

Mission Statement for Open Science at the Berlin University Alliance

Version 1.4¹ (Stand: 15.11.2023, translated on September 6, 2024)

Background

A commitment to promoting and deepening research quality and open research as integral components of excellence research has been a pillar of the Berlin University Alliance since it was founded. The Alliance has thus made it a priority to exploit new potential arising from its diversity while simultaneously addressing the question of how publicly funded research, teaching, and knowledge transfer can be made more transparent, inclusive, and accessible in order to confront current and future societal challenges.

To this end, the Berlin University Alliance builds on the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities², the German Research Foundation's Guidelines for Safeguarding Good Research Practice,³ the European Commission's Open Science Policy development process⁴, and the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science.⁵ The Alliance's strategy is also informed by existing policies on open access and research data, by the statutes of the partner institutions on good research practice, and by the requirements of the Berlin Higher Education Act on openly accessible research reports.⁶ Following the successful Berlin Open Access Strategy (2015)⁷, which was co-designed by the partners, the Berlin University Alliance is committed to developing the regional initiative Open Research Berlin⁸ together with our partners in the Berlin research environment, and strives to actively contribute to its success with its Mission Statement for Open Science.

The Berlin University Alliance has thus adopted the following Mission Statement⁹:

¹ The mission statement has been developed since March 2022 in a consultative process with 100 participants from the four Alliance partners and the Head Office of the Berlin University Alliance. The version of the resolution was finalized by a group of eight representatives in April 2023, and then submitted to the Executive Board (May 8, 2023) and the Board of Directors of the Berlin University Alliance (May 22, 2023) for approval. Subsequently, the mission statement was discussed, supplemented, and adopted by all Academic Senates and the Faculty Council of Charité (Freie Universität: November 15, 2023; Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: September 19, 2023; Technische Universität: November 15, 2023; and Charité: November 6, 2023).

² <https://openaccess.mpg.de/Berliner-Erklärung> (14.3.2023)

³ https://www.dfg.de/foerderung/grundlagen_rahmenbedingungen/gwp/ (14.3.2023)

⁴ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/open-science_en (14.3.2023)

⁵ <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-science?hub=66535> (20.4.2023)

⁶ Berlin State Higher Education Act (Berliner Hochschulgesetz - BerlHG): Section 41 Research reports. URL: <https://gesetze.berlin.de/perma?d=jlr-HSchulGBE2011V27P41>

⁷ Senat von Berlin (2015) Open-Access-Strategie für Berlin. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/refubium-26319> (20.4.2023)

⁸ <http://www.open-access-berlin.de/strategie/index.html> (17.11.2023)

⁹ A mission statement expresses a vision, builds on what already exists, articulates basic goals, and contributes to the understanding of standards and goals among all members of the partner institutions. The mission statement provides a guiding framework and reference document for future strategies and actions. The Mission Statement for Open Science thus shares the self-conception of the teaching mission statements of Freie Universität Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin and the teaching mission statement currently being developed at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (as of March 14, 2023).

Our Vision

The Berlin University Alliance is committed to the principle of Open Science. As one of the leading research alliances in Europe, we are committed to making research transparent, collaborative, and reusable.

What is Open Science?

By Open Science, we mean practices that aim to shape the entire research process – from the development of research ideas to the publication and reuse of research results – according to the principles of inclusion and collaboration, transparency and accessibility, reusability, and validated progress.¹⁰ These principles can also be applied to ensuring research quality and evaluating researchers.

Why Open Science?

With the proliferation of digital technologies, increased demands on quality assurance, and changing societal expectations, research is facing new challenges that affect the way it works. Openness in the research process, together with the potential of digitization, presents advantages for us researchers and research institutions. It supports up-to-date science communication, increases in the efficiency of the dissemination of results, and contributes to the quality assurance of research by virtue of transparency of research processes and their reproducibility.¹¹ In addition, Open Science fosters collaboration with society, responsiveness to current and urgent problems, and technical and social innovation, thus also strengthening trust in science.

Building on what already exists

Open access to research publications is already widely and successfully practiced in many disciplines.¹² There is a growing trend towards the sustainable provision and opening up of research data according to the FAIR criteria.¹³ In addition, many of the researchers at the Berlin University Alliance institutions make their work processes transparent (Open Methodology), apply open peer review procedures, and provide software and hardware or open educational resources (OER) under open licenses. The partners also practice and support inclusive and collaborative approaches to Open Science such as citizen science, patient participation, transdisciplinary approaches or open innovation. It is important to build on these developments within the Berlin University Alliance and to promote and deepen them for the benefit of an open Berlin research environment.

Responsible Openness

Making science as open as possible comes with risks and limitations. As an alliance, we are aware of the great responsibility that comes with calling for more openness in the research

¹⁰ <https://viennaprinciples.org/> (14.03.2023)

¹¹ German Research Foundation (DFG), 2022. "Open Science as Part of Research Culture. Positioning of the German Research Foundation". Bonn: German Research Foundation (DFG)., p. 7. <https://zenodo.org/record/7193838>.

¹² Kindling, Maxi, Jenny Delasalle, Pamela Finke, Steffi Grimm, und Michaela Voigt. 2022. „Open-Access-Anteil bei Zeitschriftenartikeln von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern an Einrichtungen des Landes Berlin: Datenauswertung für das Jahr 2020 und Analyse der Entwicklung der Open-Access-Anteile 2016–2020“. <https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15778>

¹³ The acronym FAIR stands for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Cf. <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/> (14.03.2023)

process. We therefore take into account the needs and ethical, infrastructural and legal requirements of science communication, data formats, and working and exploitation methods of the various disciplines.¹⁴

Our Mission

In order to achieve the goal of an open Berlin research environment it is our mission as an alliance:

- to support a change in the publishing culture towards a diverse, non-profit, scientific community-driven Open Access culture for research results
- to promote joint continuing education opportunities for members of our institutions and to embed knowledge and skills for Open Science practices at an early stage in undergraduate and graduate education
- to encourage the joint expansion of services and support for various Open Science practices and to each contribute our individual strengths and competencies in doing so
- to provide a sustainable technical and organizational infrastructure for modern research data management together with other key stakeholders in the Berlin area
- to assess, as an alliance, new and diverse incentives for the adoption of Open Science practices
- to collaborate in line with international initiatives for transparency, appropriateness, and progressiveness in the evaluation of individual researchers and research teams
- to raise awareness for Open Science and how to promote it in relevant academic support areas
- to promote research and implementation projects on the various Open Science practices that reflect and support its embedding and deepening in the everyday life of the disciplines
- to engage in dialog with policymakers to promote Open Science and to create the necessary financial, organizational and legal conditions.

A Living Mission Statement

The Mission Statement for Open Science at the Berlin University Alliance is a living document. For this reason, the Berlin University Alliance will regularly provide researchers, lecturers, students, and employees from academic support services with the opportunity to jointly reflect on and – where necessary – further develop the vision and the assumptions, and principles upon which it is based.

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¹⁴ German Research Foundation. 2022, S. 7.