

UM lessons and exams going online

Deputy VC: E-learning the new normal

By SANDHYA MENON
educate@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's oldest university, Universiti Malaya (UM), is moving its lessons and examinations online starting April 27.

This will be UM's "new normal", said its deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and International) Prof Dr Kamila Ghazali.

Currently, while this will be implemented from April 27 until the end of the semester due to the movement control order (MCO), Prof Kamilia said it would continue even after the MCO was lifted.

"From April 27 until the end of the semester, UM will go fully online and we will also conduct our exams through alternative assessment methods.

"This is our effort to continue with minimal movement of students in big groups or gathering, even after the MCO is lifted.

"More courses and lessons will be conducted through online teaching and learning methods," she said, adding that the exceptions were project-based courses that required physical and face-to-face contact during lessons.

"Students in these courses will be given the opportunity to complete their unfinished projects during a special semester period which will commence immediately after the second semester ends."

UM isn't new to e-learning as it has been a part of the university's teaching and learning delivery.

The current unusual circumstances, Prof Kamilia said, acted as an impetus to enhance and equip themselves to offer lessons through e-learning for a longer-term.

"Proper quality assurance guidelines must be followed to ensure learning outcomes are fulfilled and lessons conducted are just as good, if not better than if it was physically

delivered in a conventional way," Prof Kamilia said.

While almost all universities have shifted to virtual learning during the MCO period, a number of public universities will continue conducting their lessons online even after the MCO is lifted.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) will go online starting today for its Kelantan campus and Monday for the rest of its campuses.

Online learning was the new way of learning, said USM deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and International) Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sadullah.

"With conventional teaching, lecturers can't diversify the way they impart knowledge on their students.

"Shifting all our lessons online as well as assessments and examinations will continue even after the MCO is lifted," he said.

Once the dust revolving around Covid-19 settles, Prof Ahmad Farhan said the university would discuss with its faculties to promote and continue online learning.

"Of course, we can't go completely online because some courses require practical and lab components.

"But we would like for our learning to be flexible and blended," he said.

Like UM, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) too will have its lessons and assessments fully online starting April 27.

"It is something that is already incorporated into UPM's Academic Transformation Plan and was approved by the Senate last year, as part of rejuvenating our teaching and learning.

"Initially, the approval was to conduct lessons online for three weeks. But due to the MCO, online lessons will now be held fully (four weeks a month)," UPM deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and International) Prof Dr M Iqbal Saripan said.