

August 2026

Action Plan HR Excellence in Research Award Strategy of Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences (h_da)

Profile of Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences (h_da) is one of the largest universities of applied sciences (HAW) in Germany. With over 70 Bachelor's, Diplom and Master's degree programmes, with many offering specialisations students can choose to focus on, it offers excellent career prospects for its approximately 14,000 students. As a university of applied sciences, h_da follows in the tradition of German *Fachhochschulen*: with its scientific and practice-oriented study programmes, it is open to a wide range of educational backgrounds. H_da promotes academic success through its smaller class sizes and excellent level of student support.

Furthermore, since its foundation in the 1970s, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences has significantly expanded its activities and expertise in applied research and technology development. As such, h_da represents a development amongst Hessian universities of applied sciences that culminated in 2016 in the renaming of Fachhochschulen as universities of applied sciences and the granting of the right to award doctorates for fields with a strong research presence.

Through its departments of applied sciences and arts, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences develops ideas and solutions to societal challenges. To achieve these goals, h_da operates across twelve departments and other central units, often through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration.

Regional, national and international partnerships closely link Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences with key stakeholders. In this way, the university also fulfils its objective – alongside research and teaching – of promoting the transfer and exchange of research findings. Furthermore, as one of nine partner universities in the 'European University of Technology (EUT+)' alliance, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences is working towards the creation of a technology-oriented European university.

HR Award Strategy

In June 2025, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences (h_da) entered an audit process with the European Commission by submitting a letter of endorsement for the European Charter for Researchers and its implementation at the university, with a view to improving working conditions for researchers at h_da.

Since the European Commission's acceptance of the letter on 30 June 2025, the university has been working on developing an HR Award Strategy and, accordingly, a coherent action plan. As part of the process, a comprehensive gap analysis was carried out to examine the current

research conditions at h_da. All relevant organisational units were involved in this process, with the perspective of researchers being given particular consideration. To this end, the university's researchers were invited to take part in a survey on the research conditions at h_da between 18 November 2025 and 19 December 2025. In addition, a working group was established in which researchers and the departments involved discussed both the current state of working conditions and potential measures. Based on the gap analysis, the survey of researchers and the discussions with researchers and organisational units at the university, this action plan has been developed. The plan addresses the majority of the weaknesses identified and brings h_da a step closer to its goal of implementing the European Charter for Researchers. The actions listed here will be implemented over the upcoming years with the cooperation of a wide range of h_da's departments. Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences is committed to implementing the measures as described, with the aim of presenting an expanded action plan in two years' time that builds on the progress achieved by then.

Action Plan of Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Abbreviations of departments involved:

CoFi:	Controlling and Finance Department
DTO:	Digital Transformation Office
EUT+:	European University of Technology
FB:	Faculty
FZ AI:	Research Centre for Applied Computer Science
FZ DKMI:	Research Centre for Digital Communication and Media Innovation
FZ MPT:	Research Centre for Materials and Process Engineering
FZ NPV:	Research Centre for Sustainable Processes and Methods
GSD:	Graduate School
HDD:	University Didactics Department
HKOM:	University Communications Department
IO:	International Office
KNE:	Competence Centre for Sustainable Development
PA:	Human Resources Department
PZ:	Doctoral Centre
Senate Committee FuE:	Senate Committee on Research and Development
SFT:	Service Centre for Research and Transfer
Vice FN:	Vice-President for Research, Transfer and Sustainable Development
ZWW:	Centre for Continuing professional development & Dual Study
ZOE:	Central organisational unit

