

LISTE POPPELSDORF

MANIFESTO



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We advocate for higher education policy that is inclusive, anti-fascist, and based on solidarity – for everyone, regardless of faculty, campus, or social background.

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1 Manifesto

1.1 Preface

“Higher education policy for everyone” - this was the shared idea that brought our founding members together. Before the founding of the Poppelsdorf List, the university political scene in Bonn was largely shaped by representatives from the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Law/Political Science (strongly dominated by individual departments). The still relatively new Poppelsdorf Campus, shaped by the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Medical Faculty, was fundamentally underrepresented. For this reason, the Poppelsdorf List was founded under this name.

In 2020, we ran for the Student Parliament for the first time. In the years that followed, we grew significantly beyond a small local group and became the largest non-partisan list of the Bonn student body. We held three terms in the AStA, four years of the first speaker of the Student Parliament, and various other committees such as faculty councils, the senate, etc.

Our founding idea of representing a student status group that had received little attention quickly made us realize that it was not only the Poppelsdorf Campus that was overlooked. We soon included the other satellite locations of the university and we are here for all students in general. University political representation in the Student Parliament must not leave anyone out. We represent all students, regardless of faculty or campus. We are here for you - we are here for everyone.

1.2 Our Core Values

We stand for an inclusive university where hatred and agitation such as racism, classism, antisemitism, misogyny, homophobia, ableism, and transphobia have no place. An anti-fascist, left-wing stance is self-evident to us, and we support intersectional feminism.

The central goal of our list is to improve studying for all of us, with particular focus on the following areas.

The university thrives on its diversity – geographically, academically, and socially. Even though the different campuses are physically separated, students share similar challenges. Therefore, no campus and no faculty should be structurally privileged or disadvantaged. University policy must take all students into account equally.

1.2.1 A strong student voice

We as the student body are a strong student voice in the university's self-governance. We are active at all levels and consistently advocate both independently and together with the groups of professors, academic staff, and technical and administrative employees for student interests. Our aim is that the largest group at the university (the students) is recognized as such and that discussions take place on equal footing. In our view, all status groups should be equally represented in the Senate and the faculty councils so that decisions are made transparently, fairly, and in a balanced manner.

1.2.2 Equal Opportunities and Diversity

The University of Bonn thrives on its diversity. Therefore, students who are disadvantaged in everyday university life must not be overlooked and must receive targeted support. This includes, above all, ensuring that all buildings, rooms, and services are accessible without barriers, and that unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles are removed.

A university can only function fairly when different lived realities are taken into account — especially where multiple forms of disadvantage intersect. Students with limited financial resources, caregiving responsibilities, or particular burdens require special support to enable equal participation.

1.2.3 Social Affairs

Social justice and consistent anti-classism are pressing issues. At the university, social background must not play a role. Studying must be accessible and affordable for everyone.

1.2.4 Ecologically Sustainable and Climate-Neutral

A university that does not take climate change seriously cannot be a credible place of education and research. Only through serious and consistent efforts to safeguard our planet and all forms of life can the academic community live up to its responsibility.

We therefore expect the university to significantly expand its existing efforts and to take concrete steps toward becoming a climate-neutral and ecologically sustainable institution. This includes a consistently sustainable construction and renovation policy, responsible use of energy and resources, and teaching and research that not only address climate protection but actively model it.

Our goal is a university that takes its ecological responsibility seriously — in operations, in curricula, and throughout everyday academic life.

1.2.5 Education Without Elitist Attitudes

A degree program can only function with good teaching. But teaching and academic content are by far not the only things that matter in students' lives, we need space for forming our own opinions and time to question things critically. In teaching, the cutting edge of research must not dictate the pace; we support an education that includes every student. We clearly oppose performance elitism and advocate for modern, reflective teaching in which students play an active role in shaping their education.

1.2.6 Mental Health

Mental health is a topic that too often gets pushed into the background, even though it plays a central role during one's studies. Dense, rigid study plans or stressful exam periods far too often lead students to neglect their mental well-being. A broad and easily accessible range of support and educational resources is essential to raise awareness at the university and to address structural improvements.

1.2.7 Close to the Student Councils

Student councils (Fachschaften) are an essential point of contact for the student body — they usually know best what concerns students in their respective degree programs. Therefore, close cooperation and active exchange with the student councils is especially important.

1.2.8 Feminist

Direct and indirect sexism as well as discriminatory structures must be made visible, critically examined, and decisively dismantled. The goal is to create an equal and free university in which discrimination against FLINTA* persons has no place and empowerment is actively supported. Feminism is intentionally understood in an intersectional way, taking diverse perspectives and power dynamics into account. Unconscious biases exist at all levels of the university — from teaching and hiring to the highest administrative bodies — and must be consistently reflected upon and addressed.

