

Rapid Survey on reopening of Schools of Public Health/university campuses in the European Region – ASPHER, July 22-24

Rationale

European universities are taking very different paths towards reopening their campuses after the sudden interruption of all face-to-face activities a few months ago. In general, educational institutions seek to establish norms that protect teachers, staff, students, and visitors following public health official orders and recommendations. Mainly addressing the operation of industrial and commercial establishments, national regulations requires all employers to take reasonable steps to reduce risk to employees, and establish cleaning and sanitation obligations to ensure that business facilities are maintained in a safe condition without reasonably avoidable hazards (OSHA, 2020).

Educational and other institutional and service settings face broader challenges, because of their custodial and quasi-custodial relationships with students, who most often have no employment relationship to these entities but whose close institutional ties lead them to spend much continuous time within their facilities (Barnes and Sax, 2020).

Some may be staying with a predominantly online approach for the remaining time of this year. Others, are preparing for a return to face-to-face teaching on campus, albeit mainly for smaller group teaching. Few national authorities have launched specific guidance for re-opening higher education campuses. Recently, the Scottish government proposed a staged approach to resuming activities on campuses, similarly to some other universities around the globe (see Figure below). In progressing through the phases, universities will follow the public health and health and safety measures outlined in a guidance for the university sector in Scotland, including physical distancing, hygiene and cleaning, use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), communication, work from home, public transportation, testing, self-isolation, and equity.



European Schools of Public Health could play a critical role in policy and guideline development both for the universities and for other institutions.

Aims of the survey

To gather information about the planning preparedness of Schools of Public Health for reopening campuses after closure due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Dimensions of the survey /semi-structured telephone interview

- Teaching and exams, including entry exams/recruitment
- International students
- Equipment and infrastructure
- Additional workloads on teachers trying to juggle in-class and online learning.
- Revenue drop & Job cuts
- Contingency planning
- Prevention measures (“Low-Tech” Prevention Measures in Daily Operations; Environmental, Engineering, and Administrative Controls; Contact Tracing and the Use of Mobile Apps)
- Role of science in government decisions and quality of evidence

Methodology

Rapid survey via email and telephone within a strict timeframe of July 22-24; convenience sample of selected Schools of Public Health in the European Region. The survey includes a range of questions on the above listed dimensions of reopening of Schools of Public Health/university campuses. First contact by email followed by a telephone call (optional; and if no response).

References

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