

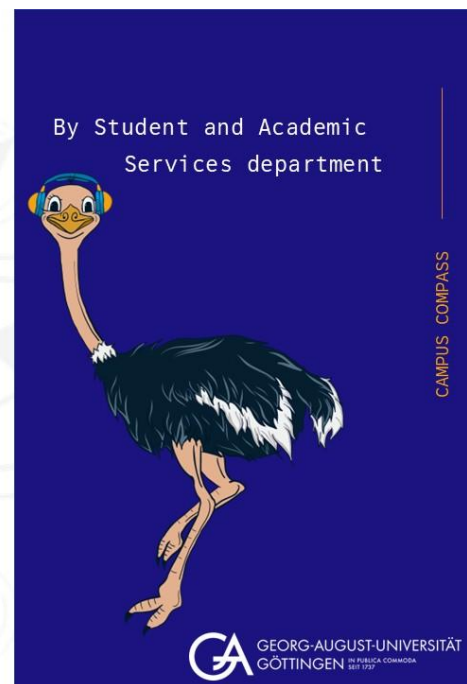
Campus Compass – Episode 11 – Mental health during university studies

CAMPUS COMPASS

Mental health during university studies

What you can do for yourself and what support is available

Episode no. 11



Welcome to Campus Compass – your guide to university life.

Hello, it's me again – your host Paulina – and today we're talking about mental health. We want to talk about pressures that can affect your mental health, what you can do about them, and where to find support if you're not feeling well.

Maybe you know the feeling? Deadlines are getting closer, your Word document is completely blank, your shared flat is a mess, WhatsApp messages are piling up, and you find yourself constantly doomscrolling on social media. And you're overtired because you can't stop ruminating in the evening? Many students feel this way.

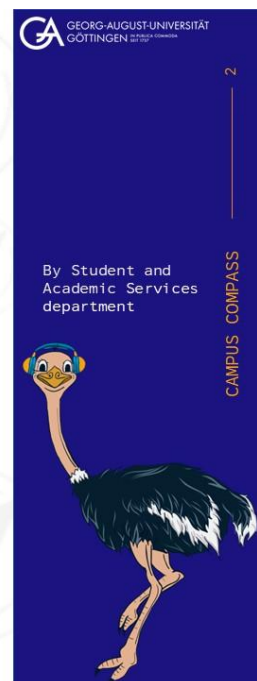
Pressures during studies – facts and figures

Are you stressed, overtired and unable to sleep?
You are not alone!

64 percent of students feel stressed (very) often
48 percent of students feel overwhelmed (very) often

Source:

22nd Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs – DSW;
study period: summer term 2021



In the 22nd Social Survey conducted by the German National Association for Student Affairs (DSW) in the summer term of 2021, 64 percent of participating students stated that they often or even very often feel stressed. And at 48 per cent, almost half said they often or very often felt overwhelmed. So, if you feel stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted in your studies, you are not alone. I often feel that way too.

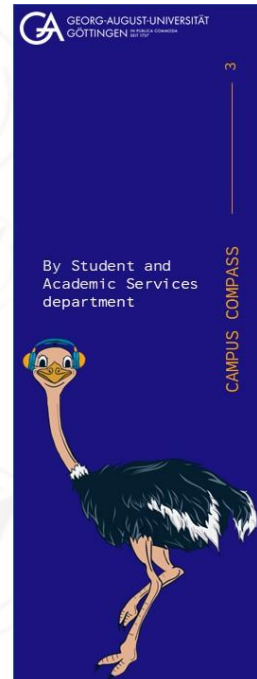
Pressures during studies – causes

Institutional factors:

- Performance requirements
- Deadlines
- Anonymity
- Lack of guidance regarding university structures
- Learning to learn

Individual development tasks:

- Leaving the parental home
- Organising your own household
- Keeping track of finances and working if necessary
- Maintaining relationships and social environment



But why do so many students feel this way? Of course, every stressful situation is unique, but there are few structural reasons: Studying always involves institutional stress factors: performance requirements, deadlines, anonymity in large degree programmes, a lack of guidance in getting to know the university structure or learning how to study independently, and so on. During school, many things were quite different. At university, you are much more on your own. And even when you have accomplished all of this, the prospect of your first degree can cause further anxiety and worry, and the pressure from other factors increases: Do I need to do a semester abroad or an internship to improve my chances on the job market? How will I finance my master's degree? Will I find a job quickly enough?

And all of this comes at a time in life when many students have to manage their lives independently for the first time. The majority of students go to university straight after school or after a short break, so they are very young and, in addition to their studies, they have to master many individual development tasks – leaving their parents' home, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, keeping track of their own finances, possibly working part-time alongside their studies and, on top of all these challenges, maintaining their relationships and social environment. All of this can be incredibly time-consuming and exhausting. Not to mention if you also have to look after children or relatives in need of care.

