

Begrüßungsansprache zur Immatrikulationsfeier 2020  
des Präsidenten Prof. Dr. Reinhard Jahn

Dear students,

my name is Reinhard Jahn, I am President of the University of Göttingen. On behalf of the entire Presidential Board, I would like to welcome you to our University! We are very pleased that you have decided to complete your academic training with us.

Perhaps you have already explored the city and the University a little during the last week and were able to establish first contacts with your fellow students. This week is the start of the semester, with lectures, seminars and practicals, but unfortunately under difficult conditions. As you all know, the pandemic is threatening to get out of control again, as it already did in spring. The number of infections is still rising exponentially. Last week, the German federal and state governments therefore decided to impose considerable restrictions on both public and private life, which unfortunately also affect you very directly: A normal campus life, with meetings in the circle of friends, common activities and relaxed evenings in the pub will not be possible this semester either.

Even though we are making every effort - and I'll say more about this in a moment: We don't know yet whether we will be able to maintain the limited presence classes that we have planned during the whole winter semester. However, we - the Executive Board, lecturers and staff - will do everything we can to make sure that you can successfully complete your first semester at our university.

To make your studies safer for you and for us, we offer you to voluntarily and regularly be tested for the SARS corona virus-2. You can find details on our homepage. We will set up several test sites where you can register for a certain time window via an online platform. Initially, this will only be possible for participants in certain courses. However, we will expand our capacities significantly in the coming weeks and hope to be able to offer such tests to any interested university member (students, lecturers, staff).

Taking samples is simple and much less unpleasant than the usual nasopharyngeal swab - you simply put a kind of cotton swab in your mouth, let it soak up saliva and then hand the

swab over to a member of staff. If everything works as planned, the results will be communicated by e-mail the same day.

What do we gain from these tests? First of all, they do not replace the general hygiene rules to protect against infections, and all regulations and restrictions remain in force. But they will allow us to monitor the development of the pandemic in the university much more closely, especially if as many as possible participate in the voluntary tests. We will obtain reliable figures on the "level of infections", which can currently only be roughly extrapolated. We will be able to better estimate the risk for each class. If there is an outbreak, we will be able to control it more quickly and thus be able to take targeted action instead of having to close down large parts of the university. Of course, no one can guarantee that you will be negative in the test but become infectious a few days later. Therefore, even if the result is negative, you must not neglect the applicable rules and precautions in any way! It would be disastrous if you were to regard a negative result as a carte blanche for a party without precautions! Nevertheless - this is a huge step forward in view of the otherwise prevailing uncertainty, and it is a chance to keep up the reduced attendance instead of - as in the summer semester - only being able to offer all courses online. This was an enormous burden for our students, as surveys have shown, and unfortunately, quite a few of them were not able to achieve their goals for the semester despite all their efforts.

Regular screening is therefore a chance for a little more normality in university life, and we hope for active participation! The tests are free of charge. However, we do not have free funds for this and have to try to cover the costs through donations - which are highly welcome!

I am aware that you are starting your studies in Göttingen at a very difficult time. I myself spent a wonderful and comparatively carefree period of studies here decades ago. We hope and wish you very much that this protracted crisis will soon be overcome and that you will soon be able to experience and enjoy the charm and special atmosphere of Göttingen and our University. Once again, a warm welcome to you, and I wish you a good start!