

20 May
2020

Protocol for Resuming Activities at Universities

1.1 Introduction

The Netherlands is currently in a phase of 'intelligent lockdown'. In March 2020, in line with this intelligent lockdown, a number of limitations were implemented concerning education and research activities at universities (see Annex 1).

The number of people infected with COVID-19 seems to be levelling off, although restrictions will remain in place in the Netherlands for an extended period. The decisions made by the government on 19 May 2020 will have the following consequences for universities:

- Staff will work from home in the event that the nature of their duties permits this.
- The basic assumption is that teaching activities will continue to take place online. Teaching activities that are difficult or impossible to conduct online can be carried out at the university as of 15 June.
- With regard to research activities, the current guidelines established by the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) will remain in force. Among other factors, this means that university staff are allowed to conduct research activities at the physical location(s) of higher education institutions in the event these research activities cannot be carried out remotely and provided these activities can be carried out in compliance with the general instructions issued by the RIVM and the Municipal Health Service (GGD). The same applies to preparatory work conducted by lecturers for teaching purposes.
- The ban on events has been extended until 1 September.

The guidelines in this protocol constitute the framework within which the universities will conduct their teaching and research activities in compliance with the government measures. For now, the main principle is that everything that can be done online will be done online. The aspects of this protocol that relate to research were partly formulated in consultation with the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

This protocol gives institutions the freedom to adapt this framework to their own situation in view of the immense variety between different buildings, facilities, public space and public transport, the variety in size between different student groups and the extent to which teaching and research activities can be organised online.

1.2 Universities have a specific risk profile

Universities have a distinct risk profile in comparison to other segments of the education sector. This risk profile is reflected by the following main aspects (among others):

- Age category of students and staff: students at universities are generally in the 18 – 26 age group and the majority of them are therefore not likely to be classified as at-risk. The staff are in the 25 – 67 age range.
- In general, there are no individuals on campus who are part of the 70+ risk group, although some students and staff may be in one or more of the at-risk groups such as people with diabetes, people with lung conditions, etc. A specific characteristic of UMCs and dentistry

faculties is that healthcare, teaching and research activities may be conducted in the same building, or at the very least in close proximity to each other. This can increase the risk of students, lecturers and patients (at-risk or otherwise) infecting each other.

- Large groups gathering on campus or in university buildings: a fully operational university campus involves high concentrations of students and staff in the buildings with a high degree of circulation. A specific point for attention is that, at many universities, a proportion of the students live on campus.
- Large groups in a single room: many regular face-to-face teaching activities (both lectures and examinations) require large groups (100+) to be present in a single room.
- High levels of mobility and dependence on public transport: many students and staff at universities are dependent on public transport to get to university or their work placement/practical workspace. The agreements made in this regard (within the security regions, among others) will largely determine how much activity is possible within university buildings.
- International population: many students and staff at universities are from different cultures and/or countries.

1.3 Basic principles for decision-making in relation to the resumption and scaling up of activities

When making decisions concerning the resumption and scaling up of activities, the universities must observe the following basic principles:

1. The health and safety (both mental and physical) of students and staff (and patients, in the case of UMCs) is paramount and these groups must be able to trust that their health and safety is protected.
2. The RIVM guidelines and local emergency decrees issued by the security regions must be complied with at all times. If differentiations between age groups are implemented into the guidelines based on the RIVM study focusing on children and young people, then clarification of the associated impact on universities will be required.
3. In view of the institutions' specific responsibilities, continuity and levels of organisable feasibility and in consultation with the participation bodies, the institutions are entitled to apply this protocol in accordance with their own considerations.
4. Upon the resumption of teaching and research activities, attention will be paid to ensuring equality of rights and responsibilities among students and staff (international or otherwise).
5. Efforts shall be made to ensure coherence between the decisions made with regard to teaching, research, valorisation and other activities.
6. Efforts shall be made to ensure that this protocol is applied consistently.
7. Careful and accurate communication with students and staff is extremely important.
8. Customisation of the protection measures is permitted, for example for at-risk students/staff. For this purpose, an effective balance must be found between these groups' interests and the need to deploy these measures for the purposes of care processes.
9. The extent to which activities can be resumed and scaled up is dependent on the availability of public transport, among other factors.
10. Students and staff in at-risk groups must not be made to come to campus against their will.
11. Students and staff who come to campus while exhibiting symptoms will be sent home.

1.4 Priorities for the resumption of teaching activities

No face-to-face teaching activities have been conducted at the universities since Friday 13 March (with the exception of a few special cases specified in Annex 1). The universities have successfully

replaced large portions of the face-to-face teaching activities with remote teaching activities. However, it is also important to facilitate the resumption of face-to-face teaching activities in order to prevent study completion delay (including the many financial and social consequences associated with this).

