

# Anti-discrimination concept of Fulda University of Applied Sciences

Planning period winterterm 2023/2024 to summerterm 2026



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## List of abbreviations

ADG	Antidiscrimination Guidelines
ADO	Anti-Discrimination Office of Fulda University of Applied Sciences
ARP	Administrative Rules of Procedure
BLFRG	Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany
CSAS	Central Student Advisory Service
FADA	Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency
GETA	General Equal Treatment Act
GSC	General Student Committee
Hess. HEA	Hessian Higher Education Act
HMSA	Hessian Ministry for Science and the Arts
HR	Human Resources
IO	International Office
LGBTIQ*	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Inter*, Queer
OEOD	Office of equal opportunities and diversity
PSC	Psychosocial Counseling
RBSD	Representative Body of the Severely Disabled Employees
SC	Staff Committee
Sfys	Survey of first-year students
UASF	University of Applied Sciences Fulda
UDP	University Development Plan

# 1. Introduction

Discrimination is a phenomenon that affects society as a whole and does not stop at universities. University of Applied Sciences Fulda (UASF) therefore wants to create protection against discrimination. This concept is intended to improve the work of the Anti-Discrimination Office (ADO) in a targeted manner. There are six important areas of protection against discrimination that are considered particularly important by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency. For each of these areas, existing UASF measures are described, improvements are suggested and future measures of the ADO are planned. These are to be implemented at the UASF between winterterm 2023/2024 and summerterm 2026. The planned measures are aimed at all members of the UASF, regardless of their status group.

## 1.1 Definition of terms and understanding of discrimination

Discrimination is defined as a “direct or indirect disadvantage due to ethnic origin or racial attribution, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity”<sup>1</sup> for which there is no objective reason. Direct (or immediate) discrimination occurs when a person is treated worse than another person in a comparable situation for one of the reasons mentioned. Indirect (or direct) discrimination occurs when seemingly neutral rules or procedures can put people at a disadvantage compared to others on these grounds. However, this is not the case if those rules or procedures are objectively justified and the means are appropriate and necessary.

The Anti-Discrimination Guidelines (ADG) describes bullying as “behavior that violates the dignity of a person”, particularly when “an environment characterized by intimidation, hostility, humiliation, degradation or insults is created”. The intention behind these actions doesn't matter.

Anti-discrimination counseling is open to all members of the university, regardless of the reason why someone was discriminated. All university members who have experienced discrimination based on the categories mentioned can submit a complaint.

In the consultation, not only obvious disadvantages are taken seriously, but also those that are not immediately apparent. Prevention and awareness-raising activities are also carried out to counteract discrimination and prejudices.

Studies show that around a quarter of the students surveyed have experienced discrimination themselves during their studies. Women, students with a migration background and non-heterosexual students are particularly affected (cf. Meyer et al., 2022).

There are only a few figures available on UASF so far. However, it turns out that international students and students whose first language is not German, in particular, fear discrimination due to

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<sup>1</sup> For definition see Antidiscrimination guideline of the UASF.

racism. Diversity and protection against discrimination belong together and reliable protection against discriminatory experiences is a prerequisite for diversity.

## 1.2 Legal Basis

Protection against discrimination at Hessian universities is based on various national and international laws. One important law is the General Equal Treatment Act, which has been in place since 2006. It is intended to protect people from discrimination in connection with their work. It states, for example, that employers have certain obligations to protect their employees. There is also an obligation to set up a possibility to complain. If employers do not fulfill these obligations, employees may claim compensation.

Students at state universities are not protected by this law. Fulda University of Applied Sciences introduced the Anti-Discrimination Guidelines (ADG) in 2017 with the aim to protect students from discrimination. The university has thus committed itself to protect not only employees, but all members and affiliates of the university from discrimination. The rules of the ADG are binding for everyone at the university.

The Hessian Higher Education Act was modified in 2022. The modification stipulates that students should be able to study without discrimination and employees should be able to work without discrimination. This is stated in § 3 para. 5 of the law. This means that protection against discrimination at Hessian universities has been strengthened for students and is now also mandated by law. An significant new development is the obligation to appoint a contact person for discrimination.

## 2. Organizational location and institutional anchoring

Fulda University of Applied Sciences has a special profile. It combines research and teaching as well as application orientation and cooperation across different disciplines. It also attaches great importance to internationality as well as educational and equal opportunities.

There are numerous (policy) documents in which the topics of anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and diversity are firmly anchored at Fulda University of Applied Sciences. These documents show the importance of these fields at the university. In its work, the Anti-Discrimination Office refers to various papers, principles and strategic developments. These include the mission statement, which was adopted by the University Senate in 2002 and last amended in 2010. Internationalization, interculturality and culture reflexivity, family friendliness, accessibility and gender equality are firmly anchored in this mission statement. These topics are closely linked to the field of anti-discrimination.

The university also participates in auditing procedures such as "Vielfalt gestalten" and "familiengerechte Hochschule". This demonstrates the university's commitment to diversity and actively supports university members with family responsibilities in reconciling studying and working at the

university. In 2017, the university was audited by the "Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft" for the first time and received the "Vielfalt gestalten" certificate. An important part of this audit was the area of anti-discrimination.

In May 2017, the Antidiskrimination Guidelines (ADG) was adopted by the Senate. The aim of this guideline is to protect all members and affiliates of the university from discrimination. An Anti-Discrimination Office and the opportunity to file a complaint at the Legal Department in case of discrimination were set up on the basis of the ADG. Further basic papers that show how important the topic is at the university can be found in the detailed version of the concept.

On 01.07.2022, a contact person for anti-discrimination was appointed, as required by the Hessian Higher Education Act. These changes will be incorporated into the anti-discrimination policy as soon as possible.

