



## **Framework Cooperation Agreement of the University Alliance Ruhr (UA Ruhr)**

between

**Ruhr University Bochum,**  
represented by its Rector  
Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Martin Paul

**TU Dortmund University,**  
represented by its Rector  
Prof. Dr. Manfred Bayer

and the

**University of Duisburg-Essen**  
represented by its Rector  
Prof. Dr. Barbara Albert

hereinafter referred to as: the UA Ruhr Universities

### **Preamble**

The University Alliance Ruhr (UA Ruhr) brings together Ruhr University Bochum, TU Dortmund University, and the University of Duisburg-Essen as they strive to achieve their vision of close collaboration. Their joint aim is to enhance their collective performance and visibility in research, teaching, and knowledge transfer, aspiring to reach a top ranking in the international arena. By joining forces, the UA Ruhr Universities are committed to creating a university network resp. environment of national and international renown that stands for scientific excellence based on active cross-university cooperation. As they pursue their path together, the three universities will expand existing collaborations and promote and develop new and innovative forms of cooperation. In the process, they will primarily focus on the scientific, economic, and social impulses and potential of the Ruhr metropolitan region, home to 5 million people and a model of diverse coexistence, outstanding innovation, and economic power.



In terms of research, the UA Ruhr has demonstrated its commitment to scientific excellence through the Research Alliance Ruhr. Through this alliance, the three partner universities are promoting cutting-edge research across institutional boundaries in four Research Centers and one College. The Research Alliance Ruhr is also setting the tone for research-based teaching and knowledge transfer within society and the economy. The alliance serves as a model for fostering cooperation across all scientific disciplines at the three partner universities and for developing new leadership and management structures within the UA Ruhr. At the same time, the UA Ruhr Universities are stepping up their collaborating in terms of diversity, internationalization, and sustainability.

## **Part 1: Goals**

### **Goals and Responsibilities of the University Alliance Ruhr**

- (1) The UA Ruhr Universities form the UA Ruhr university network.
- (2) The goal of the UA Ruhr is to maintain and expand the Ruhr region's reputation as an excellent location within the national and international research landscape. As part of this effort, the UA Ruhr is developing a joint inter-university research environment that provides a space for leading researchers to collaborate on key issues using innovative formats. The goal is to explore new fields of research by combining the complementary strengths of the partner universities. Collectively, the UA Ruhr Universities form a critical mass in terms of both personnel and infrastructure, both of which are necessary for developing cutting-edge solutions to the major research challenges of tomorrow.
- (3) The UA Ruhr Universities continuously expand the UA Ruhr's joint educational space. They aim to implement both complementary and joint study programs, especially for master's degrees, in addition to the existing ones. All UA Ruhr students have access to all study programs offered by the member universities.
- (4) The UA Ruhr promotes early career researchers through a joint interdisciplinary qualification and networking program.
- (5) The UA Ruhr supports and initiates cross-disciplinary start-up activities and participates jointly in calls for proposals. The aim is to continue developing the transfer approach in order to achieve a co-creation concept.
- (6) The UA Ruhr implements joint strategies and measures for diversity, internationalization, and sustainability.
- (7) The UA Ruhr initiates and supports cooperation in all research and university fields of activity and promotes projects that foster collaboration among its researchers, students, as well as technical and administrative staff.

- (8) The UA Ruhr Universities share common development goals and coordinate their planning efforts. This includes aligning professorship vacancies and collaboration in appointment procedures.
- (9) The UA Ruhr Universities establish joint cross-university units based on applicable legal provisions.
- (10) The UA Ruhr serves as the platform for joint public relations.

## **Part 2: Governance**

### **a) Committees and Governing Bodies**

#### **Executive Board**

- (1) The Executive Board is the supreme strategic and decision-making body of the UA Ruhr, including the Research Alliance Ruhr. It is composed of the Rectors and Chancellors of the UA Ruhr Universities.
- (2) The Executive Board steers the strategic direction and ongoing development of the UA Ruhr.
- (3) The UA Ruhr is represented in public by one of the Rectors, who act as spokesperson on a two-year rotating basis, as appointed by the Executive Board.
- (4) The Executive Board defines its internal working procedures in a set of Rules of Procedure.

