

Framework Plan for Gender Equality¹ at the FernUniversität in Hagen

in accordance with the Gender Equality Act for the State of North Rhine-Westphalia (*Landesgleichstellungsgesetz – LGG NRW*) of 9 November 1999

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¹ The framework plan includes women and men and, wherever possible, persons who identify as non-binary or use the gender entry ‘diverse.’ Regulations for the third gender option, which are already enshrined in law, are fully implemented in the framework. A number of regulations that are not yet legally finalized strive to make considerations and find internal solutions for persons who identify as non-binary or use the gender entry ‘diverse.’ Where there is not yet a corresponding legal regulation, the existing legal regulations relating to women and men (LGG, AGG, HG) are used (this particularly concerns action area 4).

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Preamble: Equal Opportunities

The FernUniversität in Hagen is the only state-run distance learning university in the German-speaking world. It is committed to the unity of research and teaching, academic study, the promotion of early career scholars and the transfer of knowledge, and promotes education through science. Committed to its core competency of enabling and supporting lifelong learning, the FernUniversität facilitates high-level academic study in socially relevant subjects for people all around the world seeking an alternative to purely face-to-face studies. It tailors its teaching methods to its unique and varied student body and guides its students to various university degrees. The results of its basic and applied research are continuously incorporated into its teaching. Thanks to a teaching/learning system that is designed to be flexible in terms of both location and time, the FernUniversität fulfills a unique educational mission and has always valued the heterogeneity of its student body.

For the FernUniversität, providing equal opportunities is not merely its social duty and the fulfillment of the legal mandate but a central goal towards which it continuously and actively strives in all areas – in the design of its offerings and as a key element of its research and teaching. The FernUniversität is committed to an organizational culture in which individual, social and cultural diversity is seen as an enrichment.

All members of the FernUniversität are valued and are given the opportunity to study or work successfully – regardless of their social and ethnic/cultural background, their age, their previous educational biography, their sexual orientation and gender identity, their religion or ideology, their disabilities (including chronic somatic and mental impairments), as well as their particular phase of life, which can be diversely defined, for example, by their commitments to work, family or caring for others.

The FernUniversität is raising awareness about (un)equal opportunities and supporting the development of competencies in dealing with diversity – explicitly in the areas and target dimensions of equality, family-friendliness, internationalization, accessibility, and educational equity. These topics are firmly anchored as key areas in the university's development and are considered quality characteristics for research, teaching, and administration. Specific goals from these areas can be found in the general and thematic strategies of the FernUniversität. At the FernUniversität, responsibility for the realization of equal opportunities is assumed by the university management as well as all university employees, especially those in leadership and decision-making positions.

1. Principles of the Framework Plan for Gender Equality

- (1) The FernUniversität specifies its fundamental equality policy objectives and the corresponding fields of action in its framework plan for gender equality. This establishes university-wide regulations to promote equality and ensures that the implementation of legal requirements remains firmly in the university's focus of attention.
- (2) To enshrine the FernUniversität's key equality policy goals in binding (quantified) targets and timelines, as well as to define appropriate measures and incentives to achieve these goals, the FernUniversität also makes use of other equality instruments: The gender equality concept aims to shape and further develop equal opportunity work with tasks that fall under university-wide responsibility or implementation. The equal opportunity plans of the various departments work in parallel to this, in terms of departmental design and the ongoing development



of equal opportunity work in the faculties, central institutions, and the central university administration.

- (3) Various institutionalized bodies shape and support gender equality work at the FernUniversität to a particular degree. These include the Equal Opportunities Commissioner and her deputies, the Faculty Equal Opportunities Commissioners, the Equal Opportunities Commission, and the Equal Opportunities Coordination Office which all have their own specific tasks and responsibilities. But broader institutionalized forms of communication and transparency regarding the equal opportunities situation and equality work are also of key importance.
- (4) With its statements on the goals and fields of action for the equality of all genders (Section I), the instruments of equality work (Section II) as well as institutionalized equality work (Section III), the framework plan for gender equality creates a regulatory framework that is valid throughout the university and is thus a decisive basis for the realization of gender equality and equal opportunities at the FernUniversität in Hagen.
- (5) The equality of women, men, and persons who identify as non-binary or use the gender entry 'diverse' is a task for all at the university to master together². Accordingly, the implementation of the guidelines of the framework plan for gender equality is the task of all members of the FernUniversität, with special responsibility falling to the university and faculty management as well as all supervisors. This applies in equal measure to the concrete integration of the framework plan in the FernUniversität's gender equality concept and in the equal opportunity plans of the departments as well as their implementation.
- (6) The FernUniversität is issuing its framework plan for gender equality at the FernUniversität in Hagen in accordance with the legal provisions of German Basic Law, the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia, and the Gender Equality Act for the State of North Rhine-Westphalia.
- (7) The Equality Plan of the FernUniversität in Hagen (compliant with sections 5a, 6 LGG NRW) comprises this framework plan for the entire university together with the equality plans of the faculties, central services, and the central university administration.

