

Short and Compact

“To have to prove to yourself that you belong there ...”

Findings of the Qualitative Diversity Study on Experiences of Studying at
Goethe University Frankfurt am Main

Recommendations for the Diversity-Sensitive Design of Study and Teaching

Foreword by the President	4
The Diversity Study	5
Findings at a Glance	8
1. Entering University Studies: “I come from a very different educational milieu ...”	8
2. Information: “You’re just thrown into cold water”	10
3. Perception of Support Structures:	
“I can’t google it if I think there’s definitely no such thing	11
4. Diversity Awareness: “	
That what you’re actually accomplishing is not acknowledged at all”	13
Recommendations for the Diversity-Sensitive Design of Study and Teaching	16
1. Recommendations for the Study Entry Phase	16
2. Recommendations on Communication and Information Channels	17
3. Recommendations for Improving the Uptake of Existing Support Offerings	19
4. Recommendations on Diversity Sensitivity	21
Further Reading (in german)	25



Foreword by the President

“Our thinking and action are based on our appreciation of openness and diversity.” (Mission Statement of Goethe University)

Universities in Germany still have little knowledge about the composition of their student bodies, the diverse experiential backgrounds and life circumstances of their students, and the possible challenges in everyday life at university that may arise as a result. We were interested in finding out whether the existing support offerings for students at Goethe University meet the needs of our students, and how these offerings are perceived and used by them. To obtain answers to these questions, and to translate the knowledge gained into concrete action, Goethe University conducted a qualitative survey of students. I am very pleased to be able to now present the main findings of the Diversity Study in a short and compact way. Based on these findings, practical recommendations for action have been developed in a process of reflection with actors from the areas of study and teaching. These recommendations make up the second part of this brochure.

Only through active listening, mutual exchange of experiences, and decisive action can existing structural inequalities and barriers at our university be identified and reduced. This goal is close to my own heart, and I would like to thank the students who participated in the study and provided insights into their perceptions and experiences at our university. We take their reports of their experiences seriously, and we shall continue to work on the implementation of a diversity-sensitive university culture based on equality of opportunity. I hope that the present findings and recommendations will be useful for everyone in treating each other with openness and respect in their everyday lives and actions at the university.

Professor Dr Enrico Schleiff
President of Goethe University Frankfurt am Main

The Diversity Study

What experiences do students have at Goethe University against the background of diverse life circumstances? What needs arise from this, and how can diversity-sensitive offerings support students in overcoming possible challenges? How are existing support offerings for students at Goethe University perceived and used? The Diversity Study provides insights into these research questions based on the qualitative survey conducted within its framework. The research project (2017–2020) was coordinated by the Equal Opportunities Office; the survey in the form of group discussions with around 50 students took place between 2018 and 2019. Hannah Burger (project coordinator) and Dr Katharina Meyer (parental leave replacement) were responsible for the project. The study was situated in the programme STARKER START INS STUDIUM [Strong Start to Studies] (2011–2020), which was funded by the “Programm des Bundes und der Länder für bessere Studienbedingungen und mehr Qualität in der Lehre” [Programme of the German Federal and State Governments for Better Study Conditions and Greater Quality in Teaching]. The aim of the programme was to support students in adjusting to their studies. Against the background of the heterogeneity of the student body, support offerings were implemented during the entry phase of studies, and ways of improving this phase were examined.

Aims of the Diversity Study

The aims of the Diversity Study were as follows:

- to access experiences and challenges of the surveyed students during the entry phase and over the course of their studies;
- to gain insights that allow a diversity-reflective examination and further development of the existing portfolio of offerings;
- to develop recommendations for diversity-sensitive reflection on support offerings for students.

Questions Addressed by the Diversity Study

- What does the heterogeneity of the student body mean for everyday student life and for study progression, and how can courses of study and framework conditions be designed in such a way that they meet the aspiration to create equality of opportunity and to reflect on diverse study conditions and life circumstances?
- What experiences do students have during the entry phase of their studies and in their everyday lives at Goethe University?
- What challenges and hurdles do they encounter?
- (How) do they perceive the existing support offerings for students, and what experiences do they have with them?
- What support offerings do they wish to see?

Design of the Diversity Study

To answer these questions, survey and analysis methods from reconstructive social research were chosen. This approach enabled us to directly access the experiences and needs of the students and to focus also on selected diversity dimensions. In group discussions with students from different disciplines, descriptions and accounts of their perceptions and experiences at the university were collected. The insights gained in this way allow a diversity-reflective examination and further development of the existing portfolio of offerings. The material collected was analysed following the documentary method of interpretation.

- Thirteen group discussions were conducted (Winter Semester 2018/19, Summer Semester 2019).
- Forty-four students of Goethe University took part.
- Survey and analysis methods from reconstructive qualitative social research were used.
- Existing offerings were not evaluated.

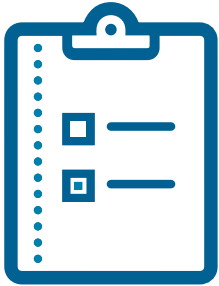
Sample and Diversity Dimensions

Thirteen group discussions (GDs) were conducted with students who ...

