

HEP *to go*

# Condensed Version

University Development Plan 2019 – 2023

Condensed version of the University Development Plan 2019 – 2023  
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*Approved in this form by the Senate during its 77th public meeting  
in consultation with the University Executive Board on 2018-12-19.*

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## Preamble

The University of Vechta looks back to a long and eventful history since 1830. It has been affected by political changes, willingness for reform, and various other dynamics. Liberal-minded, personal, and familial - its mission statement is "*Responsibility is Key.*" Integration in the region, internationality, interdisciplinarity, and intercultural competence form its self-image. The tradition of teacher training has shaped the university's identity for almost 200 years, as well as the location in the Northwest of Lower Saxony, i.e., the Oldenburg Münsterland, a rural region with a very dynamic economic, demographic, and social development.

The University of Vechta defines itself as a creative future-oriented institution for sustainable knowledge development with regional, national, and international charisma. It supports transparent science in the context of social responsibility and develops its role in a constant dialogue with all actors in society. The relevant topics are Education (in the broadest sense), Ageing, Social and Cultural Change, Business and Ethics, as well as Agriculture and Food. The human being is the centre of all actions and the university commits to universal, inalienable, and indivisible human rights. A special focus is on change processes in rural areas.

All members of the university are responsible for the successful organisation of academic teaching and studies, research, and transfer of knowledge through the right of participation. They continuously further develop these areas and commit to complying with the Rules of Good Scientific Practice (resolution by the

German Rectors' Conference HRK). In this context, the University of Vechta defines itself as a transformational university. It continuously further develops its internal and external communication processes and specifies normative and strategic goals in this University Development Plan for the period from 2019 to 2023. The basis for this are shared values and ideas aimed at a democratically structured, economically prosperous, and socially just society. Academic freedom is indispensable for the University of Vechta.



Responsibility  
is Key





*Responsibility is Key*  
**Transformation Processes  
in Rural Areas**

With the main topic of *Transformation Processes in Rural Areas*, the University of Vechta puts issues concerning the future of society into the centre of academic discourse. The close connection of re- search, academic teaching, and transfer of knowledge in combination with General Studies in the areas of Teacher Training, Social Services, Agriculture and Food, and Cultural Studies at the University of Vechta aims to prepare future generations to cope with com- plex challenges in rural areas of a globalised world. This is closely connected to the university's self- image “*Responsibility is Key.*”

It is based on the 17 *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* of the Agenda 2030 by the United Nations, developed in 2015, and on the normative framework *Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)*.

This affects the work of the University of Vechta as by

- based on the chosen key research areas, sensi- tising and educating all members of the university for transformation processes toward sustainable development and qualifying them to contribute to shaping a social and democratic society that is viable for the future;
- being a creative living lab through close co-opera- tions with representatives from politics, econo- my, cultural institutions, and society;
- contributing to the development of personalities, decision-makers, as well as future teaching staff and employees;

- offering the students excellent academic training with high practical relevance, preparing them for the job market (employability), and motivating them for social engagement (citizenship).

The university itself is exemplary, being a sustaina- ble institution with the premises of a family-friendly university, for gender and diversity mainstreaming, for internationalisation, and for lifelong learning.

It acts as a driver for innovation in a dynamic rural region. The university attends to its responsibility by

- communicating in a comprehensive, transparent, and appreciating manner,
- allowing for active participation,
- increasing identification with the university and generating, sharing, and making its knowledge acces- sible in an innovative manner (Open Access and Open Innovation).

# III

## Key Elements of University Development



## Key Elements of University Development

The University of Vechta was founded in 1830 as a so-called “normal school” for training teachers for Catholic primary and secondary schools (“Volksschulen”) in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg. Today, the portfolio does not only cover teacher training and social services, but also a broad academic spectrum, including philology, cultural studies and humanities, educational sciences, economic and social sciences, and natural sciences.

The development strategy is based on the existing range of subjects and aimed at further developing the key research areas, using internal and external networking potentials. At the same time, the university commits to supporting central cross-cutting issues like digitalisation, sustainability, internationalisation, gender and diversity in the areas of research, academic teaching, transfer of knowledge, and administration.

It supports the faculties and research institutions with developing their own emphasis within the designated key profiles. As a transformational university, the University of Vechta continuously adapts the university management and the organisation of the service sector supporting the academic field to the current requirements.

In order to increase research capability and competitiveness, as well as to ensure national and international co-operation capability, the university has determined the following requirements for the years 2019-2022:

- Enhancing the current allocation from the state;

- Maintaining the minimum number of students at 4,000 (incl. Higher Education Pact);

- Developing potentials in the areas of research and promotion of junior researchers, creation of additional professorships, posts for promoting junior researchers as well as posts for employees in research service, supporting specialist knowledge to be added to the subject didactics as part of teacher training and for safeguarding the current key profiles with unique properties or a connection with regional development.



# III.

Key Profiles



#### Teacher Training:

#### Indispensable for the Future of our Society

The University of Vechta is a central pillar for teacher training in Lower Saxony for primary and secondary schools (*Grundschule, Realschule, Hauptschule*)<sup>1</sup>. The number of students in the academic subjects intended for teacher training and the other highly demanded subjects is to be increased. The topic “Transformation” – sustainability-oriented knowledge, sustainability competencies, lifelong learning – is integrated into the educational profile. An increased co-operation between the academic disciplines/teaching and educational sciences on the one hand and school-related and out-of-school learning locations on the other hand is important for teacher training.

The *Zentrum für Lehrer\*innenbildung (ZfLB)* (School of Education), created in 2012, plays a central role in this. It is intended to cluster interdisciplinary tasks of teacher training and to support research-based further development of university didactics and skills orientation also in the future, for example, by means of learning through research. Since the teacher training concept “GHR-300” (*Grundschule, Hauptschule, Realschule*; 300 credit points) has been implemented, the university has been co-operating more closely with schools and teacher training seminars (*Studienseminare*), which has linked the different phases of teacher training and has created a sustainable base for a high practical and academic relevance. This development is to be intensified. The *Kompetenzzentrum für Lehrer\*innenfortbildung* (Centre for Continuing Professional Development of Teachers) at the University of Vechta, in co-operation with the *Ludwig-Windthorst-Haus* in Lingen and the *Historisch-Ökologische Bildungsstätte* (historical and ecological training centre) in Papenburg, offers classes for teachers that have already completed their training and work in the districts of Vechta, Cloppenburg, and Diepholz. In co-operation with the District of Vechta, the university is developing an innovative solution for continuing teacher training, including skills regarding media didactics and digitalisation.

