

Regulations for University Operations at Bielefeld University during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Organizational Decree dated 23 March 2020

Updated version dated 12 July 2021, in force from 15 July 2021

In order to continue its successful response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, and to avoid a resurgence in the number of infections, Bielefeld University is operating in the mode of “University Pandemic Operations.” At the same time, however, the provisions of this Organizational Decree are intended to allow for the gradual reopening of increased university operations – subject to applicable legal measures and regulations.

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 24 June 2021 in its currently valid version from 14 July 2021; the General Order governing teaching and examinations at institutions of higher learning in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia from the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Social Affairs dated 14 July 2021; the fourth SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance dated 25 June 2021; the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Protection Regulations from 7 May 2021; the Coronavirus Ordinance on Travel Entry from 12 May 2021 in the consolidated version from 9 June 2021; and the Corona Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia dated 8 April 2021 in its currently valid version from 8 July 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 students, instructors, researchers, and technical and administrative staff.

In principle, and independent of the following contingency plan, the following still applies:

- A minimum of 1.5 meters social distancing must be maintained between all individuals.
- **Exceptions to maintaining social distancing** only apply in the following cases:
 - Situations in which it is necessary to carry out work.
 - If suitable protective measures are in place in the work area to fully prevent infections transmitted by droplets (structural separations, partitioning with glass, Plexiglas, or similar); or if there is at least a requirement to wear a community mask.

- In outdoor areas of the university, provided that the incidence level is 0 (7-day average rate of infection of 10 and under per 100,000 inhabitants).
- While wearing a face mask in public areas in university facilities, the main university hall, and in the university library (except for at student workstations) at incidence rate 0.
- In addition to the requirement to maintain social distancing, **wearing a face mask is also required in all university buildings.** (Exceptions include wearing a mask in staff offices and other workplaces provided that adequate social distancing is observed or comparable protective measures are in place, and for individuals with a medical certificate exempting them from wearing a mask.)
- Wearing a high-quality, medical grade mask (surgical mask or an FFP2 mask) is required in work settings in which social distancing of at least 1.5 meters cannot be maintained between individuals, and/or if other protective measures (such as appropriate partitioning with Plexiglass) are not available (see point IV.3). At permitted courses and examinations held in person, wearing a medical-grade mask is required of all those in attendance, even if social distancing is maintained. If Bielefeld is at incidence level 0 or 1 (under 10 or not more than 35 infections per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively), the face mask can be taken off while seated during permitted courses and exams, provided there is adequate ventilation or air filtering in the room. In addition to this, social distancing must be observed. Exceptions to the mask requirement during practical activities, e.g., in laboratories, during oral exams, or upon presentation of a medical certificate, continue to exist.

The medical-grade mask requirement continues to apply for all visitors to the university library (e.g. students/researchers/external visitors).

- Individuals with respiratory symptoms or fever (unless medically cleared as having another etiology) are, as a rule, not allowed on the university campus.
- Bielefeld University is offering two free Coronavirus rapid tests per week to all employees. Testing can take place once a week at the campus testing center (located in the cafeteria of Building X). At the campus testing center, staff members can also pick up another rapid test for home use. Staff members includes all individuals employed by the university (salaried employees, civil servants, support staff). Use of Coronavirus rapid tests is voluntary and is not a prerequisite for on-site presence (for exceptions to this, see testing requirements under Point III.6a). The University strongly encourages all employees to take advantage of these testing opportunities.

Persons with proven immunity (through full vaccination or recovery) have a very high degree of individual protection against infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, and/or protection from serious illness. However, individuals with immunity can still become infected and pass it on to others; the general protection measures (social distancing) therefore continue to apply to immunized persons as long as a large number of people in society has not yet had access to vaccines and are thus lying upon the immunity of others for protection. Nevertheless, exceptions to general protective measures are permitted, which are described in the Organizational Decree (e.g. sharing work

areas). Fully vaccinated individuals (after completion of the second vaccination) may, in principle, return to working on campus within the framework of the regulations currently governing university operations (for details, see Section III.3 and respective risk category).