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
1	Revision of the research and transfer strategy - Redesign of the research and transfer strategy - Integration of the HR Award principles - Publication of the new strategy and providing information about the new strategy via the university's communication channels	1-20	Target: Embedding the HR Award principles within the university to ensure that working conditions for researchers are aligned with the European Charter for Researchers in the long term. Indicator: Inclusion and naming of the HR Award in the research and transfer strategy; approval by the relevant committees.	Vice FN, Senate Committee FuN, SFT	04/26-03/27
2	Enhancing the visibility of the guidelines on good scientific practice - Easy-to-find information on the regulations and processes relating to the application of, and compliance with, the guidelines on good scientific practice. - Integration of the guidelines on good scientific practice into internal onboarding and general training programmes for researchers.	1 - Ethics and Research Integrity 2 - Freedom of Scientific Research 15 - Contractual and legal obligations,	Target: All researchers are familiar with the guidelines on good scientific practice. Indicator: Level of awareness in the next internal survey on the research conditions	SFT, GSD	04/26-02/28
3	Awareness-raising and training programmes on ethics, responsibility and integrity in research - Providing easily accessible information on ethics and integrity in research - Integrating ethics and integrity in research into the university's awareness-raising and training programmes	1 - Ethics and Research Integrity, 6 - The Researcher	Target Greater awareness of issues relating to ethics and integrity in research, as well as a basic understanding Indicator: Inclusion in training programmes; number of participants	SFT, GSD, Ethics Committee, Ombudsperson for Good Scientific Practice	04/26-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
4	Establishment of an ethics committee - Initiative to establish a joint ethics committee with partner universities - Setting up of the joint ethics committee - Providing information about the ethics committee to researchers at h_da	01 - Ethics and Research Integrity 02 - Freedom of Scientific Research, 13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries	Target: Establishment of a joint ethics committee Indicator: The level of awareness of the ethics committee amongst researchers, e.g. as part of the next survey on the research conditions	Vice FN, SFT	04/26-03/27
5	Information, awareness-raising and training programmes on freedom in research - Easily accessible information on freedom in scientific research and the relevant regulations - Integration of this topic into the university's awareness-raising and training programmes - Discourse on and embedding of the principle in the university's relevant strategies	02 - Freedom of Scientific Research	Target: Safeguarding and further implementation of freedom of research. Indicator: Integration into the university's relevant strategies; provision of information; implementation in training programmes for researchers; number of researchers reached.	SFT, GSD	04/26-03/28
6	Providing information on Open Science - Evaluating the current provision of information and its reach with regard to Open Science - Adapting the provision of information in line with the evaluation results, particularly with regard to ease of access - Integrating the subject of 'Open Science' into awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers	03 - Open Science, 16 - Dissemination and exploitation of results	Target: To ensure that researchers are well informed about Open Science; to integrate it into the university's communication channels; to develop formats designed to raise awareness and provide training for researchers. Indicator: Assess the level of awareness in the context of the next survey on the research conditions at h_da	Library	01/27-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
7	Providing information on research data management ▪ Evaluating the current provision and reach of information on research data management ▪ Adapting the provision of information in line with the evaluation results, particularly with regard to ease of access ▪ Integrating the subject of 'research data management' into awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers	03 - Open Science, 12 - Career progression, 16 - Dissemination and exploitation of results	Target: To ensure that researchers are well informed about Open Science; to integrate it into the university's communication channels; to develop formats designed to raise awareness and provide training for researchers. Indicator: Assess the level of awareness in the context of the next survey on the research conditions at h_da	Library	04/26-03/28
8	Improving access to publication opportunities and the use of open science methods ▪ Evaluation of the current provision of information and its reach ▪ Adapting the provision of information in line with the evaluation results, particularly with regard to ease of access ▪ Integrating the subject into awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers	03 - Open Science, 16 - Dissemination and exploitation of results	Target: To ensure that researchers are well informed about Open Science; to integrate it into the university's communication channels; to develop formats designed to raise awareness and provide training for researchers. Indicator: Assess the level of awareness in the context of the next survey on the research conditions at h_da	Library	04/26-03/28
