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UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG

Although there had been earlier higher education initiatives in Hamburg — such as the Gelehrtenschule des Johanneums in the 16th century and academic lecture offerings in the 19th century — the University of Hamburg (Universität Hamburg) was formally founded on 28 March 1919 following the democratic revolution at the end of World War I. It was established by the newly elected Hamburg Parliament as part of a broader movement to modernize education in Germany and open higher learning to a wider public. This founding marked the first democratic university establishment in Germany, rooted in the social and political transformations of the post-war era and driven by advocates who believed that science and scholarship should serve all members of society.



From its inception, the University of Hamburg was designed as a comprehensive research institution combining teaching and inquiry across disciplines. Four faculties — Law and Public Administration, Medicine, Philosophy, and Natural Sciences — were established, and the new university absorbed the General Lecture System and other pre-existing scientific institutions. With these foundations, UHH set out to unite academic rigor with practical relevance, producing graduates and research that would contribute to societal progress in the tumultuous years of the Weimar Republic.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, the University experienced dynamic growth. Thousands of students enrolled, and its faculty included influential scholars who shaped debates in philosophy, science, and law. However, the rise of National Socialism brought profound challenges: many professors and academics were dismissed or forced out due to political persecution and racial laws, and the institution's intellectual life was deeply disrupted. By the mid-20th century, the university had endured ideological conformity and the devastation of war.

After World War II, the University of Hamburg reopened in the winter semester of 1945 /46 and entered a period of reconstruction and reform. The post-war era saw both an expansion of academic programs and structural changes: faculties multiplied, new departments emerged, and democratic governance within the university was

strengthened. This evolution reflected broader educational reforms in Germany and the University's commitment to both academic freedom and societal responsibility.

In the second half of the 20th century, the University expanded physically and intellectually. New campuses were constructed, research institutes established, and the student population grew rapidly. By the early 21st century, UHH had evolved into one of Germany's largest and most diverse universities, offering more than 170 degree programs across eight faculties. Its urban presence spans multiple parts of the Hamburg metropolitan area — from the central Von-Melle-Park campus to specialized campuses for medical and natural science research.

Embracing the research intensity expected of modern universities, the University of Hamburg has distinguished itself through interdisciplinary inquiry and global collaboration. In 2019, it was recognized as a “University of Excellence” under Germany's Excellence Strategy, a prestigious designation that supports cutting-edge projects in areas such as advanced imaging technologies, climate science, manuscript cultures, and fundamental physics. These achievements underscore the University's commitment to addressing pressing global challenges while contributing to scientific advancement.



Today, the University of Hamburg is the largest research and educational institution in

northern Germany, with over 40,000 students, thousands of faculty members, and a broad international network of partnerships. It offers a comprehensive range of academic programs — from the humanities and social sciences to natural sciences, medicine, and education — and fosters a vibrant academic culture grounded in democratic values, academic freedom, and societal engagement.

The University's mission remains deeply rooted in its historical origins: to provide high-quality education, conduct impactful research, and serve as a forum for critical thought and public discourse. It continues to reflect the traditions of openness and innovation that characterized its founding, while adapting to the demands of the 21st century and striving to shape the future of science, culture, and society.