### 3. Modules for a systematic protection against discrimination

The long-term and overarching goal of anti-discrimination work is to gradually eliminate risks of discrimination and existing disadvantages. People who are affected should be able to exercise their rights. To achieve this, it is important to create an atmosphere in which experiences of discrimination can be discussed openly. These experiences should be taken seriously and appropriate measures should be taken (see FADA, 2020: p. 7). The measures listed in this concept should allow gradual adjustments if there are difficulties with implementation. This allows for continuous improvement without challenging the measure as a whole.

Based on its extensive expertise and a nationwide survey of German universities, the FADA has identified six Modules as particularly relevant for protection against discrimination. These have been adapted for the present UASF concept. However, it is important to emphasize that this list was not considered exhaustive by the FADA:

**Module I: Identification of discrimination risks**

**Module II: Networking, public relations and institutionalization**

**Module III: Raising awareness and prevention**

**Module IV: Anti-discrimination counseling and mediation procedure**

**Module V: Guidelines on protection against discrimination and complaints procedures**

**Module VI: Positive measures and Empowerment**

Irrespective of these Modules, anti-discrimination work at the UASF should be seen as a cross-sectional task. This work should serve to recognize and make existing inequalities in society visible. Since historically evolved differences in terms of equal opportunities are also reflected in the structures of the university, these cannot be limited to certain areas. It is therefore very important to include protection against discrimination in all decision-making processes and to bear it in mind at

all levels of the university. It is an ongoing task to integrate protection against discrimination into the processes of the university, both internally and in external communication..

## 3.1 Module I: Identification of discrimination risks

### 3.1.1 Objectives and relevance

The first Module aims to identify which groups of people are affected by discrimination and exclusion mechanisms and to what extent, and how this affects their studies or work at the UASF. This knowledge raises awareness of the issue by highlighting and making visible the various dimensions of discrimination. At the same time, it is a prerequisite for designing a need-based anti-discrimination protection and thus forms the foundation for the development of anti-discrimination measures as well as the overall concept. (FADA, 2020: p. 7).

It is important not only to look at discrimination on the basis of individual cases, but also to consider institutional risks of discrimination. The results of surveys provide information not only about experienced discrimination, but also about why counseling and support services are not used. For example, in a survey on racial discrimination in 2020, a total of 71.6% of respondents stated that they had only talked to their social environment about experiences of discrimination that were important to them. Only 12.8 percent had networked beyond this and 10.8 percent had filed a complaint. A lack of energy and resignation were frequently cited as reasons (cf. Aikins et al., 2021). The experience of the Anti-Discrimination Office shows that fear of negative consequences is often cited as a reason for not filing a complaint. These circumstances show that the identification of discrimination risks is a challenge and must primarily take place via anonymous procedures. The difficulty of making use of counseling services is addressed again in the fourth module (anti-discrimination counseling and and mediation procedure).

### 3.1.2 Existing UASF measures and need for action

The Survey of first-year students (Sfys)<sup>2</sup> also includes questions about difficulties in studying due to financial burdens, caring for children or close relatives, chronic illnesses, mental health problems, language skills or high demands that students fear during the course of their studies. Correlations with gender, age, educational background or first language can also be filtered out.

Furthermore, a midterm survey<sup>2</sup> is conducted at the UASF in the 3rd or 4th semester, which also asks about factors that impair studies, such as regular care and nursing of children or family members, language problems (language of the degree program does not correspond to the first language), chronic illness/disabilities or mental impairments and financial problems.

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<sup>2</sup> For the results of the surveys, see <https://www.hs-fulda.de/unsere-hochschule/a-z-alle-institutionen/dienstleistungen-lehre-und-studium/evaluation/evaluation/studienverlaufsevaluation/ergebnisse> , last access: 04.08.23.

After graduation, a graduate survey explicitly asks about aspects of diversity and discrimination. This survey primarily refers to (un)equal opportunities in the transition to the labor market, but can also provide indications of discrimination risks in the second half of the degree course.

Comprehensive data on gender is available for employees through gender monitoring<sup>3</sup>, which looks at all status groups and shows the representation of women in various subjects and positions at the UASF. The evaluation takes place every two years. In future, this is to be supplemented by diversity monitoring for students. This will include, for example, data on international students, the financial situation of students and the situation of students with disabilities.

Insights into which people are affected by discrimination and in what form are gained not only from surveys, but also from counseling activities. Although this is not done across the board, it does provide a detailed insight into the needs of those affected. In the past, it has been possible to trace these well, which has led to ideas for structural measures. The selective evaluations carried out so far to identify discrimination characteristics are to be bundled in the future in order to be fruitful for further development at the UASF. This is to be achieved through the measures mentioned in the next section.

### 3.1.3 Approaches, best practice measures and planned ADO measures

Quantitative surveys, but also qualitative studies among all status groups, are a suitable means of identifying discrimination risks. The results of these make experiences of discrimination at the university visible and provide indications as to which target groups should be given particular attention (FADA, 2020: p. 14).

In addition to specific studies at the university itself, analyses of statistics or external surveys can also provide important insights. The "Student Survey in Germany" plays a particularly important role here.

Due to the large number of surveys conducted and topics covered, no additional survey in the area of diversity and anti-discrimination will be conducted. Instead, existing data will be evaluated and existing surveys will be expanded where necessary.

The "Student Survey in Germany" (cf. Beuße et al., 2022) already covers a large number of aspects relevant to diversity and discrimination. The results of this survey, some of which can also be filtered according to UASF respondents, should provide further indications of needs among students. The data from existing surveys at the UASF and the special sections that can be added are also continuously analyzed and are incorporated into the work of the Anti-Discrimination Office, as are findings from other surveys. In addition, the further integration of topics relevant to discrimination into existing monitoring and evaluation formats will be reviewed. The focus here is always on the added value for concrete anti-discrimination work and the informative value for needs.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. <https://www.hs-fulda.de/unsere-hochschule/a-z-alle-institutionen/gender-monitoring>, last access: 07.08.2023.

