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**Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs**

14 April 2020

**Memorandum No. OVPAA 2020-48**

**For:** Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors for Academic Affairs, Deans/Directors,  
Department Chairpersons, Institute Directors and Faculty

*CBT*

**From:** Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista  
Vice-President for Academic Affairs

**Re: PROPOSED UP SYSTEM POLICY ON THE SECOND SEMESTER AY  
2019-2020 AND THE MID-YEAR IN THE TIME OF COVID-19  
(corrected)**

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***Background***

In light of the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), the CU Executive Committees (EXECOM) met for several weeks and, in consultation with relevant officials and stakeholders, decided to propose—independently of the other CUs—the extension of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 and the resumption of learning activities in line with revised syllabi, adjusted requirements and flexible modes of delivery appropriate to the situation of students in the class. The CUs differed on when to resume learning activities, with some CUs deciding to commence around 20 April 2020 with a soft start this week while others resolved to do so once the lockdown in their respective areas is lifted.

In its 7 April 2020 meeting, the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC)—chaired by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs with the Vice-Chancellors for Academic Affairs, Vice-Chancellors for Research and Extension/Development and Assistant Vice-Presidents for Academic Affairs as members—agreed to recommend to the Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC)—chaired by the UP President, with the Executive Vice-President, the UP System Vice-Presidents and CU Chancellors as members—the following: 1) extension of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 by 3 weeks with end-of-semester dates ranging from 5 June 2020 to 25 July 2020 depending on the date of resumption of alternative and remote learning modes in the CUs; 2) resumption of learning activities, creatively and flexibly designed with the situation of the learner in mind; and 3) special attention to students who will be unable to complete the requirements of the course and be given a

“Deferred Grade” due to issues of access to learning platforms, arrangements (e.g., via Facebook, Messenger, Viber, email) or involvement in COVID-related responses.

In its 13 April 2020 meeting, the PAC, after a long deliberation, modified the AAC recommendation because of the high level of anxiety among students and some faculty members due to the pandemic, its consequent impact on everyday life and uncertainty even in the immediate future (See Annex A). Instead of obliging students to complete the semester, the PAC is proposing to end the semester on 30 April 2020 with a “Deferred Grade” for students but with a pathway for graduating students as well as those who would like to continue fulfilling the requirements of the course on the deadline set by their respective CUs. The PAC proposal has been submitted to the Secretary of the Board of Regents (BOR) for the Board’s approval and policy decision regarding the way forward for the University.

### ***Faculty/Department/Institute Action***

**In the meantime, online classes and alternative modes of learning remain suspended to give the faculty time to attend to their personal needs as well as complete the adjustments in class requirements that students need to know by 1 May 2020. During this suspension NO additional requirements will be asked of students.**

While we wait for the Board of Regents to review the PAC proposal and make a final decision on the fate of the remainder of the Semester, the following steps need to be taken whether or not the BOR approves the PAC proposal.

#### *For the CU*

- Set a deadline by which students in the list of candidates for graduation as of the end of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 may opt to meet course requirements in order that they may be endorsed for graduation within the Mid-year 2020 and approved for graduation on the date of commencement 2020;
- Take note of the following policy on the later completion of course requirements by students in the list of candidates for graduation as of the end of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020:
  - Students in the list of candidates for graduation as of the end of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 who meet the course requirements within the Mid-year 2020 will be endorsed for graduation in the First Semester AY 2020-2021 and be considered **graduated as of end of Second Semester AY 2019-2020**.
  - Students in the list of candidates for graduation as of the end of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 who meet the course requirements within the First Semester AY 2020-2021 will be **endorsed for graduation in the Second Semester AY 2020-2021** and be considered **graduated as of end of Second Semester AY 2019-2020**.
  - Students in the list of candidates for graduation as of the end of the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 who meet the course requirements within the Second Semester AY 2020-2021 and by 31 May 2021, **will be endorsed for graduation in the Mid-year 2021 and be considered graduated as of end of Second Semester AY 2019-2020**.

