

**26 January 2021****HRK Executive Board defines the needs of university research during and after the pandemic**

In view of the ongoing significant restrictions on university research caused by COVID-19, which may have to continue into the upcoming summer semester, yesterday the Executive Board of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) defined the action needed from both universities themselves and the federal government, federal states and other funding providers.

Since spring 2020, research work has frequently been interrupted or restricted due to the pandemic, in many cases affecting collaborations with external partners. International cooperation has been negatively impacted by travel restrictions. Cooperation with industry partners may also suffer in the medium term if these partners are no longer able to make the necessary contributions to research partnerships. All of this affects the (continued) employment of staff, especially on research projects supported by third-party funding.

This is particularly true for early career researchers. Post-graduate qualification times are unavoidably being prolonged, with the result that fewer positions are available for the next cohort. With inevitably increased teaching duties, additional family responsibilities, fewer opportunities to network, especially internationally, and in some cases poorer employment prospects even outside academia, the situation for young researchers is very difficult.

To address these problems, the HRK Executive Board suggests that, in addition to strictly implementing hygiene measures, universities should make the most effective use possible of legal and financial options and take appropriate account of pandemic-related limitations in staffing decisions while maintaining quality standards. Additional care responsibilities should be given due consideration in the evaluation of academic performance, for example by taking such periods into account when calculating an individual's 'academic age'.

The HRK Executive Board is calling on the federal government, federal states and other funding providers to continue measures to reduce the burden on universities for as long as necessary. This includes compensation for reduced income to ensure successful project completion and research competence, and extra financing to cover additional costs and prevent career interruptions. The long-term availability of funding for purely knowledge-driven research must be ensured at the national and European level. This is the only way to maintain innovation capability and strengthen societal resilience for future crises by a broad reservoir of knowledge.

**[Read the position paper of the HRK Executive Board](#)**