9	Development of a search tool for research information (project 'Inno Space') ▪ Development and implementation of a university-wide search tool to facilitate the search for information, in particular regarding the h_da's research expertise, researchers, research projects, publications, guidelines and other research-related	03 - Open Science, 07 - Free circulation of researchers 12 - Career progression	Target: Practical implementation of the research tool; improving the accessibility of research-related information Indicator: Usage of the tool and the feedback received	SFT, (Library, IT Department)	04/26-01/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	information and topics. Measures to ensure the quality of research content and research metadata to guarantee the usability of the information provided				
10	Expansion of support services for female professors as part of the new gender equality concept - Introduction of a new series of events for (newly appointed) female professors to raise the profile of women in research - Creating additional networking opportunities for female professors - Establishing additional opportunities for a reduction in teaching load and for receiving resources in connection with taking on committee responsibilities or self-governing tasks	04 - Gender Equality	Target: Improving the visibility of female professors; increasing the proportion of women in management and leadership roles Indicator: Women in management and leadership roles (number of reductions in teaching load/operating funds approved in this way)	Equality Office	04/26-04/28
11	Improving support services for early-career female researchers as part of the new gender equality concept Option to extend the doctoral scholarship by means of a follow-on scholarship for female doctoral candidates with care responsibilities	04 - Gender Equality, 14 - Stability of employment	Target: Improved funding for early-career female researchers with care responsibilities Indicator: The number of follow-up scholarships	Equality Office	04/26-04/28
12	Expansion of gender equality measures and support services for all female researchers at h_da as part of the new gender equality concept Conducting organised writing days for (early-career) female researchers and artists	04 - Gender Equality, 05 - Embracing Diversity	Target: Implementation of the actions and, with that, a stronger commitment to gender equality at the university Indicator: Number of events held and,	Equality Office	04/26-04/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	- Further developing and creating of a new gender equality monitor - Translating the information provided on the university's gender portal into English - Expanding existing event formats and introducing new ones on current gender and equality issues - Communication campaigns to raise awareness and provide information on the topic of gender equality, and development of feedback mechanisms to assess the perceptions of h_da's staff - Appointment of gender equality ambassadors to promote dialogue and implement measures		where possible, the number of participants		
13	Improving the visibility of research and research support - Developing a concept to enhance collaboration between the Service Centre for Research and Transfer (SFT) and the University Communications Department (HKOM) / "Impact" Editorial Team, as well as improving the visibility of research projects on the university's website - Combining this action with the action to develop and establish a university-wide search tool for research topics (project 'Inno Space' – Action 9) - Assessment of the need for and possibilities regarding research awards at the university, and, where appropriate, the planning and implementation of the research award ceremony - Regular reports to the university's committees on new research projects	06 - The Researcher, 13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries	Target: Greater visibility for research and greater recognition for researchers Indicator: Evaluation as part of various initiatives, such as the next survey on the research conditions at the university	SFT, HKOM, Vice FN, Senatecommittee FuE	01/27-02/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
14	Securing and strengthening the mobility of researchers ■ Providing advice and raising awareness amongst researchers on building cross-university and international networks ■ Expanding and promoting opportunities for cooperation between universities through stronger networking ■ Evaluating the current provision of information and its reach regarding support options for the mobility of researchers ■ Adapting the provision of information in line with the evaluation results, particularly with regard to ease of access ■ Integration of the topic into awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers ■ Inclusion of research-related topics, such as mobility, in the formulation of the new internationalisation strategy ■ Publication and dissemination of information on the new strategy via the university's information channels ■ Inclusion of specific funding opportunities to support researchers' mobility within the university's internal funding schemes	07 - Free circulation of researchers, 17 - Valuing Diverse Research Careers	Target: Securing and improving mobility for researchers; implementation of the measures mentioned Indicator: Questioning researchers on improved mobility as part of the next survey on the research conditions at h_da	IO, SFT, GSD, Vice FN, EUT+	04/26-04/27