- were the first in their families to go to university (2 GDs).
- had a (family) migration background but went to school in Germany (2 GDs).
- had experienced everyday university life as students living as lesbian, gay, bisexual, inter*, trans* or queer (2 GD).
- had experienced racist attributions and discrimination, or who had experienced attributions and discrimination based on their religion (1 GD in each case).
- were studying with a mental or physical impairment that made studying more difficult (1 GD in each case).
- were organising their everyday lives at university with one or more children (1 GD).
- wanted to take part in the study without being assigned to one dimension (2 GD).

Forty-four students participated, of whom ...

- 34 were born between 1990 and 1999.
- 28 stated their gender as "female".
- over half came from a non-academic parental home.
- 8 had a personal and 14 a family "migration background".
- over half had started another degree course before the current one; around one-third had not completed that degree.
- 34 were studying humanities and social science subjects.



Concept of Diversity Used by the Study

For the survey, selected diversity dimensions were considered, which were understood as background experiences, life circumstances and study situations rather than as attributes or as characteristics that are not subject to change. Students are never situated on only one diversity dimension (or inequality axis), but rather are always positioned in complex relations of inequality and orders of belonging that may be reflected in privilege or disadvantage. Experiences and challenges at university may also differ depending on the field of study.



Findings at a Glance

The main findings will be presented in what follows along four focal topics that the students themselves introduced into the discussions and/or intensively addressed. The relevance of individual diversity dimensions will also be explored.

1. Entering University Studies:

I come from a very different educational milieu ..."

At the beginning of the group discussions, participants were asked about their experiences in the entry phase of their studies. The following findings are of importance for this "status passage" across all groups. **Students from non-academic parental homes** in particular recounted related challenges:

- experiences of being overwhelmed, of disorientation or sensory overload at the beginning of their studies;
- a lack of possibilities for parental or family assistance, for example with organisational matters or questions relating to the production of scholarly texts (especially in the social sciences);
- a lack of possibilities for financial support, and the ensuing necessity to find alternative forms of financing (BAföG [student grant], gainful employment), each of which poses its own challenges;
- uncertainties with regard to (formal) requirements of the respective course of studies, and a particular need for clear and reliable information and points of contact; understanding and mastering university (ground) rules.
- Students with **physical and mental impairments** recounted that a key orientation task during the entry phase of their studies was to (once again) get to know and understand their own illness and its respective significance during and for their studies. They compared the performance requirements in their field of study with their individual ability to perform (regeneration time, breaks and support needed).
- **LGBTIQ* students** reported that especially in the first few semesters, they repeatedly had to come out as trans* during attendance checks if their official name did not correspond to their current name. Other negative experiences, including discrimination, were described.
- **Students perceived as Muslim** described experiences of not belonging and of exclusion as being a challenge in the entry phase of their studies. This mainly affected female students who wore a headscarf. These experiences may coincide with experiences of **gender**-based exclusion as the only woman in a seminar.



Empirical Example

Group Discussion I1 was conducted without a focus on one diversity dimension, and was heterogeneous in terms of the educational origin of the participants: :

Student A: [...] and also because of the plethora of um especially in the first semester, when I think back to the introduction to quantitative social research, what was demanded, uploading something every week, answering questions, reading texts, 30 pages or so, sure, that's studying?

Student B: Yeah.

Student A: Right? Because first you have to maybe also, you have to learn the ropes, right? Not everyone has, or I, for example, have never read much at home et cetera, I come from a very different educational milieu.

Student C: Uh-huh.

Student A: And it's always like, so how can we get everyone into the same boat, and um it's a difficult question? I was in fact completely overwhelmed in my first semester [...]. (Discussion I1, para. 159)

The participant refers here to familiarisation with scientific working methods as being a particular challenge in the entry phase of their studies, and explicitly relates this challenge to their origins in a particular "educational milieu". Whereas they do not consider the "plethora" of performance requirements to be a fundamental problem ("sure, that's studying"), they indirectly refer to the perception of different resources and thus unequal starting conditions for coping with these requirements.

Conclusions on the Basis of the Study Findings

Entering university is an important and challenging phase for all students. In addition to orientation in the field of study, understanding credit points and study regulations, and settling into everyday university life, social aspects, such as getting to know fellow students or changes in living conditions, are paramount. This situation may be exacerbated for students who cannot fall back on the university experiences of other family members; who are living with physical and/or mental impairments; for whom entering university is associated with financial worries; or who have to devote themselves to other challenges or commitments by virtue of caring for relatives or children. Entering university studies appears to be a process of mastering the rules and requirements of study. In this regard, the challenges addressed by the discussion participants were not so much discipline-related but rather formal and organisational, for example registration modalities or study regulations.

Moreover, the findings show that not all difficulties addressed by participants relate to acculturation into university studies in the classical sense, which gradually fade as they

get used to the specific rules and requirements of studying. Rather, experiences of discrimination or of not belonging, for example, may continue to be of importance over the further course of their studies. Support offerings of the university can be of help here. Especially students who are unfamiliar with the university are often unaware of such offerings. And isolated references to further offerings often get swept away in the flood of information at the orientation events.

