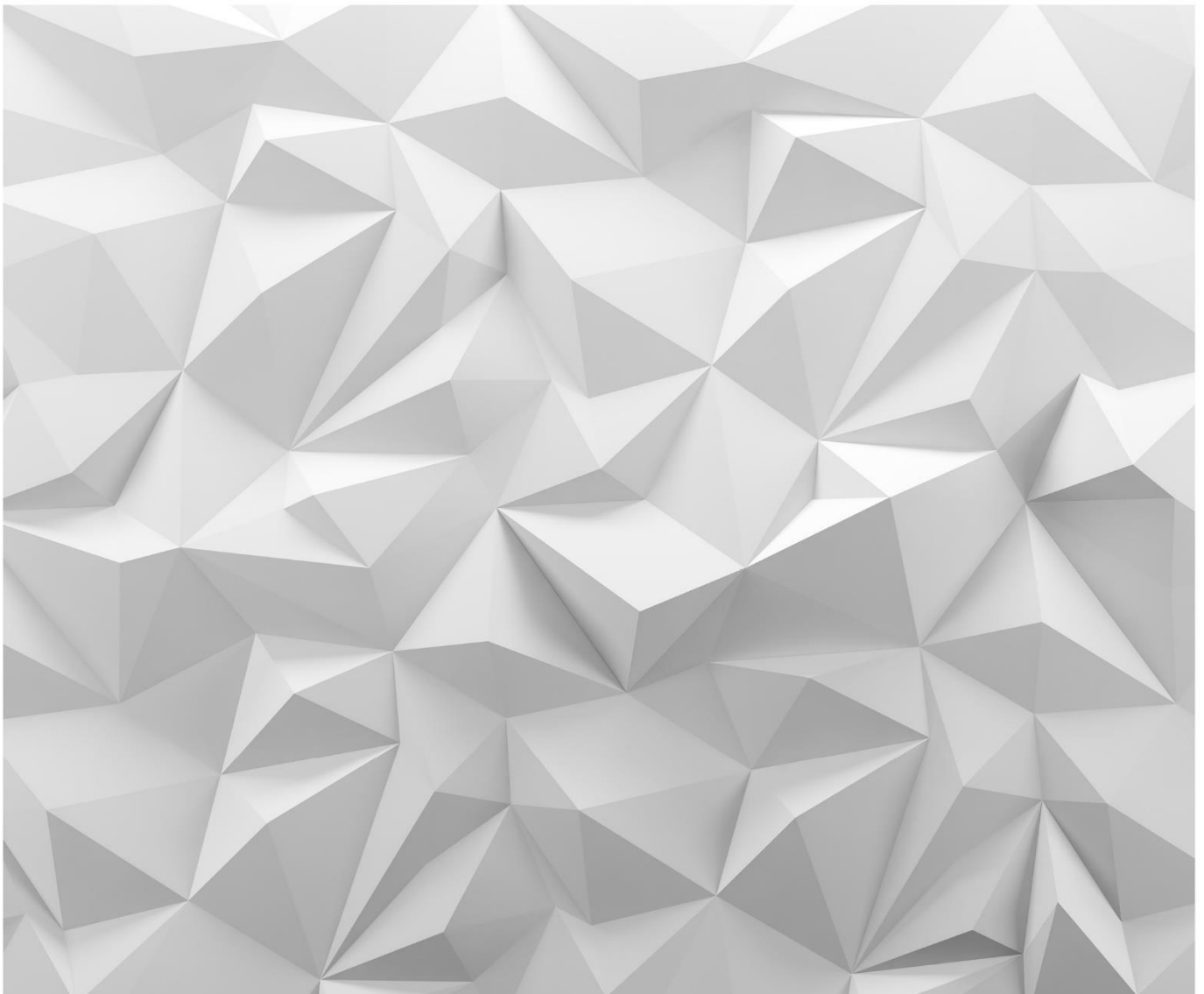




Strategy paper  
**How to embrace our diversity**  
Diversity concept for  
HWR Berlin



# A. Diversity at the HWR – we all have a role to play!

## Context

The people who work, study, teach and conduct research at HWR Berlin are many and varied, and bring in different experiences and perspectives, skills, talents and competences. HWR Berlin would like to promote this diversity unequivocally and befittingly. It perceives and recognises the diversity of its members and their potential as an asset. In doing so, HWR Berlin pursues a threefold goal: Anti-discrimination, appreciation of diversity and harnessing the potential of diversity. These goals are interdependent: Consistent opposition to discrimination is the first step towards dealing with diversity in an appreciative manner; this is a prerequisite for the potential inherent in diversity to come to fruition.

