

**9 June 2021****Digitalisation at universities: Detailed HRK appeal to the federal government and states**

Fuelled by the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Senate of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) today gave concrete shape to a long-standing demand of the universities and adopted a detailed "Appeal to the federal government and states to further develop digital teaching infrastructures".

"Students, teachers and university administrators have been committed to digital teaching for many years and have faced difficult challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The upcoming return to face-to-face higher education reinforces the HRK's long-standing appeal that the opportunities offered by digitalisation be taken advantage of on a permanent basis to ensure improved, modern teaching," says HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt. He claims that this requires an agreement between the federal and state governments on digital teaching infrastructures.

According to the HRK Senate, the pandemic has exposed pre-existing deficits in digital teaching conditions. For example, digital learning and teaching lacked studios, real-world laboratories and makerspaces with up-to-date hardware and software, as well as appropriate tools. Integrated communication channels for video conferences would need to be set up, improved and legally secured for teaching support services. In addition, the Senate claims that the infrastructure to support teaching needs to be more efficient. This includes comprehensive local WLAN coverage, increased bandwidths and a server and storage infrastructure that is available at all times.

"Most importantly, there is a growing need for staff. It is not only IT specialists who are needed for successful development, we also require conceptual experts in media didactics and course design," says HRK Vice-President for Digitalisation, Prof Dr Monika Gross, whose commission prepared the recommendation.

The financial package of €270 million per year demanded by the federal government and states arises from a digitalisation allowance of €92 per student per year. This amount had been demanded in 2019 by the Expert Commission on Research and Innovation (EFI) in connection with a corresponding report. The HRK proposes that around €50 million be distributed to the individual universities as a basic allowance and that the principal amount of just under €220 million be distributed according to the number of students; namely 40 percent for studies and teaching, 30 percent for services and 30 percent for infrastructure.

"An agreement to this effect between the federal government and the states will enable universities to integrate digital elements into their teaching at the highest level once they have returned to face-to-face higher education," says HRK President Alt. "This will allow us to further

improve the overall quality of university teaching and make our universities even more competitive internationally."

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