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FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN



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A Short Portrait





The Freie Universität Berlin (FU) is one of the leading universities in the world and distinguishes itself through its modern and international character. It is also one of the largest universities in Germany, offering degree courses in more than a hundred subjects for 35 500 students – of which 15 per cent come from other countries. For many foreign scientists, too, such as fellows of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Freie Universität is the university of preference while they are staying in Germany. Without including Medicine the Freie Universität is currently lead university for eight collaborative research centres of the German Research Foundation DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) and also has three DFG research units. Because of the wide variety of subjects it offers, the Freie Universität also has two collaborative research centres in the humanities – for the first time in Berlin. Thirteen scientists of the Freie Universität have to date been awarded a Leibniz Prize of the DFG, the most important German prize for scientific achievements. The level of external funding acquired rose to more



than EUR 55 million. This means that the Freie Universität canvasses a significant proportion of its income from third party funds. A strategic alliance has been concluded with the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität in Munich. In addition, the Freie Universität cooperates closely with international companies such as BMW, Schering, Siemens, Deutsche Telekom and Pfizer.



The Freie Universität maintains wide ranging international contacts to other universities and organisations which provide key impulses for research and teaching: Already in the 1950s, the Freie Universität had established partnerships with leading American universities such as Stanford, Princeton, and Columbia, as well as with West European universities. First contacts with universities in Eastern Europe were made in the 1970s. In particular in the 1990s, links were extended to include growing numbers of institutions in North America, Eastern Europe, and the Far East. Today, the Freie Universität has 117 partnerships world-wide, and every year some 600 visiting scientists contribute to the university's teaching and research. For the grant programmes in Germany, the Freie Universität is one of the first choices both for the SOCRATES/ERASMUS, and TEMPUS programmes, as well as for the Fulbright programme and the international programmes of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). An International Summer University has been set up for foreign students offering internationally accepted credits. Outstanding personalities who have recently been awarded honorary doctorates by the Freie Universität Berlin include the General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, and the Italian writer Umberto Eco, author of the global best-seller "The Name of the Rose"; among earlier recipients were the physicist Lise Meitner, and the politician Eleanor Dulles, known as the "Mother of Berlin", who was the sister of the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. In May 2005, the two Nobel prize recipients, Günter Grass and Imre Kertész, received their honorary doctorate within the context of a series of events entitled "Dahlemer Impulse".





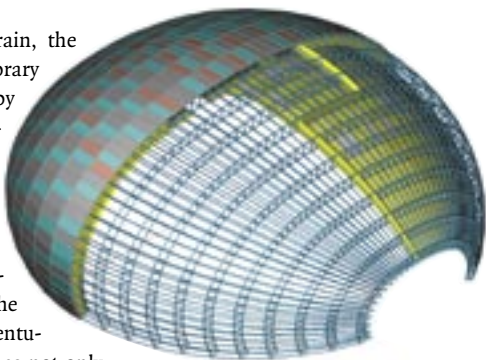
The foundation ceremony of the Freie Universität on 4th December 1948.

In 1948, students and university teachers who had been barred for political reasons from the re-opened University “Unter den Linden” in the Soviet sector of the city set up the Freie Universität (in English: “Free University”) in the American sector, and teaching already began in the Winter Semester 1948/49. Impressed by the initiative of a war-scarred generation and the keen interest in learning they showed, leading scientists returned from emigration, such as Richard Löwenthal, Ernst Fraenkel, Ernst Heinitz and Emil Dovifat, with the support of the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Ernst Reuter. American gifts included the striking Henry-Ford Building, the Mensa (student restaurant) and also the University Clinic. By the time the charismatic President John F. Kennedy spoke at the university during his historic visit to the divided city in 1963, the Freie Universität had become a leading symbol of German-American friendship. It became one of the focal points of new social developments during the student protests which began in the late 1960s. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification of the city marked a further watershed in the history of the Freie Universität, and a new era of fruitful competition began with Berlin’s other higher education institutions. As the city switched funds to the restructuring of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, massive budget cutbacks forced the Freie Universität in Dahlem to significantly reduce the number of its professorships, but on the positive side this offered the opportunity to concentrate resources in areas of excellence.





The Berlin Brain, the philology library designed by Lord Norman Foster, embodies the new spirit of the Freie Universität, which took strides in the 1990s to prepare itself to meet the needs of the 21st century. Since 1995 this has not only



involved the introduction of modern management structures in the administration, but also the reorganisation of the libraries and the faculties, and the introduction of a system for performance assessment. Despite



dramatic cutbacks in state funding, the Freie Universität has demonstrated performance growth. The aim is now to concentrate research in clusters of excellence which will bring together promising and innovative aspects of research across disciplines in order to provide answers to social and economic problems of the present and the future. The research work on the red planet Mars, on BSE, or on the aesthetics of the performative, are all examples of effective global networking in operation.



