

Dear students,

For over a year and a half, we have all been coping with the COVID-19 pandemic with great fortitude and patience. The pandemic has seriously affected all of our lives in one way or another. Many of us, including myself, have lost friends and family due to the virus. We have all had to alter our ways of teaching and learning, by shifting to online mode. We have had to postpone, modify or even give up our research projects, as we have been unable to carry out research activities abroad. You may have even had to cancel your opportunities for internships, fieldwork, and studying abroad. Moreover, many of you and your families may have been faced with financial difficulties and hardships as well.

For all of these reasons, some of you may be feeling down, anxious, and demotivated. As we have had to stay home without social occasions for so long, we have all missed opportunities to hang out, socialize, and have fun with friends, colleagues and classmates. It is quite understandable that many of you may be feeling lonely, isolated, and helpless.

However, please remember that this frustrating situation will not last forever. Thanks to accelerated vaccination drives, finally the number of new cases of COVID-19 in Japan has been declining dramatically. I am sure that this hardship will be over soon. So don't let it get you down. We GSID faculty members are always here for you. Please talk to your advisor, myself, or whoever you feel comfortable with when you are feeling down, anxious, or isolated.

The GSID Student Association (Inseikai) and the GSID Executive Council (Dean and Associate Deans) are planning to organize some social events for you, where you can socialize, make friends, have fun and relieve your stress. I hope you will all join in and enjoy the events!!

I believe that this experience of coping with the pandemic will be remembered by all of us in the future as a time when we gained strength, courage, and resilience in ourselves. So, hang in there for now. We will all get through this together! Stay safe and well!

Aya Okada

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