

January 19, 2022

To all students of Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology

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It was on January 16, 2020, when the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare reported Japan's first case of novel coronavirus infection. Over the next two years, this once-unknown virus continued to mutate as it spread, and, so far, it has infected a total of more than 1.9 million people in Japan as of January 17 this year—one in every 65 people.

To prevent the spread of infection, the university has enacted a variety of measures over this period. Classes were taught online and campus access was restricted, for example, and we have been very careful about ventilation and disinfection. All of these measures were taken to make university life safe and secure for students again, but we are afraid that from the student perspective, there were probably many restrictions that in some ways prevented you from experiencing university life as you had imagined it.

Regarding the university's response to date, I must first take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you for your understanding and cooperation, which enabled us to resume in-person classes in October last year. However, since the end of 2021, infections have regrettably surged and the situation has become unpredictable.

Although reports suggest that the omicron variant has milder symptoms and is less likely to cause severe illness, findings are still inconclusive. Unless we remain careful, we cannot deny the risk of clusters of infection on campus. I would like to ask all of you not to let optimistic news reports affect your diligence—routinely guard against infection by wearing a mask, keeping your hands clean, practicing coughing etiquette, avoiding the three Cs, keeping a safe distance from others, and so on. Every day, make an effort to stay healthy, and please refrain from eating or drinking together in large groups.

Psychologically speaking, people with confirmation bias only believe what they want to believe and disregard inconvenient beliefs, while those with conformity bias believe they should be optimistic, for example, because everyone around them is. You have been diligent and persevered for too long to let your guard down now. Take heart and keep your wits about you.