2. Information: “You’re just thrown into cold water”

Information-related issues were addressed several times by the participating students. The respondents recounted the following experiences and perceptions in general terms, as well as with regard to specific diversity dimensions:

- perception of a lack of transparency and of opaque structures;
- a lack of knowledge about course requirements;
- a lack of information about existing support structures;
- experiences of not finding the right point of contact for an existing need and of being sent “from A to B” when attempting to get the necessary information.
- Information is difficult to find, even after actively searching for it.
- Introductory and orientation events are ambivalent: helpful because of the plethora of information provided. However, this is also perceived as a challenge or as overwhelming.
- a lack of information on support possibilities for **students from non-academic parental** homes (e.g. the option of studying part-time or financing possibilities);
- unclear responsibilities and difficulty in accessing important information, for example about specific provisions for students with **physical or mental impairments**.
- Offerings and support structures for **students with family duties** are difficult to find.



Empirical Example

In Group Discussion F (studying with a physical impairment that makes studying more difficult), Student E positively reported finding a supportive contact person – the Dean of Studies of the faculty – quite quickly during the entry phase of studies. By contrast, Student D described as an “odyssey” the search for the right points of contact and contact persons for impairment-related questions that they faced during the study entry phase. This shows that unclear responsibilities and opaque structures can be a problem, particularly when the life circumstances or the study situation of the new students involves additional information needs.

Student D: Mhm, I find that quite interesting because I also, I switched. I also studied {the same subject as Student E} for two semesters. But, well, things went a bit differently? Because I also contacted the uh Disability Officer here, and that was extremely difficult; because somehow no matter who you ask, you always get a different telephone number somehow

Student E: Yeah, that's true alright.

Student D: and you always end up in a different office?

Student E: (laughs)

Student D: and somehow everyone tells you that they are not responsible in that case? And you phone around trying to get the right number? But you never really reach someone who can actually help you, and in the end it was the woman from the Examination Office {faculty} who, uh took care of it, also as far as accommodated exams and the like are concerned. But um I found it extremely difficult because before you start studying you actually have no possibility of getting hold of information somehow, but rather you're just thrown into cold water actually [...]. (Discussion F, paras 9–11)

Conclusions on the Basis of the Study Findings

From the students' point of view, the orientation phase in the university structures is made more difficult by a lack of transparency and by the fact that information is either lacking or available at the wrong point in time. As a result, existing support structures and offerings for specific life circumstances and study situations are difficult to find and thus used less. Therefore, they cannot be fully effective in compensating for disadvantages. Not only the orientation phase is made difficult as a result. The students also described recurring challenges in the further course of their studies, and problematised difficulties in finding clear and transparent access to information. This is particularly true of students who perceive the university less as a potential point of contact for their needs, which they consider to some extent to be "personal". The students also described the paradox that due to the great mass of information, especially at the beginning of their studies, many offerings go unnoticed. Information should not be communicated only when students are beginning their studies, because at that point in time their main focus is on settling in at the university, and certain concerns and needs emerge only over the course their studies.

3. Perception of Support Structures: "I can't google it if I think there's definitely no such thing"

(How) do students perceive support structures at Goethe University, and how do they use them? The discussions revealed clear differences in access to support structures. While some of the respondents had had hardly any experiences in this regard, others

had more extensive knowledge, had already availed of support in the past, and had found it very helpful. Various obstacles and hurdles to finding out about and using support offerings were described:

- The search for support offerings does not take centre stage during the study entry phase – this phase is too complex, and diverse challenges have to be overcome in parallel. Only when resources are freed up again as the study period progresses, are students able to start making the university their own, also with regard to support offerings.
- In some cases, information is lacking in visibility and is difficult to access. As a result, the existing structures and offerings may be noticed and used only at a late stage or not at all.
- A desire was expressed that specific contact persons/points of contact and existing (accommodating) provisions and support offerings should be communicated pro-actively (e.g. by lecturers who are sensitive to student needs).
- The lack of temporal resources is an obstacle for many students, for example for **students with family commitments**, or for students with an **impairment that makes studying more difficult**, if, for instance, they need time for regeneration or to take part in rehabilitation measures. Holding down a **job to meet living expenses** while studying also calls for temporal flexibility and resources.



Empirical Example

In Group Discussion C2 with students who had (family) migration experience but who had gone to school in Germany, the lack of visibility of information about support structures was problematised, also because it meant that students had to search for support structures on their own initiative. The participants expressed a desire for pro-active information on the part of the university and its members. This would signal symbolic recognition of these students' specific study situations and life circumstances, and would be perceived by them as an invitation to use existing structures. From the respondents' point of view, an independent search for these support structures presupposes that students consider the existence of such structures to be even possible and their use to be legitimate. Both of these things were described by participants as not being self-evident. Participant F referred to the internalised attitude of "having to fight your way through on your own," which may result in support offerings neither being searched for nor being used. In this constellation, a lack of visibility can become a particular hurdle:

Student F: Well, if I don't know, I don't know;

Student G: Yeah.