The concept presented here identifies areas of activity, sketches out strengths and weaknesses, defines goals and makes concrete proposals for action. It has been developed in a participative process in a working group under the leadership of the first Vice President. Numerous members of the university from all member groups responded to the call for participating in the working group set up for this purpose. In three intensive and collaborative meetings, they developed a common basic understanding of diversity and the basis for the strategy paper presented here.

HWR Berlin also feels compelled by external factors to take on the promotion of diversity. Equipped with a public educational task, it aims to provide equal, non-discriminatory access to education. The Higher Education Contracts 2018-2022 underline the role of Berlin's universities as a "major driving force for the promotion of diversity and equal opportunities". It states further that diversity policies should be developed and expanded as a cross-sectional task of the universities.

On this basis, HWR Berlin formulates its objective in its structural and development plan "Hochschule 5.0", (University 5.0) expiring in 2022, to develop a diversity strategy in which all dimensions of diversity are adequately addressed. It also states: "A diversity-sensitive teaching, learning and working environment is an inseparable part of the quality of teaching, study and work." The university also acknowledges its social responsibility in its guiding principle. It identifies the consideration of the diversity of cultures and lifestyles, gender equality, the compatibility of family and career or studies and the sustainability of economic activity as central and guiding principles.

The feasibility study "Discrimination-free university" has been carried out for HWR Berlin between 2011 and 2013, and it was possible to build on this study when preparing this strategy paper.

## Vision: HWR Berlin as an open, inclusive and diverse university

The HWR Berlin sees itself as an open, inclusive and diverse university. It is open to new ideas and changes and helps determine social values proactively. It takes the diversity of its members seriously as something positive and does not treat it superficially or symbolically. The university sees diversity as a process that is never complete. This requires constant, critical self-reflection and, if necessary, an adjustment of guiding principles, concepts and measures. This way, HWR Berlin can respond flexibly to societal demands (and think beyond them) and act as a role model for other sectors of society.

Diversity characteristics on which the HWR Berlin bases its diversity are those also defined in the LADG (Provincial Anti-Discrimination Act). The members of HWR Berlin are diverse according to the diversity characteristics of gender, ethnic origin, religion and ideology, disability, chronic illness, age, language, sexual and gender identity, and social status, but also diverse according to the extent to which they are at risk of possible racist and anti-Semitic attribution. This list of possible

diversity characteristics is not exhaustive; for example, informal university experience in particular is a distinguishing characteristic that we recognise and want to deal with constructively. We at HWR Berlin see the positive treatment of the diversity of people as a value to which its members are committed. We are aware that the university itself also makes distinctions, which can have an impact on cooperation and well-being.

Exclusion of individuals or groups is not accepted at HWR Berlin; HWR Berlin actively opposes discrimination. Mutual interaction must be characterised by cooperation and constructive conflict resolution. This is the only way to ensure that all members of the university feel that they belong and are valued, and that they can thus contribute according to their abilities, talents and skills and flourish personally. Existing discriminations and barriers must be removed so that all members of the university are able to participate equally in shaping the university, within the framework of existing structures.

Diversity is a cross-sectional task, which must be anchored in research, teaching and administration. All HWR members have a part to play in diversity. So, dealing with diversity in a fair, open, inclusive and productive manner is everybody's business.

## **B. Five areas of action for HWR Berlin**

### **Areas of action**

Diversity at HWR Berlin, in terms of very different diversity characteristics, is effective in various areas of action typical to the university. In a dynamic group process, the Diversity Working Group (WG) identified five areas of action for dealing with diversity at HWR Berlin, namely "Teaching and Research", "Organisation of Studies and Teaching", "Counselling and Training", "Personnel" and "Culture and Climate". In these fields, concrete measures can be taken with the aim of instilling respect for the diversity of the members of the HWR Berlin in a vital way. In the process, the areas of action are, of course, not clearly defined; rather, there are overlaps and interrelationships. However, the distinction between the areas of action can be helpful in continuing the discussion process and is therefore used here.