Section I – Gender Equality Goals and Action Areas

2. Academic Studies

- (1) The FernUniversität is actively pursuing a goal of increasing the proportion of underrepresented genders among students and graduates in the individual faculties. The formulation of concrete, quantified targets is part of the framework of the faculties' equality plans.
- (2) The FernUniversität's marketing activities include a target group-specific approach to attract students of the respective underrepresented gender. The Student Advice Service considers gender-specific interests and needs and offers special information and advice for prospective students.
- (3) Faculties in which female students and graduates are underrepresented are developing measures in their equality plans to attract women in particular to distance learning and sup-

² Regulations for the third gender option, which are already established in law, are fully implemented in the framework plan; regulations that are not yet legally finalized strive to make considerations and find internal solutions for persons who identify as non-binary or use the gender entry 'diverse.' Where there is not yet a corresponding legal regulation, the existing legal regulations relating to women and men (LGG, AGG, HG) are used (this particularly concerns action area 4).



port them in achieving success in their studies. This applies in particular to scientific and technical subjects.

- (4) The regional and study centers of the FernUniversität, in consideration of the specific situation of women, are working towards demand-oriented consultation and opening hours as well as events that take family and work-related constraints into account.
- (5) The FernUniversität's "Family-friendly university" concept explicitly considers measures that promote the compatibility of studies and family (for example, family-friendly organization of seminars, internships, and examinations).
- (6) When developing and updating study materials, care is taken to use gender-appropriate language that addresses all genders in an equally visible and respectful manner.

3. Early Career Scholars

- (1) The FernUniversität is pursuing the goal of increasing the proportion of women in doctoral and postdoctoral degrees in areas where they are underrepresented. The formulation of concrete, quantified targets (according to the cascade principle) will be carried out within the framework of the faculties' equality plans.
- (2) Women are given priority in paid and unpaid teaching positions in areas where women are underrepresented and if they have the same or equivalent qualifications. The faculties are already looking for suitable applicants in advance and inviting them to apply.
- (3) Women are also prioritized for positions as academic employees and research assistants if there is an underrepresentation of women and if they have the same qualifications.
- (4) The FernUniversität provides additional substitution funds ("maternity fund") for maternity leave periods as well as in the case of pregnancy-related medical employment prohibitions for academic employees and non-academic employees in the secretarial areas of the teaching departments and the faculty administrations (U2 apportionment procedure).

4. Employment: Filling Vacancies and Appointing Professors

- (1) It is the FernUniversität's goal to increase the proportion of women employees in all areas in which they are underrepresented – in particular the proportion of women in professorships in the individual faculties as well as in management positions in all areas of the university. The formulation of concrete, quantified targets (in the academic departments, according to the cascade principle) will be carried out within the framework of the equality plans of the faculties, central services, and the central university administration.

4.1 Job Postings

- (1) All positions that are to be filled in areas in which women or men are underrepresented in accordance with Section 7 LGG NRW must be advertised. In agreement with the Equal Opportunities Commissioner, an external call for applications may be dispensed with.
- (2) The posting department will specifically define the required qualifications when posting vacancies. The content of the advertisement is to be based exclusively on the requirements of the position to be filled.
- (3) To address both women and men, as well as persons who identify as non-binary or use the gender entry 'diverse,' gender-appropriate wording is used in university job postings. In job advertisements, therefore, either the feminine and masculine form of the job title is to be



used with the addition of brackets "(m/f/d)" (= male/female/diverse) or the gender-neutral form using the gender star.

