Hygiene and infection control concept of TU Darmstadt for SARS-CoV-2

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Introduction

The following information and guidelines are based on the recommendations of the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), the currently applicable ordinances of the state of Hesse and the amended Infektionsschutzgesetz (IfSG – German infection control act).

This hygiene and infection control concept applies to all members of TU Darmstadt in all buildings of TU Darmstadt including premises rented or leased by TU Darmstadt. It does not apply to those organisational units with which separate agreements have been negotiated (such as tenancy agreements for premises of TU Darmstadt). It also applies to all non-TU members who are frequenting TU Darmstadt premises as guests or as employees of contractors working at TU Darmstadt. It must be ensured that these external parties are familiar with the hygiene and infection control concept as well.

Assessing risks for employees and staff at their respective workplaces in order to identify and implement the necessary protective countermeasures is a key requirement of §5 Arbeitsschutzgesetz (ArbSchG – Safety and Health at Work Act). Superiors must produce risk assessments for every single workplace and must update them to reflect substantial changes in working conditions. For this reason, the risk assessment addendum “Setting up a workplace with regard to the coronavirus pandemic” is attached to this hygiene and infection control concept for your convenience (https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_iv/corona_leitfaden_und_hygienekonzept_der_tu_darmstadt/index.de.jsp). In this risk assessment, pandemic-specific risks and their corresponding protective countermeasures have been added to the already existing risk assessment. Superiors must complete this risk assessment form and implement the respective protective countermeasures. The Health at TU Darmstadt support team (Gesundheit) will assist superiors as necessary.

Please note that a special risk assessment under pandemic conditions applies to expectant mothers. For more information, please refer to the Directorate VII webpage: https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_vii/info_a_z_vii/mutterschutz.de.jsp

Special hygiene concepts can be drawn up supplementing this overall hygiene and infection control concept of TU Darmstadt by including special regulations and their implementation for specific areas or situations. Please mail your respective hygiene concepts to the Health at TU Darmstadt support team. They will be happy to answer any questions in this regard that you may have: gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de. Please register one-off events and their respective hygiene concept with the Event Management team (veranstaltungen@pvw.tu-darmstadt.de).

This hygiene concept is applicable until revoked due to changing statutory provisions or newly imposed conditions by the local Gesundheitsamt Darmstadt-Dieburg (public health department). It is still important to check individually and personally how the below-stated measures are implemented and organised in your own area of responsibility.

Darmstadt, 23 November 2021
The President of TU Darmstadt
2 General rules of hygiene and infection control

2.1 Basic rules of conduct (AHA+L)

Please observe the following general rules of conduct during all your activities:

- **A for Abstand – distancing**: Keep a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps) to all people working around you whether indoors or outdoors at all times.

- **H for hygiene rules**:
  1) Observe the cough and sneeze etiquette. Cough and sneeze into paper tissues or your bent arm.
  2) Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds.
  3) Keep your hands away from your face, i.e., do not touch your face.
  4) Do not touch others in greeting like shaking hands, hugging etc.
  5) Always keep a sufficient distance to other people particularly those showing symptoms of illness such as coughing, sneezing or fever.

- **A for medical face masks (formerly Alltagsmasken – mouth-nose covers)**: Medical face masks must be worn inside buildings of TU Darmstadt at all times, except in the scenarios listed below:
  1) Speakers at taught courses and other events;
  2) When working alone in offices, laboratories, shop floors or other workrooms
  3) When doing sports
  4) During choir and/or orchestra practice and performance etc.

For scenarios 3) and 4), hygiene concepts with additional protective measures must be drawn up. When using university pool cars, the co-driver must wear an FFP2 mask.

A medical face mask is either a surgical mask or an FFP2 mask. The simple mouth-nose covers, so-called Alltagsmasken, (DIY) made from fabric, are no longer permissible. There are no recommendations on how long surgical masks may be worn. Information on how long FFP2 mask may be worn can be found here: [https://www.dguv.de/de/mediencenter/pm/pressearchiv/2021/quartal_1/details_1_418252.jsp](https://www.dguv.de/de/mediencenter/pm/pressearchiv/2021/quartal_1/details_1_418252.jsp)

- **L for Lüften – ventilating**: Ventilate the rooms you are using thoroughly and regularly. It is best to ventilate several times a day for 5 to 10 minutes. The simplest way to ventilate is by opening windows. This airing by opening the window must be done at start of work in any room and must be repeated regularly for as long as you work there. A ventilation (airing) interval of 60 minutes for office rooms and of 20 minutes for meeting rooms is recommended. To this end, open the window completely to allow for maximum air exchange. This is called Stoßlüften, i.e., impact or surge ventilation. In rooms with room ventilation systems, manual ventilation by opening windows is usually not possible because these rooms are supplied with fresh air automatically via central control systems. When ventilating rooms and hallways, do not use doorstops or similar to keep fire doors open. Fire doors must be able to close automatically for fire protection reasons.

The purchase of air purifiers or cleaners is neither necessary nor recommended because the risk of spreading viruses through aerosols is higher than the positive effects of purifying or cleaning the air. The use of recirculation units (fans, ventilators, fan heaters, recirculation coolers etc.) is only permitted in rooms (offices, laboratories etc.) that are used by one person.

