

SOPs Being Revised Following November Stress-Training

by Maryam Narejo '24

University officials anticipate Spring '21 protocols based on brief stress-testing period, antibody tests, and campus resident responses.

With talks of a partially on-campus Spring semester, there are feelings of relief for some and concern for others. The medical protocol is the main concern of many students planning on taking their spring semester on campus. As of December 2020, LUMS, one student, one faculty resident and two non-resident staff have tested positive.

Dr. Samia Altaf, head of the Health & Safety Committee, shared internal procedures being followed by LUMS and details of COVID-19 cases on Campus with *The Post*. Since September, there have been 1342 Anti-SARS-CoV-2 antibody tests and 24 COVID-19 PCR Qualitative tests including all residents on campus including students, staff and faculty.

Dates	Total Tests	Positive	Negative
25-Sep	97	22	75
3-Oct	268	86	182
6-Oct	108	37	71
15-Oct	289	76	213
20-Oct	82	23	59
23-Oct	83	16	67
1-Nov	168	35	133
4-Nov	136	15	121
27-Nov	111	18	83
Total	1342	328	1004

Dr. Farhat Haq, Provost of the University, says, "When a student is suspected of being ill, they go through a clinical assessment, and if the doctor recommends a COVID test. They are quarantined until their test comes back. We have contracted with the National Hospital for managing these potential cases. Thus far we only had one resident student who had positive PCR and the parents of that student were able to take him/her home."

When asked what action the administration plans on taking for medical precautions, Dr. Farhat replied "Our vice-Provost Dr. Tariq Jadoon and our Assistant director COVID-19 operation Tariq Sheikh worked on an internal document for the management of suspected, exposed and positive cases which was circulated to various offices." You can view the document [here](#).

The one week of campus reopening in November, shortly before the second closure of all education institutions on November 26th, was a stress-testing phase meant to allow the Health and Safety, and Implementation Committees enough time to gather data on the effectiveness of current SOPs.

"It would have been better if we could have kept students coming in, but we will have to be very watchful as students come back. If there are clusters of cases that emerge, we will have to retrench," Dr. Farhat Haq said, in response to whether the data from the stress testing phase was sufficient.

Dr. Tariq Jadoon said, "It has been useful in many ways. Whatever systems we have in place, such as limited timings that a system can monitor. Smart cards are now tapped in at the entry and the exit."

"We also learned that a lot of manpower will be required to keep the monitoring system in place, to ensure whether people are socially distancing and wearing their masks. We can't monitor everyone, they're all adults, but we still need reminding. In terms of thinking about this system, it's been a good exercise in seeing what the issues are in a monitoring system."

Given that students will be returning to campus in Spring Semester '21 under conditions of double occupancy in the dormitories, *The Post* asked members of the Health and Safety Committee about what provisions have been made to ensure the safety of returning students. While double occupancy, Dr. Haq admits, is non-optimal, the University has stated that it has made this decision in an effort to accommodate as many student requests as possible—at the moment, per government directives, only 30% of the total number of people on campus can be accommodated.

Dr. Ali Khan, on SOPs inside the hostels, said, "Student movement inside the hostels will be restricted. You can't spend time in each other's rooms; despite that, students have done so and violated SOPs, and been asked to leave as a result. We don't have the luxury of mass-testing, and the rooms, however many you have, are a response to something that you're trying to avoid happening the first time. You really don't want cases. If you have cases, the situation is out of your hands, and it goes to the government, and they can choose at their whim really, to shut you down or not."

Dr. Samia expresses her concerns on the affectivity of the precautions for a larger number of students being on campus as she states, "Thus far they have been effective but luckily we have not had many cases to deal with. With more students coming on campus we have to continue to review and revise our SOPs".

Although the next semester comes with a lot of uncertainty, the one thing the LUMS admin is certain about and working towards is the students' health and safety.



OPINION

The Changing Faces of Grief: Strengthening Support Systems at LUMS During COVID-19

written and illustrated by Maira Asaad '21
(with words from Amina Omar '22 and Mabrukh Murad '24)

Petitions, prayers & obituary emails have been a silent, lurking spectator in the university this year. But has the exponential increase in the number of grieving students this year translated into strengthened support systems at the University?

The pandemic has, in many ways, changed the way we're able to mourn the loss of our loved ones, and what the grieving process looks like; the global community is still registering how the social fabric has been altered by a year saturated with losses. As we approach a hybrid Spring semester, it's important to reflect on how our education system can continue to expand and strengthen its available support mechanisms for its community.

The Changing Face of Grief in 2020

In late November, I attended the funeral of an extended family member who had passed away. It wasn't until I arrived at the funeral home did the full weight of the pandemic sink in: when I went inside to where the women would be gathered around the maiyyat, the sight that met me was jarring. Women were seated on chairs, lined up against all four walls of the room. Each of them had a mask on, and I couldn't identify anyone—not my mother, or my khala, or my grandmother—until my mother waved me over. The daughters of the deceased were on the floor next to their mother's body. But it wasn't the body that stunned me—it was the perfect acceptability of the grief that had, before that moment, felt entirely missing that year. No one was touching hands, or embracing. And while it made the entire process of grieving cold and isolated, it was a necessity no one was shirking in that moment.

I was watching the granddaughters' of the woman who had passed away. What would the next few days look like for them as they returned to the daily passage of their own lives, without ever physically moving outside of the homespace at all? The same space that had been shared, at that point, with the woman they had now lost.

For the large part, the network of interactions that was available to us as we visited campus has evaporated. Virtual connections sustain us, but there's a limit to how much they compensate for a loved one being physically present.

Amina Omar spoke about how, back in the peak months of the pandemic, when a relative of hers passed away (due to causes unrelated to COVID-19), a Zoom call had to be arranged for family members to be able to attend the prayer. "I think one of the striking experiences back then

was the extent to which the lockdown was being enforced," she says. "My sister and brother in law couldn't visit because all the flights were closed."

Mabrukh Murad remembers being woken up in the middle of the night on November 16, 2020. She was told it was an emergency. A few moments later, she sat alone with the words: "Nani ka iteqal ho gaya hai."

"I was painfully aware that those words and the meaning they carried, could not be taken back. In the chaos of the morning where my grandmother had passed away, I sent an email to my professors, all the while staring at the words I was typing in disbelief."

"Mourning alone was difficult, but despite being socially alienated, I felt a sense of being connected with friends who messaged to check up on me. I had a Professor who let me cry during her office hours."

For Professors this past year, confronting grief in the virtual classroom sphere has changed in ways that we're not seeing. As a teaching assistant (TA) this semester, I've been privy to information I wouldn't be as an enrolled student in the same course. In conversations with other friends who've also been teaching assistants, sometimes a TA has to be the middle ground between a student's personal problems and how an instructor might be able to accommodate them. At least three students in my own course have had loved ones pass away in their family (related and unrelated to COVID-19)—and, as far as the other teaching assistants I know of are concerned as well, have had to type out more condolence messages this semester than on an average year.

But students don't always have these support systems readily available to them. Not all professors are equipped to respond to the emotions of grieving students, and that can come off as abrasive or lacking in empathy. How the university creates an ecosystem around improving emotional health can play a huge role in that.

How Can We Strengthen the Support Systems Available at the University?

Mabrukh suggests an intervention that the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) could readily make. "OSA sent me a nice condolence message, but they never connected me with someone from Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS). I don't think I need therapy, but as a policy reform, it might be nice for the OSA to connect the person petitioning or informing about the death of an immediate family member to a LUMS mental health professional, and then it would be up to the person if they wish to follow through or not."

Additionally, I'd also like to turn attention to what, to my mind, has been the touchstone of grief support for the student community at LUMS: the obituary emails sent by the Student Council. The other, of course, is the private, student-run Facebook group *Help @ LUMS*, where students can anonymously post about personal difficulties that they are undergoing.

