

Recommendations for universities and colleges for implementing precautions to limit the spread of the Covid-19 infection

Compliance with home quarantine and isolation conditions and health surveillance

The university and college (hereinafter – the Institution) determines the procedure by which the requirements for limiting the spread of Covid-19 infection are ensured, which are based on the basic principles set out in Cabinet Regulation No. 360 of 9 June 2020 “Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of Covid-19 Infection” (hereinafter – Cabinet Regulation No. 360).

Persons with symptoms of respiratory infectious diseases are not allowed to be present in the Institution.

The Institution informs staff and students about the need to monitor their health, about the symptoms of Covid-19, and about personal prevention measures and actions if someone develops the symptoms of a respiratory infection. Students and staff shall immediately inform the responsible person of the Institution if they are diagnosed with Covid-19 infection.

The Institution recommends special precautions for people at risk of Covid-19 infection – seniors and people with chronic diseases: to monitor their health, treat the chronic disease to prevent exacerbations, take preventive measures, and not to go to the Institution with symptoms. If there is an increased risk of Covid-19 infection in the Institution or community, the use of medical face masks should be considered. If there is an increased risk of Covid-19 infection in the Institution, people at higher risk from Covid-19 infection should, as far as possible, reduce the time they are present at the Institution (work or study remotely) and use a face mask or nose and mouth covering in certain situations (in the event of symptoms of a respiratory infection, in unpredictable circumstances when it is not possible to observe the conditions of distancing, when in a room with a large number of people for a long time, i.e., for more than 15 minutes, and when it is not possible to observe the distancing rules, or otherwise in conditions where there is an increased risk of infection).

Action in the case of the suspicion or detection of infection in the Institution

If an employee of the Institution develops acute symptoms of an infectious respiratory disease (fever, cough, shortness of breath) while performing work duties, the employee is obliged to stop performing work duties and go home, inform the responsible person of the Institution by phone and contact a family doctor to agree on the further treatment regimen. If contact with other people is possible in the Institution or on public transport, the employee must use a face mask or mouth and nose covering.

If an employee or student has a serious health problem while at the Institution, emergency medical services shall be called.

The staff member or student may only return to the Institution on the instructions of a doctor.

If signs of an acute respiratory infection are detected in two or more students or staff members and group infection is suspected, the Institution shall act in accordance with the Institution’s infectious disease control procedures, use face masks or mouth and nose coverings as described above and provide information over the telephone to the epidemiologist of the relevant regional department of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (hereinafter – CDPC). See www.spkc.gov.lv for contact information.

If a student or staff member is diagnosed with Covid-19 infection and the case is epidemiologically linked to the particular Institution, CDPC epidemiologists will prescribe appropriate anti-epidemic measures according to the specific situation and provide customised

recommendations to the Institution's administration and the persons involved, and will also decide on the need to establish quarantine for a particular group, course or the Institution. The head of the Institution is obliged to implement the instructions of the CDPC. The head of the Institution informs the founder, employees and students of the Institution about the fact of infection and the instructions received from the CDPC, while the representative of the founder informs the Ministry of Education and Science (e-mail: pasts@izm.gov.lv) and the State Education Quality Service (e-mail: ikvd@ikvd.gov.lv) if the Institution is quarantined.

Distancing measures

The Institution lays down the procedures for staying in the Institution, inter alia by specifying in more detail the general epidemiological safety requirements for distancing and compliance with the requirements for the organisation of the flow of people. The requirements are also published on the Institution's website.

The Institution designates a responsible person whose responsibilities include coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the requirements and these guidelines. The staff and students of the Institution are informed about the above-mentioned process, the responsible person and contact information.

The Institution has developed an action plan and the founder is informed about it if the epidemiological situation, according to the information provided by the CDPC, deteriorates due to the spread of Covid-19 infection in the municipality where the Institution is located and requires partially or fully remote studies according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Science. The Institution promptly informs all staff about this, in particular by ensuring the transfer of information to all students, including foreigners.

If the epidemiological situation does not worsen, the on-site study process at the Institution is preferable.

The head of the Institution determines the procedure for the organisation of study work, identifies and determines communication channels with students (for example, e-mail, telephone, social networks, e-platforms), determines the work organisation of academic staff and their communication with students, determines the persons responsible for communication with students.

The Institution shall assess the risks of the use of the premises, identify areas inside and outside the Institution where there is a risk of crowding, such as cloakrooms and corridors in the vicinity of large lecture-rooms, and plan the flow of people in these areas to prevent congestion. The study process within one group or a course that is not divided into groups can be organised in one room, disregarding the distance of 2 metres, if this is not possible. The simultaneous presence of several groups or courses in or near the room before and after the session must be avoided.

Clearly legible instructions are placed in highly visible locations for students, staff and visitors to keep a distance of 2 metres from other people. If necessary, appropriate markings on the floor are ensured.

