	GUIDELINE OF EPOKA UNIVERSITY “ON THE CONDUCT OF TEACHING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE 2020-2021 FALL SEMESTER”				
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I. PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide the basis for the conduct of teaching and other activities during the 2020-2021 fall semester in the context of the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2. Scope

This guideline regulates the modalities on the conduct of teaching and other activities during the 2020-2021 fall semester **for all study programs** offered by EPOKA University.

1.3. Background

This document defines the general organizational guidelines and operational instructions to ensure the conduct of **teaching and other activities during the 2020-2021 fall semester** in the context of the situation caused by the COVID-19. The measures defined in this Guideline are to be implemented until February 2021, without prejudice to any other possible and different decisions that could be taken by the competent authorities.


The basic provisions of this guideline have been prepared based on:

- Article 3 of the Law 80/2015 “On higher education and scientific research in higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania”;
- Article 4 of the Statute of EPOKA University;
- Normative Act No. 03, dated 15.03.2020 “On the adoption of special administrative measures throughout the duration of the period of infection caused by COVID-19;
- Ordinance of the Minister of Health and Social Protection No. 289, dated 04.05.2020 “On the adoption of the Guide “On measures against COVID-19 to be carried out by educational institutions”.

This document provides for the following measures relating to **teaching and research for the 2020-2021 fall semester**:

- allowing access to offices, classrooms and laboratories and adopting security measures;
- reducing collective activities and allowing them only in the presence of adequate security measures;
- reducing face-to-face access to administrative services by enhancing digital systems.

The **guiding principle** of planning for the 2020-2021 fall semester shall be to reconcile the health and safety of the student community and of all academic, administrative and technical staff with the full conduct of all teaching and research activities, making use of the support of digital technologies, in compliance with the regulatory provisions and security protocols adopted by the competent authorities.

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This guideline may undergo changes in relation to the evolution of the epidemiological situation and by virtue of the measures taken by the national authorities in terms of managing the Covid-19 emergency.

2. GENERAL MEASURES

2.1. Access to the University facilities and rules of conduct

Access of students and staff members to the university facilities takes place only through the **pedestrian gates identified and specially marked**, with the obligation to measure the temperature; access will be forbidden in the presence of a temperature above 37.5 ° C.

For external visitors, suppliers, workers of external companies and/or professionals, the provisions already in force at the University continue to apply (registration of names, signing of self-declaration forms, etc.). Furthermore, the external body temperature will always be measured.

Care must always be taken that in the phases of entry and exit from the University, the interpersonal distance of at least one (1) meter is respected and any form of gathering is avoided. In the event of the presence of more than one person at the entrance/exit gate, it is absolutely essential to respect the safety distance and avoid gatherings. Entrance to the University facilities is allowed only if equipped with a mask. The use of the mask is mandatory inside the University facilities in all closed places. Outdoors, the use of the mask is still mandatory until new and different provisions adopted by the competent authorities.


2.2. Working hours for academic, administrative and technical staff members

Full-time academic, administrative and technical staff members shall be present at the premises of the University campus during the official working hours.

2.3. Prevention and protection measures

The organizational prevention and protection measures adopted by the University to guarantee the performance of ordinary institutional activities have been adapted to the anti-contagion provisions adopted by the competent authorities and systematized in a single **Guideline titled “On the Measures to Protect the Health of Students, Staff Members and Other Stakeholders”**. The aforementioned document is made known through publication on the University's institutional page as well as with other forms of electronic communication. The entire university community must strictly comply with the rules of conduct contained in the guideline and the activities of those in charge of monitoring compliance with these regulations must be intensified.

Reporting of non-compliance with the rules will result in a verbal warning and, in the face of repetition, in a written warning issued to the concerned person. In case of repetition of such non-compliance, disciplinary proceeding will be initiated towards the concerned staff member/student.

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In case the repetition of the said non-compliance is carried out by a visitor, s/he will be requested to leave the university premises.

It is recalled that the first and most effective safety measure is the constant and careful exercise of responsible behavior by everyone through the following actions:

- individual respect for hygiene rules and social distancing;
- correct use of protection devices;
- maintenance of conditions of cleanliness and hygiene in the workplace (also with personal actions).

2.4. Information and communication

The University prepares **information** initiatives on the prevention and protection measures adopted by the University and ensures **adequate communication** to students, academic staff as well as administrative and technical staff electronically (website, email communications, dedicated webinars, etc.). Signage will be prepared to help manage incoming and outgoing flows and highlight the necessary security measures.

