

31.07.2024

## **Action plan „Vocational training at UFZ“**

Parties responsible: Executive Management

Technical coordination: People and Culture

Participants: Trainees of UFZ, General Works Council

As of 30.07.2024

## **1. Preface**

The Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research – UFZ has been training since 1993 and paved the way for many young people to enter recognized careers with unique perspectives. Beginning with two apprentices training to become office management clerks, the training opportunities at UFZ have expanded to up to 19 different apprenticeships and study programs. The quality of our vocational training has been confirmed by the Leipzig Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) 17 times as an “Excellent Training Company” for the performance of our trainees. The apprentices were recognized as the best young skilled workers in the Chamber of Commerce districts of Leipzig, Sachsen, as well as the Federal Republic of Germany. Our students were at the top of their class, wrote the best bachelor's theses and received honors from the Berufsakademie Sachsen.

On the 7th of February 2024, the UFZ was rewarded for the first time with the training seal „BEST PLACE TO LEARN®“ for 2024-2025. This recognition reinforces UFZ's commitment to excellent vocational training practices and the promotion of an inspiring learning environment.

Using the „Action plan: Vocational training“, the UFZ would like to further optimize the training we offer, increase the attractiveness of its own apprenticeships, and at the same time, make their own contribution towards developing skilled workers.

## **2. Vision**

The UFZ, as a research institute, is not a typical training company. Our research plays a special role in our training. We combine topics such as environmental research, sustainability, and climate protection with an excellent apprenticeship in a diverse scientific environment. These distinguishing features must be used in recruiting and during the training so that the following continues to apply:

The UFZ – A good place to learn

In the future, we will maintain our exceptional standard in the training of apprentices and students of the Berufsakademie and implement the tips and suggestions from the workshop as part of the BEST PLACE TO LEARN® seal of quality certification on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as described in the following steps.

## **3. Next steps**

We are already well established in terms of the transparency of our application procedures, the management of the training process and implementation of the training plan, the positive, integrated working atmosphere, the professional quality and results of our training.

We strive for our own continuous development and the further improvement of the training we offer. We have identified five areas of action, and developed measures that will help us adequately address existing and future challenges, as well as to both maintain and improve the quality of our training.

The progress of this action plan will be monitored every six months by the training coordinators and adjusted if necessary.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Area of Action: Maintaining contact and relationships before starting training

The UFZ enjoys a very high reputation as an employer and training company, and our application process is appreciated as quick and transparent. At the same time, the transition from school to an apprenticeship or university is a special step for all young people, offering them opportunities to realize their professional potential and achieve their personal goals. We want to actively accompany and support this transitional process. Through a successful and punctual integration into our work and training process, we motivate our trainees and can prevent them from dropping out of the vocational training.

Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
Contact will be made by email or telephone before the start of training.	Set up a „Buddy-Program“; trainees and BA students enlist into a mentorship program before the start of their training	Beginning of the training year 2024-25  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination People and Culture, training specialists in biology and IT
All new trainees and BA students are encouraged to attend the summer festival together with friends and relatives	A starter kit will be made publicly available on the revised careers website	Until the end of 2024  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Project group: Career website, Training coordination
./.	Inviting the future trainees and students to various events (e.g. events of each of the departments, Night of Science, offer a guided tour of the UFZ campus)	After the contract signing  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination People and Culture, Departments
	Revision of advertisements, linking to training videos and initial information while simultaneously linking and using social media platforms  Involving the trainees and students in social media as Influencers, by sharing posts themselves and providing insight into their everyday working life	Start erfolgte bereits zum Auswahlverfahren 2024  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination, Staff unit Press and Public Relations and trainees, those who are employed within the framework of the training

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Area of Action: Learning culture

The apprentices and BA-students are all involved in the projects of each department and division, no matter the apprenticeship or field of study. They also take up their own projects to actively support their colleagues in their respective structural units. Our goal is to offer our trainees a positive learning environment, as well as a learning culture that challenges them and supports them. Targeted feedback and continuous updates on training-relevant information play a crucial role. Feedback from the trainees is a valuable resource for further organizational development, thus it is actively encouraged for them to provide feedback to their trainers. The following measures are intended to improve our learning culture and create optimal conditions for appreciated feedback.

Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
Feedback sessions are held irregularly, often only at the end of the probation period. In commercial professions, interim and final discussions are held regularly in departments due to the short periods of employment.	<p>Regularly conducting feedback sessions and discussions with trainees and BA students in all professions and study courses</p> <p>Feedback should be clearly defined as such, so that the trainees also have the opportunity to express other praises/criticisms</p> <p>Reaching a consensus on time periods for interim and final discussions</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Trainees, all</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination People and Culture, training specialists in biology and IT</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination People and Culture, training specialists in biology and IT</p>
As a rule of thumb, trainees do not provide feedback to trainers	<p>Create and provide a feedback guide, so trainees can enter the discussion more prepared and with confidence.</p> <p><i>See also: 3<sup>rd</sup> Personal development</i></p>	<p>prepared; seminar in 2025</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination and trainees operating in People and Culture</p>
The curriculum of the individual professions and training stations is not always made clear	Providing of the training plans and the factual and scheduled structures of the apprenticeship for trainers	<p>Until the end of 2024</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination People and Culture, training specialists in biology and IT</p>

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Area of Action: HR Development

The UFZ's internal continued education program is organized and coordinated by the HR Development Team. All continued education measures can be viewed in the central continued education catalogue. There are currently only a few offers for the target group of trainers and trainees. In order to support our trainees beyond the material taught in vocational school, offers are to be created that individualize and make learning more flexible in order to sharpen their professional profile and improve career prospects. In addition, the trainers are to be supported during their work with the apprentices through targeted offers and given the opportunity to develop and network within their vocational and occupational education.

Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
Annual meetings of trainers of all professions are held with seminars on various topics and exchanges	Networking between all training coordinators of the Helmholtz Center  Networking between the trainers of UFZ Come to an agreement on communication channels	Decide within AK Personal April 2024  1st appointment: 13.09.2024  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Leaders of PACE to speak for the AK Personal  1st Quarter of 2025  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination, training specialists in biology and IT
The current feedback culture is very dependent on the individual	Offer training on how to handle feedback for all parties involved  <i>See also: 2<sup>nd</sup> Learning culture</i>	In 2025  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination People and Culture
There is currently only case-specific networking and consultations	Introduce peer-to-peer consultations for trainers	In 2025  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Team HR development; Training coordination
There is currently one yearly meeting of trainers with external technical input	Create further training opportunities for trainers, especially on the topics of labor laws, didactics, and media education	From 2024  <u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination

Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
There is currently no support for other languages	<p>Forming of language tandems between trainees and German-learning scientists to improve their specialized English skills</p> <p>Offer English language courses for trainees</p> <p>Testing to see if language learning apps could be a viable alternative to live courses</p>	<p>in 2025</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Trainees and BA students</p>
	<p>Research and pre-selection of useful, freely available online courses and open educational resources on the above-mentioned topics on continuing education</p>	<p>in 2025</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> trainees in People and Culture under the supervision of trainers</p>
There is currently no target group of trainees and trainers in the UFZ system	<p>Create a new target group of trainers and trainees in the continued education catalogue and UFZ online academy</p>	<p>from 2025</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Team HR Development, Training coordination</p>

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Area of Action: Perspectives

In accordance with §16a TVAöD, after completion of education and/or training, we offer all trainees and BA students employment for one year, provided that there were no personal, behavioral, operational, or legal reasons to the contrary. After this year of employment, we endeavor to find long-term or permanent follow-up employment by examining needs within our center and other facilities. We would like to implement additional measures, particularly for shaping future career paths and designing individual development planning with foresight.

Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
<p>If one is professionally and personally suitable, they will be taken on for one year after the completion of training</p> <p>Continued employment will depend of the activity of management and the available positions</p>	<p>Individual support offered in career planning for trainees</p> <p>Individual exchanges about further qualification options held after completing the training</p>	<p>ongoing</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> trainees, management</p>
<p>Advertisements for biology laboratory technicians were created in response to little systemic demand from the departments and divisions</p> <p>The decision on place of employment was made at the end of training</p>	<p>The training positions for biology laboratory technicians should be advertised according to the needs of the departments, so that training takes place where there in a future need in the context of succession planning, third party projects, etc.</p>	<p>since 2024</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Team leaders of HR service, Training coordination</p>
<p>Case-specific use of networking</p>	<p>The network to LSN is to be expanded upon in order to enable follow-up employment across companies</p>	<p>ongoing</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> International Office, Team leaders of HR service, Training coordination</p>
<p>Case-specific instances of consultation at the active request of the trainee</p>	<p>Structurally integrate career counseling and guidance on development</p>	<p>from 2025</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Team leaders of PS, Training coordination, trainers</p>

### 5<sup>th</sup> Area of Action: Supporting of training staff

For successful training at our research facility to be carried out, dedicated trainers are essential. Thanks to their high level of willingness to take on the training of future specialists, in addition to their actual work, our trainers make valuable contributions to making the UFZ an excellent training company. Our trainers take on a very high level of responsibility throughout the entire training process as learning companions. With the goal of supporting them as best as possible in undertaking these responsibilities, the following measures are to be implemented.

Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
<p>Regular consultations are held with trainers within commercial professions</p> <p>Once a year, a full day event (training, seminar, exchange) for all trainers on various topics takes place</p>	<p>Trainers should be offered further training in areas such as pedagogy, communication, and training on how to deal with different generations and dimensions of diversity</p>	<p>in planning, starts at the end of 2024</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Training coordination, training specialists in biology and IT</p>
<p>Trainers would like more appreciation</p>	<p>Receive appreciation through feedback from trainees</p> <p><i>See also: 2<sup>nd</sup> Learning culture</i></p> <p>Look into the possibility of recognition from the Executive Management branch</p> <p>Official naming of trainers, recording the activity within job descriptions and mentioning it across all following job certificates and performance reviews</p>	<p>ongoing</p> <p><u>Parties responsible:</u> Leaders of PACE, Training coordination</p>



Current state	Goals	Implementation (Who/When)
<p>Trainers are currently overworked, due to the preparation and caring of the trainees having to be done alongside their normal work duties, thus having no time to accomplish their work.</p>	<p>Collaboration with the leaders of individual departments, work in the respective teams must be reorganized and redistributed so that the trainers can also devote their time to training</p> <p>Hiring of new training staff</p> <p>Training everyone in their rights and obligations during the training</p>	<p><u>Parties responsible</u>: Leaders of PACE (communication to department heads), Training coordination</p>