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# **Regulations to Offset Academic Adversities Caused by the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences**

**Dated 8 May 2020  
(Official Notice 11/2020)**

**As amended by the sixth amending statutes dated 5 July 2021  
(Official Notice 31/2021)**

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## **Section 1 Scope**

(1) With the following regulations, the Executive Board chooses to exercise the powers granted to it by the Coronavirus Epidemic Ordinance for Universities enacted on 15 April 2020, as amended on 11 December 2020, (“Coronavirus Ordinance”) with the goal of empowering the faculties to successfully tackle the challenges for students and educators brought about by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and ensuring continued academic operations.

(2) The provisions contained herein apply to all degree programmes at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences without exception. Should provisions contained in the General Examination Regulations for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programmes at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences ("RPO"), dated 3 January 2018, or in degree programme-specific examination regulations or in other official HSRW regulations clash with provisions contained herein, the provisions contained herein shall temporarily supersede the conflicting regulations in the aforementioned documents in accordance with Section 13 (2) of the Coronavirus Ordinance.

(3) The power of the Senate and the Faculty Councils to enact regulations remains unaffected in accordance with Section 14 of the Coronavirus Ordinance; Section 13 (1) of the Coronavirus Ordinance remains unaffected.

(4) Academic operations (e.g. courses and examinations) will be held online as a result of the current state of the pandemic. Requests to hold courses or examinations in-person on campus can be approved by the responsible dean if deemed essential and in accordance with the Hygiene Framework of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

(5) Decisions made by functionaries, bodies or members of a faculty in connection with these Regulations must be published for students in a prominent fashion on the faculty website with a clearly indicated publication date. These notification obligations are the responsibility of the deans.

## **Section 2**

### **Courses**

(1) Courses will be held online until further notice. The deans may approve in-person courses if student participation is planned for accordingly pursuant to the Hygiene Framework of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. Courses which began online will be continued online until their conclusion, even if in-person lectures have resumed in the meantime. Students must be notified without delay of how courses will be conducted (online or in person) in accordance with Section 1 (5).

(2) The intended formats for courses defined in examination regulations and/or module guides (for example: lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical courses, projects) can be amended by the responsible instructor. Instructors must immediately notify the responsible dean of any amendments to course formats as well as the students in accordance with Section 1 (5).

(3) Courses or parts thereof slated for winter semester 2020-2021 or summer semester 2021 may be postponed until a future lecture-free period. The deans are responsible for these postponement decisions; students must be notified of postponements as soon as possible and in accordance with Section 1 (5).

(4) Guest auditors are not permitted to attend courses at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. They may be granted access to online courses, however.

### **Section 3**

#### **Examinations**

(1) The principle of fair and equal treatment in examinations shall apply during the extraordinary circumstances caused by the pandemic, as it takes into consideration the fundamental rights of students in Germany as well as the fact that all students have been adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The faculties are responsible for ensuring that this principle is upheld during the pandemic.

(2) Examinations will be conducted online until further notice or, subject to the approval of the dean and in accordance with the Hygiene Framework of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, in person on campus. Examinations offered online may remain online examinations even after in-person examinations have become permitted once again. The deans can decide to offer in-person examinations as well as online examinations if student participation is planned for accordingly. The principle of fair and equal treatment in examinations shall apply during the extraordinary circumstances caused by the pandemic, as it takes into consideration the fundamental rights of students in Germany as well as the fact that all students have been adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The deans are responsible for ensuring that this principle is upheld.

(3) Examinations in winter semester 2020-2021 may be completed until the start of the lecture period for summer semester 2021; examinations in summer semester 2021 may be completed until 30 September 2021. Examinations from previous semesters that are offered in summer semester 2021 (repeated examinations) may also be completed until 30 September 2021. Examination dates are set by the Examination Board based on the recommendation of the examiner. Section 17b RPO shall not apply to online examinations. Written examinations completed at home and submitted online are considered "online examinations" within the meaning of these Regulations. Oral examinations shall be conducted online via video conference or in person, subject to the Hygiene Framework of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. Audiences for oral examinations are not permitted. Examinations may not be recorded.

