

Operation regulations at Bielefeld University during the coronavirus Pandemic

Organizational decision of 23.03.2020

Updated version of 18.06.2020, valid from 19.06.2020

Since 23.03.2020, Bielefeld University has been operating in reduced basic mode due to the coronavirus pandemic. This has resulted in extensive restrictions to university operations. In view of the current state of the pandemic and the further general easing of social restrictions, the university is switching from this reduced basic operation mode to 'university operation during the coronavirus pandemic'. This will allow the university to continue to operate on a reasonable level while still maintaining the existing measures and regulations to prevent chains of infection.

This decree once again summarizes the existing regulations (measures concept) and supplements these with the occupational safety standards of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. All measures continue to pursue the goal of ensuring the health of technical and administrative staff, teachers, researchers, and students by interrupting the chains of infection.

In principle, and independently from the following contingency plan, the following still applies:

1. In principle, a minimum distance of 1.5 m must be maintained between persons. In the university buildings, a mouth-and-nose covering must be worn in the public corridors, pathways, stairs, lifts, and stairways as well as in all areas in which the minimum distance cannot be maintained.
2. Persons with respiratory symptoms (unless otherwise diagnosed medically) or fever are principally not allowed to stay on the university campus.

Plan for temporary additional measures to protect against SARS-CoV-2 infection

I. Organizational aspects

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, the crisis team at Bielefeld University headed by the Chancellor has been planning and coordinating the implementation of additional infection control measures, checking their effectiveness, and coordinating them with different interest groups.

The Vice-rector for Education and Teaching and the Head of the Department of Education and Teaching are responsible for developing and coordinating the measures for education and teaching with the deans of studies.

Heads of department are responsible for implementing these measures in their

respective areas of responsibility and informing and instructing their staff accordingly.

II. University operations during the coronavirus pandemic

The new version of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of the State of NRW of 15.06.2020 combined with the general ruling of the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Social Affairs of 15.06.2020, provides new scope for implementing study courses, examinations, and other events. Due to spatial conditions at Bielefeld University and the need for planning security as well as for the protection of students and staff, the Rectorate has decided that the following will continue to apply in principle: until 30.09.2020, there will be no onsite courses and meetings (for exceptions regarding teaching and examinations, see below). Onsite conferences and continuing education events are also still not permitted until 30.09.2020.

The organization of committee meetings is based on the guidelines for committee meetings (see https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/verwaltung/dezernat-sl/wahlen/doks/2020-06-02_Handlungsleitfaden_Sitzungen.pdf). For the organization of discussions and working meetings at the university, see below.

1. Regulations for teaching

Summer semester 2020: Online semester

As currently planned, the 2020 summer semester will remain (almost exclusively) an online semester. Until 30 September 2020, courses will be held exclusively online or in the form of ‘distance learning’. Teachers have converted their courses and examinations to digital formats as far as possible for this. Oral examinations and written examinations with up to 25 persons can also be held digitally with the Zoom video conference system. Further digital solutions for larger examination cohorts are currently being examined. Research work within the framework of bachelor and master theses is also possible provided that hygiene and safety regulations are observed. For exceptions for onsite courses and their requirements, see below.

Exceptions for teaching and onsite events

Courses and practical events that cannot be held online and therefore have to be carried out onsite because they require special rooms, equipment, or other special conditions (e.g. laboratories, workrooms, practical sports events, recording studios, or artistic coaching) are permitted if the number of participants is appropriate for their purpose and all relevant safety and hygiene regulations and a minimum distance of 1.5 metres are observed. For the requirements, see below (point Requirements for exceptions).

Exceptions for oral and written examinations

Oral and written onsite examinations are permitted if it is ensured that no groups of people form at the entrance and exit and that all relevant safety regulations and hygiene rules are observed, including the minimum distance of 1.5 metres—also in passageways and corridors. For the requirements see below (point Requirements for exceptions).

Requirements for exceptions

Onsite events (e.g. laboratory internship, sports practice, music)

Applications for these onsite events that are possible in exceptional cases must be made in advance to the AGUS staff unit and coordinated with AGUS. The AGUS staff unit will provide advice and control whether the safety regulations and hygiene rules can be observed. In particular, a protective hygiene concept must be drawn up and agreed and approved exclusively with AGUS on behalf of the Chancellor. If coordination with the public health authorities is legally required, this will be arranged through AGUS.

