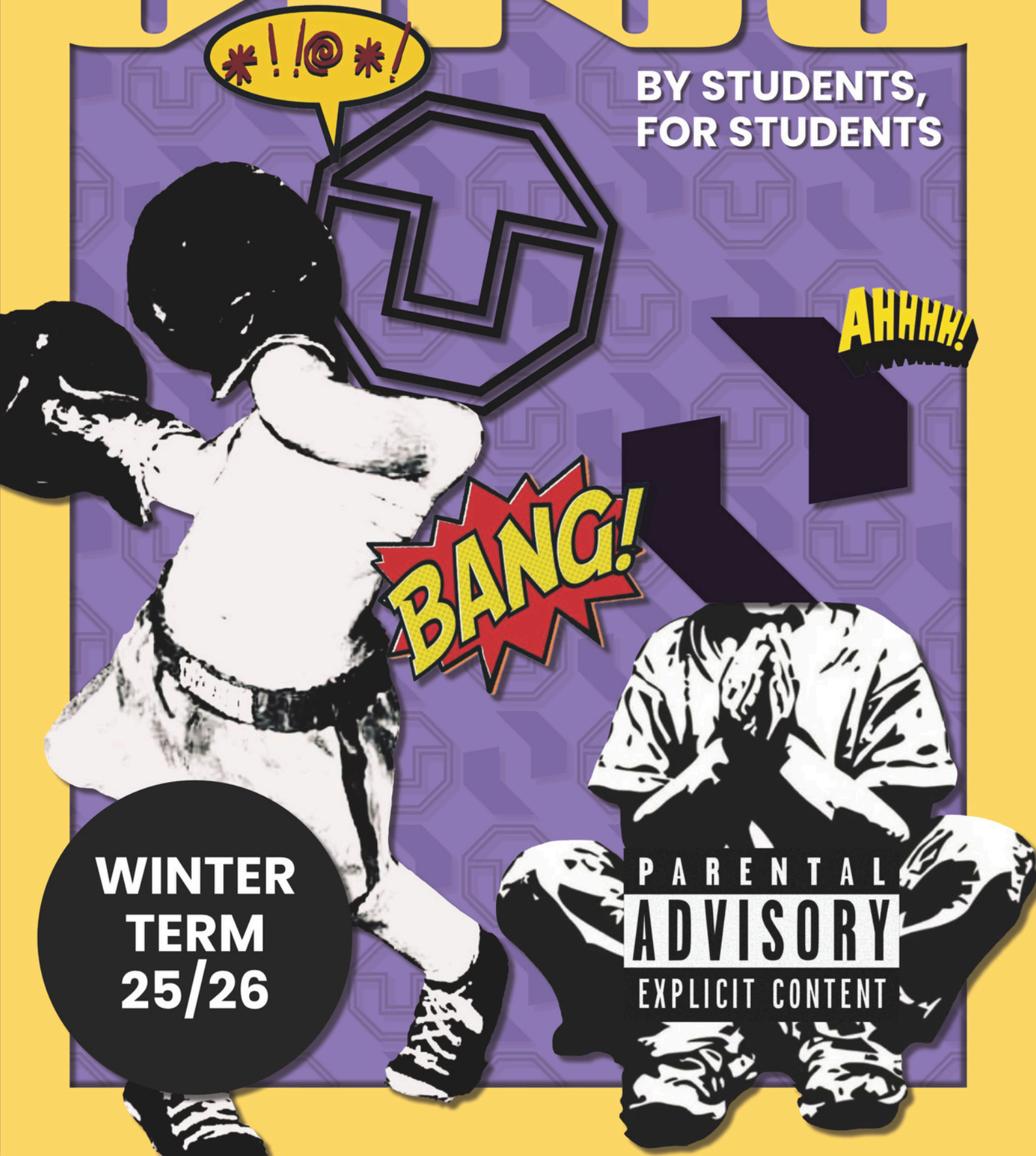
"NAH, I DON'T WANT TO BECOME A TEACHER."

JOBS

BY STUDENTS, FOR STUDENTS



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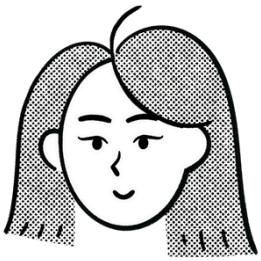

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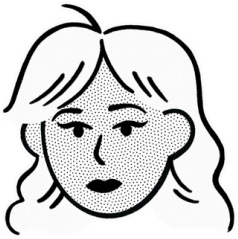

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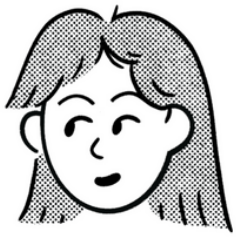

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From the Editorial Desk

As the editor of JABS and lecturer for the class that comes with it, I might be the only person to have read every article of every issue that has been published under my harsh rule, being the one correcting, assessing and grading the articles. This issue is an exception as it contains, among other – probably more interesting – articles, a rare insight interview with the editor of JABS, meaning me. As I did not want to correct, assess and grade the article about myself, I delegated this task to a trusted colleague and will be reading the interview when it is published.

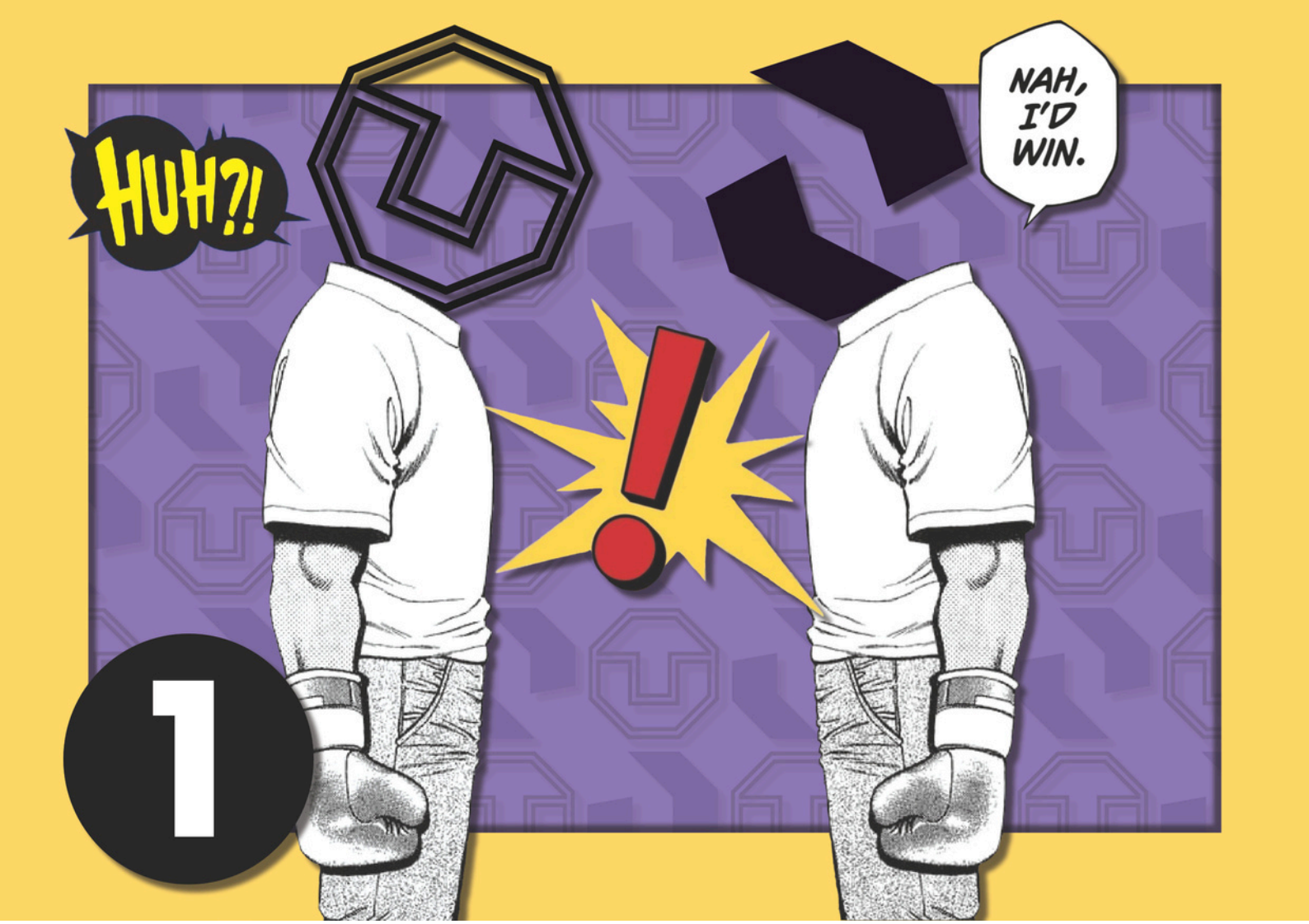
Now, I must say, being interviewed is a rather strange feeling for someone who does not know the experience. You suddenly begin to think better of what you are saying and become very fussy about the picture you release for publishing – an experience I probably shared with Moritz Ingwersen, Junior-Professor at our institute, although he already gained some interview experience before, I heard.

Yet, this semester's issue has so much more to offer than the two interviews. It features a critical approach to the new TUD logo and the dark history of our university. We look into the construction of a new student dorm and the renovation of sports facilities on campus, which have not only been greeted with enthusiasm.

While our authors investigate the problems of the pressure to succeed in your studies, they also give ideas on how to remain sane while studying. Sports betting might not be the best pastime to do so, we figured out. A much better idea could be keeping a pet. But this would mostly only work out if you lived alone. But are there also advantages in sharing a flat with a fellow student?

Teachers and students alike have noticed a very extreme attendance curve during the semester, so our authors took a closer look at this problem. One of the reasons for this phenomenon might be that students do not always see why some courses or course content should really demand their energy and attention. We will take a critical look at this topic as well. A problem on a wider scale might also be the decline of student numbers in technical studies and how our studies are influenced by the rise of artificial intelligence. And have you ever wondered how studying is experienced through the eyes of a student with a chronic condition? Well then, just keep reading and enjoy this issue of JABS...

Michael Calabranno
(editor)



TU Dresden

TU – What Did You Do? The University of Technology and its Doings between 1933–1945

"TUD is diverse and international, excellent in research, innovative in teaching, and socially engaged." During the recent new branding process of the TUD, the university carved out values they want to be associated with not only internally, but also on the world stage of university corpora and research institutions. The TUD portrays itself as an open space welcoming everyone who wants to learn, teach or conduct research.

Nevertheless, this newly established branding stands in sharp contrast to an earlier chapter of the institution's history. During the National Socialist regime, academic life at the Technische Hochschule Dresden (THD), as it was called back then, was shaped by exclusion, ideological conformity and active participation in the Nazi system and ambitions.

What was studying and teaching like?

By 1933, THD could look back on over a century of academic success with a prestigious reputation well-known across Europe. But while Germany was still sorting out its new democratic identity after the proclamation of the Weimar Republic, many students at THD were already critical or even hostile towards the new political system. In 1926, a student organization was founded that was directly subordinate to the NSDAP in Munich. Antithetical ideologies or student organizations could not assert themselves over the rising Nazi regime and were altogether prohibited in 1933 through the Reichstag Fire Decree.

That same year, National Socialist students took part in book-burnings on Mommsenstrasse, destroying books by Erich Kästner, Kurt Tucholsky and other authors deemed as poisonous to the Aryan minds. Not only were certain authors and artists vilified, but lecturers of the THD who did not conform to the system or the image of the ideal human propagated by the NSDAP were widely boycotted by students. The party found strong and immediate support in most of the student body.

Nevertheless, despite all their support and euphoria towards the new potentates, the party decided to restrict the number of students at THD in 1933. Only 1,300 people were allowed to study there. From then on, only the system's elites (or their children) were able to study at THD.

Since 1938, the number of people who were approved to study not only at THD, but German-wide, was restricted even further: “non-Aryan” students were then prohibited from studying at universities. Until 1938, they were tolerated but already faced discrimination through higher tuition fees or a ban from graduating in certain fields, like education.
Fascist and antisemitic ideas, as well as fears for the (economic) future and for an uprise of proletarian influence in academic life, were cultural mediums in which the National Socialist ideas could grow, not only in students, but also in lecturers.
When the Great Depression occurred in 1929, and Hitler’s party gained more popularity in the overarching society, many academics started accepting or even advocating for Hitler. In 1932, academics from all over Germany, 11 from Dresden – the highest number of academics from any German university, published and signed an open letter in the Völkischer Beobachter issuing the German academic elites were content with Hitler’s goals and ideology, especially the “fight against the influence of foreign races in Germany” as the academics stated. The support of the academic elites is something all totalitarian systems strive for to ensure the curated regime would not be questioned and destroyed from within through critical thinking.
Since April 1935, THD members could no longer vote for their rector. Instead, he was appointed through the Minister of Volksbildung and directly subordinate to the Ministry of Science, Education and Culture, which was also in direct contact with Hitler and his leadership. This was done to reassure only people prone and loyal to the system would have this kind of power and could reinforce the NSDAP ideology in daily academic life.
With the process of Nazification, in which laws like the Reichstag Fire Decree were established, and the implementation of the Führerprinzip, the German academic landscape was integrated fast into Hitler’s dictatorship.
In 1938, he had full control over German academic life, and only lecturers and students in line with Hitler’s ideology were able to pursue an academic career. Employees and students of Jewish background or with antithetical political views were dismissed from the universities all over Germany through the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. This affected, for example, Victor Klemperer, Richard von Mises or Paul Tillich.

What were the topics of scientific interest?

Not only were studying and teaching transformed by the National Socialists, but also the scientific work and research of the THD.

The arts, humanities and cultural studies were gradually decreased after 1933. On one hand, because many of the lecturers were dismissed by the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, and on the other hand, because the labour and research capacities were converted towards technical research for the upcoming war effort.

Topics of scientific interest and work were, e.g., reinforced concrete for air-raid shelters, systems of aerial survey for the Luftwaffe, construction project planning for ports, streets and aircraft factories, as well as special education for engineers on the topic of thermal engineering. A big team of professors and other academics of the THD was directly involved in the research and development of guided missiles and rockets at Peenemünde.

Which structural changes took place on campus?

The Jante building is the only construction vestige directly resulting from the National Socialist period. Housing the Automotive and Aviation Institute, it was considered "essential to the war effort."

At Münchner Platz, in the immediate vicinity of campus, the former Royal District Court is located, now home to the Schumann, Tillich and Hülsse buildings. Under both the Nazi regime and later the GDR, the complex was used as a courthouse, prison and execution site. Between 1933 and 1945, 1,345 people – mostly Czech and Polish resistance fighters – were executed there. In 1945, 85% of the campus and the building complex of Münchner Platz were destroyed by the bombing of the Allied Forces.

Today, the structures at Münchner Platz, besides their use as faculty buildings, are a memorial and museum (located in the Schumann building) where one can learn about the place's history under all four historical spheres it experienced: late German Empire, Weimar Republic, Nazi-Germany and GDR. The admission is free.

