

Information on Teaching in the 2021 Summer Semester (9)

Dear colleagues,

for some time now, new parameters for university operations have been in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. Particularly with regard to the coming 2021/22 winter semester, these provide us with clearer planning perspectives. In the following, I would like to describe in more detail which regulations are being implemented at our university as a result of the new circumstances. In addition, I would like to inform you about some recent developments.

The Bavarian universities' "restart – welcome back" initiative:

State Minister Bernd Sibler recently launched the "restart – welcome back" initiative with the aim of helping students get off to a successful (new) start on campus after digital semesters. Under this framework, the University of Bamberg successfully petitioned for permission to rent a large room for lectures, examinations and other events and received a small grant for equipping this room with media technology equipment.

Student vaccination status survey:

A survey on vaccination status was recently conducted among our students, with more than 2,000 taking part. The findings show that by the end of the survey, 79% were already fully vaccinated. Of the remaining approx. 20%, 11.7% were still planning a vaccination by the start of the winter semester, 20.3% remained undecided and 18.7% expressed interest in vaccination services offered by the University of Bamberg. Viewed in terms of society as a whole, the pleasing results – like those at other universities – point to an above-average vaccination rate and willingness to get vaccinated among students.

New vaccination services:

In cooperation with the Bamberg Vaccination Centre, further vaccination appointments can be offered to University of Bamberg students and employees both prior to and at the start of the winter semester. For this purpose, mobile vaccination teams will visit the three major university locations (city centre, Feldkirchenstraße and ERBA) for 2-3 hours on 6 days between 5 October and 21 October as part of a public vaccination campaign. Details will be announced as soon as possible. This service is intended to address many students' interest in a vaccination service provided by the University of Bamberg, as indicated in the vaccination status survey.

Basic conditions for university operations in the winter semester:

- New approaches:

On the basis of the Infection Protection Act, the 14th regulation on infection prevention and control measures (*Infektionsschutzmaßnahmenverordnung*) and the Bavarian universities' Corona framework concept, the following changes apply to university operations with immediate effect – and therefore particularly to the winter semester. In the future, the 7-day incidence rate will no longer be used as a key reference point, with the exception of the applicability of the rule

requiring vaccination, recovery or testing (3G rule) with a 7-day incidence rate of 35 or higher. In particular, the previous significance of the 7-day incidence rate of 100 is no longer relevant. Instead, the future point of orientation for certain measures will be the so-called hospital traffic light based on the alignment of coronavirus measures with the hospitalisation rate and the occupancy rate of intensive care beds. The regulations described below are based on the position of this traffic light on 'green'. What happens if this light changes to 'yellow' or 'red' has not yet been clearly defined.

- Vaccination, recovery, testing – 3G rule

With a 7-day incidence rate of 35 or more, the "3G" rule applies to access to the university (i.e. its buildings and other enclosed spaces, including the university branch libraries). This means only vaccinated, recovered and tested persons have access (the three Gs in German). Furthermore, regardless of the 7-day incidence rate, the rule would also apply to the hypothetical case at our university of in-person courses with more than 1,000 participants. Examinations, however, are explicitly excluded from the application of the 3G rule.

The 3G rule is subject to a fine. This means that non-compliance can result in the payment of a fine for an administrative offence. Exactly who is allowed to determine this administrative offence still has to be clarified by the ministry.

The 3G rule does not apply to university staff (including teaching staff). However, with this in mind, we urge instructors to voluntarily adhere to the 3G rule with regard to in-person contacts with students and thus to foster a mutual relationship of trust by continuing to avoid any discrepancies between instructors and students.

Testing requirements:

Under the 3G rule, tested individuals must provide a written or electronic negative result from a test conducted under medical supervision (such as at a pharmacy or testing centre). PCR tests that are no more than 48 hours old, PoC-PCR tests or tests using other methods of nucleic acid amplification technology or PoC antigen tests that are no more than 24 hours old are permitted. If the hospital traffic light changes to 'yellow', only PCR tests are valid.

Testing services for students and instructors:

Students can continue to get tested for the coronavirus free of charge. German-language information on where this is possible in Bamberg can be found on our Corona webpage [<https://www.uni-bamberg.de/gesund/coronavirus/test-stud/>]. The issuing of self-tests to students for voluntary self-application will be discontinued. The distribution points of the self-tests for employees will remain in place until at least November. Changes will be made in accordance with the Ministry's requirements.

3G monitoring of students:

Following final confirmation of the Ministry of Science, random checks are sufficient for the verification of the 3G criteria if they are structured, effective and, in particular, conducted intensively at the beginning of the lecture period. The current plan is to relieve teaching staff by deploying a mobile security service to various university facilities to conduct these checks.

