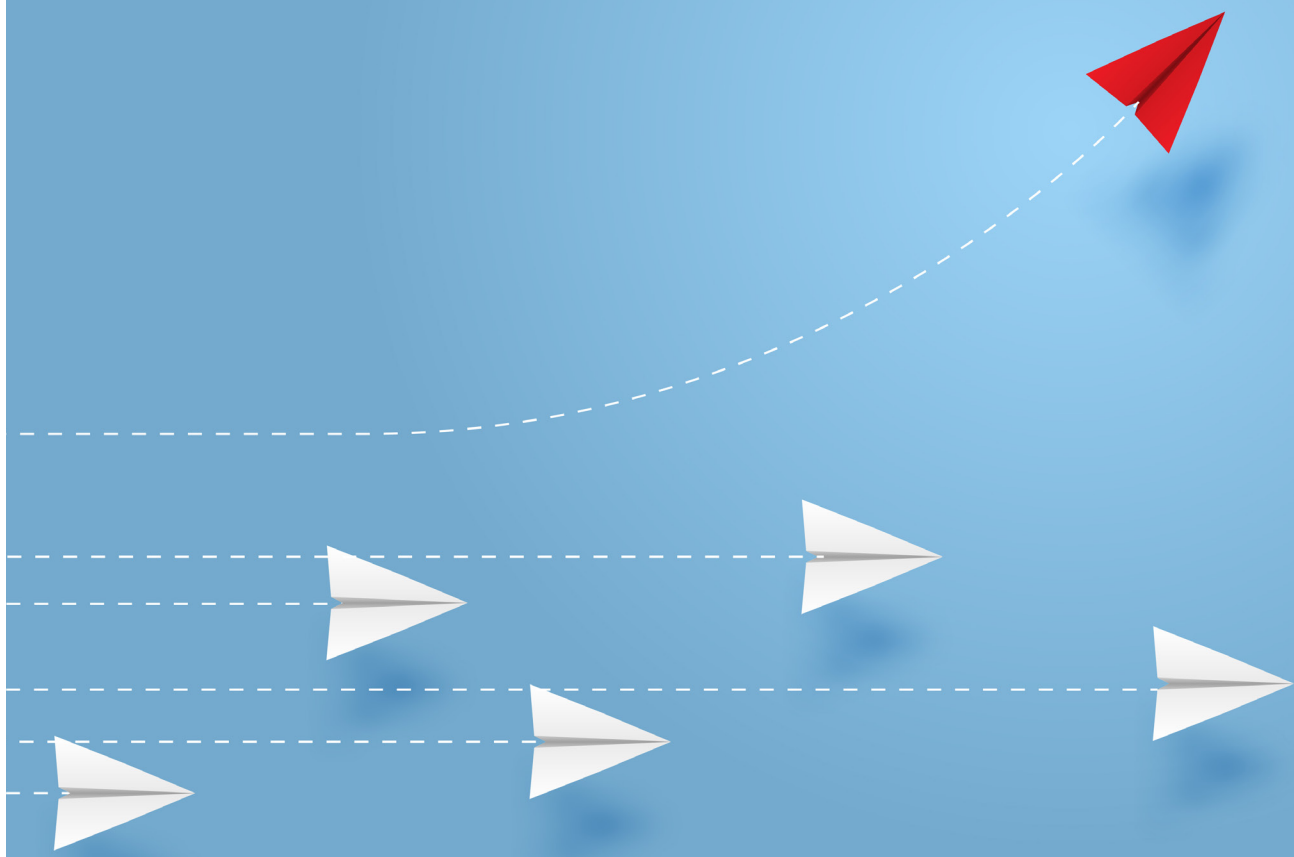




Professional Development Strategy

2025 – 2030



Science for Society
Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg

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Introductory remarks

**Dear staff members of the University of Würzburg,
Dear colleagues,**

The changes we have undergone in the past few years have led us to critically review our 2016 professional development policy and to realign it to address the challenges of the coming years. The result of this process is a professional development strategy for the 2025-2030 period.

We are a place of education, research and innovation. We help pave the way for the development of society. We are a community in which different cultures – whether national, academic, social or work-specific ones – learn and work together.

