



UNIVERSITÄT  
DUISBURG  
ESSEN

*Offen im Denken*

# ***Teaching and Learning Strategy 2025***

***Shaping change together***

## Teaching and Learning Strategy 2025 *Shaping change together*

*With the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2025, we as university teaching staff, employees and students of the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) define overarching goals for the further development of teaching and learning. Based on how we define ourselves as an organisation, the profile of our graduates and our didactic guidelines, we are pursuing university-wide goals that the development and implementation of our measures can be brought in line with and whose achievement we can regularly monitor with indicators.*

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### Development process

The Teaching and Learning Strategy 2025 is the result of a wide-reaching discussion process within the University of Duisburg-Essen. Teaching staff, students, university management and the faculties have jointly agreed on the guiding principles and goals that the University will pursue in the coming years.

This strategy will shape the way teaching and learning take place. It defines the expectations for teaching staff and students, provides a framework for recruiting committed teachers and serves as a reference point for strategic planning in neighbouring fields such as research, social responsibility and knowledge transfer.

This strategy was developed with a participatory approach. A strategic group spanning faculties and status groups provided essential support for this process for over a year. The ensuing discussion within the University's Commission for Teaching, Learning and Further Education, the Senate, the University Council and among the Deans of Studies enriched the strategy development process with many contributions. Thanks to surveys among teaching staff and students, we were able to gain important perspectives and establish a foundation for steering strategic measures on the basis of indicators.

*This strategy was approved by the University Board on 18 December 2019 following consultations among the Deans of Studies (5 November 2019), the University's Commission for Teaching, Learning and Further Education (22 November 2019), the University Council (29 November 2019) and the Senate (6 December 2019).*

## **Our self-definition**

**We assume responsibility in a region in the heart of Europe that has set itself the task of successfully bringing about processes of transformation and developing existing potential to an even greater extent. As members of a university that offers a comprehensive range of disciplines and has a focus on research, we commit to enabling people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds to access high-level academic education. By promoting their academic success, we are making a particular contribution in the German university network to further reducing obstacles in the education system and to further unlocking the potential of skilled workers in our region, not least in the realm of academia.**

In our degree programmes, we guarantee high-quality study conditions that are characterised by academic and research-based teaching, innovative teaching and learning concepts and the creation of spaces for discussion and reflection. As a university that holds system accreditation, we are bound to both national and international standards. We continuously dedicate ourselves on all levels to ensuring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in an evidence-based way.

We define ourselves as a community that is supported by each of the University's members. We are part of a society that we actively shape through our work in education and research. To this end, we promote changes of perspective, interdisciplinary networking and the appreciative and broad involvement of all teaching staff, employees and students. Our behaviour is governed by the rules and values of good research practice. We define ourselves as an organisation that applies the lessons it learns and takes social transformation processes into account in its strategic development.

As a modern and open-minded university, we have created an environment of diversity, appreciation and respect, where students and staff members can contribute their ideas and unfold their potential and their willingness to perform to the best of their ability and with a lasting effect. We consider promoting and cultivating diversity in a conscious and targeted manner an integral part of the University's development. By shaping teaching and learning in a diversity-sensitive way, we recognise that diversity has a positive impact on teaching, learning and personal development. We benefit from the different experiences and skills that students, staff members and teaching staff contribute as a result of their previous education, age or background, for example. Our graduates pass on this appreciative approach to diversity and therefore shape change in society, industry, public institutions and schools in the region.

## Our graduates

**The diversity of our students and the open attitude towards diversity and change held by all relevant groups help to create a stimulating teaching and learning environment. Our focus is on the subject-specific and transferable skill-based qualification of graduates who are sensitive to diversity and who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and for society. As academically distinguished, reflective and self-confident people, they see transformative social, economic and technological developments as a chance to improve their own environment in a sustainable way through their professional activities and commitment. They feel connected to the region but embrace international perspectives at the same time, and they are willing to keep developing their skills throughout their lives. They make convincing leaders thanks to their academically sound specialist knowledge, their reflective behaviour and their determination to shape change in a good and socially equitable way.**

With the courses we offer, we prepare our graduates for the national and international job market. After completing a bachelor's degree, they have a broad knowledge of their subject and have already been familiarised with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches at this stage. Our range of research-oriented master's courses enjoys prominence far beyond the region and gives graduates the chance to deepen their competencies with a focus on their subject or in an interdisciplinary manner. In this way, we increase their opportunities to gain the necessary qualifications for positions that require a high level of responsibility. A distinguishing feature of our profile as a University is our teacher training programmes, in which we combine the challenges of teaching in schools with key, location-specific areas of training dealing with heterogeneity and the skills future teachers require with regard to digitalisation. In our education of future doctors, we believe an academic and practical education that promotes autonomous and independent medical practice is important.