The measures announced by the government on 19 May 2020 constitute a partial relaxation of the ban on face-to-face teaching activities (see Annex 1). For the time being, any teaching activities that can be conducted remotely will continue to be conducted remotely. In line with the government's decision to facilitate assessment (i.e. tests and examinations), practical education and guidance for vulnerable students, the universities will focus their attention on teaching activities that are difficult or impossible to conduct remotely. The following activities will be prioritised during the resumption of teaching activities at university buildings:

- resumption of teaching in laboratories and practical training, with priority given to graduating students;
- small-scale teaching, such as small working groups or clinical/pre-clinical training (including dentistry and veterinary medicine) for which no effective online alternative is available;
- tests or examinations that cannot feasibly be organised remotely;
- mentoring and tutoring of vulnerable students;
- thesis supervision that cannot be conducted online.

Furthermore, priority will be given to the resumption of work placements, practical internships, field trips and projects/final projects (practical or otherwise), insofar as these were suspended due to the corona crisis. All of these activities must be performed in compliance with the guidelines applicable in the areas in which they will take place.

At UMCs and other healthcare institutions, it will not always be possible to conduct these activities in the same building due to specific healthcare processes (coronavirus-related or otherwise).

Priority will also be given to the resumption of face-to-face teaching for the new first-year students commencing their studies after the summer.

1.5 Priorities for the scaling up of teaching activities

Since 13 March, substantial restrictions have been placed on research activities at universities as a result of the RIVM guidelines and government measures. At the moment, it is possible for staff of these institutions to conduct research activities at the physical location(s) of higher education institutions if these research activities cannot be conducted remotely and provided these activities can be conducted in compliance with the general instructions issued by the RIVM and the GGD. The research activities currently permitted at research universities, KNAW institutions and NWO institutions are being conducted in compliance with the following guidelines:

- For the time being, any research activities that can be carried out remotely will continue to be carried out remotely.
- With regard to research activities that can be conducted in university buildings, priority will be given to PhDs and postdocs who are completing their research projects. In this regard, the importance of the research to the healthcare sector and its contribution to resolving the coronavirus crisis will also be taken into consideration.

1.6 Priorities for reopening the buildings

Since 13 March, a substantial proportion of university buildings have been closed as a result of the RIVM guidelines and government measures. The institutions are currently examining both the need for and opportunities to gradually scale up the reopening of the buildings in compliance with the RIVM guidelines and the government measures. This will be done in phases in order to protect the health and safety of all parties. All necessary measures will be implemented in order to protect students, academic staff, support staff and administrative staff.

1.7 Quantification and decision-making within individual institutions (including safety measures)

Following adoption of this protocol, the executive board of each institution will quantify which activities can be carried out on campus in close consultation with the participation bodies and other relevant parties. Based on this quantification, decisions will be made concerning the activities that will be carried out, taking into account the total amount of space available. Preparation for these decisions could include the following steps, among others:

- examination of which rooms can be used in line with the 1.5-metre rule;
- calculation of the maximum number of people for which the infrastructure is designed;
- investigation of priorities that apply throughout the entire institution;
- central determination of how and by whom the rooms/areas will be used in line with these priorities;
- fleshing out the national protocol into a protocol specific to the institution in question.

These specific institutional protocols must include a set of measures based on the RIVM guidelines and the government measures in order to ensure that on-site activities are resumed in a safe and responsible manner. This includes:

- guidelines for students and staff concerning when they are permitted to come to the university buildings and when they are not;
- measures to ensure compliance with the 1.5-metre rule (comparable to the measures in the protocol for shopping responsibly). This could include adjustments to the layout of laboratories or examination halls or rules for the use of corridors, stairwells and lifts;
- monitoring and enforcement in relation to the 1.5-metre rule in the university buildings;
- extra hygiene measures (for example, hygiene stations at building entrances, hand sanitiser dispensers in areas where running water and soap are not available, etc.);
- working in shifts and attention to cleaning of equipment;
- expansion of cleaning capacity;
- agreements regarding testing and contact with the GGD;
- rules concerning arrival and departure times for students and staff;
- adjustments to the scheduling of teaching activities;
- rules governing the sharing and cleaning of lab materials;
- communication regarding the measures, including communication of whom students and staff can contact if they have any questions or concerns;
- all other measures the necessity of which becomes apparent over time;
- specific exceptions/guidelines applicable to students within clinical settings, as these students must comply with professional guidelines applicable to healthcare professionals both within and outside hospitals.

Annex 2 contains an overview of generic measures that are applicable to all universities.

