

## **Implementation Utrecht University sector plan Corona Higher Education**

Version October 31, 2022

### **In advance**

With this document, Utrecht University meets the request of the government to provide an institution-specific interpretation of the national sector plan Higher Education that outlines scenarios for the approach in Higher Education around Covid-19. In agreement with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, this plan has been coordinated with the University Council.

The sector plan assumes that the closure of education in the event of a covid outbreak must be avoided as much as possible. Utrecht University wholeheartedly endorses this principle, while of course leaving the necessary scope for customised action with regard to vulnerable students and staff or international students who are unable to come to the Netherlands.

In recent years, we as a university have succeeded in rapidly converting all our education to online and hybrid education. That has been a major achievement. But we have also seen that the closure of universities and the constant scaling up and down has had a major impact on our students and staff, on their mental and social well-being and their workload. We need to avoid that as much as possible in the near future.

This plan gives substance to the national sector plan. In developing it, we have gratefully made use of all the experience we have gained in recent years, the scenarios that have been running and their evaluations.

Utrecht University has a crisis organisation with a university level and a local level (faculties and services). The university crisis team formulates university-wide frameworks, which are then fleshed out at faculty and departmental level.

In accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the following matters will be taken into account in the translation:

- Effectiveness in relation to spread of virus;
- Health and well-being of staff and students;
- Work pressure;
- Study progress;
- Educational quality;
- Vulnerable groups;
- Physical feasibility and organisability;
- Health & safety legislation and RI&E;
- The effect on environmental factors such as OV.

The plan was drawn up by the corona team that has been working at the university level for the past two years on the preparation and communication of the university crisis organisation. The plan was drawn up with input from the vice deans of education, the heads of education and student affairs, the timetabling working group, the faculty student assistants and the directors of faculties and services.

### **Starting points**

The national sector plan is based on four scenarios, in which the measures in a subsequent scenario are an addition to the measures in the previous scenario:

1. Dark green: colds, basic measures
2. Green: Flu, basic measures + precautions
3. Orange: continuous struggle, basic measures + precautions + contact limiting
4. Red: worst case, severely restricting contact

At a certain point, the government decides which scenario is applicable; the institution can then put its own interpretation into effect. The starting point for Utrecht University was and is that its teaching, research and other activities should be able to continue as far as possible within the scope offered by the national measures and within the context of the points for attention identified in the national sector plan.

- *Effectiveness in relation to spread of virus;*

Utrecht University's basic principle is that education, research and other activities should be able to continue as far as possible. In general, the spread of the virus is prevented as much as possible by limiting the number of contact moments and travel movements. This means that when taking measures, we carefully weigh up working and studying at the university and at home.

In the university buildings, measures are aimed at ensuring that students and staff can maintain sufficient distance. Given the diversity of buildings, these measures may vary from one building to another. Utrecht University will ask the Municipal Public Health Service (GGD) to set up a vaccination location at the USP again and will also facilitate this vaccination location.

- *Health and well-being of staff and students;*

The health of students and employees is paramount. On the one hand, this concerns physical health (preventing infection), but mental health is at least as important. The measures are aimed at preventing infection and at the same time offering sufficient space for social contacts and encounters. This means that we ensure that a distance of one and a half metres can be maintained in buildings and that we try to limit the number of travel movements.

- *Work pressure;*

Teachers have as much control as possible over the way in which they provide education, within the restrictions that apply. If we take measures to prevent contamination, it will be for at least two weeks, but probably for an entire block due to educational logistics; we prevent constant scaling up and down. This is also very important for colleagues in the educational organisation, such as timetablers. We ensure that instructors are well supported by the Center for Academic Teaching (CAT) and the Facility Service Center (FSC) in organizing their teaching online or hybrid.

- *Study Progress;*

Utrecht University's measures are aimed at ensuring that education continues as much as possible to minimize study delay. If limited education can be given on location, programmes make a well-considered choice for the courses that are on location and online.

- *Educational Quality;*

Evaluations over the past two years show that the quality of education has never been compromised for online and hybrid education during lockdowns, although it also appears that educational functions such as subjectification and socialisation are less easy to convey in an online situation.