We enable our students to deal with complex real-world situations after their studies, using their in-depth knowledge and applying their skills and abilities to develop and implement solutions for problems. They are able to analyse, preserve and sustainably improve their environment and society on the basis of scientific facts and findings.

In academic discourse, it is vital that they compare their own position to that of others, follow up with critical and reflexive questions and tolerate opposing points of view. Our graduates must be able to recognise, refute and counteract the dissemination of data and information that cannot be scientifically corroborated. Learning how to do so is, in the sense of objective and constructive participation in academic discourse, an essential goal in the education of students and in their development into reflective and self-confident people who can also think beyond disciplinary boundaries.

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Our graduates contribute to the University's good reputation through their impressive social and professional activity. We promote their development by offering study courses designed with transdisciplinary didactic guidelines in mind.

## Our didactic guidelines

**For us, integrating research and teaching is essential. In our courses, students have the opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge and at the same time explore their skills in research and development. Together as students and teaching staff, we design innovative, competence-based and interrelated teaching, learning, consultation and assessment formats that promote autonomous and independent learning. We use the possibilities provided by digitalisation to enhance teaching and support students in the learning process. In the development of teaching and learning structures, we network at both a regional level and beyond in order to incorporate concepts that have been tried and tested elsewhere into our future development. Our teaching and learning are designed to be equitable. We remove any remaining barriers whilst maintaining the qualification goals we have defined ourselves.**

In all disciplines and at all study stages, we strive for outstanding flexible studying and working conditions in order to enable excellent academic teaching and learning forms that are based on academia and research. We see our University as a place that enables contact and interaction, which is further enriched by the opportunities provided by digitalisation. We consider classes with dialogue-focused forms of teaching and learning successful when the interaction among teaching staff and students is characterised by high amounts of motivation, creative drive and a sense of responsibility on the part of all involved.

For us, dealing competently with academic, economic and societal issues requires that sound theoretical knowledge can be related and used in a way appropriate to the situation. In this regard, the study programme is the fundamental basis for academic skill development. From their studies, our students develop academic research competencies that are systematic and based on both evidence and critical methods, and they prioritise strengthening their reflexive abilities as a central educational goal.<sup>1</sup>

When designing teaching and learning processes, we connect fundamental disciplinary knowledge to insights from other fields, as well as to the corresponding links between theory and practice from everyday life and the professional world. Here we are aware that knowledge is temporary and that any form of future-oriented and sustainable education must therefore enable students to manage complex and unique situations and tasks.

We see the enjoyment of research-based learning and interest in a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of complex issues as important conditions for the success of teaching and learning, which need to be promoted. As part of this, we explicitly include programmes designed for continuing education. During the teaching and learning process, all students are

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<sup>1</sup> On competency (Kompetenz) as an academic concept, see the German Rectors' Conference's Fachgutachten zur Kompetenzorientierung in Studium und Lehre (Expert opinion on competency orientation in teaching and learning) by Niclas Schaper in cooperation with Oliver Reis, Johannes Wildt, Eva Horvath and Elena Bender Schaper, 2012.

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systematically assisted with advice on their subject-related and personal skills with regard to discipline-specific and transferable aspects.

We consider the shaping of teaching and learning a task in which all relevant groups participate. We provide support for the development of innovative research-based teaching and learning arrangements through systematic assistance, networking and further education. In doing so, we also focus on exchange with other higher education institutions in order to enrich our practice with new concepts and share our own experiences.

We are mindful of the specific backgrounds and needs of our students and therefore promote equal-opportunity education and training. Here we pay particular attention to transition periods, such as the early phases of studies, in order to unlock the students' multi-faceted potential in the best possible way and remove any remaining barriers.

## Our goals

### ***(1) We strengthen our students' academic integration and encourage their identification with their discipline, the University and the region.***

To develop into academically distinguished, reflective and self-confident people, it is required that students have the opportunity early on to put academic methods into practice. We want to help them participate in academic discourse and to promote their academic integration through networking on campus, drawing links between theory and practice in their studies and acquiring key skills. In this way, we also strengthen their identification with their discipline, our University and the region. Thanks to our study concepts and our teaching and learning profile, we are visible to prospective students as well as among other universities.

