

Steinbeis University

Guidelines

Gender, Diversity, and Teaching

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1 Foreword

Integrating gender and diversity skills requires action on three levels in order to secure volition, understanding, and ability: “What is needed is the volition to establish gender-inclusive course content and teaching methods, an understanding of the issues (of gender studies), and the ability – namely formal structural integration into curricula and the provision of the resources required for implementation.”¹ Now that Steinbeis University has explicitly established its position through regulations, to ensure equal opportunities are a key priority of degrees and teaching it is also important to support stakeholders involved in shaping the journey ahead – and thus progress from volition, to understanding, and to ability.

Against this backdrop, these guidelines start by raising awareness and creating understanding, but they also offer recommended actions and tools for planning courses. This makes it possible to develop skills regarding gender-sensitive teaching and expand on those skills. In doing so, this handout places emphasis on helpful instruments that are both straightforward and practical. At the same time, readers are encouraged to consider this as an incentive to remain involved in this topic.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact the women’s and equal opportunity representative at Steinbeis University: [Women’s and Equal Opportunity Representative | Steinbeis University \(steinbeis-hochschule.de\)](https://www.steinbeis-hochschule.de/en/women-and-equal-opportunity-representative)

2 The importance of equal opportunities

The advancement of women’s interests and equal opportunities is receiving increasing attention in German science and academia, particularly now that it is becoming more firmly anchored within formal structures. For example, the German Research Foundation points to “insufficient involvement of women in the German science system [as a] loss of excellence and efficiency.”² It describes this shortcoming as particularly evident in limited prospects, which can result in inadequate, gender-insensitive research.³

The promotion of gender equality within academia and science in Berlin is captured in the Berlin Higher Education Act, which is based not only on the Federal Constitution but also on the Berlin State Equality Act. In particular, the obligation of universities to appoint women’s representatives highlights the extent to which moves to establish gender-balanced representation are now underpinned by formal structures.⁴

To achieve gender equality in higher education in the long term, all university employees must be given training on (un)conscious perception bias based on stereotypical role models.⁵ This particularly

¹ The North Rhine-Westphalia Study Network for Women’s and Gender Research, 2012, p. 85

² German Research Foundation, 2016, p. 2

³ DFG (the central German research funding organization), 2016, p. 2

⁴ Senate Department of Justice, Consumer Protection and Anti-Discrimination, 2011, Sect. 4 (8), Sect. 59.

⁵ Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012, p. 16479.

affects the development of know-how among lecturers and students. Research and teaching must be organized such that individuals of all genders are supported with all possible decisions regarding career planning.⁶

Accordingly, Steinbeis University is also committed to using its formal structures and teaching to facilitate opportunities and journeys that are not negatively affected by factors such as gender, age, background, or ideology, but instead support the aims of “individual decision-making.”⁷ For this reason, there is an onus on lecturers at the university to fulfill their responsibilities to provide gender-sensitive education and design their courses appropriately. In their function as instructors, lecturers also act as role models, playing a crucial part in students’ search for identity and how they determine their course in life. Teaching that is sensitive to gender and diversity issues thus sees students as individual beings – people equipped with different motivations, goals, and expectations. This must be taken into account in course concepts in order to establish a suitable starting point for professional and personal development.⁸

3 Inclusion of equal opportunities in teaching

Integrating gender issues and diversity into teaching has been an element of the Steinbeis University framework academic and assessment regulations since 2020. Existing and planned degree programs should not be simply supplemented by self-contained gender and diversity modules in isolation, however. Instead, it is expected that these topics are included as an integral element of all modules, thus achieving transfer into teaching practice.

3.1 Recommendations regarding the organization of teaching and preparation of content

The equal opportunities concept developed by Steinbeis University offers key recommendations for organizing courses and preparing materials.⁹ These have been supplemented with additional aspects as below:

⁶ cf. Ceci & Williams, 2011, p. 3157

⁷ Senate Department for Labor, Integration, and Women/Senate Department for Education, Youth, and Science, 2015, p. 2.

⁸ The North Rhine-Westphalia Study Network for Women’s and Gender Research, 2012, p. 77