The influence of the Nazi-regime did not spare academic life at THD. Instead, it fully reshaped the understanding of learning, teaching and researching for 12 years and influenced the contemporary campus. Since 2021, the TUD has been thoroughly refurbishing its history and doings from 1933 to 1945. By studying and learning from the past, we can change the future for the better so that our university never again becomes a hostile place blinded by hatred, dogmatism and fascist ideologies.

by Lani Mariebell Gerlinde John

A New Look for Tradition: TU Dresden's Logo Redesign Sparks Debate

When the TU proudly revealed their new logo on their Instagram channel with the words: From now on, we will be presenting ourselves with a fresh new look as

"TUD | The Collaborative University - inventive. transformative. engaged.",

the online response was immediate. All it takes is one look at the comment section to find out: most people are quite upset about the change, and it did not take long for the internet to create memes and mocking videos about it.

But are these comments and videos really representing the public opinion? And what does a person who works in communicative design think about this big change? To explore these questions, I conducted a small survey and interviewed a Communication Designer to understand the reasoning and strategy behind the rebrand. And if you currently belong to the "old logo forever" camp, you might view the new design differently by the time you reach the end of this article.

To start my research and get a better feeling for the public opinion, I decided to create a poll.

I printed out the old and the new logo and asked the participants: Which logo do you prefer? They were then supposed to choose between the old and the new logo. For that purpose, I divided the voting audience into two groups. The first one consisted of 50 TUD university students and the second one of 50 random pedestrians. I asked the students in front of the SLUB main building and chose the "Theaterplatz" in Dresden for asking random pedestrians. The results were not shocking and confirmed the feeling I got from the internet: both voting audiences preferred the old logo, and in total, 88 out of 100 people liked the old logo better.

Remains of the attempt to cover up the new logo.

But why would the university change an obviously much-liked logo, probably being aware of possible backlash?
To understand the redesign completely, it is important to shed light on the background. According to TU Dresden, the former logo had a strongly technical aesthetic: geometric, closed, and highly symmetrical. While this once suited the representation of a technical university, it no longer represents today's institution. The TUD expanded into a diverse, comprehensive university, which shows in the new brand values: "collaborative", "transformative", "inventive" and "engaged". These were difficult to communicate through the old logo's enclosed form.

The redesign, therefore, aimed to preserve familiar elements while opening the shape up, making it more dynamic and inclusive. Instead of highlighting individual departments or disciplines, the new logo places the university's collaborative character at the centre. The goal is that all scientific fields will be able to identify with the brand equally.

Interview with Steven Seip (Communication Designer)

To get a different view on the logo change, I interviewed the Communication Designer Steven Seip and asked him about his opinions on the change as well as what he thinks are the reasons that the new logo gets so many negative reactions.

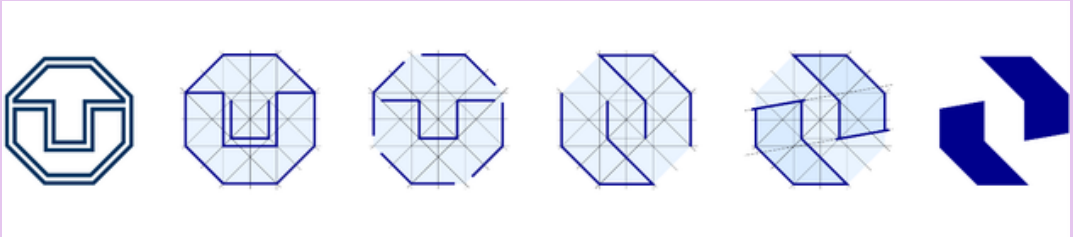
Which aspects of the new logo stand out positively to you?

"The new logo is definitely simple. The old one was as well, but the new design feels much more open and dynamic. The people in charge at TUD have clearly dealt inten- sively with the university's strategic direction, and this has been trans- lated visually into a new, simple logo. The old logo appeared very technical and solid, which was certainly appropriate for a technical university, but TUD has been a full-fledged university for more than 30 years now. From my point of view, the rebranding is a reasonable step to communicate that shift externally as well. The yin-and-yang-like appearance of the new symbol fits the new positioning as "The Collaborative University" quite well, while the use of the octagonal shape references the old design. Even though, from a design perspective, I could nit-pick a few details, the new design is a solid and logical evolution."

How do you feel about the new logo, considering the general change of course at TUD, with the aim of "highlighting and expanding the diversity of its members"?

"Considering the new strategic direction of TU Dresden, I see the logo as an appropriate visual translation of that ambition. The university wants to highlight its diversity more strongly and position itself as a broadly oriented comprehensive university. For this, the previous purely technical and very closed design language of the old logo is no longer sufficient today. It appeared stable and precise, but also exclusive and rather inward-facing.
The new symbol opens up and thereby creates more room for interpretation. The two shapes convey a sense of exchange and togetherness, without completely cutting off the connection to the past. In this sense, the logo fits well with the idea of a university that does not just tolerate diversity but actively wants to make it visible.

From my perspective, the communication around the rebrand also seems relatively transparent and thorough: in several videos and articles, the university explains why the decision for a new logo was made and what it is intended to express.
Design is not just about making things look nice; it solves problems. In this case, the problem was the outdated perception of the old TUD logo. To me, the solution feels logical and strategically well justified."



As a Communication Designer, how do you explain the displeasure regarding the new TUD logo and the insistence on sticking with the old logo?

"I can absolutely understand the criticism. Change is never easy for people, especially when it touches on their sense of identity. Many do not just associate the old design with a graphic shape, but with a piece of history and belonging. A rebranding can therefore quickly feel like a loss, particularly when the new symbol appears more abstract than the previous one. An abstract logo that represents more of a concept than a literal depiction of a product or category is not immediately intuitive and requires a greater mental transfer.
Another reason for the discontent, in my view, is that the old logo, with its symmetry and technical character, appeared more official, while the new design deliberately breaks with this aesthetic. As a result, it initially feels more relaxed, or even less serious, to many people. A logo often only unfolds its full impact once it has accumulated meaning over many years.
That is also why so many people cling to the old logo. Over decades, it built up this layer of meaning and, for many, simply felt like TUD. The new logo does not yet have this advantage, and that inevitably creates friction."

After reviewing TU Dresden's statements and speaking with a Communication Designer, it becomes clear that the new logo reflects more than aesthetic preference. It visualizes the university's shift from a technical institution to a diverse, outward-looking one, and it aligns with the new brand values, intentionally moving away from the closed and mechanical feel of the old design.

The strong backlash, however, is understandable. Logos accumulate meaning over the years, becoming symbols of identity and belonging, and the old TU Dresden logo had decades to grow into this role. My survey confirms this attachment to the old design, yet it also highlights how people respond emotionally to what they know.

Whether the new logo will eventually be embraced remains uncertain, but understanding the motivation behind it may help the community approach the change with more openness.

by Lina Günther

University of [...] Dresden? The Decline of Student Numbers in Technical Fields at TU Dresden and the Implications for its Future

The implementation of TU Dresden's rebranding, including its new logo and its new corporate design, has sparked enormous controversy among students and staff at the university. Some students refuse to adapt to the latest design—even petitions were started as soon as the recent corporate identity was launched. However, the university itself is keen on defending its new image, rather than opting for a return to tradition. On top of that, the university claims that the new logo, which has been opened in a very literal way, is supposed to represent openness in all fields of study and research, thus refraining from a corporate design which is now seen as too technical. But how can the corporate identity of a University of Technology be too technical? Not a small number of people have been perplexed by this statement. Moreover, further questions have been raised about what the dismissal of a supposedly too technical identity denotes for the university's future – a university that is deeply rooted in the fields of technology. In particular, the field of engineering is of very high importance for the university's history and reputation. Yet, does the break with the technical tradition also affect the technological subjects directly? What implications might follow for the university's future?

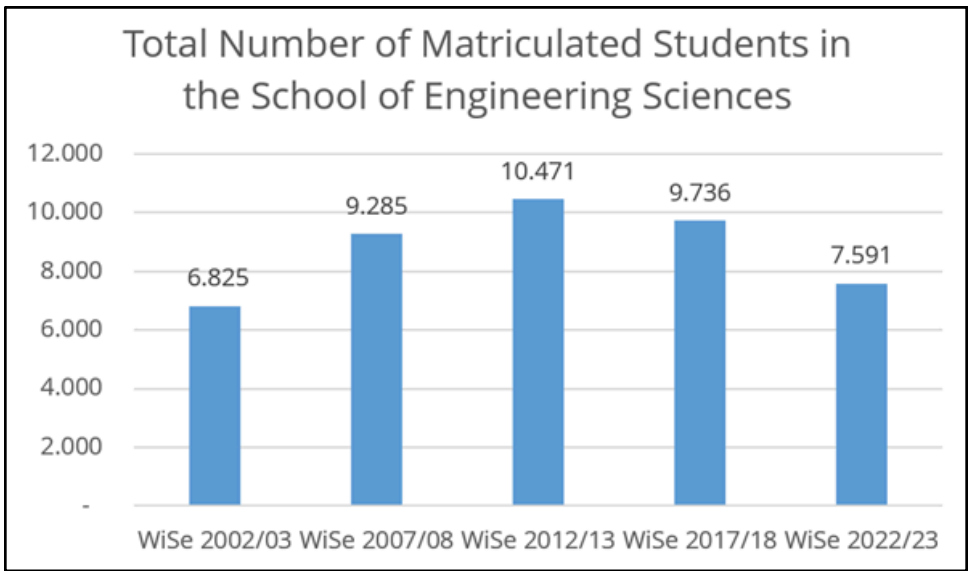
The influence and status of technology have been fundamental for the university since its beginning in 1828, as it was founded alongside with Johann Andreas Schubert, a professor for Engineering Sciences, who was also the first engineer to build a steam locomotive in Germany. Accordingly, engineering institutions have continued to be of high importance for the university's work and reputation to the present day.

In addition to this, TU Dresden accommodates six Clusters of Excellence, many of which rely on engineering sciences such as mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and computer science as their foundation in research.

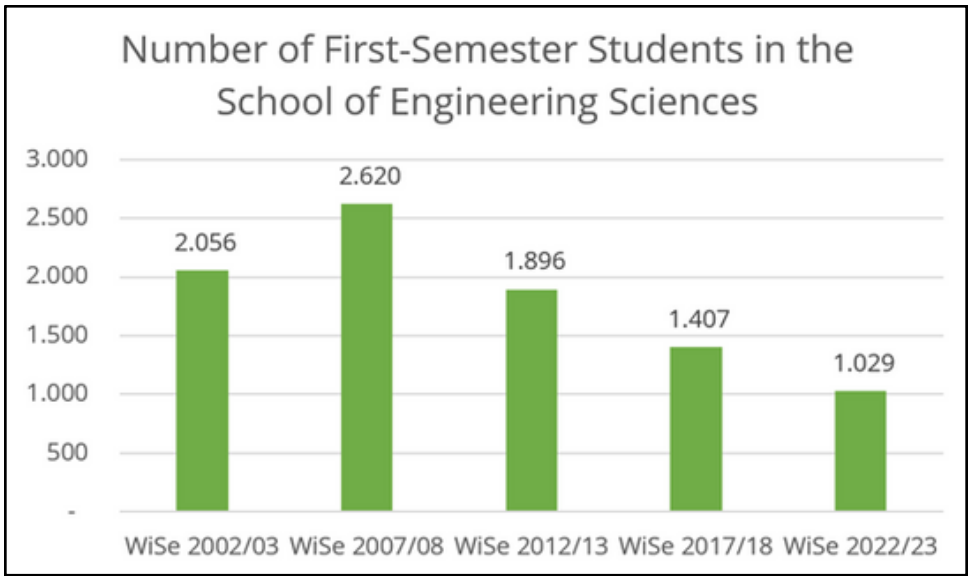
Therefore, the Excellence Strategy serves as a flagship for the university, especially since TU Dresden is, apart from the Berlin University Alliance, the only university in East Germany to bear the status of Excellence.

Yet, the number of matriculated students has been constantly declining. This phenomenon, however, is not exclusive to TU Dresden. The decline of student numbers affects universities overall in the East German states and, thus, the majority of courses of study offered. The reasons for this development are varied. Not only do the low birth rates of the 1990s and 2010s contribute to the decline of enrolled students, but the political climate is also a particularly crucial factor for the reputation of East Germany. As a result, the area's universities bear the consequences. Due to the rise of right-wing extremism, many students from West German states feel repelled from enrolling in Eastern German colleges and universities.

Engineering is of tremendous significance to the TU Dresden. However, a concrete look at the annual statistics reports has shown that the total number of matriculated students in the School of Engineering Sciences (Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Mechanical Science and Engineering) has been decreasing since a peak in the Winter Semester 2012/13, going from 10.471 to 7.591 matriculated students ten years later in the Winter Semester 2022/23.



Furthermore, a look at the number of first-semester students reveals a more drastic image. After a pinnacle in the Winter Semester 2007/08 with 2.620 matriculated students, the number has reduced by more than half in the Winter Semester 2022/23 to only 1.029 newly matriculated students.



However, while no direct studies examine the consequences of declining enrolments in the field of engineering for TU Dresden specifically, research on German-wide trends suggests that reduced student numbers have significant implications for industrial innovation and the supply of skilled labour. As a University of Technology, such developments on the national level provide an important context for strategic action at the institutional level to address the potential consequences, which primarily affect the university's reputation and image.

Nationwide efforts have been made by politicians and universities themselves to counteract these developments and attract more students to engineering courses. According to a study conducted by the German "Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung", these efforts were largely unsuccessful. As an attempt to challenge the long-term negative development in the field of engineering, TU Dresden has invested in several measures as well. For instance, in order to challenge the low birth rates in Germany, the university has welcomed a great number of foreign students—a majority from China and India—to the School of Engineering Sciences.

Contrary to frequent claims, foreign students have been proven to be beneficial for the German economy, as they contribute to sustainable economic growth, according to the German Academic Exchange Service, DAAD. Moreover, the university has launched several campaigns designed to make engineering studies more attractive for potential students. For example, there is a programme run by the "Junior-Ingenieur-Akademie", which aims to open up opportunities and prospects for future STEM studies to pupils in Dresden. At the same time, TU Dresden also aims to attract more women to technical subjects with the help of STEM ambassadors. These are women who work and research in STEM at TU Dresden, setting a positive example and providing support during studies.

