Decision regarding the 2021 spring semester as a result of COVID-19, 18 January–23 March 2021

Background
COVID-19 is currently spreading in society. The University follows the Government’s and the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s guidelines and general advice 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.

In 2020, Umeå University has reached a number of decisions due to the ongoing spread of COVID-19 in society. Prior to the 2020 autumn semester, the Vice-Chancellor decided, on 17 June, that 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’ guidelines and general advice are observed, then education and examination can be carried out on campus (FS 1.1-1062-20).

The Public Health Agency of Sweden’s current guidelines and general advice regarding COVID-19 are valid either until further notice or until 31 December 2020. The current situation requires the University to uphold measures and continue to adapt its activities to prevent spread of disease. In order to provide staff and students at Umeå University with ample time to prepare, the Vice-Chancellor is now approving the plan for Umeå University’s approach to the first half of the 2021 spring semester.

Decision
The Vice-Chancellor has reached the following decisions regarding the 2021 spring semester, this is 18 January until 23 March 2021 (if nothing else is stated).

Regarding 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’ guidelines and general advice are observed, then teaching and examination can be carried out on campus.

- Students on their first and last academic year of their study programmes 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.

- Deviations from a course syllabus regarding forms for teaching and assessment may be made to the extent necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Only the person who normally makes decisions on course syllabi and examination is allowed to make decisions on necessary deviations and must ensure that the decision is well-documented and archived. In those cases where an examination requires access to a computer or internet connection, students must be offered such aids that allow them to participate from a technical perspective.
• 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 a need to schedule the examination session earlier than normal. If an examination session is rescheduled, the course coordinating department must ensure that the examination session does not coincide with teaching on following courses. The person who makes decisions on necessary rescheduling 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 – even mild ones – must stay at home according to the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s guidelines and general advice.

Staff

• Staff should also in the future, fully or partially, and in consultation with their manager, work from home as far as their work tasks allow. And staff that need to work at their workplace must follow the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s guidelines and general advice.

• Staff who experience symptoms – even mild ones – must stay at home according to the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s guidelines and general advice.

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

Travels and events

• All public events organised or co-hosted by Umeå University are cancelled and replaced with alternative forms. “Public events” do not include the University’s core activities such as education of students on first-, second- and third-cycle level, or research. However, Umeå University has other public organisations, such as Bildmuseet, Curiosum and the University Library.

• Exceptions according to what is stated below can be made under the condition that the activities or events are adapted to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19:
  
  o public events, aimed at university students, school pupils and young children. Physical meetings must be exchanged for alternative solutions to the extent possible. Prior to organising an event aimed at students at Umeå University, careful consideration and thought should be given to organising the event online instead.
  
  o Information campaigns by the students’ unions in university premises about the student unions’ activities, and the student unions’ welcome activities for new students on campus at the start of the spring semester.
  
  o Activities concerning keeping Curiosum, Bildmuseet and the University Library open.
  
  o It is up to the Vice-Chancellor to decide on further exceptions regarding institution-wide events. It is up to the University Director and the Deputy University Director to decide on exceptions for other events.
• 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 still 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 of producing a doctor’s certificate for day eight until fourteen of illness if there are “specific reasons”.

Premises
• All public spaces, lecture rooms, group study rooms and study spaces must be adapted for social distancing to the extent possible.

A new decision for the further approach to handling issues related to COVID-19 will be made on 18 January 2021 at the latest to cover the remaining part of the spring semester.