

## **GISMA - Frequently asked question during coronavirus outbreak**

The health, welfare and safety of students and staff is the number one priority for GISMA Business School.

GISMA welcomes students and staff from around the world to Germany, and they are an integral part of our international community.

We understand that students and staff may be worried about friends and family members in Germany and affected areas around the world, and our thoughts go to all those affected by this outbreak.

We ask that students and staff support their fellow friends and colleagues at this difficult time. Harassment and discrimination of any kind, including racial or xenophobic, are totally unacceptable at GISMA.

Any instances of harassment should be reported immediately either to the Management team, or to the Student Support Team in the case of students.

### **What is the situation in Germany?**

The worldwide spread of COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO on 11.03.2020. The [RKI](#) assess the situation to be a very dynamic and serious situation worldwide and in Germany. In some cases the course of the disease is severe, even fatal. The number of cases in Germany continues to rise.

The overall risk to the health of the population in Germany is currently estimated to be high. However, this risk varies from region to region. The probability of serious disease progression increases with increasing age and existing previous illnesses.

All federal states are implementing measures to enforce social distancing, such as cancellation of mass gatherings, closure of cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, concert halls, limiting operation of restaurants, bars and clubs, as well as school and daycare closures starting the week of 16/03/2020.

The [Federal Foreign Office](#) has information for anyone travelling to Germany.

## **Are GISMA classes still running?**

As the situation regarding COVID-19 became more present in Germany, GISMA Business School made the decision to temporarily suspend face to face teaching from Tuesday March 17 on all campuses in Germany. During this period, wherever possible we will move learning, teaching and assessment online.

## **Are GISMA campus buildings open?**

GISMA Business School and GISMA Language School are following the advice of the German government regarding campus buildings being open. Therefore, the GISMA Language School Hannover is able to open for students who are in Hannover, and strict hygiene measures are being taken. On advice by the authorities, campus buildings in Berlin and Hamburg are still closed to students. All teams and staff will continue to be available to students via phone and email during regular hours. We will update students on a regular basis so please check our website and your student email regularly. Please be assured that during this challenging period we will endeavour to continue to provide online high quality equivalent learning, teaching and support services to all our students.

## **How is GISMA managing the outbreak?**

We are following all regulations and guidelines by the Federal Ministry of Health, have robust processes in place, an experienced team capable of dealing with the outbreak of an infectious disease and we are communicating regularly with our staff and students.

Across our campuses, we are displaying The Robert Koch Institute's (the German government's central institution for the identification, surveillance and prevention of infectious diseases) coronavirus information and we have significantly increased the number of hand sanitisation stations. We have reviewed our regular cleaning procedures and the products we use, making changes to ensure an appropriately high level of disinfection. We are monitoring facilities regularly to ensure soap and sanitiser dispensers are maintained.

## **Has GISMA had any cases so far?**

At present, there are no cases involving staff or students from GISMA.

The [Robert Koch Institute](#) and the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) have confirmed that a number of patients in Germany have been tested positive for coronavirus.

## **I'm feeling anxious about the virus.**

We have set-up NTT-Hotline (Need-To-Talk Hotline) for students and staff to provide both information and comfort from one of GISMA team if they feel distressed in the current situation or in self-isolation.

You can get more information on it by contacting GISMA through the following email addresses: [careercentre@gisma.com](mailto:careercentre@gisma.com) for students; and [HR@GISMA.com](mailto:HR@GISMA.com) for staff and external faculty.

## **What are the symptoms of coronavirus?**

Based on current evidence, coronavirus presents with flu-like symptoms including a fever, a cough, or difficulty breathing. Further information from European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control [here](#).

## **What should you do if you become unwell and believe you have been exposed to the coronavirus (through travel to affected countries or contact with a confirmed case)?**

Call the local Health Administration Hotline. For Berlin, please call 0049 30 9028 2828, for Hamburg please call 0049 40 428 284 000, for Hannover please call 0049 511 4505555 (if you fear you have been infected with the coronavirus).