As of November, this past year we've received over 160 emails from the LUMS Obituary. Compared to the obituary numbers from the past year (around 120), the distinct association, or anxiety, that has surrounded each of these emails has been with COVID-19 related deaths. Over a third of these emails were received during the peak months of the pandemic (June/July)—and these notices **a)** only consist of students (enrolled or alumni), and **b)** are only the ones that actually do make it to the Student Council's inbox. Other times, news of the passing away of a loved one goes directly to the Office of Student Affairs to file for a petition, or is posted through the LUMS Discussion Forum, or on the students' own social media pages.

Maida Tahir '21, the member of the Student Council who is responsible for sending out the students' obituary emails, says that at one point earlier this year, several students reached out to the Student Council and requested that the emails not be sent out at once.

She goes on to say, "A lot of people, you know where they're coming from. People were sad. They might have had COVID-19 related deaths in their family. My own thought process [when I saw those requests] was: but I can't stop sending out emails. Those people who've asked for an obituary email want those prayers they're asking for. They don't want to be kept waiting. It was taking a toll on me to be seeing those emails, and messages on WhatsApp, but I couldn't pick and choose which ones to send out."

It's important to note that this mechanism is independent of the petition system for the OSA. The obituary emails are also only emailed to students. For faculty members, this might be a way for them to find out whether a student in their class has undergone a loss, because chances may be that a student never tells their professor unless it's an immediate family at all.

As of the latest edition of the Undergraduate Student Handbook 20-21, students are not allowed to withdraw from a course after the withdrawal period is over, and the provision for special or extenuating circumstances is, if existent, vague and ambiguous and refers to taking a semester off instead of a withdrawal.

Here's what the Handbook has to say about that:

"19.5.2. Involuntary Withdrawal from the Semester

In cases where it is judged that the student is able to recover/cope, the student is allowed to take the semester off, on the condition that s/he will provide certain documentation to the OSA before being considered for re-joining. This includes, but may not be limited to, a petition for resumption of studies, medical documentation and an academic plan approved by the student's school advisement unit. This documentation will be verified by the OSA and the student will be required to have clearance interviews with the Head of OSA and the student counsellor..."

I've had to go back and forth between the Handbook a few times to make sure I'm not missing out on a provision, but the fact is: the fine print is unclear. A student (and most often a distressed one) has to make several queries before being routed to the proper channel. So how can OSA, CAPS, and the Student Council improve on the current provisions available for grieving students?

• Include Faculty on the list of recipients for the Obituary emails sent out by the Student Council

• For OSA & the Student Council to work together to create a more transparent process for petitions "The thing is, OSA can email professors with a petition, but it's up to the instructors on whether or not they want to accept it," Tahir explains. It is also true, however, that in cases where OSA denies a petition, an instructor still has the prerogative to reschedule any missed grading instruments.

• As vital as the implementation of sexual harassment information sessions and training was for faculty earlier this year, perhaps the University is ready to look into grief counselling (this is not a substitute for therapy or counselling)

This editorial is meant to be a starting point to discuss ways forward. This past month, the LUMS Discussion Forum has slowly been filling with screenshots of instructors' messages, where students who have been panicking over being unable to meet deadlines are consoled for not having to worry—and more often than not, while the out-pour of likes and heartwarming comments is an expression of gratitude, it is also symptomatic of something else: these consolations, extensions of empathy and understanding, and moments of recognition that the community is sticking it out in a global pandemic are an exception, not the norm—in a time when they least should be.

M5 to be Converted to Female Dormitory

by Menabel Khan '22

On December 10, 2020, an email from the Dean of the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) announced the conversion of the M-5 male dormitory into a female dormitory to expand accommodation space for women on campus.

The email stated the following: "After looking into many options and speaking with the Student Council, it has been decided that all Graduate and Undergraduate women students will be given space on campus. This will be accomplished by converting M5 to a women's dorm. All male graduate students and all male juniors will be given accommodation in a LUMS only compound within the Askari 11 complex."

Additionally, to remain COVID-19 compliant, no more than two residents would be allowed per room in M-5. The decision to give preference to the female hostelites was a much welcomed decision owing to the fact that about two years ago, a controversy sparked regarding this same issue among the campus community.

In recent years, female dormitories have been overcrowded as the number of female residents exceeds the hostel capacity. To accommodate female students coming from far-off Lahore areas, the administration decided to allot them M-2, a male hostel for graduate students. Shortly afterwards, after the hostel residents protested, the decision was reversed." Details about the incident can be found [here](#).

Hostel applications for Spring 2021 were opened through the 10th to 15th of December. However, it is interesting to note that while applying, Zambeel shows an applicant cap of 1250. As of the night of the 10th of December, 600 applications had already been submitted. It is important to note here that the number of female residency applicants exceeds the 1250 cap based on the fact that there are approximately 600 female students per batch. The question of whether the administration will be increasing this cap later remains to be seen in light of developing SOPs at the University. The matter becomes further relevant considering the Student Council's email regarding the administration's plans of bringing desiring students with a Lahore address to the hostels as well.

In any case, the student community is requested to stay on guard as the COVID situation develops in the country. Special care is of utmost importance as a second strain of the COVID-19 (VUI-202012/01) has already made its way to Pakistan. A collective effort made at an individual level will ensure health and safety for all.

Library Equipped for Spring, Says Manager

by Amna Mazhar '21

The occasional sight of a student carrying a pillow to the library is not uncommon, especially during exam weeks. The cozy red couches and the complete silence—except the dull hum of the ventilators—are familiar to every library goer. The LUMS library environment, however, had to be changed substantially to battle the novel Coronavirus. In the absence of a climate control system, the staff faces pressure not only to keep the hundreds of books and archives safe, but also to ensure the health and safety of every person present within the building itself. It is safe to assume that returning students would be required to adapt to an unexampled system of service, yet again.

If the Gad and Bridgit Rausing Library encountered mildew, stains, loose bindings, and mold in unseen battles all year round, fighting an air borne virus presents an obvious complication. The library requires carefully regulated humidity levels and a temperature of 21°C at all times—the optimum conditions for book storage around the world, Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan, the manager at the LUMS library, told *The Post*. However, the indoor ventilation system has been switched off since March as it could act as a carrier for virus containing aerosols which are fine particles suspended in the air. This puts not only the individuals present in the library, but also people in adjoining rooms at a risk of contracting Covid-19. Where you would previously find bookends on every shelf, packets of silica gel have now been placed to absorb excess moisture from the air.

"We are equipped to host more than a hundred students each day," says Mr. Zeeshan who works from campus as the library remains fully staffed. While all online services are available 24/7, under the restrictions placed by standard operating procedures the on-ground capacity has been significantly reduced. Students are expected to sanitise upon entry, to wear masks, and to sit with at least one empty seat between them. "We implement the SOPs strictly and keep a record of all our visitors under a booking system." Mr. Zeeshan added, "We are waiting on a signal from the institute to expand the current capacity".

Precautionary measures will need to be put into practice for months to come. "Even with the possibility of a vaccine becoming available, the number of people who can be present in an indoor space at the same time would be limited," explained Ali Khan, Dean of MGS SHSS. Every part of the university has its own specific SOPs that visitors are expected to follow, complete with a rotational booking system and a maximum number of visitors allowed at one time. Under these circumstances, the majority of the students have been invited back to campus for the spring 2021 semester. Once more visitors are provided access, the booking system may then struggle to accommodate all. "Modality needs to be worked out," added Professor Khan.

At present, however, this discussion does not seem to be on the table. The administration appears to be focusing on settling in the expected batch of students who have been promised on-campus as well as off accommodation.

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Caretaking Responsibilities Affect Students' Decisions to Return to Campus

by Samaah Qasim '24

Eight months after the pandemic arrived in Pakistan, the majority of schools and universities have reopened for the new semester with strict SOP's. LUMS, however, has remained closed, with ongoing plans for a hybrid reopening in the coming Spring semester.

