

## TH Köln's operational and hygiene concept during the Covid pandemic

### in force from June 8, 2022

The federal SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Regulation expired at the end of May 2022. However, companies and public institutions are still advised to continue to monitor infection rates and to adjust their hygiene concepts if necessary.

For TH Köln this means, on the one hand, that there is no concrete legal basis for infection protection measures. On the other hand, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs rightly points out that, even though the Coronavirus Occupational Health and Safety Regulation has expired, the responsibility of companies and institutions to reflect the current situation and to implement protective measures to ensure safe operations does not end.

TH Köln has adapted its operational and hygiene concept to this new situation. It has been drafted assuming that the Coronavirus Protection Regulation for North Rhine-Westphalia of May 26, 2022 will not be updated to include stricter regulations in the near future.

The concept is based on the experience and lessons learned in the past two years during the Covid pandemic. This guideline particularly considers the realization that wearing FFP2 masks and reducing the density of aerosols with Coronavirus contamination in enclosed spaces by ensuring proper ventilation are highly effective measures to prevent infections.

Additionally, the most recent experience with classes of all faculties taking place on-campus is considered. Concerning our teaching operations, we have seen that the verifiably effective protective measures, namely FFP 2 masks and regular, thorough ventilation of enclosed spaces, have been accepted and implemented by most persons involved. With those measures, TH Köln achieves a high level of infection control, which ensures that classes can continue to take place on campus.

### Responsible parties

Executive Board

Team Arbeitssicherheit, Umweltschutz und Gesundheitsförderung

Team Infrastrukturelles Gebäudemanagement

All employees in leadership positions acting as supervisors (*Fachvorgesetzte*)

Members of the Deans' Offices who are responsible for structuring faculty operations based on the regulations collected here

Teaching staff by conducting classes and examinations based on risk assessments and the guidelines stated here

In advisory capacity: Crisis Management Board and Crisis Management Team

### General information

#### a. Announcement of changes to the infection protection measures

The important and main protection measures are compiled on posters, which are displayed on all main entrances of the university. Additionally, there is an FAQ page on TH Köln's website. TH Köln's members may also consult the Occupational Health and Safety Manual available in the university intranet.

Information on the current regulations and protection measures as well as further information on practical aspects resulting from this concept are available on the Covid info page [www.th-koeln.de/corona\\_en](http://www.th-koeln.de/corona_en) as well as on TH Köln's intranet.

TH Köln's members may send inquiries or suggestions regarding the Covid pandemic and related regulations at TH Köln by email to [corona-info@th-koeln.de](mailto:corona-info@th-koeln.de). Based on the questions we receive, the FAQ will be extended and updated; suggestions are forwarded to the Crisis Management Board and the Executive Board.

All employees and students of TH Köln can enter the university buildings during the opening hours. On TH Köln's premises, the current infection protection regulations are to be observed. Anyone who does not observe these regulations loses their right to be on TH Köln's premises.

## b. Opening hours

Opening hours for TH Köln's buildings in the summer semester 2022 are as follows:

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Monday to Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
Deutz Campus	6.30 am - 10.00 pm	6.30 am - 10.00 pm	7.00 am - 7.00 pm
Südstadt Campus	6.30 am - 10.00 pm	6.30 am - 10.00 pm	7.00 am - 7.00 pm
Gummersbach Campus	6.30 am - 10.00 pm	6.30 am - 10.00 pm	7.00 am - 7.00 pm
Leverkusen Campus Chempark	6.30 am - 8.30 pm	6.30 am - 8.30 pm	closed

Opening hours for the libraries in the summer semester 2022 are as follows:

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Monday to Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
Deutz Campus library	8.00 am - 10.00 pm (service hours from 9.00 am - 6.00 pm)	8.00 am - 10.00 pm (service hours from 9.00 am - 6.00 pm)	10.00 am - 7.00 pm (service hours from 10.00 am - 4.00 pm)
Südstadt Campus library	9.00 am - 10.00 pm (service hours until 6.00 pm)	9.00 am - 10.00 pm (service hours until 4.00 pm)	10.00 am - 7.00 pm (service hours until 4.00 pm)
Gummersbach Campus library	9.00 am - 10.00 pm (service hours until 6.00 pm)	9.00 am - 10.00 pm (service hours until 6.00 pm)	10.00 am - 7.00 pm (service hours until 4.00 pm)
Leverkusen Campus library	10.00 am - 4.00 pm	10.00 am - 3.00 pm	closed

All buildings remain closed on Sundays and public holidays.