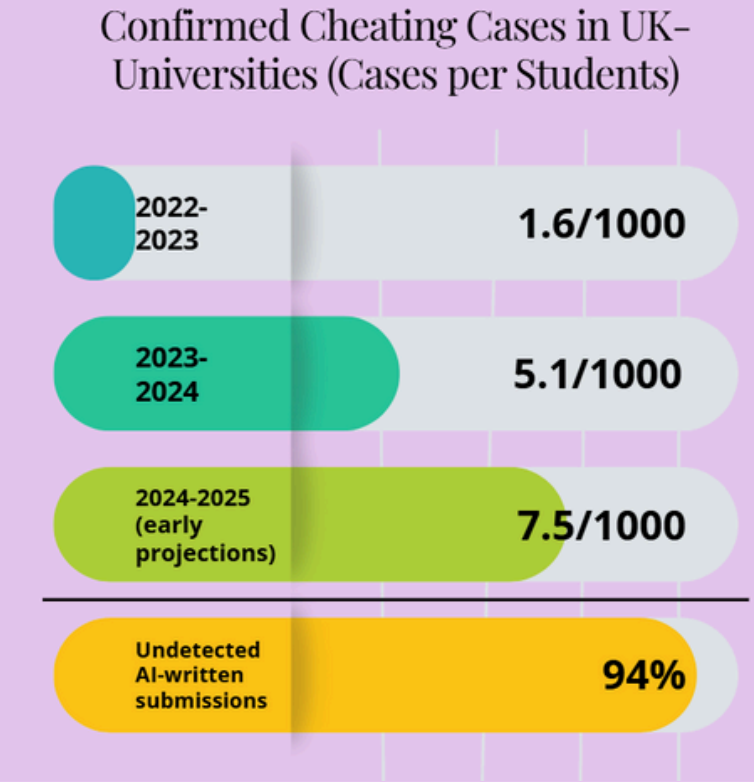
In conclusion, despite the measurable decline in student numbers in the School of Engineering Sciences, TU Dresden's image as a University of Technology does not appear to be fundamentally endangered. While enrolment figures point to structural challenges that are shaped by many universities throughout the country, they do not reflect a weakening of the university's technical core. On the contrary, TU Dresden's position within the Excellence Strategy, research, and industry continues to underline its standing as a leading institution in engineering and STEM. At the same time, the university's targeted investments in attracting potential future engineering students demonstrate a clear awareness of shifts in demography and society. Looking ahead, the decisive factor for TU Dresden's future image will be defined by how successful the attempts to stabilise student numbers will be, without diluting its technical profile. If the university manages to align its open self-conception with a continuing commitment to excellent engineering, the current decline in enrolments may prove to be a transitional challenge rather than a lasting threat to its identity as a University of Technology.

by Charlotte Hochberger

AI and Academic Integrity
The New Cheating Crisis

When ChatGPT entered the academic world in late 2022, universities faced an unexpected problem: how can academic integrity be upheld when machines can write better essays than some students? Today, institutions everywhere are struggling to define what constitutes original work and what counts as cheating in an age of artificial intelligence. The term "artificial intelligence" (AI) is used very broadly; here, however, I will focus specifically on so-called "large language models" (LLMs) such as ChatGPT or Perplexity.

Across the world, universities are experimenting with different ways to handle this new challenge. Some ban AI, while others cautiously integrate it into their study programmes. Each institution provides a set of guidelines for students and staff. At the University of Oxford, students are allowed to use LLMs if they are transparent about their usage. While AI-generated texts may not be submitted as complete work, students may use LLMs to generate alternative phrasings or rewrite their own texts in a particular style. Meanwhile, Harvard University does not permit any part of a student's paper to be written by AI, although instructors may grant exceptions under specific circumstances.



The Dresden University of Technology (TUD) has established its own guidelines, which can be found on its website (Home/TU Dresden/Digitalisation/Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Using AI at TU Dresden). Their official stance is similar to that of many other institutions: "TU Dresden

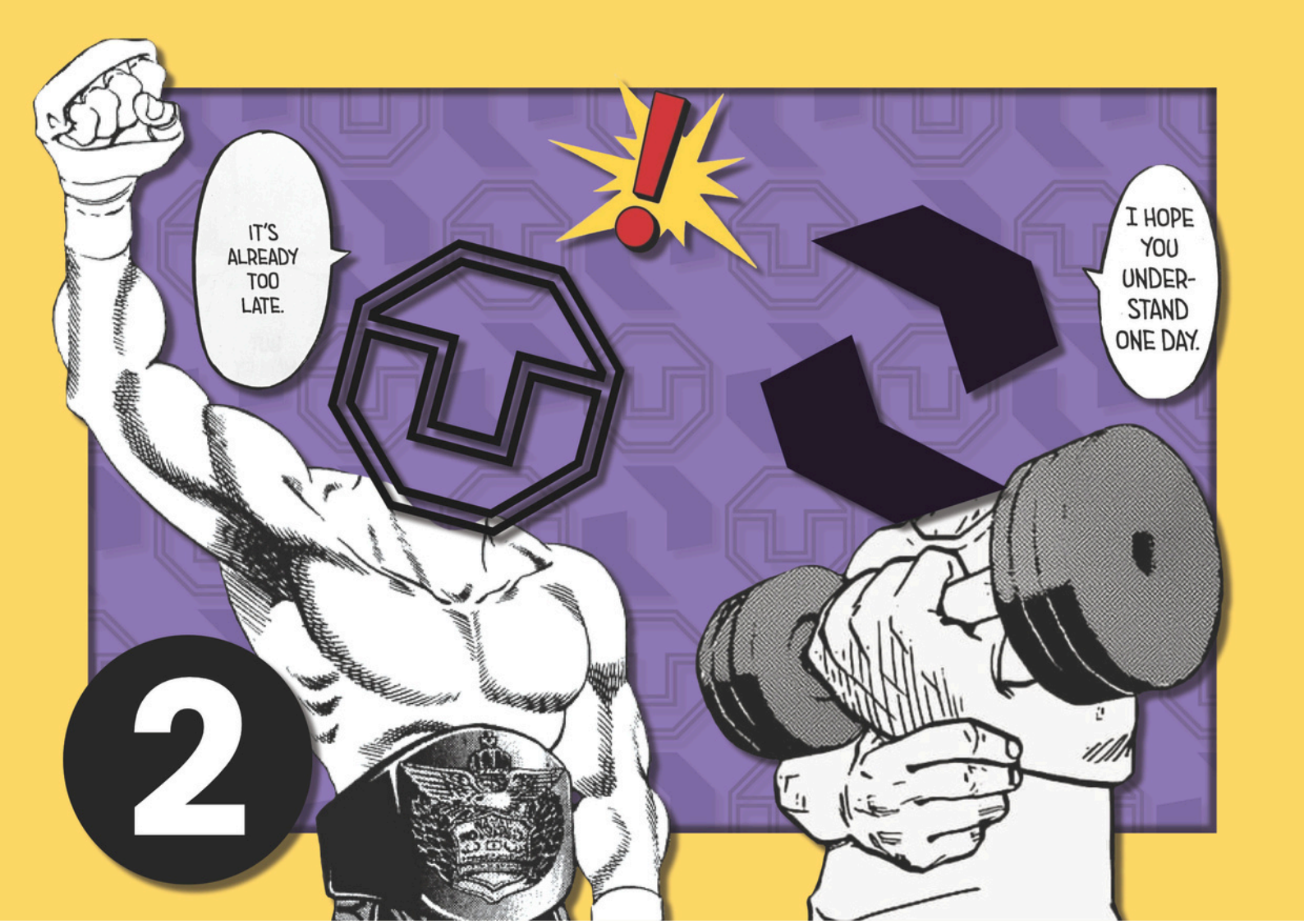
recognises the potential, but also the challenges that AI brings with it." To support students and staff, TUD outlines five main points of guidance. The first emphasises the need to check AI-generated results, as LLMs frequently present outdated or incorrect information, also called "hallucinations," when the system invents statements that appear plausible but are factually wrong. The second point warns about the reproduction of biases and discrimination, something I have not seen highlighted as clearly at many other universities, but which is important when interacting with these tools. To protect students, the next guideline is directed at instructors: no final decisions with legal consequences may be automated. This prevents instructors, for example, from judging the originality of a paper solely based on AI-detection tools. Points four and five advise staff and students to avoid entering potential business or trade secrets of the university into AI systems and to stay informed about the ongoing development of these guidelines, as they continue to evolve. In addition, the university explains how individuals can protect their data and even offers a programme called "Chat AI," which allows access to various LLMs through TUD's protected network. Finally, it is stated that teachers and examiners may determine independently whether, and to what extent, AI may be used for assessments. Declaring the use of AI is mandatory, but due to the variability of AI responses, references or links are not considered appropriate. Instead, students should include the AI-generated text they used in an appendix. Unlabelled or unauthorised use of LLMs constitutes academic misconduct. Overall, TU Dresden follows the guidelines set by the Deutsche Forschungs-gemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation).

Worldwide, universities are trying to regulate an ever-evolving system that becomes more refined every day. While some institutions try to embrace the technology, others reject it entirely. None has found the perfect solution, which may well be impossible, as what appears adequate today could already be outdated tomorrow. A balance must be achieved: one that protects academic integrity while preparing students for a world in which AI is deeply integrated into many aspects of professional and

social life. Yet many universities still lack clear rules, leaving students unsure of where the boundary between legitimate help and cheating lies. Overall, I believe TU Dresden's approach to be a good one. It does not simply label AI as a threat but acknowledges the opportunities it presents. At the same time, it remains cautious about its risks, and the guidelines communicate these concerns effectively. The clear warning about biases and discrimination is something I have not often seen elsewhere, and it is good to see the institution actively addressing this issue. Furthermore, the prohibition of automated legal decisions and the provision of tools to protect personal data illustrate that the university is not only safeguarding academic integrity but also prioritising the well-being of its students. Transparency between staff and students appears to be a reasonable compromise that enables responsible use of modern tools. In my research, I also came across videos and seminars offered by TUD to promote AI literacy, which is an important step towards enabling careful and productive use of LLMs. However, not everything is communicated effectively. Unless students actively seek them out, these guidelines and opportunities are not widely promoted. AI-literacy seminars exist, but very few people seem to know about them. With only four seminars offered this semester, and three of them limited to 12 or 20 participants, this does not seem sufficient to prepare students for a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.

In summary, the emergence of large language models has left universities scrambling to adapt and redefine a clear line between what is to be considered as cheating and what is not. The approach of the TUD seems well-balanced and genuinely focused on protecting students. Yet, missing communication and limited access to training stand as challenges still to be overcome. The question is, though: As AI becomes more elaborate and refined over time, will academic institutions be able to protect their integrity and their students, or will they need to fully change their approach to meet this new age of artificial intelligence?

by Humbert Vogel



Our Institute

A Junior-Professor for Science Fiction? An Interview with Jun.-Prof. Dr. Moritz Ingwersen

Which book sparked your interest in literature?

I probably have to say *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, an enigmatic and incredibly gripping postmodern horror novel about a found footage film of a house that is bigger on the inside than on the outside. In my undergrad, I had a seminar on just that book. At first, I wondered how can you spend a whole semester on a single book? But once you start to obsess over the more than 400 footnotes and realize the book itself is structured like an impossible house or labyrinth—bigger on the inside than on the outside—it is a delight to get lost in. Admittedly, it would be a good choice for that current performative reading trend — where people (pretend to) read certain books in public to look sophisticated. Anyway, *House of Leaves* showed me what literature, and books as physical artifacts, can do and how fun it is to talk about these things.

Do you produce aesthetic, poetic or fictional literature yourself alongside your scientific publications?

No, but I would propose that scholarships in the humanities, where how you say something can matter as much as whatyou say, share a poetic sensibility with creative writing, at least to a degree. And like novelists, many academics certainly know what writer's block feels like.

How many books do you own? And if you had to estimate, how many have you read in your life?

I have no idea, and have to say one thing up front, which I say to anyone who wants to show off their bookshelf: It's okay to own books you haven't read. You see a lot of books here (points to the books in his office). I've probably read a fraction of them. I see them as tools that will be used when I need them, whether for teaching, learning, research or pleasure.

Did you always read the required reading during your school days?

Probably not. I was bullshitting, as every high school student does at some point. Maybe this would have been different had we read cooler books—whatever "cool" means for somebody. A delightful aspect of my job now is introducing aspiring teachers to wonderful works of literature. As if to say: Look, what if, for example, you brought this queer-Indigenous science fiction novel into your future classroom? Wouldn't that be wonderful?

You came from a teaching degree in English and Physics, and according to your curriculum vitae, you passed your first state examination. At what point did you realize this wasn't really your thing and turned to university life?

While it might seem like a turn, I rather see this as a continuity. I still am an English teacher. My subjects were Physics and English because I found both fascinating. Physics allows you to explain the phenomena of the world, at least that's what I thought until I learned about quantum mechanics. Literature, on the other hand, gives you stories, poetics and narratives, the imaginary dimension of the world, if you like.

At some point, I realized that both fields actually had a lot in common. I had a professor of American Literature in Cologne who would frequently bring physical concepts like entropy or resonance to the study of a poem or a short story. Seeing this entanglement of science and culture is probably what inspired me to pursue a career in academia. I didn't want to write brilliant books; I wanted to think about what it actually means to learn about the worlds we make in a more interdisciplinary way.

What interests you so much about North America that your research is focused on this direction and you also did your doctorate in Canada?

Several experiences led me here. I was an exchange student at an American high school and later studied for a semester in New Brunswick, Canada, which had a big impact on me. As a scholar, I would say I am not fascinated by all things North American per se, but see it as a vehicle to raise broader questions, such as: How do we construct the worlds we live in? Which role do narratives play in this? How do ideas of "nature", "technology" or "the future" shape modern subjectivities, and where do they come from? Who is included or excluded in these stories, and how can we tell them differently? This is something that is especially important right now, as we witness the US slide into authoritarianism and the government is trying to write minorities—from trans people to immigrants—out of the future and the past. The vice president of the U.S., J.D. Vance, recently called humanities professors "the enemy," which I take as a confirmation that education—not only but also in cultural and literary studies—is an important tool to resist authoritarianism, bigotry, disinformation and xenophobia.

Your professorship has an interesting denomination: North American Literature with a Focus on Future Studies. Which came first? The professorship or Dr. Ingwersen? Was the professorship curated around you, did you apply, or were you asked?

While TUD has always had a professor of North American Literature, the addition "Future Studies" is new and was part of the job posting that I applied for. The link between Future Studies and literature is unprecedented, not only at TU Dresden, but also in Germany.

I had the freedom to interpret it broadly. For me, it is a focus on speculative fiction and the relationships between culture, environmental crisis, technology and justice. This includes thinking about how artists, authors—even politicians and scientists—are constantly producing and imagining futures in the face of structural inequities, the climate crisis and an atmosphere of uncertainty that tells us a lot about who we think we are—and we always have to question who that "we" is. These are the fields I brought to the professorship. And it is exciting work, especially in the interdisciplinary environment of a university of technology like TUD.

Regarding professorships, what defines a junior professorship in comparison to a conventional professorship?

A junior professorship is an alternative academic career path that catapults mid-career researchers from a short postdoc phase directly into a professor-level position without the additional qualification of a habilitation (a second book typically required for professors in Germany). This means a junior professorship is a qualifying position. I am like a professor on probation. If I do well within the first 5 years and fulfil the criteria I was given when I started, I can eventually drop the "junior" and will be promoted to a full professor—hopefully next year, fingers crossed. On a daily basis, the main difference is that I have a little less teaching than a full professor, but a wider range of requirements related to research, transfer, supervision, and so on. It's a very fulfilling career path that I could not have anticipated.

What do you particularly like about your job, and which disadvantages do you see?

It's great that I'm constantly learning new things alongside students, peers, and generally—mostly (laughs)—interested people. I love teaching and experimenting with different ways of enriching the classroom, for instance by inviting artists, doing field trips or hosting film screenings. I appreciate the creative and academic freedom when it comes to the selection of what I teach and do my research on.

A significant part of the job involves event organization, project management, research supervision, and community building, all of which is exciting, but also—again—a big responsibility, with a significant workload.
Nevertheless, I wouldn't celebrate academia as an ideal work environment: it has a bad track record when it comes to supporting career paths for women and minorities and is still very hierarchical and competitive. It is a precarious field, meaning that in order to even get to a tenured position, many people have to endure low salaries, fixed-term contracts and draining workloads that can be challenging to a healthy social life.

What does a normal working day as a professor look like for you?