#### ***(1.1) We encourage academic discourse as part of our study programmes.***

By offering ample opportunities to practice the relevant skills, we promote academic, fact-oriented and constructive discourse, thereby strengthening our students' ability to pose critical and deliberate questions concerning their own and other positions and to acknowledge opposing points of view. Teaching staff and students are equally responsible for achieving this academic standard. Particularly in classes, we create opportunities to experience academic discourse and to critically engage with academic practices. Both as part of and beyond our study courses, we promote measures that increase our students' interest in academic issues, integrate them into this discourse and support teaching staff in creating these opportunities.

#### ***(1.2) We create spaces for learning and promote a vibrant campus life.***

Our University is a place for studying, teaching and learning with as few barriers as possible, where we as members are happy to spend time. It is a living environment, a place of work and activity, as well as an important space for sport, culture, interaction and exchange. Both students and teaching staff contribute to the integration of every member into the University through appreciation in day-to-day communication.

We are continuing to expand the range of central and faculty-specific learning spaces on offer. In cooperation with the students, we are creating new spaces for individual and group work. We design our rooms to be as flexible as possible for various learning scenarios and offer assistance through student tutors and research associates who support students in their learning processes. In this regard, we consider it our responsibility to combine physical spaces and digital infrastructures in a pedagogical context and enable the holistic support.



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In addition to physical spaces, we promote academic integration on campus with tutoring and mentoring programmes that provide students with guidance and networking opportunities at the earliest possible stage.

We support the activities of student committees and together we strengthen our students' identification through appropriate measures and coordinated communication.

#### ***(1.3) We advocate drawing links between theory and practice in study courses, therefore incorporating our students' experience.***

We support the students' socialisation in an academic environment and in the culture of their discipline by creating free space as part of the curriculum, promoting personal responsibility and building on students' previous experience (e.g. their professional work, international experience and multilingualism). To this end, we develop teaching and learning arrangements where students are confronted with current and prospective real-world situations that they can learn to deal with as part of projects, simulations or similar formats. Here we use problem scenarios that reflect social, economic and technological challenges in that they not only require subject-related knowledge but also interdisciplinary thinking, making students aware at an early stage of the importance of sound decision-making.

#### ***(1.4) We foster key skills to support students in the early stages of their studies and to already prepare them for positions that require a high level of responsibility.***

During their bachelor's studies, our students benefit from an extensive range of courses to foster key skills. As part of these complementary elective courses, they have the opportunity, for example, to learn foreign languages, develop their skills in academic writing, consolidate their personal, methodological and social communication skills or gain insights into disciplines other than their own.

We are expanding this range of courses and focusing it on two key areas. The first area is the early stage of the bachelor's programme, in which the key skills that are relevant across all disciplines and that our students need to complete their studies successfully are at the forefront. The students' academic reading, writing and speaking skills, their self-reflection ability, their self-management and sustainable learning are the subject of curricular portfolios, whose compilation we align with the concrete needs and propaedeutic approaches of each subject. In this regard, we place particular emphasis on adhering to the principles of good research practice. The second area aims to develop competencies and key qualifications that are closely related to the subjects studied and open up transdisciplinary perspectives. We design course formats on important cross-disciplinary topics that will shape our graduates'

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future professional profiles. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals form the framework for this.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***(1.5) We raise our profile for prospective and current students and impress with innovative concepts in teaching and learning.***

Thanks to our data collection and analyses, we know what characterises our students and what challenges they face during their studies. With the help of diagnostic assessments and by closely connecting preparatory and supplementary programmes to our curriculums, we optimise the support we offer to our target groups. Our intention is to embrace our students' various competencies when it comes to content, structure and didactics. For this reason, we present programmes that are exemplary for teaching and learning in the German university network, both in terms of scope and quality.

We are committed to high visibility both at a regionally competitive level and beyond. For this purpose, we are continuing to develop our profile in teaching and learning. We make it our responsibility to develop and explore innovative models in teaching and learning. An important benchmark in this context is shaping teaching and learning in an equitable way, allowing students with diverse potentials to complete their studies successfully. We evaluate these models, make reference to educational research and discuss the experience and knowledge gained in this process in relevant formats within and outside our University.

