

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE TO THE UNIVERSITY BOARD
AND FACULTY BOARDS OF LEIDEN UNIVERSITY**

**CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
REGARDING PLANS FOR IN-PERSON TEACHING AT LEIDEN UNIVERSITY**

As an urgent matter, in consideration of the need to reassure academic staff and students, and in the interest of promoting a safe and effective environment for learning we, a collectivity of concerned teaching staff at Leiden University, wish to put forward our concerns, questions, and recommendations regarding the content and roll out of arrangements for in-person teaching at the University in the coming semester. Given the urgent nature of these concerns, we request a serious response from the University on or before September 6. We look forward to working with the administration and all students and staff to ensure a successful academic year.

CONCERNS

1. For reasons pertaining to the Government's own public health information and other internationally recognized public health organizations concerning the dynamics of the pandemic at present and the acute and long-term health risks associated with the virus, many members of the staff perceive current plans for a return to in-person teaching to be unsafe.
2. Until such time as they feel safe, individual teaching staff must have the discretion to teach their classes in alternative ways (e.g., online or in some hybrid format) and must receive full social and practical support from their institution in this choice. Teaching staff should not be subject to invasive questions or be required to justify their choice for teaching online or in some hybrid mode, as doing so violates principles of privacy, places staff (especially junior staff) in an unfair position, and unjustifiably dismisses legitimate concerns.

QUESTIONS

Cognizant of the needs of the university and the interests of students, we request the university to address the following questions.

3. How will the university seek to avoid a situation in which staff are informed but not involved or consulted in the content, adjustment, and rollout of teaching arrangements?
4. What steps will be taken to ascertain the nature and extent of staff concerns regarding in-person teaching and specific proposals such as no compulsory distancing or masks in class?
5. What measures will the university take to promote safe practices that are based on available scientific evidence and benchmarking measures taken in other sectors and countries?

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Affirm that all staff have the choice to choose their preferred mode of instruction and must not be subject to questions regarding the basis of their legitimate health and safety concerns.
7. Convene an online session of the University Board on 6 September or as soon as is practicable to hear staff questions and concerns.
8. Given the Government's intent to normalize all teaching practices by mid-November, we recommend the university to reconsider masking and distance requirements in all buildings and classrooms until at least November 1, affording additional time to give all students a chance to become fully vaccinated.

(Signed in alphabetical order) Jonathan London, Ethan Mark, Ellen Raven, Florian Schneider, Elmer Veldkamp and **45 additional Members** (as of Friday, September 3, 13:00) of the 'Teaching Safely in a Pandemic @ Leiden University' Concern Group (support for this document can be registered via our Facebook page [here](#).)