



Open Letter

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Geschäftsstelle:
Thüringer Weg 11 Zimmer 006
D-09126 Chemnitz
Telefon: 0371 / 531 16 000
Fax: 0371 / 531 16 009
E-Mail: stura@tu-chemnitz.de
Internet: www.stura.tu-chemnitz.de

Digital, ingenious, no matter what - what will happen to the summer semester 2020

Dear students, professors and staff of Chemnitz University of Technology,

and in particular: Dear members of the rectorate,

Today, the second week of the full stand-by mode (sometimes also called Lockdown) of TU Chemnitz comes to an end. The last days have been an unprecedented challenge for all of us, personally for each individual, as a community but also on all levels of cooperation within the university. Like most of the 2,300 employees of the university, we work from home and try to keep up to date with the latest news and events. In such an exceptional situation, it is important for each and everyone of us to work together and communicate with each other. However, our paths diverge visibly. The University Management has set up a crisis committee to act "appropriately" during this emergency. The students, the largest group of members of Chemnitz University of Technology, are only represented in it because the student council has vehemently advocated student participation. We currently represent more than 10,000 students who were left alone without officially communicated information and a direct possibility to participate in this situation.

As students who are both affected by the problems and have access to information from the crisis committee, we have a very demanding double position in this voluntary supervision crisis management during this time. At the moment we try our best to be there for our fellow students, to make their acute problems heard on the level of the decision makers and to provide them with all the scarce information in a concentrated and up to date way. We are especially thinking of our fellow international students. This is the 28 percent of the TUCfamily of which the university management is ordinarily so proud. At the moment, however, this group of students simply falls by the wayside, as specific information is not offered and general news was translated with a considerable delay, if at all. We are happy that our criticism was heard at least in this point and that the fifth open letter of the President was published bilingually from the beginning.

Even the coordination on fundamental issues is sometimes non-transparent and chaotic. Every week, new and contradictory information on the 2020 summer semester is heard from different quarters. We have heard a great deal, ranging from a later start, to a shortening of the semester, to a shift in the period of attendance to the lecture-free period (an unspeakable cognitive error on the part of the HRK President). In this respect, we clearly agree with the demand that the semester should not be credited because, despite all our efforts, it cannot become a normal semester. We welcome the first step in the direction of digitising teaching and are impressed by what has been made possible by the staff and lecturers so far. Nevertheless, we are convinced that this is only a stopgap measure, but by no means a substitute for qualitatively well developed face-to-face classes. This is shown, among other things, by the fact that the students were only informed at first about the start of the digital lectures via individual social media accounts of the press office and not via a central circular mail, before it was mentioned nearly one week later in the fifth open letter from the president.

The transition of the Central Examination Office (ZPA) and the Student's Office (Studentensekretariat) to work from home was also carried out somewhat less than perfect. Only the vehement opposition of the student body has ensured that the processing of the examination procedures is not completely stopped and that certificates are issued and grades are registered. After all, this is one of the core processes of the proper administration of a university, which must be guaranteed even during emergency operation. However, there is still an urgent need to improve the digitisation of the administration. At the moment, it is assumed that students have access to scanners, printers, fax machines or the like in order to be able to submit applications or homework and theses. Due to closed pool rooms, copy shops and so on, this assumption is thought too short, creates unnecessary barriers and generally counteracts the desired inclusion.

While students have already invested countless hours and nerves to collect and process information, to offer security to the students and to represent their interests, the press office has still tried to process the current situation botanically.

For this we do not expect hollow phrases of thanks in an open letter, but rather that student interests finally get the priority they deserve. This has to happen especially against the background that we are the basis of existence of our TUCfamily. We therefore assume that our demands will be implemented uncompromisingly and without delay.

Yours sincerely, with best wishes for good health,

the student council of TU Chemnitz

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via the usual channels or by e-mail to: pr@stura.tu-chemnitz.de.