

Making Creative Adjustments for e-Learning Post COVID-19

By

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It is now clear that the higher education is not spared from the COVID-19 tsunami. The sector has been severely tested by a virus which has baffled scientists all over the world. Many still grapple to fully understand the disease-causing character of the virus. A lot of research is still under way to clear up the many unknowns so that a better protection and therapy can be developed. In the absence of a viable vaccine, the only practical protection we have at the moment is through physical distancing to minimise close contact. This can only be relaxed when a safe vaccine is found. The good news is that, the advances made in vaccine science have reduced the time to develop one. In fact, a few candidate vaccines are already at the early phase of clinical trials in some countries.

Meanwhile, the practice of physical distancing and good hygiene remain absolutely essential post covid-19. Since the running of universities is associated with mass gatherings, practising physical distancing is a big challenge. Literally all the educational activities including teaching, seminars, public talks, practical laboratories and experimental research involve close physical contact. Each year, the convocation ceremony also involves big gatherings. So is the conduct of examinations. Because of all such requirements, universities are devising new ways to deliver university education in an efficient and safe way.

As Malaysia's top private university, UCSI University has embarked on an aggressive programme to implement creative ways to meet the many challenges posed by the pandemic. Through the close cooperation between staffs, students and management, the university has already perfected the necessary tools to continue delivering teaching and learning in a conducive environment. This involves the deployment of the latest in the e-learning digital technology. The important thing is that studying at UCSI University continues to be a rewarding and fulfilling experience.

There is no denying that, during these challenging times, both students and lecturers will have to adjust their usual learning and teaching methods to get the best out of the new e-learning environment. Many educationists have long viewed that the migration to digital learning would happen eventually. There have been many educational forums, held in recent years, which pointed to the inevitability of such a move. It is just that COVID-19 has hastened the migration. And it is now real. So, we must be ready to embrace and benefit from the change.

There are many reasons why a culture of digital learning is the way forward for the higher education. First, as a result of the explosion in the world wide web, the amount of information and knowledge has expanded in an exponential fashion in cyber space. Unfortunately, we have not been able to fully tap such resources since our learning process is not synchronised with it. Second, with the advances made in the digital communication technology, we are now able to effectively synchronise our delivery of lessons with the massive information available on the world wide web. Third, with the e-learning approach, there are evidence to show that the interaction between lecturers and students can be better managed and improved. Fourth, with the agility to engage in the digital space, the linkage and networking among researchers and with industry players can be further enhanced.

In a nutshell, we should all welcome this positive change in university education. Of course, the success of the digital system does not just rest with the students and lecturers. The government must now see more urgency in improving the digital infrastructure for the nation. A reliable and efficient internet support is key to the success of the entire system. We are therefore encouraged with the recent announcement by the multimedia ministry that the government is treating such call as high priority. Let us hope that this will soon be a reality. At UCSI university, the campus digital system is fully equipped to deliver the new e-experience.