



**A University
for the Future**

Digital // Diverse // International



A University for the Future: Digital, Diverse, International

I am pleased to introduce you to the FernUniversität in Hagen, and I invite you to join me on a voyage of discovery through a unique university. Since its founding in 1974, our university has been characterized by topics like digitalization, diversity, and lifelong learning. With an average of 70,000 students, the FernUniversität is Germany's largest university.

Research at the FernUniversität is marked both by disciplinary depth and interdisciplinary cooperation and ranges from theoretical to applied research. These research activities ensure that teaching at the FernUniversität reflects the cutting edge of knowledge in the field while also providing the basis for training a new generation of researchers.

The FernUniversität sees itself as a site for networking and exchange between research, politics, economy, and society. Through such networks, new academic discoveries flow into the university. Our research offers numerous points of contact for cooperative projects, contract research, and consulting services. As the largest educational institution as well as one of the main employers in Hagen, we additionally engage in cooperative projects for city and regional development. In addition to these local roots, the FernUniversität is also globally networked, with numerous international cooperations in research and teaching.

Our university's flexible options for degree programs and continuing education play a vital role in promoting equal opportunities and access to higher education within the German higher education landscape. We serve a more diverse student body than any other university in Germany. Our students have a wide variety of educational backgrounds and goals. Most of our students study in parallel to their careers. Others are parents raising their children, are simultaneously in vocational training, are gifted secondary school students or elite athletes, or have a disability. What all of our students have in common is that they are engaged and dedicated in their private and professional lives, highly motivated, and hungry for knowledge. Thanks to our flexible, digitally supported distance-learning system, they can integrate higher education into all phases of their lives, thereby putting the idea of lifelong learning into concrete practice.

Take a look through the following pages to see what makes the FernUniversität stand out: firmly rooted in a modern campus in the city, yet accessible from anywhere in the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ada Pellert". The script is fluid and cursive.

Prof. Dr. Ada Pellert

President of the FernUniversität in Hagen

FernUniversität in Hagen: A University for the Future

As Germany's only state distance-learning university, the FernUniversität in Hagen fulfills a unique role in the German higher education system. It serves the largest and most diverse student body in Germany, providing flexible options that make university education accessible to students whose needs are not met by traditional universities and enable the pursuit of lifelong learning. Through innovative research and new approaches to education, it contributes answers to the challenges facing education and society in the future.

Founded in 1974 in response to rising student numbers and an increased need for flexibility in higher education, the FernUniversität's focus has always been on innovation in education, backed by research and based in its particular expertise in distance learning.

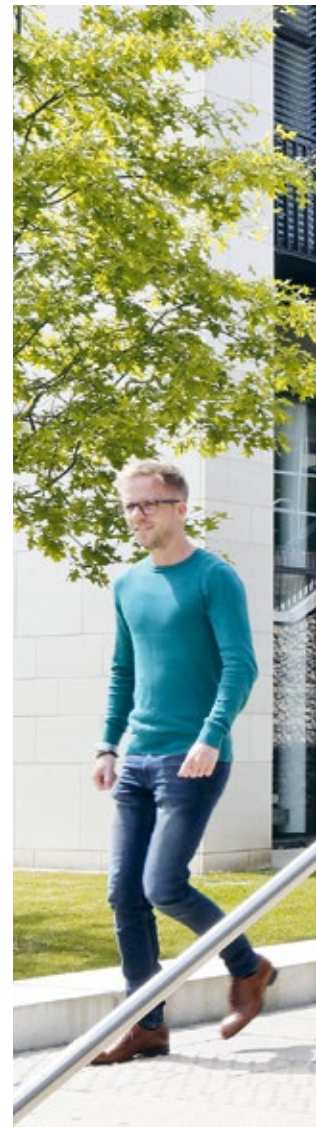
Its original teaching concept, designed by a committee of experts in the field, incorporated a mixture of printed study materials, audio-

visual media, and in-person advising and instruction. Since then, its blended learning approach has evolved to incorporate new technological advances, with the FernUniversität becoming an early adopter of digital technology in education within Germany.

At the same time, human connection and support remain at the heart of the FernUniversität's distance-learning system. Its campus locations and study centers play a vital role as the local face of the FernUniversität and the first point of contact for students at thirteen locations throughout Germany, as well as Austria, Hungary, and Switzerland. These centers offer information, advising, and support for current and prospective students. They also host in-person events, seminars, and mentoring sessions for students, provide a meeting place for study groups, and open up the FernUniversität to the general public through lecture series, alumni celebrations, and other events.

