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# Recommendations for Dealing with Antisemitism at Universities with Teacher Education

**Adopted by the IHRA Plenary in Gothenburg<sup>1</sup>**

Universities that offer studies for a teaching diploma or teaching degree are recommended,

- firstly, to ensure that all degree programmes and the respective teacher training programmes for future teachers offer basic, extended and in-depth courses on dealing with antisemitism,
- secondly, to openly communicate the professional ethical expectations of students,
- thirdly, to offer case management at the level of the university in order to be able to (re)act quickly and in a process-guided manner in the event of antisemitism and other discriminatory incidents,
- fourthly, to designate a contact person who can advise and support the university in dealing with antisemitism.

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Presented here is a summary. The full research and results conducted as part of the project are available in German and can be found here: [Antisemitismen | Print | 41456 \(wochenschau-verlag.de\)](#).

## **Contextualisation**

The responsible handling of human rights and democracy is part of the core of teacher professionalism and is therefore given a special status in teacher education. In a time of increasing awareness of discriminatory practices in the form of group-focused enmity, racism, sexism and especially antisemitism – Often in connection with conspiracy ideologies – higher education institutions are also increasingly finding themselves in the situation of having to react appropriately to these phenomena. A special responsibility is given to the area of teacher education.

Antisemitism is a global phenomenon of long duration and was the guiding ideology for the genocide of European Jews, the Holocaust/the Shoah. Antisemitism occurred and continues to occur in very different time- and context-bound manifestations. Mere knowledge about the Holocaust does not immunise against antisemitism, nor does it immunise against the Holocaust being distorted and instrumentalized in political contexts. However, appropriate teaching and learning about the Holocaust is a prerequisite for reflective engagement with Holocaust trivialisation, distortion and denial as well as with antisemitism. It is well known that transversal topics in teacher education are difficult to locate in the curriculum, demanding to plan and challenging to implement and to put into practice. It is clear that such educational concerns cannot and must not be delegated to the responsibility of a single subject. Throughout their education, students must be given the opportunity to acquire an appropriate understanding of their role as well as professional knowledge and skills that will prepare them in the best possible way for the challenges they will encounter in school practice.

## **Necessary competences for teachers to deal with antisemitism**

Professional competences such as professional knowledge, convictions and values, motivational orientations and self-regulatory skills, as well as an awareness of the inherent antisemitic codings in our societies, are prerequisites for recognising and countering antisemitism. Personality development in this respect as well as strengthening communicative competences and the person should have room in the training of every teacher, regardless of the subject and type of school.

### **1. Teaching offers**

In order to achieve these goals and to enable the development of the teaching competences, it is suggested to establish a structurally analogous but differentiated three-part offer in all degree programmes or in the respective teacher training studies. The design of the offer can differ from university to university, depending on the available time allowance as well as on the personnel resources and the profile of the degree programmes or the teacher training programmes. The following concretisations are meant to be a suggestion for internal university discussion and can serve as an orienting guideline for self-evaluation.

## **Basic offers**

reach all students of a degree programme and are compulsory. Here, all students are taught what they must know and be able to do on the topics of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion in view of their professional assignment as teachers. This includes, for example, an offer to reflect on the significance of antisemitism and, if applicable, Holocaust distortion in one's own socialisation, basic knowledge (history, manifestations, mechanisms) to raise awareness so that incidents can be recognised, as well as an elementary repertoire of actions for dealing with antisemitism (prevention and intervention) in lessons and schools.

These basic offerings can be carried out in partnership and team-teaching by those responsible for the relevant curricular offers (e.g. in education and educational sciences) and specialists in education against antisemitism.

Basic offers can comprise a single seminar event, a block day, several block days or even an entire semester event, e.g. a cross-subject seminar for all students on discrimination, in which antisemitism is also an important sub-topic.

## **Extension offers**

reach students of a specific subject area and are compulsory for these students. Here, the students concerned are taught what they must know and be able to do in view of their specific tasks as subject teachers on the topic of antisemitism.

For prospective history teachers, this includes, for example, a basic overview of Jewish life in the past and present, of the history and manifestations of antisemitism, of the Holocaust and its aftermath, as well as of the forms of instrumentalisation of antisemitism and the Holocaust in social discourses (for example, in the Middle East conflict, in postcolonial discourses or within the framework of certain conspiracy narratives).

In the case of extension offers, too, attention must be paid to a balanced development of competences, which encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour, motivation and possibilities for action.

Extension offers are taught by those lecturers who prepare the students for their professional assignment in the specialised courses designed by the curriculum. Specialists in educating students against antisemitism and learning about the Holocaust can advise and support lecturers if they wish to do so. Extension events must be of an appropriate scope in terms of time for the degree programme or teacher training studies and can also comprise a single seminar event, a block day, several block days or even an entire semester event.

## **In-depth offers**

are elective courses and reach all students who are particularly interested in the topic. Here, in-depth aspects of educational work critical of antisemitism as well as teaching and learning about the Holocaust are offered and taught. This includes specialisation studies, an offer for qualification theses (BA, MA, state examination theses, PhD), activities around various memorial days, action days and encounter learning.

In-depth offers may take place in the same formats as the extension offers or may also include university-wide lunchtime or evening events as part of commemorative days.