Furthermore, instructors can and may carry out checks themselves, especially in their own courses with a manageable number of participants. Corresponding methods also apply to library staff with regard to access to libraries. These additional checks make an important contribution to the quality of our monitoring system. For 3G verification, the relevant apps or paper documents can be used. Additionally, the students' responsibility to consistently adhere to the 3G rule should be clearly communicated and posted in the entrance areas of all buildings.

Mask requirements and minimum distancing:

Masks are required in all university buildings and closed rooms. Medical masks may now be worn throughout the university. FFP2 masks can still be worn as an option. Beginning with the 'yellow' level of the hospital traffic light, wearing an FFP2 mask is again required.

The requirement to wear a mask is only waived at a fixed sitting, standing or working places if a minimum distance of 1.5 m from other persons can be reliably maintained. This also means that (only) under this condition there is no longer a mask requirement for instructors in teaching situations. As soon as instructors engage in conversations where the minimum required distance cannot be maintained, the wearing of a mask is obligatory. The same applies to library users. Finally, there may also be exceptions to the mask requirement for other compelling reasons, such as in the context of practical (especially artistic) in-person courses or events.

As with violations of the 3G rule, persons who violate the mask requirement are also subject to a fine.

Collection of contact data:

How and to what extent contact data will be collected in the future has not yet been finally determined. You will be informed as soon as this is clarified. Until then, contact data will continue to be collected in the established form.

In-person teaching:

Following students', instructors' and policy makers' considerable demands for a semester with predominantly in-person courses, it is now possible to develop responsible room occupancy concepts even without adhering to minimum distancing. We are making use of this at our university by continuing to pursue the room occupancy concept already communicated in August. This stipulates a maximum seating capacity of 50% and an upper limit of 200 people, while at the same time retaining the requirement to wear masks regardless of the density of seating (for the exception regarding the requirement for instructors to wear masks, please see above). This is intended to give many instructors the opportunity to again offer their courses in person. It is now important that course instructors inform their students as soon as possible whether the respective course will be held in person or online.

At the same time, I would like to point out once again that the partial return to in-person teaching changes the necessity to (also) offer courses completely in digital form. For courses that are held entirely in person and that are generally accessible to all students via compliance with the 3G rule, the requirement to offer digital alternatives no longer applies. In other cases, this guideline remains very important for ensuring good study conditions. Here – as previously mentioned – it would be beneficial for instructors and students to jointly determine the need for and the form of

the online offering in the respective courses. Students who refuse to comply with the 3G rule and are therefore not eligible to participate in in-person courses are not entitled to the provision of a digital course.

The declaration required in the last two semesters for the implementation of in-person teaching is no longer required.

Examinations:

As stated above, the 3G rule explicitly does not apply to examinations. Nevertheless, in order to ensure a high level of infection protection, the infection protection concept for examinations that is currently in force at our university (observance of minimum distances between the examination places and the obligation or recommendation – in the case of university or state examinations, respectively – to wear medical masks at the examination site) should be upheld. For dissertation defences, the exception that has also already been communicated applies: the mask requirement is waived if the 3G status of all persons assembled in the room can be verified.

Field trips:

For field trips, the existing regulations generally remain unchanged. Accordingly, such trips announced to the university executive board and deemed necessary to the curriculum can be undertaken if the instructor explicitly acknowledges the assumption of responsibility to comply with all guidelines set out in the university's updated handbook on infection protection measures. Secondly, care must be taken to ensure the specific infection prevention measures applicable at the field trip location and during the trip there are also observed and the greatest possible safety is ensured for the students. Additionally, instructors can request self-tests from the university for the purpose of testing their group of students on multi-day trips.

Conferences, conventions, fairs and events:

Effective immediately, it is once again possible to hold conferences, conventions, fairs and cultural events in compliance with the relevant infection protection regulations and, in particular, the framework concepts that apply specifically to them. A notification to the university executive board is required. The same guidelines apply for the use of rooms as for in-person courses. In addition, proof of the 3G criteria must be provided on an event-specific basis and at the discretion of the event management.

Extension of the Corona Statutes for the winter semester:

The Corona Statutes currently valid for the 2021 summer semester, with their options for choosing alternative examination formats and for individual flexibility of examinations, are to be extended essentially unchanged for the 2021/22 winter semester. The resolution is planned for the special session of the Senate on 29 September 2021.

In the hope that my remarks will ease your planning, I send you my best regards.

Sincerely,

Stefan Hörmann