Our deeply felt responsibility to society to generate research findings and to serve as a beacon for them is expressed in our guiding principles: ‘Science for Society’ and ‘Veritati – Committed to the Truth’. These are the distinctive pillars of the mindset and of the actions of the University of Würzburg.

The people who research, study, learn and work with us do so in an environment that sees the freedom of opinion as a guiding value and encourages them to form critical opinions about issues and to be open and tolerant of diverse opinions. They do so in an environment that shows how the power of the argument, of rational discourse and of critical engagement can un-

fold in a culture that is built on lively and appreciative interaction. We see it as our educational responsibility to society to enable all members of our university to base their actions on research findings and, in particular, on fact-based ones and to develop sustainable solutions for society on this basis. As a university community, we want to be a role model for society on how to shape a meaningful and future-ready world of work in such a way that we are not only prepared for the consequences of societal change but are also able to lead the way in finding innovative solutions to pressing global issues.

Our professional development strategy is intended to express how we will make the educational responsibility to society described above come to life. It explains the fundamental principles, goals and methods that will be used to implement our projects in the area of professional development. The strategy takes up the key ideas that have been mentioned, it highlights the skills that will need to be enhanced and outlines a learning and development framework for the professional and personal development of the people working in our university community.

We look forward to continuing our work with you!

Dr. Uwe Klug
Chancellor of the University

Prof. Dr. Caroline Kisker
Vice-President for Research and
Academic Career Development

The English text in this document is intended solely as a convenience to non-German-reading individuals. Any discrepancies or differences that may arise in the translation of the official German version shall not be legally binding.

Chapter 1: Our understanding of professional development

The goal of professional development at the University of Würzburg is to consolidate and develop the skills of employees, teams, organisational units and of the university as a whole as well as the attitudes that guide their actions. Our activities in the area of professional development are being planned with the current and future demands of the workplace in mind. Professional development provides working conditions in which employees experience a higher level of self-efficacy in their work activities in order to ensure their job satisfaction and success in the long term.

Here, professional development acts as both a starting point and an important tool to help implement, and ensure that we reach, the university's strategic development goals. Its central approach is to develop and implement activities that both align with the university's overall strategies and meet the needs of the university's individual organisational units. It thus aims to establish a balance between ensuring that the university reaches its strategic goals and ensuring that the identified needs of its individual organisational units are taken into account (demand orientation).

Together with Organisational Development, Professional Development supports and facilitates change at the university in the form of both personal and group-oriented learning processes. By doing so, it makes an essential contribution to creating a university culture that is recognisable both nationally and internationally and to raising the university's profile. Therefore, Professional Development and Organisational Development are linked inextricably, and they harmonise and coordinate their efforts.

However, professional development is not only an institutional responsibility. It is also one of the central responsibilities of each manager, a responsibility that cannot be delegated to others. Professional Development helps managers perform their responsibilities relating to the professional development of their team members in an appropriate manner.

The organisational unit 'Professional Development' has been created to ensure that the tasks mentioned above are carried out professionally. The team at Professional Development collaborates closely with the staff at other relevant areas of the university about cross-cutting issues including career development for early-career researchers, teaching, diversity and equal opportunity, internationalisation, health, conflict management and sustainability.

Together, these institutions form the university's Professional Development Network (PDN).

Chapter 2: Professional Development: tasks, responsibilities, processes, resources

Professional Development (Unit A.2) is the university's core centre of excellence and service provider in the area of professional development. As such, it is the first point of contact for the University Board, university committees, managers and employees for questions relating to professional development. It is involved in strategic processes and decisions in an advisory capacity and, on behalf of the University Board, carries out projects aimed at implementing the goals that have been agreed upon.

