

## Statement Against the Discrimination of Persons Infected with COVID-19

Given the need to respond to the protracted COVID-19 crisis in Japan and around the world, even if efforts are taken to prevent infection, it is extremely difficult to completely contain the disease. Amid this backdrop, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the medical professionals battling COVID-19 on the front lines.

When we turn to society at large, however, prejudicial and discriminatory behavior targeting medical professionals, persons who have unexpectedly become infected, and their families as well as the organizations to which these people belong continues unabated. We cannot help but feel apprehension over how this COVID-19 crisis is eroding the sound thinking that underpins democracy, which at its core is committed to respecting basic human rights regardless of nationality. Anyone, anywhere can contract this disease. We must be aware that the act of oppressing infected persons by way of defamation also poses a risk of spreading the infection to others in the community.

The role of a university is to ensure that society can function, even in a world of uncertainty, by proposing new value and meaning to the people, and to produce talented individuals who can undertake this task. Our top priority during this COVID-19 crisis, as always, is to protect the life and safety of our students, so we have decided to continue offering our classes online. We have also partially resumed research activities while taking thorough measures to prevent infection. Meanwhile, some student clubs are resuming activities starting with those that have taken the initiative to establish club policies rooted in efforts to prevent infection. We have also taken this opportunity to raise students' awareness of preventative measures and provide them with guidance to ensure they thoroughly implement these measures. By way of education, research, and extracurricular activities, we will work to enhance students' understanding of COVID-19 and make every effort to ensure that they can make their own decisions and act appropriately while keeping in mind their relationship with society and the world.

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on global travel and our communication with people around the world. Although there is concern that this virus could divide society, efforts are already underway to explore avenues for cooperation and to tackle this pandemic as a common issue. Japan and the international community must join forces for the peaceful, democratic, and sustainable development of the world in response to any further threats to sustainability on a global scale.

We believe that freedom means respecting human rights and acknowledging each other as we are, and this virtue must be cherished as we forge ahead into a new era. Abiding by the Ritsumeikan Academy's founding ideals of "Freedom and Innovation," Ritsumeikan University operates under the core educational philosophy of "Peace and Democracy," and the basic ideals of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University are "Freedom, Peace and Humanity, International Mutual Understanding, and the Future Shape of the Asia Pacific." Based on the idea of academic freedom and striving to shed light on the issues facing humankind while creating value for coexistence, both universities will re-imagine the concept of the university and university-level education over the long term, and we will continue tackling complex social issues.

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