

The Corona Pandemic 2020 -

Challenges for Phd Students

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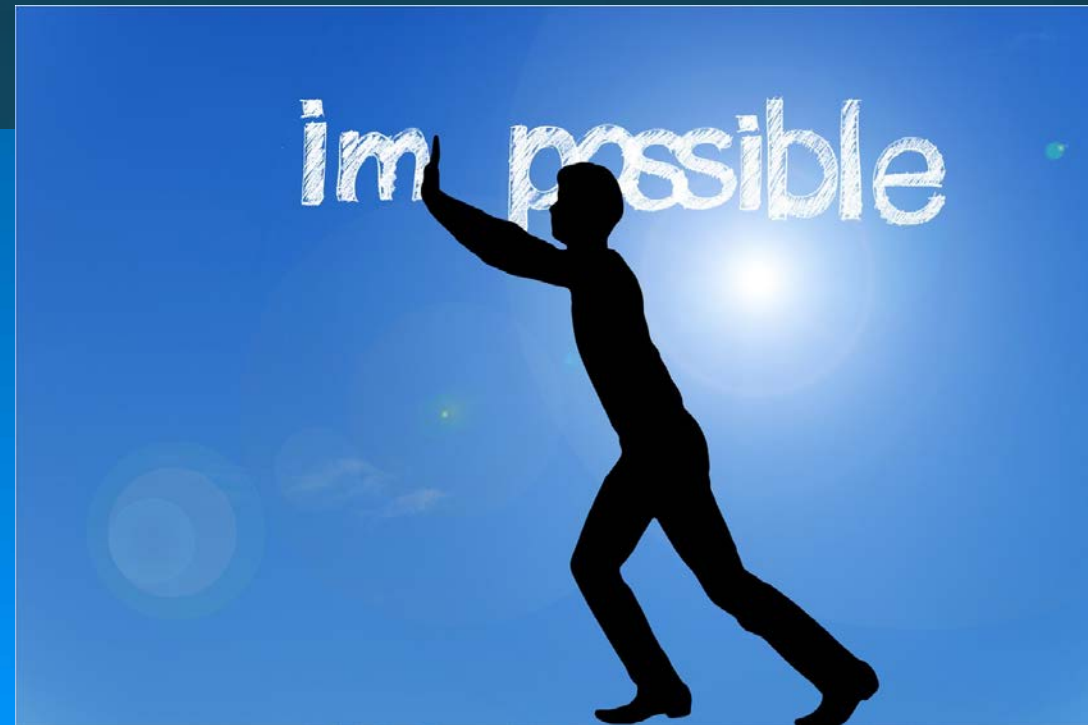
Challenges for Phd Students



The Corona Pandemic 2020 -

+ strategies to cope
+ chances for something new

Challenges for Phd Students





Challenges

- Research options limited: labs closed, travel ban
- Setting up a work place at home
- Reduced contacts / social distancing, worries about family members
- Conferences and workshops cancelled
- Funding of the own project or of scheduled field trips, research placements etc.
- Health problems, worries about the own health
- Getting used to online meetings, coping with technical problems
- Keeping in touch with the supervisor and thesis committee
- Self-organisation, finding new working strategies, finding motivation
- Lack of child care
- Organising a „hybrid“ PhD defence (committee is present, rest of the audience via zoom)

Challenges that especially international students face:

- Worries about family members far away at home
- Fewer social contacts in Bremen
- Cultural differences in communication become more obvious



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Labs closed:

- In some institutions (e.g. MARUM), PhD students were the first ones allowed back to the office/labs
- In others (e.g. ZMT), lab facilities are limited and PhD students are more or less the last ones to return

➡ It is the responsibility of your supervisor to ensure that you can gain sufficient data for your thesis!

It is YOUR responsibility to let them know when you are having trouble or need to change the scope of your project.

In many cases, your PhD thesis / scientific articles will not follow the exact strategy that you had planned for in the beginning.

➡ This will prepare you perfectly for a career in academia or any other field!



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Conferences cancelled:

- Most large conferences have been transferred to online format

Thus, it is much easier to participate, no travel / funding needed



vEGU21: Gather Online | 19-30 April 2021



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Conferences cancelled:

- Many PhD students are worried because they know how important conference participation is for a career in science



(1) You can be part of a historical development:
the first ever science online conferences!

(2) When people read your CV in the future,
they will know why you didn't attend any conferences in 2020!





Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Field work postponed:

➡ Talk to your supervisor and/or thesis committee!

There are enough samples in Bremen to finish a PhD!



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Funding:

- GLOMAR funding can be postponed - take it when you need it
- Most funding agencies have programmes to account for delays due to the pandemic – contact them!



Delays in the PhD project:

- Most funding agencies have programmes to account for delays (not necessarily additional funding!)
- Bremen Fonds via the University of Bremen: extra funding for some PhD students



Changes in schedule / delays are intrinsic to science,
it's 'part of the game' to figure out how to handle them!



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Also important, in terms of your
employability in academia in Germany:

The German government has extended the permitted time limit for early career researchers at Universities by 12 months.

PhD students who had a contract between 1 March and 30 September 2020 get an additional 12 months,

PhD students who start/ed a new contract between 1 October and 31 March 2020 get an additional 6 months.

(Amendment to the Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz)

see <https://www.bmbf.de/de/karrierewege-fuer-den-wissenschaftlichen-nachwuchs-an-hochschulen-verbessern-1935.html>



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Working at home:



Make sure your work place
at home welcomes you and
motivates you to start
working!



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Developping a daily structure / keeping up motivation:

- Do something to make up for the missing journey to work, e.g. go for a cycle or run every morning
- Start working at the same time every morning
- Have sufficient breaks (~90 minutes for about 15 minutes), walk around or do short exercises
- Do something nice and rewarding every day, e.g. call a friend, watch a film, cook a nice meal, go for a walk, ...
- „Meet“ other Phd students online to work jointly / at the same time, for example at the

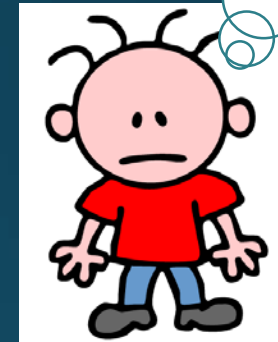




Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Feeling lonely, missing social contacts:

- Make sure to talk to a friend / family member every day
- Arrange to meet a friend or colleague to go for a walk outside
- Meet friends or colleagues in informal online meetings



Make sure to also look out for others!

This will make you feel good yourself and it may help someone else.

People who feel very low or depressed often don't manage to ask for what they need.

how are you?



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

(Getting used to) Online Meetings

Practice them!

→ GLOMAR document about Thesis Committee Meetings online

<https://www.marum.de/en/education-career/GLOMAR/thesis-committee-meetings.html>



➡ Online meetings will happen much more frequently in the future,
this is your chance to become an expert!



Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Health problems

- All doctoral practices have very good hygiene measures. It is safe to go and see a doctor whenever you need to! It may be a good idea to ring them up first to enquire about their hygiene measures.



corona news and regulations in Bremen in English:

<https://www.bremen.de/corona/corona-faq-englisch>





Strategies, ideas, support, outlook

Communication with the supervisor

- Many PhD students have problems to stay in contact with their supervisor during the pandemic
- Some supervisors have/had trouble getting used to the situation as well

➡ Let your supervisors know what you need from them, they don't know by themselves!

Many PhD students miss the opportunity to ask „little“ questions, the ones you would normally ask during the coffee break or when you meet your supervisor / colleagues in the hallway.

➡ Join all kinds of meetings / courses / seminars where you meet people to ask your questions there.

Have regular meetings with your supervisor where you can discuss big and small questions.



The biggest challenge of all (?)

Staying happy in all this mess

Try to start with a positive mind set

Ask yourself:

What is this situation trying to teach me?


Which positive experiences can I make?

What I can I do for myself to make me feel good?

Most importantly:

It is always okay to ask for help or support!


For example:
Your PhD representatives,
People from the Early Career Researcher Support,
or any of the people/service points listed on this
web page:



SERVICE


- Administration +
- First Aid
- Alarm
- MARUM work place +
- International Scientists +
- Jobs / Open Positions
- Gebäudebetriebstechnik
- Support and resources for MARUM staff

MARUM as a Work Place




Welcome Information

Find some useful contacts for the first days at your new work place




Well-being

Staying healthy and looking after yourself; support when you are encountering problems




Emergency

Fast help in cases of e.g. fire, accident, hate crime, violence or sexual harassment



Work Safety

Information on topics like fire



Family support

Taking care of family members

<https://www.marum.de/en/Service/MARUM-as-a-work-place.html>