Decision regarding the 2020 autumn semester as a result of COVID-19

Background

COVID-19 is currently spreading in society. The University follows the Government’s and the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s directives, advice and recommendations regarding COVID-19. Additionally, the Vice-Chancellor reaches decisions on other issues deemed necessary. The University’s ambition is that teaching and examination will continue as planned to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, the University is also working to reduce the spread of disease.

This spring, Umeå University has reached a number of decisions due to the ongoing spread of COVID-19 in society. The majority of these decisions were originally valid until the end of the spring semester on 7 June. The Vice-Chancellor decided on 12 May 2020 (through FS 1.1-1062-20) to extend some of these decisions until 30 August, which is the day prior to the start of the 2020 autumn semester. The Vice-Chancellor also decided on 21 April 2020 (through FS 1.1-948-20) concerning the University’s summer courses that all teaching involving physical meetings would be cancelled and replaced with alternative instruction methods.

On 29 May, the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Government announced that the recommendation regarding remote teaching at Swedish universities would be removed from 15 June. However, the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s directives and general advice are still valid to prevent the spread of disease. This includes the prohibition of public gatherings exceeding 50 people. Umeå University is hence planning on conducting campus-based education from the start of the autumn semester on 31 August under the condition that it is possible to carry out the education in such a way that the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s and other authorities’ directives and general advice are observed. When this is not possible, the education must instead be carried out remotely.

Decision

The Vice-Chancellor has reached the following decisions regarding the 2020 autumn semester, i.e. 31 August 2020 until 17 January 2021 (if nothing else is stated).
First- and second-cycle education

- If it is possible to carry out teaching and examination in such a way that the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s and other authorities’ directives and general advice are observed, then education and examination can be carried out on campus.

- Students on their first and last semesters of their degree programme are to be prioritised for campus-based instruction.

- Teaching and examination can be scheduled to evenings if required due to the risk of spreading disease, but only with consideration for the ability of students and teaching staff to participate.

- Teaching and examination on summer courses in 2020 can be implemented on campus after 15 June under the condition that the directives and general advice of the Public Health Agency of Sweden and other authorities regarding COVID-19 are observed. No change of plans regarding summer courses can be required.

- Departments must, if possible, adapt their retake exams this August so they can be carried out remotely. If this is not possible, retakes can be carried out according to the examination format stated in the syllabus. To the extent possible, large crowds of students must be avoided in examination halls, and the maximum number of 50 people in each hall must not be exceeded. The distance between seats in examination halls must be increased where necessary. If possible, activities and course components including close contact between people must be avoided, for instance in practical examinations.

- Extending the validity of the decision Deviations from course syllabus to prevent further spreading of COVID-19 (FS 3.1.4-667-20) until 17 January 2021. This means that deviations may be made from established formats of teaching and examination in course syllabi to the extent necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- An examination session can be scheduled outside of the time frame of the course. Such a decision must be used considerably restrictively, and the examination session must be scheduled for a time as close to the original session as possible. First and foremost, the time frame within which the course is offered must be adhered to, which can result in examination session may be scheduled earlier than normal. If an examination session is rescheduled, the course coordinating department must ensure that the
examination session does not coincide with teaching at following courses. The person who makes decisions on necessary postponements of examinations is responsible for ensuring that the decision is documented, registered in the registry and that students concerned are informed. A student representative must, whenever practically possible, be consulted before a decision is reached.

- Students who experience symptoms of disease – even mild ones – must stay at home and be free of any symptoms for at least 48 hours before they can return to university premises.

Staff

- Staff should continue to, fully or partially, and in consultation with their manager, work remotely as far as their work tasks allow. Individuals who enter the workplace must follow the directives and general advice of the Public Health Agency of Sweden, and individuals who experience symptoms of disease – even mild ones – must stay at home and be free of any symptoms for at least 48 hours before they can return to university premises.

- Physical meetings must be exchanged for alternative solutions to the extent possible.

- All employees over the age of 70 are urged to follow the recommendations of the Public Health Agency of Sweden and limit their contacts with others, and hence avoid visiting the university's campuses and workplaces.

Travels and events

- All public events organised or co-hosted by Umeå University are cancelled and replaced with alternative forms.

- Staff, students and guests are urged to follow the guidelines for domestic and international travels issued by the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- Restrictiveness and caution must be taken when considering holding planning days and internal conferences. If any such are organised, the directives and general advice of the Public Health Agency of Sweden must be adhered to.

- Umeå University must continue to follow the Swedish Work Environment Authority's interpretation that states that employers can voluntarily remove
the requirement on staff to produce a doctor’s certificate for day eight until fourteen if there are “specific reasons”.

Premises

- University premises open to students on 10 August 2020.
- Study spaces in the University Library and the Medical Library as well as the group study rooms in Universum will open from 10 August 2020.
- All public spaces, lecture rooms, group study rooms and study spaces must be adapted for social distancing to the extent possible.

A decision regarding the University’s public activities will be reached separately.