Common guidelines for teaching and examinations, autumn semester 2020

Summary
After months of online study activities all now indicates that the university will be fully reopened as of August 2020. Employees and students will be able to meet at our campuses again. We have missed and now look forward to this. Nonetheless, not all will return to the way it used to be. We face a semester where teaching and examination activities are still governed by health related regulations due to COVID-19. For instance, the current distance requirements entail that the classrooms can only accommodate 50 percent of what they used to. This has consequences for both planning and execution of all study activity. 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. Simultaneously, planning of the coming semester should be carried out with regards to the experiences with the physical shutdown during the spring semester 2020. Digital element of teaching and study activities should be maintained if pedagogically-didactically meaningful, provided that experiences are good.

Background
On 7 May 2020, The Strategic Council for Education approved establishment of a taskforce, which was to draw up common guidelines for teaching and examination in the autumn semester 2020. The situation and the national guidelines continuously change. Therefore, there is a need for establishing common guidelines; in order to ensure that the planning of the autumn semester can be commenced under known circumstances and that as many study activities as possible can be carried out in spite of potential continuous restriction.

Limitations
The following constitutes the common guidelines for teaching and examination in the autumn semester 2020 at AAU. The guidelines include all teaching and examination activities of the autumn semester. In relation to the study start, please confer with the document “Guidelines for study start 2020”1. The guidelines 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 to which it has been necessary to change the general practice, due to current advice and guidelines from the public authorities concerning COVID-19. In the light COVID-19 it is also significant that the organisation of teaching and examination activities in the autumn semester are organised with particular focus on academic and social integration. The purpose of this is to retain students with the help of a well-organised semester.

1 Guidelines for study start 2020 have been drawn up by a parallel taskforce concerning study start 2020. The guidelines have been shared internally at AAU. They can also be accessed at WorkZone, case number2020-400-00461.
Decisions
General
All teaching and examination activities must be carried through in agreement with the advice and guidelines of the public authorities concerning COVID-19. This includes Guidelines for a responsible reopening of the institutions of further education\(^\text{2}\) and AAU regulations on refutation of corona contagion, which bring the guidelines of the public authorities for a progressive reopening of Aalborg University into effect\(^\text{3}\).

The following recommendations and scenarios are based on a claim from the Danish Health Authorities about distance between individuals in all classrooms and supervision facilities. This claim reduces capacity in all lecture theatres, seminar facilities and meeting rooms. The institutes are responsible for compliance with the regulations on distance 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 recommendations and scenarios for teaching
In general, focus of the planning of the teaching should be on:

1. ensuring teaching and guidance through physical attendance to support professional interaction, study environment and social contact of students. 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.

2. ensuring that all study programmes beginning autumn semester 2020 lean on the experiences with the physical shutdown during the spring semester 2020 and continue to apply digital elements in teaching and study activities if pedagogically-didactically meaningful, provided that experiences are good. It might be an advantage to cooperate with CDUL and the e-learning consultants.

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

- It should be ensured that all students enrolled at ordinary full-time and part-time degree programmes at AAU – regardless semester – attend as much physical teaching as possible during the autumn semester 2020 – among other things out of concern for the support of the academic and social integration as well as retention of students.
- First semester planning of Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes should take into consideration that new students’ experience with study start will be positive. Therefore, physical teaching and guidance must be prioritised.
- It might be worth considering to spread 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.

The use of facilities
The minimised capacity of lecture theatres and classrooms entails big challenges in relation to course administration. If there is not enough room for all students, we face the following possible scenarios:

- Online teaching for entire classes.

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\(^3\) AAU regulations and other relevant information on COVID-19 are available at https://www.aau.dk/coronavirus
• Dividing students into smaller groups, thereby doubling the lessons.
• Dividing students into two classes, which take turns attending either physical or digital teaching.
• Online lectures/teaching form the basis of following assignments, workshops and/or group work which require physical presence.

Common guidelines for examination
If The Ministry extends the dispensation concerning the examinations, thereby including autumn semester 2020, it is recommended to adjust to the following:

• It is important that each board of studies in cooperation with the programme managements will still approve whether or not oral and on-site examinations should be converted into online examinations.
• It should be ensured that students as minimum always get the option to participate in physical oral examinations concerning their projects, Bachelor’s projects, Master’s theses and final executive Master’s projects.