

Dear University Members,

At the University of Hamburg, elections to the Academic Senate are held in the winter semester and elections to the faculty councils and the departmental councils in the summer semester. As these so-called committees of academic self-governance are extremely important for the University, we want to provide some important background information below.

Why elections?

Universities maintain and develop science through research, teaching, studies, and continuing education. As independent public-law institutions, they govern themselves and—as they are bound by the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz)—must be democratically constituted. Therefore, all members of the University have the right to elect representatives of their respective status groups (professors and junior professors, students, academic staff, and technical, library, and administrative staff) to the committees. Active involvement in self-governance through participation in elections or committees is the right and duty of members of the University pursuant to [Section 9 subsection 4 of the Hamburg Higher Education Act \(Hamburgisches Hochschulgesetz, HmbHG\)](#).

Key questions of the University's development—including the mission statement, priorities, staffing, and distribution of financial resources, among other things—are discussed and decided by the University's academic self-governance committees.

The Academic Senate: The central body of representation for the University's status groups

The **Academic Senate** ([Section 85 HmbHG](#)), alongside the University Council ([Section 84 HmbHG](#)), is the central committee at the University of Hamburg that represents all University status groups.

The Academic Senate handles diverse tasks, such as electing the president, confirming the vice presidents, and deciding on the University statutes, additional bylaws, and the establishment of the University's self-governing units (the faculties). The Academic Senate also decides on the University's structure and development plans and can set framework provisions for the examination regulations in the faculties. It also issues statements on business plans and principles for equipment and resource allocation as well as on bylaws for fees. The Academic Senate can request information and make recommendations on all self-governance matters, which affect the University as a whole.

With these rights, the Academic Senate can influence the University's development and regulate its self-governing structures. At its 780th meeting, for instance, the Academic Senate commented on the planned university agreement in 2021 ff. ([PDF](#) (within the University)).

Why are the faculty councils and department councils significant?

The University of Hamburg is divided into eight faculties that have statutory rights and are responsible for teaching, research and development, and relevant administrative tasks in their fields. The faculty management (office of the dean), the faculty council, and the department councils are responsible for this.

Each **faculty council** ([Section 91 HmbHG](#)) decides on, among other things, the academic and examination regulations as well as on the appointment proposals, which form the basis of a faculty's scouting and recruitment of new professors. Faculty councils also elect the dean, thus influencing

faculty management, and have a say in the structural and development planning for the entire University and the distribution of financial resources within the respective faculty.

At the same time, they can issue statements on all matters concerning the relevant faculty. The seemingly dry legalese actually also deals with exciting aspects of everyday university life: The Faculty of Medicine's council recently decided to rename the UKE's lecture halls after historical figures. The Faculty of Humanities' council is calling for 8 May, the day of liberation, to be turned into a public holiday. The Faculty of Education's council has called on the legislature to legally grant all bachelor's graduates in teacher training a place in a master's degree program. And the Faculty of Mathematics, Informatics and Natural Sciences contributes only to peaceful goals and civil purposes.

The large faculties are subdivided into departments (*institutes* pursuant to [Section 92 HmbHG](#)). Among other things, **department councils** are responsible for organizing teaching operations and providing the faculty council and the office of the dean with advice on all matters that affect the content of the respective subjects. They make suggestions for academic and examination regulations in their field and can nominate members for the academic search committees.

Why voting is key

Science and scientific institutions are constantly evolving, and our academic self-governance committees play an essential role in this process. Questions on the composition of the committees and on the distribution of responsibilities within the University are equally important and also affect the relationship with the Ministry of Science, Research and Equality. Last but not least, good academic practice and teaching greatly depend on how much value the members of the University place on their democratic self-governance. The representatives of the respective status groups need your support to meet the challenges of committee work with confidence. We thus strongly urge you to

exercise your right to vote!

Sincerely,

Members of the Academic Senate Elections working group