

**22 October 2019**

**Network conference of the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation: Attendees call for financing of secure tools for online cooperation**

Data security was the focus of the third conference of the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation (HFD) in Bonn. The HFD is a joint initiative by the Stifterverband, the CHE Centre for Higher Education and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK). It deals with issues relating to higher education in the digital age.

Almost 500 students, teachers and employees of university support institutions attended the conference. They addressed topics including aspects of legal protection for dealing with data or digital standards in higher education. "Data security is a hugely important element of digitalising teaching, for example in situations where online platforms are to be used for exchanging data and collaborative work on documents," explains Martin Rademacher, HRK Project Manager for the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation.

The members of a student working group in the HFD called for special sensitivity in the handling of data created by teaching and learning systems. This includes not recording an excessive amount of information relating to the learning habits of students; otherwise their autonomy could be severely restricted. This requirement was derived from a survey of around 10,000 students, which the working group presented at the conference. According to the survey, 45% of the students feel compelled to sign up to private platforms for their studies, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Google Drive, which is problematic in view of data security.

To round off the conference, the attendees made a declaration calling on the federal government, state government and the EU Commission to promote the development of tools with a similar functionality to Dropbox or Google Drive for online cooperation across universities. This could take the form of funding the further development of existing local solutions or establishing a cloud infrastructure that can be used throughout Germany or Europe.

Further information on the network conference: <https://hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/en>

**About the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation (HFD)**

The HFD is a joint initiative by the Stifterverband, the CHE Centre for Higher Education and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK). It is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The independent national platform brings together experts from politics, higher education, research administration, university-friendly organisations and students to identify

practical solutions and concrete recommended measures for digitalising teaching in German universities and supporting initiatives.

[www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/en](http://www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/en)

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