Onsite oral and written examinations

For oral and written examinations that are exceptionally held onsite, basic protective hygiene concepts have been agreed with the public health authorities. The protective hygiene concepts are to be used by the examination organizers or examiners. These protective hygiene concepts open up the possibility of conducting examinations for up to 5 persons in centrally and decentrally managed seminar rooms. Examinations with significantly more than 5 persons (medium examination format) can be conducted in designated lecture halls and centrally managed seminar rooms. In addition, examinations with large cohorts can be held in the university canteen, the sports hall, the Lok-Schuppen entertainment centre, and the city Stadthalle following a protective hygiene concept also agreed with the public health authorities. The deans of studies, the ekv representatives, and the teachers have already been informed about the procedure.

Students who cannot participate in courses/examinations due to relevant prior illnesses should be offered alternative forms of courses/examinations.

Bachelor/master theses and research in laboratory work teams

Students who are involved in laboratory research teams as part of their bachelor/master theses and research work are subject to the same requirements as those for other research activities in laboratories (Point 2). In addition to the workplace design requirements, laboratory managers must prepare a supplementary risk assessment for preventing coronavirus infections. A sample hazard assessment can be requested from AGUS. Consultation and onsite inspection will be carried out by AGUS.

Examination work

Examination work such as term papers, final papers and the like can still be submitted. Students should submit their papers by email or via the submission folder in the Lernraum [learning room]. Any current examination regulations requiring the submission of a printed version are currently suspended. In the case of final papers, an email containing the final paper corresponding to the printed version must be sent to the responsible examination office as well as to the examiners. Students are requested to meet deadlines for the submission of academic and examination papers (especially final theses) as far as possible at least in electronic form. Teachers are requested to offer generous deadlines.

Service units

All service units are still closed to the public until further notice. They can be reached online or by telephone.

Workstations for students

In the faculties, rooms with individual workstations that comply with hygiene requirements have been set up for students to enable them to participate in the summer semester. Contact persons are the respective faculty administrations.

2. Regulations for research

Academics should principally work at home. There are some areas in which this is not fully possible (laboratories). Attendance at the university should be reduced to a minimum and the workplace regulations should be observed (see Point IV).

3. Regulations for the library

The library has reorganized its services for students, staff, teachers, and temporary lecturers of Bielefeld University as follows:

Opening hours are: Monday to Friday: 10.00 to 16.00; Saturdays, Sundays, and as public holidays: closed. From 1 July onward, opening hours will be extended initially to Monday to Friday: 9.00 to 16.00. However, the library will remain closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays.

Media that are absolutely necessary for individual teaching and research activities or for student work can be borrowed, but only if they are not available electronically. Interlibrary loans are possible.

The individual and group workstations may no longer be used, but the public PC workstations can be used to, for example, search in Katalog.plus (only for brief periods of time!). It is intended to offer workstations in the library again to a limited extent from 1.8.2020. The scope and modalities of use still have to be determined. These have to take into account the necessary hygiene measures to prevent infection, and will be communicated in due course.

Only the main library entrances D1 and U1 in the main university building and the specialist libraries in Building X are open. Visitors have to register by presenting their library card or UniCard. The central lending department is closed. The self-service terminals should be used to borrow and return media.

The University Library is not yet open to external users. The plan is to readmit external users to the library onsite from 1.9.2020.

In the library, all persons must wear a mouth-and-nose covering in corridors, passageways, and stairways.

Personal advice is only available electronically (by e-mail, chat or telephone). All loan periods are being handled generously.

The University Library provides information about the details on its website: www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/coronavirus

4. Arrangements for the support areas

Technical and administrative staff should continue to work from home as far as possible. Work at the university is carried out in so far as the technical or service conditions require an onsite presence to fulfil the tasks incumbent on the respective

work area. In exceptional cases, employees can also work at the university workplace with the permission of their superiors if they desire this due to their domestic situation (e.g. lack of an adequate workplace, high noise levels, etc.). The management of departments and organizational units should organize the necessary or desired attendance in such a way as to avoid longer personal contacts between employees. Measures to ensure this are, for example, fixed or spatially separated teams or prior registration in attendance lists. The regulations on workplace design must be observed (see below under Point IV).