For the comprehensive timeframe of the concept, the focus is initially on students before the identification of specific risks of discrimination among employees is included.

#### **Overview of planned measures**

- Analysis of the results of the survey "The Student Survey in Germany" with regard to aspects relevant to diversity and discrimination and filtered according to UASF students
- Inclusion and evaluation of the special section of the Sfys on questions relevant to anti-discrimination at regular intervals
- Review of the inclusion of discrimination-relevant issues in other existing monitoring and evaluation formats
- Ongoing analysis of the results of the graduate survey

## 3.2 Module II: Networking, public relations and institutionalization

### 3.2.1 Objectives and relevance

The aim of this component is to consolidate anti-discrimination work and create synergies through internal and external networking with relevant stakeholders. Public relations efforts aim to raise awareness on issues related to discrimination and to promote the services, especially anti-discrimination Counseling, throughout the university. Thus, those affected by discrimination and those seeking advice are not left to face the challenges alone. The specific significance of public relations efforts stems from the understanding that services and rights, such as counseling, can only be effectively utilized if all members and staff of the university are adequately informed about them.

The institutionalization aims to embed the topic sustainably, both institutionally within the structures of the university and in the consciousness of the university community. Anti-discrimination should be integrated as a cross-sectional task in all relevant policy documents and considered in all fields of action. Given the variety of target groups and a restricted scope of influence, this process is long and challenging, requiring a broad range of initiatives spanning a wide spectrum and the involvement of key influencers.

Linking all actors internally who are relevant in the context of anti-discrimination work leads to a wider awareness of the issue, which in turn results in reaching a larger target audience.

Collaborative measures can be developed through internal and external networks. In this way, the regular interaction between specialised agencies can ensure quality of the work. Strengthening cooperation with regional stakeholders is also essential to fulfill the university's social responsibility in this domain.

### 3.2.2 Existing UASF measures and need for action

In winter semester 2022/23, the Equal Opportunities Commission was expanded thematically and transitioned into a new Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities, thereby placing a stronger focus on the topic of anti-discrimination.

As part of the amendment to the Hessian Higher Education Act, the contact person for anti-discrimination was included in the Extended Executive Board and the Commission for Equality and Equal Opportunities. The latter plays an important role in the institutionalisation and internal networking of the anti-discrimination office within the UASF. In connection with the Stifterverband's Shaping Diversity audit, a steering group and the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation were set up in winter term 2014/15. The Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation sees itself as a working group that offers members the space to discuss sensitive topics and prepares and supports the implementation of strategic goals on the topics of anti-discrimination, equal opportunities, diversity, family justice, equality and cultural reflexivity on an open working level. The Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation is open to all those interested in the subject area, comprises members from all eight departments and relevant organisational units and works with the Commission for Equality and Equal Opportunities.

In addition to networking in committees, the ADS is in close contact with the relevant organisational units at the university:

- General Students' Committee
- Staff Committee
- International Office
- Central Student Advisory Service (especially the Family Office)
- Psychosocial Counseling
- Representative for students with disabilities/chronic illnesses
- Representative Body of the Severely Disabled Employees

The introduction of the Newsletter published by the Office of equal opportunities and diversity (OEOD) and the OEOD website, allows not only the dissemination of services but also the targeted distribution of additional information and knowledge. It should be noted that the awareness of the newsletter has been increased, especially among students. Existing structures, such as the 1-2-3-magazine and the first semester welcome, are used to present and publicise anti-discrimination services.

The planning of Diversity Day, supported by the ADO, where various events have been organised for several years in a row, is well established and contributes to the greater visibility of the subject areas.

Externally, the ADO is particularly active in the anti-discrimination network at Hessian universities and in the nationwide anti-discrimination network at universities. Meetings are organized twice a year within this framework.

A gap is particularly evident in the area of external local networking. The exchange in networks at university level shows how fruitful cooperation can be and how synergies can be used. A need for action is seen above all with regard to networking the ADO in the area of racist attributions, as students repeatedly report incidents from their everyday lives. Specific measures for all areas are presented in the following section.

### 3.2.3 Approaches, best practice measures and planned ADO measures

The measures planned in this module are closely linked to the measures in Module III (awareness-raising, prevention and empowerment), as awareness-raising is a prerequisite for successful networking and institutionalisation.

As a possible measure for the institutionalisation and networking of all those who deal with issues relating to discrimination and diversity, the FADA recommends the establishment of a permanent working group, a round table or an anti-discrimination council, which can be initiated by existing bodies working in the field. Interest groups and those affected themselves should also be involved if possible (FADA, 2020: p. 14f.).

An anti-discrimination council was established at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, which is anchored in the anti-discrimination guidelines and includes at least five other people from different areas and status groups of the university in addition to the Chancellor, Staff Committee (PR), Women's and Equal Opportunities Officer, Representative for severely disabled employees and General Student Committee. The council's tasks include developing preventative measures to protect against discrimination, providing conceptual support to initial Counseling centres at the university and evaluating and further developing the university's internal guidelines on protection against discrimination (ibid.: p. 18).

The link between the Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation Steering Committee and the Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities is to be promoted. Various working groups have emerged from the steering committee, which have dealt with issues such as sensitisation, monitoring and dealing with the growing heterogeneity of the student body in teaching at Fulda University of Applied Sciences. The working group on dealing with diversity in teaching, for example, has launched pilot projects in various subject areas for low-threshold dialogue between teaching staff on this topic in a protected space. Some of the topics were subsequently further developed in other contexts. If necessary, new working groups will be set up for specific topics.

With a view to the students, the cooperation and networking of the ADO with the student councils and the GSC is to be promoted more strongly. For example, the frequency of the current annual meetings with the GSC should be increased and the student councils should be actively offered a

dialogue at least once a year. The networking meetings serve the exchange of needs and, if necessary, the development of joint offers for students. The inclusion of the needs of students affected\* in the work of the Discrimination Office is a priority here.

