

## **Protection concept of the University of Erfurt during the Corona (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic**

*(Preliminary version: April, 27, 2020)*

### **1. Background**

As an employer, the University of Erfurt fulfils its duties in the area of occupational safety and health protection in a responsible manner. In doing so, it not only has its employees in mind, but ultimately all university members and relatives as well as guests. During the Corona (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic, it is also taking intensive precautions in the area of infection protection. In the following, the structural and organizational measures are described and supplemented by individual behavioral instructions.

In the course of the current pandemic, experts warn of the danger of a rapid and severe illness of large population groups and point out the following problems in particular:

- 1) An effective vaccine is not available, and despite all efforts it is not yet possible to predict when a vaccine will be available.
- 2) There is no effective medication available and treatment must therefore be limited to alleviating the symptoms of the disease.
- 3) There are no reliable figures on what proportion of the population has been infected and what proportion of infections causes severe or even fatal disease.
- 4) There is also no reliable information on how long the protection against infection will last because of the disease.
- 5) According to the current state of knowledge, the virus spreads from person to person by droplet infection, by a smear infection through touching contaminated objects or surfaces and subsequent contact with the face, and by bioaerosols, i.e. floating droplet nuclei, especially indoors. Correspondingly, protective and hygienic measures must be taken and observed to prevent infection.
- 6) The majority of infections are caused by people in the early phase of the disease, or rather by infected persons without symptoms. Accordingly, it always remains unclear whether a contact dangerous to infection takes place or has taken place.
- 7) After the infection, an average of six days passes until the first symptoms appear, in individual cases, however, up to two weeks. This period is particularly dangerous for the transmission of the infection.

Against this background, the university has taken the protective measures described below. They apply with immediate effect, are regularly reviewed and, if necessary, adapted depending on the further course of the pandemic and the knowledge gained about the virus.

## **2. General conditions at the University of Erfurt**

The buildings and rooms of the university are spread over several locations in Erfurt and Gotha. There are about ten buildings on the main campus in Erfurt where employees are regularly working. From the point of view of infection protection, the fact that the distances between the buildings are covered in the fresh air is a positive factor. At the same time, however, there is no central access to the university, which means that both central and de-central measures must be taken to protect against infection, for example by installing disinfectant dispensers at the respective building entrances.

In addition, there are also student dormitories on campus and/or in the immediate vicinity, as well as supply facilities such as the cafeteria. Here, however, the „Studierendenwerk Thüringen“ is the responsible institution, so that they are not in the direct area of responsibility of the University of Erfurt. However, a close and trusting cooperation is maintained.

The University of Erfurt has rented the premises of the Gotha Research Library (FBG) from the Thuringian Palaces and Gardens Foundation and the City of Gotha. The FBG shares the buildings with the Friedenstein Castle Foundation, the latter and the State Archive. It is dependent on access via the castle courtyard and the ducal staircase as well as the toilets in the staircase, which are managed by the Castle Foundation. Against this background, the FBG cooperates closely with the landlords and neighbouring institutions in matters of infection control.

In normal operation at the university, the following areas of activity and work scenarios are to be distinguished:

- events in large groups, especially lectures;
- activities in small groups, especially seminars with students and committee meetings;
- office activities in the scientific and non-scientific area;
- special activities of employees such as caretakers, gardeners, drivers;
- service areas with contacts to students, employees and visitors (in particular Department 1: Registrar's Office, Department 3: Financial Services, Department 2 Human Resources, University Computer and Media Centre (URMZ), University Library, Research Library Gotha and the self-study areas in the Language Centre);
- offers in the field of university sports.

From the point of view of protection against infection, the above scenarios involve different risks and therefore require different reactions in the event of a pandemic.

## **3. risk minimisation measures**

### *3.1 Technical and organisational measures*

The university has created specific structures in the field of infection control. This includes the establishment of a crisis management team, in which representatives of the Presidium, departments and staff units, the University Computer and Media Center, the Staff Council, the Study Advisory Board, the contact person for occupational safety and the representative for occupational health management of the university meet with a representative of the Students' Union Thuringia. Several times a week, the crisis management team conducts a current assessment of the situation, clarifies any questions that arise or brings about decisions by the executive committee and regularly coordinates the university with the „Studierendenwerk Thüringen“.

For all questions regarding the current situation at the university, the crisis management team has set up an e-mail address: [gesundheit@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:gesundheit@uni-erfurt.de).

The following technical and organizational protective measures are taken:

1) The classical lecture business is suspended for the period of the pandemic until further notice. There will be no major classroom events at the university.