#### **UA Ruhr Commissions**

- (1) The UA Ruhr Commissions (Commissions) form the second strategic level of the UA Ruhr. The Commissions are established for the following fields of action: Research, Teaching and Studies, Transfer, and Human Resources. Additional commissions may be constituted by resolution of the Executive Board.
- (2) In accordance with the strategic guidelines of the Executive Board, the Commissions develop ideas and recommendations for innovative future UA Ruhr projects in their respective fields. Following a resolution by the Executive Board, the Commissions are responsible for implementing these projects.

- (3) The Commissions have up to nine members each. Competent members of the Rectorates of the three UA Ruhr Universities participate ex officio in the respective Commissions. Additionally, each university appoints a maximum of two members who are proven experts in the respective field. Each Commission is headed by a Rectorate member who serves as spokesperson. The Executive Board appoints the spokespersons and other members of the Commissions. Their term of office is two years; they may be reappointed.
- (4) The spokespersons of the Commissions report to the Executive Board on a regular basis.

### **UA Ruhr Assembly**

- (1) The UA Ruhr Assembly was created to facilitate the sharing of ideas and information between the Executive Board and representatives from the Senates of the three UA Ruhr Universities.
- (2) The Assembly consists of twelve professors, three research assistants, three students, and three members of the technical and administrative staff. Each of the three Senates appoints four of its members from the group of professors and one member from each of the other three groups.
- (3) The term of office for Assembly members is two years, except for student members, whose term of office is one year. Reelection is possible.
- (4) The Assembly convenes twice a year.
- (5) The members elect a spokesperson from among their ranks.
- (6) The UA Ruhr Assembly may regulate its internal working procedures in the Rules of Procedure.

### **International Advisory Board (IAB)**

- (1) The International Advisory Board (IAB) of the University Alliance Ruhr consists of six internationally renowned scientists and science managers who are not members of the UA Ruhr and who hold or have held prominent positions at their respective universities resp. research institutions.
- (2) The IAB advises on the long-term strategic planning of the University Alliance Ruhr. It deals with new and existing strategic decisions, conducts international benchmarking, and provides valuable input from the perspective of different higher education systems and areas of expertise.

- (3) The members of the International Advisory Board are appointed by the Rectors of the UA Ruhr Universities. Members serve five-year terms and may be reappointed.
- (4) The IAB convenes twice a year.

### **Council for Ethics and Responsibility**

- (1) The UA Ruhr has established a joint Council for Ethics and Responsibility to support the UA Ruhr Universities in their ethical self-reflection as responsible societal actors.
- (2) The Council for Ethics and Responsibility addresses fundamental ethical issues and provides recommendations on them. The Council acts at the request of the UA Ruhr Executive Board resp. one of the Rectorates of the UA Ruhr Universities.
- (3) Further details are specified in the the most recent version of the agreement on the formation of the UA Ruhr Council for Ethics and Responsibility.

## **b) Processes and Administration**

### **Procedural Principles**

- (1) Within the framework of this Cooperation Agreement, the UA Ruhr Universities shall cooperate in good faith in order to pursue their common goals as effectively as possible. They shall establish an administrative support structure for their collaboration and determine instruments for the coordinated management of joint activities.
- (2) The administrations of the three UA Ruhr Universities shall coordinate their support for joint activities based on a division of labor and avoid redundant processes.
- (3) The UA Ruhr Universities shall use infrastructures jointly wherever possible and appropriate.

### **Governance through Target Agreements**

The Executive Board shall conclude Target Agreements with all joint institutions of the UA Ruhr. These agreements serve to clarify mutual goals and expectations, provide budgetary resources for agreed-upon measures when necessary, and constitute the foundation for monitoring target achievement.

### **Management Office**

- (1) The Management Office provides administrative support to the Executive Board as well as to other UA Ruhr committees and institutions. The office coordinates joint programs and projects and is responsible for monitoring.
- (2) The Management Office is headed by a Managing Director, who supervises the other staff members of the Management Office. The Managing Director reports to the Executive Board.