With regard to public relations work, unconventional and offensive strategies have proven to be effective at other universities<sup>4</sup>. With the postcard campaign "Reflect on Discrimination", Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences primarily addressed the majority society and focussed on the topic<sup>5</sup>. A series of analogue and digital postcards is intended to draw attention to the services offered by the UASF's Anti-Discrimination Office and raise awareness of the issue of discrimination among all university staff and members. Furthermore, an international day and event formats are to be used in the future to raise awareness (e.g. anti-discrimination and diversity quiz on International Human Rights Day; organisation of a travelling exhibition on racism).

Due to the needs outlined in the previous point, it is planned that the ADO will become part of the regional network Migration and Health, which was founded by the alliance mittendrin für kulturelle Vielfalt und Teilhabe in Fulda e.V. (Alliance for cultural diversity and participation in Fulda).

#### Overview of planned measures

- Cooperation between the Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation Steering Committee and the Equal Opportunities Commission
- Increased utilisation of the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation and the Commission for Equality and Equal Opportunities for the discussion and further development of ideas and measures
- Greater involvement of specific target groups in the work of the steering committee (e.g. through working groups)
- Reactivating individual working groups of the Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation Steering Committee and establishing new topic-specific working groups as required
- Intensify cooperation with student councils and GSC and include student representatives in the steering committee
- Series of postcards to sensitise the university public
- Campaigns as part of international days (especially on racism)
- Increased regional networking

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Conference „Discrimination at university" at University Friedrich-Alexander Erlangen-Nürnberg, 20.02.2020.

<sup>5</sup> cf. <https://hs-duesseldorf.de/antidiskriminierung> , 04.08.23.

## 3.3 Module III: Raising awareness and prevention

### 3.3.1 Objectives and relevance

Discrimination as a problem for society as a whole is also relevant at universities. The aim of the module is to sensitise all university staff and members to discrimination. People in Counseling and teaching positions as well as those with staff responsibility have a distinct responsibility in this regard. Raising awareness is intended to protect those affected from discrimination in the long term and gradually reduce institutional disadvantage. Raising awareness is a central element in the prevention of discrimination and is indispensable in the protection against discrimination. Awareness-raising is closely linked to the field of public relations, which is why these two modules are seen as complementary.

Only when a large number of university members are sensitized to equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and diversity can effective protection against discrimination stemming from labelling be achieved. Knowledge of discrimination, social (power) structures and reflection on one's own roles, prejudices and privileges are considered relevant in this context (cf. FADA, 2020: p. 20f.). Further preventive measures in many areas can lead to an increase in the quality of study and employment at higher education institutions.

### 3.3.2 Existing UASF measures and need for action

The work units responsible for Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Cultural Reflexivity regularly offer awareness-raising training courses in cooperation with Human Resources Management (HR) for employees.

Workshops and training courses are offered for students, particularly in the areas of anti-discrimination/anti-bias and cultural reflexivity. These sessions mainly focus on racist attributions and address the other grounds of discrimination and stereotyping listed in the GETA as well. As part of the Diversity Day, various awareness-raising activities on different diversity and discrimination topics are offered to all status groups.

Various training courses and events which focus on enhancing awareness of gender issues are regularly organised by the OEOD department or offered externally within the framework of Hessian-wide learning and development programmes. The guidelines on gender- and diversity-sensitive language and barrier-free teaching also help to sensitise employees.

Information designed by the ADO in the style of FAQs, which can be viewed both on the intranet and on the internet, offers all interested parties an overview of discrimination and also addresses everyday discrimination based on gender, racial discrimination and disability.

Childcare poses a potential risk of structural disadvantage for students and employees if this is not sufficiently taken into account when designing study programmes and workplaces. The Family Of-

fice, the OEOD department and Human Resources Management provide services such as Counseling and workshops with a view to reconciling family and studies/employment. The akadeMINIS daycare centre on campus is available to all members of the university and offers the advantage of short distances. The KinderStube (hourly and demand-orientated childcare) offers students and employees the opportunity to have their children looked after for short periods outside regular childcare hours and also in emergencies. Students with caring responsibilities also have preferential access to courses in order to be able to complete their studies during regular childcare hours as far as possible. The constant adjustment of needs and offerings in this area should be carried out in cooperation with the relevant departments. The Anti-Discrimination Office works together with the Family Office and Human Resources Management to develop measures if needs are identified through Counseling or monitoring (see Outlook).

There is currently a gap in the context of sexualised harassment, discrimination and violence. There are currently no specific information or prevention programmes in the form of publications or workshops in this area. LGBTIQ\* people, migrants and people with disabilities are particularly affected by this (cf. Maurer & Mense, 2022: p.7).

The ADO regularly receives enquiries about all-gender toilets from people who do not identify with the gender binary spectrum. They fear and experience discrimination or violence when using existing toilet facilities. The installation of all-gender toilets could provide them with preventative protection against this.

### 3.3.3 Approaches, best practice measures and planned ADO measures

In particular, workshops and further training on the topic of discrimination and prejudice, as already offered at the UASF in various contexts, are seen as a possible starting point for this module.

Awareness-raising workshops on anti-bias and/or (inter)cultural reflexivity should be continuously expanded so that, if possible, at least one workshop per academic year is offered to students in each department, for example as part of a Studium Generale. A special focus should be placed on racial discrimination and prejudices.

The existing programme for all employees was expanded in 2022 to include a special programme for teaching staff. A training series entitled "Dealing with discrimination and bullying in teaching", conducted by an external trainer, emphasized and encouraged self-reflection on one's own teaching programmes. To ensure the participation of all departments, two seats were reserved for each of them. Moreover, the invitation was sent out on behalf of the Presidential Board. Two workshops were held by the winter semester 2023/2024. In addition, there are long-term plans to create information material on diversity-sensitive teaching, which will be distributed via the intranet and can also provide assistance to those who are unable to take part in the training series.