<sup>1</sup> *Realschule*: grades 5-10, intermediate level, possibility to proceed to the *Gymnasium* to achieve Abitur; *Hauptschule*: grades 5-9, slower teaching pace



**Social Services:****Social Responsibility and Recognition**

The Social Services comprise a broad spectrum of measures and institutions from the fields of general social aspects, social pedagogy, education, health, and nursing care. The focus of this key profile results from the different perspectives on the social aspect as a political construct of human coexistence. Related to the course of life, as well as specific issues that can be influenced by society, the degree programmes and research fields of the key profile deal with the different forms of expression and *transformation processes* on a social, demographic, economic, and organisational level.

Further professionalisation of these fields of action through research and high-quality and research-based education is to contribute to increasing social recognition of social occupations. This can be achieved by confronting social change, especially considering interrelations of the political framework, social discourse, and everyday life of the target groups, as well as with special characteristics of management in social facilities.

The academic subjects Social Work, Management of Social Services, Gerontology, and the general field of Business and Ethics play a central role at the University of Vechta as a so-called „*Große Gesellschaftliche Herausforderung*“ (key challenge of society) connected to issues of health, demographic change, and welfare.







### Focus on Regional Systems: Agriculture and Food

Due to the regional specific of a highly developed industrial agriculture and in co-operation with the Institut für *Strukturfor-*  
*schung und Planung in agrarischen Intensivgebieten* (Institute  
for Spatial Analysis and Planning in Areas of Intensive Agricul-  
ture, ISPA), since the 1990s, the academic subject Geography  
has evolved to a key research area at the University of Vechta  
in the context of Agriculture and Food. The university is part of  
a diversified network with links to the economy, associations,  
environmental organisations, public institutions, research  
institutes, and higher education institutions. For example, the  
University of Vechta co-operates with the German Institute of  
Food Technologies (DIL) in Quakenbrück, forming a market- and  
application-oriented network of expertise across different  
industries and technologies. For almost 20 years, the two  
institutions have been responsible for the Lower Saxony Agri-  
food Competence Center. In addition, the co-ordination centre  
“*Transformationswissenschaften für die agrarische Intensivre-*  
*gion im Nordwesten Niedersachsens*” (Transformation Studies  
for Areas of Intensive Agriculture in the Northwest of Lower  
Saxony) was established at the University of Vechta in 2017,  
which addresses environmental, social, and economic challenges  
of the agriculture and food industry in the region in a research-  
based and participative manner. In order to develop future  
prospects for intensive agricultural regions, the technical focus  
is on *transformation processes* within the entire value-added  
system of the agriculture and food industry. The University of  
Vechta engages in several fields of the so-called “*Große Gesell-*  
*schaftliche Herausforderungen*” (major social challenges), like  
issues concerning food security, safety and quality, sustainable  
agriculture, environmental changes, climate protection, resour-  
ces, and resource efficiency. This is linked with teacher training  
through educational offers regarding sustainable development  
and local environmental education, as well as through the co-  
operation with the *Kompetenzzentrum für Regionales Lernen*  
(Centre for Regional Learning).



### Exploring and Shaping Change: Cultural Studies

The field of Cultural Studies connects several defining disciplines of Humanities, Cultural, and Social Sciences at the University of Vechta. Due to its interdisciplinary approach to issues concerning Cultural Change, this key profile is suited for a profound and cross-linked examination of cultural and social change and *transformation processes*. Cultural Studies promote the superordinate normative goal “*Responsibility is Key*” at the university by responding to the immediate surrounding social, economic, and environmental changes as well. Co-operations with external partners are to be established and extended, like for example, the *An-Institut für Kulturanthropologie des Oldenburger Münsterlandes* (Affiliated Institute for Cultural Anthropology in the Oldenburg Münsterland) in Cloppenburg.

Overall, Cultural Studies deal with aspects that contribute directly to further develop the key profiles and cross-cutting issues digitalisation, internationalisation, diversity, and sustainability. Cultural Studies can be connected to other fields of research that are dealt with at the University of Vechta within the topic area “Rural Areas”, e.g., by addressing the topic “Global/Local” that comprises regional and everyday cultures on the regional as well as on the European level. These approaches take into account some of the latest and most urgent cultural transformations of the early 21st century, i.e., globalisation and an increasing interconnectedness of social change processes (migration, multicultural society, intercultural communication, post-national societies and cultures, digital humanities, gender studies). With this, Cultural Studies are facing the social challenge of “integrative, innovative, and reflective societies.”





# IV

Cross-Cutting  
Dimensions



## Digitalisation

In the context of application-oriented digitalisation, the University of Vechta has long been successfully engaged in national and international research projects. These include, for example, topics like digital innovation cultures in administration, digital methods for creating potentials for civic engagement, and the construct of the so-called *Smart Region*; explained here using the example of the Oldenburg Münsterland. The University of Vechta has been successfully participating in the joint project eCULT in Lower Saxony for several years with the aim of using digital learning technologies for improving academic teaching, amongst others by means of electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) or webinars. With the project BRIDGES (*Qualitätsoffensive Lehrer\*innenbildung = Quality Offensive for Teacher Training*), the university is developing an electronic skills development portfolio that will be the basis for further digital teaching and learning formats.