Student F: and I search, I can't google it (laughing) if I think there's definitely no such thing. (Discussion C2, para. 167)

Conclusions on the Basis of the Study Findings

Some students described obstacles to availing of existing support offerings for their needs – for example because they did not know where to turn, or they were unable to clearly formulate their needs, or they had the feeling that a university would not have any offerings that catered for their needs. Other commitments besides studying – for example a job, family responsibilities or health issues – and the resulting limited time capacities for searching for or using support offerings, may also constitute barriers. A further reason for not using support structures lies in the feeling on the part of some students that using support offerings is tantamount to not meeting the requirements of a university. These reasons document the desire for an inviting attitude on the part of the university, for explicit recognition of different study situations and life circumstances, and for pro-active communication of support structures and possibilities for their use.

4. Diversity Awareness: “That what you’re actually accomplishing is not acknowledged at all”

In the group discussions, the surveyed students engaged intensively with the way in which their diverse experiences, affiliations and locations, study requirements and conditions were perceived and acknowledged by the university:

- Across groups, the students described a feeling of powerlessness because of relationships of dependency vis-à-vis members of the teaching and administrative staff.
- *LGBTIQ* students* expressed the wish that staff at the Student Registration Office should receive training, especially in dealing with the issue of name changes of trans* people.
- **Students with experiences of racism** suggested that tutors be trained and made aware with regard to racism, institutional racism, as well as intersectional discrimination experiences such as those suffered by Muslims, for example.
- Participants who had experienced discrimination on the basis of their **religious affiliation** formulated the idea of raising lecturers’ awareness of – and preparing them for – cultural and religious diversity.
- In the context of academic events, **female Muslim students** criticised unreflected and undifferentiated attitudes on the part of lecturers and fellow students with regard to the topic of the “headscarf”. They articulated a feeling of powerlessness because people were talking about them but not to them; they observed generalising references to certain affiliations and backgrounds; and they reported that they were often addressed in an undifferentiated way as experts on “Islam”, and that some lecturers referred to the Sharia in a derogatory way.



Empirical Example

In the following quotation from Group Discussion F1, a clear criticism of the status quo conveys the desire for recognition – recognition of what it means to cope with everyday student life with an impairment (in this case, autism) that makes studying more difficult:

Student D: [...] but the fact that what you're actually accomplishing when you come to uni every day with a disability is not acknowledged at all. In other words, that in addition to the course content you're also coping with a new social hierarchy, and all these things, that the curriculum is actually twice as full. Because so much more is added, right.

Student E: That you basically have two jobs at the same time, yeah.

Student D: They're basically two (laughing) full-time jobs

Student E: Mhm.

Student D: that you somehow have to manage in parallel. But no one is aware of that. It's simply completely, you go through it completely blindly. And um, if you want to talk to somebody about it, you're told: "Yes, but everyone finds it hard once in a while."

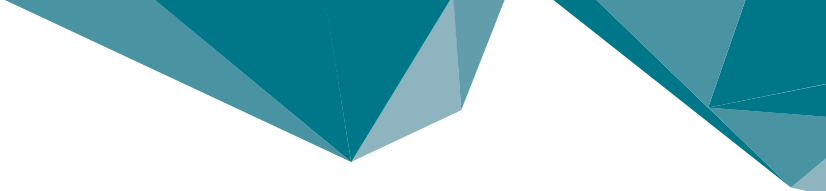
Student H and Student E: Mhm.

Student D: well there it is; it's just, well I think it's just scornful. It's absolutely incomprehensible. (Discussion F, para. 250)

Reactions to the disclosure of an illness or the attendant (counselling) needs were discussed. Were these reactions and approaches characterised by empathy or a lack thereof? Did the affected students perceive a need to justify themselves, or was an anticipated need to justify themselves confirmed? This example shows that in the tersely formulated desire for greater awareness on the part of the people around them, a number of very fundamental questions are condensed whose importance goes much further: How do I exist at the university with my respective experience, my background, my location or affiliation? (How) is this experience taken into consideration in different contexts? (How) is it addressed?

Conclusions on the Basis of the Study Findings

The perception of not being visible at the university with one's own background, one's personal experiences or one's individual life circumstances, and of not having been taken into consideration in the structures and processes, may produce insecurities and represent an enormous emotional and temporal burden. Because of relations of dependency, they [the affected students] find it difficult to present their points of view and counter-arguments, for example when lecturers refer to their backgrounds in a judgemental way. Depending on the diversity dimension in question, the students see different margins for manoeuvre, for example whether there is any option with regard to



coming out, or whether a person has no other option but to engage with attributions and boundary transgressions because they are not classified by others according to the prevailing gender models.

The students want awareness of the diversity of the student body and understanding from fellow students, lecturers and staff for their personal circumstances and challenges. They suggested concrete awareness-raising measures and further education and training offerings for different target groups in order to create an awareness of the diversity of experiences and to impart concrete knowledge about individual diversity dimensions and intersectional discrimination experiences.

