

Information on Teaching in the 2021 Summer Semester (7)

Dear colleagues,

Even though the summer semester lecture period only recently ended and examinations are currently in full swing, the winter semester is just around the corner. It is with this in mind that I contact you with new information.

In-person teaching in the 2021/22 winter semester:

Recently, calls for a return to classroom teaching at universities have become ever louder. With its 27 July 2021 resolution, for instance, the Bavarian state government would like to create "the decisive basis for more on-site operations in higher education during the pandemic" and enable students "to experience on-site studies in the winter semester" and "to prepare themselves (again) for student life in their place of study in the coming winter semester". In a recent press release by the Bavarian Ministry of Science following the decision on in-person teaching in the coming winter semester, Minister Siblir is even quoted as saying: "In-person teaching is a must for the winter semester." And in a recent open letter from the University of Bayreuth's student parliament, which is supported by other student committees at various Bavarian universities, an attendance rate of significantly more than 50% is presented as a potential target. On the other hand, the 13th regulation on infection prevention and control measures (*Infektionsschutzmaßnahmenverordnung*), as amended on 27 July 2021, does not yet provide a sufficiently well defined framework for a high level of in-person teaching. Currently, we know that with incidence rates of no more than 100 between persons who have been vaccinated, have recovered or have been tested, the minimum distancing requirement of 1.5 metres no longer has to be constantly maintained.

In light of this, and subject to further regulations at the state or federal level, we at the University of Bamberg are now proceeding as follows:

- The university executive board is striving to provide students with a wide range of in-person courses in the coming winter semester under current conditions. In this context, we also expressly invite students to come (back) to Bamberg. Please endorse this invitation in your own circles.
- The prerequisite for participating in on-site courses is that students and teachers are either vaccinated, recovered or tested. However, it is still unclear how these things can be verified and on what legal basis the verification can be enforced. We can only hope that the situation will be clearer by the start of the winter semester.
- With an incidence rate below 100, rooms are arranged according to the chessboard method (appropriate spacing of seats in rows with sufficient gaps). This allows the use of approx. 50 % of a room's seating capacity. Please observe the relevant notices posted on the doors. This room allocation concept is the result of a joint agreement between the Bavarian universities. This approach almost invariably results in room occupancy for no more than 200 people. Only the *Audimax* would allow a higher number of people, but in order to avoid excessively large gatherings of people, the upper limit is also set at 200 people.
- With an increase in the number of people in lecture and seminar rooms, entering and leaving the rooms in an orderly manner is of considerable importance for infection control. We should always keep this in mind.

- The new room occupancy figures will be published in UnivIS as additional information under the heading 'Schachbrettmuster-Belegung' on 13 September 2021 - at the end of the semester break. In the weeks remaining until the start of lectures, room planning must be updated as quickly as possible. In particular, however, I would like to urge you to relinquish large rooms that you have booked and do not need in the winter semester. As in previous semesters, this decision to make these rooms available has no effect on future bookings. Course instructors should also inform their students about whether the respective course will be held in person or online as early as possible.
- We ask that the faculties, degree programmes and teaching units examine the possibilities of in-person teaching under the conditions outlined above. A joint coordination of these possibilities in the respective teaching units is therefore of great importance.
- On the whole, these measures will make it possible for instructors to once again hold their smaller to medium-sized courses in person. The amount of available space will, of course, be a limiting factor in some cases.
- With the partial return to in-person teaching, the need to offer courses (also) completely in digital form also changes. The requirement to provide a purely digital course option is not necessary for courses that are held entirely in person and are generally accessible to all students. In other cases, this guideline remains very important for ensuring good study conditions. In such cases, it would be beneficial for instructors and students to jointly determine the need for and the form of the online offering in the respective courses.
- Even though the course is currently being set in the direction of increased in-person teaching, we must always consider the option of a quick return to more online teaching in the event of a worsening pandemic situation.

Vaccination status survey:

A high vaccination rate among students is of major importance to the universities' opening concept for the 2021/22 winter semester. In light of this, the University of Bamberg - like other Bavarian universities - would like to know more about the vaccination status of its students. We are therefore currently conducting an anonymous survey.

Autumn vaccination services:

Together with city authorities, the University of Bamberg provided vaccination opportunities for employees and students in the 2021 summer semester. Currently, the university executive board is working to provide a similar vaccination offering in the autumn. In particular, the focus is on new enrollees and students returning to the university in the winter semester. The result of the student vaccination status survey will also be used to correctly assess demands.

Examinations:

In connection with the examinations currently underway, I would once again strongly urge you to utilise public testing centres and the self-tests provided by the university. If possible, only persons who fulfil one of the 3 criteria of vaccinated, recovered or tested should be present at examinations.

A letter with similar content is also being sent to the students. Like all previous newsletters for students and teaching staff, it is available on the coronavirus website (<https://www.uni-bamberg.de/en/health-management/coronavirus/>).

I would like to thank you once again for all your support in finding viable ways to ensure good teaching under sometimes rapidly changing conditions. I wish you all the best and a relaxing semester break.

Sincerely,

Stefan Hörmann