


German Rectors' Conference HRK: Guidelines and standards for international university cooperation

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 <https://www.hrk.de/resolutions-publications/resolutions/beschluss/detail/guidelines-and-standards-in-international-university-cooperation/>

International cooperation is indispensable to German universities. Standards are needed for this cooperation that enable sustainable interaction, in particular with partners from nations with restrictions on civil liberties.

HRK President Prof Dr Peter-André Alt explained:

"The HRK Executive Board has now adopted such standards and guidelines. In so doing, we are deliberately sending a signal, precisely at this time of international crisis due to the corona pandemic."

International networking provides vital stimulus for innovation in teaching, learning and research. For students and researchers alike, it constitutes professional and personal enrichment. The HRK paper emphasises these opportunities, but also gives substantial consideration to the challenges and risks international cooperation may pose to the integrity of national structures: *"In this tension between opportunities and risks, it is important to proactively identify realms of possibility for cooperation, without jeopardising our own values and standards in the process."*

When universities operate across borders, they need to be aware of the firm, well-considered value systems that underpin their activities. The HRK addresses this need with the guidelines and standards for international university cooperation that have now been adopted. HRK Vice-President Professor Dr Ing. Bernd Scholz-Reiter, under whose guidance the paper was prepared, said:

"Now is precisely the time to strengthen and expand international cooperation. It is part of our responsibility to support our partners, particularly in the Global South, in these difficult times. We must fear substantial loss of progress in the research systems there if the limited state resources in developing and emerging nations are concentrated solely on tackling the pandemic. A global challenge such as the current pandemic demands a global search for solutions and intensive exchange with our partners throughout the world."

Scholz-Reiter also emphasised the following:

"However, we must also ensure that the academic freedoms of German universities and their members are not restricted by partnerships and that cooperation takes place on an equal footing. Especially in sensitive research areas, it is also important that the universities and their members protect their own and the public interest appropriately. This holds true now and for the future."

The HRK has formulated non-country-specific fundamental principles and values around the various dimensions of international cooperation: *"Strategy and governance", "Joint teaching and learning", "Joint research", and "Universities as transnational spaces"*. They are designed to provide key players – both the universities as institutions and the individual members of universities – with support and orientation on the ground when setting up and maintaining resilient university partnerships.

It is envisaged that the guidelines and standards presented will be reviewed at regular intervals. In addition, country-specific papers will be developed in a second stage.

Source: HRK via IDW News (English translation of the HRK press release from 7 April 2020)

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