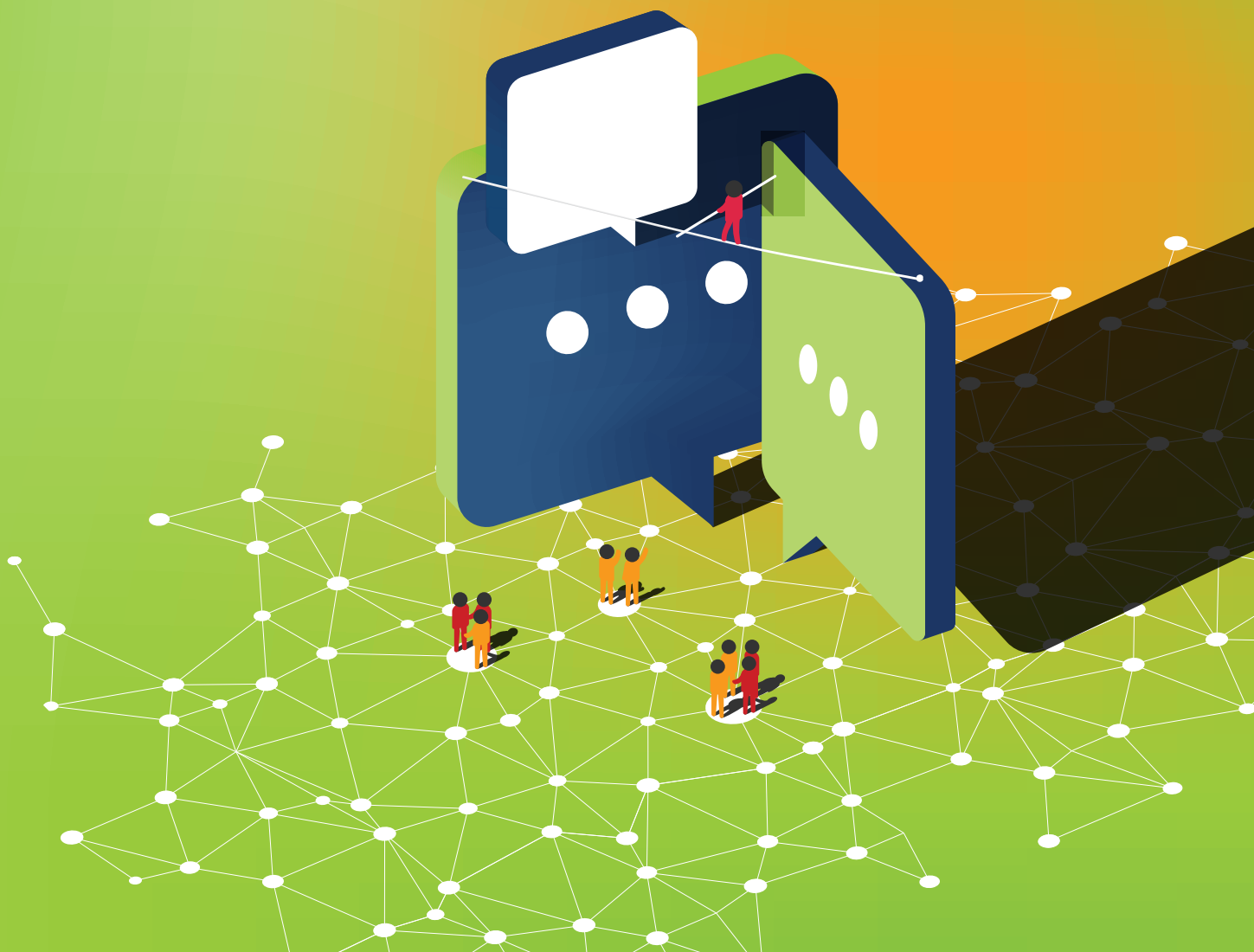


Teaching and Education in 2030

Shaping the Future Together
Strategy Process



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Thank You for All We Have Achieved Throughout Our Strategy Process

Dear students, instructors, and employees of Freie Universität Berlin,

The French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once wrote, “As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.” It was in this spirit that we invited you to join us in developing a shared vision for teaching and education for our university between 2020 and 2021. We wanted to address challenging and inspiring questions about our future such as:

What is Freie Universität Berlin’s mandate with regard to education in the twenty-first century? What values do we want to incorporate in teaching and education as a modern institution located in Berlin, one of Germany’s most important regions for science and research? And what characterizes a positive university culture when it comes to education?

The responsibilities of universities and other institutions of higher education have changed significantly since the Bologna Process was first introduced twenty years ago. In the wake of major changes on a local and global level – as well as the far-reaching consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on our society and our personal lives – we are now entering a stage of transformation in higher education. We want to take a leading role in setting the course of those developments.