Contingency Plan for Additional Temporary Measures to Protect against Infection with SARS-CoV-2

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, verifying their effectiveness, and coordinating with representatives of various university groups.

The Vice-Rector for Education and Teaching and the leadership 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 accordingly (see point III.5).

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

II. University Operations during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Based on the current version of the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia dated 14 July 2021, and in conjunction with the General Order of the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Social Affairs of 14 July 2021, the following regulations govern the organization of courses, examinations, and other academic events at institutions of higher learning:

Effective immediately, academic conferences and events can be held again in person. These gatherings must be in compliance with applicable requirements (including the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance) and must meet the following conditions:

- The incidence rate in Bielefeld must be 0 or 1 (maximum 10 or 35 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively)
- The number of participants must correspond to the occupancy limits of room(s) used.
- Regulations on social distancing are to be observed; at fixed seating areas, minimum distances may be exceeded.
- At the time of the event, participants must provide proof of full vaccination, recovery, or a negative test result.
- A face mask must be worn until arriving at your seat.

- 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 ventilation and required room size.

Should changes in rates of infection occur, it is possible that planned conferences and events will have to be cancelled at short notice. In such cases, the university management will make arrangements that are in line with the interests of the participants. Costs incurred due to cancellations will be borne by the organizing institutions.

Committee meetings must comply with the guidelines for conducting internal university committee meetings and appointment committees during the Coronavirus pandemic (see https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/verwaltung/dezernat-sl/wahlen/doks/2020-12-01_Handlungsleitfaden_Gremiensitzungen_und_Wahlen.pdf). In-person committee meetings may be attended by a maximum of 20 individuals if these meetings cannot be held by video conference or telephone. For committee meetings with up to 250 attendees, approval must be obtained from the public health authorities of the city of Bielefeld by submitting a request. The meeting must be held in person for legal or factual reasons, and with the number of individuals specified. These requests must include a valid rationale for why the meeting should be held in person.

For more on conducting meetings and working sessions at the university, see below.

1. Regulations for Studying and Teaching

a) Summer Semester 2021

In accordance with Infection Control Act of the Federal Government of Germany, the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia, and the General Order of the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Social Affairs in their currently applicable versions, the following regulations governing teaching and examinations during the 2021 Summer Semester apply:

Teaching and Practical Courses

The new General Order of the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia generally provides for the possibility of returning to in-person operations, provided that certain hygiene regulations (depending on incidence rates) are complied with. **In-person teaching and practical courses** are now also allowed without further subject-related prerequisites or justifications, given that social distancing is observed and simple contact tracing is followed. This means that there are no more restrictions on subject matter, such that permitted courses are no longer limited to certain rooms, equipment, or other requirements and framework conditions (previously, this was limited e.g. to lab practicals, practical sports courses, or art courses). In-person courses are also no longer limited to certain course participants (e.g. first-semester students, or students in their final semester). Returning to classroom teaching in the current semester, however, is not easily feasible for students or instructors due to pedagogical, organizational, and curricular considerations. This is why **the current 2021 Summer Semester should in general be brought to a close in the format in which it was started (largely online)**. However, taking into account classroom capacities, **instructors**

can also offer individual courses/meetings in person, provided that this is coordinated and agreed upon with students.

Participating in presence-based teaching and practical courses is only allowed if the current hygiene concepts (including social distancing) are followed, and proof of a negative test result is provided. This negative test result must not be older than 48 hours (with the exception of sports and music courses, for which the test must be taken on the day the course is held). Fully vaccinated individuals with proof of vaccination do not need to get tested. In accordance with the *Hausrecht* law, this testing requirement for teaching and practical courses is to be maintained during the lecture period of the 2021 Summer Semester regardless of the incidence rate. The specific testing scenario for teaching and practical courses was discussed by the Occupational Safety, Health, and Environmental Protection Service (AGUS) with the respective faculties, and is binding for all participants. In addition, students can also take the free public tests available at the campus testing center, among other places.