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<sup>2</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals pursue a broad concept of sustainability. In 2015, the United Nations resolved, amongst other things, to end extreme poverty by 2030, achieve full gender equality and fight climate change or mitigate its consequences. Please find further information at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

***(2) We strengthen our students' problem-solving skills and their self-efficacy with a particular focus on their social responsibility.***

Our graduates are able to solve complex problems using their academic knowledge both individually and in interdisciplinary teams. They analyse problems and develop potential solutions that they can propose and implement with confidence. For this reason, we develop our students' problem-solving skills and make use of various formats to prepare them for a working world that is becoming increasingly international and digitalised. We encourage them to assume social responsibility and support our particularly high-performing students in qualifying for scholarships and preparing for leadership roles in industry, the public sector, politics and research.

***(2.1) We design each course with formats that allow students to further develop their problem-solving skills.***

It is an essential skill for all areas of life and work to be able to act in a solution-focused way. It also helps people to shape their surroundings with their own ideas, creativity and courage and to assume responsibility in a region that is defined by many social, economic and technological challenges.

Being able to develop solutions is a skill that requires students to be given space to experiment freely, 'fail' without the stress of examinations and then reflect on their own actions on the basis of feedback. Building on approaches that have already been proven within and outside of our University, we create formats in each of our bachelor's study courses that allow students to develop their problem-solving skills with subject-related and methodological assistance. We encourage our students to create their own problem-solving approaches that they can confidently communicate and implement to shape their social environment in a sustainable way.

***(2.2) We encourage our students to gain international experience.***

We would like to educate our students to the highest possible level and prepare them for a working world that is becoming increasingly international and globalised. We see international mobility in teaching and learning as a field of action, alongside advancing internationality and interculturality on our home campuses. In view of the diverse makeup of our students, we place a focus on achieving equity in education and social inclusion, also with regard to international mobility, and counteracting the mechanisms of social selectivity in exchange programmes. We encourage our students to gain international experience and we support this with consultation services, mobility windows and a student-friendly attitude towards credit recognition. In this context, we aim to incorporate at least one international experience,

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preferably for ECTS credit points, in each course, encouraging students to improve their international and intercultural skills and offering them the opportunity to network with each other.

#### ***(2.3) We strengthen the skills that our students require for guiding digitalisation processes.***

Knowing how important it is today to connect subject, method and digitalisation-related competencies, we encourage engagement with technological developments in a way that goes beyond individual classes and also incorporates learning environments and study conditions.

The primary focus is the responsible use of methods and tools that the future graduates will need in a digital working and living environment. Here emphasis is placed on fostering data skills (data literacy and data science). We create opportunities to engage with data in order to make students aware of the typical applications they should expect in academia and in the professional world and of the tools and processes available for dealing with data-oriented issues. In courses for a teaching qualification, we also focus on the students' role as disseminators. We prepare those studying for a teaching qualification for their task of supporting pupils in acquiring digital competencies in accordance with the competence framework provided by the 'Education in the digital world' (*Bildung in der digitalen Welt*) strategy from the KMK (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs).

#### ***(2.4) We support and cast light on our students' social commitment.***

Many of our students have social commitments. They are personally involved in associations or initiatives, form student groups or take part in service-learning seminars where they help to find a solution using academic findings on the basis of a concrete project with a civil society partner.

We support students through communication, consultation and networking, cast light on their commitment and involve them in our knowledge transfer activities. With a view to our graduates' responsibility, we are therefore establishing a culture of commitment that values existing accomplishments, persuades more students to get involved and creates a climate conducive to founding new initiatives and groups.

#### ***(2.5) We offer special services for high-performing students to support them in applying for scholarships and to provide them with qualifications beyond their subject curriculum in the best possible way.***

We have recognised that more students at our University could benefit from the scholarships offered by organisations for the promotion of young talent. On the basis of a broad, talent and

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motivation-oriented understanding of achievement, we take the initiative to routinely make high-performing students aware of funding opportunities, to support them during the application process in the best possible way and to therefore actively counteract any potential social selectivity. Regardless of whether their scholarship application is successful, we provide additional support to students in this group with offerings that are embedded in their subject and designed to develop competencies in order to prepare them in an optimal way for leadership roles in industry, the public sector, politics and research.

