



**HOCHSCHULE
RHEIN-WAAL**

Rhine-Waal University
of Applied Sciences

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**RHINE-WAAL UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

2017 - 2022

CONTENTS

5	1. RHINE-WAAL UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES TODAY AND ITS STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
9	2. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
10	2.1 Strategic Positioning
11	2.2 Demographic Development
12	2.3 University Funding
13	2.4 Job Market, Educational Equity and Diversity
15	2.5 Interdisciplinarity and Innovation
16	2.6 Internationalisation
20	2.7 Sustainability
13	3. SPECIFIC ACTION AREAS FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT
16	3.1 Facilitate Multidisciplinary Education
20	3.2 Strengthen Applied Research and Knowledge Transfer
22	3.2.1 Research
24	3.2.2 Knowledge Transfer
24	3.3 Shape HSRW as a Social Space
26	3.3.1 Values and Culture
25	3.3.2 Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences as an Employer
27	3.3.3 A Partner for the Region
27	3.3.4 Transparent Internal Communication
29	3.4 Optimise Structures and Use Resources Sustainably
29	4. ACADEMIC SCORECARD AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT
33	4.1 Dimensions and Goals of the Academic Scorecard
36	ANNEX: STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT - PROCESS AND CHALLENGES
39	PUBLICATION DETAILS



1.

RHINE-WAAL UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES TODAY AND ITS STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. RHINE-WAAL UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES TODAY AND ITS STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences (HSRW) is one of the most newly-established universities in the academic sector of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW). Taking into account its nearly 7,000 students from over a 100 different countries it is, at the same time, one of the most international universities of Germany. The founding of the University, which currently includes two campus locations in Kleve and Kamp-Lintfort, resulted from proposals individually submitted to the State of North-Rhine-Westphalia by the County of Kleve and the nearby Lower Rhine cities of Kamp-Lintfort, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Moers, Rheinberg and Wesel. Decisive factors for the State's vote in favour of Kleve County's concept for the establishment of a new regional institution of higher education included not only the substantial support for the concept shown by the region, but also the distinct lack of regionally available academic education. The swift establishment of the University and its eventual two campus locations was backed by both material and immaterial support from the region.

The founding of the four Faculties

- Faculty of Technology and Bionics
- Faculty of Life Sciences
- Faculty of Society and Economics
- Faculty of Communication and Environment

and their range of degree programmes followed the recommendations made by a jury appointed by North Rhine-Westphalia. In addition, both the degree programmes already available at neighbouring universities, as well as the limits on the potential number of local applicants had to be taken into account. Within just a few years, a departmental structure and accompanying degree programmes emerged at both locations. These are designed to meet the demands of the region, to avoid redundancy in terms of courses offered at nearby universities and to constitute an innovative university profile. In essence, Rhine-Waal University strives to link the Lower Rhine region to a larger global network by not only providing an innovative contribution to the existing range of degree programmes offered by other universities of applied sciences in Germany, but also by promoting internationally-oriented academic research and teaching.

All the curricula of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences were developed from the ground up according to three overarching principles: innovation, interdisciplinarity and internationality. Both the content of the curricula, as well as the teaching and research methods used within the degree programmes, focus on a high standard of quality, scientific consistency and real-world relevance. Moreover, we are open to integrating innovative ideas and developments. Rather than cultivating traditional academic disciplines, teaching and research methods are characterised by their problem-based as well as interdisciplinary approach of linking various methods and bodies of knowledge. In this vein, besides specialisation in the individual field of study, knowledge is also acquired in neighbouring subject areas and scientific disciplines. This approach is augmented by modern didactic methods, good teaching practice and numerous collaborations with local, national and international organisations in academia and the private sector. In addition to its regional roots, the University is also characterised by its international profile. At present, internationality is mainly achieved by the large proportion of international students and teachers, as well as the sheer number of courses offered entirely in English. In addition, a number of individual areas in the fields of research and knowledge transfer also demonstrate an international focus.

This shared view of the successful establishment of the University and its Faculties is reflected in our overarching mission statement, which is dedicated to upholding the University's innovative, interdisciplinary and international character in addition to acting as a framework for a unified campus culture. With heartfelt gratitude to all those who enabled and supported this swift development in their respective areas of responsibility, all parties involved in the University's establishment agree that this phase has now come to a successful conclusion.

Qualitative advancement in all of the University's performance dimensions will be at the forefront of the dawning consolidation phase. Top priority will involve the consolidation of successful structures and core processes as well as the dynamic improvement of these structures and processes. Above all, we will pay special focus to the question of where the University and its Faculties strive to be in five years' time: situated in a rapidly changing world, the University's goal must be to establish, consolidate and improve the best possible competitive position at all levels of performance – teaching, research, knowledge transfer and further qualification opportunities.

All members of the University were invited to participate in the university-wide consultations regarding this challenging undertaking and many actively contributed to the goal of outlining a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for the University. The strategic roadmap of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences for the next five years has been outlined with passionate commitment to its objectives, with prudence and in the spirit of mutual respect among educators, students and all other members of the University. This SDP represents the summarised outcomes

of this process, which was coordinated by a steering committee comprised of specialists from various areas and prepared by the committee's editorial group. A detailed overview of the entire process, which was designed to allow comprehensive participation, can be referred to in the annex to this SDP.

At the outset, the Executive Board of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences issued guiding principles to guide the Faculties towards strategic goals, as well as outlines aiming to sharpen the contours of the University's profile, which the Faculties then took into consideration and integrated into their individual strategic Faculty Development Plans (FDP). By submitting their detailed, reflexive as well as prospective development plans, the Faculties provided their own bottom-up contributions to the process of devising the SDP. In addition to a critical review of their own achievements, each Faculty engaged in a future-oriented discussion of the strategic goals proposed by the Executive Board. The Faculties unanimously emphasised the importance of all proposed strategic goals by reflecting upon and amending them with regard to their respective subject-specific contexts. Above all, they specified these goals by formulating measures in accordance with their respective expertise and focus. The feedback gathered from the Faculties signalled across-the-board approval and support for a series of strategic concepts which are ripe for implementation.

The Faculties exercised great care in identifying numerous opportunities both in all performance dimensions as well as in areas dedicated to the advancement of the University as an organisation. Potential areas of development were pinpointed by the Faculties both on and off campus – in the local region, the German-Dutch Rhine-Waal Euroregion, as well as internationally. The SDP provides direction and strategic objectives for the evaluation and utilisation of these opportunities and encourages openness to innovative ideas. All processes and framework conditions should be aligned with these objectives.

The planning approaches developed by each Faculty have been integrated into the SDP, and in doing so the steering committee refrained from making detailed references to individual FDPs to avoid any impression of implicit assessment.

In reference to the Faculties' feedback, the steering committee also re-evaluated the objectives originally proposed by the Executive Board to subsequently present a coherent, well-structured, comprehensible and clear Strategic Development Plan allowing straightforward communication and in turn ensuring a common direction for the activities of the University. The perception of the University commonly shared is that of a learning organisation, able to flexibly confront and adapt to a changing environment – be they legal or financial framework conditions of North Rhine-Westphalia, student demand, challenges regarding curricula, larger international developments or the local government's expectations regarding the performance of the University.



2. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2.1 STRATEGIC POSITIONING

An ever-changing social, economic and political framework constitutes the backdrop for Rhine-Waal University's strategic positioning. Influential external factors are, above all, demographic development, the employment system as well as higher education funding and legislation. In particular, we seek to address the challenges posed by the job market and educational equity in developing our strategic orientation. The strategic objectives focus on interdisciplinarity while assigning leading roles to internationalisation and sustainability. In this sense, the two aspects of internationalisation and sustainability form the pillars of the strategic framework of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, which is further broken down into four operational dimensions: Facilitate Multi-disciplinary Education, Strengthen Applied Research and Knowledge Transfer, Shape HSRW as a Social Space, and Optimise Structures and Use Resources Sustainably.

These operational dimensions promote and strengthen the University's identity. In order to communicate these dimensions on a large scale, the Executive Board is developing an extensive marketing concept in collaboration with the Faculties, focusing both on achieving more effective use of the University's corporate design across all spheres and, above all, on achieving consistency with regard to the University's website and its general presence in online media.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT

Current nationwide forecasts project a drop in the number of applications for enrolment from German nationals. However, the forecasts of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK)

have regularly been revised upwards due to both the growing inclination of young people to pursue a degree and the increasing number of qualified international applicants. Opportunities to unlock previously untapped regional potential for student recruitment require further strategic evaluation.

Taking into account its 40 per cent share of international students, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences currently ranks among the most successful universities in Germany regarding first-year students holding a foreign university entrance qualification. At present, this achievement benefits from the current form of higher education funding; recent developments, however, indicate changes regarding these funding structures, such as the allocation of funds according to metrics for academic success, calling for corresponding measures.

The current demographic development, which indicates, among other things, a dwindling proportion of younger people leading in turn to a shortage of skilled workers, will force industry in the long term to recruit specialists from abroad. Consequently, the potential appeal of recruiting international graduates as skilled workers will increase at the regional, national and European level. This development could create a competitive advantage for Rhine-Waal University if international students can be successfully encouraged to acquire German language proficiency during their studies and remain in Germany after graduation.

For this reason and in light of the fact that at least the County of Kleve, where the University's administration is seated, is projecting an increase in population, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences, as a part of the academic landscape of North Rhine-Westphalia, sees itself as well-prepared for the coming

demographic change and does not expect a noteworthy decline in demand with regard to its degree programmes in the future.

2.3 UNIVERSITY FUNDING

As is the case with all universities in North Rhine-Westphalia, the financial resources of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences primarily rest on the three pillars of permanent basic funding, quality improvement funding as well as Higher Education Pact 2020 funding, which is based on an agreement between German state governments and the federal government signed in 2007. These three pillars are supplemented by additional funding from external sources. As a recently established institution, the University does not yet participate in the performance-based allocation of funds (LOM) offered by North Rhine-Westphalia. The criteria regulating the allocation of performance-related funds, such as Strategic Budgeting, are currently being discussed at HSRW. Moreover, we will take additional proactive steps to prepare for the upcoming performance-oriented competition for funding which is likely to start before the expiration of funding via the Higher Education Pact.

The two pillars of funding not available on a permanent basis currently represent the main financial challenges facing the University. Quality improvement funding was granted to compensate for tuition fees abolished in Germany since winter semester 2011/12, while the Higher Education Pact funding is set to expire in 2023, or during the proposed implementation phase of this Strategic Development Plan. The amount of allocated Higher Education Pact funds is linked to the agreed-upon additional number of first-year students newly enrolled at the University, and further determined by a bonus granted for graduation success rates; this funding is therefore both expense- and performance-related.

With the Higher Education Agreement NRW 2021, North Rhine-Westphalia entered into an arrange-

ment with state universities to secure a portion of Higher Education Pact funding for an extended period of time: starting in 2021, an additional 250 million euros will be allocated annually to NRW universities on top of basic funding. This prospect of funding security would improve our strategic capabilities by giving us financial means in the form of central strategic funds which can be directed towards opportunities as they arise, enabling testing and promoting of innovative ideas and boosting as well as pre-financing structural developments, even before they are budgeted.

The SDP provides objectives, the framework and descriptions of the criteria by which this future funding can be allocated. It forms the basis on which to discuss which additional capacities can and should be made permanent. Thus far the temporary increase of personnel, for example, could only be facilitated with the help of a large number of fixed-term contracts for professorships and other positions. The resulting high turnover of staff impairs our commitment to quality and causes additional consumption of resources due to expenses for recruitment and training of new personnel etc. The prospect of additional, secure funding permits us to create new permanent positions in priority areas according to specific criteria.

2.4 JOB MARKET, EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

The state government's policy approach towards addressing the impending shortage of skilled workers by establishing additional STEM universities inspired the foundation of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. To this day, we adhere to this founding principle, even though from the outset the University was not conceived as a purely STEM-based university, but one based on a broad, interdisciplinary academic foundation. Accordingly, since its founding the University has actively pursued a policy of attracting local groups of people from non-academic

backgrounds to enrol in a degree programme at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences. Following these initial years, we are now intent on expanding this approach by, for example, intensifying collaboration with secondary schools, optimising part-time study programmes and establishing our range of further qualification opportunities.

We do not view HSRW solely as a place of academics and research, but also as a social space jointly shaped by all our members. Accordingly, from the start we have been committed to promoting diversity, equal opportunities and family-friendly policies above and beyond our legal requirements.

2.5 INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND INNOVATION

As with the core goal of internationalisation, which has come to be a widely recognised aspect of the University's profile, its other two core goals – interdisciplinarity and innovation – have been essential to Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences since its conception. Interdisciplinarity in particular has shaped the academic structure of the four Faculties, many of the degree programmes as well as the University's daily operations. After their initial years of development, the Faculties now see many opportunities to utilise their fully-developed, interdisciplinary organisational structures more effectively to engage in joint research projects and strengthen their interdisciplinary approach to teaching, thereby intensifying their cross-faculty and cross-campus collaborations.

2.6 INTERNATIONALISATION

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences has made its mark as an international university and positioned itself accordingly. The strategic objective of internationalisation has contributed significantly not only to the University's rapid growth over these past years, but

has also fostered a sense of community and identification with the University among students and staff, in addition to ensuring public attention.

These developments represent the basis from which we will progress and grow stronger. All members of the University are encouraged to ensure a common understanding of internationalisation and internatinality in all areas of activity (academics, teaching, further qualification, research and knowledge transfer), including central support processes and institutions as well. The aim here is to use the change in perspective that internationalisation brings about to improve the overall quality of work. Considering and integrating as many different perspectives, ranges of knowledge, experiences and applications as possible into the general practice of the University, as well as making an effort to understand, respect and accept differences, go hand in hand with our broad understanding of diversity.

As part of our social mission, we strive to review and intensify activities which increase the proportion of underrepresented groups in our degree programmes (gender balance included). Ensuring modern campus accessibility will be an asset to this mission as well.

The University will focus both existing and untapped potential in a coordinated internationalisation strategy and systematically incorporate internationality in all its areas of activity. By employing this strategy, the University seeks to develop into a centre of excellence for all aspects connected to the internationalisation of science. In this context, we are also examining possibilities for developing our own scholarship programme for international exchange.

The Faculties support the University's strategic roadmap and wish to contribute their own set of priority measures in accordance with the given framework. To this end, they have identified potential areas of opportunity in their respective fields of expertise in line with the University's overarching strategy, particularly with regard to the degree programmes. These areas include the international exchange of

students, lecturers and researchers from all degree programmes as a permanent and integral fixture in the curricula, cross-faculty flagship partnerships with outstanding universities, the advancement of the double degree programmes as well as the University's duty to improve international students' ability to acquire German and thus access a wider range of (very good) employment prospects in Germany. At the same time, we seek to tap the potential in our immediate vicinity more effectively by establishing a network between Dutch and German universities in the Rhine-Waal Euroregion as an 'academic melting pot' for students and all other members of the University.

