

Using ZOOM at Technical University of Darmstadt

Using ZOOM raises data protection and data security issues. These issues have been discussed in great depth by the Hessische Beauftragter für Datenschutz und Informationsfreiheit (Hessian Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information) and the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts (HMWK).

We believe ZOOM not to be the perfect solution meeting all requirements. However, we believe ZOOM to be an easy-to-use tool well suited for on-line learning and teaching. Which is why we believe its shortcomings to be justifiable. The Executive Board of TU Darmstadt decided to permit the use of ZOOM because there are currently no other solutions available which are at the same time technically scalable, stable, better suited regarding data protection, more secure in their most recent version and affordable.

The Hessian Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information evaluated the available video conferencing systems according to the requirements of §6(1) d) and e). He has currently made a positive assessment. This means, the currently available video conferencing systems are permitted.

<https://datenschutz.hessen.de/videokonferenzsysteme-schulen>

This assessment applies explicitly to using video conferencing systems in schools.

Responding to an enquiry by the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts (HMWK), the Hessian Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information confirmed that his positive assessment on 29 April 2020 also applies to the use of currently available video conferencing systems at universities.

The HMWK followed his assessment on 29 April 2020 and announced that the legal supervisory authority has accepted the use of ZOOM for on-line teaching at universities and universities of applied science in Hesse for the summer semester 2020.

This permission, however, comes with restrictions:

- ZOOM may only be used when licensed. These licences must be provided by the Technical University of Darmstadt.
- It is possible to adjust the data protection settings in ZOOM to optimise their privacy compliance. These settings, therefore, need to be read, understood and set carefully to using personal data only when absolutely necessary. The HRZ has adjusted the necessary settings to this end.
- Using confidential data must be avoided with ZOOM.

Based on these conditions, the risks to general rights of privacy can be minimised and ZOOM can be used safely.

The Data Protection Team of TU Darmstadt