*The project UniV-FDM ("Bottom-up-Managementmodell zur Umsetzung eines institutionellen Forschungsdatenmanagements [FDM]" = Bottom-up Management Model for Implementing Institutional Research Data Management [RDM]) was created to establish interdisciplinary, institutional research data management. It is based on subject-specific as well as national and international norms and it is to provide standards for academic research documentation.*

The university increasingly addresses itself to digitalisation as a cross-cutting task in research and academic teaching and will comply with the requirements set by the *Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK = Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education*

and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany) for education in a digital world. For this purpose, the respective range of courses is embedded in the curricula of all degree programmes in an additive and integrative manner. The goal is to develop the expertise to handle digital technologies professionally and critically in all four key profiles and all degree programmes offered at the university. This also includes training the entire teaching staff in using the respective tools.

The University of Vechta wants to increasingly use the digital potentials in academic teaching and research on the national and international level in many social fields and in an application-oriented manner in order to provide access to studying for working professionals and to support students with family responsibilities. Open Science, Open Access, and Open Innovation will help to better integrate knowledge bases in future and will make them accessible for more parties involved. As a prerequisite, the university creates a common model, which expresses the intention to organize studies, learning, research, and administration in a digital environment in a positive way.



## Internationalisation

Internationalisation as a topic relevant to the key profiles is part of the long-term strategic planning at the University of Vechta. It is an important goal of the university to intensify international orientation in the areas of studies, academic teaching, and research through the stable integration of existing co-operations and networks, as well as through the exchange between students and teaching staff.

The expansion of international and intercultural competence of students and teaching staff is to be promoted by supporting mobility, international co-operations, and an internationalisation “at home.” At the same time, the range of degree programmes offered is to be made more appealing for prospective students from abroad and a firmly integrated culture of welcome with intensive support of incoming students is to be promoted.

The internationalisation of studies and academic teaching is to be initiated by creating international degree programmes with strategic partners. The university also aims at recruiting students, teaching staff, and researchers from abroad. Last but not least, internationalisation is considered a central element for allowing all members of the university to gain international and intercultural experiences “at home” as well. Especially for students that do not spend part of their studies abroad, international experiences, knowledge of foreign languages, and intercultural competence are important for entering a job market that is becoming increasingly international.

What is more, these experiences do not only enhance personality development, but they also help to actively participate in shaping global society (Global Citizenship Education).





## Sustainability

Sustainability is an integral part of the philosophy of the University of Vechta and it is recorded in a corresponding guideline. Since 2015, the *AG Nachhaltige Hochschule* (Task Force for a Sustainable University) has been establishing processes for sustainable development at the university. Education for sustainable development and promotion of sustainability skills are considered cross-cutting tasks in academic teaching. They are defined as the ability to identify, analyse, and evaluate environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political challenges of the present and future. This also includes the willingness and motivation to take responsibility for our future, to pursue goals of sustainable development in the private and professional sector, and to participate in their implementation on a social and political level.

In the setting of the recommendation *Für eine Kultur der Nachhaltigkeit* (Towards a culture of sustainability) by the German Rector's Conference (HRK), sustainability skills are to be promoted in all degree programmes. The contents are based on existing global sustainability goals and the Global Action Programme (GAP) by UNESCO. The General Studies "Education for Sustainable Development" (ESD) are being developed. The skills of the teaching staff in the field of ESD are to be expanded through an increased exchange between colleagues and through further training offers.

In the context of research, the University of Vechta promotes issues relevant to sustainability that serve to generate system knowledge (knowledge about relations and mechanisms in environmental and socio-economic systems), target knowledge (knowledge about desirable targets), and transformation know-

ledge (knowledge about triggering specific change processes). Research projects are to be oriented toward aspects of sustainable development regarding their objectives and execution. The promotion and qualification of junior researchers is of major importance in this context.

At the University of Vechta, there is a consensus that a large majority of university members must support the sustainability process in order to achieve change. As an institution, the university strives for an environmentally friendly, resource-efficient, family-friendly and gender-sensitive, inclusive, health-promoting, and diverse campus. The culture of participation is essential here, in which all employees and students can be involved. Sustainability initiatives of university members are to be specifically promoted and supported.

Besides integration into research and academic teaching, the University of Vechta also forwards the topic of sustainability as part of its *Third Mission* activities. Networking and co-operation with the relevant regional and supra-regional participants is an integral part of shaping the university's profile.



## Gender & Diversity

The University of Vechta considers diversity and heterogeneity as a potential for social development that is to be appreciated. It takes part in the audit “*Vielfalt gestalten*” (shaping diversity) and develops its own diversity strategy to increase equal opportunities in higher education. In addition, the University of Vechta has successfully participated in the audit „*familiengerechte Hochschule*” (family-friendly university) since 2013 with the aim of establishing a family-friendly culture on all levels of the university.

Students are to be supported in their diversity by means of complementary learning offers and have the chance to meet individual challenges and, thus, to be able to successfully organise all phases of their studies. *Studienqualitätsmittel* (funds for the improvement of study conditions) and Formel+ funds have specifically been used for this purpose during the last years. Regarding the organisation and execution of the degree programmes offered, the needs of students with a disability or chronic disease, of working students, and of students with family responsibilities need to be paid more attention.

Students receive the opportunity to reflect on and expand their gender and diversity skills through existing doctoral programmes and the “*Gender & Diversity Zertifikat*” (Gender & Diversity Certificate). The aim is to create the General Studies “Interculturality and Linguistic Change.” Another focus is on the promotion of language awareness and skills in the context of multilingualism, German as a foreign and second language and its didactics as well as intercultural competence and also especially in teacher training.

The university will promote and further develop gender equality in research, academic teaching, and transfer of knowledge, also on a superordinate level, e.g., by participating in corresponding joint projects.







# Academic Teaching and Studies



### Development of Available Degree Programmes

The University of Vechta currently offers four Bachelor's degree programmes and seven Master's degree programmes. The Master's degree Management of Social Services was started in the winter semester 2018/19. In case the financial resources of the university can be increased, it is planned to establish further Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes or academic subjects/joint degree options within the planning period, which complement the existing subject structure in a useful way, meet the respective demands of the region, as well as highlight and strengthen the university's key profiles.

In order to particularise the key profiles, it is planned, amongst others, to strengthen the educational sciences, to establish an offer handling the interconnection of food systems and regional development dynamics, and to create an independent degree programme in the field of psychology, using synergies with the existing degree programmes offered.

