **The numbers have been published on UG's website. Please note that those numbers are call and WhatsApp enabled. Telephone service will be available Mon to Friday from 10 and to 2pm. WhatsApp messages may be sent anytime. Given the circumstances we ask that you please allow a reasonable time for response.**

NO FINAL EXAMS BUT VARIOUS FORMS OF ASSESSEMENTS: There will be no final exams. However, there will be various forms of assessments scheduled for the months of June-July 2020. The details of what form they will take and how they will be conducted are being worked on by the Faculties and will be communicated next week. *N.B. This does not apply to those of you who are already doing continuously assessed courses.*

STUDENTS PERFORMING ESSENTIAL SERVICES: We salute all those alumni and current students who are providing essential services during this period - health workers, security, CDC, social services, key financial services, custodial workers, ICT experts, farmers, transport services among others. *If you are a current student on call or “in line” or working on the national response to NCV 19 and pursuing your academic programme online, we recognize that you will need extra time to complete assignments etc. You are therefore advised to inform your lecturers and copy to the HoD. UG will work with you on realistic scheduling of your assignments, classes and interactions with lecturers. It is not a perfect system yet but please know we will work to support you.*

EXTENSION OF ZOOM: It may be helpful to note that due to the survey feedback received regarding the efficacy of Zoom for many Lecturers and students, *the University has just invested in an enterprise solution with Zoom which will enable each Lecturer who requests its access to the version which allows for recording and sharing of lectures. This will allow for review by those who may not have been able to join live in their convenient time and place.*

LABS, FINAL YEAR SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS, INTERNSHIPS, FIELDTRIPS, PRACTICA, ATTACHMENTS

*Solutions are being explored globally. While some of these may be converted into virtual simulations, Action experiments, Scenario or Model building, and Action Evaluations. Indeed, some may not lend themselves to the respective adaptations. However, **Faculties are working to see which of these can be offered virtually or what other options can be pursued. Additionally, many of these may be re-scheduled to later in the year perhaps in June through Sept 2020. More specifics on this will be available by the third week in April 2020 when we ought to have a better handle on the trajectory of the NCV 19 outbreak.***

FEES – Gentle Reminder that the **University issued a note 2 weeks ago extending the deadline for payment of Fees till the end of the safe period. It is worthy to note that thousands of students have been able to get relief from this early mitigation action even though the University must still meet all its obligations and bills during this period. Data as of today indicates that almost 2/3rds of our students have not fully paid.**

Continuous work on Building the Systems: *We continue to work with the tools we have and to build out new solutions, including Zoom, Online exam solutions, and helping more people get on to Moodle. We*

must also track the trajectory of the NCV 19 outbreak in Guyana in order to provide support to the national effort and to make the best decisions for our University. The student population of the University of Guyana is 4 times larger than all other Universities in Guyana put together. Many of our staff are also struggling with similar challenges as our students. This is a lot to manage under these circumstances, but we continue to workday and night to keep everyone safe and well in mind, body, and soul; Realistically it is taking time to get to everyone. We ask that you take the necessary steps to preserve your health and you have our full support to do so as a priority. However, we urge that you do so with honesty, fairness and integrity and that you work to maintain focus as far as possible. Please reach out if you have any challenge or question.

*And remember practice physical distance, avoid negativity, stress and anxiety, rest well, nourish yourself body and spirit, boost your immune system, ensure proper hygiene and sanitation, stay indoor as far as possible, but if you have to go out keep safe distance, wear a mask, cover your head, eyes and hands and **sanitize everything**, including yourself when you come home.*

You are the best and brightest of this nation. We are committed to getting you through this.

We are wonderfully made. This period will end. One day at a time and we will come through this and be better from the experience.