

Ordinance to Enact the General Implementing Provisions at Saarland University

26 June 2020
(Coronavirus Ordinance)

Note: This translation is provided for information purposes only. In the event of any discrepancy between the translation and the original German version published in the Official Bulletin (*Dienstblatt der Hochschulen des Saarlandes*), the provisions of the latter shall take precedence.

Pursuant to Section 13(1) and 13(3) in conjunction with Section 24, Paragraph 1.2, item 1 and Section 64, Paragraph 1.1 of the Saarland Higher Education Institutions Act (*Saarländisches Hochschulgesetz SHSG*) of 30 November 2016 (Official Gazette of Saarland (*Amtsblatt*), p. 1080), most recently amended in law on 10 April 2019 (Official Gazette, p. 412) and further pursuant to Section 16(3) of the Saarland Teacher Training Act (*Saarländisches Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildungsgesetz*) of 23 June 1999 (Official Gazette, p. 1054), most recently amended in law on 18 May 2016 (Official Gazette, p. 366), and with the consent of the principal regulatory authority for research in Saarland and of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Saarland, the Saarland University Senate has issued the following Ordinance to Enact the General Implementing Provisions at Saarland University.

Section 1 Scope

The following rules apply in derogation of the regulations regarding Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes as set out in the Framework Examination Regulations for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programmes at Saarland University (BMRPO) of 17 June 2015 and in the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University for Vocational Secondary Schools (LAB), for Primary Education (LP), for the Lower Secondary Stage at German Secondary Schools (Years 5 to 10) (LS1), and for the Lower and Upper Secondary Stages at German Secondary Schools (LS1+2) of 14 February 2018 (hereafter: Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University). These rules apply to all Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at Saarland University. They do not apply to degree programmes at Saarland University that are subject to regional or national statutory regulations, with the exception of those programmes that are governed by the Examination Regulations Pertaining to Teacher Training Programmes at Saarland University. Furthermore, these rules do not apply to programmes that lead to the award of a Master of Laws qualification (LL.M.).

Section 2 Teaching activities

(1) Unless it is essential that a teaching activity is conducted with students attending in person, teaching staff should offer the teaching activity in digital format or should teach via video conference. In case of doubt, the Dean of Studies shall decide whether a teaching activity can be presented in digital form.

(2) Teaching activities may be conducted with students physically present provided that it is not possible to teach the relevant content using an alternative remote teaching method. In-person teaching activities shall be conducted in rooms in which attendees will be able to observe the hygiene and physical distancing rules. The relevant Dean of Studies shall be notified in good time about the time and place of any in-person teaching activity and the Dean shall be provided with a suitable health protection plan covering the activity. Based on the information received, the Dean of Studies shall compile a master health protection plan and

shall submit the plans to the university's crisis management team. The crisis management team reserves the right to intervene if necessary.

(3) If a teaching activity cannot be conducted in the summer semester of 2020 either online or in person, that teaching activity may be conducted in part or in full in one of the two following semesters.

(4) If a teaching activity would normally require mandatory attendance, the course or class instructor can decide whether participation should be mandatory when that course or class is held online.

Section 3 Examinations and academic assessments

(1) Examinations and academic assessments may be conducted in a manner that deviates from that specified in the relevant applicable study regulations. This could involve the use of electronic information and communication technologies or could mean conducting an examination by video conference. A request to deviate from the form of examination specified in the examination or study regulations shall be submitted by the examiner to the relevant examination board. The decision to grant this request shall be made by the examination board or by the chair of the board, if the chair has been authorized by the board to make this decision. Notification of the decision shall be made available in suitable form. In case of doubt, the decision shall be made by the Dean of Studies. Data protection and privacy rules shall be observed when examinations are conducted online. There shall be an appropriate means of verifying the identity of the candidate.

(2) The completion times for individual written academic assessments, such as essays, term papers, Bachelor's theses, Master's theses or theses in state-examined subjects shall be adjusted appropriately to reflect the challenging conditions that students have faced during the coronavirus pandemic. With the exception of final-year theses, written academic work may be submitted in purely digital form (e.g. as a read-only PDF file). This also applies to the declarations that candidates have to submit in accordance with the requirements in Article 23(2) of the BMRPO and Section 23(11) of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University. The examiner is entitled to ask the student to submit the original written work at some later date. Final-year theses shall not only be submitted to the relevant examinations office in electronic form, printed versions must also be sent by post to the examinations office. The printed versions shall also include the signed declaration of original authorship (*eidesstattliche Versicherung*). The candidate shall provide a written assurance that the electronic and printed versions of the thesis are identical in form and content.

