

Call for Participation: dghd conference 2027 (08.-11.02.2027)

Between Aspiration and Reality: Perspectives on the Present and Future of Higher Education from the field of Academic Development

Higher education institutions are facing the challenge of aligning study programs and teaching not only with current societal developments, but also with long-term transformations. Topics such as Artificial Intelligence, societal polarization, strengthening democracy, or new forms of online teaching are changing expectations of academic education, as do structural developments such as learning analytics, modularization, or flexible study pathways. Some students have spent part of their youth during a pandemic and the related lockdowns. Today, major social tensions and complex global and regional crises are creating unrest and uncertainty. At the same time, difficult economic conditions, increasing financial pressure, and limited resources are intensifying the demands placed on higher education institutions.

These developments create new challenges for all actors involved in higher education teaching and learning and reshape the responsibilities and perspectives of academic development (again).

Against this backdrop, this years' dghd conference scrutinizes how academic development can actively support the design of future-oriented study programs and teaching-learning formats. Which didactic and competence-oriented approaches are needed? Which structural conditions should be promoted? How can academic developers prepare themselves to integrate new requirements for higher education into their qualification programs and research projects? The conference will focus on perspectives of curriculum and program development as well as on the design of teaching and learning practices. In addition, new approaches to faculty competence development, quality enhancement of teaching, and the further development of academic development itself will be shared and discussed.

We invite all professionals working in academic development to share their perspectives from research and program development and to enrich the conference with contributions related to teaching development and learning support, curriculum design, and research in academic development and higher education.

Conference Topics

1. Rethinking Study Structures and Curriculum Development
2. Reconsidering Structural Conditions and Governance
3. Reorienting Academic Development Programs and Perspectives

Topic 1: Rethinking Study Structures and Curriculum Development

- How can study programs be designed coherently without losing their responsiveness to societal, technological, and professional change? How can students be involved as active co-creators?
- How can curricula be designed in ways that connect disciplinary education, social responsibility, and the discourse on so-called “future skills” or presumed future competencies in a critical and reflective manner?
- Which study structures enable flexible educational pathways without reinforcing fragmentation, arbitrariness, or new inequalities? How can study structures respond to the realities of a diverse student body?
- Which institutional, resource-related, and organizational framework conditions and tensions support or constrain future-oriented curriculum development?

Topic 2: Reconsidering Structural Conditions and Governance

- How do power relations, governance logics, and organizational tensions influence the design and implementation of teaching and learning development, and how can these dynamics be shaped productively and balanced?

- How can the quality of teaching within higher education institutions be developed and managed, and what contribution does academic development make? Which competencies do instructors need in order to support students effectively?
- Which governance structures are required to enable and sustainably anchor the professional development of instructors within higher education institutions?

Topic 3: Reorienting Academic Development Programs and Perspectives

- How can (and should) academic development position itself in response to increasing pressure on academic and democratic values? How can this position be reflected in the design of academic development programs?
- How does academic development address the rapid developments in Artificial Intelligence and their impact on higher education? How can academic development approaches respond to these developments?
- How can the constantly evolving and reinventing academic development community ensure that its practices and professional self-understanding remain value-based, critical, open, and flexible?

Conference Contribution Types

The conference will include research-based contributions as well as workshops dedicated to the further development of academic development practice. In addition, insights from completed projects may be shared, where the focus does not lie on presenting the project itself, but on reflecting what other academic developers can learn from these experiences. Accordingly, the conference distinguishes between three types of contributions:

- **Research Contributions** that share theoretical and empirical findings from current research, including Scholarship of Academic Development (SoAD) and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) projects.
- **Development Contributions** that share lessons learned from previous academic development projects or practices and discuss their implications for academic development work.
- **Professional Development Contributions** in which conference participants engage in collaborative learning and professional development workshops.

Contribution Formats

Poster Presentation

Your contribution: Preparation of a poster or artifact and a short presentation for a station in the poster session.

Format: Presenters give short presentations (2 minutes each) introducing their topics. Participants then move freely through the room and engage in deeper discussions at the stations that interest them most.

Suitable for: Development Contributions & Research Contributions

Goal: Initiating lively discussions and exchange on projects and research findings.

Lightning Talk

Your contribution: Preparation of a short presentation with a clearly defined key message based on data-driven experience or theoretical models.