Professional Development is responsible for both the university's academic and support staff and has the following tasks and responsibilities. It:

- implements the professional development projects commissioned by the University Board with the assistance of other partners and contributes its own suggestions for new projects;
- advises the University Board on issues relevant to professional development;
- coordinates and advises the Professional Development Steering Committee and carries out additional tasks assigned by it;
- closely collaborates, within established structures, with the university's faculties as well as with those responsible for organisational development, diversity and equal opportunity, internationalisation, health and conflict management, sustainability and teaching. In the framework of the PDN, these stakeholders collaborate productively and, ensuring a clear division of responsibilities, coordinate the services and opportunities they provide in order to avoid duplications. In this way, they generate synergies and create space for new ideas, all with the aim of providing their target groups with a wide range of opportunities for professional development;
- brings together all of the existing services and opportunities in the area of professional development and staff training and presents them in a target group-oriented and transparent manner, e.g. on the university website;
- provides support during recruitment processes for leadership positions, both in the area of non-academic support staff and in the area of academic staff;
- advises additional target groups, identifies their needs, and determines these can be met;
- builds networks with national and international partners and exchanges ideas and information with professional development professionals at other universities and non-university organisations.

To ensure that these tasks are carried out proficiently, the University Board will, within the means at its disposal, provide Professional Development with an infrastructure that meets the organisational unit's needs and will ensure that the unit is appropriately staffed.

Chapter 3: Steering our activities in the area of professional development

A steering committee will be set up to monitor our activities in the area of professional development; permanent in nature, this committee will strategically coordinate the implementation of our professional development strategy and the projects commissioned by the University Board. The committee will work as an intersection between the University Board and those implementing professional development activities at the university. The steering committee:

- ensures that the University Board involves, commissions and supports Professional Development;
- develops a university-wide professional development strategy (further) that aligns with the university's strategic goals and responsibilities and ensures that this strategy is implemented;
- sets standards for evidence-based approaches and target group-specific professional development measures at the individual, team and institutional levels based on needs assessments;
- sets up working groups on specific issues as needed.

The members of the steering committee come from different areas of the university to ensure a broad perspective on the diverse fields of activity of professional development. The steering committee comprises the following members:

- The Vice-President for Research and Academic Career Development,
- The Chancellor

These two University Board members have a double function: They represent the concerns of the University Board and serve as representatives of the University Board on the steering committee. At the same time, they chair the steering committee. They pass the steering committee's decision papers, ideas and suggestions on to the University Board and communicate to the steering committee the decisions taken by the University Board as a result.

- The Head of Professional Development (Unit A.2): In his/her capacity as head of unit, he/she coordinates the work of the steering committee. In consultation with the chairs of the steering committee, he/she regularly summons meetings, draws up the agendas of these meetings, invites guest attendees from within or outside the university, if necessary, ensures that records are prepared of the meeting outcomes and, on the basis of these, assigns tasks to others.
- The Head of Department 4: Service Centre Human Resources,
- The Managing Director of the Graduate Academy,

- A representative from the Centre for Teaching and Learning,
- A representative from the Women's Representative's Office,
- Another member from Unit A.2: Professional Development.

The steering committee may recruit additional members.

Chapter 4: Target groups of professional development

Professional Development is responsible for all university employees. Its programmes, services, and opportunities target all university employees, whether full-time, part-time, academic, or non-academic staff. It develops and implements these programmes, services and opportunities in accordance with the University Board's requirements, tailoring them to specific roles and responsibilities. Conversely, professional development projects, programmes and services may also be initiated by the target groups, which are systematised according to roles or responsibilities.

The target groups of professional development are:

- Managers, both in the area of academic staff and in the area of non-academic support staff, as well as project and team leaders,
- Professors,
- Tenure-Track and non-Tenure-Track junior professors,
- Academic staff holding permanent positions,
- Academic staff holding qualifying positions as well as fellows and post-doctoral researchers,
- Administrative and technical staff as well as staff in third-space roles,
- Trainees.