At a glance

- Founded: 1974
- Students: around 70,000
- Faculties: 5
- Staff: around 1,900
- #1 university in Germany by enrollment numbers





The FernUniversität's focus on innovation and addressing the challenges of the future is also reflected in its research. In addition to strong research within its academic disciplines, the FernUniversität has established interdisciplinary research clusters which address overarching issues for education and society. These include the impact of digitalization on culture as well as issues of energy, environment, and sustainability.

A strong partner in all these activities is the Society of Friends of the FernUniversität, which provides vital support for the campus locations and study centers, as well as research activities, cultural projects, and especially recognition of outstanding academic performance and achievements in research. Many of the society's members are themselves FernUniversität graduates and remain connected with their university through the society's alumni circle.

"The role of the campus locations is very important. Distance-learning students especially need face-to-face personal contact. You can't do everything with social media, chats, or forums. There has to be a place where you can meet in person and exchange ideas."

Computer Science Graduate,
Coesfeld Campus



International and Interconnected

The FernUniversität actively pursues international cooperations and partnerships and considers internationalization to be an important factor in the quality of its teaching, research, and support for early-career scholars. Through the Vice-Presidency for Continuing Education, Knowledge Transfer, and International Affairs, the topic is firmly anchored as a key strategic objective for the university.

It is a member in international networks and organizations, including the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), Scholars at Risk (SAR), and the International Council of Distance Education (ICDE), and throughout its history it has also entered into numerous cooperations with international higher education institutions. Its five faculties undertake their own wide variety of international activities, ranging from research cooperations, extensive Erasmus+ cooperations, and summer schools to international dual-degree programs and hosting visiting scholars.



The FernUniversität offers its students a wide range of flexible options for gaining international experience and skills while they study. In addition to traditional study abroad through programs such as Erasmus+, the FernUniversität has focused on short learning opportunities and virtual mobilities as a supplement or alternative to physical stays abroad. In this way, the FernUniversität offers its students the chance to broaden their perspectives and gain valuable intercultural skills in ways that fit their personal and professional situations, for example through summer schools and short learning programs, joint teaching projects with international partners, and internationally oriented courses and modules. Since the FernUniversität's study programs can be completed from anywhere in the world, students also have the flexibility to enroll from abroad – around 5,000 students each year take advantage of this opportunity.

The FernUniversität also offers its staff and early-career researchers a variety of opportunities to gain valuable international experience and competence, including through staff mobilities, internal professional development courses, and stays abroad for research and teaching. It promotes international collaboration and projects in research and teaching, for example through its internal funding programs.

This wide range of international activities converges at the FernUniversität's International Office. In addition to developing and implementing the university's overall strategy for internationalization, the office provides practical support for student and staff mobilities, develops and maintains international partnerships, supports and advises on international projects, and provides information and assistance for international guests.



"Knowledge is built on the exchange of ideas. Through international projects, collaborations, and partnerships, we carry out innovative research across borders and enable our students to gain international experience while meeting the needs of our diverse student body."

Prof. Dr. Uwe Elsholz,

Vice-President for Continuing Education, Knowledge Transfer, and International Affairs

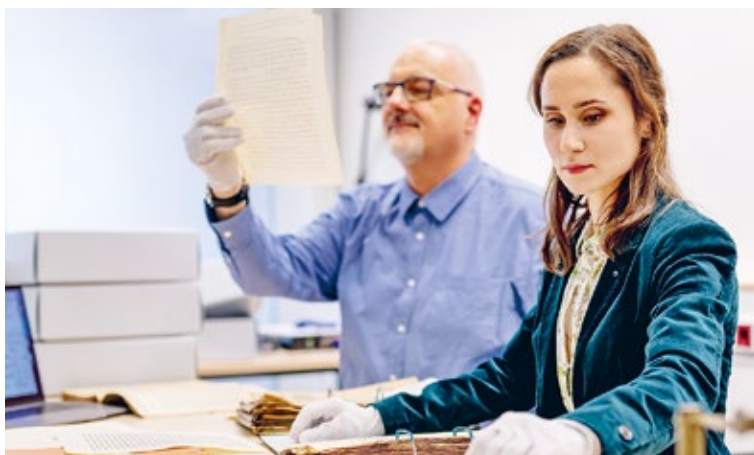
Researching Answers

The innovative research at the FernUniversität covers a broad spectrum of topics in both basic and applied research. In addition to in-depth research in their individual disciplines, FernUniversität researchers collaborate across disciplinary boundaries to address overarching questions. FernUniversität researchers are active in national and global networks, working together with scholars throughout Germany and around the world.