3. ORGANIZATION OF TEACHING AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3.1. ORGANIZATION OF THE MIXED MODE


During the 2020-2021 fall semester, classes will be delivered both *remotely* and *on-campus*, outlining a **mixed teaching mode** that can be enjoyed in university classrooms, but at the same time also remotely. Classrooms and auditoria will be equipped with the necessary infrastructure that will enable the **hybrid flexible (HyFlex) course format** as an instructional approach that combines face-to-face (F2F) and online learning.

With regard to courses consisting only of lectures, classes will be held remotely. Remote teaching comprises online live streaming, which must also be recorded. Based on student requests or if deemed as necessary by the course instructor, students can be requested to attend classes on-campus through the shifting system whereby the remaining students follow these classes remotely.

With regard to courses consisting of practice, laboratory and studio hours, each Faculty and Department shall ensure that students attend these hours on-campus through the shifting system.

Platforms to be used the conduct of Remote Teaching: Google Meet, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams.

Video-recordings: Online classes will always be video-recorded and made available on the platforms used by the University. The on-campus classes may in any case be video-recorded and made available on the platforms used by the University.

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Academic hour: The duration of the academic hour will be 45 minutes.

Priority criteria: Faculties and Departments draw up plans for the presence of students in the classroom, paying particular attention, where possible, to freshmen students to allow new students to fully experience the university experience.

Office hours: Course instructors announce office hours with a duration of at least two hours per week for each course. The reception of students by course instructors during the office hours is carried out on-campus preferably at the available classrooms or meeting rooms.

Accompanying services for students with disabilities: The University has provided an accompanying service to class and/or to the premises of the University for students with disabilities who request it.

3.2. COURSE TIMETABLE IN THE MIXED DISTANCE/PRESENCE MODE.

In the context of its organizational autonomy, each Faculty and Department defines for each course of the 2020-2021 fall semester, how classes must be carried out by taking into account the priority criteria indicated above, the specific features of the course and of the study program, the availability of spaces, as well as indications to ensure safety.

The course timetable containing the calendar, the names of course instructors and the rostering criteria of students, where provided, must be made known to the interested parties well in advance in order to allow for the proper conduct of teaching activities.


3.3. COURSE SCHEDULE AND PLANNING OF EVENTUAL SHIFTS

All classes will be held according to the announced course schedule.

With regard to classes that will be held on-campus, Faculties and Departments shall determine if it will be necessary to define shifts for the frequency of certain courses. In this case, they will establish the operating procedures for dividing the students (e.g. by surname) who will be able to alternate one week in presence and one at distance.

3.4. CONDUCT OF PRACTICE, LABORATORY AND STUDIO HOURS

Practice and laboratory hours which are not otherwise replaceable with remote teaching activities, can be carried out on-campus. The respective Faculty and Department plans the aforementioned activities in accordance with the Guideline titled “On the Measures to Protect the Health of Students, Staff Members and Other Stakeholders”, by also providing for an appropriate reduction of the hours to be carried out on-campus based on the number of students and the size of the respective classroom/auditorium.

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The plan of the aforementioned activities containing the calendar and the names of the personnel and students authorized to access facilities must be made known to the interested parties well in advance in order to allow for the proper conduct of the said activities.

Any reduction in application activities/exercises must be compensated with alternative remote activities, in compliance with the specific formation objectives of the formation activity. Faculties and Departments must in any case provide for substitutive forms of attendance to the aforementioned activities for students unable to attend due to the emergency situation who make a justified request.

3.5. INTERNSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Curricular and extra-curricular internships and professional practices to be conducted at external entities/institutions/companies, can be carried out in presence provided that there are no restrictions or limitations to mobility or to the exercise of work by the concerned student deriving from national provisions in the context of the epidemiological emergency from COVID-19 and that the host entity/institution/company guarantees to have adopted all the contagion containment measures and adequate prevention strategies against COVID-19 in its facilities.

The conduct of the internship/professional practice at the host organization may provide for the mixed "distance-presence" mode. The internship/professional practice can take place remotely where possible.

3.6. EXCHANGE STUDENTS

For incoming exchange students, at least one course selected in the modality is guaranteed in presence and all the others in any case remotely.

For outgoing exchange students, in the case of countries for which mobility is envisaged, it is the student to decide whether to leave or not and, if possible, can also opt for the remote mode.


For countries for which mobility is impeded by supranational rules, mobility is carried out remotely, if possible.

3.7. MID-TERM EXAMS

The Mid-term Exams of the 2020-2021 fall semester will be held through online means in compliance with the respective guideline.

3.8. FINAL AND RESIT EXAMS

The decision on the modalities concerning the conduct of Final and Resit Exams will be taken by the competent University body at least four weeks before the end of the classes of 2020-2021 fall semester based on the epidemiological situation at that time.