Format: Lightning talks are informative and presented consecutively. Each 7-minute talk is followed by a 3-minute discussion. Discussions take place directly before a break to encourage networking.

Suitable for: Development Contributions & Research Contributions

Goal: Presentation of innovative strategies and specific implementation approaches.

Short Presentation

Your contribution: Preparation of a presentation on data- and theory-based research findings with practical relevance.

Format: Each presentation lasts 30 minutes in total (max. 20 minutes presentation, 10 minutes questions). Several presentations are grouped into thematic sessions and moderated in relation to one another.

Suitable for: Development Contributions & Research Contributions

Goal: Presentation and discussion of findings with practical relevance.

Workshop

Your contribution: Development of a participant-oriented workshop with a clear learning objective. Workshops last between 45 and 90 minutes and are designed for groups of up to 15 participants.

Format: The format is designed by the submitters themselves and outlined within the abstract.

Suitable for: Professional Development Contributions

Goal: Promotion of practical competencies and collaborative problem-solving skills.

Special Formats*

Case for Peer Discussion

Your contribution: Formulation of a specific practical question to be discussed with peers.

Format: Using the method of collegial case consultation, the question is systematically discussed within a peer group and solution ideas are documented.

Goal: Solution-oriented discussion of practical professional challenges.

Contribution to the „Fuck-Up Session“

Your contribution: Presentation of an unsuccessful approach resulting from misjudgement, poor planning, or miscalculation in the context of an academic development initiative or research project, including reflection on possible alternative approaches.

Format: Contributions are informative and self-critical and are presented consecutively. Each 10-minute presentation is followed by a 5-minute Q&A session. The format takes place directly before a break to facilitate networking afterwards.

Goal: Learning from the failed assumptions and decisions of others through self-critical reflection

Doctoral Forum (08. February 2026, morning)

The doctoral forum offers doctoral researchers in the field of academic development the opportunity to discuss their research projects and current questions with fellow doctoral researchers and experienced members of the dghd. Individuals considering pursuing a doctorate in academic development are also warmly invited to present and discuss initial ideas.

**The special formats are not subject to the regular peer-review process. Contributions for the peer discussion and the “Fuck-Up Session” are selected by the dghd organizing team, while contributions to the doctoral forum are selected by the research commission.*

Submission

Each submission...

- is presented in the form of an abstract (maximum 750 words excluding references)
- must be assigned to at least one of the three conference topics
- specifies the contribution type (Research Contribution, Development Contribution, Professional Development Contribution)
- justifies why the selected format is appropriate for the contribution
- may be submitted in German or English

Submissions must be made via the EasyChair conference platform and are possible until 01 August 2026.

Please note: All submitters agree to serve as reviewers within the submitted topic area and to review up to three submissions based on specified criteria.

Selection criteria

Decisions regarding the acceptance of a submission are based on the following criteria:

- relevance to the conference theme
- scientific quality (for all contributions) and additionally didactic quality for Professional Development Contributions
- clarity and comprehensibility of the description (e.g., regarding methodological approaches or contextual framing)
- relevance for academic development practice (research and application)

Conference proceedings

As always, we are planning to organise proceedings for this dghd conference. These will feature a selection of research and development contributions (but not workshop contributions) presented at the conference. During the submission process, authors may indicate whether they are generally interested in having their contribution published in the conference proceedings. Once the review process for the conference submissions has been completed (October 2026), the programme committee will select contributions that are particularly suitable for the conference proceedings and invite the authors to submit their papers by 28 February 2027. These will then undergo a further peer review process. The conference proceedings are intended to be published at the end of 2027.

Timeline

- 1 June 2026: Publication of the Call for Participation and opening of submission
- 1 August 2026: Submission deadline for all contributions. Review of submissions by the program committee and assignment to reviewers. The reviewers are the authors of the submitted contributions and, if needed, invited dghd members.
- 1 September 2026: Start of the review process
- 1 October 2026: End of the review process
- 15 October 2026: Notification of submitters and program development
- 2 November 2026: Opening of conference registration and publication of the preliminary program
- 15 January 2027: Registration deadline
- Between 15 February and 28 February of 2027: Submission of invited contributions for the conference proceedings (see website for more details)