



## Press Release

### **25 years of innovative learning – University of Tübingen Teaching Prize for international mathematics seminar**

**Students from 40 countries learn together – Student Commitment Prize for Mindful Science initiative, which invites students and researchers to talk about mental health**

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This year, the University of Tübingen's teaching award goes to Professor Rainer Nagel from the Department of Mathematics for his international internet seminar on evolution equations. For 25 years, Nagel has combined digital elements with classroom teaching in this seminar. Students from currently 120 universities worldwide work together on annually changing topics in mathematics. Rainer Nagel started the seminar and kept on developing it. Now it is jointly organized and evaluated by an international committee of 15 scientists.

The University awards the 2,500-euro prize annually for innovative teaching formats or special commitment to teaching.

The 2022 University of Tübingen Student Commitment Prize goes to the Mindful Science initiative in the neurosciences, in which PhD students offer low-threshold formats such as lectures and group walks in which students and researchers can exchange ideas on mental health issues, about their own situation and stresses, among other things in the pandemic.

#### **Teaching Prize for the Internet Seminar on Evolution Equations**

The recognition of the Internet Seminar coincides with an anniversary - 25 years ago, in winter semester 1997/98, Professor Nagel established this format for mathematics students from the third semester on. Nowadays, some 500 mathematics students from 40 countries participate each year.

The schedule alternates online phases with in-person classes. From October to February, a "virtual lecturer" teaches the necessary basic knowledge in an online course - supplemented by exercises, online meetings with other participants and support from local coordinators. From March to June, small groups of members from different universities

form to work on key topics and submit regular status reports on their progress. The results are presented in June during a one-week on-campus workshop, in English.

An international steering committee consisting of 15 professors, many of whom have participated in the seminar as students, selects the respective topic. The committee supports the organization and raises funds for the workshop.

"Students make their first international and professional contacts in this seminar and experience mathematics as an international science," says Nagel. "It is always impressive for me to see the enthusiasm and commitment of the participants."

The prize money is to provide financial support for Tübingen students to attend the seminar.

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Link to seminar 2022: <https://www.mat.tuhh.de/veranstaltungen/isem26/start>

**Student Commitment Prize for “Mindful Science”**

The Mindful Science initiative, launched by former students – now doctoral candidates – Marleen Viet and Morgan Hess, arose from the pandemic years. A survey they conducted in the Master's and doctoral programs of Tübingen's Neurosciences revealed that the majority of respondents had struggled with mental health problems at some point. 25 percent also said they did not know of any place to get support.

On this basis, a committed group of students and doctoral researchers took action; they have been offering regular formats providing low-threshold support to fellow students since 2020. In hybrid lectures ("Growing up in Science"), neuroscientists talk about their careers, including unexpected difficulties and lessons learned. Afterwards, the speakers are available for questions and discussion.

Since November 2021, the group has been organizing joint “mental health” walks, which provide opportunities for contacts and conversations about one's own situation. In addition, posts on the topic of mental health are regularly published on the group's Instagram and Twitter channels.

These activities have met with keen interest and are to be continued in the future. The aim is to create a space for information and discussion about mental health in science. The aim is to draw attention to the issues and to destigmatize psychological problems so as to strengthen both students and researchers in the long term. The prize money will be used to finance further events for students and lectures with guest speakers.

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Professor Rainer Nagel received the University of Tübingen's teaching award: Since 25 years he offers the hybrid teaching format "Internet Seminar Evolution Equations".

Right: Professor Monique Scheer, Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity, left: Professor Karin Amos, Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

Photo: Friedhelm Albrecht / Universität Tübingen



The initiative "Mindful Science" received the Student Commitment Prize from Professor Karin Amos, Vice-President for Academic Affairs (left) and Professor Monique Scheer, Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity (right).

Photo: Friedhelm Albrecht / Universität Tübingen