

# Better safe than sorry

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WITH a student population of around 6,000 – of which a significant number are from overseas – it is not surprising that Inti College Malaysia had to quickly implement a set of guidelines to ensure that SARS stayed as far away as possible from its campuses.

“Everyone, of course, was concerned about the possibility of contracting the illness, so much so that we looked at all those with whom we came into contact with suspicion,” the IMC vice-president for administrative affairs, Dr Koo Wee Kor, says in explaining why the college drew up guidelines.

“Every effort has been made to keep students and staff informed about the SARS situation and officials from the Ministry of Health have been invited to give talks and disseminate information and address any concerns that anyone may have.”

Inti's guidelines, the first of which were issued on April 9, encouraged responsible behaviour to ensure that no one would get SARS.

These include not visiting SARS-prone or SARS-affected areas; not going to crowded areas; maintaining good personal hygiene; changing clothes before going to work or after returning from any function; avoiding unnecessary functions that will bring one into contact with the disease; keeping healthy by taking vitamins, as well as being cheery and optimistic.

The students were specifically told not to return home to or visit countries where SARS is prevalent.

Dr Koo says a set of good practices was adopted under the guidelines. For example, staff from the international office are issued gloves and masks when they go to pick up

students from the airport or other pickup points. Another is to require a definitive health check for students returning from SARS-affected areas.

“The Student Affairs Office, Office of Admission and Records, and International Office may have to institute procedures to monitor the situation,” he says, adding that all students returning from SARS areas have to declare their movement for the past month.

The college has also prepared a designated room to hold possible suspects waiting for the ambulance.

“Masks and gloves are at hand and some staff will be trained to handle any emergency cases.”

As for college staff, all overseas trips to conferences and for marketing purposes in SARS-affected areas have been cancelled, postponed or put on hold.

If the situation does not improve, more stringent measures will be imposed on students, staff and visitors entering the campus.

Koo adds that staff will be encouraged to acquire “electronic learning” skills by using the INTI-Online eLearning platform so that courses can continue even when students and staff are not on campus. “As for now, teaching and learning will go on as usual unless instructed otherwise by the authorities.”