

Policy on Infection Prevention for Students

I Introduction and scope of proposal

The Policy on Infection Prevention for Students proceeds from the framework established by the Working Conditions Act (*ARBO wet*) and the provisions based on this piece of legislation. This framework applies to employees, but also to students 'when they perform activities that are comparable to work in a professional setting' (Article 2). Wageningen University & Research has a duty of care for its students, to ensure a safe and healthy work environment, in educational and laboratory facilities but also in test environments and with regard to destinations outside the Netherlands.

In concrete terms this means that, for educational situations where students may incur infectious diseases, WUR must follow a hygienic work strategy and take all necessary safety measures possible. If necessary, it must supply students with personal protective devices, such as lab coats, safety goggles and gloves.

Infectious diseases are diseases that are caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi. They can be transferred from one person to another but also from animals to humans (zoo-noses). Other pathogenic biological agents, such as allergens, do not fall under this policy.

For most students, high-risk activities are unfamiliar, making good information highly important. It is essential that they are made aware of the dangers involved, of ways to protect themselves and of how WUR helps them in this.

Within the context of this policy, a student is a person who receives education at Wageningen University (WU) and is officially registered for:

- a regular BSc programme at the university,
- a regular MSc programme at the university,
- an accredited exchange programme (..), or
- an elective, as student at another Dutch or foreign educational institution.

WU students who take courses in the context of their individual set of examination courses at *another educational institution in the Netherlands* (including internship or graduation course) fall, in terms of infection prevention, under the regulations of that institution.

WU students and students from another educational institution who work *at Wageningen University & Research within the context of an internship or graduation course of their programme or otherwise* are considered employees within the meaning of the infection prevention policy for WUR staff members.

II Infection risk for students

Infectious diseases can spread through the air (e.g. by sneezing or coughing), indirect contact (via objects such as faucets or telephones), direct contact (via body fluids such as blood, saliva, faeces,

urine or open wounds), and vectors ('intermediate hosts') such as mosquitos (malaria) or ticks (Lyme disease).

By participating in the educational process at Wageningen University, students may incur infections. This prevention policy is intended to avoid the risk of infection as much as possible.

This involves the following situations:

- a. Regular subjects provided by Wageningen University

Providing education is a 'work-related activity' of Wageningen University (also abroad, e.g. in field practical courses), where the employer is expected to protect his or her staff and students as necessary against possible infections. Working conditions policy applies here, and Risk Identification & Evaluation (RI&E) is part of this.

An RI&E will identify whether thorough identification is required, meaning an in-depth or supplementary RI&E. An in-depth RI&E is required by definition when biological agents are involved. A further consideration is that, in terms of a standard or in-depth RI&E, students constitute a vulnerable group that requires extra attention.

The employer has assigned the responsibility for conducting the general RI&E to the management (*directeuren bedrijfsvoering*). The RI&E must be carried out by organisational unit, with the assistance of the RI&E manager. There are no standard programmes for an in-depth RI&E.

The testing and quality control of the RI&E, including the role of the local and/or central works council, derives from the working conditions catalogue 'Risk Identification & Evaluation (RI&E) at Wageningen UR'.

We recommend that in-depth RI&Es for regular subjects be conducted in line with the process described below:

- *the programme directors* are responsible for signalling current and new regular subjects that may include working with biological agents that involve the risk of infection for students;
- *the QHSE* coordinator* of the Sciences Group which the course coordinator for the course involved is assigned to carry out the in-depth RI&E and presents this for review to the key experts of Facilities & Services - Safety & Environment (FS-S&E);
- *the key experts of FS-S&E* establish whether the in-depth RI&E has been properly conducted;
- at the initiative of the QHSE coordinator, the *FS-S&E, the course coordinator and FSP staff*** together (1) determine what measures need to be taken on the basis of the approved in-depth RI&E and (2) how the students for the course involved need to be informed regarding this;
- the responsibility for ensuring a proper work approach and correct use of personal protective devices lies with the *course coordinator*. The course coordinator may delegate this responsibility to the course lecturer(s) involved. FSP specialists may confront students when they signal irregularities and report this to the course lecturer involved.

