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Open Letter to the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, concerning the start of the semester.

Please Consider that this is just a translation of the German version, and not all the terms can be adequately translated. It has been published to inform the international students about the AStA open letter contents.



**Dear Mrs. Martin,
Dear members of the state government,**

We, the student representatives of the Universities of Greifswald, Neubrandenburg, Wismar, Stralsund, and Rostock, have teamed up to critique and protest against the upcoming semester start.



The quality of teaching and taking exams cannot be guaranteed in times of the Corona-Crisis. It is unrealistic for universities to be able to switch to digital teaching as they are not supported enough, and students are confronted with existential fears if job contracts are canceled, and study material is not available due to closed universities.



This is why we demand the following measures to be taken:

The summer semester in 2020 must be counted as an 'optional semester.' We consider the following steps necessary:



1. The semester must not be counted as a regular semester; thus, it must not count to the standard period of study. No student should face any disadvantages due to the current situation, specifically considering BAföG or student loans.

2. Attendance has to be optional for online courses as well as regular courses. It is crucial that attendance is optional as not all students have equal access to adequate technological equipment or enough space and quiet in their homes to be able to participate in online courses the same way they would in a physical classroom.



3. Students should be able to take exams but must not be obliged to as a sufficient quality of teaching cannot be guaranteed, and students must not be disadvantaged.

4. Students who decide to take exams nonetheless must receive an additional attempt due to the crisis. Thus, if an exam is failed, no regular



attempt is lost. If the exam is passed, the additional attempt ensures the possibility of improving the results of the summer semester 2020 with an additional retake.

We consider the optional semester as a necessary reaction to the crisis. Equality of opportunities is of utmost importance in times of this crisis and proceeding as if the upcoming semester would be a regular one would violate this.

1. Digital teaching is not realizable in the same way for every discipline. Specifically, engineering and other disciplines that rely on laboratories will have to deal with severe limitations. But also, artistic, pedagogic, and library-based activities as well as internships, in general, are hardly realistic in digital form.
2. Equal opportunities between different universities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are not given in an attempt to proceed with the upcoming semester as if it were a regular one. On a nationwide scale, students in our state would be disadvantaged against students of other federal states where online teaching has been implemented much better already.
3. Students with children have to stay at home due to a lack of childcare. In combination with the having to work at potential side jobs, studying these days is barely possible for students with children.
4. Many students face a financial crisis due to the loss of their side jobs, which makes it more difficult for those students to participate in the summer semester 2020 than for others, who do not face the same issues.

An optional semester would enable students to take on important, societal tasks, for example, farm work like cutting asparagus since agriculture is facing a lack of workforce at the moment.

Furthermore, we would like to raise awareness for the necessity of financial support for students. Due to the closing of companies, many students that do not receive BAföG have had their basis of existence revoked. Students are not caught by the social system and need your help. We demand immediate emergency aid for students.

Kind Regards,

AStA of the University of Rostock

AStA of the University of Greifswald

AStA of the University of Wismar

AStA of the University of Stralsund

AStA of the University of Neubrandenburg

StuRa of the College for Music and Theatre Rostock