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3.9. ADDITIONAL EXAMS

The Additional Exams of the 2020-2021 fall semester will be held on-campus. To this end, Faculties and Departments must comply with the measures indicated in the Guideline “On the Measures to Protect the Health of Students, Staff Members and Other Stakeholders”.

3.10 OTHER EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AT THE BACHELOR AND INTEGRATED SECOND CYCLE STUDY PROGRAMS

The presentation and defense of the Graduation Project by last-year Bachelor students can be held online subject to the approval by the respective Department.

The presentation and defense of the Master Thesis by last-year students in the integrated second cycle study program in Architecture will be held on-campus.

3.11. PRESENTATION AND DEFENSE OF THE MASTER’S THESIS/MICROTHESIS

The presentation and defense of the Master’s thesis/microthesis by students will be held on-campus.

3.12. PRESENTATION AND DEFENSE OF THE PhD THESIS

The presentation and defense of the PhD thesis by students will be held on-campus.


3.13. CLASS ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT

Each student has to attend courses, applied studies, laboratories, projects, seminars, workshops, graduation projects and other studies of the semester she/he enrolled for.

Bachelor and integrated second cycle study program students who have not attended at least 60% of theoretical courses as well as of applied and laboratory studies are not allowed to enter the final exam of the respective course.

Master and PhD Students have the obligation to attend respectively at least 60% and 80% of courses held in class and the laboratory and application courses. If students fail to comply with the abovementioned condition, they have to retake the course with all the relevant obligations.

Attendance of students in lectures shall be registered by the lecturer at the end of each hour in the EIS system (Epoka Interactive System).

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3.14. REPORTING ON THE CONDUCT OF CLASSES

All course instructors shall report at the end of each week to their respective Department Coordinator about the progress of the remote and/or on-campus teaching process and the respective evidences of conducted classes.

4. MODALITIES ON THE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Research activities can usually be carried out on-campus, in compliance with the safety measures. The respective head of academic unit, in collaboration with the laboratory staff, define the list of personnel authorized to access the facilities. The laboratory staff define the access plan to the laboratory taking into account the maximum number of people authorized to access the various environments in which the structure is divided, in relation to the measures indicated in the Safety Protocol to which it is mandatory to comply.

5. MEETINGS OF COLLEGIAL BODIES

The meetings of the collegial bodies as well as of the academic and administrative units and of any other forum provided for by the regulations in force may also take place in presence as long as physical distancing and compliance with the security measures for the containment of the COVID-19 contagion is in place.

The meetings of the collegial bodies can in any case be held in mixed or remote mode, according to the specific regulatory provisions adopted by the university.


6. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SERVICE AND STUDY SPACES

The library offers its services in full compliance with the security measures indicated in the Guideline titled “On the Measures to Protect the Health of Students, Staff Members and Other Stakeholders”.

7. UNIVERSITY SERVICES

The administrative services must be used by internal and external users by giving precedence to the use of remote communication tools (telephone, e-mail, web) or by appointment and in strict compliance with security measures.

The reception services of the public and front office activities (where necessary) must be carried out by electronic booking, organizing and quoting the appointments in compliance with the measures indicated in the Guideline titled “On the Measures to Protect the Health of Students, Staff Members and Other Stakeholders”.

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8. TRAVEL FOR WORK PURPOSES

Travel for work purposes in Albania can be carried out according to the rules established by the national government with the recommendation to limit them as much as possible to non-deferrable cases, avoiding situations with a risk of contagion.

Travel for work purposes abroad can only be carried out to countries for which government measures do not provide for any limitation to travel and with the recommendation to limit them to proven institutional needs of absolute urgency. In any case, it is necessary to comply with governmental, ministerial and World Health Organization guidelines.

9. CONFERENCES, SEMINARS, EVENTS, EVENTS AND OTHER SIMILAR ACTIVITIES

All conferences, seminars, events, events and other similar activities are suspended, except for activities carried out with the aid of remote communication tools.

10. TRANSPORTATION OF STAFF AND STUDENTS TO AND FROM THE CAMPUS

EPOKA University is 12 km away from the city center. EPOKA University has subcontracted a transportation company for the transport of staff and students to and from the campus.

In order to minimize the use of the bus transportation, EPOKA University will encourage the students and staff to use their private vehicles. Also, EPOKA University will conduct a questionnaire on all students and staff to ask them on the matter and their availability in terms of personal transportation to and from the campus. Students will be asked via e-mail to notify the University on the use of the bus service. Students who do not provide the said notification, will not be allowed to use the bus service.

11. CONCLUDING PROVISIONS

11.1. Entrance into force

This guideline enters into force on the day of approval by the Rectorate of EPOKA University.

11.2. Enforcement

The enforcement of this guideline is ensured by the Rector of EPOKA University.