

Hygiene Framework of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences

Planning for and implementation of the winter semester 2020-2021 must take into account the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and make full use of the many insights and experiences we have gathered thus far.

As a whole, the winter semester 2020-2021 must be implemented *without* large groups of people on campus in order to ensure proper social distancing and adherence to hygienic guidelines.

Unfortunately, that means a return that normal operations is not yet possible.

These hygienic guidelines aim to reduce person-to-person contact to a minimum, ensure clear and effective documentation of those who do come into contact with each other, and safeguard operations in essential areas in the event of a quarantine. The Executive Board, acting on the basis of current legal guidelines, wishes to organise academic operations, research and administration responsibly and equip staff with the necessary flexibility to adapt to a dynamic situation.

The Hygiene Framework contains both mandatory guidelines and helpful recommendations offering the best possible protection to prevent or slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2 at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

They describe the necessary precautions which must be taken in a pandemic to ensure the health and safety of all members of our University. Note: the Hygiene Framework is intended to *complement*, not supersede, other pandemic-related legislation currently in force in Germany at the state and federal levels.

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1. General

1.1 Transmission paths for SARS-CoV-2 and infection control strategies

The main route of transmission for SARS-CoV-2 is the respiratory tract, in particular when virus-laden particles are expelled by breathing, coughing, speaking or sneezing. “Infectious particles vary in size, generally from larger ‘droplets’ (>5 µm) to ultra-fine ‘aerosols’ (< 5 µm), though these two forms freely flow into one another,” states the Robert Koch Institute (RKI). Thus close contact with infected persons, even those with mild or no symptoms at all, can potentially result in virus transmission. Smear infections have also been observed, though these only make up a small percentage of new infections. The greatest risk posed by the coronavirus pandemic is the sheer scale of infection: an out-of-control outbreak has the potential to quickly overwhelm intensive care units in hospitals throughout Germany in a very short time frame.

1.2 Guidelines for suspected and confirmed cases of Covid-19

- a. Anyone who is suspected to have contracted SARS-CoV-2 – because they recently visited a high-risk area or suddenly exhibit typical Covid-19 symptoms (mild or otherwise) – must immediately quarantine themselves at home.
- b. Typical symptoms include fever, dry cough, breathing difficulties, loss of taste and/or smell, sore throat, joint pain, nausea/vomiting and diarrhoea.
- c. If symptoms do not improve or become worse, please call emergency medical services (116 117) or contact your doctor or a hospital for the next steps (testing, reporting to health authorities, etc.)

2. Conducting in-person teaching and examinations

The ongoing pandemic requires universities throughout Germany to remain vigilant and adhere to strict precautions to prevent in-person teaching or examinations from becoming spreader events.

Masks must be worn while inside buildings.

Health authorities in Germany have developed three possible pandemic scenarios for the coming months.

Scenario 1:

- This scenario presupposes a 7-day incidence rate for Kleve/Wesel county **less than 35** per 100,000 residents according to the NRW State Centre for Health. It also assumes that responsible health / municipal authorities have not instituted additional restrictions at the local level.
- The assumption here is that gatherings on campus of up to 50 people will be possible depending on the size of the room/facility and corresponding risk assessment.

Scenario 2:

- This scenario presupposes a 7-day incidence rate for Kleve/Wesel county **between 35 and 50** per 100,000 residents. It also assumes that responsible health / municipal authorities have not instituted additional restrictions.
- The assumption here is that gatherings on campus of up to 30 people will be possible depending on the size of the room/facility and corresponding risk assessment.

Scenario 3:

- This scenario presupposes a 7-day incidence rate for Kleve/Wesel county **greater than 50** per 100,000 residents
- The assumption here is that no gatherings will be permitted on campus and that the University must return to remote teaching across the board.

2.1 In-person teaching

Remote teaching is permitted across the board. In-person teaching is possible, but only permissible if the following requirements are met:

- a. There are fewer than 50 participants.
- b. A distance of at least 1.5 m between each participant can be ensured.
- c. If distancing is not possible in very specific instances – for example when entering or leaving the room, or when moving about the room/between seats – then all participants must wear a mask.
- d. In the case of closed rooms, the maximum room occupancy cannot be exceeded. Maximum occupancy – particularly for rooms used by different groups of people throughout the week – should be communicated clearly and transparently through posted signs.
- e. Easy and effective contact tracing must be ensured in accordance with Section 2a of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance. Per Section 2a (1), the following personal information must be recorded: full name, address and telephone number.
- f. Facility Management will install disinfectant dispensers at building entrances and in sanitary areas.
- g. Facility Management, together with occupational safety experts (FASi), will post hygiene guidelines at all building entrances and in high-traffic areas. All participants and organisers must strictly follow these guidelines.

