



Announcement from the Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear Students,

As the Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, I would like to offer some words of reassurance during this uncertain time. **First and foremost, there are no confirmed COVID-19 cases on campus** and we are working hard for that to continue to be the case.

As you will be aware, in line with advice from The Saudi Government, the University has implemented a plan starting this past Wednesday to offer classes through distance learning technology. From initial feedback from a number of students, I have heard that this transition has been successful. While classes have been transitioned to online instruction, research efforts continue to move forward. I appreciate you may have concerns about upcoming exams, scheduled defenses, and graduation, and encourage you to address any concerns regarding your academic studies or research to your advisor, program chair or GPC. Visiting students are encouraged to check in with their supervisor.

Remote working policies have been rolled out across the campus, with the closure of TKS and the Building Blocks Daycare, support has been put into place to ensure those who need to work from home can do so. Your advisor must approve remote working, the University has not closed; business should continue as normal where possible. As part of normal contingency planning, business continuity plans are currently being put in place for all labs and research facilities; research efforts continue under the direction of your faculty advisors. This is being carried out so that if additional precautions need to be put into place, we are able to do so quickly and smoothly.

As part of our precautionary measures, you are probably already aware of social distancing practices being put into place at the University. Social distancing is proven to reduce the risk of the virus spreading, and in line with directions from the Taskforce, the University, including Graduate Affairs have decided to postpone a number of events and activities. The Graduate Affairs team is currently working on remote programming and support mechanisms. One-on-one appointments with staff in Graduate Affairs are still going ahead with the option of virtual meetings on the [Zoom](#)

[platform.](#)

The last few days have seen announcements regarding the suspension of personal visitors to the campus and today the suspension of all international flights in and out of the Kingdom. Contingency plans have been put into place across the campus to ensure critical services are operational, Tamimi has increased their stock levels, and food outlets remain open, encouraging takeaway options. Where possible and safe, the campus will continue to function as normal.

I count on you to support one another and adhere to the recommended advice, which will help protect our community. Up-to-date information about COVID-19 and our community response to it can be found on the [KAUST Health website](#), as well as following the daily announcements on the [KAUST Lens](#). In the upcoming days, a specific COVID-19 hotline number and helpdesk email will be established so that everyone has a central point of contact for COVID-19 related inquiries and this will be communicated to you shortly. In the meantime, if you have any general concerns or questions surrounding information that has been sent out, please email graduateservices@kaust.edu.sa.

Thank you for your continued efforts to keep our community safe.

Yves Gnanou
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs