

Regulations for University Operations at Bielefeld University during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Organizational Decree dated 23 March 2020

Updated version dated 7 September 2021, in force from 9 September 2021

Bielefeld University continues to be operating in the mode of “University Pandemic Operations.” The regulations of this Organizational Decree have been updated in accordance with applicable legal provisions and apply to all employees in teaching and research, as well as technical services and administration who are in a position of employment by the university (pay-scale salaried employees, civil servants, auxiliary staff, instructors).

This Organizational Decree has been updated on the basis of the Infection Control Act of the federal government of Germany, the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia from 17 August 2021 in its currently valid version from 2 September 2021; the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance from 1 September 2021 (draft bill) that has been in force since 10 September 2021; the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Protection Regulations dated 7 May 2021; the Coronavirus Ordinance on Travel Entry from 12 May 2021 in the consolidated version from 30 July 2021; the Ordinance governing Exemptions to COVID-19 Protection Measures from 8 May 2021 and the Corona Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia dated 8 April 2021 in its currently valid version from 2 September 2021. This Organizational Decree summarizes the current measures in place at Bielefeld University.

All measures continue to pursue the goal of effectively targeting and limiting the risk of infection, thus safeguarding the health of all members of the university community.

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1. Organizational Aspects

Since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, the crisis team at Bielefeld University, headed by the Chancellor, has planned and coordinated the implementation of additional infection control measures, verifying their effectiveness, and working together with representatives of various university groups.

The Vice-Rector for Education and Teaching and the heads of the Department for University Study and Teaching have been responsible for the development of these measures for education and teaching, as well as coordination with the deans of studies.

Supervisors are responsible for implementing these measures in their respective areas of responsibility, as well as informing and instructing their staff in how to observe these measures accordingly (see Point 10.4).

Event organizers (including instructors teaching in person) are responsible for implementing these measures in their respective areas of responsibility, as well as informing and instructing their staff in how to observe these measures accordingly (see Point III.5).

Staff, students, guests, and external companies are required to comply with these measures.

2. Guiding Principles

- All those present on the university campus are required to behave in such a way so as not to expose themselves or others to an unreasonable risk of infection. Accordingly, the **general rules of conduct governing social distancing, hygiene, and masks** as well as the regulations of this Organizational Decree must be observed.
- A minimum of 1.5 meters of social distancing must be maintained between all individuals when present indoors. Exceptions to maintaining social distancing only apply if other suitable protective measures are in place (e.g. appropriate structural partitions, wearing a mask, and at gatherings in which the “3G” rule is in force) (see Points 9 and 10 of this Organizational Decree).
- As a **general requirement, medical-grade masks (surgical masks at a minimum) must be worn in all university buildings**. Exceptions to the mask requirement can be found under Points 10.1.2 and 9 of this Organizational Decree.
- Individuals with respiratory symptoms or fever (unless medically cleared as having another etiology) are, as a rule, not allowed on the university campus.
- For all courses and events at Bielefeld University, restrictions apply if the incidence rate is greater than 35 in the city of Bielefeld or in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. In this situation, only those who are immunized (vaccinated or recovered) or tested are allowed to participate (the so-called “3G” rule). Admission to these events must be controlled. The specifics of this procedure are to be found under Point 9 (“Events”) of this Organizational Decree.
- Bielefeld University will offer two free Coronavirus rapid tests per week to all employees (see Point 4 of this Organizational Decree).
- Those with proven immunization through vaccination or recovery have a very

high degree of individual protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection or, in any event, very high protection against having a severe clinical case. Immunized individuals, however, can still become infected and transmit the virus; basic protective measures therefore still also apply in general to immunized individuals (masks, social distancing, hygiene). Exceptions to these basic protective measures are defined under Point 9 (“Events”) and Point 10 (“Workplace Design/Protective Measures”).

3. Modalities for Work and Presence on Campus

3.1 Researchers

Starting on 1 July 2021, researchers have been allowed to work from Home Office or on site in the facilities of Bielefeld University. When work is performed in university premises, regulations governing protective measures and workplace design must be observed (see Point 10).

The following continues to apply as an important measure for protecting against infection: **only one person is allowed per office space unless more than one person is necessary for work purposes. Regulations governing protective measures and workplace design** must be observed (see Point 10).

3.2 Support Services (Technical Services and Administration)

3.2.1 Home Office and Working on Site

As of 1 July 2021, university support services have been in the mode of “University Pandemic Operations”, which provides more flexibility than the previous “Reduced Basic Operations” mode.

Staff in technical services and administration have been authorized to work from Home Office or on-site in university facilities since 1 July 2021. When work is carried out in university buildings, regulations governing protective measures and workplace design must be observed (see Point 10).

As of 1 September 2021, the goal has been for approximately half of the staff in technical services and administration to be back to working on campus. The goal is for all employees to return to working on campus for at least some of the time, while still maintaining infection control.

The goal of having half of technical and administrative staff back to working on campus is a target figure. The specific staffing of organizational units is to be based on the respective service requirements and accompanying circumstances (especially room occupancy capacities). A lower level of on-site staffing may be practical; in individual areas, however, a higher level of staffing may be required for service reasons in order to ensure operations or services. Existing remote work agreements that provide for lower rates of on-site staffing should also be taken into account.

3.2.2 Reducing Contact among Staff with Work or Occupancy Teams

As far as possible, on-site staffing should be implemented in regular rotations of staffing groups (e.g. in work or occupancy teams). The number of individuals in a team should be reduced to the necessary minimum. When organizing work or occupancy teams, the same persons should be assigned to joint shifts or work groups whenever possible in order to further reduce the degree of internal contact. Should the supervising managers be aware of the immunization status of their staff, this can be taken into account when making organizational staffing decisions.

Personal contact between individual work groups involved in operations and modifications to shift assignments should be kept to the minimum necessary for maintaining operations.

The exact organization and implementation of staffing is up to supervisors, who best know the specific circumstances and needs of their departments and can work with staff members to find

viable solutions for all. These decisions are to be based on specific service requirements and attendant circumstances.

The following continues to apply as an important measure for protecting against infection: **as a rule, only one staff member is allowed to work per office space**, except if the presence of more than one person in that office is necessary for maintaining operations. Regulations governing protective measures and workplace design must be observed (see Point 10). This rule is to be given priority over the goal of achieving on-site presence for half of all technical and administrative staff.

Should conflicts with family caregiving responsibilities arise, staff members in question can temporarily be allowed to return to working from Home Office.

3.2.3 Trust-Based Working Hours

Working hours were already changed to trust-based work hours in March 2020 in agreement with staff representatives. This policy will continue to be in force through 31 December 2021. With trust-based work hours, the staff member typically compensates of their own accord for times when they work less and times when they work more. Anyone who is doing more work than can be compensated for within this framework, whether due to the current Coronavirus situation or for other reasons (projects, seasonal peaks), must discuss this with their supervisor in advance. In such cases, staff members must document the extra time worked and can then offset it later.

4. Coronavirus Rapid Tests for Staff Members

In its capacity as an employer, Bielefeld University is offering two free Coronavirus rapid tests per week to all staff members who have to be on campus to perform their work. Testing is to take place once a week at the campus testing center (located in the cafeteria of Building X). Another rapid test for home use will be handed out at the testing center. Staff members involved in practical sports and music courses also have the option of getting a Coronavirus rapid test done on each day the course is held in person.

Staff members are defined as all individuals employed by the university (i.e. salaried workers, civil servants, support staff). The use of Coronavirus rapid tests is voluntary and is not a prerequisite for being present on campus (for exceptions, see Point 8.4). Bielefeld University strongly encourages all staff members to take advantage of these testing opportunities. In addition to this, staff members can also take advantage of the free public testing options available at the campus testing center, among other locations. For cases in which workplaces are used by multiple individuals, Bielefeld University also provides additional free rapid tests for home use (see Point 10.2). More information on this procedure is available at <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/intern/themen/corona-test/>

Starting in October 2021, the university will only issue Coronavirus rapid tests for self-testing as part of its employer testing scheme. Free public testing (see above) will no longer be available.

5. What to Do with Suspected and Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

5.1 Symptoms in Suspected Cases

Fever, coughing, shortness of breath, and disturbances to smell and taste can be signs of COVID-19 infection.

Staff with such symptoms are requested to leave the university campus immediately or to stay at home. They should continue working from home and not from university facilities (unless they are unable to work due to illness). Until their health status has been cleared by a medical professional, such staff members are deemed to be unfit for work. Staff members must inform their supervisors as usual if they are unable to work. Supervisors are to forward information regarding suspected cases to the email address coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de.

Affected persons should immediately contact a doctor for consultation by telephone. If the suspected infection is confirmed, the staff member in question must either send the relevant

information themselves to the email address coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de, or ask their responsible supervisor to do so.

5.2 Staff Members with a Positive Coronavirus Rapid Test

In the event of a positive test result (Coronavirus rapid test), employees are required, in accordance with §13 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance, to submit to a PCR test (confirmatory test) immediately at a testing center or at a doctor's office. Before obtaining this PCR test, the staff member in question is also required to inform the testing center beforehand of their positive rapid test result. A PCR test can be performed at the campus testing center. Until receiving a negative result on a confirmatory PCR test, all social contact is to be reduced to the absolute minimum. Accessing university buildings during this time is not allowed.

Staff members must immediately notify their supervisor if they have a positive result on a Coronavirus rapid test. If this positive result is then confirmed by PCR testing (see Point 5.3), staff members must also inform their respective supervisor and send an email reporting their test result to coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de.

5.3 Staff Members with a Positive Coronavirus PCR Test

In case of a **confirmed, positive case of COVID-19 (PCR test)**, the following guidelines are especially important in order to be able to perform contact tracing:

Guidelines for contact tracing for staff member: https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/intern/stabsstellen/agus/2021-09-03_handlungsleitfaden_Mitarbeitende_final.pdf

In accordance with § 15 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia dated 2 September 2021, individuals who test positive are required to immediately inform all persons (private and work-related contacts) with whom they have been in close personal contact either in the four days prior to the test, before the appearance of symptoms, or since the test was performed. This includes those persons with whom there had been contact for a period of more than 10 minutes and at a distance of less than 1.5 meters in which both parties were either not wearing a face mask or had been together for a longer period of time in a poorly ventilated or unventilated room. Public health authorities then determine the next course of action.

Staff members who have tested positive are to inform their supervisor in a timely manner. Their supervisor will then arrange the next course of action.

After receiving a positive test result, staff members may not enter university premises for at least 14 days (from the date of diagnosis) – regardless of any existing quarantine order issued by the public health authorities. Only after 14 days have passed and the staff member has been symptom free for at least 2 days may the staff member return to the university (exceptions exist for cases in which the public health authorities extend the length of the quarantine requirement).

For those with verifiable immunity from full vaccination who have a positive PCR test result, quarantine may be ended after a period of 5 days by taking another PCR test and receiving a negative result on it, provided that, based on the recommendations of the Robert Koch Institute, early termination of quarantine resulting from negative test results can be justified and the individual is symptom free. The public health authorities are responsible for quarantine orders. University premises may only be entered again after quarantine has been completed.

5.4 Suspected and Confirmed Cases in Staff Members' Households

If a person living in a staff member's household falls ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (suspected case), the staff member in question must contact their supervisor to clarify the next course of action (e.g. remaining in Home Office).

Staff members who live in a household with a person who has tested positive of COVID-19 (confirmed case) are required under § 16 Para. 1 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia from 2 September 2021 to self-quarantine immediately after

the household member's positive test result is known and to inform the appropriate health authorities.

This does not apply to individuals who had no contact with the person who tested positive since the time of the test or had no contact with the person who tested positive in the last ten days prior to obtaining the positive test result and who themselves do not show any symptoms of illness. The Quarantine Ordinance of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia in the current respective version must be observed (<https://www.mags.nrw/coronavirus-rechtlicheregelungen-nrw#verordnungen>). The requirement to quarantine also does not apply to individuals who have proof of immunization either by full vaccination or documented recovery. If, however, symptoms of illness occur within 14 days, such individuals must immediately quarantine and arrange for prompt testing (§16 Para. 1a of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance).

5.5 What to Do with Suspected and Confirmed Cases among Students

The same rules as described above also apply to students with suspected cases of COVID-19 (symptoms of illness, positive rapid test result) and confirmed cases (PCR test), including self-isolation, confirmatory testing, PCR testing, and the requirement to quarantine. Students must immediately inform their instructors of their positive result on a Coronavirus rapid test. If this positive rapid test result is then confirmed by PCR testing, students must also notify their instructors and send an email to coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de. If students who test positive for COVID-19 have attended in-person courses, course participants will be notified (see Point 6.2).

6. Contact Tracing

6.1 Contact Tracing of Staff Members in the Workplace

As stipulated § 15 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia dated 2 September 2021, individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to inform all those with whom they have had contact in private or professional settings during the past four days prior to taking the test or since the appearance of symptoms, or in the four days since close personal contact took place (see also Point 5.3). In order to comply with these requirements in the context of the workplace, the following rules are to be observed:

- It is the staff member's own responsibility to document mandatory business gatherings (such as work meetings with colleagues) that will be longer than 10 minutes and where minimum social distancing will not be maintained, and which were not organized by supervisors (e.g. in Outlook calendar).
- If guests are invited to official business appointments such as work meetings, the organizer must personally keep a record of attendees' contact information (e.g. in Outlook calendar).
- If external companies are contracted and deployed on site and there is a possibility of having personal contact with them (longer than 10 minutes), those responsible must also keep a record of these contacts.

Only the email address and telephone number of these contacts are documented. This contact information is to be kept for a maximum of 14 days, after which it is to be deleted.

6.2 Contact Tracing for Events

In order to comply with the requirements as outlined in § 15 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia (see Point 6.1), and in order to be able to notify attendees of an event that they may have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, contact information from event participants is to be collected on a voluntary basis and with their consent, regardless of the incidence rate (whether below or above 35 cases per 100,000).

For University Courses:

Students are strongly urged by organizers/instructors to continue to register when attending in-person courses or events. Instructors are not required, however, to enforce this. Contact tracing is conducted primarily by scanning a QR code at the entrance of the lecture hall or at the seat to be occupied. For participants or guests who do not have a smart phone, the course organizer/instructor can record their contact information.

Only the email address and telephone number of these contacts are documented. This contact information is to be kept for a maximum of 14 days, after which it is to be deleted. Contact information is not forwarded to the health authorities or any other external agency. In the case of a positive test, those who may have been exposed in the context of the event or course will be notified. This contact tracing policy complies with data protection provisions. For more information on registration for contact tracing, see: www.uni-bielefeld.de/anwesenheit.

For All Other Events:

Participant lists can be documented on a voluntary basis, with participants providing a declaration of consent to collecting this data for the purposes of contact tracing.

7. Preventative Occupational Medicine and Guidelines for Dealing with Risk Groups

All staff members have access to occupational health care (as a provision or upon request). Staff members can obtain individual advice from university medical services, including information on special risks due to a prior illness, their individual health status, possible risks of infection, concerns about the risk of infection, or psychological stress. Consultations from university medical services can also be given by telephone.

7.1 Persons in Particular Need of Protection (High-Risk and Risk Groups)

Given the progress in vaccination among staff members, blanket regulations for (high-)risk groups will be eliminated in the future, and individual risk assessments will be made on a case-by-case basis instead. The regulations mentioned under Points 3.1 and 3.2 in the currently applicable version therefore apply to all staff members.

Automatic permission to work exclusively from Home Office, or an automatic/blanket exemption based on membership in a (high) risk group therefore no longer exists.

Staff members belonging to risk groups should contact university medical services **in advance** to discuss their individual situation. Within the framework of an occupational health check, university medical services will assess whether working on site at the university would be possible on the basis of individual risk characteristics **before the staff members returns to working on campus**, and will arrange for an individual risk assessment to be carried out (by telephone or in person). Alternatively, university medical services may adjust an existing risk assessment in cooperation with the AGUS staff unit and managers. Information on individual risk characteristics is not disclosed to the employer. The AGUS staff unit can provide more information on this procedure. Only once a risk assessment has been completed, confirming that it is possible for the staff member to resume working on campus, will the staff member in question be able to return to working on university premises.

7.2 Staff with Chronically Ill Relatives Requiring Care and Those Living with Family Members with Risk Factors

Starting on **1 October 2021**, the following applies: staff members providing care to relatives with underlying illnesses or those requiring care in their households, and those who with live such persons who (possibly) have a special need for protection (and are medically certified as such), can only continue to work completely from Home Office if and as long as they are not fully vaccinated due to lack of vaccine availability. If such staff members wish to continue working from Home Office beyond 1 October 2021, they must inform their supervisors of this and provide

them with a rationale, after which the next course of action will be determined.

7.3 Staff with Severe Disabilities

Staff members and students with a severe disability (without relevant underlying illnesses) can, in principle, also work on site on university premises. If there are any questions regarding this, medical advice should be sought. Representation from severely disabled persons is to be included.

7.4 Pregnant Staff/Public Officials

With an incidence rate of 35 or above in the city of Bielefeld, the modality of “university operations during the Coronavirus pandemic” stipulates that pregnant women continue to be entitled to work from Home Office. For the time being, there is a ban on working on campus for pregnant women. If presence is required for work purposes and/or the expectant mother wants to return to working on campus, an individual risk assessment can be carried out at the agreement of the pregnant woman and with the involvement of supervisors, the AGUS staff unit, and a university medical officer to determine whether this is possible. If the individual risk assessment establishes that there is no unjustifiable risk at the individual workplace in accordance with the Maternity Protection Act and with the agreement of the Detmold district government, it would be possible for the pregnant woman to work on site at the university. Pregnant women are required to contact the AGUS staff unit before starting work on university premises.

If the incidence rate drops below 35, the ban on working on site on university premises for pregnant women is lifted. An individual risk assessment, however, is still required.

Conclusive findings on whether and how long mRNA or vector-based vaccines provide sufficient immunity against SARS-CoV-2 are not yet available given the current state of scientific understanding and data. In this context, and in order to exclude an unjustifiable risk according to the Maternity Protection Act, the protective measures mentioned above are also to be carried out for preventative reasons for pregnant and breastfeeding women who have already been vaccinated. This also applies for pregnant and breastfeeding women who have already recovered from COVID-19 infection.

7.5 Pregnant Students

For pregnant students, a ban on participating in mandatory in-person courses also applies due to the reasons mentioned above. Pregnant students may attend relevant in-person courses on a case-by-case basis if an individual risk assessment is carried out with the involvement of the AGUS staff unit, the university medical service, and responsible public authorities (Detmold district government), provided that the risk assessment finds there is no unjustifiable risk. Pregnant students are required to contact the AGUS staff unit. If the incidence rate falls below 35, the general ban on in-person attendance for pregnant students no longer applies. Nevertheless, an individual risk assessment is still required.

8. Returning from Business Travel, Trainings, and Vacation

8.1 Business Travel

The following has applied since 1 July 2021: The necessity of work-related travel should be critically reviewed before it is undertaken, particularly when it involves travel to risk areas or virus-variant areas. Work-related travel should only take place to the extent necessary, and wherever possible, digital alternatives such as telephone or video conferences should be used instead. Attendance at external training courses should be treated in the same way. Business trips to regions with high rates of infection (including those within Germany) at the time the travel begins must be limited to the absolute minimum needed to fulfill work obligations.

Business travel to high-incidence, high-risk, or virus-variant areas is generally not possible. In special cases, a request may be made to the Department of Human Resources, and upon approval, special 9

permission may be granted by the Rector.

The measures outlined in the Coronavirus Ordinance on Travel Entry and the Regulations for Returning Travelers (III.6 and III.6a) must be observed.

All generally issued official travel approvals are again valid under the above-mentioned conditions. If work-related travel or training courses are attended in person, appropriate protective measures must be taken: this includes travelling by private car rather than by public transport if possible, maintaining sufficient distance from others at the external location, etc.

8.2 Work-Related Trainings

Internal university training events, which fall under the organizational responsibility of the Department of Human Resources (Staff Development) should in general continue to take place digitally.

Training events that are the organizational responsibility of e.g. departments/individuals can take place digitally but also in person if the following requirements (for in-person events) are met:

- Only fully immunized individuals participate in the planned training event (vaccinated or recovered, “2G” rule). Vaccination or recovery status must be voluntarily disclosed by employees, external guests, and trainers/facilitators.
- If participants do not disclose their immunization status, an in-person event can still be held, provided that the hygiene/protective measures outlined in Point 9.1.3 are followed (voluntary “3G” rule).

Event organizations are responsible for the implementation of protective measures for the training program and must inform participants of these.

8.3 Returning from International (Business/Tourist) Travel in Foreign Risk Areas

Those returning from an area that has been declared a high-incidence, virus-variant, and/or other special risk area by the Robert Koch Institute, or those returning from other areas for which a travel advisory has been issued by the Foreign Office, generally must quarantine for a period of 10 days (14 days for virus-variant areas) after their return, as stipulated in §4 the Coronavirus Ordinance on Travel Entry from 12 May 2021 and its consolidated version from 30 July 2021.

Such returning travelers are to work from Home Office. If it is not possible to work from home, the supervisor must first check whether the staff member in question can be temporarily assigned other suitable tasks.

