

„Diversity“ and „Diversity-Policies“ at Goethe University Frankfurt – Definitions

Diversity at Goethe University Frankfurt

“Diversity” refers to the differences between people that result from individual characteristics and life courses as well as social conditions. This is linked to different accesses to resources, education or networks and political participation in society.

For Goethe University Frankfurt as an educational and research institution, the focus lies on the following diversity dimensions, which are also protected by the university’s Anti-Discrimination Directive:

- Sex, gender, gender identity
- Sexual orientation/identity
- Religious affiliation and belief
- Racist attributions (concerning appearance, assumed or actual origin and/or religion, name etc.)
- Personal and familial migration experience as well as international educational biographies
- Social background and familial educational background as well as social and financial status
- impairment of health – a chronic condition, a mental health issue or a disability
- Age
- Family status and care responsibilities within the family

Often, people do not belong or are assigned to only one diversity dimension. Depending on the social context, various diversity dimensions overlap and interact with each other, which results in specific social positioning, experiences and encounters with discrimination. The term “intersectionality” is used to describe this.

Depending on the social context, diversity dimensions have an impact on an individual, institutional and structural level. Consequences can be advantages, but also disadvantages that are not compensable by individual effort and performance alone.

In relation to universities, different opportunities for successful studies or a successful career within or outside academia ensue. The Diversity Policies of Goethe University Frankfurt address these issues, with the aim of creating equal opportunities and equity as well as counteracting all kinds of discrimination.

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Diversity Policies at Goethe University Frankfurt

The term “Diversity Policies” describes strategies and practices for handling diversity in institutions. Diversity Policies pursue several objectives: on the one hand, to render visible unequal social positioning and opportunities as well as the associated disadvantages and, on the other hand, to shape everyday interaction and social structures in such a way that they are based on mutual esteem and respect. Diversity Policies are anchored in a framework of statutory regulations (e.g. the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG), the Hessian Higher Education Act, in particular Section 3 (5)).

As an educational and research institution, Goethe University Frankfurt recognises its special social responsibility to foster a diversity-sensitive academic and social culture that is critical of discrimination in order to facilitate broad participation. Integrating a plurality of perspectives on an equal level can accentuate the potential of all university members and affiliates, expand and question existing knowledge, and enhance creativity and problem-solving skills.

Key elements of the Diversity Policies introduced at Goethe University Frankfurt in 2011 are the establishment of diversity-sensitive structures and processes, support for wide-ranging talents in studies and science, comprehensive anti-discrimination work, empowerment offers and measures to raise awareness. Diversity Policies make an essential contribution to shaping organisational and academic culture and are thus part of a future-oriented university.