Amid these efforts, however, there are quite a few students who prefer to remain online for the coming semester. Their reasons, including familial commitments and fear of contracting the virus, provide insight into the lives and challenges of some students at LUMS.

After an unfortunate six day visit to the ICU in August, Hania Khan '22 says she was able to see firsthand the extent of the damage caused by COVID-19. She recounts her experience, saying, "There were 3 young patients there with post corona complications; it was heartbreaking to see them reduced to nothing. It was even harder to see their families and the doctors attending to them. You'd have trouble sleeping at night seeing their condition... seeing what the virus does up close."

Although Khan, too, is hopeful for an on-campus education, stating that she would like to be back at LUMS as soon as possible, she believes precaution of the illness takes precedence.

A general concern regarding the recent rise in COVID-19 cases across Pakistan has caused many, including Umar Saeed '23, to reevaluate their desire to return to campus.

Students and Faculty Comments on Reopening in Spring '21

by Salman Tuasene Khawaja '24

As the fall semester comes to a close, discussion regarding a hybrid re-opening of the campus continues amongst the students of LUMS at a fever pitch. While the student body is certainly excited about the prospect of re-opening, safety must be our number one concern.

In light of this, Dr. Alnoor Bhimani, Dean of Suleman Dawood School of Business, has assured the student body that safety is the top priority of LUMS.

"We are guided by Dr. Samia Altaf, Professor of Practice in Public Health and Director of Campus Health and Safety, as well as others with oversight for campus safety and also the relevant external authorities."

To gain a better understanding of LUMS' plan to tackle the virus, we reached out to Dr. Ali Khan, Dean of Mush-taq Gurmani School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Convener of the Health and Safety Committee.

Dr. Khan said, "We (LUMS Administration) have been planning for next semester from June. So it's been months. Much of my time has gone on dealing with Covid related issues including putting together SOPs, implementing them, creating quarantine and isolation wards, re-creating the campus so that social distancing can be maintained. There is of course the whole re-creation and revisiting of teaching for an entirely online semester."

The Post was also curious to know what tentative procedures have been decided upon in regards to the reopening of schools. According to Dr. Bhimani, the decision to open campus for some students is based on a number of factors; the program, attendance, timing requirements, term, the capacity to observe all SOPs, as well as the additional advice of Dr. Altaf and concerned admin.

"There is continuous evaluation undertaken and adherence to governmental SOP requirements as well as directives tied to advice by Dr. Altaf," Dr. Bhimani explained. However, even if precautionary measures are followed, one obstacle still remains and that is the disproportionate treatment of students under the hybrid system. As Dr. Khan explained, "The Gurmani School was not in favour

of the hybrid model, where some students are allowed to be in person and others are left to access classes remotely. We felt that provided very different experiences of learning, with those online being severely disadvantaged."

Similarly, Aden Zahoor '22 says that the recent surge in cases is her reason for wanting to tread with caution. She, like many others, is hoping to be back on campus by January 2021 for hybrid education, she saying, "If the right precautions and measures are taken by the LUMS administration, the idea of a spring semester on campus is highly feasible."

On the other hand, Ahad* says that the only factor warning him to the prospect of online education is that he would prefer an online education due to the "necessity of [his] availability at home". He went on to describe his family's predicament, saying, "My father recently underwent a double heart surgery. I need to be physically present at his side to tend to him, and as the only child of my parents, all the responsibilities of the household are upon my shoulders." Furthermore, he cannot risk exposing his father, who is already immunocompromised, to the virus; which would definitely be a possibility if he were to attend classes on campus.

In such a situation, Ahad cannot leave home, and is more keen on an online semester for himself. That being said, however, Ahad agrees that the best case scenario for the upcoming spring semester would be a hybrid education system, since he acknowledges that not everyone's situa-

-tion is the same. He added, "LUMS should reopen and bring positive changes. Right now a hybrid system is what should take priority."

Maria* is a hostelite, and her absence at home has until recently meant that her family withholds updates about her father's health. Her family believes such news will create more stress in her life. As a result, Maria can only hope that her father is doing alright. Moreover, Maria suffers from health issues of her own while living on campus, which are further aggravated by not having any family to turn to. She says, "[The] online system helps [me] stay updated on [my] family situation and benefits [my] own health."

She went on to say that the current online semester has made her "able to look after [my] parents in a better way and also have their support." Maria did, however, say that one must consider the opinion of the general public, which is largely a preference for a hybrid system, in which those who favor in-person classes can come to campus, while those who want to remain online can do that as well. Keeping that in mind, she suggests LUMS should take a similar course of action since a hybrid system is most likely to suit the majority. Students facing serious issues at home are ready to attend their classes on campus, and even those who are not prepared to do so, due to the increasing risk posed by COVID-19, are eager to see LUMS adopt a sustainable hybrid system.

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of sources.*

it comes to them. As much as I want to experience campus life until a vaccine is confirmed to be highly effective, opening HSS or SAHSOL might be a very risky step," said Sheharyar Hussain '22.

Some students believe that campus access should only be given to those students who require it. "If a class can be conducted online then I don't see any point in holding it on campus," said Muhammad Nouman Abbasi '21.

"If there is coursework that requires your presence on campus or your home environment isn't conducive to learning then sure, get accommodation on campus. But if you want campus access just to hang out with your friends at the *khokha*, then you should rethink the seriousness of the greater issue at hand," said Abbasi.

Some students raised valid points in regards to a re-opening. "While non-residential colleges have the luxury of using workarounds like having students come in on alternate days, and entirely residential colleges have the luxury of calling back everyone and isolating from the outside world, the problem with LUMS is that it is semi-residential and it doesn't have enough space to accommodate all non-Lahoris in single-person rooms," said Sobaan Qadeer '22.

It is clear that while online classes are not entirely ideal, they currently remain the preferable alternative for the administration. However, the same cannot be said for the students for whom in-person classes still remain a better alternative. Although the situation is not completely clear either, "There could have been more transparency into how the students will be selected for the upcoming semester," said Abbasi, and other such specifics were brought up: if exams for SDSB open-air classrooms will be held in-person or online, how will lab rotations work for SSE students and the extra set of regulations they will have to follow during lab procedures? The student body is still currently in the dark about these details.

late January, [which is] when the semester starts."

It appears that these outdoor classrooms are ready for regular use, and MBA classes have already been tried out. Besides, it goes without saying that usage will increase significantly after campus reopens in January. Whether or not these classrooms will be able to serve as a long-term solution is unsure, especially considering their infeasibility during the hot summer months. However, in the meantime, they are proving to be a much-needed solution to a pressing COVID-era challenge.



Research at LUMS During the Pandemic

by Mabrukh Murad '24

***The Post* speaks to Professor Ali Raza and Professor Faisal Bari to discuss how the demands of the academic market have shifted, and how research cycles have been affected, in light of the pandemic.**

As the pandemic grew in seriousness and LUMS campus closed, research activity at LUMS came to a screeching halt. Dr. Ali Raza, Associate Professor of History, calls the pandemic, "a very timely reminder [for] what needs to be done and what role scholars can play in trying to think about the society that they live in."

Dr. Faisal Bari, Interim Dean of the School of Education, whose research focus is broadly human development, is interested in researching industrial areas, markets, education and economics through a micro approach. His most employed research methods during field research include surveys, case studies, interviews, and focus groups. He says, with the lockdown instituted, his research projects were halted for a while since he couldn't "send [his] enumerators to the field" because of the obvious danger. Similarly, Dr. Raza, whose research focus is South Asian history, says, "My research fell through the cracks obviously because of the pandemic, because teaching became our main concern. We had to transition to a completely new medium". Research, consequently, took a backseat.