## **Part 3: Joint Institutions**

### **Research Alliance Ruhr**

- (1) Within the Research Alliance Ruhr framework, the UA Ruhr Universities have established four Research Centers and a College as joint scientific institutions, as well as a governance unit as a joint administrative institution in accordance with Section 77 (2) of the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia. The Research Centers and the College have been set up to provide a structural framework for cutting-edge research within the UA Ruhr and reflect its main areas of research.
- (2) The interdisciplinary research areas were selected based on the universities' joint strengths, addressing the key issues of our time: health, sustainability, digitalization, and energy. The Research Centers are being systematically developed and expanded into internationally recognized research priorities, particularly through the creation of new professorships and the appointment of outstanding researchers.
- (3) The College for Social Sciences and Humanities is not limited in its scope of topics, which is of paramount importance for the humanities and social sciences. It promotes international exchange by inviting visiting scholars from around the globe to the Ruhr area to work on joint research projects with local researchers.
- (4) Further details are specified in the cooperation agreement on the establishment of the Research Alliance Ruhr dated February 10, 2022, as well as in the most recent versions of the respective administrative and usage regulations of the joint units.

### **Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI)**

- (1) The Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) is an interdisciplinary research institute for the humanities and cultural studies that follows in the tradition of international institutes for advanced study. Established on January 1, 2007, it is a joint scientific institution of the partner universities in accordance with § 77 (2) of the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia at the University of Duisburg-Essen.
- (2) As a cross-university institution of the Ruhr University Bochum, TU Dortmund University, and the University of Duisburg-Essen, the Institute collaborates with researchers from its member universities as well as with other partners in North Rhine-Westphalia, across Germany, and abroad.
- (3) Further details are specified in the cooperation agreement on the establishment of the KWI dated August 26, 2016, and the institute regulations for the KWI dated May 20, 2021, in their most recent versions.

### **Alliance for Research on East Asia Ruhr (AREA Ruhr)**

- (1) AREA Ruhr is the collaborative research and teaching network between the Faculty of East Asian Studies at Ruhr University Bochum and the Institute for East Asian Studies (IN-EAST) at the University of Duisburg-Essen. AREA Ruhr is a joint scientific institution of Ruhr University Bochum and the University of Duisburg-Essen in accordance with § 77 (2) of the Higher Education Act of North Rhine-Westphalia.
- (2) AREA Ruhr is one of the largest research and teaching centers in Europe in the field of East Asian studies. It brings together a broad range of academic disciplines, creating a unique interdisciplinary research and teaching environment.
- (3) Further details are specified in the cooperation agreement on the establishment of AREA Ruhr dated May 18, 2021, and the regulations of the Alliance for Research on East Asia Ruhr (AREA Ruhr) of Ruhr University Bochum and the University of Duisburg-Essen dated November 7, 2022, in their most recent versions.

### **Research Academy**

- (1) The Research Academy is a cross-university platform that promotes early career researchers at the UA Ruhr.
- (2) The UA Ruhr Universities have jointly operated the Research Academy since 2017, with the aim of coordinating their efforts to promote early career researchers. The UA

Ruhr Universities pool their expertise within the Research Academy to support doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers in their academic and non-academic careers.

- (3) Within the framework of the Research Academy and beyond, the UA Ruhr Universities strive to jointly acquire third-party funding for graduate programs. They strongly support relevant initiatives on the part of their researchers.
- (4) Further details are specified in the most recent version of the cooperation agreement on the operation of the joint platform “Research Academy” dated February 21, 2022.

### **UA Ruhr Transfer GmbH**

- (1) The UA Ruhr Transfer GmbH aims to strengthen cooperation between the UA Ruhr Universities by consolidating and bundling transfer activities.
- (2) UA Ruhr Transfer GmbH aims to expand partnerships with businesses and consolidate initiatives to increase innovation and efficiency.
- (3) Further details are specified in the most recent version of the partnership agreement for “UA Ruhr Transfer GmbH” dated January 7, 2025.

