

# Campuses fully reopen tomorrow

## Strict measures put in place to prevent spread of the virus

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**PETALING JAYA:** Higher education institutions are set to welcome all their students back.

The institutions would start reopening their doors fully from tomorrow, the Higher Education Ministry said, while stringent steps had been implemented in view of the latest spike in Covid-19 cases.

Sunway Education Group chief executive officer Dr Elizabeth Lee said the group's campuses had worked to create a safe bubble for their staff and students.

"We have ensured that all university-wide working spaces and communal areas such as labs, library, lounges and cafeteria have physical distancing measures as advised by the authorities and our medical advisers from Sunway Medical Centre," she said, adding that students were also given the option of attending online real-time classes if they were unable to return to campus.

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (Unisza) vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Basri Awang Mat Dahan said second, third and fourth year students could either return to campus or continue studying virtually from home as per the ministry's guidelines.

However, he said first year students must return to campus with registration for the new semester being done online.

Students residing in red zones, states with two or more red zones, yellow zones with at least six Covid-19 cases and states with more than half of their districts designated yellow zones were not allowed back on campus, he added.

Prof Hassan Basri said all these measures were to prevent the virus from being brought into the campus.

While expressing his concern over the spike in Covid-19 cases, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Dr Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor assured students and parents that the varsity had meticulously planned out a Covid-19 prevention and security system.

"To adhere to social distancing norms, registration for new students will be held over two days (Oct 3 and 4) where students will be divided into two sessions, morning and afternoon, depending on which state they are coming from," he said.

In a statement to students, Universiti Malaya said the registration, orientation for new students, and teaching and learning activities would follow the original schedule but be conducted online.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (Mapcu) president Datuk Dr



**Safe space:** All working spaces and communal areas such as labs, library, lounges and cafeteria have physical distancing measures in place at Sunway Education Group's campuses.

Parmjit Singh said the standard operating procedure (SOP) was in place and had been implemented over the last few weeks.

"Higher education institutions have had more than ample time to prepare for this," he said.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Dr Noraini Ahmad earlier said 30% of private higher education institution students could start returning from July, in line with Mapcu's request.

She said all institutes of higher learning would be given the flexibility to determine the most suitable modes – including online learning – for their respective programmes.

Only Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris reopened on Sept 28, the ministry said.

Although anxious about their health and safety, students are looking forward to a better study environment when they return to campus next month.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) student Muhammad Fahmi Saleh, 20, said he was excited to head back to campus on Oct 18 and resume physical classes.

"Face-to-face classes are more efficient and it is easier to interact with our lecturers if I don't understand something, and it is easier to collaborate for group work when everyone is on campus," said the Bachelor of Human Development Science with Management student.

Fellow UPM student Siti Aishah Nadzeemudin, 20, from Penang, said she preferred to study on campus as the facilities were much better than what she had access to back home.

"I'm having trouble with my home's Internet connection. Once, during an online class, something went wrong with the connection, causing my assignment submission to be delayed by a week," said the Bachelor of Communication student.

She said that according to the university's SOP, lectures with 40 or more students would be conducted online, with the students remaining in their respective colleges.

The possible spread of Covid-19 among students once everyone returns to campus weighs heavily on the mind of UKM student

Zahier Hakimi, 22.

This, she said, was because of the formation of new clusters in the country.

She added that UKM had already briefed their students on the SOP, which is similar to the ones issued by the Health Ministry with some additional physical distancing measures.

The geology student, who has laboratory-based subjects this coming semester, said it would not be hard to follow the safety measures as it had become the norm to wear face masks and stay apart from each other.

"The size of the group for laboratory work was always small, even before the pandemic hit," she added.

Year One Bachelor of Science (Hons) Psychology student Parveenn Balan Kumar Devan, 19, said Sunway University had been very thorough and stringent with its SOP for returning students.

"The steps taken are easy for me to follow, from customised health declaration forms to the physical distancing labels and reminders around the campus."