15	Review and, where necessary, adaptation to alternative assessment criteria for research output (CoARA project) ■ The university's participation in CoARA	09 - Researchers' Assessment, 11 - Selection, 17 - Valuing Diverse Research Careers	Target: Raise awareness within the university of the need to adapt the evaluation of research performance; Establish a more comprehensive	SFT, Vice FN, Senate Committee FuE	04/26-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	■ Providing easily accessible information on CoARA and opportunities for participation across the university ■ Raising awareness within the university of alternative and complementary criteria for evaluating research output through the relevant committees and appropriate workshops ■ Promoting internal discussion on the adoption of best practices for internal research funding and selection procedures		research evaluation system in line with CoARA's objectives Indicator: The university's involvement in CoARA; provision of information; discussion of CoARA in committees and workshops; CoARA best practices in committees and workshops		
16	Establishment of an onboarding programme for early-career researchers ■ Development and implementation of an onboarding programme for national and international early-career researchers (focusing on information and support services) ■ Ensuring that information is easily accessible on the university's website ■ Organisation of a welcome day for early-career researchers	06 - The Researcher, 12 - Career progression, 15 - Contractual and legal obligations, 20 - Supervision and Mentoring	Target: Improved provision of information at the start of employment; recognition of early-career researchers; improved networking opportunities for early-career researchers Indicator: Implementation of the onboarding programme or welcome day; number of early-career researchers participating in the welcome day	SFT, GSD	03/27-03/28
17	Review and needs-based expansion of English-language job advertisements within research areas ■ Evaluation of the current use of English-language job advertisements, including potential barriers and support requirements ■ Identification of research areas in which English-	10 - Recruitment	Target: The needs-based use of supplementary English-language job advertisements in relevant research areas Indicator: Increase in the number of	PA, SFT, HKOM, FBs (piloting)	01/28-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	language job advertisements are expected to add value in attracting international applicants. ▪ Piloting a supplementary English-language job advertisement in a faculty or organisational unit. ▪ Raising awareness amongst departments of the opportunities and benefits of supplementary English-language job advertisements		English-language job vacancies in suitable research fields		
18	Raising awareness of and reviewing the use of international job vacancy portals (such as Euraxess) ▪ Identification of suitable research areas (in conjunction with action 17) ▪ Expansion of a guidance document or template for the additional publication of job vacancies on Euraxess ▪ Raising awareness amongst academic departments of the possibilities for additional publication on Euraxess. ▪ Review of the use of other international job vacancy portals	10 - Recruitment	Target: Promoting the targeted use of international job vacancy portals to increase the international visibility of suitable research positions. Indicator: An increase in the proportion of suitable research positions that are also advertised via Euraxess or other international job portals.	PA, SFT	01/27-03/28
19	Evaluation and conceptual development of an OTM-R policy ▪ Assessing the necessity and added value of a university-wide OTM-R policy, taking into account existing regulations and processes	09 - Researchers' Assessment, 10 - Recruitment, 11 - Selection	Target: Assessing the need for an OTM-R policy and laying the foundations for the further development of transparent and fair recruitment procedures in line with the OTM-R principles. Indicator: Documented assessment of the need for an OTM-R policy; if	PA, SFT	01/28-04/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	■ Reviewing the requirements of the OTM-R checklist and comparing them with existing recruitment processes ■ Drawing up a draft for an OTM-R policy, taking into account the university's framework conditions, provided that the assessment reveals a corresponding need. ■ If necessary, assessing suitable options for publishing and gradually implementing the OTM-R policy.		necessary, a draft of the policy or a concept for the further course of action is available.		
20	Gradual development of the digital application process ■ Introduction of an application management tool to support the application process ■ Ongoing evaluation of the implementation and use of the tool within the participating organisational units ■ Review of opportunities for further development of the application process, taking into account the OTM-R principles and the recommendations of the European Commission	10 - Recruitment, 11 - Selection	Target: Support for a transparent, user-friendly and needs-based digital application process Indicator: Increasing use of the application management tool across organisational units	PA, (DTO)	04/26-04/27
21	Evaluation and further development of support services for research career development ■ Evaluation of existing channels and formats for providing information and raising awareness about career opportunities for early-career researchers ■ Where required, further development of the information provided and the channels of	06 - The Researcher, 12 - Career progression, 18 - Career Development and Advice	Target: Providing early-career researchers and researchers with better information on their academic career opportunities and fostering stronger networking amongst them Indicator: Positive assessment of the level of information and networking	GSD, SFT	04/26-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	communication ■ Evaluating and, where possible, testing additional exchange formats to raise awareness among researchers about career opportunities				