The education directors and course coordinators are in the lead when working out the measures for specific study programmes and courses. At the university level, only preconditions are agreed upon with vice deans.

- *Vulnerable groups;*

Utrecht University pays special attention to vulnerable groups. First and foremost, this concerns students and staff members who are unable to attend the university for reasons beyond their control:

- medical reasons
- caring for someone in frail health
- living with someone in fragile health
- unable to travel to the Netherlands due to Corona travel restrictions

We take these students and staff into account and apply customised solutions. Employees discuss this with their superiors, students with the study advisor.

There are also people who, for whatever reason, are unable to work and study at home. We offer this group space to work and study at the university in the event of serious government restrictions (code orange or red).

- *Physical feasibility and organisability;*

The greatest challenge for the university in the case of increased governmental regulation lies in the scheduling of teaching. When teaching is timetabled for a particular block, it is complicated and very time-consuming to rush to reschedule teaching.

The government assumes percentages of teaching on site and one and a half metres; these are assumptions that cannot be captured in the timetable system. Therefore, in the event of a lockdown (scenario orange or red), the university will work with maximum group sizes.

In the orange and red scenarios, the number of attendees at a promotion will be limited; scheduled promotions cannot be postponed, otherwise there will be a bump after the situation ends that logistically cannot be eliminated.

- *ARBO legislation and Risk Inventory and Evaluation (RI&E);*

In addition to the important factor of behaviour (keeping your distance, washing your hands), good ventilation also helps to prevent infections.

The ventilation in our buildings complies with the Buildings Decree and is therefore sufficient. The university itself sets higher standards and this means that the ventilation in the buildings will be tackled at natural maintenance intervals over the next few years.

Improving ventilation and maintaining distances is sometimes a complex matter in the city centre. The Academy Building in particular is narrow enough to restrict the number of visitors to one and a half metres. This has consequences for the number of people present at inaugurations and promotions.

With regard to the mandatory Risk Inventory and Evaluation of the faculties and services, the aspect of psychosocial workload will play a role in accommodating changing covid scenarios.

- *Effect on environmental factors such as public transport.*

The Utrecht Science Park is home to the UU, the HU and the UMCU. All staff and students together generate a large number of travel movements. This means that measures - in consultation with the USP partners, transport companies and the Utrecht Safety Region - are aimed at limiting the number of travel movements at the same time. This may affect the scheduling of education.

Obviously, the success of the measures under the Coronavirus Sector Plan will depend on external factors (such as the way in which transport companies implement the measures to be taken under the various scenarios).

### Elaboration of scenarios

Prevention	1. - Dark green - colds, basic measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure good ventilation</li> <li>- Communication about vaccination (education) staff and students;</li> <li>- Basic recommendations on hygiene and health, as applicable to the entire society.</li> </ul>
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### Measures

- Students and staff members follow basic recommendations regarding hygiene and health and self-test if they experience symptoms that may be covid-related.
- Education takes place on location.
- If students cannot attend classes on site because they have to follow a quarantine measure, even though attendance is compulsory, they will contact the study advisor of the study programme concerned or will follow the procedure indicated on the student website of the study programme.
- If students are unable to take a test on site because they have to follow a quarantine measure, they will follow the procedure set out on the site of their programme.
- Study places can be fully utilised.
- Graduation ceremonies take place without restrictions.
- Promotions take place without restrictions.
- Orations take place without restrictions.
- Events take place on location
- Testing: on location with no maximum group size.
- Lab and other work continues without restrictions; agreements are made locally about working from home versus office work; if someone has to follow a quarantine measure, working agreements are made between the supervisor and the employee.
- Social activities take place on location.
- A stay abroad may take place, depending on the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The code orange committee has been set up for exchanges to orange areas.
- Students, faculty and other staff are expected to attend when required or desired for study or work.
- Parnassos is open as well as Faculty Club and Botanical gardens.

### Communication strategy

- Basic information on the website (easy to find and visible). This is the place where students and employees can find up-to-date information about applicable corona measures.
- Continuous attention for living with corona in UU- and faculty wide communication and meetings (such as the opening speech of the academic year, the dies, etc.)
- Decentralized communication follows centralised communication.
- With respect to ventilation: activate teachers and other staff through line communication. If necessary, tailor-made communication on site as a result of Safety & Environment advice.