In the context of the main topic *transformation processes*, Teacher Training will be continuously further developed as a future-oriented profile element in academic teaching and research regarding macrosocial and demographic change, always reflected in comparison with common practice.

## Structures for Quality Assurance and Development

The University of Vechta ensures the quality of studies by means of accreditation based on the *Studienakkreditierungsstaatsvertrag* (interstate study accreditation treaty) and by continuously receiving feedback from professionals from the job market and alumni. Having successfully completed the re-accreditation for the cluster of Social Services and with the ongoing re-accreditation process for the combined study programmes (including teacher training), the University of Vechta uses this instrument for external quality assurance consistently for all its degree programmes. As regards internal quality assurance and development, the University of Vechta will further develop its system.

The university commits to consider the responsibilities and the interaction of all parties involved when it comes to (further) process development for systematic quality development on a central and decentral level.

The faculty structure introduced in 2017 supports this development and allows for an increased decentralisation and division of responsibilities. This requires readjustment of processes within the planning period. It can be a chance to establish an extensive feedback culture and dialogue-oriented communication regarding studying and teaching conditions. The university plans to introduce mandatory standards for allocating teaching assignments and tutorials and to include the teaching assignments into the internal quality assurance and development process. For example, the accreditation of the Bachelor's degree programme Social Work within the cluster of Social Services was used to reorganise the study orientation days as of the winter semester 2018/19.

This phase is aimed at accustoming the students to project-related, autonomous, and inquisitive learning from the beginning of their studies. It has properties of a pilot project and will be assessed after the first cycle regarding quality development and possible transfer to other degree programmes.

Tutorials are used as a didactic component of modules for improving the students' ability for self-regulatory learning. For this reason, the qualification offer for tutors is to be extended within the next years with the aim for ensuring standardised, high-quality, and sustainable methodical-didactic tutor training for all degree programmes.







## Development Potentials in Academic Teaching and Studies in Line with the Cross-Cutting Issues

Targets for the development of academic teaching and studies have already been defined in the strategy concept for academic teaching in 2018. This area is to be focussed within the cross-cutting issues:

*Gender & diversity: Accepting and appreciating diversity.*

- Consistently institutionalising and further developing counselling, support, and supervision offers for various groups of prospective students and enrolled students
- Developing a diversity strategy in order to, amongst others, increase equal opportunities in higher education
- Implementing measures to further optimise family-friendly study conditions
- Considering specific needs of students with a disability or a chronic disease, of working students, and of students with family responsibilities
- Promoting the acquisition of educational and didactic basic skills regarding heterogeneity of learning groups, especially due to migration

*Internationalisation: Intercultural competence.*

- Expanding and intensifying the partner school network for arranging internships for students with teacher training option
- Increasing international and intercultural competence
- Further internationalisation of curricula for promoting international student and teaching staff exchange

*Digitalisation: Actively shaping the digital world.*

- Using digital potential for an improved access to studying for working professionals and students with family responsibility
- Creating media-based teaching and learning spaces for promoting media expertise of teaching staff and students
- Introducing a so-called *Studium Digitale* across faculties at the beginning of a lecture period
- Teaching principles and methods of open science and innovation for educating junior researchers

*Sustainability: Cultivating Education for Sustainable Development.*

- Integrating the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in academic teaching and studies
- Promoting the students' sustainability skills by including respective contents and formats in all subjects
- Expanding the *Aktionswoche Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung* (Education for Sustainable Development Action Week) and the current further training offers regarding ESD for teaching staff

Research, Promotion  
of Junior Researchers,  
Transfer,  
and Open University



The University of Vechta aligns its research with the paradigm of RRI. It reacts to possible bias, includes various opinions about research methods and results and makes them accessible to a wider community. The university reflects upon, anticipates its goals and impact, and considers multiple research strategies and methods. Wherever possible and permissible, it discloses methods and results and informs about potential conflicts of interest. As an institution that commits to research on Transformation Processes in Rural Areas, it is also part of the university's self-image to react to changing challenges and expectations with its research in an adaptive manner.

The key profile Teacher Training includes research in the subject didactics on the one hand and in the disciplines of educational sciences on the other hand. The increasing co-operation between different subject didactics and educational sciences on jointly identified cross-cutting issues like "professionalisation," "inclusion/heterogeneity/diversity," and "digitalisation/use of media" in educational processes is an important development at the university. The aim is to incorporate and further pursue these issues. It is a specific of educational research at the University of Vechta to align this interdisciplinary research with Transformation Processes in

*Rural Areas* and it is moreover a possibility for multi-directional transfer. The central institution School of Education with its units, the Centre for Continuing Professional Development of Teachers, and the Centre for Regional Learning also support this structure.

The key profile Social Services covers a wide spectrum of topics. Research in its branches deals with, amongst others, issues of social security, ageing and demographic change as well as its economic implications of the associated transformation processes. Interdisciplinary research on issues of social responsibility and acceptance will increasingly define this key profile.

The key profile's structure is partially supported by the *Institut für Gerontologie* (Institute for Gerontology, IfG) with its inter- and transdisciplinary orientation. The university strives for establishing further research institutes, for example, in Social Work or Business and Ethics.

Research within the key profile Agriculture and Food is characterised by a strong co-operation with non-university institutions and becomes manifest in the Institute for Spatial Analysis and Planning in Areas of Intensive Agriculture (ISPA). This profile is to be further developed within the development period and to be completed with corresponding degree programmes.

The key profile Cultural Studies comprises diverse, often also interdisciplinary research that deals with, amongst others, the concept of the Anthropocene, examines aspects of interculturality and "Cultural Change," and will also consider issues of digitalisation and use of media in future.