In addition to the measures already described, embedding equal opportunities and anti-discrimination in the university's mission statement can help to raise awareness. The mission statement of Bochum University of Applied Sciences, for example, states that "equal opportunities, freedom from

discrimination and appreciation of diversity [...] are a matter of course" (ibid.). The inclusion of diversity, anti-discrimination and cultural reflexivity, implicitly contained in the UASF's mission statement but not explicitly mentioned, should be carefully examined. This objective was previously formulated during the "Shaping Diversity" re-audit process.

Victims of sexualised harassment, discrimination and violence are often reluctant to go to a Counseling centre as they often feel ashamed (see Weißer Ring, 2019). Harassment is on the rise, especially in digital spaces. In most cases, victims only come to the Counseling centre after encouragement from close confidants. The aim here is to reduce the barrier. To this end, measures should be taken to empower those affected to exercise their rights and to raise awareness within the university community.

One starting point for sensitising the university public is the "development and dissemination of information brochures, flyers and information on the intranet, sticker campaigns, films and comprehensive campaigns with various components aimed at the company or general public" (cf. Nägele et al., 2021: p.27). Furthermore, workshops with different thematic focuses are planned for various status groups. In the future, awareness-raising courses will be offered on the topic of recognising and dealing with sexualised harassment, discrimination and violence. This is an offer open to all employees and is organised by UASF's HR management.

The universities in Baden-Württemberg, for example, have joined forces and launched a campaign for respectful coexistence and against sexualised harassment, discrimination and violence entitled "Draw a line"<sup>6</sup>. The Stuttgart State University of Music and Performing Arts has published a flyer entitled "NO means NO!". It provides information and contact details of specialised contact points<sup>7</sup> for victims of sexualised violence, those around them and, in particular, their superiors. Goethe University Frankfurt<sup>8</sup> and Friedrich Schiller University Jena<sup>9</sup> are also raising awareness of sexualised harassment, discrimination and violence as a special form of discrimination through campaigns and brochures. The ADO measure starts here and plans to publish flyers and posters that address both those affected and their environment.

Anonymised procedures, for example in written examinations, are an effective measure to prevent discrimination. The University of Greifswald has introduced anonymised examinations with this aim in mind. Study results (cf. Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018; Glock & Krolak-Schwerdt, 2013; Hofer, 2015) indicate that different factors, such as the assumed gender and assumed social and ethnic origin based on the name, often unconsciously influence the grades awarded. For example, female-sounding names tended to receive lower grades for the same performance in physics. Similarly, people with names like Kevin or Chantal, associated with a certain social background, and people

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<sup>6</sup> cf. <https://zieheinenschlussstrich.de/gute-praxis-beispiele>, 04.08.23

<sup>7</sup> cf. [https://zieheinenschlussstrich.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Nein\\_heisst\\_Nein\\_Flyer\\_Web.pdf](https://zieheinenschlussstrich.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Nein_heisst_Nein_Flyer_Web.pdf), 04.08.2023.

<sup>8</sup> cf. [https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/74837088/Laut\\_stark\\_Kampagne](https://www.uni-frankfurt.de/74837088/Laut_stark_Kampagne), 04.08.23.

<sup>9</sup> cf. <https://www.uni-jena.de/gsb-stopp-bei-sexualisierter-belaestigung>, 04.08.23.

with foreign-sounding names were significantly more often graded lower despite having the same performance. One way of preventing this is through anonymised procedures in written examinations, which can significantly minimise both discrimination itself and accusations of discriminatory behaviour against graders. Other universities, such as the RheinMain University of Applied Sciences, are also currently taking the first steps towards the introduction of anonymised examinations by conducting a survey on implementation at other universities. A pilot project on anonymised examinations is to be launched at the UASF in interested departments during the specified period and, in a second step, ideally extended to other departments, if possible.

The Hessian Ministry for Science and the Arts advises universities to utilize all available legal latitude to consider the concerns of people with different gender identities and to counteract discrimination against them<sup>10</sup>. In light of this recommendation, as well as the clearly identified need and the crucial importance of providing safe sanitary facilities, initiatives aimed at addressing this issue should be supported and a pilot project should be initiated.

#### Overview of planned measures

- Expansion of workshops and training for students on prejudice and cultural reflexivity for students (in cooperation)
- Multi-day training course "Dealing with discrimination and bullying in teaching"
- Review of the embedding of diversity, anti-discrimination and cultural reflexivity in the UASF's mission statement
- Flyers/brochures and posters to raise awareness of sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence
- Organization of workshops for different status groups on the topics of sexual harassment, discrimination and violence
- Initiation of the pilot project anonymized audits by submitting a draft concept to interested departments
- Initiating and supporting pilot projects on all-gender toilets

### 3.4 Module IV: Anti-discrimination counseling and mediation procedure

#### 3.4.1 Objectives and relevance

Those affected should be able to find easily accessible advice at the university and, if necessary, receive support in the form of mediation procedures. The prerequisite for this is widespread awareness of and trust in the operations of the counselling center. These can be achieved with the help

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<sup>10</sup> HMSA Comment regarding the new version of Hessian Higher Education Act

of publicity measures previously described. Surveys indicate "that those affected not only turn to a specific office, but also contact different people and offices at the university in whom they have confidence and to whom they can address their experiences of discrimination from their point of view" (ADS Bund, 2020: p. 24). This requires a qualified counselling centre, which provides specific information and guidance to contact persons and affected individuals. Discrimination and bullying remain taboo topics and the experiences of those affected are still doubted. As a result, affected individuals often doubt their own perceptions of the discriminatory event and fear that their experiences will not be taken seriously. This is where the principles of anti-discrimination counseling are applied. These do not doubt the experiences of those affected, focus on their needs and aim to develop strategies for a solution together. Many of those affected find it extremely helpful to have the opportunity to talk about their own experiences, classify them and weigh different approaches. A counselling center brings the issue to light and supports those affected in exercising their rights (see FADA, 2020: p. 61).