In case of a positive result on a Coronavirus rapid test, students are immediately required to submit to a PCR test (confirmatory test) at a testing center or general practitioner. You are required to inform the testing center or doctor's office of your positive Coronavirus rapid test result in advance. A PCR test can be performed at the campus testing center. Until receiving the results of your confirmatory PCR test, you must avoid all contact with others unless it is absolutely necessary. During this time, you are not allowed to enter university buildings.

In case of a positive Coronavirus rapid test result, students must immediately inform their instructors. If this result is then confirmed positive by PCR test, students must also immediately inform their instructors and send a message to coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de.

The General Order continues to allow for more than 50 people to attend in-person teaching and practical courses. Taking into account available room sizes, however, universities may set a maximum number of participants in order to ensure social distancing. In this current 2021 Summer Semester, only smaller courses with a maximum of 50 participants, and in compliance with applicable hygiene regulations and concepts, are allowed to be held in person at Bielefeld University. Applicable hygiene protection concepts are to be utilized by the organizers. The actual number of participants allowed in specific rooms depends on the size of the room (allowing for 1.5 m of social distancing), and information found in the hygiene protection plans. For courses allowed to be held in person on the basis of exception, names must continue to be registered and possibly also seat locations in order to enable public health authorities to conduct contact tracing if necessary. For more on recording contact information during teaching and practical courses, see point III.1; for more on the mask requirement, see above.

The respective courses should be taken from eKVV and posted online. eKVV also must contain information on whether the course will be held in person or online, or a combination of the two formats. In special cases, it may be possible to postpone planned courses into the semester break. Courses on Saturdays are also permitted.

For **online courses**, the digital formats and tools that have previously been developed and implemented can be used.

Oral and Written Exams

In general, oral and written examinations in the Summer Semester can be held as online or in-person examinations, taking into account room occupancy capacities.

For **online examinations**, the digital formats have already been developed and are available for online exams, including open-book and closed-book formats in the exam Moodle, or using Zoom and a computer lock (safe exam browser).

For **in-person examinations**, the General Order now stipulates that in-person exams are also possible without any further subject-related requirements or justifications, provided that social distancing is maintained and simple contact tracing is performed. This means that there are no longer any restrictions on the formats by which exams should take place (e.g. priority use of digital exams). The exams that have already been registered as in-person can therefore take place in presence without further justification, taking into account applicable hygiene regulations and hygiene protection concepts. Due to limited room capacities, not all examinations will be able to be held in person – some must be held online.

Participation in in-person examinations is currently permitted without having to provide a negative test result or undergo a supervised self-test for teaching staff and students because the city of Bielefeld and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia are current at an incidence level of 1 (maximum 35 cases per 100,000 inhabitants). There is still, however, an expectation that students get themselves tested in advance of the exam for the safety of all those present. **If the incidence rate of 1 is exceeded (maximum 35) in Bielefeld or in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, in-person examinations are only allowed to be held with a negative test and/or supervised rapid test.** Vaccinated individuals with proof of immunization do not need to get tested. In this scenario, students who do not have proof of a negative test result or vaccination will not be allowed to take an in-person exam. For more on the mask requirement, see above.

For in-person exams, the sign-in and registration procedure already established for exams during the previous summer semester must continue to be used (course enrollment lists in eKVV using individually allocated seating and no QR code).

Students who are unable to participate in courses and/or examinations due to relevant pre-existing health conditions are to be offered alternative formats.

The “Coronavirus Ordinance” for the 2021 Summer Semester from the Rectorate for Education and Teaching can be found here: <https://uni-bielefeld.de/themen/pruefungsrecht/coronavirus/Corona-Ordnung-SoSe-21.pdf>

Bachelor/Master Theses and Work-Group Laboratory Research

Students who are involved in laboratory research teams as part of their bachelor/master theses and/or research work can continue to carry on their work in compliance with the existing hygiene protection concepts. In addition to the measures governing workplace

design, laboratory managers must prepare a supplementary risk assessment to prevent Coronavirus infections. A sample hazard assessment can be requested from AGUS. Consultation and onsite inspection will be carried out by AGUS. For more on testing requirements, see below.