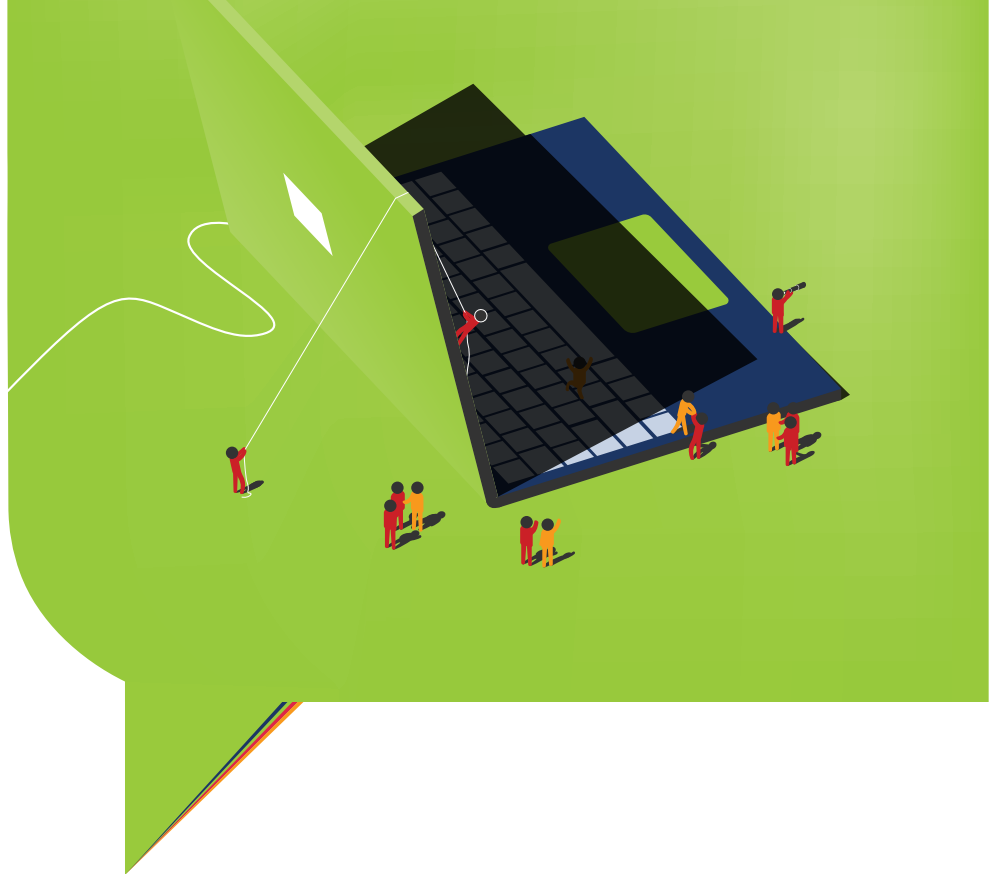
The goal of the strategy process “Teaching and Education in 2030: Shaping the Future Together” was to proactively meet these challenges and pinpoint the key concepts of a Mission Statement for Teaching and Education at Freie Universität Berlin. This document will serve as the basis for developing future-oriented measures to improve the options available for studying, teaching, and services at our institution. This makes our mission statement both a driving force and a set of guiding principles for our university-wide teaching and education strategy, as well as a point of reference in developing the quality of our courses, testing innovative teaching formats, and appreciating good teaching at our university. As instructors, employees, and students, you now know that Freie Universität Berlin has an all-encompassing vision for the future of teaching and education that you can rely on.

Openness, transparency, and inclusion guided us in designing and organizing the different participative events we held over the last three semesters. The resulting campus-wide strategy process is a shining example of how we can work together to advance our university. What is most important here has been to set up processes that enable university members from all status groups to contribute their ideas and participate in making decisions related to university-wide work on our vision and strategy.

This integrative approach has proved successful: Hundreds of students, instructors, and administrative staff – from the academic departments to the administrative units at Freie Universität Berlin – participated in different digital events, formed focus groups independently, made inspiring contributions to the mission statement, and



Prof. Dr. Hauke Heekeren
Vice President



➤ campus.leben

[“An Innovative Look at Teaching, Together”](#)



[“Resilience Is Simply Part of Freie Universität Berlin’s DNA”
\(in German\)](#)



drew up specific measures. I want to take this opportunity to say how grateful we are for your support, enthusiasm, and confidence in our project, and to convey our deepest thanks and respect for your hard work.

The strategy process has made clear just how committed all of the university members involved in teaching and education are, not to mention how interwoven the community here at Freie Universität Berlin truly is. We have intentionally set high goals in our Mission Statement for Teaching and Education. We hope that all members of the university will continually pursue these objectives by contributing their expertise. In addition, the perspectives and ideas for our teaching and education strategy have been collected in a living document that makes them available to all university offices and accessible in a variety of processes. Taken within the context of our overarching strategic goals as an institution, this will allow us to draw on rich sources of inspiration in finding new ways to bring our mission statement to life.

The fact that we have been able to accomplish so much is due to our ability to work together – and the same applies to our future achievements. That is why the groundbreaking way in which we set up the strategy process will prove itself especially innovative in the coming years. Thanks to a common understanding of our vision and goals, good faith and cooperation, mutual appreciation and consideration, we have grounded our approach in a culture of communication – and it will remain with us into the future as we develop diverse formats and concepts for teaching and education at Freie Universität Berlin.

Prof. Dr. Hauke Heekeren
Vice President

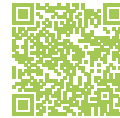
The Stages of the Strategy Process

Digital World Café, June 22, 2020

“A Semester Like No Other: Challenges and Experiences in Teaching and Education during the 2020 Summer Semester” was the title of the first event held as part of the strategy process. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, this digital event was moved up to before the kick-off event. It was designed to give all university members the opportunity to reflect back, evaluate the status quo, and think about the future together in terms of the extraordinary challenges we all face in education and teaching. The discussion, which took place at sixteen virtual tables with about 120 people, served as the ideal prelude to our project, producing invaluable input for the future strategy process.