Answering emails all day (laughs). No, there's no such thing as a normal working day. They vary greatly.
In general, my tasks—and they of course not all happen every day—include:
- Preparing seminars and teaching, which is the most fun part.
- Responding to emails every day and feeling bad, that I can't respond to all emails and hoping people will get back in touch and won't be angry with me for not answering yet.
- Administration and paperwork, such as managing grants.
- Everything that has to do with event organization (for conferences, guest lectures, field trips).
- A lot of reading, not only for my courses, but also for my publications and to stay up to date with the latest research developments in my fields.
- Writing articles, lectures, talks, book proposals or editing other people's writing.
- Grant writing for research projects, guest invites, conferences.
- Meetings with all kinds of people – colleagues, staff, students, doctoral candidates, research networks, peers
- Grading, grading, grading – assignments, exams, term papers, reading responses, BA, MA, LA theses.
- Giving talks, and going to conferences, research trips, or exciting university events hosted by colleagues or students.

You are also part of the Schaufler Lab. Could you briefly summarize what the focus is and what your role is?

The Schaufler Lab is a research institute within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences—and also affiliated with the university's Kustodie. It aims to promote dialogues between art, the humanities and science/technology. It has two pillars. One is a 6-month artist residency and the other is the Schaufler-Kolleg, a graduate school with seven doctoral students coming from all kinds of disciplines, such as theology, political science, history, literary studies or art history, who are funded for three years to pursue PhD projects on the intersection of humanities and science.
I am a co-speaker of the Lab and, together with my colleague, Orit Halpern (Chair of Digital Cultures), and responsible for the graduate program and events of the Lab. The overarching theme of the current funding period is "Data—Worlds," which means that our research deals with questions like: How does digital technology shape the worlds we live in, and how do the worlds we live in shape how we think about and produce new technologies like AI or smart cities? This could mean asking how data economies and new technologies relate to capitalism, social justice, ideas of progress, climate, authoritarian politics, etc. We host interviews and symposia with artists and scholars and sometimes go on field trips to companies, science labs or exhibitions.

You often offer these special events with unique guests, etc. for your courses. What would you say, who is the most famous name on your contact list?

It's not like I have a roster that a I flip through and say, oh, who should I call now? Oh, look here, him or her. (laughs). Let's put it this way: over the years, I've certainly met some very impressive and inspiring people. For example, I was once invited to talk to Kim Stanley Robinson, one of the most acclaimed contemporary science fiction authors, about the climate crisis, social change, and the difficult path towards more hopeful futures. That was very exciting for me, but I don't have him on speed dial (laughs). Check out his novel The Ministry for the Future!

Right now, I'm giving a seminar on Indigenous Popular Music, for which I'm inviting Gregg Deal, an acclaimed Indigenous artist and the frontman of the punk band Dead Pioneers. Enticing him to come to our university and talk to our students feels like a big deal.

Which book, which album (or song) and which movie should everyone read, listen to, and see?

Album:
Since I mentioned them above, I can recommend the *Dead Pioneers' self-titled album* (2023). It confronts the ongoing injustices, stereotypes and harmful narratives around First Nations People in North America through punk music. Expect an uncompromising in-your-face attitude, heavy riffs, and lyrics that are quite political.

Film:
A great movie I teach repeatedly is *Get Out* by Jordan Peele (2017). It addresses everyday systemic racism—from police violence to the fetishization of Blackness. It inaugurated what is sometimes called Black Neo-Horror and is full of intertextual references to the history of American racism, horror film, and cultural theory.

One of my favourite movies from my teenage years is *Donnie Darko* by Richard Kelly (2001). You could call it a white emo movie, as it features an angsty Jake Gyllenhaal stumbling through a surreal and oppressive suburbia, obsessed with time travel and haunted by a guy in a rabbit costume. If you are into Halloween aesthetic and twisted American nosalgia, this is your film. Also, great soundtrack. Favourite Track: Mad World by Tears for Fears.

Rhymes for Young Ghouls (2013) by the late Mi'kmaq filmmaker Jeff Barnaby – a stylish gothic horror film with a powerful female lead about a group of Indigenous teenagers who fight the abusive Canadian residential school system in the 1970s.

A film I want to see but haven't seen yet is *Neptune Frost* by Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman (2021). It's been described as an afro-futuristic musical, combining cyberpunk and eco-fable.

Set in the context of a coltan mine in Burundi, the community comes together to fight extractive colonialism.

Book:
A modern classic I always recommend is *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (1818). Sometimes considered the first science fiction novel, it questions what it means to be human, is brilliantly written, with a unique structure that centres and humanizes the monster. While the Frankenstein motif has become a touchstone for cultural fears of machines striking back, the novel is incomparably richer than its clichés.

I would also like to pass on a recommendation from my research assistant, Anja Lind: *Always Coming Home* by Ursula K. Le Guin (1985), a figurehead of feminist science fiction and one of the luminaries of twentieth-century utopian, anti-authoritarian thought.

Another recommendation: *On Tyranny* by the American historian Timothy Snyder (2017). The book offers historical lessons on how authoritarianism creeps in, what we can do and what the warning signs are.

A little glimpse of Dr. Ingwersen's bookshelf in his office.

What is your favourite word in English?

Good question. I don't know if I have a favourite word, but how about *rambunctious* or *obnoxious*? Ram-bunc-tious—almost onomatopoeic—someone bouncing around. Or *recalcitrant*. Fun to say… Now, I realize they all seem thematically related. Oh boy.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Sleep (laughs). Other than that, I used to spend a lot of time going to concerts or even playing shows, preferably in smaller DIY venues, but there is less time for that now. So, I make a point of going to see a movie every other week. Other than that, cooking relaxes me, canoeing in Canada is my favourite holiday treat, and I should go swimming more often.

by Lani Mariebell Gerlinde John

With special thanks to Jun.-Prof. Dr. Moritz Ingwersen for his time, input and support.

Attendance in the Age of Online Learning Does Showing Up Still Matter?

The stress of university does not start at the beginning of the semester, but a week before: enrollment. If it starts at 10 a.m., you sit in front of the device of your choice at 9:59 a.m. and hammer the refresh button like there is no tomorrow.

The clock strikes 10, the page suddenly freezes, you anticipate where the "Enroll" button will appear and finally press it. You find yourself in 14th place on the waiting list for a course of 30 people. The first week begins, and you attend the seminar on the off chance. Maybe not everyone will show up, and you will still make it into the course.

You will soon realize your foolish hopes. The classroom is packed. All the seats are taken, and some people are even sitting on the windowsill or the floor. You are clearly not the only person who desperately needs this course. The chances of still being accepted into the course are slim, but you keep going anyway. It is a mixture of academic ambition and stubbornness that drives you. In week two, the benches are still full, but no one is sitting on the windowsill anymore. In week three, both seats next to you are free.

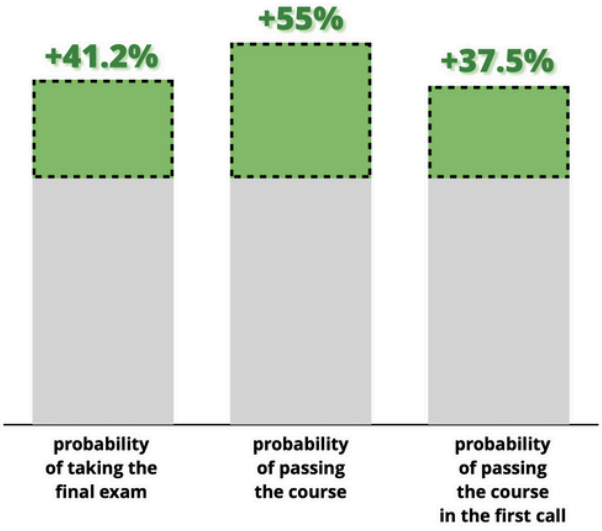
In week four, the room is so empty that you might doubt that a class is even taking place here. This slightly absurd and mildly amusing scenario, however, is not a figment of the imagination but rather the reality for many students in the first few weeks of each semester.

Since the reform of university regulations in 2009, attendance requirements and proof of attendance have largely disappeared in Saxony. Since then, students have become remarkably good at being everywhere except the university. Some estimates place student absenteeism as high as 40%. Although absenteeism has always been a chronic issue in higher education, it has worsened considerably since the COVID-19 pandemic.

This rapid decline in attendance raises a key question: In the age of digital learning, is it still important to attend university in person?

The digitalization of higher education has fundamentally changed the conditions of learning. Lecture slides are uploaded, sessions are recorded, and summaries circulate in group chats. Since the pandemic-driven shift to online teaching, many students have grown accustomed to consuming academic content independently, detached from fixed times and physical spaces. Learning increasingly appears to be a solitary and flexible activity that no longer requires showing up.

Empirical research, however, paints a less optimistic picture. Multiple studies indicate that regular attendance, including in synchronous online classes, has a significant positive effect on academic performance. Students who attend classes are more likely to take final exams, more likely to pass them and tend to achieve higher final grades. The differences are substantial. One study found a gap of over sixty percent in the probability of taking the final exam between students who never attended and those who attended all sessions.



the positive effects of university attendance

Notably, these effects appear regardless of teaching format. Attendance at lectures and seminar classes produces similarly positive outcomes, suggesting that it is not the medium but the structured learning environment that matters. Being present encourages interaction with teachers and peers, helps students manage course material and supports engagement with complex or abstract concepts. Face-to-face settings make this possible in a very natural way.

Despite this evidence, absenteeism remains widespread. Research points to a range of reasons for non-attendance. These include unsuitable schedules, large classes that discourage personal involvement,

poor teaching quality and the availability of alternative sources of information.
External pressures such as paid work, mental health issues and competing academic commitments further influence students' decisions to skip classes. Attendance has therefore become a personal cost-benefit calculation. When lectures feel optional and resources are abundant, skipping class can appear reasonable. Yet repeated absenteeism comes at a cost.

Missing sessions means losing opportunities for clarification, discussion and skill development. Over time, this absence can translate into weaker academic outcomes and a growing sense of disengagement.

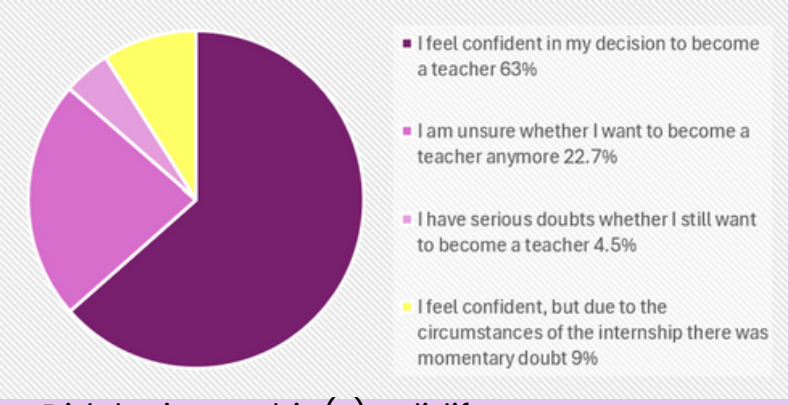
So perhaps the real question is not whether attendance still belongs in the age of online learning, but whether universities and students can even afford to treat it as optional.

by Henry Feustel

What Would I Need That For? Teaching in Theory

Another semester, another struggle to create a timetable that will make you show up for more than just the first two or three weeks. After all, you want to become a teacher, and showing up to class should be no problem. But eventually you ask yourself, "What would I need that for?" and decide to sleep in the next day, since the topic of the seminar you have to attend seems too redundant to you.

Teacher studies require commitment from those who decide to embark on this journey that will last at least four years, often longer. Students can pick between a plethora of subjects, but must choose at least two, which leads to some restrictions on possible combinations. After this decision, semesters that are heavy with theory await, with just little practice of teaching at schools. While newer programs allow you to complete internships during the term and will even pay a good wage, the spots in those programs are limited, forcing most students to sacrifice their lecture-free time. As only a few classes realistically prepare you for teaching at a school, the four weeks of the internship can turn into sleepless nights spent on planning lessons while simultaneously writing term papers to meet deadlines for seminars on subjects nowhere to be found in school curricula. As a small disclaimer: it is important to remember that changes in this course of studies are being made, with many subjects changing their study regulations to include more didactical contents and separating teaching students from bachelor students. Most importantly, if teaching is your passion, the effort will be worth it, and the internships are generally a very exciting experience.



Did the internship(s) solidify your quest to become a teacher or did it raise doubts?

How do future English teachers at the TUD perceive their curriculum?

A small survey conducted to inquire about students' opinions on the current curriculum, especially the one of English studies, shows that most would prefer more structure. This refers to "Academic Writing" sessions, which teach students how to present arguments coherently, conduct research and properly cite sources, appearing again and again throughout the course of studies, across different subjects. However, there are rarely any seminars that focus directly on this topic. While this may be a small detail, academic writing is an integral part of studying at a university and should therefore be part of the curriculum (which it is in some subjects). Instead, some lecturers recognize the need for such a class and sacrifice their 90 minutes for it, and in doing so, lose time to teach the seminar's actual topic, which cannot be the solution.

Another issue addressed by a lot of students is the lack of practice, of teaching itself, and of finding out whether you are on the right path. Lessons are planned, portfolios written, but with what relevance?

A lot of lesson plans are created to cater to university standards and will therefore never see the light of a classroom. Admittedly, facilitating the opportunity to regularly teach at a school as a set part of teacher studies would require a high level of cooperation between the university and schools. What is often talked about and slowly becoming reality could be the answer: teacher studies as a dual studies/integrated degree programme.

When the internship rolls around, the excitement is often overshadowed by the workload that will follow: the big bad APTE-portfolio. With three seminars accompanying the internship, pre-, while- and post-APTE, it is probably one of the most time-consuming modules in the English curriculum, duelling for first place with RPTE. Both ask students to create elaborate portfolios, checking off a list of university standards. Still, RPTE and APTE definitely help future teachers to improve in planning and teaching, with the added benefit of receiving feedback from both fellow students and lecturers. When asked how relevant students perceive the individual modules to be in their goal to

become teachers, the language learning seminars received the best rating, coming to 4.96 out of 5 stars. The "Überblicksmodul" got the lowest rating at 2.35 stars, with many criticizing that it does not really create an overview as the name suggests, but that the lectures rather focus on narrowed-down topics. However, the module description states that students should be able to apply knowledge on specific topics. This is one of the reasons why some students wish for a clearer distinction between teaching and bachelor studies, seeing that an overview of English linguistics, literature and culture is important for both, but in varying functions.

Educational sciences were not part of the survey, yet they were mentioned quite a few times, revealing students' dissatisfaction with this section of their studies. Multiple people criticized that most seminars lack a connection to real circumstances in schools, that is, they do not address how to deal with behavioural problems, how to engage with students, or how to gain respect. Certainly, these topics present unique circumstances in the classroom, but learning basic strategies to overcome stressful situations would help teacher students feel more prepared for a day at school. Additionally, and not only in educational sciences, but in English as well, the school types are seldom differentiated coherently: primary school teachers will meet vocational school teachers in a seminar on didactics. Can they learn from one another? Yes, but as one answer to the survey put it, "I assume, when I try to teach new vocabulary at vocational school, the way I was told in this seminar, I would be thrown at with water bottles."

What could be changed according to students?