* QHSE: Quality, Health, Safety & Environment

** FSP: Facilities Support Practicum

We also recommend instructing FS-S&E to review the existing in-depth RI&E for infectious diseases (developed by order of the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment) and, if necessary, to have a user-friendly electronic module developed that supports and facilitates the process described.

b. Internship, thesis or other course abroad

Many Wageningen University students go abroad for an internship or a thesis or other course. This involves activities in the context of a WU programme that are not provided by Wageningen University itself. For these students the duty of care is different from that which applies to regular subjects of Wageningen University. After all, WUR can only take very limited measures at the location abroad. For these students the focus on the part of WUR lies on information, preparation and aftercare where necessary. WUR has no responsibility for the concrete situations in which students carry out their work.

Information & preparation, aftercare

It is important to point out to students who are planning to go abroad in the context of their study programme that they need to prepare well for their stay abroad, also with a view to possible infections. Good preparation includes taking measures to prevent infections (see III). Student advisors, programme coordinators and course supervisors need to refer students to the 'current students' web page: Ministry of Foreign Affairs ('travel advice') and Wageningen Vaccination Centre (ESA-SSC Action).

Even with good information and proper preparation by the student involved, it is impossible to exclude the possibility of incurring an infection abroad altogether. Course supervisors must advise students who go to regions that, according to a certified vaccination centre, involve specific medical risks, to have themselves medically checked upon return.

For travel to regions that involve safety risks in a broad sense, the application procedure includes a check as to whether the student is aware of possible infection risks and how to deal with these (also in a preventive sense).

<https://www.wur.nl/en/Education-Programmes/Current-Students/Travel-policy-for-students.htm>

III Student vaccination policy

The student vaccination policy proposed here is based on the *Working Conditions Decree for Toxic Substances and Biological Agents*. This decrees that an employee must always be offered vaccination by the employer against diseases that the employee may be exposed to and for which vaccination is available.

As to students, this involves vaccinations for a limited number of regular subjects and for internships and courses abroad. It may be assumed for this purpose that the student generally takes these courses only once, so no structural activities are involved, as is often the case with employees.

Vaccinations for regular subjects

a. Vaccination requirements arise from the in-depth RI&E of the course involved.

- b. In operational terms, the course coordinator has final responsibility for the regular subject. As such, he is to inform the student in good time of the need for vaccination. For information regarding the benefits and drawbacks of the vaccination the course coordinator will refer the student to a certified vaccination centre (such as *Vaccinatiecentrum Wageningen*).
- c. Students have a legal right to refuse vaccination.
- d. A student must present to the course coordinator a statement by a specialist certified by the Dutch Travel Information Centre (LCR), evidencing that the student is sufficiently protected to be able to carry out the specific activities that are part of the course (certified vaccination centres and Joint Health Services - *GGDs*)
- e. The course coordinator records which students have not submitted such a statement and refuses to allow these students to perform specific activities that involve high risk or that create risk (temporarily or at all).
- f. For mandatory courses and a limited number of electives, the course coordinator must in such cases offer the student an alternative in order to achieve the learning objectives for the course.

Vaccinations for internship, thesis or other courses abroad

Students who wish to go abroad for an internship, thesis or other course have to take good notice of the LCR advice*** for vaccinations and/ or prophylaxes in their situation. This also applies to international students whose study destination is their home country.”

It is the university’s responsibility to inform the students about the importance of the LCR-advice, it is the student’s responsibility to indeed look for the advice and to indeed follow the advice. Important actors are the thesis and internship supervisors, the study advisors and the exchange coordinators.

For internships and thesis or other courses abroad, it is generally possible to choose a destination for which no vaccination and/or prophylaxis is required. In other words, students who object to vaccination generally have an alternative.

*** Landelijk Coördinatiecentrum Reizigersinformatie (LCR), <https://www.lcr.nl/>

IV Infection prevention measures to be taken by WUR

Regular subjects at WU are given at central educational locations that extend beyond the Sciences Groups (SG). The costs involved for the preventive measures against infection are paid by Education Facilities. We believe that the labs already meet the conditions for work involving infectious agents so that no further adjustments are required to meet the infection prevention policy for students. The 2018/2019 academic year is a transition year in which to get a better overview of this.

The costs of measures to be taken by the external locations selected by the SG, such as for excursions and practical field courses, are paid by the SG that has appointed the course coordinator for the course involved.