

Diversity as an essential component of the overall strategy at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Final Learning Symposium
Integrating cultural diversity
in higher education

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President

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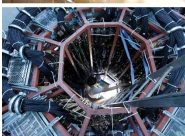

JOHANNES GUTENBERG
UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ


JG|U

2 | About JGU

Facts & Figures

- **Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz (1477, 1800, 1946)**
- **Research-Oriented Comprehensive University**
 - Almost all academic disciplines
 - Large interdisciplinary potential
 - 260 degree programs, 75 subjects
 - Some 31.500 students from 120 nations
 - Some 5.000 PhD students
 - 4.400 academic staff, including 560 professors
 - A single campus (almost)
 - University Medical Center, two Art Schools
 - Cluster of Excellence, Graduate School of Excellence



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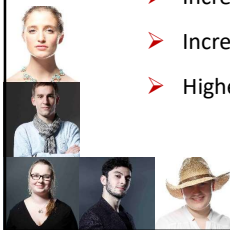
3 | Background

Socio-political and Higher Education Policy Framework▪ **DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

- Increasing fraction of young generation seeks HE
- Increasing heterogeneity of the student body
- Decline in student numbers
- Shortage of specialists

▪ **BOLOGNA REFORM**

- Increasing importance of lifelong learning
- Increasing need for student and staff mobility
- Higher permeability



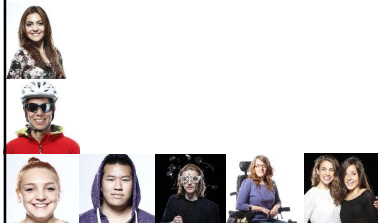
4 | Background

▪ **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- Gender-equality
- Inclusion vs. discrimination experiences and exclusion mechanisms
- Unequal educational opportunities

▪ **GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION**

- Increasing number of foreign students
- International competitiveness and compatibility
- Internationalization at home



5 | Background

- **PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM**

- Optimizing the collaboration of heterogeneous teams
- Using existing potential and prospects
- Learning together and from each other

- **COMPETITIVENESS AMONG UNIVERSITIES**

- Increasing innovation potential and creativity
- Attractiveness factor
- Raising the university's profile



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6 | Diversity in Higher Education

Relevance of diversity in Higher Education

- Diversity describes the different preconditions and backgrounds of JGU's members
- The consideration and recognition of both **differences** and shared **similarities**
- Typical categories of diversity (age, gender, nationality/cultural origin, disability, sexual orientation/identity and religion) need to be complemented with **university-specific aspects**, such as social background, performance heterogeneity, professional identity and learning differences



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7 | Diversity in Higher Education

Relevance of diversity in Higher Education

Our understanding of diversity is characterized by:

- breaking homogenous ideals and categorizations,
- overcoming approaches that have so far had only a levelling character,
- reflecting on different social backgrounds and their attributions,
- reflecting on structural and historically developed discriminations,
- a multidimensional,
- less problem-oriented and
- respectful view of differences.

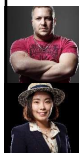


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8 | Diversity in Higher Education

Goals of diversity-activities at JGU

- Establishing a diversity-oriented university culture in which:
 - all JGU members are enabled to best possibly participate in all university processes, structures and resources;
 - the success of students and employees is not adversely affected by socio-demographic factors;
 - access to the university as well as the transitions within the university are not fundamentally influenced by the mentioned factors;
 - diversity is an enriching opportunity to actively shape intellectual discourse;
 - various cultural socializations are recognized and valued and a change of perspective is possible;
 - the rather homogenous character of the academic environment is changed.



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9 | Diversity strategy JGU

How to achieve our goals

- Establishing diversity management as a cross-sectional task
- Active rather than reactive approaches (**Diversity Audit 2016/2017**)
- Defining fields of action on a personal, organizational and structural level
- Communication across all university organizations (**Example 1**)
- Communicate the benefits (**Example 2**)
- Connecting top down and bottom up approaches
- Self-perception as a learning organization
- Input, cooperation and networking
- Promoting changes in perspective (**Example 3**)



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10 | Examples

Example 1: Diversity Photo Shootings

- Try to simply visualize the rich variety among JGU's members
- First professional foto shooting in 2011 in the context of the German Excellence Initiative
- 50 faces of JGU members exhibiting their individual hobby (Exploring what moves peoples minds ...)
- Well anticipated exhibition in the university administration building
- Second professional foto shooting 2016 in the context of the diversity audit
- A multitude of portrait photographs shown in an exhibitions and published in a brochure.

