Dear Employees and Staff of TU Darmstadt

Due to the corona pandemic, we currently experience considerable disruptions of our private and working life resulting in many uncertainties and a growing sense of insecurity.

In times like these, all of us need to work together in the interest of our families and friends, our colleagues and every single one of us by being careful, proactive and supportive as a community.

In close cooperation with the Hessian Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration, the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts and in close contact with other academic institutions, including experts at the TU Darmstadt, we work hard to adopt regulations and offer recommendations to maintain operations and services under these difficult circumstances. However, we also need to consider the personal circumstances of our students, employees and staff, including their fears and worries as much as possible. This will in some cases become quite challenging and we will only be able to persevere with the active help and support of all concerned. More often than not, we will be confronted with situations that we did not foresee and for which we have no ready-made response. These situations may require extremely difficult decisions on an individual basis. To ensure a well-informed decision-making process, we offer counselling in close cooperation with our team of experts who will coordinate all queries and responses and will include all experts at TU Darmstadt, the TU crisis response team and the Executive Board of TU Darmstadt in this process. You can get in touch with this team via email at gesundheit@tu-darmstadt.de.

Please check the TU Darmstadt homepage daily for up-to-date information, recommendations and instructions:
https://www.tu-darmstadt.de/universitaet/aktuelles_meldungen/mitteilung_corona_virus.de.jsp

We would also like to encourage all employees, staff and supervisors/managers as well as student assistants, of course, to show a certain degree of generosity and flexibility in this situation and to help us find creative solutions as long as they comply with the law and do not expose employees and staff to danger.
In the following, we compiled the expectations of the Executive Board of TU Darmstadt on this matter (status: 15 March 2020), which we ask you to kindly consider in your decision-making process:

1. Working from home and caring for other family members

   a) The Executive Board expects that staff and supervisors/managers make generous use of the opportunity to work from home independent of whether they fall under the regulations on mobile work in force since 1 November 2019 or not and independent of the individual regulations formulated then.

   b) Supervisors/managers are expected to implement the necessary technical requirements to make working from home possible. Should it be impossible to offer mobile work immediately, employees, staff and supervisors/managers need to find a feasible solution, even if reasonable restrictions of functionality are required.

   c) The interests of employees and staff with an increased risk of serious illness caused by COVID-19 need to be considered in particular. All employees and staff, age 60 and older and/or suffering from underlying health conditions (such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic diseases of the respiratory system, the liver, kidneys as well as cancer) and/or with a suppressed immune system (due to any illness putting a strain on the individual's immune system and/or due to any prescribed medication that weakens the immune system) must be given the opportunity of working from home if at all feasible (refer to resolution of the cabinet, dated 13 March 2020).

   d) Upon request, employees and staff taking care of children under the age of 12 will be granted leave of absence with continued payment of remuneration beyond the 3 working days previously collectively agreed or provided under civil-service law, if and provided that working from home is either not possible or only in a limited way should childcare facilities such as nurseries, kindergarten or school close due to coronavirus infection control measures. In addition to the age of the child, this decision-making process must also consider available alternative care-taking options and mobile work from home, even at irregular hours, if necessary.

   The same considerations apply for employees or staff having to take care of family members in day-care (refer to SGB XI of the German Social Security Code and HVwVfG, the Hessian Administrative Procedure Act) should these day-care facilities close due to corona infection control measures (refer to resolution of the cabinet, dated 13 March 2020).
e) In the cases c) and d) mentioned above, the supervisors/managers need to coordinate matters with employees and staff. A formal request and a formal approval of this request will not be necessary.

f) Working from home is considered approved until 30 April 2020. Please note, however, that confidential data and information must be protected at all times to prevent third parties from accessing and reading them. Supervisors/managers maintain a list of all employees and staff who will be working from home temporarily based on this regulation (refer to resolution of the cabinet, dated 13 March 2020).

g) Supervisors/managers will also maintain a list of all those employees and staff who have been exempted from duty based on the regulation stipulated under d) and will present them in regular intervals to the Directorate of Human Resources and Legal Affairs.

h) In case work from home is not a feasible option, holiday leave on short notice, a reduction of accumulated plus hours and an increase of minus hours should be considered generously as far as possible with reasonable restrictions of functionality. In this case, too, supervisors/managers, employees and staff are encouraged to come up with creative solutions as long as they comply with the law.

2. **Face-to-face meetings**
   The number of face-to-face meetings must be restricted to the absolutely required 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.

3. **Sick leave**
   In case of sickness, employees and staff need to notify their supervisor/manager as usual on the first day of sickness. They will have to present a certificate of incapacity for work from calendar day 8 of their sickness. This sick leave notification should be done electronically, if possible, and should also be documented this way.

4. **Returning from a risk area and/or having been in direct contact with an infected person**
   Employees and staff who have been staying in a risk area as specified by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) in the last 14 days (refer to [https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete.html](https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete.html)) and are now returning to Germany, must
notify their HR administration office immediately by phone of their return from a risk area. Duty of presence is suspended for employees and staff; instead, they will have to work from home for at least 14 days, if possible. This regulation applies also to any employee or staff member who has been in immediate contact with a coronavirus infected person.

5. Further training
There will be no face-to-face courses available for further training. Employees and staff will not attend any face-to-face in-house or external training courses. Participation in such courses must be cancelled.

6. Business trips
Business trips to risk areas as specified by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) (refer to (https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete.html) cannot be approved, any approvals already granted for upcoming trips to these areas are now invalid. Cancellation fees for business trips already booked will be reimbursed without further justification or proof. For all other business trips, supervisors/managers and the travellers must check with due diligence in each case whether this business trip is absolutely necessary. Alternative forms of communication such as video and telephone conferences must be given first choice. Should a business trip prove unavoidable, then this trip should preferably be done with a company car without any additional passengers and not with a private car. Using public transport is not recommended. When using a private car, valid reasons in accordance with §6(1) of the HRKG (Hessian travel expense law) will be assumed and a compensation of EUR 0.35 per kilometre travelled will be granted.

7. Taking along laptops / mobile devices
All employees and staff who have access to a university laptop and/or mobile phone are required to take these devices to their private quarters to ensure that working from home is possible even on short notice.

8. Taking children to work
To reduce risk of infection, children cannot be taken along to work. For more information about taking care of children, refer to position 1 d). Regarding positions 3 to 7, refer to "Dienstanweisung im Umgang mit dem Corona-Virus im Geschäftsbereich des Hessischen Ministeriums für Wissenschaft und Kunst bis zum 30. April 2020", the instructions for handling the coronavirus by the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts.

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