In the course of enhancing the international focus of research and knowledge transfer, we are planning to increase the number of invitations to guest lecturers and researchers from abroad, particularly to female candidates in the event of equal suitability, but also to Humboldt Fellows funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Similarly we encourage the international activities of our professors by promoting work at outstanding foreign universities as well as international publications, projects and doctorate programmes.

As part of the goal to strengthen our further qualification opportunities, we plan to concentrate the diverse international know-how and intercultural competencies of our members in a Centre of International Excellence dedicated to promoting intercultural skills, language acquisition, teaching and learning methods, inclusion strategies and much more as needed across the Faculties and the University. The University's online image, particularly with regard to internationality, will undergo revision. The practices of other internationally-oriented universities will provide good examples and serve as additional inspiration.

2.7 SUSTAINABILITY

Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences views itself as an important engine in the process of developing and institutionalising awareness for sustainable development in the region, as well as on a national and international level. Much has been done and achieved towards this objective. For example, principles of sustainable management were integral to the development of each Faculty's degree programmes. Moreover, we rely on future-oriented teaching and research practices and take into account the necessary interplay of social, economic and environmentally compatible issues.

Our understanding of sustainability synergises with our activities in the areas of education and science, the management of our campuses and our commitment to society.

Where reasonable and possible, we will continue to incorporate into our curricula the complex issue of sustainable development as well as our responsibility to the future with regard to our own actions as well as those of our future graduates. The breadth of the offered degree programmes and professional expertise does, of course, give rise to a variety of different perspectives on sustainability. In the coming years, we aim to use this diversity of thought even more effectively to improve the quality of our teaching practices by way of a dialogue among the disciplines, which will include the topic of sustainability within curricula. As part of the UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the follow-up to the UN's Decade of ESD, a German steering committee called the National Platform was brought together in order to define objectives and measures for the implementation of the Global Action Programme on ESD in all areas and at all levels of the German education system. Rhine-Waal University will closely follow the didactic and systematic recommendations for the implementation of ESD, as defined by the National Platform, and integrate examples of good ESD practices into its own activities and performance portfolio.

In order to meet the complex social requirements of future-oriented, sustainable development, the University has relied on a both transdisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary research profile since its founding. As a university of applied sciences, we consider it therefore a matter of utmost importance to approach our future-oriented research questions together with our regional, national and international off-campus partners in a trusting and transparent manner in order to achieve our objectives. Collaborative research across organisational borders and disciplines must also be strengthened. Sustainable development can today only be achieved on an international level, which is why we attach great importance to an active exchange with researchers from abroad, today and in the future.

Particularly with regard to the management of our campuses and daily campus life, we continue to make every effort to meet our organisational, economic and social responsibilities. To this end, the University will approach resource management in an energy efficient way, take into account fair-trade products in purchasing processes where possible and work towards an environmentally sound (re-) structuring of its campuses. We are also dedicated to fulfilling our social responsibility as a University at both campus locations. Thus, we are committed to achieving our social and ethical aspirations of being a gender-balanced, non-discriminatory, family-friendly, open-minded and cosmopolitan university which treats its students, partners and staff fair and just. Social responsibility will also play an increasingly vital role for Rhine-Waal University as an employer in the years to come.

As a university, we play an important role in society. Our efforts in research and knowledge transfer are dedicated to making lasting contributions to the social challenges of our time, such as climate change, resource depletion, the advancing internationalisation of markets, digitalisation, demographic change and many more key issues. New solutions can only be approached in a dialogue with other social stakeholders, through which new sustainable development

opportunities may emerge to help tackle the pressing issues of our time mentioned above.

In order to continue developing, structuring and realising this roadmap in the coming years, a sustainability concept for Rhine-Waal University will be prepared and established over the course of the SDP implementation period. Making this concept a reality will require the active collaboration of all stakeholders of the University, regardless of group affiliation or administrative area. The resulting activities will be documented in a sustainability report prepared according to the Sustainability Code for Higher Education Institutions, developed by the German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE) in collaboration with 50 other universities



3. SPECIFIC ACTION AREAS FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 FACILITATE MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

Over the course of the SDP drafting process, members of the University, the Faculties and the Executive Board took an intensive and differentiated look at its strengths and weaknesses in the areas of academics, teaching and further education opportunities. Time and time again, quality was considered the highest priority in all identified opportunities and suggestions for new offers and services for students.

Based on a broad understanding of academics and teaching, the FDPs incorporate nearly all necessary processes. On the one hand, they are dedicated to the Faculties' many academic responsibilities, which begin with the many challenges awaiting first-semester students, then on to providing expert support and guidance until graduation and subsequent career success. On the other hand, they are also dedicated to institutional areas of responsibility, which include, for example, recruitment of prospective students, establishing initial administrative contact and assisting with enrolment, providing advisory services to students as well as a great many necessary administrative processes. The University considers it an urgent priority to incorporate the very welcome, manifold initiatives and challenges identified in the SDP preparation phase into an overarching strategic context; particularly due to the fact that external accreditation processes, though stimulating individually, are oriented towards their respective degree programmes and not the University as a whole. Inspired by how teaching and academics is prioritised in the FDPs, and given their sheer importance as a core mission of the University, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences will develop a new concept that lays forth common standards and core processes while also respecting the Faculties' final say in curricular matters.

The University's portfolio of degree programmes and available modes of study are crucial aspects of its attractiveness as an institution. There is a consensus, however, that both aspects must be continuously and critically examined with regard to student demand, the skills currently in demand in industry and the demands of the employment sector. The Faculties have already discovered numerous opportunities, for example programmes for working professionals such as part-time study, dual study and additional postgraduate programmes. As part of the common development of the University, these opportunities will be evalu-

ated according to overarching criteria. Accordingly, speedy development of these criteria represents a fundamental, highly prioritised step in the strategic development of the University; as these are a necessary prerequisite for the Faculties to evaluate, update and implement their respective strategic development plans.

Given the increasingly heterogeneous background of first-semester students, the intake phase deserves special attention, a fact which is further stressed by feedback from the Faculties. In that vein, self-assessment options, preparatory courses and additional advice and guidance options appeared as suggestions. An overarching and cohesive intake phase is an integral part of a teaching and academic concept that makes the University an attractive destination for prospective students and encourages their academic success over the course of the subsequent semesters.

Ensuring both a high standard and the continued improvement in the quality of all degree programmes are particularly imperative for the development of the FDPs in the current consolidation phase, as demonstrated by the Faculties' own guidelines and the official guiding principles of the Executive Board. A high standard of quality begins with the selection and qualification of educators. For that reason, the existing processes for appointing new professors should be examined in terms of their effectiveness in evaluating candidates' teaching abilities. Teaching deficits should also be systematically addressed as part of the quality assurance process. To that end, the Executive Board, in collaboration with the deans, will develop and implement an overarching procedure for quality improvement. The possibility of publishing lectures in connection with the ongoing professorial appointment process for members of the University will also be explored.

Based on a common understanding of the role and the importance of sessional lecturers for the University, overarching guidelines addressing the formal requirements and the selection of sessional lecturers will be developed. The University will verify with the Faculties whether it would be advisable to provide organisational support to complement the responsibility of the Faculties with regard to curricular matters.

