

Dear university members,

Today we experience a semester opening very differently from what we are used to: an opening without being able to meet and greet each other in the foyer and in the corridors of our university building. We start a semester that lacks the connecting place and the joint presence; a semester in which all of our major projects – the orchestral and drama work, study excursions and competitions, concerts and festivals have been cancelled or postponed; a semester in which we are thrown back on the core tasks of study and teaching, and even these core tasks will only be able to take place under very limited conditions. Nevertheless, in the last few days I could feel how happy many of you are that the summer semester 2020 can finally start.

The time ahead is, depending on the perspective, either an unreasonable demand or a large, exciting field of experimentation. As often, the truth might lie in the middle. In order for this semester to succeed, I wish all of us the openness and willingness to look beyond the limits and to put the positive aspect of the joint experiment in the foreground.

This semester we are forced to return to the basic idea of studying, which originally did not lie in working through modules, but in the delightful experience of being confronted with new things. In this sense, the semester that is now beginning is something very special, because due to the circumstances we all are students in a certain way. The present situation is unprecedented. Nobody knows exactly what will happen. Nobody knows exactly how to face it. But together we will find a way through. In this sense, I wish all of us an intensive, educational, successful and surely an unforgettable summer semester 2020!

Organisational Framework

- Lecture period: April 20 – July 12, 2020
- The lectures and lessons only take place in terms of online teaching.
- The teaching and practicing in the university building is still suspended.
- The university building remains closed to students and lecturers.
- A catch-up period is planned for presence teaching from September 1, 2020, as far as the circumstances and legal framework allow it.
- Lessons in private buildings are generally not allowed.
- The start of the lecture period in the winter semester 2020/2021 has been shifted nationwide to November 1.

Organization of study and teaching

In concrete terms, this means that everything that is possible online via digital communication and new media has to start now. The planned attendance period in September is still subject to the political framework allowing the university building to be opened again by then. In addition, the catch-up period only lasts a few weeks and is therefore primarily intended for musical and scenic ensemble work and for the final exams.

Step-by-step plan for a gradual return to normal

A first step towards normalization is already taking place: the library is re-opening for the lending business. Books and media can be pre-ordered electronically and can be

picked up the following day. For details on the procedure, see the library page (<https://www.hmt-rostock.de/hochschule/bibliothek/>). Many thanks to Kirstin Blös and her student team!

We will also develop a step-by-step plan for a gradual return to normal. However, when the individual stages can come into force is not at our decision, but depends entirely on the general health and political conditions.

Execution or postponement of tests and exams

We will do everything to make module and final examinations possible under the given hygiene regulations. But we will have to decide on a case-by-case basis. We currently assume that written and oral exams can take place at the end of the semester in strict compliance with health protection. Concerning the artistic exams, however, we decided to postpone it to late summer or autumn. This is also the case with the entrance exams. Those of you who do not feel adequately prepared given the current conditions can apply for an extension in the current semester and postpone the exam to the upcoming winter semester.

How to design online teaching

It is a very special challenge for all of us to entirely switch university classes to online teaching only within a few weeks. The development of online distance learning courses normally does not take weeks, but years! We can therefore all significantly reduce our claim to perfection. What we will need in the upcoming weeks is patience and forbearance with ourselves and with others.

Three basic thoughts:

- Fixed times: It is also important for online teaching to agree on fixed times so that everyday study life can be well organised, so that reliable daily structures can develop in the coming weeks, and so that stress situations from too much simultaneity are prevented.
- Online teaching does not necessarily mean permanent media presence in video chat: Many other formats are conceivable, such as the weekly sending out of working tasks and material by email or written feedback on videos that were recorded by students.
- Take breaks: If we do not pay attention, we will run the risk of constantly hanging in front of the computer with the feeling of never being finished. Therefore, consciously take breaks and establish clear offline times! Everyone has the right to step back from the digital world and sometimes to be unavailable ...

€ 50 support for the purchase or upgrade of technical equipment

In order to provide financial support for online teaching, the university provides funds for students and lecturers who, in the current situation, are forced to buy or upgrade the appropriate technology. A subsidy of 50 euros is planned per person. Students can apply for this money through the Student Council (stura@hmt-rostock.de). Lecturers should direct their applications to the institute spokesmen. The application is made using the form "Reimbursement of privately spent funds". Important: Please submit the relevant current invoices as supporting documents!

Help for online teaching

From now on there is also a website in the intranet with guidance and help for online teaching. There you will find information and tools for internet-based teaching and learning. The page is continuously updated and instructions and additional tools are added. After logging in (<https://www.hmt-rostock.de/login-intranet/>), the link to the website appears directly with the first information.

In addition, we want to support you by online consultation hours if you have difficulties setting up or using certain programmes. The consultation hours will initially take place according to need and individual agreement. The contact person is Felix Prochnow (multimediasstudio@hmt-rostock.de).

Contact and help in crisis

If you really do not know what to do: Please do not hesitate to contact us quickly. Our university has many open ears and helping hands. The Student Council ([stura@hmt-rostock](mailto:stura@hmt-rostock.de)), the Student Office ([swantje.tomforde@hmt-rostock](mailto:swantje.tomforde@hmt-rostock.de)), the Representation of the Lecturers (<https://www.hmt-rostock.de/hochschule/ansprechpersonen/vertretung-der-lehrbeauftragten/>), the Heads of Department and Spokesman for the Institute and Dagmar Gatz as Vice-Rector for Studies and Teaching (dagmar.gatz@hmt-rostock.de) – they all will be able to take care of your problems.

There are also two aid funds for members of our university: The first fund is managed by the “Friends and Sponsors of the Rostock University of Music and Drama”. The application for students and lecturers in a financial emergency situation can be sent via mail until April 25, 2020 to: stephan.imorde@hmt-rostock.de. In addition, students can also apply to the Rostock-Wismar Studierendenwerk for a monthly Corona emergency help (<https://www.stw-rw.de/de/soziale-dienste/downloads.html>).

Last but not least: special circumstances of communication during the next weeks

Telephone calls, SMS, emails and video chat: All of these forms of communication are deficient tools. They only partially replace direct human-to-human communication. In the end there is still an incommensurable remnant that cannot be communicated via the medium.

This easily invites misunderstandings: How easy is it to misunderstand an e-mail because the tone of the sender is simply not being transported! How quickly do you intervene in a video-conference without wanting to! So let's all be careful to communicate benevolently, appreciatively and kindly during the next weeks to prevent misunderstandings and to make life easier for each other.

A good start to the semester and best regards
Oliver Krämer
(Acting Rector)