

# **Open letter of the LandesAStenkonferenz Hamburg**

Dear First Mayor Dr. Peter Tschentscher,  
Dear Second Mayor Mrs. Katharina Fegebank,  
Dear members of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg,  
Dear members of the Hamburg Parliament,  
Dear presidencies of the Hamburg universities,

As Landesastenkonferenz (LAK) Hamburg, we currently see massive social and financial problems affecting students due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Many students live under precarious conditions and are therefore particularly affected by the crisis. We call on the City of Hamburg and thus especially on the Bürgerschaft and the Senate, as well as the universities, to limit these effects and also explicitly to make financial resources available to secure the livelihood of students.

## **Financial consequences of the general decree to contain the COVID 19 pandemic for students at Hamburg universities**

Many students are currently in a difficult financial situation, as they often earn their living through mini-jobs and employment in sectors that are particularly affected by the general decrees. The extensive closure of many small businesses, restaurants and recreational facilities is leading to a loss of earnings for students across the board, while at the same time the measures taken at the federal level, such as the short-time work regulations, are not taking effect. Tutor jobs are also not secure due to the unclear handling of the upcoming semester. In addition, most students do not have any financial reserves. As a result, many students are not able to pay their rent, the semester contribution or other running costs.

## **Consequences for the course of studies**

Colleges and universities are currently forced to adapt regular teaching to the situation created by Covid-19. However, this usually means that the teaching cannot meet the usual quality requirements. Furthermore, it is not yet foreseeable that the teaching content, which must necessarily take place in physical form, can still take place this semester. It is not possible to work on final theses at the same speed, especially if laboratory access is required and access to literature is also difficult. For these reasons, many students will be forced to extend their studies. Funding, such as BAföG, which is dependent on the length of study, will be negatively affected. International students also face a variety of problems.

We would also like to point out that digital alternatives cannot replace a semester with attendance. Many problems arise, such as the lack of necessary end devices or software licenses, which in turn are associated with cost-intensive purchases. In this context, students that do not have a lot of financial capacities anyway are massively disadvantaged. In addition, there are further uncertainties, e.g. to what extent access to laboratories or other stationary research equipment can be guaranteed.

## **Libraries and access to literature**

The closure of the libraries is currently a problem for the entire scientific community that should not be underestimated. Students as well as scientific staff and professors are absolutely dependent on access to literature for their scientific work. Digital access in the libraries should be significantly

expanded. Students and all other members of the university must be put in a position to pursue their research, scientific papers and homework from home.

### **Social consequences due to a change in the semester schedule**

In particular, support must be provided for first-semester students, who are now starting their studies in a particularly insecure manner and can hardly get any help in getting started due to the lack of contact with other students. This also applies to international students.

### **Support of the Studierendenwerk**

The Studierendenwerk is an important social carrier for the interests of the students. Both the provision of affordable housing in student residences and the provision of affordable meals in the refectories are essential measures to make studying possible for all. The Studierendenwerk in particular is also in a difficult situation due to the loss of income in the refectories as a result of the closure. In order to relieve the students financially on the one hand and to ensure the continued existence of the Studierendenwerk on the other hand, financial support for the Studierendenwerk by the City of Hamburg is therefore absolutely necessary.

### **Proposed solutions and demands for social relief for LAK students**

The Landesastenkonzferenz therefore calls for rapid emergency aid measures for all affected students and long-term solutions to ensure the financial existence of students and qualitatively appropriate teaching. We propose the following points in this context:

- In order to secure the livelihood of students, an emergency fund for students will be set up, modelled on the rescue fund for self-employed persons.
- Students will be relieved of considerable costs of living, especially if no emergency aid fund is set up:
  - The universities will waive administrative cost contributions for re-registration for the SoSe 2020.
  - The HVV waives the costs for the semester ticket or moderates them considerably. The use of the ticket must still be made possible.
  - The Studierendenwerk waives rental fees for students. The same is conceivable for SAGA and other landlords.
- Exmatriculations due to non-payment of semester fees will be completely waived.
- The universities are requested to continue to pay student employees of all kinds and tutors, even if the job cannot be performed at the moment. The faculties should find appropriate solutions for the orientation weeks with the orientation week teams.
- BAföG payments must be extended by one semester for all recipients without exception. If courses are only offered once a year, the extension must be adjusted accordingly by a further semester.

- For international students, it must be ensured that the coming semester is not included in the ten-year maximum duration for study purposes. If courses are only offered once a year, the extension must be adjusted accordingly by a further semester.
- In the case of an online summer semester 2020, the necessary infrastructure will be provided for the participation of all students:
  - o Suitable devices will be made available to students, for example by lending them equipment from the universities.
  - o Necessary software licenses, which are normally only accessible from university computers, will be provided.
  - o Necessary literature will be made available online, for example on request to libraries for specific literature.
- The possibility of picking up pre-ordered literature from university libraries is being examined.
- The negative consequences for the course of studies are mitigated as far as possible:
  - o Digital teaching-learning offers can only replace reference seminars and lectures to a limited extent. There are no disadvantages for students who cannot attend compulsory courses under these conditions.
  - o Students are not disadvantaged by the cancellation or rescheduling of examinations.
  - o Non-mandatory examinations will be waived.
  - o The application deadlines for all degree programs and Studienkollegiates will be extended.
  - o Deadlines for the submission of academic examinations and theses will be extended according to circumstances.
- The social isolation of students, especially for first semester and international students, is counteracted by suitable formats on the part of the Studierendenwerk and the universities.

Yours sincerely,

**the Landesastenkonzferenz (LAK) Hamburg**

Hamburg, 30.03.2020

Universität Hamburg ([vorstand@asta.uni-hamburg.de](mailto:vorstand@asta.uni-hamburg.de))

Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg ([vorstand@asta.haw-hamburg.de](mailto:vorstand@asta.haw-hamburg.de))

Technische Universität Hamburg ([vorstand@asta.tu-hamburg.de](mailto:vorstand@asta.tu-hamburg.de))

HafenCityUniversität Hamburg ([vorstand-asta@hcu-hamburg.de](mailto:vorstand-asta@hcu-hamburg.de))

Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg ([asta@hfbk.de](mailto:asta@hfbk.de))

Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg ([asta@hfmt-hamburg.de](mailto:asta@hfmt-hamburg.de))