

Call for Papers for the Special Issue: The Future of the University: Global, Sustainable and Inclusive

The world has been dealing with multiple crises for several years – be it the now omnipresent climate crisis or the various wars around the world, economic crises, as well as the influx of refugees and displaced people. In times of such crises, higher education is expected to empower people to deal with these challenges. UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative classifies higher education as transformative because it not only responds to the changing world but transforms it (UNESCO, 2020). That's why people look to higher education to address issues such as poverty, health, climate change, job creation, economic development, social cohesion and many other social and political ills. Therefore, higher education has a powerful impact on the wellbeing of the society at large. The United Nations' Agenda 2030 (UNESCO, 2015) sees the contribution of higher education and science as critical to expanding the Sustainable Goal 4, *Quality Education*: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Universities and higher education institutions are also expected to address Goal 13, *Climate Action*: “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.” It is therefore important that the future of universities must always be orientated towards addressing questions of sustainability and inclusion in a global context. By addressing these goals, higher education is expected to contribute to a better future for all.

Studies that deal with the future of universities and higher education come into fashion whenever higher education institutions are confronted with societal challenges that require new approaches and forms of research, novel approaches to teaching and learning, and different forms of governance. The examination of the future can be seen in the burgeoning of research institutes at universities, research clusters or networks or alliances in regional and global initiatives. While it is important to position universities to play a critical role in shaping the future, it seems that the interest in looking at the future of universities is more a reaction to existing crises and upheaval rather than an intentional move in shaping the future.

Following the 19th annual conference of the Association of Higher Education Research in Hagen, Germany, **this special Issue explores the future of the university from a global perspective, linking it with sustainability and inclusion.** These topics will be examined through three areas that are central to the mission of universities: teaching and learning; university management, governance, policies, systems and structures; and (higher education) research. In order to develop future perspectives, we welcome **empirically based critical analyses of the present as well as contributions that rethink higher education, higher education development and higher education research.**

Area 1: Teaching & Learning and future

The rapid development of technology within areas that focus on Artificial Intelligence has raised a number of questions regarding teaching and assessment practices that impact student learning. Furthermore, global crises affect teaching and learning in universities in multiple ways and call for (re-) action. The papers should address the following questions:

- a. What will the student body look like in the future?
- b. How can or should teaching, learning and assessment be shaped in the future? What new formats are needed?
- c. What can future-oriented and inclusive higher education didactics look like? What do these changes mean for teaching staff?
- d. What role will AI play in teaching and learning?
- e. Which topics will become more important in future curricula? Who will set them?

Area 2: Governance and future

As the higher education sector is facing numerous changes, organisational systems, structures and practices are bound to transform. The questions that may be asked are:

- a. What will universities structures, systems and practices look like? What does this mean for higher education as public good?
- b. What type of policies needs to be in place to guide these changes?
- c. What actions do universities need to put in place addressing the growing need for globalisation, inclusion and sustainability?
- d. How will inclusion and sustainability be defined and practised?
- e. What are suitable steering mechanisms, research networks and bodies that should be in place in the future?

Area 3: Higher education research and future

The complexity of the crisis issues calls for new ways of generating knowledge and new forms of collaboration in research. Contributions can critically explore this with reference to the following questions:

- a. How will technology impact new ways of research?
- b. What forms of cooperation amongst individuals and institutions can be envisioned?
- c. What types and forms of research will be more acceptable in the future and why?
- d. How can or should future-oriented research be conducted and what methods and approaches are conceivable?
- e. Which research topics will be addressed in the future? Who will set the topics?

We welcome various types of manuscripts of different orientations and lengths in German or English: *Research articles* (quantitative or qualitative studies), *research notes* as well as *insights into practice*. Details on formats can be found in the “Guidelines for Authors” section (<https://www.bzh.bayern.de/en/guidelines-for-authors>).

If you are interested, please submit your manuscript by **31 January 2025**, including a note on your intended article format. All submissions will be evaluated by the editors concerning their suitability for the planned thematic issue. The authors will receive a corresponding message by **1 March 2025** latest. The two-stage review process will be carried out from March 2025. Receipt of the final manuscripts is scheduled for **15 October 2025** at the latest. Publication of the articles will take place in **in the first quarter 2026** in issue 1/2026 of the “Contributions to Higher Education Research”.

About the Journal:

The Journal Contributions to Higher Education Research is one of the leading academic journals in the field of higher education research in the German-speaking area, publishing papers in German and English. The journal is characterised by high-quality standards, a broad range of topics, wide coverage and gold standard open access. The scientific and practical relevance as well as the diversity of disciplines and approaches are hallmarks of this journal. It is aimed at academics conducting research on higher education-related topics, political decision-makers, and staff in higher education administrations, ministries and public administrations as well as higher education and science organisations. All articles that are considered for publication undergo a review process by independent reviewers (double-blind).

Editors of the issue are Prof Eva Cendon (FernUniversität in Hagen), Prof Mpine Makoe (University of South Africa) und Irina Haury (FernUniversität in Hagen).

We look forward to your submission!

Dates and deadlines:

Submission of papers, 1st version:	31 January 2025
First Reviewer feedback to authors:	15 May 2025
Submission of papers, 2nd version:	30 June 2025
Second Reviewer feedback to authors:	1 September 2025
Submission of papers, final version:	15 October 2025
Release (online and print):	Q1 2026



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Please submit your papers via E-mail in German or English:
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If you have any queries, please contact the editors at: beitraege@ihf.bayern.de

References

- UNESCO. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Nr. A/RES/70/1). United Nations. Retrieved from United Nations website: <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/transforming-our-world-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-17981>
- UNESCO. (2020). *Humanistic futures of learning: Perspectives from UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks*. UNESCO. <https://doi.org/10.54675/AYFL2310>