So, it's really normal for us students to feel stressed and exhausted from time to time. That doesn't mean we're too "weak" or "stupid" to study.

Self-care

Free time is important for taking care of yourself:

What would be good for me right now?

- Am I getting enough exercise, fresh air and sunlight?
- Have I seen my friends, been able to talk about my worries or simply had a nice evening again?
- Do I perhaps need a whole day just for myself, without any obligations?
- Do I feel like cooking a proper meal again, reading a book for fun or going to a university sports class?

→ There is no one-size-fits-all solution; everyone has to find out for themselves what is good for them.

But: It is important that we take good care of ourselves in order to cope well with all these challenges.

By taking regular breaks and time out after stressful periods, we create space for ourselves to listen to ourselves and our bodies: Am I getting enough exercise? Fresh air and sunlight? Have I seen my friends, been able to talk about my worries or simply had a nice evening again? Do I perhaps need a whole day for myself, without any obligations? Do I feel like cooking a proper meal again? Reading a book for fun? Taking a university sports course?

Whatever it is, it must be beneficial for you and strengthen you. There is no one-size-fits-all recipe for good mental health. We are all individuals, and what helps one person may not be beneficial for another.

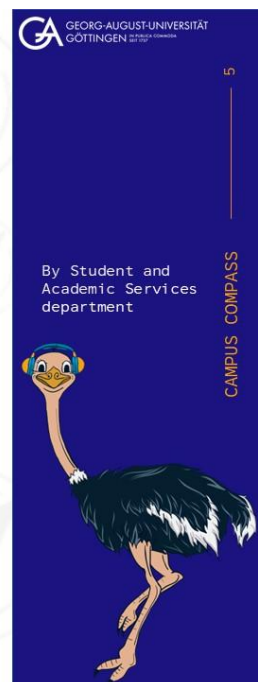
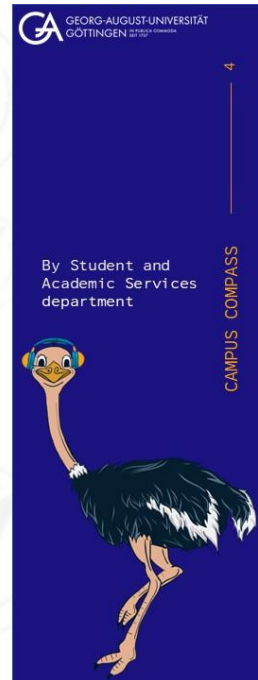
Guide *Mental Health*

Not sure what's good for you?

Or when is the right time to seek support?

Just take a look at the guide
Mental Health by ZEITCAMPUS

www.zeit.de/campus/ratgeber-mental-health



Not sure what's good for you or how you find out? Or whether you need support? Take a look at the Mental Health Guide from ZEITCampus. It will help you learn step by step how to take care for

yourself and when it's a good idea to seek help. You can find it online at www.zeit.de/campus/ratgeber-mental-health, and there are also some printed copies available at the university.

When to seek support?

Is everything just difficult for you right now?

Do you feel like something is completely wrong?

Or has something thrown you completely off track?

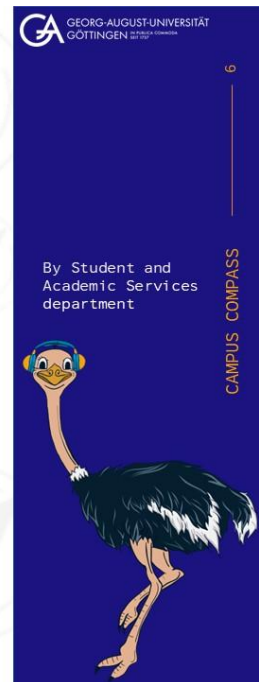
Then don't hesitate to seek support!

The sooner we receive support, the faster a crisis can be overcome.

The question of when a problem is serious enough or when you are feeling bad enough to seek help makes many people hesitate to actually ask for help. But we should all be aware that it is perfectly okay to seek support. In fact, the following generally applies: the sooner we get support, the faster we can overcome a crisis. And let me tell you: I've also been in therapy for panic attacks, and it helped me so much. But let me also tell you: just don't wait until things get that bad in the first place.

Of course there are sometimes short periods of stress, but once the big deadline has passed and the family drama that took place at the same time has settled down again, you immediately feel better. But perhaps a lot of things are coming together at once, or we experience something that throws us completely off track. If you feel that everything is difficult for you or that something is seriously wrong, don't wait, seek professional help.