To support interdisciplinary collaboration across its faculties and to enhance its profile as a research university, the FernUniversität has bundled individual research activities into strong interdisciplinary research clusters, which focus on AI in higher education, personalized learning, and targeted support for students; the impact of digitalization on culture; issues of energy, environment, and sustainability; and the digital transformation of the working world.

The wide range of further research projects at the FernUniversität is demonstrated by the continuous increase of third-party funding. Through its research activities, the FernUniversität also engages in dialogue and exchange with business and industry. These connections can be seen, for example, through the FernUniversität's three endowed chairs. The FernUniversität's expertise is also highly sought after in politics: FernUniversität professors serve on a number of advisory boards for the German federal government.

The FernUniversität supports its researchers with an extensive internal research funding program and a range of services. These include information about and assistance with applications for national and international funding opportunities as well as its own internal stipends and grants. Its commitment to gender equality in research is reflected in its broad spectrum of funding and support programs aimed at increasing the proportion of women in academia.





Researchers in the early stages of their careers benefit from targeted support with their doctoral and postdoctoral qualifications from the FernUniversität's Graduate Services, which offers advising and assistance for all phases of an academic career.

The strength of the FernUniversität's research is also reflected in its teaching, as researchers' new discoveries and insights ensure that the contents of its study programs remain on the cutting edge, while FernUniversität researchers' innovations in the field of distance learning find direct applications in its study programs.



"Doing research in an international context is inspiring: cooperating with and hearing the perspectives of other colleagues and disciplines helps me to look differently at what is already known and to explore new avenues."

Prof. Eva Cendon,
Chair of Adult and Continuing Education

Interdisciplinary and Innovative

Research is a fundamental component of the FernUniversität's self-identity. To elevate its research profile, the university has consolidated its research efforts into a center, several clusters, networks, and numerous groups. This allows the FernUniversität to create synergies by leveraging its many academic disciplines to address overarching research questions through an interdisciplinary framework. This research infrastructure concentrates knowledge and resources, making it possible to implement innovative, complex, and long-term research projects, often in cooperation with external experts.

The primary focuses at CATALPA (Center of Advanced Technology for Assisted Learning and Predictive Analytics) are on issues such as AI in higher education, personalized learning, and providing targeted support for students. The goal of the Energy, Environment & Sustainability research cluster is to analyze political, economic, social, and technological issues in its three focal areas. The digital_culture research cluster focuses on the process of digitalization itself and its consequences. The Work – Education – Digitalization (WED) cluster investigates digital transformation in today's working world.





CATALPA – Center of Advanced Technology for Assisted Learning and Predictive Analytics

What implications and contextual factors arise from the use of artificial intelligence and adaptive learning technologies in studying and teaching? This is the question that lies at the heart of CATALPA's research activities. By harnessing research-based knowledge, CATALPA aims to foster the responsible use of these technologies. Its researchers have one common goal: to advance higher education, thereby fostering greater equity in education.

CATALPA serves as the central hub for more than 60 researchers working together in a living lab environment that transcends the boundaries of their individual disciplines. They conduct practical research into developments in technology and didactics and transfer their findings into the university's operations. With approximately 70,000 students utilizing digital

technologies for their studies, the FernUniversität is able to furnish CATALPA with a broad database for this endeavor.

Research professorships, such as in Computational Linguistics, Learning Analytics, and Learning Sciences; junior research groups; professors from several of the FernUniversität's faculties; and a large team of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers all contribute to CATALPA's interdisciplinary team. A broad range of expertise and an extensive academic network are ensured through collaborations, including partnerships with the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence, the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society, and the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning.

Energy, Environment & Sustainability

The Energy, Environment & Sustainability research cluster consolidates the diverse research activities being carried out by all the faculties of the FernUniversität on these topics and addresses corresponding subject and thematic interfaces.

