Content

Introduction

More and more students are reporting increasing psychosocial stress for themselves and their fellow students. **The high examination load and pressure to perform**, a **reduced sense of solidarity** with fellow students as a result of the pandemic semesters and **increasing everyday demands** resulting from financial and social uncertainties are making it more difficult to actively participate in seminars and student life. On the one hand, the digitalisation of higher education is accompanied by an increasing **flexibilisation of the individual way of studying** (place, time, and teaching/learning formats), which can reduce the feeling of being stressed. On the other hand, the increased range of digital applications poses the risk of **mental and information overload.**

In cooperation with the German think tank *Hochschulforum Digitalisierung (engl.: Forum for Higher Education in the Digital Age, abbreviated: HFD)*, the team of the research project *enhance* (Mental Health in the context of digitalisation processes at universities) worked intensively on the topic of student mental health together with the "Student Mental Health" working group of the HFD's student *DigitalChangeMaker* cohort 2023/2024. They asked themselves how **mental health** can be better promoted **within digital higher education. The recommendations for action** and **good practice examples** presented in this Spotlight are aimed at all interested status groups at institutions of higher education and highlight various aspects such as the **(digital) design of space and relationships**, ways of communicating **health literacy,** and the encouragement of **student participation.**

Initial Situation

On the legitimisation of pressure & sSress during studies

You have to work and there's nothing to argue about (...) you have to fulfil your tasks. And nobody cares if you're running on empty (...) so I put other activities last.

In the quote, a student describes the importance of **performance ideals** in her everyday life as a student. Stressful experiences are accepted or romanticised as obligatory prerequisites for academic success.

If **stress and pressure** lead to a considerable impairment of the current and future **quality of life** and there are no adequate opportunities for recovery, this burden is unacceptable.

Nevertheless, a significant proportion of students in Germany pursue their studies under these conditions.

Classical instrument student, summer semester 22*

* The pseudonymised quotes shown are taken from the qualitative study of the enhance project (Schuhr and Brock, 2024)

Initial Situation

Typical stress factors in (digital) university studies

Typical Stress Factors

...in Digital University Studies

Performance Pressure

Time Pressure

Overloads

Feeling of Isolation

Problems with Concentration

Exam Anxiety

Information Overflow

Problems of Motivation

Social Exclusion

Multiple Loads

Organisational Problems

(Self-)Doubt

Behavioural Pressure

Content Volume

Reduced Social Contacts

(cf. Herbst & Müller, 2016)

(cf. Giesselbach et al., 2023)

Initial Situation

Who is adressed by Student Mental Health?

Everyone,
but especially:

→ **Students facing mental health challenges** report feelings of depression, overload, anxiety, harmful substance use, and high levels of exhaustion. (The prevalence of mental health issues sorted by stress pattern ranges from 31% to 42.2%, as shown by the results of representative student surveys in Saxony (2022) and Berlin (2021.)

→ **Students with mental illnesses** report, among other things: depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, addictions, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder (AD(H)S), autism spectrum disorders. (aggregated total: 65.2 % of n=25,462 students from "The student survey in Germany" 2021 (BMBF, 2023))

→ **Students in difficult life situations** are: financially and/or socially disadvantaged, involved in social obligations (e.g. caring for relatives, childcare), (chronically) somatically ill, international students. (proportion according to situation between 8% and13% of n=25,462 students from "The Student Survey in Germany" 2021 (BMBF, 2023))

The Burden of Intersectional Disadvantages

We know very well that the pluralisation of life situations is a huge topic in our society and, especially when it comes to students, we always act as if there was only one student and we offer them one course of studies, which they then have to complete in the way we have put that specific package together.

Lecturer at a Saxon university of applied sciences, winter semester 22/23

... what exactly that means, becomes clear from the following case, which happened at a university ...

The Burden of Intersectional Disadvantages

Zahra, who fled Syria in 2015, is about to complete her degree at a German university. Consultation hours with her professor for her upcoming bachelor's thesis are rare and usually take place online. As she doesn't have her own workstation at home, she often lacks concentration. Sometimes she doesn't understand everything in the digital format and doesn't have the confidence to ask the necessary questions.

Zahra has two sons, one of whom is at risk of failing at school due to learning difficulties. In addition to caring for her children and studying, she also has a job. She wants to be independent and be able to provide her children with their own room in the future. Last but not least, she loves her work and is very good at it. However, she feels increasingly overwhelmed. The last four semesters have been held digitally due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, she often couldn't keep up in class.

