I. Basic principles

In accordance with the currently applicable legislation and the occupational safety and health standards defined by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and following consultation with the internal Occupational Safety and Health Specialists and the Staff Unit for Occupational Safety & Health and Environmental Protection, the University Board has defined the current overall conditions for work at the University of Duisburg-Essen in the form of this action plan, also taking technical, organisational and personal protective measures into consideration by order of priority.

As the overall conditions and legal provisions are currently subject to continuous change, it will be necessary to successively adapt and expand this action plan.

For specific issues (examinations involving physical presence, research activities and conducting practical courses), further regulations will be required.

Department-specific measures are to be defined and documented in the form of ‘supplementary risk assessments’ on the basis of this action plan (see section II.6).

1. Avoiding contact

First and foremost, the 1.5-metre rule for social distancing applies.

In order to achieve this, human density must be reduced, e.g. by

- Adjusting working hours and reducing the number of staff present at the same time
- Dividing staff into separate teams or
- Separating workspaces, e.g. by installing transparent protective barriers

Furthermore, mobile working from home is to be allowed if tasks can be efficiently completed remotely.

2. Adhering to hygiene measures (see Attachment 3)

All members of our university can personally contribute to mutual protection by observing the hygiene rules.

Hygiene must also be considered with regard to shared equipment.

Jointly used rooms must be ventilated regularly.

Please find further details on these matters in the sections below.

Numerous other rules regarding the coronavirus are available on the UDE website.
II. Working conditions/operations

1. Workplace design

As a rule, there are no issues regarding offices that are exclusively used by one member of staff. In shared offices, the workstations are to be arranged in such a way that a distance of 1.5 metres is ensured and that staff do not sit facing one another directly wherever possible. Small two-person offices are currently only to be used by one person at a time. The distance rule must also be adhered to when entering or leaving the office.

In laboratories and workshops, the workplaces are only to be used to an extent that ensures the 1.5-metre distance rule is adhered to.

Agreed schedules or shifting to rooms that are currently not used for teaching can help reduce the intensity of use of individual spaces and better spread present staff. Other remedies include alternating between laboratory and office work or making use of the mobile working option, at least on individual days. Forced ventilation has a positive effect on infection prevention and control.

Sufficiently sized handover areas are to be established for handing over files, documents, intermediate products, workpieces, deliveries, etc. These areas may then only be entered in turns.

If it is impossible to keep the minimum distance, priority is to be given to installing a barrier (e.g. plastic screens, plastic curtains, framed plastic film). This applies to consultation scenarios with changing interlocutors, visitor enquiries in the libraries or when operating machinery together, for example.

If such measures cannot be implemented due to the type of work or the circumstances, e.g. when handling heavy or bulky loads together or in the case of teamwork for assembling or disassembling equipment and technical work, personal protective equipment is required. This means that all persons involved must at least wear surgical masks. In situations with frequent direct contact with others or when the minimum distance to other people not wearing a face mask can frequently not be kept (e.g. when invigilating exams), FFP2 (or higher) category protective masks must be worn (see section IV.2).

Teams or groups are to be formed in order to ensure that the same persons are present at the same times in units where this approach is suitable. Meetings between members of different teams should be avoided wherever possible (different break rooms or break times). The constellation of the teams is to remain unchanged.

2. Equipment

Devices, tools and work surfaces should be used exclusively by a single person wherever possible. Equipment that is jointly used (photocopiers, kitchenettes, machinery) is to be cleaned using a cleaning agent at least once every workday. Disinfection is not mandatory but may be helpful if a large number of people use the equipment or if it is frequently passed on.

3. Separate storage of work clothing and personal protective equipment

Work clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE) is to be stored separately from everyday clothes and for each individual person. Regular cleaning must be organised.
4. Conferences/meetings/interaction with visitors:

Technology such as video and telephone conferencing systems are to be primarily used to conduct conferences and meetings and to interact with the public.

If physical presence is necessary, gatherings are to be organised in a way that enables compliance with the distance rule at all times. This can be achieved by reducing the number of available seats in meeting rooms or using classrooms that are currently not used for teaching.

Try to prevent queues by arranging appointments and defining access regulations. If, in exceptional cases, this is not possible, waiting persons are to be guided by means of distance markings.

