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Date: 10-11-2020  
Case No.: 2020-400-00464

## **Common guidelines for teaching and examination, spring semester 2021**

### **Background**

On 18 June 2020, The Strategic Council for Education (TSCE) approved common guidelines for teaching and examination, autumn semester 2020<sup>1</sup>. The guidelines were made with reference to the COVID-19-situation, June 2020, with the purpose of supporting the educations in planning teaching and examination activities during the autumn semester 2020. A task force appointed by the TSCE recommended the guidelines. The said recommendations and scenarios were based on regulations from the Danish Health Authorities concerning distance between individuals in all classrooms and supervision offices in June 2020. As the situation and the national guidelines continuously change, there is a continuous need for establishing common overall guidelines concerning teaching and examination during spring semester 2021 in order to ensure that the planning of F2021 can be commenced under known circumstances. The purpose is to ensure that all planned study activities can be carried through in spite of possible restrictions due to COVID-19. Accordingly, on 17 September 2020, TSCE decided that the task force should revise the recommendations for common overall guidelines for teaching and examination during the spring semester 2021.

### **Limitations**

The following constitutes the common guidelines for teaching and examination during the spring semester 2021 at AAU. The guidelines include all teaching and examination activities of the spring semester and include Campus Aalborg, Campus Esbjerg and Campus Copenhagen. The guidelines consist of overall recommendations and scenarios to support the planning of the study programmes as well as the teaching and examination activities.

The guidelines solely include areas/issues where it has been necessary to change the general practice, due to current advice and regulations from the public authorities concerning COVID-19. In the light COVID-19, it is also significant that teaching and examination activities during the spring semester 2021 are organised with particular focus on academic and social integration in order to retain students with the help of a well-organised semester. Moreover, it is significant to draw on the experiences from the lockdown during the spring semester 2020 and the organisation of the autumn semester 2020.

### **Decisions**

#### **In general**

All teaching and examination activities must be carried through in accordance with the public authorities' advice, guidelines and restrictions concerning COVID-19 as well as in accordance with AAU-guidelines concerning prevention of corona infection. The latter of the two implement the guidelines of the public authorities at Aalborg University<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Common guidelines for teaching and examinations, autumn semester 2020*: cf. Workzone, case number 2020-400-00464.

<sup>2</sup> For AAU-guidelines and other relevant information on coronavirus as well as links for the public authorities' websites, see <https://www.aau.dk/coronavirus>.



The following recommendations and scenarios are based on restrictions from the Danish Health Authorities concerning distance between individuals in all classrooms and supervision offices. The institutes are responsible for compliance with the distance requirements as well as support of other contagion reducing regulations, described in *AAU regulations on refutation of corona contagion*. This includes disinfection of tables, the possibility to keep your distance by entrances to and exits from rooms as well as in breaks.

### **Common overall recommendations and scenarios for teaching**

In general, focus of the planning of the teaching should be on:

1. Supporting academic and pedagogical quality. Campus activities combined with digital activities should ensure meaningful interaction and valuable learning spaces. The study programmes should focus on supporting a good learning environment and students' social intercourse, for instance, by ensuring that a substantial part of the teaching and supervision is held physically. Depending on the location of each study programme, number of students in one class etc., there might be a need to rethink elements of the semester activities to ensure that they can be carried out responsibly in relation to health concerns as well as pedagogically-didactically responsibly.
2. Ensuring that all study programmes learn from the experiences with the physical shutdown during the spring semester 2020 and the experiences from the autumn semester 2020, and hence continue to apply digital elements in teaching and study activities when pedagogically-didactically meaningful, provides that experiences are positive. Focus should also be on semester and education internal coordination of various didactic formats as well as on development of new teaching combinations with the purpose of offering students better teaching in addition to a larger variation of teaching methods. This could with advantage be carried out in cooperation with CDUL and the e-learning consultants.

Both recommendations support different learning methods. They must be thought together in order to comply with the health claims of the public authorities and in order to promote the development and integration of various learning methods.

Support of the academic and social integration as well as retention of students has a high priority, and it should therefore be ensured that all students enrolled at ordinary full-time and part-time degree programmes at AAU – regardless semester – attend as much physical teaching and guidance as possible during the spring semester 2021. This with regards to AAU's pedagogical model and facilities of each study programme.

It might be worth considering spreading out the physical attendance. Teaching in the late afternoon and/or in the evening would level out the number of people in the AAU buildings, the use of public transport and hence, minimise danger of contamination. However, it needs to be kept in mind that the frequency of public transport is lower in the evening, that some students have children, student jobs etc.

It is up to the departments with human resources management responsibility to decide whether it is possible to meet potential requests from teachers and examiners not to carry through physical attendance.

### **The use of facilities**

The minimised capacity of lecture theatres and classrooms might entail big challenges in relation to course administration. If there is not enough room for all students, we face scenarios such as:

- Online teaching for entire classes.
- Dividing students into smaller groups, thereby doubling the lessons.
- Dividing students into two classes, which should take turns attending either physical or digital teaching.



- Physical teaching combined with streaming as well as potential recording of lectures.
- Online lectures/teaching form the basis of following assignments, workshops and/or group work, which require physical presence.

Some modules are distinctly based on practice, e.g. lab teaching, which is why – as a rule – virtual teaching is not an option. In case of non-attendance due to corona, the departments are urged to offer alternative teaching to ensure that the necessary learning is offered to all students.

The study boards and the relevant head of studies will assess, what makes best sense academically and pedagogically-didactically for each study programme.

### **Common guidelines for examination**

In September 2020, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science issued an executive order of amendment for the Ministerial Order on University Examinations and Grading<sup>3</sup>, which revoked the claim that there must be an invigilator present at digital examinations<sup>4</sup>. If – as a consequence of the COVID-19-situation – a study board or the head of studies requests an alteration of the examination method evident from the curriculum, this requires a dispensation from the curriculum<sup>5</sup>.

In situations where it might be necessary to prioritise health concerns, it is recommended to offer students the option to participate in physical oral examinations related to their bachelor projects, master theses and final master projects with regards to the at any time valid health related claims.

In relation to examinations, risk group students have the opportunity to apply the study board for dispensation to carry through the examination digitally instead of physically or vice versa<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> BEK nr. 1332 af 10. september 2020 om ændring af bekendtgørelse om eksamen og censur ved universitetsuddannelser (the executive order of amendment).

<sup>4</sup> The university must, however, still provide precautionary measures correspondent to those that normally apply to execution of the examination.

<sup>5</sup> A substantiated application must be sent to Uddannelsesjura, which address the concerns on behalf of the Associate Dean. Information about the examinations at AAU can be accessed at <https://www.studieservice.aau.dk/eksamen/>, and specific regulations and agreements due to COVID-19 can be accessed at <https://www.studieservice.aau.dk/studielegalitet>.

<sup>6</sup> "Vejledning til institutterne om håndtering af studerende, der er forhindret i at deltage i undervisning og eksamen på grund af forhold, der er direkte relateret til COVID-19", completed by Uddannelsesjura, can be accessed in WorkZone case number 2020-606-00073.