The cluster thus aims to examine the political, economic, social, and technological dimensions of the energy and environmental sector – and their interdependencies – as well as analyze the approaches and effects of energy and environmental policy. In addition to pure research, the group plans to develop practical and process-oriented solution models for business, politics, and society.

The research activities are carried out as individual research projects as well as the following interdisciplinary subclusters: Socio-Technical Interactions in Climate Protection; Climate Protection at the Interface Between Politics and Economics; Emotions and Standards for Sustainable Development; Sustainable Supply Chains; Climate Change, Financial Markets, and Macroeconomics; and Smart Cities.

www.fernuni.de/ees-cluster



digital_culture

The digital and digitalization reach deep into the self-conception of contemporary cultures and societies and permanently change them. The transformation which accompanies technology-driven innovation is so comprehensive and complex that it also impacts people in the areas of their lives where they are not directly interacting with technological artifacts, because it is a change to the culture itself – a digital culture. At the same time, the extent of the upheaval, as well as how dramatic and wide-ranging its effects are, has until now been nearly impossible to estimate.

The humanities and social sciences, working together with computer science, can contribute to making the factors which transform our communities and lives legible and accessible. In the process, they are required to identify the transformation which is involved with digital cultures and societies, to reflect upon it, to examine it in a scholarly way, and to accompany it with a critical eye.

As academic disciplines, however, they are themselves subject to this transformation, and their objects of study and methods are changed by it. This phenomenon is described by the term “digital humanities.” As a result, in the digital_culture research cluster, this process is being studied from two directions: on the one hand, in relation to social reality and on the other, in relation to changes within academia. This close interconnection between cultural reflection and digital humanities is a distinguishing feature of the research cluster.

The group’s outputs include “On Humans and Machines,” an international conference on human-machine interactions, and Theorie|Apparate, a series of video interviews with experts from different fields shedding light on current technological phenomena.





Work – Education – Digitalization

The FernUniversität's interdisciplinary Work – Education – Digitalization (WED) research cluster is dedicated to exploring digital transformation in the context of work and education.

Researchers from eleven different disciplines are investigating the catalysts, evolution, and ramifications of digitalization processes. The research is focused on specific application domains, such as the economy, education, health, and administration, as well as the broader issues of leadership and agile work. Of particular interest are questions regarding work design, competence development, and lifelong learning for employees and managers.

Working together with external partners, this application-focused research cluster is aiming to enhance the potential for knowledge trans-

fer into the working world. In addition to developing specific continuing education offerings and recommendations for action, the research group is looking into issues such as how innovation in this area can be fostered through start-ups.

To make the research results and discussions about the digital transformation of the working world more tangible, the WED research cluster is developing a new co-working space – the Immersive Collaboration Hub (ICH) – where researchers can try out new ideas and test immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR). The hub will be affiliated with the forthcoming institute that is being developed from the WED research cluster.





Flexible Study Programs

The FernUniversität imparts knowledge and enables access to higher education. With its flexible study programs, it serves the most diverse student population in Germany.

Around 52% of FernUniversität students have already completed a first higher education degree, while others supplement their vocational training or career experience with academic study. Most FernUniversität students study in parallel to their careers or have parenting or other care responsibilities. More than 6,000 FernUniversität students do not have a formal higher education entrance qualification and

were admitted on the basis of their vocational qualifications, far more than at any other university in Germany. Around 5,000 students enroll at the FernUniversität from abroad.

FernUniversität students can plan their studies according to their individual pace and requirements. As a basis, they have printed study materials, which are shipped in physical form and made available online. The use of digital media in particular makes it easy to study on the go – students can access the necessary materials anywhere and at any time.





“At the FernUni, I have the freedom to arrange my studies in a way that fits together with my everyday life with a full-time job.”

Susanne Krieghoff,
Student in Psychology

Using the internet, students collaborate with one another, communicate with teaching staff, and research academic literature. The university library not only offers traditional services like interlibrary loans but also services specially tailored to distance learning, such as virtual reserve shelves with required and recommended reading.

Students and teaching staff alike profit from a distance-learning system which focuses on digital technology and instructional design. By incorporating the findings of its researchers, the FernUniversität continuously develops and refines new educational tools and didactic

strategies. The FernUniversität's Center for Learning and Innovation supports its teaching staff with expert knowledge and specialized training.