2.2 Testing strategy and 3G principle

Vaccinated and recovered employees and staff are encouraged to do a self-test at least twice a week. This can be done using a self-test kit provided by TU Darmstadt or acquired from third parties. Unvaccinated employees and staff must present a negative self-test no older than 24 hours when entering their place of work. A negative PCR test is valid for 48 hours.

Based on the 3G principle, you need to provide negative proof indicating that you either are fully vaccinated against, recovered from or have tested negatively for the coronavirus as described above. The 3G principle is used at TU Darmstadt in the following situations:

- When attending courses on site;
– During written and oral examinations;
– When using the ULB, learning centres, PC pools or study areas;
– During university sport activities;
– During events such as conferences, project meetings, cooperation events, conventions, choir or orchestra practice and performance.

For more information regarding employment, please visit the webpages of the Directorate VII:
https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_vii/info_a_z_vii/informationen_a_z_vii/artikel_details_de_en_311360.de.jsp
https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_vii/info_a_z_vii/informationen_a_z_vii/artikel_details_de_en_311424.de.jsp

2.3 Hygiene and infection control material, personal protection equipment

Every organisational unit (such as department, institute, research group, central services) is independently responsible for providing their employees and staff with the required material. Orders can be placed centrally via the Directorate III using this email address: dez-3-z@ev.tu-darmstadt.de.

2.4 Returning from a trip

Your immediate presence at work after returning from a trip on official business or holiday abroad can only be granted under certain conditions. Quarantine regulations for travellers returning to Germany have been harmonised nationwide and can be found here in English:

Beginning work in person on site without the measures mentioned in this fact sheet is not possible. A current list indicating areas of virus variants and of high risk is provided by the Robert Koch Institute (https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete_neu.html) Again, please evaluate responsibly and carefully what risks and hazards you were exposed to during your trip, and what consequences they could have for you and your colleagues. If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to an increased risk of infection, you should contact your superior/manager and, if necessary, arrange for mobile working. In case of organisational questions, please feel free to contact the Health at TU Darmstadt support team by email: gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de. In case of medical questions of an occupation-related nature, please contact the Medical Service MAS.

2.5 How to deal with COVID-19 infected people

If you are working at TU-Darmstadt and feel symptoms such as coughing, fever and/or shortness of breath, inform your superior/manager or the Departmental Office and go home immediately. Get in touch with your general practitioner or the Gesundheitsamt (public health department) by phone to discuss how to proceed. Should an employee or staff member call in sick to work because of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 infection, we ask you to notify us via gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de so we can initiate any further steps that may prove necessary together with you. Vaccinated and recovered employees, staff and students are kindly asked to report back to the support team. Naturally, we will handle all information and data involved confidentially.

For detailed information, please refer to the webpage of the Directorate IV: https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_iv/corona_leitfaden_und_hygienekonzept_der_tu_darmstadt/index.de.jsp#text__bild_1
3 Special hygiene measures

3.1 Workplace

Employees and staff need to discuss personally with their superiors what options there are to work mobile from home and which tasks can only be done on site. They also need to discuss the availability of suitable working space on site and at home to set up a tailored work schedule and place. An important aspect to be considered is the employee's and staff member's mental health including personal and social circumstances. During this weighing process and in accordance with the Infektionsschutzgesetz (IfSG – German infection control act), it is important to remember that TU Darmstadt as an employer is required to offer its employees and staff working in office rooms or taking care of comparable tasks the opportunity to work mobile from home, unless there are overriding operational reasons to be considered. Employees and staff have to accept these opportunities, unless there are valid reasons to the contrary.

Multiple occupancy of workrooms, such as offices, shop floors, laboratories etc., is possible. In that case, however, medical face masks must be worn by everybody, even at their personal workplaces. It is generally not necessary to have rotating fixed teams.

At some workplaces, separators made from plexiglass (transparent acrylic plastic) for instance can be useful in addition to keeping the minimum distance. This applies particularly to areas that are frequented regularly and extensively by others, e.g., to receive counselling, to get information or material and may even include laboratories and shop floors. The Health at TU Darmstadt support team (gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de) will assist you in case of questions.

It is still necessary to consider carefully if official meetings and briefings really require the participants to be present physically. If digital formats prove to be inadequate and gatherings on official business on site prove to be the best option, suitable locations and numbers of participants need to be selected in accordance with the AHA+L rules (section 2.1). In addition, the gatherings must be kept as brief as possible. For more information regarding working on site, mobile work from home and gatherings on official business, please refer to the Directorate VII webpage: https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_vii/info_a_z_vii/corona_virus_handlungsanweisungen.de.jsp

3.2 Using shared spaces

When using shared spaces such as break rooms and tea kitchens, you must observe the minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps). Breaks must be taken at staggered times to avoid indoor encounters during meals as much as possible. Medical facial masks may only be taken off temporarily while eating or drinking. When using tea kitchens, you must observe customary hygiene rules regarding the use of cutlery and dishes as well as tea towels.