5. Common rooms and shared spaces

Even in small common rooms, a 1.5-metre distance is to be kept to the nearest person.

A maximum of two persons may use a lift at the same time. If two persons are already using a lift, please wait for the next one or take the stairs. Please bear in mind that it is now more important than ever to give priority to persons with limited mobility.

Keep a distance from others in corridors, wait in a room or at intersections if this can help avoid close encounters. Turn away if you encounter other persons unexpectedly and cannot keep a safe distance.

In narrow staircases, encounters are to be avoided whenever possible. Wherever the building design allows, directions of movement will be defined and indicated by signs and markings for highly frequented stairways. Where this is not possible, please allow enough room to ensure a distance can be kept.

Most kitchenettes and copy rooms are so small that only one person may work there at a time.

Washrooms are usually not very spacious, and the washbasins are close to one another and the door. Units that are immediately next to one another without separation may not be used simultaneously. Please wait if the room is occupied.

6. Risk assessment and instruction

The protective measures specified here are applicable to all areas in general use at UDE. Measures for individual organisational units are to be defined in the form of supplementary risk assessments (RA; based on the separate form in Attachment 1) by the responsible line manager.

In this context, factors of mental stress to staff resulting from the corona crisis, such as high intensity of work over a long period of time, fear of infection, worry about family members who belong to a high-risk group, strain of family and care duties, are to be taken into account.

Similar to current procedures, it may be useful to create different partial RAs depending on the job profiles. For office settings, one comprehensive supplementary RA will be sufficient in many cases. Moreover, the measures defined in existing RAs continue to apply. The Occupational Safety and Health Specialists, the Work Psychology Unit and the university’s Occupational Health Service are available for consultation on these matters.
Implementation of the action plan and the RAs is a prerequisite for work on campus to be resumed. If the scope of activities is to be extended, the measures must be revised.

Before operations can be resumed, staff must be instructed on the supplementary measures. The supplementary risk assessment and a record of instruction are to be filed as additional documents alongside the existing documents (usually the red ‘Arbeitsschutz’ (occupational safety and health) binder; section 2, potentially with an additional ‘Corona’ divider). Regulations regarding the confirmation process for the supplementary risk assessment will be communicated separately.

7. Preventive occupational health care/consultation by the university’s medical officers

UDE offers its staff preventive occupational health care. Consultation by the university’s medical officers, in their function as trustworthy, neutral persons, can also help assess particular risks due to underlying conditions or your individual constitution. Please find the contact details here: https://www.uni-due.de/verwaltung/organisation/betriebsarzt.php

8. Admission of external parties (e.g. contractors)

Admission of external parties is to be restricted to a minimum.

Contact details of external persons, the times when they were present and their contacts at UDE must be documented by the person who awarded the contract. External parties are to be instructed on the infection control measures applicable at UDE with regard to SARS-CoV-2 before entering the building/taking up work. An information sheet will be made available for this purpose.
III. Employment-related regulations

1. Mobile working from home

The option to work from home and the relevant guidelines on recording working hours have been extended until 31 May 2020 for the time being. Therefore, line managers are to continue to allow mobile working, potentially alternating with work on campus, and develop a staff schedule for their area of responsibility.

Depending on further developments and work requirements, the times that staff is present on campus is to be successively increased over the course of the month of May, taking all protective and hygiene regulations into consideration (see Attachment 3). The objective is to carefully and gradually increase presence at UDE in a controlled manner as far as is justifiable.

2. Work-related travel

The University Board has decided to carefully loosen the general ban on work-related travel.

Essential domestic work-related trips may once again be undertaken with immediate effect. For this purpose, the person requesting the trip must explain why it is essential in his or her request.

In addition, private cars should be given preference for travelling at present. In accordance with the contact restrictions, a maximum of two persons may travel in the same car and must be seated one in the front and one in the back. For the entire duration of the work-related trip, the applicable distance and hygiene measures must be applied (see Attachment 3).

This means: line managers may approve domestic work-related trips with immediate effect. Decisions as to whether trips are essential are to be taken in the departments and should be documented. Strict criteria are to be applied when deciding on the necessity, also with regard to the timing (why does it have to be now?).

