

Moving forward without masks – Uni-list-Mail from Prof. Andreas Musil, 11 April 2022

Ladies and gentlemen, dear students, dear colleagues,

I would like to take a moment at the start of the new year to wish you all the best for 2023, in your studies and career as well as in your private life. We can be happy that we have largely left behind the time of the Corona pandemic. I thank you for supporting and, above all, helping to shape our decisions in the area of teaching and studies. We have all learned a lot, like it or not, and are well on our way at the University of Potsdam to productively linking these new experiences with what we were accustomed to up until March 2020.

In the past year, I was therefore pleased to see how you, as teachers at our university, maintained face-to-face teaching as far as possible in difficult and uncertain times, while at the same time increasingly expanding and professionalizing the provision of digital teaching. I would like to thank you very much for this and would like to remain in exchange with you, as it were, for the constant further development of teaching, including the use of digital elements, while at the same time taking into account the guiding principles of teaching. In order to support you in this challenge, we have developed a handout entitled "[Cornerstones of Digital Teaching](#)" that provides guidance on the use of digital media.

Even though there are signs of an increasing relaxation in dealing with the Corona virus, we still ask you to be considerate. Based on the [SARS-CoV-2-Infection Protection Ordinance - SARS-CoV-2-IfSV](#), the **obligation to wear a mask** in public transport will be lifted as of February 2, 2023. In response, the university management has decided to end the obligation to wear a mask in the buildings of the University of Potsdam as of February 2, 2023.

As we begin to put the pandemic crisis behind us, we are already facing the next one. Due to the **energy crisis** and increased energy costs, the University of Potsdam is facing new challenges. But again, we are committed to keeping our university buildings open. I want you, dear students, to continue to come to our campuses and experience that university life is much more than just looking at a computer screen. University teaching is a space for meeting and sharing. We want you to have a place where you can learn and spend time together with your fellow students, where you can meet by chance and build friendships. Nevertheless, the University of Potsdam is aware of the tight energy situation and has developed an [emergency plan](#) in response. Currently, there is no gas shortage and, thanks in part to special allocations from the state, we expect our university buildings to remain open.

One topic that will occupy, if not shape, teaching is the **use of artificial intelligence** in higher education. The examination system, for example, will have to find answers to constantly advancing and, to a large extent, freely accessible AI tools. The activities of all Brandenburg universities in researching and implementing artificial intelligence were recently compiled in a [Brandenburg AI Atlas](#), including diverse contributions from the University of Potsdam.

In addition, I am pleased that the "practical module on **democratic commitment**" specifically

encourages students to get involved socially as part of their studies, including in our university's student councils and committees. Dear student representatives, this has demonstrated the extent to which our cooperation for the benefit of the education of all students produces constructive and innovative results. At the same time, the module's content follows an important suggestion of the Science Council from its "[Recommendations for a sustainable design of studies and teaching](#)" to develop new concepts for the involvement of students within and outside of university decision-making bodies. This will also give us valuable input and inspiration for further development this year and we want to devote ourselves to this specifically.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to three current **calls for proposals** that provide space for innovation and incentives for continuing to develop teaching and studies:

- Up to January 31, 2023, you can still apply to the university's internal call for proposals, "[Innovative Teaching Projects](#)," with project ideas that contribute to the implementation of the teaching mission statement.
- Also until January 31, 2023, you can submit expressions of interest to the Innovation in Higher Education Foundation's "[Free Space 2023](#)" call for proposals at zfq@uni-potsdam.de.
- As part of the [Data Literacy Education Program](#), the Stifterverband supports universities in establishing appropriate learning opportunities across disciplines and thus imparting basic data skills to as many students as possible. Applications will be accepted until March 15, 2023.

Despite the many positive developments mentioned above, I do not want to pass over the events in Ukraine. We can only help to a limited extent at the University of Potsdam, but I thank you for all of the initiatives working in this direction and for your understanding for energy-saving measures. I began this letter with good wishes for 2023, and I would like to end it by expressing my hope for peace for the people in Ukraine.

Sincerely,

Dr. Britta van Kempen
Vice President for Teaching and Studies