Prevention	2. - green - flu+ Basic + precautionary measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraging the use of self-testing in the event of complaints</li> <li>- Additional attention for vulnerable groups</li> </ul>
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### **Measures**

- Students and staff members follow basic recommendations regarding hygiene and health and self-test if they experience symptoms that may be covid-related.
- Encourage self-testing in the event of complaints, which for the time being will be made available free of charge through the institutions.
- Education takes place on location. Lecturers can make customised arrangements with students on what form education will take and additional preventive measures.
- If students cannot attend classes on site because they have to follow a quarantine measure, even though attendance is compulsory, they will contact the study advisor of the study programme concerned or will follow the procedure indicated on the student website of the study programme.
- Vulnerable students who cannot or do not want to follow education on location will follow the procedure mentioned on the website of their study programme.
- If students cannot or do not want to take the test on location, they will follow the procedure mentioned on the website of their study programme.
- Study places can be fully utilized.
- Graduation ceremonies take place without restrictions.
- Promotions take place without restrictions.
- Orations take place without restrictions.
- Events take place on site; information activities follow a new coronavirus-proof format and are divided into online, offline and hybrid activities.
- Testing: on location with no maximum group size.
- Lab and other work continues without restriction; local agreements are made about working from home versus office work; if someone has to follow a quarantine measure or cannot work on location because of vulnerable health or duty of care, working agreements are made between the supervisor and the employee. Based on agreements between supervisor and employee, more home working can be decided upon.
- Social activities take place on location.
- A stay abroad may take place, depending on the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For exchange to orange areas, the code orange committee has been set up.
- Students, faculty and other staff are expected to be present when required or desired for study or work; students or staff with fragile health make arrangements with their student advisor or supervisor, respectively.
- Parnassos is open, as are Faculty Club and Botanical Gardens.

### **Communication strategy**

As above with additional:

- Basic information on the website (easy to find and visible). This is the place where students and staff can find up-to-date information about applicable corona measures. > Link to corona website back on homepage.
- Communicate about rising numbers and draw attention to them (be alert, take care of each other, test in case of complaints):
  - At the start of the academic year, include corona in the Opening of Academic Year mail, OAJ speech, student mail 'welcome back' and message via socials and intranet and student site with reference to [uu.nl](http://uu.nl) for more information.
  - Drawing attention to the preventive effect of face masks and encouraging self-testing in case of complaints - within teams by managers, and via the intranet and socials for students.
  - Attention to 'fetch duty' at [www.uu.nl/corona](http://www.uu.nl/corona) instead of a high-frequency mail2all.
- Corona widget on intranet with link to internet.

<i>Intervention</i>	3. - orange - continuous struggle basic + precautionary + contact limiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preventive self-testing twice a week;</li> <li>- Where possible, apply the safe distance standard;</li> <li>- Use of walking routes;</li> <li>- Use of mouth masks when moving;</li> <li>- Increased use of distance learning</li> <li>- Wherever possible, relocate activities to the outdoors;</li> <li>- Scale down activities that do not involve the primary educational process;</li> <li>- Spread educational activities throughout the day;</li> <li>- Staff are advised to work from home (in accordance with the national guideline).</li> </ul>
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### **Measures**

