Deviations from programme syllabi and postponement of courses to prevent further spreading of COVID-19

Presenter
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Background
COVID-19 is currently spreading in society. The university follows the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s recommendations regarding COVID-19. Additionally, the Vice-Chancellor reaches decisions on other issues deemed necessary.

The university ambition is that teaching and assessment will continue as planned to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, the university is also working to reduce the spread of the disease. On 17 March, the Vice-Chancellor decided to allow deviations from a course syllabus to prevent further spreading of COVID-19. A guide and template to document such deviations has been established and is available for staff online.

Should such a deviation from a course syllabus not be possible or sufficient, there may, in certain cases, be necessary to decide on deviations from programme syllabi or to postpone a freestanding course to a later date. As an example, this could be to change the order of courses within a degree programme. Deviations of this nature have support from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ), who, due to COVID-19, states the following:

Urgent revisions of a degree programme
Certain types of courses can be difficult or impossible to carry out remotely. The transition to online teaching can hence, in some cases, result in an urgent need to change the order of courses within a programme. It is the opinion of the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) that changes in programme syllabi may be made in retrospect. If the matter should be reported, UKÄ will not criticise a university that has urgently revised the order of courses within a programme for reasons of disease prevention without having first made revisions to the programme syllabus.

In Rektors besluts- och delegationsordning för Umeå universitet (Reg. no FS 1.1-1142-19), the Vice-Chancellor delegatesthe following to the Faculty Board, without the right for further delegation of authority:

To approve and revise a programme syllabus for a degree programme, including decisions on specific entry requirements. For interfaculty programmes, the host faculty makes decisions after consultation with the other faculties concerned.

In order to, in necessary cases, enable fast decisions on deviations from programme syllabi, Umeå University must, for a limited period, adjust the order of delegation of authority for such decisions.

This document has been translated from Swedish into English. If the English version differs from the original, the Swedish version takes precedence.
Furthermore, deviations from approved programme syllabi can mean that courses, in which students have already been accepted, must be postponed or change location. This needs to be included in the delegation and be valid for both freestanding courses and courses within a degree programme.

This decision has been prepared in the Study administrative group for issues relating to COVID-19.

**Decision**

The Vice-Chancellor has reached the decision to, from 7 April until 7 June 2020, allow that deviations from programme syllabi may be made when necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Deviations must be designed so that the degree requirements can still be fulfilled even if changes to the programme syllabus take place.

This authority to decide according to paragraph 1 also includes postponing and re-scheduling courses, even if students have already been admitted and notified of this. This goes for both courses within degree programmes and courses within freestanding courses.

Decisions to revise programme syllabi for this purpose, can be made in a revised order to the one described in the Vice-Chancellor’s delegation of authority. The Vice-Chancellor is hereby delegating to deans and the director of the Umeå School of Education to reach such decisions mentioned in paragraph 1. This delegation of authority may be further delegated during this period. However, such further delegation of authority must be documented, registered in the registry and notified to the relevant students’ union.

The person who makes decisions on necessary deviations from programme syllabi, is responsible for ensuring that the decision is documented, registered in the registry and notified to the relevant students’ union. Decisions must also be reported to the Faculty Board or to the board of the Umeå School of Education at the next assembly, at which point it must be noted in the minutes.

The Vice-Chancellor assigns the Student Services Office to establish a guide and a template describing how to document decisions to deviate from programme syllabi.

Hans Adolfsson
Vice-Chancellor

Dispatched to
Faculties
Umeå School of Education
Student Services Office
Planning Office
Students’ unions