22	Implementation of the 4th certification under the 'Family-Friendly University in the State of Hesse' quality seal by the Hessian Ministry of the Interior, Security and Homeland Protection ■ Developing a concept to improve the work-life balance for researchers, in order to support their personal and professional development. ■ Working towards the corresponding objectives and implementing the measures set out in the concept ■ Establishment of an EUT+ Family Office	05 - Embracing Diversity, 12 - Career progression, 13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries, 14 - Stability of employment	Target: Improving employment conditions, particularly for early-career researchers, and creating attractive and secure working conditions Indicator: Positive feedback from committees, working groups and the survey	Family-Friendly University Certification Unit	04/26-04/27
23	Evaluation and further development of the distribution mechanisms for overhead allowances in the interests of researchers ■ Internal discussion with the relevant stakeholders regarding the further development of the mechanisms for allocating overhead costs or programme allowances, and the different practices in the faculties ■ A transparent presentation of the current mechanisms for allocating overhead allowances	06 - The Researcher, 13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries	Target: Improved information on the mechanisms for allocating overhead allowances and, if necessary, adjustments to these mechanisms; greater acceptance of the allocation mechanisms; greater support for research Indicator: Conduct an evaluation and, if required, develop a proposal for improved allocation mechanisms for overhead allowances for the benefit of researchers; assess whether	Vice FN, Chancellor of h_da, CoFi, SFT, (Senate Committee FuE)	01/27-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
			improvements have been made as part of the next survey		
24	Evaluation of current measures and regulations regarding teaching load reductions for research at the university and within the faculties ▪ Evaluation of previous measures and current regulations regarding teaching load reductions at university level and within academic departments ▪ Discussion on improving the comparability of teaching load reductions for research ▪ Discussion on standardising measures for teaching load reductions, in consultation with the academic faculties.	06 - The Researcher, 13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries	Target: Improved level of information regarding the regulations and differing practices relating to reductions in teaching loads for research; where necessary, standardisation of practices at all levels; greater acceptance of the regulations; greater support for research Indicator: Positive feedback on the regulations governing reductions in teaching loads for research	Vice FN, (FBs)	02/27-03/28
25	In-depth evaluation of the responsibilities of research-related institutions and consolidation ▪ In-depth analysis of the distribution of responsibilities for research-related matters ▪ Discussion on optimisation in the interests of researchers between the central organisational units and, where relevant, the committees concerned ▪ If required, development and implementation of a plan to optimise responsibilities	13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries	Target: Optimising responsibilities in the interests of researchers Indicator: Positive feedback from researchers regarding their demands	SFT (moderation), relevant ZOE, (Committees)	03/27-03/28
26	Discussion on the introduction of a teaching load reduction for transfer and start-up activities	13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries	Target: Evaluation and discussion of the potential for a teaching load reduction in the context of transfer and start-ups	Vice FN, SFT	01/27-03/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	■ In-depth research into existing regulations and activities relating to teaching load reductions for transfer and start-up activities at university and faculty level ■ Discussion on options for teaching load reductions for transfer and start-up activities ■ Where applicable, development of measures for teaching load reductions in the area of transfer and start-up activities		Indicator: Report on the evaluation and findings of the discussion; where applicable, definition of new measures		
27	Further development of support for researchers ■ Assessment of the demand for other or additional support services and training programmes for researchers ■ Development of new support measures and training programmes for researchers, and the adaptation and further development of existing ones	15 - Contractual and legal obligations	Target: Adapting support for researchers to meet additional or changing needs Indicator: Positive feedback from researchers	Vice FN, SFT	03/27-03/28
28	Improving visibility of support services ■ Identifying the relevant support services for researchers provided by the various stakeholders within the university ■ Combining this action with action Nr. 09 – Inno Space and integrating the identified requirements for relevant support services into the Inno Space project	13 - Working conditions, funding and salaries, 15 - Contractual and legal obligations, 19 - Continuous Professional Development	Target: Practical implementation of the research tool; improving the discoverability of research-related information Indicator: Using the tool and providing feedback on it	SFT, relevant ZOE	04/26-04/27
29	Development of an IP and patent management strategy	03 - Open Science, 12 - Career progression,	Target: Clarification of the framework conditions and providing better support	SFT (preparation and moderation),	04/26-03/27