Recommendations for the Diversity-Sensitive Design of Study and Teaching

1. Recommendations for the Study Entry Phase

Communicating the Core Message: The University as a Supportive Place

Especially at the beginning of their studies, the students are confronted with a great deal of information, and individual support offerings may thus go unnoticed (especially if they do not yet appear to be relevant at that point in time). It is therefore important to communicate the general, supportive attitude of Goethe University. If efforts to ensure that students perceive the university as a supportive place for challenges are successful, students will be more inclined to search for suitable offerings in case of need. The university's message to students should be the following: "At Goethe University, there is an awareness of diverse life circumstances, different prerequisites, study situations and challenges. Therefore, there are counselling services, offerings and support structures, and all students are invited to use them." The communication of this message could, for example, be initiated by a campaign that is present at all locations (e.g. through posters, banners, multi-media screens etc) and across all (digital) media of the university, and could already be integrated into the application and admission information.

Checking Orientation and Introductory Events in the Fields of Study

The institutes and faculties are an important source of information, especially in the study entry phase. The orientation events in the fields of study should therefore be checked to see whether the supportive attitude as a whole and the breadth of support offerings for students could be conveyed even more strongly.

Peer Tutors and Mentors as Multipliers

Peer tutors and mentors who provide support during the study entry phase (e.g. during orientation week, in tutorials during the semester, in mentor and buddy programmes) should inform students about the support offerings at Goethe University. For this purpose, they must receive training both with regard to information about offerings and to diversity sensitivity. If the tutors/mentors have themselves experienced support offerings for students, they can – on a peer-to-peer level – lower possible inhibition thresholds for availing of the support. The establishment of peer-to-peer advice and counselling or tandem formats in the study entry phase may also be advisable.



Examples from Goethe University

🔗 **Guide for students and prospective students “Studying the Inclusive Way. Navigating Goethe University with Health Issues or Disabilities” (Goethe University 2021):** This guide contains inter alia introductory information about studying, funding, accommodation and mobility, as well as advice on studying at Goethe University and contact addresses.

🔗 **Mentoring programme for first-semester students at the Faculty of Law (in German):** First-semester students are mentored by students from higher semesters.

🔗 **Support service “Call-a-CAB” (Call-a-Come-Along Buddy):** This is a free service provided by students for students who require assistance due to special circumstances. The aim of the buddy service is to support students in difficult situations in their everyday lives at university by providing personal and confidential assistance.

Training offering for tutors and mentors: Each semester, the Equal Opportunities Office offers a workshop on behalf of studiumdigitale within the framework of the training of tutors and mentors. The workshop focuses on the “diversity-sensitive design of tutorials” (for current dates, see the websites of 🔗 **studiumdigitale (in German)** and the 🔗 **Equal Opportunities Office (in German)**).

🔗 **Offerings of “ArbeiterKind.de” (in German):** The non-profit and donation-funded organisation ArbeiterKind.de, which is located at Goethe University on behalf of the State of Hesse, encourages pupils from non-academic parental homes to study at university, and supports them on the path to successfully completing their studies and starting their careers.

2. Recommendations on Communication and Information Channels

Using Teaching as an Information Channel

Greater use should be made of subject teaching to convey a fundamental message about diversity and to impart information about the breadth of offerings and possibilities for support.

Repeated Promotion of Support Offerings and Contact Points

In order to acquaint students with the support offerings, the offerings and the points of contact should be continually promoted by the central administration and the faculties throughout the entire course of study. Therefore, support offerings should not be addressed only at the beginning of studies, but rather information about these offerings should accompany students throughout their entire course of study. This could be achieved in a targeted way through events in higher semesters, for example a fair in the third semester, or through a targeted presentation of the points of contact at Goethe University's summer party.

Using Diverse Routes and Different Information Channels

Different channels should be used to publicise support offerings in order on the one hand to increase the reachability of students, and on the other hand to increase the uptake of offerings through repeated promotion via different channels. These channels include, for example, social media such as Instagram and Facebook; the "Goethe-Uni" app; mailing lists; or media on campus, such as posters, digital information screens etc. One option could be a coordinated newsletter format or short animation films that present the support offerings thematically (e.g. a film about exam nerves with references to suitable points of contact and support offerings). Another idea could be to offer service points/information stands for students in the buildings in order to increase visibility at the individual locations.

Using Digital Formats to Promote and Publicise Support Offerings/Points of Contact

To help publicise support offerings and points of contact for students, diversity-sensitive digital formats could be used to present the offerings. This would in turn be in line with the promotion of support offerings and points of contact for students via different routes or channels. To facilitate findability, the digital formats should be placed in a prominent location on the Goethe University website, for example on the web page for prospective students in order to inform them about the support offerings even before they start their studies.

The Website as a Communication Platform

Support offerings and points of contact for students should be easy to find on the Goethe University website. One way of reducing the amount of information on the website and arranging it more clearly could be to sort it into thematic clusters on FAQ pages. In addition, links should be created between the information of the faculties and the information at central level (e.g. by linking the FAQ web pages of the Global Affairs, Study and Teaching (SLI) Department and the faculties).