In agreement with the staff councils, the university has switched to trust-based working hours. This regulation will initially apply until 31 August 2020.

III. Regulations/Procedures

1. Instructions on how to respond to a suspected infection

Fever, coughing, shortness of breath, and disturbances to smell and taste can be particular signs of infection with the coronavirus.

Staff with corresponding symptoms are requested to leave the university premises immediately or to stay at home. Until their health status has been clarified medically, they are deemed to be unfit for work. As usual, superiors must be informed of the inability to work. Superiors will forward the information regarding the suspected case to the email address coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de.

The persons concerned should immediately contact a doctor or the public health authorities by telephone for clarification. If the suspicion is confirmed, the staff member concerned is requested to either send the relevant information her- or himself to the email address coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de or ask the responsible superiors to do so.

In the case of confirmed cases of infection, the university will (in addition to the information provided by the public health authorities) identify and inform those persons who are also at risk of infection through contact with the infected person.

2. Occupational medical precautions and protection of particularly endangered persons

All staff have access to occupational health care. They can obtain individual advice from the university medical service, including advice on special risks due to a prior illness or individual disposition.

3. Risk groups (technical and administrative staff, teachers, researchers)

The pandemic situation imposes a far-reaching and special duty of care for university staff. Therefore, special regulations for the protection of the employees are in place that reflect the current state of knowledge. These regulations apply until further notice. Information about follow-up regulations will be provided.

Staff with health risk factors (e.g. underlying diseases, advanced age)

Particularly in the case of certain basic diseases, there is—regardless of age—a generally increased risk of a serious disease course when infected with the coronavirus (COVID-19). For this group of people, special protection is generally necessary.

Determining whether staff belong to a risk group cannot be generalized due to the variety of different potentially predisposing pre-existing conditions and their severity (e.g. already existing organ damage) as well as the multitude of other variables involved (e.g. age, gender, weight, specific behaviour, adequate drug/therapeutic approach) and the individual ways in which these can be combined. This therefore requires a person-related risk assessment in the sense of an (occupational) medical evaluation.

Staff who exhibit corresponding risk factors can have these certified by a medical assessment. If the medical certificate concludes that working in the university buildings significantly increases the risk of infection with COVID-19 compared to other everyday situations, and that there is therefore an increased health risk, that staff member is entitled to perform her or his work exclusively in home office—if necessary with appropriate adaptation of the tasks to be performed. Proof of the medical risk assessment must be submitted to the Personnel and Organization Department via the responsible superior (scan/photocopy is sufficient). For reasons of data protection, the type of prior illness should not be indicated.

Staff with chronically sick relatives in need of care

Staff who care for relatives in need of care with underlying illnesses in their home environment can have the care of the pre-sick relative certified by a (general) medical practice. The certificate must be forwarded to the Personnel and Organization Department with prior notification of the responsible superior (scan/photocopy is sufficient). The type of prior illness of the relative should not be indicated for reasons of data protection.

Staff and students with severe disabilities

Staff and students with a severe disability (without relevant underlying diseases) can also, in principle, work on university premises. If there are any uncertainties, medical advice should be sought. The representation of severely disabled persons should be involved.

Pregnant employees/staff/students

In view of the current circumstances, pregnant women cannot be employed on the campus grounds for occupational health reasons. Pregnant women are requested to contact the AGUS staff unit. For pregnant students, a risk assessment for participation in relevant online examinations can be prepared in individual cases in coordination with AGUS.

4. Official travel and further training

Official travel is now possible to countries for which no travel warning has been issued by the Federal Foreign Office. All generally issued official travel approvals are again valid with this restriction. However, only essential official travel should be made to and instead—where possible—technical alternatives should be used such as telephone or video conferences.

Attendance of external training courses is possible in principle. If official travel or training courses are attended in person, the appropriate protective measures must be

taken—for example, if possible, travel to and from the training course by car rather than by public transport, maintain sufficient distance from other persons at the place of work, and so forth.