An important topic in quality assurance is feedback from students and educators, which promotes improvements in teaching quality, reduces drop-out rates and helps more students achieve academic success. To that end, the University's evaluation process will be reviewed and updated accordingly. Moreover, the University will develop an overarching information system on study progression and success which transparently supplies relevant quality data to the Faculties and statistical data to the Executive Board for future funding distribution decisions. This system will also systematically incorporate graduates' success on the job market, feedback from alumni and the reasons for dropping out determined by the Faculties. The University's large proportion of international students challenges it to develop a comprehensive and integrated concept of service offers at the central and decentral levels in order to provide a full range of support services to students,

be it initial advising after first contact, to academic and social guidance in advanced semesters, to assisting students seeking out internships, or to remaining in contact with graduates via an alumni network. Fortunately, high degrees of commitment towards this goal and a keen awareness for the need for collective action exist at all levels of the University.

Internationalisation geared towards a diversity of perspectives is an important and unique characteristic of the University which should be found at all levels of teaching and academics. The concept of sustainability, which itself links international and regional perspectives under one banner should also be explicitly addressed in the University's degree programmes. Internationalisation forms a key strategic element of the University's profile, and as such each degree programme should demonstrate an international undercurrent in terms of content or medium of instruction. In addition to manifold programme-specific matters, other potential areas of development include the establishment of a stronger connection between degree programmes and the realities and practices of regional industry, expanding services and offers dedicated to improving students' soft skills and greatly increasing the importance of research-based learning as a principle of knowledge transfer, in particular in master's degree programmes. All degree programmes should incorporate entrepreneurial and science communication skills as existing strengths into their curricula in an appropriate fashion. This also applies to the topics of sustainability and diversity in general.

All spheres of the University see digitalisation as a challenge, though one which is addressed on the basis of a competitive existing infrastructure. As new eLearning solutions are introduced, the Executive Board is keen to avoid isolated and expensive curricular-specific solutions by spearheading the development of a comprehensive technical concept for the University which includes IT infrastructure and accompanying advising services for the Faculties. The initial step will involve defining the goals, vision, required measures and resources needed for eLearning at the University, as well as establishing processes to promote the development of best practice examples and ensure their successful implementation. The recruitment of prospective students according to the strategic criteria of the University is essential for its planned marketing concept. Here, greater focus should be put on the University's coordinated presence in various online media.

In its swiftly-paced foundation phase, the newly-established Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences prioritised degree programme development. Now, the University as a whole is ready and motivated to turn its eyes towards the development of further qualification opportunities. The University aims to develop a new further qualification strategy which incorporates current considerations regarding potential offers, target groups and commercialisation models. New services (accompanied by appropriate marketing support) are set for development and later implementation over the course of the SDP period in the form of a central umbrella organisation for further qualifications.



3.2 STRENGTHEN APPLIED RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

3.2.1 RESEARCH

Modern societies require sound knowledge-based training for upcoming generations as well as the continuous generation of new knowledge and insight. Universities of applied sciences are the only institutions which unite knowledge-based training (academic education and further qualification) with the discovery of new knowledge (research and transfer between academia and industry). HSRW stands out in all performance dimensions thanks to an approach that embraces industry outside of the scientific system.

The University's performance dimensions are not founded on meticulously separated disciplines, but rather on an interdisciplinary approach capable of tackling real issues. Generating new knowledge and insight is a standard of quality, one which is further emphasised by embracing applied research as a bridge between basic research and real-world application.

In their individual contributions to the SDP, the Faculties conducted their own strength-weakness analyses which showed great potential in the field of applied research. The importance of research as a performance dimension in the eyes of all stakeholders suggests that the University should collectively develop a research strategy which taps into the significant potential of all researchers, students and other members of the University.

At the heart of our research activities is the drive to develop practical solutions that are as recursive as possible, i.e. developed in close cooperation with partners from the respective fields of application. We should strive to develop and maintain a strong network with commercial and not-for-profit enterprises as well as other research institutions regionally, nationally and globally. Here it should be noted that the University is already partnered with enterprises and

institutions when it comes to international collaborations. Relations and networks with the Netherlands offer another distinctive possibility, as they provide potential for collaborative research and development projects with cross-border impact. This collaboration can be seen in the region at large with joint research and development projects, internships, practical semesters and collaborative thesis projects with businesses, social organisations and partner universities operating at the local, national and international levels.

To promote internationality as a distinguishing feature of the University, particular emphasis must be placed on international research links within the framework of our research strategy. In the future, these efforts should become visible as an increase in the number of applications for international projects (particularly in the EU and the Rhine-Waal Euroregion). As a rule, both the University and the Faculties should encourage and support networking among researchers and colleagues abroad, for example by strengthening researcher exchange agreements and taking a more active role in international research communities.

Since its establishment, the University has dedicated much of its attention to promoting research. This resulted in an outstanding infrastructure for research activities, which in turn provides the University with competitive advantages. Utilising these in a more intensive and strategic fashion is an essential task for the future.

With the Centre for Research, Innovation and Transfer (ZFIT), the University has developed cross-faculty enabling and support structures which will see further development to tap into the significant potential in applied research. The organisational structure of ZFIT will be adjusted to new content requirements

and priorities of the University, in particular the two key areas of research support and knowledge transfer. In addition to improved service offers in connection with the application process, in the future ZFIT will feature a structured transfer of expertise and know-how through staff workshops focused on applying for research funding, securing external funding etc. This is expected to produce a sharp increase in the amount of external funding obtained over the planning period and a significant boost to interdisciplinary collaboration and networking within the University, thus expanding its research strengths and increasing its innovative potential and performance. In addition to the aforementioned increase in external funding and applications, emphasis will also be placed on the scientific and social benefit of proposed projects. Output factors such as publications, symposium contributions and patent submissions are also considered equivalent research achievements which ZFIT will promote via accompanying support in an advisory capacity.

Generating space for research is a common objective of both the Executive Board and the Faculties. New incentives were introduced with legislation enabling professors to reduce teaching hours in exchange for more hours for research. To take advantage of these incentives, the University aims to develop a new centralised awarding procedure that is both transparent in nature and based on performance criteria.

The Executive Board and the Faculties agree that the University should develop an internal seed fund for the purpose of initiating and/or strengthening international collaboration. This would allow for new binational PhD agreements, collaborative research projects and additional support for existing, internationally-oriented research (in collaboration with the University's own junior researchers, wherever possible).

These centrally distributed, project-oriented funds will encourage new research activities. The awarding procedures needed for these centralised incentive opportunities will be overseen by researchers,

application-based and competitive; the applications themselves will be reviewed by the Commission for Research and Knowledge Transfer.

Through a bottom-up approach, the University will identify its fields of competence and distil research foci that contribute to its unmistakable research profile, reflected, for example, on the nation-wide research map of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK). At the same time, the University will incorporate into its efforts existing and repurposed flagship projects, for example FabLab/GreenFabLab or the Tropical Greenhouse with Showcase and Showpiece Gardens. In connection with this strategy, the University will also examine which other institutional measures made possible by the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia are necessary or appropriate and issue guidelines, where applicable, for the establishment of these new internal structures.

The University strives to systematically promote the inclusion of students in research projects. To that end, it supports efforts to embed research-based learning approaches in curricula, where possible at the undergraduate, but primarily at the postgraduate level.

The University trains and encourages new generations of researchers through mandatory research-based scholarly work, thesis projects and, in particular, doctoral studies. All stakeholders agree that the University's research staff (WiMis) should be incorporated into research projects, that this process should be predictably linked to their continued professional development as researchers, and that the Graduate Institute of North Rhine-Westphalia should be involved in the process as well. The University is currently evaluating the possibility of developing a central pool of posts for doctoral candidates and researchers on fixed-term contracts, which could be allocated upon application via a review process overseen by researchers. Essentially, the positions would remain centrally funded, but researchers would be employed in a decentralised manner.