➤ [campus.leben](#)

[“A Steep Learning Curve”](#)
(in German)



Karina Kriegesmann, researcher at the Institute for Latin American Studies, Vice Dean for Teaching:

“The entire strategy process brought together people who would otherwise probably never have come into contact on campus. I think that the fact that different status groups were represented equally so that their interests could be factored in was very enriching, and this close exchange and dialogue was incredibly important for the process.”



Kick-Off Event, November 16, 2020

The strategy process officially opened with a kick-off event. All members of the university were invited to contribute their ideas, expertise, and unique perspectives on different aspects of teaching and learning. In a world café format with roughly twenty virtual tables, 150 participants discussed questions like “What do we consider a future-oriented culture of teaching and learning at Freie Universität Berlin?” and “What would we like to change – about ourselves and our institution – in order to establish a future-oriented culture of teaching and learning?” These small group discussions ser-

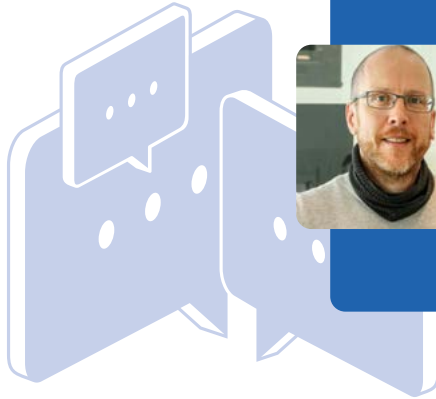


ved as the basis for a fishbowl conversation at the end. The topics derived from these conversations were made the subject of focus groups that were established after the digital event to conduct more in-depth work independently. It was possible for those who could not attend the event to adapt and add to the range of focus group topics up to two weeks after the event.

Jochen Dietz, coordinator E-Learning & E-Examinations at the Center for Digital Systems:



“The mission statement and strategy process gave us all the opportunity to talk about what we predicted for the future, but also what could be possible in the future and what has been impossible until now. We got the chance to learn about each other’s opinions, develop ideas together, and determine how we want our own work and learning environments to look like. This was a remarkable opportunity.”



Focus Groups Stage, November 2020 to February 2021

About twenty specific focus groups were founded after the kick-off event to work on and develop concepts for the Mission Statement for Teaching and Education, as well as goals and measures for our teaching and education strategy. The focus groups, which were highly diverse and made up of participants from all status groups, used the months between November 2020 and February 2021 as an opportunity to carry out intensive, self-directed work and discussions. The stages of this process and its results are clearly laid out in the Freie Universität wiki.

Jörg Aschenbach, managing director of the Institute of Veterinary Physiology, Vice Dean for Teaching:

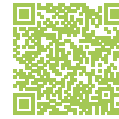
“When we first started working within our focus group, we had many different perspectives and I would never have imagined that we could find a way to reconcile them. To have found a mutually agreeable consensus after much wrangling over a few points was an incredible moment for me.”



Wrap-up Phase I, March 8–31, 2021

The results of the work undertaken by the focus groups for the Mission Statement for Teaching and Education were collated in March 2021. University members were able to add to the results posted on the Freie Universität wiki during the wrap-up phase. This culminated in a wrap-up event with short pitches presented by the focus groups and a plenary debate with roughly 140 participants honing the results. The first version of the Mission Statement for Teaching and Education was drafted based on the results of these discussions.

➤ [campus.leben:](#)
[“Full Steam Ahead!” \(in German\)](#)



Nora Leben, student and employee at the Dahlem Center for Academic Teaching:

“With a mission statement for education, I hope that teaching will receive greater appreciation and that we will find a way of discussing good teaching from both the perspective of the student and the instructor.”



Feedback Campaign, May to July 2021

The feedback campaign was an opportunity for the university to respond to the draft mission statement with comments, critique, and additional ideas. Targeted feedback was sought from all relevant actors. This included the vice deans for student affairs and the officers for teaching and studying in the departments, all central service areas for teaching and learning, the relevant advisory councils, and the various status groups represented on the academic committees. The first draft of the mission statement was adapted and expanded in response to these comments and suggestions.

Louisa Reissig, junior professor at the Institute of Experimental Physics:

“I’m truly delighted and impressed that Vice President Heekeren was able to pull off this project without a hitch and in spite of Covid-19! The process is very transparent: we are all kept well-informed and open to constructive criticism.”



➤ [campus.leben:](#)

[“A Culture of Communication Lies at the Heart of Our Approach”](#)
(in German)



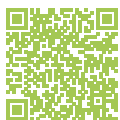
➤ [“It Motivates Us to Continue Thinking and Working Together”](#)
(in German)



➤ [Overview and results: Wrap-up Phase II:](#)



➤ [Press release](#)



Wrap-up Phase II, May 27–June 15, 2021

The second wrap-up phase focused on presenting the latest version of the Mission Statement for Teaching and Education. The focus groups’ contributions to the goals and measures for the teaching and education strategy also took center stage. Similarly to the first wrap-up phase, university members were also given the opportunity to discuss the topics on the Freie Universität wiki. Another digital brainstorming event was held with about ninety participants. In fall 2021, the results of this phase were systematized to produce a collection of ideas and concepts that lines up with the overarching strategic goals of our institution. It also serves as a source of inspiration for ways of implementing our mission statement.