Higher education institutions that offer study programmes for a teaching diploma or teaching degree are recommended to develop a matrix within the framework of a location assessment or quality evaluation in order to guarantee a range of offers in which basic, extension and specialisation offers are linked to the individual study programmes or teacher training studies. This can look as follows (and must be adapted accordingly for each higher education institution):

<b>Course of study offers or teacher training studies</b>	<b>Basic offers</b>	<b>Extension</b>	<b>Specialisation courses (all degree programmes)</b>
Kindergarten/Lower School	Dealing with antisemitism (AS) in the introductory weeks in semester 1	AS in the module "Sachunterricht" (general education) in the 3rd semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialisation study "Against antisemitisms in education", open to all students</li> <li>• Qualification theses (pool diversity, pool history, pool ethics and religions)</li> <li>• Conferences, financed for lecturers and students</li> <li>• Political activities and events: discourses on so-called action days on Jan 27 and May 8 in cooperation e.g. with student organisations, foundations, media etc.</li> </ul>
Primary level	AS in the module "Educational Sciences" in semester 1	AS in the module "Social Sciences" in the 3rd semester	
Secondary school I/Upper school	AS in the mentoring module in the 5th semester	AS in the modules "History" and "Ethics and Religions" in the 5th semester.	
Secondary level II/Gymnasium	AS in the module "Educational Sciences" in the 2nd semester	AS in the module "Subject Didactics History" in the 2nd semester	

Universities and colleges as locations of teacher education, which offer the outlined three-phase profiling to students, could develop a joint certificate for students who complete not only the basic, but also the extension and a specialisation course. Students who opt for such a certificate keep a portfolio during the three phases of professional profiling in order to favourably support the development of their reflective capacity as well as professional role understanding.

Depending on the legal structure of the universities, the extension and in-depth courses could also be offered across institutions and phases. This would make it possible to address teachers who are already practising as well as other pedagogical specialists, for example from the elementary sector.

## 2. Professional ethical expectations of students

The teaching profession is characterised, among other things, by great responsibility and a wide scope for action and decision-making. In addition to the necessary professional competences that guarantee quality teaching and education, teachers need a professional ethical awareness as a self-commitment to norms, values, attitudes and behaviour. In some countries, such commitments are formulated as the result of a joint clarification process among teachers in professional guidelines, rules of professional conduct, mission statements or in a code of ethics.

Teacher education has to pay special attention to the development of professional ethics. Transparent and openly communicated professional ethical expectations enable students to differentiate these requirements, are therefore resource-oriented and offer an opportunity for personal development and self-education. Furthermore, they enable higher education institutions to sanction any unacceptable transgressions. It is therefore suggested that higher education institutions with teacher training formulate the professional ethical competences as well as detailed expectations in this regard and disclose them to students right at the beginning of their studies.

Professional ethical expectations for students should be a non-negotiable basis for studies and professional activity. With the goal of becoming a teacher, students declare their willingness to enter into the obligations associated with these professional ethical expectations during their studies and to deal with the values behind them. For example, the following professional ethical expectations could be formulated for dealing with antisemitism:

- Students respect the human dignity, behaviour, opinions and the appearance of all people and treat them with respect.
- They do not discriminate against other persons because of their ethnic or national affiliation, their gender, their religious affiliation, their physical and mental impairments, their social or regional origin, their age or their political attitudes.
- They use language that does not discriminate against and hurt others; they do not express themselves in a racist or antisemitic way.
- They perceive conflicts or discrimination, address them appropriately and seek just solutions.
- They pay attention to the protection of the integrity as well as the psychological and physical well-being of the children and young people. They maintain a caring and benevolent attitude towards the children and young people.

### **3. Case management of the university**

Incidents of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion in schools and colleges are not exclusively the problem of those individuals who first become aware of them, but a problem of the entire institution and its management as well as its support levels (mentorates, counselling centres, etc.). Educational institutions (schools and universities) therefore need case management that ensures appropriate responses to incidents of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion. In this case management, the responsibilities and procedures for dealing with incidents are precisely designated.

A transparent reporting system and trained internal and external contact persons support the affected lecturers and teachers in internal and external communication. Such specific case management can be part of an overarching case management that deals with other socially undesirable behaviour, further discriminatory incidents, bullying or the non-fulfilment of professional ethical expectations. The following aspects, for example, are important:

- Rapid intervention;
- victim protection, if possible;
- internal university documentation;
- intra-university discussion and reflection process;
- informing the public;
- sanctioning (under criminal or personnel law).

Case management is known to all employees of the educational institution.

## **4. Internal university contact person for dealing with antisemitism**

Against the background of the great challenges faced by higher education institutions, especially in teacher education, in dealing with antisemitism and Holocaust distortion as well as other forms of discrimination and group-related hostility towards human beings, it is suggested that a contact person for these questions and problems be designated from within the higher education institution.

The contact person for dealing with antisemitism supports teachers and students – and possibly also teachers in the teaching profession – in preventing and intervening against antisemitism and Holocaust distortion and against other phenomena of group-related hostility towards or discrimination against people. He/She fosters professional exchange, supports lecturers in high-quality teaching against antisemitism, makes offers himself/herself if necessary, especially in the field of specialisation, advises students and lecturers in dealing with professional ethical expectations and participates in case management if antisemitism or Holocaust distortion is involved.

The university's internal contact person for dealing with antisemitism is easy to find for all students and employees of the educational institution and can be contacted easily.

*When designing and formulating the present recommendations for action we benefitted from many conversations we could have with experts from universities as well as from relevant documents that were made available to us by various universities.*

*We would explicitly like to mention the brochure by Herbert Luthiger of the “Pädagogische Hochschule Luzern”: “Verantwortung übernehmen: Berufsethische Erwartungen an Studierende der PH Luzern; ohne Jahr”. (Taking over responsibility: Professional ethical expectations for students of the PH Luzern; no date”). Many thanks for the great support and the numerous suggestions.*