

## Education adapts to meet the challenge of COVID-19

Since our first report on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education around the world, the situation in some countries is improving while in others the rate of infection is still increasing. Educational institutions worldwide are having to adapt to serve the needs of their students



South Korea was among the first countries to report confirmed cases of the virus after China. IACLE Korea National Coordinator **Professor Kyounghee Park** (left), from [Kookje University](https://www.kookje.ac.kr/), reports that although the spread of the disease has been limited, the effects of the pandemic are still being felt in education.

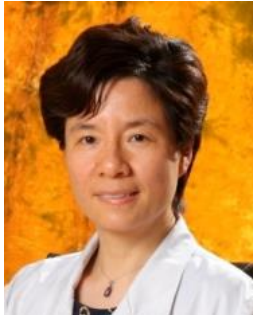
‘As the number of Koreans with COVID-19 decreased from mid-March, the situation looked better. But as the situation in other countries – including the US and Europe – is getting worse, Korean students studying abroad are coming back to Korea. It’s possible that COVID-19 will spread in Korea again.

‘The date of starting semester for all schools was delayed three times. The Education Ministry will release this semester as online lessons instead of offline. And the timing of two-way online lectures will be different for schools. First, high school will be started for those entering universities. Second, middle schools and elementary schools will start, in that order.

‘The situation in universities will depend on their online lecture capability. Even though most Korean universities are running online-based lectures, the foundation of online lecture is not good now.

'I noticed Korean IACLE members are using Korean translations of the IACLE Contact Lens Course modules for students. It's very useful to have these good materials. Most professors are too busy to make their lecture videos by themselves.

'Owing to COVID-19, all schedules will be running behind,' said Kyounghee. 'However, I expect the 2020 IACLE Korea meeting to take place as planned in December.'



In China, 100 days after the first case of coronavirus disease was reported to the World Health Organization, lockdown restrictions in the epicenter of the pandemic, the city of Wuhan, were partially lifted on 8 April.

IACLE China National Coordinator **Xiomei Qu** (left) is based in Shanghai and reported: 'Things are getting better now in China. In some cities, schools are open now and students – in primary schools and middle schools – are back at school, but universities are still closed, and have online lectures.'



Meanwhile in Italy – one of the countries in Europe most affected by the pandemic – FIACLE **Dr Fabrizio Zeri** (left) from the [University of Milano-Bicocca](#) said that the peak of the outbreak seemed to have passed. 'The situation is improving with a slowing down in the number of confirmed cases and deaths.

'Universities are physically still closed in all the regions although lectures are guaranteed through online platforms. The problem for specific courses such as contact lenses and optometry is labs and clinics, which clearly cannot be managed online,' said Fabrizio.

'At Milano-Bicocca we are postponing the practical sessions of the second semester in the hope we will be able to restart them as soon as possible. For this new phase, we are also preparing to arrange a safer setting in the labs, where the close distances required in contact lens practice cannot be avoided. Masks, eye protection, gloves, slit-lamp shields and a higher standard of hygiene precautions will be provided.'

In the US, which now has the highest number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide, the [American Academy of Optometry](#) (AAO) is working with the [Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry](#) (ASCO), and the deans and faculty of optometric schools and colleges, to develop an online experience that will help enhance students' clinical education.

The Student Online Clinical Case Education Program (SOCCEP) will provide live streamed and/or recorded experiences. During each session a presenter will deliver a case study. Students will then have an opportunity to ask questions before the session concludes with the lecturer delivering a patient outcome.



Academy Board President **Dr Barbara Caffery** said, 'This is a direct and rapid response to the coronavirus crisis. Once our Academy Fellows in universities identified the clinical issue, we knew we were the only organization with the membership and reach to quickly pull together the resources they needed.'

While the program was designed to help third- and fourth-year students build on their clinical experience, it is expected to be used as a supplemental and continuing education program for others.



**Dr Elizabeth Hoppe**, ASCO President and Founding Dean of the [Western University of Health Sciences College of Optometry](#), added. 'During these trying times, ASCO member institutions must continue the education of their students. Faculty members at ASCO institutions have really stepped up to the challenge and will continue to lead these online clinical education sessions for the foreseeable future.'

For more information, visit [www.aaopt.org/soccep](http://www.aaopt.org/soccep) or the ASCO website at <https://optometriceducation.org/compiled-clinical-education-resources/>.

## USEFUL LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION

**World Health Organization:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

**The Lancet:** <https://www.thelancet.com/coronavirus>

**Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention:** <http://www.chinacdc.cn/en/COVID19/>

**US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

**CDC Information for Healthcare Professionals:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/index.html>

**CDC Guidance for Contact Lens Wearers:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#How-to-Protect-Yourself>

**American Academy of Ophthalmology:** <https://www.aao.org/headline/alert-important-coronavirus-context>

**NHS England Guidance for Clinicians and NHS Managers:** <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/>