1.Differentiate didactics, even out the workload

The differentiation of school types was just mentioned, as not being executed coherently. While everyone meets in seminars on how to teach, they sometimes go home with different assignments. Especially grammar and vocational school students complain that their workload is extensive in comparison to the remaining school types.

2. More teaching, less portfolio

Many students express the wish for a more practical approach that does not end with a 50-page

report, making actual teaching the focus, and without the pressure of creating the perfect, spelled-out lesson plan.

3.Reduce repetition

The recurrence of sessions on academic writing could be reduced by implementing it into the curriculum in either the educational sciences or in the individual subjects. Further, the survey showed that students find that the trinity of linguistic, literary and cultural studies turns repetitive as topics recur, without necessarily adding new information.

Keep in mind!

University is not school! Which is why some seminars may seem redundant to you. Expecting to only learn what is stated in school curricula would be naive. Your studies should give you a headstart on your students' knowledge. Seemingly redundant or over-the-top knowledge in one topic may solidify your knowledge in another. This goes especially for grammar school students: teachers will have to prepare learners for the world of academia. How will you prepare someone for something you have not experienced yourself?

by Evi Hoffmann

“Nah, I don’t want to become a teacher” Introducing the editor in chief: Mick

But now I say that was the best thing that happened to me.” What might the person who revived JABS be referring to? Travel? Wife? Wine? Job? All of it? Keep reading to find out.

While brainstorming for ideas to turn into an article, I thought, what if we get to know one of our language teachers better. So, I sprung the idea on Mick who, after brief hesitation, agreed to be interviewed.

Mick teaches the language courses ‘Grammar’, ‘Vocabulary’ and ‘Advanced Translation’, as well as the optional courses ‘Error Analysis’, ‘Creative Writing’ and ‘JABS’. That means if you feel the urge to get creative (or maybe you were looking for a way around the Writing courses), you know where to go to realize your potential as a writer.

Why should you too join JABS you ask? “If journalism has always been your thing or you want to get a feeling for it, if you want to see if this is something for you at all, JABS is an entry level for you, an entry course into this. If you want to do something else apart from grammar in your language courses. If you want to write a different type of essay or if you want to research, if you have always been nosy about things, I think then JABS could be your thing.”

“Thank you”, we all say in unison when we learn that he also digitizes the readers for the language courses, saving us all a trip to the copy shop.

Now, university-Mick is cool and all, but assuming you want to know more, let me share with you some fun stories and details between him travelling the world and finding the right job.

Born in Dresden he is a fan of Dynamo Dresden even if that is hard sometimes: “Two seasons ago when we were winning every match in the first half of the season and then losing every match of the second half, I got so annoyed that I didn’t go to matches at home. I had a ticket, a valid ticket. I preferred to go the gym. I preferred to lie in the park and hear the cheers of the away fans”. In any other season, you may run into him in the K-Block. You may also run into Mick and his wife walking a cute poodle called Sugar (very important note: when looking for a picture of Sugar, he picked one with his wife in it as well saying “Here are my two favourites”).

Something all of us struggle with is the question what do we study, what do we do after university and all the while wondering if the choices we make are right for us. Do not worry if you do not know what your final plan for life is or if you thought you did but ended up changing your mind. You can still find yourself saying “I really love this job. It really is fun to do” and rating it an 11/10 without hesitation. After his A-Levels Mick worked in an intensive care ward at the university hospital for 13 months as part of his civilian service and planned on becoming a nurse. But, as fate wanted it, he applied too late and had to wait half a year to apply again. To bridge this gap, he decided to study at the TU for one semester and then go do the apprenticeship at the hospital. Spoiler: this is not what ended up happening. After a semester of studying English as a major, along with modern history and the history of the state of Saxony as minor subjects, he realized “no, I’m having so much fun here because I am actually studying what I enjoy. Only the question, what can you do after your studies was annoying”. To assume that it was a straight road from this point to being interviewed would be wrong.

“Someone told me, well, you could work freelance and become a translator or interpreter and maybe teacher. And I said, teaching? Nah, I don’t want to become a teacher.” Ironic, is it not? Some freelance hours, a few teaching jobs, the realization that this is what he wants to do and a pandemic later “we decided to go to Magdeburg. We started looking for places when” the news came that there was an opening at the TU and the rest is history… quite recent history.

What could be a highlight for someone who found their calling in teaching language courses at a university?

"I like overseeing the exams. That's actually a highlight every semester, to be in the big auditoriums and to walk through the rows and see students suffer. Not because I'm a bad person, but because it's the end of the semester and it has a certain vibe around it." Those of you who will become teachers might be able to confirm this feeling in a few years' time. If he is not overseeing exams, interacting with students, talking and the actual teaching are his favourite parts.

After various trips around the globe, there are many stories to tell from pubs in Ireland to poisonous spiders in Chile. Three short tales for the gentle reader:

"I got the insight that I should ask you about the in-laws and how you may have endangered their lives."

"Thank you, Sandra", was the first reaction before Mick starts to explain how he went from hero to zero with one decision. The lesson is, when preparing breakfast in Chile, you may find a potentially fatally poisonous spider in a cup. If you do, it is important you do not just chuck the spider outside and clean the cup with toilet cleaner because your otherwise kind-hearted in-laws will not appreciate that this spider lives another day to come crawling back into their house to bite them.

In their hunt for stamps on their passport, Mick and his wife found their way to Honduras to an archipelago called Cayos Cochinos. They arrived on a small island with a hut to spend the night in, and to spend the night together with a giant hand-sized spider. "Who do you think made me aware of the spider? It was my wife. She shouted, pointed and left." After employing the force of his flip-flop, the spider was gone, but the trust in the room not rebuilt.

"But now I say that was the best thing that happened to me." Please remember this quote, the very important note from earlier and know that Mick is no stranger to sarcasm for this last story. When a friend of his asked if someone wanted to travel South America together for ten weeks, Mick agreed. However, that friend changed plans and left a lost solo traveller behind, and yet: "for me, the most beautiful of all journeys was actually 2014, when I set foot in South America, when I travelled Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile, which was not planned, but unfortunately, fortunately, please write fortunately, I met my wife there", he said smiling.

What someone's favourites are is a big part of who they are as a person, which is why in this last part you can read about Mick's favourite authors, music, show, beverage and what a statue of him would look like.

There is not one favourite author but three that he read a lot before mostly switching to newspaper: Nick Hornby, Roddy Doyle and Bill Bryson. His favourite book is House of Spirits by Isabel Allende. In case your Thalia wish list is not too long yet maybe some of them will find their way on there.

Like the author, a favourite artist is hard to pick. So, once more a short list of those worthy: Bruce Springsteen, Tocotronic, Gisbert zu Knyphausen, Calle 13 and Baustelle. Give them all a quick listen, it is worth it.

If you have ever felt bad about watching a show multiple times, do not, you are not alone. Mick has watched Friends five times and Gilmore Girls four times. Relatable. A couple of watches of Dances with Wolves have occurred as well.

Now, if you attended any class with the editor of this journal, you know the answer for his favourite beverage: rosé wine from the south of France.

"If there was a statue to be built in your honour, what pose would it be in, what material would it be made of and where would it be?"

"I'm not someone who would like to have a statue of himself", but if there had to be one it would be raising a finger or holding a piece of chalk in its hand and "it would be made of wood. And it would be placed in Radebeul at the wine fest, where they burn it." So, if you have a talent for woodworking the next wine fest is from 18-20 September 2026.

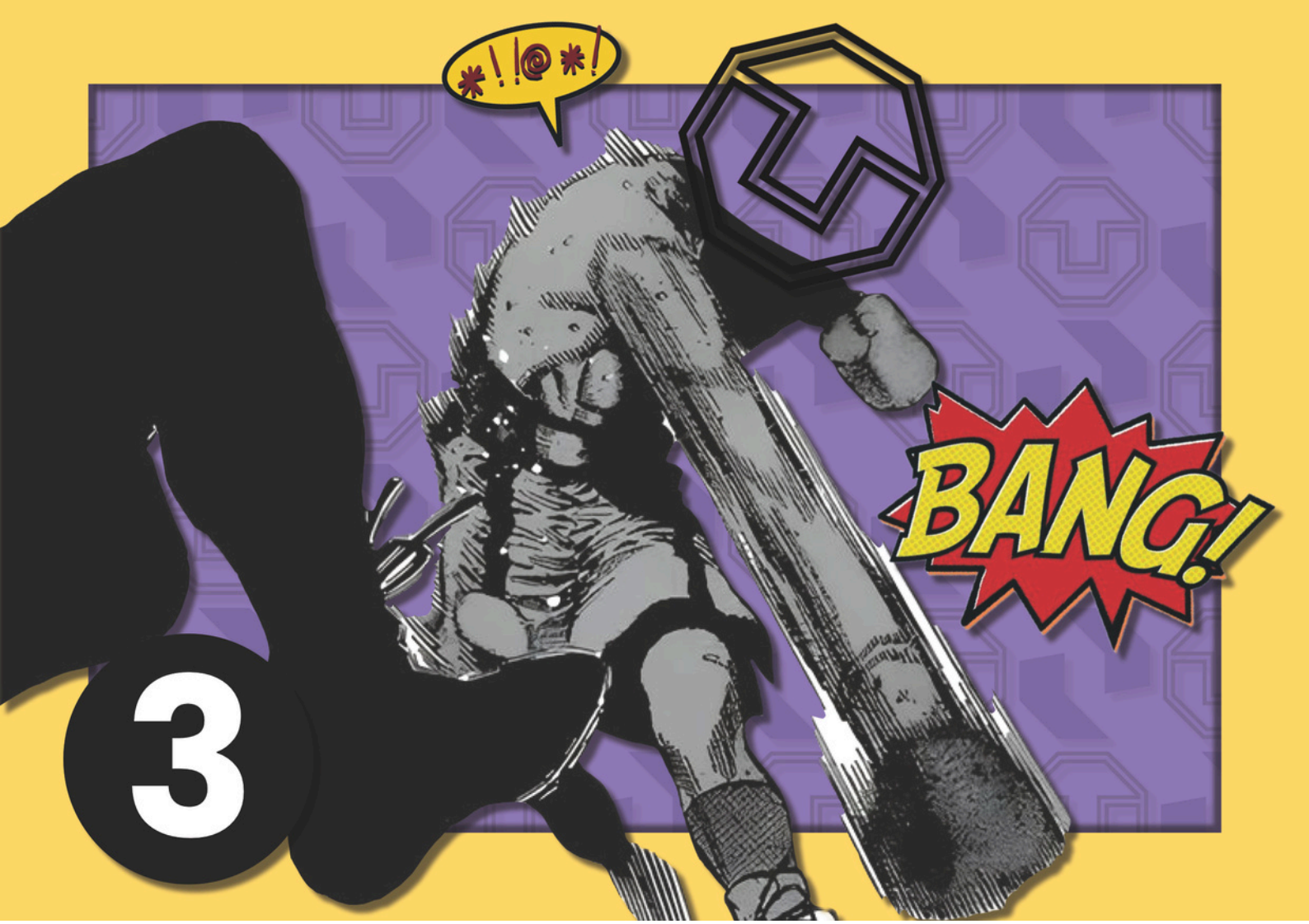
To award the final words of this article to the protagonist, one last question:

"Is there anything that we didn't talk about at all that you would want the JABS readers to know?"

"One of the most important things of my life is travel. So, travel, travel with friends, travel alone, travel with your partners, but do travel as far as you can get wherever you can get and go take advantage of this year abroad, of this period abroad, make it as long a trip as possible. Don't care if you lose friends because of this, family because of that, your

partners because of that. But do travel. Do get to know the world and do it now. Now that you're young."

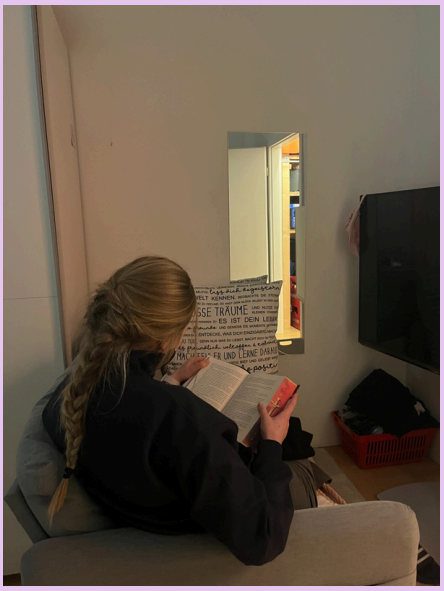
by Evi Hoffmann with a big Thank You to Mick for agreeing to the interview and sacrificing his time!



Lifestyle

Roommates or Room to Yourself? The Choice Many Students Face

It's 4 a.m. on a Thursday. You have an important exam at nine, but just can't sleep. Why? Because your roommate decided now is the perfect time to have a party with four of his friends in his room, blasting loud music. Right now, you wish you had chosen to live alone and not in a shared apartment. But is living alone really better than sharing an apartment? What can sharing an apartment offer you? What advantages and disadvantages do both options have? And why do people choose either option?



To find out, I interviewed six students who live alone, live in shared apartments, or have tried both. Their experiences show that the decision is far less straightforward than stereotypes suggest.

Living alone often promises a kind of peace that shared apartments simply can't offer. Students describe the comfort of coming home to a space that belongs entirely to them. They enjoy cooking in the kitchen without being disturbed, not always having to clean up immediately, and decorating their home freely without needing anyone's approval.

Living alone can also improve your independence. You have to take care of all the contracts, buy groceries, and do all the chores by yourself. Additionally, you learn how to be by yourself. One student who has been living alone for two years says, "Living alone made me stronger. I really got to know myself." After finishing school, she felt she needed the space to grow on her own terms.

Another student, who moved to a new city barely knowing anyone, chose solo living for a different reason. Independence, for her, also meant safety. “My apartment is my retreat. I wouldn’t feel comfortable living with people I don’t fully connect with,” she explains. The predictability of coming home to exactly the atmosphere she left in the morning mattered more to her than saving money or having built-in company.

But the quiet that feels so comforting on stressful days can become unsettling on others. The students I’ve interviewed state that they sometimes feel lonely at home. “Some days I notice that I haven’t spoken a word to anyone,” one student says. The solitude or boredom isn’t enough to make them reconsider living alone, but it does shape their everyday life.

Finances play their part too. While it’s easy to assume that living alone is automatically more expensive, many students say the difference depends heavily on the city. In places like Erfurt or Dresden, the rent for small apartments barely exceeds the price of a room in a shared apartment. Still, the cumulative costs of things like electricity, internet, cleaning supplies and furniture fall entirely on one person. Those who choose to live alone generally accept the higher cost as the price of privacy and autonomy.

Meanwhile, shared apartments offer a different kind of comfort. For many students, they play a major role in building connections at university. Coming home to people, whether to cook together, ask for advice, or just have a quick chat in the hallway, can turn a new city from intimidating to welcoming. One student, who has been living in a shared apartment for a year, says this blend of community and autonomy is exactly what she appreciates: “You can be around people when you want to and stay in your room when you don’t.”

For another student, who moved to Dresden without knowing anyone, that social support system was crucial. “I needed social contact in a new city,” she says. “And it’s cheaper. That mattered a lot.” Cheaper rent, built-in company, and the chance to form friendships all played a role in her decision, something many students can relate to.