To systematically and comprehensively catalogue research achievements for both internal and external

publication, the University will build from the ground up a new core set of research data (a recommendation of the German Council of Science and Humanities) which is fed relevant data by all participants and serves to support the Faculties in their efforts to expand research activities. This will also serve as a proactive step towards opening new avenues of third-party funding with advanced eligibility requirements such as a core data set.

3.2.2 KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The continued development of knowledge transfer as a performance dimension has been eagerly anticipated by the region since the first founding concepts were presented, and has thus been an important goal of the University from the beginning.

During the SDP drafting process, the University took part in the publicly announced programme 'Innovative University of Applied Sciences' launched by the German federal and state governments. As part of the application process, the Executive Board and the accompanying steering committee were required to flesh out existing transfer approaches into a cohesive and competitive knowledge transfer strategy with elements eligible for funding.

The University's current positioning as a partner for research and knowledge transfer is clearly visible in its many collaborative agreements with regional enterprises as well as civic partners at the municipal and regional levels. Many collaborative agreements focus directly on regional needs, aiming to proactively tackle current and future issues and making positive contributions to regional economic and social development. With a broad understanding of innovation that includes both technological and social aspects, the University has grown from a socio-economic engine for regional development to a supra-regional driving force in the areas of interdisciplinary research and the 'Third Mission'. However, many at the University too often assume that off-campus stakeholders should come to us and 'scoop up' our information

and know-how themselves. Participative formats for research and knowledge transfer are only employed in a select few projects; there is still a lack of efficient mechanisms for including knowledge from the region directly into research and academics. The lecture series 'Studium Generale' in winter semester 2016-2017, which was dedicated to sustainability themes, provided a good example of how this could be accomplished.

Building upon its strengths, the University will develop its knowledge transfer strategy for the coming years in order to make full use of its related opportunities and potential. We are guided by the conviction that, in an innovative knowledge transfer system, all persons involved in the innovation process should not only generate and share new knowledge, but also take advantage of external knowledge and integrate it into the innovation process as well. Collaboration with political, cultural and civic society is considered just as important as collaboration with industry.

The University will begin to emphasise a broader understanding of knowledge transfer across the board. The phases of research, development and application will be recursively linked to one another. This requires not only appropriate structures and formats for collaborating with external partners, but also the ability for all participants to work on problems together as a network. This important skill – the ability to work with others in a network in order to generate new insights and transform them into innovations – is already practiced and encouraged at the University via research-based learning.

Neither the Faculties nor the University know the full extent of the many commendable knowledge transfer activities being conducted on an individual basis. Knowledge transfer will continue to rely on an individual initiative that is shown appropriate appreciation and support by the University. To increase our effectiveness in this field, however, the University must take a different approach towards knowledge transfer as a performance dimension by organising it in a more strategic and systematic fashion, documenting it,

conducting regular evaluations and communicating it more effectively both internally and externally. It is often impossible to delineate clearly between knowledge transfer activities and research projects, particularly at a university of applied sciences, which is why they will be systematically recorded in the planned core data set for research.

As a long-term effect of these measures, we envision a lasting and reciprocal expansion of perspectives between the University and the region. In addition, we strive for a greater inclusion of regional development concepts in research and knowledge transfer activities. This will include a strengthening of collaboration between the University and Rhine-Waal Euro-region in the future – an important development objective within the context of internationality at the University.

Accompanying processes, for example advising services regarding the exploitation of results or steps to founding a startup, will be strengthened across the board and in cooperation with internal and external partners in order to contribute to regional startups needing a boost in innovative potential as well. These services are available to students, but also professors and researchers at the University who wish to commercialise the results of a successful research project. By generating a better understanding of the details surrounding inventions and intellectual property rights, the University aims to increase the number of high-quality, patentable inventions and applications for similar intellectual property rights, thus increasing its supra-regional impact on innovation. In addition, professors with expertise in entrepreneurship and startups as well as ideas for other ways to spark the entrepreneurial spirit at the University will be systematically incorporated into this development process.

ZFIT was founded in 2010 to provide professional support and encouragement to the knowledge transfer activities of staff and students at the University. This laid the cornerstone for an active network between the University and industry. Future structures and

processes of the University's new knowledge transfer strategy will be built upon existing ZFIT structures and formats in the interest of open innovation systems and their stakeholders (as described in our understanding of knowledge transfer).

To complement the central coordination of knowledge transfer and innovation activities, decentralised support systems will be developed in the Faculties to offer targeted help to their students and educators engaged in knowledge transfer activities.

By promoting the transfer of know-how and brain power, students and alumni become ever more important resources for the region. This results in an increased number of projects, internships and theses being conducted in connection with the private sector and other external partners. To that end, the Career Service will see a strengthening of its role as a link between the University and the private sector.

Providing adequate time and support are hurdles for both research and knowledge transfer which the University will tackle. Knowledge transfer is a scientific achievement appreciated both on and off campus. As part of the new transfer strategy, all tried and true incentive systems found in the area of research support will be developed for the area of knowledge transfer as well.

3.3 SHAPE HSRW AS A SOCIAL SPACE

3.3.1 VALUES AND CULTURE

Values and culture are essential parts of the University's identity among its members, whose interactions in day-to-day contexts and in committees shape its true quality. The many contributions to the SDP drafting process prove that behaviour-guided social relationships and communication are part of a sustained effort to drive improvement. HSRW should be an environment in which all its members treat each other in an open, respectful, attentive, fair and responsible manner. Decision-making processes should be as transparent and participative as possible. The rich tapestry of cultural backgrounds represented at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences offers enormous potential, but can also result in friction. Thus, it is important to continuously and regularly discuss the values we strive for and, where at all possible, to come to a consensus on university culture endorsed by everyone involved.

Building upon this dialogue, the University will develop a code of conduct for its educators, staff and students which protects against discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity or any other diversity characteristic. Further deliberation is needed to develop ways to ensure the day-to-day observance of ethical standards. Observance of ethical standards in research is verified according to the guidelines for good scientific practice issued by the German Research Foundation.

The Faculties offer numerous trust-building services for students; these services will be enhanced and expanded in the future. The number of Link Professors, confidantes for students, will be increased and their distribution among the Faculties will be kept on equal footing as much as possible.

With particular regard to equal opportunities, sustainability and internationality, a new range of leader-

ship seminars for people in managerial positions at the University will be developed (with outside support). The University plans to offer an introductory workshop for new employees which clarifies its canon of values and discusses the culture of communication aspired to.

To ensure low thresholds for participation in its committees, the University will introduce new language-based measures to address the challenges of diversity. This includes English courses for employees which aim to facilitate a broad collaboration (in English) among as many members of the University as possible. Similar measures are planned in German for our many international students studying in English.

3.3.2 RHINE-WAAL UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AS AN EMPLOYER

We strive to be an attractive, socially responsible and competitive employer for all groups of employees. Many aspects of the working relationships are regulated by law, collective bargaining agreements and funding conditions; the University is afforded only a small amount of leeway here. Nevertheless, the University uses this leeway to pursue its goals. While clear standards are given in the area of collective bargaining agreements, similar standards must be developed or updated in other areas. The Executive Board, the Faculties and administrative staff will continue to work together to ensure that new standards are implanted in a unified manner. In line with our goal of actively promoting the professional advancement of women in all areas, a corresponding framework plan was developed and implemented through collaborative effort. Gender equality measures for (potential) employees are in place and active.