Crises cannot always be overcome quickly and on your own. This can happen to anyone and is nothing to be ashamed of. Sometimes professional help is needed to prevent a crisis from becoming an insurmountable problem. It is also important to remember that what others seem to overcome easily may feel insurmountable to you. And that is precisely when it is important not to compare yourself to others, but to focus on yourself and seek help.



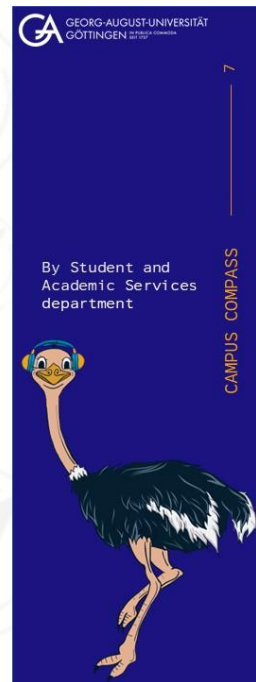
Support services for students

Service by the Psychosocial counselling centre (PSB)

- Psychological counsellors and psychological psychotherapists
- Topics include:
 - Learning difficulties
 - Exam/failure anxiety
 - Self-esteem issues
 - Disorientation, anxiety about the future
 - Conflicts with parents or partners
 - (Early stages of) mental illness such as depression or addiction

Students can get help from the Psychosocial counselling, in short PSB, provided by the student welfare organisation (Studierendenwerk), among other places.

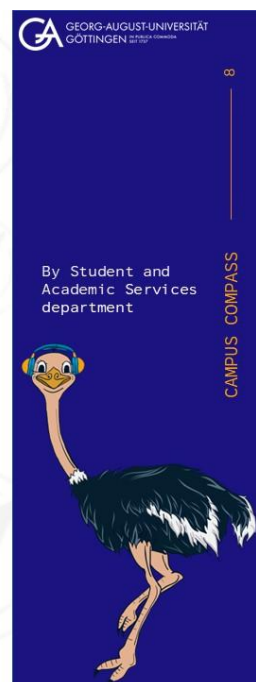
The psychological counsellors and psychological psychotherapist who work there can help you with many different issues, including learning difficulties, exam or failure anxiety, self-esteem problems, disorientation and anxiety about the future, or conflicts with parents or partners. They can also be your first point of contact for (early-stage) mental illnesses such as depression or addiction and, if necessary, support you in finding further treatment options. And even if you don't know exactly what the problem is, the PSB can help you figure out what's going on.



PSB advisory services

- Up to 10 confidential counselling sessions available free of charge
- Counselling in person, by telephone or via video
- In German and English
- Support finding a therapy place, if necessary
- Waiting time usually not longer than 4 weeks
- Certificates are recognised by the University for deadline extensions, exam dates, disadvantage compensation etc.

Up to 10 counselling sessions are possible and free of charge! The staff are bound by confidentiality and, if you wish, you can even receive anonymous counselling during a one-off consultation. This is important to me because many people still believe that psychological counselling or psychotherapy could stand in the way of them becoming a civil servant, for example. Although this is no longer the



case, it is still ingrained in people's mind, which is another reason why the PSB's services are so important.

In many cases, a single conversation or a few sessions can help you overcome a crisis and move forward feeling stronger. If it becomes apparent during these counselling sessions that (longer-term) psychotherapeutic treatment could be beneficial, the PSB team can assist you in finding a therapy place. So, you won't be left alone in the process! The counselling sessions are offered in person, via video and telephone, and even in German and English.

So, if you are currently in a crisis, finding everything difficult or don't know what to do next, call one of the PSB's open consultation hours, briefly describe your concerns and make an appointment. Unlike many registered psychotherapists, you usually don't have to wait longer than four weeks for an initial appointment at the PSB.

And by the way: at the PSB, you can also obtain a certificate that you can present if you need an extension for a term paper due to psychological stress, are unable to take an exam, need to take a leave of absence to have more time for your recovery, or want to apply for compensation for disadvantages because you suffer from panic attacks, for example. To do this, the staff will of course first need to get to know you and your problems better.

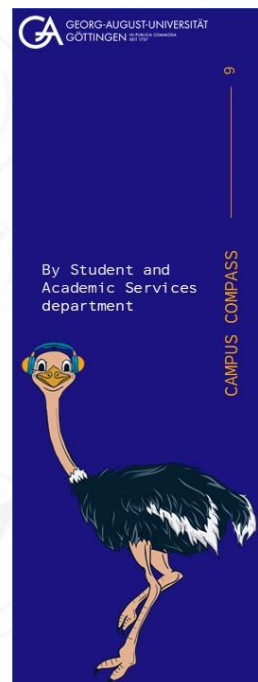
PSB courses and group offers

- Contact with other students, mutual support
- Topics include:
 - Mindfulness
 - Resources
 - Relaxation techniques
 - Time management
 - Dealing with exam anxiety
 - Assertiveness training for women
- HOPES-group: Support for students who need practical and study-related help to continue their studies after a serious mental health crisis

In addition to these counselling sessions, PSB also offers various coaching programmes and courses that can be extremely helpful at every stage of your studies. Some of these offerings have been designed specifically for the start of your studies or for completing your degree or doctorate. In the courses, you will not only receive support and tips from the staff but also get in touch with other students who are in a similar situation. And who knows, maybe you will continue to support each other even after the course is over?

The current range of courses covers topics such as mindfulness, resources, relaxation techniques, time management, dealing with exam anxiety and assertiveness training for women. While the counselling sessions are always free of charge, some of the courses require a fee of 20 euros.

If a psychosocial crisis or mental illness has forced you to interrupt your studies, the PSB also offers the opportunity to participate in the HOPES group. HOPES stands for help and guidance for students



with mental illness. In this semester-long group programme, students who need practical and study-related help to continue their studies after a serious mental health crisis can find support.

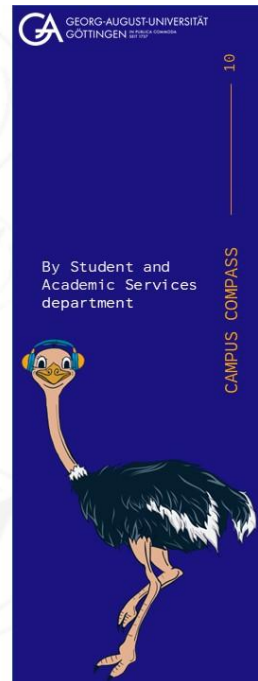
Information and Contact

Psychosocial counselling (PSB) provided by the student welfare organisation (Studierendenwerk)

www.studierendenwerk-goettingen.de/beratung-soziales/psb

Psychotherapeutic ambulance for students (PAS)

www.pas.uni-goettingen.de



You can find more information on the website www.studierendenwerk-goettingen.de/beratung-soziales/psb.

In addition to the PSB, there is a similar service offered by the university and university medical centre: the Psychotherapeutic Ambulance for Students, or PAS for short. In addition to psychological counsellors and psychotherapists, doctors also work there, so medication is also an option. To keep this podcast from getting too long, we can't go into too much detail about the PAS. However, you can find information on the website www.pas.uni-goettingen.de.

Studying is hard enough as it is, so we don't need to make it even harder for ourselves. Let's talk about our problems, listen to others and not leave each other alone. Together, we can do this.

Many thanks to Carolin Fernandez Castelao and Kerstin Karg from PSB for their support in researching this episode.

I hope the tips in this episode have been helpful and that you now know how to empower yourself and, for example, take advantage of the services offered by PSB or PAS when you need them.

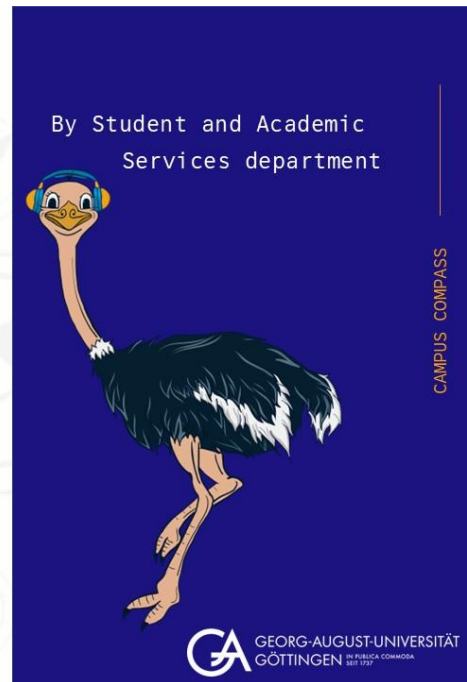
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THANKS FOR LISTENING!

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

www.uni-goettingen.de/kritik

OR SIMPLY SCAN THE QR-CODE.



Thank you for listening, I hope this episode was helpful to you.

Campus Compass was set up by Silja-Katharina Haufe, the Ombudsperson for students and responsible for Complaint Management at Göttingen University. If you would like to find out more about her counselling and her work, simply listen to our episode no. 1 or visit the website. Simply scan the QR code or enter www.uni-goettingen.de/kritik.

See you next time – at Campus Compass – your guide to university life.