With the exception of travelers returning from virus-variant areas, quarantine is **not** required for **recovered, vaccinated or tested persons** who can present proof of their recovered status, vaccination status, or a negative test result. (The test must have taken place no earlier than 5 days after their return.)

Please also refer to the current regulations of the Federal Ministry of Health regarding entry to Germany:

https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/fileadmin/Dateien/3_Downloads/C/Coronavirus/FAQs_Reise/Corona-Einreiseregeln_Kurzuebersicht.pdf

Irrespective of the above-mentioned regulations, Point 8.4 must also be observed (“Returning to Working on Campus After Absence (Vacation/Release from Work”)

8.4 Returning to Working on Campus After Absence (Vacation/Release from Work)

According to § 4 Para. 7 of the current Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia from 17 August 2021 in its currently applicable version from 2 September 2021, **non-immunized** staff members must present a negative test result to their responsible supervisors upon returning to work on university premises after an absence of 5 business days or more due to vacation or comparable

release from service or work. This negative test result must not be older than 48 hours. Alternatively, a test can be performed on site under supervision (in our case: at the campus testing center). The Coronavirus test taken for entry to Germany according to § 5 of the Coronavirus Ordinance on Travel Entry also counts as a negative test result. Responsible managers are your direct supervisors: for lecturers, this means the university instructors to whom you are assigned. For university instructors, the deans of study will assume this function. In cases for which there is no clear direct supervisor, test results can be submitted to the responsible office in the Department of Human Resources and Organization.

This requirement does not apply for absence due to illness or working from Home Office. This rule, however, **does apply for all other periods of absence, including vacation (even if you do not travel anywhere), special leaves of absence, and being released from work, etc.**

According to the Ordinance, this requirement applies to **all university staff members**, i.e. technical services and administration, academic staff, support staff, and civil servants, including professors.

If work is resumed in Home Office after a period of absence, the test must be performed on the first day of returning to work on the university campus.

Exceptions to this requirement apply to staff members who have proof of full immunization (i.e. those who are fully vaccinated or recovered). Submitting proof of immunization status by email to your responsible supervisor is sufficient. Responsible supervisors must then delete or destroy this communication immediately after becoming aware of it, regardless of the form in which it was received (digitally or in paper copy).

Providing proof of testing or immunization status is legally required after returning to work from a period of absence. Failure to comply with these requirements constitutes a violation of §4 of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance from 17 August 2021, as well as a violation of the university service directive, therefore comprising a violation of employment contract obligations and/or official work duties.

9. Events, Courses, Gatherings, and Meetings

9.1 Events

9.1.1 Definition

Events are defined in the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia from 17 August 2021 in its currently valid version from 2 September 2021 and this Organizational Decree as an organized activity with a **specific objective or purpose, limited in time and place**, in which a group of people attends said activity as participants or visitors under the responsibility of an organizer. The mere use of permanent facilities (e.g. library, counseling services such as the ZSB, examination offices, or student offices) by several individuals at once **does not compromise an event** according to these regulations.

According to §4 Para. 2 no. 1, events in public areas, in particular in educational, cultural, sport and leisure facilities in which indoor spaces are used, along with trade fairs and conventions held indoors, as well as all sport and wellness offerings and comparable offerings in indoor spaces are permissible.

In-person events at Bielefeld University include the following:

- Teaching and practical courses, exams, field trips
- Committee meetings (e.g. faculty meetings, professor appointment committees)
- Conferences and conventions; academic events
- Cultural events (e.g. the Night of Sounds), receptions, and inaugurations
- Readings at the library

In academics and administration, work meetings are not considered events, including, for

instance, service meetings, training events, and recruitment activities (see Point 9.2).

In general, events are allowed to take place in person. The conditions under which these events may be held are determined by the current incidence rate (under 35 or above 35).

9.1.2 Rules for Events: Incidence Rate of 35 and above

Restricted Access/Testing Requirements

If the 7-day incidence rate of new infections in Bielefeld or the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia is at 35 cases per 100,000 or above over the course of 5 consecutive days, events held indoors may only be attended by immunized or tested individuals. Immunized individuals are those who are fully vaccinated and/or recovered from prior infection (according to the regulations in § 1 Para. 3, § 2 No. 1–5, § 3 and § 7 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance and the Ordinance governing Exemptions to COVID-19 Protection Measures of North Rhine-Westphalia from from 8 May 2021). Proof of recovery may not be older than six months. Tested individuals are those who have a negative test result from a rapid test performed within 48 hours or a PCR test from a recognized laboratory confirmed as having been performed within 48 hours, as defined in the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance. Coronavirus self-tests, such as those taken at home, do not qualify as proof of testing. Should a positive test result be returned when taking a Coronavirus self-test, however, applicable regulations must be observed (i.e. immediately contacting a doctor and taking a confirmatory PCR test).

At (educational) events, the testing requirement in force can be satisfied by taking a self-test under supervision of the event organizer (as has previously been practiced in the natural sciences/internships).

Admission to an Event

Proof of immunization or testing must be checked upon admission to an event by the individuals responsible for organizing the event or their designees. During this check, the event organizers should randomly spot check attendees' identification documents to verify identity. Individuals who do not provide proof of their identity during this check are not allowed to attend the event.

For events that take place over several consecutive days (such as an internship), or for small seminars/tutorials with a fixed group of participants, performing this check once for proof of vaccination/recovery (2G) before the start of the event is sufficient. Those presenting a negative test result, however, must be re-checked every 48 hours.