Examinations & Graded Work

Students are to continue to submit their assignments via email or using the submission folder in “Lernraum” (Study Room). This regulation does not apply if the examination regulations require a printed version to be submitted. For final theses, an email that contains an exact digital copy of the printed version must be sent to the responsible examination office as well as to the readers. Students are requested to meet deadlines for the submission of course assignments and exams (especially final theses) as far as possible, at least via electronic submission. Instructors are also asked to provide generous arrangements for submission deadlines.

b) Winter Semester 2021/2022

On the basis of the Key Points for the 2021/2022 Winter Semester (https://uni-bielefeld.de/themen/coronavirus/studium-und-lehre/Eckpunkte_Lehr-und-Prufungsbetrieb_WiSe-21-22.pdf), course scheduling is currently being organized at the faculty level. More information on the 2021/2022 Winter Semester will be provided at a later date.

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.

Student Workstations

Student workstations (for studying) located in the gallery/bridges in the hall of the main university building are anticipated to be available again for use by students starting on 1 September 2021. Study stations are already currently available for use in the University Library. Additional student workstations in seminar rooms are available based on the respective capacities of faculties and institutes.

Student workstations may only be used by students who have tested (negative) for SARS-CoV-2, or those who are fully vaccinated or recovered. Students must bring a negative Corona rapid test, which is not older than 48 hours, or proof of complete vaccination or recovery to the workstation. This regulation is based on the *Hausrecht* law (§ 18 para. 1, sentence 4 HG NRW).

2. Work and On-Site Options for Researchers

Starting on 1 July 2021, researchers are allowed to work from Home Office or on campus in the facilities of Bielefeld University. When work is performed in university buildings, regulations governing workplace design must be observed. The following continues to apply as an

important measure for protecting against infection: **only one person is allowed per office (see Point IV below)**. Exceptions to this rule must be cleared with AGUS in advance so that the necessary hygiene protection measures can be taken. Points IV.1 and IV.3 in the Organizational Decree are to be observed. Coordination with AGUS is not required if the individuals sharing an office are both fully immunized.

3. Library Regulations

The library is open, with limitations. Only the main library entrances D1 and U1 in the main university building and the specialist libraries in Building X are open.

Visitors must register when they come to the library by presenting their valid library card (UniCard or barcode card), or by filling out a registration form with their name, address, email address, and telephone number (optional).

All individuals accessing the library (e.g. students/researchers/external visitors) are required to wear a medical-grade mask in addition to maintaining social distancing. In general, 1.5 meters social distancing must be observed. While wearing a face mask, social distancing limits can be exceeded in public areas of the university library (except at student workstations).

Library workstations must be reserved, and are only available to students of Bielefeld University. In accordance with the general regulations governing student workstations, library workstations may only be used by students who have tested (negative) for SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus or are fully vaccinated or recovered. Proof of a negative rapid test no more than 48 hours old, or proof of full vaccination or recovery, must be brought to the workstation.

Other library services are very limited: for more information and opening hours, please visit the university library website at <https://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/ub/coronavirus/>.

4. Regulations for Support Services

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

As of 1 July 2021 (if still possible), staff in technical services and administration will be authorized to work from Home Office or on-site in university facilities. When work is carried out in university buildings, regulations governing workplace design must be observed (see Point IV).

As of 1 September 2021 (situation permitting), the goal is 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 ensuring infection control.

The goal of having half of these staff members back to working on campus is a target number. The specific staffing of organizational units is to be based on the respective service requirements and accompanying circumstances (in particular 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 are also to be taken into account.

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 setting up work or occupancy teams, the same persons should be assigned to joint shifts or work groups as far as possible in order to further reduce the number of internal contacts.

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

Details are to be determined by supervisors for their respective areas. These decisions are based on specific service requirements and attendant circumstances. The following continues to apply as an important measure for protecting against infection: **only one person per office is allowed**. This rule is to be given priority over the goal of achieving on-site presence for half of all staff. Exceptions to this rule must be cleared with AGUS in advance so that the necessary hygiene protection measures can be taken. Regulations governing workplace design are to be observed (Points IV.1 and IV.3). Coordination with AGUS is not required if the individuals sharing an office are both fully immunized.