At the same time, studying at the FernUniversität offers plenty of opportunities for students to make a personal connection with the university. The campus locations and study centers are the local face of the FernUniversität throughout Germany, in Switzerland, in Austria, and in Hungary. The centers provide advising and support for students; host in-person events, classes, and lectures; and offer working space for student study groups.



Open-minded and open to the world

The FernUniversität supports both physical and virtual mobility for its students, teaching staff, and researchers – for example via joint teaching projects in partnership with international universities, through summer schools, or via funding for stays abroad. These activities are coordinated by the FernUniversität's International Office. The office also develops and implements strategic plans and initiates and develops international partnerships.



A Strong Foundation for Research and Teaching

The FernUniversität is composed of five faculties, which carry out the university's research and teaching. Their strengths: disciplinary depth and interdisciplinary networking – an excellent basis for their degree programs.

The faculties' areas of research focus enhance the university's overall profile. The strength of the university's individual academic disciplines lays the foundation for teaching and research across disciplinary boundaries. The FernUniversität focuses on its faculties, supporting and promoting their research and teaching.

The faculties work closely together in many areas. Interdisciplinary research and teaching is routine. For students, this means that every faculty develops new forms of teaching which enhance and expedite the learning process. When appropriate, the faculties design and offer interdisciplinary study programs.

This also means that the FernUniversität's researchers, while working in a comparatively narrow spectrum of disciplines and subject areas, are able to examine a broad range of socially, politically, and economically relevant questions from the perspective of their disciplines.



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences offers a diverse range of subjects, including educational sciences, literary studies, political science, history, philosophy, and sociology. Its research and teaching are designed to allow students to explore and understand personal, social, cultural, and political phenomena.

The faculty's seven institutes, comprising thirty-three departments, are dedicated to investigating historical and contemporary processes and structures, analyzing their implications and transformation, and placing them in a broader context.

The faculty is home to several research clusters, including digital_culture; Energy, Environment & Sustainability; Gender Politics; Figurations of Uncertainty; Collective Violence; and Oral History.

Its nine (multi-)disciplinary study programs employ a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches to provide students with a solid disciplinary foundation and enhance students' skills and career-relevant knowledge through learning by example.

Tried and tested course materials, virtual learning environments, and in-person and online classes, supplemented by module- and subject-specific advisory services, all enable students to study from anywhere at their own pace and according to their individual requirements.





Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science

By integrating two disciplines, the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science has been able to develop study programs that transcend the boundaries of each specific subject area. It offers bachelor's and master's programs in mathematics, mathematical-technical software development, computer science, practical computer science, data science, and – in collaboration with the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics – business information systems. Certificate programs are available for all of its bachelor's programs, allowing students

to acquire a university qualification below bachelor level. Additionally, the faculty offers Open Access Studies and continuing education programs. Moreover, it grants doctoral degrees in engineering and natural sciences.

The Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science comprises twenty departments and two research professorships. More than 13,000 students are currently enrolled in the faculty's programs.



Faculty of Psychology

The Faculty of Psychology comprises thirteen professorships, encompassing the full spectrum of fundamental principles and application areas of non-clinical psychology. Its research activities are concentrated in three interdisciplinary focal areas: Psychology of Digitalized Education; Legal Psychology; and Psychology, Diversity, and Social Cohesion. It is Germany's only faculty to offer university bachelor's and master's degree programs in psychology specifically designed for distance learning. In

addition, the faculty's certificate program gives students an opportunity to earn a university qualification below bachelor level. Students can study from anywhere and at any time due to the university's blended-learning concept. To ensure quality, the faculty's study programs are accredited regularly by an external agency. Its Bachelor of Psychology program also stands apart as the only distance-learning study program to have been awarded the German Psychological Society's seal of quality.



Faculty of Business Administration and Economics

With more than 18,000 students, the Faculty of Business Administration and Economics ranks among the largest of its kind nationwide. It also boasts a strong international presence, with approximately 1,300 of its students based abroad.

The faculty has consolidated expertise in business administration, economics, and business information technology, making it a strong advocate for both research and real-world ap-

plication. Utilizing blended-learning methods, it offers students from varied work and life backgrounds the best opportunities to advance their qualifications through distance learning. More than twenty professors are engaged in teaching and multifaceted, interdisciplinary research projects, regularly publishing in leading disciplinary journals.