New personnel management guidelines and rules will be developed and implemented via a workshop programme for employees in managerial positions. This also serves to improve communication between central administrators and the heads of the Faculties.

The University and Faculties will continue to dedicate a large portion of their attention to recruiting and expanding the qualifications of research, technical and administrative personnel. To that end, the University will develop a new structural concept for personnel-oriented goals and opportunities. In preparation, the Executive Board has suggested to the Faculties that they conduct a resource-neutral comparison of future degree programmes which incorporates budgetary constraints and strategic considerations regarding future professorships and their fields of expertise. The methodical and systematic recruitment of qualified junior researchers and international professors (e.g. from the United States) – preferably female candidates in the case of equal suitability – is a goal we strive for.

The University offers attractive employment conditions for both professors and researchers with unlimited contracts. Nevertheless, the University strives for improvements in the shape of university-wide guidelines on reductions in teaching hours to promote exceptional work in teaching, research and transfer, as well as providing support and tutelage services. Additional opportunities in professional development will also be introduced for research staff. The University aims to implement similar options for researchers on fixed-term contracts whose professional development serves to improve subsequent employment opportunities, as the University is largely restricted in the number of available unlimited contracts given current legislation. In response, the University will both increase its range of professional development options, and provide more opportunities to participate. The University also plans to develop a mentoring concept for female researchers (this is planned for implementation as part of an internal idea competition for innovative gender equality projects of the University, which is supported by federal funds intended to promote more professorship opportunities for women).

To promote and improve the motivation, productivity and innovative thinking of administrative and research staff, the University will develop a compre-

hensive personnel development concept focused on groups as well as individuals and their development opportunities. A university-wide feedback management system will be implemented, and the culture of a learning organisation will be established in this area as well.

The University will implement the jointly developed codex for good employment conditions. As a family-friendly institution, the University will continue to participate in related audits and the Executive Board will work together with the staff councils to develop improved, family-friendly forms of employment for all employees, which can include, for example, home office, telecommuting and new working time models.

Childcare services will continue to be expanded as appropriate to address employees' needs. Family-friendly measures will be implemented for students, as well. In addition, a new corporate health management system will be introduced and we will aim to create new opportunities for employees to take advantage of our sport and music opportunities.

3.3.3 A PARTNER FOR THE REGION

The region needs the University and the University needs the region. We are an employer, a partner, an educator and a potential driver of innovation. With our proximity to the Netherlands, the University's positioning is simultaneously regional and international.

All persons involved in the SDP drafting process agree that enormous opportunities can be unlocked by strengthening the University's strategic connection to the surrounding region. This applies to all performance dimensions, which are identified, evaluated and utilised in a systematic and collaborative manner both centrally and in the Faculties. In addition to the opportunities and potential outlined in the previous paragraphs, prioritising the region in all strategies

of the University presents an enormous opportunity for development. Ongoing regionally-focused initiatives are met with both appreciation and support. In the future, the University will systematically identify and record these efforts in order to drive continued strategic development in this spectrum of services, as well as for official reporting purposes and marketing campaigns. Regional development processes, as well as existing network structures such as the Rhine-Waal Euroregion, will see more active, coordinated involvement from both the Executive Board and other members of the University in the future.

As part of a planned networking management, the University aims to systematically summarise and consolidate its many existing contacts according to their respective collaborative activities, as suggested by the Faculties during the SDP process. A free exchange of information across the entire University forms the backbone of an effective and efficient network of contacts to the region, which is an essential part of the HSRW knowledge transfer strategy.

In this regard, the University will examine good examples of regional education networks as well as suggestions for mentoring partnerships with schools and innovative forms of exchange via events. A particular strength of our University lies in future-oriented areas such as Industry 4.0, 3D manufacturing and ecological sustainability, which offer a diverse range of possibilities for strengthening our role as a driver of innovation both in and for the region. Students will be incorporated into all activities, which in turn will strengthen the role of Career Service as an important interface between the University and the region. Both the local region and the Rhine-Waal Euroregion will be key elements of our future marketing strategy.

3.3.4 TRANSPARENT INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The University strives to increase clarity regarding areas of responsibility and contact persons, as well

as clarity in its approach to online communication, particularly email. Accordingly, comprehensive communication guidelines will be developed on the basis of the University's commonly shared values in order to achieve the highest possible transparency in decisions, communication channels and areas of responsibility both within and without the University (ticket systems, process descriptions, service point schemes etc.) These guidelines will address existing deficits with regard to clear employee substitution rules and scheduled communication between sessional lecturers and professors, as well as the regular communication of central reports and key figures to all staff members. Further, the flow of information between administrators and researchers will be intensified in order to promote a mutual understanding of operational processes, priorities and necessities. Regular communication events will also be introduced on crosscutting themes such as gender and diversity, as well as the rights and responsibilities of staff members.

3.4 OPTIMISE STRUCTURES AND USE RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY

The swift manner in which the University was established was only possible through the strong commitment and intrinsic motivation of all staff members. During this first phase, the main priority was to establish and ensure the operational capacity of the University at all levels and in equal measure. In the interest of goal-oriented management of the annual budget, existing instruments must be continuously reviewed and amended. For that reason, the University will introduce new academic controlling mechanisms and expand its existing financial controlling structures. A shared reporting system will be developed to provide key information in a systematic and targeted manner to all decision-makers at the University, thus strengthening their ability to steer the University and develop new strategies.

Just as the state government would impose budget cutbacks on the University for lack of performance, similar consequences could result with regard to the internal distribution of funding. We are therefore dedicated to optimising our structures and using our resources in a sustainable manner to secure and consolidate our position as a forward-thinking and competitive institution in a diverse, globalised world and in an era of demographic change. The anticipatory planning of resource requirements and distribution (derived from the goals in the SDP/FDPs), e.g. for new teaching staff, materials and space, as well as a needs-based investment budgeting for technical facilities, equipment etc. should be used to ensure optimal quality and performance in academics, teaching and research within the scope of the University's resource framework.

The University enjoys a top notch, modern infrastructure. However, in areas with shorter innovation cycles, for example IT, reinvestment issues are now beginning to emerge. In addition, the University's actual growth considerably exceeded the figure of 5,000 students used for initial planning purposes, pushing our facilities to their limits and requiring additional off-campus facilities. To achieve our goal of offering a modern, reliable infrastructure, the University must introduce a new reinvestment plan geared towards common needs, and budget its available resources accordingly. Planning for future facilities will be determined based on the teaching concept of the University and how the Faculties utilise their existing capacity.

Though it operates largely independently, as a public institution the University is subject to specific laws which define its many duties, rights and responsibilities. How these apply to members of the University, for example the rights and duties

concerning secondary employment, mail or travel expenses, should be made more clear and understandable.

With its extensive documentation of process descriptions and workflows for its many day-to-day and ongoing tasks, the University has developed a solid foundation for operational efficiency. As a learning organisation, a content adjustment with regard to overarching goals and sub-goals will be conducted in order to achieve greater efficiency and control. In the day-to-day operations inherent to a higher education institution, the University considers quality service a high priority across the board. Good service requires customer-oriented, user-friendly support for teaching, research, transfer and professional development, particularly from the University's administrative staff. This notion of service, and a culture of collaborative partnership, will be enshrined in a university-wide model of leadership. The aspired-to level of service will be clarified in more detail in order to ease implementation.