Bielefeld University is currently looking into organizational and/or technical support options to help event organizers/instructors perform the required "3G" check (vaccinated, recovered, tested) this Winter Semester.

Hygiene Rules/Additional Protective Measures

- All events are to be held with assigned seating or assigned standing areas for participants.
- In the waiting area (before admission to the event), a medical-grade mask (at least a surgical mask) must be worn in public areas before arriving at the assigned seat or standing area.
- The mask can be taken off when occupying the assigned seat or standing area.
- Minimum social distancing of 1.5 meters can only be exceeded when seated or standing in the assigned area.
- Before the event, the organizer must verify whether there is enough mechanical or natural ventilation in the room. Mechanical ventilation is in place in the main lecture halls; the centrally managed seminar rooms usually have window ventilation and mobile air purifiers with HEPA filters (see Point 10.1.2, "Ventilation").
- If singing together (without wearing masks) is planned as part of the event, non-immunized individuals are required to provide a current PCR test.

- Contact information is collected on a voluntary basis, with consent (see Point 6.2).

If events with more than 100 people are planned to be held indoors without assigned seating, a hygiene concept must be submitted to the public health authorities prior to the event.

9.1.3 Rules for Events: Incidence Rate Below 35

No Restricted Access/Testing Requirements

If the 7-day incidence rate of new infections is under 35 per 100,000, there are no access restrictions to events for individuals who are fully vaccinated, recovered, or tested (see Points 9.2.1 / 9.2.2).

Hygiene Rules/Additional Protective Measures

- All events are to be held with assigned seating or assigned standing areas for participants.
- In the waiting area (before admission to the event), a medical-grade mask (at least a surgical mask) must be worn in public areas before arriving at the assigned seat or standing area.
- The mask can be removed when occupying the assigned seat/standing area, provided that:
 - Social distancing of 1.5 meters between individuals is maintained, or
 - All participants **voluntarily show proof** of being immunized or tested.
- Social distancing of 1.5 meters between seating areas may be exceeded, provided that:
 - A medical-grade mask is worn while occupying one's seat/standing area
 - A physical partition has been installed (such as a Plexiglas partition or similar), or
 - All participants **voluntarily show proof** of being immunized or tested.
- Before the event, the organizer must verify whether there is enough mechanical or natural ventilation for the room. Mechanical ventilation is in place in the main lecture halls; the centrally managed seminar rooms usually have window ventilation and mobile air purifiers with HEPA filters (see Point 10.1.2, "Ventilation").
- Contact information is collected on a voluntary basis, with consent (see Point 6.2).

If events with more than 100 people are planned to be held indoors without assigned seating, a hygiene concept must be submitted to the public health authorities prior to the event.

9.1.4 Committee Meetings and Professorship Appointment Procedures

When conducting **committee meetings** in person, the regulations under Point 9.1 apply. In addition to this, committee meetings must comply with the guidelines for conducting internal university committee meetings, voting, and professorship appointment procedures during the Coronavirus pandemic. An updated set of guidelines will soon be made available.

9.2 Service Meetings, Work-Related Meetings, Hiring Procedures, Company Outings

Service Meetings, Work-Related Meetings

Contact among colleagues for the purposes of performing work is allowed, provided that hygiene rules are observed (see Point 10). Business-related meetings and events with internal and/or external participants should in general take place digitally or by telephone. If an official meeting is held in person (e.g., short work meetings), the number of persons must be reduced to the necessary level and hygiene requirements must be observed (e.g., ventilation, selecting a room of suitable size, wearing masks, social distancing). Applicable internal regulations governing room occupancies and hygiene rules (see Point 10) are to be followed.

Hiring procedures should continue to be held largely in digital form. This can also be carried out in person starting at a certain stage in the hiring process. The number of people present is to be kept at the necessary minimum (attendance should be as low as possible). The 3G rule (vaccinated, recovered, tested) can be followed on a voluntary basis.

Company outings be undertaken, provided that general hygiene measures are followed.

Company outings are permitted under the following conditions:

- At the time of the company outing, participants provide proof of full vaccination, recovery, or a negative test result.
- Simple contact tracing procedures are in place (list with contact information).
- A hygiene concept must be created in advance of the event, regulating aspects such as travel by public transportation, subcontracted bus transportation companies, exclusion of individuals with respiratory symptoms, and observance of special, state-specific regulations (when traveling outside of North Rhine-Westphalia). This hygiene concept must also take into account any applicable regulations governing special leisure and cultural offerings.

10. Protective Measures, Workplace Design, Hygiene, and Providing Instruction in these Regulations

10.1 Protective Measures (Social Distancing, Ventilation, Face Masks)

10.1.1 Social Distancing

As a rule, adequate social distancing of at least 1.5 meters between colleagues must be maintained in all work areas, including those open to the public, as well as in indoor spaces where customers or visitors are present, in break rooms, in public areas, and in the library. Social distancing must be maintained even for periods of short personal contact. Social distancing may only be exceeded if other appropriate protective measures are in place, e.g. at events where “3G” status (vaccinated, recovered, or tested) is verified; if physical partitions have been installed; or if masks are worn (see Point 9, “Events”, and Point 10.2, “Workplace Design”).

10.1.2 Masks

Mask Requirement

In addition to the requirement to comply with minimum social distancing requirements in university buildings, there is also a general requirement to wear a medical-grade face mask (so-called surgical mask). Wearing a medical-grade mask is also required when going to the library (e.g. students/researchers/external visitors). Wearing a medical-grade mask is also required in other areas with visitors/customers (e.g. service units).