### **Objectives**

In these areas of action, HWR Berlin aims to avoid discrimination and to ensure equal opportunities. It would like to take a look at procedures and processes to see how diversity can be better appreciated and how diversity can be better used for learning, teaching and research. For this, it is necessary that members of the university develop an awareness of diversity and that they acquire the skills necessary to deal with the topic sensitively. Diversity should be reflected and embraced in the culture of the university, and the HWR Berlin strives for a climate of open exchange of opinions across all status groups. When graduates leave HWR Berlin, they should do so with a "diversity self-awareness" and be able to assume responsibility for diversity in their professional activities and in society.

Diversity-relevant offers, structures and processes must be made transparent and known - also to new university members. Those who have reservations should be taken along - convinced through information and exchange. There should be clearly defined contact persons who are networked with each other. The university should be responsible for dealing positively with its diversity in its guiding principle on studies and teaching, its university guiding principle and on its website. Cases of discrimination should be investigated and prohibited with strict respect for the rights and interests of the persons concerned. For this, it is important that members of the university know who they can turn to in confidence, if necessary.

Procedures and processes should be considered with regard to sensitivity to diversity and adapted, if necessary. Practice-oriented guidelines help the actors to implement the objectives. Barriers to participation must be removed and support and counselling services must be set up for all university members.

## **C. Where do we stand and what can be improved?**

Strengths and weaknesses can be identified, based on the different fields of action. To this end, the WG has discussed the following questions openly and with respect to the areas of action: What has HWR Berlin already achieved in terms of diversity, even without a concrete concept? What has possibly been put into practice for a long time, although no systematic examination of diversity aspects has taken place yet? In which areas is there still a need for action? Where do deficits emerge and what are these?

### **Teaching and Research**

At HWR Berlin, courses on the topic of diversity are offered in most degree programmes. The study programmes at HWR Berlin are broad and in many cases interdisciplinary; the range of subjects covers economics and social sciences, administrative sciences and law, as well as engineering. However, some courses on issues of diversity are not firmly anchored in the curriculum. Diversity aspects and perspectives should also be a firmly integrated and natural part of every course. This has not yet been the case.

HWR Berlin also has gender and diversity professors or teaching staff who deal with diversity and conduct research and teach on this topic. However, in this case as well, the WG sees a need for expansion. For example, it has discussed whether diversity should be openly addressed in individual denominations in different departments.

The Harriet Taylor Mill Institute for Economics and Gender Studies has been in operation at HWR Berlin since 2001. In addition to gender studies, the Institute considers its primary task as communicating gender issues through an appropriate range of courses and events. HTML highlights one of the great strengths in research at HWR Berlin, also because it works across disciplines on the main topics of economics, law and administration, as well as digitisation, which is exceptional throughout Germany.

Professors at HWR Berlin also conduct research on aspects of diversity, which is reflected, among other things, in publications on topics like digitisation and information technology, innovation management, migration sociology, gender research, labour law, human resources, SME research and police science. Research projects address, among other things, strategies against discrimination and racism as well as with the question of how diversity in companies and administrations can be improved, especially through the use of digital media. References to diversity research are therefore already available in the established research fields in the university. The aim should be to expand these and also to further develop the diversity of the research groups.

### **Organisation of studies and teaching**

Diversity aspects are partly well anchored in the study organisation. For example, we work together with "ArbeiterKind.de" on student counselling, and there are counselling and support services for students with professional qualifications, family responsibilities or other special needs. The representative for students with disabilities and chronic illnesses provides counselling services along with a staff member. In addition, there are many other services such as the Queer Buddy Programme, services for refugees and an overall more diverse student body (e.g. in the course of

degree programme for senior police service in department 5 or in the various Master's degree programmes aimed at international students).

Last but not least, HWR Berlin is characterised by its pronounced international orientation and attaches great importance to a constructive and international culture of exchange and welcome. This concerns the organisation of student exchange via the International Office, study programmes aimed at international students, and exchange programmes also for employees in technology and administration. In this regard, there is another strategy paper of HWR Berlin that explicitly deals with internationalisation and which is referred to over here.