1.8 Transport

Universities are a vital part of the strategy to gradually reopen society. In order to prevent overcrowding of public transport upon the resumption of teaching activities in university buildings, universities will observe the following basic principles¹ until 1 September:

- Measures will be taken to ensure optimal distribution of activities across the working week and the individual working days. An example of this is longer opening hours to facilitate optimal traffic flow.
- The maximum number of journeys to and from the institution for the purposes of teaching is around 20% of the normal number. The majority of students and staff will therefore not be physically present in the university buildings for the time being.
- Students and staff will be encouraged to use alternative transport methods. Examples of such measures could include:
 - o a communication campaign encouraging students and staff to avoid unnecessary use of public transport if other means are available to them, such as taking the car, cycling or walking from a train station;
 - o encouraging the use of bicycles rather than buses or trams, provided it would be responsible to do so;
 - o facilitating the purchase of a bicycle or e-bike by expanding the scheme to trade holiday entitlement for a facilities budget;
 - o reserving extra parking spaces for students and staff;
 - o getting involved in schemes set up by public transport providers and coach firms to generate extra capacity.
- To lessen the burden on public transport, face-to-face teaching activities will not start or finish during the rush hours. This can be done by adjusting the timetables.
- The government has decreed that universities are only permitted to start and finish teaching activities between 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. and after 8.00 p.m. Students are allowed to be present at the university between 3.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m., but it is prohibited for teaching activities to start or finish during this time.
- With regard to the resumption of teaching activities, universities will consult with their security region (particularly regarding the issues of safety and public order), local authorities (to coordinate all applicable aspects relating to public order, safety, public transport and travel movements) and all transport providers relevant to the institution in question. Whenever possible, any existing local collaborations, consultations, etc. will be used for this purpose.
- Provisions have been made to enable customisation of the aforementioned timeslots at the local level. In order to customise the timeslots at a particular location, an agreement must be made with the transport firms serving the location, who will investigate in advance whether the customised timeslots will facilitate the necessary distancing and whether the public transport services will be capable of accommodating the passenger flows. This agreement must be ratified by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.
- As students are often frequent users of public transport, research universities have a vital role to play in preventing disruption to the public transport system upon resumption of teaching activities. This responsibility can be met by taking action in line with the aforementioned basic principles.

¹ The basic principles in this section are only applicable to teaching activities in university buildings and do not apply to activities such as work placements or clinical placements being conducted

outside the university. For activities such as these, the persons in question must comply with the guidelines applicable in the locations where the activities are carried out. Furthermore, the examples provided are for illustrative purposes only and do not constitute guidelines in and of themselves.

Annex 1

Government guidelines applicable up to and including 19 May based on the Higher Education Service Document dated 24 April

No educational activities – including assessments – are to be conducted on-site at higher education institutions up to and including 19 May. This is understood to mean:

No teaching activities are to be carried out in the buildings of higher education institutions:

- Teaching activities are defined as all organised activities that involve a face-to-face meeting between the lecturer(s) and student(s) at the premises of higher education institutions and UMCs. This includes all activities that take place within the various stages of the educational chain, from intake to alumni activities, including contract teaching.
- All activities that do not directly contribute to organised teaching, such as activities organised by study and student associations, are to be scaled down. The institution in question may interpret the exact definition of such activities in its own way.
- The term 'teaching activities' does not include thesis defences conducted in a small group (of course, these will be conducted online if possible) and examinations/final examinations for which the student's physical presence is essential. All general instructions issued by the RIVM and the GGD, such as maintaining a sufficient distance from others, must be complied with at all times.
- Research activities can be carried out on-site, provided the general instructions issued by the RIVM and the GGD are complied with.
- The institutions can decide for themselves how the use of facilities on campus, such as libraries and research laboratories, will be organised. Once again, this is on the condition that the general instructions issued by the RIVM and the GGD are complied with.

Annex 2

Measures applicable to all universities

Access to university buildings	Measures at the university	Personal protective equipment (PPE)
<p>Staff members are not permitted to access the university buildings in the event that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the staff member or a member of their immediate family has been infected with the novel coronavirus; - the staff member is experiencing cold-like symptoms; - the staff member or a member of their immediate family is suffering from a fever. Staff members can only return to work once they or the family member or members in question have been symptom-free for 24 hours. <p>Remote work will be organised if possible.</p> <p>Students are not permitted to access the university buildings in the event that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the student, a member of their immediate family or a housemate has been infected with the novel coronavirus; - the student is experiencing cold-like symptoms; - the student, a member of their immediate family or a housemate is suffering from a fever. Students can only return to the university once they or the family member or members/housemate or housemates in question have been symptom-free for 24 hours. - attention to vulnerable students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ban on shaking hands; - directive to regularly wash hands with soap and/or to use hand sanitiser with an alcohol content of at least 70%; - directive to wash hands at least six times per day in accordance with the instructions. In any event, people must wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after travelling by public transport and after cleaning items; - directive to avoid touching one's face, sneezing or coughing into the elbow, bringing one's own paper tissues and disposing of them after a single use. After using tissues, people must wash their hands; - directive to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from others and to adjust the workplaces and organisational processes in order to facilitate this; - if proximity of less than 1.5 metres is inevitable (e.g. in UMCs), ensuring compliance with RIVM guidelines; - cleaning regularly. If possible, clean items using 70% isopropyl alcohol wipes; - keeping items and materials clean and not sharing them with others; - ventilating all rooms; - working in fixed teams to the greatest extent possible; - formulating hygiene plans and 	<p>All precautionary hygiene measures.</p>

	appointing a 'coronavirus coordinator'; - informing staff of who they can contact if they have any questions or concerns.	
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