If you are unwell, you should not visit a GP, a pharmacy, urgent care centre or hospital. While you wait for advice or for an ambulance to arrive, you should stay *at least* two metres away from other people. If possible, find a room or area which can be isolated behind a shut door. Avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the bin.

## **Do I need to be tested and stay home even if I have only mild symptoms?**

Yes, if:

- you have had contact in the last two weeks with a patient who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the laboratory
- you were in an area where many COVID-19 diseases have already occurred
- there is a previous illness or the respiratory disease is getting worse (shortness of breath, high fever, etc.)
- if you come into contact with people at work or in voluntary work who are at high risk of serious illness (e.g. in hospital or care of the elderly)

Even before the test result is available, you should isolate yourself, i.e. stay at home, avoid all close contact under 2 meters, maintain good hand hygiene and wear a mouth and nose protector when in contact with others (if available).

### **GISMA has also established a 14-day regulation.**

The regulation stipulates that students and staff who have stayed in coronavirus risk areas, who have had personal contact with other people from the risk areas or a case that has already been confirmed, may only come to the campus after 14 days.

The risk areas and guidance, based on advice by the German health authorities as well as GISMA internal guidelines, follows below:

If you have returned from the following areas since in the last two weeks, you should stay indoors, avoid contact with other people and call your doctor **even if you have no symptoms**:

- Italy
- Iran
- In China: Hubei Province (incl. Wuhan City)
- In South Korea: Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (North Gyeongsang)
- In France: Grand Est region (this region includes Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne)
- In Austria: Federal State of Tyrol
- In Spain: Madrid
- In USA: States of California, Washington and New York

If you have returned from the following countries in the last 14 days and **have developed symptoms** you must stay indoors and call the doctor, even if symptoms are mild. The symptoms include a cough, sneeze, shortness of breath or a fever.

- mainland China outside of Hubei province
- South Korea outside of Daegu, Cheongdo and Gyeongsan
- Cambodia

- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Laos
- Macau
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Vietnam

Please take advice before travelling from your GP, Pharmacy, hospital or at GISMA campus to minimise any risk of spreading infection. We encourage all to follow the usual general steps to avoid spreading germs/colds, such as good hand hygiene, cough etiquette, etc.

The risk areas will probably continue to expand. In that case, we will keep you informed.

### **Are you ensuring anyone returning from risk areas is quarantined for 14 days?**

We are recommending all students and staff to follow the guidance of the [Robert Koch Institute](#). The institute advises that you should stay indoors and avoid contact with other people immediately if you've travelled to the Germany from an infected area in the last 14 days, even if you do not have symptoms.

Use the following hotlines to find out what to do next:

Federal Ministry of Health: 0049 30 346 465 100

independent patient counseling Germany: 0800 0117722

Patient Service: 116 117

### **Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.**

Call the local Health Administration Hotline. For Berlin, please call 0049 30 9028 2828, for Hamburg please call 0049 40 428 284 000, for Hannover please call 0049 511 4505555

### **What is the proper preparedness and response?**

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has published various information guides on proper preparedness and response [here](#).

### **Are students and staff advised not to travel to affected areas?**

We are recommending all staff and students follow the [Federal Ministry of Health's guidance](#) on travel to affected areas.

### **Is it ok to travel in Germany on public transport?**

If possible, avoid going on trips, using public transport and instead work from home.

Generally, all contact with others should be reduced to the bare minimum and the attendance of events with crowds of people should be avoided.

### **What should you do if you are concerned about a student or member of staff?**

You can contact GISMA through the following email addresses: [studentsupportberlin@gisma.com](mailto:studentsupportberlin@gisma.com) for students; and [HR@GISMA.com](mailto:HR@GISMA.com) for staff and external faculty.

If you have a clear medical concern about yourself or someone else, call 0049 30 9028 2828 for Berlin, 0049 40 428 284 000 for Hamburg, 0049 511 4505555 for Hanover.

