

The Executive Board's current planning considerations for summer semester 2021 at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences

Kleve/Kamp-Lintfort, 5th / 12th of January 2021

As of writing, summer semester 2021 will **begin** on 1 March 2021 and **end** on 31 August 2021. The **lecture period**, as set by the NRW Ministry of Culture and Science, will be held from 29 March 2021 to 23 July 2021 (including examinations).

At the moment, we must assume that the state of the pandemic in summer semester 2021 will, in many ways, resemble the current situation as society will not yet have achieved broad immunity to SARS-CoV-2. Because of the immense challenges posed by these past (and upcoming) winter months, we should not expect restrictions to ease significantly by March. Thus we should begin preparing for summer semester according to the current Hygiene Framework with another **flexible online semester** with online and hybrid teaching. Referring to the semester this way is intended to show a change from winter semester 2020-2021, namely that in-person teaching *can* be possible, but that we will also remain flexible in our options and teach primarily online.

We hope that falling infection rates will allow us to introduce more in-person teaching for all students while still complying with the guidelines and requirements of health authorities. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility of changes to the NRW Coronavirus Regulations for Universities, or the guidelines of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MAGS), or the guidelines of county health authorities in Kleve or Wesel that force us back to purely online teaching.

But with **the experiences gathered over the past two semesters** faculties and teachers can continue developing and honing their organisational and didactic concepts for the better. The Executive Board hopes that this will also strengthen the teaching-learning dialogue with students, as teachers' workloads return to more accustomed levels. We would also like to encourage everyone at Rhine-Waal University to contribute their thoughts and energy to ongoing internal discourse on how teaching during a pandemic can be improved.

In early 2021, administration and the faculties will work together to develop **new frameworks and planning considerations** for implementing the coming summer semester to give students, teachers and indeed all staff members at Rhine-Waal University an idea of what to expect in the coming months. While these frameworks must duly account for the current state of the pandemic, they should also allow a glimpse into a near future that offers the very real possibility of more in-person teaching. It also remains important to give the faculties as much assurance, dependability and support as possible.

General goals

- **Flexible study options** should be possible depending on the state of the pandemic at the time. It would also be a sound move to adjust teaching goals according to the expected situation at the time of examinations as well as the examination formats which would be available.
- **Student participation** must be assured in summer semester as well. Digital alternatives must be planned and implemented alongside any in-person teaching.

Clear priorities

The deans and the Executive Board have agreed upon a clear course of action:

- Until the pandemic is over, **digital forms of teaching should remain top priority**. Experience and insight gathered in the summer and winter semester should be put to good use and developed further. We are all aware that **in-person instruction** must be made possible where necessary.

Beyond these points, the Executive Board also considers the following framework conditions important:

- **Didactic freedom** should be put towards further developing online and in-person teaching formats.
- **Room and scheduling capacity** (both centrally and in the faculties) should continue to be used while still adhering to hygiene guidelines.
- Every teacher should expect the situation in summer semester to worsen, which would necessitate a **change in teaching formats**. These types of changes should be duly considered and made possible, **but they should not become the norm**.

At the same time, the faculties should:

- set their **own internal priorities**, for example with regard to graduates, international students, postgraduates etc., and communicate these priorities early (both within the faculty and for external audiences, for example via our website), and
- develop a semester schedule with **in-person teaching options** (including times and rooms) and, ideally, communicate this schedule to students at the start of the semester. Students should be aware, however, that it may be necessary to revert back to digital teaching only during the semester.

The Executive Board will be focusing on **central event planning** for students and coordinating with the faculties accordingly. Our goal here is to re-introduce person-to-person exchanges and networking, but also begin reviving campus life as well.