2.2 Conducting oral and written examinations

Digital examinations are permitted if not otherwise prohibited by applicable examination law. In-person examinations are possible, but only permissible if the following requirements are met:

- a. Organisers must ensure that no groups form, whether at the building/room entrance, during registration, after the examination etc. Precautions can include staggered examination slots, entry times etc.
- b. A distance of at least 1.5 m between each participant must be ensured through assigned seating. Brief exceptions are only permitted when entering or leaving the room, or when moving between rows of seats. Masks must be worn in these situations.
- c. Easy contact tracing must be ensured for every in-person examination in accordance with Section 2a of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance. Per Section 2a (1), the following personal information must be recorded: full name, address and telephone number.
- d. Facility Management will install disinfectant dispensers at building entrances and in sanitary areas.
- e. Examination materials must be distributed on tables *before* participants arrive. Participants must bring their own writing materials and take them when they leave.
- f. Rooms, sanitary areas and tables in particular will be cleaned and disinfected by professional cleaning staff once per day. If a room is used by more than one group throughout the day, organisers must ensure proper cleaning and disinfection between bookings.
- g. Where appropriate, minimum distances should be marked throughout the room, and paths to the room should be marked as well to avoid unnecessary person-to-person contact. Doors should be kept open to avoid unnecessary contact with door handles.
- h. Air out rooms as often as possible; deactivate any air recirculation systems in use. For rooms without air conditioning, windows should be opened fully and regularly.
- i. There must be sufficient staff on-hand to enforce hygienic guidelines. Staff must ensure that students do not form any groups on campus before and after the examination.
- j. Other relevant hygienic guidelines and official recommendations (particularly those from the Robert Koch Institute) should also be taken into consideration when conducting examinations.
- k. Spectators are not permitted to attend examinations.

2.3 Laboratories

In-person work in campus laboratories is only permitted when otherwise impossible to conduct elsewhere. Lab supervisors must ensure proper precautions are taken to prevent the possible spread of SARS-CoV-2. These precautions must be documented together with the laboratory's other risk assessments. The following must be implemented:

- a. The names of all persons authorised to enter the laboratory must be recorded.
- b. If necessary, teams should be organised and the names of all persons in each team must be recorded. Teams can alternate use of the laboratory weekly, but alternating shifts on a single day would also be feasible if no contact occurs between the two teams. The main goal is to minimise the number of people who come into contact with each other. Only when this is ensured should supervisors move on to organising system-critical infrastructure and laboratory operations to account for possible quarantine.
- c. Sufficient ventilation must be ensured in laboratories without automatic air exchange.
- d. PPE is for individual use only and must not be shared. In addition, PPE should be stored separately, i.e. multiple lab coats should not share a single hook. PPE should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Where possible, increase cleaning intervals.
- e. If a distance of 1.5 m cannot be maintained between participants, all participants, including the instructor, must wear a particle-filtering half mask with the protection class FFP2.
- f. Students conducting work in laboratories must be informed in advance of possible infection risks stemming from their participation.

2.4 Approval for in-person teaching and oral/written examinations

Any in-person teaching or oral/written examination on campus must first be approved by the responsible dean. Approval from the Executive Board is no longer necessary.

Deans must consider the following with their approvals:

- a. The deans are ultimately responsible for ensuring process compliance, particularly with regard to coronavirus-related guidelines.
- b. Individual instances of in-person teaching/examinations, but also the total number of in-person teaching/examinations planned for the semester and the movement of all participants throughout campus buildings, must be compatible with coronavirus-related guidelines.
- c. During in-person teaching sessions or examinations, the head organiser is responsible for implementing and enforcing all coronavirus-related guidelines.

2.5 Accessing and using buildings on campus

- a. All students must wear a mask while in a campus building.
- b. Teachers are responsible for organising and controlling building access for students.
- c. Students are only permitted to enter buildings on campus in order to participate in approved cases of in-person teaching, practice sessions or examinations. Students are only permitted to access those building(s) in which the sessions or examinations will occur.
- d. While on campus and in campus buildings, students are obliged to show their student ID to Campus Security upon request. Students must also disclose to Campus Security personnel which session or examination they are attending.

3. University operations and public traffic

Masks must be worn while inside buildings.

3.1 Working in the office

The safety and health of employees has top priority. Depending on official work requirements, employee presence on campus may be successively increased, provided that health and hygienic precautions are adhered to properly and the current state of the pandemic permits such a change. To that end, each area of the University has been tasked with developing a plan for teams to return to the office. These plans should be submitted to the responsible staff council for reference and/or additional feedback.

In general, these plans should cover the following aspects:

- a. While in a campus building (and when briefly outside the office), all employees must wear a mask. This requirement also applies to stays in areas too small for proper distancing, e.g. office kitchens, archives, copy rooms, sanitary areas etc.
- b. Where possible, only one person should remain in a room at any one time. If unavoidable, ensure that proper distancing is maintained in the room. Double offices should only be used by a single person where possible. If multiple people must share a room temporarily (for a meeting, for example), then all participants must wear a mask. The maximum occupancy for larger offices and conference rooms should be determined via risk assessment and posted for all staff to see.
- c. Proper distancing must also be maintained in break rooms, for example by separating tables and chairs. Please adhere to your organisational unit's work plan regarding break room usage as well. Avoid touching someone else's used cutlery or utensils.. When avoidable, for example when loading a dishwasher, employees are strongly advised to wash or disinfect their hands thoroughly afterwards.
- d. Do not share any office materials (pens, hole punches etc.) with colleagues. When unavoidable, materials should be disinfected before returning. Employees should also disinfect or wash their hands for at least 20 seconds after using shared office equipment (printers, copiers etc.)