## Risk assessment and assessment principles

In the current semester as well as in the winter semester 2022/23, a risk of infection with SARS-CoV-2 for people working or attending events at TH Köln is still given.

The following factors are considered in the risk assessment:

- The infection situation in the summer period with the Omicron variant BA.2 currently dominating in Germany. This variant mainly causes mild symptoms, which lead to a situation where infection rates were no longer directly linked to ICU occupancy.

- For the winter period, it will additionally be considered that new variants, which may be more contagious than BA.2, cause more severe courses of disease or have better immune evasion strategies, will occur in Germany. A return of the Delta variant due to lower immunity levels may also be possible.
- The period until the end of September with mainly mild weather and the period from October 2022 until Easter 2023 will be considered separately.
- Assumption that the high number of infections with the omicron variant in spring 2022 has caused immunity to the omicron variants BA.1 and BA.2 among the majority of the population for the next few months in addition to vaccine immunity.
- It is also considered that practical experience regarding the dynamics of infections from the past few weeks has shown that while most protective measures were dropped in Germany, the reproduction number  $R(t)$  still remained below 1. Hence, infection rates continued to decrease.

A separate assessment is necessary for the following groups:

- Persons who, despite a vaccination or with a contraindication to any vaccination, are part of a risk group who must expect a severe course of disease, even with the usually mild Omicron variant.
- Pregnant persons, because the protective effect of a vaccination with regard to adverse effects on the health of the mother and unborn child cannot be conclusively evaluated yet.

Assessment of the situation without any kind of protective measures:

It is likely that individuals who work or attend events at TH Köln will be infected with SARS-CoV-2 inside TH Köln's buildings. However, in the period until end of September 2022 is unlikely that at work or during events one infected person will infect a large number of other people. i.e. superspreading events are not to be expected.

Due to the weather, and a reproduction number  $R(t)$  which may rise again above 1 combined with decreasing antibody levels in recovered and vaccinated individuals, it will become more likely again that at work or during events one infected person will infect a large number of other people.

#### **Goals while Omicron BA.2 is the dominating variant**

- Prevent individual infections of persons who belong to risk groups and pregnant persons.
- Reduce individual infections of persons who do not belong to one of those groups.

#### **Goals in case a new virus variant with significantly higher contagiousness and/or causing more severe courses of disease will become the dominant variant:**

- Prevent individual infections in all groups
- Prevent superspreading events

### **A) Teaching operations and extracurricular activities during the Covid pandemic**

### **a. On-site teaching operations**

For all faculties, classes of the summer semester 2022 and the winter semester 2022/23 are planned to take place on campus. Counseling services and courses are to be offered on-site. It is our goal to offer our students opportunities for social integration at TH Köln as well as to familiarize with their faculty culture. All rooms, which either have an adequate ventilation system in place or where impact or cross ventilation is possible may be used as classrooms. These rooms may be occupied up to the available number of seats.

Rooms without automatic ventilation systems, which cannot be ventilated by opening windows, may not be used for classes of any kind.

### **b. Physical distancing**

The legal requirement for physical distancing has been removed. With highly contagious variants of the Coronavirus, such as Omicron, regulations on physical distancing and acrylic dividers in indoor spaces have very limited protective effects but significantly reduce the capacity of rooms. Thus, the following regulations apply:

- Rooms may be used without any physical distancing regulations, however, they may only be occupied up to the available number of seats.
- Physical distancing regulations may be retained if they do not affect operations (e.g. in service areas open to the public).
- In service areas open to the public, acrylic dividers will remain in place and may still be ordered.

### **c. Personal individual workplace assessment**

- These assessments will still be conducted for persons who belong to risk groups. Protective measures defined after the assessment will implemented.
- For pregnant persons, these assessments will continue to be conducted. Protective measures defined after the assessment will implemented.

### **d. FFP2 masks strongly advised, breaks**

Teaching staff, students and employees of TH Köln, as well as visitors and guests, are strongly advised to wear FFP2 masks while inside the university buildings. This includes the following indoor spaces:

- all lecture halls, seminar rooms and any other classrooms,
- also during on-campus examinations
- in hallways and restrooms, in all other circulation areas
- when using student workspaces, irrespective of their location (examples: library, entry hall at Deutz Campus, seats located in the hallways, seminar rooms not used for classes at the time in question etc.)