Scientists at the Freie Universität also maintain close cooperation with businesses, the political sphere and the media – offering promising potential for future synergy effects. Currently, the Freie Universität is introducing internationally-recognised courses for bachelor and master degrees, supplemented by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and make unlimited study possible in Europe.



In the humanities and the social sciences, the Freie Universität has a broad spectrum of small subjects, including for example Jewish studies and theatre science, which fit in well in Berlin's cultural landscape, with its unparalleled array of libraries and museums. Media research is currently very popular, as is the Otto-Suhr Institute for Political Science. Solutions for global conflicts are developed in "Area Studies" for the regions North America, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Eastern Asia, the Middle East, and individual European countries such as Italy or the Netherlands. In the natural sciences, the focus is placed on interdisciplinary approaches in the life sciences and earth sciences, which are supplemented by mathematics, physics and computer science. Research work is carried out on applications of direct relevance for everyday life, together with basic research on topics ranging from the microbiological analysis of enzymes to quantum field theory. Interdisciplinary research is particularly encouraged at the Freie Universität with the Clusters of Excellence, including "Global Governance", "Diversity", as well as "Security Research" and "Humanities: 'Dynamic Cultural Transformation'". The university now also has a strong reputation in gender research. One of only five faculties for veterinary medicine in Germany is located at the Freie Universität, and in addition to research and teaching, special veterinary services are provided for a wide range of animals. In 2003, the medical departments of the Freie Universität and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin were merged to form the Medical Faculty Charité – University Medicine Berlin. This now means that Berlin and the Freie Universität have one of the most modern teaching hospitals, providing excellent patient care.





The Freie Universität welcomes every opportunity to open the doors of its laboratories, libraries and institutes to the general public, whether as part of the city's Long Night of the Sciences, the University Open Day, during a Science Fair, or for the Young People's Information Day. The Mint Zentrum brings together all the activities in the natural science departments which are aimed at young people. In 2004, a Children's University for primary school pupils and a Summer University for Natural Sciences and Technology for secondary school students were organised for the first time. Since Berlin became the federal capital of Germany, there has been a significant change in the role of the Freie Universität. Increasingly, the university has had the privilege of welcoming state guests, as well as ambassadors and representatives of major international companies.

A varied programme of public lectures is provided with the aim of promoting the public understanding of science and of the humanities. The Freie Universität draws in those of the post-war generation who are particularly interested in art history and cultural history, with its attractive guest student program. Life long learning is taken very seriously at the Freie Universität, and a wide range of continuous education courses is provided, including for example "Executive Master of Business Marketing" and "International Relations". The Ernst-Reuter Society – with more than 1 400 members – maintains contacts between the Freie Universität and its alumni. In New York, American alumni have come together in 2003 to support the university as the Friends of Freie Universität.





Statistics

not including Medicine

Students:	35.500 of which: 60% women, 15% foreign students
Professors:	408
Scientists:	1.150
Other personnel:	2.200
Staff funded externally:	550
Departments:	Eleven, plus the Medical Faculty Charité, made up of the former medical departments of Freie Universität and Humboldt Universität.
Institutes:	74
State funding 2004:	EUR 291 million
External (third-party) funding:	EUR 55 million

13 Leibniz Prize winners:

- ▶ Prof. Volker Erdmann, Biochemistry (1988)
- ▶ Prof. Wolfram Saenger, Biochemistry (1988)
- ▶ Prof. Randolf Menzel, Neurobiology (1991)
- ▶ Prof. Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner, Japanology (1992)
- ▶ Prof. Jürgen Kocka, History (1992)
- ▶ Prof. Johann Mulzer, Organic chemistry (1994)
- ▶ Prof. Peter Schäfer, Jewish studies (1994)
- ▶ Prof. Emo Welzl, Computer science (1995)
- ▶ Prof. Onno Oncken, Geology (1998)
- ▶ Prof. Regine Hengge-Aronis, Microbiology (1998)
- ▶ Prof. Joachim Küpper, Romance languages and literature (2001)
- ▶ Prof. Rupert Klein, Mathematics (2003)
- ▶ Prof. Gabriele Brandstetter, Theatre science (2004)

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Clusters of Excellence

- ▶ Diversity: Gender, Ageing, Migration
- ▶ Earth and Space Systems
- ▶ Global Governance
- ▶ Humanities: Dynamics of cultural transformation
- ▶ Quality of life and health
- ▶ Teaching-learning research
- ▶ Media
- ▶ Molecular world in movement
- ▶ Security research
- ▶ Structure and dynamics of natural and social processes

