



Higher Education Forum: 20 theses on digitalising teaching

At its mid-week conference today, the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation will discuss the potential for and challenges of digitalisation for academic teaching, the higher education system and the necessary political framework conditions.

Berlin, 9 September 2015. Digitalisation offers universities and politicians opportunities that are not yet being fully exploited. At the same time, digitalisation helps to manage existing challenges, such as a growing and increasingly more diverse student body. Digital courses enable a flexible duration of study, take into account the individual learning process and are able to promote student mobility. They provide new marketing instruments for German universities that increasingly need to bear up in international competition in the wake of globalisation. However, the transition to digital is associated with its own challenges, e.g. with respect to the legal framework conditions.

More than 70 experts are addressing the opportunities for and challenges of digitalisation for universities in the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation. Today the project will take stock during a conference of experts in Berlin. The experts have summarised the most important results, assessments and requirements in a position paper published for the conference.

An overview of the most important points:

Digitalisation in the German higher education system:

Digitalisation can support the ongoing differentiation process in the higher education system. As a whole, universities are even more exposed to international competition as a result of digitalisation. Universities can use digitalisation to cross national borders and make a name for themselves through their excellent level of teaching. Working students and students who want to better integrate their stay abroad into their study pathway can benefit from the flexibility of efficient online and distance learning courses. This goes hand in hand with the potential for further increasing international student mobility.

Digitalisation in academic teaching:

Innovations in teaching that arise as a result of digitalisation are not just technical in nature. To a greater degree it is a matter of developing teaching skills, curricula and the way in which teaching is organised, and using the technical innovations to create learning methods that are more active, personalised and motivating. Global interaction between students, teachers and universities can be reorganised via digital platforms. It goes without saying that digitalisation leads to more internationalisation. However, the extended opportunities for mutual exchange and group work require the physical learning facilities to be adapted to digital processes.

Overcoming obstacles in digitalisation:

Experts emphasise the particular importance of a higher education strategy as it determines the success or failure of the digitalisation efforts at universities. In addition to providing funding, politicians need to create the legal framework conditions, including a revision of copyright law, in order to sustainably establish and broadly disseminate digital teaching and learning opportunities.

The position paper forms the basis for discussion in further talks on specific measures with decision-makers in business, research and politics.

"Be it schools, universities or further training – we need to further exhaust all possibilities when it comes to digitalisation, create new routes into education and therefore bring together all actors involved in our education system," said Cornelia Quennet-Thielen, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. "We need to achieve quality-assured good practice through our diverse range of experience. Every university should develop its own digital agenda to tailor the opportunities offered by digitalisation to its own profile. Our joint objective must be to make all research data widely available. Our planned Open Access strategy will also help to achieve this objective."

The details of all 20 theses on digitalisation in university teaching can be read here (available in German only):

www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/diskussionspapier

The Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation is a joint project by the Stifterverband, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Centre for Higher Education (CHE). The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

For more information on the Higher Education Forum on Digitalisation, please visit (available in German only):

www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de

More information on the themed week entitled "The Digital Turn" (available in German only):

<http://www.hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/digital-turn-themenwoche-digitalisierung>

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Media partner of the themed week entitled "The Digital Turn":

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