

Hygiene/Safety Regulations for University Operations

(- Last updated: March 8, 2021 -)

The pandemic continues to define our actions. The UP is committed to using all available means to ensure safe learning for students, protected research for academics, and healthy working conditions for employees in the administrative services.

The seventh Containment Ordinance of the State of Brandenburg that came into effect on March 8, 2021 and the SARS-Cov-2 Occupational Safety Ordinance (Corona-ArbschV) present new challenges, but they do not entail a major rethinking of university operations as was the case in December 2020.

Special hygiene and distance regulations still apply for your workstations at the university, the place of work and the working hours. The pandemic plan adopted by the Senate on March 18, 2020, continues to apply; however, there is currently no “crisis” as defined in Section 7. The following regulations are an interpretation and reading of the regulations in the Sixth Ordinance on Temporary Containment Measures Due to the SARS-CoV-2 Virus and COVID-19 in the State of Brandenburg, adopted by the state of Brandenburg on Feb. 12, 2021.

For further up-to-date information on individual issues, please refer to the university's website: <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/presse/press/latest-news/coronavirus>.

1) Hygiene Regulations

In general, a minimum distance of at least 1.5 meters, preferably 2 meters, must still be maintained for all activities without additional protective measures. When compliance is not possible in public spaces, at least medical-grade masks are to be worn (Section 20/21 SARS-CoV-2-EindV). Exceptions are only possible for work processes where this cannot be implemented (e.g. experiments in the laboratory for practical courses) with corresponding additional protective measures (use of personal protective equipment).

Furthermore, frequent hand washing and airing of the rooms is required. Regular cleaning and disinfection of contact surfaces (handrails in the stairwells, door handles, toilet seats) is ensured by the HGP-UP in coordination with the cleaning companies. The respective notices with information for employees and students have already been put up.

The use of disinfectant is still considered to be of a lesser priority than the protective measures mentioned above and disinfectant will only be issued in consultation with the Occupational Safety Unit.

The general hygiene rules and recommendations of the Robert Koch Institute and the Federal Center for Health Education on the prevention of infections are still to be observed.

2) Teaching Operations

Courses with on-site attendance are possible with a maximum of 5 participants. However, considering the efficiency of such small groups, courses like seminars and lectures requiring attendance are suspended and must still be offered online.

Courses and examinations that absolutely require on-site attendance, in particular laboratory courses whose safety from an infection prevention perspective has been demonstrated by a risk assessment, can take place with groups of more than 5 participants. The applicable rules on social distancing, mask mandates etc. remain unaffected.

Such courses and examinations and immediate preparation for them can only be conducted in compliance with the permitted maximum number of participants for the respective room: <http://www.hgp-potsdam.de/SW/corona/gebinfo.htm>. The maximum number of 50 may not be exceeded.

Deviations from the proposed furniture arrangements may only be made upon request and with the approval of the Occupational Safety Unit (<https://www.hgp-potsdam.de/sw/>).

Practical sports courses in higher education may take place in compliance with the respective regulations of the sports facility.

Rooms must be entered and vacated in an orderly fashion and in compliance with the distance regulations. The teaching staff members / persons in charge of the course are to give instructions to that end. If possible, a one-way system (separate entrance/exit) should be implemented.

For rooms in which windows can be opened, users are required to ensure that the room will be ventilated thoroughly for short periods at frequent intervals by opening the windows as wide as possible. Rooms should be aired out in this manner for 5 to 15 minutes as frequently as possible. Suggestions on ventilation times can be found in the statement of the Commission for Indoor Air Hygiene at the German Environment Agency.

If outside temperatures permit, courses should be held (in whole or in part) with open windows. At the very least before and after a course, the room must be aired out for at least 10 minutes with both windows and doors wide open.

Rooms in which windows cannot be opened must have a ventilation system installed as a prerequisite for use. HGP-UP is responsible for ensuring that the necessary air change rates are met. The share of recirculated air is to be set to zero.

Cleaning between courses carried out by HGP-UP cleaning staff will not be necessary if course participants are given the opportunity to disinfect their workstation/desk themselves. For this purpose, dispensers with disinfectant and disposable towels are available at the entrances. Attention will be drawn to this using appropriate signs and teaching staff members will also point this out at the beginning of a course.