(3) It is the responsibility of the relevant examination board and the relevant examiners to exempt candidates from the normal admission requirements for examinations, modules or module elements as may be necessary as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The course or class instructor shall decide whether a candidate may be exempted from the in-module tests normally required for exam registration.

(4) The relevant examination board may decide to modify the registration deadlines for an examination or a repeat examination (resit) that are stipulated in the programme-specific study or examination regulations. A candidate may withdraw from an in-person examination even after the withdrawal deadline has passed, if they can demonstrate that they are particularly vulnerable to the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

(5) After completing each individual examination, a candidate may inspect their written work and the associated exam reports in accordance with the provisions of Article 16(10) of the BMRPO and Section 19 of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree

Programmes at Saarland University. In such cases, inspection shall be conducted remotely (i.e. by digital means).

(6) In exceptional cases and where strong grounds exist, the examiners may deviate from the grading system set out in the programme-specific study regulations.

(7) If requested by a student, the relevant examination board may recognize the student's voluntary activities in assisting with the response to the coronavirus pandemic (e.g. laboratory work, looking after COVID-vulnerable groups, etc.) by awarding the applicant 3 ECTS credits. If a student rendered other forms of assistance in combating the COVID-19 crisis, they may apply to the relevant examination board to have these other activities recognized. The actual work or activity performed by the student shall be confirmed by means of an official certificate that states the time and duration of the activity and precisely describes the type of activity performed.

Section 4

Oral examinations via video conference

(1) Oral exams may be conducted by video conference (with open audio and visual channels) if this has been so agreed with the candidate. In such cases, the candidate may take the examination from a location other than a university site. Candidates shall be given sufficient time to become acquainted with the video conferencing system to be used. The duration of the oral examination may therefore be extended appropriately to reflect the special circumstances under which the assessment is being conducted, provided that all candidates are treated equally in this respect.

(2) Minutes of the remote video examination shall be kept by the second examiner or the observer in accordance with the requirements in Article 13(7) of the BMRPO and Section 11(11) of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University. In derogation of the provisions of Article 13, Paragraph 7.5 of the BMRPO and of Section 11(11) of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University, examiners and observers may approve the minutes via email.

(3) In order to verify their identity, candidates shall present a valid personal identification document and their student card. Before the oral examination begins, the name and student registration number of the candidate shall be recorded in the examination minutes.

(4) All of the participating examiners and observers must have an uninterrupted audio and video link during the entire oral examination. As far as is possible, the student should remain entirely within the camera's field of view during the examination.

(5) Unless otherwise provided for in this ordinance, remote oral examinations by video link shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions of Article 13(7) of the BMRPO and Section 11(11) of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University.

Section 5

Study abroad periods and work placements / internships

(1) The admission requirements and the conditions governing the study abroad periods, work placements, internships and other practical training activities specified in the programme-specific examination or study regulations may be amended by the chair of the examination board if this is necessary due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

(2) If a study abroad period, work placement, internship or other practical training activity had to be terminated earlier than planned, the relevant examination board may still award the full number of ECTS credits. If a period of practical training that would normally earn course credits cannot be carried out because of the pandemic, alternative student activities may be recognized.

Section 6 Progress checks

(1) The rules governing academic progress checks, as specified in Article 10(5) of the BMRPO and in Section 21 of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University, shall not apply in the winter semester of 2019/2020 nor in the summer semester of 2020. However, students may still receive notification of their academic progress for information purposes only.

(2) The academic progress requirements shall be amended so that students will not be disadvantaged because examinations and assessments had to be suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Section 7 Repeating academic assessments and examinations

(1) If a student took and failed examinations or assessments for which the associated teaching activities were in the summer semester of 2020 or the examinations or assessments were originally scheduled during the campus shutdown period (17 March 2020 until 4 May 2020), the student is permitted to submit a request for each such failed examination or assessment to the relevant examination board to have the examination or assessment reclassified as 'not attempted'. The decision to grant the request rests with the examination board whose members will consider applications favourably whenever reasonable grounds exist. In derogation of Article 17(5) of the BMRPO and of Section 15(3) of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University, this rule also applies when an examination was not completed within the standard period of study, even if such a requirement was not explicitly stipulated in the programme-specific examination regulations or in the subject-specific annexes for teacher training degree programmes. Sentence 1 of this paragraph does not apply to seminar papers, final-year theses, school teaching placements or portfolios.