Of course, living with others inevitably means negotiating habits, boundaries, and the daily challenges of shared life. Cleaning expectations vary. “Sometimes the mess in the kitchen drives me crazy,” one student admits. She learned that communication solves most

problems, although not all of them. A second student had a different experience in her previous shared apartment in the dormitory, where she had to share a kitchen with seven strangers. “It was always dirty. I hated being in there,” she recalls. The constant clutter, plus not getting along with her roommate anymore, pushed her to move into her own apartment, where she now feels much more comfortable.

Students who have experienced both living setups often describe their preference as situational rather than fixed. One student, who lived alone for a year before switching to a shared apartment, says her move was motivated by the desire for an easier start in a new city, someone to show her around and chat with in the evenings. Another student, on the other hand, left her shared apartment because the situation with her roommate became too stressful. For her, living alone feels calming rather than lonely.

Their stories suggest that the “better” option depends on what a student needs at that moment, whether it’s stability, connection, independence, support, calm or company.

So, which option is better? There’s no universal answer. Your roommate might be annoying sometimes and blast loud music at 4 a.m. But while you’re struggling to fall asleep, your friend who’s living alone might be sitting in silence, wishing someone were there to talk to. Some students eventually try both, and each option teaches you something about independence, compromise, boundaries, and ultimately, what “home” means to you right now.

The truth is simple. Choose what fits your life best right now. And if it stops fitting, you can always choose again.

by Mia Friedel

Apps, Odds and Risks
A Student's Story of Sports Betting

You are sitting in a university lecture, listening more or less attentively. Your screen glows with the characteristic blue of the TU Dresden website. The class is over; you close your laptop and head home. As soon as you arrive, you open it again, but the TU blue has now given way to the Tipico red. You are no longer checking your emails, but the latest odds for the upcoming matches. University may be over, but your evening is only just beginning. You tinker with the perfect betting slip. Today, it will work; today, you are smarter than everyone else, smarter even than the bookmakers. A few hours later, the red on your screen is still there, but now it is not just the logo, it is also the color of that one word staring back at you:

LOST

Sports betting used to take place in run-down shops on street corners, in smoky rooms where older men huddled around televisions with slips of paper in their hands. Today, it is no longer older people. The slips of paper have been replaced by smartphones, and the shops have long since closed. The place is no longer physical but exists in the devices that we young people use for everything else as well, from learning and socializing to banking and entertainment.

In recent decades, bookmakers have evolved into sleek, fast, and highly personalized online platforms, and young people are their fastest-growing audience. The number of bettors under 25 has steadily increased in recent years, and this upward trend does not appear to end anytime soon.

Young men are particularly vulnerable to sports betting. They are more prone to risk-taking, having encountered gambling elements in video games with random rewards from a young age. Today, economic uncertainties, rising living costs and the pressure to navigate an uncertain future are added to that. Many also feel more socially isolated than previous generations and look more to influencers or streamers, some of whom actively promote betting companies.

On top of that, there is a digital world that promises constant stimulation and instant rewards. Those who love sports and believe they have a good sense for the game quickly assume they have an edge when betting. All of this is fueled by the explosive spread of mobile betting apps and, above all, aggressive social media marketing.

An article in *The Guardian* earlier this year put it best:

> **"Watching televised sports in 2025 can feel a little like sitting through one long gambling commercial, interspersed by occasional flashes of actual games."**

For example, when watching football, the commercial breaks both start and end with an ad for a betting company, and even when the game resumes, the advertising does not stop. Players wear jerseys sponsored by betting companies, and in the postgame interview, the Player of the Match stands in front of a colorful backdrop covered with so many betting company logos that anyone trying to count them by hand would find it an impossible task.

So, the betting landscape has shifted strongly toward online betting, advertising is everywhere, and young people are most affected. But what does this actually mean? Why is it a problem? What are the potential risks? And how can it affect people's lives on a personal level?

I spoke with a 22-year-old male student who has been struggling with online sports betting for several years. In multiple sessions and conversations, we discussed how it all started for him, the experiences he has had, when it became a problem and how he is coping with everything now.
The following excerpts from our conversations are published with his consent.

"I started when I was 18. I would bet on Bundesliga or Premier League games together with my friends. I had always watched football and now I could also make a little money while watching. In the beginning, the five of us in our friend group would meet on weekends and bet on the big leagues, small stakes, not much, like five to ten euros. It was a lot of fun, but at some point, I wanted more.

Another friend in the group felt the same way, and soon it was just the two of us, and we started betting during the week, too. That went on for a while, and eventually I was betting alone every day, even on smaller leagues: everything from MLS to the Saudi Professional League and the Malaysia Super League. I was really into it then. I would check every day which matches were on and what the odds were, and I had a spreadsheet where I wrote everything down. Almost like in an office job."

He laughs. I ask him about his successes and failures:

"You always get both: sometimes it goes well, sometimes you have bad luck. The feeling when a bet wins is great, especially if you like the team; that's the best. Then not only has your team won, but you've also made some money. When it goes wrong, your mood immediately drops. Eventually, my whole day was ruined if I lost. I couldn't tell anyone either, because no one was supposed to know, especially not my parents."

I ask him how much he lost.

"At first, I was actually in the plus, but at some point, I wasn't anymore. At my worst, I bet 100 euros on a single game, and when that money was gone, I tried to make up for the loss with even more bets. I really didn't have that kind of money to be placing bets like that in the first place. I ended up in the awkward situation of not being able to go to the movies or the club with friends because I had no money left. Of course, I couldn't tell anyone why. Altogether, I probably lost around 500 euros over the course of three years. The total amount I bet during that time was certainly several thousand euros."

I ask him whether social media or all the advertising has influenced his betting behavior. He explains:

"Social media, not so much, but all the advertising definitely. There were several periods over the past four years when I took a break from betting, but I never stopped watching football. And when you're constantly confront-ed with odds and betting wins, it affects you. You're eager to do it again."

I ask him how he feels about it now. He explains:

"I don't bet anymore. It's been a few months now, and to be honest, I do miss it a little, but it also feels good not to have all the stress and frustration that comes with betting. And of course, my bank account is much happier too."

He laughs again.
To conclude, I ask him what advice he would give to his eighteen-year-old self:

"The best thing, of course, is to stay away from it completely. But I know how I felt back then, so I would say: stay sensible, set rules for yourself, like a fixed budget per month, and stick to it. And most importantly, talk to someone about it. Whatever you're going through, you don't have to go through it alone."

His story is not an isolated case, and that is exactly what makes it so relevant. Sports betting has long since become part of a digital everyday life that draws in young people with promises of quick wins and more thrilling matches.
But behind the colorful apps and aggressive ads lie real conse-quences: financial worries, stress, shame and lost control. When you listen to his words and those of many others who have had similar experiences, it quickly becomes clear that this is not about weakness. It is about a system designed to keep users engaged for as long as possible, and why we urgently need to raise aware-ness of how easily curiosity can turn into addiction.

The interview was conducted in several parts in early and mid-November of 2025. At that time, he said he had not bet for over a month. While working on this article, however, I learned that he had started betting again. This serves as a reminder that overcoming betting behaviors is an ongoing struggle and underscores his final words from the interview:

“Whatever you're going through, you don't have to go through it alone.”

by Henry Feustel

No Room for Students: Dresden's Housing Crisis and the Promise of a New Dormitory

Imagine moving to a new city because you want to start studying there. Your first excitement quickly fades after looking at the rare and overpriced apartment advertisements online, so you decide to apply for a student accommodation offered by the university. Many readers can surely relate to the struggle of finding accommodation in Dresden. Luckily, you are not among the thousands of unfortunate students who receive a rejection letter every winter semester and actually are offered a room. So, you move into your new apartment. Even though the room is not the most modern, you especially love the view from your window, with its many trees, and above all, plenty of light. Until one day, those trees are cut down and a construction site spreads out in front of your window. For the students living in the dormitory on Fritz-Löffler-Straße, this scenario has become reality.

As a growing university city, the TUD welcomed over 6.000 new students from all over the world last winter semester, and this number continues to rise. In particular, the number of international students is steadily increasing. Accordingly, a large part of these students need centrally located accommodation near the university, which is no easy task. Many university cities face the same struggles: a shortage of affordable housing, competition with locals, and rising rents. Securing a room in one of the university accommodations is not easy either: Michael Rollberg from the Studentenwerk Dresden speaks of thousands of rejections they have to send out for the dormitories every winter semester.

But on September 26, 2025, a glimmer of hope appeared: the official groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a new dormitory in Dresden. Representatives from the Studentenwerk and local politicians gathered – but why directly in front of the existing student residence at Fritz-Löffler-Straße?

Because this is exactly where the new dormitory is being built, right in front of another dorm. The construction is planned to be finished in 2029 and is expected to provide 149 housing places, in addition to the 513 students already living in the existing building at Fritz-Löffler-Straße 12.

The new building is estimated to cost €19.7m. Of this amount, €15.2m originates from the program "Junges Wohnen", which is aimed at providing affordable apartments for young people as part of a broader social housing initiative. The remaining €4.5m are financed through the Studen- tenwerk Dresden's own funds. What makes this new buil- ding particularly spe- cial is the fact that it is the first student dormitory that has been newly built in Dresden since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Michael Rollberg says: "By 2029, we will have created new student housing here for the first time since the reunification, providing a home for students from all over the world during their studies."

And even though 149 students will surely be more than grateful for this new dormitory in the future, there are already students living there who are rather unhappy about the current developments. Of the students currently living in the dormitory on Fritz-Löffler-Straße, 21 have answered some of my questions about their thoughts and fears on the new dormitory.

My survey among current residents of the dormitory reveals overall negative feelings toward the construction project.
Many students express strong concerns, with several already planning to move out during the construction phase. The main worries relate to construction noise, while the stu- dents living on lower floors are particularly anxious about re- duced daylight and the loss of privacy. Although some students acknowledge positive aspects, like the creation of affordable housing for students and the potential noise protection from street traffic for the rear building, these benefits are outweighed by criticism.

A clear majority feels poorly informed about the project, with only one person out of 21 stating they feel sufficiently informed. Most students expect their daily lives to be significantly affected, criticising the dense development and the loss of green spaces due to tree cutting.

The construction noise impacts sleeping, mental well-being, and the ability to study or participate in online university courses, which is especially hard during exam periods.

In response to these concerns, Michael Rollberg from the Studentenwerk Dresden emphasizes that the environmental impact of the new dormitory will be limited. According to him, only four trees are planned to be removed, while 27 new trees will be planted to compensate for the loss. Although parts of the existing lawn will need to be sealed for the construction, this will be offset by the creation of new green spaces.

The resulting open area between the new building and the existing dormitory is intended to become a shared social space, with planting beds and seating areas designed for meeting and spending free time.

Despite these plans, one central issue remains: many current residents feel that they were not sufficiently involved in the planning process, reinforcing the sense of being ignored that shapes much of the opposition to the project.

Only in a few years will it become clear what the finished student residence and the communal living situation on the site near Fritz-Löffler-Straße will look like. By then, many of the students currently living there will probably have moved out, and 149 students will have moved into the new residence. However, it remains questionable why the students were so poorly informed about the construction and whether there weren't more suitable sites in Dresden for this building that wouldn't have so drastically disrupted the daily lives of other students. Nonetheless, affordable housing is scarce in Dresden, and the construction of this new residence was more than necessary!

by Lina Günther

A New Floor, an Empty Hall: How Renovation at Nöthnitzer Straße Disrupts Student Sports

Since 4th November 2025, the sports hall at Nöthnitzer Straße 60 in Dresden, a central facility of the Dresdner Hochschulsportzentrum (DHSZ), has been closed due to construction work. According to current information, the renovation is scheduled to be completed by the end of January, which means sports courses can resume at the beginning of February. The primary focus of the construction is the renovation of the flooring, which, after years of intensive use, has suffered significant wear and tear.

The timing of the construction, however, has raised questions among students. Especially during the winter semester, indoor sports serve as an important balance to academic life, when outdoor conditions are often unfavourable.

The chosen timeframe is justified by funding requirements. The renovation has to be completed by a specific deadline in order to secure financial support. While this explanation makes the choice of the timing administratively understandable, it has nevertheless resulted in frustrating consequences for students who are currently unable to participate in many sports courses.

Under normal circumstances, the sports hall hosts a wide range of sports courses, including basketball, volleyball, handball, badminton, climbing, fencing, gymnastics, as well as numerous dance courses such as ballet, hip hop, jazz dance, rock ‘n’ roll, samba, and many more. With the hall closed, many of these courses have been cancelled or postponed, leaving students searching for alternatives.

For many students, the closure has had an immediate and disruptive effect. Several students interviewed report that their planned courses were cancelled entirely. Most of them mention the loss of volleyball groups, university league games, and training sessions. In some cases, the impact goes beyond missing individual workouts. One student, for example, notes that only two league games had been played before the closure, while the rest were postponed until the hall reopens, which is

potentially so late that some team members may no longer be able to participate due to the end of their studies.

Finding alternatives has proven difficult and uneven. One student was unable to find any replacement and currently does not participate in any regular sport at all. Another student managed to continue playing volleyball once a week in a private volleyball group that already existed before the closure of the hall, instead of the usual twice-weekly sessions, meaning he still exercises on a regular basis but less than desired.

Others have taken matters into their own hands. Apart from joining private playgroups, some students have rented a field in a private sports hall with their university league team and another team to train once a week. Although this solution allows training to continue, it involves higher costs and does not come close to the original training frequency of up to three times per week for some. One interviewee also reports compensating by going to the gym more often, while also playing volleyball outside of university sports.

All in all, a clear divide emerges. Students with better access to time, financial resources, or external sports networks can compensate more easily, while others are left without viable options.