(4) For identification purposes, a written declaration from the student confirming that he or she is indeed the examinee in question will suffice. In addition, the student must explicitly state in this declaration that the examination was completed independently and without the use of any unapproved aid or support. If technical difficulties occur which prevent a student from completing an examination normally, then the examination attempt must be terminated. The affected student is obligated to notify the examiner of these technical difficulties immediately. Notifying the examiner of technical issues after the examination has been completed is considered too late. A prematurely terminated examination attempt will not be counted towards a student's remaining attempts.

(5) The examination format and duration indicated in the RPO, the degree programme-specific examination regulations or the module guide can be substituted with a different format and/or duration. Deviating from the curriculum, examinations can be assessed without a mark in justified cases; instead, examinations can be graded pass/fail and thus do not contribute to students' GPA. The examiner can

also permit the use of additional aid or support during an examination. Changes to examination formats or durations, or decisions to alter the scoring of an examination to be pass/fail in justifiable cases, will be made by the Examination Board at the behest of the respective examiner; students should be notified immediately of any changes, but no later than the start of the registration period for the affected examination. Keeping in mind the principle of fair and equal examination conditions in spite of the coronavirus pandemic, a variety of examination formats may be offered in a module if the ability for all students to participate is given proper consideration.

(6) If degree programme-specific examination regulations contain additional requirements for admission to an examination beyond those set forth in Section 15 (1) RPO, then the Examination Board can decide to suspend these additional requirements temporarily.

(7) Provisions in examination regulations requiring mandatory registration for a first examination attempt pursuant to Section 15 (9) RPO or a new attempt for a previously failed examination do not apply.

(8) Students may withdraw from an examination for any reason before the examination has commenced; missing an examination will also not have any negative effects. Every student is entitled to one free examination attempt per module for any examination failed between 20 April 2020 and 30 September 2021; this does not apply to examinations that were failed as the result of cheating within the meaning of Section 13 (3) of the General Examination Regulations (RPO). Sentence 2 does not apply to the thesis. A maximum of one free attempt per module is permitted.

(9) Intentionally omitted.

## **Section 4**

### **Internship and study abroad semester**

(1) The 20-week internship and study abroad semester (Sections 21, 22 RPO) can, where justified and by request, be conducted after the thesis to avoid delaying a student's timeline for graduation. Accordingly, applications for admission to a thesis may be approved for students who have not acquired the minimum number of credits stipulated by examination regulations. The Examination Board is responsible for the approval of these requests.

(2) Paragraph (1) applies accordingly to applications for admission to the master's thesis if the student in question is required to complete an internship or semester abroad per a learning agreement.

(3) Deviating from Section 5 (3) RPO, if an internship or semester abroad is interrupted as the result of the coronavirus pandemic, the 20-week minimum requirement can instead be completed in segments; students are also permitted to change companies or universities and/or their chosen type of practical semester (study abroad to internship, or vice versa). If the majority of the internship or study abroad was completed before being interrupted by the pandemic, then an exemption for the incomplete portion can be requested. In this case, the incomplete portion of the internship or study abroad can be completed via additional examination. If an internship or study abroad semester was outright cancelled due to the

coronavirus pandemic, this will not count towards a student's remaining attempts for this study requirement; Section 21 (9) RPO remains unaffected. Sentences 1-4 apply accordingly to internships or study abroad semesters. The Examination Board is responsible for decisions in connection with sentences 1-5 based on the suggestions of the affected student's supervisor.

(4) Students who are unable to undertake their semester abroad due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic may substitute these mandatory requirements with other coursework in order to avoid a delay to their graduation progress. The Examination Board is responsible for these decisions and will act upon recommendations from affected students' supervisors.

## **Section 5**

### **Thesis**

(1) In accordance with Section 4 (1) and (2), an application for admission to the thesis can be submitted before completing the internship or study abroad requirement.