Until further notice, the wearing of a medical mask is mandatory in all university buildings of the University of Potsdam (Section 20 SARS-CoV-2-EindV). This also applies to lecture halls, seminar rooms (also during the courses), laboratories, libraries and computer labs. We ask that all students also bring such a mask (surgical mask, FFP2 mask or equivalent) with them to examinations. In support of this, a surgical mask will be provided by the university for students who take part in an on-site examination. However, we would like to point out that this is a voluntary service provided by the UP and that an examination can also take place if there are not enough masks provided by the university. The medical mask must be worn for the entire duration of the examination; however, it may be removed in order to drink or eat.

Teaching staff are exempt from the mask requirement in the lecture hall or seminar room, provided that they teach at a fixed location and maintain a distance of 2.5 meters to the students. If that is not the case, they must wear an FFP2 mask. They will receive these masks once a risk assessment has been carried out at the UP's Occupational Safety Unit.

The employer must provide medical face coverings or FFP2 masks or comparable respirators specified in the annex to the Corona-ArbSchV if

- the requirements for room occupancy according to Section 2 of the Corona ArbSchV cannot be met (10m²), or
- the minimum distance of 1.5 m cannot be maintained, or
- the performed activities are likely to cause hazards due to increased aerosol emission.

This evaluation has to be carried out with the mentioned risk assessment. Employees must wear the masks provided by the employer.

Special arrangements (e.g. in the laboratory) are possible after a risk assessment has been carried out and must be reviewed by the Occupational Safety Unit.

Work in science laboratories may be conducted in compliance with the established rules regarding distance, hygiene and the wearing of masks. Due to the existing technical particularities (in particular mechanical ventilation) or the associated hazards from chemicals,

there may be special regulations with regard to the obligation to wear a respirator.

In preparative chemistry laboratories, the mask mandate can be waived if wearing a medical mask would cause additional laboratory-related dangers. This may be the case if personal protective equipment is negatively affected by the respirator.

Laboratories generally have an air exchange rate of eight times per hour and are therefore considered to be very well ventilated in terms of infection control. A fume hood is operated with a laminar air flow that retains vapors and aerosols or transports them away with the exhaust air. Air around the fume hood that might be contaminated with the virus will be sucked out thanks to a continued air flow. It is possible to dispense with the wearing of a respirator if minimum distances are observed in front of a fume hood. Persons in charge of supervision must wear an FFP2 mask in order to be able to intervene quickly (averting danger) within a 1.5 m radius.

Excursions in Brandenburg are possible in compliance with the containment ordinance. The maximum number of participants must be chosen in such a way that the required minimum distances can be maintained at all times. Rules of the containment ordinance pertaining to the maximum number of attendees for open-air events are to be applied.

3) Using Offices and Work Spaces

The applicable distance regulations of at least 1.5 meters, preferably 2 meters, are to be observed in offices and work spaces. The minimum sizes for workstations in accordance with Occupational Safety Rule 1.2 are suspended for the time being. According to the Corona-ArbSchV, each employee must have 10m² of space available when an office is occupied by more than one person. This requirement is particularly directed at fixed workstations where the medical mask can be removed whilst in position. If the 10m²/person are not available, the face covering must not be removed. It is of particular importance to air rooms at frequent intervals. Furthermore, where this is required due to the nature of the premises or work organization, technical and/or organizational measures are to be implemented to protect against infection, for example, physical barriers (sneeze guards) or the introduction of shifts by adjusting working hours or working from home.

The heads of the faculties, divisions and institutions shall define appropriate guidelines for their area of responsibility.

Sneeze guards can be ordered as a “Kleinauftrag” (small order), the on-site carpentry workshop can create custom builds.

If distance rules are not observed outdoors, a mask must also be worn in this situation.

The necessity of wearing a medical mask / FFP2 or equivalent mask arises analogously to point 2 on the basis of the Corona-ArbSchV and the associated risk assessment. The employer (management, head of division, executive) has to organize / provide these if one of the points mentioned in Section 3 (1) Corona-ArbSchV applies. The Occupational Safety Unit can provide you with organizational help with regard to procurement.

The nature of the respirator must be such as to reduce the spread of transmissible droplet particles during coughing, sneezing, speaking or breathing. For optimal effectiveness, it is important that the face covering fits correctly. It must fit snugly over the mouth and nose and be changed when it becomes wet. You can find further information on this on the websites of the Occupational Safety Unit (Intranet).

- What are FFP 2 masks?
- Instructions on the use of FFP 2 masks.
- Information leaflet on time limits for wearing face coverings, and
- Information leaflet on respiratory protection and prevention.

Exceptions to the mask mandate (e.g., for persons with disabilities) are governed by the applicable containment ordinance.

4) Meetings and Study Groups

Where possible and appropriate, video conferencing systems should continue to be used for meetings.

