



Universität Hamburg
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KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY

of the Universität Hamburg

Third Mission at the University of Hamburg: Knowledge Exchange Strategy

SUMMARY

The University of Hamburg (UHH) regards the Third Mission as a central component of its institutional mandate alongside research and teaching. As a University of Excellence, UHH follows the strategic guiding principle “Excellence Meets Relevance – Relevance Meets Excellence”. Knowledge exchange aims at the co-creative generation of public value together with partners from society, business, politics and culture, as well as at science communication that contributes to a democratic and evidence-based culture of dialogue and debate. UHH’s knowledge exchange activities are guided by the Triple-E model: Expertise, Engagement and Entrepreneurship. The model reflects the disciplinary diversity of a comprehensive university.

UHH’s faculties and central institutions are the primary actors in knowledge exchange. They develop their activities autonomously on the basis of their research and teaching priorities and align them with the University’s mission statement and strategic goals. The Knowledge Exchange Agency supports them with infrastructure, advisory services and strategic coordination across the entire University.

The Knowledge Exchange Agency consolidates this support in three core areas:

Innovation & Entrepreneurship covers start-ups, IP management and cooperation with external partners; **Career & Qualification** fosters employability and knowledge exchange competencies; **Co-Creation & Engagement** strengthens partnerships with civil society, public institutions and culture. In addition, the Knowledge Exchange Fund provides seed funding for knowledge exchange projects.

Knowledge exchange is closely linked to UHH’s overarching priorities, in particular to the Twin Transformation as combination of sustainability and digitalisation (cf. [UHH Sustainability Strategy](#) (PDF download)) as well as to internationalization and the principles of equal opportunity, diversity and work-life balance (family and care work). In this way, it helps address societal challenges and strengthens the regional innovation space.

The governance of knowledge exchange at UHH combines responsible university governance and participatory processes. Its key elements are the Vice President for Knowledge Exchange, the Knowledge Exchange Council as an advisory excellence body and the Sounding Board, which involves the faculties in the strategic development of the Third Mission. For undertakings with an elevated potential for misuse, the Central Commission for the Ethics of Security-Relevant Research (ZKEF) and the disciplinary ethics committees provide additional support within this framework.

An impact-oriented set of knowledge exchange indicators provides the basis for quality assurance and informed further development. It captures institutional structures, cooperation formats and partnerships as well as contributions to sustainable development and innovation. In this way, UHH anchors knowledge exchange in its academic culture and supports its members as *academic citizens* for societal transformation.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG

Strategic Principle, Knowledge Exchange Strategy and Implementation Measures

PREAMBLE

By establishing knowledge exchange as a third performance dimension, the University of Hamburg (UHH) commits to responsible university governance. Alongside strong and capable leadership structures, this approach enables open and inclusive decision-making both within the University and with its external stakeholders. It rests on an agreed strategic principle, a clearly formulated knowledge exchange strategy and a set of implementation measures.

Researchers, teaching staff and students in the faculties, as well as employees in the central institutions, develop their knowledge exchange activities on their own responsibility, proceeding from their respective research and teaching priorities and within the framework of the target agreements with the university leadership and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. In doing so, they align their activities with UHH's mission statement, profile and knowledge exchange strategy, set their own priorities and participate in the further development of the University's Third Mission.

Faculties and central institutions create institutional arrangements to promote knowledge exchange effectively in their respective contexts, for example through dedicated organizational units (faculty-based knowledge exchange units), staff (officers for knowledge exchange and communication) and incentive structures (performance-based funding allocation, LOMI). Where needed, they receive additional support from UHH's Knowledge Exchange Agency and its specialized teams.

1. STRATEGIC PRINCIPLE

As a University of Excellence, UHH is committed to combining excellence in research and teaching with strong societal relevance. Research and teaching form the basis of knowledge exchange; conversely, such activities sharpen research questions and broaden teaching content. In this way, UHH contributes to addressing complex societal challenges and to strengthening democratic culture and trust in science. UHH sees itself not only as an institution for outstanding research and teaching but also as a *corporate citizen*. Its members act not only as researchers and teachers but also as *academic citizens* who contribute to societal development through responsible engagement and collaboration. Accordingly, the University's role in the knowledge exchange performance dimension extends from the co-creation of public goods in partnership with society to science communication as an integral part of academic practice, academic identity and contemporary career paths (see Mission Statement for Good Science Communication).

