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**DIRECTIVE (Version 4)****COVID-19: Measures with regard to teaching (Autumn Semester 2020 and Spring Semester 2021)**

*Version 4 (08.07.2021) replaces all previous versions.*

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*This English translation is for information purposes only. The German version is the legally binding version.*

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*The Rector of ETH Zurich,*

pursuant to the ETH Zurich Executive Board decision of 18 August 2020 regarding the Corona Master Plan<sup>1</sup> and Art. 9, Para. 2 of the ETH Zurich Organisational Ordinance of 16 December 2003<sup>2</sup>, in association with the “COVID-19 Special Situation Ordinance” of the Federal Council of 23 June 2021<sup>3</sup>,

*has issued the following directive:*

**Preliminary note**

Planning and implementation in Autumn Semester 2020 and Spring Semester 2021 must as far as possible facilitate the conducting of course units and performance assessments even if new government regulations on face-to-face teaching mean that that latter must be restricted even more or completely cancelled.

If further provisions are required, the responsible offices in the Rectorate will draw these up on behalf of the Rector and enter them in the directive – always with an eye to any further restrictions or easing of restrictions ordered by the federal and cantonal authorities.

This directive will be augmented by the Safety Concept for Teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> [Corona Master Plan](#)

<sup>2</sup> RSETHZ 201.021

<sup>3</sup> SR 818.101.26

## **Art. 1** Purpose, period of validity, precedence

<sup>1</sup> The following provisions with regard to teaching are intended to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) at ETH Zurich and protect all persons involved in teaching operations from infection.

<sup>2</sup> This directive applies to Autumn Semester 2020 and Spring Semester 2021, including the associated end-of-semester and session examination phases.

<sup>3</sup> The provisions contained in this directive take precedence over any contrary provisions.

## **Art. 2** Safety concept

<sup>1</sup> The Rectorate will compile a safety concept to cover teaching in Autumn Semester 2020 and Spring Semester 2021, including the associated examination phases. It will be based upon the pertinent regulations of the federal and cantonal authorities and any further stipulations set out in the master plan of the ETH Executive Board. If regulations change, the safety concept will be altered accordingly if necessary.

<sup>2</sup> It is mandatory for all persons involved in teaching (students, faculty, Assistants, others) to adhere strictly to all of the measures in the safety concept with regard to social distancing, hygiene and other safety measures such as the wearing of masks<sup>4</sup>.

## **Art. 3** Entries in the Course Catalogue

<sup>1</sup> Entries in the Course Catalogue are binding from the first day of teaching in the respective semester. Any exceptions are set out in Para. 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> According to the implementation stipulations<sup>5</sup> regarding the ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments<sup>6</sup>, the Vice Rector for Study Programmes may approve changes in well-grounded exceptional cases if the associated request is submitted by the end of the fourth teaching week of the semester at the latest. Para. 3 still applies.

<sup>3</sup> If new regulations are instituted by the government or safety measures are altered during the course of the semester and entries in the Course Catalogue must be changed accordingly, such changes are possible at any time. They do not require the approval of the Vice Rector for Study Programmes. Adjustments at short notice, particularly just before or during examination sessions, may also diverge from the entries in the Course Catalogue; in these cases the Course Catalogue will normally not be altered (e.g. due to lack of time).

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<sup>4</sup> Please see the [Information sheet on mask types](#).

<sup>5</sup> See [www.directives.ethz.ch](http://www.directives.ethz.ch)

<sup>6</sup> SR 414.135.1

## Art. 4 Continuous performance assessment

<sup>1</sup> If continuous performance assessment is foreseen, the associated tasks must be described fully in the Course Catalogue under “Additional information on mode of examination”<sup>(7)</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The following provisions apply to the optional continuous performance assessment activities “learning tasks” and “interim examinations”:

- a. Learning tasks must be conducted or must continue to be conducted virtually from 2.11.2020. Any exceptions will be decided by the Rector (requests, containing grounds, should be sent to [Inbox@akd.ethz.ch](mailto:Inbox@akd.ethz.ch)). One particular reason for physical presence may be the necessity for on-site infrastructure (e.g. laboratory). If it is impossible to conduct learning tasks without physical presence, students’ academic achievements to date are to be taken into account, with the corresponding adjustments to the bonus point requirements. The bonus function of learning tasks (potential increase in the final grade) is not affected by how they are conducted.
- b. The following provisions apply to interim examinations:
  1. Oral examinations may be conducted via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2, or face to face as long as government regulations on face-to-face examinations allow and the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to.
  2. Written examinations during the semester will normally be conducted as remote written examinations (see Art. 8, Para. 1). As exceptions they may be conducted as written face-to-face examinations, as long as government regulations on face-to-face examinations allow, the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to and the required rooms are available. Face-to-face examinations must always have a backup plan involving a remote version in case it is no longer possible to conduct them face to face on the planned date; the provisions set out in Art. 5, Para. 6 apply analogously. If it is no longer possible to conduct an examination face to face and it is not possible to conduct it as a remote examination, the examination in question must be cancelled without replacement. The entries in the Course Catalogue must be adjusted accordingly.
  3. If interim examinations for two-semester courses (Autumn Semester 2020 and Spring Semester 2021) are planned for the lecture-free period (January-February 2021), these may be conducted as face-to-face examinations as long as government regulations on face-to-face examinations allow, the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to and the required rooms are available. If this is not the case they can be conducted as remote examinations. If it is no longer possible to conduct an examination face to face and it is not possible to conduct it as a remote examination, the examination in question must be cancelled without replacement. The entries in the Course Catalogue must be adjusted accordingly.
  4. The bonus function of interim examinations (potential percentage increase in the final grade) is not affected by how they are conducted.

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<sup>7</sup> See also Art. 8 of the directive [“Deploying continuous performance assessment in teaching”](#)

<sup>3</sup> The following provisions apply to compulsory continuous assessment activities:

- a. These may be conducted as long as government regulations (particularly regarding physical presence or travel) and the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to and – if any are necessary – the required rooms are available. If this is not the case, the lecturer must cancel them or change them such that government regulations and safety measures can be complied with (e.g. limit or stagger the physical presence of students, or dispense with it entirely). Changing the grading system for compulsory continuous assessment activities from “graded” to “ungraded” is not permitted.
- b. If changes or cancellations as per (a) above are required during the course of the semester, these must be entered in the Course Catalogue, including any effects on computation of the final grade.

## **Art. 5** End-of-semester examinations

<sup>1</sup> The time allotted for end-of-semester examinations in Autumn Semester 2020 will be extended by one week by adding calendar week 1 in January 2021 to it. No changes are so far foreseen to the time allotted for end-of-semester examinations in Spring Semester 2021. All end-of-semester examinations must be conducted within the respective allotted period; shifting them to a time outside this period is not permitted.

<sup>2</sup> End-of-semester examinations may be conducted face to face or as remote examinations. If a face-to-face examination is foreseen it must always have a backup plan involving a remote version in case it is no longer possible to conduct it face to face in the respective time period due to government regulations (see also Para. 6).

<sup>3</sup> The following provisions apply to oral end-of-semester examinations:

- a. They may be conducted as oral examinations via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2, particularly if one of the grounds listed in (d) applies.
- b. They may be conducted as face-to-face oral examinations as long as government regulations allow, the persons involved are able and the corresponding safety measures<sup>8</sup> can be adhered to.
- c. The lecturer determines how the examination will be conducted. If there is any disagreement between students and faculty, the Director of Studies of the degree programme in which the affected student is enrolled makes the final decision.
- d. Grounds for complete or partial conducting of the examination by video link are:
  1. Government regulations do not permit a face-to-face examination.
  2. The specific safety measures for conducting a face-to-face examination cannot be adhered to.
  3. At least one of the persons involved shows signs of illness, is in quarantine or has COVID-19.
  4. At least one of the persons involved is verifiably in the risk group<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The safety measures will be listed in the instructions for examiners during the course of Autumn Semester 2020 (as in the Summer 2020 examination session).

<sup>9</sup> For information on the risk group see [Coronavirus: People at especially high risk](#)

<sup>4</sup> The following provisions apply to written end-of-semester examinations:

- a. They may be conducted as remote written examinations (see Art. 8, Para. 1). A declaration of originality must be required from each student. Recording of these examinations is not permitted.
- b. They may be conducted as face-to-face written examinations as long as the following prerequisites are fulfilled:
  1. Government regulations permit a face-to-face examination.
  2. The corresponding safety measures can be adhered to.
  3. The examination generally takes place in the teaching-free period subsequent to the respective semester. For Autumn Semester 2020 this means 4.1–22.1.2021 (calendar weeks 1–3); for Spring Semester 2021 this means 7.6–18.6.2021 (calendar weeks 23+24).
- c. The lecturer determines how the examination will be conducted.