The Institution informs staff and students about the use of the Apturi Covid mobile app for identifying and informing contacts.

“Apturi Covid mobile app for identifying and informing contacts is available in Latvia, and it allows everyone to discover the risks of infection as soon as possible if there has been close contact with a Covid-19 patient, and to make a decision on laboratory examination and self-isolation as soon as possible, as well as get recommendations and information for further action. Detailed information about the app can be obtained, and it can be easily downloaded by visiting the website <https://www.apturicovid.lv>”

Ensuring hygiene

The Institution provides all students, staff, service providers and other visitors of the Institution with the opportunity to practice hand hygiene, as well as use hand disinfectants. Clearly legible information is placed on the premises of the Institution, reminding students of the need to practice hygiene.

The premises are regularly aired or good mechanical ventilation is ensured.

The premises are cleaned regularly. All common-use surfaces (e.g., door handles, table tops, chair armrests and support surfaces, toilet surfaces, water taps, touch-screen devices) are regularly cleaned using disinfectants. More detailed information on the cleaning of premises is available on the CDPC website <https://www.spkc.gov.lv/lv/tirisana-un-dezinfekcija>.

Using dormitories

The following principles shall be observed when accommodating students in dormitories:

- common areas are only used when necessary, and students are not allowed to gather in common areas;
- the use of common areas (toilets, showers) is planned in order to ensure, as far as possible, the observance of a distance of 2 metres and to prevent the gathering of students;
- inside the premises it is possible to wash hands with warm water and soap, as well as hand disinfectants are made available;
- in the premises, including toilets, clearly legible information is placed reminding students of the need to practice hygiene;
- all common areas and surfaces are carefully cleaned.

The Institution is obliged to collect information on the time of arrival and the residential address of foreign students. Where possible, the possibility of 14-day self-isolation should be provided for students from countries with a high incidence of Covid-19 and in cases where the infection is confirmed or the person is identified as a contact person. If a person is a Latvian citizen and can get to his/her place of residence, then it is recommended that the student go to his/her place of residence for isolation, home quarantine or self-isolation measures. Foreign students or persons who cannot get to their place of residence must be provided with the possibility of isolation, as far as possible, by providing a separate room, bathroom and meals. For example, parts of a building that are separate from the rest of the dormitory building can be reserved, or separate apartments can be rented.

Up-to-date information on the risk status of countries on the CDPC website (<https://spkc.gov.lv/lv/tavai-veselibai/aktualitate-par-jauno-koronavi/valstu-saslimstibas-raditaji-a/>) should be regularly checked to determine the necessary restrictions. The Institution informs foreign applicants and students about the rules of self-isolation in accordance with the instructions of the CDPC (including activities that are or are not allowed, <https://covid19.gov.lv/covid-19/drosibas-pasakumi/pasizolacija>) two weeks before the beginning of the academic year in accordance with the provisions of Cabinet Regulation No. 360.

An algorithm of action must be developed for the dormitory for dealing with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 or has been identified as a contact person. A responsible person who knows and supervises the implementation of the algorithm must also be designated.

The Institution shall lay down the conditions for the use of and payment for dormitories in the case of remote studies in its internal rules.

Internship process

Internships (including qualification internships) in companies can take place on-site or remotely, after assessing the risks for all parties to the contract. Students observe the requirements set at the place of internship. The Institution agrees with the company on the prompt exchange of information if a case of Covid-19 infection is detected at the place of internship.

If necessary to meet the epidemiological requirements, the Institution issues an order on changes in the work organisation of the educational process for each stage of the internship/part of the internship that can be implemented remotely.

Organisation of the study process

From 1 August 2020, all study programmes are implemented on site. The Institution evaluates the risks and opportunities for distancing, and may implement a part of the course or module of the study programme remotely in accordance with Cabinet Regulation No. 360, which provides for the assessment of the risks to compliance with safety measures during the provision of services, and determines the cases where remote studies should be used, including the inability of a foreign student to attend studies in person, the need to ensure distancing, compliance with anti-epidemic measures set by the CDPC, as well as a situation when the levels of Covid-19 infection remain high in the territory of the Institution or in territories bordering it.

The Institution prepares the necessary amendments to the study agreement, stipulating that a part of the study programme may be implemented remotely due to safety reasons, as well as in situations specified in external laws and regulations. Possible changes in the tuition fee are included in the agreement depending on how much of the study programme is implemented remotely.

When organising international student exchanges, Institutions shall follow up-to-date information on the Covid-19 situation in the partner countries and shall contact partner institutions to ensure that applicants for mobility programmes are provided with timely information about their options, including, if applicable, the possibilities for the exchange to be partially or fully implemented remotely. Latvian Institutions that receive incoming participants in mobility programmes are entitled to decide whether to implement this practice in the 2020/2021 academic year.