Victoria Mummelthei, researcher at the Seminar for Semitic and Arabic Studies, Master Advisor:

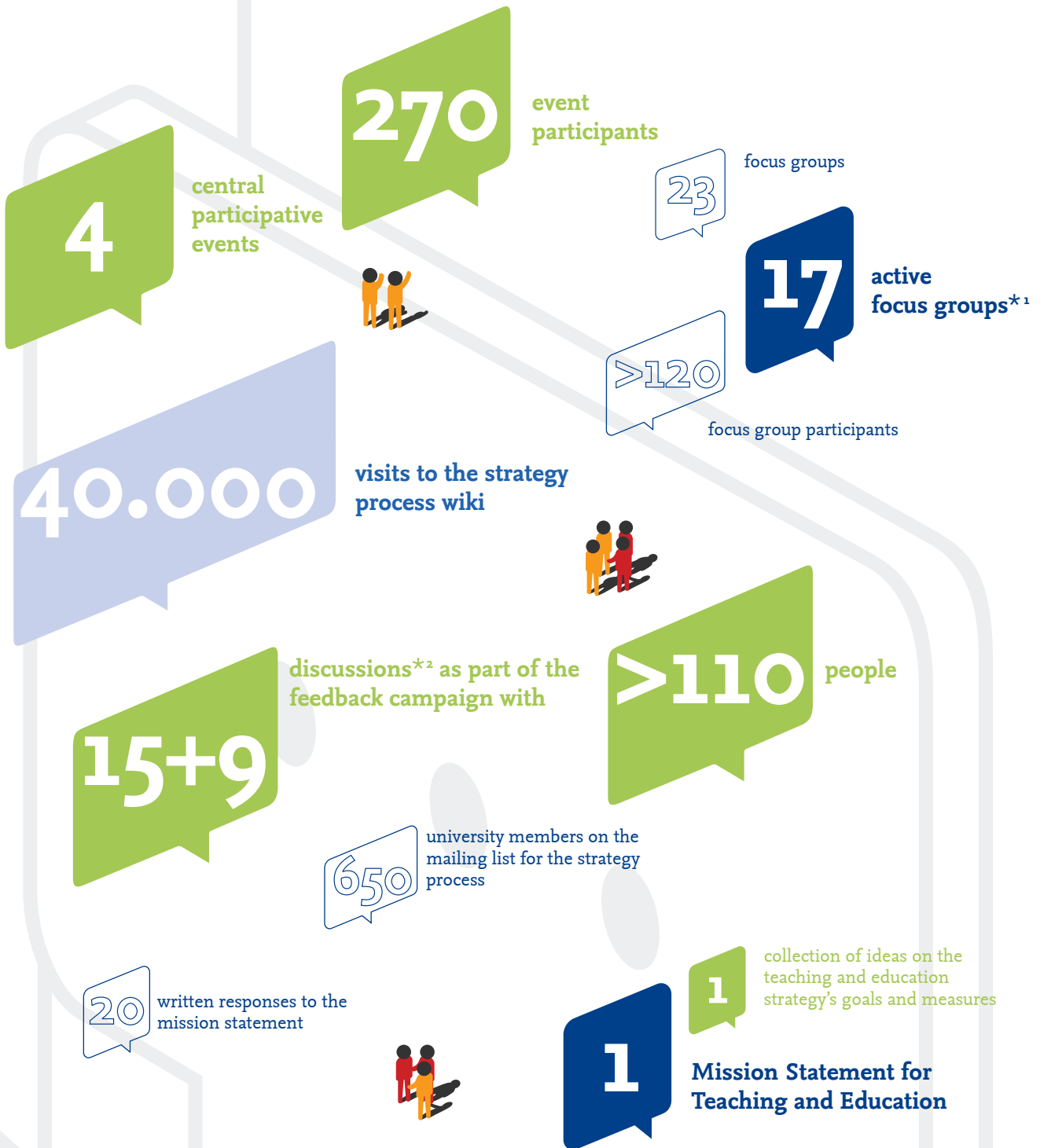
“By the year 2030, I hope that teaching and research will be promoted on an equal basis with regard to infrastructure, administration, and third-party funding. That kind of support combined with their inherently symbiotic relationship – would allow them to truly flourish in terms of the qualitative development of educational opportunities.”



Approval by University Committees

The Teaching Committee (KfL) at Freie Universität Berlin unanimously voted in favor of approving the mission statement. The Academic Senate adopted the Mission Statement for Teaching and Education on July 14, 2021.