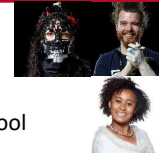


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11 | Examples

Example 2: First year students Medical School

- Admission to German medical schools is typically based on high school achievements (Abiturnote) only
- Rhineland-Palatinate offers alternative access based on achievements in professional training (e.g. nurses, physiotherapists, paramedics, ...)
- Two groups of first year students with significantly different competences
- JGU's reaction: extra courses in basic natural science and math for those with professional background (positive effects)
- In a second step: opening the courses to all first year students
- Results:
 - improvement of the students' performance in nation-wide competition
 - students' performance became independent of initial knowledge
- In addition: the professional experiences are shared with all students helping to link the rather theoretical content of the initial courses to the final job of a medical doctor



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12 | Examples

Example 3: Changing perspectives

- On last year's German diversity day, members of JGU were asked to form pairs and change roles for a day
- At the end of the day, all pairs met to exchange their experiences
- Example: University President flipped roles with a member of the security staff controlling traffic at the central university entrance
 - president checked the incoming cars in the morning
 - security staff member opened a conference with a welcome address
- High visibility, media coverage (press, TV, ...)
- Excellent instrument to create individual awareness and to communicate the overall project
- JGU received an award for this initiative



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13 | Diversity oriented teaching

Creating a diversity-oriented teaching and learning environment

- How does student diversity affect student behavior and academic success?
- How can diverse needs and expectations be taken into account in university teaching?
- How can the potential of diversity in and for teaching be used?
- Which skills do members of the teaching staff need for this?
- Which didactic starting points are possible?
- How can we support members of the teaching staff here?



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14 | Diversity oriented teaching

Focus: development of a diversity-oriented teaching culture

ASPECTS OF DIVERSITY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Social Background**
 - Type of educational biography
 - Social class
 - Educational experiences in the family
 - Earlier professional experiences
- Socio-economic Resources**
 - Financial resources / financial situation
 - Sideline activities
- Cultural Background**
 - Foreign students
 - Migrant background
 - Refugee experience
 - First language
 - Grew up in the countryside / in the city
 - Religion (clothes, behavior, holidays)
- Age**
 - Young students
 - Part-time students
 - Mature students
- Gender**
 - Gender-specific socialization
- Sexual Orientation / Identity**
 - Attitude towards own orientation / identity
- Family Situation**
 - Children
 - Single parent
 - Relatives in need of care
- Individual Physical / Mental Disposition**
 - Physical abilities (general disposition, visible and non-visible disabilities, pregnancy, chronic diseases)
 - Mental abilities (general disposition, mental impairments)
 - Cognitive abilities (talents)
- Moral Concepts**
 - ...

STRUCTURAL, CURRICULAR AND SUBJECT-SPECIFIC CONDITIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY

STUDY AND LEARNING HABITS

- Critical and analytical thinking, creativity and problem solving skills
- Motivation to study and put effort in
- Dealing with stress and exams
- Expectations towards teaching staff, course of study and learning environment
- Allocated time for studying
- Previous experiences and knowledge
- Learning strategies and learning styles, preferences for exam types
- Ability to study in a self-regulated manner
- Existing specialist skills
- Forms of communication and cooperation
- Written language, linguistic abilities
- Adaptability, habits, insecurity in an academic setting
- Need for security and planning
- Mobility
- Ambiguity tolerance
- ...

DIVERSITY AND DIDACTICS

- Teaching material
- Didactical Methods
- Forms of interaction between students and between students and teaching staff
- Determining and assessing performances
- Learning environment and spaces
- Role models
- Adjusting the curriculum (if applicable)
- ...

MEASURES

- Diversity-sensitive and diversity-oriented didactic measures
- Non-discriminatory language
- Barrier-free materials / access
- Create a diversity-sensitive learning environment
- Knowing about the potentials of diversity
- Incentives for reflection
- ...

TEACHING SKILLS

- Diagnostic capability
- Didactical skills (e.g. adequate choice of methods)
- Ability to reflect on own actions
- Ability to reflect on the historical background in a subject, e.g. in view of colonial, euro-centric, heteronormative positions and their current implications
- Teaching concept
- Forms of communication and cooperation
- Habitus reflection
- Using the potentials of diversity
- ...

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Degree (and successful transitions)
- Final grades
- Duration of degree
- ...

15 | Diversity oriented teaching

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-
- **Include diversity aspects into HR development measures at JGU**
 - **Study the effects of diversity oriented teaching by professional surveys**
 - **Feedback of the results into HR development measures ...**



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16 | Opportunities and challenges

Lessons Learned - Challenges

- Important:
 - Comprehensive strategy instead of isolated solutions
 - Consideration of the university-specific situation
 - Evidence-based approaches (i.e., in terms of learning-relevant diversity aspects)
 - Permanent communication of the topic
 - Role models and peer influencers
- Traditional notions of normality in terms of academic careers and leadership
- Limited resources
- Legal boundaries



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17 | Requirements

Political Incentives

- JGU emphasizes the recommendation of HE4u2 “National governments should provide incentives for universities with diversity on their agenda”
- It is also important to communicate from the political point of view that the holistic approach to student diversity is a topic for the future (and not just a target group policy)
- Extension of the General Equal Treatment Act for protection against discrimination (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*) to students including the characteristic “social origin”
- Adaptation of state student financing (BAföG) to changing needs, such as:
 - Abolition of the age limit
 - Adjustment of payment levels
 - Adaptation to new study structure and lifelong learning



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Thank you for your attention!

GUTENBERG SPIRIT –
MOVING MINDS
CROSSING BOUNDARIES

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