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

Version 1.2
(Status 17 June 2020)
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1 Introduction

The following information and guidelines are based on the recommendations of the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and the currently applicable ordinances of the State of Hesse. The coronavirus pandemic is a challenge touching all of society and requires all of us to act responsibly. TU Darmstadt decided to follow our current path by contributing to our joint efforts of containing the pandemic and protecting all members of the TU.

This hygiene and infection control concept applies to all members of TU Darmstadt with the exception of those organisational units with which separate agreements have been negotiated (such as tenancy agreements). It also applies to all non-TU members who are frequenting TU Darmstadt spaces 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 and identifying and implementing the necessary protective counter measures are one of the key demands of §5 of the Arbeitsschutzgesetz (ArbSchG - Safety and Health at Work Act). Supervisors 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 the hygiene and infection control concept for your convenience. In this risk assessment, pandemic-specific risks and their corresponding protective counter measures have been added to the already existing risk assessment. Supervisors must complete this risk assessment form and implement the respective protective counter measures. The support team will advise supervisors as necessary.

Based on the higher-level hygiene and infection control concept of TU Darmstadt, a hygiene and infection control concept must be produced containing the necessary modifications and additions for the respective organisational unit (e.g. for laboratory work, project groups, excursions etc.) and sent to the support team gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de. The support team will be happy to assist as necessary.

This hygiene concept (version 1.2) is applicable until revoked due to changing statutory provisions or newly imposed conditions by the local Gesundheitsamt Darmstadt-Dieburg (public health department).

Darmstadt, 17 June 2020

The President of TU Darmstadt

2 General rules of hygiene and infection control

2.1 Basic rules of conduct

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

- Whenever it is not possible to work alone, keep a minimum distance of 1.5 meters (4-5 steps) to all people working around you including passers-by whether indoors or outdoors.
- Have your personal hygiene material (surgical mask) with you at all times.
- Observe the cough and sneeze etiquette: Cough and sneeze into paper tissues or your bend arm. Discard your paper tissues after use immediately in a dustbin/garbage can.
- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- Keep your hands away from your face, i.e. do not touch your face.
- Do not touch others in greeting like shaking hands, hugging etc.
• Always keep a sufficient distance to other people particularly those showing symptoms of illness such as coughing, sneezing or fever.

2.2 Hygiene and infection control material

Every organisational unit (such as department, institute, research group, central services) is responsible for providing their employees and staff with the required material.

2.2.1 Hand sanitiser

Please use hand sanitiser only if washing your hands with soap and water is not possible. Using hand sanitisers is not an adequate substitute for washing your hands regularly as detailed above.

2.2.2 Mouth-nose coverings and clear facial-shields or visors

Simple mouth-nose coverings are intended primarily to protect other people from very fine droplets and particles that you exhale. Wearing such a covering is, therefore, highly recommended to protect others. However, this is not an alternative to keeping the required minimum distance to other people. These coverings are only a complementing infection control measure.

How to put on a surgical mask:
• Touch a surgical mask on the outside only.
• Pick up the surgical mask by its elastic bands.
• Hold the surgical mask in front of your face.
• Pull both elastic bands behind your ears.
• Press the nose clip of the surgical mask firmly to your nose until the surgical mask form-fits your nose and cheeks.
• Pull the surgical mask with your thumb and index finger down and past your chin.
• Put on your glasses (spectacles).

How to take off a surgical mask:
• Do not touch the surgical mask with your hands.
• Take hold of both elastic bands with both hands at the same time and pull them to the front.

You can also use facial shields or visors.

2.2.3 Disposable gloves

Wearing disposable gloves is not necessary when observing proper and thorough hand-washing routines. It becomes necessary only whenever there are no hand-washing facilities nearby.

When wearing disposable gloves, please note:
• Dry your hands well before putting on disposable gloves.
• Wear disposable gloves as briefly as possible (no longer than 2 hours at a time, otherwise the moisture trapped between gloves and skin will damaged your skin).
• Do not touch the contaminated outside of disposable gloves when taking them off. Roll them off instead.
• Throw disposable gloves in the dustbin (garbage can) immediately after use.
• Should you be unable to wash your hands right away, use hand sanitiser instead.
2.2.4 Workplace separators

In principle workplace separators, made from plexiglass for instance, should only be used where people cannot keep a minimum distance of 1.5 m permanently or where it is not possible to vent regularly, be it for workflow or technical reasons. 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. For more information, read sections “3.5 Laboratory and shop floor operations” and “3.7 Workplaces open to the public”.

2.3 Indoor ventilation

Ventilate the rooms you are using thoroughly and regularly to reduce the number of potential causative organisms in the air and trapped in tiny droplets. It is best to ventilate 4 times a day for 5 to 10 minutes. 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.

