

COVID-19 Mitigation

As a global and highly interconnected university, every aspect of our operations has been disrupted by COVID-19. Much has happened, and continues to unfold. Nevertheless, I am proud that NUS has performed remarkably well in the face of change, challenges and disruptions.

The NUS **Crisis and Emergency Management Group** was activated on 18 January 2020 to plan and make preparations for handling a pandemic. NUS commenced the recall of students on Student Exchange Programmes and NUS Overseas College (NOC) programmes in China from 24 January 2020, and we were one of the earliest institutions to implement Leave of Absence for returning students from Hubei. When the crisis broke out, more than 1,300 NUS students were overseas on various academic and exchange programmes. Subsequently, all students based overseas were recalled and I am thankful that they returned to Singapore or to their home countries, safely.

From the outset, NUS moved rapidly to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on campus, ensuring that our campus community is safe and healthy. Our policies and actions are closely aligned to directions set by the Government; we actively monitor the updates from the Ministry of Health, and put in place corresponding protocols to ensure adherence to all statutory measures. We also facilitated staff and students who had to fulfil **Quarantine Orders, Stay Home Notice** and **Leave of Absence (LOA)**. As an educational institution of higher learning, NUS has a duty of care to our students, staff and community. Where appropriate, we have exercised a higher degree of precaution in our containment measures, for example, in extending LOA to contacts beyond what is statutorily mandated.

Early on in the pandemic, NUS proactively introduced a slew of mitigation measures; these include temperature screening, mandatory temperature, health and travel declarations and safe distancing practices. All staff and students are encouraged to practise personal, social and community responsibility. An **NUS Resilience Fund** of \$500,000 was set up to assist staff and students with expenses relating to COVID-19 policies, such as flight expenses for students recalled from exchange programmes, LOA expenses, as well as the purchase of equipment and supplies for safe management measures. An appeal for donations to the **NUS supports Hubei Fund** was made to senior academic and management colleagues to help communities in China which had been severely affected by COVID-19. In a short span of two weeks, nearly 200 colleagues responded to the call. A collective sum of \$389,000 was raised and channeled to the Red Cross Society in China via the Singapore Red Cross.

An **enhanced sanitation and cleaning regime** was implemented across campus. NUS dining outlets had to comply with stringent food preparation standards and cleaning guidelines. Hand sanitisers were placed at lecture theatres and frequently used lifts for the

convenience of the community. Internal shuttle buses went through the same enhanced cleaning regime as public transport.

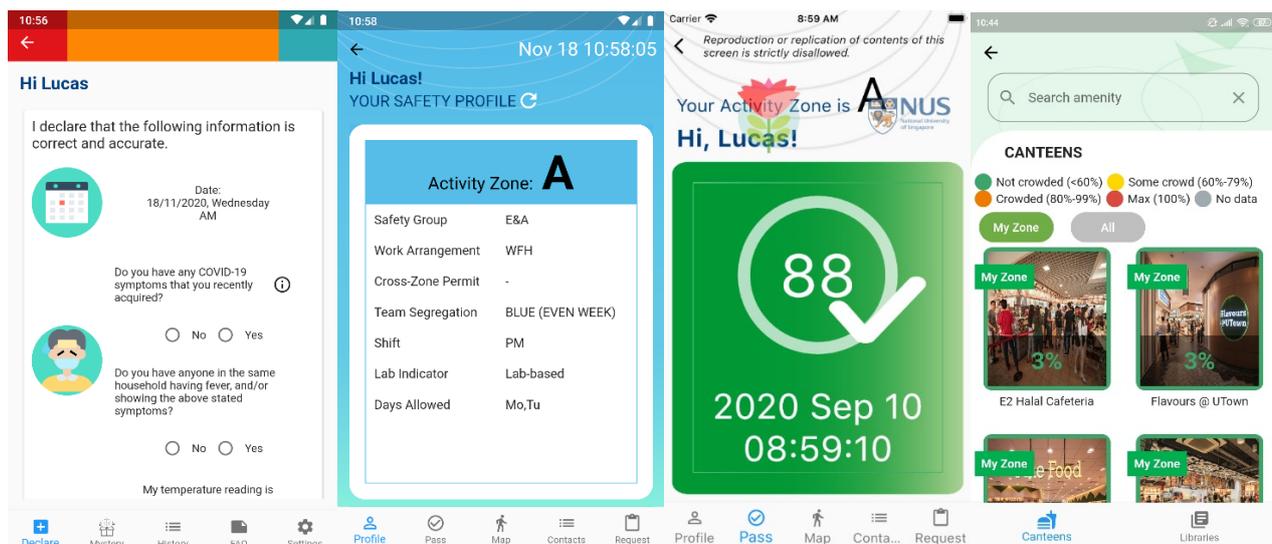
From 10 February 2020, NUS implemented **e-learning for classes with more than 50 students**, with spacing out implemented at teaching venues. For the first time, the **NUS Open Day**, an annual event that is usually attended by more than 31,000 prospective students and parents, was conducted online. From 26 February to 5 March 2020, more than 3 million people browsed through websites, participated in ‘virtual campus tours’ and tuned in to livestreams and social media sessions hosted by Faculties, Schools and programmes across the three NUS campuses. Prospective students and parents also dialled in to the dedicated hotlines to speak to students and staff.



Since the early part of the year, NUS had been aggressively planning, testing and rolling out **Business Continuity Plans (BCPs)** across various scenarios to ensure that critical functions can carry on in the worst-case scenario, and that disruptions to core academic programmes are minimised. BCPs include split team arrangements, alternative site work arrangements, harnessing various technology and digital tools that can keep functions, services and activities running without the need for physical gatherings. Staff and students have gained confidence in operating across a range of scenarios, and were prepared, when NUS had to move to full e-learning and e-exams for the semester from 6 April 2020, in line with Singapore’s circuit breaker implementation.

In preparation for the return of staff and students for the new Academic Year 2020/21, NUS introduced a number of new measures, appropriately calibrated to the pandemic situation, to ensure the safety and well-being of the campus community. These measures include campus zoning, split shifts and alternate team-based work arrangement, as well as the use of **NUSafe** in uNivUS app, which is critical to our efforts in mitigating COVID-19 risks on campus, and to facilitate safe resumption of campus operations.

The **NUSafe** system, developed in-house by our very own NUS IT, is one of the most sophisticated, precise and comprehensive COVID-mitigation systems. NUSafe is a seamless application that integrates information feeds from health and travel declarations, class, meeting and visitor registries, people movements and whereabouts on campus, ad hoc approvals for campus access, with management policy decisions governing zoning, shifts, and timetables. This tracking system allows us to monitor population density and facility usage, to help ensure decongestion and safe distancing. NUS IT is now working towards integrating the NUSafe app with TraceTogether and SafeEntry, to provide us with seamless movement in and out of campus.



NUSafe, developed by NUS IT