Masks can be removed indoors under the following conditions:

- When performing work in offices or other workplaces where social distancing of at least 1.5 meters is maintained.
- Suitable physical partitions (e.g. Plexiglas) have been installed.
- All staff members present are immunized.
- When only immunized or tested employees are working together at set workplaces or in fixed teams (except during activities with high aerosol emissions, such as heavy physical work or loud talking).
- In laboratories if wearing a mask poses an additional hazard (e.g. chemical transfer).
- Those who are medically certified as not having to wear a mask.
- At events, provided that the regulations outlined in Point 9 of this Organizational Decree are followed.
- During sporting activities, if removing the mask is necessary for playing the sport. This also applies for other activities that cannot be performed while wearing a mask, such as playing a wind instrument.
- When singing together, provided that only immunized or tested individuals take part (tested singers must provide a PCR test).
- At assigned seating areas for those using university facilities, provided that social distancing of 1.5 meters is maintained or all those present have been immunized or tested (e.g. at

library work stations or other student study areas).

Required FFP2/FFP3 Masks (Personal Protective Equipment)

Filtering half masks (FFP2 /FFP3) must be provided to and worn by staff members while performing their work when they come into direct contact with another person who cannot wear a mask for medical or other significant reasons. An FFP2 mask must also be provided and worn during activities that are likely to involve an increased risk of increased aerosol emission (e.g. very loud talking during activities in noisy areas). When using FFP2 masks, specifications for personal protective equipment (PPE) must be observed. This includes, in particular, the length of time for wearing an FFP2 mask and regulations regarding multiple use. Employees must be instructed in the correct use of FFP2 masks before they are distributed. Sample instructions for using FFP2 masks are available on the AGUS website (www.uni-bielefeld.de/agus). Staff members who use FFP2 masks must be offered occupational health care (preventive care).

Exceptions to the Mask Requirement with a Medical Certificate

If for medical reasons a staff member cannot wear a mask (community mask, medical mask, FFP2 mask) or can only wear it for a very short period of time and submits a medical certificate attesting to these medical reasons, their workplace setup must be adjusted by the supervisor in such a way that these colleagues are adequately protected. For instance, supervisors must determine whether contact with others can be ruled out, or, in the case of contact with other staff members, whether they can wear a higher-grade FFP2 mask (for self-protection and the protection of others). With regard to the scientific findings that are now available (as of January 2021, in the Explanation of the Corona Protection Ordinance) on the lack of efficacy of community masks and face visors with regard to droplet and, above all, aerosol transmission, face visors can no longer be considered equivalent mask substitutes at this time.

Where applicable, staff members who have a medical certificate attesting that they cannot wear a mask can work permanently from Home Office if adequate protection cannot be assured on site.

Mask Violations

If face masks (medical-grade masks, FFP2 masks) are not worn in accordance with these instructions, this constitutes a violation of the University's operating regulations, and thus a violation of employment contract obligations and/or official work duties. Those who do not comply with the requirement to wear a mask shall be excluded by the responsible authorities from university offerings, facilities, and services.

Orders for Masks

Orders for medical-grade masks and FFP2 masks are to be pooled by the various divisions of the university (i.e. faculty, department, institution) and placed by email by sending the order to arbeitssicherheit@uni-bielefeld.de. Distribution of masks to employees is to take place at the divisional level. As a general rule, minimum social distancing of 1.5 meters must be maintained even when wearing a mask.

10.1.3 Ventilation

Ventilating rooms being used is a particularly important protective measure due to the possible presence of virus-containing aerosols. For this reason, rooms must be regularly ventilated by their users. Ventilation reduces the number of fine droplets that may contain pathogens present in the air. The minimum standard for the period of time between ventilation is as follows: every 40 minutes at a minimum for offices, and every 20 minutes at a minimum for meeting rooms. The length of ventilation (with all doors and windows open) should be at least 10 minutes in summer, 5 minutes in autumn/spring, and 3 minutes in winter (when the temperature is below 6°C). Increased ventilation

can also further reduce the concentration of possible virus-laden aerosols present in the air. The beneficial effects of ventilation can be enhanced by increasing the above-mentioned frequencies and extending the length of each ventilation.

Offices must be ventilated regularly at the beginning and end of the workday. Meeting rooms must also be ventilated before being used.

In rooms that have mobile air purifiers (with HEPA 13/HEPA 14 filters), the same regulations for room ventilation still apply. Air purifying devices serve only to support natural room ventilation.

10.2 Workplace Design

10.2.1 Offices

As a rule, **only one person may work in an office of up to 20 square meters** (this is the size of a typical office space). The use of rooms by more than one person is to be kept to the minimum necessary to ensure operations. Exceptions are possible on a case-by-case basis provided that social distancing of 1.5 meters is maintained (also in public areas) or a suitable barrier is installed (e.g. plexiglass partitions); sufficient ventilation is in place; and other hygiene measures are observed.

For cases in which supervisors know the immunization status of their staff members, this information can be taken into account when scheduling work (such as placing immunized staff members together in one room).

Furthermore, if offices are used by more than one person, it is strongly recommended that staff members undergo a Coronavirus rapid test every workday. Coronavirus rapid tests can be performed at home before the start of work; for this purpose, the university provides rapid tests to employees. Orders for rapid tests should be pooled at the divisional level (i.e., faculty, department, facility) and sent to this email address: arbeitssicherheit@uni-bielefeld.de.

The protective measures outlined above also apply for immunized individuals; exceptions are to be documented in an individual risk assessment.