When scheduling work groups or staffing teams that will be present on campus, small groups with the same persons should be assigned to the same shifts or work groups as far as possible in order to further reduce the amount of contact among internal staff. Personal contact between individual work groups involved in operations and changes to shift assignments are to be reduced 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 in their departments and can work with staff members to find viable solutions for all.

If a staff member develops respiratory symptoms, work is to be continued exclusively from Home Office and not on site at the university, even in reduced basic operations (if the staff member is not too sick for work) (see point 6. d. Introduction).

Work hours were already changed to trust-based work hours in March 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 for times when they work less and times when they work more on their own. 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 document the extra time worked and can offset it later.

III. Regulations/Procedures

1. Registration of Contact Information for Tracing Purposes

Principle

The traceability of contact chains of infected persons is one of the key strategies for containing the Coronavirus pandemic. Based on the Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia, the University is required to collect contact information for the purposes of traceability. Should an infected person have been present at the university, there may be a short-term obligation to provide information to public health authorities. In this case, people who may have come into contact with the infected person must be identified and informed (see point III.2 on suspected and confirmed cases below).

Students (Teaching and Practical Courses, Student Workstations)

Students are required to register for courses (lectures, practical courses, onsite examinations) that are allowed under exception to be held in person on campus. Ideally, registration of contact information is to be collected with a QR code at the entrance to the lecture hall or at the seat one is to occupy. This can then be scanned with a smartphone. For participants without a smartphone or for guests, registration is to be carried out by the **organizer**. Further Information on registration is available at: www.uni-bielefeld.de/anwesenheit

Additional registration of contact information at the (main) entrance areas (QR code or scanner) of university buildings is therefore not necessary for students.

More detailed information can be found in the respective hygiene protection concepts at <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/coronavirus/sicherheitskonzepte>.

University Staff

Technical Requirements

Digital registration has been available in all university buildings since 26 October 2020. Registration is carried out with scanners using a contactless, building-specific QR code. It is to be performed at the open entrances to university buildings (see point III.7) by swiping the UniCard or by reading the building QR code using a suitable smartphone. Anyone who does not have a UniCard or a suitable smartphone or does not wish to use them must fill out a registration form at the entrance with their relevant contact details (name, address, e-mail address, telephone number, period of stay) or drop a completed registration form in the letterboxes provided.

Access forms can be downloaded here: https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/themen/coronavirus/registrierung/2020-08-21_Zugangsbeleg_Fomular.pdf.

Please use your own pen to complete forms onsite. The scanner records only the ID number stored on the UniCard; the QR code records the Uni-ID and the day of presence in specific university buildings. If there is no request for tracing, data are deleted after four weeks. This also applies to the registration forms. It will only be necessary to trace the

registered ID numbers with contact details (name, address, telephone number, e-mail address) of the relevant persons if there is a coronavirus case in one of the university buildings. These data will then be processed by only a very small circle of authorized persons and only for the purpose of tracing. There is no recording of working times and no attendance controls either via electronic recording or via registration with a form.

By registering and entering the university buildings, you consent to the processing of your data as described above. The privacy policy can be viewed at: https://uni-bielefeld.de/themen/coronavirus/registrierung/2020-15-10_DS-Erklärung_Corona-Registrierung1.pdf.

In principle, the following applies: University buildings may be entered only through the officially open entrances (see point III.9). Open emergency exits and side exits must be kept closed. This policy is being applied only in order to be able to trace Covid-19 contacts. It is therefore limited in time and will end at the latest when the university returns to normal operations.

The data processing procedure has been verified for data protection conformity, please see: <https://uni-bielefeld.de/themen/coronavirus/registrierung/>.

Registration Rules

University buildings may only be accessed after completing registration. **This applies to all staff members: registration is therefore mandatory.** Those who do not register are not allowed to enter the university. Registration is required only once a day in each building that is entered. It is not necessary to “check out” when leaving a building.

