



## **"Videoconferencing Etiquette" - Practical tips from the GI for Doctoral Students at H-BRS**

### **Content preparation:**

- The person inviting communicates an agenda beforehand. A clear discussion thread helps to manage the meeting objectively and within the given time. This is especially true for meetings with more than two participants.
- The person inviting shares access data with all participants in advance.

### **Technical equipment:**

- Get familiar in advance with the operation of the conference system.
- Do not tape the camera. Turn on the sound.
- Using headsets or mobile phone headphones prevents people in your immediate vicinity from listening in.
- If you are sharing your screen with other participants, remember to close all unnecessary applications, disable the screen saver and the power saving function before you start. With some conference tools it is possible not to share the whole screen, but only individual windows, such as a PowerPoint presentation. If possible, use such a function to protect your privacy.
- Other electronic devices should be muted.
- We recommend a trial session with friends or colleagues.

### **Surrounding area:**

- Even if a cosy atmosphere is allowed in your home office - an untidy shelf in the background does not interest your conversation partners and is distracting.
- Make sure that the working atmosphere is calm and that nobody inadvertently bursts into the conference.
- Place yourself with your back against a wall and in such a way that you can see the door. Even a virtual background does not protect you from uninvited guests.
- You can point the screen or camera at a neutral background for the duration of the videoconference (but not at the ceiling, which easily happens with tablets, for example).
- In some conference tools you can show virtual backgrounds (see settings in the respective system and uploading a photo from the computer). If you use a virtual background, choose a neutral, non-small picture (less is more). When talking to partners outside H-BRS (e.g. companies, partner universities) you can also use the H-BRS logo or the view of the university (see download for a sample). In any case, make sure that the background stands out from your hair and clothing so that you are clearly visible. It is best to try it out first.

### **Behaviour during the video conference:**

- Log in punctually, preferably even a few minutes before, so that spontaneously occurring technical problems can still be solved.
- As in any conversation, all participants should introduce themselves one after the other and greet each other. Especially when meeting not only with colleagues but also with partners from outside the university, it is polite to introduce yourself first. The same applies to the end. Don't forget to say thank you and sign out.



- One person should take over the moderation.
- A "conference" in the original sense of the word means that you are comparing and bringing something together, in other words, you are in a dialogue. Avoid monologues and give others the opportunity to speak up sufficiently, either by gestures or virtual hand signals.
- In larger groups it can be helpful if participants turn off audio and video for a certain amount of time so that the person explaining something is not interrupted or visually distracted.
- Even if it is difficult: Avoid unnecessary movements that contribute to restlessness (fidgeting on the chair, getting up, doing your hair, etc.). Remember that you are always in the focus of the other participants.
- Do not look into your own face, but into your own camera (i.e. into the eyes of your conference participants). This will get their attention.
- Avoid other secondary occupations (e.g. private communication in any form).

### **Clothing:**

- Strong contrasts between the clothing and the background seem exhausting. Make sure the contrast ratio is as low as possible. This does not mean that you should sit in front of a dark wall with a black sweater or in a white blouse in front of a white wall.
- Stripes and checks can lead to interference and should therefore be avoided. We therefore recommend muted, single-colour tones that do not clash with the background.
- Make sure that the neckline of the clothing is not too deep.
- Avoid overly casual clothing all over the body. Even though usually only the upper part of the body is in the picture, it can happen that you have to stand up and the lower part of the body may also be visible. This should then be just as presentable. You are in a professional working atmosphere, even though you may be sitting in your home office.

### **Data protection:**

- No personal information should be exchanged during a videoconference.
- In a video conference, extreme caution must be exercised with regard to the exchange of research data. We advise our doctoral students to speak orally only in a general form and not to disclose anything that could hinder them in their doctoral process or a possible patent application. This applies regardless of the software used, especially for possible screen releases where screenshots could be taken. You must leave the video conference immediately as soon as the impression arises that you are endangering your research work. This applies in particular to video conferences with researchers from partner universities and employees of companies in Germany and abroad.

### **Breakdowns:**

- We are all human and breakdowns happen. We have influence on some, but not on others.
- Admit openly if the situation requires you to break off the conversation, e.g. for family reasons.
- If necessary, log off and log in again.