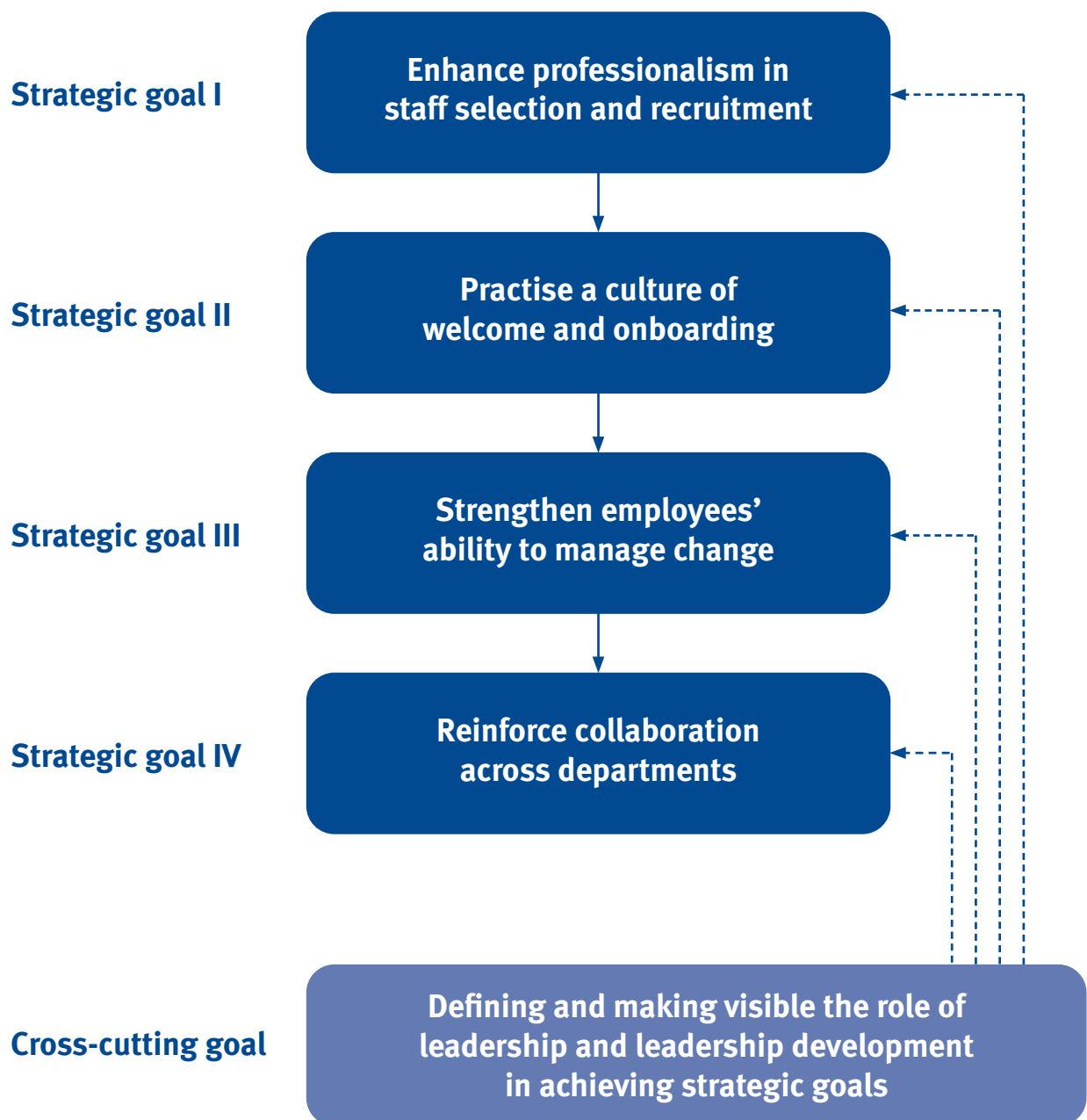
Other or additional categories may be identified.

Managers assume the role of primary dialogue and development partners for Professional Development when designing specific programmes. This is due to the fact that managers, both in the area of academic staff and in the area of non-academic support staff, have a special responsibility and are one of the central target groups of professional development. Professional development is an inherent responsibility of managers. For example, the satisfaction, the success and, not least, the health of employees depend to a considerable degree on the leadership qualities of their managers. Managers assess the current situation together with their team members, identify development needs and determine how these needs can be met.

Chapter 5: Strategic goals of professional development

The following section outlines the four central strategic goals of professional development for the 2025-2030 period. The subgoals derived from them specify the actions to be taken by the relevant stakeholders and what Professional Development will do specifically to provide operational support.

The measures systematically derived from the four goals and the respective subgoals along with defined success criteria, are detailed in a separate document.



