



COVID-19 PANDEMIC

INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENCY PLAN OF THE UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA MARIA (UFSM)

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICE
(SAI)

Santa Maria, June 2020

PRESENTATION

In line with international efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and measures established by the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), the International Affairs Office (SAI) has established a set of temporary actions through this International Contingency Plan.

This plan is being continuously updated and has been developed with aid from the Provost Office for Undergraduate Studies (PROGRAD), Provost Office for Postgraduate Studies and Research (PRPGP), Provost Office for Personnel Management (PROGEP), Provost Office for Extension (PRE), Provost Office for Planning (PROPLAN) and Provost Office for Student Affairs (PRAE).

This set of actions aims toward the continuous monitoring of members of the UFSM academic community (students, faculty and technical-administrative staff) who are currently on international academic mobility programs. Likewise, it intends to monitor and assist students and faculty from abroad who are at UFSM on exchange programs.

In addition, UFSM has a strategic plan for the return to campus activities which is being prepared under the leadership of the UFSM COVID-19 Crisis Management Committee. Thus, SAI's activities will be constantly updated based on their guidelines.

This International Contingency Plan establishes constant communication of updated information to students and international partners regarding the status of activities during the pandemic and the measures being taken to assist and inform students, especially exchange students, whether abroad or at UFSM.

Thus, the actions are organized into two groups:

UFSM COMMUNITY ABROAD

- ✓ **UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ON INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY PROGRAMS**
- ✓ **FACULTY AND TECHNICAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF ON LEAVE ABROAD**

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AT UFSM

- ✓ **INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC MOBILITY PROGRAMS AT UFSM**
- ✓ **INTERNATIONAL FACULTY AND RESEARCHERS ON MOBILITY PROGRAMS AT UFSM**
- ✓ **INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT UFSM**

UFSM COMMUNITY ABROAD

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, UFSM students abroad on academic mobility programs have contacted SAI frequently to inquire about the current situation regarding exchange programs and participants. Thus, SAI has sought to maintain permanent contact with these students, sending information to them, as well as to partner universities and institutions, about the progress of activities at UFSM and the actions taken during this period. In March, for example, as soon as the suspension of administrative and academic activities at UFSM was announced, according to administrative order no. 97.935 of March 16, 2020, renewed by the apostille published on April 9, 2020 and administrative order n. 98.100 of May 8, 2020, all UFSM partners and students were notified. Since then, we have maintained a constant dialogue with exchange students in order to monitor their situation and provide important information to help them, such as informing them of the online psychological assistance being offered by UFSM.

UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ON INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY PROGRAMS

In partnership with the Provost Office for Undergraduate Studies (PROGRAD), the Provost Office for Postgraduate Studies and Research (PRPGP) and the undergraduate and graduate program coordination offices, SAI has sought to facilitate the process of enrollment of students who returned to Brazil right at the beginning of their exchange programs. In view of the exceptional situations and inconveniences caused by the pandemic, we have sought to provide flexibility and make exceptions so students could register for classes outside of the period originally stipulated by the academic calendar.

In addition to academic issues, SAI has been available to assist exchange students with their return to Brazil, contacting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) for consular support and repatriation, for example.

Considering the current world scenario with the COVID-19 pandemic, SAI, in agreement with Provost Office for Undergraduate Studies (PROGRAD), opted to cancel the applications for international undergraduate academic mobility programs for the second semester of 2020, in order to ensure the physical and mental integrity of the institution's students, postponing these mobility programs until the first semester of 2021. In partnership with PRPGP, SAI is at the disposal of students from UFSM who are on international mobility programs, especially the Postgraduate Exchange Program of the Asociación de Universidades Grupo Montevideo (AUGM), the CAPES PrInt Postgraduate Exchange Program and the Sandwich Doctorate Abroad

Program (PDSE), for assistance with issues related to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and guidelines, mainly from CAPES, regarding scholarships. For postgraduate mobility via the CAPES PrInt Program, the calls for proposals are being carried out under the responsibility of PRPGP, in line with CAPES' guidelines.

