

Guidelines and recommendations regarding teaching at candidate and Masters levels during the spring term of 2020, arising because of the new corona virus (which causes the illness Covid-19)

Background

Because of the ongoing spread of the new corona virus, teaching activities and exams need to be modified at short notice. The aim of this document and the associated decision by the Dean of Science are to simplify the decision process in the present situation, to clarify what can be decided on by Departments, and to give recommendations to that we are as prepared as we can be for the coming situation. The recommendations are based on the responses we received from the survey sent out to the Directors of Studies from March 12 to 16, 2020.

Overall goal

Our overall goal is to continue with teaching and examination throughout the spring term while, at the same time, supporting the global effort to reduce spread of the new corona virus. This will require changes to modes of teaching and examination as well as how obligatory parts of courses are handled.

Ensuring that our teaching and examinations continue to be of high quality will rely on us working together to find creative and flexible solutions for teachers and student.

Teaching and examination

Guidelines

To allow for changes to modes of teaching and examination and to obligatory parts of courses, we will need to accept that course plans cannot be adhered to in their entirety. Decisions about deviating from a course plan should be made by the Head of Department or a person to whom the Head of Department has delegated this task (e.g. Vice Head of Department or a Director of Studies, not individual teachers). Whenever possible, such decisions should be made in consultation with a student representative. Students who are affected by such changes should be informed in writing. Major changes need to be decided on in consultation with the Chair of the Education Board.

If an obligatory part of a course is removed it should be replaced by an alternative assignment. An exception to this rule is obligatory parts of a course which are only a very small part of a course.

Normally, course plans will not be changed for reasons relating to the new corona virus. Instead, we will accept that course plans cannot be adhered to in their entirety at this time. However, if changes are needed for technical reasons (e.g. subdivision of examination codes), these can be decided on by the Chair of the Education Board. Requests should be sent to gb@science.su.se and edsjo@fysik.su.se either by the Head of Department or by the person (e.g. Director of Studies) to whom this task has been delegated.

Recommendations

We recommend that Departments:

- plan for and switch over to giving lectures online using e.g. Zoom or Athena.

- plan for and modify lab exercises to demonstrations which can be filmed or streamed via e.g. Zoom. If this makes it impossible for learning goals to be achieved (e.g. if a learning goal is for students to have acquired practical skills), an alternative is for labs to be conducted in small groups on campus (provided that this is allowed by health authority guidelines).
- plan for and switch to conducting student presentations (e.g. candidate thesis examinations) and other seminars online via e.g. Zoom. An alternative is for such examinations to be done in written form.
- decide on a reserve teacher for each of the spring term courses in case the usual teacher of a course becomes ill.
- decide on a reserve examiner for each of the spring term courses in case the usual examiner of a course becomes ill (this decision needs to be taken by the Head of Department).
- conduct field work, if at all possible, near Stockholm, so that it is easy to return home at short notice, and to minimize time spent travelling.
- if possible, allow virtual participation in field trips by using e.g. Zoom on a smartphone.
- allow for exams to be done by distance, e.g. by replacing campus-based exams with home-based exams and hand-in exercises. One option, which is not a requirement, is to supplement a home exam with an oral exam via e.g. Zoom. This is to allow for a student's ID to be checked. If this approach is used, the standard requirement of student anonymity is waived.
- inform teachers that they are allowed to send a student home who shows obvious symptoms of illness which according to the Swedish Health Authority are reason for a person to stay at home.
- when switching to digital solutions, be prepared to find solutions for students who do not have the necessary technical equipment.
- when making changes to the mode of teaching and examination, be ready to find solutions to allow for students with disabilities to participate.
- be flexible about offering extra labs and re-exams.

Other alternatives, which are not recommended as a long term solution, are to hold teaching activities and examinations in larger rooms so that students can sit further from one another.

A number of Departments have asked about delaying teaching and exams. We are investigating this question. However, we presently advise Departments to find other solutions as current regulations are that delaying teaching or exams to another time period (e.g. the summer) is not allowed.

In general, we do not recommend replacing lectures with self-study.

Learning outcomes

Changes to modes of teaching and examination should, as much as possible, be done in a way that allows for the main learning outcomes of a course to be achieved.

If a Department needs to modify a learning outcome of a course, the first step is to make sure that this will not cause problems for future courses and that the overall goals of the education program can still be achieved. This analysis should be done in consultation with the Chair of the Education Board and any changes need to be decided on by the Head of Department (or similar) and documented accordingly.