

Information for exchange students regarding COVID-19 measures in Germany

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

At the moment Germany finds itself in a **strict lockdown** due to the steady increase of covid-19 infections across the country. Therefore, the government decided to extend the lockdown, which began in December and is in place **until at least February 14th**. The new, tougher measures require people wearing filter masks in shops and on public transport. Non-essential shops have been closed across the country since December 16 as are schools. The measures already in place since November saw restaurants, bars, cafes, cultural and leisure facilities close and allow people to meet with one person from another household. Restaurants can still offer takeaway services. Overnight stays in hotels for tourist purposes continue to be prohibited, museums as well as tourist attractions remain closed. Besides, a travel ban has been imposed on countries with widespread occurrence of **SARS-CoV-2 virus variants** of concern.

The “**RKI - 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. Find all updated information regarding covid-19 [here](#).

Further useful information is provided on these websites:

- [German Federal Ministry of Health](#)
- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)

Travelling to Germany

Inform yourself before leaving your home country

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 your destination airport
4. Plan **enough time** for your arrival, paying particular attention to extended times when checking-in and boarding.

Restrictions on travel from countries with coronavirus variants

Please note that a **travel ban** has been imposed on countries with widespread occurrence of **SARS-CoV-2 virus variants** of concern (referred to as “areas of variant of concern”). All transport companies may not transport any persons from these countries to Germany. [Here](#) you can find further updated information regarding the designation of international risk areas. Please check to which category your home-country belongs.

Digital entry registration

All students coming from **risk, high incidence** or **virus variant areas**, or having visited those during the **last 10 days before entering Germany**, must **register** themselves via

www.einreiseanmeldung.de **before** arriving to Germany and **carry proof** of registration with them upon entry. This obligation always applies to those entering the country who have previously stayed in **virus variant areas**. Certain exceptions apply for previous stays in other risk areas and high incidence areas. In particular, those who have only passed through a risk area and have not had a stopover there are exempt.

Test requirement on entry

1. Students coming from **high incidence or virus variant areas**:

If you have been in a high incidence or virus variant area during the 10 days prior to entry into Germany, you must **carry proof** that you **have been tested** for an infection with SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus **upon entry** and present it to the competent authorities upon request and, if necessary, to the transport company prior to travelling. The test must have been performed **no more than 48 hours prior to entry** (time of swabbing). Proof of the test result must be on paper or in an electronic document in English, French or German. You can find details regarding the test requirements [here](#). The test result must be kept for at **10 days** after entry.

2. Students coming from **any other risk area**:

If you have been in **any other risk area** (neither high incidence area nor virus variant area) during the last 10 days prior to entry into Germany, you must possess a **test result no later than 48 hours after entry** and present it to the competent authorities upon request. You also need to proceed directly to your destination and self-isolate there until the test has been carried out. You are not allowed to leave your apartment and you have to avoid any contact with other persons.

→ [Here](#) you can find the **RKI list** of high incidence, virus variant and other risk areas.

*Please note that **no exceptions** can be made for entry from **virus variant areas**. Those in transit from **high-incidence areas** and other **risk areas** are exempt from registration, testing and quarantine requirements under certain circumstances. This includes transit through a risk area **without a stopover prior to entering Germany** as well as transit through Germany via the fastest route, e.g. with a confirmed onward flight to a third country.

We highly recommend to make use of the testing centres at the airports!

• **Airport Frankfurt**

There are **two corona** test centres at the airport in Frankfurt. The prices for different types of tests varies and you need to register beforehand. Find further information [here](#).

• **Airport Düsseldorf**

There is **one** corona test centre at the airport in Düsseldorf. The testing costs approx. 69€ and you need to register beforehand. Find further information [here](#).

You can find more information on entry regulations and testing requirements on this [website of the Federal Ministry of Health](#).

Regardless of the test result, there is a **quarantine obligation** in our federal state North Rhine-Westphalia.

Quarantine regulations

All students coming from **high incidence or virus variant areas** who enter our federal state North Rhine-Westphalia are obliged to proceed directly to their final destination (e.g. apartment) and self-isolate there for **10 days** (quarantine).

All students coming from **risk areas**, that are not defined as a virus variant area, who enter our federal state North Rhine-Westphalia are obliged to put themselves into **quarantine for 10 days** if they **do not undergo** testing for infection with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus no more **than 48 hours before entry or immediately after entry**. If testing is not available immediately at the point of the place of entry, the test can be performed within **24 hours after entry**. Until the test has been carried out, you have to self-isolate, you are not allowed to leave your apartment and you have to avoid any contact with other persons.

Exception: negative test result after 5 days

The 10-day quarantine can be terminated **at the earliest** after the **5th day** following entry with a negative test result.

Arriving in Gelsenkirchen

Upon arrival at your accommodation in Gelsenkirchen, students coming from **high risk areas** are obliged to **contact the local public health office in Gelsenkirchen** and to **self-isolate**. This self-isolation ends as soon as you have submitted a **negative corona test** at the public health office, at the earliest after the **5th day** of quarantine.

Contact hotline of the health office in Gelsenkirchen: **+49 (209) 169-7000**

They offer support in English and some other languages.

What does quarantine/self-isolation mean and involve?

As the incubation time of COVID-19 is estimated 10 days, students coming from high risk areas, or with symptoms or close contact with infected persons are expected to stay in their apartment for 10 days and avoid face-to-face contact with other persons in order to prevent the spread of the virus. In self-isolation you won't be able to leave your apartment; even to buy groceries. **The international office will take care of you** and get all necessary supplies for you.

How is everyday life affected in Germany?

At the moment, the everyday life in Germany is **strongly restricted** due to the existing lockdown. The measures and regulations in place to fight the spread of covid-19 infections are in place **until at least February 14th 2021**. They include:

- **Application of social distancing and hygiene rules:**
Masks must always be worn in enclosed public spaces, in public transport and all shops people are even obliged to wear filter masks (eg. surgical masks, FFP2, KN95/N95) and a minimum distance of 1.5 meters from all persons must be maintained in public and private
- **Closure of non-essential shops and cultural/recreational facilities and services:**
Most shops, non-essential businesses as well as all cultural/recreational facilities (e.g. sport facilities, theatres, museums, clubs, cafés and restaurants) remain closed
- **Closure of educational facilities and application of distance-learning**
Schools are largely closed and students are taught through distance learning methods
- **Travel restrictions:**
Any kind of tourist trips are prohibited. Hotels and other accommodation providers may only offer overnight accommodation to people whose travel is absolutely essential

- **Limitation of private meetings:**
Private meetings are restricted to just **one** other person not living in the same household

* Please note that some regulations may differ within the German federal states 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 published by the **World Health Organization** [here](#).

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 a **doctor**. Please call a doctor rather than consulting the doctor physically, and avoid contact with others under all circumstances. Then follow their instructions.

International Office phone numbers:

- **Eva Quel:** +49 (0)209 9596 968
- **Nadine Hackmann:** +49 (0)209 9596 160

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

At Westfälische Hochschule, **distance learning is applied** until the end of this winter semester.

We hope that the upcoming summer semester will take place as a **hybrid semester** (some lectures will be held online and some on campus). However, this will strongly depend on the future situation and the respective measures and regulations in place.

The administration will be office, including the International Office. Individual appointments will be arranged **via email** and held digitally, either by phone or Zoom, in order to avoid personal encounters. You can always contact us during our opening hours via phone or email.

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 bank account.

Stay healthy and safe!