It is also difficult for her to socialise. When her fellow students meet up, they usually do so in the pub in the evening. It is often almost impossible for Zahra to join in. A fellow student made it clear to her that they couldn't become friends because their lives were too different. She once spoke up about such experiences in a seminar. A fellow Syrian student then came up to her and reprimanded her, saying that she was casting a bad light on the Arab community.

Zahra often feels lonely, isolated, overburdened and not belonging. She often misses her family, who live in another country. The online calls with her mother and sisters are sacred to her. She hopes to obtain German citizenship soon, but communication with the relevant authorities via email is slow and difficult. What's more, it turns out that an entry in her police file stands in the way of her naturalisation. It is related to a racially motivated act of violence that Zahra suffered and reported a few years ago. The uncertainty weighs heavily on her mind. She is all the more grateful for the people at the university who believe in her and support her.

The Burden of Intersectional Disadvantages

Students who are part of several disadvantaged groups , like Zahra, can experience **intersectional disadvantages.**

The interacting categories of disadvantage give rise to **particular stress situations** that often remain invisible in their interwoven nature. This requires an analysis of interacting experiences of exclusion and disadvantages as well as a differentiated view of identity (Winker/ Degele 2010).

Examples of overlaps between different social categories are:

Disabilty	Sexual Orientation	Religion/ World View	Ethnic Origin
Parents' Level of Education	Age Cohort	Refugee Experience	Gender Identity

The Burden of Intersectional Disadvantages

Due to the **pluralisation of life realities** and the **increasing diversity** at German institutions of higher education, a sensitive view of intersectional forms of disadvantages is becoming increasingly relevant. Nevertheless, support services are often only aimed at specific concerns (e.g. health counselling or anti-discrimination office), meaning that **the overall situation is rarely or never addressed or supported**. In the higher education context, this happens not only with the familiar categories of discrimination (e.g. skin colour) but also with specific categories (e.g. first-generation student).

For example, students need to ...

| ... work while studying. | ... do care work. | ... travel long distances to campus. | ... take care of more than just their studies. |

Die Studierendenbefragung in Deutschland: 22. Sozialerhebung des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung (The student survey in Germany: 2022; social survey of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research)

What lecturers can do

Mental stress can be both a **cause** and a **consequence** of discrimination. Disadvantaged students are often exposed to multiple stress factors at a time (due to jobs, family obligations, chronic illnesses, etc.), often have fewer resources that could help them deal with specific stressful situations and fewer means to take care of their (mental) health. Intersectional disadvantages require intersectional solutions. In practical terms, this means:

❏ Raise **awareness** of discrimination and disadvantage and recognise intersectional problems
❏ Develop sensitivity for **'invisible' disadvantage factors** (e.g. care tasks)
❏ Become aware of their **own privileges** at various levels (access to health resources, financial resources, independent organisation of everyday life, freedom from discrimination, etc.) and understand them structurally
❏ At the beginning of the event, provide **information about various support services and contact persons** for students
❏ **Regular exchange and networking** with local support organisations and offices (e.g. anti-discrimination officers, psychosocial counselling provided by the Studierendenwerk, AStA (General Students' Committee))
❏ Introduce **diverse perspectives and lifeworlds** into discourse to which disadvantaged people have no or only limited access (e.g. integrating feminist concerns into a meeting with exclusively male participants)

III. Recommendations of Action for Teachers and Higher Education Staff

Designing (Digital) Universities with a Human Touch

Designing (Digital) Universities with a Human Touch
Position

Students are responsible adults who have to face major life questions during their studies. The social space of higher education requires a perspective that places **people**, their **relationships** and their needs for **meaningfulness and significance** at the centre of learning (Felten/Lambert 2020).

Where students are reduced to grades, numbers and examination results, it is important to make **universities more human again**.

But how can this be achieved? Especially with regard to a **culture of digitality** in which social interaction, knowledge (re-)production and social negotiations are already taking place digitally (Stalder 2021)?

Designing (Digital) Universities with a Human Touch
More than digital tools – from digitalisation to digitality

Technical tools alone are not able to solve social stress phenomena in digital education.

Rather, we need to look at deeper **structural problems in the higher education system.** (Pietsch & Zybura 2022).