## Support Structures

The central *Referat Forschungsentwicklung und Wissenstransfer* (Office for Research Development and Knowledge Transfer), the *Graduiertenzentrum* (Graduate Centre), a central third-party funds management, a Current Research Information System (CRIS) currently being set up, as well as Research Data Management (RDM) support the research structure. Interfaces to national RDM databases or repositories and archives will be defined and provided and separate archives/repositories for Open Access publication of documents and data will be made available. Strategic goals for research at the University of Vechta with a focus on the frame concept "*Responsibility is Key*:"

- Integrating research into professional and public discourse, also regarding ethics;
- Addressing and reflecting upon issues of equal opportunities and diversity, not only regarding gender, but also in the context of research;
- Making results and knowledge bases publicly accessible to the extent possible by introducing a CRIS and an RDM "culture" supported by an infrastructure.





## Transfer of Knowledge and Open University

The idea of transfer and the Open University play an important role at the University of Vechta. The Third Mission has become more and more important at higher education institutions, apart from the core tasks in research and academic teaching. The reason for this is the value of knowledge transfer and lifelong learning for the development of society. New target groups in the context of the Open University are reached by means of a reciprocal transfer of social experiences and new knowledge as well as a demand-oriented, extra-occupational educational offer. In agreement with the organisational units, faculties, and research institutes, the university establishes events that promote and further develop knowledge and educational transfer.

At the same time, as a university with the motto *“Responsibility is Key,”* it does justice to its goal of maintaining society’s trust in science as a basis for democratic discourse.

- The University of Vechta assumes responsibility for regional innovation systems, especially regarding application-oriented research, and promotes active knowledge transfer, for example, via the Science Shop Vechta/Cloppenburg.
- The University of Vechta further develops its transfer strategy with a multi-lateral or multi-directional orientation and expands its transfer management. This includes identifying transfer-relevant funding guidelines, giving advice within the university regarding filing of applications, and raising third-party funds, also in the field of knowledge transfer and science communication.

The university considers the transfer strategy of the state of Lower Saxony in its own strategy. The organisational units in charge of transfer tasks as well as external partners are to interact and co-operate with one another in a multi-directional way.

- The scope of duties of science communication will be systematically strengthened and professionalised in order to inform about processes and results of knowledge creation in a transparent and understandable manner.
- The concept of an Open University is an essential element of the transfer strategy of the University of Vechta with its motto *“Responsibility is Key.”* Research and innovation include participative elements and exchange with society. In the context of the current digitalisation, it is important to restructure value-creation potentials at the intersection of science and economy in order to achieve benefits and locational advantages for society as a whole. For the transfer strategy and “openness” of the University of Vechta, this implies to include the dimensions “Inclusivity and collaboration,” “Access and reuse,” and “Transparency and examination.” Keeping in mind the already initiated developments, this also implies expanding existing partnerships between science and society in a way that active collaboration becomes possible.
- The university establishes tools for reciprocal accessibility of research issues and data and for reusability of findings and outputs.

- The university commits to proceed with the initiated steps toward a CRIS as a tool of transparency and, with that, to open up verifiability options in the medium term for academic output developed by means of discourse.

Institutions like the School of Education with its Centres of Excellence, the department Marketing and Communication, the Science Shop Vechta/Cloppenburg, as well as the Graduate Centre and the University Library support these objectives.

Promotion of Junior Researchers

The qualification and promotion of junior researchers is a declared strategic field of action of the University of Vechta. The normative goals for this are aligned with the *Regeln guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis* (Rules of Good Scientific Practice, by the German Research Foundation DFG), the *Leitlinien zur Qualitätssicherung in Promotionsverfahren* (Guidelines on Quality Assurance in Doctoral Examination Procedures, by the State University Conference of Lower Saxony LHK and the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony MWK), and the *Empfehlungen zu Karrierezielen und -wegen an Universitäten* (Recommendations on Career Goals and Paths at Universities, by the Federal Advisory Council on Science and Academic Affairs WR).

In the field of action of academic qualification through doctoral thesis projects, measures range from concluding defined supervision agreements and support for joining scientific communities on the level of subjects, faculties, and/or university head offices, to supervision that is accounted for and supported between colleagues in the form of doctoral research groups.

The creation of the Graduate Centre is a structural measure and, at the same time, a strategic goal to promote and support academic careers. With its offers and measures, it addresses a deliberately broad target group (see image). Members of the target groups are to be encouraged to exchange experiences through overlapping offers in order to demonstrate different career paths.

Apart from the prototypical career paths, change scenarios and, where applicable, exit scenarios or alternative career options are also to be addressed. The University of Vechta promotes its motto “*Responsibility is Key*” also in this context and takes care of the diversity of its academic staff as well as compatibility of private and professional life planning.

Internationalisation is another important concern regarding the promotion of junior researchers. Junior researchers from abroad are to be increasingly recruited.