At UHH, knowledge exchange is understood as an interactive process whose dialogical character is already highlighted by the term itself. Across diverse disciplinary contexts, it takes place through cooperation with partners from business, politics, education, culture and civil society. Through these activities, UHH contributes both to the innovation space of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region and to the development of national and international knowledge exchange communities, and, in keeping with the idea of the Flagship University, sees itself as a strong actor and innovator in this field.

Within the Hamburg science region, UHH cooperates closely with the city's other higher education institutions (TUHH, HAW Hamburg, HafenCity University, etc.) as well as with local non-university research institutions (e.g. DESY). These cross-institutional alliances enable joint knowledge exchange formats that exceed the reach of any single university and reinforce the region's innovation impact.

The key actors of the Third Mission are UHH's faculties and central institutions. UHH's Knowledge Exchange Agency supports the development and infrastructural strengthening of knowledge exchange across the entire University. All activities are guided by the University's overarching vision, "Innovating and Cooperating for a Sustainable Future in a Digital Age", and by the strategic priorities of the Twin Transformation (linking digitalization and sustainability; cf. [UHH Sustainability Strategy \(PDF download\)](#)), of [Internationalization](#) as well as the [Principles of Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Work-Life Balance \(Family and Care Work\) \(PDF download\)](#).

The following sections address freedom, openness and responsibility in knowledge exchange, the Triple-E profile, the Knowledge Exchange Agency, its governance, as well as the impact-oriented knowledge exchange indicators.

2. FREEDOM, OPENNESS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Knowledge exchange at the University of Hamburg is grounded in the freedom of research and teaching. This freedom entails the responsibility to handle knowledge, research results and intellectual property in a reflective and context-sensitive manner. UHH does not regard the protection and commercialization of intellectual property as an end in itself. Rather, it represents one instrument among several for enabling societal impact. To this end, the University pursues several pathways of knowledge exchange. These range from open, participatory and co-creative formats through non-exclusive commercialization models to targeted protection and commercialization strategies. The appropriate approach in each case depends on the specific scientific, societal and ethical context.

Within this framework, openness, cooperation and the protection of intellectual property are complementary elements of responsible knowledge exchange, in line with the strategic guiding principle "Excellence Meets Relevance – Relevance Meets Excellence".

Open access, FAIR data practices and the open provision of research software constitute distinct modes of knowledge exchange that strengthen the connectivity and reusability of scientific results. UHH systematically expands these practices within the framework of its open science policy and regards them as an integral part of responsible knowledge exchange.

In the case of international collaborations and potentially security-relevant commercialization projects, the Knowledge Exchange Agency, together with the responsible UHH offices, examines the applicable foreign trade regulations, in particular EC Regulation 2021/821 on the export control of dual-use items, and supports researchers in the due diligence assessment of cooperation and commercialization partners.

3. OUR PROFILE: THE TRIPLE-E MODEL

The University of Hamburg's Third Mission profile is expressed in the "Triple-E Model of Knowledge Exchange", which situates the University's diverse knowledge exchange activities within a triangle of Expertise, Engagement and Entrepreneurship.

- **Expertise:** Science-based policy advice, cooperation with companies and dialogue and participation formats with civil-society actors and the public are central forms of knowledge exchange that build on academic expertise.
- **Engagement:** Researchers and students cooperate with actors from civil society, politics, business and culture in order to address societal challenges and foster mutual learning processes.
- **Entrepreneurship:** UHH promotes a broad spectrum of innovation activities, including technological, social and ecological innovation.

Within the Triple-E model, the faculties specify their knowledge exchange activities according to their disciplinary criteria, support them and render them visible.

4. THE UHH KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AGENCY

Working closely with the faculties and central institutions, UHH's Knowledge Exchange Agency promotes knowledge exchange activities across the entire University. Its offerings are addressed to researchers, doctoral candidates, students, graduates and external cooperation partners.

It raises awareness of knowledge exchange, makes related activities visible and advances its strategic development across the entire University. At the same time, it provides services that enable such projects and fosters collaboration across faculties and disciplines.

The Knowledge Exchange Agency offers structured advice, individual support and sustainable project development. Its activities include support for transdisciplinary research, innovation and start-ups, career development pathways, project consulting and public dialogue.