*What I experience now with regard to how a degree programme is completed and how teaching has to be done, is **far too stringent a corset** in my eyes, and I think it is also a challenge to get into such a very rigid structure now with digital means, and we practically despair of this rigidity with the desire to **open up and become more flexible**. I would like to see a **rethink of how studying actually works** in the course of digitalisation.*

Professor for Social and Childhood Pedagogy

Designing (Digital) Universities with a Human Touch

Informal rooms - even online?

Social interaction forms and conventions that form **organically** in face-to-face situations are only possible to a limited extent in digital media (Paruschke, Barlösius et al. 2023).
So how can informal interpersonal encounters be transformed into virtual space?

*One thing that would really support health would be **informal spaces;** for example, so **psychological problems** or something like that can also be better dealt with **in dialogue**.*

Student of Social Work, summer semester 22

Informal rooms as places of exchange between peers are an important resource for **student health**.

Designing (Digital) Universities with a Human Touch
Relationships in the digital space

The use of digital tools in online teaching has been perceived to be particularly productive by students when ...

*... it was **about an interesting topic**. When we had a **good relationship with the lecturer** and somehow had a **group feeling** and felt addressed.*

Student of Cultural Science, summer semester 2022

*Some lecturers even took ten or 20 minutes from time to time, like at the beginning, just to ask questions and talk about **how everyone was doing**. I always found that very connecting. Because especially in this online context, I really **missed the connection.** (...) And when the lecturers did something like that, it was also easier for me to **follow the content.** Because then I had the feeling, okay, we're also somehow **human here** as a group.*

Student of Social Work, winter semester 2022/23

A **trusting relationship** and knowledge of **communication conventions** are very important for digital teaching. To get there, **social check-ins** offer a **low-threshold** but effective first step.

What lecturers can do

It is not about 'micromanaging' needs and learning objectives or meeting social challenges with digital tools and methods. Instead, the objective is to re-imagine higher education in the sense of a 'conversation within a community' (Readings 1997) and ask ourselves how we can make teaching relational and human - both in person and virtually. In practical terms, this means:

- ❏ Involve students in the selection of learning content, methods and the choice of digital tools
- ❏ Express an authentic interest in students with the help of social check-ins
- ❏ Recognise black tiles as a **need for** privacy
- ❏ Maintain a resource- and needs-orientated, accepting, equal dignity **attitude**
- ❏ **Appreciate** contributions, learn names and their pronunciation, address appropriate forms of addressing people
- ❏ Create touching moments (Blazejewski 2021)
- ❏ Reduction of content: Less is more, online too! Activate existing knowledge resources instead of binge learning
- ❏ Create an atmosphere of "**relentless welcome**' across all rooms (Felten/Lambert 2022)

🔗 *Unconditional Teaching* (Pietsch & Zybura 2022)

Exam stress

The blatant demands placed on students by the development of the Bachelor's/Master's system. And how everything has been extremely shortened and squeezed, the degree programme. There is not really a feel-good phase any more. It's just learning without a break, more or less. To make sure you are available for the labour market as quickly as possible.

Student of Communication Science, summer semester 22

I also sometimes had the experience that the exam was already over and then I had to throw up [...]. Yes, you just muddle through and you actually get through it somehow. I often thought [...] before these oral exams that if I didn't have these stomach cramps or these night sweats [...], 'then it would only be half as bad.' Because yes, I also tell myself that I've studied, but (laughing) in my head it's always like: 'Okay, I didn't study this and that.'

Student of Dentistry, summer semester 22

Hochschulforum Digitalisierung

Digital Change Maker

enhance

Exam stress
The current stress situation

Many students suffer from a **high level of pressure to perform**, which is particularly noticeable in the examination phases. Due to intersectional disadvantages, students can also prepare for exams with varying degrees of intensity, which again has a strong impact on the **stress** they experience during **exams**. In addition, individual strengths and weaknesses differ enormously with regard to different examination formats.