**(3) *We support teaching staff in developing teaching and learning in an evidence-based way.***

We continue to develop high-quality, innovative and flexible teaching and learning settings to a high academic, didactic and methodological level. This process is driven by our teaching staff. With equipment conducive to innovation, supportive formats and space in which they can develop freely, we support them in continuously advancing their own teaching practice. In this regard, a particular focus is placed on establishing a constructive feedback culture, shaping our curriculums in a competence-oriented way, systemically using data from the quality management system, professionalising and conducting further research on teaching and using digital teaching and learning scenarios.

**(3.1) *We strengthen the interaction between students and teaching staff and commit to a constructive feedback culture.***

We place particular emphasis on interaction between teaching staff and students so that they can engage with each other on a subject-related and individual level, create spaces for identification and contribute to an active campus life. Opportunities for communication are an important prerequisite for this. In this regard, as an on-campus university, we emphasise the need for direct interaction on site but also acknowledge the increasing importance of virtual and above all asynchronous communication.

Classes are enlivened by the participation of those involved. For this purpose, students and teaching staff must not only be present and interact with each other, but they must also be able to give constructive feedback and receive it. We view feedback as a fundamental mental tool that needs to be adopted by students and teaching staff in order to have a constructive effect. That is why we are strengthening our focus on a constructive feedback culture.

**(3.2) *We support our teaching staff in shaping teaching and learning in a competence-oriented way.***

In shaping teaching and learning, our focus is on developing academic competencies. Competence-oriented curriculums, classes, consultation services and examinations are an important prerequisite for the students' personal development and ability to participate in the job market. For this reason, we have firmly embedded competence orientation in our University's quality management system. We support teaching staff and in particular module and programme coordinators in designing courses with the students' involvement that are competence oriented.

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#### ***(3.3) We use our quality management system for the data-based advancement of teaching and learning and make a wide range of tools available for this purpose.***

Our quality management system combines the quality assurance of our study programmes, institutional evaluation and target and performance agreements to enable the data-based advancement of teaching and learning. The interaction between these instruments and the relevant information about processes and responsibilities are presented in a quality management handbook. As members, we all contribute to a holistic quality management system that both focuses on institutions and structures and aims to optimise processes. A key element of this is therefore the continuous reviewing and, if necessary, improvement of all processes in the field of teaching and learning.

Faculties, facilities and teaching staff benefit from a comprehensive range of survey tools and analyses. We utilise information and data in a targeted manner. In addition to a lean, transparent and efficient reporting system, we offer the opportunity to take an in-depth look at processes and structures, explore individual issues and, in this way, consistently support developments and innovations in teaching and learning in an evidence-based manner.

#### ***(3.4) We provide teaching staff with opportunities for professionalisation and further development and support them in conducting further research on their own teaching practice.***

We are aware that excellent academics do not all have equal amounts of experience or professional training in order to adopt the students' perspectives and plan and design their teaching accordingly. In this context, needs-based further education and training offers and the teaching staff's employment and working conditions are of particular importance for the quality of teaching and learning. Our University supports teaching staff as they face the challenge of designing and exploring excellent research-based, equitable teaching and learning processes interactively with students. We make it attractive for all the relevant individuals to develop their own teaching practice and we acknowledge teaching qualifications acquired.

The professionalisation of teaching at our University accommodates diversity to ensure the academic integration of students and prepare them for life in a knowledge-driven society. We are committed to the logic of research-based teaching and continue to develop this. We assist teaching staff through support formats that give them space to conduct further research on their own teaching practice and encourage discourse within the University on developing the quality of teaching and learning.

***(3.5) We encourage teaching staff to innovate in their classes through the use of e-learning and blended learning approaches.***

The use of digital formats provides sustainable solutions that make teaching and learning concepts more flexible with remote independent learning phases and extend interaction between teaching staff and students beyond class times. The extended range of media and methods that are made available thanks to the media-didactic use of innovative learning technologies can help better support the acquisition of skills during study programmes and classes via more diverse learning paths. E-learning platforms for students offer them the chance to review material and encourage both individual and cooperative independent work.

We motivate teaching staff and students to invest further in the implementation of digital teaching and learning scenarios by offering the relevant trainings for qualification and support. In this regard, we place a focus on the development and provision of e-assessments, in particular to give students in large classes individual and continuous feedback on their learning, which supports them in their learning process.

We advise teaching staff, support their classes with services, software and hardware solutions and encourage commitment to developing new e-learning and blended learning approaches by means of non-material and financial incentives. Here we pool our expertise and set ourselves development goals that we define in a separate strategy on digitalisation in teaching and learning.