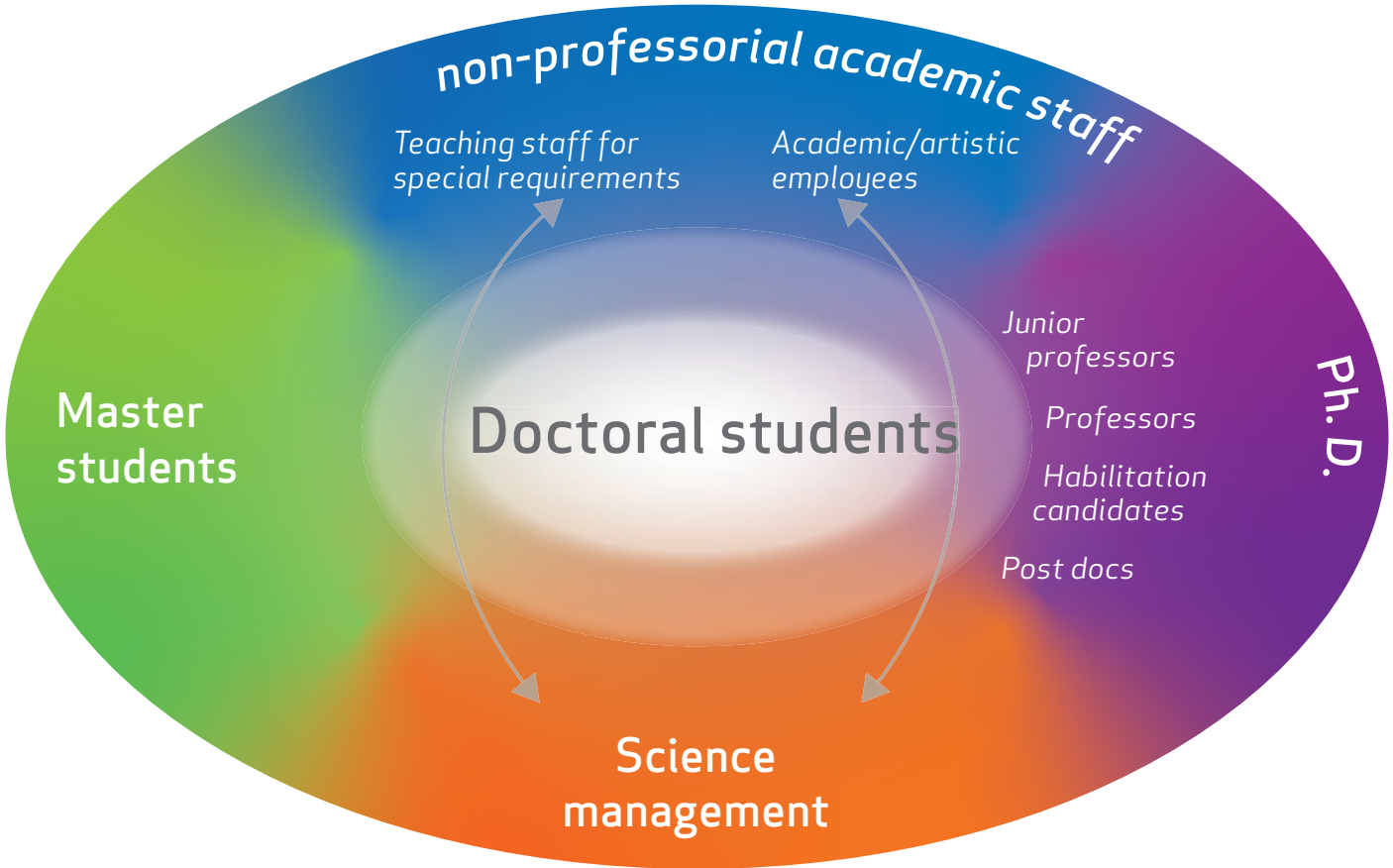


Image1: Target groups of the Graduate Centre (own source).

# University Management and Organisation of the Service Sector



The higher education reform processes of the recent past lead to extensive *transformation processes* regarding organisation and management of the University of Vechta. To this end, the university changed the organisational structure of its academic field in 2017 by introducing faculties with integrated academic subjects as well as research institutes. The service sector supporting the academic field was reorganised on a central and decentral level. It is planned to comprehensively adapt the university management to this reorganisation within the planning period.

### Normative Goals for the Development of University Management and the Service Sector

When it comes to further developing modern, professional university governance structures, the University of Vechta complies with the basic principle of unity of decision and responsibility. Within the framework of autonomy in higher education, the internal governance mechanisms are aligned with the stipulations of an integrative quality concept, as well as with performance, effectiveness, and efficiency in the setting of the university's task profile and specific culture. The service sector acts in a modern, solution-/result- and service-oriented way. It sees itself as a learning organisation that addresses, actively supports, and shapes present and future demands of society. The relation between the academic field and the service sector is constructive and characterised by mutual acknowledgement.

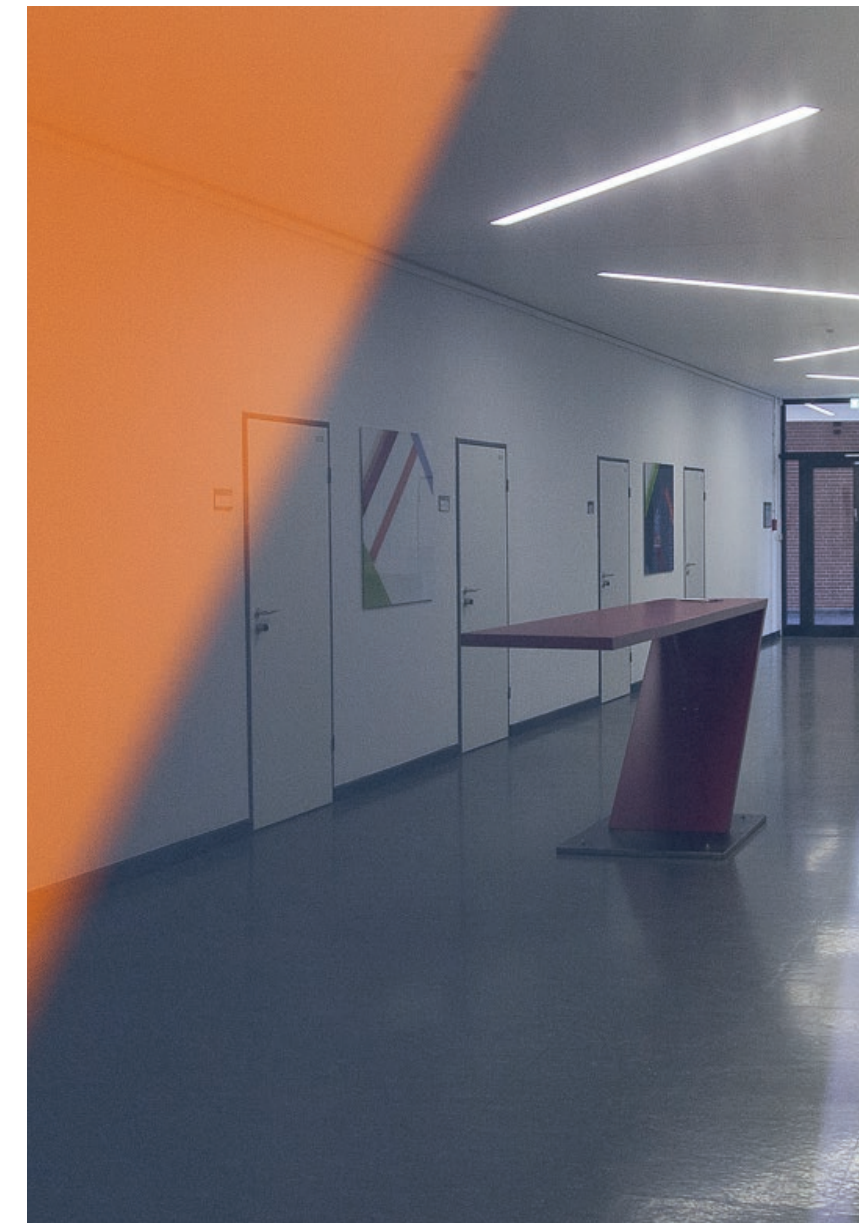
Active participation of all areas of responsibility and employees is ensured by timely and extensive information about goals and developments in the academic field and the service sector. The employees' expertise is included in developing policies and in decision processes. Internal communication is open, respectful, transparent, targeted, and constructive in the team as well as across departments; there also is always room for new ideas.