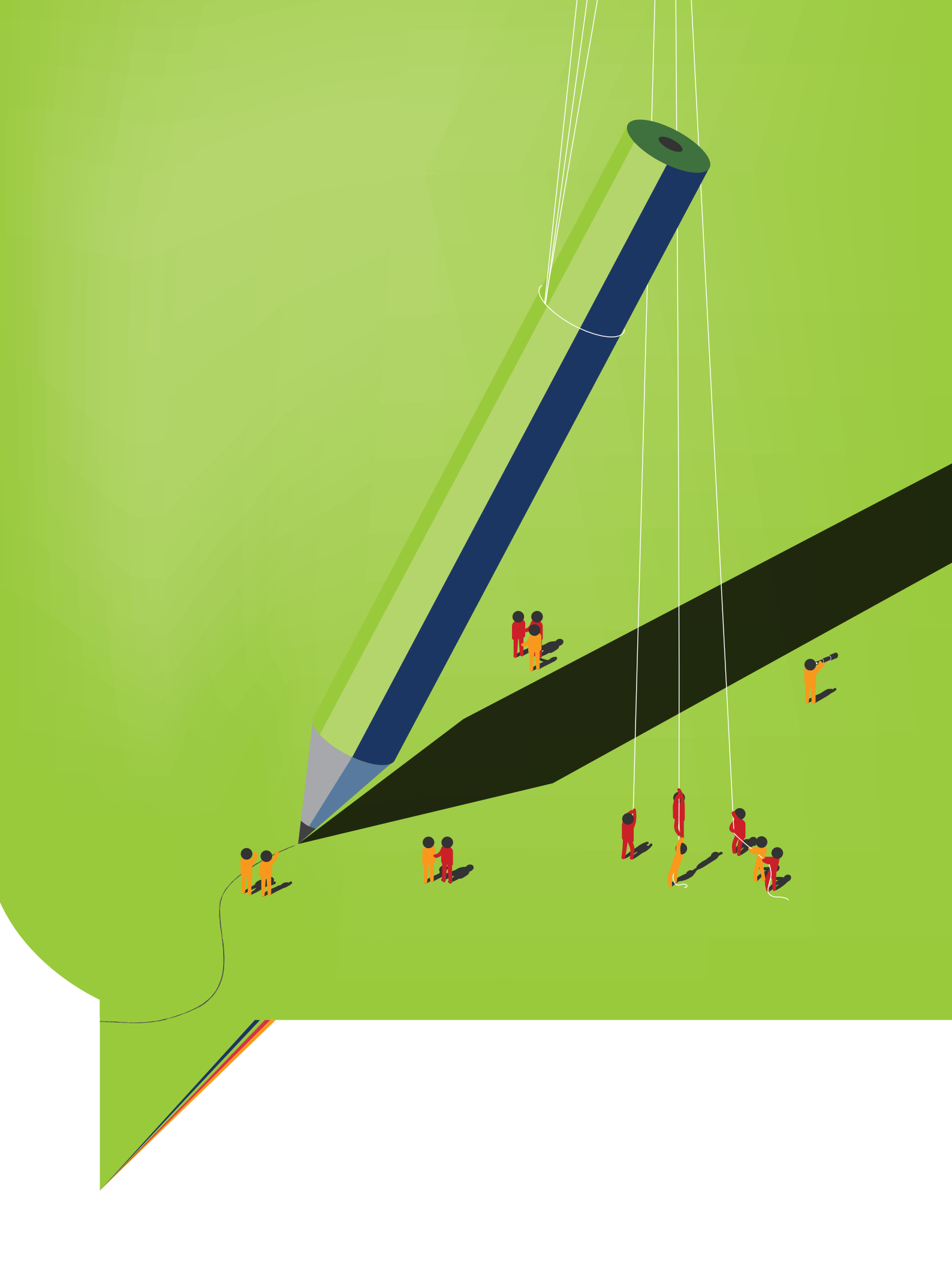
The Strategy Process in Numbers



Legend

*¹ Digitalization in teaching, examinations, and educational support; Diversity, heterogeneity, and inclusion in university education, Types of participation; communication, and networking; The university and society; Innovative and future-oriented approaches to education and testing; Internationalizing university education; Teacher education; Sustainability and university education; Orientation and transitions between secondary and higher education; Professionalizing university instruction and teaching methods; Doctoral study; The quality of in-person teaching in a digital age; Quality assurance and evaluation in university education: Resources and working conditions for university students and instructors; Writing workshop; Student projects on teaching and education; Appreciation of and incentives for good teaching.

*² Feedback rounds as part of fifteen quality-oriented discussions with all departments and central institutes as well as with vice deans for student affairs and the officers for teaching and studying in the departments, all central services areas for teaching and learning, the relevant advisory councils (General Professional Skills and Quality Management), and the various status groups represented on the academic committees.



Mission Statement for Teaching and Education

The following mission statement represents the vision of teaching and learning shared by the students, faculty and staff as members of Freie Universität Berlin's academic community. It was developed between 2020 and 2021 as part of a university-wide participatory strategy process called "Teaching and Education in 2030 – Shaping the Future Together." The process allowed members of the university from all departments, status groups, and administrative units to contribute their ideas, expertise, and unique perspectives on different aspects of teaching and learning.

This mission statement outlines the fundamental objectives for the development of studying and teaching at Freie Universität Berlin, including strategies and measures in our degree programs, teaching methods, and services. As a statement of common understanding regarding university-wide quality standards and overarching goals for university education, it serves as a frame of reference for the departments in developing teaching and learning, as well as in implementing and supporting such developments on centralized and decentralized levels.

In keeping with Freie Universität Berlin's history and identity as a modern academic institution continuously undergoing transformation, the mission statement embodies our founding values of truth, justice, and freedom. As a core element of the university's system-accredited quality management for teaching and learning, it is both a manifestation of and medium for the university's dedication to critical self-reflection. It reinforces our vibrant teaching and learning culture as an essential feature of this institution. As an outcome of a university-wide process, the mission statement reflects an ongoing conversation on the principles of teaching and learning.

A University Founded on a Commitment to Education

As a university dedicated to outstanding research, located in a city that is one of Germany's most important regions for science and research, Freie Universität Berlin strives to achieve the highest standards in university education. In our efforts to integrate teaching and research, we consider it the university's duty to contribute to and engage with the communities around us, both within academia and in society at large. The university's commitment to excellence in teaching and research alike forms the foundation for our ambitious standards, setting the bar high for ourselves and for other universities, whether on a regional, national, or international level.

As a university with a lively campus, Freie Universität Berlin fosters communication among its members, especially intellectual dialogue and critical debates on pressing issues. Learning, teaching, and research in person and on site give rise to different types of interaction that in turn inspire new ideas, thoughts, and discoveries with both theoretical and practical applications. In this enriching and innovative space of learning and teaching in which people from various backgrounds meet, it is our duty to assert the freedom of research and teaching as a bedrock of knowledge, especially in terms of fulfilling our societal responsibilities.



