



Joint press release by the Senate Chancellery for Higher Education and Research and the State Conference of the Rectors and Presidents of the Higher Education Institutions in Berlin (LKRK)

PRESS RELEASE

26/05/2021

Prospects of opening up for Berlin's universities and colleges: more presence on campus possible again from June

In view of the steadily falling incidence values, preparations are being made for initial steps to open up the universities and colleges in Berlin. After more than a year of operating largely in digital mode, and with a great deal of commitment from all students, teachers and employees, the Berlin colleges and universities have made an immense contribution to fighting the pandemic.

As of 4th June, the current restrictions to study and teaching operations will be relaxed, and more in-person activities will be made possible again on campus with the use of hygiene concepts and test strategies. University libraries will then open for in-person lending, and computer labs, workplaces and laboratories will also be able to be used again. In principle, practical formats will also be able to be carried out in small groups.

From 18th June onwards, the universities and colleges will continue to increase their proportion of in-person study and teaching activities; in addition to practical formats, it will then also be possible to conduct other courses and examinations in person. The cafeterias of the student services and support body Studierendenwerk Berlin will also be able to gradually resume operations in June, initially offering food for collection.

The Governing Mayor of Berlin and Senator for Higher Education and Research, Michael Müller: "I would like to express my sincere thanks to all students, employees, teachers and researchers at Berlin's universities and colleges. For over a year, and under difficult conditions, they have been making a major contribution to overcoming the pandemic in our city. This demanded a lot from all of them, and I am delighted that, in view of the falling number of infections and the established test strategies, we are once again enabling a greater in-person presence at our universities. With the advancing Berlin vaccination campaign, we want to ensure a return to campus for the coming winter semester – because, even though there are many useful fields of application for digitisation in teaching, research and administration, our universities and colleges will remain in-person universities in the future."

The President of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Chair of the State Conference of the Rectors and Presidents of the Higher Education Institutions in Berlin (LKRK), Prof. Dr-Ing. Dr Sabine Kunst: "The heads of all Berlin universities and colleges want their 200,000 or so students to once again experience life on campus. Given the pleasing decrease in incidence numbers, we can no longer ask them and the more than 25,000 members of teaching staff to sacrifice their everyday academic life in this way. My thanks and respect go to all members of the universities and colleges who have ensured that teaching and research activities have been

kept running digitally for over a year. However, the community on campus cannot be replaced by online formats. We will therefore be taking careful initial steps to open things up from the beginning of June. Further vaccinations – including for students – will be an important component. If the developments continue to be positive, there is a good chance that as many students and employees as possible will be able to go into the universities and colleges in the coming winter semester.”

The following rules for opening are planned for 4th June 2021 onwards for state, private and denominational universities and colleges, including their institutions:

- University libraries will be allowed to expand their services. In addition to the online services, the use of on-site services will be permitted again, with appointments being booked in advance.
- The universities and colleges will be allowed to open workstations, for example, in libraries or computer labs, provided that the minimum distance between persons is maintained and the maximum number of people permitted in the area in question is observed. Reservations will be required.
- The Studierendenwerk Berlin cafeterias will gradually resume their Click&Collect service.
- Practical courses will be able to be held in small groups of up to 25 people on site.

As of 18th June 2021, the following rules for opening will be added:

- An increase in the proportion of in-person study and teaching activities will be made possible. In addition to practical formats, this also includes other courses in small groups as well as courses outdoors. The upper limit of 40 people will apply.
- In-person examinations will be able to be held, provided that a distance of 1.5 metres between persons is maintained and the maximum number of people permitted in the area in question is observed.

The opening measures are subject to the following requirements:

- Students must provide evidence of a negative test result. The universities and colleges will regulate the testing of students who are present on their grounds as part of their protection and hygiene concepts.
- The measures under the hygiene concepts of the universities and colleges must be implemented consistently. Among other things, this includes maintaining minimum distances and observing the maximum number of people permitted in the area in question.
- It is mandatory to wear an FFP2 mask in all enclosed spaces.
- Attendees must be documented for contact tracing.
- In order to provide students who cannot take part in on-campus events with the best possible support during their studies, a digital or hybrid teaching offering must also be arranged when switching to in-person mode.

The agreed steps for opening up the universities and colleges are laid down in a joint paper by the Senate Chancellery for Higher Education and Research and the Berlin universities and colleges, and are available online:

https://www.berlin.de/sen/wissenschaft/assets/offnungsperspektiven_fur_die_berliner_hochschulen.pdf

These supplement the “Principles for the implementation of the summer semester” that were already agreed for the Berlin universities and colleges in February 2021. In view of the rapidly increasing number of infections at that time, these principles planned for the start of the 2021 summer semester to be conducted in digital mode and only included in-person options for absolutely essential practical formats and examinations that cannot be conducted digitally. Possibilities of opening up for more in-person activities were also provided for in the event that the spread of the pandemic declined over the course of the summer semester. These are now being specified.

The “Berlin phased plan for college and university operations under pandemic conditions”, which, since September 2020, has proved a practicable and flexible framework for crisis management in the state of Berlin in response to the pandemic, continues to apply. In the coming weeks, the Senate Chancellery for Higher Education and Research and the Berlin universities and colleges will make plans for university and college operations in the 2021/2022 winter semester.

Press contacts:

Hans-Christoph Keller
Press Spokesperson and Head of the Communications and Media Department
Press Office for the State Conference of the Rectors and Presidents of the Higher Education Institutions in Berlin
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Tel: 030 2093-12710
Email: hans-christoph.keller@hu-berlin.de

Matthias Kuder
Press Spokesperson for Higher Education and Research
The Governing Mayor of Berlin.
Senate Chancellery for Higher Education and Research
Tel.: 030-9026-5010
Email: matthias.kuder@wissenschaft.berlin.de