

NUS STATEMENT

21 OCTOBER 2020 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dismissal of Dr Jeremy Fernando

Singapore, 21 October 2020 — The University would like to provide clarifications on the matter concerning the dismissal of Dr Jeremy Fernando, a former non-residential teaching staff of the Tembusu College.

The University received two complaints alleging that Dr Jeremy Fernando had behaved inappropriately as a teaching staff. All allegations of misconduct are taken seriously, and the University stands firmly against all forms of inappropriate behaviour. On receiving the initial complaint, the University immediately placed the staff member on suspension and started investigations.

The University's internal investigation established that Dr Fernando had an intimate association with an undergraduate. As this is a serious breach of the University's Code of Conduct for Staff, the University acted swiftly to dismiss him.

Please refer to the timeline of events at the [Annex](#), which describes the actions taken since the first complaint was reported to the University.

Standards expected of teaching staff

All NUS staff must adhere to the University's [Code of Conduct for Staff](#). There are strict guidelines pertaining to personal and professional conduct. For example, a staff must not engage in an intimate relationship with an undergraduate student, and a staff must ensure that they do not place themselves in a position of conflict of interest.

Our priority is to ensure a strong level of support and care for the two students involved. The two students were advised to report the allegations of sexual misconduct to the police, in the company of an NUS staff.

Given the seriousness of the allegations, NUS has also separately made a police report.

Support for students

The NUS Victim Care Unit (VCU) has been providing care and support to the two students throughout the investigation process and will continue to do so.

Actions taken by Tembusu College

The College places the utmost priority on the safety and well-being of its students. When the incident was made known to the College, it immediately took action to protect the student community and worked with the VCU to facilitate a fair and prompt investigation that was conducted by the University.

As one of the students was formerly a student at Tembusu College, two of the College's Directors have been providing direct additional support to her, and are continuing to be in touch with her.

The College Master has also engaged the different stakeholders on the matter through face-to-face interactions and discussions. In addition, the College took prompt action to ensure that there was no disruption to students' learning following the dismissal of Dr Fernando.

A group of student leaders at Tembusu College have also started a ground-up initiative to form a Community Support Working Group to facilitate deeper dialogue and discussion within the College community.

Communication of dismissal

In this instance, the University has to balance interests of privacy and confidentiality, particularly for the victims involved. We recognise that we could have shared information about the dismissal with Tembusu staff and students in a more timely manner and we endeavour to do better.

In response to a request from the NUS Students' Union, the University has published the Code of Conduct for Staff, which is currently available in the NUS staff intranet, in the public domain for ease of access by staff and students.

We will continue to remind our staff to uphold high standards of professional and personal conduct. We will also continue to work closely with our students, staff and stakeholders to build a safe, inclusive and respectful community.

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Annex: Timeline of Events

Month	Event
August 2020	
27 Aug, Thu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tembusu College received a complaint from a student against Dr Jeremy Fernando
31 Aug, Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Fernando was suspended from duty and prohibited from contacting any student or staff of NUS, or attending his workplace other than for the purpose of assisting in the University's investigations. • No Contact Order was issued to him to prohibit him from contacting the first complainant in person or through any other means, whether on or off campus.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student was interviewed on her complaint. Victim Care Unit (VCU) Care Officer explored with the student the option of making a police report and assured her of continued support by VCU through the process if she chooses to do so, including accompanying her to the police station. The student decided not to report the matter to the police.
September 2020	
1 Sep, Tue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Fernando was interviewed by the University on first complaint.
5 Sep, Sat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University completed its internal investigation of the first complaint.
7 Sep, Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University received a second complaint from a student against Dr Jeremy Fernando. VCU Care Officer Care Officer explored with the student the option of making a police report and assured her of continued support by VCU through the process if she chooses to do so, including accompanying her to the police station. Director from Tembusu College also provided the same advice. The student decided not to report the matter to the police.
9 Sep, Wed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second student was interviewed on her complaint.
14 Sep, Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Contact Order was issued to Dr Fernando following the second complaint, to prohibit him from contacting the second complainant in person or through any other means, whether on or off campus.
21 Sep, Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University completed its internal investigation of the second complaint.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Fernando was informed of the alleged misconduct and was given 7 working days to respond with additional information/mitigating factors.
30 Sep, Wed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Fernando responded to the University.
October 2020	
7 Oct, Wed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal was conveyed to Dr Fernando following internal investigations on his conduct.

Month	Event
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the same day, the two students were informed of the outcome of their complaints, in separate sessions. VCU Care Officer explored with the students the option of making a police report and assured them of continued support by VCU through the process if they choose to do so, including accompanying them to the police station. The students decided not to report the matter to the police. • Tembusu College informed academic staff about the departure of Dr Fernando.
18 Oct, Sun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tembusu College sent email to all staff and all students to inform them about the dismissal of Dr Fernando. • Tembusu College continues face-to-face engagement with students, student leaders and staff in small groups.
19 Oct, Mon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCU Care Officer contacted the students who had filed the complaints to check on their well-being. • Tembusu College continues face-to-face engagement with students, student leaders and staff in small groups.
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tembusu College will continue to engage students to address their concerns. The students who filed the complaints are being supported by the VCU Care Officer. Tembusu College Directors will also continue to support the student under their care.