

Study conditions and mental health in higher education in Germany

Implications for healthy campus initiatives

Rational for Health Promoting Universities

- Universities are large institutions (760.000 employees and about 2.9 million students in Germany)
- Universities have a large throughput of students who are or will become professionals and policy-makers
- They are major players within the community

Potential

- Enhancing the moral of those working in universities
- Maintaining health and productive work force and reducing staff absenteeism
- Creating competitive advantage and better reputation for the university / Boosting student and staff recruitment
- Improving academic performance / Reducing student dropout
- Improving resilience in times of crisis

History of HPU internationally and in Germany (blue)

- 1995 German Network of Health Promoting Universities has been established with 5 universities
- 1996 International Meeting on HPU in Maribor, Slovenia with a WHO Healthy Cities Business Meeting
- 1997 Round Table Meeting in Lancaster, UK
- 1998 A framework for action by a European network of HPU, WHO
- 2000 International meeting in Lancashire, UK
- 2005 10th anniversary of the HPU German Network and launch of “10 HPU Principles”
- 2015 Okanagan Charter
- 2020 25th anniversary and launch of the revised version of the “10 HPU Principles”
- 2022: German HPU Network comprises over 150 Universities and Colleges and 5 regional networks

Okanagan Charter 2015

- Call to Action 1: Embed health into all aspects of campus culture, across the administration, operations and academic mandates
 - Embed health in all campus policies.
 - Create supportive campus environments.
 - Generate thriving communities and a culture of well-being.
 - Support personal development.
 - Create or re-orient campus services.
- Call to Action 2: Lead health promotion action and collaboration locally and globally
 - Integrate health, well-being and sustainability in multiple disciplines
 - Advance research, teaching and training for health promotion knowledge and action
 - Lead and partner towards local and global action for health promotion.



OKANAGAN CHARTER
AN INTERNATIONAL CHARTER
FOR HEALTH PROMOTING
UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

An outcome of the 2015 International Conference on Health
Promoting Universities and Colleges / VII International Congress
Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

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Higher education in Germany – developments in the 21st century

Conditions for institutions and students

- Bologna Reform
 - Modularisation of curricula
 - Higher density of exams
 - Restricted individual choice
 - Improved internationalisation
 - Improvement in teaching quality - accreditation
- Steady increase in student numbers – minimal increase in professorships (underfinancing)
- Measures to reduce study duration
- Decrease in the proportion of students eligible for public study loans
- Higher competition between institutions – excellence awards for few universities to create elite universities
- Power shift towards leadership (rectors and deans)
- Decrease in basic funding – external funding needed to maintain structures and to grow
- COVID-19 pandemic – distance learning for 2 - 4 semesters

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Study conditions and students' mental health – Results of the StudiBiFra Project

The StudiBiFra Project

Funded by the German Statutory Accident Insurance 2021-2023

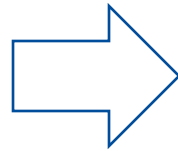
Joint project of University of Bielefeld and Charité Berlin

- Aim: Use of the Bielefeld Questionnaire for Study Conditions and (mental) Health at German universities
 - Needs assessment for environmental changes to improve health conducive study conditions
 - Identification of vulnerable student groups
- Support institutions for the mental health risk assessment at study places overseen by accident prevention regulations
- Providing data on student (mental) health and wellbeing for student health management systems

Framework of the Bielefeld Questionnaire on Study Conditions

I. Study Conditions („Determinants“)

- 0. Corona Conditions
- I. Quality and general conditions of studies
- II. Support from lecturers
- III. Quality of cooperation among students
- IV. Culture in the course of studies
- V. Culture at the institution
- VI. Filter questions



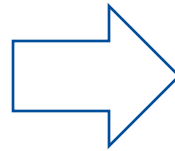
II. Impacts

- I. Academic achievement
- II. Well-being during studies
- III. Identification with studies and institution
- IV. General condition and health

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Scales for health impacts

General Wellbeing: ProSoB
Depressive Mood: ProSoB
Cognitive stress symptoms: COPSOQ (Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire)
Exhaustion: MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory)
General health: ProSoB

