**RULES**

For the start of the new academic year 2020/2021 and facilitating the educational process in MU - Pleven

*/The rules were approved and established by the Rectors' Council, held on 08.09.2020/*

There is a general consensus that the most beneficial learning process is achieved by an in-person environment with direct interaction between students, lecturers and patients. Taking into account the legal requirements by the state and the health risks associated with the emergency situation, the Management of MU – Pleven have decided to start the new academic year 2020/2021 with the application of a *hybrid in-person/online model* of the educational process.

At the same time, if instructed by the health authorities on a state level, the University will switch to distance learning in an e-learning environment, using the university system for e-learning and distance learning (SEDO). In order to ensure more self-preparation opportunities for the students majoring in Medicine, as an additional resource to the integrated teaching materials in SEDO, the University will provide access to a new educational tool - the online learning platform *Lecturio*.

In order to ensure and facilitate the educational process in an e-learning environment, the **Commission for Distance Learning** was established at MU-Pleven (*order №1395 / 07.07.2020 of the Rector of MU-Pleven*). The Commission is charged with administering and regulating the use of the electronic resources at the University in order to ensure the consistent high quality of education. The Commission would also propose to the Rector of MU-Pleven to change the form of the educational process from in-person to distance learning, should the deterioration of the epidemiological situation in the city of Pleven and the university hospitals require it.

The educational process in MU-Pleven will be carried out in compliance with the necessary anti-epidemic measures, as follows:

**COMPULSORY MEASURES FOR THE REDUCTION OF HEALTH RISKS**

1. Strictly abiding by the established measures for reducing health risks, including physical distancing between students, lecturers and patients.
2. Compulsory wearing of personal protection gear (face masks and/or face shields) indoors on the territory of the university, the lecture halls and any common room or corridor where people gather by the students **and** guests of the university. Students are expected to provide their own protection gear and the university is expected to provide substitution gear should a need arise.
3. Wet cleaning and disinfection of all critical surfaces - floors, desks, tables, door handles, windows, lighting switches, elevator buttons, railings, appliances, screens, toilet bowls, sinks, taps, etc. is to be done daily. Classrooms and laboratories are to be ventilated between classes.
4. Conditions are to be created for enhanced personal hygiene through:

• Providing running water and soap in each bathroom.

• Installation of automatic dispensers or nebulizers with hand sanitizer on each floor, and if possible - in classrooms and laboratories.

1. To not allow on the work premises (classrooms, laboratories and offices) people with manifestations of acute respiratory infections (fever, cough, difficulty breathing, etc.).
2. To allocate a room for the isolation of students or employees with flu-like symptoms. As soon as the isolation room is vacated, a thorough disinfection with a biocide with virocidal action is to be carried out in compliance with the requirements for disinfection.
3. To ensure good coordination and interaction between the main Units/Departments of the University in the preparation of the curricula, in order to limit the gathering of large groups of people.
4. All students are to sign a declaration that they are familiar with the Rules for conducting the educational process in MU-Pleven in connection with the anti-epidemiological control of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Student group leaders/representatives are to be selected, who are to ensure the observing of the anti-epidemic measures.
6. All students arriving from abroad are to undergo mandatory quarantine before joining the educational process.
7. The use of medical clothes outside the hospitals is **strictly forbidden**, as non-compliance is to be considered as grounds for **the dismissal (expulsion) of the student** from the Higher School in accordance to art. 74, para. 2, item 2 of the Higher Education Act.
8. Upon entering any of the hospitals, the students must put on medical clothes at the designated places. Immediately after the end of the classes and before leaving the hospitals, the students are required to change their clothes.

**RECOMMENDED MEASURES FOR THE REDUCTION OF HEALTH RISKS**

1. The use of gloves by students, lecturers, administration and support staff is recommended.
2. It is advisable to limit the departure from the city of students and representatives of the academic community, as well as traveling abroad, except for professional or personal needs. It is recommended that students, in order to effectively comply with anti-epidemic measures, notify the Dean in writing through the relevant student office of any forthcoming departure from the city, indicating the reasons, period of absence and place of residence.
3. It is recommended that students observe physical distancing measures during breaks between classes. When visiting leisure establishments, students should aim to sit outdoors, without grouping or crowding.
4. It is recommended to reduce social contacts and practice social distancing. Students living in student dormitories are advised to not have more than 5 people in one room at any given time when they gather in groups.