Digitalisation is seen as a chance to improve workflows and to organise them in a more transparent, efficient, and lucid way. In addition, digitalisation has a great potential for better reconciling the professional and private life. In this context, risks like a constant availability of employees are explicitly considered in all concepts.

As part of human resource development, each person is appreciated, challenged, and supported according to their individual skills. The university promotes an active and appreciative feedback culture. Executive staff must be qualified for their specific tasks and, also in view of varying conditions and frequent new challenges, is to be dedicated to conceptualise these and to continuously personally develop. Respect for diversity, internationalisation, sustainable development, and equal opportunities are to be incorporated in the actions of all university members. Equal opportunities are actively promoted at the University of Vechta by raising awareness and by means of structural organisation.

### Strategic Goals Regarding University Management | Service Sector

The image on the next page represents the link between university structure and management and shows the superordinate topics for university management. Until 2020, the established management system oriented toward decision-making and dialogue will be further developed. The tasks with top priority are "Organisational development and communication management," "Human resource development, human resource management", and "Property management, location development, and infrastructure." The departments "Controlling, management, financial management" and "Quality management" provide support regarding impact analysis, risk management, and for preparing decisions.





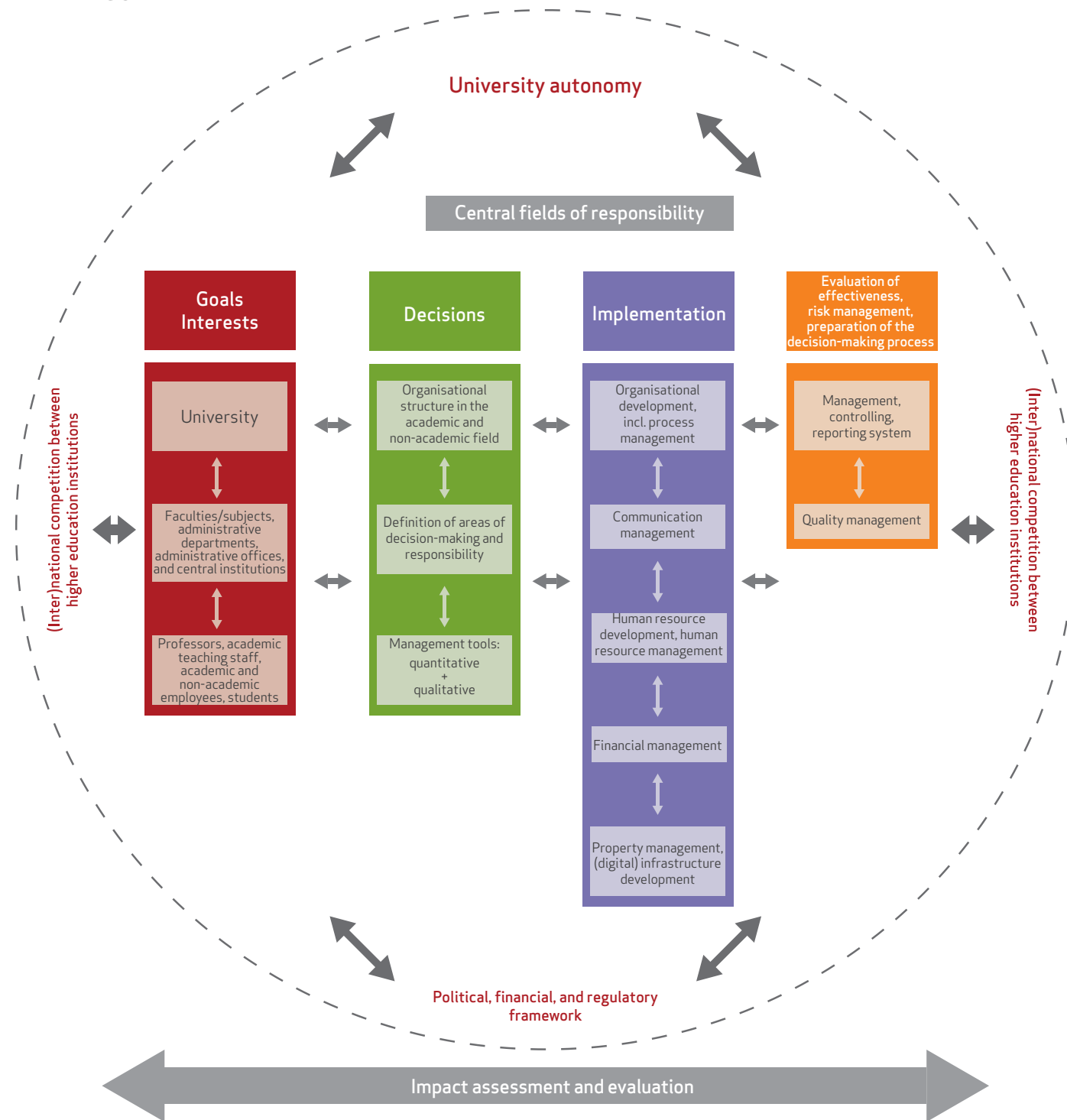


Image 2: Basis structure of the management system oriented toward decision-making and dialogue of the University of Vechta (own source).