<sup>5</sup> End-of-semester examinations must be graded. Changing them from graded to ungraded is not permitted.

<sup>6</sup> As per Para. 2, every face-to-face examination must always have a backup plan involving a remote version. In detail:

- a. The remote version of a face-to-face oral examination will be an oral examination via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2.
- b. For written examinations, the respective lecturer must select one of the following remote versions as a backup:
  1. A remote written examination, possibly adjusted in duration (see Para. 4(a))
  2. An oral examination via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2, with the corresponding adjustment in duration

**Art. 5a** End-of-semester examinations: Examination repetitions without repeating the respective course unit

<sup>1</sup> If an end-of-semester examination from Spring Semester 2021 can be repeated without repeating the respective course unit, the repetition will take place as originally foreseen in the first or second teaching week of Autumn Semester 2021 (calendar weeks 38+39).

<sup>2</sup> The repetition is subject to the same modalities as the original end-of-semester examination held in in May / June 2021. These modalities include mode (oral/written), duration, content, permitted aids, language, etc.

<sup>3</sup> The repetition examinations may be conducted as face-to-face or remote examinations, i.e. irrespective of whether the original examination at the end of the semester was face to face or remote. However, face-to-face examinations are only possible if government regulations allow them at that particular time and the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to. For this reason, a remote version must always be planned as an alternative to the face-to-face examination. The following provisions apply:

- a. The repetition of a written examination can be conducted as a face-to-face examination or as a remote written examination. If the examination is conducted on the computer, it must be conducted again on the computer; an examination on paper must be conducted again on paper. The lecturer decides on the mode.
- b. The repetition of an oral examination can be conducted as an oral face-to-face examination, or completely/partially via video link. The latter is indicated if one of the grounds set out in Art. 5, Para. 3 (d) applies. The lecturer decides on the mode; any disagreements between student and lecturer are settled by the Director of Studies of the degree programme in which the respective student is enrolled.

## **Art. 6** Session examinations (examination session Summer 2021)

<sup>1</sup> The planning and conducting of the Summer 2021 session examinations are contingent on whether it is possible to hold physical presence examinations at the time planned, while applying appropriate safety measures.

<sup>2</sup> The Summer 2021 examination session will take place as planned during the period 09.08.2021 – 03.09.2021 (calendar weeks 32–35). Examination days are Monday through Saturday (not including 04.09).

<sup>3</sup> The Rectorate will draw up safety measures for session examinations. They will be based on the measures of the federal and cantonal authorities and any further stipulations made by the ETH Zurich Executive Board.

<sup>4</sup> The following points apply to all persons taking part in the examination session (students, examiners, invigilators, further staff):

- a. They are obligated to adhere strictly to the measures regarding hygiene and social distancing, as described in the safety concept, as well as other measures such as the wearing of masks<sup>10</sup>.
- b. They will receive, in person and in advance of the examination session, instructions specific to COVID-19 regarding safety measures, behaviour on examination premises, and travel to and from examination premises.
- c. If students fail to comply with the safety measures foreseen they may be refused entry to examination rooms or may be ejected from an examination. In such cases the examination in question will be declared failed (designated as “aborted”).

<sup>5</sup> The following students may not sit physical presence examinations on grounds related to Covid-19, and must deregister from the examination via the Examinations Office, one hour at the latest before the examination begins:

- a. Students suffering from Covid-19
- b. Students who are in quarantine because of Covid-19
- c. Students with symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell and/or taste or muscle aches, unless they can produce the results of a recent COVID-19 test (not older than 48 hours) stating that they do not have COVID-19.

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<sup>10</sup> Surgical masks (disposable masks) or protective masks such as FFP2 masks. Cloth masks are not permitted.