The objective of university education at Freie Universität Berlin is to give students the tools they need to develop a research-oriented mindset, critical thinking skills, and scientific rigor so that they can perform complex professional activities when they enter the pluralistic world of work, as well as take on responsibility in an international, diverse, and digital knowledge-based society. Cultivating academic integrity, an emancipatory understanding of historical and social phenomena, a holistic appreciation of sustainability, the ability to engage with diverse perspectives and navigate ambiguities and differing points of view are all crucial to this process.

Freie Universität Berlin believes that learning and teaching must always be designed with a view to the future. University education today is essential in shaping the society of tomorrow, and prepares capable, independent, and responsible students who will participate in fundamental transformation processes of the future. The degree programs here empower students to confront the major issues of the twenty-first century through the lens of their chosen discipline.

Freie Universität Berlin creates the ideal conditions for academic success with its systematic approach to the phases of academic study as part of a life-long learning process. It also offers flexible courses of study for a diverse student body, as well as research-based and skills-oriented education and a zeal for innovation and cross-disciplinary dialogue. For students, this means accomplishing their qualification goals and acquiring knowledge and skills in their chosen degree program that will foster their personal and professional development.

The culture of teaching and learning at Freie Universität Berlin is permeated by a sense of trust, open-mindedness, tolerance, and inclusivity, as well as the willingness to engage in conflict resolution, constructive dialogue, and an openness to change. All members of the university are seen as equally important members of our teaching and learning community, which is defined by and flourishes on the basis of mutual respect, objectivity, and considerate communication.

Key Aspects of Outstanding Teaching and Education

Our commitment to education outlined above shapes key aspects of teaching and studying at Freie Universität Berlin. This dimension of our institutional identity resonates within the individual disciplines as well as in cross-disciplinary contexts. These interlocking elements apply to both our educational content and the thriving culture of teaching and learning we have here.

Academic Rigor and Research-Based Teaching

Research is deeply ingrained in how we study and teach at Freie Universität Berlin. Our degree programs feature up-to-date research and employ innovative methodological and didactic approaches. The variety of curricula not only challenges students and unlocks their potential, but does the same for the university as an institution, pushing us all to grow and improve. The long-term integration of world-class research into our teaching, collaboration with doctoral students, and the participation of students in research projects are all important aspects of the university's dedication to research. The acquisition of specialist knowledge and research skills are critical in identifying and addressing cross-disciplinary issues as well as in pursuing academic activities and specialist professions. This is achieved through research-oriented teaching, as well as



sophisticated teaching and learning situations that are defined by their flexibility and diversity of tasks. These allow our students to truly grasp the complexity of the topics under discussion. Our programs therefore cultivate an outlook steeped in academic curiosity and integrity, in keeping with the principles of good scientific practice. The communication of these ethical standards is anchored in the curriculum.

An Open Space to Develop Ideas and Competencies

Freie Universität Berlin understands competencies in the sense of an individual's willingness and ability to work through complex issues using critical thinking. This includes the ability to transfer and apply acquired knowledge to other contexts. The development of skills at university blends self-guided learning with theoretical frameworks in order to explore the content of degree programs, with student-centered learning processes and inspiring learning environments in the foreground. The goal is therefore to promote both personal development and the ability to transfer acquired knowledge to professional activities. Cross-disciplinary skills acquisition and an education in the core tenets of academia are indispensable in accessing and interacting with all kinds of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and media. Furthermore, they equip students to participate in academic and societal debates. This educational process includes training in academic writing and reading skills along with courses that instill rhetorical and logical competencies in students, so that they can glean knowledge from texts in order to formulate their own thoughts, choices, and arguments, as well as take a critical approach to information and data.