With regard to academic staff, diversity awareness is probably still lacking in some areas. Also, diversity skills have not yet been systematically trained and promoted in further education and training. This also applies to support services for the diversity-friendly design of teaching, especially digital accessibility.

For supporting students with disabilities, although there already are various counselling services available, there is still a need for additional suitable services and, above all, for measures to reduce barriers.

There is no contact person at present expressly designated for this task in the event of discrimination, for all diversity dimensions. In addition to the women's representative and the representative for students with disabilities, we would also like to appoint a person of trust who can be approached about discrimination in all dimensions of diversity.

## **Counselling and training**

HWR Berlin offers a wide range of counselling services on the topic of diversity, some of which have already been mentioned here. For example, intercultural competences were explicitly established in various status groups in the "Cross-Cultural Mentoring" and "Cross-P" programmes. Over and above that, many other ideas and suggestions for points of contact, training, seminars, etc. were put forward by the WG participants. Here, a recurring element was "awareness", that is, creating awareness of diversity aspects at all levels and for all university members, preferably also interactively and discursively with the opportunity for networking.

It is also important to mention here that funding and staff are essential basic prerequisites for setting up, long-term support services and further development of the training and counselling services.

## **Staff**

Diversity skills and aspects are just as important for staff as they are for teaching staff and students. Various measures and services are already in place for this purpose, such as the personnel development concept and the Employee+ concept. Employees in technology and administration can contact the women's representative and/or the staff council in the event of discrimination. Here, the lack of a contact person explicitly designated for the issue is therefore somewhat less pronounced than among the students. Since 2016, the HWR has been continuously undergoing the family-friendly university audit and has concluded target agreements for this purpose, and adheres to the same.

Since 2002, HWR Berlin has been awarded the Total E-Quality Award; and will receive it for the seventh time in 2020. The sponsors of the award call it an exemplary case of Best Practice. (cf. <https://www.total-e-quality.de/die-praedikatsstrager/datenbank/16/hochschule-fur-wirtschaft-und-recht-berlin/>).

Although the WG did not explicitly identify many strengths and weaknesses in the area of human resources, numerous suggestions for concrete measures suggest that there is still room for development and improvement, especially with regard to staff selection, development, processes and marketing. Here, too, it is important to create diversity awareness and to build up or expand the know-how that is still lacking, by means of training, seminars, self-learning tools and the like.

People often voiced their desire for more flexibility in terms of working hours and workplace design (home office) as well as the consideration of different types of care (children, nursing, voluntary work) and family situations. If HWR Berlin wants to make full use of the potential of all employees, diversity aspects should be given even greater emphasis.

## **Culture and Climate**

Culture and climate connect and shape all areas of design at HWR Berlin. A climate must be created in all areas, for all status groups and, above all, across all hierarchical levels, in which every member of the university feels accepted and valued. Before concrete strengths and weaknesses can be identified here, it is first necessary to gather impressions and experiences, e.g. in the form of a survey. First impressions of WG participants with diversity characteristics revealed at least the desire for more tolerance and visibility. This in turn implies that for some it is still far from being possible to show and develop themselves in a way that corresponds to their own needs. HWR Berlin should also function as a protected space here, as an entire organisational unit and not just at a small level (department, study group, etc.). This will make it a strong institution with multiple opportunities for identification.

## **D. The next steps**

The participative process for dealing with diversity at HWR Berlin, which encompasses all member groups, resulted in the strategy paper presented here, which was drawn up with the participation of and from the diversity WG. The WG outlined and discussed various measures, which either cover HWR Berlin as a whole or individual areas of action. In some cases, additional surveys or tests are required before concrete measures can be derived. Therefore, the WG should continue its work – open to the participation of new members – under the leadership of a member of the university board. Its task will then be to conceptualise and implement concrete measures for the various areas of action. In the process, measures to protect against discrimination are required as well as measures to actively promote a positive approach to diversity at HWR Berlin. After all, if the latter are successful, they will ensure that there is no more discrimination. These measures must be reflected in the structure and development plan of HWR Berlin that is to be drawn up or updated. Particularly, a contact person should be appointed as soon as possible for students who have experienced discrimination. This person could also steer and implement the process of creating an anti-discrimination policy for HWR Berlin.

## **Imprint**

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