



Executive Summary

Berlin University Alliance – Crossing Boundaries toward an Integrated Research Environment

With the founding of the Berlin University Alliance, Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin are aiming high: The four institutions' long-term goal is nothing less than to turn Berlin into an integrated research environment. By crossing boundaries of personal networks, institutions, and disciplines, the Alliance will be the nucleus and driving force in an outstanding ecosystem of universities and other research institutes, scientific collections, museums, cultural and political institutions, and start-ups and industry partners. Three main driving factors have provided an impetus for the formation of the Berlin University Alliance: First, the Alliance partners are convinced that the potential in Berlin for a far-reaching collaborative culture is unique in Germany. Second, they believe that the Alliance will greatly expand the realm of possibilities and opportunities for its individual partners. Third, the four partners are confident that the Alliance will substantially strengthen, focus, and strategically align the individual partner institutions.

Strategy, Objectives and Planned Measures

The Alliance's vision is to turn Berlin into an integrated research environment and one of Europe's leading science hubs. In order to reach this goal, the Alliance has defined five Objectives: (1) developing Berlin-wide joint research agendas focusing on societal issues of global importance, (2) fostering a Berlin-centered network of research and knowledge exchange, (3) bundling Berlin expertise for assessing and developing general standards for research quality and value, (4) establishing a Berlin-wide integrated space for careers and recruitment, and (5) creating a Berlin-wide network of research services and infrastructures. Three additional Cross-Cutting Themes shape the joint agenda: supporting diversity and gender equality, promoting research-based teaching and learning, and advancing strategic internationalization.



Objectives

Objective 1: Focusing on Grand Challenges

Grand Challenge Initiatives (GCI) will represent a thematic umbrella for the development of research agendas within the Alliance. Grand Challenge topics are based on strengths within the Alliance's research profile and the potential arising from their anchoring in Berlin's integrated research environment. The Alliance plans to introduce two main measures to achieve this objective: Flexible *Exploration Projects* and an *Office for Grand Challenge Initiatives* will support new variable and tailored formats for research networks and projects. In addition, the initiatives will receive substantial funding for project development within *Einstein Research Units* and for high-profile *Einstein Strategic Professorships* financed by the State of Berlin via its Einstein Foundation Berlin. Through these measures, GCI will contribute to the establishment of agile cross-institutional platforms that systematically stimulate and expand otherwise unlikely exchanges between researchers of diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Objective 2: Fostering Knowledge Exchange

The Alliance defines knowledge exchange as a multidirectional process in which academic ideas and research results are directed outward, and external perspectives and experiences then fed back into research. By bringing together their strengths in research, and consolidating their contacts within national and international politics, cultural institutions, in large and small companies, and other areas of society, the Alliance partners aim for an essential qualitative and quantitative advance in this exchange process. Three measures will serve this objective: An *Expertise and Knowledge Exchange Office* will support the introduction of formats that trigger joint innovation processes between researchers and experts from other sectors. *Research Forums* are transdisciplinary working groups consisting of researchers and experts from non-academic contexts who jointly explore a thematic field related to top-level research. Innovative Measures focusing on interactive events, new media, and professional communication training for researchers will create better public awareness of academic research as part of a joint *Science Communication*.

Objective 3: Advancing Research Quality and Value

The Berlin Alliance partners will pursue a joint agenda for developing and promoting the value, quality, integrity, and credibility of research. In order to achieve this goal, the Alliance will create a *Center for Open and Responsible Research (CORE)* that will structure and



coordinate an implementation process for value-based research governance elements and policies. In close collaboration with CORE, the Alliance will foster *Research and Reflection on Research Quality (R3Q)*, thus providing a nucleus for researchers already involved in meta-research. The *Berlin OpenX Initiative* will develop and support incentives for research openness and transparency, and it will help to develop an error culture (“Fehlerkultur”) that values such openness.

Objective 4: Promoting Talent

The success of the Alliance will depend on the success of its partners in attracting, retaining, and supporting the most outstanding researchers at all career stages. To this end, the Alliance partners will jointly develop a joint integrated space for careers and recruitment. The partners will harmonize the environment for doctoral training by establishing a *Berlin Graduate Studies Support* program. Furthermore, the Alliance will focus on supporting and advancing *Postdoctoral Careers Developments* through *Career Development Awards* and *Junior Research Groups*. For the sake of promoting the most promising researchers, the Alliance will jointly finance well-endowed tenure-track professorships (W2). *Berlin Recruitment Services* will optimize recruitment standards and processes, take account of diversity and gender equality considerations and a jointly run *Berlin Leadership Academy* for advanced researchers and administrators will foster leadership.

Objective 5: Sharing Resources

Access to excellent infrastructure is an important competitive factor for excellent research, as well as for attracting talented researchers. To make the best use of the existing, the Shared Resources Center (SOURCE) will coordinate the complex research infrastructure and information services offered by the four Alliance partners. As a single point of entry for researchers, SOURCE will provide services for resource usage ranging from large-scale equipment to data-management support, from open access publishing to complex IT services. The accompanying Research Infrastructure-related Community Building will provide (better) access to and joint usage of top-level research infrastructure and community-centric services in order to foster interdisciplinary research communities around cutting-edge research infrastructure.



Cross-cutting Themes

Diversity and Gender Equality

The partners will systematically develop and implement a strategy for the joint advancement of diversity and diversity studies. To this end, the *Diversity and Gender Equality Network (DiGENet)* will bundle existing standards and formulate new ones that will catalyze a cultural change toward a diverse and gender-sensitive research environment in the long term. In addition, by widening access to their most successful and desirable joint program to support female scholars on the way to a professorship, ProFiL, the partners will continue their joint efforts to strengthen gender equality. The long-term effects of this CCT will be to extend the leading position of the Berlin universities in gender equality to the field of diversity and to establish sustainable diversity-related standards within the Alliance that are internationally competitive.

Teaching and Learning

This cross-cutting theme bridges the often-distinct areas of top-level research and study, and connects excellent researchers to the world of students, and will implement two sets of measures. The *Berlin University Alliance Joint Courses and Programs* aims to substantially extend and develop joint study courses as part of the Alliance's integrated research environment. The *Berlin Student Research Opportunities Programx (StuROPX)* aims to create joint support programs for the advancement of students with an interest in research, thus strengthening the link between top-level research and teaching. Both measures enable students to gain broader access to courses at all four partner institutions, to profit from tailor-made training courses emerging from activities in research, knowledge exchange, and research quality, and to get actively involved in research projects in the context of the *Grand Challenge Initiatives*.

Internationalization

Each of the Alliance's five Objectives relies intrinsically on international input, inspiration, and resources. Building on prior achievements, the Alliance will implement a joint internationalization strategy focused on three core initiatives: The *Berlin Center for Global Engagement* will initiate new research connections with partners in emerging science regions, create a Berlin-wide platform for global expertise, and act as an advisory unit for the Alliance in science diplomacy. The *Joint Partnership Strategy* will set up a network of joint strategic partnerships with leading universities worldwide. The *Global Advancement Strategy*



increase the Alliance' Engagement with the EU through a joint liaison office in Brussels and with major foundations, multilateral organizations, and public funding organizations in countries outside of Germany.