

Covid-19 Survey Faculty of Sustainability – Results employees

1. Problems and effects

Challenges related to work:

Most participants saw the aspect of working from home as a huge problem. The juggling of child care and having a full-time job was the most challenging. The following were also mentioned to be great causes of problems:

- For many, there is no longer a separation of work and free time which has led to a state of them being always available. This causes a lack of clarity, a lack of structure, and a lack of finality.
- Online teaching (incl. the planning etc.) takes up more time than expected.
- The same is true for research funding from the DFG: It helped, but was a very exhausting and time-consuming process.
- Another major issue is the lack of motivation to work on one's own research or qualification work (doctorate, habilitation).
- Some also report their concern that the quality of their own work, teaching, and supervision suffers from "emotional instability." One person also explicitly worries about students and that their curiosity and questions will go unanswered because they can no longer participate in full teaching and discussions.
- Especially in the second round of the survey, many report that they are able to publish less or not at all and that the quality of their own research also suffers.
- The persistent lack of exchange is also described as particularly challenging in the second round of the survey.

Private and health challenges:

This new lifestyle also causes many health problems. Many report negative physical consequences caused by sitting too long and spending less time being active. These issues and the pandemic in general then lead to psychological and emotional difficulties as well.

Stress and loneliness are most commonly cited as triggers for emotional problems. People who have a "limited social network" in Lüneburg (especially international employees) constantly worry about their families back home and that they will not be able to be with them if they get sick, as they will have to continue working their jobs. In addition, there is the uncertainty that some do not know who would take care of them here in Lüneburg if they got sick and went to the hospital. Not speaking fluent German is mentioned as another big problem.

Differences to the beginning of the pandemic

Many participants notice fatigue in themselves, other employees and students. The long lockdown and the lack of perspective lead to frustration and exhaustion and further to a loss of contacts and motivation. However, some also speak of a more relaxed way of dealing with the situation and becoming accustomed to it. Particularly the experiences in handling of online teaching is mentioned positively. Some do not notice any differences.

2. SUPPORT THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY AND SUGGESTIONS

Many participants had suggestions on how the university and faculty can support them:

- Advice on how they can work from home ergonomically
- Assistance and flexibility with regard to hiring student assistants
- Increasing evaluation time
- Connecting more with supervisors and sharing how they are doing
- It was suggested that the university provide more support to employees who have to take care of children or family members more often, such as compensating for missed publications through a point system. Similarly, it was suggested that the university provides these employees with a

certificate confirming that they were employed during the pandemic and that the situation affected their research.

- One person reported that his*her request for an Internet connection at home was denied, requiring his*her to privately sign a more expensive contract, which was over budget.
- Individuals who do not live in Lüneburg would have liked to have been offered a place to work in Lüneburg.
- There was a desire for more accommodating exceptions and creative solutions, e.g., on the topic of vacations, contract extensions, or SHK positions.
- But the university was also praised, especially in terms of its flexibility and efficient IT support and the smooth running of online teaching.
- Some report that they actively use the existing or new support services of the university.

Other suggestions on how the university can help were mostly related to psychological counselling to get through the pandemic. In addition, workshops in German and English were suggested to address and help deal with stress and anxiety disorders. Another suggestion was to reduce teaching loads. In addition, the following suggestions were made:

- Provide more opportunities for students to teach outside
- Provide disinfectant at the doors and hallways
- Covid-19 issue should be actively integrated into research and teaching

3. STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH THE IMPACTS

In addition to the suggestions above, many participants developed their own strategies to deal with the situation. While many have said that they simply try to "deal with the situation," others have explicit methods:

- Organizing virtual meetings with friends and colleagues.
- Acceptance that less is possible and they cannot deliver the same results as before
- Prioritization of activities, i.e. they did not have the possibility to solve every problem of every person who came to them. This includes setting limits on one's own work capacity.

Contact information, complementary quotes and all results can also be found [here](#).