**PROCEDURE FOR A COVID-19 POSITIVE OR CLINICALLY SUSPICIOUS STUDENT, LECTURER OR EMPLOYEE**

1. By order of the Rector of MU-Pleven, commissions are to be formed at each main Unit to monitor and prepare lists of tested, positive as well as close contacts of students, lecturers or staff infected with the virus.
2. The commissions should include the Deputy Dean, the Head of the student office and one *Training and qualification* expert.

**Initial steps to be taken when a person with one or more clinically relevant symptoms (fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, etc.) is found**

The person should:

1. Be isolated immediately and given a mask if his/her return home is not immediately possible.
2. Avoid physical contact with others. If possible, use personal transport to get around.
3. Consult with his/her personal physician for assessment of the condition and possible follow-up, including the need to perform a test for COVID-19.
4. Be re-admitted to work only after a medical note is issued from the personal or family physician that he/she is clinically healthy.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**

1. At the start of the academic year, all students are required to sign a declaration of compliance with the rules for conducting classes in the developing epidemic situation.
2. Classes of 1st and 2nd year students in the specialties "Medicine" and "Pharmacy" are to be held in an in-person format.
3. The in-person model of education is to also be applied for all 1st year students in all other specialties at the University (exception is made for students engaged in part-time form of education).
4. For years 3rd to 6th of the specialty "Medicine", 3rd to 5th of the specialty "Pharmacy" as well as years 2nd to 3rd and respectively 4th of the Bachelor's degrees, a hybrid from of education is to be implemented - all lectures are to be held online, in an e-learning environment while all exercises/practical courses are to adopt the in-person model in compliance with all anti-epidemic requirements.
5. The classes conducted online are to use a unified e-learning platform for the whole university (*virtual classroom* in SEDO).
6. If it is possible to strictly observe the anti-epidemic measures and if deemed necessary - as related to the specifics of the discipline - as an exception, the lectures under item 4 may be held in person.
7. When conducting lectures for a large number of students, lecturers are:

• to use the *Magnum Hall* in the *Second Clinical Base* while observing the rules for physical distancing

• to divide the flows of students and hold classes in parallel in two halls, using the opportunity provided by the telelearning capabilities of the university.

1. Student groups and/or practical exercises are not to be merged as part of the learning process for 1st and 2nd year students.
2. More than two student groups are not to be present in a clinic or ward in the same time period.
3. Mornings are to remain free of pre-clinic classes as much as possible in order to facilitate the conducting of clinical exercises.
4. Internship groups should be divided into subgroups, which are to conduct their internships at different times.
5. The conducting of pre-diploma internships and training practices in accredited hospitals in the country is allowed.
6. The 1st year students of the Bachelor’s degree *Health Care Management* in part-time form of education are expected to be present in person only for the first week of their 3-week part-time classes. During the remaining two weeks, the lectures and exercises should be held according to a pre-set schedule in an electronic environment by utilizing the *virtual classroom* of SEDO.
7. For second-year students, studying *Health Care Management* in part-time form, all courses should be entirely in an electronic environment according to a pre-set schedule in an electronic environment by utilizing the *virtual classroom* of SEDO.
8. The education process for the specialty of *Public Health and Health Management* is to proceed according to the previously developed distance learning model.
9. The *physical education and sports* classes should take place in the gym only in the months when it is not possible to hold outdoor classes.
10. The resources of the university library will be available to use while applying the rules of physical distancing and only after **making an online request in advance**.
11. Individual e-learning for students to be implemented as an exception, following an established procedure: the student must provide an epicrisis by the attending physician to prove the existence of a disease and its current status while also determining the risk of in-person classes, followed by a recommendation for distance learning for a specific period of time.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

1. Following the above-listed rules for the conducting the educational process at MU-Pleven is mandatory for all students and lecturers.
2. Classes are considered realized/completed when:
   1. The model of the exercises and lectures is in-person.
   2. The lectures are held in the *virtual classroom* platform of SEDO.
3. All lecturers are to fill in a declaration, stating that they are familiar with the above-listed rules and that classes conducted in a different way from the approved will not be considered realized and taken into account.

The rules have been established in accordance with orders № РД-01-487 / 31.08.2020 and №РД-01-489 / 31.08.2020 of the Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Bulgaria and are in compliance with the Guidelines for the work process of schools in the school year 2020- 2021 in the developing Covid-19 crisis, developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.