In addition to the above-mentioned registration of your own presence in university buildings, the following points must also be observed for contact tracing and any potential requirement to provide contact information to public health authorities:

- It is not necessary for supervisors to document the presence of employees because this is done via the registration procedure at the entrances to university buildings.
- In the case of events, meetings, and gatherings arranged for official purposes, the organizer, supervisor, or promoter must keep a list of all participants/attendees for contact tracing purposes (please refer to point III.6. for the forms with which this can be completed).
- 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 contact information and attendees (e.g. in the Outlook calendar).

- If external companies are contracted and deployed onsite 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.
- A record must be kept of contacts and attendance of students at student counselling centers, where contact/counselling sessions usually last longer than 10 minutes and during which minimum social distancing will not be maintained (these are currently only being held online).

2. Instructions on What to Do in Suspected and Confirmed Cases

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

Staff with such symptoms are requested to leave the university campus immediately or to stay at home. Until their health status has been cleared by a medical professional, they are deemed to be unfit for work. As usual, supervisors must be informed if you 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 evaluation 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 the responsible supervisor to do so.

After a positive test result has been confirmed, infected individuals may not enter university buildings for at least 14 days (from the date of diagnosis)—irrespective of any quarantine order issued by the public health authorities. The university may be entered again only after 14 days and at least 2 days of being symptom-free (an exception may exist if the public health authorities extend the mandatory 14-day quarantine).

3. Rapid Coronavirus Tests for Staff Members

In its capacity as an employer, Bielefeld University is offering all staff members who have to be on campus to perform their work two free Coronavirus rapid tests per week. Testing is to take place once per week at the campus testing center (located in the cafeteria of Building X). Another rapid test for use at home 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.

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 to this, see Point III.6a). 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 general public testing options available at e.g. the campus testing center.

More information on how to get tested is available here: <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/intern/themen/corona-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 test, you are also required to inform the testing center of your positive rapid test result in advance. A PCR test can be performed at the campus testing center. Until receiving a negative result on the confirmatory PCR test, all social contact is to be reduced to an 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, staff members must also inform their respective supervisor and send an email about their result to coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de.

In case of a confirmed positive case of Coronavirus resulting from contact tracing, the following guidelines are to be observed:

1. Guidelines for contact tracing of students (Link: https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/agus/2020-12-03_handlungsleitfaden_Studierende_final.pdf)
2. Guidelines for contact tracing of staff (Link: https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/agus/2020-12-03_handlungsleitfaden_Mitarbeitende_final.pdf)

In accordance with § 15 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia dated 8 July 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 determine the next course of action.

Information on work-related contact is to be carried out in such a form that the person who has tested positive will inform their supervisor in a timely manner. Their supervisor will then arrange further steps.

If a person living in your home falls ill and has such symptoms (suspected case), please contact your supervisor and 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 (confirmed case) are required under § 16 paragraph 1 of the Coronavirus Testing and Quarantine Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia from 11 April 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; had no contact with the person who tested positive in the last ten days prior to this time; 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 (link: <https://www.mags.nrw/coronavirus-rechtlicheregelungen-nrw#verordnungen>).

4. Preventive Occupational Medicine and Guidelines for Risk Groups

All staff members have access to occupational health care (as a provision or on request). They can obtain individual advice from university medical services, including advice 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. Advice from university medical services can also be given by telephone.

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

Due to the currently low rates of infection, and the progress in vaccination among staff members, blanket regulations for (high-)risk groups will be eliminated in the future, and instead, individual risk assessments will be made on a case-by-case basis. The regulations mentioned under I.2 and I.4, in their current 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 the university medical service in advance to discuss their individual situation. Within the framework of an occupational health check, the university medical service will assess whether working on site at the university would be possible on the basis of the 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, they 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 they be able to return to working on university premises.

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 looking after relatives requiring care for underlying illnesses in their homes, and those 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 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 further procedure will be determined.

Staff and Students 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.

Pregnant Staff/Public Officials/Students

In view of the currently low rates of infection (incidence rate below 35 per 100,000), the ban on working on campus for pregnant women has been lifted.

