



Universität Hamburg
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

IP STRATEGY of Universität Hamburg

PREAMBLE

As an Excellence University and Flagship University, Universität Hamburg (UHH) embraces the responsibility to conduct both excellent and socially relevant research and teaching. The guiding principle “Innovating and Cooperating for a Sustainable Future in a Digital Age” underscores the central importance of innovation and cooperation in addressing societal challenges. In line with the vision “IP in the service of society”, UHH, as a corporate citizen, contributes through the knowledge exchange of intellectual property (IP) to making results and insights from research and teaching accessible to society through concrete (social) innovations.

The vision “IP in the service of society” explicitly includes, alongside the commercial exploitation of intellectual property (including intellectual property rights), open and participatory forms of knowledge exchange. These include, in particular, open science, open access, open data, open-source software, citizen science, living labs, social innovation, policy advice, and public communication. The IP strategy thus takes into account the tension between the protection of intellectual property and the principles of openness, participation, and broad societal access.

The IP strategy of UHH is an integral part of its knowledge exchange strategy. It combines the freedom of research and teaching with openness, cooperation, and a responsible, context-sensitive approach to intellectual property, which—depending on the objective—may be openly shared, used co-creatively, or strategically protected in order to generate societal impact.

In its definition of intellectual property (IP), UHH follows the definition of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)¹. Accordingly, intellectual property comprises “all results of creative activity in all areas of the institution for which rights can be acquired or enforced in accordance with legal provisions.”

With this IP strategy, UHH is committed to making the intellectual property of its staff accessible and usable for society through concrete measures. At the same time, UHH explicitly recognises that different knowledge exchange logics can coexist and that different IP arrangements may be appropriate depending on the context (see IP Policy). This strengthens UHH as a place of innovation, collaborative cooperation, and sustainable development.

¹ World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), 2019, S. 7 f.: Intellectual Property Policy Template for Universities and Research Institutions

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The central objective is to promote the transfer of intellectual property in order—within the meaning of the vision “IP in the service of society”—to enhance and make visible not only its monetary exploitation, but above all its societal benefit as well as the innovation potential of UHH. Societal benefit includes, among other things, contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sustainability-oriented innovation, open science practices, knowledge exchange with civil society actors, policy advice, and public communication.

The stakeholders of UHH include non-university actors such as private-sector companies, civil society organisations, policymakers, schools and other educational institutions, as well as citizens. Increasing knowledge and technology exchange is not primarily aimed at simply raising the number of patents and intellectual property rights filed, but rather at ensuring that the knowledge generated at UHH is increasingly put into practice. The focus is therefore on maximising impact rather than maximising profit. The successful transfer of knowledge and technologies—through research collaborations with or research services and contract research for external partners, IP-based start-ups, licensing, or sales—makes a significant contribution to UHH’s innovative capacity.

A further objective is the early identification of intellectual property arising from (research) projects and (research) collaborations with academic and non-academic partners. The IP strategy serves both to safeguard and, where appropriate, protect the rights of staff to their intellectual property and to support them in the successful exploitation of their knowledge.

In addition, UHH aims to increase both the number and the quality of IP-based start-ups and spin-offs as a specific pathway for exploitation. To this end, it develops and promotes start-up-friendly IP measures that facilitate access to intellectual property rights and enable their effective use. UHH thereby seeks to support innovative, knowledge-based ventures emerging from UHH on their path towards market-ready application. Excellent research gives rise to innovation, which—through successful knowledge and technology exchange—can contribute directly to economic growth.

TARGETED MEASURES

The following measures are intended to foster an IP-friendly culture in order to transfer knowledge from UHH to society, facilitate cooperation with (non-)academic partners, and make innovations from UHH visible:

1. **Raising awareness of intellectual property:** Targeted awareness measures promote researchers' understanding of the value of intellectual property, the importance of early protection (including criteria for when intellectual property is protected at UHH), and the corresponding exploitation options. This explicitly includes open forms of knowledge exchange such as open access, Creative Commons licences, and open-source approaches.
2. **Professionalisation of IP management:**
 - 2.1. Development of streamlined processes and clear responsibilities to ensure the swift, transparent, and fair transfer of intellectual property. At the same time, these processes facilitate and accelerate collaboration between academia, the central administration, and external stakeholders.
 - 2.2. Development of transparent and standardised processes, decision-making frameworks, and contract templates for exploitation options such as licensing, sale, or virtual shares,² as well as criteria for the valuation of intellectual property and revenue sharing. This enables greater transparency and predictability for all parties involved.
 - 2.3. Early and comprehensive advice and support for researchers—from identifying intellectual property and advising on available protection options through to its exploitation. This includes advice on intellectual property issues in co-creative and participatory research formats (e.g. citizen science, living labs), as well as consideration of open-source software and open data.
3. **Development of a sustainable funding model:** Significant costs arise for UHH, particularly in connection with patent applications and the maintenance of a patent portfolio. To ensure long-term coverage of these costs, a mixed financing model is required. This includes the standard allocation of funds for potential intellectual property within third-party funded projects, a percentage-based share in revenues from exploitation, external funding, and cost-sharing or even full cost coverage by inventors in cases where patents are released without an intention to exploit them.
4. **Making IP transfer visible:** The success and impact of the transfer of intellectual property are to be made transparent through key performance indicators (KPIs) and societal impact stories, including on the UHH website. This serves to highlight UHH's contribution to (social)

² Virtual shares modeled on the approach used by TU Darmstadt: Transfer of intellectual property in exchange for the granting of so-called virtual shares (so-called phantom stocks) to a start-up or spin-off. These virtual shares provide a purely financial participation in the success of the start-up by legally replicating the position of an actual shareholder without conferring formal ownership rights.

innovation and knowledge exchange, as well as to emphasize the importance (non-monetary value) of intellectual property transfer for both academia and society.

FINAL REMARKS

This IP strategy is conceived as a dynamic framework that will continuously evolve in order to remain responsive to changing technological, societal, political, legal, and economic conditions. In particular, new developments in open science, sustainability, participatory research, and ethical considerations (e.g. dual use) will be appropriately taken into account.