Examples from Goethe University

✔ **Set of slides with information on equal opportunities and support offerings for students:** At the beginning of each semester, the Equal Opportunities Office at Goethe University produces a set of slides with information currently available to the faculties for use in introductory and orientation events and in courses. This set of slides briefly and clearly presents information on equal opportunities, the Goethe University Mission Statement, and support offerings for students.

✔ **Self-learning tool “Studieren ohne Barrieren” [Studying without Barriers] (in German):** This online course provides students with information on five topics following the inclusive student lifecycle model.

✔ **Information portal “Inclusive University”:** The portal provides general information and an overview of points of contact and support offerings related to studying and working without barriers. It is aimed at prospective students and employees. Moreover, the portal contains information for lecturers and staff on designing teaching and courses of study in the most accessible way possible.

✔ **Mission Statement of Goethe University Frankfurt:** In its mission statement, Goethe University opposes racism, nationalism and anti-Semitism. Its principles include the realisation of gender equality and diversity.

✔ **Antidiskriminierungsrichtlinie [Anti-Discrimination Directive] of Goethe University (in German):** Goethe University’s Anti-Discrimination Directive applies the prohibitions of discrimination laid down in the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) in favour of all members and affiliates of Goethe University, and gives affected persons a right to receive advice and to lodge a complaint. It obliges Goethe University to take preventative measures, and it enables punitive measures to be taken.

3. Recommendations for Improving the Uptake of Existing Support Offerings

Positive Presentation of Use

In the presentation, description and promotion of support offerings and points of contact for students, attention should be paid to the language and images used. They should not convey the impression that using these offerings constitutes a deficit, but rather that it is understood as self-evident and as a profitable resource.

Referral Service as a Central Point of Initial Contact

A central point of initial contact with a referral service that provides information and guidance on all support offerings of the university at central, faculty and institute level could facilitate students' searches for suitable offerings. Promoting a central point of contact for students that can be reached via different communication channels is easier than scattering the information about the university's comprehensive and sometimes changing and growing portfolio of offerings. In addition, the referral service can serve as a point of contact for students who are not yet able to clearly formulate their support needs.

Flexible Curricular Integration of Support Offerings for Students

The flexible curricular integration of support offerings for students can increase the uptake of these offerings, promote engagement with Goethe University's broad portfolio of offerings, and counter inhibitions about using them. One possibility would be to integrate a presentation of the offerings into the curriculum, for example within the framework of a series of lectures during the study entry phase.

Exchange and Networking between the Support Offerings and the Counselling Services

A further starting point could be to test (digital) formats and instruments that could facilitate networking and exchange between counselling services and support offerings in the areas of study and teaching. This would enable staff members to get to know new offerings and to remain informed about changes and new topics. It would also facilitate mutual references to other offerings at Goethe University and beyond.



Examples from Goethe University

🔗 **“Handlungsempfehlungen für eine diversitätssensible Mediensprache” [Recommendations for Diversity-Sensitive Media Language] (Marlies Klamt, Equal Opportunities Office 2016, in German): Forum Studienfachberatung des Bereiches „Studium, Lehre, Internationales“:** This brochure provides concrete tips for diversity-sensitive media imagery.

Academic Advisory Forum of the Global Affairs, Study and Teaching Department: This forum offers Goethe University's academic advisors an opportunity for collegial exchange and for networking on varying topics with actors from the areas of study and teaching.

4. Recommendations on Diversity Sensitivity

Perception of Diversity Sensitivity as a Cross-Cutting Issue

More account should be taken of different study situations and the diversity of the student body, which should always be taken into consideration in everyday university life, for example when creating curricular and non-curricular offerings, when communicating with students, and in media representation and visibility.

Awareness-raising measures and further education and training offerings for different target groups (e.g. students, lecturers, and staff in the decentralised and the central administration) can create an awareness of the diversity of experiences, and can convey concrete knowledge about individual diversity dimensions and intersectional discrimination experiences.

Communication of Goethe University's Position

Respect for diversity at Goethe University should be communicated more strongly. It should be made clear that Goethe University is open and supportive, and that it addresses diversity and questions the homogeneous, ideal-typical conception of the student body. This could be achieved, for example, through a corresponding poster campaign; through banners at the entry to the campus; or through the inclusion of a corresponding message in the communications of the faculties and the central student administration, for example in welcome addresses to students at the beginning of their studies.

Strengthening Teaching Staff as Important Multipliers for the Use of Support Offerings

As multipliers and as representatives of Goethe University, university members (e.g. lecturers, tutors and mentors, staff in the faculties, counselling services, service centres, examination offices etc.) should convey the message that the university offers support. When communicating with students, lecturers should therefore appreciatively and continually refer to existing offerings, for example at the start of the semester during their lectures and seminars, and in the context of consultations. Thus, lecturers and other staff members from the areas of study and teaching must themselves be informed about the offerings, and corresponding information material (in digital and/or in paper form) must be made available to them. Lecturers should convey the message that they are approachable and open to the needs of the students and should incorporate these different needs – for example with regard to different time resources or degrees of familiarity with the academic habitus – into the design of their teaching. In this context, it is important to give lecturers training in diversity competence in their role as multipliers, or to support them in their training in this regard.