### 3.4.2 Existing UASF measures and need for action

The ADO of the UASF offers regular walk-in consultation hours and also schedules appointments besides these times. The principles of confidentiality, a solution-focussed approach and appreciation play a paramount role in counseling, which can be carried out anonymously, if requested. In cases where counselling and mediation fail to reach an agreement, or are not appropriate, the counselling process makes recommendations and impartially examines specific allegations of discrimination and bullying, with the aim of protecting individuals affected. After the consultation, mediation can be carried out, which is moderated by the ADO (see Module V Guidelines on protection against discrimination and complaints procedures). Besides individuals affected, counselling also supports and addresses queries of all persons who have general questions in connection with discrimination and bullying.

The UASF has a comprehensive range of cooperating counseling centers. Students can contact numerous offices in addition to the ADO counseling service. These include: the Women's and Equal Opportunities Officer, the Family Office, Psychosocial Counseling, Counseling for Students with Disabilities/Chronic Illnesses, Scholarship Counseling, the Interculturality/Cultural Reflexivity Coordinator and Social Counseling (Studentenwerk).

Support and counseling services for students and employees in the areas of care responsibilities and disability or chronic illness are not provided by the OEOD department at the UASF, but by other departments, such as the Central Student Advisory Service (CSAS). There is close cooperation between the respective departments and the OEOD department. In addition to the services offered by the OEOD department and the Women's and Equal Opportunities Officer, the SC and the RBSD are also available to employees.

The limitations of the mediation regularly become apparent during the counseling. Dependent parties rarely utilise the options for mediation or filing complaints due to the fear of facing negative

consequences later on. It is therefore important to regularly develop suggestions for improvement and solutions that encourage those affected to take action against discrimination or harassment.

It is important to make the counseling services as easily accessible as possible. Therefore, a network of contact persons should be established, each possessing a fundamental understanding of protection against discrimination. The reasons are explained in the following section.

### 3.4.3 Approaches, best practice measures and planned ADO measures

People affected by discrimination often prefer to turn to places or people they know and trust. Examples are SC, RBSD, ZSB, PSC, women's and equal opportunities officers, GSC or contact persons at the department. Often, the people to whom those affected turn are not even involved in counseling. For this reason, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency recommends that, in addition to setting up a specialized Counseling centre, all persons in relevant roles and responsibilities should be made aware of discrimination so that they recognize and take any indications of discrimination seriously. The contact persons can refer people to the UASF's anti-discrimination office after an initial consultation (see FADA, 2020: p. 24).

The aim is to have a person of trust for those affected from all status groups. Other universities have had very good experiences with this. The Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin, for example, has created a qualified counseling network and published a brochure<sup>11</sup> on the subject. This approach also has the advantage of enabling peer-to-peer counseling with regard to similar experiences of discrimination. The Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg are also pursuing similar approaches. Due to the advantages, a network of counselors based on the model of the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin is also planned at the University of Applied Sciences Fulda. Interested persons from the above-mentioned groups of people will receive basic training, in which legal principles and counseling skills in particular will be taught. The ADO organizes a multi-part training series for interested university members. Care will be taken to ensure that all status groups and all grounds of discrimination are covered.

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<sup>11</sup> See [https://www.ash-berlin.eu/fileadmin/Daten/Einrichtungen/Frauenbeauftragte/Antidiskriminierung\\_und\\_Schutzkonzept/Web\\_Brosch\\_Berater\\_innenprojekt.pdf](https://www.ash-berlin.eu/fileadmin/Daten/Einrichtungen/Frauenbeauftragte/Antidiskriminierung_und_Schutzkonzept/Web_Brosch_Berater_innenprojekt.pdf); 11.08.2023.

Counseling services should be continuously adapted to needs of individuals affected and made more widely known. In particular, information on Counseling services on sexual harassment, discrimination and violence should be made more widely publicised. (see measures in Module III "Raising Awareness and prevention").

#### Overview of planned measures

- Continuation of needs-oriented consultation in various formats
- Ongoing development of suggestions for improving the mediation process through regular evaluation
- Making the counselling services visible, especially in the context of sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence (see campaign module Networking, public relations and institutionalization)
- Initiating a university network of discrimination-sensitive counselors at the UASF through training courses

### 3.5 Module V: Guidelines on protection against discrimination and complaints procedures

#### 3.5.1 Objectives and relevance

Guidelines create certainty for all members of the university and offer the opportunity to refer to them. Above all, guidelines on protection against discrimination and complaints procedures provide orientation and security for those affected. A formalized procedure gives them the option of filing a complaint in addition to the alternatives described in Module IV (anti-discrimination Counseling and mediation). A complaints procedure enables those affected to assert their rights and provides preventative protection against discriminatory behavior and bullying by making the issue visible.

A directive on protection against discrimination promotes the institutional anchoring and transparency of procedures. Section 13 of the AGG obliges all employers to set up a complaints office for employees whose task it is to examine complaints neutrally. Students at universities are excluded from this. A large number of universities in Germany have included students in the protection with their own guidelines. The amendment to the Hessian Higher Education Act provides for the creation of a legally non-discriminatory environment for all university members (cf. §3 para. 5).

#### 3.5.2 Existing UASF measures and need for action

In 2017, the UASF's anti-discrimination guidelines extended protection against discrimination to all members of the university. Subsequently, the anti-discrimination office was established and the complaints office was located in the legal department.

The UASF's IT security policy<sup>12</sup> also includes protection against discrimination and bullying, for example by prohibiting the dissemination of "information that insults or degrades people (e.g. on the basis of their skin color, nationality, religion, gender, political views or sexual orientation)". The policy applies to all applications provided by the university. However, discrimination often occurs in services that are not provided by the university. Even if students are asked to use services provided by the university, chat groups in commercial services are often used to organize their studies. Individual students are thus subject to peer pressure and potentially put themselves at risk of discrimination. The need for action that becomes apparent here has already been made clear several times during the consultation.