- (4) Job postings in areas where women are underrepresented will be accompanied by one of the following addenda, depending on the qualifications profile: "The FernUniversität is striving to increase its percentage of women. Applications from women are expressly encouraged. Women will be given preferential consideration in cases of equal suitability, qualification, and professional performance, unless reasons relating to the person of a competitor prevail." or "The FernUniversität is striving to increase the proportion of women in research and teaching. Applications from appropriately qualified female scientists are strongly encouraged. Women will be given preferential consideration in cases of equal suitability, qualification, and professional performance, unless reasons relating to the person of a competitor prevail."
- (5) In consultation with the Equal Opportunities Commissioner, a call for applications is not required if:
 - employees already employed in technology and administration continue to be employed on a temporary basis in a job that does not lead to a change in classification,
 - trainees who have completed their training at the FernUniversität are taken on in adequate temporary (fixed-term) positions,
 - the job is considered to be an extension within the same legal relationship and the same qualification phase,
 - persons are hired who are explicitly named in the approval of a third-party funded project,
 - academic assistants are taken on as research assistants if the current academic assistant funding is also categorically required for the new employment (funding by drawing on academic assistant funds as well as the provision of additional funding),
 - the appointment is a matter of personnel development measures that have already been agreed on,
 - a change of academic assistant status occurs due to the acquisition of the corresponding qualification,
 - academic assistants at the FernUniversität are taken on as research assistants within the respective funding phase,
 - the appointment is considered to be a "return transfer" of research assistant to the status of academic assistant within the respective funding phase,
 - employees of the FernUniversität are employed beyond the standard retirement age,
 - in the case of initial appointments to a new professorship at the FernUniversität if the person being taken on is already mentioned by name in the appointment notice.
- (6) The Human Resources department or the department issuing the call for applications is responsible for implementing paragraphs 1–5.

4.2 Professorships

- (1) The university management issues an appointment guideline that governs the involvement of the equal opportunity commissioners and the consideration of gender equality in appointment procedures. The guideline for equality in appointment procedures will be updated and further developed with the participation of the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner, her deputies, and the faculty equal opportunities commissioners at least once during their term of office. The appointment officers and faculty equal opportunities commissioners en-



sure that the measures in the guide are implemented. When drawing up their shortlist of candidates, the University Board will check whether the implementation has taken place.

- (2) When filling professorships, half of the members of each appointment committee in each status group should be women. If this is not possible for pragmatic reasons, these reasons must be made a matter of record and documented in a comprehensible manner in the appointment report. In exceptional cases, gender parity can be achieved if the proportion of female university lecturers in the appointment commission is at least equal to the proportion of women in the group of university lecturers from whose ranks the appointment to the committees is made. Each appointment committee should include at least one female professor. If this is not possible, at least one female professor in the same subject from another university should be a member of the appointment committee. If this is also not possible, a female academic working in the relevant subject in the faculty or in the same subject at another university shall be elected to the appointment committee.
- (3) In job advertisements for professorships, applicants are asked to consider gender-specific aspects in research and teaching as well as in the promotion of early career scholars. The following sentence is therefore included in the job advertisement for professorships: "Applicants are requested to also consider gender and diversity-specific aspects in research and teaching as well as in the promotion of early career scholars in a professionally appropriate manner." These gender aspects are considered as a criterion in the evaluation of qualifications. If no gender-specific issue is recognizable in the scientific or technical orientation, the applicant should be able to explain this. The explanation of why no gender-specific issue is apparent is to be documented. The appointment report documents the extent to which the candidate takes gender aspects into account. The appointment committee and the University Board also include the criterion "gender aspects" when drawing up their shortlist of candidates.
- (4) When assessing academic qualifications, the appointment committee may not regard periods of part-time work, breaks in academic activity, or delays in completing qualifications for family reasons as well as any consequences of these (e.g., lower number of publications, less third-party funding acquired, less teaching experience) as reducing the value of the qualifications.
- (5) In principle, all applicants who meet the minimum and desired criteria formulated in the job advertisement should be invited to make a trial presentation. If this is not practicable due to the large number of female applicants, at least as many women as men shall be invited for an interview.
- (6) On appointment lists, women are to be given preferential consideration in the event of equivalent suitability, qualifications, and professional performance.
- (7) Half of the letters of recommendation are to be awarded to women. If this is not possible for pragmatic reasons, these reasons must be made a matter of record and documented in the appointment report.
- (8) A list of all applicants, including information on their academic qualifications and current position, is to be submitted to the University Board attached to the appointment proposal. If none of the female applicants is considered in an appointment proposal or if there is a written vote by the Equal Opportunities Commissioner or a special vote in favor of a female applicant, the proposing department must comment on this. The rights of the Equal Opportunities Commissioner under Sections 18 and 19 LGG shall remain unaffected.
- (9) The deans, faculty councils, and appointment committees are responsible for implementing paragraphs 2–8.
- (10) The President and the Head of Administration shall ensure that women are not disadvantaged in the implementation of the salary laws of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, particularly with regard to resources and performance-related remuneration.



- (11) The Equal Opportunities Commissioner is provided with all necessary data on resources and personal remuneration (the amount of basic remuneration, the amount of performance-related remuneration, or performance-related allowances) by the respective professor on an ad hoc basis. HR administration is responsible for implementation.

4.3 Other Academic Vacancies and Vacancies in Technology and Administration

- (1) For all job appointments, the hiring divisions shall proceed in accordance with their equality plans. The guidelines for staff selection procedures and the induction of new employees, which were drawn up by the staff administration in consultation with and using the information provided by the staff councils and the equal opportunities commissioners, are to be observed during all selection procedures.
- (2) Selection procedures must be carried out for all appointments.
- (3) In principle, all female applicants who meet the qualifications required in the advertisement will be included in the selection process and, in particular, invited for an interview. If this is not possible due to the large number of female applicants, at least as many women as men must be invited for an interview.
- (4) At the request of the Equal Opportunities Commissioner, additional women from among the applicants shall be invited for an interview if they are appropriately qualified and suitable for the job.
- (5) Suitability, ability, and professional performance are to be assessed according to the requirements of the position to be filled. Seniority, age, and the date of the last promotion may only be considered to the extent that they are relevant to the suitability, performance, and qualifications of the applicants.
- (6) If women are underrepresented, they shall be given preferential consideration in the event of equivalent suitability, qualification, and professional performance, unless reasons relating to the person of a competitor prevail.
- (7) If female applicants are not to be considered in certain departments or in remuneration, grade, and salary groups in which women are underrepresented, the selection committee or the persons responsible for the selection or the supervisors must submit a list of the applicants to the Equal Opportunities Commissioner and provide her with reasons why they cannot be considered.
- (8) The allocation of positions financed by third-party funding is to be handled accordingly.
- (9) The above principles shall also be observed in the hiring of academic and student assistants as well as part-time and adjunct employees.
- (10) This also applies to the allocation of traineeships and the hiring of trainees, as well as to promotions and salary upgrades. Women are also given greater consideration in the awarding of work contracts, teaching assignments, and visiting or interim professorships, provided they are underrepresented.
- (11) In the case of applications for employment, the Human Resources Department checks whether the Equal Opportunities Commissioner has been involved. If the Equal Opportunities Commissioner is not involved in due time, any decision regarding employment shall be suspended for one week to allow this involvement to be made at a later time.



4.4 Involvement of the Equal Opportunities Commissioner (in Staffing and Appointment Procedures as well as Promotions and Upgrades)

- (1) The Equal Opportunities Commissioner is to be involved in all appointment, hiring, promotion, and upgrading procedures. She is an equal member of appraisal meetings. To this end, she must be informed in good time and on an ongoing basis by the persons responsible for planned measures, and the dates must be agreed with her at the following times: in the case of appointments, when the subject is first raised in the Faculty Council; in the case of other recruitment procedures, at the latest when the tendering process begins; in the case of promotion and upgrading, at the latest from the time the planned measure is initiated.
- (2) After the application deadline, the Equal Opportunities Commissioner receives a list of the applications received as well as all documents, which are also sent to the other parties involved in the recruitment process. She has the right to be fully informed about ongoing procedures at any time and to attend all interviews. She is to be informed of all selection decisions and the reasons for them.
- (3) The Equal Opportunities Commissioner has the right to submit a written statement at all stages of the decision-making process. The Equal Opportunities Commission must then comment and, in the event of dissent, forward the comments to the next decision-making body.
- (4) If the Equal Opportunities Commissioner is not involved in due time, the decision shall be suspended for one week to allow this involvement to be made at a later time.

5. Gender in Teaching

- (1) Gender-responsive design is one of the quality characteristics of good teaching and comprises various dimensions: the integration of gender research into teaching (gender content), gender-equitable didactics, and gender competence on the part of the teachers. The FernUniversität pursues the goal of taking these requirements into account in the design of high-quality teaching.
- (2) When developing and updating study materials, care is taken to use gender-appropriate language that addresses all genders in an equally visible and respectful manner.
- (3) The faculties promote courses with gender content by awarding teaching assignments, visiting professorships, and guest lectures.

