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Better to send university students home

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BY April 14, the movement control order (MCO) will be a month old. That means university students, who had not gone home before the MCO, will also be restricted to their campuses for a month. In the absence of academic activities and restricted social activities, this would not be good for their state of mind.

Students should be allowed to return home.

Apart from the psychological viewpoint, other arguments include the fact that many overseas students are allowed to return from places that have recorded far higher fatalities.

The process to allow local students to return home should be systematic and strict. Parents and students must exercise responsibility and take sufficient precautionary measures.

Universities can request students to administer a self-check routine several days before leaving for home. Students will also have to register at university health centres or clinics for final screening before they are allowed to leave. Those who fail the final screening should remain in self-quarantine at the university.

In addition, universities can prioritise those students who are picked up by parents or relatives after obtaining the necessary permission. For students whose parents or relatives are unable to pick them up at the campus, universities should arrange for chartered buses to transport students to major destinations (including airports).

From there, parents and students must prove that they have made arrangements for safe travel the last mile to their homes.

Proper identification letters may need to be provided by universities so that parents and students can identify themselves at roadblocks.

Universities must also continue to ensure the wellbeing of students who, for one reason or another, are unable to return home and have to remain on campus.

Finally, allowing students to return home during the MCO period should not be seen as universities shirking their responsibilities, but rather as the universities' efforts to minimise the impact of MCO, especially psychological ones.

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