General permissions for work-related travel within Germany which have been approved before the travel ban are valid once again but subject to the regulations specified above.

International work-related travel will continue to be forbidden until further notice.

3. High-risk groups

Persons who are at a higher risk for a severe course of COVID-19 must be specifically protected. In such cases, close consultation with the line managers and, if necessary, the Human Resources department is required.

Written confirmation by the attending physician documenting that an employee is a member of a high-risk group must be submitted to UDE as employer.
**IV. Protective equipment and its use**

1. **Barriers/protective screens**

Protective screens that stop droplets serve to separate staff from visitors and divide workspaces if the minimum distance cannot be kept. The carpenter’s workshop, which is part of the Technical Facility Management unit (Essen campus), is currently producing protective screens, which can now be ordered.

2. **Respiratory protection/surgical masks**

**Application:** A general obligation to wear face masks as is now applicable in retail outlets and public transport will not be introduced for the time being. As teaching is currently not taking place and not all staff is present on campus, the number of persons within buildings is significantly lower than during regular operation.

Persons who wish to do so may wear face masks. However, please consider and respect that the perceived need for protection may differ from one person to the next. Simple masks made of fabric may also be used. Please note that responsibility for keeping their face masks clean lies with each individual person.

In situations where the protective distance cannot be kept, all persons present are to wear surgical masks. Please note that, in such contexts, these masks predominantly serve to protect others, not yourself.

Depending on the situation/working conditions, FFP2-quality respiratory protection masks without valves may also be required, e.g. when invigilating written exams or instructing individual staff employed by contractors. Please find explanations of the differences in Attachment 2. In this context, it is crucial that the masks are worn properly. For instance, FFP masks are unsuitable for people with beards.

**Procurement:** UDE provides disposable surgical masks and FFP2 respiratory protection masks via the central stock kept by the Technical Facility Management unit.

**Use** (see Attachment 2): Surgical masks and respiratory protection masks can be used multiple times during a day if they are put on and removed with clean hands or touching the ribbons only and it is ensured that they are stored without a risk of contamination (e.g. on a hook and not touching any surfaces). This way of storing also allows the masks to dry before the next use.

3. **Hand hygiene/use of disinfectants**

Virologists generally deem regularly and thoroughly washing your hands with soap sufficient. Therefore, UDE will not provide hand sanitiser in all washrooms and at all entrances throughout the campuses. For work situations where staff would have to wash their hands too frequently or where it is not possible, e.g. during face-to-face examinations, in the library, in the context of transport or consultation services, disinfectants can be ordered via the central stock kept by the Technical Facility Management unit.

In the case of written examinations, mobile disinfectant dispensers will be made centrally available.
4. Cleaning/disinfecting surfaces

Plans are to be made for frequently and generally used surfaces to be cleaned at least once per workday. Facility Management will centrally clean handrails in staircases, handles of entrance, corridor and washroom doors, and control panels of lifts and photocopiers. Moreover, Facility Management will also clean (but not disinfect) desktops and telephones more frequently. Cleaning of washrooms was already included in the central cleaning services, depending on the building and the frequency of use also multiple times per day.

If the staff schedule includes working in shifts, cleaning in between shifts is to be organised. This can also be coordinated with the Facility Management Department.

Cleaning of other shared equipment (devices, table surfaces, etc.) has to be organised within each department. Using soapy water or glass cleaner for cleaning will be sufficient. Surfaces should only be disinfected in exceptional cases.

Cleaning agents are also provided via the central stock kept by the Technical Facility Management unit.

5. Disposable gloves

Gloves are primarily used for skin protection. The coronavirus is ineffective on the skin of your hands. It has to be in contact with the mucous membranes to harm humans. Therefore and because wearing gloves rather increases the risks, also for others, if they are not properly used, wearing gloves is not generally recommended. At best, they may be useful in specific areas (e.g. where frequent handover of objects is required).

Wearing gloves for long periods of time may result in health issues. If gloves are to be worn over long periods of time on a regular basis, an occupational health assessment regarding wet work is required.

6. Marking material/adhesive tape

The Facility Management Department will centrally install signs at frequently used entrances and staircases. The Staff Unit for Occupational Safety & Health and Environmental Protection provides material for labelling that individual organisational units would like to install themselves (e.g. distance marking).