<sup>6</sup> The following points apply to written and computer based session examinations:

- a. They are conducted as physical presence examinations. Alternative ways of conducting them are not permitted. Cases mentioned in (b) below are excepted.
- b. Spring Semester 2021 exchange students (incoming), and ETH students who are outside of Switzerland at the time of the examination session on academic grounds may, as far as possible, be allowed by the Examinations Office to undertake the examination in a different way. The choices are (1) a supervised written distance examination on paper; or (for incoming exchange students only) (2) a preponed oral examination via video link<sup>11</sup>. Both alternatives are only possible if the responsible examiner agrees and if proper supervision for the distance examination is guaranteed.

<sup>7</sup> The following provisions apply to oral session examinations:

- a. They may be conducted as face-to-face oral examinations as long as the persons involved are able and the corresponding safety measures<sup>12</sup> can be adhered to.
- b. They may be conducted as oral examinations via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2, particularly if one of the grounds listed in (d) applies.
- c. The lecturer determines how the examination will be conducted. If there is any disagreement between students and faculty, the Director of Studies of the degree programme in which the affected student is enrolled makes the final decision.
- d. Grounds for complete or partial conducting of the examination by video link are:
  1. The specific safety measures for conducting a face-to-face examination cannot be adhered to.
  2. At least one of the persons involved shows signs of illness, is in quarantine or has COVID-19.
  3. At least one of the persons involved is verifiably in the risk group<sup>13</sup>.
  4. The examinee is an ETH student, who is abroad and cannot enter Switzerland.
  5. The examinee is a Spring Semester 2021 exchange student and will be outside Switzerland at the time of the examination session.

## **Art. 6a**

*Rescinded*

## **Art. 6b**

*Rescinded*

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<sup>11</sup> See also the policies in Art. 8, Para. 2 of this directive.

<sup>12</sup> The safety measures are listed in the instructions for the examiners.

<sup>13</sup> For information on the risk group see [Coronavirus: People at especially high risk](#)

**Art. 6c** Grading conferences and the deadline for communicating the results of session examinations

<sup>1</sup> Each grading conference in Spring Semester 2021 may be conducted in one of three ways:

- a. All participants are present via video link
- b. A mixture, whereby some participants are physically present and some are present via video link
- c. All participants are physically present.

<sup>2</sup> The responsible Director of Studies decides which of the three ways mentioned in Para. 1 will be selected. The decision takes the pertaining safety measures (hygiene, social distancing requirements, required room size etc.) into account.

<sup>3</sup> The deadline for communicating the results of Summer 2021 session examinations (grades and breakings off / no-shows) *shall not be* extended. Communication must therefore take place by Thursday 16.09.2021 (the last week of the semester break [calendar week 37]) at the latest.

<sup>4</sup> All further details regarding grading conferences, i.e. the constellation of participants (including student representation), are governed, as before, by the provisions set out in Art. 19 of the ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments<sup>(14)</sup>; the associated Rector's implementation stipulations; and any further provisions in the bylaws of the respective department.

**Art. 7** Course units featuring semester performance tasks

<sup>1</sup> Semester performance tasks may be conducted as long as government regulations allow and the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to. The specific guidelines "[Planning and implementing a practical laboratory course](#)" govern lab courses and practicals; the "[Protection Concept for Excursions](#)" governs excursions and field courses.

<sup>1bis</sup> ...*Rescinded*

<sup>2</sup> If government regulations or the safety measures cannot be adhered to, the lecturer must either cancel the semester task in full or in part, or change it such that government regulations and the safety measures can be complied with. Altering the content of the task or postponing it are also options.

<sup>3</sup> If a written face-to-face examination is foreseen in the semester performance framework but cannot be conducted face to face due to government regulations, safety concept rules or lack of rooms, the lecturer may apply one of the following options:

- a. Change the examination to a remote written examination, possibly adjusted in duration (see also Art. 8, Para. 1).

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<sup>14</sup> SR 414.135.1, RSETHZ 322.021

- b. Change the examination to an oral examination via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2, with the corresponding adjustment in duration.
- c. Change the examination to a different type of performance assessment which requires no physical presence (e.g. a written homework assignment).
- d. Postpone the examination to a later date.
- e. Cancel the examination with no replacement.