The faculty's staff provides students with qualified support to help them navigate their studies.





Faculty of Law

With almost 12,000 students, the Faculty of Law at the FernUniversität in Hagen is the largest of its kind in Germany.

In addition to traditional legal studies, students can pursue a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) or Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree, giving graduates the freedom to pursue the full range of careers in the legal field. The faculty offers specialized support to assist students in balancing their work, family life, and studies. Thanks to the innovative teaching methods and technologies associated with blended learning, students have the flexibility to study whenever and wherever they choose.

In certain specialized legal areas, the Faculty of Law is at the forefront in Germany. One example of this is the W. P. Radt Endowed Chair of Civil Law and Industrial Property Law, which was endowed by an association of patent attorneys. The faculty is also setting new standards in out-of-court dispute resolution and mediation. Additionally, lawyers from Hagen are recognized as among the best in their field in areas such as basic research, comparative law, and legal history.



In Dialogue with Society

The FernUniversität in Hagen carries knowledge outside the university into government, industry, and society.

This happens via research projects, political advising and public lecture series and events – and especially via the minds of its students. Seventy-five percent of students at the FernUniversität are employed and put the knowledge they gain in their studies directly into practice. In addition, the FernUniversität is an important link in both local and global networks: It is active in cooperative and international research projects and engages in contract research and consulting services for industry and government – up to and including the German federal government.

The FernUniversität also engages in dialogue with local citizens: During its set of local event series Politischer Salon Hagen (“Hagen Political Salon”), Lüdenscheider Gespräche (“Lüdenscheid Conversations”), and BürgerUniversität Coesfeld (“Citizens’ University Coesfeld”), researchers spend the evening discussing current topics with the general public. Through institutions such as the Kompetenzzentrum Mittelstand 4.0 center for small and medium-sized businesses, the university supports initiatives which promote digitalization processes.





The FernUniversität offers continuing education – for both personal and professional development, in every life situation.

Support for Continuing Education

To promote the mission of lifelong learning, some academic chairs and institutes at the FernUniversität have been actively engaged in continuing education for years. They are being supported by the Institute for Continuing Academic Education, particularly with regards to reaching new target groups and communicating information about their programs to external audiences.



As the largest employer and educational institution in the city, the FernUniversität is committed to the city of Hagen and the surrounding region. It founds local networks and is actively engaged in projects for city and regional development as well as in the cultural sector.

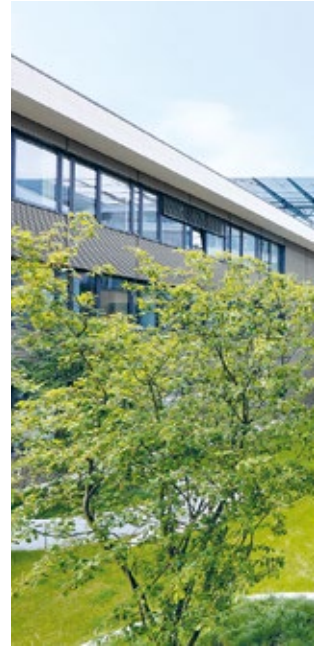
FernUniversität: Made in Hagen

Hagen is the “City of the FernUniversität.” This title is proudly displayed on most of the local signs and on the city’s official letterhead. The university, for its part, bears the name of its home city as the “FernUniversität in Hagen.”

Located in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in western Germany, the city has a population of around 200,000 and sits on the border between the densely populated Ruhr area with

its history of industry and culture, and the Sauerland, which is known for its natural parks and hiking trails.

At the time of the university’s founding, the choice of location was a political decision. Hagen was impacted by structural changes in the industrial Ruhr region, and the placement of the university was intended to bring new momentum.





The FernUniversität's connection to its location is visible on its campus. Over the years, a diverse architectural ensemble has gradually sprouted up on the meadow which surrounded the Villa Bechem, as the FernUniversität concentrated its various offices and locations on the campus. Today, the FernUniversität is among the largest employers in Hagen, with around 1,900 employees in research and teaching, administration, logistics, and technology. The majority of the FernUniversität's employees also live in the region.