Peer Tutors and Mentors Contribute to the Representation of Diversity

Like lecturers, peer tutors and mentors contribute to the representation of diversity. As a matter of principle, consideration should be given to diversity-conscious ways of recruiting peer tutors and mentors (e.g. by remunerating the tasks, because not all students can afford to do voluntary work; through the communication of appreciation for these tasks by lecturers; by encouraging and transparently describing the roles and tasks in order to motivate students to apply who might not otherwise have the confidence to do so; and by casting a wide net when searching for peer tutors and mentors, so that not only well-networked students are addressed).

Promoting Discipline-Specific Engagement with Diversity

In the institutes and faculties, engagement with diversity should be promoted in the respective disciplines taking into account the discipline-specific particularities. In some STEM subjects, students from under-represented groups feel particularly visible; and in the humanities and social sciences, the overlapping of course content and personal life experience leads to challenging seminar discussions, which should be sensitively moderated by the lecturers.

Expanding Support Offerings for Students

Empowerment and awareness-raising offerings on the subject of diversity and anti-discrimination should be expanded and become more present in order to strengthen students and to contribute to a respectful and diversity-conscious atmosphere.

Countering Structural Discrimination

Disadvantage and discrimination may also be embedded in the institutional structures, for example in examination procedures or appointment and recruitment procedures. This includes topics such as accessibility, name changes for trans people, all-gender toilets, adjusted conditions in exams for students with children, disadvantages for women* or people of colour in recruitment procedures, to mention but a few. Here, it is a matter of making clear the discriminatory mechanisms that can be found in the structures and actions of the institution and countering them with suitable measures.



Examples from Goethe University

Courses in diversity and anti-discrimination for lecturers: Workshops on diversity topics and the collegial round table “teach&talk” on dealing with discriminatory behaviour in lectures and seminars are offered every semester (current dates can be found on the websites of the [Equal Opportunities Office \(in German\)](#) and the [Interdisciplinary College for University Didactics \[IKH\] \(in German\)](#)).

Courses in diversity and anti-discrimination for tutors and mentors: A workshop focusing on the “diversity-conscious design of tutorials” is offered every semester within the framework of the training of tutors/mentors (can be found on the websites of [studiumdigitale \(in German\)](#) and the [Equal Opportunities Office \(in German\)](#)).

[Tutorial for lecturers: “Communication culture in virtual teaching”:](#) Based on Goethe University’s Anti-Discrimination Directive, the tutorial offers concrete suggestions for interaction in virtual teaching and learning spaces that is characterised by respect and equality of opportunity.

[Manual for lecturers: “Handreichung für eine diversitätswusste digitale Lehre” \[Manual for Diversity-Conscious Digital Teaching\] \(Equal Opportunities Office 2020, in German\):](#) With the help of reflective questions, lecturers are supported in designing digital teaching and learning settings in an inclusive way. In addition, a reading list and a list of points of contact at Goethe University are provided.

[Guide for lecturers: “Finding Study Paths – Overcoming Barriers” \(Representative for Inclusion at Goethe University 2021\):](#) This brochure contains inter alia initial suggestions for barrier-free and accessible didactics, and addresses various types of impairments and their effects in the university context.

[Manual for lecturers: “Barrierefreie Lehre. Hinweise und Tipps für die inklusive Gestaltung von Medienformaten” \[Barrier-Free Teaching: Suggestions and Tips for the Inclusive Design of Media Formats\] \(Representative for Inclusion at Goethe University 2022, in German\)](#)

[Project “Successful Teaching and Learning – Diversity and Internationalisation in Higher Education \(ELLVIS\)” \(in German\):](#) <https://www.goethe-university-frankfurt.de/123795175/>

The ELLVIS project aims to increase teaching quality; to address heterogeneity, diversity and inclusion; and to promote the internationalisation of higher education and teaching.

ELLVIS sub-project “Faculties: Competent for Diversity!”: This sub-project provides offerings for faculties that wish to engage for a longer period of time with equal opportunity and diversity at very different levels: in appointment and recruitment procedures, in teaching, in counselling and consulting, in administration etc. The portfolio also includes empowerment offerings for students.

ELLVIS sub-project “Counteracting Discrimination: Structurally and Sustainably”: This sub-project aims to counteract structural discrimination and disadvantages, especially in studying and teaching, and to establish sustainable structures and measures against discrimination. The areas of focus will be gender diversity, anti-racist university, and first generation. Instruments and concepts will be developed and implemented in close collaboration with various university departments and institutions.

🔗 **Self-learning tool “Diskriminierung: Umgang und Handlungsmöglichkeiten an der Universität, im Arbeitsleben und Alltag” [Discrimination: Dealing with It and Possibilities for Action at the University, at Work and in Everyday Life] (in German):** This online course is targeted at students, especially international students at Goethe University. It offers interested parties the possibility of engaging with the topic of discrimination and with rights and possibilities for action at the university, at work and in everyday life. In addition, it provides information on contact persons in the Frankfurt am Main area.

🔗 **Self-learning tool “Lehren ohne Barrieren an der Goethe University Frankfurt am Main” [Teaching without Barriers at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main] (in German):** This online course provides information on accessibility in digital documents, accessible teaching and the study conditions on campus.



