

DER REKTOR



UNIVERSITÄT
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To all members
of Heidelberg University

Heidelberg, 28 September 2021

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Dear colleagues,
Dear staff,
Dear students,

The last few months during the Covid-19 pandemic have made many demands on us. Teaching largely switched to digital formats and for three semesters the students had little regular exchange with one another, some almost none. Academic relations, which are so important to filling research and teaching with life, almost came to a standstill. Stays abroad became nearly impossible and many face-to-face contacts were reduced to the partial pictures on screen we are all now familiar with. Precautionary measures took over and anxieties among members of the university from all status groups had to be seriously addressed and taken into account. Some of you accompanied infected persons or fell ill yourselves.

I have repeatedly referred to how much the students suffered and still do; I look with enormous respect and gratitude at your achievements under difficult conditions, dear students, as well as your understanding, patience and sense of responsibility in an important phase of your lives. At this point, I say a big thank you again for the collective effort made to keep university operations running at all levels. Thank you for the creativity shown in many places in institutes, centres, operating facilities and administrative offices when it came to handling unfamiliar situations and the determination to seek and find solutions. Not everyone made the same effort but, looking back, we can say that together we managed well in this exceptional situation with its special challenges.

The pandemic is, and remains, an exceptional situation though. Now it is time – and the Covid situation in Germany allows this – to return to regular study and research activities. I am grateful to the State for having created a framework that makes this largely possible. The precondition is a high level of vaccination among university members. Again, I urge all those who have not yet been vaccinated to get it done, unless this is not advisable for health reasons. With the vaccination you will protect yourself and those around you. You will help to guarantee smooth teaching and research activities

and enable participation in the sadly missed international academic exchange. International Students who still need immunisation with a vaccine approved for the EU can have this done free of charge. Please use the opportunities available.

The winter semester will be a semester back on campus. Of course, we will continue to develop and implement our hygiene plan to make this possible. That includes the 3G rule: classes and events can only be attended by those who have either been vaccinated, have recovered or have an up-to-date negative test result from the previous 24 hours. We will conduct random checks for compliance with this in the smaller classes and also in the big lecture halls. I request your support for the checking team and your understanding for these measures, which are for the protection of yourself and of us all.

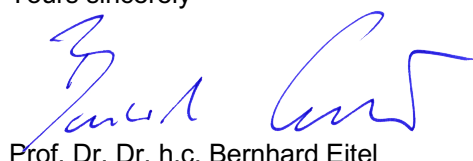
For all the steps we have to take it is important and helpful to be aware of the vaccination status quo among the students. I therefore urge you to participate on a voluntary basis in the survey that will reach you in the next few days and weeks. It is short and easy to operate, and is also anonymous. It has scientific support for the implementation and evaluation. The replies of the newly enrolled students and those filling up vacant places will be included in the statistics in subsequent surveys.

Many young students at our university have not yet been able to attend lectures and classes in person, or only very few. In October, moreover, we expect over 5,000 students to enrol for the first time. That is not only a challenge for the Heidelberg accommodation market but also calls for the investment of every effort to provide these groups with the necessary information for a successful start to their studies. Besides the student representative bodies, whose initiatives I particularly acknowledge, the student service, the deans of studies and academic advisors have an especially significant role to play here. Be present, approach students seeking help and advice and don't wait for them to find you. Often small things have great results.

We have all learned to live with digital formats in teaching, research and communication. These skills, newly established infrastructures and tools will remain, and we will continue to use them. But the university and university community is about more than conveying knowledge and exchanging information. Insights have to be gained together, and academic socialisation goes hand in hand with jointly assimilating successes and setbacks. Personal encounter creates room for innovation and for new departures that will shape the future. Hence, taking a degree course becomes a central phase of life with many outcomes having a far-reaching impact. Advancing learning is also a way of life that is especially (co-)shaped by distinctive figures and by exchange between the generations. That leads to the generation of insights, development of talents, transfer of knowledge and knowhow, and added value for society. It only happens in teamwork. In that spirit, I am profoundly convinced that we are all fellow students.

Dear colleagues, students and staff in all support functions, I look forward to our all being able to continue developing the academic community again in personal interaction. I look forward to the upcoming encounters and informal face-to-face exchange, to the "living spirit" we have missed for so long. Rarely was this expression by Friedrich Gundolf, inscribed above the entrance to the New University, so timely and meaningful. Let us shape a successful 2021/2022 winter semester together.

Yours sincerely



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