

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 engaged in higher education didactics to share their perspectives from research and program development in the form of a keynote presentation

Your contribution: You will deliver a keynote lecture as part of the plenary session on one of the conference topics described below.

Format: Keynote presentations usually last 45 minutes, followed by a 15-minute discussion. The keynote should provide multi-perspective insights, inspiring ideas, and stimulating viewpoints on one of the conference themes. One keynote is planned for each thematic area to introduce and outline the topic.

Objective: Inspiration and shared perspectives on structural and strategic developments.

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?

Submission of a concept for a Keynote until 1 Jul 2026

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
- justifies why the idea is appropriate for the a keynote speech
- may be submitted in German or English

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

Selection Criteria

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

- relevance to the conference theme
- scientific quality
- 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 Keynotes and opening of submission
- 1 Jul 2026: Submission deadline and review by the dghd board members
- 15 July 2026: Notification of submitters and possible specification of minor adaptations
- 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)