Strategic goal I ‘Enhance professionalism in staff selection and recruitment’

The University of Würzburg will establish itself broadly as a renowned employer regionally, nationally and internationally: One of the key responsibilities of professional development is to professionalise the process of staff selection.

The subgoals derived from this goal are:

- To equip managers with the knowledge and skills needed for staff recruitment
- To improve the quality of decisions made in staff selection processes
- To coordinate and develop target group-specific recruitment strategies

Implementing this strategic goal will be the responsibility of the recruitment project group, which has been set up already. The members of this project group include the Chancellor, Human Resources, Professional Development, Press and Public Relations and Equal Opportunity. Professional Development will coordinate the work of the project group and will be responsible for the implementation. Among other things, Professional Development will be involved in recruitment processes for key and leadership positions in an advisory capacity, provide advising to managers, prepare a staff selection guide and hold related training courses for managers. In addition, Professional Development, together with other relevant stakeholders, will develop recruitment strategies for specific groups of roles on the basis of empirical needs assessments.

Strategic goal II ‘Practise a culture of welcome and onboarding’

The University of Würzburg will strengthen its culture of welcome. Professional Development will create the necessary conditions for implementing a systematic onboarding process across the whole university.

The subgoals derived from this goal are:

- To establish centralised onboarding processes for all new hires
- To provide support to managers in order to ensure efficient onboarding processes
- To strengthen the social and cultural integration of new hires with a particular focus on international employees and guests
- To ensure that knowledge is retained and transferred
- To develop processes for employees who are changing roles within the university (crossboarding) and for employees leaving the university to transfer to a new employer or to retire (offboarding)

Professional Development will initiate an onboarding project group to analyse current practices and develop measures for a systematic onboarding process. In addition, representative sounding boards will be used as needed. These will evaluate measures and provide more precise input. Professional Development and Organisational Development will act as facilitators of these processes and will bring the relevant stakeholders together. Professional Development will develop onboarding tools to be used by managers, e.g. checklists for administrative preparation tasks and guidelines for on-the-job training and structured feedback meetings. It will organise networking events (e.g. buddy programmes, welcome days) and provide advising to managers on issues relating to on-, cross- and offboarding.

Strategic goal III ‘Strengthen employees’ ability to manage change’

The University of Würzburg sees itself as a responsible employer that helps both its academic and its support staff develop and enhance their ability to deal with change confidently. Professional Development will provide assistance in identifying the knowledge, skills and potential of employees, deploying them appropriately to certain situations and developing them further.

The subgoals derived from this goal are:

- To further improve the framework conditions, and to further expand the support structures, for researchers at all career levels and to continuously enhance their ability to deal with change, including changed requirements at career levels to which they may progress in the future
- To create a structural framework for early-career researchers as they transition to autonomy in their research
- To enable university employees to see themselves as driving forces for societal change and to initiate and drive transformative change through their own projects and initiatives
- To make the learning culture at the university more future-oriented at all levels by establishing processes for lifelong and self-directed learning
- To cultivate a positive error culture as a managerial responsibility, recognising that change entails risks and provides opportunities to learn from mistakes and their consequences.
- To make even more focussed efforts to enhance the intercultural skills of the university’s academic and support staff and to further intensify the intercultural dialogue of all members of the university.

Transformation processes and megatrends (e.g. digitalisation, globalisation or demographic change) directly impact universities. Professional development and a future-oriented learning culture are key factors to enable us to deal with ongoing change, and to meet the increasingly dynamic requirements regarding job and qualification profiles.

Professional Development will provide assistance when it comes to creating learning conditions that, on the one hand, prepare employees for dealing with the consequences of these overarching changes and, on the other hand, enable them to make an active contribution to finding innovative solutions to pressing global issues (cf. future skills in Chapter 6).

Professional Development will play a decisive part in shaping the framework for the university’s learning culture by introducing formats for self-directed learning, such as digital learning materials, job shadowing, peer-to-peer learning and mentoring, in addition to the traditional training and development programmes.

One core competency of Professional Development, particularly in times of change, is to connect, and facilitate the exchange of, different perspectives within the university. This manifests itself in the role of Professional Development as a coordinator. For example, Professional Development will serve as a hub for the activities supporting the university’s early-career researchers in order to prepare these for a changed world and bringing together all relevant stakeholders in order to, for example, build a university-wide network of post-doctoral researchers.

