



Guidelines on (more) non-discriminatory teaching

The HU has drafted its "demand for fair, cultivated and respectful cooperation between all university members" in its guideline/establishment agreement for respectful cooperation.

More specifically:

This demand excludes discrimination, bullying, stalking, and sexual harassment and violence – as well as toleration thereof. If such tendencies are not decisively counteracted, they compromise the personal development, sense of self-worth and freedom of action and decision of those concerned.¹

But what is discrimination? "Discrimination occurs when the same is treated differently. Yet discrimination also occurs when people with different requirements are treated in the same way."² A guiding principle applies here: "The motive or intention is not significant. What is significant is whether discrimination is the result."³

This is especially true of teaching; teachers have a particular responsibility to provide an environment that is as respectful and free from discrimination as possible. Each lecturer at the HU can make a valuable contribution to making the university a more inclusive and diverse space. This includes for example increasing awareness of marginalized perspectives in the selection of teaching and learning content, but also affording students with complicated admission requirements a good and non-discriminatory teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, the particular capabilities and views of students of different backgrounds are to be considered and incorporated. Social categories that (can) lead to complicated admission requirements are, for example, a non-academic background, caring for relatives or children, physical or psychological impairments, gender, sexual orientation and national or social origin.

We would like to give you a few pieces of advice on how to make your teaching more inclusive and diverse. For this purpose, it is essential to

- consider the special needs of students with different starting conditions. This implies not only the legally required provision of alternative study and examination services via the disadvantage compensation,⁴ but also wherever possible barrier-free access to teaching and learning materials for students who due to pregnancy, caring for relatives/children, chronic illness, other physical or psychological limitations or language barriers are only able to participate in the course in a limited way.
- ensure the participation of students with children. If the children have a significant impact on the teaching, then a bilateral conversation with their guardian is to be

¹ https://gremien.hu-berlin.de/de/amb/2014/117/117_2014_RL%20und%20DV%20respektvolles%20Miteinander_DRUCK.pdf

² Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2013): Guidelines for Protection against Discrimination in Universities, http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Diskriminierungsfreie_Hochschule/Leitfaden-Diskriminierung-Hochschule-20130916.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, p.8.

³ *ibid.*, p.10, in bold in the original.

⁴ §109 ZSP-HU: "Anyone who because of disability or chronic illness, pregnancy, caring for and bringing up a child up to the age of 10, caring for close relatives who require nursing in accordance with the Home Care Leave Act, or for any other similar reasons is not in a position to earn credits or complete an examination on the designated date, within the designated amount of time, in the designated place, in the designated form or otherwise in the designated manner, will have that offset against these disadvantages." (ZSP-HU, https://gremien.hu-berlin.de/de/amb/2013/15/15_2013_AMB_ZSP-HU_2013-04-30_DRUCK.pdf, p.43.)

sought out and, if necessary, alternative opportunities for procuring academic qualifications to be indicated. (For further information, see the Family Support Centre guidelines.)

- avoid comments, insinuations or assumptions about appearance, presumed background, gender and origin of students. Even if such behavior is intended to be conducive to an informal teaching environment, it is often perceived by students as offensive or lacking in respect. Likewise, performance feedback should always be given while respecting the personal dignity of those concerned, in order to ensure a respectful environment. As a rule, bilateral conversation with students is preferable to criticizing them in front of others.
- ensure respectful interaction between students. Personal attacks and unruly talk that may hinder the participation of students with complicated admission requirements should be prevented and any complaints about discriminatory remarks and behavior sensitively and promptly investigated, if necessary by bringing in external mediation bodies.⁵ In order to contribute to a learning environment in which all students can develop as freely as possible, it may be helpful to establish agreement on how to interact with each other at the beginning of the course.
- respect the students' own self-descriptions and self-definitions – this also includes addressing those concerned with first names and/or personal pronouns that differ from those on official documents, as the case may be.
- pay attention to diversity of content and examples as well as non-discriminatory language in teaching content. One possibility is to use the self-descriptions of discriminated groups ("Sinti and Roma", "black Germans", "intersex people") and eliminate stereotyping. This applies to e.g. the selection of texts and content used in the course, but also to the choice of explanatory examples.

We hope these guidelines have provided suggestions for interaction that is as respectful and non-discriminatory as possible. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Further links:

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2013): Guidelines for Protection against Discrimination in Universities, http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Diskriminierungsfreie_Hochschule/Leitfaden-Diskriminierung-Hochschule-20130916.pdf?__blob=publicationFile
<http://www.diversitaet.uni-mainz.de/tipps-fuer-hochschullehrende/#>

Centre for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies, AG Lehre (2016): Teaching that is critical of discrimination. Food for thought from Gender Studies, online at <https://www.gender.hu-berlin.de/de/studium/diskriminierungskritik-1/broschuere-der-ag-lehre-diskriminierungskritische-lehrendenkanstoesse-aus-den-gender-studies>

HU language guidelines will also be appearing shortly.

⁵ See: https://gremien.hu-berlin.de/de/amb/2014/117/117_2014_RL%20und%20DV%20respektvolles%20Miteinander_DRUCK.pdf