- in offices, laboratories and workshops whenever it is not possible to keep a distance of at least 1.5 meters to another person or in situations where offices or other units are open to the public
- Exceptions apply for teaching staff during their presentation to the class or when interacting with students, as well as for other persons while speaking or presenting as part of the class.

#### Breaks between classes

- Persons who wear FFP2 masks for long periods of time need regular breaks to take off their masks. For students this is only possible outdoors, due to TH Köln's general regulations.
- Examples:
  - Classes with a duration of 90 minutes are to be followed by a 30 minute break, so that students may spend some time outside and take off their masks.
  - Shorter breaks of only 15 minutes if the duration of individual classes is reduced.
- Organizing mask breaks is, just like the organization of classes, the responsibility of the faculties. Hence, no central regulation on this matter will be worded.

#### **e. Systematic ventilation**

Proper ventilation is to be ensured during all classes. However, there is no longer a legal requirement to stay below the CO<sub>2</sub> reference value of 1000 pm. Good ventilation helps to prevent infections. Additionally, a low CO<sub>2</sub> concentration due to regular ventilation has positive effects on students' and employees' performance and well-being and has therefore been fixed in the work place directive (*Arbeitsstättenrichtlinie*).

The following process is to be observed with regard to ventilation:

- CO<sub>2</sub> monitors are available in the faculties.
- Continue to measure CO<sub>2</sub> levels during classes, ppm value can be up to 1500 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> but may not exceed this value. Explanation: This threshold value is mentioned in the technical regulations for work places (Technische Regeln für Arbeitstätten) and is the lowest value for good air quality. In comparison, the threshold value for "excellent air quality is 1000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>
- Automatic ventilation systems: These systems will continue to run at their current capacity.
- Rooms may only be occupied up to their seating capacity.
- Please note: Rooms which cannot be sufficiently ventilated, neither with the help of an automatic ventilation system nor by opening windows and doors must not be used as classrooms.

For the upcoming winter period, it is possible that legal requirements regarding the ventilation of rooms or to stay below the threshold value of 1000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> concentration will be reintroduced.

#### **f. Extracurricular events**

Events such as presentations, workshops, work meetings etc. may take place without additional restrictions as long as the regulations defined in this document are observed. Responsibility lies with the organizers of the respective event.

For conferences or events with social elements, such as group meals and drinks, a hygiene concept is to be drawn up and submitted to the Occupational Health and Safety Team ([arbeitsicherheit\\_antraege@th-koeln.de](mailto:arbeitsicherheit_antraege@th-koeln.de)). Approval will be denied and events may not take place if the criteria regarding occupational health and safety as well as the current Covid protection regulations are not fulfilled. In case of doubt, the matter will be forwarded to the Executive Board.

### **g. Positive test results**

For students: If you tested positive for Coronavirus (official PoC or PCR test), please get in touch with the Office of Student Services on your campus, ideally by email. Please include the following information:

- Your name, student ID number and program
- Which courses you have attended at TH Köln in the past five days?

For teaching staff: Please get in touch with your HR person and your Dean's office, irrespective of the reporting channels of the Public Health Department (Gesundheitsamt) if

- your physician or the Public Health Department orders you to get tested for Covid,
- you have already been tested but have not yet received the results.,
- it has been confirmed that you are infected with Covid

If reporting sick to your HR person and supervisor, please always mention if you are reporting sick due a (suspected) Covid infection or not. This allows us to take necessary measures, such as disinfecting any rooms you have recently used, without delay.

## **B) Hygiene measures for employees (except teaching operations)**

### **a. Physical distancing**

The legal requirement for physical distancing has been removed. With highly contagious variants of the Coronavirus, such as Omicron, regulations on physical distancing and acrylic dividers in indoor spaces have very limited protective effects. Thus, the following regulations apply:

- Rooms may be used without any physical distancing regulations, however, they may only be occupied up to the available number of seats.
- Physical distancing regulations may be retained if they do not affect operations (e.g. in service areas open to the public).
- In service areas open to the public, acrylic dividers will continue to be used and may still be ordered.

### **b. Personal individual workplace assessment**

- These assessments will still be conducted for persons who belong to risk groups. Protective measures defined after the assessment will be implemented.
- For pregnant persons, these assessments will continue to be conducted. Protective measures defined after the assessment will be implemented.

