

## **Ten-Point Programme of Higher Education Institutions**

### **Together against COVID-19: Take care of yourself and of your higher education institution**

The current situation with COVID-19 is still a challenge and has far-reaching effects on almost all areas of society. It is a shared responsibility to stop the spread of the infection or at least to reduce it to a minimum. In this context, higher education institutions are also being called upon to help. At the same time, teaching and research within the higher education system must continue to function, even under COVID-19-induced conditions. The higher education institutions have, within the frame of their autonomy, spent the last few months developing concepts and regulations, suitable for their respective situation, size and field, based on the “COVID-19-Guidelines for a safe operation of higher education institutions” and are thus well prepared as they enter the 2020/21 academic year. The following ten points summarize the major measures taken by the higher education institutions.

#### **1. If you feel unwell, stay at home**

The Sars-CoV-2 virus is unpredictable and highly contagious. Anyone who comes into close contact with someone who is infected has a high risk of becoming infected himself or herself. Therefore, only individuals who are healthy, may participate in teaching, examinations, research and administrative activities. Anyone who feels unwell must absent him or herself from higher education institutions.

#### **2. Responsibility starts with personal responsibility**

All those who take care of their own health also take care of their University and of their fellow students, teachers and colleagues. Only together, can we fight the COVID-19 pandemic successfully. For this, we need to accept that we have a personal responsibility! The necessity to comply with the minimum distance rule as well as the general hygiene and health regulations (washing hands, airing rooms at regular intervals, etc.) does not end when we leave the lecture. Personal responsibility also includes adhering to these rules in the private domain there is known to be a higher risk of contagion at parties, private meetings and festivities.

#### **3. Personal responsibility means wearing a face covering at all times**

A face covering is the best protection against a further spread of the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic and must therefore be worn in all areas of higher education institutions if the necessary minimum distance cannot be maintained. This should also apply during lectures or when working in laboratories. Moreover, everyone one of us has a responsibility to contribute towards safety by wearing a face covering at all times.

#### **4. Digital, hybrid or in-person: Classes will require flexibility**

During the winter semester 2020/21, teaching will be carried out in a hybrid form. Lectures will be held solely in a digital form (Distance Learning), solely as in-person classes, or in a hybrid form. The higher education institutions have developed security concepts for these formats in due consideration of the “COVID-19-Guidelines for a safe operation of higher education institutions”. The security concepts take into account the conditions at the individual higher education institutions (as regards space, personnel and content) as well as the current situation concerning COVID-19.

#### **5. In-person examinations and meetings are possible – with only a small number of participants and adherence to the minimum distance rule**

The COVID-19 pandemic does not hinder higher education institutions from conducting in-person examinations and meetings in situ. This is possible because of the security and safety concepts developed by the higher education institutions, which guarantee a sufficient level of protection. The minimum distance rule is to be adhered to. This is especially the case in the context of arts education, practical exercises and laboratory work, for which additional measures may apply.

#### **6. Classes (and written exams) and large-scale events with special security measures**

Apart from wearing a face covering, maintaining a safe distance is the most effective measure to prevent a further spread of COVID-19. Therefore, classes and written exams with a large number of participants should always take place in rooms that could hold twice as many people. It is also advisable to mark or number each seat and keep a list of those who were present. Each higher education institution decides on the measures it takes to guarantee the tracing of contact persons. At in-person events, the entrance and exit to the event have to be managed accordingly. At large-scale events (more than 250 participants) higher education institutions are required to implement special security measures, e.g. allocated seating. Managing the entrance and exit to the event should guarantee that crowds do not form at the beginning or the end of the event.

#### **7. Digital Learning cannot replace in-person learning for internships or practical exercises**

Since the current infection rate can change at any time, the winter semester 2020/21 must be characterized by flexibility. It is therefore possible that some classes, such as excursions, language trips or the like, cannot be successfully transferred to a digital format. In this case, the higher education institutions will endeavour to provide an equivalent substitute in digital form. This, however, might not be possible in all cases.

#### **8. Use of libraries and reading rooms only under certain strict conditions**

Plans envisage an almost normal use of libraries during the winter semester 2020/21. Borrowing and returning books, magazines and other media is – as usual – possible during opening hours. However, entering and exiting the library will be regulated to prevent crowds

forming. Reading and studying rooms can be used provided the strict safety and hygiene regulations are followed. This includes a system of advance reservations for allocated seating in the reading and studying rooms. In any case, adherence to the minimum distance rule as well as the hygiene and health regulations must be ensured.

## **9. Researching with minimum distance or by working from home**

In the field of research, organizational adaptations have been made, especially for larger groups of researchers or where there is insufficient space for people to maintain the minimum distance. For these kinds of situations, specific concepts for the use of space, which include the possibility of working from home, have been developed within the framework of the security concepts drawn up by higher education institutions. For epidemiological reasons it has to be guaranteed that the same people always work together. All researchers must remember that the minimum distance rule as well as the hygiene and health regulations must be complied with at all times.

## **10. Student residences are no longer party-zones**

Student residences are undoubtedly important sites for living and learning together. In the past, student residences were also the location for legendary parties and events. So far, experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that parties and events provide an ideal environment for contagion with the virus. Numerous COVID-19 clusters, in particular those with many young people, can be traced back to private parties or events. In keeping with the principle of personal responsibility, there can be no justification for holding such parties or events in the current situation. Many operators of student residences have therefore already banned parties or events on their premises and closed the relevant facilities.