Further Reading (in german)

- Ahmed, S. (2012): *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham (u.a.): Duke Univ. Press.
- Altieri, R. & Hüttner, B. (Hrsg.) (2020): *Klassismus und Wissenschaft. Erfahrungsberichte und Bewältigungsstrategien*. Marburg: BdWi-Verlag.
- Aslan, E. (2017): „Wem gehört der Campus? Weiße Unilandschaften und Widerstandsformen von Student_innen of Color in Deutschland.“ In: Fereidooni, K./El, M. (Hg.): *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, S. 749-771. Bänder der Diversity Reihe
- Auferkorte-Michaelis N. & Linde, F. (Hrsg.) (2018): *Diversität lernen und lehren – ein Hochschulbuch*. Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Barbara Budrich.
- Bender, S.-F., Wolde, A. & Schmidbaur, M. (2013): *Diversity ent-decken: Reichweiten und Grenzen von Diversity Policies an Hochschulen*, Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Darowska, L. (Hrsg.) (2019): *Diversity an der Universität. Diskriminierungskritische und intersektionale Perspektiven auf Chancengleichheit an der Hochschule*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. (2018): „Institutioneller Rassismus und Migrationskontrolle in der neoliberalen Universität am Beispiel der Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung.“ In: Laufenberg, M. et al. (Hg.): *Prekäre Gleichstellung. Geschlechtergerechtigkeit, soziale Ungleichheit und unsichere Arbeitsverhältnisse in der Wissenschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, S. 101-129.
- Heitzmann, D./Houda, K. (Hg.) (2019): *Rassismus an Hochschulen. Analyse – Kritik – Intervention*. 1. Auflage: Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Heitzmann, D./Klein, U. (2012): *Diversity konkret gemacht. Wege zur Gestaltung von Vielfalt an Hochschulen* Weinheim [u.a.]: Beltz Juventa.
- Kessé, E. N. (2018): *Stille Macht. Silence und Dekolonisierung. Silence, Wissen und Gewaltstrukturen*. Berlin: w_orte und meer.
- Klein, U. (2016): *Inklusive Hochschule: neue Perspektiven für Praxis und Forschung*. Weinheim; Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Klein, U. & Heitzmann, D. (2012): *Hochschule und Diversity: Theoretische Zugänge und empirische Bestandsaufnahme*. Weinheim und Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Kuria, E. N. (2015): *eingeschrieben. Zeichen setzen gegen Rassismus an deutschen Hochschulen*. Berlin: w_orten & meer.
- Linde, F. & Auferkorte-Michaelis, N. (2021): *Diversität in der Hochschullehre - Didaktik für den Lehralltag*. Opladen, Toronto: utb.
- Przytulla, N. V. (2021): *Exzellente inklusiv. Deutsche Hochschulen zwischen meritokratischer Ideologie und inklusivem Anspruch*. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Springsgut, K. (2021): *Zwischen Zugehörigkeit und Missachtung. Empirische Rekonstruktionen zu studentischen Diskriminierungserfahrungen*: Weinheim: Beltz Juventa.
- Thompson, V.E. & Vorbrugg, A. (2018): „Rassismuskritik an der Hochschule: Mit oder trotz Diversity-Policies?“ In: Laufenberg, M., Erlemann, M., Norkus, M. & Petschick, G. (Hg.): *Prekäre Gleichstellung. Geschlechtergerechtigkeit, soziale Ungleichheit und unsichere Arbeitsverhältnisse in der Wissenschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, S. 79-99.
- Wojciechowicz, A. (2018): *Erkämpfte Hochschulzugänge in der Migrationsgesellschaft. Rassismuskritische Perspektiven auf Biografien von Lehramts- und Jurastudentinnen*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

IMPRINT

Frankfurt am Main, 2022


Responsible within the meaning of press law: Goethe University Frankfurt am Main
Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 1 | 60323 Frankfurt am Main | Germany

The research project “Diversity Study” was conducted by:
Hannah Burger and Dr Katharina Meyer (parental leave replacement)
Student assistants: Mona Papadopoulou and Ranzhan Lü

Text of the short brochure:
Dr Katrin Springsgut, on the basis of the project report by Hannah Burger

Layout:
Grübelfabrik

This work is protected by copyright. All types of reproduction or communication of this work or of parts thereof – especially the reprinting of text and images, speeches, performances, presentations – are permissible only within the framework of the statutory provisions. This shall apply also to all other types of use, such as translation, extraction of graphs, filming and broadcasting. Infringements will be pursued. We have endeavoured to identify the copyrights and rights of use in the figures and to obtain permission to publish them. Should this not have been successful in individual cases, we request the holders of the rights to contact the Equal Opportunities Office at Goethe University. Justified claims will of course be met.

Goethe University Frankfurt am Main
Equal Opportunities Office
Campus Westend | SKW-Gebäude
Rostocker Str. 2 | 60323 Frankfurt
Tel.: +49 69 798-18698 | gleichstellungsbuero@uni-frankfurt.de
 **Equal Opportunities Office**