Strategic goal IV ‘Reinforce collaboration across departments’

The University of Würzburg will strengthen collaboration across departments. It will develop as an organisation by placing particular emphasis on a culture of appreciation.

‘The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.’

William James (1920)

The subgoals derived from this goal are:

- To raise awareness of the need for an appreciative communication culture in the workplace
- To make communication culture an integral part of our training and development programmes
- To incorporate appreciation as a guiding principle into cross-departmental leadership programmes and conversation tools
- To facilitate learning processes within joint projects of faculties, central institutions and central administration in the field of organisational development

Here, Professional Development will coordinate the harmonisation of university-wide professional development during annual conferences. The service providers from the areas of professional development, career development for early-career researchers, teaching, diversity and equal opportunity, internationalisation, health and conflict management as well as sustainability will coordinate respective initiatives to promote an appreciative communication culture in the workplace. Professional Development will be responsible for the issue of ‘communication culture’ and for incorporating elements aimed at building such a culture into leadership activities.

In addition, Professional Development will plan and facilitate learning processes correlating with change projects (e.g., digitalisation) led by Organisational Development in collaboration with faculties, central institutions, and central administration.

Defining and making visible the role of leadership and leadership development in achieving strategic goals

Managers play an important part in the implementation of the strategic goals described above. They ensure that their team members understand the university’s direction and priorities and incorporate them into daily work. Their communication and decisions reflect how we can reach the university’s goals. In addition, they are responsible for developing the skills and capabilities of their teams in such a way that these can perform their responsibilities, in the interest of the university, successfully and in a meaningful manner. In short: Managers drive change processes, define clear goals and provide guidance.

Leadership development is a systematic process that helps managers enhance their skills and competencies to fulfil their role optimally. It creates a framework for managers that aligns with the university’s strategic development and that offers a wide range of activities to support managers as they perform their responsibilities. These include:

- Further developing our leadership culture: e.g. developing leadership guidelines for all managers to create a comparable leadership standard;
- Identifying and clarifying leadership roles;
- Comprehensive leadership development: building a shared base of knowledge and skills;
- Providing assistance with leadership responsibilities, including: staff selection and personnel management, onboarding, leadership communication, change management, project management, team development, enhancement of future skills (cf. Chapter 6);
- Encouraging networking among managers and expanding structures for intervention;
- Succession planning and talent management for junior managers (e.g. identifying fields where action is needed; creating professional development frameworks; identifying, selecting and grooming high potentials).

Leadership development at the university level aims to create a shared understanding of leadership among all managers. Managers from faculties, central institutions, and administration reflect together on the values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors identifying a manager at the University of Würzburg. At the same time, leadership development will consider the distinct and specific needs of individual target groups. Succession planning for non-academic support staff, for example, will look different from succession planning for heads of chairs.

Chapter 6: Fields of action and structure of offered services

The fields of action of professional development are defined by key situations in which individuals experience change, face challenges, experience transitions and need support. The University of Würzburg identifies the following life and work phases in which it supports the development of professional skills and self-concept of people in their respective roles. These phases are based on the university's HR planning strategy.

Life and work phases:

- Discovering the University of Würzburg as an employer (recruitment)
- Making a selection (staff selection)
- Arriving and getting started (onboarding)
- Staying/identifying with the University of Würzburg and developing (retention and development)
- Getting promoted (retention and development)
- Changing roles and managing the departure of employees (crossboarding and offboarding)

Within these life and work phases, the university aims, in particular, to strengthen those skills of its employees that play key roles when it comes to reaching the four strategic goals described above:

- **Dialogue and conflict skills** – transcending disciplinary and functional silos. Easing tensions and resolving dilemmas; understanding contradictory points of view and dealing with ambiguity; having the courage to engage in open debate and express one's views openly
- **Ability to deal with change** – developing strategies for achieving change objectives; understanding the dynamics of groups, institutions, networks and systems; accepting lasting cultural change
- **Resilience** – ability to cope in difficult situations or adversities without experiencing lasting harm; carrying out tasks that have been taken on in a focussed and responsible manner, recognising and addressing risks at an early stage, being able to adapt; dealing with technological or societal change confidently
- **Intercultural communication** – precise and nuanced communication between diverse groups, foreign language skills; ability and sensitivity to tailor one's message to one's audience
- **Self-initiative and entrepreneurship** – acting autonomously and working on one's own initiative; high degree of self-efficacy; ownership of outcomes and processes

The skill-based future skills framework by Stifterverband and McKinsey & Company with its categories of 'transformative skills' and 'classic skills' serves as an aid to orientation. This combination of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills will prepare people to successfully meet the challenges of the future, whether professional or personal.

