

## **Memorandum of Understanding on the cooperation of higher education institutions within the framework of the ‘Bavarian Network for Sustainability in Higher Education’ (*Netzwerk Hochschule und Nachhaltigkeit Bayern*)**

This alliance regards itself as an **open network that has the objective of promoting sustainability at higher education institutions in Bavaria**. On the basis of a common understanding and vision of sustainability, the key players in the network support a whole-institution-approach to sustainability in higher education. **They pool their resources to implement sustainability in the fields of research, teaching, operations, governance, knowledge transfer and student initiatives**. The network thereby supports the recommendations of the German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz HRK*) designed to foster a culture of sustainability at higher education institutions, society's innovation labs for the future<sup>1</sup>.

### **Objectives**

The Network aims to improve the framework conditions for sustainability at, with and through the agency of Bavarian higher education institutions.

From this overall objective, the following partial goals are deduced:

- **The Network raises awareness and motivates**, by encouraging academic debate about the grand challenges of society and sharpening the understanding of sustainability in the context of higher education and across all faculties.
- **The Network connects people and organisations** by offering a platform for exchange of knowledge, methods and good practice examples as well as by initiating and supporting subject-specific working groups.
- **The Network creates transparency** by informing about current developments and activities connected to sustainability at Bavarian higher education institutions.
- **The Network advises** by providing higher education institutions and policy makers with recommendations for action and supporting them with the implementation of sustainability.

### **Vision**

The signatory higher education institutions (HEI's) support the objectives of the network. They acknowledge that sustainability is a central concept that will enhance their specific profiles and create common ground with the other HEI's. In performing their tasks they are guided by the principles of their common understanding and vision of sustainability. They develop and implement higher education-specific sustainability concepts and set individual priorities in their various fields of activity. In doing so, they contribute to shaping society for the future and also adopt a more responsible approach to the natural environment. For this purpose, the network engages in discourse with stakeholders from the fields of academia, politics, business and society in general.

### **Participation**

The signatory higher education institutions participate in the Network's activities and name contacts in the academic and administrative areas.

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<sup>1</sup> See the recommendations of the 25th General Assembly of the *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* of 6 November 2018 as outlined on page 4 of the document "*Für eine Kultur der Nachhaltigkeit*"

## **Common understanding and vision of sustainability**

*The following definition of sustainability was developed by key players of the Network through a participatory process within the framework of the project “Nachhaltige Hochschule: Kriterien zur Bestandsaufnahme” (sustainability in higher education: criteria for surveying the status quo) in 2017. The project was sponsored by the Bavarian State Ministry for the Environment and Consumer Protection.*

As central locations of self-reflection, the higher education institutions in Bavaria see themselves as jointly responsible for the complex transformational processes that are required to achieve a sustainable development of society.

Sustainability is perceived as an ethical principle that informs regulation and operations and that is central to the global endeavour to establish a future-orientated social contract of sustainability for the 21st century. At its core is the indivisible responsibility of society to safeguard our natural environment, social justice and economic performance over the long term.

The simultaneous and systemically integrated implementation of these standards aims to enable humane living conditions worldwide as well as to guarantee the ecological, economic and sociocultural resource base for satisfying the basic needs of present and future generations in the long term and to respect and protect nature in its own right and with its full biological diversity.

Sustainability gains academic and analytical potential if its relationship to other ethical political principles is clarified, conflicting goals and criteria for dealing with these conflicts are named and if qualitative and quantitative indicators for monitoring progress and success of sustainability processes are defined.

On the basis of their legal mandates – in particular as specified in the Higher Education Act, in particular Article 2 (1) thereof, in conjunction with Articles 1 (1) and 5 (3) of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, the remarks on sustainability of the Innovationsbündnis Hochschule 4.0 (higher education innovation pact 4.0), the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) recommendations with regard to a culture of sustainability at higher education institutions (dated November 2018) and the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNESCO World Action Programme ‘Education for Sustainable Development’, this aspiration is given concrete expression for (Bavarian) higher education institutions in the fields of research, teaching, operations, governance, knowledge transfer and student initiatives.

Sustainability is seen as a pluralistic guiding principle, that considers the diversity of perspectives and approaches to be an added value. At the same time, this diversity represents a challenge for the dialogue between faculties, higher education institutions and research institutions, as well as for the strategic pooling of existing potentials.

*The English text in this document only serves the purpose of providing information on the contents of the corresponding German text. Only the German text is legally binding.*

Further information: [www.nachhaltighochschule.de](http://www.nachhaltighochschule.de); Contact: [info@nachhaltighochschule.de](mailto:info@nachhaltighochschule.de)