**Art. 8** Remote examinations (written and oral)

<sup>1</sup> The details and rules governing remote written examinations are found on the Educational Development and Technology (LET) webpage “Performance assessments without physical presence”<sup>15</sup>. They include:

- a. A list of various open and closed question forms and the corresponding requirements of the respective examination type
- b. Different ways to solicit the declaration of originality
- c. What to do if technical problems occur
- d. Didactic strategies for designing written examinations
- e. Contacts for guidance and support

<sup>2</sup> Oral examinations via video link are subject to the following policies:

- a. Depending on the safety measures pertaining at the time, the examination may be held with all participants via video link, or in a mixed form where only a portion of participants are connected by video link.
- b. An assessor must be connected throughout. This person must
  1. satisfy the academic requirements set out in Art. 18, Para. 2 or 4 of the ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments<sup>16</sup>; and
  2. perform the tasks set out in Art. 18, Para. 3 of the ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments (help with proper conducting of the examination, logging).
- c. The video link (image, audio) must be ensured for the entire duration of the examination. The candidate must be recognisable in the image throughout.
- d. Recording of the video conference is only allowed if the candidate is informed in advance of the reason for, the intended use of and the data storage details regarding the recording, and provides explicit permission for it to be made.
- e. Further details on the conducting of oral examinations, particularly regarding procedures if technical problems occur, didactic strategies for designing written examinations and contacts for guidance and support, are found on the dedicated LET webpage<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> [Performance assessments without physical presence](#)

<sup>16</sup> SR 414.135.1

<sup>17</sup> [Performance assessments without physical presence](#)

## **Art. 9** Doctoral qualifying examinations

<sup>1</sup> The following stipulations apply to doctoral qualifying examinations:

- a. They may be conducted face to face as long as government regulations on face-to-face examinations allow and the corresponding safety measures can be adhered to.
- b. If an oral examination is foreseen, it may also be held via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2.
- c. If a written examination is foreseen, it may also be held as
  1. a remote written examination, possibly adjusted in duration (see Art. 5, Para. 4(a); or as
  2. an oral examination via video link according to the provisions of Art. 8, Para. 2, with the corresponding adjustment in duration.
- d. The lecturer determines how the examination will be conducted.

<sup>2</sup> The Doctoral Administration Office of Academic Services will provide further details to the candidate and the responsible department offices by email.

## **Art. 10** Doctoral examinations

Doctoral examinations may be conducted completely (i.e. with all participants) via video link, or face to face in the full or partial physical presence of the examination committee and the candidate. The Department Head determines how the examination will be conducted, including whether guests may be admitted; however, candidates cannot simply be required to appear face to face, but must give their permission. The examination is subject to the government regulations (face-to-face examinations permitted/forbidden) and the safety measures pertaining at the time (social distancing, hygiene, required room size etc.).

## **Art. 11** Cancellation of a course unit during the semester

<sup>1</sup> Cancellation of a course unit during the semester is only permitted if the safety measures or government regulations pertaining at the respective time can no longer be adhered to and there is no alternative to holding the course face to face. Cancellation requires the agreement of the Director of Studies of the degree programme under which the course unit is listed in the Course Catalogue. Such agreement is not required for course units which are not compulsory in any degree programme. Here the lecturer may make the decision to cancel.

<sup>2</sup> The lecturer informs students of the cancellation by email, with a copy to the Director of Studies and the departmental study programme coordinator of the department served and the Examinations Office.

**Art. 12** Self-organised student sojourns abroad

Self-organised student sojourns abroad for project reasons (particularly Master's theses), internships, exchange studies etc. are the sole responsibility of the student involved. ETH advises against travel to high-risk countries and regions as listed in "[Ordinance 3 on Measures to Combat the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)" and to countries or regions where there is a high risk of infection according to the "[Covid-19 Ordinance on International Passenger Transport Measures](#)" (see also the [federal recommendations on travel](#)). No contributions to travel costs will be made. See also the corresponding ETH Zurich information sheet<sup>18</sup>.

**Art. 13** Special cases

The Rector rules on cases which are not addressed or are insufficiently addressed in this directive or in other pertinent ordinances or directives.

**Art. 14** Effective date

This directive enters into force on 19 August 2020.

Zurich, 19 August 2020

The Rector, ETH Zurich  
Prof. Dr Dr h.c. mult. Sarah M. Springman

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<sup>18</sup> [Official Regulations Governing Travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)