3.3 Using changing rooms, toilets and washrooms

In toilet facilities, do not stand around the sinks as a group at the same time. Regular ventilation of sanitary facilities must be ensured. If changing rooms are used, they must be ventilated after each use. Please observe the minimum distance to other people in the changing rooms as well. Should it be impossible to keep such a minimum distance due to room design, organisational measures must be put in place such as one-person access at a time only.

3.4 Trainees and apprentices at places of work

Should it be necessary for trainees and apprentices to be present on site, the workflows must be organised in such a way that work can be resumed safely while adhering to the applicable hygiene and infection control measures. The instructor in charge is responsible for setting up a safe working environment. In addition to this requirement, each workplace environment must be assessed (such as specific requirements for laboratory
work, shop floors or offices). To ensure full infection control, processes and work assignments need to be organised in such a way that parts of them can also be done from home. If necessary, respective measures need to be coordinated with the training/education provider in charge.

3.5 Courses

In the winter semester 2021/22, courses will, as a rule, be taught in a hybrid format both traditionally and digitally. For courses on site in person (lectures, exercises, seminars, practicals etc.), mandatory negative proof based on the 3G principle applies (refer to section 2.2). Speakers are exempt from the general obligation to wear medical face mask, provided a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-6 steps) to the audience can be ensured. Hygiene concepts for practicals, laboratory work and excursions must be coordinated with the respective departments. Hygiene concepts for all other courses deviating from the overall hygiene concept must be coordinated with and approved by the Health at TU Darmstadt support team (gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de). Which courses are to be held digitally or in person on site will have to be decided by the departments. Dissertations and theses requiring student attendance on site can be registered any time, provided that the required hygiene concepts have been implemented.

3.6 Oral and written examinations

Oral examinations are possible in person on site as long as a minimum distance to other people is kept and medical face masks are worn. There is negative proof required based on the 3G principle. Medical face masks must be worn throughout the examination.

There are no exceptions possible in regular examination rooms. Should medical reasons be stated that make wearing a medical face mask counterproductive, the following options are available in general:
1. Withdrawing from the examination in accordance with Section 33b of the supplementary statutes1 to the APB;
2. Opting for an alternative form of examination (such as an oral examination, an open-book or remote written exam) in accordance with Section 2 of the 2nd supplementary statutes2;
3. Opting for an examination in a separate room based on a separate hygiene concept scheduled at the same date and time.

Changing the form of examination and conducting an examination at the same date and time are subject to practicability and must be applied for in time by the examinee with the examiner.

During a thesis or dissertation defence, all participants other than the speaker must wear medical face masks. Should this not be possible, these defences must be done online.

For detailed information on how oral and written examinations are organised and conducted, please refer to “Courses and examinations under corona conditions” on the webpage of the Directorate II: https://www.intern.tu-darmstadt.de/verwaltung/dez_ii/covid19/index.en.jsp

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1  Supplementary statutes to the APB (Allgemeine Prüfungsbestimmungen – General Examination Regulations) and PO/AT (Allgemeine Bestimmungen der Promotionsordnung – General Provisions of the Doctoral Regulations) of TU Darmstadt concerning the permissibility of alternative forms of examination due to the coronavirus situation, approved by the Executive Board on 08 January 2021, SB 2021 II S in the version dated 15 July 2021 (SB 2021-VII p 4)

2  Second supplementary statutes to the APB of TU Darmstadt regarding the reliability of remote written exams, dated 18 February 2021 (SB 2021-III p. 8)
3.7 One-off events

In case of one-off events, a distinction is made between events critical or uncritical regarding hygiene. The regulations stated below apply:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Events uncritical regarding hygiene</th>
<th>Events critical regarding hygiene</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No meals, no overnight stays as a</td>
<td>Conferences, meetings, project</td>
<td>Meals, making music, overnight stays</td>
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<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>gatherings, cooperation events,</td>
<td>as a group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>training sessions, further education</td>
<td>courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>All events with an organised</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reception, informal gatherings,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christmas parties, choir and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>orchestra practice, performance,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conventions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Registration via application for</td>
<td>In addition to the measures stated on the left:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one-off events, including a hygiene</td>
<td>– Negative testing of all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>concept</td>
<td>required; daily testing in case of events lasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– 3G checks of all persons present</td>
<td>more than one day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by organiser</td>
<td>– Verification of negative test results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Obligation to keep a minimum</td>
<td>by organiser</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distance and wear a medical face</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mask</td>
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More stringent rules upon request by the event management permissible. It is highly recommended to refrain from events that are critical regarding hygiene.

4 Already approved hygiene concepts

Already approved special hygiene concepts for conferences, project meetings, training, in-house training, cooperation events, conventions, team-building measures, taught courses, learning centres and study areas, libraries, activities of university groups etc. will remain in force with the following changes:

- Medical face masks must be worn (refer to section 2.1), whether or not a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-6 steps) can be ensured.
- Amended rules for negative proof based on the 3G principle (refer to section 2.2).
- The regulations stated in section 3.7 now apply to one-off events.

The Health at TU Darmstadt support team (gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de) will be happy to answer any questions in this regard that you may have.