Team Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Start-ups: UHH's start-up service ("Startup Port@UHH") supports students, researchers and graduates through individual advice and start-up support formats. These include qualification offerings and networking opportunities that help translate science-based ideas into successful innovation ventures.

Intellectual Property Protection: UHH's IP management advises on the protection and strategic use of intellectual property, including patents, copyrights, trademarks and software. Under the guiding principle "IP in the service of society", the responsible transfer of intellectual property contributes to innovation and societal impact (see [UHH IP Strategy](#)).

Cooperation: Cooperation management supports the initiation and legally sound realization of collaborations with external partners such as companies, foundations and associations, in particular those that enable the development and commercialization of intellectual property. It also supports researchers in the due diligence assessment of clients, cooperation and commercialization partners, where appropriate also through the faculty ethics committees and the Central Commission for the Ethics of Security-Relevant Research (ZKEF).

Team Career & Qualification

Advising, Qualification and Job Placement: In cooperation with faculties and partners from UHH's central institutions, as well as with external actors from business and public administration, these activities support students in their transition into the labor market and in shaping their career paths in the context of the Twin Transformation.

Employability and Knowledge Exchange through People: Beyond subject-specific knowledge, employability increasingly encompasses transferable skills that enable graduates to succeed along their individual career paths and, in doing so, to contribute to the responsible transformation of our society. One focus lies on conveying knowledge exchange competencies, which also include the ability to engage in dialogue with diverse cooperation partners.

Diversity and Internationality: The offerings are designed to take account of students' diverse backgrounds and needs, in line with the guideline of equal opportunity and with the [UHH Internationalization Strategy](#).

Team Co-Creation & Engagement

Campus-Community Partnerships: UHH builds sustainable networks with civil-society organizations, foundations, cultural institutions and public actors. Examples include cooperation within the AKTIVOLI state network and the Hamburg Master Plan for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2030. These initiatives also contribute to the development of an open campus.

Research-Practice Partnerships: Knowledge exchange is strengthened through partnerships between researchers and societal actors, including the establishment of Living Labs for the sustainability transformation. Platforms for knowledge exchange and transdisciplinary collaboration foster societal engagement in and through research and teaching in the Hamburg Metropolitan Region.

Communities of Practice: Researchers engaged in sustainability-oriented research and teaching are supported through peer-learning formats and international networks. Activities range from strengthening UHH-internal communities through co-shaping regional and national associations to exchange within international scholarly communities.

5. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FUND

The Knowledge Exchange Fund, established in 2020 from funds of the Excellence Strategy, supports knowledge exchange projects with seed funding of up to EUR 30,000 for twelve months. The annual calls for proposals with changing thematic priorities aim to support undertakings that members of UHH realize together with non-academic partners and that yield concrete knowledge exchange products.

The projects to be funded are selected in a two-stage review procedure involving external experts. The approved projects are accompanied by the Knowledge Exchange Agency, and their results are presented to a broad audience at a public event in the metropolitan region at the end of the funding phase. The administrative handling of the Knowledge Exchange Fund is handled by the Knowledge Exchange Agency.

6. RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE OF KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Governance for the Third Mission comprises:

- a Vice President for Knowledge Exchange,
- the statutory bodies of the University and the faculties,
- the Knowledge Exchange Council and the Excellence Council,
- the Sounding Board for participatory development across faculties.

In dealing with third-party funders and cooperation partners from business and foundations, UHH combines openness to cooperation with transparency obligations. Researchers are supported in identifying and disclosing potential conflicts of interest at an early stage. Third-party funding income and funding sources are made accessible within the framework of UHH's reporting obligations. This governance model ensures institutional autonomy, transparency and participatory self-administration and supports the University's long-term development in the context of the Twin Transformation.

7. IMPACT-ORIENTED KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE INDICATORS

An impact-oriented set of indicators, developed in a participatory process with the faculties, monitors the development of knowledge exchange activities. The indicators relate to institutional structures and resources, knowledge exchange processes, partnerships and cooperation formats, as well as support structures for the actors involved. They also capture contributions to sustainable development and innovation, as well as the qualitative implementation of communication activities in line with the University's mission statement. The set of indicators is continuously developed further in a participatory manner. On this basis, UHH shapes the quality assurance and the informed further development of knowledge exchange.