"In summer, we were planning for an online fall. We had to rethink reading, pedagogy, and assessment. It did not allow us to think carefully about our writing or research let alone conduct research". Additionally, "[Research] wasn't possible because some of the archives and libraries that we like to hang out in are shut down and opened up really late in the summer. International travel became a lot more difficult. And a lot of the archives we like to consult are not in Pakistan so it became more onerous to conduct research."

This halt in the research process also brought with itself a process of renegotiation with the donors or partners involved in the research project. A decision had to be taken on the best of course of action moving forward. Dr. Bari says, "Some donors and partners stalled projects that were not time-sensitive to be resumed at a later date. However, others insisted upon the importance of assessing the impact of Covid on different sectors".

Dr. Raza commented that he did not have to negotiate with his donors however, for "colleagues in the sciences, it was a huge deal. [The] labs were closed and [there was] no access to instruments and every research grant comes with deadlines, [we] have to deliver some key things at the end of each cycle. That obviously necessitated a great deal of renegotiation. Firstly, how is one to conduct research and secondly, what kind of deliverables are even possible in a closed down university".

Making the DHL by Mail Proves to be Underwhelming, Say Some Students

by Musa Ali Chaudhry '24

Hunza was sitting at her desk, absently staring out the window, when she heard that fateful notification ding. Turning her attention back to her laptop, she opened the emails tab to check what she had received. The subject line made her pause for a moment: it was her Dean's Honor List induction letter. Holding in a deep breath, Hunza began scanning through the text to find that one crucial morsel of information — until she did. "Your DHL will be dispatched to you...", she read aloud, and her heart sank.

Like hundreds of individuals who earned their place on the prestigious Dean's Honor List (DHL) this semester, Hunza received her certificate at home through a courier, instead of on stage at the official ceremony that usually takes place in early November each year. This shift in the process has been one of the many changes that the LUMS community has had to deal with in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I knew this was coming, and I was mentally prepared for it...but still, one of my main motivators was the ceremony itself," Hunza told *The Post*. "I would've dressed up...my parents would've been there too, and they would have been proud of me."

She also added that having a virtual ceremony, instead of not having one at all, would have been a win-win situation for her. "I live with my grandmother," she said, "who would not be able to attend an in-person ceremony, but could definitely experience an online one."

Such online ceremonies were organized for other key events this year, such as the convocation for the outgoing batch of 2020 in March, and the O-Week for the incoming batch in September, but not for the DHL ceremony. As such, the lack of a DHL ceremony this time around (virtual or otherwise) incurred a negative reaction from the students, who felt that the ceremony itself held a deep

emotional importance, and not having one meant that being on the DHL lost much of its appeal.

"The ceremony was a time to catch up with your peers and professors, and reflect...on how far you've come," said Hamza Naveed '22. "You don't attach much sentiment to the certificate itself, compared to the actual event that takes place."

Mishaal Alvi '22 explained how many students might be incentivized to strive for a place on the DHL due to factors like prestige, the importance it has on one's transcript, and the implications it has towards grad school admissions. "Despite what everyone's individual motivations were, we all worked really hard for the DHL," added Alvi, "I was really underwhelmed when I found out that we wouldn't have a virtual ceremony either...getting your pictures taken and seeing the 'congratulations' posts uploaded is an important part of it all."

However, he cautions that a greater impact on research will be due to what he calls domestic considerations. "Greater responsibilities with child care, care for elderly parents, especially women are impacted differentially than those who don't have those obligations".

Moreover, Dr. Raza says, "Donor priority and preferences [have] changed overnight". He adds, "8/10 calls for proposals will be around Covid-19, pandemic, disease and so forth. That's how the research industry works as well. Suddenly there is a dramatic change in focus and calls are sent for scholars to send in proposals that directly address the priorities of donors and Covid is obviously one of them. The other preference one can think of and this is obviously highly dependent on political contexts, so for example the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement. There has been a lot more focus, additional funding and a shift of priorities for research that addresses the concerns for minority communities, especially racialized communities. Things you might have been working on and that may have been fermenting on your laptop for years, suddenly become less important and for good reasons too because this is an important issue".

Commenting on measures taken by the University's administration to facilitate the shift from in-person research to an online medium, Dr. Bari says, "Timelines for project

were extended by the administration and there was a leniency in meeting deadlines."

However, he isn't unaware of the potential funding constraints, "[The] revenue side has been affected, budget have been tightened but LUMS has tried to reduce the impact on research budgets."

Dr. Raza says, "[The administration] has been supportive. They made a policy change back in March that this time off from research will not adversely impact cases of promotion and tenure".

Dr. Hamza Habib from the LUMS Office of Research comments, "During these uncertain times, donors have facilitated researchers by extending project duration, however, the extension is not granted for the complete closure period at LUMS. Closure of labs at LUMS, non-availability of research staff/students and delays in procurement orders for over a period of 6 months has severely affected project timelines. The expected second wave of Covid-19 may extend its impact on the research ecosystem".

He adds, "Due to closure of the University, impact on the following project categories [has been] observed: lab experiments, surveys and field work. However, since labs are now operational, most of the projects are gaining the lost momentum".

Despite the turbulent times, Dr. Bari is hopeful about the future, "One thing that has definitely come through is how to manage the impact of these disruptions in the research process. If God forbid, something of this sort comes up again we will be better prepared to deal with it".

Dr. Raza remarks, "One has to think about what this pandemic has opened up and made visible. It has brought new, more urgent and critical questions to the fore. For example, how it has impacted people depending on existing inequities the world over. In some ways it has made this iniquitous world more visible and more apparent." "Some colleagues and I have become more interested in the history of diseases in South Asia and public health research. What are the things we can learn from disease outbreaks in the past? That experience is certainly a question that became more obvious to us once the pandemic hit. We weren't thinking about that at all before. So I suspect that would be the case for other disciplines as well. I don't want to make it sound like this is an opportunity of sorts because that would be a cynical way to think about it but I certainly think that it should push us to think more deeply about existing inequities and differences in society. One reason this should be at the very forefront of our concerns is impending climatic disaster. If pandemics can devastate the global economy and society on such a large scale one can only imagine what large scale climatic disasters can do. If there's anything to take out of this is that it's a huge warning signal that this may well get worse if existing inequities are not addressed."

While students have not formed a unanimous consensus on whether the lack of a DHL ceremony affects the incentive to strive for academic excellence, and whether the administration's efforts to counter this problem through the policy change have been successful, they agree on one thing: the lack of celebratory events is having a significant toll on the development of college culture at LUMS.

"University life means nothing without such events...if students just want to attend courses, they can get those online as well, there's plenty of resources for it," said Alvi.

Similarly, Abdullah Nadeem '23 had some strong feelings regarding the lack of important events too. He claimed that while the DHL ceremony itself is still significant, despite being a smaller-scale celebration, larger events like the convocation for the outgoing batch are a pivotal part of college life. "Not getting a DHL ceremony this time around is understandable," he said, "but I simply wouldn't know what to do if this persists and I'm unable to get a proper convocation."

It appears that most students are not only unhappy about the current situation, but also worried about how these changes might affect the general outlook towards college life — and understandably so. If the golden days of one's life are robbed of its brightest moments, they lose much of their worth.

However, with campus partially reopening earlier this week, one can hope for better news in the future. If all goes well, by the time the next DHL cycle begins, recipients will be able to celebrate a special day together and pat each other on the backs, instead of receiving their certificates at home and have them gather dust atop bookshelves and inside desk drawers.

Seniors at LUMS Concerned Over Career Prospects

by Khadija Faruqi '24

Out of the countless victims who have suffered at the hands of an online semester, perhaps the most obvious that come to mind are seniors. After all, it is their last year at LUMS and they are unable to take advantage of all the social events geared towards seniors. However, the last year at LUMS is also critical for deciding where students wish to go once their college journeys have ended. They usually attend career fairs, engage in field work and explore diverse projects to get a better sense of what their next steps should be. All these opportunities have either been severely impeded or completely halted due to the

online semester.