### 3.5.3 Approaches, best practice measures and planned ADO measures

The protective function of guidelines is most effective when they are widely known. Guidelines can either be published on the homepage and on the intranet or posted in buildings in a clearly visible location. In some universities, such as the University of Applied Sciences Frankfurt, all new students and all new employees are required to sign and acknowledge the policy.<sup>13</sup>

The amendments to the Hessian Higher Education Act with regard to the changes in the area of protection against discrimination should be included in the ADG of the UASF and other relevant changes inserted. Once the guideline has been revised, it should be distributed at the university. This is to be done by means of a print version, notices and online posts. In addition, attention should be drawn to it via the 1-2-3 magazine. The guideline is to be made available in English and barrier-free.

In order to protect students in digital communication, the university should also provide a chat service (e.g. Rocketchat) for students.

#### Overview of planned measures

- Adaptation of the ADG with regard to the amendment of the Hess. HEA
- Comprehensive digital and analog distribution of the ADG after adaptation, e.g. through notices and print versions
- Examination of the possibility of a pilot introduction of a chat service for students provided by the UASF

<sup>12</sup> cf. <https://www2.hs-fulda.de/it-sicherheit/>, 04.08.2023.

<sup>13</sup> cf. [https://www.frankfurt-university.de/fileadmin/standard/Hochschule/Ueber\\_uns/Gleichstellung\\_und\\_Diversity/Antidiskriminierung/SO-666\\_Antidiskriminierungsrichtlinie\\_08-11-2017.pdf](https://www.frankfurt-university.de/fileadmin/standard/Hochschule/Ueber_uns/Gleichstellung_und_Diversity/Antidiskriminierung/SO-666_Antidiskriminierungsrichtlinie_08-11-2017.pdf), 04.08.2023.

## 3.6 Module VI: Positive measures and Empowerment

### 3.6.1 Objectives and relevance

People with different backgrounds study and work at the university. Due to certain structures, some people have fewer opportunities for further development. The module therefore aims to use equalizing measures to compensate for disadvantages and create opportunities that are as fair as possible for everyone. These so-called "positive measures" are also anchored in the law (GETA §5). They can be used to compensate for inequalities in the short term. Empowerment offers serve to strengthen those affected, help them to develop strategies and thus avoid leaving the university. This module is closely related to Module III (awareness-raising and prevention), as both approaches should be pursued simultaneously<sup>14</sup>.

### 3.6.2 Existing UASF measures and need for action

Mentoring programs are measures through which participants can be advised and empowered by individuals. Fulda University of Applied Sciences offers students many such mentoring programs, some of which are only offered to individual groups of people or to everyone at the entire university.

IntTime, Campus Crew, the Buddy Program or Mentoring Hessen are just a few examples of mentoring programs at UASF. A status and effectiveness analysis of the university's own mentoring programs was carried out and published by the Diversity Coordinator in 2021. According to the study, mentoring programs have a positive impact. The study states that the self-confidence and motivation of students with regard to their upcoming studies is strengthened.<sup>15</sup>

At the UASF, students with (chronic) illnesses and impairments have the opportunity to apply for compensation for disadvantages when taking examinations (§ 21 para. 1 General Provisions for Examination Regulations of the UASF dated 11.7.2018)<sup>16</sup>. A longer processing time or a different type of examination should level the playing field.<sup>17</sup>

Other measures at the UASF can also be counted as positive measures. These include, in particular, the fact that students with caring responsibilities have priority when choosing modules for their degree programs in order to best combine their caring responsibilities with their studies.

Female students are supported and empowered in their personal development through workshops and training sessions on various topics organized by the OEOD department, for example as part of

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Yiğit, Nuran, [https://www.bpb.de/medien/201911/Thesenpapier\\_Yigit.pdf](https://www.bpb.de/medien/201911/Thesenpapier_Yigit.pdf); 04.08.23.

<sup>15</sup> cf. [https://www.hs-fulda.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/CUV/Strategien\\_und\\_Konzepte/Mentoring\\_an\\_der\\_Hochschule\\_Fulda.pdf](https://www.hs-fulda.de/fileadmin/user_upload/CUV/Strategien_und_Konzepte/Mentoring_an_der_Hochschule_Fulda.pdf); p. 51. , 04.08.23.

<sup>16</sup> cf. [https://www.hs-fulda.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Unsere\\_Hochschule/Hochschulrecht/Amtliche\\_Mitteilungen/2018/2018-26\\_ABPO\\_Nf\\_2018-07-11.pdf](https://www.hs-fulda.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Unsere_Hochschule/Hochschulrecht/Amtliche_Mitteilungen/2018/2018-26_ABPO_Nf_2018-07-11.pdf), 04.08.23.

<sup>17</sup> cf. <https://www.hs-fulda.de/orientieren/umschauen/beraten-lassen/beratungsangebote/fuer-studieninteressierte/studieren-mit-behinderung>, 04.08.23.

the frauen@ series. In the context of Diversity Day, there are also annual empowerment offers for all members of the university with changing topics, which are to be expanded even further.

### 3.6.3 Approaches, best practice measures and planned ADO measures

Mentoring programs and compensation for disadvantages are cited as examples of positive measures. Both are already offered at the UASF for different target groups. Barrier-free access to the university is also counted among the positive measures (FADA, 2020: p. 32).

The task of the ADS in this area is to make the needs of different groups visible and to raise awareness of them. In addition, those involved should be sensitized to equal opportunities. Offers specifically for mentors can be provided on request.

In addition, compensation for disadvantages should be made better known at the university. This was also suggested in the final report of the peer review in the context of the Shaping Diversity audit. The process should become more transparent and the procedure better known throughout the university. To this end, all teaching staff should provide information about it at events. At the same time, this will sensitize the university public to the topic of neurodiversity. In addition, compensation for disadvantages should also be offered to other target groups in the future if possible.