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 expectant mother 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 in accordance with the Maternity Protection Act at the individual workplace and with the agreement of the Detmold district government, it is possible to work on site at the university. Pregnant women are required to contact the AGUS staff unit before starting work on site in university buildings.

The ban on being present on campus for pregnant students has also been ended. **In order to participate in relevant presence-based courses/exams**, an individual risk assessment can be conducted on a case-by-case basis in coordination with AGUS, university medical services, and the responsible authorities (Detmold district government) to obtain permission to attend relevant onsite events (if no unacceptable danger exists). Pregnant students are required to contact the AGUS staff unit.

Exceptions for Fully Vaccinated Individuals

Expectant mothers and pregnant students who are fully vaccinated no longer fall under the special regulations as described above. For these individuals, II.2 or II.4 of the latest version of the regulations for all normal staff members applies.

5. Work-Related Travel and Trainings

The following applies from 1 July 2021:

The necessity of work-related travel should be critically reviewed before undertaking it, 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 human resources department, and upon approval, special permission may be granted by the Rector or Chancellor.

The measures outlined in the Corona Entry Regulation 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.

Internal university continuing education courses should, as a rule, be conducted online (via Zoom). In individual cases, it is also possible to conduct events in presence, provided that hygiene measures are observed. In this case, the applicable internal regulations governing room capacities must be observed.

6. Returning from International (Business/Tourist) Travel from Foreign Risk Areas

For 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 9 June 2021. During this time, 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. (The test must have taken place no earlier than 5 days before their return.) This exception, however, does not apply to travelers returning from virus-variant areas.

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 III.6a must also be observed: when absent from campus for at least 5 business days, a negative test result or proof of complete immunization must be presented to the responsible supervisors before returning to working on site at the university. The specifics for each individual case are to be coordinated with the returning staff member's direct supervisor.

6a. Returning to Work on Campus after Absence

According to § 7, Para. 3 of the current Coronavirus Protection Ordinance of North Rhine-Westphalia from 14 July 2021, staff members must present a negative test result to their responsible supervisors upon returning to work on site at the university after an absence of 5 business days or more due to vacation or comparable exemption from service or work. Alternatively, a test can be performed on site under supervision (in our case: at the campus testing center). 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 exemptions 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 §7 of the Corona Protection Ordinance from 14 July 2021, as well as a violation of a university service directive, therefore comprising a violation of employment contract obligations and/or official work duties.

7. Work-Related Meetings and Events with Internal and/or External Attendees

In order to carry out their work, essential contact between staff members is permitted, provided that hygiene regulations are followed (Chapter IV).

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, room occupancy limits, wearing masks). The applicable internal regulations governing room occupancies and hygiene rules (Chapter IV) are to be followed.

Business-related events (by invitation and in event format) and meetings can generally

be held in person again, effective immediately. This is subject to compliance with the applicable requirements (including the Corona Protection Ordinance) and must meet the following conditions:

- The incidence rate in Bielefeld must be 0 or 1 (maximum 10 or 35 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively)
- The number of participants must correspond to the occupancy limits of room(s) used.
- Regulations on social distancing are to be observed; at fixed seating areas, minimum distances may be exceeded.
- At the time of the event, participants must provide proof of full vaccination, recovery, or a negative test result.
- A face mask must be worn until arriving at your seat.
- 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 ventilation and required room size.

Should changes in rates of infection occur, it is possible that planned meetings and events will have to be cancelled at short notice. In such cases, the university management will make arrangements that are in line with the interests of the participants. Costs incurred due to cancellations will be borne by the organizing institutions.

Effective immediately, company outings can also once again be undertaken, provided that the general hygiene measures are followed. Company outings are permitted under the following conditions:

- The incidence rate in Bielefeld must be 0 or 1 (maximum 10 or 35 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, respectively)
- At the time of the event, participants must 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.

8. Building Access

Buildings are open to staff and students for permitted onsite teaching and examination activities as specified in the regulations governing university operations during the coronavirus pandemic described here. Building access is also permitted for persons who need to be present at the university for operational reasons, as well as those who are present for agreed-upon reasons (e.g. on invitation by the university), and library users.