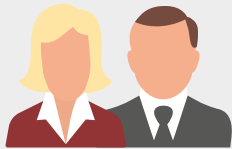
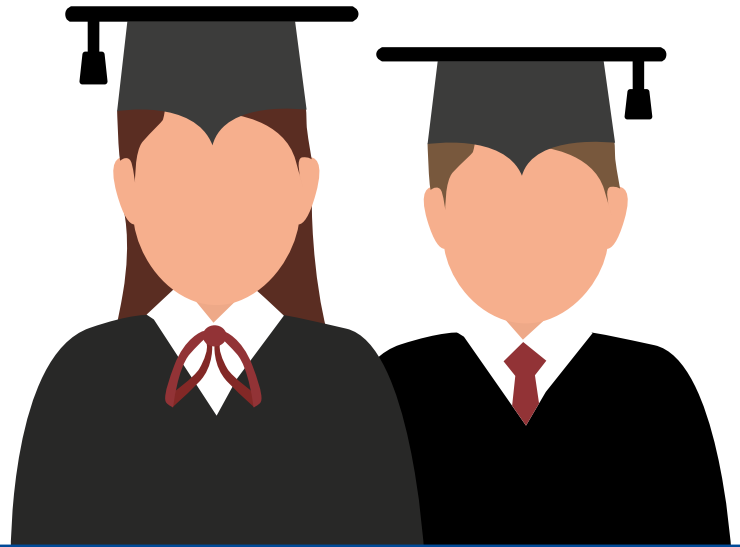
The campus is also a point of interest for residents of Hagen and the surrounding area. They visit the university's library to study, borrow books and journals, or to use the library's catalog for research. They also know the library as a regular host of public exhibitions,

readings, and lectures. In addition to these cultural programs, the university also organizes the Hagerer Forschungsdialog ("Hagen Research Dialogue") series, in which researchers present their research topics to the general public in the form of lectures, readings, symposia, and discussions, including at locations beyond the university's campus.

The FernUniversität is also firmly established in local networks. The Society of Friends of the FernUniversität, which provides support for the FernUniversität's activities, counts FernUniversität graduates from Hagen among its actively engaged members. The city and the university also cooperate in cultural and scientific activities. For many people in the city, the FernUniversität's annual Campusfest is a major event in the city calendar.

Far more than just a campus with state-of-the-art facilities: the FernUni combines local roots with global networks.

Around
70,000
students



75%
are employed



52%
have a first degree



Most are between
the ages of **32–38**



Around 5,000
live abroad

50

50 years of distance
education excellence

4

4 interdisciplinary
research clusters

98

98 professors
in 5 faculties

32

32 bachelor's and master's
degree programs

1,900

Around
1,900 staff

Imprint

Publisher

The President of the FernUniversität in Hagen

Photos

Jakob Studnar, Volker Wiciok, Torsten Silz,
Hardy Welsch, Thomas Rosenthal, GettyImages

Issued

June 2024

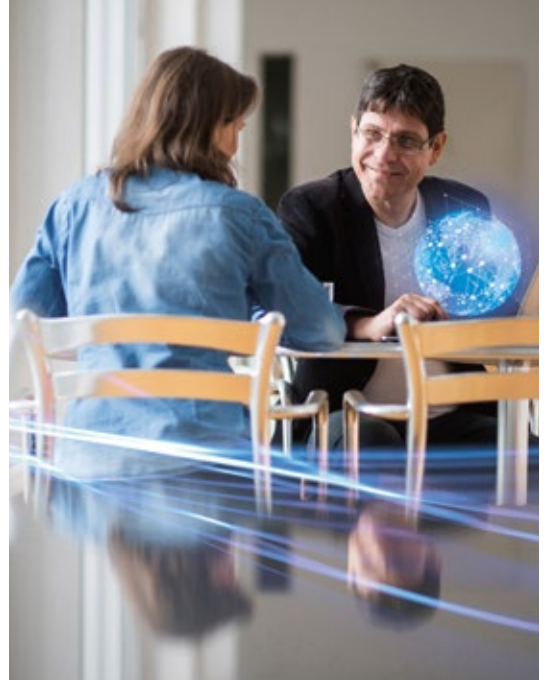
FernUniversität in Hagen
Service Center

Universitätsstraße 11
58097 Hagen
info@fernuni-hagen.de
Phone: +49 2331 987-2444

Mon. to Fri. from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

More Information

www.fernuni-hagen.de/english



**A University
for the Future**