Implementing technical solutions to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of work processes is a key component of the digitalisation strategy that we will continue to pursue. This includes the digitalisation of administrative workflows in conjunction with affected employees. To that end, not only will the University continue to develop its IT infrastructure, but also continue to promote digitalisation across the board.



ACADEMIC SCORECARD AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

4. ACADEMIC SCORECARD AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

From the earliest stages of the SDP drafting process, the strategic goals developed therein were intended to serve as a roadmap for the University over the next five years. With this in mind, the SDP steering committee discussed possible future strategic management mechanisms for the University. Over the course of numerous discussions, the Executive Board and the Faculties came to a consensus that the Academic Scorecard (ASC) would be a good way to structure the goals and track progress during the SDP implementation period. The ASC enjoys a proven track record at other universities in Germany and internationally, and we expect the same results from the ASC, namely a solid structuring of SDP goals and a clear overview of their implementation.

The ASC is a university-specific variation on the 'balanced scorecard' (BSC), an evaluation instrument originally developed by Kaplan and Norton for companies as an alternative to classic, figure-based instruments for strategic planning and management. As the name suggests, the balanced scorecard offers a 'balanced' look at various aspects of a company, with a particular emphasis on cause-effect relationships.

As internal discussion rounds progressed, participants came to realise that the 'balance' between various dimensions, for example research and teaching, was one of the many challenges facing universities which also defined the ASC as a strategic instrument. Other advantages, e.g. ordering of strategic goals, their operationalisation, defining measures to be implemented and subsequently measuring their degree of implementation, all address in their own right the challenges posed by a clear and transparent development process for the strategic management of the University.

As the decision to use the ASC was made during the ongoing drafting process for this SDP, a complete and final version of the ASC will not be presented here at this time. Nevertheless, the dimensions of the future ASC of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences have already been set out in writing and reflect the goals and measures planned within the scope of this SDP in the figure below. As agreed upon by the Faculties and committees, a participatory development process will commence shortly after ratification of the SDP in order to define the essential measures, responsibilities and indicators that will be used to measure the extent of implementation.

Our strategic framework is built upon the principles of internationality and sustainability, and our mission is to arrive at a unique selling point (USP) via this strategic

framework. The extent to which we achieve this will be tracked via the four dimensions of the ASC: Facilitate Multidisciplinary Education, Strengthen Applied Research and Knowledge Transfer, Shape HSRW as a Social Space, and Optimise Structures and Use Resources Sustainably (see Fig. 1):

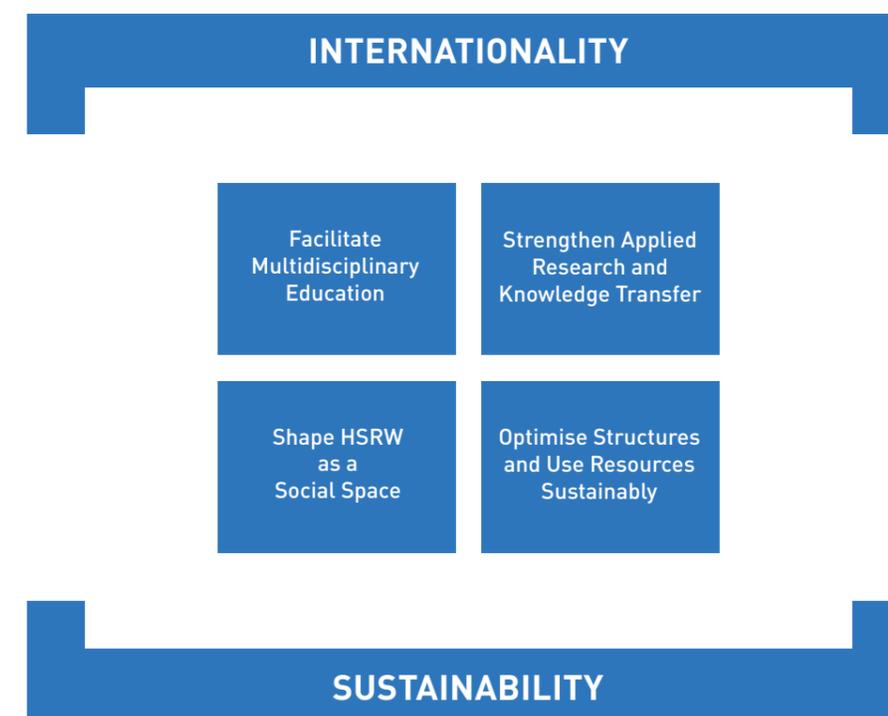


FIGURE 1: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND DIMENSIONS OF THE ASC

The strategic framework was previously discussed in chapter 3, and the four dimensions of the ASC correspond to the four sub-chapters of chapter 4. The University must find a way to balance these four dimensions equally. The first two dimensions are derived from the University's official mandate. As a university of applied sciences with a strong connection to research, we must endeavour to keep a proper balance between teaching and research. Yet offering modern, high-quality teaching is an essential goal which, as we perceive it, cannot be achieved without a hybrid approach combining teaching and research. At the same time, we value and appreciate the diversity of our members, the commendable collaboration and communication, and our responsibility towards the region. These goals are only achievable if we use both financial and non-financial resources in a sustainable manner and continually optimise our structures.

Strategic objectives are defined within each dimension and operationalised in turn through numerous specific goals. A group of measures is then defined to achieve each specific goal. Progress is measured through agreed-upon indicators and target values.

The aforementioned indicator development process will serve to determine the extent to which specific target values should be allocated to achievement indicators or, alternatively, whether general target improvements would be preferable to begin with.

Our strategic management strategy should be compatible with the dynamic of a learning university. Accordingly, the question of a continuous review and revision cycle for our strategic goals should be considered with the framework of our ASC-based strategic management strategy. After commencement of the SDP period, intervals will be set in order to verify the continued up-to-dateness of the strategic and specific goals of the SDP and the appropriateness of the proposed measures.

4.1 DIMENSIONS AND GOALS OF THE ACADEMIC SCORECARD

DIMENSIONS	STRATEGIC GOALS	SPECIFIC GOALS
FACILITATE MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION	(1.1) Maintain our position in Germany as a leader in internationalisation	(1.1.1) HSRW is seen as an example of good practice by other education institutions
		(1.1.2) Increase the international character of degree programmes
	(1.2) Enshrine sustainability as a core characteristic in our profile	(1.2.1) HSRW imparts its stakeholders with expertise in the area of sustainability
	(1.3) Ensure a high standard of teaching quality	(1.3.1) Define and implement quality objectives for academics and teaching at HSRW
		(1.3.2) Increase the number of teaching staff
	(1.4) Respect our diversity of lifestyles	(1.4.1) Increase flexibility in study locations and times
		(1.4.2) Implement measures to improve study-life balance
	(1.5) Optimise student recruitment, academic success and graduate employability	(1.5.1) Ease academic transition period
		(1.5.2) Consolidate and expand dual-vocational and part-time study options
		(1.5.3) Qualified students are recruited, with special attention paid to gender balance
(1.5.4) Ensure the employability of graduates		
(1.6) The University's profile is more clearly defined in terms of professional development	(1.6.1) Develop a strategy for professional development and implement the first steps	