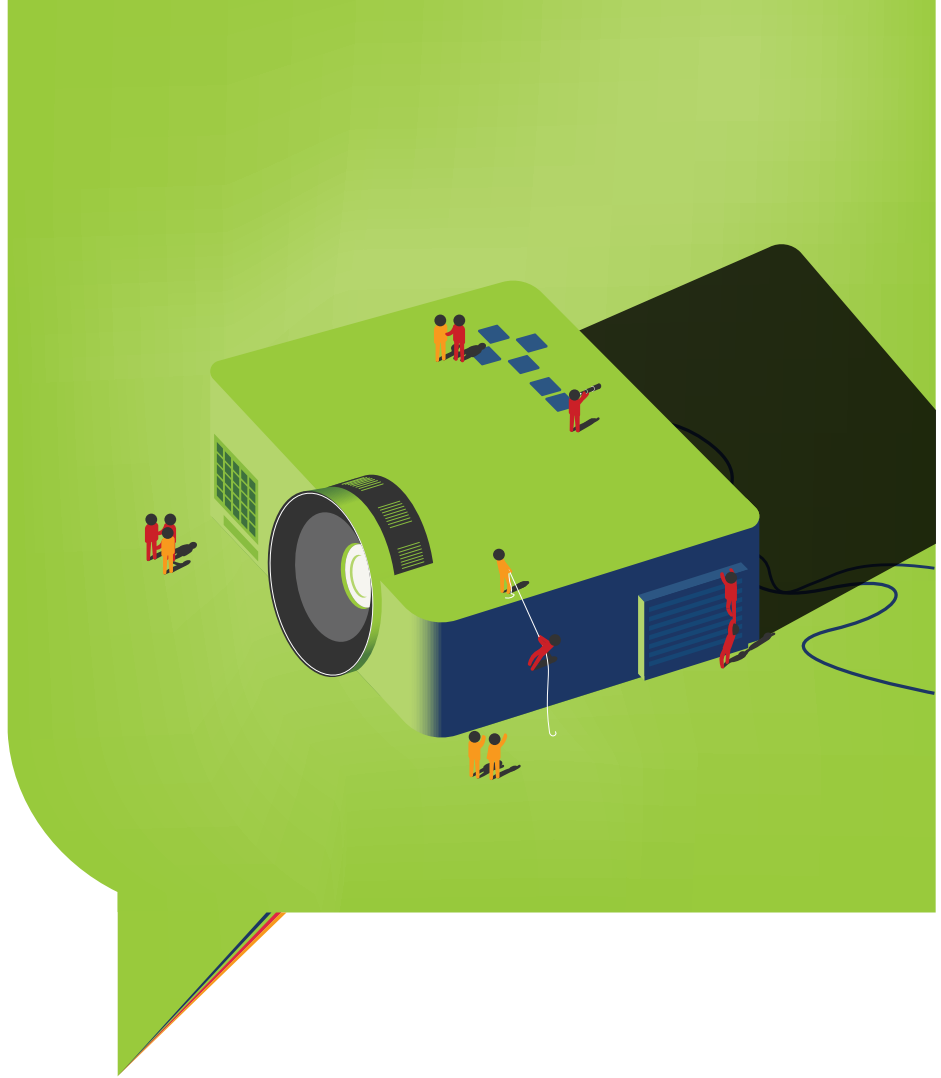
Interdisciplinary Synergies

Thanks to Freie Universität Berlin's strong subject-specific cultures and the wide range of subjects housed in our departments, we offer ideal conditions for multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary teaching that draws from different approaches, methods, and theories. Dialogue between the disciplines and the interplay between perspectives make it possible to understand a range of views, which in turn gives rise to intellectual synergies. Interdisciplinary teaching in particular strengthens competencies, paving the way for insights into field-specific phenomena or social issues, which can, in turn, greatly benefit from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Communication and exchange within the university and with other institutions of higher education via different fields of research play an essential role here as well as teaching and learning projects involving multiple fields. One important interdisciplinary task we have as an institution of higher education is our teacher education program, which is based on close collaboration between different academic and scientific fields, teaching methodologies, and educational sciences.

Fostering Innovation

Outstanding teaching and learning are the result of applying established standards and providing the freedom to experiment and innovate. Our educators reflect on the content, methodology, and technological aspects of their teaching and seek to develop these areas by communicating with other instructors, students, and support staff in order to improve our university culture and enhance academic success. Freie Universität Berlin provides future-oriented teaching and learning formats as well as state-of-the-art infrastructures. Research-oriented teaching and a focus on building competencies are reflected in an array of project-oriented, problem-based, and





research-driven formats. New formats for self-study and learner-centered teaching, which promote active participation and collaboration, are oriented to a diverse student body. Summative evaluation methods, formative assessments, and student feedback are innovative components of the university's examination framework. The progressive field of quality-assured student teaching and learning projects offers opportunities for independent learning and knowledge transfer, as it hones students' teaching skills and gives rise to a change in perspective by learning through teaching.

Internationality

Internationality is a tangible, highly visible feature of our university culture on and beyond campus. All members of Freie Universität Berlin reap the benefits of internationalization on a daily basis. The university takes concrete measures to encourage students, instructors, and employees to seek out international experiences. We give our students the skills they need for a future in a globalized professional world, and all members of the university have the chance to discover the value of international partnerships and intercultural experiences. Alongside well-established formats like traditional stays abroad, we also provide creative online options as well as special events specifically on campus. These international opportunities are further bolstered by a wide selection of foreign language courses and a well-developed infrastructure for digital teaching, learning, assessment, and advising. These innovative and sustainable mobility options embed internationalization at Freie Universität Berlin and facilitate communication with current, former, and future members and partner institutions across the world.



Sustainability

Freie Universität Berlin is dedicated to fulfilling its responsibilities in terms of local and global sustainable development. Sustainability is a prominent aspect of learning and teaching at our university as well as life on campus in general. As an institution that focuses on preparing the policy-makers of the future through its degree programs, we incorporate this awareness into our courses by taking into account different disciplines, methods, and perspectives. Issues related to climate change as well as social and ecological transformation are addressed in courses open to all members of the university. This means that we offer unique teaching and learning formats that benefit greatly from increased interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration. Set against this backdrop, teaching and learning take on a particularly important role as a space for experimentation and creation.

Diversity

Freie Universität Berlin is committed to ensuring the equitable participation of all those involved in studying and teaching. We understand and recognize diversity as it is embodied in the multidimensional, intersectional differences between individuals in relation to socially defined categories. The university is committed to establishing equal opportunities, dismantling intersectional injustice, and establishing educational environments that are accessible to all and free from discrimination. As we are engaged in a continuous process of self-reflection, our teaching, learning, and advising services are designed with diversity in mind while targeting potential sources of discrimination, and thus cater to the different backgrounds and needs of all participants. While diversity-related skills are both a learning objective of the degree programs and a characteristic of our teaching, we have also embedded different aspects of diversity on a structural level – from the admissions process and accessibility to education, right through to the curricula.