#### *For Departments/Institutes/Colleges*

- Ascertain, with understanding and compassion, the situation of every faculty member to know the personal circumstances they are in and to determine how to handle the

delivery and assessment of learning if a faculty member is unable to function academically due to the crisis;

- Set up a system of tracking students with the assistance of disciplinary/college-based student organizations;
- Devise a creative way of helping faculty members with big classes, especially those handling more than one such class, track their students;
- Finalize alternatives or adjustments that need to be done (e.g. number of hours of clinical rotation) for laboratory work, field work, practicum, on-the-job-training, internship and other out-of-classroom requirements;
- Plan and develop programs for bridging or remediating prerequisite courses under the jurisdiction of the Department/Institute/School/College to enable students even with “Deferred Grades” to catch up with a subsequent course;
- Begin planning and developing programs for courses to be offered in the Mid-year or the First Semester AY 2020-2021 that students can audit to hone their competence in the critical courses of their programs given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of our education this semester; and
- Begin planning and properly designing the courses to be offered in the Mid-year or First Semester AY 2020-2021 that at best would be blended but may end up remotely delivered.

#### *For the Faculty*

- Openly discuss your situation with colleagues in the event that is difficult for you to perform academically in the next few weeks
- Track down your students through all the means available and identify those whom you cannot reach;
- Keep in touch with your students and find out how they are not just academically but even more important at this time, emotionally, given heightened anxiety and the reported effects of the crisis on the mental health of young people;
- Identify students who intend to complete the requirements of the semester within the deadline set by the CU;
- Finalize the adjustments in your course design, if you have not completed the work with clearer instructions re: coverage, learning materials and assessments if appropriate for each module/session in your class. Equally important, plan the delivery of learning for graduating students and those who will opt to continue in the event the PAC decision is approved or even if it is not, for how students with deferred grades can fulfill the requirements of your course;
- Take the opportunity to video- or audio-record your remaining lectures as well as complete PowerPoint presentations for your students if you have not done so; and

Even as we listed academic imperatives at different levels, we recognize that both students and faculty are stressed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that the quality of education in any alternative format will not be the same. And this is okay, given the circumstances we are in. For this reason, we appeal for greater compassion and sensitivity to the situation of students in adjusting your requirements. We also appeal for understanding and compassion for colleagues who are unable to perform academically.

As to the Mid-year and First Semester AY2020-2021, the University can only provide details after assessing the situation iteratively as it unfolds.

Thank you and please stay safe.

## **ANNEX A**

### **PROPOSED UP SYSTEM POLICY ON THE SECOND SEMESTER 2019-2020 IN THE TIME OF COVID-19**

**Submitted by the Presidential Advisory Committee to the Secretary of the UP Board of Regents  
14 April 2020**

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 principles of honor and 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's modification of the original option is reflected in the following actions endorsed to the Board of Regents for approval:

- 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
  - Since there is no sufficient basis for assessing students, they will be given a **“Deferred Grade”**. **None of the students will fail the course provided they meet the requirements.**
  - Students have up to **31 May 2021** to complete the course requirements. Should they be unable to do so, students have the option to drop and re-enroll the course in the succeeding semester. The grading scheme for the classes taken in the Second Semester AY 2019-2020 is as follows:
    - Pass** [Optionally, the faculty may indicate the adjectival equivalent of the numerical grade in the Remarks column of the grading sheet, i.e., Excellent (1.0-1.25), Very Good (1.5-1.75), Good (2.0-2.25).]
    - DRP** (Dropped)
  - A student who enrolled in a course in the Second Semester 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.
  - For Second Semester 2019-2020 classes for which the faculty is adjusting further the requirements of the course, the faculty concerned and or the department/institute/unit will reach to the students in the class for the requirements and means to meet them;
  - Adjusted requirements for the completion of the course must have been communicated to students by **1 May 2020**.
- 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.

- 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.

- 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.