2) For events, committee meetings, conferences and other meetings, digital facilities are to be used primarily until further notice:

- The technical possibilities for digital teaching have been expanded and will be further optimized. Thus, seminaristic forms of teaching can be realized as online events. Teachers receive technical support for the new tools to be used through training courses and individual advice from the URMZ.
- A full license of the WebEx conference software has been purchased, so that video conferences and consultations are possible.
- The possibilities for digital committee meetings and decisions by circulation procedure have been extended by means of a framework code of procedure.
- The course rooms are open to students so that additional workstations are available for them on site. Signs at the entrance indicate how many students may use the room at the same time and remind of the distance requirement.
- Where it is nevertheless necessary for small groups to meet, attendance lists are kept so that chains of infection can be traced if necessary and quarantine precautions can be initiated. The participants sign the lists with their own pen. For data protection reasons, only the most necessary information – name and contact information – is provided. The lists are stored securely by the group management in accordance with data protection regulations and are destroyed after 30 days.
- For meetings of small groups, the rules of distance and hygiene (e.g. no sharing of objects, washing hands before and after the meeting) must be observed. A mouth-nose cover should only be worn if the rules of distance cannot be observed at the beginning and end of the meeting. The meeting is to be interrupted every hour for thorough airing.

3) In case of office work, the service activities are to be carried out, as far as possible, in tele-work/homeoffice or mobile work. In this way, the University of Erfurt also makes a contribution to its employees in fulfilling their care obligations (e.g. for children under 12 years of age or relatives in need of care).

- According to the current state of knowledge, pregnant women do not in principle have a higher risk of infection than the general population and are not subject to an increased risk of serious illness. However, the possibilities of treatment in the case of a severe course of the disease in pregnant women are limited compared to the general population. For this reason, pregnant employees must work in the home office as a special protective measure.
- In principle, service laptops are provided for work in the home office. If this is not possible, private hardware and software can be used for work in the home office in exceptional cases and in compliance with the university regulations on data protection and IT security. If necessary, employees receive technical support and individual advice from the University Computer and Media Centre (URMZ).
- If the presence of employees on campus is required, individual offices will be provided if possible. If this is not possible, work will be organized in such a way that two people share an office in "shift work" and are not present at the same time. Only in absolutely exceptional

cases can employees work simultaneously in particularly large rooms, provided that the rules of distance are observed, ventilation is intensified and a display unit (e.g. Plexiglas screen) is installed between the workstations.

- To facilitate "shift work", working hours have been made more flexible. Core time has been abolished; the framework time has been extended to 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

4) In case of activities of caretakers, gardeners, drivers and technical staff isolated work will be carried out as far as possible, provided that this does not cause additional hazards. Otherwise, small, fixed teams are planned in order to reduce changing contacts.

- In service vehicles, utensils for cleaning hands, paper towels and garbage bags are provided. During operationally necessary journeys, the simultaneous use of vehicles by several employees is to be avoided if possible. The number of people using a vehicle consecutively is also to be limited as far as possible. The interiors of the company vehicles are cleaned regularly, especially when used by several persons. Route planning is continuously optimized.
- Work clothes are to be stored separately from everyday clothes and cleaned regularly.

5) In service areas of the administration with student contact, there are instructions on distance regulations. Where possible, the minimum distances for possible queues are marked on the floor. At service points where regular calls take place and where the distance regulations may not be observed, more transparent displays (e.g., Plexiglas panels) are installed.

- The central facilities of the university can only be used under strict restrictions. The language center is to be used exclusively for courses. Students will have the opportunity to use the university's W-LAN facilities on campus with their own equipment. The University Library and the Gotha Research Library offer limited lending under special security measures (e.g. mouth-nose cover, Plexiglas panels at the lending and information counters). Special regulations are issued for this purpose. Computer pools of the University Library and the URMZ are not available for public use.

6. The sports facilities are closed for sports activities.

### *3.2 Further measures*

In addition, the following overarching measures will be taken:

- 1) Dispensers with disinfectants are located in the entrance areas of the buildings.
- 2) The sanitary facilities are equipped with skin-friendly soap and, to a large extent, disposable towels.
- 3) Instructions on the correct procedure for washing hands are attached to the wash basins.
- 4) Soap dispensers have a contact address for Department 4: Facility Management. If the soap runs out, a message can be sent and a short-term refill beyond the regular cycle can be guaranteed. The regular cycle includes daily refilling by an authorised cleaning company and, during the course of the day, a check and refill as required by Department 4.
- 5) Tea kitchens may only be used by one person at a time and exclusively for the preparation of food and beverages or for washing up. Common breaks are not permitted there and in other indoor areas. Regular thorough cleaning is guaranteed.