The main stress factors for students include

- Exams (51%) ,

- Fear of poor grades (28%),

- Difficult or extensive subject matter (28%)

TK-Gesundheitsreport 2023
(2023 health report of the TK
health insurance)

Exam stress

Digital ways out

The use of digital, flexible examination formats can enable students, in particular with multiple stress levels, to take examinations with less stress. This not only promises mental relief, but also provides resources that are useful for learning. In conjunction with a flexibilisation of submission deadlines, the use of digital tools promises a higher and intrinsic motivation to learn, a more sustainable anchoring of content, the linking of practice and specialist knowledge as well as an interdisciplinary expansion of skills. Lecturers and other university stakeholders can contribute to changing the examination culture by:

❏ Critically reflecting on their own **attitude** towards the meaning and purpose of examinations (e.g. performance assessment, selection) and prejudices against students (e.g. general suspicion of cheating)

❏ Offering interlocking examination formats according to the **Blended Assesment Approach** (Jantos/Langesee 2023) and using **technology-supported methods** (animated videos, online quizzes, e-portfolios and peer assessments)

❏ Involving students in new digital examination formats as "**co-creators"**

❏ Taking learning processes and competence development lines as a basis for the examination design, integrating cooperative feedback loops and establishing a progressive error culture

❏ Integrating media-supported task solutions based on the '**bring-your-own-device**' principle

Budde, Eichhorn et al. 2024 ; Bandtel, Baume et al. 2021

Health Promotion at Universities

Health Promotion at Universities

Universities as central players of health promotion   (*Okanagan Charta* 2015)

There must be mental training. There must be resilience and stress reduction programmes, in various forms. [...] Whether it's muscle relaxation according to Jacobson, whether it's autogenic training, whether it's any other type of training, there needs to be a broader range of courses offered by universities. It can also take place online.

Lecturer at a Music University in Saxony, winter semester 2022/23

[When] mentally healthy studying comes up, [...] I think to myself: Well, now they have such a great project. And now? I don't know, I have the feeling that it's often a bit of a sham (pause). [...] I don't really take things like that serious any more.

Student of Childhood Pedagogy, summer semester 2022

III. Recommendations of Action

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Health Promotion at Universities
Status quo

In the current German higher education landscape, there are mainly **extracurricular health services,** i.e. health offers are utilised at an individual level and often without being embedded in the curriculum.
Some of these programmes include:

- *Courses on self-management (time management, self-organisation during studies, ...)*

- *Courses on mindfulness exercises, yoga or resilience training*

- *Psychotherapeutic counselling centres for students (PBS) which offer low-threshold, free and anonymous individual and group counselling services*

Due to the limited number and sometimes long waiting times, extracurricular health programmes can only cover part of the demand. Studies show that knowledge of such services is often low among students (Günthner et al. 2023).

But what is the actual state of health literacy among students?

Health Promotion at Universities
Health competence & digital health literacy

58.5 % of the participants in the study by Schricker et al. (2020) at TU Dortmund had limited health literacy. More than half of the students reported difficulties in finding health-related information, understanding it, categorising it for themselves and being able to apply it to their own situation. In turn, limited health literacy is associated with an increased risk of poor health behaviour and a poor state of health.

Young students (18-20 year olds), who were already in a **difficult situation** in terms of their **financial and social situation** and their **subjective social status**, were the most likely to report limited health literacy …

but...

Dadaczynski et al. (2022) found that the **digital health literacy of students**, i.e. the identification, understanding and application of health information based on digital sources, is **higher than that of the population as a whole**. The most common difficulty cited by 42.3% of the n=14,916 students surveyed was being able to correctly categorise the reliability of information.

Health Promotion at Universities
Intracurricular health programmes

*I think this should somehow be brought to you even more, or somehow in such a way [...] that it is **not an additional burden**, but is perhaps **integrated** into the degree programme **from the outset**. [...] So if there was something like that, and if you could somehow get credit for a course like that, I think that would be an additional incentive to take advantage of something like that.*

Only by introducing **intracurricular health programmes,** it can be ensured that a minimum level of measures reaches all students and does not place an additional burden on them.

Student of Social Work, winter semester 2022/23

Health Promotion at Universities
... or health-promoting universities?

Health promotion and the promotion of health literacy must not remain a mere add-on, but need to be **holistically integrated into the DNA** of universities.

The aim is to achieve the transformation from *health promotion at universities* to *health-promoting universities.*

National Action Plan Health Literacy

Health Promotion at Universities

Current approaches to the (intracurricular) implementation of health promotion

🔗 AK Health-Promoting Universities
The nationwide association of representatives from universities and university-related organisations is committed to the establishment of comprehensive health management and health promotion at universities based on the setting approach.

🔗 Mental Health Literacy Courses
These could be, for example, courses that develop mental-health-related projects on campus and thus create a participatory, 'hands-on' learning atmosphere.

🔗 Mental Health Coaches
Contact persons at schools who provide support services and create group programmes for dealing openly with mental health.

🔗 Experiential Learning
Experience-based learning by doing for non-health disciplines.

🔗 Virtual/telemedical offers
Low-threshold access to psychological and medical services through the use of audiovisual/digital communication technologies, e.g. Timely Care from Stanford University or the online offer of Enhance.

Health Promotion at Universities

Health integration in curricula

In view of current and future challenges, the integration of mental health and health-related topics into curricula is absolutely essential, both for the pure fulfilment of needs and for the promotion of health skills among students. **Intracurricular health programmes** are a necessary component of a systematic strategy to promote health and increase health literacy. In practical terms, this means:

❏ Universities need to become aware of their **central role as locations for health promotion**: this must be structurally anchored in the values and self-image of each university (e.g. in the form of SHMs).

❏ Involve all stakeholders in the higher education system.

❏ *Digitalisation can serve as a lever in the sense of local and temporal scalability of offers, but cannot serve as the sole solution.*

❏ *Obstacles such as the methodical implementation of a health concept in curricula, access to offers, additional burdens or the guarantee of creditability may have to be recorded and explicitly addressed on a site-specific basis.*

❏ Theoretical and practical **knowledge transfer** to promote health literacy and strengthen self-efficacy, resilience and emotion regulation.

Student Health Management

Student Health Management

„The aim of SHM is to create a health-promoting university environment for all students and to strengthen the students' individual health resources. It is recommended that student health management is systematically implemented and sustainably integrated into university   structures."

(Kompetenzzentrum Gesundheitsfördernde Hochschulen (Competence Centre Health-Promoting Universities))

SHMs are essential for centralising health-promoting offers for students and structurally linking them to universities.

Student Health Management
Student participation in the SHM

The target group of an SHM is very heterogeneous: students from all subject areas of different semesters with diverse demands and challenges during their studies. It is therefore all the more important that SHMs **act and communicate in a target group-orientated manner.**

Student participation is an indispensable component in the development, implementation and evaluation of measures carried out as part of an SHM. This is the only way to ensure that the reality of students' lives is fully taken into account and that students help to shape their universities in a way that promotes health as partners at eye level.

The graphics on the following two slides give a detailed overview of the levels of student participation.

Student Participation

Initiation

Giving students options to start their own projects Students

Involving students right from the initial ideas

Conception

students as members in the project and proposal team

Termination

Announcements and advertisement

Involvement of the student community

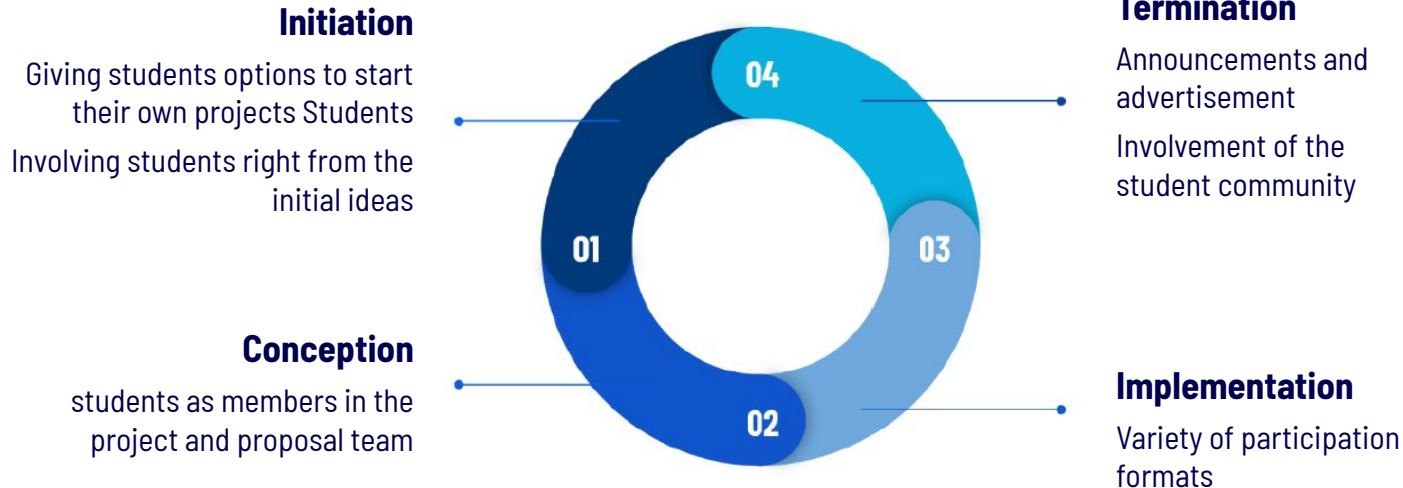**Implementation**

Variety of participation formats

Figure 2: Student-centeredness in teaching and learning projects should be considered throughout the entire project life cycle: from start to finish

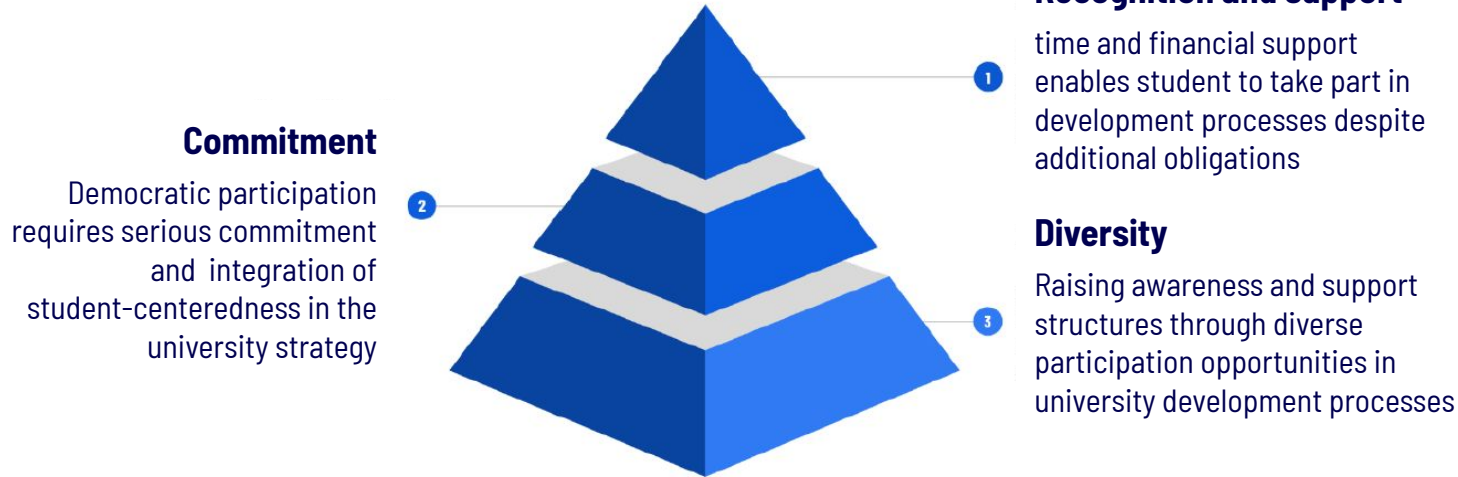Bachus, L., Sakuel, K., Rahrt, R.: *Studierendenzentrierung neu denken*. Diskussionspapier Nr. 22 Berlin: Hochschulforum Digitalisierung.

Student Participation

Recognition and support

time and financial support enables student to take part in development processes despite additional obligations

Commitment

Democratic participation requires serious commitment and integration of student-centeredness in the university strategy

Diversity

Raising awareness and support structures through diverse participation opportunities in university development processes

Figure 3: The organization university ensures student centricity when it takes student diversity into account in strategy and project development, commits to equal participation of status groups and recognizes and promotes student engagement.

Bachus, L., Sakuel, K., Rahrt, R.: *Studierendenzentrierung neu denken*. Diskussionspapier Nr. 22 Berlin: Hochschulforum Digitalisierung.

Student Health Management

Germany-wide SHMs: examples of good practice

SHM **Hamburg University**: *CamPuls II*
Wide range of multimedia offerings - from YouTube videos, signposts to learning places in the city and action weeks on campus on various elements of healthy studying.

SHM **Bielefeld University**: *Campus in Balance*
The SHM website offers students a digital guide to contact points and support services and as well as current events at the university.

SHM **Kempten University**: *Study Well*
Close collaboration with the community to realise student needs, e.g. in the planning of a feel-good place on campus.

