

Ensuring equal opportunities based on family responsibilities
Guidelines for the Implementation of Section 4a Paragraph 2 and Section 15 Paragraph 2
Sentence 2 of the General Examination Regulations (ATPO) and Other Family-Friendly Study
Conditions

1. Goal and Object

- (1) *“The family is defined as all social networks in which active responsibility is taken for others, especially for raising and educating children and caregiving.”*

With this expanded understanding of the concept of family, Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences wants to do more justice to the actual reality of its students' lives.

The reconciliation of study and care responsibilities is an important concern of the university. With the position paper on the development of Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences “Project 2023”, the target agreements with the Ministry of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony, and the Academic Senate Policy on the Implementation of the Gender Equality Mandate in Accordance with Section 3 Paragraph 3 of the Lower Saxony Higher Education Act [*Niedersächsisches Hochschulgesetz – NHG*], the university has committed itself to designing its structural framework in such a way that diversity and equal opportunities are made possible. This includes providing family-friendly study conditions so that students can successfully combine their studies with caring responsibilities. In addition to improving compatibility, family-friendly study conditions help to avoid prolongation of studies, reduce dropout rates, and promote successful completion of studies within the standard period of study.

With section 4a paragraph 2 and section 15 paragraph 2 sentence 2 of the General Examination Regulations and these guidelines for the implementation of these sections, the university creates a binding framework that enables students to reconcile their study and care responsibilities in a uniform manner throughout the university.

2. Basic Principle

- (1) In view of the different life situations and circumstances of students with care responsibilities, it is sometimes necessary, despite uniform regulations, to examine on a case-by-case basis which measures can be taken to achieve equal opportunities. The goal of all parties involved is to enable students to complete their studies as quickly as possible, taking into account their caregiving responsibilities.

The Family Service offered by the university's Equal Opportunity Office is available to all students as a counseling and support service.

3. Requirement

- (1) In order to take advantage of the family-friendly study conditions, students with care responsibilities must apply for a “*Studium und Familie*” (Studying with a family) card at the Office of the University Registrar. The card is recognized as suitable proof in accordance with section 4a paragraph 2 of the General Examination Regulations.

4. Target Groups

The following target groups can apply for the card:

- (1) Students on maternity leave (in accordance with the Maternity Protection Act [*Mutterschutzgesetz – MuSchG*])
- (2) Students raising and caring for children under the age of 14 in a shared household
- (3) Students who regularly care for close relatives for at least ten hours per week

5. Measures for Ensuring Equal Opportunities in Accordance with Section 4a Paragraph 2 and Section 15 Paragraph 2 Sentence 2 of the General Examination Regulations

The “*Studium und Familie*” card entitles the holder to the following family-friendly study conditions:

(1) *Extension of the completion time for graded exams*

The target groups listed in section 4. receive a 25%¹ or 50%² extension of the time to complete graded exams held continuously throughout the course. Graded exams held continuously throughout the course are written assignments and final theses. The completion time for final theses is also extended by 25%³ or 50%⁴ of the regular completion time.

(2) *Flexible scheduling for courses that require attendance⁵ and other practical graded exams*

- a) Reasonable times absent from courses that require attendance is given to persons referred to in section 4. if the composition and structure of the course provide alternatives for acquiring the skills associated with attendance in other ways.
- b) The persons referred to in section 4. are given appropriate flexibility for internships and other time-dependent practical types of exam⁶.
- c) Pregnant students will be offered an alternative solution in the case of hazardous practical graded exams in accordance with the Ordinance on the Protection of Mothers at Work [*Verordnung zum Schutze der Mütter am Arbeitsplatz – MuSchArbV*]⁷.

(3) *Graded exams during the maternity protection periods*

Students for whom the statutory maternity protection periods fall within the exam period may take one or more identical or equivalent graded exams at another exam date during the semester, to be arranged individually.

¹ A 25% extension is granted to

- students with one child
- students with care responsibilities between ten and 19 hours per week

² A 50% extension is granted to

- students with two or more children
- single parents with one or more children
- students with one or more children who are “lone parents” during the week (e.g., partner does not live at home during the week due to work)
- students with care responsibilities for 20 or more hours per week

³ As defined in footnote 1 in (1)

⁴ As defined in footnote 2 in (1)

⁵ Examples of courses that require attendance include language courses, mandatory internships, and mandatory field trips.

⁶ Examples of enhancing flexibility, after consultation with the teaching staff, include:

- a. preferred time slot when multiple options are available
- b. creation of alternative dates
- c. part-time completion or partial retake, splitting

⁷ See <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/muscharbv/>

- (4) *Unexcused absence / withdrawal from graded exams as referred to in section 15 paragraph 2 sentence 2 of the General Examination Regulations*

Valid reasons also include

- a. the need to care for a sick child
- b. the need to care for a child when the person who would normally provide regular care is ill (e.g., a childminder or grandparent)
- c. the need to care for a dependent close relative when the person who would normally provide regular care is ill (e.g., other caregivers)

6. Other Family-Friendly Study Conditions

- (1) *Enhancing the flexibility of the program schedule*

It is possible to enhance the flexibility of the program schedule. The faculties and the Institute of Music offer course planning advice that takes into account the individual circumstances of students with care responsibilities and the course and exam planning of the degree program. The result of the consultation is documented in an appropriate form.

- (2) *Priority selection right for limited enrollment courses*

The persons referred to in section 4 shall be given priority in the selection of limited enrollment courses.