2.4 Cleaning

All rooms are cleaned according to the usual cleaning intervals based on the pre-determined cleaning schedules which are available for reference at the organisational units or can be requested at the office in charge via reinigung@pww.ru-darmstadt.de. Not included in these schedules are main rooms with high visitor frequency during written exams. These rooms will be cleaned after each exam.

Cleaning beyond the measures stated above will not be necessary according to the Robert Koch Institute: “To disinfect domestic and public areas and surfaces on a large scale routinely, even those frequently touched, is not recommended despite the current COVID pandemic. Instead cleaning these areas and surfaces appropriately should be first choice.” (Source: https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Reinigung_Desinfektion.html, status: 28 May 2020).

It is still very important to wash your hands regularly and thoroughly and to observe the general instructions on hygiene.

2.5 Workwear, personal protection equipment and work equipment

Workwear and personal protection equipment must not be shared with others. They are for personal use only. Work equipment such as tools should whenever possible, be used by one person only. Should this not be possible, this work equipment must be cleaned regularly. While at it, observe hand-washing routine as well.

2.6 Returning from travel

You are required to return to your private quarters or another suitable place without delay or detour after entering Germany and to stay there for 14 days in self-quarantine should you have entered the state of Hesse from a state outside the Federal Republic of Germany, i.e. a state that is neither a member state of the European Union nor a Schengen member state (non-member state). This also applies if you are entering from a state that according to statistical analyses and publications by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has a number of newly infected people in relation to its population of more than 50 cases per 100,000 residents cumulated during the last seven days and if the German Federal Government has referred to this information in their status report and the Robert Koch Institute has published it as well. Under these circumstances, you need to inform your supervisor/manager.
immediately by phone that you are back home again before returning to work. Duty of presence does not apply to you; instead, you will have to work from home for at least 14 days. This regulation also applies to any employee or staff member who has been in immediate contact with a coronavirus infected person.

2.7 How to deal with COVID-19 infected people

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.

Naturally, we will handle all information and data involved confidentially.

3 Hygiene measures case by case

3.1 Office work and meetings

The regulation to move working time to mobile work, if possible, applies until revoked. For more detailed and current information, refer to “Coronavirus – Instructions and Guidelines for Employees and Staff” under “Information A-Z” on the Department VII webpage.

Should it be necessary to work on site, the following basic rules apply:

- Depending on the size of the office, only one person at a time may use the office.
- Keep a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps) when meeting with or passing by other people. This regulation applies independent of the office size.
- In consultation with the supervisor/manager, employees and staff members can agree on a combination of mobile work and work on site.

The number of face-to-face meetings must be restricted to the absolute minimum. Alternative online communication formats should be used instead. Should face-to-face meetings be absolutely required, the number of participants must be reduced, suitable rooms must be chosen and to prevent further virus infections, the precautionary steps such as sneeze and cough etiquette, a minimum safety distance between participants etc. must be observed.

For more information regarding working on site, refer to “Coronavirus – Instructions and Guidelines for Employees and Staff” under “Information A-Z” on the Department VII webpage.

3.2 Use of 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 per person at different times to avoid direct contact. 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.

Shared showering facilities will remain closed until further notice. Please observe the minimum distance to other people in the changing rooms as well. Should it be impossible to maintain 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 Mobile work

Workflows must be organised and designed in such a way that working on site at TU Darmstadt will be reduced to bare minimum. Employees and staff members should continue to opt for working from home in consultation with their supervisor/manager whenever possible.

For more detailed and current information, refer to “Coronavirus – Instructions and Guidelines for Employees and Staff” under “Information A-Z” on the Department VII webpage.

3.5 Laboratory and shop floor operations

Necessary work in laboratories can continue provided the general hygiene and infection control measures are observed. In addition, the following safety precautions must be observed, particularly in rooms that are used by more than one person at the same time. Should it not be possible to ensure a safety distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps) at all times:

a. Organisational measures ensuring safety distances in rooms and buildings must be put in place, such as a guiding system, signposting, visiting rules, re-organisation of workflows etc.

b. Should there be areas where safety distances cannot be ensured at all times, those persons working or spending time in these areas must wear protective mouth-nose covers (for instance when assessing products). Facial shields or visors according to the DIN standard DIN EN 166 can be used, if suitable for laboratories.

c. Should a laboratory workplace require a lengthy task activity that makes minimum distancing impossible, a separation to adjoining workplaces is recommended (like a plexiglass divider).

d. To prevent direct contact, consider time offsets for starting/ending work and breaks. In addition, consider offset working hours by mutual agreement between supervisor/manager and employees/staff.

e. Should several groups work one after the other on the same day in the same laboratory, the respective laboratory manager must ensure that the used work surfaces are being cleaned before turning this workspace over to the next group. For work equipment used during laboratory work, refer to section “2.5 Workwear, personal protection equipment and work equipment”.

f. Laboratories must be vented regularly and thoroughly.