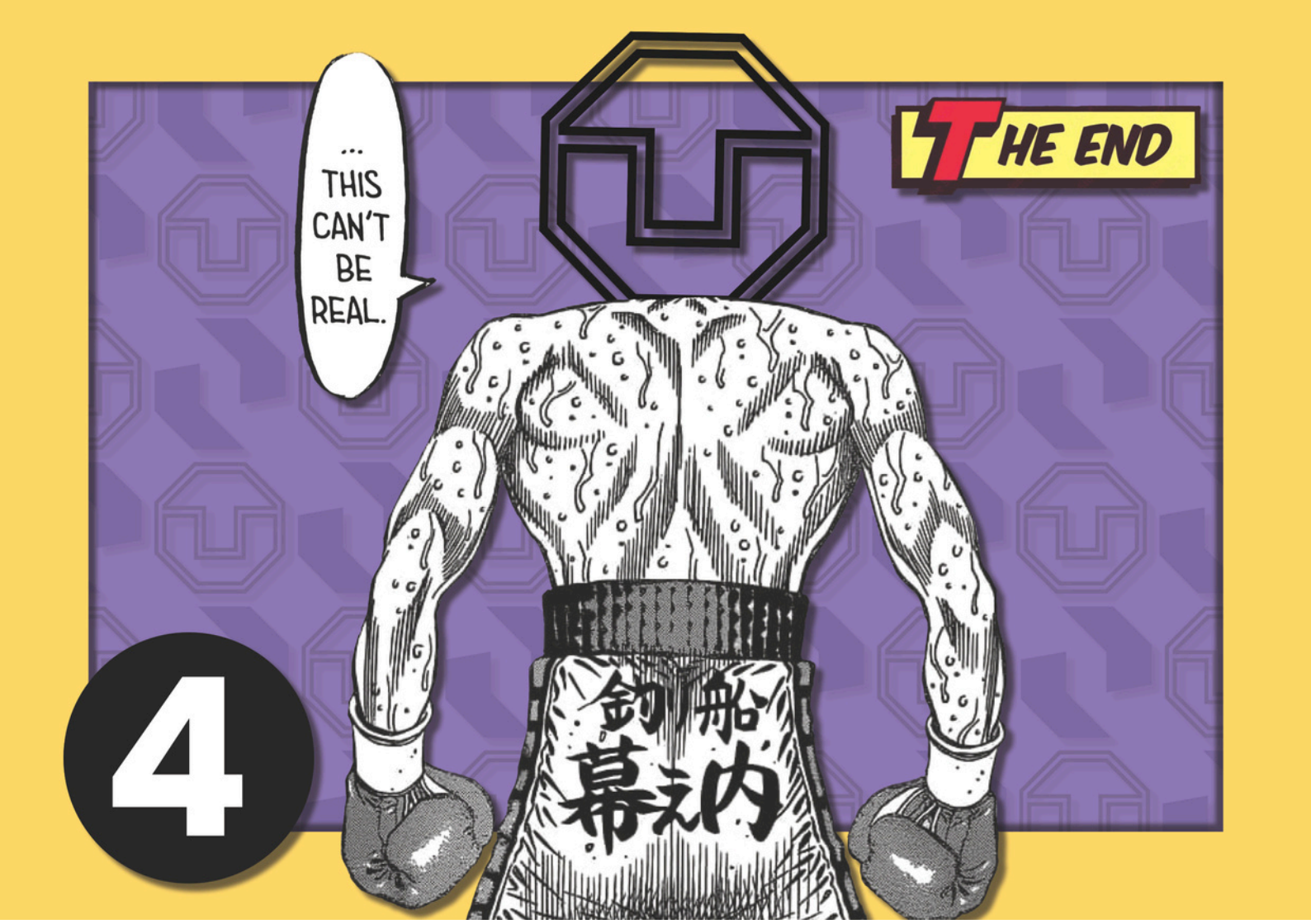
Furthermore, the effects extend well beyond physical fitness. Nearly all interviewees emphasise the importance of regular exercise for mental health, stress regulation, and social connection. One student describes how the Sunday volleyball courses are not just about sport, but also a central social meeting point. Their temporary cancellation has made it harder to stay connected with friends, negatively affecting both mental and physical well-being. A different student points out that long hours of sitting in cognitively demanding seminars require a physical counterbalance. Without regular exercise, she has noticed a reduced stress tolerance and increased mental strain.

For some, sport is also closely linked to academic performance. Most interviewees state that regular exercise helps them unwind, manage exam stress, and prevent cognitive overload. One student draws a comparison to the Corona pandemic, when access to indoor and team sports was severely limited, and describes how sport functions as a crucial coping mechanism during high-stress phases of study. Without

this balance, concentration and academic performance tend to suffer.
Moreover, access and affordability represent another key issue. While not all students are financially dependent on DHSZ programs, many stress that university sports are more cost-effective, flexible, and easier to access compared to private sports clubs. One student emphasises that renting private halls creates additional financial burdens on students and undermines the DHSZ's role in making sports widely accessible. In the long run, such disruptions risk excluding students who cannot afford external alternatives.
Unsurprisingly, frustration about the temporary closure of the hall is widespread. Several interviewees question why the renovation has to take place in the winter semester rather than the summer semester, when outdoor sports would have been possible. Others describe the short-notice closure as an organisational challenge that adds stress to already demanding schedules, internships, or exam periods. While not everyone feels personally affected to the same extent, the consensus is clear. The closure has significantly impacted daily routines for a large portion of the student body.
The renovation of the sports hall at Nöthnitzer Straße 60 addresses a genuine infrastructural need. Worn-out flooring poses safety risks, and funding regulations often leave institutions with limited flexibility in scheduling construction projects. From an administrative perspective, renovating during the winter semester is therefore understandable.
At the same time, the experiences of affected students reveal the hidden costs of such decisions. University sports are not merely optional leisure activities. They play a central role in students' physical health, mental well-being, social integration, and, for some, academic success. While many students have shown resilience and creativity in adapting to the situation, others have been left without access to regular exercise altogether.
The situation highlights a broader challenge for universities, which is how to modernise facilities without disproportionately burdening those who rely on them most. As courses are set to resume in February, the hope among students is not only for a newly renovated sports hall, but also for future planning that better accounts for the realities of student life. More transparent communication, improved scheduling, and

temporary alternatives could help lessen the impact on students and ensure that necessary renovations do not come at the expense of their well-being.

by Mia Friedel

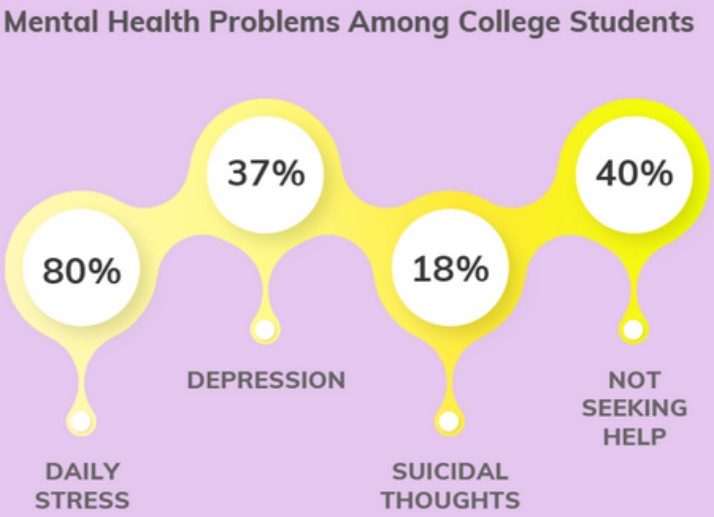


Student Health

The Pressure to Succeed: How a Performance Society Shapes Student Life at Universities

It is the middle of the night. The laptop glows in the dim light of the room, with a half-empty coffee mug right next to it. Tired fingers type away endlessly, pushed forward by the stress of yet another deadline. Many students are very familiar with a situation just like this, and universities around the world push their students to achieve more and better results. The familiarity raises a valid question: what kind of students do universities expect us to be, and do they take any measures to protect us from this pressure? Earning credits, achieving grades, completing internships and reaching milestones in time, for many, this starts to feel like a continuous performance rather than an episode in their lives of exploration and learning. This pressure is nurtured by a culture that defines success in a pre-determined and narrow way, or in other words, by universities that are part of a performance society. In the science of Sociology, modern Western societies have been described as “performance societies” where the worth of an individual is closely tied to their productivity and achievement. As universities are part of this system, they require different ways of performance by the students. Apart from the grading system, there is the pressure of a standard period of study, the expectation of a certain research output or international expe-rience. Time becomes a valued and measured resource: always try to finish early, and if you fall behind, you will need to justify yourself. The learning process is pushed into the background, experimentation is discouraged, and only the result matters. This is rarely directly enforced, but rather follows naturally from communicated expectations, study regulations, institutional language and the comparison with peers. Most of the time, these have already been drilled into the students during secondary school and are further nurtured in university. Over time, this leads to apathy, various forms of perfectionism, or sometimes a difficult

combination of both. The rise of perfectionism is backed up by psychological research and studies that show a particular increase in “socially prescribed perfectionism,” a form where one feels like others expect a flawless performance. In an academic context, “others” start with lecturers and faculties and end with funding bodies and future employers. This structural pressure leads to students treating themselves and the surrounding ones differently. It creates a certain feeling of competition, which is followed by a higher intolerance of mistakes by all participants. Maybe it is supposed to have a motivational effect, but what it often ends up being is a strain on the mind. If left unchecked, it leads to the risk of burnout, anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion. Students just keep on going, though, not because they are engaged in their studies, but rather because they feel like stopping is impossible. While these symptoms have already gained much-needed attention, there lies a more subtle problem of identity. Academic setbacks, like a failed exam, feel no longer situational, but existential. Many define themselves through their academic success, and failure is not seen as an opportunity for growth but as personal incompetence. Even when you succeed, the next deadline is just around the corner and there is barely a chance for relief. This shows how important it is for universities to understand their power and role in shaping the identity of young adults. Universities love to have labels like “top”, “leading”, or “excellent”, as they attract funding, international students, and popularity in general. In the context of a performance society, these terms become ideals for the students to follow. They are reminded of those standards every day and have to function as part of this high-performance organisation, nurturing expectations of speed, resilience and constant optimisation before they even set one foot into the jobmarket.



Universities are not blind to these problems, and support services are often provided, but they exist alongside these structures, and they only help with the aftermath, rather than prevention.

As a good example, the TU Dresden likes to advertise itself as one of the few Universities of Excellence in Germany, achieving a strong global profile, and international competitiveness, which makes competitiveness central to its identity. This status is supposed to help the university as a whole, which is a topic in itself, but it indirectly affects student culture as well. The pressure to succeed is likely to cause a chain reaction, as the pressure on the institution grows, departmental expectations are shaped, which influences how students assess themselves. Communication to the outside puts a focus on achievement, innovation, and competitiveness. Even though these views are not only meant for the students, they also influence everyday life, and they are expected to cope without falling behind. Yet, the TU Dresden is not leaving the students alone with those problems. In case of exam anxiety, study-related stress, and general emotional difficulties, the Studentenwerk Dresden offers access to psychological counselling. Members can use health services, preventive programmes, counselling, and resources addressing stress management and mental well-being, made accessible by the university itself. Beyond this, there are services like mindfulness courses, self-help groups, and peer-based listening services such as Nightline Dresden. These services are incredible and very important. It is good that awareness has been spreading about issues like depression or burnout, and yet they only address the results of a society and institutions that focus on performance. They do not tackle the root of the problem, only teaching students how to cope with them. The structures producing this overload stay mostly unchanged, and even though students are encouraged to seek help, they are not encouraged to question the structures that made help necessary in the first place. This does not mean that ambition or the idea of excellence should be abandoned. It is good for students and universities to have goals to work towards. It just becomes a problem when the

focus lies too much on the results and too little on the path that enabled it. Ambition should enable learning, not dominate identity, and everyone needs to understand the importance of failing and the potential it brings. As students keep on working late into the night, stressed about the next deadline, we need to ask ourselves: how much are we willing to give, and how can we best take care of ourselves and the people around us through the increasing pressure to succeed.

by Humbert Vogel

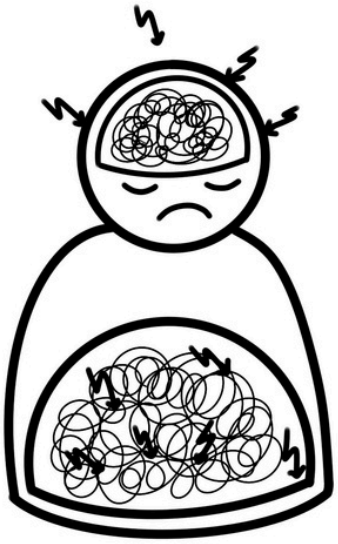
It's Okay Not to Be Okay - Studying with a Chronic Condition

Skipping classes due to sudden flare-ups, leaving exams early because of pain, or struggling to meet deadlines because your body simply does not cooperate are experiences many students with chronic illnesses share. While university life is often associated with independence, flexibility, and social activities, it can also present unique challenges for those managing long-term health conditions alongside their studies.
To shed light on how chronic illnesses affect everyday student life, five students with different conditions were interviewed: one living with epilepsy, one with atopic dermatitis (also known as neurodermatitis), one with migraines, one with migraines and endometriosis, and one with Crohn's disease. Their experiences show that while chronic illness does not define academic ability, it often shapes how students navigate university life.

A short overview of the different illnesses

To understand each of those illnesses better, the following descriptions provide a short overview of the different challenges the interviewed students "suffer" from.
Individual experiences may vary significantly, of course.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that usually causes unpredictable seizures. Therefore, it may impact concentration, memory, and sometimes independence. While it is dangerous untreated, it can be controlled with medication. The student interviewed reported that her condition is well-controlled and does not currently limit her studies.



Atopic dermatitis/neurodermatitis is a skin condition that involves (painful) inflammation, dry skin, itchiness, and red skin. It typically happens in flare-ups. Triggers can include different fabrics, food, stress, or climate changes, among others. The interviewed student has had this illness since childhood and described stress as the most significant trigger.

Migraines are more than just headaches. They come with immense pain and other symptoms such as light, smell, or hearing sensitivity; nausea or vomiting; numbness; dizziness; and many more. Triggers are very hard to pinpoint, and flare-ups can vary from once a year to every day. One interviewee has had migraines for about four years, and the other has experienced them since late childhood. Both named stress as the most significant trigger.

Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory bowel condition. It may cause fatigue, fever, pain in the abdomen, nausea, vomiting, etc. It can disturb normal routines. The interviewed student has had Crohn's since she was 13 years old.

Another chronic condition affecting students is Endometriosis, a condition where tissue, similar to the lining of the uterus, grows outside it. This can cause severe pain and other symptoms, such as vomiting, nausea, blackouts, weakness, etc., that interfere with daily tasks. The interviewed student has had Endo for a couple of years.

How to deal with chronic illness during the semester

Surprisingly, two of the five students said that their illness has little to no impact on their studies. The student with epilepsy has been treated before starting university and can therefore participate in university without restrictions. The student with Crohn's reported that she rarely had any restrictions. The only time she felt her disease flare up was during stressful times.

The remaining students experienced restrictions in their everyday lives, also affecting university life. So, for this part, the focus will lie on those who experience restrictions and could give tips about dealing with their condition during semesters.

1. Know your illness

Doctors can only explain so much to you about your own illness. It is important to know what can trigger flare-ups, what can ease pain, and how to handle the anxiety that comes with being chronically ill. Having a vast knowledge about your condition can help you understand symptoms better and broaden the understanding for those around you.

2. Build a support system

Explain to your friends and family what your sickness is about. Tell them how they can help you get through flare-ups and how to support you in ways that you need at that moment. Most professors are likely to respond with understanding, but not all might be able to grant facilitation due to Nachteilsausgleich. Every single interviewee agreed that the most significant thing is to tell someone that you are suffering. Be open about your struggles and find the right people who will stick it out with you.

3. Accept your limitations

This might sound harsh, but accepting that you are not “normally” healthy can help ease the pressure off. It is totally okay to skip a seminar and take the exam another semester if you cannot do it right this time. It is okay to cancel plans if you do not feel well. Students described those adjustments as sometimes difficult at first but worth it in the end.

4. Take some stress off

Stress was identified as the biggest trigger in almost all conditions during the interviews. Taking it off, even just a little, might ease some pain. A routine, study schedules, or frequent breaks can already be beneficial to your academic success.

Apply for Nachteilsausgleich

Many universities, including TUD, offer students who suffer from a disability or a chronic illness a Nachteilsausgleich, which is a legal entitlement to compensation for disadvantages. If you are a person who can apply for it, it can help you with longer deadlines or equivalent examination performance in another form. To help anyone who is struggling with applying for the Nachteilsausgleich, I investigated the website of the TUD. At first glance, everything looks very legal and rather incomprehensible. It seems that much of the information can only be obtained from various documents or central study information instead of being explained on one page.

