



Students in special life situations in times of corona Guidelines for (online) teaching 2.0 WS 2020/21

The extraordinary teaching situation in times of corona will continue to pose great challenges for all concerned - students and teaching staff alike.

The university - in other words, all of us - has a duty and has committed itself to making it possible for all students, including those whose situation represents a particular hardship, to attend courses and take examinations:

- students with disabilities and chronic illnesses
- students with children and/or dependent relatives
- international students
- socially, financially and educationally disadvantaged students

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you very much for your engagement with many problems of the student groups addressed here and for finding many individual solutions!

Thanks to the experience already gained in the summer semester, there is a lot we can build on. Both the strengths and the problems of teaching in times of corona have become apparent, and that is particularly true for students in special life situations. We would like to ask you as members of the teaching staff to continue to keep these student groups in mind. And in this paper we would like to give you some important information.

What problems may students in special life situations have to face when taking online courses and examinations during the corona period?

Online teaching is basically a very valuable format for students in special life situations, particularly if they can attend courses independently at different times and the courses, therefore, have a greater reach. As many have already experienced, however, even this format poses great challenges and a (new) hurdle for the target groups mentioned, and can even jeopardize the successful completion of studies and examinations. Potential problems arise especially from technical and organizational conditions as well as from the format and time frame in which content is presented.

Problems are expected in particular with:

1. Synchronous online lectures and seminars:

Especially students who have care responsibilities for children and/or dependent relatives, students with medical and therapeutic obligations, students with hearing, visual and speech impairments, international students who have to stay in their home country and are in a different time

zone, as well as students, who might not have stable internet at home or have to share computers and office with other family members, may experience problems with synchronous lectures. A solution could be, for example: Always make lectures available asynchronously as well, i.e. as a recording. For seminars that cannot be additionally made available online, student groups could prepare a transcript for all participants. Students who are unable to attend courses synchronously on a regular basis - for example, because they belong to a risk group - could be required to complete alternative assignments.

Please refrain from compact seminars of longer duration with compulsory attendance, as continuous participation is a considerable obstacle, especially for students with care responsibilities, for students with certain disabilities, and for international students who are in a different time zone in their home country.

2. Audio and video recording of lectures

This affects students with hearing and visual impairments in particular, and often also students with Asperger autism. Clear pronunciation and visibility of the speaker is important for hearing-impaired students. Please also make sure that the sound and image qualities are very good and that there is no background noise (important for hearing-impaired and visually impaired students, as well as for international students whose language skills are still deficient). Therefore, please use recordings by the TIK (Technical Information and Communication Services of the University of Stuttgart) if possible.

In addition to recorded lectures, please also provide a written elaboration ((trans)cripts, lecture notes, blackboard presentations or similar) of your course / lectures. This is absolutely essential not only for the hearing-impaired students, but also for many other students who, for various reasons, cannot listen and take notes at the same time: Visually impaired and blind students, mobility impaired students (especially with regard to taking notes), students with other impairments where slowing down occurs (e.g. due to medication, ADHD, mental impairment), students with children and/or dependent relatives, and international students.

3. Presentations and scripts with barriers

This, too, affects students with visual impairment in particular, but often also students with hearing impairment. When PPT slides are uploaded as a pdf, sometimes diagrams and animations that are visible in PPT are missing in the pdf. These should be explained.

The documents (PPT slides, scripts in Word or pdfs generated from them) should be designed to be as accessible as possible. When creating the documents, particular attention should be paid to these principles:

- Follow a clear and well-organized document structure, so that even someone zooming in on the screen can keep track.
- In Word documents, use document templates and mark chapter headings so that they can be read by a speech output program.
- Create alternative texts for images and objects used.
- Use simple and clear table structures and specify column headers in tables.
- Check if the links and cross-references are working and make sure they are clearly labeled.

- Insert subtitles for audio elements.
Make sure that the contrast is good: White background and black font is optimal. Light/middle blue with a white or black font should be avoided, as well as combinations of red and green, red and orange, blue and green, etc.
Please note the new templates of Hochschulkommunikation (HKOM), where you find barrier free templates: [Download Templates](#)

Please note, that the TIK presents guidelines for creation of barrier free documents:

[Anleitung zur Barrierefreiheit Dokumente](#) (Allgemein) (in german only)

[Anleitung Barrierefreiheit von PDF-Dokumenten](#) (PDFs) (in german only)

4. Examinations

Regarding the above-mentioned student groups, please make generous use of the corona statutes on the exam regulations: [Corona-Satzung zur Prüfungsordnung \(in german only\)](#), especially with regard to the change of examination type and compensation of disadvantages (see in particular §3 subsec. 2 and §5 subsec. 1). The extension of the currently valid corona statutes is planned.

Alternative examination options should urgently be considered for international students who cannot be present due to entry restrictions.

For students with health impairments, changing the type and duration of an examination is also covered in the exam regulations of each study program, see § x, subsec. "Module examinations, study and examination credits".

Please be flexible when students who belong to a risk group concerning covid19 request to take their exam in a separate room. If you have problems with space and personnel, please contact your respective discipline's Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, program manager, or departmental student advisor. Often good solutions can be found together and at short notice.

Additionally, we ask you to take the following measures:

- ➔ Opportunities for feedback on your courses and materials are important. This need not necessarily be in real time. Please tell the students, how they can contact you.
- ➔ Please leave the uploaded content (recorded lectures and the scripts/notes mentioned) online at least until the examination and re-examination.
- ➔ Please continue to put content online in post-corona times, especially recordings of lectures and transcripts of your courses. This is going to help all students in different life situations, who can now study well by means of these teaching formats.
- ➔ Please tell students about the university institutions who can help in certain instances.

Due to this still new situation, we have certainly not considered all cases and circumstances. We therefore ask you to **handle questions and requests from students of the aforementioned**

groups with sensitivity. We have informed the students accordingly on the websites for students with disabilities, on the Uni & Family website, and on the website of the International Office, advising them to come to you with their questions and concerns should they have problems with the online formats.

We thank you very much for your support!

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