

DER REKTOR



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

Heidelberg, 21 October 2020

Dear colleagues and members of staff,

Pandemic level 3 in Baden-Württemberg, and the winter semester is just around the corner. At the moment, many cautiously optimistic plans have to be revised and many intensive preparations adjusted. At Heidelberg University our rule is still: as much on-campus activity as possible and justifiable. This applies not only to teaching – and there particularly to the first-semester students and those newly enrolled, who want and need to find their feet – but also to the service institutions, the University Library, the Computing Centre and the administration.

As much on-campus work as possible means, in view of the surge of COVID-19 infections, that we must all again summon up the motivation to deal with an extreme situation. While we had hoped to be able to organise something resembling a “normal” winter semester, now our patience, mutual consideration, our sense of responsibility and our commitment are challenged afresh. And from today’s angle it looks as though we will still have to contend with extraordinary circumstances in the 2021 summer semester as well.

At the beginning of the academic year I call on you all to accept this situation in a spirit of collegiate cooperation. Our prime aim at present must be to join in taking responsible action to contain the proliferation of the pandemic and to protect ourselves and others. I ask you cordially to be consistent in implementing all necessary measures in the buildings and areas of encounter at the university. Respect the obligation to wear a mask, ensure good ventilation and be considerate of one another! Research and teaching on one hand, health on the other – they are not opposites. Finding creative solutions to do equal justice to both requirements is up to us. My thanks go to all those who, each at their own place and with their own resources, contribute to enabling our university to remain vibrant and to operate successfully.

We are ready: our students have given their lecturers good grades for their teaching performance in the mainly digital 2020 summer semester. We can carry on from these positive experiences and by now feel more or less at home in the digital world. As an employer, the university is enabling higher flexibility and consequently, amongst other things, has made it possible for numerous members of staff to work from home.

In the coming weeks and months we in the Rectorate will do everything necessary to keep the university going. Our academic community has the mission, particularly in the interest of the students, to maintain the character of our university, also in times of crisis. Alone we will achieve nothing, but today we have every chance to succeed in developing research and teaching in responsibility for society, even in complicated situations. Keep an eye on each other! Let us welcome first-semester students, those who have come to us from other universities and new staff, making it easy for them to integrate into our community. The newcomers need us especially. Let us help one another. For your willingness in that regard, for your flexibility, considerateness and readiness to assist, and for our cooperation in the winter semester – already I extend my deepest gratitude.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bernhard Eitel', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Bernhard Eitel