- Preventive self-testing, which for the time being is being made available free of charge through the institutions.
- A combination of online education and education on location. The group size for on-site education is capped (at one and a half metres) in consultation with the timetabling working group; larger groups are online. In consultation with their director of education, lecturers can also opt for a customised solution.
- Tests: on location with no maximum group size, but at one and a half meter.
- Study places in libraries and other buildings limited access due to one and a half meters. Extra study places are created in buildings if there is a demand for it.
- Diploma ceremonies can take place at a distance of one and a half metres with a maximum of two guests; the course determines; catering on a take-away basis.
- Promotions: maximum 15 guests and 6 committee members behind the table; planned promotions cannot be postponed; no receptions take place after ceremonies.
- Orations: maximum 30 people, preferably online; no receptions will take place after ceremonies.
- Office work: maximum half of the working time and at a distance of 1.5 metres from each other on location; this also applies to boardrooms of student organisations.
- Lab work: continues at 1.5-metre distance as much as possible.
- Building opening hours may be restricted. This will partially depend on the availability of facility services.
- Members of staff who are also company emergency response team members are asked to work on location.
- Events and information activities at 1.5 metre distance, with a maximum of 100 people for indoor activities with reserved seating and health check. Also for outdoor activities keep 1.5 meters distance. Information activities take place in accordance with a new Covid-proof format featuring online, offline and hybrid activities.
- Foreign stay: depending on the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to be judged by the dean to orange areas. For exchange to orange areas, the Code Orange Commission has been established.
- Fieldwork: at the discretion of the Dean.
- Students and staff may stay home due to anxiety or fragile health; they will consult with their student advisor or supervisor, respectively.
- Parnassos can organise activities 1.5 metres away as can Faculty Club and Botanical Gardens.
- Social and substantive activities of study associations at 1.5 meters distance.
- Attention for international staff and students who are in the Netherlands or in their home country.

### **Communication strategy**

As above with additional:

- Mail2all at the start of this scenario: informing about the status of infections and scaling up of measures (linked to the scenario). A short mail with a point-by-point summary of the new measures and links to the corona page on the website for more information on the measures in force.
- Socials: communicate upscaling.
- On-site communication about measures, such as stickers along walking routes, signs at entrances (responsibility of FSC), narrowcasting (refer to website) and start screens at lectures via lecturers (preventive testing, etc.) (action: explore possibilities for automating this).
- Scaling down communicate with mail2all with reference to the website.

- Policy information and line communication through the responsible UU departments.

<i>Intervention</i>	4. - Red Worst case: severely restricting contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum 50% simultaneous presence of students and teachers in rooms and on location, customised solutions are possible for institutions within this limit;</li> <li>- Intensify attention to the social function of education and keep an eye on vulnerable groups of students;</li> <li>- Limitation of contact moments: maximum distribution of educational activities in time and space.</li> </ul>
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### **Measures**

- Group size for on-site education is capped in consultation with the scheduling working group. Education for larger groups is online.
- Tests can take place on location, at a distance of one and a half metres; study programmes also investigate alternative forms of testing.
- Practicals and work groups can take place on location at one and a half metre distance.
- Study places in libraries and other buildings have limited access for students with a difficult home situation, at one and a half metres.
- There is a limited possibility to organize tutor groups on location, in coordination with the timetable organization.
- Diploma ceremonies are fully online.
- Promotions: maximum 15 guests, 6 committee members behind the table; scheduled promotions cannot be postponed.
- Orations: fully online (with the possibility to stream from the Academieggebouw).
- Office work: the norm is working at home. Employees with a difficult home situation can come to the office, in consultation with the supervisor.
- Lab work can continue at a distance of one and a half metres.
- Building opening hours are restricted.
- Members of staff who are also company emergency response team members are asked to work on location.
- Events and information activities are fully online.
- Foreign stay: depending on the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to be judged by the dean to orange areas. For exchange to orange areas, the Code Orange Commission has been established.
- Fieldwork: at the discretion of the Dean.
- Students and staff may stay home due to anxiety, frail health, or caring responsibilities. They make arrangements with the student advisor or their supervisor.
- Study-related activities of study associations can take place for groups at a distance of one and a half metres.
- Attention for international staff and students who are in the Netherlands or in their home country.

### **Communication strategy**

As above with additional:

- Basic information on the website (easy to find and visible). This is the place where students and employees can find up-to-date information about applicable corona measures. > Link back to the homepage.
- Message CvB (compassionate) to staff and students when activating this scenario.
- Mail to all at the start of this scenario: informing about the status of infections and scaling up of measures (linked to the scenario). A short e-mail with a point-by-point summary of the new measures and links to the corona page on the website for more information on the measures in force. Further e-mails only in case of major, unforeseen changes.
- Socials: communicate upscaling.
- On-site communication about measures (FSC responsibility)
- Scaling down communicate with mail2all with reference to the website.
- Policy information and communication via the responsible UU departments.