(2) If the coronavirus pandemic has adversely affected a student's progress on their thesis, then he or she may request an extension beyond the normal four-week limit set forth in Section 25 (2) sentence 7 RPO. This request must be justified in writing. Alternatively, students in these cases may also withdraw from their thesis without loss of an attempt. The decision to withdraw must be justified in writing. Students who choose to withdraw from the thesis must select a different topic for their next thesis attempt.

(3) The thesis can be submitted before the deadline via Rhine-Waal University's online tool *Sharepoint*. The two required hard copies may be submitted afterwards. Students may also submit a request to their Examination Board for an exemption from the hard copy requirement in justified situations. This is the case, for example, when mail services have been significantly impaired by the pandemic. The Examination Board, in conjunction with the thesis supervisor, is responsible for decisions on exemptions.

## **Section 6**

### **Admission requirements**

(1) Deviating from Section 4 (3) RPO, students may submit proof of completion of the 8-week basic internship by their 6<sup>th</sup> semester re-registration deadline. This general extension will apply until the re-registration deadline for winter semester 2021-2022.

(2) The deadline for submitting missing admission requirements for a master's degree programme in accordance with Section 49 (7) sentence 5 HG NRW will be extended until 15 July 2021 for students who first enrolled in their master's degree programme in winter semester 2020-2021. The deadline will be extended until 15 January 2022 for students who first enrolled in summer semester 2021.

(3) Enrolment for summer semester 2021 and winter summer semester 2021-2022 may occur online.

(4) Students planning on completing their final graduation requirements in summer semester 2021 can request to complete these requirements without re-registering for the semester. "Final graduation requirements" within the meaning of the preceding sentence are defined as the thesis and colloquium, as well as any examinations which must be completed after the thesis, but which are not prerequisites for admission to the thesis, as defined in examination regulations. When facing financial hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic, students may also request to complete examinations other than those defined in sentences 1 and 2 without re-registering for summer semester 2021. Students are considered to be facing financial hardship when they cannot afford to pay the semester contribution after rent and living expenses. These requests must contain all necessary information and appropriate proof of financial hardship. Students who wish to complete examinations which have been delayed until a later semester due to the coronavirus pandemic will not be required to enrol to complete these examinations if, in the meantime, they choose to enrol at a different university in Germany. If students were unable to complete their final graduation requirements as defined by sentences 1 and 2, they may register for winter semester 2020-2021 or summer semester 2021 retroactively. If students choose not to register retroactively, then they are considered to have de-registered from Rhine-Waal University at the end of the corresponding semester.

## **Section 7**

### **Standard duration of study**

The extension of a student's individual duration of study by one semester (see Section 10 (1) sent. 1, Coronavirus Ordinance) shall also apply to students who were on an approved leave of absence in summer semester 2020 or winter semester 2020-2021.

## **Section 8**

### **Ensuring collaborative participation per Section 7 (5) of the Coronavirus Ordinance**

In accordance with Section 7 (5) of the Coronavirus Ordinance, the Executive Board is required to take steps to ensure the collaborative participation of the faculties with regard to those types of examination-related decisions defined in Section 7 (1) sentence 2, (2) sentence 3, (3) and (4). These Regulations were drafted with collaboration and input from members of the faculties. The requisite collaborative participation has therefore been obtained for both the original version of these Regulations as well as the fifth amending statutes.

## **Section 9**

### **Entry into force and expiration**

(1) These sixth amending statutes shall enter into force on the day after publication of the German-language original in the Official Notices of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

(2) The Regulations to Offset Academic Adversities Caused by the Coronavirus Epidemic (SARS-CoV-2) dated 8 May 2020 (Official Notice 11/2020), as amended by the sixth amending statutes

dated 5 July 2021, shall expire on 30 September 2021. Deadlines or time frames in these Regulations which extend beyond this date of expiration remain unaffected.

*Note: These Regulations, as amended by the sixth amending statutes, entered into force in their present form on 14 July 2021.*