In its efforts to help students secure careers after graduating, the LUMS Career Services Office (CSO) organises a series of events to assist them. While career services are still provided in this online semester, according to Mohammad Bilal '21, "There used to be career fairs, seminars and internship recruitments but there hasn't been a proper channel for all this stuff in this semester. There haven't been any special career opportunities for us. In fact, there are lesser opportunities now."

Many seem to agree with Mohammad Bilal as seniors interviewed by *The Post* revealed that a large majority of them felt that the quality of LUMS career services deteriorated in the online semester as compared to previous years. The dissatisfaction with the CSO's handling of the online semester was also echoed by Shamaayum Muzammil '21 who said, "The recruitment ratio is going down so there should be extra efforts by CSO to counter [this]."

[Continued on page 4]

THE LUMS POST

ARTS & CULTURE

December 2020

Issue VI

ARTS & CULTURE

“Home Is All You Have”: *Mohammed Hanif on Home, Writing, and Censorship*

by Zoha Fareed Chishti '23

At 10 PM on 16th of December 2020, in a relatively quiet corner of my house, I sit facing my laptop screen. I get a notification, “Changez is in the waiting room.” I click on admit. A few seconds later, Mohammed Hanif, author, journalist, and professor, appears on my screen. On the wall behind him I see a clock, it is noon at his end.

I thank him for taking out time to speak to me, amidst his busy schedule. He laughs and tells me to bring out the questions for him. “*Tob batayen*,” he says, as he takes a bite out of his breakfast.

I ask Hanif what he thinks about his works being labelled as being “about home, written from away [from home], in the same line as say, Kamila Shamsie or Mohsin Hamid.” We can hear his children speaking at the back, as he replies, “Uh, I have no idea.” Hanif says he understands that some novelists are ‘immigrant writers’— they are born somewhere, they leave that place, move away, and then they write about home from where they live, but since he has never really left home, he does not know what label his works fall under.

“Home is all you have,” he says, “family is always your biggest playground. You have friends, enemies, you live there, you die there.” His children continue to speak at the back, he smiles and scratches his forehead. Hanif believes home is the greatest subject to write about, whether you are at home or away.

Hanif was criticised for setting his latest book, *Red Birds*, out of Pakistan. He tells me it is flattering when people read with such diligence, and have questions, and critiques— they want to know the reason for everything. It makes me happy, he says, and then adds, “I assume fiction is about writing about anything, and about anywhere.” He does not have the answer as to why he has to restrict his stories spatially. “Sometimes a story is about a certain mohalla, so you want to name it. Sometimes you do not want to name it,” Hanif explains that specifying your setting is a choice. He believes when you are writing about war we do not have to choose to name the place to write about it, “There is war in the South, we have lived it, it is in Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Pakistan, we tell the story [how we want] today.”

Hanif’s works have been associated with challenging a lot

of taboos. I ask him what goes through his mind, when he is working on a piece of fiction, and whether questioning certain notions is a priority. “There is something called loitering,” He answers, “without [clear] intent. I think that is also a crime.” He smiles, and continues, “You are hanging out in the street corner, maybe with an intention to do something bad, you have not done it yet. Writing is a bit like that.”

He tells me he hears a voice in his head, and then spends a few years with that voice trying to find out what is going on with it, and if there is a story, he tells it. He does not understand what taboo is anymore. Writing fiction itself is a taboo itself, he muses. “I am trying to sell my own word to the world, [the world] does not need it, it is useless. That is the ultimate taboo.” He laughs and says that a grown up man sitting aside and making up stories is admittedly pretty silly, but he does it because he likes it.

When I ask Hanif whether his work in journalism clashes with his writing style, which has been influenced by fiction, he laughs and tells me, “In idea, in journalism, you just write what you saw. You faithfully and honestly report. But, news today is full of wonderful fiction.” In his understanding, journalists today are the biggest fiction writers.

When he started work, there was tension between fiction and journalism, “Don’t mix it up,” we were told, when I was working in print media.” But today, it is completely different. My eyes wander to a black and white floral painting on his wall. According to him, cooked up fiction passes off as news, so the tension between writing styles is no longer relevant.



Hanif walks me through his reliance on satire. “My sarkaari education background made Urdu and Punjabi, performers and comedians my first influences.” They always used a certain way of looking at things, talking about the most serious matters of life, summed up in little jokes. Pakistanis have been through most difficult times,

and we have survived it by making fun of it. He tells me it was a natural choice for him, “It is a very Pakistani way of dealing—take away the terror of it by making light of it.” He goes to his window, opens it, and lights up his cigarette.

Our Lady of Alice Bhatti, intended as a love story, has aged as a commentary on the plight of religious minorities in Pakistan. I ask him about the importance of writer’s in-

tent and whether it matters. Hanif tells me that he sees writing as a very intimate act, “You spend years with it, and no one really knows what you are doing.” Reading, he also, believes to be just as personal and intimate. “Book *banda akela be parhta hai*. [It is a] lonely act,” he looks around, sighing. He continues, “I think it is fair that everyone reads [fiction] differently, because every reader brings their own life, and experiences [to the story].” The joys of being read, Hanif admits, is being perceived in different ways. As a fiction writer, he has no complaints about readers interpreting his stories in ways he had himself not conceived.

His book, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, has been on the shelves for over ten years, unbothered. In January 2020, after his novel was translated into Urdu, it suffered at the hands of censorship. The translated copies were seized from shelves days after coming out. Hanif expresses his confusion over this, “I did not get it.” The book was first translated five years back, but the publishers were reluctant. He recalls the publishers telling him, “Sometimes, it takes them ten years to get the joke.” He laughed, and told him that finally they had gotten the joke— and hence, the censorship.

As an afterthought, Hanif adds that he believes there is a lot more censorship in Pakistan today than there was a decade ago. I ask him about the future of free media and journalism in the country. He looks out the window, thinks for a moment, and then replies, “There are moments when I think there is no hope.” As a journalist, or a story-teller, you are scared, not just for yourself, but the people you are writing about, because the trouble is ever present. In such cases, there is an inclination towards self-censorship, when people’s lives are at stake. “There is, say, a professor in jail, for false blasphemy charges, and their family does not want you to tell the story.” Hanif believes that people being scared to tell their own stories, that’s more worrying than state enforced censorship.

Hanif tells me he is hopeful for the future. Writing, as an art, keeps evolving. Story-telling, Hanif maintains, can never die. He says forms change; newspapers went from print to online, novels and short stories keep changing, it is a process in transition. “The basic need to tell stories, and hear stories from others, can never die.”

are indeed open. However, rising corona cases may have diminished this opportunity as well.

“The name of this source has been changed to preserve their anonymity.”



From left to right: (Top row) Sahar Gul, Rojeh Sheikh, Ayesha Zeh. (Bottom row) Zuba Ansari, Zoha Shoaib, Tasarunn Munir

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ARTS & CULTURE

Creativity in Times of Adversity: *Social Media Eateries and the Women That Run Them*

by Rida Arif '23

From budding freshmen to alumni, many female entrepreneurs have decided to make use of the pandemic to take the plunge into food-related start-ups. This seems to be an anomaly considering the industry of both home-businesses and commercial restaurants are dominated by men; in 2018, *Food & Wine* magazine reported that only 6 percent of women owned restaurants or ran kitchens. Similarly, a 2015 report by the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland showed that the majority of home-based business owners are male (66 percent). These gendered statistics show that the following women are defying the norm to establish their eateries and are using social media and even the lockdown to their advantage.

Aleeha Shah '24, started her baking venture, *Aleeha's Pantry*, during quarantine as a result of having nothing to do but bake cakes and crave food from *The Pantry*. A passionate baker since the age of eight, Aleeha specialises in working with buttercream to create aesthetically pleasing delectable desserts. However, keeping work stress from bleeding into such a deep passion has proven difficult. She says, “This is something that is therapeutic for me. Why should I turn it into something that would be the reason I need therapy?”

