



28 February 2020  
SUPRA  
Minran Liu  
president@supra.usyd.edu.au  
0293513715  
Lvl 2 Holme Building  
Science Rd  
University of Sydney

Dear Dr Michael Spence AC

**Re: Fee Subsidy**

I am writing again on behalf of the affected postgraduate student community regarding the lack of financial subsidies being offered to students impacted by the Covid-19 travel ban. As the President of SUPRA, I wrote to you on the 24 February expressing our concerns. The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Barbara Messerle has kindly responded and SUPRA greatly appreciates Professor Messerle's help and efforts.

As I have mentioned in our previous letter, we understand that the travel restrictions are difficult for the university to navigate. We also understand that the University has been working proactively to establish study options for affected students and many of our beloved lectures, teachers and administrative staff have been involved in developing those options.

We are pleased to hear from Professor Messerle that the university is looking at options to help alleviate the financial burden our fellow students are currently facing. For example, those students who have an existing rental contract with campus accommodation, will have their first five weeks to be waived. However, our primary concern still stands, which is to advocate on behalf of all the postgraduate students so they receive a fair and equitable tuition reduction. While the fee waiver with university owned accommodation is greatly welcome, it is not enough and only supports a minority of students that reside on campus.

The situation worsens today as the travel ban is extended again for another week, forcing a much larger cohort of students to study their units online. As I have mentioned previously, it is not reasonable for online courses to be charged the same tuition rate of those attending face-to-face.

Currently the only means a student can arrive into Sydney on time is to attempt to go through a third country. This is both costly and not a viable option for many. I've noticed that there are increasingly more usyd students expressing their anxiety and disappointment through all types of social media about their situation.

Due to the travel restriction, our fellow students are facing tremendous unexpected economic hardship, academic and psychological pressure in addition to the regular challenges of being an international student. Academic and psychological issues aside, the economic problems are not limited to: impacts on employment, airfares (many have changed their flight several times in just the last two weeks), cost of paying for housing in Sydney, China or a third country.

As we have mentioned, attending the University of Sydney carries a prestige that is highly valued by both domestic and international students. It is the first University of Australia, a member of sandstone Universities. It is not only one of the best universities in this country, but also considered one of the best academic institutions around the globe. However, since many of other universities have taken concrete steps to help their affected students, the reputation of usyd is at serious risk. Many of our affected fellow student are either deferred their studies or considering transfer to other academic institutions.

We ask you take note of the active and commendable steps the below universities have taken. The University of Western Sydney will pay each student arriving in Austria through a third country \$1500 AUD to help cover the cost of airfares and 14 days' accommodation. This move clearly demonstrates the university understands the additional costs that affected students will incur as they attempt to arrive into Australia.

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/coronavirus-information/update-on-the-coronavirus.html>

The University of Technology Sydney has made the promise that if the students cannot arrive in Sydney before the 20<sup>th</sup> of March and fail a course as a result, the tuition fee of this subject will be automatically exempted.

<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/news/coronavirus-and-international-travel-information>

The University of Adelaide, another member of G8, in support of students who select to study in Semester1 offers 1) a 20% reduction in Semester 1 tuition fees and the reduction will still apply on top of any existing scholarships. 2) A reimbursement of up to \$ 2000 on air travel costs to Australia once travel restrictions are lifted. If the students decides to defer, the University will also provide a reimbursement of up to \$2000 AUD on air travel costs to Australia for each student.

<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/newsroom/covid-19>

The University of Melbourne, another highly prestigious university is offering a support package for students, who have been affected, including support grants up to \$7500 AUD. This support demonstrates they value international students as an integral part of their community. I quote Professor Mark Considine from UM, 'those student support grants are intended to help students with unanticipated expenses incurred as a result of the travel restrictions related to COVID-19 and to help students transition to or return to study at the University of Melbourne.' Here is the link: <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/student->

[support/coronavirus?utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_campaign=redirect\\_testing&utm\\_source=coronavirus](https://support/coronavirus?utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect_testing&utm_source=coronavirus)

In addition to above mentioned ones, Monash University, link:

<https://www.monash.edu/news/COVID-19-fact-sheet> ; Australia National University, link:

<https://www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/remote-participation-faqs-for-students> ; The University of Tasmania, link:

<https://www.utas.edu.au/alerts/coronavirus-update> have all offered some support to affected students.

Again, we would like to thank you for all your effort and support regarding the COVID-19 and the related travel restrictions. We ask the university immediately offer both an tuition reduction for all affected by the travel ban and assistance with financial hardship and travel costs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to continue this conversation and the evolving impacts on our fellow students.

Yours sincerely,

Minran Liu