

Berlin universities commit to summer semester 2020

Digitalized teaching, learning and examination formats being developed at speed/Berlin universities call for united action.

The members of the Rectors' and Presidents' Conference in Berlin wish to thank senator for education, Michael Müller, and state secretary for higher education and research, Steffen Krach, for their prompt and considered response in protecting the interests and health of people in Berlin. Their decision to provide Berlin universities with additional financial support to ensure a speedy development and implementation of digitalized teaching, learning and examination formats also provides an important future signal for Germany's largest higher education region.

The Berlin universities will do everything in their power to develop contactless formats for their more than 150,000 students and to implement these, where possible, starting 20 April 2020. We are greatly impressed by the level of creativity displayed by our universities. The commitment shown by our teaching staff and researchers in developing as many new formats and courses as possible is an inspiration and motivation for us all.

The universities are developing new formats to complement existing options and will make proven formats available to provide broad access for a great many students. This includes efforts to allow courses requiring presence, such as labs and field trips, to take place under different conditions or to be replaced by other options. One such option would be to arrange for these to take place at a later date as block courses.

It is clear that all members of the universities (and therefore the institutions and their degree programs) are operating at their limits and will need to develop new solutions, not only for teaching and research but also, to some extent, for administrative processes as well. The transition to digital options represents a particularly great challenge for those universities teaching arts subjects, where completely new methods of teaching will have to be developed to replace in-person formats. We see this, however, as a chance to experiment rather than an invitation to cancel all teaching. As such, this summer semester represents a great challenge and something extraordinary for us all.

The Berlin universities call upon their members to show solidarity, not only with each other but also with all locations and persons in the city in particular need of support. We would like to thank all of you who are undertaking particular responsibilities and assure you that your efforts are not going unnoticed.

It is the duty and desire of the Berlin universities to show awareness of hardship, to make compensating provisions for those with particularly challenging life situations as well as to enable as broad a participation as possible. We are fully aware that the various different technical options available are essential in achieving this for students, teachers and university staff.

We regard a complete cancellation of the semester at this point in time as counterproductive. The message we wish to send is a very different one: Enablement and a new digital approach!

Professor Dr. Christian Thomsen, chair of the Berlin LKRP and president of TU Berlin, on behalf of his colleagues at the Berlin universities.

- <https://www.lkrp-berlin.de/>

For further information, contact:

Stefanie Terp

Spokesperson of TU Berlin

Tel.: 0172 314 6639

Email: [steffi.terp\(at\)tu-berlin.de](mailto:steffi.terp(at)tu-berlin.de)

Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht (HWR) Berlin

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