On-site face-to-face meetings are to be conducted in accordance with the above-mentioned distance and hygiene regulations. The maximum number of participants and furnishing plans must be adhered to: <http://www.hgp-potsdam.de/SW/corona/gebinfo.htm>. Deviations from the proposed furniture arrangements may only be made upon request and with the approval of the Occupational Safety Unit (<https://www.hgp-potsdam.de/sw/>).

For meetings, the minimum square meter requirements per person apply as described in 3) above. If the surface area is not available, a medical mask must be worn throughout the meeting, and in addition to good ventilation and distancing.

For meetings that are part of the usual and routine communication within working groups, chairs or departments and where contact details are therefore known, no further contact records need to be kept. For meetings that are not part of routine business and/or with external parties, the traceability of possible chains of infection must be ensured by the organizer through documentation on the meeting participants (first and last name as well as telephone number or e-mail address). Data collected for this purpose must be deleted or destroyed after four weeks.

The same applies to study groups. Students will receive written instructions on this when booking a room. Documentation of the participants (first and last name as well as telephone number or e-mail address) is to be carried out and guaranteed by the organizer.

5) Using Sanitary Facilities

Regulations for offices and work spaces also apply to sanitary facilities.

6) Hallways/Building Access Areas

Longer periods spent in the hallways are to be avoided.

Please wear a surgical mask, FFP2 mask, or equivalent in the corridors, hallways, elevators and stairwells of the University of Potsdam until further notice. Justifications for deviation from the mandatory wearing of a specified mask at the university is available in section 2) above.

This also applies when entering or leaving lecture halls and seminar rooms.

Elevators may only be used alone and while wearing a medical mask.

7) Public Access to the University

Public access is to be organized with infection protection in mind. One possible measure to be implemented is the definition of office hours or the use of fixed appointments. Advisory services can also be offered via telephone or e-mail or online. Appropriate physical barriers (acrylic glass screens) are provided in the relevant areas to protect employees that are in frequent contact with the public. Writing utensils etc. are not provided for public use, and as far as possible, paper brochures will not be handed out.

In entrance areas frequented by the public, barriers, e.g. stretch belt barriers, must be installed to prevent uncontrolled access. When installing barriers, the Occupational Safety Unit must be involved to address building code concerns, fire protection in particular.

The approval of external events in the broadest sense related to research/teaching, medicine, as well as ministry events at the university require case-by-case evaluations and decisions by the university management.

8) Work Equipment/Workstations

In general, work equipment and tools are only to be used by one individual. If this is not possible for organizational or other operational reasons, they must be cleaned or disinfected before being passed on or used by other persons. For the purpose of intermittent cleaning/disinfection, the employees are provided with appropriate cleaning and disinfectant products by the Occupational Safety Unit upon request.

9) Illness/Suspected Illness

Symptoms of a cold must be assessed by a physician **before** going to work or performing duties at the university workplace; if the symptoms are unclear and no incapacity for work has been ascertained, work must be carried out from the home office for the time being. Further information on how to deal with suspected cases and infections can be found on the UP website and in the appendix of this concept.

10) Returning to the University after Traveling (on Holiday)

For those returning from risk areas (students and employees), the valid version of the quarantine ordinance shall apply (see <https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/service/gesetze-und-verordnungen.html>).

Students in need of advice affected by this can contact corona-studium@uni-potsdam.de.

Should university employees stay in a COVID-19 risk area, they must inform the head of their department of this fact before returning to their workplace. The heads of department and supervisors have the right to ask whether employees have been to a COVID 19 risk area.

In such cases, the current guidelines for dealing with returnees from COVID-19 risk areas as published on the UP website must also be observed.

11) Business Trips

In order to carry out and obtain approval for business trips, please observe the respective information or publications of the Division of Human Resources and Legal Affairs. Furthermore, the guidelines of the Robert Koch Institute with regard to the designation of risk areas published by the RKI shall apply. Business trips to high-risk areas or areas with travel warnings from the German Foreign Office are generally not eligible for approval.

12) Dining Halls/Cafeterias

The Studentenwerk Potsdam (Association for Student Affairs) provides information on access to dining halls and cafeterias and the regulations that apply there.

13) General Legal Provisions

The regulations of the Federal Government, the State of Brandenburg and the City of Potsdam relating to the control and containment of the coronavirus shall apply in their respective versions. Student and employee representatives will be included within the framework of the applicable legal provisions.

14) Closing Provisions

The defined measures will be adapted to the current situation on a short-term basis.

Appendix: Orientation guidelines (tips on how to deal with suspected cases)

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