

UHH · Der Präsident · Mittelweg 177 · 20148 Hamburg

**Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dieter Lenzen**

To:  
Members of Universität Hamburg

Präsident

Mittelweg 177  
Raum N 5046  
20148 Hamburg  
Tel. +49 40 42838-1800  
Fax +49 40 42838-6799  
[Praesident@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:Praesident@uni-hamburg.de)  
[www.uni-hamburg.de](http://www.uni-hamburg.de)

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Staff code P

Dear Universität Hamburg Members!

A new semester will begin, under the strangest of circumstances, as we face a threat to life and limb on the one hand and the prospect of remote teaching and distance learning on the other. We will have to get used to the situation—hopefully only temporarily. We may feel a lot of resistance, and understandably, we react reflexively by defending academic freedom.

Currently, researchers in the most various of disciplines are pondering this question—from the virologist, theologian, and philosopher to the legal scholar and educator. Their thoughts on the matter are important and they will no doubt come to manifold conclusions. These conclusions will be significant in answering when and under what conditions the current restrictions should end.

In the meantime, however, leadership, students, teachers, and administrative, technical, and library staff have not been released from the obligation to act accordingly. The University leadership takes this obligation seriously in line with state guidelines; it also reflects upon its actions against the backdrop of our common knowledge about the history of the Enlightenment and the risks posed to it.

Therefore, I am sharing a few thoughts about the relationship between life and freedom in an educational institution in the hopes that this or that decision may be easier to understand.

We have been trying tirelessly, and sometimes in 10-hour telephone conferences, to coordinate our activities, bring back members of the University from the furthest reaches of the planet, create the technological conditions for working from home, offer 5,000 courses in some kind of digital form, and even in some cases to calm, assure, and aid individuals. We cannot do more.

I thank everyone who has gone the extra mile to help us in these efforts. We all see that almost everyone feels like part of our whole, our university.

There is no question: Universität Hamburg will survive, albeit in a different form. Very little will remain untouched by this event, and it may take years to return to the former routines. Thus, I am asking you to keep helping us realize our collective obligation in the hopes of a

bright future.

Stay healthy and safe!

Sincerely,

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dieter Lenzen