DIMENSIONS	STRATEGIC GOALS	SPECIFIC GOALS	
STRENGTHEN APPLIED RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER	(2.1) Strengthen international research projects	(2.1.1) Empower international research via 'brain power'	
		(2.1.2) Bolster research conducted jointly with international institutions	
	(2.2) Increase the visibility and reputation of the University in research and knowledge transfer	(2.2.1) Develop solutions to issues facing society and industry	
		(2.2.2) Develop a research strategy	
		(2.2.3) Continue to develop space to freely conduct research	
		(2.2.4) Strengthen knowledge transfer in the region	
		(2.2.5) Adjust support measures for research and knowledge transfer	
		(2.2.6) Embed the University in the Rhine-Waal Euroregion	
	OPTIMISE STRUCTURES AND USE RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY	(3.1) Offer a needs-based infrastructure	(3.1.1) Continue to develop infrastructure according to current needs
			(3.1.2) Permanently maintain a modern technical infrastructure, in particular IT (hard- and software)
(3.2) Ensure a purposive use of budget funds		(3.2.1) Secure a targeted distribution of budget funds	
		(3.2.2) Ensure adequate revenues	
		(3.2.3) Ensure sustainable fiscal management	
		(3.2.4) Strengthen commercial, social and ecological effects in our areas of action, particularly in the interest of sustainability	

DIMENSIONS	STRATEGIC GOALS	SPECIFIC GOALS
SHAPE HSRW AS A SOCIAL SPACE	(3.3) Establish needs-oriented support for the strategic goals of the University	(3.3.1) Continue to develop central and decentral processes
		(3.3.2) Increase internationality among members of the University
		(3.3.3) Update and implement new marketing concept
	(4.1) HSRW is an enjoyable place to work and study, and assumes responsibility for meaningful family and diversity policies	(4.1.1) Implement and establish audit of family-friendly policies
		(4.1.2) Embrace diversity on campus and in our organisation
	(4.2) The University treats its members with respect and trust, and maintains a reliable culture of information	(4.2.1) Improve internal communication
		(4.2.2) A clear customer and service orientation drives our staff
	(4.3) The University is a 'learning organisation'	(4.3.1) Strengthen personnel and organisational development to maintain and improve productivity and innovative potential of administrative and research staff
		(4.3.2) Institute a knowledge management system
		(4.3.3) Develop a culture of giving and receiving feedback
(4.3.4) Continue to develop QM system		

ANNEX: STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT – PROCESS AND CHALLENGES

Since 2009, Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences has grown and expanded at a considerable pace. Each new semester set and broke the enrolment record of the previous semester; an impressive, but also somewhat alarming development for many members. The swift growth of the University resulted in quite a bit of renown and respect, but it resulted in numerous challenges as well.

Responsive planning, focused particularly on acquiring new spatial accommodations, is needed and has been incorporated into the University's strategic development process accordingly.

The large number of students who decide to study at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences each year, and its continued growth since its founding, can be interpreted as clear indicators for both the future potential of its campuses and its range of degree programmes and services. This growth produces specific challenges.

Degree-seeking students in Germany should be able to communicate in German at a functional level. To that end, the University must ensure the necessary support structures through language courses, language tandems and other language-based services. This also allows our international students to engage with locals and enjoy their way of life both on campus and within the wider region. These enabling support structures require corresponding resources, however.

This is made more difficult by an increasing trend in politics of funding on the basis of fixed-term programmes, which makes it difficult to offer permanent contracts. In many cases, the University is allotted funding only for a specific period of time, for example the Higher Education Pact 2020 funding, which can only be used for fixed-term contracts. In addition to creating uncertainty among employees and compli-

cating planning, this situation results in a continuous fluctuation of staff and disrupts the flow of work at the University. Juggling these many issues linked to the swift growth of the University has left precious little time for comprehensive and long-term, strategic planning. Ensuring active participation was the primary goal of the SDP development process. Not as a goal unto itself, but rather to achieve widespread identification with the goals and strategies being developed. The following paragraph offers insight into the path the University took to achieve this objective.

The first step involved forming a steering committee responsible for the strategic direction of the process. To encourage active participation across the board, the steering committee was formed from a cross-section of representative groups: the Board of Governors, Executive Board, Senate Chair, the deans, representatives of academic and non-academic staff, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Disability Officers, the heads of both the General Student Committee (AStA) and the Student Parliament (StuPa), and finally representatives of CHE Consult GmbH as external process support. The steering committee named Professor Dr Klapdor as project coordinator. On 5 October 2015, the Executive Board invited all staff and all student committee representatives to a kick-off event in the picturesque Wasserburg Rindern. The event was dedicated to the theme of strategic university development and opened with a welcome address and introduction to the proposed SDP drafting process by President Heide Naderer. Afterwards, the participants split off into small, interdisciplinary groups to discuss pre-defined topics in numerous rounds. These in-depth discussions produced the first results of the drafting process, and were presented to the entire group at the end of the day. Over 200 people – more than two-thirds of HSRW staff – engaged in this first brainstorming process.

These initial results formed the basis for the subsequent steps in the SDP drafting process, and underwent further development in eight different working groups over the following months. Each working group set its own agenda and appointed a speaker. With (partial) support from external moderators, each of these eight groups discussed the topics and issues that move members of the University. The University's profile was scrutinised via a strength-weakness analysis focused on finding deficits and proposing remedies, allowing the first contours of a future strategic orientation to take shape. This extensive work was recorded in group-specific reports and published for all members of the University in the interest of transparency. The creative process did not end here, however, as members of the University were able to contribute ideas and suggestions or engage in continued discussion on the working groups' reports via an online forum.

For the next step, the Executive Board needed to develop a Strategic Guidance Paper. Each member of the Executive Board combed through the results of the working groups for topics and issues in his or her area of responsibility, which were then incorporated into his or her own problem programme. This assured that no topic or question remained unaddressed and that the Strategic Guidance Paper would reflect the hard work and contributions of our colleagues in the working groups. During a day-long retreat, the Executive Board members, again with support of an external moderator, combined their individual contributions to produce a Strategic Guidance Paper. At this point, the paper was given to the deans for feedback and suggestions, which resulted in some portions of the paper undergoing revision. The final version of the paper, representing the guiding framework for the Faculty Development Plans (FDPs), was then distributed to all University personnel.

At this point, work began in the Faculties on their own specific strategic development plans. Though the processes varied in detail, each Faculty began with an internal strategic conference open to all its members. These conferences then produced their

own working groups to develop individual chapters within their FDPs. These working groups were given the option of external support, as well. The individual contributions of the working groups were then combined into four FDPs which articulate the development strategies of the Faculties over the next five years. These combined plans were further discussed in the Faculty Conference, revised and reworked as the discussion dictated, and finally ratified by the respective Faculty Council. To conclude the long content development process, all members of the University were invited to Wasserburg Rindern for a second time to discuss the process and its current stages, as well as to address attendees' remaining questions or concerns.

From these texts on the strategic goals of the Executive Board, the Faculties and the colleagues in the working groups, an editorial group formed by the steering committee then produced this first Strategic Development Plan of Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences.

All universities in North Rhine-Westphalia are required by law to develop a Strategic Development Plan. How they do this is up to their discretion. These detailed descriptions of our SDP development process serve to show the extraordinary levels of participation involved. By choosing this path, the Executive Board endeavoured to introduce a new culture of participation across all spheres of the University. The engagement, the energy and the willingness to contribute to this kind of development process should not be taken for granted. Accordingly, the administration would like to express its sincere thanks.

Last, but not least, it should be noted that the SDP does not signify the end of all development-related activities, but the beginning of a new phase of implementation. The strategic objectives enshrined here are meant to guide us and our organisation as a whole over the next five years. Achieving these objectives will require much commitment and energy from all members of the University. Let the collaborative work begin!

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