The Technical University of Braunschweig, for example, also allows female students on maternity leave and students with family or care responsibilities to compensate for disadvantages, for example in the form of extended processing times or the opportunity to have a say in setting examination dates. In addition, the FADA proposes that students with little knowledge of German should also be able to receive compensation for disadvantages (see FADA, 2020: p. 33).

Experience has shown that workshops, peer-to-peer networking and safe spaces are useful for empowering and supporting those affected. The organization and support of such offers and initiatives already exist at many universities (FADA, 2020: p. 23). The Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin is developing safe spaces for students who experience racism in order to network them and strengthen their resources<sup>18</sup>. The UASF has already made preliminary preparations for the implementation of a safe space for students affected by racism. The desire for such a service has arisen from requests from students. The offer is to be started by the OEOD department and then continued by the students themselves.

#### Overview of planned measures

- Offer awareness-raising workshops for mentors, e.g. on unconscious bias
- Increase awareness of the procedure for compensating for disadvantages through decentralized dissemination and, if necessary, adaptation of the process
- Establishment of a safe space for students affected by racism

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<sup>18</sup> cf. <https://www.ash-berlin.eu/studium/empa-antirassismus-und-empowerment>, 04.08.23.

## 4. Overview of all planned measures at the UASF with time frame

On a regular/ongoing basis:

### Module I: Identification of discrimination risks

- Connection and evaluation of the special section of the Sfys at regular intervals
- Ongoing analysis of the results of the graduate survey

### Module II: Networking, public relations and institutionalization

- Cooperation between the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation and the Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities
- Increased use of the Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation and the Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities for the discussion and further development of ideas and measures
- Intensify cooperation with student councils and GSC
- Increased regional networking
- Campaigns on international days (depending on capacities)

### Module III: Raising awareness and prevention

- Expansion of workshops and training on prejudice and cultural reflexivity for students (in cooperation)

### Module IV: Anti-discrimination counseling and mediation procedure

- Continuation of needs-oriented counseling in various formats
- Making the counseling services visible, especially in the context of sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence (see campaign module networking, public relations and institutionalization)

### Module VI: Positive measures and empowerment

- Increase awareness of the procedure on compensation for disadvantages through decentralized dissemination and, if necessary, adaptation of the process

Measures

	Module I: Identification of discrimination risks	Module II: Networking, public relations and institutionalization	Module III: Raising awareness and prevention	Module IV: Anti-discrimination counseling and mediation procedure	Module V: Guidelines on protection against discrimination and complaints procedures	Module VI: Positive measures and empowerment
Already started			Multi-day training course "Dealing with discrimination and bullying in teaching"			
Winter term 23/24		Awareness-Raising -Post-cards	Initiating and supporting pilot projects on all-gender toilets	Ongoing development of suggestions for improving the mediation process through regular evaluation	Adaptation of the ADG with regard to the amendment of the Hess. HEA	Establish a safe space for students affected by racism

Summer term 24

Analysis of the results of the survey "The Student Survey in Germany" with regard to aspects relevant to diversity and discrimination and filtered according to UASF students

Greater involvement of specific target groups in the work of the steering committee (e.g. through working groups) and Re-activating individual working groups of the Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Participation Steering Committee and establishing new topic-specific working groups as required

Winter term 24/25

Flyers/brochures and posters to raise awareness of sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence

Organization of workshops for different status groups on the topics of sexual harassment, discrimination and violence

Comprehensive digital and analog distribution of the ADG after adaptation, e.g. through notices and print versions

Examination of the possibility of a pilot introduction of a chat service for students provided by the UASF

Summer term 25

Review of the inclusion of discrimination-relevant issues in other existing monitoring and evaluation formats

Winter term 25/26

Review of the anchoring of the topics of diversity, anti-discrimination and cultural reflexivity in the UASF's mission statement

Initiating a university network of discrimination-sensitive counselors at the UASF through training courses

Offer awareness-raising workshops for mentors, e.g. on unconscious bias

## 5. Outlook

The measures presented provide an overview of the planned priorities for the planning period from winter semester 23/24 to summer semester 2026. The concept is intended to extend protection and structure the work of the anti-discrimination office. The Hess. HEA formulates the goal of freedom from discrimination for all university members. Small steps can be taken in this direction within the specified period and with the measures listed.

Not all measures that are considered necessary can be processed within the specified period. The following measures should therefore be taken up in the following period.

For all modules, measures have already been identified that can significantly advance the protection against discrimination at the UASF. These include, for example, anchoring awareness-raising workshops and training for students in the curriculum of all degree courses, a handout on diversity and anti-discrimination in teaching, support for self-help groups or empowerment offers for other target groups and a signature under the ADG by all new university members. There are also plans to compensate for disadvantages for pregnant students and students with care responsibilities. To this end, changes to examination regulations and/or a procedure based on compensation for disadvantages are planned. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency proposes to include students with a poor knowledge of German and, in particular, to take measures to ensure equal opportunities in examinations (see FADA, 2020: p. 33), for example by using a dictionary. In addition, it should be reviewed in future whether anonymized recruitment procedures for employees are possible in order to prevent discrimination in this area. Many commercial enterprises, but also public administrations, have launched pilot projects in recent years in which applications are made anonymously due to known risks. The experience gained from this is to be evaluated as a basis for a possible implementation of the topic at the UASF.

## 6. Attachment

Legal Basis see German version:

[https://www.hs-fulda.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/CUV/Antidiskriminierung/Antidiskriminierungskonzept\\_leichte\\_Sprache\\_barrierearm.pdf](https://www.hs-fulda.de/fileadmin/user_upload/CUV/Antidiskriminierung/Antidiskriminierungskonzept_leichte_Sprache_barrierearm.pdf)

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