Principles of good digital teaching

Preamble

The University of Jena considers itself to be an institution offering face-to-face teaching. For this reason, face-to-face interaction and exchange on site are essential for academic learning. However, the digitalization of teaching in higher education is an ongoing and dynamic process. As students and teachers are gaining more experience with regard to digital teaching, its potential is becoming increasingly apparent. The principles of good teaching laid down in the Strategy 2025−Teaching also apply to digital teaching. Since digital learning contexts create special challenges for teachers and students, the present document supplements those principles, placing a specific focus on digital learning.

Principle 1: Teachers ensure the quality of digital teaching and learning

Digital content supplements and complements the traditional formats of teaching and learning. Academic teaching can benefit from the use of digital resources if they are selected, modified and commented on by teachers. It is therefore mandatory for teachers to ensure the quality of digital teaching and learning offerings, to adapt them to the specific prerequisites and needs of the students as well as to the examination objectives, and to ensure compliance with the legal framework. This is why teachers remain indispensable in digital teaching and responsible for the design of teaching and learning opportunities.

Principle 2: Digital teaching is a social and communicative process

In digital teaching settings, the exchange between teachers and students as well as among students is always mediated by a virtual learning environment. The mediated nature of these interactions makes it particularly challenging to build social relationships. Digital teaching is to be understood as a social process and should be designed as such. Teachers foster student learning by continuously interacting with students in relevant phases of the learning process. They are to design accessible digital teaching formats that give all students the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with each other in relevant phases of the learning process.

Principle 3: Digital teaching tools are selected to achieve didactic objectives

The range of classical teaching and learning methods is constantly being supplemented by digital tools. However, the use of digital tools per se does not make for good teaching. As with traditional face-to-face formats, digital teaching and learning tools are developed with specific objectives and situational requirements in mind. Being clear about the objectives makes it possible to take a well-founded decision about where digital or analogue formats have particular potential in the teaching process and how they can be interlinked, if necessary. In this sense, digital teaching tools are an addition to the range of media and methods available and make it possible to coordinate learning objectives, teaching methods and performance assessment even better.

Principle 4: Digital teaching requires a special form of feedback culture

The lack of personal contact makes it difficult for teachers to provide students with immediate feedback on their learning processes and results. Especially in digital learning environments, it is important to provide students with targeted, regular and transparent feedback in order to give them orientation and allow them to adequately assess themselves. For feedback to promote learning, it has to be based on clear criteria and given during the learning process. In addition to feedback from teachers to students, forms of peer feedback (among students) and teaching evaluations (feedback from students to teachers) can also be used.

Principle 5: Digital formats of teaching and learning are used consciously

Digitalization is bringing about a rapid increase in freely accessible knowledge and new ways of imparting knowledge and of interaction between teachers and students, as well as among students. At the same time, there are limits in terms of time and cognitive processing that need to be taken into account in teaching and learning. This is why it is important to select and prioritize teaching content and to be aware of the limited nature of resources, especially when using digitally supported teaching and learning formats, to ensure that the workload for students and teachers is appropriate.