⁹ cf. Steinbeis University, 2020, pp. 5 based on Ebenfeld, 2017

Organizing lectures	The subject matter of courses
<p>Are teaching materials diverse in terms of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, social background, sexual orientation, but also religion and ideology? Are stereotypical portrayals avoided in texts and images?</p>	<p>Are societal hierarchies of power and forms of discrimination such as age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ableism, religion, or ideology taken into account in the presentation of course content, how content is analyzed, and how tasks are solved?</p>
<p>The promotion of representative examples and equal opportunities for all genders in teaching materials through inclusive language. Requiring the university to adopt such language makes a clear statement regarding the university's stance on equal opportunities. Lecturers and students of all genders are addressed as equal members of the organization. This demonstrates the different career options available to less-represented genders.</p>	<p>Do selected examples reflect human diversity, particularly unconventional gender examples and role models? Are texts that are used written by authors that reflect human diversity?</p>
<p>Are lecturing rooms barrier-free (suitable visibility, giving consideration to people with walking and hearing disabilities)? Are rooms designed in such a way that all students feel comfortable? Are materials designed to be barrier-free?</p>	<p>Do the topics examined by students and lecturers highlight issues that touch on human diversity? Are the roles of course participants reflected – in terms of age, disability, ethnicity/race, gender, social background, religion/ideology, and sexual orientation?</p>
<p>Is student participation supervised in such a way that reasonable participation is possible (speaking time, avoiding individual dominance)?</p>	<p>Is the mixture of gender and hierarchies of power among participants included in discussion?</p>
<p>Is composition taken into account regarding gender, age, migratory background, class/background, sexual orientation, life stage? The aim is to promote equal participation by creating heterogeneous groups that approximately reflect real working conditions when forming study groups and examination groups – and not promoting homogeneous groups, e.g. based on similar levels of attainment/experience, or simple empathy.</p>	<p>Is gender-inclusive language used that supports representative examples and equal opportunities for all genders?</p>

Further information on planning teaching content can, among other places, be found here:

- References and input for integrating gender and diversity skills into existing modules: <http://www.gender-curricula.com/>
- Case studies on gender and the economy: [Rotman | Gender and the Economy \(gendereconomy.org\)](#)

3.2 Practical tips for running courses

The table below offers practical tips on how best to share prepared course content:

At the beginning of the course	Allow enough time for introductions and getting to know each other so that all course participants get to know each other's personal and professional backgrounds, as well as expectations regarding the group and the event.
	Briefly explain how you would like people to work together during the course (appreciative and non-discriminatory interaction, gender- and diversity-appropriate language, non-threatening communication, allowing for different opinions, recognition of different personal and professional backgrounds).
During the course	Moderate as necessary in order to give students an equal chance to participate and use speaking time, also in order to avoid imbalances within the group or individual dominance.
	When working in groups, ensure groups are mixed and avoid groups based on personal empathy, performance, or student preferences – if necessary by drawing lots, distributing students randomly, or deliberately forming different groups.
	Allow sufficient time to reflect and discuss presented content with regard to gender and diversity factors (age, disability, ethnicity/race, gender, social origin, religion/ideology, and sexual orientation).
At the end of the course	Offer people the chance to meet one-on-one so that all course participants have an opportunity to approach you individually, away from the group.

3.3 Key questions to ask yourself¹⁰

You might want to ask yourself the following questions about your courses:

- Do I use teaching materials and practical examples that reflect human diversity (age, gender, disability, ethnicity, social background, sexual orientation or even religion and ideology)? Do I explain to the students why I chose certain materials or examples?
- Do I use gender-neutral language (verbally/written)?
- How did I select participants to work together on group tasks? Was I able to make the groups heterogeneous?
- Did I manage student participation in order to maintain equilibrium (speaking time, individual dominance)? Which methods did I draw on to do this?
- Did I successfully convey content taking gender and diversity aspects into account?
- What issues, if any, did I encounter safeguarding equal treatment during the course? What support options would I like to have in order to overcome such issues in the future?

4 Conclusion

The aim of these guidelines is to raise awareness and foster an understanding of gender and diversity issues in teaching. They should help ensure that any practical support that is implemented tangibly shapes teaching at Steinbeis University in the long term. The recommended actions and tools are also intended to motivate others to think more about such issues, beyond the scope of these guidelines. The sources provided in the appended links may provide initial pointers for this.

By systematically introducing gender and diversity skills to teaching across the university, Steinbeis University aims to foster women's interests and equal opportunities in German science and academia – and do more than merely establish formal structures. For this reason, these guidelines will be regularly expanded and updated. In addition to introducing more and more gender and diversity topics to teaching, the aim in the future will be to assess progress.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding our approach to gender-inclusive teaching, the women's and equal opportunity representatives at Steinbeis University are happy to help.

¹⁰ cf. Kaschuba, 2006, p. 32.

5 Appendix

5.1 Links

General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG):

<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/agg/index.html>

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency handbook on legal protection against discrimination

http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/DE/ThemenUndForschung/Recht_und_gesetz/Handbuch/HandbuchRechtlicherDiskriminierungsschutz_node.html

https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Expertise_Sexuelle_Belaestigung_im_Hochschulkontext.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3

Berlin Higher Education Act (BerLHG)

<http://gesetze.berlin.de/jportal/?quelle=jlink&query=HSchulG+BE&psml=bsbeprod.psml&max=true>

Higher Education Framework Act (HRG)

<http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/hrg/>

Steinbeis University Framework Regulations

<https://www.steinbeis-hochschule.de/Studium-Studierende/Allgemeine-Informationen/Ordnungen>

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

https://www.behindertenbeauftragte.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/UN_Konvention_deutsch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2

5.2 References

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