6. Research

- (1) Gender equality impacts the quality of research by allowing talent to be drawn from a larger pool, promoting a diversity of research perspectives, and eliminating blind spots about the importance of gender in research content and methods. With this in mind, the FernUniversität is pursuing its goals of increasing the representation of women in research at the FernUniversität and increasingly implementing gender research.
- (2) Women must not be disadvantaged in the allocation of research funds and scholarships. If there is an underrepresentation of women, preference will be given to applications from women in situations where the quality of the project and grant applications is considered equal.
- (3) The faculties ensure that female academics are treated equally to their male colleagues when it comes to the allocation of material and human resources.



- (4) A section on the development and results of women's and gender research at the FernUniversität will be included in the FernUniversität's research reporting. The faculties also include the development and results of women's and gender research at the FernUniversität in their research reports.

7. Equality as a Management and Mainstream Task

- (1) The FernUniversität is committed to ensuring an equality-oriented design of all internal university strategy- and decision-making processes through gender mainstreaming, institutionalized equality work, and gender parity in the composition of committees.
- (2) Gender equality is systematically integrated into university management and its instruments.
- (3) Committee work is at the core of university organization and academic culture. High-quality committee work requires that all genders are equally represented. Accordingly, the FernUniversität pursues a policy of gender parity when staffing its committees – in accordance with section 11b of the Higher Education Act (HG) NRW – except in specific cases where there is an objectively justifiable exception. When drawing up lists and nominations for electoral bodies and organs (in particular the University Council, Senate, and faculty councils), attention is paid to equal representation. The implementation of this provision of Section 12 (1) LGG NRW is to be included in the report on the equality plans, and any deviations therefrom must be justified.
- (4) If committees are formed or reappointed, the appointing bodies should nominate an equal number of women and men. If only one nomination is possible, women and men shall be considered alternately. If the number of persons is odd, this applies to the last position.
- (5) To create transparency, the gender-specific composition of the committees is regularly published in the Gender Monitor of the FernUniversität.
- (6) Achieving gender parity in the committees is a joint task in which everyone at the FernUniversität must participate: the University Council, university management, deans, students, professors, employees in technology and administration, the academic staff, and the equal opportunities commissioners.
- (7) The President shall pay particular attention to gender balance when nominating candidates and/or when personally approaching candidates for memberships and offices in committees at the FernUniversität, scientific organizations, and scientific awards.

8. Human Resources Development

- (1) Gender sensitivity and competence are quality criteria for all areas of human resources development. The FernUniversität pursues the goal of considering the equality of all genders as well as gender aspects in the development of its human resources and in its further education and consulting offerings.
- (2) Human Resources Development regularly offers female employees, especially those on sabbatical, special training and continuing education measures that enable them to gain further qualifications or maintain their qualifications and thus increase their chances of promotion.
- (3) In-house university training and professional development events are held during duty hours. Continuing education and training courses are designed in such a way that participants are not subjected to additional family burdens that arise through scheduling, proximity to the location, and childcare options.



- (4) As far as possible, equal numbers of men and women should be recruited to lead and speak at training and continuing education events. Persons who identify as non-binary or use the gender entry 'diverse' should also be approached to lead continuing education and training events, if possible.
- (5) Issues of gender equality and protection against sexual harassment in the workplace are considered in training and continuing education in an appropriate and target group-related/oriented manner. Approaches to gender sensitization and equality (gender training) must be regularly taught at events on the performance of supervisor and management tasks.

