

## **Hybrid Semester Concept\***

### **Studying in Hessen starting in the winter 2020/2021 semester**

#### **In-person teaching using sound judgment**

Employees and students at universities, vocational academies and music academies in Hessen mastered the transition from in-person to online teaching made necessary by the pandemic in the summer 2020 semester with great commitment.

Universities are places of encounter and common learning. For this reason, there will be an increased presence operation at the universities in Hessen for the winter 2020/2021 semester. This should – as far as is justifiable and organisationally feasible with regard to hygiene aspects – be lived through in-person courses. One of the special features of the universities is that a large number of people participate in many very different courses and events, with the composition changing at short notice. This differentiates universities from schools. This feature makes special protective measures necessary, preventing a complete return to normal operations. The winter 2020/2021 semester will therefore be a hybrid semester.

Beginning in the winter 2020/2021 semester, university operations should take place in presence formats to the extent that infection situations and spatial opportunities allow, otherwise based on digital teaching and courses. Presence teaching is thus a complementary option to digital teaching.

To make it possible for students to achieve their qualification objectives completely, universities will give priority to the following student groups / study formats in particular when carrying out in-person events.

- New students
- Students in the final phase
- Students with a high need for in-person events, e.g., in laboratory operations, project work, or events with a high proportion of sports-training or artistic-musical components.
- Events which are particularly difficult with direct discourse, such as tutorials and seminars.

The universities developed and offered digital teaching formats in the summer 2020 semester of high quality, which can also be employed in the winter semester.

#### **University concepts**

The universities have developed concepts to ensure courses and teaching operations in the winter semester. These differ according to profile, type of university, location of the university and spatial circumstances.

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The organisation of the in-person component of the courses and examinations will be carried out taking the number of people in the course into consideration in coordination with size of the available rooms and teaching capacities.

The basis for carrying out in-person events is compliance with the general regulations of infection protection as well as the hygiene concepts developed by the universities, which are to be continually developed on the basis of the infection situation. The responsibility for implementation lies with the universities. Based on their general competences in higher education law and within the scope of their existing responsibilities, the universities can take further measures to protect against infection. In particular, measures may be represented in the hygiene concept that serve to align the requirements of infection protection to the specific circumstances of the individual case and the local conditions

The pandemic situation may lead to regional restrictions that are currently not foreseeable. Universities can therefore immediately convert courses to digital formats or create follow-up or transitional arrangements if the local infection situation does not permit in-person courses.

### **On-site information**

The organization and design of university teaching is the responsibility of the universities within the framework of the applicable legal regulations. The universities will provide comprehensive information locally. Individual questions regarding the concrete planning of teaching and study operations and hygiene measures will be answered by the respective university.

### **Examinations**

In-person examinations remain indispensable. In order to carry out in-person examinations under the current pandemic conditions, space capacities are required that are not always available at universities. It may therefore be necessary for individual universities to rent larger halls or event rooms outside the universities. The state will create a more extensive legal basis for online examinations.

### **Libraries**

In the summer 2020 semester, the licensing of additional e-journals, e-books or databases for the area of libraries and media was in many cases carried out at short notice. This will also be available in WS 2020/21; remote access is usually possible for students.

### **Compensating for unusual components of the curricula, especially internships**

The universities will keep the loss of practical content of the studies as low as possible and offer alternative forms of implementation or compensate for it by other work with practical parts. The persons responsible for the courses will decide in coordination with the four deans of studies on the basis of the basic regulations of the respective university how to

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organize their courses in the hybrid semester. In some cases, the number of courses offered for internships will be increased so that smaller groups can be formed. It may also be possible to make up for an internship at a later date or to convey the practical content through online formats. If an internship does not take place in the intended form, the examination boards may allow equivalence performances through which the competence and qualification goal is achieved.

With regard to school internships for students studying to become teachers, the universities in Hessen have agreed on a catalogue of replacement services. These have been incorporated into an alternative concept that serves as an equivalent service to the classroom internship. An amendment to the Hessian Teacher Training Act allows the waiving of the requirement to present proof of the school internship when registering for the First State Examination if it was not possible to complete the practical school studies or the practical semester during the period stipulated by the respective study regulations because of limited teaching operations caused by the corona virus pandemic.

### **Canteens**

With a stronger presence of students at the universities as part of the hybrid semester 2020/2021, the Hessian student unions will also reopen their canteens and offer meals that can be eaten on site and, if necessary, takeaway meals as well.

### **Scientific events**

For scientific events (congresses, conferences) the regulations for cultural events (§ 1 para. 2b of the Corona Contact and Operating Restrictions Ordinance) apply accordingly. Official events (especially committee meetings, commissions, assessments) are governed by § 1 para. 2 no. 1 of the Corona Contact and Operating Restrictions Ordinance.

### **Hessen - active for international guests and exchange students**

Hessen's worldwide attractiveness as a place to study and the high number of international students is important to the state. International applicants in particular are uncertain whether they will be able to leave their home country or enter Germany in the winter 2020/2021 semester. In addition, studying from at home in another country and under crisis-related circumstances is especially difficult to carry out. It is therefore important to communicate reliably whether and to what extent it will be possible to take advantage of digital courses. This also includes the statement that practice formats or examinations can be made up in a later semester, which examinations can be taken online or whether it is necessary to travel from abroad to take examinations or mandatory attendance courses. The state of Hessen will make every effort vis-à-vis the federal government to reduce existing hurdles for foreign students, for example with regard to the granting of visas required for entry and the obligation to have health insurance.

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Implementing the hybrid semester will require some legal changes, which are to be incorporated into the Corona Contact and Operating Restrictions Ordinance.

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