Aleeha admits that turning a hobby into a career inevitably results in not loving it the same way, but she says, “If you love it enough, you’ll find a balance.” With 2200 followers on Instagram and counting, she is managing to do just that.

Like Aleeha, Maryam Malik's '23 venture, *Madbatter by Maryam*, is rooted in the magical realisation at age nine, that baking was a fantasy-land. Malik says, “[It’s a place] where you put ingredients together and something new comes out.”

Currently a sophomore, Malik concocts everything from brownies to lasagna, with no compromise on quality. The pandemic helped increase business exponentially, with at least four orders a day from what started as a blog with 500 followers. Upon asking if the saturated market of home-bakers is demotivating, Maryam echoed the view of the group in all, saying, “You don’t have to fight to make your place...everyone has their own niche.”

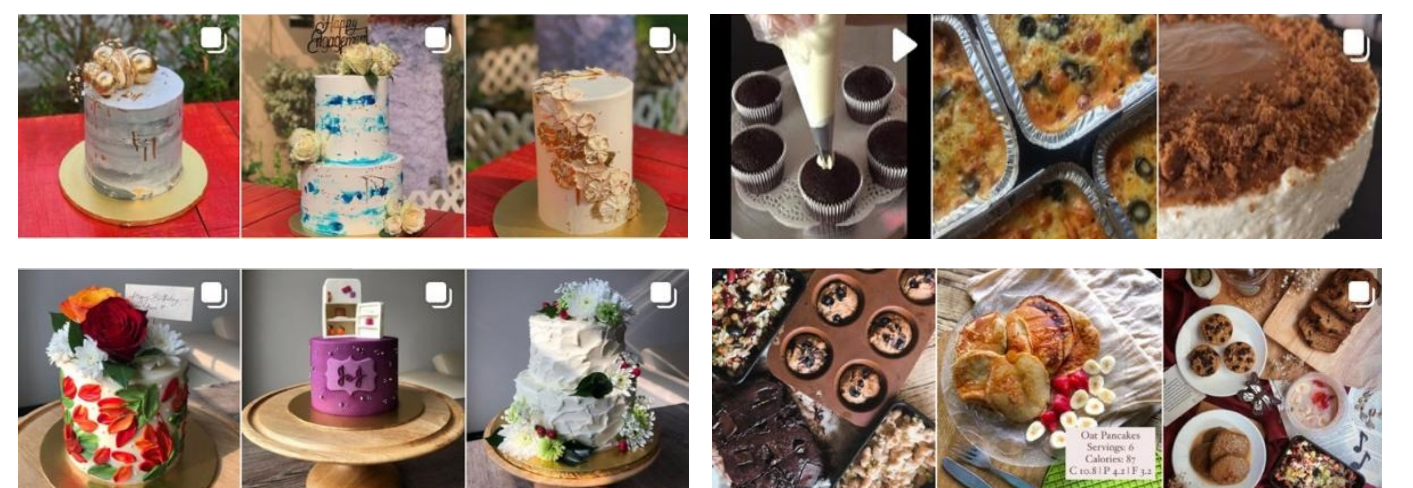
Few have created a venture more niche than Fatima Binte Afzal '22 and founder of Fraiche by Fatima, almost at a thousand followers within the quarantine alone. A nutritious-based food start-up inspired by her own struggles with hyperthyroidism and PCOS, Fatima wanted healthy and affordable options in Karachi, while not restricting her clients to bland greens.

Fatima also brought up the difficulties she has faced as a woman in the business, saying, “I was always a huge feminist, but even I never realised how bad things are for women, because I was always so sheltered”. She compared how riders speak to her versus her brother or father, and noted how women have to put in “five times the effort as a man in the same field” to be taken seriously.

Bismah Azhar '19, better known for *Bismah's Bakeshop*, an alumna of the MGSNSS, can more than confirm Fatima's experiences. Boasting an impressive 3,400 followers, Bismah has one of the better-known bakeries in Lahore. However, even months into her commercially pursuing this, older men would patronise her. “They’ve said, ‘you’re kind of good at this, why don’t you start doing this as a business?’ and when introducing me, they say kitchen mein mama ki help karati hain,” Bismah says.

Her business was severely affected by the pandemic, with a loss of money, time and queries, with growing pressure from other food ventures starting around the same time leaving Bismah wondering how she could compete. However, she takes comfort in her business being different from the rest as she decorates cakes according to the personalities of the recipient, and what she would like to see in their place. Bismah emphasised on the importance of making something with love, thought and intention, advising other budding entrepreneurs to simply take the leap because the market is extensive.

The stories of Aleeha, Maryam, Fatima and Bismah show how in times of adversity, these women are able to not only work effectively in the male-dominated industries of home businesses and food, but thrive.



Clockwise: MadBatter by Maryam (@madbatterbymaryam), Fraiche (@fraichebyfatima), Bismah's Bakeshop (@bismahsbakeshop), and Aleeha's Pantry (@aleehaspantry).

FiLUMS '20

by The LMA Team

Due to unprecedented circumstances caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, FILUMS 2020 took place virtually this time around. This year, the film festival was bigger and better with the help of the entire team that worked almost entirely remotely to successfully pull off an incredible event through Youtube streaming. The journey to FILUMS 2020 began with a series of podcasts called Cinema Trails that featured guests like the creator of Shehr-e-Tabassum and tiktok celebrities who’ve made the most out of the lockdown. The three day event featured panel discussions on all aspects of filmmaking. This included discussions about pre-production, cinematography, sound engineering, costume and styling as well as the writing for film and tv. Guests with practical hands on experience from the film industry joined us at the panels to talk about their experiences and share the best insight for those who are interested or aspire to pursue a career in film.

The three-day online event featured local and international film submissions and panels that discussed themes and issues of contemporary cinema. FILUMS had an especially memorable tribute to the legendary actress Sania Saeed.

The first day of streaming featured films like “Aik Do Teen” directed by Aleem Bukhari and “Udaan Sitaron Ki” directed by Safar Ali. The panels featured Huma Tahir to discuss character transformations through make up and costume in cinema. And first day ended by taking the audience on a virtual tour of iconic film theatres.

The second day began with a streaming of “Lebendig (Alive)” directed by Michael Sielbert and featured a con-

versation with Usman Mukhtar and Yasir Jaswal about directing and film making in modern day Pakistan. The legendary actress Sania Saeed also joined us for an engaging conversation about the characters that she plays, how she brings them to life and what’s in store for her in the future. The day ended with an interesting conversation about the film makers of the films that were submitted. They discussed the conception of their films, the ideas that drove them to make these films and what’s the process of film making like.

The third and final day featured films like “Sleepwalker” directed by Andrea Yu-Chieh Chung and “Patang” directed by Hamza Farooq among other films. The film directed by Maroof Taj “Salary is the bribe they pay you to forget your dreams” also featured on the third day. Ace brother-duo- actor Adnan Malik and director Saqib Malik- also joined us for a conversation about the Pakistani cinema and explored the idea of parallel cinema in Pakistan. Up and coming director Shah Nawaz Zali also featured in one of our panels and spoke about films and film festivals in Pakistan.

We aspire to make FILUMS one of the most prominent film festivals at LUMS and in Pakistan. It is one of the few platforms that showcases talent and allows the pursuit of cultural exchange. Moreover, the amazing and high quality content that was showcased at FILUMS 2020 stands testament to the fact that the years ahead hold the promise of incredible talent emerging out of the local hubs of our country. It is our hope that FILUMS becomes a route that allows filmmakers and creators to leave a mark on the world through the art of story telling and the magic of movie making.

Send your Letters to the Editor at:

dailystudent@lums.edu.pk

Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space and should carry the writer’s roll number and city.

The Social Watch

The social watch is LDS’ virtual social responsibility program aimed at creating awareness for prevalent issues within Pakistan.