### **Should students in Germany go home?**

Students are advised in the main to follow the advice for their particular circumstance. However, should students wish to return home, we will of course support their choices and look to support their learning from a distance. Please let your Programme Coordinator know of your plans so we can support you appropriately. If you do leave the country, please let them know, via email.

Please note, that the online mode of sessions has been introduced as a temporary mean to address the challenges imposed by recent health and safety development

across the globe. This solution by no means replaces a face to face teaching in long term, and we shall advise you with a up to a minimum of 4 weeks' notice when sessions will revert to the standard face-to-face interaction. With such notice in place, you will be expected to return to the German campus and recommence learning in the face-to-face mode.

Please also be advised that in order to not be in violation of your student study visa, your "exit period" should not exceed 6 months. We ask that you keep your visa terms and conditions in mind when you decide on the next course of action and ensure that your residence permit is still valid for re-entry.

### **You have a visit from friends, family or colleagues planned, what should you be aware of?**

Staff and students should consider whether planned visits from friends or family could increase the risk of coronavirus transmission.

Individuals who have recently travelled from the following places are most at risk.

- Italy
- Iran
- In China: Hubei Province (incl. Wuhan City)
- In South Korea: Gyeongsangbuk-do Province (North Gyeongsang)
- In France: Grand Est region (this region includes Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne)

### **What should you do if you have a family member with immune system issues?**

If you are caring or coming in to close contact with someone who has a significant health condition, seek advice from a GP or hospital specialist. They should continue to take their normal precautions in relation to their health.

Should you or anyone in your household experience flu like symptoms, dial the local Health Administration Hotline immediately. For Berlin, please call 0049 30 9028 2828, for Hamburg please call 0049 40 428 284 000, for Hanover please call 0049 511 4505555

## **You have seen people wearing face masks – should you be worried?**

In some countries wearing face masks is very common, it is seen as an everyday way to prevent spreading and catching illnesses. In other countries face masks are more unusual and can be seen with alarm. Wearing a face mask is an entirely personal decision and no-one should be treated differently because they decide to wear one. Face masks for the general public, students and staff are not recommended to protect from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments, but individual decisions should be respected unless wearing one presents a health and safety concern.

## **Are you relying only on self-reporting or are you working proactively to identify specific students and staff that might be at risk?**

We are identifying and communicating directly with all staff and students, providing them with advice specific to their circumstances.

## **What should you do about your studies if you are unable to travel to Germany or are in self-isolation?**

If you are either unable to travel from your home country to Germany or if you have to go into self-isolation you should email [studentsupportberlin@gisma.com](mailto:studentsupportberlin@gisma.com) with your name, student ID and programme of study. This will help us keep an accurate record about who is affected and to give you further guidance. You should try to keep up with your studies as far as possible using the resources available on the learning platform and keep in touch with your programme management team. If you have to miss any assessments, you should inform the programme management team.

## **Could your immigration status be affected?**

If your visa or current residence title is expiring and you cannot visit the local authorities for an extension application because you have been tested positive for the coronavirus or have to stay in isolation, please get in touch with your local visa support team for further guidance and instructions. For Berlin campus students please reach out to [visaberlin@gisma.com](mailto:visaberlin@gisma.com), for Hamburg campus students please reach out to [visahamburg@gisma.com](mailto:visahamburg@gisma.com), for Hanover campus students please reach out to [visahanover@gisma.com](mailto:visahanover@gisma.com)

If you are a member of staff affected by coronavirus and you have concerns about your immigration status, please contact Human Resources.

**I am a student from one of the areas affected by coronavirus. Should I travel home for the Easter vacation?**

The situation continues to evolve globally. Travel restrictions may be imposed, and additional health precautions may be placed upon individuals returning to Germany. If you live in an affected area you are advised not to return for the vacation. If you are travelling to, or have family travelling from, other affected areas, you should consider the risks of exposing yourself and GISMA to the virus, and speak to your Programme Management team in the first instance if you need any further advice.