The entrances to the main university building (main entrance C01) and Building X (side entrance at the security station) are open. University buildings may be entered only through these officially open entrances. Emergency exits and side exits must be kept closed. If additional entrance areas have to be temporarily opened for events, these are to be defined as exceptions in the hygiene protection concepts. The university will remain closed to the general public.

IV. Policies on University Workplace Design during the Coronavirus Pandemic

1. Use of Work and Break Rooms

As a rule, adequate social distancing of at least 1.5 meters between colleagues must be maintained. This distance must be maintained even for periods of short personal contact. The only exceptions to observing minimum social distancing requirements include for example mandatory meetings for work-related purposes, and for in-person interaction among vaccinated individuals and/or those who all have proof of a negative test result, as well as while wearing a face mask in public areas, in the main university hall, and in the university library. Staff are still requested not to gather in groups indoors.

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

Furthermore, if offices are used by more than one person, it is strongly recommended that staff members undergo a Coronavirus rapid test every work day. 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.

An exception applies when only fully vaccinated people are present together in an office – in this case, distances of 1.5 meters can be exceeded.

Additional exceptions to these regulations governing the use of office rooms must be cleared in advance with the AGUS staff unit, which provides guidance and verifies whether safety regulations and hygiene measures are complied with.

Furthermore, office rooms may only be entered by colleagues upon request and with an appropriate face mask or a medical mask (if the distance is less than 1.5 m).

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). An exception applies when only fully vaccinated people are present together in a laboratory – in this case, distances of 1.5 meters can be exceeded.

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 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.

Ventilation of these rooms is particularly important due to possible 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 in 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 effects of ventilation can be enhanced by increasing the above-mentioned frequencies and extending the length of ventilation.

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

In public areas, minimum social distancing of 1.5 meters must also be maintained. In areas where the above-mentioned measures of workplace design 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). If partitions (protective hygienic walls) are to be used, these must be cleaned every day on both sides with a standard cleaning agent.

2. Shared Work Equipment

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 cleaner) is to be performed by the user, especially before handing the equipment over to others.

3. Sufficient Protective Distancing/Face Mask Requirement

In addition to compliance with minimum social distancing requirements in university buildings, there is also a general requirement to wear a face mask (exceptions to this include offices and other work areas where social distancing is maintained and individuals

who are exempt on certified medical grounds).

This face mask requirement also applies to areas in which wearing a face mask has already been defined as necessary in separate hygiene protection concepts.

Wearing a **higher-quality face mask** (a surgical mask or an FFP2 mask) is mandatory **if a distance of 1.5 meters between persons cannot be maintained** while performing work or if no other protective measures (e.g. suitable Plexiglas partitioning) are available.

At permitted courses and examinations held in person, wearing a medical-grade mask is required of all those in attendance even if social distancing is maintained. If Bielefeld is at the incidence level of 1 (maximum 35 cases per 100,000 inhabitants), masks can be temporarily removed when seated at permitted in-person courses and examinations, provided that the room is properly ventilated or an air filtration system is in place, social distancing is maintained, and a proof of a negative test result is provided. Wearing a medical-grade mask is also required when going to the library (e.g. students/researchers/external visitors). Exceptions continue to exist for individuals e.g. with a medical certificate exempting them from wearing a mask, and those participating in practical sport courses, laboratory activities, music instruction, and in-person oral examinations.

Filtering half masks (FFP2 /FFP3) must be provided to and worn by staff members when they come into direct contact while performing their work 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. Example 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).

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 certificate attesting to these medical reasons, the 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 evaluations that are now available (as of January 2021, in the Explanation of the Corona Protection Ordinance) on the lack of efficacy between 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.

If face masks (community 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.

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 the employees will 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.

3. Hygiene, Face Masks, PPE

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.

4. Official Instruction and Review of Measures

Management is legally obligated by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the SARS-CoV-2 ASR to provide regular instructions to their employees, and to document this. 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 above-mentioned content 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 example hygiene failures, must be monitored by supervisors and adjusted as necessary.

Contact

Email: coronavirus@uni-bielefeld.de

Bielefeld University

The Chancellor