The Sample (N = 20.060)

Ten universities and universities of applied sciences

Gender	N (%)
female	7,958 (67.5 %)
male	3,627 (30.8 %)
gender-diverse	199 (1.7 %)

- 15 % with family responsibilities (caring for or supervising children and / or relatives).
- 2 % with severe disability or equality issue (according to definition by law)

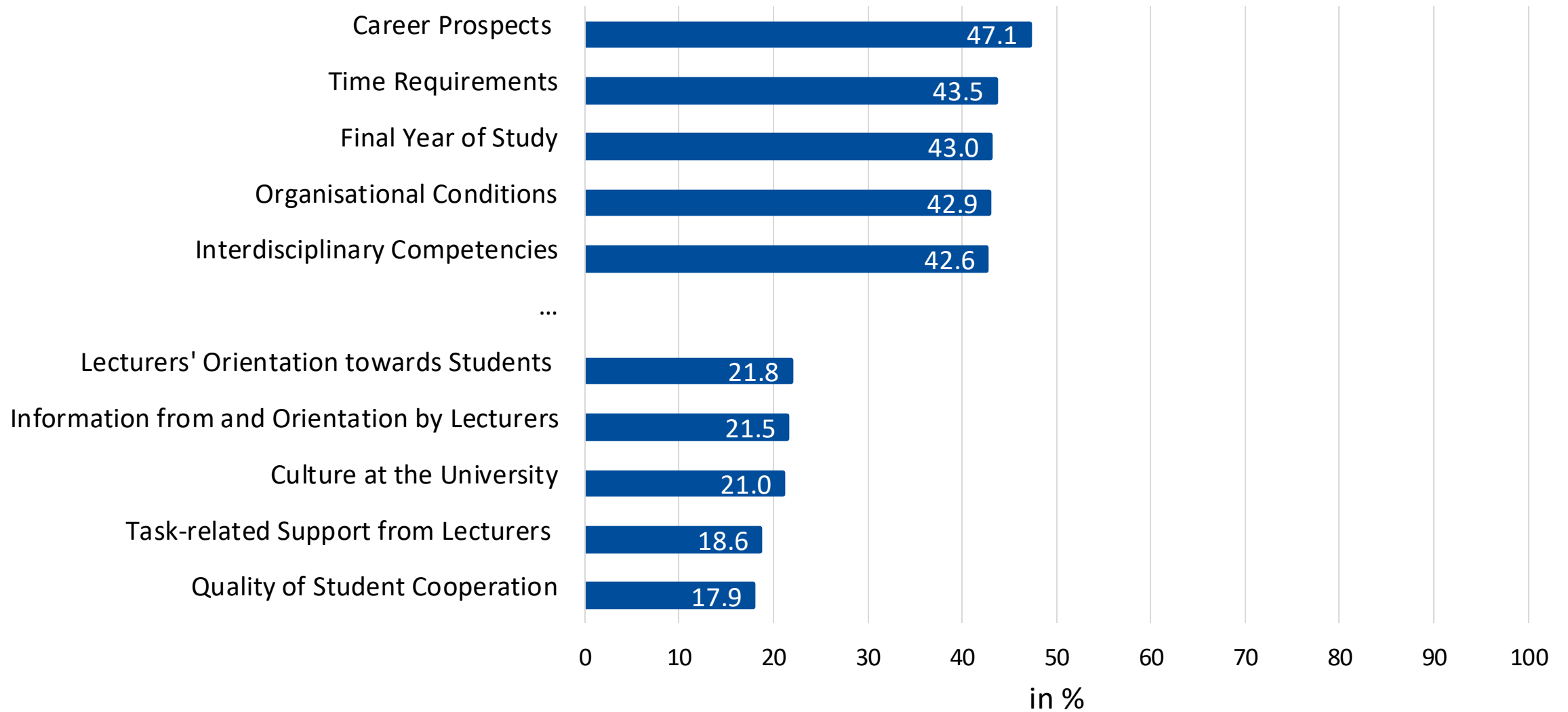
Subject Group	N (%)
Education, Humanities, Social, Behavioural and Media Sciences, Economics, Law, Languages, Arts and Culture	11,422 (60.3 %)
Natural and Life Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics	3,196 (16.8 %)
Engineering, Technology and Architecture	2,070 (10.9 %)
Medicine and Health Sciences	1,930 (10.2 %)
Other	341 (1.8 %)

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In which areas of their study conditions do German students indicate the highest or lowest need for action?

