

13 March 2020

HRK President comments on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on universities

Professor Dr Peter-André Alt, President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), made the following comments regarding the situation of German universities in view of the risk of infection posed by the pandemic coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19):

“In the interests of general health protection, the postponement of the start of lectures at universities, as is now stipulated or planned by the federal states for the summer semester, is sensible and unfortunately there is no alternative. In spite of the resulting constraints for students and challenges for all university members, these measures are very welcome.

The same applies to the widespread cancellation of public events, scientific conferences and other similar gatherings. We support universities in their efforts to do everything in their power to prevent the rapid spread of the virus. The HRK itself is cancelling all planned conferences through to the end of April for the time being.

Universities are attempting to continue with teaching activities and individual student support, predominantly by means of digital content. Research activities will be continued as far as possible with due regard for the protection of employees.

In the event that upcoming examinations cannot be held due to the exceptional circumstances, fair solutions will be developed based on existing examination regulations to protect affected students from disadvantages.

In accordance with state legislation, universities will generally maintain research activities while closely observing the requirements of health protection. We trust that all university members will approach the situation calmly, and appreciate that only the drastic measures now being taken will help to prevent the spread of the virus which can no longer be controlled.”