9. Compatibility of Studies/Career and Family

- (1) With the help of its FamilyService (*FamilienService*), the FernUniversität designs family-friendly study and working conditions and implements measures to reconcile academic studies or career with family life.
- (2) Family-friendliness is a permanent task for the FernUniversität; a task which is fulfilled continuously and constantly. The FamilyService has been established as an organizational unit at the FernUniversität to further enhance "family-friendliness" at the university and to ensure the sustainable implementation of family-friendly measures. The FamilyService is part of the human resources department.
- (3) Part-time work is made possible for all genders, in all departments and management positions.
- (4) Part-time employees must be given the same career advancement and training opportunities as full-time employees.
- (5) The possibility to make use of flexible working hours is crucial to reconciling work and family life. Correspondingly, the FernUniversität offers flexible working time models (home office arrangements, teleworking, etc.) for its employees.
- (6) Possibilities to extend temporary civil service contracts and fixed-term employment contracts of academic employees by the duration of maternity protection periods and parental leave as well as periods spent caring for relatives in need of care must be exhausted within the framework of the applicable law.
- (7) The FernUniversität strongly supports the taking of parental leave and leave for homemaking tasks by male employees as well.
- (8) Systematic re-entry management has been introduced to maintain contact and prepare employees for re-entry into the workforce.
- (9) Maternity leave replacements are deployed via the U2 apportionment procedure in such a way that funds are made available to the affected areas to pay for a replacement in full.
- (10) Periods of childcare, homemaking, and part-time employment are not to be treated as negatives when evaluating qualifications.
- (11) Committee and regular meeting dates will be arranged in a family-friendly manner and, if possible, should fall within working hours when part-time employees are also present. Individually agreed part-time working hours are also to be considered when arranging short-term task- or project-related deadlines within the individual departments.
- (12) To support students and employees with children, the FernUniversität offers childcare during school vacations and year-round childcare at its "MiniCampus" for times when regular childcare is not available or parents need on-campus care.



- (13) Pregnancy, parenthood, and the care of dependents must not lead to disadvantages in studies and graduation. The FernUniversität makes appropriate special arrangements to ensure the compatibility of studies and family (e.g., offering nursing mothers the option to take exams in regional centers).

10. Ensuring Safety and Measures Against Sexualized Harassment and Violence

- (1) The FernUniversität shall be a safe and non-violent place to study, teach and work. The FernUniversität does not tolerate any forms of sexualized harassment, discrimination, or violence. To counteract all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence, the FernUniversität has developed a guideline for dealing with discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence, which establishes clear procedures and possible sanctions for conflict situations. This guideline applies to all members and employees of FernUniversität in accordance with section 9 paragraphs 1 and 4 HG.
- (2) To ensure the safety of employees and students, the university's facilities and buildings are regularly inspected for sources of danger and threatening environments. Measures to eliminate sources of danger are implemented accordingly.
- (3) Safety considerations are always to be considered when selecting work and event locations and times. These include, among other things, connections to public transportation, the establishment of parking spaces for women, and adequate lighting for access routes, parking lots, bus stops, and buildings.
- (4) For a definition of terms, section 3 of the General Equal Treatment Act is to be applied. Accordingly, discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favorably (disadvantaged, disregarded, disrespected, belittled, excluded, or unlawfully treated differently) than another person in a comparable situation on the grounds of their racial or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual identity. Sexualized harassment is any form of unsolicited conduct of a sexualized nature that manifests itself in an unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical form and that has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person involved (e.g., intimidation, hostility, humiliation, degradation, and insults). The decisive factor for the definition of "undesirable behavior" is the personal feeling of the person affected.
- (5) The FernUniversität, in particular the University Board and all heads of department, is obliged to take measures to prevent sexual harassment, to investigate indications of sexual harassment and, if necessary, to take action against the harassing person under labor or employment law or other legal instruments.
- (6) Employees and students may not be discriminated against because they have resisted discrimination, sexual harassment, or violence, or otherwise exercised their rights.
- (7) To protect against discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence, and to raise awareness of these issues, the FernUniversität offers continuing education events and provides counseling centers to help deal with the problem. Measures also include courses in self-defense and assertiveness.
- (8) The University Board also takes measures to ensure that department heads and other responsible persons are informed of their obligations to protect employees and students and comply with these obligations.

Section II – Instruments of Gender Equality Work

11. Gender equality concept

- (1) The aim of the gender equality concept of the FernUniversität is to design and further develop the university-wide equality work and includes all necessary tasks for the fields of action mentioned in the framework plan in university-wide responsibility or implementation. The gender equality concept clearly defines the fundamental equal opportunity policy goals of the FernUniversität in binding (quantified) targets and timelines and specifies corresponding measures and incentives to achieve these goals.
- (2) The overall responsibility for the implementation of the gender equality concept lies with the University Board, which is advised on the content of this matter by the Equal Opportunities Commission. The implementation of the gender equality concept is made possible by sufficient financial resources.
- (3) The implementation of the measures of the gender equality concept and the achievement of objectives are evaluated. The Equal Opportunities Commission discusses the evaluation reports and submits them with a statement to the University Board. At the end of the period, the University Board reports on the implementation of the measures and the achievement of the objectives of the gender equality concept and submits this report together with the update of the gender equality concept to the Senate and the University Council.
- (4) The gender equality concept will be updated and improved as needed, taking the equality successes achieved and the evaluation results into account, as well as in accordance with the framework plan for gender equality at the FernUniversität.

