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Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs

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For: The UP Faculty, Staff and Students

Through the CU Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors for Academic Affairs

From: 
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Vice-President for Academic Affairs

**Re: Academic Plans for AY 2020-2021 and Timetable for Dialogues
with Faculty, Students, Staff and Concerned Parents**

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the University has been planning how UP students can continue learning despite class suspensions due to natural hazards, disasters, or social and political eventualities. Anticipating many more such suspensions in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, the pre-COVID-19 UP System plan already entailed strategies to: 1) expedite the paradigm shift to lifelong learning; 2) accelerate changes in pedagogies and assessment that include the blending of face-to-face, virtual and experiential course work; and 3) provide course packs at the start of every semester to facilitate independent learning as a value in itself but most especially to make up for disruptions in the learning process, among others.

By upending the world as we know it, the global spread of the SARS-COV-2 virus merely catalyzed the overdue transformation of higher education in general and UP education in particular. As we find our bearing in this "new" world, we are compelled to accept the reality that we can no longer go back to the traditional teaching and learning we have been used to. However, we are beginning to realize that this reality is also opening up new prospects for the University to enhance the capacity of our learners to lead in the different spheres of work they will find themselves in with honor, excellence, and compassion. Put differently, the emerging "next normal" provides a platform for teaching innovations that can further hone the competence of our graduates to find feasible solutions to persistent problems plaguing the Filipino people.

Our work challenges in the next two months are daunting. However, this period also offers an exciting opportunity to tap into our creativity, experiment on new ways of delivering programs and courses, and institutionalize innovations that enhance learning. For instance, this is the time to:

- Invite eminent Visiting Professors who in the past have hesitated to accept our invitation because they could not afford to be physically away for an extended period of time;
- Invite experts such as noted literary authors, artists, scientists, researchers, and practitioners to interact with students in virtual class sessions;

- Use uploaded plays, art works, music, TV UP panel discussions, even Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs);
- Offer modular courses in sequence within a semester when feasible;
- Incorporate available virtual reality applications in courses, while ensuring that students without online connections are able to access uploaded works and recorded sessions with experts asynchronously; and,
- Design common courses collaboratively within a unit or across the UP System, among other possible changes in the way we have delivered courses so far.

The University will also use the time to pilot the enrolment of students who were slated to spend a semester abroad in AY 2020-2021 in online courses in universities with which UP has a Memorandum of Agreement or in selected MOOCs offered by reputable academic institutions. Lessons from this pilot might eventually expand our cross-enrolment policy to enable student registration in MOOCs that are free of charge—unless a grade or certification is sought—for UP assessment or validation akin to our advance placement system.

The prospects are many, and more will open up once we begin stepping out of our usual modes of course and program delivery. In anticipation of “new ways of doing”, the Board of Regents in its 1351st Meeting on 21 May 2020 approved the suspension of academic policies and rules that may be affected by the remote and blended delivery of education in AY 2020-2021. The revision of these rules and policies after the forthcoming academic year will be grounded in UP’s experience then.

This Memorandum outlines UP’s academic plans and preparations for AY 2020-2021. Details will be provided in subsequent Memoranda.

I. ACADEMIC PLANS FOR AY 2020-2021

A. Mode of Teaching and Learning in the First Semester AY 2020-2021

Putting the safety of our students, faculty, and staff first, the University is adopting remote learning and/or the blending of remote and face-to-face learning for AY 2020-2021 if the public health situation allows.

1. Courses in the First Semester AY 2020-2021 will be delivered **REMOTELY**. Any exemption from this policy must be approved by the CU Chancellor, subject to strict compliance with the guidelines set by the country’s Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) and Local Government Units, and the CUs as well as the situation of students in the class a unit endorses for exemption.
2. Remote teaching and learning cover the entire spectrum of asynchronous or non-real time communication between teachers and learners—from text-based (basic email, FB messenger, Viber group, etc.) to online discussion boards in different platforms (UP’s Learning Management Systems (e.g. UVLE, VLE), Canvas, Google Classroom, Edmodo etc.)—and synchronous or real time communication between teachers and learners (e.g. lectures, webinars and teleconferences using such platforms as Zoom, Google Meet). **To avoid confusing students, the CUs are urged to adopt a uniform LMS or at most two LMSs.**
3. Remote learning is commonly perceived to be inferior to residential learning in terms of quality. This is understandable because Philippine education has traditionally been face-to-face and predominantly lecture-based. However, guided independent study that is properly planned and implemented may be of the same, if not superior quality, to the usual teacher-dependent learning despite its remote delivery.