Figure 1 (p. 11) shows the fields of action of professional development with the services and opportunities that are being provided to its different target groups in their respective life and work phases.

This structure allows joint formats to be offered for situations typically faced by different target groups. In this way, professional development creates a lasting and culture-shaping impact: An understanding will develop of the diverse requirements of the individual departments. Shared rather than differing requirements are more likely to be recognized and collaboration via informal and more direct channels is to be expected. In short, these university-wide professional development activities and the related services and opportunities lay the groundwork for a lived sense of community and mutual appreciation.

This integrative understanding of professional development at the University of Würzburg is fostered and sustained through the continuous and constructive exchange among stakeholders within the framework of the Professional Development Network (PDN).

TARGET GROUPS	LIFE AND WORK PHASES					
	Discovering the University	Making a selection	Arriving & getting started	Staying, identifying & developing	Getting promoted	changing roles & managing departure
Managers, project and team leaders						
Professors						
Junior professors with and without Tenure-Track						
Academic staff holding permanent positions						
Academic staff holding qualifying positions; fellows and post-doctoral researchers						
Administrative and technical staff; staff in third-space roles						
Technical (lab) staff						
Trainees						

Fig. 1: Services and opportunities provided in the area of professional development – an overview of target groups in different work and life phases.

Chapter 7: Quality assurance and development

The tools of quality assurance and development are intended to continuously support and monitor the services and opportunities provided in the area of professional development. These tools will allow us to enhance the quality of the services and opportunities we provide, to assess the effectiveness of the measures that have been taken and to ensure a continuous transfer into the workplace. This quality assurance process will take place at four organisational levels:

At the **university level**, professional development will have to be integrated into the university's strategy. Once a year, the Professional Development Steering Committee will deliver a report to the University Board on the status and outlook of the professional development projects. The University Board will arrange for an audit to be conducted in collaboration with external experts at least every five years.

At the **level of the professional development programme**, the focus will be on coordinating all areas where professional development services and opportunities are offered ensuring a comprehensive university-wide programme aligned with the goals defined in the professional development strategy. The Professional Development Steering Committee defines thematic foci and reviews relevant quality assurance data from the fields in question. The service providers will deliver reports to the steering committee about the goals in their fields and the progress that has been made towards them.

At the **service provider level – within the framework of the PDN** (including professional development, teaching, research funding, support of early career researchers, diversity and equal opportunity, health and

conflict management as well as sustainability), those responsible will reflect at regular intervals on the demand of their target groups and the feedback received from them, drawing on qualitative and quantitative data and information, and will directly make adjustments where necessary. Here, they will be guided by the 2015 code of good practice in professional development at universities ('Kodex für gute Personalentwicklung an Universitäten') by the UniNetzPE network (Netzwerk für Personalentwicklung an Universitäten). This code defines quality standards for professional development activities at universities in Germany. The service providers will exchange expertise, join nationwide networks such as the German University Association of Advanced Graduate Training (UniWinD/GUAT; e.g. postdoc support network, Tenure-Track network) or UniNetzPE and share their expertise with the partner universities of the University of Würzburg, e.g. within the CHARM-EU alliance or the European Coimbra Group.

At the **individual activity level**, the service providers will evaluate outcomes and processes to be able to make continuous adjustments. The Professional Development Steering Committee will define the common quality standards for the activities and the internal and external experts.

The approaches described for each of these levels are closed-loop quality processes, requiring periodic determination of what measures for further development should be taken and subsequent review of their implementation. The goals defined for professional development, which are derived from the university strategy, will serve both as starting point and reference benchmark.

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