### **c. FFP2 masks strongly advised, breaks**

All employees of TH Köln, as well as visitors and guests, are strongly advised to wear FFP2 masks while inside the university buildings. This includes the following indoor spaces:

- all lecture halls, seminar rooms and any other classrooms,
- Also during on-campus examinations
- in hallways and restrooms, in all other circulation areas
- when using student workspaces, irrespective of their location (examples: library, entry hall at Deutz Campus, seats located in the hallways, seminar rooms not used for classes at the time in question etc.)
- in offices, laboratories and workshops whenever it is not possible to keep a distance of at least 1.5 meters to another person or in situations where offices or other units are open to the public
- Offices may be used with two or more people at the same time. It is recommended to keep a distance of 1.5 meters, if possible. Offices are to be ventilated regularly. In this case, FFP2 masks are not necessary. As soon as people, whose usual workspace is not in this office, enter the room it is strongly recommended to wear FFP2 masks.
- Workspaces that are open to the public (counseling services secretariats etc.): It is strongly recommended to wear FFP2 masks in situations of interaction with the public. Please pay special attention to regular ventilation in these workspaces.
- Persons who wear FFP2 masks for long periods of time need regular breaks to take off their masks. For office workspaces, mask breaks may be taken while rooms are ventilated.

### **d. Systematic ventilation**

There is no longer a legal requirement to stay below the CO<sub>2</sub> reference value of 1000 ppm. Good ventilation helps to prevent infections. Additionally, a low CO<sub>2</sub> concentration due to regular ventilation has positive effects on students' and employees' performance and well-being and has therefore been fixed in the work place directive (*Arbeitsstättenrichtlinie*).

All rooms are to be ventilated sufficiently. Rooms are to be ventilated with windows fully open (impact ventilation). Airing with the windows in tilt position ("kippen") is not sufficient because the air cannot circulate properly. In rooms where windows can only be opened to a tilt position but not completely, it is necessary to open doors at the same time (cross ventilation). The CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in a room can be measured to determine ventilation intervals.

- CO<sub>2</sub> monitors are available in the faculties and all other units.
- Guide value: 1.500 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>
- Explanation: This threshold value is mentioned in the technical regulations for work places (Technische Regeln für Arbeitsstätten) and is the lowest value for good air quality. In comparison, the threshold value for "excellent air quality is 1000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>
- Automatic ventilation systems: These systems will continue to run at their current capacity.
- Rooms may only be occupied up to their seating capacity.

- Please note: Rooms which cannot be sufficiently ventilated, neither with the help of an automatic ventilation system nor by opening windows and doors must not be used for longer periods of time.

For the upcoming winter period, it is possible that legal requirements regarding the ventilation of rooms or to stay below the threshold value of 1000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> concentration will be reintroduced.

#### **e. Meetings, workshops etc.**

Events such as meetings, workshops etc. may take place without additional restrictions as long as the regulations defined in this document are observed. Responsibility lies with the organizers of the respective event.

For conferences or events with social elements, such as group meals and drinks, a hygiene concept is to be drawn up and submitted the Occupational Health and Safety Team ([arbeitssicherheit\\_antraege@th-koeln.de](mailto:arbeitssicherheit_antraege@th-koeln.de)). Approval will be denied and events may not take place if the criteria regarding occupational health and safety as well as the current Covid protection regulations are not fulfilled. In case of doubt, the matter will be forwarded to the Executive Board.

#### **f. Distribution of rapid tests**

Regular testing of all employees does not have any positive effects in times of low infection rates. Since the SARS-CoV-2 Occupational Health and Safety Regulation has expired, it is no longer required to carry out rapid tests once or twice a week as a preventive measure. Supervisors may still order small numbers of tests for their units. These may then be distributed as needed (e.g. to persons who are feeling unwell, who have a cold or who have been in contact with a person who tested positive for Covid).

#### **g. Positive test results**

Irrespective of the reporting channels of the Public Health Department (*Gesundheitsamt*), please get in touch with TH Köln if

- your physician or the Public Health Department orders you to get tested for the Coronavirus.
- you have already been tested but have not yet received the results.
- it has been confirmed that you are infected with Covid

Please get in touch with your HR person and your supervisor. If reporting sick to your HR person and supervisor, please always mention if you are reporting sick due a (suspected) corona infection or not. This allows us to take necessary measures, such as disinfecting any rooms you have recently used, without delay.

TH Köln's Executive Board

Wednesday, June 08, 2022