12. Equality Plans of the Departments

- (1) The faculties, the central services, and the central university administration develop an equality plan every three years in accordance with the framework plan for gender equality at the FernUniversität in Hagen and the gender equality concept for their respective areas and thus fulfill the legal requirements defined in sections 5a & 6 LGG NRW. These equality plans contain specific targets and timelines for the respective department to increase the proportion of women in areas where women are underrepresented and to achieve the goals of the framework plan. The equality plans of the departments continue to define the personnel, organizational, and training measures they would like to use to achieve their specific targets, the corresponding time frames and – based on the current need for action – to further develop their own equality work. A particular focus is placed on structural discrimination against women and the compatibility of studies/career and family.
- (2) The equality plans make use of regular stocktaking and analysis concerning the equality goals, in particular the employee structure, as well as a forecast of the positions to be filled and the possible promotions and upgrades. The equality plans consider all employee and professional groups; faculty equality plans also take students into account.
- (3) The development of the equality plans is the responsibility of the Faculty Councils (in the faculties), the head of the respective service (in Central Services), and the Head of Administration (in the central university administration). Faculty equality plans are approved by faculty councils.
- (4) The administration provides the departments with the data necessary to develop and review their equality plans.



- (5) The respective faculty equal opportunities commissioner and the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner together with the Equal Opportunities Commission are to be involved in the preparation and realization of the equality plans.
- (6) The faculties, Central Services, and the central university administration shall submit a written report on the implementation of their respective equal opportunity plan to the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner at the end of the term.

Section III – Institutionalized Gender Equality Work

13. Equal Opportunities Commissioner

13.1 Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner

- (1) The FernUniversität will elect a Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner and four deputies (one each from the group of female university lecturers, female academic staff, female technical and administrative staff, and female students). The election regulations (*Wahlordnung*) for elections to the Senate, the Faculty Councils, the Women's Advisory Council, the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner, and the person responsible for representing the interests of student assistants at the FernUniversität in Hagen provide further details.
- (2) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner participates in all regulations and measures that have or may have an impact on gender equality; this applies in particular to social, organizational, and HR measures, including job advertisements, selection procedures, and interviews.
- (3) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner is also to be involved in the updating and reporting of the framework plan for gender equality at the FernUniversität, the gender equality concept, and the equality plans of the departments.
- (4) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner is the point of contact for all members, affiliates, and employees of the FernUniversität in matters of equal opportunity. She receives complaints and develops initiatives to remedy any difficulties.
- (5) Effective fulfillment of the tasks of the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner is ensured by the provision of the necessary staff, rooms, material, and financial resources.
- (6) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner and her deputies shall be appropriately relieved of their other official duties in order to carry out this activity.
- (7) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner performs her duties as a member of the Central University Administration. In doing so, she is free from instructions from the faculties. The deputies are also not bound by instructions in the performance of their duties. Further rights of the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner under the provisions of LGG NRW remain unaffected.
- (8) Employees at the FernUniversität have the right to contact the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner at any time during working hours. At the request of the persons concerned, the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner will take part in discussions with superiors.
- (9) The responsible offices at the FernUniversität are obliged to provide the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner with all data and information necessary for her work, to inform her of all planned organizational and personnel changes and measures, to provide her with information, and to grant her access to personnel and factual files.



- (10) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner is authorized to contact the staff councils directly.
- (11) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner shall be given the opportunity to attend the meetings of all committees and organs. She is entitled to speak and make motions. She also participates as a member in departmental working groups and committees.
- (12) The Equal Opportunities Commissioner provides the university with her point of view about the equality situation at the FernUniversität and her activities. To this end, she prepares a Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner's Report at regular intervals and makes it available to the university public.
- (13) For the purpose of promoting women, the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner cooperates with other university and non-university equal opportunities commissioners or equal opportunity offices and similar institutions in matters relating to equal opportunities.
- (14) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner and her deputies have the right to participate in events that serve their own information and training. They inform the FernUniversität about any business trips they plan to take.
- (15) To support the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner, regular working meetings are held between her deputies and the faculty equal opportunities commissioners. The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner may be represented in the performance of her duties by her deputies or by one of the faculty equal opportunities commissioners acting within her respective area of responsibility.