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	■ The development and agreement of an IP and patent management strategy for the university ■ Publication of the strategy via the university's information channels	15 - Contractual and legal obligations, 16 - Dissemination and exploitation of results	for researchers and researchers interested in founding a business Indicator: Level of awareness amongst stakeholders and positive feedback	Vice FN, Senate Committee FuE	
30	Development of awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers ■ Evaluation of existing awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers ■ Further development of awareness-raising and training programmes for researchers	19 - Continuous Professional Development	Target: Improving the range of awareness-raising and training services available to researchers Indicator: Positive feedback and number of participants	SFT, GSD, HDD (focus: teaching), ZWW	03/27-03/28
31	Expansion of networking opportunities for early-career researchers ■ Evaluation of existing exchange and networking opportunities for early-career researchers ■ Further development of the exchange and networking opportunities available to early-career researchers, in consultation with the doctoral and research centres	17 - Valuing Diverse Research Careers, 18 - Career Development and Advice, 19 - Continuous Professional Development	Target: Better networking among researchers and a wider range of exchange programmes Indicator: Number of networking formats and assessment of their effectiveness	GSD, PZs, (FZ AI, FZ DKMI, FZ MPT, FZ NPV)	04/26-03/28
32	Participation in the implementation of an EUT+-wide network to support early-career researchers (ECROS) ■ Designing and conducting a survey of early-career researchers on the current state and development opportunities of support for young researchers	07 - Free circulation of researchers, 12 - Career progression, 14 - Stability of employment,	Target: Promoting training opportunities and mobility for researchers, and expanding industrial partnerships in the area of professional training and employment for early-career researchers	GSD, EUT+	04/26-04/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	- Establishing an EUT+-wide professional development programme for early-career researchers - Developing additional exchange formats and opportunities for job shadowing - Establishing a network-wide career counselling service	17 - Valuing Diverse Research Careers, 18 - Career Development and Advice, 19 - Continuous Professional Development	Indicator: Finalisation and submission of policy recommendations regarding support for young researchers		
33	Further development of support services for supervisors and mentors of early-career researchers - Identifying the support needs of supervisors and mentors of early-career researchers - Further developing the support services provided by the university or its central organisational units	20 - Supervision and Mentoring	Target: Improving the quality of supervision and the confidence of supervisors when working with early-career researchers Indicator: Positive feedback from supervisors, mentors and early-career researchers	GSD	04/26-04/27
34	Embedding climate protection across the university through the development of an integrated climate protection strategy - Evaluation of the university's current climate protection regulations and practices - Preparation of a greenhouse gas balance and analysis of potential areas for development - Implementation of various participation formats to ensure broad participation by the university's members - Preparation of a catalogue of specific climate protection measures	08 - Sustainability of Research	Target: Promoting sustainable practices at the university, particularly with regard to climate protection Indicator: Implementation of the greenhouse gas balance, number of participants in the participation formats	KNE, Vice FN	04/26-04/28

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Nr.	Title and description of the action	Principles	Targets and indicators	Responsible departments	Timeframe
	Providing information on the greenhouse gas balance and climate protection strategy via the university's communication channels				