Need for action to improve study conditions

(Percentage of respondents with great or very great need for action)



Factors associated with needs for action

Career prospects
& time requirements

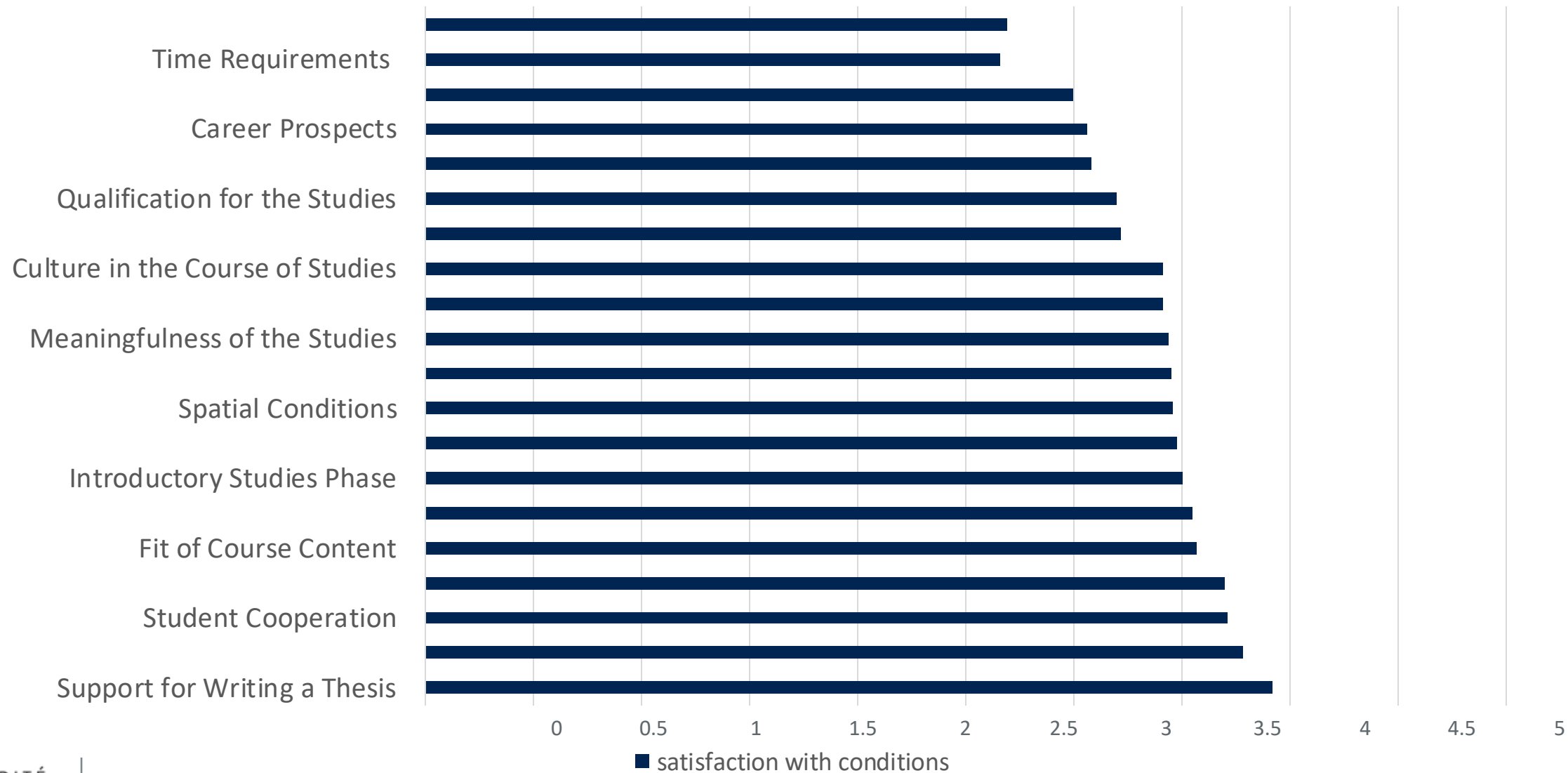
- Students who identified themselves as **female** or **gender-diverse** and students at **universities** (vs. universities of applied sciences) were significantly more likely to indicate need for action.
- Students in the **final year of study** were more likely to report need for action regards „career prospects“. They were less likely to report needs for action regards "time requirements".
- Associations were found between **subject group** and need for action regards „career prospects“ (e. g., lower need for action for "**medicine and health sciences**" students).