### **Liaison Offices**

- (1) Internationalization is a cornerstone of the activities of the UA Ruhr Universities. The universities maintain extensive international networks and strive to expand their global networks and collaborations.
- (2) The UA Ruhr currently operates three Liaison Offices to promote and strengthen its international connections and collaborations in the target regions of North America, Eastern Europe/Central Asia, and Latin America.
- (3) Further details are specified in the most recent versions of the respective consortium agreements of the Liaison Offices.



## **Part 4: Joint Programs and Responsibilities**

### **RuhrCampus<sup>3</sup>**

- (1) The Ruhr higher education hub is continuously evolving and expanding under the umbrella of RuhrCampus<sup>3</sup>. The aim is to allow UA Ruhr students to freely move between the university locations in this higher education landscape.
- (2) The study programs at the UA Ruhr Universities are open to all UA Ruhr students. Students enrolled at one of the UA Ruhr Universities have visiting student status at the partner universities, along with all the benefits that entails. Thanks to streamlined admission and credit transfer regulations for courses and exams, students can take advantage of the wide variety of courses on offer.
- (3) At the master's level, the UA Ruhr Universities offer complementary resp. joint (bilateral and trilateral) degree programs.
- (4) Within the framework of the International Academy for German Engineering & Science (EUREF Campus), additional joint master's programs in the fields of energy, mobility, and sustainability are offered in cooperation with the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences. The English-language continuing education programs are fee-based and are primarily aimed at international students.
- (5) Further details are specified in the RuhrCampus<sup>3</sup> agreement of January 2014 and the cooperation agreement on the establishment of the EUREF degree programs in their most recent versions.

### **MERCUR**

- (1) MERCUR is the joint funding body of the UA Ruhr Universities for the strategic development of the University Alliance.
- (2) MERCUR supports cooperative research projects involving researchers from at least two of the three UA Ruhr Universities.
- (3) Moreover, MERCUR promotes the establishment and expansion of long-term cross-university structures. At least two of the three UA Ruhr Universities must be involved in such endeavors, with the aim of achieving trilateral participation.
- (4) Further details are specified in the most recent version of the cooperation agreement on the joint funding institution "MERCUR" dated February 10, 2025.

### **The Ruhr Science Hub and Knowledge Transfer**

- (1) The UA Ruhr plays a key role in establishing the Ruhr region as a science hub, actively collaborating with local authorities, educational and cultural institutions, associations, and regional bodies such as the Regionalverband Ruhr.
- (2) The UA Ruhr Universities have close research ties with non-university research institutions in the region.
- (3) The UA Ruhr Universities are members of the Initiativkreis Ruhr, an alliance of 70 leading companies in the Ruhr region.
- (4) Together with the RAG-Stiftung and the Initiativkreis Ruhr, the UA Ruhr Universities have founded the BRYCK Startup Alliance. The alliance aims to create a leading European innovation center for developing science-based B2B tech startups.

### **Part 5: Final Provisions**

- (1) This agreement shall enter into force upon signature by all partner universities and shall remain in effect indefinitely.
- (2) This agreement may only be amended and/or supplemented with the consent of all partner universities. Any amendments or additions to this agreement must be made in writing. This also applies to any waiver of the written form requirement.
- (3) The Rectorates of the partner universities shall decide on the adoption, amendment, or supplementation of this agreement based on the Executive Board's recommendation.
- (4) Should any provisions of this agreement be or become invalid, either in whole or in part, for any reason, this shall not affect the legal validity of the remaining provisions of this agreement. In the event of the invalidity of any provision, it shall be replaced by a new, valid provision that most closely approximates the invalid provision, taking into account the objectives of this agreement. The same applies in the event of a contractual loophole.
- (5) This agreement replaces the Framework Cooperation Agreement of February 23, 2017.
- (6) This agreement is signed in both German and English. In the event of discrepancies or contradictions between the language versions, the German version shall prevail.



Bochum, Dortmund and Duisburg-Essen, dated 07.07.2025

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Martin Paul

Rector  
of Ruhr University  
Bochum

Prof. Dr. Manfred Bayer

Rector  
of TU Dortmund  
University

Prof. Dr. Barbara Albert

Rector  
of the University of  
Duisburg-Essen