

Information for Exchange Students regarding COVID-19 Measures in Germany

What is the current situation in Germany regarding COVID-19?

COVID-19 case notification rates have increased steadily across the EU/EEA and the UK since August 2020, but this is not having the same impact in all countries. After a temporary stabilisation of case numbers at a higher level, further increase is currently observed in the population of Germany. Thus, it is still necessary for the entire population to be committed to infection control, e.g. by consistently observing rules of distance and hygiene – also outdoors –, by ventilating indoor spaces and, and by wearing a mask correctly. Crowds of people – especially indoors – should be avoided if possible and gatherings should be limited to the closest circle of family and friends

The “Robert Koch Institute” is monitoring the situation in Germany and is evaluating all available information, estimating the risk for the population in Germany and providing health professionals with recommendations.

Robert-Koch-Institute – Information on COVID-19

<https://www.rki.de/EN/Content/infections/epidemiology/outbreaks/COVID-19/COVID19.html>

Further links:

German Federal Ministry of Health – Information regarding Covid-19 in Germany

<https://www.zusammengegencorona.de/en/>

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

General Information: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china>

Travelling to Germany

Travellers coming from high risk areas are obligated to travel directly to their destination, contact their local public health department immediately and go into quarantine (self-isolation) for 14 days.

List of the RKI for high risk areas:

https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Risikogebiete_neu.html

You can end the quarantine with a negative coronavirus test. The coronavirus test must take the form of a medical certificate. The molecular test to detect an infection must have been conducted no more than 48 hours prior to entry. The test must have been carried out in a European Union member state or a state with comparable quality standards.

You can find information on the recognition of molecular biological tests for SARS-CoV-2 here:

https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Transport/Archiv_Tests/Test_230_92020_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

Alternatively, the test may be carried out upon entry at the border crossing point (at the airport) or at the place where you are staying (in Gelsenkirchen). We recommend to take the test at the airport.

If you are coming from a high risk area, you must either carry out a corona test in your home country and make sure that the test result upon entry is not older than 48 hours, or get yourself tested at the airport. Exchange students who have already arrived reported that the testing at the airport in Düsseldorf was carried out without any problems and that they received the result within 2 days. During this time they had to self-isolate. You can find more information on the corona testing at the airport below.

Federal Ministry of Health: FAQ regarding corona testing when travelling to Germany

<https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus-infos-reisende/faq-tests-entering-germany.html>

Before you leave

1. Contact your airline to find out if you need to comply with any additional regulations.
2. Consult the websites of the RKI and Ministry of Health to check the latest corona updates and travel restrictions
3. Find out which rules apply at the destination airport
4. Plan enough time for your arrival, paying particular attention to extended times when checking in and boarding.

Upon arrival

Travellers from high risk areas are expected to complete so called “Aussteigekarten” upon arrival in Germany when leaving an airplane, train, ship or bus, giving information about origin and destination of their travel and contact details. These cards help to monitor contact persons in case symptoms might occur with fellow travellers. The cards are collected again on the airplane and handed over by the airline to the public health department.

Corona testing at the airport

Frankfurt

There are two corona test centres at the airport in Frankfurt. The testing is free of charge yet, you need to register.

Information Frankfurt Airport Corona: <https://www.frankfurt-airport.com/en/transfer-at-frankfurt-airport/covid-19.html>

Düsseldorf

There is one corona test centre at the airport in Düsseldorf. The testing is free of charge yet, you may need to register.

Information Corona test center Düsseldorf airport: <https://www2.dus.com/en/inform/for-a-safe-journey/corona-testcenter>

Arriving in Gelsenkirchen

Upon arriving at your accommodation in Gelsenkirchen students coming from high risk areas are obligated to contact the local public health office and to self-isolate until you have handed in a negative corona test with the public health office.

You can contact the hotline of the health office in Gelsenkirchen under this number (they offer support in English and some other languages): +49 (209) 169-7000

You can hand in your corona test result online via this link:

https://www.gelsenkirchen.de/de/Soziales/Gesundheit/Coronavirus/Formular_fuer_Reiserueckkehrer.aspx

If the testing is done after entry, the quarantine must be maintained until the medical certificate is received. The medical certificate must be kept for at least 14 days after entry.

What does quarantine/self-isolation mean and involve?

As the incubation time of COVID-19 is estimated 14 days, persons coming from a high risk area, or with symptoms or close contact with infected persons are expected to stay in their apartment/hotel/hospital for 14 days and refrain from face-to-face contact with other persons in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

If you have to self-isolate you won't be able to leave your apartment; even to buy groceries. The international office will take care of you and get you necessary supplies.

How is everyday life affected?

Everyday life in Germany is more or less back to normal. You are obligated to observe the rules of social distancing and hygiene, and to wear a mask in shops and all indoor facilities, as well as on public transport. Shops, pharmacies, restaurants and cafés are open, yet the number of persons admitted to an establishment might be limited. Museum, cinemas, theatres, and sport facilities are opening up again under strict hygiene measures, limiting the number of persons admitted or offering outdoor activities. For all public activities and events you must leave your contact details in order to ensure the tractability of infection chains.

All large-scale events are generally prohibited until 31 December 2020. In addition to members of a family or two households, a group of up to ten people may meet in public space in Gelsenkirchen. Indoor gatherings have been limited to a number 50 persons. In general you are strongly advised keep a distance of 1,5 meters to other persons especially indoors and to limit the number of persons with whom you are in close contact as much as possible. Regulations differ within the federal states in Germany or even from city to city.

How can I protect myself?

Precautions can be taken in order to protect yourself and others from infections. Please find some useful advice here:

World Health Organization -Advice for the public

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

What happens if I get sick?

As an exchange or international student, obtaining a local health insurance is obligatory. This means that in case you get sick, you will have full access to the German health system. If you feel symptoms, please contact your international office, the local health office, and call a doctor. Please use a phone rather than consulting a doctor physically, avoid contact with others under all circumstance and follow the instructions.

International Office numbers:

Mareike Ickler: +49 (0)209 9596 943

Nadine Hackmann: +49 (0)209 9596 160

Local health office in Gelsenkirchen: +49 (209) 169-7000

Measures at Westfälische Hochschule – How is my exchange semester affected?

This semester is going to be hybrid semester for students at Westfälische Hochschule which means that most of your courses will be online and only some on campus. Please check with your faculty coordinator to get more information about your courses.

On campus the same hygiene rules apply as within all public institutions: You are expected to distance yourself from others (at least 1,5 meters) and to wear a mask. In classes a maximum of 50 persons are allowed, to insure traceability attendance lists are kept.

The administration will be in office including the International Office. Appointments will be organized via email in order to avoid encounters with too many people. You can contact us always during our opening hours via phone or zoom.

What about the payments I have made if I decide not to come?

If you have already paid your semester fee, we can transfer it to the next semester if you wish. If you wish to cancel your exchange at WH completely, we will reimburse the fee to your account.