

Dear Students,

The semester is nearing its end and soon you will be involved in the oral and written exams which unfortunately are conducted online because the university buildings are still closed for most activities. As everybody has experienced and is experiencing at the moment, in Hamburg restrictions have been gradually eased and some even were lifted, but still we must observe high caution lest the virus to spread anew. Therefore, the university is very cautious to open up its buildings again for ordinary business and strongly advises to conduct alternative ways of examining instead of the usual oral and written exams at the AAI or neighbouring buildings.

This is a challenge for both students and staff members, particularly for the language classes in which the need for direct teaching in a classroom where linguistic but more specifically paralinguistic elements, such as gestures, facial expressions and postures, can be learned. Such elements are much harder to be conveyed through distant teaching.

On this note we would like to express our admiration and commend all of the students, tutors, and especially the language lecturers, who are doing amazing work by teaching Southeast Asian languages to the students online without waver! For all of us it is proving to be quite tiring to teach or be taught online, but our language lecturers have the most contact hours and their classes involve the most intensive teaching methods. **HUGE** compliments to all of you who are involved in this!

We hope all working students have been able to regain their old jobs or have secured new ones. We also hope that you managed to overcome the frustrations of being at home all the time and not being able to meet up with friends or do the work you normally do at the library! Restrictions have been eased but the crisis is not over yet. We hope that the libraries will soon be able to open for longer hours and make study places available. We will let you know if and when they do.

For the next semester we will need to view how the teaching and all the administrative procedures can be returned to the ways before the pandemic. A rather logical outcome of the advantages of how teaching is going at the moment may be that Zoom and other online platforms will be used much more frequently for teaching in the future. This would also allow students and or teachers to stay at home and/or to conduct courses in close cooperation with specialists and universities in other parts of this world.

One crucial part of the curriculum as we know it is the semester abroad programme, which requires students to study and/or conduct other relevant activities in the region in Southeast Asia where the studied language is used. It is extremely important for students to get the experience of living for a few months among the people whose language she or he studies and to extend her/his language proficiency in the process. With the restrictions still in place and without being certain about the future developments of the pandemic it is extremely difficult to plan for a semester abroad in the next winter semester. More information from the AAI board of examiners (Prüfungsausschuss) about what to do and how to proceed is in the message that can be downloaded from this website, but in general one can say that the advice is to postpone and try to finish parts of the study that you need to do anyway before going abroad next year. If you want and can postpone, you do not need to do anything, except for registering for the courses next semester. But, in case you cannot wait and would need to waive the semester abroad semester, you need to apply for an exemption (Erlass) of this part of the curriculum and design a plan to obtain the necessary 30 credit points.

We wish you all the best of luck with the remainder of this semester and with your exams, and also want to thank all of you for your generous cooperation and all your assistance during this semester so far.

Stay focused, healthy and sane!

Very best wishes,

All lecturers and staff at the Department