(2) If a student took an examination or assessment for which the associated teaching activity was in the summer semester of 2020 or the examination or assessment was originally scheduled during the campus shutdown period (17 March 2020 until 4 May 2020) and the student was awarded a passing grade, the student is permitted to retake the examination or assessment on one further occasion but no later than the summer semester of 2021 in order to improve the grade attained, irrespective of whether this is provided for in the programme-specific examination or study regulations. The decision to grant a retake request rests with the examination board whose members will consider applications favourably wherever reasonable grounds exist. The student shall be awarded the better of the two grades achieved. Sentences 1 to 3 of this paragraph do not apply to essays and other written assignments, seminar papers, final-year theses, school teaching placements or portfolios.

(3) Applications for a third attempt at an examination or assessment, as provided for in Article 17, Paragraph 2.2 of the BMRPO or in Section 15(2) of the Examination Regulations Governing Teacher Training Degree Programmes at Saarland University, should generally be given favourable consideration if reasonable grounds exist and if the teaching activity associated with the examination or assessment was in the summer semester of 2020 or the examination or assessment was originally scheduled during the campus shutdown period.

Section 8

Standard period of study

(1) For students enrolled in a programme of study at Saarland University in the summer semester of 2020, deadlines that are stipulated on the basis of the standard period of study shall be extended by one semester. This also applies to cross-enrolled students and to students on leave of absence in the summer semester of 2020.

(2) When assessing the academic progress of students enrolled in the summer semester of 2020, any constraints or obstacles that affected student academic performance (i.e. ECTS credits earned) within the standard period of study shall be taken into consideration.

Section 9

Meeting admission requirements for Master's degree programmes

(1) If the entry requirements for a Master's degree programme set out in the subject-specific examination regulations have not been met, the student may – in the absence of any academic evidence to the contrary – be provisionally admitted to the relevant programme on condition that the student acquires the missing curricular content in a supplementary study programme. Which curricular content needs to be acquired in which time frame shall be specified by the relevant examination board.

(2) With respect to admissions to Master's degree programmes in the winter semester of 2020/2021, the examination board may decide to deviate from the entry requirements specified in the subject-specific examination regulations, if this would compensate for possible disadvantages suffered by the applicant or student due to the coronavirus pandemic.

(3) If, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, students who have been provisionally enrolled or provisionally admitted to a Master's programme are unable to meet the conditions specified in the letter of admission within the stipulated time frame or are unable to provide the necessary supporting documents, the deadlines should be generously extended, which would normally mean an extension of three months. Examples of the conditions that may need to be met are: proof that the required number of ECTS credits have been accumulated, submission of a Bachelor's degree certificate, submission of a formal record of recognition of prior learning.

(4) The relevant committee shall use reasonable discretion when deciding whether to extend the time frames in which stipulated conditions need to be met if these conditions are not impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Matters relating to examinations and academic assessments shall be dealt with by the relevant examination board.

Section 10

Enrolment

Students who were able to complete the curricular requirements of their programme in the summer semester of 2020 but were unable to acquire the associated ECTS credits due to the postponement of examination dates and submission deadlines may take these examinations in the winter semester of 2020/2021. The relevant examination board may exempt a student from the need to be properly enrolled at Saarland University if so requested by the student.

Section 11

Commencement

(1) This ordinance shall come into force on 1 April 2020.

(2) The rules expressed herein that govern examinations and teaching activities apply to those teaching activities conducted in the summer semester of 2020 and to those examinations for which the associated teaching activities were conducted in the summer semester of 2020 or that were originally scheduled for the period in which the campus was shutdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

(3) The rules expressed herein that have an impact on entry and admission to degree programmes apply to the winter semester of 2020/2021.

(4) This ordinance shall cease to be in force on 31 September 2021.

Saarbrücken, 26 June 2020

President of Saarland University
(Univ.-Prof. Dr. Manfred Schmitt)