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How does the expressed need for action correspond with satisfaction with study conditions?

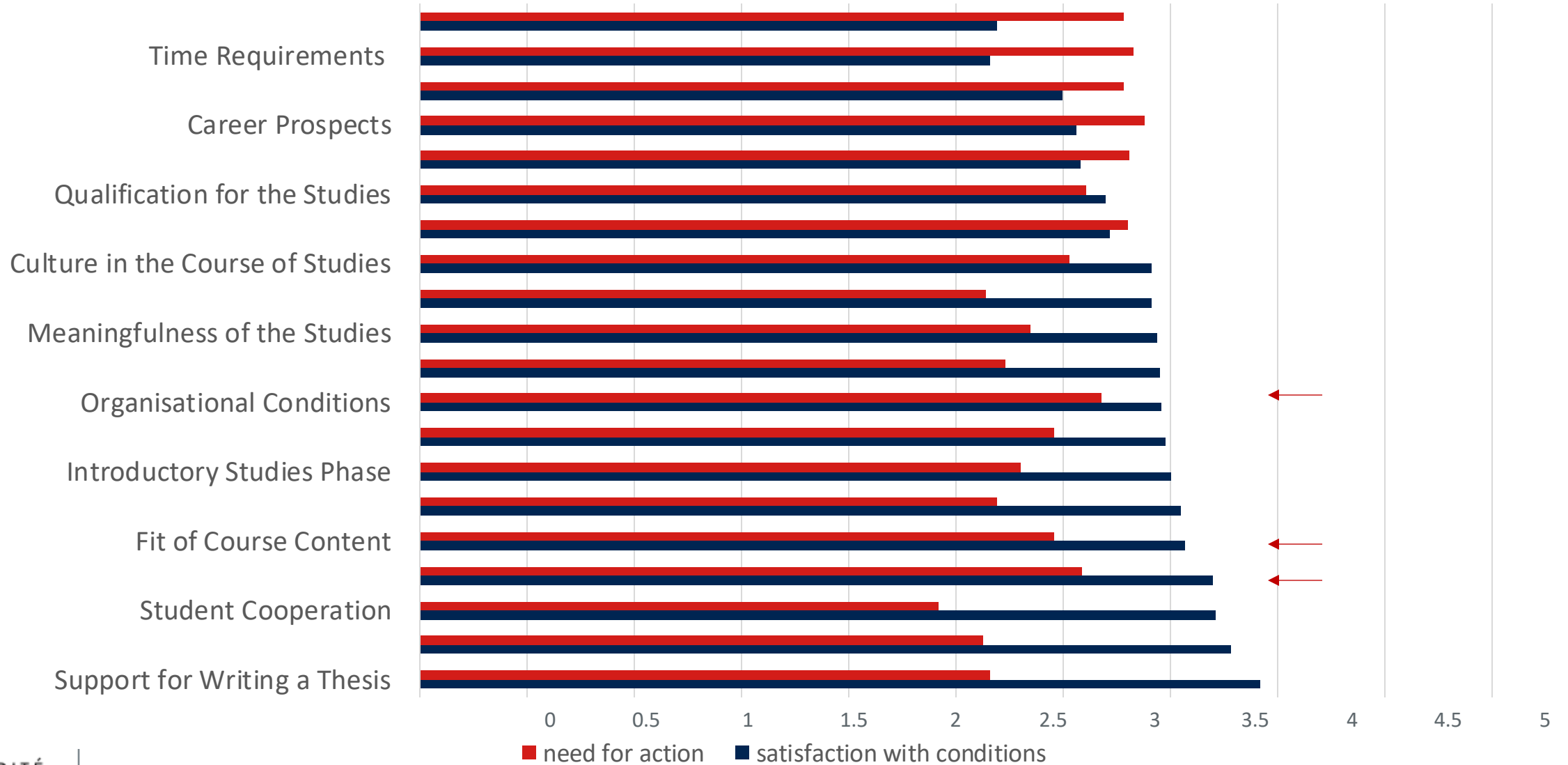
Satisfaction with Study Conditions and Need for Action