For our first video we aimed to cover the low conviction rate of rape and sexual harassment cases within Pakistan. We had two women on board to breakdown the consequences of reporting such crimes and give an in-depth analysis of the process; Hiba Akbar, a lawyer and teaching faculty at SAHSOL as well as Rubina Shaheen, an officer from Asma Jehangir’s legal aid cell.



THE LUMS POST

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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Issue VI

Seniors at LUMS

(Cont from Page 1)

Seniors who do not wish to immediately work and are instead looking to study further are also distressed because of the online semester. Bilal Naeem '21 said, "Because of the current situation, there is less funding for PhDs. My plan was to fund my PhD application by finding an internship. I emailed the CSO a few times but they were unresponsive so I was forced to find internships through personal contacts and LDF."

A major concern for the current batch of seniors relates to the values online learning instills within them, close to the beginning of their official careers. According to Syed Irtaza Ali '21, "A lot of people are taking the online semester very casually and the core value of discipline is getting distorted. Being at home encourages this and there are serious commitment problems in many students. This lack of discipline could lead to problems in later life." Ali's statement draws attention to how the professionalism of many students has suffered as a result of taking classes from the comforts of their homes and for seniors, who are expected to dovetail into professional life soon, this distortion of work ethic can prove disastrous.

Other senior specific apparatus which provide useful insights into coping with professional life are Senior Projects or Sprojs. Usually distinguished for being incredibly collaborative projects where instructors and students meet and share useful contacts and skills, this typically cooperative experience has debilitated as a consequence of remote learning. Mohammad Bilal '21 remarks, "While being on campus, we can stay close to our S-Proj instructors who [can then] really guide us and recommend us to others. Because of this online semester I have only met my instructor once." The gulf between students and instructors is worrying as senior projects are supposed to serve as valuable learning experiences which can be applied in

professional life and provide unique networking opportunities for students.

In response to student concerns, Khaqan Ali, the Deputy Manager of the CSO spoke to *The Post* about the CSO's strategies during the pandemic. Mr Ali stated that the CSO was aware of the negative impact the pandemic may have on job placements and said, "We are expecting that this pandemic may affect the job market in the next year, and we are strategizing our activities to co-up the future challenges. We will explore bigger avenues to take more potential companies on board, through massive outreach to recruiters by utilising our current network. We have already taken on board 60 new potential employers from multiple sectors."

Mr Ali showed awareness of the struggles of students but suggested the best way for students to combat these was to actively engage with the CSO about their concerns. He elaborated, "We completely understand student's emotions and sentiments about limited career opportunities and their future. We are still striving to bring more online programmes and sessions for our students. Students are advised to be in touch with the Career Services Office [and] attend all virtual activities related to recruitment, professional development and higher education, as it would help them to achieve their career objectives."

The additional stress of remote learning and it being their final year has left LUMS seniors the latest victims to the vagaries of the current global crisis. It would be pertinent for the university to address senior concerns in a timely fashion and increase its efforts to mitigate these concerns and to equip the Batch of 2021 with the same security and self-assuredness that previous LUMS graduates were accustomed to.

The International Student Conference

by Syeda Aiman Zebra '22

On November 21-22, LUMS Daily Student held its first ever International Student Journalism Conference, a space for collaborative learning for student journalists from across the globe. These two days saw not only participants from IBA, Habib, and LSE in Pakistan, but also students coming in from the US, UK, Belgium, Ireland, Taiwan, Nigeria, and India. The conference also hosted five keynote speakers to engage the audience with topics ranging from climate journalism to student collectives to storytelling and photojournalism: Zoe Carpenter, Raza Rumi, Saiyna Bashir, Ilana Cohen and a student from LUMS, Wafa Asher.

The conference was held via Zoom where participants conversed with each other on the ethics, guidelines, stories, innovation and collaboration bodies that their publication was working upon. There was one shared goal: the next step for student journalism.

A few notable bodies included the Aman Project, a publication worked on by students from Pakistan and India; 13 stars, a newspaper shared between thirteen European schools; Perspective magazine, a Pakistani feminist publication.

The Best Stories of 2020

by The LUMS Post team

Rattu: The Case for the "Rescue"

At the beginning of 2020, 21 students were stranded in Rattu while on a trip organized by the LUMS Adventure Society. Read the full story to hear how the group's time was spent in isolation.

Q&A with Malala Yousafzai

The Convocation speaker of the graduating class of 2020 was Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Prize laureate and activist. The Post had the chance to ask her a few questions during a virtual livestream. Here's what Malala had to say.

Tethered: Literary Legend Kishwar Naheed Visits LUMS

Last year the Urdu literary legend Kishwar Naheed visited LUMS as part of the Gurmani Center for Language's Bazm-e-Adab's series of talks, where she discussed her poetry, her experiences in the industry as a female writer, and her advice to upcoming writers.

INTL LUMS Student Quarantined in Riyadh

When COVID-19 arrived in Pakistan, many international students at LUMS were unable to return to their homes due to the closure of flights, or were traveling in uncertain conditions. Mahnoor Ismail '21 describes her experience being quarantined on her way back to Jeddah.

Here Lies Hair: Three Accouts of Trichotillomania

In this piece, Syeda Aimen Zehra '22 talks about what it's like to live with trichotillomania, a hair pulling disorder.

PCOS Bodies are Feminine Bodies

In this editorial, Heer Cheema '22 talks about the impact of polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) on female students' mental health.

Reader's Editor

In keeping with the internationally recognized practice of journalism, *The Post* has its own internal ombudsman — *The Post Reader*. The idea is to attend to our readers' complaints and respond to them professionally. PRE is the investigative authority, to which all complaints are referred, and it is PRE who takes notice of any alleged violations of *The Post*'s code of ethics.

Email: postreaderseditor@outlook.com

OPINION

Weekend? What Weekend?

by Ahmad Hasan '24 and Munema Zahid '24

break. One of the anonymous respondents says, "There's too much to do. And the professors still expect the same results as an in person semester, [pretending] as if it's just another minor inconvenience like a road jam." Many others specify that they don't get any time off to go to the gym or spend time with family.

This experience may vary across the four schools. From SDSB, Abdur Rehman '23 says that he can barely manage the workload even though he's taking the same number of credit hours right now as he did in the last offline semester, because of more graded components, higher mean scores and, at times, instructors who fail to be accommodating in light of the circumstances of this semester.

Muhammad Ibrahim Hameed '24, a SAHSOL sophomore, says, "I almost always have something due by Monday morning or Sunday night. I also spend a decent chunk of time working on whatever assignment I have due the next week because I know I won't have time to do it during the weekdays because of the workload and the readings."

On the other hand, Mashael Shah '21 thinks HSS professors have been more understanding compared to what she's heard about from other schools. Although she's gotten used to the extensive readings, the increased screen

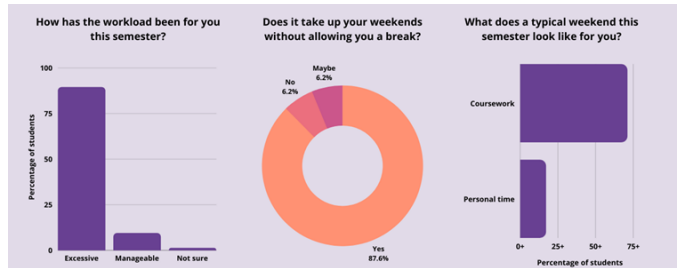
time still results in backaches and strained eyes. "You're reading on your computer, you're doing assignments on your computer, and for a lot of us our source of entertainment is also our computer," she says.

Sheharyar Khalid '24 believes the academic burden at SSE is immense, even more so online. Though the learning experience is better in-person, he says it can get hindered by having to be at campus from 8 AM till 6 PM. He adds, "I have weekly quizzes in two courses and two assignments every week, so the weekend is practically non-existent."