Offices may also only be entered by colleagues upon request and with an appropriate face mask or a medical mask (if social distancing of 1.5 m cannot be maintained).

10.2.2 Public-Facing Work Areas

In public-facing work areas, social distancing of 1.5 meters between individual work areas and between work areas and visitors is to be maintained (also in areas of public traffic). If social distancing of 1.5 meters cannot be maintained, a suitable physical partition must be installed (e.g. Plexiglas partition). If the above-mentioned rules are observed (social distancing or Plexiglas), staff members are not required to wear masks.

10.2.3 Laboratory Work Spaces

For **laboratory work** (laboratory workstations with technical ventilation, fume hoods, weighing chambers, large equipment, etc.), general and customary laboratory hygiene regulations must be observed. Social distancing of 1.5 meters from colleagues must also be maintained. Laboratory workstations must be set up accordingly (e.g., no shared use of laboratory work benches). For cases in which supervisors know the immunization status of their staff members, this information can be taken into account when scheduling work (such as placing immunized lab workers together in one room). The protective measures outlined above also apply for immunized individuals; exceptions are to be documented in an individual risk assessment.

The same regulations governing workplace design also apply to students who are working in laboratories or are conducting laboratory-based research for their Bachelor's/Master's theses.

10.2.3 Break Rooms

Compliance with the social distancing rules must be observed in the **break rooms and areas**, tea

kitchens, and cooking facilities as well as in **other social rooms** by changing the arrangement of furniture or minimizing seating in these respective areas. Where applicable, break times should be staggered. Before entering and using these rooms, users must wash their hands.

10.2.4 Student Workstations

Student workstations (for studying) located in in the gallery/bridges in the hall of the Main University Building have been open again for use since 1 September 2021. Masks must be worn in areas of public traffic and on the way to the individual workstation. **Registration** (see Point 6, “Registration“) and proof of immunization or testing is not required.

Additional student workstations in seminar rooms are available based on the respective capacities of faculties and institutes. The following applies at student workstations: if the tables are arranged in such a way that the minimum social distancing of 1.5 meters can easily be maintained, a mask does not have to be worn. If the tables are arranged in such a way that minimum social distancing cannot be maintained, a mask must be worn. Regardless of the arrangement of student workstations, a mask must be worn in areas of public traffic on the way to the workstation and hygiene regulations must be observed.

For **library workstations**, see Point 11, “Service Units, Including the Library”.

More information on student workstations is available at <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/studium/studierende/start-ins-studium/lernorte/>.

10.3 Hygiene

Tools and work equipment (also IT devices, telephone receivers, table tops, etc.) are to be used by just one individual wherever possible. Where this is not possible, regular cleaning (with a commercial household cleaning agent) is to be performed by the user, especially before handing the equipment over to others. If physical partitioning is used for hygienic purposes, staff members are to clean both sides of the partitioning with commercial-grade cleaning agent every workday.

Personal protective equipment (e.g. FFP2 masks) are only for individual use. (Reusable) masks must be taken home after work (and not left in the open on your desk). This does not apply to special areas, such as genetic engineering facilities. Liquid soap, towel dispensers, and disinfectants are available for cleaning your hands.

10.4 Official Instruction, Notification, and Review of Measures

Management is legally obligated by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Protection Regulations to provide regular instructions to their employees, and to document this instruction. Staff working from Home Office must also receive such instructions. Instructions should include in particular the regulations of the Organizational Decree; (Coronavirus) transmission risks and modes of transmission, protective measures, measures for groups in need of special protection (e.g. high-risk and risk groups), as well as how to correctly wear and remove face masks. Instructions should be provided in digital form wherever possible.

Sample instructions based on the content mentioned above are available at <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/agus/>.

The effectiveness of these measures in the workplace and the impact of the measures on protecting staff health, as well as the occurrence of, for instance, hygiene failures, must be monitored by supervisors and adjusted as necessary.

Event organizers are responsible for the implementation of protective measures for the event they are organizing and must notify participants of the measures to be observed. Recommended hygiene measures for events are available at <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/coronavirus/sicherheitskonzepte/>.

11. Service Units, Including the Library

Library

The university library is open, with some restrictions. Only the main library entrances D1 and U1 in the main university building and the specialist libraries in Building X are open. Regular opening hours have been in effect since 6 September 2021.

All visitors to the library are required to wear a medical-grade mask in areas of public traffic. Minimum social distancing can be exceeded in public areas (but not at workstations) when wearing a mask. At set workstations, it is not required to wear a mask because workstations have been arranged with minimum distances of 1.5 meters in between.

The previous registration procedure for library visitors is no longer in effect. Library workstations, however, do still need to be reserved and are only available to university students.

Other library regulations are provided by the university library and are available here:

<https://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/ub/coronavirus/>

Other Service Units

Service units, such as the Information Point, the Student Office, the Central Student Advisory Service (ZSB), the Advisory Service at BITS, and the examination offices are currently only available by telephone, email, or other electronic forms. Starting on 1 September 2021, these services will also be available in-person to a limited extent. Further details can be found on the respective websites of these university service units.

12. More Information on Studying and Teaching

Additional regulations governing studying and teaching during the 2021/202 Winter Semester are available in the Corona Regulations from the University Rector at

<https://uni-bielefeld.de/themen/pruefungsrecht/coronavirus/Corona-Ordnung-SoSe-21.pdf>

Contact

Email: coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de

Bielefeld University

The Chancellor