scale averages / mean values (Likert scale 1 very low - 5 very high)



Satisfaction with Study Conditions and Need for Action

scale averages / mean values (Likert scale 1 very low - 5 very high)



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Is the satisfaction with study conditions associated with mental health and well-being?

Associations between Study Conditions and Mental Health

significant regression coefficients ($p < 0.001$) adjusted for gender identity and university

Evaluation of Study Conditions	General Well-being
Spatial Conditions	0.318
Interdisciplinary Competencies	0.264
Qualification for the Studies	0.271
Fit of Course Content	0.377
Clarity of Expectations	0.266
Meaningfulness of the Studies	0.244
Organisational Conditions	0.298
Digital Teaching	0.282
Examinations and Academic Achievements	0.381
Time Requirements	0.449
Career Prospects	0.232
Lecturers' Orientation towards Students	0.301
Orientation by Lecturers	0.241
Support for Writing a Thesis	0.248
Task-related Support from Lecturers	0.344
Student Cooperation	0.315
Corona Conditions	0.315

Associations between Study Conditions and Mental Health

significant regression coefficients ($p < 0.001$) adjusted for gender identity and university

Evaluation of Study Conditions	General Well-being	Depressive Mood	Cognitive Stress Symptoms
Spatial Conditions	0.318	-0.227	-0.206
Interdisciplinary Competencies	0.264	-0.275	-0.231
Qualification for the Studies	0.271	-0.253	-0.254
Fit of Course Content	0.377	-0.345	-0.254
Clarity of Expectations	0.266	-0.264	-0.276
Meaningfulness of the Studies	0.244	-0.272	-0.226
Organisational Conditions	0.298	-0.266	-0.242
Digital Teaching	0.282	-0.308	-0.308
Examinations and Academic Achievements	0.381	-0.352	-0.348
Time Requirements	0.449	-0.385	-0.340
Career Prospects	0.232	-0.265	-0.231
Lecturers' Orientation towards Students	0.301	-0.277	-0.220
Orientation by Lecturers	0.241	-0.217	-0.189
Support for Writing a Thesis	0.248	-0.237	-0.228
Task-related Support from Lecturers	0.344	-0.264	-0.225
Student Cooperation	0.315	-0.335	-0.283
Corona Conditions	0.315	-0.434	-0.413

Associations between Study Conditions and Mental Health

significant regression coefficients ($p < 0.001$) adjusted for gender identity and university

