

7 May 2020**HRK: 2020 summer semester to continue online****Only incremental return to classroom teaching feasible and sensible**

The German Rectors' Conference (HRK) welcomes the re-opening of society based on the most recent resolutions reached by the federal and state governments regarding the coronavirus pandemic. However, it strongly warns against a rushed and untenable resumption of classroom teaching at universities in Germany.

In Berlin today, HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt said: "In principle, it is very encouraging that our society is re-gaining more scope for action. Having said that, there are many reasons why it makes little sense to plan for extensive classroom teaching at universities again in a week's time.

For one thing, most universities do not have the space required to comply with the all-important hygiene regulations. Added to this is the fact that classroom and online teaching cannot be swapped at will or at short notice. Digital teaching follows its own rules and regularities that also affect the arrangement and presentation of the subject matter. Universities have developed concepts and infrastructure for this with admirable speed and quality that will now come to fruition in terms of both the planned learning outcome and building up digital competence among all those involved. Abruptly starting normal lectures again would ruin this. It is therefore advisable to only initiate classroom teaching for placements and tutorials that cannot be replaced by digital versions."

Yesterday, the federal and state governments decided to permit further re-opening and to delegate the majority of decisions regarding content to the federal states. In some federal states, a very broad and rapid resumption of classroom teaching at universities is being discussed or even planned.

HRK President Alt made the following comments in this regard: "In view of the social and individual planning, an incremental approach is strongly advised. Students in particular have largely adapted to digital contact and made the necessary arrangements, with some of them temporarily relocating. Raising false hopes among this large and important group in society would send out a problematic message during this transition period."