

## **Winter semester 2021/22: On-site teaching will be the norm – Uni-list-e-mail from Prof. Andreas Musil, 11 June 2021**

Dear Sir or Madam, dear students, dear colleagues,

“Together – coordinated – responsibly. On-site attendance, wherever possible”: That is the motto of the University of Potsdam for the winter semester 2021/22. The recent development of the pandemic over the last few weeks inspires confidence in us. The waning number of infections reinforces our optimism with regard to the second half of the summer semester, but also to the period that follows. We can finally proceed on the assumption that our campuses will be full of life again soon!

We are already receiving a large number of applications to switch courses to on-site attendance formats. One of the most important factors for the approval, besides adherence to the hygiene concept, is that you, dear students, can implement this switch. We are very pleased to see that this is possible in most cases or can be compensated by additional online offers. We should therefore assume that on-site teaching will be the norm again in the winter semester! All lecture halls and seminar rooms will then serve their actual purpose again: lively and scientific exchange.

How we approach this goal will be outlined below:

### **1) On-site teaching will be the norm**

The current regulations allow for 200 people to be present in a room as long as DHM+A (distance, hygiene, masks and airing) rules are observed. We anticipate that, as the number of vaccinated people increases while incidence levels decrease, distance rules in higher education will also be adjusted so that rooms could once again be used at half capacity (checkerboard plan). In light of this, plans can be made with on-site attendance formats as the norm for courses with up to 200 participants. Larger courses will most likely still need to be offered in digital formats for the winter semester.

### **2) Digital teaching will complement this**

Digital teaching should continue to play an important role in the university's curriculum. We have learned a lot over the last three semesters and have acquired new competences in digital teaching. The effort we made here cannot be credited highly enough and must not be allowed to fizzle out under any circumstances. Our appreciation for this and our gratitude to all those involved, dear colleagues, dear students, is particularly high, as we know that this was only possible with you taking on many additional tasks, also in your private life.

However, digital teaching should no longer be the norm. We would ask teaching staff members who wish to continue digital teaching to please consult with your deans of studies. Together, you will decide whether a continuation will be possible. We want to ensure that courses for first-, second- and third-semester students are offered as on-site courses (exception: large lectures) on a regular basis. Digital teaching must only be an exception in this situation and will need to be substantiated (e.g. didactic or room capacity reasons). On-site teaching should also become the norm again for higher semesters. In this case, however, capacities will be limited even if the checkerboard rule is applied.

Against this backdrop, we will still see a mix of teaching formats at the University of Potsdam in practice. The diverse scenarios that have been established with regard to blended learning are to be continued alongside on-site teaching formats. In this context, I would like to remind you of [the regulations on the crediting of e-learning components in courses towards teaching obligations](#), which we have not yet been able to use due to COVID-19. For the winter semester, large lectures will probably still need to be offered digitally due to space constraints, but they are to be accompanied by on-site seminars or tutorials once again. In addition, e-learning components may also be used to supplement other courses.

### 3) Organization

1. Problems arise when on-site and synchronous online teaching formats immediately follow one another. In that case, students do not have sufficient access to spaces where they can follow digital teaching. Therefore, purely synchronous online formats should be avoided whenever possible. Synchronous formats should only be offered if there is also a possibility to catch up asynchronously. If appropriate materials are made available after the course or if missed synchronous content can be compensated for in another form, digital formats can also be carried out synchronously.
2. There will continue to be groups of people who are not vaccinated. An asynchronous offer is also important for these individuals. However, we are aware that it might not be possible to regularly offer asynchronous content when the amount of on-site courses increases.
3. It is not yet possible to predict whether evidence of vaccination, convalescence, or a negative test result will still be required at the start of the instructional period. We are taking models under consideration though, that would allow us to verify this status without having to repeat the process at the beginning of every course. One possible solution to prevent conflicts between teaching staff and students would be to create several points of contact on campus that would be charged with the issuing of wristbands that would allow students to attend their courses throughout the whole day. Of course, wearing these wristbands would not be mandatory for anyone. We also do not at all intend to limit general access to the university's premises. At this time, we do not know what to expect with regard to the legally binding nature of contact tracing in the fall. We want to be prepared though and are therefore looking at digital tools that could be used for that purpose.
4. The University of Potsdam will make all reasonable efforts to provide testing and vaccination opportunities for its members. However, please note that vaccination capacity in particular will be severely limited in terms of logistics and legal requirements, so we ask that you also take advantage of other means of testing and vaccination.

We cannot yet predict what exactly will be possible as of October. However, we will continue to provide you with regular updates on the developments regarding university operations.

Sincerely,

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