- e. Door handles and handrails will be disinfected at least once a day by professional cleaning staff. Cleaning frequency should be increased with room use as appropriate. These additional cleanings can also be conducted by regular University staff.
- f. Rooms should be aired out fully every 20 minutes to remove stagnant air.
- g. Meetings should be reduced to an absolute minimum and replaced by telephone or video conferences as often as possible.
- h. Other gatherings, whether for professional, commercial or other official purposes, should be conducted online as often as possible.
- i. For rules on working from home and valid working hours during the pandemic, refer to the effective guidelines published by the president and chancellor.

3.2 Third-party companies / visitors on campus

Facility Management is tasked with documenting all official visitors and third-party companies on campus. These persons / parties should be informed of current hygienic guidelines. To expedite this process, all third-party companies and visitors should be reported by their receiving organisational units to facilityservice@hochschule-rhein-waal.de in advance. Please report the names and telephone numbers of the visitors for easier contract tracing.

3.3 Company vehicles

Proper distancing must also be maintained in company vehicles, meaning they should only be used by a single employee if possible. Where not possible or sensible, a maximum of two employees may share a company vehicle and the passenger should sit on the back seat. Distancing and hygienic guidelines apply for the entire trip (see official notice for more information).

3.4 University Library

Access to university libraries and archives is regulated by Section 6 (3) of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance.

Accordingly, university libraries and archives must restrict access to their facilities and services, permitting their use only under strict guidelines that ensure, for example, easy and effective contact tracing, occupancy limits, proper distancing of least 1.5 m in all reading and work areas, and informing visitors of hygienic guidelines via posted signs. Contact tracing requirements do not apply to those who briefly visit the library to pick up or return media. In lieu of distancing requirements in reading and work areas, libraries can also stipulate that users of these areas provide their personal information for contact tracing purposes.

The University Library of HSRW is currently planning to reopen in four successive stages while adhering to the aforementioned requirements. To that end, individual operating plans for each area of the library have been developed.

<https://www.land.nrw/de/pressemitteilung/landesregierung-fuehrt-maskenpflicht-ein>

3.5 Committees

As a rule, committees should hold meetings primarily online. In-person meetings, however, are permitted where absolutely necessary. In these cases, appropriate measures should be implemented to ensure proper hygiene, restrict access, and maintain proper distancing between those in attendance and any person waiting for entry.

In-person meetings must be organised such that proper distancing is maintained throughout the entire session. This can be done, for example, by removing chairs from conference rooms for greater spacing, or holding meetings in larger seminar rooms / auditoriums. The maximum number of attendees for a meeting can be derived from the layout plan for the corresponding room(s). Layout plans are found on the HSRW QM portal.

Queues of people should be avoided as much as possible through careful timing and access restrictions. Where queues are unavoidable, proper distancing of 1.5 m should be maintained via markings in the waiting area. Building and room access should also be controlled and monitored.

In general, only committee members and necessary personnel (supervisors, advisors, minute-takers etc.) are permitted to attend in-person sessions. Guests participation should be enable primarily via remote means, for example simultaneous telephone or video conference. If rooms are large enough to potentially permit guest attendance, a limit for the number of guests must be clarified and set before the session occurs. In all cases, hybrid meetings (in-person and video/telephone conference simultaneously) are permitted. At the same time, steps should be taken to ensure that the identities of attendees is properly and reliably verified, and that the session is not inadvertently made public where this must be avoided for legal reasons. Any participants attending via video or telephone conference must pledge to maintain confidentiality for the duration of the session and not take any photos or screenshots or record audio.

3.6 University Sports

Section 9 of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance regulates sporting and athletic activities at universities.

Accordingly, proper hygienic precautions must be instituted for all sporting activities, practice sessions and competitions held in public or private facilities in order to reduce the risk of infection, restrict access, and ensure proper distancing for all persons not belonging to the groups defined in Section 1 (2) of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance. These rules also apply to any shower or sanitary area, dressing rooms, lounge areas, common rooms and queues. Closed rooms used for sporting activities must be properly aired out. Where proper distancing cannot be maintained, a maximum training/competition limit of 30 participants is also possible, provided that appropriate steps for easy and effective contact tracing are implemented (refer to Section 2a of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance).

The University Sports team will develop an individual plan for each of its sporting activities that adheres to the aforementioned regulations.

4. Annex

- Annex 1** Request to conduct in-person teaching or examination
- Annex 2** Contact list for participants
- Annex 3a** Risk assessment for in-person teaching
- Annex 3b** Risk assessment for in-person examination
- Annex 3c** Risk assessment for use of a laboratory
- Annex 4** Example report for senate session held on campus on 27 May 2020