13.2 Faculty Equal Opportunities Commissioners

- (1) Faculty equal opportunities commissioners are elected in the faculties on the recommendation of the women employed in the respective area and in agreement with the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner. All women assigned to the respective department are eligible for election. Further details are determined by the respective faculty regulations.
- (2) Faculty equal opportunities commissioners are advisory members of the Women's Advisory Council and the Equal Opportunities Commission and may attend meetings held by the Equal Opportunities Commission with the right to make motions and speak.
- (3) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner may be represented by her deputies or the faculty equal opportunities commissioners in the performance of her duties. The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner invites her deputies and the faculty equal opportunities commissioners and their deputies to regular working meetings to ensure the coordination and quality of equality work.
- (4) The faculty equal opportunities commissioners inform the women at the FernUniversität about their activities.

13.3 Women's Advisory Council

- (1) A Women's Advisory Council is formed to elect the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner and her deputies. The Women's Advisory Council comprises three representatives from the group of female university lecturers, three representatives from the group of female academic employees, three representatives from the group of female employees in technology and administration, and three representatives from the group of female students. They shall be elected by the female members of the University by direct, free, equal, and secret ballots separated into the respective groups. The election regulations (*Wahlordnung*) for elections to the Senate, the Faculty Councils, the Women's Advisory Council, the Central Equal Opportunities

Commissioner, and the person responsible for representing the interests of student assistants at the FernUniversität in Hagen provide further details.

14. Equal Opportunities Commission

- (1) The Senate of the FernUniversität elects an Equal Opportunities Commission. Details of the election, members, and term of office are set out in the basic regulations.
- (2) The Equal Opportunities Commission advises and supports the university and the Equal Opportunities Commissioner in fulfilling the equal opportunity mandate. This includes:
 - monitoring the updates to and implementation of the framework plan and the equality plans of the divisions,
 - participation in the updating and implementation of the gender equality concept,
 - advising the University Board on the content of the implementation of the gender equality concept and on its evaluation and reporting,
 - participation in the internal allocation of funds,
 - requests from individuals on matters relevant to equality,
 - gender aspects in accreditation and re-accreditation procedures, and also
 - gender aspects in research funding and other programs, in particular (in addition to the University Board Committee on Research Funding) the implementation of the research-oriented gender equality standards set out by the German Research Foundation (DFG).
- (3) The Equal Opportunities Commission comments on objections raised by the Equal Opportunities Commissioner.

15. Women's Assembly

- (1) The Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner may hold a women's assembly once a year and smaller meetings for women as required. She may also invite male employees or people who do not identify as any specific gender or identify as a different gender to raise awareness of gender equality issues. Employees shall be given the opportunity to participate during working hours in consultation with the management of the department.

16. Equality Coordination

- (1) The coordination of gender equality work with its strategic and institutional anchoring in university development (e.g., the university development plan) as well as in the various gender equality-oriented instruments (e.g., gender equality concept, framework plan for gender equality, women's advancement plans of the departments) is carried out – in close coordination with the Central Equal Opportunities Commissioner – by an office coordinated by the President.

17. Report on Equality

- (1) Transparency and a reliable database on the gender equality situation at the FernUniversität help to develop an awareness of the problem as well as approaches designed to promote the realization of gender equality at the university.



- (2) Gender-disaggregated data are continuously being collected as part of the University's statistics and reporting, as well as differentiated data on the gender equality situation (in all areas, at all levels of the university, and at all stages of the academic career ladder). Gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis are also implemented in the context of research reporting. In addition, the data required for the various reporting obligations associated with the university's equality work is also collected. This data is regularly summarized by the Equal Opportunities Coordination Office within the framework of the "Equality core data set" and made publicly available to the university.
- (3) On the basis of the equality core data set, the university reports regularly and publicly on the equality situation at the FernUniversität in the *Gender Monitor* (published by the President's office).

Section IV – Closing Formulations

18. Publication and Entry Into Force

The Framework Plan for Gender Equality is published in the "Official Notices of the FernUniversität." It enters into force on the day of its publication and replaces the framework plan for gender equality at the FernUniversität in Hagen dated 21 January 2016. The framework plan has a term of 3 years and will be updated.

Issued and approved based on the resolutions of the Senate on 03.06.2020, the University Board on 29.10.2019, and the Equal Opportunities Commission on 25.09.2019.

Hagen, 02.02.2022

The President of the FernUniversität in Hagen

Professor Dr. Ada Pellert