6) Door handles and handles on WC cabins, WC access doors, tea kitchens and recreation rooms are cleaned thoroughly every day with disinfectant.

7) The university provides cleaning agents for objects that must be used by several people.

8) The university provides mouth-nose covers for the employees on campus. Mouth and nose covers should only be worn in areas where it is explicitly required, for example in the lending area of the University Library, or where the minimum distance to other employees cannot be maintained for a short time. When exercising outdoors and observing the distance rules, breathing in and breathing out freely should be avoided. After at least one hour of wearing the mouth-nose-cover, a free breathing time of at least 30 minutes should be observed.

9) The university shall take into account fears, conflicts and similar psychological stress caused or aggravated by the corona crisis within the framework of the risk assessment and take appropriate measures based on this assessment. Employees can also seek medical advice on their individual risk at work and possible additional protective measures.

10) The university ensures the internal flow of communication, proactively informs about the affected regulations and explains them. It informs all students and employees on its website, in circulars via e-mail and on notices on and in the buildings.

11) Where the University of Erfurt cooperates with external service providers, it requires them to present their hygiene concept or a protection concept adapted to the current corona virus risk situation.

12) The external contractual partner must wear a mouth-and-nose cover and bring his or her own pen for signing contracts required on site. Afterwards, the table surface and door handles must be disinfected and cleaned.

13) Separate arrangements will be made for persons belonging to risk groups after consultation with the Human Resources Department or the Registrar's Office.

### *3.3 Individual behavioural guidelines*

In order to prevent the virus from spreading as far as possible and to protect oneself and others from infection, individual behaviour is particularly important. The following instructions apply here:

1) University members and relatives who feel ill, sense a herald of illness or have respiratory diseases are not allowed to enter the campus. They are requested to immediately contact their doctor and the hotline of the public health department of the city of Erfurt (Tel.: +49(0)361 655-267662) and to enter domestic quarantine. The infection of other people on the campus should be avoided. If infections are confirmed, the contact persons are to be identified and informed.

2) University members and relatives who return from abroad, who have had contact with a returnee or infected person or who are in domestic quarantine shall immediately contact their supervisor by telephone or e-mail and in Department 2: Human Resources (e-mail: [personal@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:personal@uni-erfurt.de), for employees) or in Registrar's Office (e-mail: [studierendenangelegenheiten@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:studierendenangelegenheiten@uni-erfurt.de), for students).

3) Any personal contact, especially in larger groups, should be avoided both inside and outside the university.

- 4) Where personal contact cannot be avoided, a distance of at least 1.5 metres, preferably two metres, from other persons must be maintained. Waiting and crowding in narrow corridors are to be avoided; in such cases it is necessary to wait at a distance until sufficient free space is available.
- 5) Direct physical contact, for example by shaking hands or hugging, should not take place.
- 6) Communication should be done digitally or by telephone as far as possible. Presence events with very small groups must be limited to the necessary extent and may only take place under strict observance of the rules of hygiene.
- 7) Business and training trips should not take place, but should be replaced by video conferences, for example.
- 8) Frequent hand washing with soap for at least 30 seconds is to be observed. Touching your own face with your hands is to be avoided.
- 9) Objects should not be shared if possible. Where this cannot be avoided, the corresponding objects are to be cleaned again and again with disinfectant; in the case of information and communication technology, however, with the necessary caution (only moist with fog).
- 10) A mouth-and-nose cover is to be used on campus if the minimum distance cannot be maintained during encounters. When taking off the mouth-nose-cover, avoid touching the outside of the cover, as germs may be present. Instead, the lateral tabs or cords should be grasped and first carefully placed on a clean surface (such as a sheet of paper). After removing the mouth-nose-cover, wash your hands thoroughly. The used mouth-nose-cover should be stored airtight (e.g. in a separate bag) and washed daily at at least 60° Celsius or another suitable disinfection. If necessary, a second mask should be used. Guests of the university are asked to bring their own mouth-and-nose covers.
- 11) Care should be taken to thoroughly ventilate the interior several times a day, as droplet nuclei can be suspended in the air for hours.
- 12) The way to work is preferably to be covered on foot, by bicycle or by car. Carpools should not be used. If the use of public transport cannot be avoided, a mouth-nose cover should be worn.
- 13) During (lunch)breaks, the occurrence of peak hours in the tea kitchens as well as at the food outlets of the „Studierendenwerk“ is to be avoided. Meals should be taken alone if possible.
- 14) The greatest possible distance from other people should be kept away from coughing or sneezing, and one should also turn away. In these situations, disposable tissues should be used and disposed of immediately afterwards. The hands should then be washed. If no handkerchief is handy, cough or sneeze in the crook of your arm, not in your hand.

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