All supplementing hygiene and infection control measures must correspond with the applicable requirements regarding safety and health protection at work.
3.7 Trainees and apprentices at workplaces

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.

3.8 Workplaces open to the public

Once TU Darmstadt is open to the public again (e.g. for personal counselling at the offices for student affairs, opening of information desks and counters, central post offices), installing fixed plexiglass dividers for sneeze and cough protection is recommended in addition to the other general hygiene measures, provided there is enough space. Alternatively, protective mouth-nose covers must be used by both parties. Only one student or person seeking advice is allowed to enter and be in the room at a time. In case of information desks and counters, a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps) must be maintained.

3.9 Working outdoors

A minimum distance of 1.5 meters (4-5 steps) must also be observed between people working outside (technical services, HRZ employees, gardeners, postal services) and possible passers-by. If the tasks involved cannot be done while observing a minimum distance, then all involved must wear protective mouth-nose covers.

Tools and equipment shared with others need to be cleaned after each use before handing them over. Wash your hands regularly. Should this not be possible because there are no hand-washing facilities nearby, use hand sanitiser instead.

3.10 Use of university vehicles

Have university vehicles be used by one person per vehicle per day only. Those in charge of university vehicles must provide non-alcoholic disinfection tissues so the user can wipe down frequently-touched surfaces such as steering wheel, back mirror, gearshift lever, Radio/GPS controls).

Should it be necessary that not just the driver but another person rides along at the same time in other university vehicles (such as transporters, lorries, vans or service vehicles of the technical services, the HRZ and the Directorate IV), the passenger must wear a protective mouth-nose cover and must sit on the back bench, if available.

4 Studying and teaching

Teaching on-line via digital channels still applies to the summer semester 2020 and the winter semester 2020/2021. An exception is possible for courses that require being on site, such as laboratory work and excursions. Any course on site must be justified and coordinated in advance with the department in charge.

4.1 Final theses and laboratory work

Theoretical Bachelor’s and Master’s theses can be registered at any time.
For completing or registering experimental final theses and laboratory work, however, the following two requirements must be met:
  a. The supervisor in charge must be on site and must admit students/research assistants personally.
  b. The supervisor in charge must ensure that the hygiene regulations stated in section “2. General rules of hygiene and infection control” are observed.

Presence in the building must be limited to the experimental part of the work only.

4.2 Excursions

Should it not be possible to offer substitute courses, excursions are a good alternative provided the general hygiene requirements are observed. Travel to and from the location must be organised individually and not as a group. In addition, excursions should be limited to day trips.

4.3 Oral exams

For oral exams on site, the following steps must be taken:
  • The number of participants must be limited to the bare minimum.
  • Suitable rooms must be chosen where a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps) between everyone involved can be maintained.
  • The regulations stated in section “2. General rules of hygiene and infection control” must be maintained.

For detailed information regarding the organisation and implementation of oral exams, please refer to “Information on conducting examinations and courses under corona conditions” on the webpage of the Directorate II.

4.4 Written exams

For current and detailed information regarding the flow and organisation of written exams, please refer to “Information on conducting examinations and courses under corona conditions” on the webpage of the Directorate II.
The risk assessment “Setting up a workplace with regard to the coronavirus pandemic” supplements the already existing risk assessment by including pandemic-specific risks and their corresponding protective counter measures.

<table>
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<th>Risks</th>
<th>Does not apply to work area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Possible protective measures</th>
<th>Defined measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is no hand washing facility near the workplace (for instance when working outdoors).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provide hand sanitiser.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps) between individual persons cannot be maintained.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Protective mouth-nose covers must be worn by all people affected. At worksites with direct “customer contact”, protective shields must be installed.</td>
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<td>Multi-occupation of office rooms or workplaces</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reduce the number of people working in the same rooms per day by offsetting working hours on site and in combination with mobile work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third party access to workplaces (persons not belonging to the work area)</td>
<td>Rearrange furniture and reduce number of seats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insufficient ventilation</td>
<td>Specify and put up access regulations. Mark floor with required minimum distance markings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ventilate rooms regularly by opening windows. Turn on technical ventilation systems (where available and if not centrally controlled). Do not use ventilators.</td>
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<td>Shared break rooms</td>
<td>Rearrange seating and schedule break times or provide additional space.</td>
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<td>Team work required</td>
<td>Keep a minimum distance of 1.5 m (4-5 steps). Set up fixed teams and rotate complete teams when working in shifts to prevent cross-infections between teams.</td>
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<td>Hazardous solo work</td>
<td>Also during the pandemic, hazardous work must not be done alone. Maintain minimum distance while working. Coordinate hazardous tasks with the leading occupational safety officer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business trips</td>
<td>Reduce business trips to a minimum. For more information, refer to section 3.9</td>
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of the hygiene concept of TU Darmstadt.