### Organisational Development/Process Management/Communication Management

Internal development potentials are to be activated and internal and external communication structures are to be optimized by means of organisational development and process and communication management within the planning period. A concept for a differentiated structure that has been agreed upon throughout the university will be adopted until 2020, from which processes in consideration of intersections and internal communication can be deduced.

The concept is to be implemented and completed after an evaluation by 2021. In addition, the university will frame a target-group-specific concept for advice, improvement, complaint and conflict management as well as an ombudsperson system and adopt it in 2019.

Complementary to this, a university-wide IT concept will be developed in 2019 and agreed upon in 2020. The working conditions are to be organised based on diversity/heterogeneity, gender equality, occupational health and safety, aspects of a family-friendly university, and a sustainable use of resources. The individual concepts, which are to be mutually agreed upon, will be developed and implemented based on the following (among others):

- Transparency and consistency of decision-making structures, decision-making processes, and areas of responsibility within the organisational structure;
- Systematic expansion of digital media and service-oriented software for optimizing processes supporting the academic field;

- Development of an agreed-upon communication management for successfully implementing the announced goals and measures;
- Participation in the audit “*Vielfalt gestalten*” (Shaping diversity) as a systematic approach for organisational development.

## Human Resource Development/Human Resource Management

Due to the increasing performance and quality requirements and, at the same time, limited human resources, strategic human resource development and correlated human resource management play a central role in university management. A comprehensive frame concept for human resource development will be adopted in 2019. To this end, the human resource management provides the respective means and develops processes geared towards the respective target groups. Human resource development is to be further developed as a systematic field of responsibility. Thus, it is also the basis for the Equality Plan to be adopted in 2019. It includes, amongst others, measures for gender-specific human resource development in the form of a “cascade model” that is to reduce under-representation along the qualification levels.

The following aspects, amongst others, are included in the elaboration of a human resource development concept:

- Definition of the duration of employment based on the function and task assignment;
- Systematic succession and qualification planning;
- Primarily taking into account existing potentials of the staff;
- Further development of a welcoming and farewell culture;
- Development of an *employer branding*;

- Development of a separate concept for executive human resource development;
- Integration of diversity/heterogeneity, implicitly considering gender equality and the conditions of a family-friendly university;
- Employee satisfaction regarding work-life balance, occupational health and safety; taking into account sustainable use of resources and demand-oriented room furnishing.





### Management, Controlling, Reporting System, Financial Management

By 2020, the University of Vechta will expand its management approach to an overall system that includes the following core elements, amongst others:

- Central and decentral budgeting of incoming funds (e. g., ongoing appropriations from the state, reserves, programme allocations);
- Developing a *gender budgeting* concept (that will be tested as a pilot project and reviewed for successive expansion in 2021);
- Staff structure plan for permanent allocation of posts;
- Target agreements with the organisational units in the academic field and the service sector: with the faculties and research institutes as of 2019, in the service sector as of 2020;
- Using funds for the improvement of study conditions while involving students in the conceptual development.

Incentive management is aligned with the principles “Development of key academic achievements defining the key profiles,” “(Supra-)regional and, to the extent possible, international networking in research and academic teaching,” “Equal opportunities,” as well as in relation with quality management “Orientation toward high quality standards in all core and cross-cutting tasks.”

In addition, the controlling approach will be expanded to a strategic, cross-departmental, overall controlling and monitoring system that creates the framework for quality management. External report requests are co-ordinated with internal management requests. To this end, a concept will be elaborated in 2019 and 2020, which will help to systematically further develop the reporting and controlling system, include all departments and levels of administration and management as well as the approach of a systematic risk management and internal revision.



## Quality Management

Further development of an extensive quality management system is aligned with international standards in research, academic teaching, studies, and the service sector. By 2022, an integrated quality management system will be adopted with the aim to provide assistance for management support and to take into account cross-cutting tasks like establishing equality/equal opportunities, sustainability, and internationalisation in accordance with the associated strategies. Quality is an integral element of the university's profile and is to be internally and externally communicated. The following perspectives are guiding here:

- Quality culture – Actively implementing quality and feeling responsible for it so that people will discuss about quality and will openly broach the issue of opportunities for improvement;
- Creating a quality structure and perpetuating it in co-operation with the relevant (internal) stakeholders;
- Creating, making visible, and linking quality expertise.

## Property Management, Location Development, Infrastructure

Finding additional rooms, restoring buildings, and further developing the campus and the infrastructure are a considerable challenge for the University of Vechta. The focus here is on creating new space, reducing leased branches, and modernisation under the premise of sustainability. The Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture has requested a survey report for space requirement planning from the *HIS-Institut für Hochschulentwicklung (HIS-HE)* (Higher Education

Information System Institute for Higher Education Development). Building measures for a gymnasium and an extension of the University Library are currently taken into account in the space requirement determination. In 2019, the space requirement is to be finally determined, the space utilisation plan is to be agreed upon, the procedure for initiating building measures is to be started, and the respective financial resources are to be provided. In accordance with the corporate architecture, the guidance and information system is to be expanded.

Funds for the improvement of study conditions are to be used for improving the infrastructure related to academic teaching and learning in future. An agreement on this is to be reached between the *Studienqualitätskommission* (Commission for Managing Funds for the Improvement of Study Conditions) and the University Executive Board by 2020.

The university also aims at successive energy-efficient refurbishment of the existing building parts. For this purpose, an energy strategy for properties will be created and measures will be prioritised until 2020. This is complemented by a superordinate solution for sustainable use of resources in relation with sustainable procurement.

As part of the audit “*Vielfalt gestalten*” (shaping diversity), the university is developing a package of measures for accessibility, which is also aligned with building design and other infrastructural aspects. A special focus within the planning period is on expanding the IT infrastructure in connection with the IT strategy (see VII.2.1). An appropriate demand and development plan will be adopted by 2020.





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