

Message from the President and the Vice President for Teaching and Studies on the Pandemic Situation – Uni-list-mail, 19 November 2021

Dear colleagues,
dear students,

The pandemic-related developments of the last few days also affect institutions of higher education, of course. As far as academic teaching at the UP is concerned, we have decided, after thorough deliberation, to continue with **face-to-face teaching** as far as possible. However, for the time being, teaching staff will have the option of switching to digital teaching formats until the end of the year, **provided that the majority of all participating students agree to this and that it is ensured that this will not result in delays in the further course of studies**. We would like to outline our motives and actions below:

“The political discussion (...) is dominated by concerns about Christmas markets and soccer stadiums. The university members consider this to be inappropriate in view of the great importance of the education and research operations which they are in charge of,” said the President of the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK), Peter-André Alt. We believe that the primacy of face-to-face teaching should be maintained for as long as possible after three difficult pandemic semesters. We are not alone in this view; it is held by the majority of higher education institutions across the nation. In this context, it is important to us that we also continue to fulfill our duty of care for employees and students. Furthermore, we take the criticism we have received seriously and would therefore like to implement various measures in an even more stringent manner:

A) **3G status checks:** It is true that we assume that a university system characterized by the spirit of freedom must also function without tighter controls; all the more so in a pandemic situation that everyone wants put behind them as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, we will increase the frequency of random spot checks. Teaching staff members are also entitled to carry out 3G status checks, and we would be pleased if this right were exercised more often, knowing full well that it is not easy, especially in the case of courses with a large number of participants. If proof of vaccination, recovery, or testing is not provided, the individual in question must leave the room on the basis of [Section 4 \(1\) of the House Rules](#). ***Dear faculty, please ask to see the relevant certificates at the beginning of each course, if at all possible!***

B) **Mask mandates:** Once again, we would like to strongly recommend that masks be worn for the duration of the course, even though this is only required by law for courses in which the minimum distance cannot be maintained. ***Be considerate of others and put on an FFP2 mask as soon as you are in a room with other people!***

C) **Vaccination:** The key difference compared to the last three semesters is the availability of highly effective vaccines. Fortunately, the majority of individuals at universities nationwide have been vaccinated. This is how you protect yourself and others. Those who do not get vaccinated –

with the exception of certified health contraindications, of course – rely on a community of solidarity borne by others. This is becoming more and more difficult to tolerate. The only way that social life in general and university life in particular will be possible again is through even higher vaccination rates than we have today. Hence our appeal to you: ***Please get vaccinated! Promote vaccination in your social and professional environment! Get a booster as soon as such an offer becomes available!***

D) **Free testing options:** Golm campus already has a testing site. Testing sites will also be set up at the other two locations on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays beginning next week. You will receive more detailed information on this shortly.

E) **Contact tracing:** If persons who tested positive for the coronavirus were present in classrooms, questions arise as to who should, can, and may deal with the knowledge about this and how. Detailed information on this topic is available on the website [Together against Corona](#). Quarantine orders may be issued only by health authorities; for vaccinated and recovered individuals, quarantine orders will *not* be issued. However, potential contacts should be encouraged to get tested immediately. ***In such cases, we therefore ask that you inform the participants of the respective course. We also recommend that you use the Corona-Warn-App.***

F) **QRoniton:** QRoniton will only be used to pass on information to health authorities. It is important that every member of the university participates as far as possible. Anyone can see how many people have logged in to a room or course via QRoniton. ***If there seem to be discrepancies with the number of people actually present, please bring this to the attention of the participants and ask your (fellow) students to log in.***

G) **Hybrid teaching:** We receive a lot of feedback asking us to offer courses *in both* face-to-face and online formats. We would gladly comply with this, as it would also make it possible to implement a **2G model** at the University of Potsdam (which we would both very much welcome). However, this can currently not be implemented across the board for infrastructure, personnel, and also didactic reasons. We are pleased to see the many courses in which this is nevertheless succeeding where, for example, materials from previous semesters are being used to supplement classroom teaching with online offers.

We urge you to heed our appeals to ensure that the University of Potsdam can continue to offer safe face-to-face teaching! Attending classes at university is not the same as potential superspreader events. It is our mission to impart knowledge and foster competencies. For this purpose, faculty and students must also exchange information with each other in person and cannot just communicate through various media.

Sincerely,

Prof. Oliver Günther, Ph.D.
President

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