



Current information on teaching and studies – Unilist e-mail from Prof. Andreas Musil – 14 September 2020

Ladies and gentlemen, dear students and colleagues,

I am very pleased that we have been able to take major steps in recent weeks towards easing the measures implemented at the beginning of the pandemic. Together, please let us do everything we can to ensure that we can continue along this path!

My goal for the winter semester is to be able to offer as much **face-to-face teaching** as possible at the University of Potsdam. It is impossible to foresee what the situation will be like from November 2; nevertheless, like many other universities, we have decided to take this approach in order to uphold the spirit of university teaching: the direct discourse with each other. I was therefore pleased to hear from the faculties that – assuming an advantageous development in the number of infections – a quarter of the courses, on average, are scheduled to take place on-site. This requires a lot of discipline from all of us. Adherence to the distance and hygiene regulations is a necessary prerequisite for a successful outcome.

Of course, a large part of **teaching will once again have to take place in digital formats**. I have the impression that we are now even better positioned for this than we were in the summer semester: both the technical equipment and the support services have been significantly improved. All of us have also become more experienced by now. Nevertheless, I know – and the [PotsBlitz and Feedback.UP](#) surveys have also confirmed this –, that teaching without face-to-face interaction remains a great challenge for everyone, students and teachers alike. From the results of the surveys mentioned above, we should also conclude that concepts allowing for a direct exchange between students and teachers, even if it is still based on digital media, ought to be used. This challenge should be important to us, not only, but especially in light of the large number of new students we will be welcoming in the winter semester. Many of them come to us after a final year of school that ended abruptly. We have to welcome them at the University of Potsdam in such a way that they can experience the very good atmosphere that characterizes our university, even in another semester marked by the pandemic.

I would therefore like to thank you in advance for the time you are investing in the preparations and subsequently in the implementation. You deserve the utmost appreciation. I have heard of many initiatives that have been launched since March. They are all dedicated to specific problems affecting the departments and contribute to solutions. They range from the self-made construction of dispensers for disinfectants to the repurposing of Schreib.UP in order to generate attendance lists that protect the participants' data in the event of an infection, to the various forms of digital offerings for teaching, support, introductory events and presentations. Just a quick glance at [Media.UP](#) provides a very good overview of the many activities.

The library is open at all locations from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can find the latest news at: <https://www.ub.uni-potsdam.de/en/user-service/current-library-services>. We have also developed a registration system so that members of the UP can make optimal use of the approved seating

capacities.

Available seminar rooms can also be booked by students to work in small learning groups via the [room allocation system](#). Of course, the hygiene concept must be adhered to, which means, among other things, that the maximum group size must be observed and chains of infection must be traceable. Please support the university management's intention of providing you with this opportunity by adhering to the guidelines! You will find them and a list of important links on the website of the [BSO](#) division (Construction, Occupational Safety, Organization) under the heading "Lecture halls".

Policymakers have also played their part in the success of digital teaching. With the #DigitaleLehreBB immediate action program, for example, they have allowed the UP to implement measures worth approximately €1.5 million. This enabled us to invest in online literature and technology on the one hand, but also to hire students to support digital teaching on the other hand. In addition, a small amendment to the BbgHG (Brandenburg Higher Education Act) is in preparation, which will allow for the adoption of appropriate regulations by means of legal ordinances in case of an emergency. Specifically, this means that the individual standard period of study could be extended by one semester for the 2020 summer semester. Irrespective of this, the individual confirmation documents of your periods of study already state that there were corona-related disruptions in teaching and examinations in the 2020 summer semester. We hope that this will provide you, dear students, with the necessary documentation for the future.

The ordinance SARS-CoV-2-UmgV, in force since September 5, is valid until October 11. Subsequently, there would be three weeks left to react to any further challenges that are not yet foreseeable. Therefore, as early as July, we decided to prioritize planning for the winter semester based on what we already knew. Since then, two new developments have taken place, about which I would like to inform you:

1. University sports courses may be held in line with the practice in schools (Section 9 (5) SARS-CoV-2-UmgV).
2. Meetings in the context of education offers as well as vocational training and continuing education, provided that they take place "in fixed groups", are exempt from the distance regulations. In such cases, masks must be worn permanently – with instructors being exempted from this rule (Section 2 (1) no. 7 in conjunction with subsection 3 no. 6 SARS-CoV-2-UmgV). However, we will only respond to this to a limited extent, as there are usually no coherent groups at the UP to which this condition applies.

Finally, I would like to raise awareness of the fact that you, dear students, will have to inform us **in case of a positive COVID-19 test result**. Please send a short message to dez2@uni-potsdam.de, stating which courses, exams or areas of the UP you have been to since the infection. This will help to prevent chains of infection from breaking out in the first place. We will then be able to react immediately and provide the health authorities with the necessary information in a timely manner.

Up-to-date information on the handling of the pandemic in teaching and studies can still be found on the [FAQ page](#).

I remain optimistic that we will increasingly approach a new normal at the UP, which will certainly limit us considerably compared to the past, but which nevertheless, as the mission statement on teaching states, enables "students to carry out research and scientific work and to deal critically with scientific information". To do that, we need face-to-face teaching!

Kind regards,
Prof. Dr. Andreas Musil
Vice President for Teaching and Studies