B. Academic Calendar

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted adjustments to the academic calendars of higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide. A number of HEIs operating on a semester basis have either shifted to quarterly terms or to a trimestral system for AY 2020-2021. Some universities that have retained a semester-based academic calendar divide the semester into two, with students concentrating on two or three courses at a time in the first and second half of the semester.
2. UP is retaining the Semester and Midyear system with the following adjustments, **subject to the final approval of the Board of Regents:**

In its 1351st meeting on 21 May 2020, the UP Board of Regents **approved in principle** the shortening of the first and second semesters to 14 weeks and the opening of the First Semester on 10 September 2020 subject to student consultations—which are scheduled on the week of 29 June 2020.

NOTE: A reduction in the number of weeks in the semester will not affect the delivery of content since lessons will be delivered asynchronously or synchronously. For students without connectivity, their independent learning will be supported by activity and assignment guides in the course packs which will be delivered to them in USB flash drives or as printed material. The remote mode of instructional delivery will not limit the duration of the interaction of the students with the content, with the teacher, and with fellow learners, and can even approximate the usual 48 hours of face-to-face classes in a semester. In its Special Meeting on 17 June 2020, the President's Advisory Council (PAC) chaired by the UP President and with the Chancellors of UP's Constituent Universities, the Executive Vice-President and Vice-Presidents as members resolved to endorse to the Board of Regents an expanded 2021 Midyear, making it 7 weeks instead of 4 weeks, to enable adjustments of student and faculty load in light of the COVID-19 situation—without affecting the prescribed load for the year.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR REMOTE LEARNING IN AY 2020-2021

A. Physical and Academic Infrastructure

1. To address the required physical infrastructure for remote learning, UP is currently undertaking the following initiatives, among others:
 - Maintaining its institutional subscription to ZOOM for faculty meetings, webinars, workshops, synchronous classes, student group work and interactions;
 - Discussing with telecommunication companies (TELCOs) the procurement of gadgets and Internet connectivity for financially challenged students;
 - Launching fundraising initiatives and resource generation campaigns for alumni and private sector donations for computers and laptops for students;
 - Providing support for Internet connectivity, computer loans and/or subsidy for the faculty;
 - Studying possible support for TELCOs' educational data packs for students; and,
 - Exploring the use of television and radio air waves as alternative to the internet especially in areas with poor signals or internet connectivity.

2. The following ongoing initiatives lay down the academic infrastructure for remote learning:
 - Piloting in the First Semester AY 2020-2021 the implementation of an in-house developed Library Services Platform and Discovery Service to replace the existing Library System (iLib) that will feature a union catalog of print and electronic resources of all CU libraries and a centralized patron database;
 - Subscribing to Databases/Collections for all CUs;
 - Subscribing to Open Athens (remote access platform) for each CU;
 - Procuring a Learning Management System (LMS) to supplement the CU LMS (e.g., UVLE) if deemed necessary;
 - Projectizing the upgrade and enhancement of the UP LMS; and,
 - Curating and making local and international online educational resources available.
3. The schedule of webinars/workshops on the LMS that will be utilized by the CUs will be announced at a later date.

B. Program and Course Preparations for Remote Learning

1. Program Preparations

Guided by the principles of honor, excellence, inclusivity, and compassion, academic units are enjoined to review their curriculum in view of the move to remote learning in the next academic year, noting the possibility of blended learning in the second semester if the situation will allow. This review should be done by **10 July 2020 in coordination with units offering other courses in the curriculum**. The review will determine the possible sequencing of courses to be offered in the First and Second Semester AY 2020-2021 and the proposed modified Midyear. It entails decisions related to the following questions, among others:

- Which courses can be entirely delivered remotely and which of these can be offered in the First Semester?
- Which courses should have a face-to-face component and can be delivered in a blended mode?
- Which courses cannot be delivered remotely or in blended mode but can be redesigned to be amenable to remote learning and blended learning at a later date?
- Which courses cannot be delivered either remotely or in blended mode? What protocol should be in place in order to ensure safety of students if they will have to go to school for these courses? What arrangements will be made for those who are unable to do so?
- What is the reasonable student load in a remote learning mode?
- What is a reasonable number of students per class in a remote learning mode? Can the Unit afford to offer more sections if needed? If not, can the course be offered in a large class with Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Teaching Fellows (TFs)?
- Which courses can be team-taught (with the teaching load divided among the members of the team)? Which courses may be delivered with Teaching Associates (TAs) / Teaching Fellows (TFs)?
- Which courses may be entirely delivered remotely and offered in a large class format? How many TAs/TFs will be needed for these courses?
- Are there courses in the program that can be designed for completion in 7 weeks and taken sequentially within the semester with final grades given at the end of the semester? This is to enable students enrolled in

major courses to focus only on two to three courses in the first 7 weeks of the semester—or 6 to 9 units of the student's 15 to 18 enrolled units in the semester—followed by another two to three courses in the next 7 weeks.