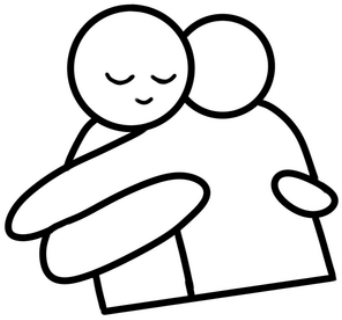
And the actual application might not even go through for sure. I sadly cannot give any information on the actual application, as I have never applied for it, but I will shortly summarize the information found. To apply for the Nachteilsausgleich, you need a medical certificate from your doctor about your chronic illness. In addition, you should gather all information about any examinations before submitting your application. Once you have done this, the application should be submitted no later than three weeks after the start of the semester; after this time, acceptance cannot be guaranteed. Next, a document must be completed in which the student must suggest for each examination which measures can be taken to compensate for the disadvantage. In addition, a justification for these measures must be provided.
Personally, it does seem like a lot of work, especially if you do not have any idea which methods might help you with examinations, but it might help make your daily life at university a little easier. I think it might be worth the effort, and I am convinced that the examination office or the Commissioners for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses will help you.

If you want more information about Nachteilsausgleich, if you can apply, or even if you have any other questions, this website might be helpful:
Background information on compensation for disadvantages: https://tu-dresden.de/tu-dresden/organisation/gremien-und-beauftragte/beauftragte/bfsb/nachteilsausgleich?set_language=en

Make your illness visible

Chronic conditions are often invisible, making it easy for affected students to feel isolated. What the students shared in these interviews highlighted the importance of open communication, understanding, and institutional support. For those who live with chronic conditions, adapting to university life and focusing on your needs is not a sign of weakness but a necessary step toward healthy and sustainable success.
And for those who do not live with a chronic illness, empathy, understanding, and awareness can go a long way. Making others feel seen while they manage their conditions quietly can help them get a sense of normalcy while often facing invisible challenges.

by Viviane Müller



Have Fun and Maintain Your Sanity at TU Dresden

At universities, there is often the problem that – especially in their first semesters – young students struggle with getting along in the new, exciting chapter in their lives. Many first-semester students have recently finished school, just moved out from their parents' home, and now have to get organized all by themselves – most likely in a different city than home. Additionally, university brings further challenges: in contrast to the education at school, students in their first semesters have to learn to adapt to the new learning environment at university. For instance, each day, each week, and each semester are structured differently, which requires high adaptability and flexibility. Nonetheless, workloads at university might also feel enormous and frightening at first. All these new impressions and a completely different daily life can make young students feel scared or anxious and often stressed as well.

According to a survey conducted by a German health insurance company, many students in Germany report that they are mentally and emotionally exhausted. Stress is the most significant reason here. For instance, many students need to work part-time in addition to their full-time studies to be able to afford the costs of studying and housing in the first place. Also, students feel pressured to finish their studies in time due to strict regular study periods. To take this a step further, the stress they experience can be followed by anxiety as well as problems in concentration and during sleep, which can quickly evolve into a vicious cycle. Moreover, compared to 2015, students' stress levels have increased significantly. This is highly alarming and concerning, considering burnout is a foreseeable consequence among many. Also, more women are affected by signs of stress and anxiety than male students are, and the highest percentage of stressed students can be found in the department of language and cultural studies. Research names the pandemic as a major factor in the emergence of stress and anxiety among students: With universities having become more digital, students have fewer options to socialise on campus, which can then lead to loneliness and an increase in anxiety.

But what can be done to reduce the feeling of stress and anxiety? It might seem controversial at first, but fixed breaks from studying can reduce stress significantly. For example, an effective means could be time blocking, which saves valuable time for fun and recreational activities in your calendar. This helps you to see free time as important as study time, so your brain can relax and restore its power for the next day of work, thus it will work more efficiently than a stressed one. A valuable factor for reducing stress is physical activity, especially for students who spend many hours a day on their desks.

Our university offers many sports programmes organised by the Dresdner Hochschulsportzentrum (DHSZ). They offer a huge number of activities, providing fun for everyone. Plus, these are great opportunities to socialise as well! If you want to combine exercise with getting to know Dresden and its surroundings, the Studentenwerk's own hiking group, pedibus migrantes is more than happy to welcome you on their tours exploring Saxony throughout the semester.

Moreover, going to the gym is another great option for exercising whenever your timetable allows you to, as they are open all day, and many gyms in Dresden offer student discounts as well. Also, did you know that TU Dresden even runs its own gym?

While physical exercise is one of the most effective ways to relieve stress, sometimes a quiet evening in your apartment is all you need. Grab the book that has been waiting on your shelf for too long. Take the violin that has been covered in dust, waiting for you to pick it up and apply to the university's orchestra. Or why not use the time to let your creativity flourish? Take some time to draw, paint, write poems, or learn a craft.

For example, many people discover knitting or crocheting for themselves.

The good news is that creative hobbies can benefit your stress relief just as well as active hobbies do. Studies have shown that, similar to physical exercise, crafting can provide the brain with an increased blood flow and thus more oxygen, leading to positive effects on cognitive and emotional processes. Yet, sometimes after a long and exhausting day of studying, zoning out in front of a screen is okay and nothing to be ashamed of. In that case, our university provides a great offer too! While the city's cinemas can be quite expensive, TU Dresden's Kino im Kasten offers a variety of movies and special events ranging from blockbusters to interesting picks from any period and genre, all while including student-friendly prices and show times.

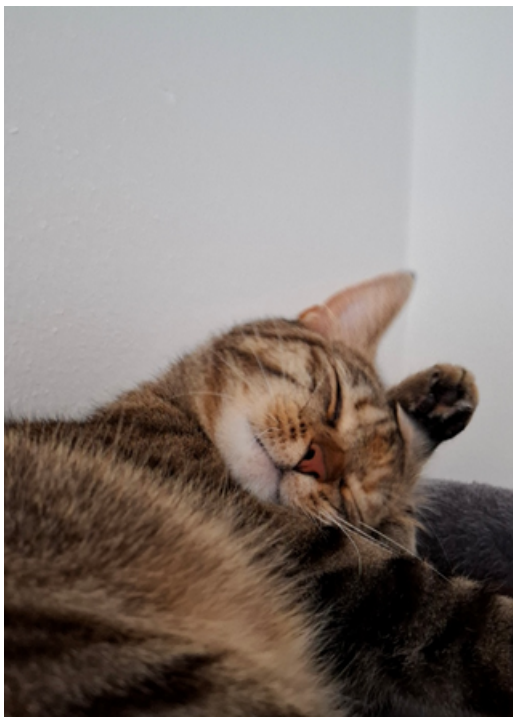
As you can see, student life in Dresden offers more than study dates at the SLUB. In contrast, there are many great programmes for students to make their valuable free time fun and recreational. Whatever you do – the key is to treat free time as important as study time for you to become resistant to stress and be able to enjoy your time at TU Dresden to the fullest!

by Charlotte Hochberger

Pet Pick-Me-Up: Why Pets Can Be Beneficial for Students

A fish, a hamster, a cat, or maybe a dog? Many pets are more than just company to their owners. Instead, they can provide physical and mental benefits and help with personal development. At the same time, students usually run on a tight budget and have hardly any time, which can become a conflict. As a cat owner myself, I can attest that there is no better feeling than coming home to my purring friend. But the decision to own a pet should be well thought through, because it means responsibility, money and a lot of time. If you have ever considered getting yourself a companion, this article could help you decide whether you are ready for this commitment.

"Pet Power", how the smallest pet can grow your character



Pets can help strengthen your willingness to take responsibility, and that does not only apply to cats or dogs. Especially small rodents like hamsters or guinea pigs are often overlooked, but they give great opportunities to learn care routines. For example, feeding regularly, cleaning the cages and watching their health, these tasks may help your sense of organization, reliability and empathy.
Furthermore, animals help with your overall well-being. Studies have shown that pets can reduce stress, lower blood pressure and help against loneliness. he latter is important for students who live alone and have no one to turn to. Dogs also increase daily mobility, as they need to be taken on a walk about three times a day. If your lease does not allow for animals bigger than cats, a smaller pet could be just the right choice for you. Most landlords do allow smaller rodents, and maybe even the smallest little creature can impact your life in great ways.

Owning a pet also makes for a great conversation topic. So, if you have a hard time interacting with others or finding interesting things to talk about, a pet is the way to go since almost everyone loves animals.

"Pet Peeves" – the downside of owning a pet

Besides all the positives, we need to talk about the downsides as well. Many students live on a tight budget, which owning a pet would only make matters even tighter. Quality food, litter, supplies such as a cat tree or toys, leashes or a cage for a species-appropriate home can quickly add up. You can generally calculate anywhere between €150 to 500 just for the overall amenities, depending on the species and their demands. Furthermore, there will be regular costs such as food, litter or vet bills. Routine appointments at a vet can cost anywhere between €10 to 150 if your pet is healthy. Once it is sick and needs medical attention, the bills can skyrocket.

Another factor to consider is time management. Animals need attention. If you travel a lot, you require someone to watch while you are away. In the exam period, when time is already scarce, you still must manage to take care of your pet. They also want to be entertained. Cats want to play, Dogs need to go for walks, and even the smallest rodent wants love and attention from its owner. Their bathrooms need to be cleaned daily, as you cannot simply flush it all down the drain. So, consider all those time-consuming factors in your decision.

Finally, a pet is sometimes a lifelong commitment. Especially larger animals like dogs or cats can live up to anywhere between 12 to 20 years on average. Many rodents can live between two to five years. Therefore, a pet is nothing for a short moment that can be given up for adoption once it becomes a burden to take care of.

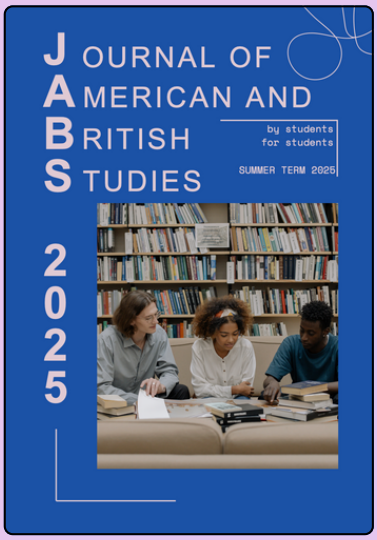
Pet or no Pet – that is the question

Before you decide to adopt a pet, think realistically. Does it fit my lifestyle, my budget and my living space? Thoroughly research the species you want to adopt, calculate spending, and talk to your landlord and roommates. If you have never owned a pet, start small, use all resources for information, and think about adopting from an animal shelter. Most rescue animals will be more grateful for a loving new home.

From my own experience, it is always worth owning a pet because the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Pets give so much back – love, quality time, company. But they really are not a short-term accessory. They are many years of commitment which require preparation.

If you think you can benefit from owning a pet but plans just do not work in your favor, go check out animal shelters. Ask there for a pet partnership or go on walks with the dogs (if allowed). Where there is a will, there is a way to spend time with these precious animals.

by Viviane Müller



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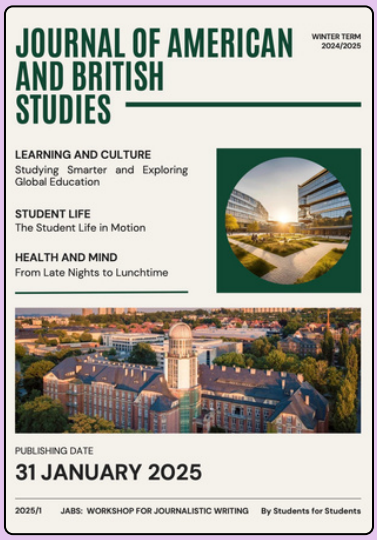

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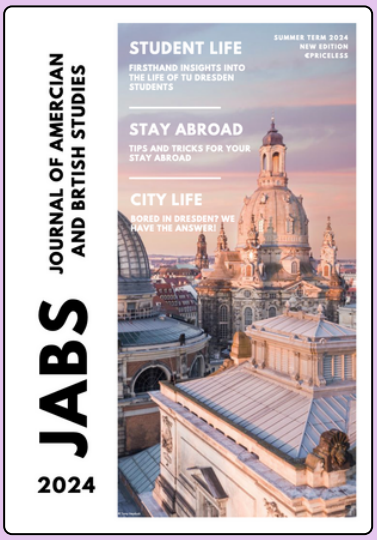

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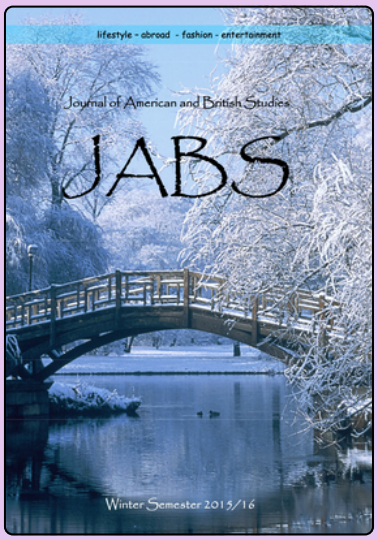

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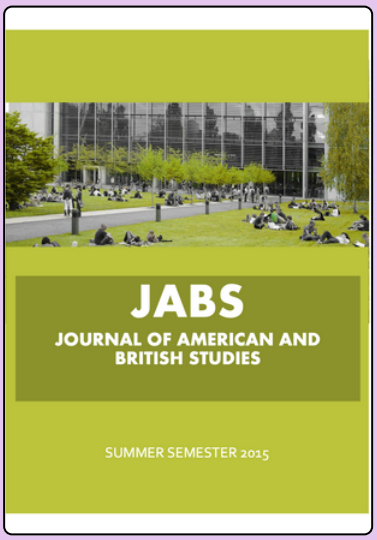

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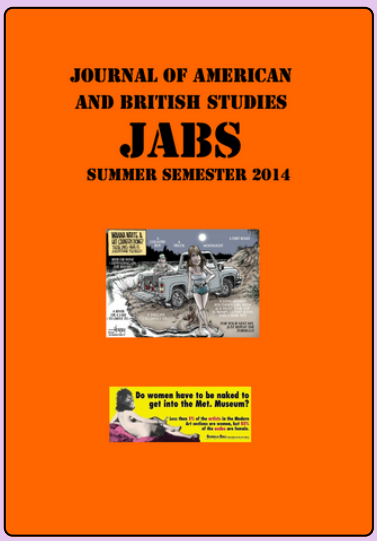

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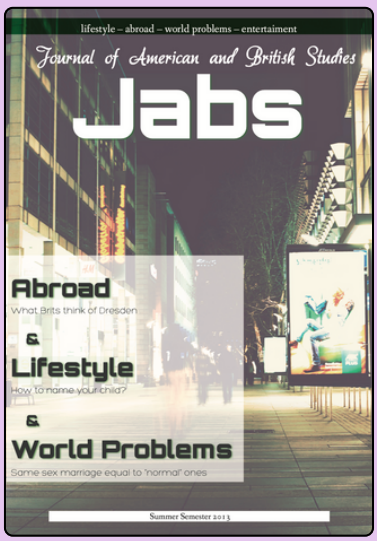

JABS
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JABS
Winter 2007/2008

https://tu-dresden.de/gsw/slk/anglistik_amerikanistik/studium/jabs-magazine

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