Digitalization

Quality-assured technologies and digitalization are implemented at Freie Universität Berlin to fulfill our mandate as an educational institution and create a genuine added value in terms of studying and teaching. Digitalization is not a mere afterthought here – in fact, it drives many of our transformative processes. By means of innovative blended and online formats, digitalization significantly supports, expands, and transforms many aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as working on collaborative projects and advising. Suitable digital formats for teaching, learning, and assessment are a key feature of the degree programs offered by Freie Universität Berlin and contribute to the highly effective teaching conducted in our courses. This is carried out on the basis of tried-and-tested concepts that apply university-wide quality standards and subject-specific best practices. This digitally focused approach to achieving academic success shapes Freie Universität Berlin's digital identity when it comes to studying and teaching, which in turn boosts its public image as a forward-thinking university.



Prime Conditions for Learning and Teaching

Freie Universität Berlin creates the conditions needed to attain the highest educational standards. In doing so, we aim to foster successful communication and interactions between instructors, students, and other staff in research, teaching, and administration. This entails reviewing established processes and the parameters required to achieve success in teaching within the context of very diverse conditions across subject areas. It also means facilitating the emergence of new structures and constantly working toward even better conditions related to political, financial, resource-related, and legal contexts. The physical, mental, and social well-being of our students and employees is of the utmost importance to us at Freie Universität Berlin, and these aspects are always factored into education at our university. All members of the university are encouraged to be aware of health and well-being issues, while health awareness is also incorporated into the degree programs.

Appreciation, Incentives, and Participation

Freie Universität Berlin values excellent teaching, as it forms the basis for our students' educational success. This is why we strive to convey its importance within and outside of the university. We promote an academic culture in which outstanding teaching aptitude and high-quality teaching are celebrated. Not only that, but we also develop a varied system of incentives to encourage quality, creativity, and innovation in teaching, and reinforce teaching qualifications as an integral component of academic qualifications. Freie Universität Berlin believes that good teaching is a joint effort that relies on active participation and a respectful dialogue about our successes and failures, learning outcomes, and plans to continuously develop university education. The university's different status groups are engaged in a constructive dialogue with one another and operate on equal footing. Our educational community is supported by a wide array of formats for communication, networking, and interaction.

Advising Services and Orientation

In addition to providing an education with a well-rounded curriculum, Freie Universität Berlin offers comprehensive support services to accompany students from the beginning of their studies, all the way through to their doctorate. All instructors and departments are involved in determining the subject-specific and interdepartmental aspects of these services, and due care is given to individuals' psychological and professional needs. Along with supervisory services throughout their studies, other services include recruiting, guidance, introductory support, academic and career advising, and alumni networks. The study phases and transitional process from secondary school to university – and from university to the professional world – are actively shaped in cooperation with the relevant institutions in education, business, and society. Both prospective students and enrolled students get a realistic image of the educational options available, admission and study requirements, and their respective prospects, which makes it easier for them to choose their ideal degree program and courses. These options are designed with the heterogeneity of the student body in mind in order to facilitate the best possible environment for each individual in the academic community to develop and succeed.



Professionalization of Academic Teaching

Freie Universität Berlin highly values university teaching as a profession and considers it essential to our reputation as a renowned academic institution. For this reason, we promote educational training for targeted teaching skills and strive for high-quality teaching among all our instructors. We research suitable indicators, metrics, and models so that we have the data we need to modernize university teaching based on factual evidence. Instructors at all qualification stages and in all status groups – including students and doctoral students – receive support acquiring university-level teaching skills and honing their individual teaching profile as part of a quality-assured, long-term professional development policy. The professionalization of university teaching covers many areas. It includes continuing education opportunities for administrative staff involved in educational support for students and instructors. It also means building administrative units equipped with solution-oriented and target group-specific skills, who can offer services and administrative support for studying and teaching at the university. Professional university teaching also demands a high-performance IT infrastructure, excellent library facilities and services, as well as buildings designed to meet the requirements of modern teaching, learning, assessment, and advising environments.

Quality Assurance

As an institution that is itself constantly learning, education is the subject of an ongoing conversation at Freie Universität Berlin. Evidence-based, dialogue-oriented processes that meet high academic standards guarantee the superior quality of the university's degree programs. Feedback from internal and external students and evaluations from instructors, experts from specific fields, and working professionals contribute greatly to discussions about the quality of education. The subjects, instruments, and processes of quality assurance are always adjusted to keep up with current academic, didactic, technological, and societal discourses. This encompasses openness, tapping into the potential of digital administrative, learning, and assessment systems for the further development of teaching and learning based on new data, and the widespread implementation of innovative feedback tools. Essential components of these processes include utilizing the results from these assessments, which means incorporating feedback from target groups, establishing suitable intervention measures, and enabling the participation of all status groups.



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Professor Heekeren was supported by the strategy and process team:

Dr. Pellegrino Favuzzi, Executive Assistant to the Vice president for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Development

Dr. Michaela Gugeler, Division V: Academic Affairs

Karin Bauer-Leppin, Christine Boldt, Moritz Hartmann, Annika Middeldorf, Stephan Töpper, Bernd Wannemacher, Carsten Wette, Office of Communication and Marketing

Natalie Lis-Awarke, Anna Lena Tischewski, Student Marketing and Communications (Center for Academic Advising and Psychological Counseling)

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Dr. Japhet Johnstone, Emily Richards, Sonja Rohan, Central Translation Office Division IV: International Affairs

Radu Tetcu, Center for Digital Systems

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Website: www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/zukunft-lehre

Contact: zukunft-lehre@fu-berlin.de





Open Dialogue.
*Let's shape our
future together.*