



STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM)

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April 16, 2020

The Registrar,

Through;

The Dean of Students,

Ghana Institute of Journalism.

Dear Madam,

PETITION FOR THE SUSPENSION OF E-LEARNING AND ONLINE EXAMS UNTIL BETTER PROVISIONS ARE MADE

The Executive Committee of the Students' Representative Council acknowledges government's efforts in ensuring that academic work continues despite the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that has put various aspects of the country on hold. Since the institution of social distancing by the state over the past few weeks, Management has maintained that academic work continues on the internet. This move has over the weeks raised so much unrest among students due to a number of concerns particularly, high data costs, poor network in some areas and the overload of assignments on students by some lecturers. There also remains the issue of persons who do not have smart phones or laptops for such endeavours as well as the psychological unrest on the part of many due to the entire COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the SRC made these concerns available to Management and asked for interventions.

While online studies are being carried out, it is unfortunate that most of these issues still remain, making the e-learning ineffective in achieving the desired purpose. Management informed us about partnership with some telecommunication companies to provide free access to some websites for online studies. The initial configuration is for Airtel-Tigo users and Management assured us that steps were being taken to initiate similar initiative with other networks. As it stands, we are yet to receive confirmation of the designated websites and the configuration of the Airtel-Tigo users to the free data service not to talk of other networks. Also, the issue of poor network connection in certain areas still remains making access to the internet difficult for a lot of students.

While these challenges remain, Management on Wednesday, April 15, 2020 released a document containing guidelines for examinations as well as an update on the final year students' capstone project and research. Per the document, arrangements are being made for students to undertake end-of-semester examinations and for Management to subsequently bring the semester to a close. We however acknowledge management's regard to persons who may not be able to partake in the online exams as it is indicated in the document that such persons should inform their lecturers or Heads of Department ahead of the start of the exams.

Per a survey conducted by the Executive Committee, majority of students are not happy with the current situation and are therefore calling for the suspension of the e-learning initiative. In view of this, the Students Representative Council calls for the suspension of online lectures and subsequently the end-of-semester examinations until the following provisions are made.

1. Management should partner with at least two telecommunication companies to provide free access to a designated website(s) or application which will be solely used for online teaching and learning. And lectures should be migrated to the designated website(s).
2. Management should give an assurance and a clear-cut mode of assessment for students who may not be able to partake in the online examinations at no extra cost. This request is so because per precedence (thus, the issue of fee payment that resulted in a demonstration on campus, management gave the assurance that students who had missed some papers would be given the opportunity to re-write, however, it turned out that the results were not graded on three credit hour basis), students have doubts that persons who miss the exams will be treated fairly.
3. Questions to be set for the examinations should be based on topics that were taught before the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.
4. Management should send bulk SMS to all students to inform them about the end-of-semester online examinations and indicate a contact number for students to call in case they cannot partake in the examinations due to some genuine reasons. This will even make it easier for Management to better compile a list of persons who cannot partake in the online examinations.
5. After the configuration of free website(s), piloting should be done for a minimum of three days to ascertain the effectiveness of such platforms before their full employment for academic activities.
6. The online examinations should be open to all students since not all students were able to do the online registration before the suspension of physical lectures. Some students had genuine concerns about their fee payment and online registration for their courses which could not be looked at due to the sudden suspension of physical activities at the time.

The Students' Representative Council understands that these are not normal times, however, it is wise that academic work continues. But we stand by the position that before academic work continues, the above requests should be met. This will make the adaptation of the e-learning and the online exams more feasible on the part of students. Until these requests are met, we call on Management to suspend online lectures as well as the end of semester exams. The SRC is in no way calling for the cancellation of the exams, however, we request that better provisions be made and the necessary measures put in place to clear the road for a successful completion of the semester.

The Students' Representative Council strongly believes that the need to officially close down schools is a directive from the Ministry of Education since the management of the institute does not work in vacuum. We therefore see this move as a more national issue since other universities are facing similar challenges. In this regard, we also request that the content of this petition be made available to the Ministry of Education for a more national approach rather than the institutional approach that is causing so much chaos among students.

We are with the best of hope that our requests will be given the due consideration within the shortest time possible. Please find attached a copy of the survey conducted by the Executive Committee of the SRC.

Signed:

Patrick Nambe

(General Secretary, GIJ SRC)

Joseph Agbezuke

(President, GIJ SRC)

CC: Rector

Deputy Rector

Head of Academics

Head of Research

All Students