

Barrier-free digital teaching

„Free of barriers are all sectors, systems and other configured areas of life if they are accessible and usable for persons with disabilities in the generally customary way, without particular difficulty and without assistance“ (not official translation of § 3 Sächsisches Integrationsgesetz)

With regard to barrier-free digital teaching, this means that the specific needs of students with disabilities and/or chronic illness are taken into account when planning and implementing online courses (in contrast to classroom teaching).

Digital teaching with a focus on the needs of special groups of students

As the coordinator for inclusion and contact person for students with disabilities, I would like to ask you to keep this special target group (or students in special situations, e.g. students with children and relatives in need of care) in mind. In principle, online formats are very welcome, as they can make it easier to balance study and the individual situation due to disabilities or illness.

However, to ensure that no student are excluded (even if unintentional), there are a number of organisational aspects to consider when designing digital courses in times of the corona crisis. Many thanks for your commitment and awareness!

If the following requirements cannot yet be fully met due to the current workload and time pressure when redesigning the course offerings, reference should be made to compensation for disadvantages for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses during their studies in accordance with § 5 number 12 Saxon Law on Universities (Sächsisches Hochschulfreiheitsgesetz) and with regard to examinations in accordance with § 34 Paragraph 3 Saxon Law on Universities (with reference to § 5 Paragraph 2 of all examination regulations of Chemnitz University of Technology).

Students with hearing and visual impairments are particularly dependent on digital accessibility.

Possibilities for supporting students at a glance:

- In the case of real-time online formats, teachers should show interest in the situation and experiences of the students. For example, ask how everyone is doing or how they have coped with online learning so far. Encourage especially students with disabilities or in special circumstances to contact you (i.e. signal your willingness to respond to the needs of special groups of students without violating the privacy of individual students). Please be sensitive to the requests of the student groups mentioned above.
- Also ask about technical problems (internet connection, equipment, cameras for live streaming etc.) so that you can adapt your offers and formats to the possibilities of the students in your lectures, exercises, seminars etc.
- Please make sure that the sound and picture quality is adequate and that the background of lecture recordings is free of disturbances. In addition to recorded lectures, please provide, if possible, a written summary as well as literature

references for follow-up work of the sessions (scripts, transcripts, lecture notes, written "blackboard"), for example in OPAL. This is a help for all students who have problems taking notes (such as visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired, physically impaired students or students with a reading and writing disorder). All online offerings should remain online at least until the examination period in the current semester and the re-examination.

- You could also instruct students to take notes for everyone (transcripts of the meeting). This helps others to concentrate while one person - in turns - documents what has been said. Teachers can then correct them if necessary and make them available for everyone to download. Think about possibilities of recognition for this commitment and the services they have provided.
- Feedback possibilities on your courses and with regard to your online materials are beneficial (for all students).
- Requirements (for examinations, self-study, etc.) and work instructions should be formulated as clearly as possible.
- Prepare written documents with as few barriers as possible (keyword: barrier-free PDF documents, for example through consistent use of format templates, contrast settings, clarity, heading formatting, etc.).



[Link to the guideline "Barrierefrei lehren - barrierefrei studieren" \(darin: Abschnitt 6.2; in German only\)](#)

- If your course takes place via video/web conference as an online presence format, alternative possibilities should be checked and offered (e.g. recording of this session). This is important for students who were unable to attend at the start and during the course (e.g. prevented from attending due to illness, lack of care for children, relatives in need of care, i.e. social or other stressful situations). Live lectures can therefore be problematic for students who are hard of hearing or deaf, for students who have sound problems due to overloaded or poor Internet connections, for students with visual impairments or with devices with a small display. Therefore, the use of live formats should be carefully considered because of the many challenges for students. It may be better to use asynchronous formats in order to achieve certain learning objectives in a similar way. It should also be noted that chronically ill students may not have the energy for a day of online teaching.
- Discussion questions and teaching materials can be provided in advance in a good time (e.g. in OPAL).
- Videos should be subtitled or a transcript should be made available as an extra document (concerns hearing impaired students). Describe important images orally or, if the information is only visually presented, an audio description or transcript is important (concerns visually impaired students).
- Live chats are rather problematic for many disabled students. Additional information in written chats such as links should be provided in an additional document as well as the recorded chat discussion protocol, which compensates

for non-participation or problems caused by impairment and serves as a follow-up service.

Further information



[Guideline „Online-Lehre \(fast\) ohne Barrieren“ of the Studying with Disabilities-Information and Advice centre \(Informations- und Beratungsstelle Studium und Behinderung des Deutschen Studentenwerkes\)](#)

Contact information for questions and concerns of impaired students

Department 1 | Student Service | Central Course Guidance Service

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Exchange of experiences

I am interested in feedback from teachers and disabled or chronically ill students on the special challenges of digital teaching, especially for students with disabilities at Chemnitz University of Technology, on their need for advice and other specific lessons learned from the online courses.