8 FU Collaborative Research Centres

(in German: Sonderforschungsbereiche = Sfb)

1. Aesthetic experience and the dissolution of artistic limits (Sfb 626)
2. Analysis and control of ultrafast photo-induced reactions (Sfb 450)
3. Cultures of the performative (Sfb 447)
4. Mechanisms of developmental and experience-dependent neural plasticity (Sfb 515)
5. Mesoscopic structured connective systems (Sfb 448)
6. Metallic thin films: Structure, magnetism and electronic characteristics (Sfb 290)
7. Protein-cofactor interactions in biological processes (Sfb 498)
8. Structure and function of membrane integral receptors (Sfb 449)



Viewed from the air, the Dahlem district resembles a dignified park landscape. The central university campus includes the Henry-Ford-Building (erected 1952-1954), with the Auditorium Maximum and the university library. The academic activity in Dahlem was first initiated by Friedrich Althoff, Ministerial Director in the Prussian Ministry of Culture, who first proposed “the foundation of a distinguished colony of scientific excellence, a German Oxford”. Beginning in 1912, key institutes of the newly founded Kaiser Wilhelm Society were established in Dahlem, and they went on to produce no fewer than twelve Nobel Prize winners. One of these, the chemist Otto Hahn worked there with Lise Meitner on radiochemistry for three decades, and with Fritz Strassmann they discovered nuclear fission in 1938. Today the impressive Otto-Hahn Building is used by the Institute of Chemistry.

A special attraction for visitors from all over the world is the Botanic Garden and the Botanical Museum of the Freie Universität. More than 22 000 different kinds of plants are grown on the 43 hectare site, so that the Botanic Garden is one of the largest in the world in terms of species' numbers. The Botanic Garden and the associated museum are an important element of the Berlin-Brandenburg science region, and they play an important role in international biodiversity research. Horticultural highlights include the tropical giant water lily *Victoria amazonica*, and the scientific treasures include the herbarium, a collection of dried specimens with an international reputation. The Botanic Garden brings together in a unique fashion the three elements of research, teaching and recreation, attracting some 400 000 visitors and visiting scientists from all over the world every year.

The main tropical greenhouse in the Botanic Garden





The university also exerts a considerable academic attraction for students and researchers from Germany and other countries. The library system is one of the largest of any German university and it is closely linked with the other major libraries in Berlin and Brandenburg. The Freie Universität has a literature stock of nearly nine million volumes and 24000 ongoing magazine subscriptions. More than six million volumes are found in the 45 specialist libraries of the university and a further 2.5 million in the University Library. The University Library is also an American donation.

The Study and Psychological Advisory, which receives around 40000 enquiries per year, offers a wide range of advisory services prior to and while studying. Anybody interested in learning a new language should go to the Modern Languages Centre. Training in all matters relating to computers is provided by the ‚Zedat‘ Central Office for Data Processing, and the ‚Cedis‘ Centre for Digital Systems helps with e-learning projects. The proportion of women at the university has increased steadily in recent years and they now make up more than half the students. Since 1995, the Freie Universität has awarded the Margherita von Brentano Prize for excellent work for the promotion of women. The Ernst Reuter Prize for excellent dissertations is awarded annually on 4th December - the anniversary of the day on which the Freie Universität was founded. The international Dahlem Conferences organised by the Freie Universität are very highly regarded in the scientific community.





The Freie Universität is one of the largest employers in the Berlin-Brandenburg region and is particularly interested in ensuring that personnel are systematically prepared to cope with the changing demands of the working world. The Further Training Centre offers a wide range of courses for university staff. Anybody needing physical exercise can sign on at the University Sports Centre and choose from more than a hundred sports. New talented members are always welcomed by the various orchestras, choirs, and the two student theatre groups. For the specific interests of women, both students and personnel, there are representatives in the departments, and a University Officer for Women's Affairs.



The four Mensa student restaurants and seven cafeterias at the Freie Universität are run by the Studentenwerk. The Career Service of the Freie Universität helps students to plan their futures in the working world, but the University also provides targeted support for scientists and graduates who are interested in setting up their own new enterprises. The Freie Universität has successfully promoted the Business Plan Competition Berlin-Brandenburg: In 2003, the Freie Universität received an award for its activities in encouraging new entrepreneurial ideas ranging from high-tech science spin-offs to student start-ups in IT and the services sector.

Dahlem seems predestined as a location for the promotion of interdisciplinary research and development, and with various Max-Planck Institutes in the direct vicinity, as well as the Konrad Zuse Institute for information technology Berlin (ZIB) working in the field of applied mathematics and computer science, and the Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing, a lively exchange is always maintained.

