German UDS AI Charter

Positioning the German UDS as a born-digital, AI-enabled university

1. Mission and Vision

The German UDS embraces Artificial Intelligence as a core enabler of its mission as a born-digital university. We use AI to enhance teaching, advance research, and streamline operations while safeguarding human dignity, academic freedom, and democratic values. AI at German UDS shall always augment, not replace, human judgement and responsibility.

2. Guiding Principles

1. **Human-centered and responsibility-based**
   AI systems support people in learning, research, and work; final accountability for decisions remains with humans.
2. **Ethics, fairness, and non-discrimination**
   AI must be designed and used to avoid unjust bias and discrimination and to promote inclusion and accessibility.
3. **Transparency and explainability**
   Significant AI use in teaching, research, and operations must be disclosed, and its role should be understandable for affected persons.
4. **Privacy- and security-by-design**
   Data protection, confidentiality, and cybersecurity are embedded into all AI solutions from the outset.
5. **Academic integrity and autonomy**
   AI must not undermine honesty in learning and research; its use should be acknowledged and aligned with disciplinary standards.
6. **Open and responsible innovation**
   Wherever feasible, AI-related artefacts (data, code, models) follow open science practices while respecting legal and ethical limits.

3. AI in Teaching and Learning

1. AI is used as a **learning partner**, helping students to explore, practice, and receive formative feedback, while preserving genuine performance in assessment.
2. All study programs integrate **AI literacy** (technical basics, critical evaluation, legal and ethical aspects, human–AI cooperation).
3. Each course defines a clear **AI use policy** (permitted, restricted, or prohibited uses) communicated to students at the outset.
4. Exams and assignments are redesigned to assess higher-order skills (reflection, transfer, creation, collaboration) that aim to go beyond automated generation.
5. Assessments may incorporate specific AI-detection elements. Where responses consistently reproduce known AI-generated errors, this may trigger a case-by-case review.

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4. AI in Research and Innovation

1. Researchers may use AI tools, models, and data under the conditions of **scientific integrity, reproducibility, and legal compliance**.
2. Use of AI in data collection, analysis, or writing must be **documented and disclosed** in line with disciplinary standards.
3. Sensitive data and high-risk AI applications follow **enhanced review and oversight**, including ethics and data protection assessment.
4. The German UDS promotes **interdisciplinary AI research** (e.g. Human–AI Cooperation, Digital Law & AI Governance, AI in Education) as strategic profiles.
5. Open science is encouraged: where possible, datasets, code, and models are shared, accompanied by documentation on provenance, limitations, and risks.

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5. AI in Operations and Administration

1. AI is deployed to improve **student services**, advisory processes, and administrative efficiency, ensuring that critical decisions always involve human oversight.
2. Individuals are informed when AI significantly shapes decisions or recommendations affecting them and retain access to **human review and redress**.
3. AI use in HR, performance evaluation, and resource allocation must follow strict rules of **fairness, transparency, and contestability**.
4. The university maintains robust **data governance** for operational AI: data quality, minimization, lawful basis, retention, and secure processing.

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6. Governance, Accountability, and Participation

1. The German UDS establishes an **AI Governance Board** (leadership, IT, Digital Law, ethics, faculty, students, administration) to steer AI strategy and monitor this Charter.
2. All significant AI systems undergo **risk-based assessment** before deployment and periodic review during their lifecycle.
3. Clear **roles and responsibilities** for AI system owners, developers, and users are defined, including incident reporting and mitigation procedures.
4. Members of the university (students, staff, faculty) are involved through consultations and feedback channels when new AI uses are introduced.

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7. Skills, Culture, and Capacity Building

1. The German UDS commits to **continuous AI upskilling** for all groups: leadership, faculty, researchers, students, and administrative staff.
2. Safe experimentation is encouraged via **sandboxes and pilots**, accompanied by evaluation and communication of lessons learned.
3. The university promotes a culture where AI is used **critically, creatively, and reflectively**, not blindly or purely for efficiency.

4. **AI learning analytics** tools are made available to lecturers and students to support the development of effective learning strategies, helping them identify which approaches work best for them.

8. External Engagement and Compliance

1. The German UDS aligns its AI practices with **applicable laws and regulations** (e.g. data protection, copyright, emerging AI regulations).
2. The university engages with partners in academia, industry, civil society, and public institutions to shape **responsible AI ecosystems**.
3. International collaboration is pursued to benchmark against best practices and to contribute to global debates on **trustworthy AI in higher education**.

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9. Review and Evolution

This AI Charter is a living document. It will be reviewed at least **annually** to reflect technological advances, regulatory developments, empirical evidence, and input from the university community. Revisions follow a transparent process involving the AI Governance Board and university stakeholders.

By adopting this AI Charter, the German UDS affirms its ambition to be a leading, born-digital, AI-enabled university that uses AI responsibly to advance knowledge, foster human potential, and serve society.

Version: March 4, 2026