

Chinese University

# BULLETIN

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The Corona Chronicle



## 05 The Storm

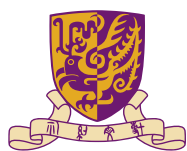
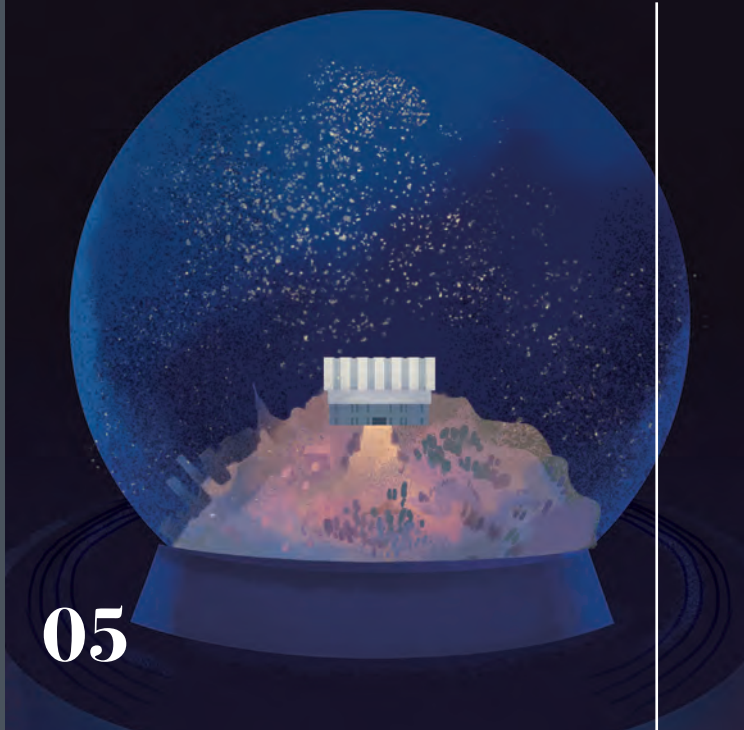
- 07 Charting the Sea
- 08 Moving to the Cloud
- 11 In Good Hands
- 13 Stock up or Suffer?
- 14 Business Not As Usual
- 18 First on the Scene

## 21 The Calm

- 23 Casting the Web of Education Wider
- 25 Clinical Services to the Community
- 28 Beyond Physical Illness
- 31 A Zero-sum Game in Nature?

## 33 Dawn or False Dawn?

- 38 What They Said about COVID-19
- 44 Appointments



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# The Corona Chronicle

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Photo by  
Keith Hiro



# *The* Storm

On the New Year's Eve heading into 2020, as people were celebrating with joyful expectations the advent of a new decade, few were aware that on the far horizon, a storm was brewing: a new coronavirus, believed to have originated in bats and belonging to the same family of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus causing 299 deaths in Hong Kong back in 2003, would soon sweep through the world, locking down its proudest cities and robbing people of lives and livelihoods.

Having learned the SARS lesson the hard way, Hongkongers put up a strong defence right from the first threats of the new virus in January. CUHK had been bracing itself for the stormy weathers ahead with the same foresight. From e-learning and social distancing to working from home, the University did not shrink from experimenting with new and unprecedented ways of doing things and changing its game as the situation called for. As a seat of learning, moreover, it beacons the way ahead with timely and cutting-edge research, and provided the public with practical aid and understandings that shed light on the murky waters we found ourselves in.



李達三葉耀珍伉儷樓  
LI DAK SUM YIP YIO CHIN BUILDING





# Charting the Sea

The University geared itself up for the battle soon after a cluster of pneumonia cases with unknown cause were reported in Wuhan on the threshold of the New Year. In tandem with the Serious Response Level activated by the government on 4 January, the University's Committee on Health Promotion and Protection (CHPP) has been closely monitoring the development of the coronavirus situation and taking into account the recommendations of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health. The University Health Service (UHS) has also stepped up health surveillance on campus.

Prof. **David Hui**, Chairman of the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics and an authority on respiratory disease who joined the panel of experts advising the government, gave a range of tips to the CUHK community for preventing exposure to and infection with the new virus in two video clips released on 22 and 23 January. His advice included: establishing good personal hygiene and washing hands frequently; wearing a surgical mask in a crowded place; and seeking immediate medical attention at the nearest accident and emergency hospital department if one came back to Hong Kong from the mainland and caught a fever or showed symptoms of a respiratory illness.

After announcing on 24 January the cancellation of exchange programmes and the suspension of short-term academic activities in mainland China, the University decided the next day to extend the Lunar New Year break until 17 February. The CHPP activated the Emergency Response Level—the second highest in the health alert ladder—in an attempt to rise to a situation where the risk of a novel virus causing new and serious impact to human health in Hong Kong was high and imminent. All students and staff members had to use specified forms for health declaration and 14-day self-monitoring before returning to campus.

On the other hand, the Emergency Response Group was formed and led by Prof. **Rocky S. Tuan**, Vice-Chancellor and President, and staffed by members of senior management and relevant heads of the professional and administrative services units. The Group has been meeting regularly and frequently to stay abreast of local and overseas developments and to deliberate on infection control and academic and work arrangements. The Group also consulted and conferred with members of the Colleges, Faculties, other units and outside parties to arrive at decisions and take necessary actions in the face of fast-changing challenges. ■

Prof. Rocky S. Tuan

★ Vice-Chancellor  
and President



Prof. David Hui

★ Chairman of the  
Department of Medicine  
and Therapeutics





## Moving to the Cloud

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The highly contagious character of the coronavirus, officially named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 February, made face-to-face classes fraught with health risks, but the lessons had to go on. Teachers, students and supporting personnel all joined together to make their online teaching and learning activities work when the school term was resumed on 17 February.

In a message to all faculty members on 11 February, Prof. **Alan K. L. Chan**, Provost and J.S. Lee Professor of Chinese Culture, stated the reason for resorting to full-scale online learning: 'First, our priority must be to safeguard the health and well-being of our students, staff and faculty. Second, every effort must be made to mitigate the chances of an outbreak on campus. Third, we must ensure that the learning outcomes of every single course are delivered fully, initially through our e-learning platforms.'

Prof. Alan K. L. Chan

★ Provost



The teaching and learning delivered online at CUHK relies on Zoom, a video conferencing software that can support large-scale synchronous and non-synchronous activities including both lecture-type and tutorial-type classes. Ms. **Carol Chiu**, Director of the Information Technology Services Centre (ITSC), said, 'Zoom is cloud-based and not housed in the server on campus. We needed to increase the bandwidth for the Internet connection to ensure smooth delivery.' The University's efforts to enhance its e-learning capability also included subscribing to a third-party VPN service which ensured stable connection and better delivery across borders. This was especially useful for teachers and

students who found themselves having to stay behind in mainland cities and recommence the school term from there.

Ms. Carol Chiu

★ Director of the Information Technology Services Centre



Between 30 January and 14 February, a total of 22 online workshops on the use of Zoom for class purposes were offered to over 9,200 students and over 2,700 teachers and technical and administrative staff members from academic departments and Faculties. The Special Funding Scheme for Online Learning was set up to provide timely support to teachers and to encourage them to come up with novel instructional strategies, e-assessment methods and teaching materials with Zoom and other online learning initiatives. A number of notebook computers were also available for use by students in need.

The teachers could in theory conduct their classes from home or from their offices. Indeed, many of them did. For those who preferred to have a not-so-virtual lectern, some classrooms on campus equipped with the necessary gadgets including webcams were made available upon request.

The CUHK Library consolidated its online materials and facilities as well as offering new resources in support of e-learning and teaching. For instance, members of staff and students could request an e-copy of an existing library print book if the e-copy was available. For books or journals with no e-versions, the Library tried to obtain the licenses for the chapters or articles where possible.

Despite a few teething problems on the first few days, online classes got off to a remarkably smooth start, even for classes with over a hundred participants. Some students commented that more of their classmates participated in the discussion, resulting in a more active or engaging atmosphere, which is always conducive to learning. Even usually reticent students might be more willing to take part via 'Chatbox' or find it easier to push the button 'Raise the Hand' than

really raising a hand. Some students could not help noticing the benefit and convenience of their teachers recording what they had said or showed and uploading this onto 'Blackboard' for review and revision.

Since 17 February, an average of over 1,100 e-classes were held every school day, with over 70,000 participants. The average attendance rate was close to 90%.

Online learning poses a huge challenge to CUHK's 100 or so students with special educational needs (SEN), e.g., students with visual/hearing impairment, ADHD, autism or other learning difficulties. These students managed to struggle through the intimidating online experience with the help from the Disability Services Manager of the Office of Student Affairs, who, among other things, prepared notes for teachers on how to manage e-classes with SEN students in it. Technicians of ITSC also enhanced web accessibility on various e-learning platforms such as Blackboard and VeriGuide.

Prof. Isabella W. Y Poon

★ Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)



Prof. **Isabella W. Y. Poon**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), who led the full adoption of the virtual mode of teaching and learning, recalled: 'Our team was committed and self-motivated to go the extra mile to support students and teachers, whose enthusiasm, desire for excellence, trust, support and encouragement in turn energized the team. I have been much heartened to have received encouraging messages from many colleagues who were keen to work hand-in-hand to support each other to conquer the challenges.' ■

1,100+

Number of e-classes held every school day





# In Good Hands

**A**s the coronavirus menace raged on, the simple yet life-saving act of keeping our hands clean became uppermost in people's minds. Immediately after the first blow of the virus to the city in late January, hand disinfectants became scarce and highly sought after. CUHK was swift to alleviate the shortage by producing 1,900 litres of 75% alcohol handrub to give to University units as well as the wider community.

It was Prof. **Dennis Ng**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and professor of the Department of Chemistry, who thought of mixing the much coveted liquid himself by making use of the labs and excellent facilities in the University. He enlisted his colleagues and students in the Department of Chemistry and also the University Safety Office to produce the solution.

A video was shot of the production process, from the preparation of raw materials to mixing, filtering and bottling the handrub. It went viral, accruing a viewership of 230,000 within days. Many a non-governmental organization (NGO) called in to make queries, and the I-CARE Centre for Whole-person Development helped line up 36 non-governmental partners to distribute the handrub to elderly homes, special schools and residential childcare centres.

'We want to share even when supplies are low—that's the spirit of giving we want to uphold,' remarked Professor Ng. 'Over half of

the handrub we made went to the hands of the elderly and the disadvantaged, who are most at risk of getting infected.'

Meanwhile, money, efforts and resources were pouring in from graduates heeding Professor Ng's call. A former student of his got in touch and offered to donate non-alcohol disinfectants produced by his company to the NGOs. Sixty-seven medical graduates in the class of 2000 raised \$33,500 for the purchase of raw materials and bottles, whereas Pricerite, run by an alumnus, also gave 10,000 bottles to the University.

Two alumni associations—the Convocation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Federation of Alumni Associations of the Chinese University of Hong Kong—played a huge part in reaching out. Four outreach sessions were arranged from late February to early March in Tin Shui Wai, Sham Shui Po and Ma On Shan that saw alumni and students producing handrub in the morning and giving it away in the afternoon. Long queues formed outside the distribution counters, with CUHK members approaching the elderly and the vulnerable to furnish them with the bottles of handmade sanitizer. ■

Prof. Dennis Ng

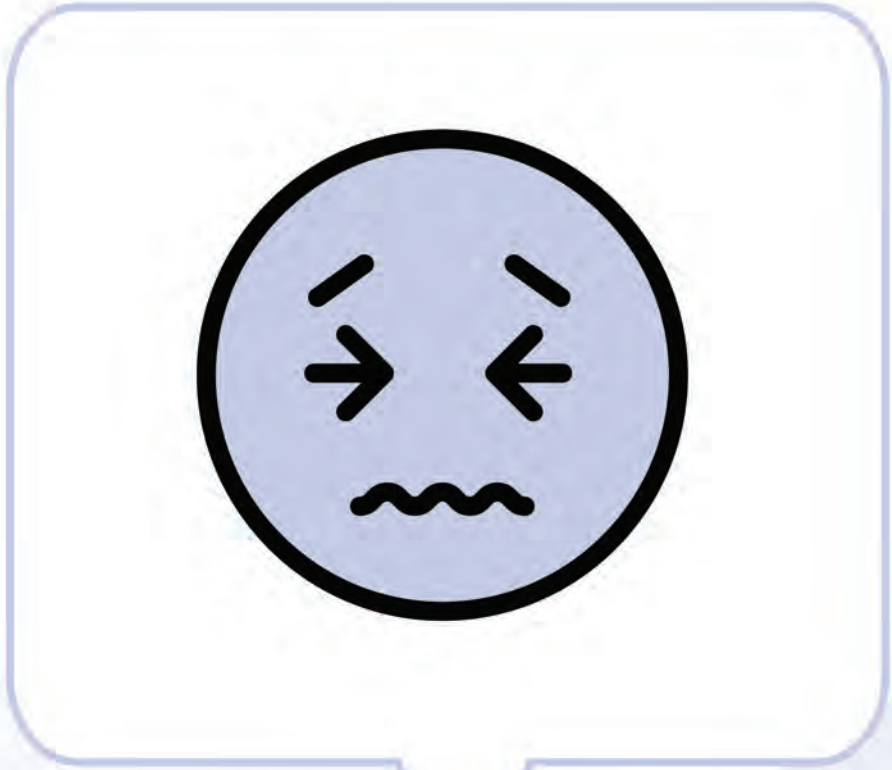
★ Pro-Vice-Chancellor

★ Professor of the  
Department of Chemistry



# 1,900

Litres of alcohol handrub given to University units and the community





# Stock up or Suffer?

**B**e it hand sanitizer or household cleaner, tinned soup or toilet paper, what we had considered ordinary items were flying off the shelves when ‘panic buying’ reached a frenzy in Hong Kong. It spread to countries including the UK, the US, Singapore and Australia, sending people flocking to their local stores and raiding their every nook and cranny.

This mass phenomenon was something that greatly intrigued Prof. **Catherine Yeung**. The associate professor of the Department of Marketing studies how people make decisions and has keen research interests in behavioural science and consumers’ well-being. Panic buying, according to her, ultimately boils down to just one thing—emotions.

‘Emotions, or feelings of uncertainty in this case, are the crux of the panic buying phenomenon,’ Professor Yeung said. ‘Humans are generally risk-averse and tend to envisage the worst-case scenario rather than the best. Such imagination often comes with fear and anxiety. These emotions drive our behaviours and, in turn, shape our comprehension and responses in facing disasters.’

She backed up her theory with some concrete research data: a study surveyed about 1,000 Hong Kong citizens from 8 to 18 March and investigated the correlations between their stockpiling patterns and respective anxiety levels. Interestingly, the research found out that the more anxious a person is, the more likely for him or her to stockpile. For instance, of those

who hoarded toilet paper, around 50% of them exhibited a moderate level of anxiety.

So why do the masses have such an apprehensive tendency? After digging through various academic papers and reconstructing the timeline of recent incidents, Professor Yeung concluded: ‘It all began when some Hong Kong folks received a WhatsApp message on 5 February, telling them that COVID-19 had shut down the logistics in China entirely and led to a serious shortage of toilet paper.’

Elaborating further, Professor Yeung pointed out that social media constantly bombarded us with images of vacant streets and empty shelves in Wuhan and other places in China. Therefore, the WhatsApp message, however short and simple, stuck firmly in people’s minds. The fear of not having toilet paper became so vivid that anxiety clouded their judgments.

She also made a special note on the aspect of emotions. ‘Emotions such as fear and anxiety are not a bad thing *per se*—although seemingly irrational at times, they are an instinctual element of human behaviour and alert us to take action to protect ourselves; it is only when we overreact and experience a high level of anxiety nonstop that it is damaging to our mental health.’

Prof. Catherine Yeung

★ Department of Marketing



# Business Not As Usual

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Among other things, the workplace is an aspect of our lives that has been upended by the coronavirus. To prevent the outbreak of COVID-19 on campus by minimizing human contact, the University announced on 28 January special work arrangements for parts of its staff to work from home after the Lunar New Year holiday. Although the University tried to resume normal operation gradually from 2 March when the first wave of infections showed signs of relenting, special work arrangements were reinstated from 23 March as the second wave was set off by overseas residents returning home. It was not until 4 May, when the situation was beginning to stabilize in Hong Kong, that the University started to bring back its full workforce. But two months later as new cases surged again, staff members whose work permits offsite handling were not required to return to office.

CUHK employees who carried out their duties from home were assisted by tools such as Office 365 for sharing files and documents, VPN for remote access, and Zoom for video-conferencing. Academic, administrative and professional staff worked hard on and off campus to keep things going while holding the outbreak in check on campus.

Even when the campus was devoid of its usual hustle and bustle, stringent social distancing measures were observed in all communal areas, study rooms and hostel pantries. Except for emergencies and activities essential to the operation of the University, all forms of activity and social gathering among students and staff on campus were kept to a minimal level to prevent infection. ▶▶



Photo by  
amytam@cuhkimages

飲且  
食藟  
而康

壬午道堂







NTW

Illustration by  
Nathan Wright

Only limited catering service during this period was maintained. Restaurants and canteens that remained open were required to perform body temperature screening on each customer before admission. A limited number of people were allowed to sit together at one table. All customers were requested to wear face masks at any time except when consuming food or drinks.

Never have we gone this far to stay apart. ‘At the heart of social distancing is preventing mass gatherings,’ said Dr. **Scotty Luk**, Director of UHS. He explained that when two people socialize, the chances of infection are many times greater than if they do not; when it gets to four people, assuming none of them is wearing a mask, the likelihood becomes exponentially higher.

‘With social distancing, we can contain the disease to the point where there aren’t too many patients for the medical system to handle,’ he said. With too many cases at any one time, disaster ensues. ‘What worries us the most and what many fail to grasp is it doesn’t end with the medical system collapsing. Following the meltdown in the healthcare sector is the city’s entire infrastructure being devastated. Hospitals are unable to treat patients with other medical needs, while funeral services are put under massive strain.’

Living in the age of social distancing can be lonely, inconvenient and even frightening, but short of a new vaccine, it is the best way to slow the spread of the virus and to keep disaster at bay. ■

Dr. Scotty Luk

★ Director of University Health Service





## First on the Scene

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**A**s Hong Kong was battling the COVID-19 crisis, CUHK has not taken a back seat. It was among the first to arrive at the scene, utilizing its academic expertise to sound the alarm and inform policies to keep the fast unfolding crisis in check.

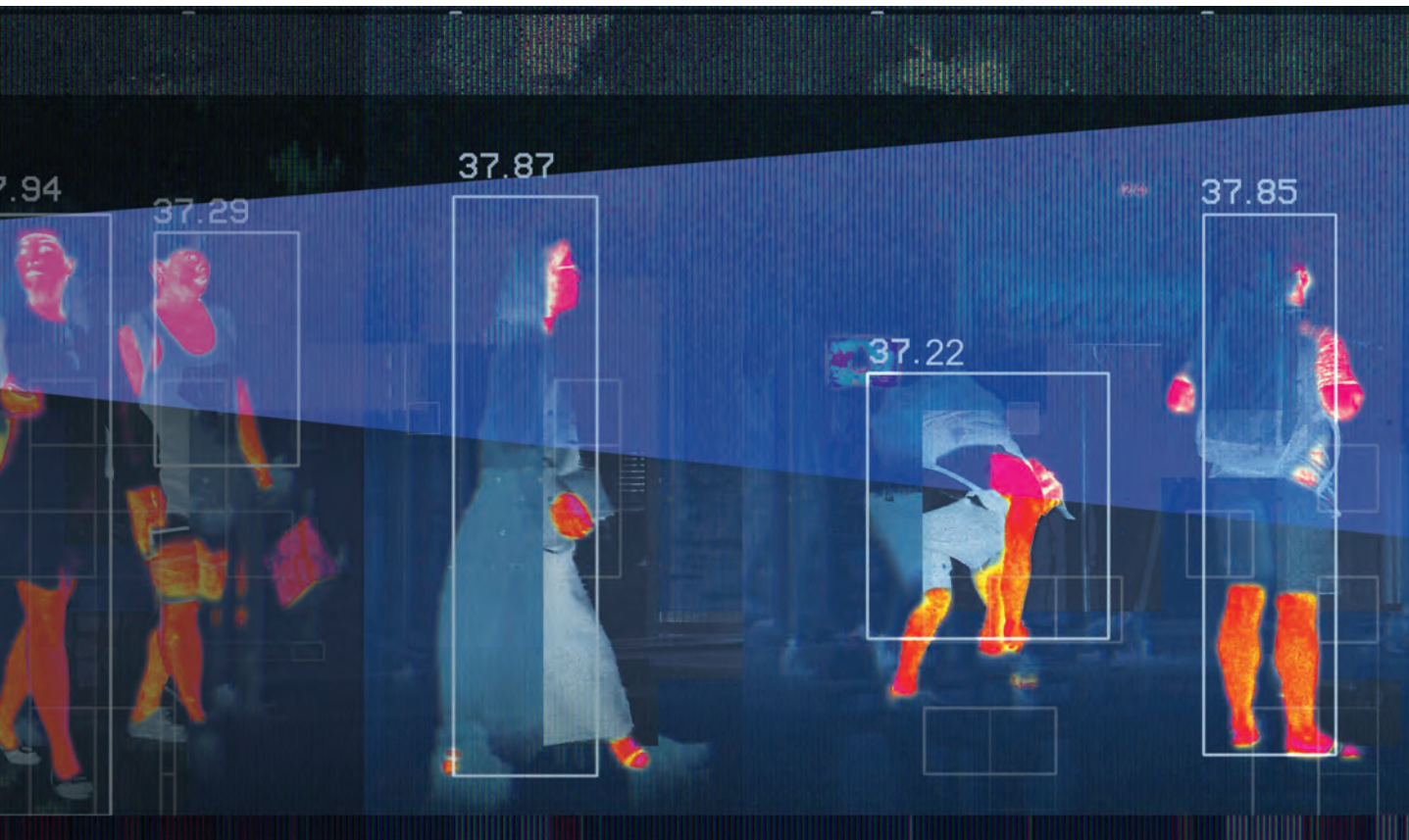
In the first two weeks after the first confirmed case was reported on 23 January, a research team from The Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care surveyed 1,168 Hong Kong residents to investigate the public's risk perception and psychobehavioural responses.

Among their findings are that an overwhelming majority of the respondents were alert to the disease progression (99.5%), perceived a high chance of getting infected (88%), and practised enhanced personal hygiene practices such as

wearing masks and washing hands (90%). The release of such findings in mid-February was a timely reminder to policymakers and the public that psychobehavioural changes are also effective interventions in the control of the disease.

In another study, the researchers analysed the first 56 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Hong Kong from demographic and epidemiological data. They found that over 90% of the cases had a delay of an average of six days from the onset of symptoms to isolation, with the longest time being 14 days, and that most patients had sought medical assistance more than once before diagnosis was made. Given the relatively long period of incubation and deceptively mild symptoms at the onset, the team exhorted the government and the public to adopt social distancing policies and practices. ■





**99.5%**

Percentage of respondents who were alert to the pandemic's progression



**88%**

Percentage of respondents who perceived a high chance of getting infection



**90%**

Percentage of respondents who enhanced personal hygiene practices



**90%**

More than this percentage of cases had delay in isolation







# *The* Calm

We might have stumbled through, but we became stronger in the gales of the pandemic. Despite a little confusion at the beginning, those of us in the wider community and at CUHK quickly got ourselves back on our feet and geared up for what was evolving into a long battle. In isolation we held out against the virus, and in the safety of our homes we looked to carry on with our endeavours. It was in this spirit that the University went on with its mission to share knowledge with the public as well as its members, now comprising an online community, while contributing to humanity's continued response to the disease.



# Class Acts

博文在線



► Scan to access the 'Class Acts' online public lectures

香港中文大學文物館呈獻  
Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Sets the Stage for

# 藝術無間

HEART to HEART

五月二十九日起  
一連八個星期五 下午四時三十分播映  
From 29 May onwards  
Eight consecutive Fridays at 4:30 pm



► Scan to access all eight episodes of 'Heart to Heart'



# Casting the Web of Education Wider

**P**art of the University's effort to continuously provide quality education for all was 'Class Acts,' an online public lecture series that took place between March and May. The series included eight highly accessible talks given by our specialists from different areas, including the arts, business, education, engineering, law, medicine and science. Prof. Alan K. L. Chan, Provost and speaker of the inaugural lecture 'Higher Learning in the Era of Industry 4.0,' noted precisely the importance of learning even in these challenging days. From artificial intelligence to online dating; from gravitational waves to treasure hunting; from urban history to educational robots, ending with the inspiring story of a urological surgeon, the series dealt with a wide range of topics and gave much food for thought to the many who stayed home but stayed curious.

At the Faculty level, too, the cloud served as a rendezvous for minds eager to collide. At the height of the pandemic, our arts and business scholars, engineers, scientists and social scientists reached out through the screen, guiding learners here and abroad through their fields of expertise and offering fresh perspectives on the plague.

At the Faculty of Law, the Greater China Legal History Seminar Series, in its fifth offering in 2019–20, adopted the webinar format as well. Among the series' many knowledgeable speakers was Prof. **Steven Gallagher**, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) of the Faculty, who delivered to his audience a story of the fascinating art world told from a legal viewpoint. A former antique dealer himself, Professor Gallagher discussed a myriad of issues surrounding the

acquisition, possession and disposal of antiquities, drawing on precious examples of Chinese and Western art, past and present.

Prof. Steven Gallagher

★ Associate Dean  
(Teaching and Learning)  
of the Faculty of Law



Joining the effort to keep passing on knowledge online was the Art Museum. In *Heart to Heart*, a video series taking a fresh look at its collection, guests from all walks of life were invited to explore with our curators treasures in the museum. How does a piece of jade remind a doctor of his work, and what might an abbot see in a painting of a lotus? How does an ink wash painting capture the New Territories as a hike leader knows it, and what would a hair stylist say about fashion in the Qing dynasty? In the course of eight webisodes aired between May and July, art lovers had the chance to appreciate the many works housed in the museum as they had never been seen before.

While the University is always producing new materials, it also has a repository of talks given at CUHK by eminent figures from different domains. As the world went into lockdown, the University combed through its rich archive and compiled lectures given in recent years by Nobel laureates and leading cultural figures, hoping that they would give colour to life in quarantine. Old or new, these gems are there in the cloud, readily available, for our ever-stronger love of wisdom. ■





# Clinical Services to the Community

**A**s we stayed home to wait out the pandemic, medical professionals stayed in their wards, racing against the clock to save lives and defeat the disease. Joining the ranks were physicians from the Faculty of Medicine, part of whose work during the pandemic was designing a stool test for children arriving in Hong Kong by air.

This project was based on an investigation by the Faculty which showed that the virus was detectable in the stool samples of all patients, regardless of how sick they were. Indeed, 20% to 30% of the patients cleared of the virus in their respiratory tracts tested positive in their stool samples. In light of these findings, the Faculty arranged for stool test kits to be distributed to children arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport starting 29 March. A laboratory here at CUHK would then test the specimens and have the results ready within a day.

Children can remain asymptomatic when infected, and it is crucial that silent carriers are detected if we are to prevent an outbreak in our community. The stool test came as an improvement on the deep-throat saliva test. It is difficult to collect saliva from a child's throat, as Prof. **Paul Chan**, Chairman of the Department of Microbiology, noted. With improper collection techniques, the test yields a false negative rate of 40%. Stool samples, on the other hand, are easier to collect when it comes to children and give more accurate results. By the end of May, over 700 stool tests had been performed.

Apart from detecting active asymptomatic cases, Professor Chan also started identifying those who have previously been infected to get a full

Prof. Paul Chan

★ Chairman of the Department of Microbiology



idea of hidden infections in Hong Kong. The research team aims at recruiting 3,000 subjects, who would provide samples of their blood, saliva, or both. These fluids would be tested for certain antibodies, marks of an infection in the past. The point of searching for hidden patients, said Professor Chan, is to see if our response to the pandemic needs any adjustment.

'Let's say our research indicates a considerable number of hidden infections among senior citizens over 65. It could be a sign that our strategy has failed to cover these people all along. In that case, we'll have to consider, say, enhancing preventive measures and testing at elderly homes.' The team is also paying attention to the hidden patients' occupations, trying to understand the risk a particular line of work entails.

The study began in late April. In the first phase, the team looked for 1,000 people. There was much enthusiasm for the project, which attracted over 2,000 registrations the first day it was announced. With the data obtained at the pilot stage, the team could generate an estimate for the number of hidden infections in the city and decide on what to do next, which could involve contact tracing and focusing its research on particular age groups. ▶▶



In another approach to combating the disease, researchers led by Prof. **Siew Ng**, Associate Director of the Centre for Gut Microbiota Research, noticed imbalance in the gut microbiota in many cases in a groundbreaking study. Involving over 100 patients and 1,500 healthy individuals, the investigation reveals a lack of good bacteria in the patients' guts. Imbalance between good and bad bacteria in the gut microbiota can weaken our immune system, making us susceptible to viral and bacterial infections.

Building on their findings, the researchers worked out a probiotic formula targeting the imbalance and potentially enhancing the

human immune system. While drawing up the formula, the team took into account differences in lifestyle across cultures with the help of big data. The Faculty has applied for patents for this innovation and is collaborating with industry to turn the formula into a supplement that goes with our diet. Large-scale clinical trials are also underway to demonstrate the role of gut health in preventing novel infectious diseases.

Prof. Siew Ng

★ Associate Director of the  
Centre for Gut Microbiota  
Research





While Western medicine is still universally adopted in combating the pandemic, the theories and practice of Chinese medicine, developed over thousands of years, should not be overlooked. The disease has filled people's hearts with fear and anxiety. Chinese medicine, which sees the human body as an organic whole, values the integration of nature and humanity, and tries to achieve a balance between the internal organs through the observation of natural laws, can complement Western medicine. According to Prof. **Lin Zhixiu**, Associate Director of the School of Chinese Medicine and Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Integrative Medicine, Chinese medicine has played a significant part in our battle against the pandemic, and, in the long run, deepened our understanding of the enigmatic virus, and the equally mysterious human constitution.

In the absence of vaccines and specific medicine, Chinese medicine practitioners have participated in treating the disease since the early days of the outbreak in China. In fact,

in some makeshift cabin hospitals in Wuhan, Chinese medicine has played a leading part in treating patients, with Western medicine playing a complementary part. Chinese medicine has proved effective in relieving symptoms such as fever, cough and fatigue. It has also helped shorten the duration of hospitalization, prevent non-serious cases from developing into serious ones, improve the recovery rate and reduce the death rate.

Among the tens of thousands of patients in China who have been discharged, most of them had received integrated treatment, but there are also a number of them who have been treated with Chinese medicine alone. ■

Prof. Lin Zhixiu

★ Associate Director of the School of Chinese Medicine







## Beyond Physical Illness

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**T**he repercussions and impact of the pandemic go far and wide, and some of the people that feel them the most are teachers. A study focusing on kindergarten teachers conducted by the Faculty of Education reveals that half of the interviewees suffered from emotional drain as they continued to provide services with schools closed. They also reported lower life satisfaction and a weaker sense of duty to their schools, students and profession.

Meanwhile, students are having a hard time adapting too. A concurrent study by the Faculty, focusing this time on secondary students, shows that the interviewees did not rate the value of online teaching very highly. They also reported huge pressure and anxiety under this new mode of education. Prof. **Thomas Chiu** of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction,

leader of this investigation, noted that online teaching currently focuses on behavioural participation and is not conducive to diversity in learning. He noted also that it is difficult for students to adapt to these changes in such a short time. The researchers suggested that online teaching strategies be adjusted to meet the needs of students. Measures can include organizing mental health activities, setting up peer support groups and cutting down on assessments.

Prof. Thomas Chiu

★ Department of Curriculum and Instruction



Also vulnerable to the disease are low-income groups owing to the long-standing problem of a lack of equal access to healthcare services around the world. There being far more private outpatient clinics than public ones in Hong Kong, the poor are at a higher risk than the affluent. Also, it is often the underprivileged who work on the frontline with inadequate protective gear and little understanding of how the disease spreads. With the possibility of another wave of infections and, indeed, another widespread disease in the future, these people live under constant threat.



In a similar vein, the University established the CU RELIEF Fund (CURE Fund) in April to provide support and assistance to members who are adversely affected by the pandemic. The senior management team led by example in donating 15% of their salaries for the remaining months of the year to the Fund. In only a couple of months' time, the Fund has been able to create over 300 employment and internship opportunities for CUHK graduates. Prof. T. F. Fok, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and chairman of the management committee of the Fund, was much heartened by such enthusiastic response. He said, 'The responses are amazing. Nowhere is the CUHK spirit more graciously expressed than in such benevolence that cuts across generations, affiliations and ranks of our community. As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be fully felt, we need to keep up this momentum to help mitigate the hardships endured by the less fortunate among us. CUHK members watch out for one another.

Prof. T. F. Fok

★ Pro-Vice-Chancellor and chairman of the management committee of the CU RELIEF Fund



My sincerest thanks to those who are doing the watching out this round.'

But the pandemic is also taking a toll on creatures other than humans. In late February, the first case of animal contagion was reported in Hong Kong, where a dog had tested weakly positive for the virus. Shortly after, more dogs and cats in the city and in Belgium were reported to have been infected. Later in April, a Malayan tiger at the Bronx Zoo in New York City fell victim to the disease, and towards the end of the month, two cats from the US also tested positive.

All this was undoubtedly worrying news to pet owners around the world. As part of its continuous effort to keep the public informed, the Faculty of Medicine updated the section on the pandemic on their Facebook page to include information and tips regarding pets. Prof. David Hui reminded pet owners to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. If they are unwell, they should avoid direct contact with their pets. In case the pets are unwell, owners should seek veterinary advice immediately. ■



300+

Number of job opportunities provided for graduates by the CU RELIEF Fund



# A Zero-sum Game in Nature?

When the world comes to a halt, is there a silver lining? At first glance, the pandemic was a boon for Planet Earth. As Prof. **Francis Tam** of the Earth System Science Programme noted, there were significant drops in pollutants and greenhouse gases like nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in such places as China and New York with the economy slowing down and traffic disrupted.

In the long run, though, the pandemic is no good news to the environment. For one, the temporary downturn in the global economy is not a solution to climate change, which operates on a much longer time scale, according to Prof. **Gabriel Lau**, Advisor of the Institute of Environment, Energy and Sustainability. This is echoed by Prof. **Amos Tai** of the Earth System Science Programme, who pointed out that CO<sub>2</sub> emission tends to rebound after a dip resulting from a major global crisis. The world could even see what is known as ‘revenge pollution’, where greenhouse gas emissions increase even more quickly than they did before the crisis as we try to make up for the lost time and GDP.

The ways we tackle the pandemic have placed tremendous strain on the environment, too. With Hongkongers staying home more often,

the number of takeaway meals ordered per week saw a drastic increase of 74%, and more than 100 million pieces of plastic utensils were used and thrown out every week, as a study by Greeners Actions shows. Meanwhile, countless masks were improperly disposed of. Piling up on the beaches and the hiking trails, they posed a serious threat to life on land and in the sea.

Prof. **David Chen** of the Department of Geography and Resource Management further warned that the pandemic will get in our way to fix our planet. ‘The development of renewable energy and clean production might be impeded by the pressing need of rapid economic recovery. International cooperation on environment and climate change might also be weakened with attention and effort being drawn to the pandemic,’ he said.

Nothing on Earth escapes the pandemic. Its impact is felt socially, economically and politically. At the same time, it has exposed problems that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Despite these setbacks for those of us working towards a better, more sustainable world, the pandemic has given us a window of opportunity to make things work, and at CUHK, we are seizing this opportunity to play our part. ■



Prof. Francis Tam  
★ Earth System Science Programme



Prof. Gabriel Lau  
★ Advisor of the Institute of Environment, Energy and Sustainability



Prof. Amos Tai  
★ Earth System Science Programme



Prof. David Chen  
★ Department of Geography and Resource Management





Photo by  
Keith Hiro



# Dawn or False Dawn?

Just as steady progress was being made towards re-opening the campus for the Fall Term of 2020–21, the COVID-19 pandemic reared its ugly head again. Early July saw an alarming increase in the number of infections in different locales and among diverse groups in Hong Kong. The situation in the rest of the world was not good, either. The pandemic showed no sign of abating or coming under control, either in Hong Kong or in many other parts of the world.





In view of this unsettling turn of events and with the safety and well-being of our students and staff in mind, the Emergency Response Group, after careful deliberation and in consultation with the CHPP, decided that the Fall Term beginning on 7 September 2020 would move to a fully online mode and that students would be advised to stay away from campus to minimize the risk of spreading the virus in gatherings. It was not desirable but absolutely necessary to safeguard the health and well-being of the University community and to prevent further and serious disruption to the operation of the University.

In an open letter dated 20 July 2020, Prof. Rocky S. Tuan, Vice-Chancellor and President, and Prof. Alan K. L. Chan, Provost, informed the University community of the change of plans for the Fall Term and the implementation of the following measures:



Photo by  
Keith Hiro



- ▶ All student orientation activities will be conducted online. Social distancing, avoidance of group gatherings and minimizing the use of public transport will help mitigate the spread of infection.



- ▶ Students currently residing outside Hong Kong are strongly advised not to return to campus.



- ▶ Classes will be conducted online until such time as the pandemic stabilizes. Given the valuable experience gained in the last academic year and the continued investment in enhancing our e-learning capacity, including synchronous teaching, online teaching will be able to achieve the desired learning outcomes while keeping our students and staff safe from possible infection.



- ▶ Hostel applications for local students will be suspended until further notice. Students domiciled locally are advised to avoid crowded places and make every effort to keep COVID-19 at bay.





Photo by  
Keith Hiro

Even when in-person classes and other activities are resumed on campus, the University will embrace the overarching principle of physical distancing that informs all academic and non-academic undertakings. Physical distancing will be enforced in all places on campus and at all times to prevent infection, and to contain any outbreak if the intractable virus ever finds its way onto the campus. There are already plans to implement measures to ensure students can pursue their studies and staff their work as safely and effectively as possible, including:

- ▶ Face masks have to be worn at all times on campus, particularly on school buses and in indoor areas.
- ▶ There are body temperature checkpoints at key University venues, together with supplies of hand sanitizers and face mask vending machines.
- ▶ Cleaning and sanitizing regimes have been instituted in common areas, including classrooms, libraries, and sports grounds, and in facilities such as elevators and buses.
- ▶ There are protocols of entry to and exit from classrooms and laboratories as well as of seating arrangement to achieve the optimal level of physical distancing in both lectures and tutorials.

A task force under the Emergency Response Group has issued the 'Referencing Guidelines for Social and Non-academic Events during COVID-19' to provide guidance on the planning and operation of on-campus events. To reduce the risk of spreading the virus, all units of the University are strongly advised not to organize any large-scale events and events involving catering. If it is necessary to host an event, the organizers are strongly advised to consider alternative ways or formats to avoid the clustering of people. Group dining activities should be avoided as far as possible.

The organizers of large-scale events should implement effective preventive measures to control and limit the transmission of the virus by applying measures such as social distancing, crowd and environmental control, arranging body temperature checks and requiring participants to wear face masks.

As this issue goes to print, there's still no sign of the COVID-19 pandemic easing up, let alone dying down. The pandemic has taught us how little we know of this disease and that one can never be overcautious. There may be more false dawns ahead in the fight against COVID-19, but that does not daunt or impede the University's resolve to pursue its educational objectives to the highest standards as always. CUHK members have, collectively and individually, weathered the storm, gone beyond their call of duty during the intervening calm, and look forward to seeing a new dawn break. ■



Thermal scanners and face mask vending machines are installed at key University venues



# What They Said about COVID-19

CUHK members' opinions and advice are much sought after by local and international media organizations. The assortment on the following pages attests to how their take on the pandemic is highly relevant and regarded.

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▲ Prof. David Hui, Chairman of the Department of Medicine and Therapeutics

**It's clear that where people are more cautious, like Hong Kong, Singapore, Macau, Taiwan, we see a relatively lower number of cases. The facts speak for themselves.**

Laignee Barron, 'What We Can Learn From Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong About Handling Coronavirus', *Time*, 13 March 2020

**Universal masking, as a package of anti-epidemic measures, including greater social distancing and hand hygiene, has been instrumental in keeping COVID-19 in check.**

Victor Ting, 'To mask or not to mask: WHO makes U-turn while US, Singapore abandon pandemic advice and tell citizens to start wearing masks', *South China Morning Post*, 4 April 2020

**Everyone faces risks—a risk-free life is a myth; we can only reduce the risks at best. I suggest not to be glued to your tech gadgets 24/7, but to think of something else to do. Try to set some achievable goals for yourself, such as exercising at home with online workout videos. You could also practice mindfulness and reduce news consumption to free your mind from worst-case scenarios.**

► Prof. Samuel Wong,  
Director of the Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care

Translated from Cheung Yee-ha,  
<中大公共衛生專家黃仰山 教港人紓緩瘟疫焦慮情緒方法>,  
*Hong Kong Economic Journal*, 20 March 2020







I don't think it's an overstatement to say that people with diabetes are at higher risk of developing COVID-19, because the data are suggestive. Our message is to ask people with diabetes to do things early in order to protect themselves and reduce their risk of having problems if anything happens.

◀ Prof. Juliana Chan,  
Director of the Hong Kong Institute of  
Diabetes and Obesity

Mike Watts, 'Coronavirus: I have diabetes, am I at a greater risk?',  
*Diabetes.co.uk*, 25 March 2020

The way to beat this virus is to really understand the biology, and how we respond to the virus. Then, we can tackle it at all levels.

▶ Prof. Gary Wong,  
Department of Paediatrics

Katherine J. Wu, 'The coronavirus spares most kids. These theories may help explain why', *National Geographic*, 25 March 2020





**Governments are likely to decide to ease off restrictions by July. They need to prevent disruptions that would cause food shortages, social unrest or greater damage to human lives and the economy if the restrictions continued. The economy will naturally rebound when restrictions are lifted.**

◀ Prof. Terence Chong,  
Department of Economics

Karen Yeung, 'World at risk of second Great Depression due to coronavirus, says Chinese central bank', *South China Morning Post*, 5 April 2020

Children really need recess and to go out and exercise. In terms of indoor space, it's very difficult to stay in a very confined one for a long time and when it comes to the subdivided homes, we are also talking about people living in the lower socioeconomic strata of the population, dealing with stress and poverty, as well.

▶ Prof. Catherine McBride,  
Department of Psychology

Marta Colombo, 'Home Alone, Hong Kong's Children Face Increased Stress During Pandemic', *US News & World Report*, 9 April 2020





It is...critical to plan stringent, proactive psychological support measures early on to facilitate distressed workers in seeking help and to prevent unintended secondary injury being inflicted upon them. The prevention of further psychological harm should be a major consideration in any post-pandemic policies that follow and which are related to healthcare workers.

◀ Prof. Steven Chau,  
Department of Psychiatry

'Who will heal the healers? The psychological aftermath of covid-19',  
*BMJ Opinion*, 17 April 2020

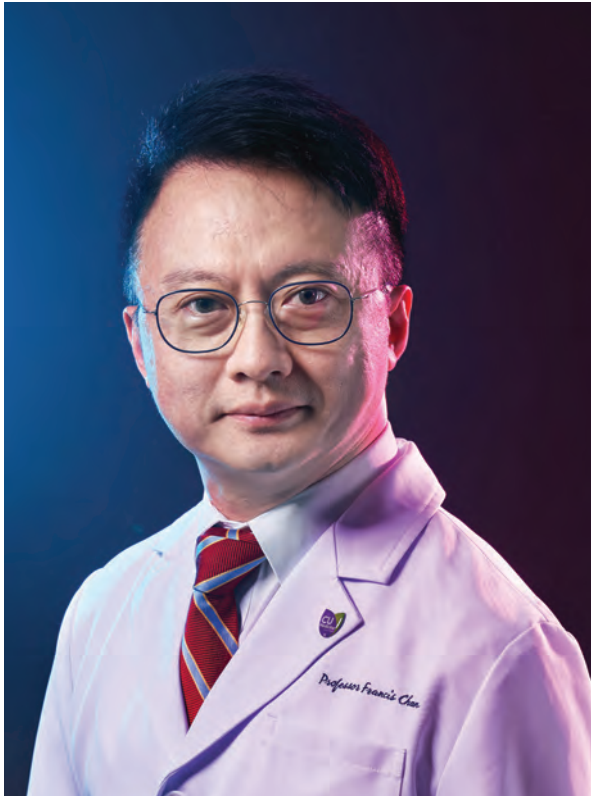
Stories about China by little-regarded or obscure foreign authors found their way into [Ye Lingfeng's] collection alongside scholarly works and historical materials. Such a mix and match has much to do with freedom and isolation – turns out we read not because of the quarantine; in order to read, we have to 'quarantine' ourselves!

▶ Prof. Wong Nim-yan,  
Department of Chinese Language and Literature

Translated from <隔離時看什麼書？>, *Ming Pao*, 21 April 2020







With the additional funding, we will embark on new projects that will help deepen our understanding of this novel virus and improve clinical guidelines in the various specialties most affected by this pandemic.

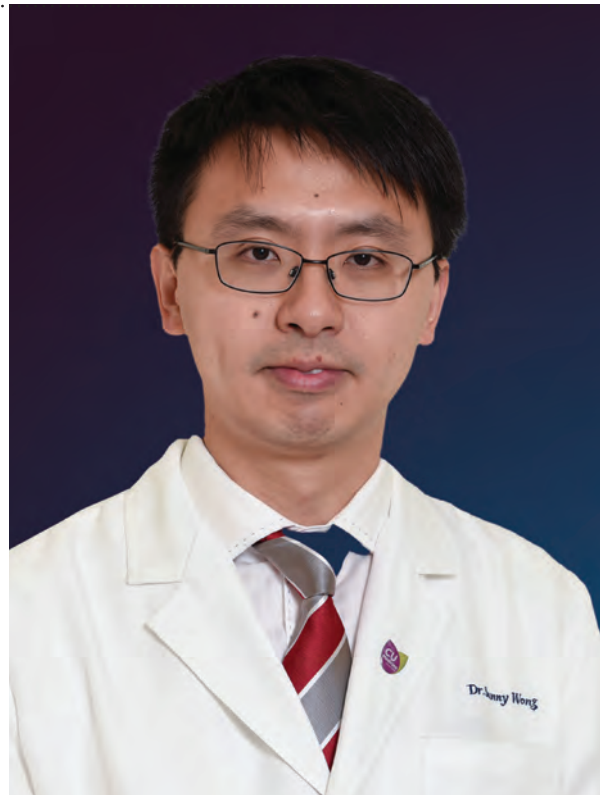
◀ Prof. Francis Chan,  
Dean of Faculty of Medicine

Joyce Lau, 'Huge cash injection for Hong Kong universities' Covid-19 research', *Times Higher Education*, 1 May 2020

Face masks can help slow the spread of COVID-19, and have a relatively low cost compared to the health resources and death toll associated with the pandemic.

▶ Prof. Sunny Wong,  
Department of Medicine and Therapeutics

'Countries with early adoption of face masks showed modest COVID-19 infection rates', *ScienceDaily*, 24 June 2020







# Appointments

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## Council Members



The Honourable  
Cheung Yu-yan



The Honourable  
Lau Kwok-fan



The Honourable  
Mak Mei-kuen

	Name	Period
New	The Honourable Cheung Yu-yan	5.6.2020–4.6.2023
	The Honourable Lau Kwok-fan	5.6.2020–4.6.2023
	The Honourable Mak Mei-kuen	5.6.2020–4.6.2023
Re-elected	Mr. Clement S.T. Fung	18.5.2020–17.5.2023

## University Officers and Senior Staff



Prof. Sham Mai-har



Prof. Song Chunshan



Prof. Leung Yiu-kin Freedom

New	Name	Period
Pro-Vice-Chancellor	Prof. Sham Mai-har	1.8.2020–31.7.2023
Dean of the Faculty of Science	Prof. Song Chunshan	15.7.2020–14.7.2025
Head of Shaw College	Prof. Leung Yiu-kin Freedom	1.7.2020–30.6.2024

## University Officers and Senior Staff

Re-appointed	Name	Appointment Period
Pro-Vice-Chancellor	Prof. Poon Wai-yin	1.5.2020–30.4.2023
Pro-Vice-Chancellor	Prof. Dennis K.P. Ng	1.8.2020–31.7.2023
Vice-President (Administration)	Mr. Eric S.P. Ng	1.4.2020–31.3.2023
Associate Vice-President	Prof. Wong Suk-ying	1.2.2020–31.7.2022
Head of Chung Chi College	Prof. Fong Wing-ping	1.8.2020–31.7.2023

## Emeritus Professors

17.6.2020



Prof. Ho Puay-peng  
School of Architecture

1.8.2020



Prof. Cheung Fanny Mui-ching  
Department of Psychology

1.8.2020



Prof. Leung Wing-leung Patrick  
Department of Psychology

1.8.2020



Prof. Lee Leo Ou-fan  
Faculty of Arts



Prof. Beverly Jane Jackson  
Department of English



Prof. Gerald Anthony Nelson  
Department of English

## Emeritus Professors

1.8.2020



Prof. Tony Gin  
Department of Anaesthesia and  
Intensive Care



Prof. Lau Tak-fai Joseph  
The Jockey Club School of  
Public Health and Primary Care



Prof. Lee Tze-fan Diana  
The Nethersole School of Nursing



Prof. Huang Jie  
Department of Mechanical and  
Automation Engineering



Prof. Kong Siu-kai  
School of Life Sciences



Prof. Wong Po-keung  
School of Life Sciences



Prof. Wu Chi  
Department of Chemistry



Prof. Hui Pak-ming  
Department of Physics









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