It seems like students generally agree on the diminishing semblance of a weekend and little personal time this semester. Haphazard class schedules, society meetings, and other responsibilities combine to make students feel like they're working continuously, as Rehman '24 puts it: "Every day is a Monday for me." Shah '21, a hostelite, compares this experience to her junior year. Though it's the toughest year, she says it was made easier by always being physically surrounded by other students also swamped with work. This sense of community was immensely beneficial for her stress levels and perceived workload. "It felt like we had more of a weekend when we were at LUMS," she says. "Now you're at home and you can't really escape work, and it does kind of take over your weekend."

The university administration, however, has a different perspective. *The Student Guide for an Online Fall*, sent out by the Office of Academic Advising advises students to, "Fix some time for your work or preparation of classes on weekends." It also supports one "technology-free" day on the weekend. However, many students feel that this is out-of-touch with their reality. Maira Riaz '24 says, "I'm barely able to complete all [my assignments and quizzes] these in time, while balancing my studies and society work. Even when I intend on revising for a course over the weekend, I can't, let alone take out time to sustain a social life."

The short-lived reopening of campus may have helped lift morale and alleviate stress for those situated in Lahore, but with finals season rolling around, the workload is continuing to increase. One thing seems likely: that weekends won't go back to what they were anytime soon.



OPINION

Society Inductions: Fair or Unfair?

by Maryam Batool '24

October was packed with many societies' orientations and inductions. Newly admitted freshmen were excited to attend as many as possible and pick where they would apply. I know I was. It was a breath of fresh air amidst all the problems of this online semester. However, after the induction was completed, reactions were the opposite: many students expressed their discontent on the LUMS Discussion Forum. This sparked some necessary dialogue about societies and their induction processes between first-year students and their seniors.

Are societies even necessary for students? I think they're great platforms for gaining experience and working on your craft. I find the LUMS Daily Student an excellent platform for aspiring journalists to work with like-minded people and expand their horizons by learning more through their workshops. However, this can only be possible if students even get that chance. In the many cases that they don't, societies can actually serve the opposite purpose of discouraging students from their passions.

The induction process is unnecessarily extensive. Students have to fill out forms with many questions requiring detailed answers. The forms themselves are discouraging enough at times. I know that I didn't apply to many

societies that I wanted to because of this. And for what? I've to write answers as long as 200 words, just for one of the EC members to skim through my application and decide whether I'm deserving of an interview?

I understand that the forms are supposed to gauge applicants' commitment levels. That can be achieved without requiring such answers, especially since you're already required to elaborate during the interviews.

Musa Saeed, HR director for Dramaline, says, "There are people who are not good at writing; speaking is an innate activity that even someone who's not exactly eloquent can convey their passion through. You can judge people's passions through interviews better, rather than words." Dramaline didn't have such forms and had walk-in interviews. "People are deterred from forms, and walk-in interviews let them be more at ease."

Almost all forms have questions that ask about your experiences and skills. The society should be the experience and platform for developing your skills. Maham Asif '24 said, "They (societies) expected you to have prior experience in the department. That's unfair considering that not everyone coming to LUMS is from a privileged back-

ground where they had the opportunity to build on soft-skills."

The interviews for many societies have a panel. There really isn't a need for 6 people to interview one student. The questions asked are generally necessary and fair and usually allow space to elaborate on the answers that you've given in the forms. However, the tones of the interviewers were sometimes intimidating. Some confusing questions put you on the spot. I was riddled during one of my interviews, and I still can't figure out the answer. It felt like I was giving a job interview: long panels, confusing questions, intimidating tones. Students with anxiety might have an unfair shortcoming here, as I did in my LUMS Daily Student interview.

After these concerns were raised on LDF, there were replies like, "But this is what'll happen during job interviews!" Well, that's the problem: this isn't supposed to be like a job interview. I think academics are doing a well enough job to prepare us for our careers, which is overwhelming enough for students. We need these societies to serve as something that we enjoy spending our time on, working on our craft and passion, rather than being disheartened.

OPINION

Eating Disorders: Neglected Narratives during Quarantine

by Laiba Ahmad '22 and Mohammad Owais Sabri '24

Quarantine Pounds is the concept that a sedentary lifestyle is causing widespread weight gain which must be combatted. However, what is usually absent from this discourse is its detrimental effect on victims of eating disorders.

Though many are now becoming aware of the physical side effects - such as hair fall, weakened immune systems, frequent fevers, fainting, memory loss, and more, as Zara '24 describes - the daily struggles of living with an eating disorder remain largely unknown.

This experience is further aggravated with the closure of campus. Safa Imran '22, who has been struggling with bingeing and purging since the 8th grade, tells *The Post* how she was finally able to control her purging upon coming to LUMS by regularly going to the gym. She comments, "In quarantine, I had been experiencing a lot of triggering feelings about my body. I couldn't go to the gym as often and started feeling like I was losing my muscle tone and getting flabby. I knew my body hadn't changed. I still weighed the same, but I didn't feel like that."

Similarly, Mina Khan '21 shares, "In quarantine, everything went downhill. I suddenly stopped moving. You just start worrying about the state of the world that you can't worry about anything else. I didn't think much about food

because I just thought I'm going to die, so I'm just going to eat everything."

This cycle of bingeing forced her into a vicious cycle of starvation. She explains, "I chopped off all of my hair, because in my head short hair only suits certain body types. I thought that if I chopped off all of my hair I would be forced to go on this starving session where I would starve endlessly so that my body type could be small enough to suit my hair. I stayed home six-seven months into quarantine because I didn't want anyone to see me like this. I felt disgusting."

Confronted with this struggle, balanced eating and regular exercise is a coping mechanism adopted by most.

In the case of balanced eating, an online semester can be helpful. Imran '22 explains how she is now able to frequently cook healthy food, being home most of the time. "When I have good food going into my body, I feel good about myself and don't feel the need to purge," she says.

However, the line between healthy eating and disordered eating has become increasingly blurred which complicates matters. Khan '21 states, "It is harder now to identify these things as they can be sold under the guise of fitness and loving yourself." She continues to say that this is especially

so as self-proclaimed fitness experts on YouTube and Instagram promote fad diets and excessive workout plans, recently seen being marketed as a means to lose quarantine pounds.

Over time, this pressure to lose weight causes damaged eating habits to become an addictive form of self-discipline, forcing many to live in a dilemma whereby they want to recover but find themselves unable to do so. Zara '24 emphasizes, "I don't think people realize that it takes a lot of effort for me to tell myself that I can eat."

Though online sessions with the LUMS counsellors can be used to overcome these challenges, Imran '22 believes that LUMS counsellors were not sufficiently trained to aid victims who require support for these disorders. Khan '21 felt her struggle was overlooked as being merely superficial upon her visit to a counsellor on campus. "She would say things like 'but you are not fat'. I know that, but I don't feel like that," she states.

It should be noted, however, that the mechanisms at CAPS are continually evolving through community-wide discussions with students, staff and faculty. The department also connects students with external counselling, consultation and treatment, from a list of certified psychologists and psychiatrists, when required.

Many remain deaf to the plight of victims, absorbed in societal ideals which see weight loss an accomplishment, regardless of the means employed. Zara '24 says about her weight loss, "At that point even my parents were like you are doing a great job that you aren't eating. Keep going!"

"What people don't understand is that a lot of people, even in the fitness world, have eating disorders. I don't feel like there is as much of a discourse about eating disorders over here [Pakistan], at least, as there has been about other mental illnesses," says Imran '22.

The absence of dialogue surrounding disordered eating habits, culminates in a sense of shame for victims which adds to their suffering by preventing someone from seeking help. As one of our anonymous sources claims, "I don't want people to think that I have these problems."

We, as a community, must work to create a safe environment for people suffering with eating disorders, a need made all the more urgent during these trying times, and the first step in this journey is that of open discourse.

"The name of this source has been changed to preserve their anonymity."

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