

News from the UP - Unilist e-mail from 30 March 2020

Dear colleagues, dear employees, dear students,

here's a brief update following our first experiences with such unusual circumstances – see also my video message of today at www.uni-potsdam.de.

The so-called emergency on-site operations – a previously undefined term – have successfully been implemented at UP. The presence on site has been massively reduced and the majority of the work is done from home. On-site presence is only permitted if urgent tasks in research, teaching, transfer or administration require it AND – very importantly – if this does not increase the risk of infection and in particular if the recommended distance between people of at least 2 meters is observed. We have deliberately put the precise arrangements for the emergency on-site operations into the hands of the different departments and faculties and leave it to them to judge what "urgent" means. It is therefore all the more important that this flexibility is not abused and that work being done on site follows hygiene and safety regulations. I thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

- 1) Dear students, the outstanding oral on-site examinations for the winter semester 2019/20 will be substituted wherever feasible by alternative examination formats so that many of you can all still complete your winter semester properly. Oral examinations can only take place by mutual agreement of all parties involved. Unfortunately, written examinations cannot take place for the time being. The teaching staff is encouraged, however, to offer alternative dates as soon as possible. Details will be communicated and updated promptly by our Vice President for Teaching and Studies and by the Deans of Studies via the established information websites.
- 2) We proceed on the assumption that we will be able to provide well over half of our courses planned for the summer semester 2020 in a digital format. We are encouraged by the positive examples from the universities of applied sciences, where the summer semester has already begun. The state government and the higher education institutions agree that although the summer semester will have to be creatively redesigned to take account of the severely limited possibilities for contact, it will by no means be cancelled or go down in history as a "non-semester".
- 3) That said, everything currently indicates that generous exceptions will be made with regard to time limits – e.g. in the case of BAFÖG funding or fixed-term qualification positions. Many of these exemptions are contained in federal legislation, so I would ask for a little more patience with regard to the specifics.
- 4) We are in the process of obtaining a campus license for the software Zoom in order to conduct online teaching and virtual meetings. Of course, the necessary participatory processes for decision making will also be taken into account. In addition, we have massively expanded the storage capacity of our media server to be able to store recordings of virtual lectures and seminars on a large scale. UB and ZIM have also reorganized their respective services in order to offer literature and technical support online.

Dear university members, nobody could have ever imagined such a situation until recently. We are all rethinking many things that used to be taken for granted. I have included some of my personal impressions in a recent interview (<https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/nachrichten/detail/2020-03-27->

[auf-die-ungewohnten-umstaende-besonnen-reagieren-uni-praesident-prof-oliver-guent](#)). However, the experiences of the last few days also make me optimistic that reason and solidarity will prevail over polemics and ignorance. Let us stand together and put this nightmare behind us. I wish you and your families the very best!

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Günther