5. Work meetings/Discussions

Work meetings/ Discussions should always be held in digital form or by telephone. If a discussion is held in person, its duration must be limited to the minimum time necessary. In addition, a sufficiently large room to maintain a safety distance of at least 1.5 m throughout and **good ventilation** (open windows) must be ensured. If the minimum distance of 1.5 m cannot be maintained safely, a mouth-and-nose covering must be worn.

6. Recommendation for medical emergency organization

Due to the special situation (few people in the building), the recommendation is to staff areas in such a way that at least two people are present at the same time. This serves the purpose of medical (initial) care, in particular by locating people promptly and alerting rescue services. Areas in which working alone was priorly permissible are not affected (e.g. central control room).

7. Access to buildings

Buildings are open to staff and students who are covered by the regulations on university operations during the coronavirus pandemic described here, including the permitted teaching and examination activities. Access is also permitted for persons who must be present at the university for operational reasons or who are present for agreed reasons (e.g. by invitation). The main entrance of the main building and the entrance at the security control centre of Building X are open. Starting on 24 June 2020, an additional entry area will be opened at the west end of the main building (Areas Sports, Section P). If further access areas become necessary for events, these will be documented as exceptions in the protective hygiene concepts. The university remains closed to the general public.

IV. Measures for organizing workplaces within the university during the coronavirus pandemic

1. Use of work rooms and social spaces

A sufficient distance of at least 1.5 metres to colleagues must be maintained. This distance must be maintained even for shorter personal contacts. Staff are requested to continue not to gather in groups.

The basic rule is that offices with an area of up to about 20 square metres (the size of a typical office) should be used by only one person. Individual cases can deviate from this as long as the distance of 1.5m between persons is retained (also in corridors and the like), sufficient ventilation is planned, and the further hygiene measures are maintained. This regulation for exceptions in office use must be coordinated with the AGUS staff unit: AGUS will determine whether the safety measures and hygiene rules can be maintained. Distance specifications must also be observed when arranging seating in social or recreation rooms. For laboratory work (laboratory workstations with technical ventilation, fume hoods, weighing chambers, large equipment, etc.), the general and customary laboratory hygiene regulations must be observed. A distance of 1.5 meters from colleagues must also be maintained here. Laboratory workstations must be set up accordingly (e.g., no shared use of laboratory benches).

Rooms must be **regularly ventilated** by their users. Ventilation reduces the number of fine droplets containing pathogens that may be present in the air. The following applies to ventilation: length of brief intensive ventilation: 3–10 minutes after 60 minutes at the latest in offices; after 20 minutes in meeting rooms. Duration of ventilation (doors and windows open simultaneously): In summer: 10 minutes, In spring/autumn: 5 minutes, In winter (outside temperature < 6°C) 3 minutes.

In public areas, the minimum distance of 1.5 m must also be kept safely. In areas where the above measures of work organization are not possible, alternative protective measures must be taken. To develop alternative protective measures, please contact the AGUS staff unit directly (arbeitssicherheit@uni-bielefeld.de).

2. Shared tools and work equipment

Tools and work equipment are to be used only individually wherever possible. Where this

is not possible, regular cleaning must be provided, especially before handing over to other persons. Otherwise, suitable protective gloves must be used provided that this does not result in additional hazards (e.g. getting caught up in rotating parts). Limits on the time worn and the individual disposition of staff members (e.g. allergies) must also be taken into account.

3. Sufficient protective distance/mouth-and-nose covering

When using public areas on the university campus (including stairways, doors, university hall, corridors, public areas of the library) and in areas where a sufficient distance is unlikely to be maintained, as well as in areas where experience has shown that people congregate (tool and material dispensers, washrooms, changing rooms, etc.), the wearing of mouth-and-nose covering is obligatory. This obligation also applies to areas in which a separate protective hygiene concept has determined that it is necessary to wear a mouth-and-nose covering.

As a general rule, the safety distance of 1.5 metres should also be maintained when using a mouth-and-nose covering.

4. Hygiene, mouth-and-nose covering, PPE

Personal protective equipment and mouth-nose covers are exclusively for individual use! The (reusable) mouth-and-nose covering must be taken home after work (and not left in the open at the workplace). This does not apply to special areas such as genetic engineering facilities. Liquid soap, towel dispensers, and disinfectants are available for cleaning hands.

V. Contact

E-mail: coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de

Bielefeld University

The Chancellor