2. Course Preparations:

2.1 After the review of the curriculum, academic units should then redesign courses to be offered in the First Semester and come up with course packs that will be ready for the students by 1 September 2020. The course packs should have the following components:

- A course guide with detailed syllabus
- Learning resources such as readings, multimedia resources like video lectures, and other content resources
- Study and activity guides
- Assignment guides

2.2 The redesigned courses are expected to have the following characteristics:

- Establish **consistency** in course delivery
- Involve **active learning** (i.e. learning by doing)
- Enable **interaction among students** (e.g. learning through teamwork, projects, discussion forum, if feasible)
- Incorporate a mechanism for **ongoing formative assessment** and prompt (e.g. automated) **feedback**
- Include a mechanism for **one-on-one, on-demand assistance** from highly trained personnel (e.g. TA, GA, peer tutor)
- Provide **structure and sufficient time** to perform learning activities
- Include a mechanism for **monitoring student progress** and intervene when necessary
- Include a mechanism for **measuring learning and completion**.

2.3 Academic units are enjoined to do the course redesign collaboratively. For example, it is optimal for **a course offered with more than one section** to be redesigned by all faculty teaching the course or all faculty who have taught the course. Cross-CU faculty collaboration is also encouraged especially among those teaching courses in a common program across the UP System who have previously met to discuss revisions in their respective programs (e.g. Microbiology).

2.4 The schedule of special UP System webinars/workshops for the redesign of courses will be announced at a later date.

C. Student Support

1. In addition to enhancing existing programs, the University is instituting two new programs in support of academic instruction.

- Learning Assistance Grants to aid students in need of equipment and subsidy for connectivity service
- Peer Learning Groups and Networks
 - a network of student assistants to support students in remote learning contexts

2. Two programs are also being instituted to ensure the safety, health and dignity of students.

- Student Wellness System and Networks
 - a network that provides information, referral systems, and mental health services to students with additional needs
 - a referral system across UP campuses and linkage with agencies that can support better health outcomes
- Student Helpdesk and Guidance
 - a network of social workers and counselors who can provide academic, emotional, and legal support to students in special circumstances (e.g. career, domestic violence, legal concerns)

III. SCHEDULE OF WEBINARS AND DIALOGUES WITH STAKEHOLDERS ON ACADEMIC PLANS FOR AY 2020-2021

A. Webinars/Workshops

1. A webinar-workshop for faculty members across the UP System on Taking Stock and Gearing UP for AY 2020-2021 was conducted on 8 June 2020 and 15 June 2020. The last and third session will be conducted on 22 June 2020. A copy of the recorded webinars and PowerPoint presentations will be made available.
2. Special Webinars for Faculty (e.g. course redesign; design thinking, LMS training) and the retooling of administrative staff will be announced separately.

B. Dialogues with Stakeholders

1. Dialogues with the faculty, students, staff and concerned parents at the CU level will be conducted in the next few weeks. The schedule of the dialogues are as follows:

1.1 Dialogues with the Faculty

CU	Date	Time
UP Manila	Thursday, 25 June	9:00 - 11:00 AM
UP Diliman	Thursday, 25 June	2:00 - 4:00 PM
UP Los Baños and UP Mindanao	Friday, 26 June	9:00 - 11:00 AM
UPB, UPV and UP Cebu	Friday, 26 June	2:00 - 4:00 PM

1.2 Dialogues with Students at the CU and Unit levels

CU	Date	Time
UP Diliman	Monday, 29 June	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
UPLB	Monday, 29 June	2:00 - 5:00 PM
UPV	Tuesday, 30 June	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
UP Manila	Tuesday, 30 June	2:00 - 5:00 PM
UP Baguio	Wednesday, 1 July	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
UP Cebu	Wednesday, 1 July	2:00 - 5:00 PM
UP Mindanao	Thursday, 2 July	9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
UP OU	Thursday, 2 July	2:00 - 5:00 PM

- 1.3 Dialogues with REPS (Schedule to be announced)
- 1.4 Dialogues with Administrative Staff in coordination with the Office of the VP for Administration and the Offices of the CU VCs for Administration (Schedule to be announced)
- 1.5 Dialogue with Concerned Parents of Incoming First Year students (Schedule to be announced)

IV. ITERATIVE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

- A. Iterative Planning:** Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation in the country, specifically in the sites of different CUs, planning for AY 2020-2021 is iterative and detailed for different scenarios.
- B. Iterative Implementation:** The iterative nature of planning and implementation has made the feedback of faculty, students and staff even more critical at this time. Throughout this journey in uncharted waters, flexibility will be exercised in the implementation of plans by putting in place feedback mechanisms for all stakeholders to have a voice as partners in drawing up the "new" normal of teaching and learning in the University.

At the end of the day, all the changes we are compelled to make within severe time constraints aim to assure our students that their wellness is paramount and that the country's National University will make every effort to ensure that they will continue to THRIVE in their learning environment, ENGAGE in learning leveraging on digital and information technology, LEARN with the appropriate pedagogical practice best suited to their enrolled course, and CREATE through various learning partnerships.

Our work in the next two months will be extremely challenging but we also hope you will find it exciting.

Stay safe.