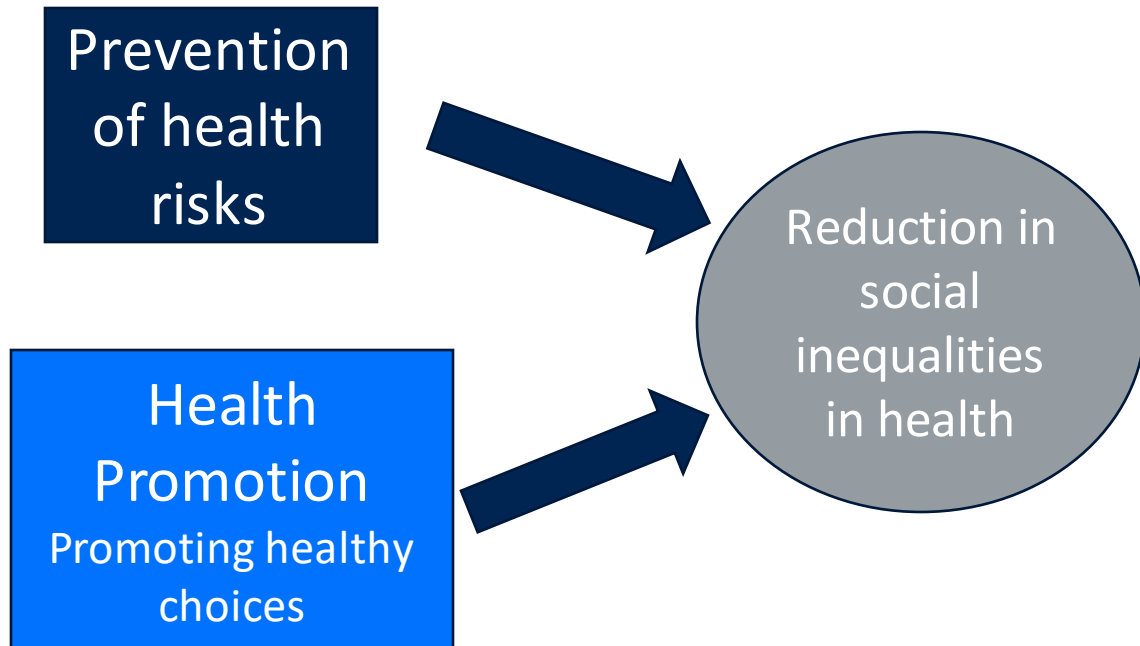
Evaluation of Study Conditions	General Well-being	Depressive Mood	Cognitive Stress Symptoms	Exhaustion
Spatial Conditions	0.318	-0.227	-0.206	-0.295
Interdisciplinary Competencies	0.264	-0.275	-0.231	-0.284
Qualification for the Studies	0.271	-0.253	-0.254	-0.323
Fit of Course Content	0.377	-0.345	-0.254	-0.407
Clarity of Expectations	0.266	-0.264	-0.276	-0.317
Meaningfulness of the Studies	0.244	-0.272	-0.226	-0.322
Organisational Conditions	0.298	-0.266	-0.242	-0.357
Digital Teaching	0.282	-0.308	-0.308	-0.301
Examinations and Academic Achievements	0.381	-0.352	-0.348	-0.508
Time Requirements	0.449	-0.385	-0.340	-0.582
Career Prospects	0.232	-0.265	-0.231	-0.242
Lecturers' Orientation towards Students	0.301	-0.277	-0.220	-0.384
Orientation by Lecturers	0.241	-0.217	-0.189	-0.290
Support for Writing a Thesis	0.248	-0.237	-0.228	-0.273
Task-related Support from Lecturers	0.344	-0.264	-0.225	-0.382
Student Cooperation	0.315	-0.335	-0.283	-0.310
Corona Conditions	0.315	-0.434	-0.413	-0.387

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From needs assessment to
action – Conditions for Healthy
Campus Initiatives in Germany

How is a Healthy Campus Initiative financed in Germany?

The Prevention Act 2015



- Major players – statutory health insurances and accident insurance
- 7 EURO per year and health insured person to be spent on prevention
- Thereof 2 EURO on settings-based approaches
- Quality guidelines include universities and colleges as settings eligible for funding via the prevention act
- Institutions can apply for healthy campus project funding
 - Project plan (including evaluation)
 - Leadership support
 - Participatory approach with steering group



Celebrating the contract signature with the funder Technial Health Insurance

The way forward at Charité – A medical faculty

The Project Gesund-studieren@Charité

- 5 year project funded by a health insurance and through the Prevention Act
- Steering committee (since 2021) with support from leadership (vice-dean for teaching)
- Communication of survey results and launch of the project in all committees
- Detailed data analysis – combination with other data sources
- Participatory thematic workshops
 - Kick off in May
 - Diversity Day
- Networking and exchange with other Berlin universities (Humboldt and Free University) and with regional and national HPU networks

Thank you for your attention!

christiane.stock@charite.de