FACULTY AND TECHNICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF ON LEAVE ABROAD

The monitoring of the number and situation of members of this target group who are abroad is the responsibility of the Provost Office for Personnel Management (PROGEP), with the help of SAI.

The number of faculty and technical-administrative staff on leave is updated by PROGEP, at the UFSM Portal for Statistics (<https://portal.ufsm.br/ufsm-em-numeros/publico/index.html>). On the other hand, graduate students on leave for sandwich master's/ doctoral programs are monitored by PRPGP.

Issues related to this group, such as difficulties in returning to Brazil, extensions of the period of leave, unfeasibility to continue activities abroad, as well as other exceptional situations, are handled directly by the employee's sector, department or graduate program. SAI/UFSM is available to assist in consular and repatriation issues and provides support to these sectors.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AT UFSM

SAI has also provided assistance and information to the international academic community currently at UFSM on exchange programs. This includes frequent updates on the progress of academic activities which are taking place online (Special Home Exercise Regime) during the quarantine. With the aid of PROGRAD and academic program coordination offices, SAI has also provided continual support to students with difficulties accessing the platform.

INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC MOBILITY PROGRAMS AT UFSM

SAI has sent weekly updates to students with best practice guidelines for the current pandemic. In addition to enabling a direct channel of communication, this action aims to strengthen the relationship with the students and provide necessary support at this moment.

Another important issue is access to the University Restaurant by exchange students from programs such as the AUGM Postgraduate Exchange Program and the PEC-G Undergraduate Student Program whose financial aid plans included free access to meals at the restaurant. Since it is closed to avoid agglomerations, these students have received emergency aid stipends from the restaurant, with the support of PRAE and SAI, to avoid financial loss to international users during the period of their exchange program.

International students who have chosen to return to their home countries have also had the support of SAI, PROGRAD and the academic program coordination offices to maintain their enrollment and access to class contents in the distance education modality program of UFSM, Special Home Exercise Regime (in accordance with the Normative Instruction IN 002/2020 of PROGRAD), and thus have been able to finish their exchange programs.

AUGM students were offered the option of transferring their exchange program to the first semester of 2021. In the case of the Undergraduate Exchange Program (PEC-G), students were given the opportunity to put a hold on their semester in order to return to their home country. Considering that UFSM admissions for this program in the second semester of 2020 are on hold, SAI is waiting for information from the Ministry of Education to confirm information regarding admissions in 2021.

INTERNATIONAL FACULTY AND RESEARCHERS ON MOBILITY PROGRAMS AT UFSM

Each Postgraduate Department or Program at UFSM is responsible for providing information regarding the status of faculty/researchers at UFSM on mobility programs, guiding and assisting them in the event of difficulties in returning to their home country or if they have any other need during the suspension of on-campus academic activities at UFSM. In addition, SAI assists the PRPGP in matters pertaining to teachers/researchers at UFSM through the CAPES PrInt Program.

INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT UFSM

In addition to each program monitoring the situation of international students, SAI also provides support for students who have been admitted to carry out the full post-graduate program at UFSM through the Partnerships Program for Education and Training (PAEC), which is the result of cooperation between the Organization of American States (OAS), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Coimbra Group of Brazilian Universities (GCUB), with support from the Division for Educational Themes of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DCE/MRE). Currently, the students who arrived last February to start their Master's program are being continually monitored to make sure they are able to become acquainted with our institution and city.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In line with the deliberations and guidelines of the UFSM COVID-19 Crisis Management Committee and engaged in frequent dialogue with provost offices, program coordination offices, departments and the academic community as a whole, SAI is available to assist and help find solutions for problems that may arise in the academic community. Assistance during the suspension of on-campus activities is being carried out remotely:

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