Student Health Management
Recommendations of action

Of the 86 German universities that reported to have some kind of health management system in a self-assessment on the website of the Competence Centre for Health-Promoting Universities:

— 76 have an **E**mployee**H**ealth**M**anagement
— 64 have a **S**tudent**H**ealth**M**anagement
— 24 have a **U**niversity**H**ealth**M**anagement

The establishment of an SHM is particularly helpful for a more humane university, the teaching of key health skills and the promotion of student participation.

🔗 [Übersicht Studentische Gesundheitsmanagements in Deutschland (Overview of Student Health Management Systems in Germany)](#)

Student Health Management

Development of student health management

The establishment of an SHM is often full of obstacles, particularly due to a lack of financial and human resources. How can the systematic development and participatory establishment of an SHM at a university succeed?

- ❏ Build on existing infrastructures of an **EHM or UHM**
- ❏ Read the Public Health Action Cycle
- ❏ **Involve students** right from the start, e.g. via student representatives or info mails
- ❏ Enquire about needs for an SHM, e.g. through information stands and anonymous note boxes
- ❏ **Link various players** in your own university landscape:
  student advisory services, university sports, student services, learning centres, etc.
- ❏ Check funding and support **from health insurance companies**
- ❏ Check the Handbook "Student Health Management" for tips

Summary

Digital higher education offers a number of advantages, such as flexibility and accessibility, but in combination with other structural stress factors, it also poses a considerable **challenge to students' mental health.**

To effectively address these challenges, universities need to develop and implement **holistic mental health promotion strategies**. This includes creating opportunities for **informal exchange**, integrating **health competences** into curricula and **actively involving students** in health-promoting initiatives.

Particular attention should be paid to recognising and **taking account of intersectional disadvantages** in order to ensure that all students can benefit equally from the measures.

Human design of the (digital) university:
- Promoting informal exchange opportunities in digital learning environments, e.g. sharing information on contact points and counselling services on digital platforms
- Maintain a needs-orientated attitude

Health promotion at universities:
- Integration of health competences into the curriculum
- Should not just be seen as an additional offer, but rather as a core feature of health-promoting universities

Student Health Management:
- Strengthening the participation of students in health-promoting projects
- Involvement of multipliers and expert groups

Summary

This Spotlight on the topic of student mental health in digital higher education shows that, for a sustainable improvement in the mental health of students, it is important that universities take their role as **places of health promotion** seriously and provide appropriate **structures and resources**. This requires not only the **use of digital tools**, but also a **culture of support, empathy and participation**.

Ultimately, a health-promoting and inclusive university landscape can only be created through the **joint commitment** of all those involved - teaching staff, students and university management.

The DigitalChangeMaker Initiative (DCM)

Initiative founded in 2018 in the German Hochschulforum Digitalisierung to **strengthen student participation** in the **learner-centred digital transformation** of the university landscape.

Want to help shape the university world of tomorrow?

Contact us!

More about the initiative

Lea Bachus
Student employee, DCM Initiative
lea.bachus@stifterverband.de

Silke Müller
Programme manager, DCM Initiative
silke.mueller@stifterverband.de

Hochschulforum Digitalisierung

About HFD

The German **Hochschulforum Digitalisierung** (German Forum for Higher Education in the Digital Age, abbreviated: HFD) not only **monitors, shares and acts as a source of information on important (inter)national developments in Higher Education**. Through a range of programmes and projects, it also builds **key competences of higher education professionals** across the country. Independent yet connected with a **network of stakeholders** from different sectors, including education and IT professionals, EdTech leaders, students, policy-makers and digital learning experts, it is uniquely placed at the **heart of the digital transformation of higher education in Germany**. The HFD was founded in 2014 as a **joint initiative** by the Stifterverband, CHE Centre for Higher Education and the German Rectors' Conference and is **funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research** (BMBF).

STIFTERVERBAND
Bildung. Wissenschaft. Innovation.

CHE
Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung

HRK Hochschulrektorenkonferenz
Die Stimme der Hochschulen

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

Consortium partners

The organisations supporting the Hochschulforum

STIFTERVERBAND

HRK

CHE Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung

The Stifterverband is a joint initiative in which 3,000 companies, compay associations, foundations and individuals come together. The Stifterverband's objective is to achieve sustainable improvement of the German education and research landscape.

The Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (German Rectors' Conference) is the voluntary association of the public and state-approved universities and higher education institutions in Germany.

The CHE Centre of Higher Education is supported by the Bertelsmann Stiftung und and the German Rectors' Conference and advocates for a versatile science system.

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