Directive on Repetitive Testing
(Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2)
(23 February 2021)

1. Purpose of the Directive

Further to the resolution of the Executive Board of the University of 23 February 2021, UZH (hereinafter: employer) has issued this directive setting out the procedure for repetitive testing at UZH. It is intended to ensure the greatest level of employee protection during the exceptional situation that has arisen owing to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The directive is founded on the Federal Council’s decision of 27 January 2021 on covering the costs of tests for persons without symptoms, which is being implemented accordingly by the Canton of Zurich.\(^1\)

2. Validity of the Directive

This directive is valid only for the current exceptional situation and remains in effect until further notice. The employer will regularly evaluate the directive. If necessary, the directive may be extended via e-mail.

3. Repetitive Testing – Powers and Criteria

At UZH, repetitive testing may be mandated only for individual organizational units and for specific individuals within those organizational units, as described below. This ensures that repetitive testing remains within reasonable bounds. Testing is subject to a formalized process (see section 5 of this directive).

Repetitive testing may be conducted in organizational units with individuals who:

− for operational reasons usually work on site, in compliance with the statutory and official requirements issued by the federal government and the Canton of Zurich,

− and, under the existing safety concepts and in compliance with all applicable measures, work in situations in which it is not possible to maintain an appropriate distance from others and in which that other individual does not or cannot wear a mask or in which that other individual is classified in accordance with the COVID-19 Ordinance as being at high risk,

− or who work directly with the coronavirus and are therefore subject to an elevated risk of exposure.

Repetitive testing cannot be used for any other purpose.

\(^1\) See Ordinance 3 on Measures to Combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19) (COVID-19 Ordinance 3) (Tests for SARS-CoV-2 and FFP Masks) of 27 January 2021. For the implementation the cantonal HR office recommends as follows: "Employers may conduct targeted and repetitive tests, or have them conducted:
− around individuals at high risk (such as in retirement homes). The recommendations of the FOPH must be followed;
− in situations in which there is an elevated risk of transmission (such as in schools), but subject to approval and in compliance with the requirements of the cantonal Department of Health (cf. authorization for repetitive testing)..." (FAQ on COVID-19 and cantonal HR law, no. 18, of 9 February 2021 (translation from German))
4. Compliance with Safety Measures

The organizational units referred to in section 3, and the individuals who have been tested, must comply unconditionally with all safety measures. This also applies at all times during and after repetitive testing.

Knowledge of and compliance with the basic safety concept and the specific safety concept defined by the heads of the organizational unit must be reviewed and ensured by line managers at all times.

Special safety measures apply to employees who are at especially high risk in accordance with Art. 27a COVID-19 Ordinance 3.2

5. Planning, Requesting and Conducting Repetitive Testing

Planning for the scope and frequency of repetitive testing must remain within reasonable bounds.

Organizational units that wish to test their employees repeatedly, and that satisfy the criteria defined in section 3, should report their interest to the Occupational Medicine team in the Safety, Security and Environment Office (SU), designating the contact person responsible for coordinating the process within that organizational unit.

If testing is regarded as a sensible complement to the safety concept, the application for cantonal authorization will be drafted jointly by the organizational unit and SU.

As a rule, tests are conducted by the Institute of Medical Virology (IMV). Following cantonal authorization, the Occupational Medicine team at SU will put the IMV in contact with the organizational unit so that the details of testing can be discussed. These include testing frequency, the number of employees, the arrangement with the IMV of the day on which tests will be conducted, and the responsibility of the organizational unit.

To uphold data privacy regulations, the use of barcodes is recommended for repetitive testing. These can be supplied by the IMV. Encryption is handled by the responsible contact person within the organizational unit.

The fact that tests will be conducted, and the associated planning aspects, must be coordinated transparently within the organizational unit sufficiently well in advance. The time needed for a test as part of the repetitive testing program is counted as working hours.

6. Handling of Positive Test Results

The IMV passes the results of the tests to the responsible contact person at the organizational unit in question.

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In the event of a positive test, the responsible contact person must disclose the name of the coded individual to the IMV. The IMV has a statutory duty to pass the name of the individual who has tested positive to the cantonal authorities.

If tests are positive, the employees concerned will be notified by the responsible contact person, who will work alongside UZH Occupational Medicine where necessary. In the event of a positive test result, the employee concerned must leave their workplace and the UZH premises without being asked to do so by their line manager. They must go immediately into self-isolation (working from home). From then on, they must follow the instructions of their doctor.

The fact that a positive test result has been received will be recorded internally by UZH Occupational Medicine.

7. Voluntary Testing

UZH values the solidarity that employees demonstrate with their colleagues by participating in the repetitive testing program.

Participation in repetitive testing by employees meeting the criteria set out in section 3 of this directive is nonetheless voluntary. Consent may still be revoked during the process, with effect for the future.

If an employee is not prepared to participate in the repetitive testing program, they should contact their line manager at an early stage. The line manager will then examine and decide upon the allocation of other work to that employee, or the option of taking leave, i.e. by reducing overtime hours, or taking annual or unpaid leave. Cases are escalated via official channels, with the attendant consequences under personnel law.