

UP SYSTEM POLICY ON THE SECOND SEMESTER AY 2019-2020 IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

We are now living in extremely challenging times. The extension of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) and the rapid COVID-19 escalation have caused profound human suffering especially among Filipinos at the margins of Philippine society. Epidemiological projections of exponential growth in the number of COVID-19 cases and recent news of a second wave of infections in China have further exacerbated the anxiety of our people.

The COVID-19 pandemic demands that UP as the country's national university step up and carry out its mandate both as Research and Public Service University for the Filipino people. We have deployed various experts from different branches of knowledge and campuses of the UP System in search of solutions to mitigate the impact of the crisis. Since the start of the pandemic, our teams have engaged in projecting the spread of the disease, using big data to study mobility under ECQ, developing a local COVID-19 test, validating testing kits, determining the source of the virus through genetic sequencing, conducting clinical trials on new treatment modalities, preparing ethics guidelines for COVID-19 crisis-level hospital care, designing disinfection tents and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) i.e. overalls, gowns and masks, developing locally designed breathing machines i.e. ventilator, ascertaining supply chains for food, health-related and other inputs to economic and trade policies, and developing apps for Local Government Units to facilitate their work, to name a few COVID-related researches. Multi-disciplinary teams from the humanities, natural and social sciences are producing more effective ways of communicating the various dimensions of the pandemic to help our people understand COVID-19 and are creating art and music to help them cope with stress in these difficult times. The UP Philippine General Hospital and all our Constituent Universities have also been directly involved in preventing the spread of COVID in their own communities and regions, offering the services of their laboratories, experts and trainers in biosecurity and biosafety.

Even as UP has heeded the urgent call to fulfill its research and public service functions vis-à-vis the nation, it has also focused its attention to ensuring the provision of learning opportunities for our students in this crisis situation. Since 10 March 2020, faculty members have calibrated their syllabus, adjusting its delivery and assessment modes to the composition and situation of students in their classes. With compassion and empathic understanding, our faculty members have reached out to our students, assuring them of their intention to continue keeping in touch through different communication platforms and media. In regional units with unstable internet connections and very poor TELCO signals, the University has even resolved to cross checkpoints and distribute USBs and other learning materials for independent study, with faculty members ready to monitor their students remotely.

While the University is scheduled to resume learning activities in the different Constituent Universities after this week's reorganization of the work of the faculty in departments and institutes, our attention was called to the high anxiety level of UP students and even of some faculty members. Many of our students have returned home to different regions of the country and are unable to gain full access to the University's Learning Management Platforms and other low technology-supported modes (e.g. emails, Facebook,

Viber, Messenger etc.). Moreover, several surveys reveal the difficulty of pursuing academic work for a significant number of students and faculty in the face of basic survival concerns.

Under the circumstances, the Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC)—composed of the UP System Executive Committee and the Chancellors of Constituent Universities—resolved to modify the option presented to it in its 13 April 2020 meeting—i.e. to extend the semester while paying closer attention to the needs of students who will be disadvantaged by their lack of access to various learning platforms. Guided by the principle excellence as operationalized in adherence to academic standards--albeit adjusted to the context of the pandemic--this option was based on the decisions reached over the last three weeks by CU Executive Committees in consultation with College Secretaries, Graduate Program Coordinators, Registrars, faculty and students.

Prompted by the need for even greater compassion for our students and faculty at this particular juncture, the PAC modified its original position by calling for 1) an end of the semester on 30 April 2020; 2) assurance that students will not fail the course but that their grade of Pass (with optional adjectival remarks) will be deferred until they meet the requirements by 31 May 2021; and 3) that graduating students and those meeting personal timetables—e.g., students who need to graduate in a succeeding semester to begin earning for their families, those applying for graduate admissions, those on scholarships, etc. may opt to complete the requirements of the semester following the adjusted syllabus and the deadlines set by his or her Constituent University

The Board of Regents, in its meeting on 16 April 2020 approved **with revision** the following actions proposed by the PAC affecting students in all CUs except the UP Open University:

1. FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

- a. The University shall end the Second Semester on 30 April 2020 to reduce the growing anxiety of students and faculty on one hand, and enable their COVID-related engagements, on the other hand
 - i. Departments/Faculty who have sufficient basis to make an assessment of their students' academic performance may give their students a numerical grade;
 - ii. Where there is no sufficient basis for assessing students, they will be given a **“Deferred Grade”** that will not appear in their Transcript of Records;
 - iii. Departments/Faculty shall prepare the necessary adjusted course requirements which shall allow them to make an assessment of academic performance if they have not done so yet and communicate the same in a timely manner to their students;
 - iv. Departments/Faculty shall ensure that the course requirements take into consideration the crisis conditions under which the students are required to comply with the requirements;

- v. Students have up to **31 May 2021** to complete the course requirements, upon compliance with which the students shall be given a numeric grade. Should they be unable to do so, students shall be considered dropped, and will have to re-enroll the course in the succeeding semester;
- vi. A student who enrolled in a course in the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 that is a prerequisite to another, shall be allowed to enroll in the latter course for credit, despite having a 'Deferred Grade' for the prerequisite course. The department/institute/unit shall offer bridging programs to enable the student to catch up with the course in the First Semester 2020-2021;
- vii. For Second Semester AY 2019-2020, classes for which the faculty is adjusting further the requirements of the course, the faculty concerned and or the department/institute/unit shall strive, if conditions permit, to reach all students in the class for the requirements and means to meet them;
- viii. Adjusted requirements for the completion of the course must have been communicated to students through all means if possible, taking the crisis situation into account;
- ix. While UP is ending the semester for all students, graduating students as well as those meeting personal timetables—e.g., students who need to graduate in a succeeding semester to begin earning for their families, those applying for graduate admissions, those on scholarships, etc. may opt to complete the requirements of the semester following the adjusted syllabus and the deadlines set by his or her Constituent University.

2. FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS AND STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF LAW AND THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

All units offering and handling graduate courses shall determine how best to proceed with their courses, in consultation with their students, and in consideration of the current crisis situation. The parameters for the assessment of their students' academic performance, shall be determined by the respective colleges/departments, likewise taking into consideration the current crisis situation.

- 3. CUs shall set the deadline for the submission of requirements for undergraduate and graduate students to be endorsed for graduation in Mid-year and in time for the Commencement of 2020.
- 4. Graduating students completing the requirements after the deadline set by the CU shall be endorsed to the BOR for graduation when it meets to approve the candidates for graduation of the semester the student completes the requirements in. However, upon approval of the Board of Regents, the student shall be deemed graduated as of the Second Semester 2019-2020.

5. The University is also waiving academic rules as well as policies on scholastic standing and student financial assistance.

DROPPING OF SUBJECTS

The deadline for dropping of subjects for the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 is lifted.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The deadline for filing of Leave of Absence for the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 is lifted.

MAXIMUM RESIDENCE

Residence for the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 shall not be included in the reckoning or in the counting of years of residence of a student.

PREREQUISITES TO COURSES

As stated above

REMOVAL OF INC

A student who incurred an INC during the Second Semester AY 2018-2019 shall be allowed to remove the INC until First Semester AY 2020-2021.

REMOVAL OF 4.0

A student who incurred a 4.0 during the Second Semester AY 2018-2019 shall be allowed to remove the 4.0 until First Semester AY 2020-2021.

RULES ON SCHOLASTIC STANDING

The following rules on scholastic standing (delinquency) are suspended for the Second Semester AY 2019-2020:

- a. Warning
- b. Probation
- c. Dismissal
- d. Permanent Disqualification

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Policies on student financial assistance which are tied to scholastic standing are suspended.

6. There will be no more face-to-face classes after 30 April 2020. The University shall endeavor to adopt alternative modes of instruction, requirements and assessment methods that are consistent with its mandate as the National University committed to honor and excellence and that equally take the extreme conditions confronting our students and faculty into account.