

The instructional period is starting now – Uni-list-e-mail from Prof. Andreas Musil, 30 October 2020

Dear Sir or Madam, dear students, dear colleagues,

as reported by the press, many areas of public life will be shut down for the month of November. This is explicitly not the case for daycare centers and schools, and institutions of higher education throughout Germany are also not included in the “lockdown light”. The state government has followed this philosophy with the [Containment Ordinance](#) published today. The Ministry for Science, Research and Culture has also pointed out in its current [press release](#) that “teaching operations can be carried out independently taking the provisions of the new Containment Ordinance and the local conditions into account”. Libraries and dining halls will also remain open for now. For the University of Potsdam, this will have two implications:

1. Of course, we will do our share to contribute to the reduction of contacts to a minimum. But this also includes a process in which we have to weigh our options, ranging from a sweeping ban on face-to-face teaching on site to opportunities for opening up in areas where hygiene and distance regulations can be observed without problems. The terms *freedom* and *responsibility* played a major role in the Bundestag on Thursday. And it is in this matrix that we are also operating at the University of Potsdam, especially in the current situation. We have a responsibility, on the one hand, for the health of each and every one of us, but also for the continuation of academic life. Together, let us therefore make responsible use of the freedoms that enable us to work, develop and think in a university context! Wherever possible in terms of content and didactics, digital offers should and must be provided. But where physical presence is necessary, it should also be made possible.

2. For the reasons mentioned above, despite the call to minimize contacts, we will also stick with our plans for face-to-face teaching. I would like to once again draw your attention to the [Handout](#) and the [Hygiene and Safety Regulations](#). It is only through the consistent implementation of security measures by all of us that the planned face-to-face teaching can be guaranteed.

We are aware that this position is viewed ambivalently by you, the teaching staff and students. We receive feedback that vehemently criticizes the continuation of face-to-face teaching on site. At the same time, however, we also receive comments that welcome this decision with joy and dedication and indicate that face-to-face teaching will be carried out with due diligence. Students in their first semester, in particular, appreciate the opportunity to get to know fellow students and teaching staff in person. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully consider each individual case to see which is the most suitable format for the teaching/learning context, taking into account the respective framework conditions.

We wish you all a smooth start of the instructional period on Monday - no matter if your courses are digital or taking place on site. The current situation is still marked by a constant process of reassessment, which requires all of us to react according to the situation; however, we can also act. In this spirit, let us approach and master the current challenges together and carry on the dialog!

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