

**Faculty Message #001 from the Interim VP for Academic Affairs
Sunday, April 5, 2020**



Dear Faculty members:

I am reaching out to you in these challenging times to reiterate the message that my team and I, and more generally the senior leadership, are here to support you and to ensure that KAUST remains on the right track.

I am aware of the increased demands of work that you are all experiencing along with sacrifices whether it is hibernating your labs or moving your classes online in such a short time. I also understand that students are needing more supervision and support from their supervisors than ever. I would like to emphasize that the well-being of our students at this time is my priority and this cannot be attained without your support.

I thus ask you to adjust your courses accordingly taking into account the fast transition to online teaching and learning. The learning outcomes of your course must not change but an adjustment in your approach to delivering the content is expected. You may not be able to cover all the course content as previously planned. I also expect you and urge you to reconsider assessment formats. Finally and most importantly, I would also like to remind you to be mindful of the hard times that most of the students are going through at a personal level and ask you to be tactful and flexible in deadlines and personal arrangements. Furthermore, I encourage you to proactively reach out to students who are struggling or having academic difficulties and explore with them if additional supports are needed.

Attached is a survey that was conducted by Graduate Affairs about online classes. It will give you an idea on what our students are struggling with the most. It is clear that students need clear instructions on what is expected from them in terms of coursework, assessment of their academic progress and exams. Please be clear in your instructions and your expectations to remove any ambiguity.

Several options are possible to ease this period of anxiety for our students and for you as faculty members. I will come back to you and make recommendations with respect to final exams as soon as possible.

I have also decided, due to the unusual circumstances presented by COVID-19 and the shift to different learning modalities, to amend the "Student Evaluation of Teaching" for this 2020 Spring term. The survey questions will be redesigned to capture the extra efforts and extra engagement hours devoted to our students.

I would like to reassure you that all faculty members have my full support during these uncertain times, especially our junior faculty who are up for mandatory promotion. I realize the direct and indirect effects of such hard time that caused an unprecedented hibernation of our academic research.

Thank you

Yves Gnanou
Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs