

# EDUCATION

## Updates

21 March 2020

### ASIA & PACIFIC

**Singapore, March 20: Schools to reopen on Monday with stricter measures in place [The Straits Times].** Schools and kindergartens will reopen on Monday as planned, but with stricter measures to prevent the coronavirus from being spread by those who had returned from trips abroad during the holidays. Students and staff of schools, pre-schools and student care centres will be given 14 days' leave of absence if they return from overseas on or after March 14. The date of their return to Singapore will be taken as Day Zero of the 14 days. The move comes amid a recent spike in the number of imported cases. Eight out of 10 of Singapore's imported cases of Covid-19 have come in the last 10 days. The decision to reopen schools and pre-schools came amid speculation that the one-week school holidays, which began on March 14, might be extended, especially after the number of new infections reached a new high of 47 on Wednesday (18 March). Instead, additional precautionary measures will be put in place. Students who will have to miss classes will be supported through home-based learning. [\[LINK\]](#)

**Singapore, March 20: NUS student allegedly abuse Covid-19 measures to cheat during exam [The Straits Times].** To protect students from the coronavirus, the National University of Singapore (NUS) allowed a group of them to take a practical examination at home. But despite being warned not to cheat, a significant number allegedly shared their answers and plagiarised one another. NUS is now scrutinising their submissions and identifying the alleged cheats so that action can be taken against them. Replying to queries from The New Paper (TNP), a spokesman for the NUS School of Computing confirmed it is investigating, with instructors still making plagiarism checks and have yet to finalise the results. "NUS takes a serious view of academic dishonesty and does not condone plagiarism," she said. "NUS takes a serious view of academic dishonesty and does not condone plagiarism," she said. It is believed that several have come forward and admitted to plagiarism.

**Malaysia, March 20: Higher Education Ministry gives go-ahead for e-learning [Malay Mail].** The Higher Education Ministry has given the approval for all higher education institutions including public and private universities to conduct online teaching or e-learning. The Ministry in a statement said online teaching could only be conducted if all students have accessed to lecturers and all infrastructure requirements are in place. The Ministry is aware of the level of readiness of some higher education institutions, in term of infrastructure and lecturers as well as those offering programmes via Open and Distance Learning. The Ministry holed there would be no issue over connectivity causing some to miss the e-learning session adding that face-to-face learning is strictly prohibited. [\[LINK\]](#)

**Malaysia, March 20: FullAMark keeps students on track with studies [New Straits Times].** With school closures for two weeks until March 31, online or digital learning can be a solution for students sitting for national exams this year to keep on track with their learning. NSTP Education Vertical Department general manager said FullAMark offers exercises for students of all three levels of standardised. FullAMark also gives parents the flexibility to monitor their children's progress while preparing for the examinations. [\[LINK\]](#)

**Australia, March 16: Why Australia is not shutting schools to help control the spread of coronavirus [The Guardian].** Australia has introduced a ban on non-essential mass outdoor gatherings of 500 people or more and indoor gatherings of 100 or more to control the spread of Covid-19, but so far has not opted for the mass closure of schools. Several schools including in New South Wales and Victoria with confirmed cases of coronavirus have temporarily shut, but chief medical officers have not advised wide-scale closure. So why hasn't closure been recommended and are there dissenting views about whether – and when – it will be necessary. [\[LINK\]](#)

## [ASIA & PACIFIC \[CONT'D\]](#)

**Australia, March 19: Schools urged to get kids outdoors, ventilate classes as 'soap drop' arrives [The Sydney Morning Herald].** NSW public education authorities have urged teachers to keep children outdoors and to ventilate classrooms as much as possible as they ramped up cleaning and made a large-scale 'soap drop' to ensure students could wash their hands frequently. They have also assured teachers that their work is valued and critical, with many in the profession concerned about their own exposure to viruses and feeling that, as one said, they are being 'sacrificed to keep nurses working'. It comes as Prime Minister Scott Morrison issued a veiled threat to private schools to follow government advice and keep their schools open or risk losing public funding. [\[LINK\]](#)

**Australia, March 20: Australian university orders return to face-to-face teaching amid coronavirus pandemic [The Guardian].** Queensland university prompted outrage by ordering its academics to scrap established plans for online teaching and return to face-to-face classes, a sign of the sector's chaotic and disjointed response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Universities across the country are still grappling with how to continue teaching during the crisis, after the federal government firmly advised them on Wednesday that "university and higher education should continue at this time with risk mitigation measures". [\[LINK\]](#)

**New Zealand, March 20: Coronavirus: Victoria University offers free study for those impacted [nzherald.co.nz].** Victoria University of Wellington is offering free study for new students affected by Covid-19, after its surplus expectations were waived. Scholarships covering 100 per cent of tuition fees are being offered for the beginning of this year's second trimester, which starts on Monday July 6. Vice-chancellor professor Grant Guilford said the scholarships were for people whose work and life had been disrupted by the pandemic. "We are wishing to support people who have lost their job, been forced home from overseas or find themselves in changed circumstances, such as needing to care for dependents at home. "At times of crisis, universities have an important role to play as inclusive institutions where learning flourishes and new beginnings are possible. [\[LINK\]](#)

## [AMERICAS](#)

**Canada, March 17: Could the school year be over because of coronavirus? [Maclean's].** Parents, teachers and students are considering the possibility that class is out for the year. But that doesn't mean the kids have to stop learning. Alberta was one of the few parts of coronavirus-stricken Canada where kids were supposed to go back to school this week as normal, without mandated closures or March break on the horizon. The provincial daily briefing changed that, jarringly. The premier, education minister and chief medical officer of health didn't merely match others by closing schools for a week or two alongside March break. In Alberta, classes were dismissed *indefinitely*. Until September, it now seems likely. Provincial assessment tests, which take place in May and June, have been cancelled. [\[LINK\]](#)

**USA, March 20: Trump: States can cancel standardized tests because of coronavirus school closings [USA TODAY].** It's official: U.S. students won't have to take annual state tests this year. The Education Department will waive federal requirements for state testing for K-12 students, due to unprecedented school shutdowns to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced Friday. Normally, federal law requires schools to administer exams in English and math to students in third through eighth grade, and once in high school. The results are used to examine how students are progressing and how well schools are performing. Students usually take state tests in the spring – and school closures are likely to continue through the testing window. [\[LINK\]](#)

## [EUROPE](#)

**United Kingdom, March 20: Pupils' exam results to be graded on work so far. [THE INDEPENDENT].** GCSE and A-level students will be given grades based in teacher assessment and their work so far, the government announced. But students will also be given the opportunity to sit an exam in the autumn if they wish. It comes after exams due to take place this summer were cancelled amid the coronavirus pandemic. Exam boards will now work with teachers to come up with a "'calculated grade' by end of July. [\[LINK\]](#)