2 Our Topics

Principle: Higher Education Policy for Everyone

We fight in all areas of university policy for a university in which studying, working, housing, mobility, and culture are shaped in socially just, accessible, and climate-friendly ways.

2.1 Topic: Education

Endlessly boring and bad lectures must come to an end. Abolish bad professors! We stand for a fair and didactically meaningful university and academic education. The university education system has not truly been reformed since the Bologna Process — and even Bologna itself is highly debated. Our studies are shaped by “traditions,” and everything is done simply because “that’s how it’s always been done.”

The university — a place that should stand for diversity, innovation, renewal, and evaluation — is still a “keep going as before!” machine. In our view, a university needs an educational concept that deserves to be questioned and put under scrutiny as much as scientific research. A lecture, seminar, or course must be evaluated, analyzed, and followed by concrete action. Evaluations should not be an annoying task but should inspire a drive for improvement and support the teaching process as an indicator-based tool.

Teaching and university education must be free and accessible to everyone. Classism has no place at a university. We stand for class struggle. First-generation students often have significantly more difficulty completing a degree than those with an academic family background. We want to fight for a university where it does not matter whether a student comes from a family of doctors in the third generation or grew up in a foster home. Education is not the privilege of individual status groups! We want to make education free and accessible to everyone!

Digitalization: from overhead projectors to generative AI, everything exists at the university — we demand digital competence in teaching. Even though we already have many digital services, the competence with which instructors work with them varies greatly. We want these systems to be used where it makes sense and for data to be open and freely accessible.

Teaching under licensing conditions: proprietary, expensive software is not a solution for accessible education. Software used at the university — both in teaching and research — should always be open-source and freely accessible. A public university should be obligated to make its results and products freely available to everyone.

Bad teaching must have consequences. Students have a right to good education. Bad teaching is not an option. A university system that is inherently focused on performance and scientific output cannot look away when poor and pedagogically harmful teaching is being practiced. Consistent didactic training should be the standard for anyone teaching at the university. Teaching qualifications (“Habilitation”) are granted solely based on research performance — absurd!

2.2 Topic: Mental Health

No time off, grade pressure, and anxiety about the future: this makes people mentally ill. In 2022, our university conducted a pilot survey on students' mental health — initiated by us. Not only have these results never been publicly accessible to the university community, but the results that a few students were able to see were catastrophic. Every second student at the university struggled with depression-like symptoms at least every other day in 2022.

We urgently need a shift in thinking so that studying with good mental health is no longer categorically impossible.

To help students in mentally precarious situations, we want to commit to maintaining and expanding counseling and prevention services — from support for students seeking therapy places to workshops on topics such as study habits and work structures. These services must be preserved and expanded — and their visibility must be improved as well.

However, counseling and prevention alone do not fix a broken system. We especially need a fundamental shift in thinking at the university. The 2022 survey already showed that performance pressure, elitist behavioral patterns, and overcrowded exam schedules are major factors affecting mental health in studies. Our approach: **More exam attempts, less performance pressure!** With this, we aim to reduce systemic pressure while improving the study conditions for everyone.

Topics related to mental health must be integrated into the university's quality management system. Regular assessments of students' mental health are necessary to quickly identify and eliminate systemic causes.

2.3 Topic: Sustainability and a Climate-Neutral University

Animal testing and high energy consumption at the university are not sustainable — especially the construction of new university buildings and the renovation of old ones must be carried out sustainably and in a climate-neutral manner. We advocate for teaching at the University of Bonn to become free of animal testing. To ensure that new construction projects are implemented sustainably and climate-positive, we serve on the key committees that influence these decisions. Teaching must be designed responsibly and in a climate-conscious way. This includes: accurate and scientifically accepted communication of climate research results, the mindful use of high-performance computing facilities, and a critical evaluation of the use of AI with a focus on the enormous energy and resource consumption associated with it.

2.4 Topic: Canteens

We all deserve affordable, all-day food options.

Whether it's the JuriShop, the Campo and Hofgarten canteens, or the food trucks — the food offerings in Bonn are diverse but not comprehensive! The offerings of the Studierendenwerk must be available at every university location. Regular evaluation of the food trucks is necessary to ensure food provision at remote campuses several days a week.

The extension of opening hours for existing facilities is also long overdue. Students are not only on campus from morning to afternoon; students are at university locations at almost any time of day and must also have access to food in the evening. We therefore demand expanded serving hours in the canteens and the JuriShop — for example, with an evening stew between 17:00 and 20:00.

Meal costs must remain affordable, and low-cost dishes must be preserved. Students in financially difficult situations must still be able to eat well. This is why we want to continue projects like the “Freitisch” (free meal program) for students in need next year. Warm meals and healthy nutrition should never have to compete with having a place to live or succeeding academically.

The eating habits of many students are moving increasingly toward vegan or vegetarian diets. We want non-animal-based meals to be available every day. More options are needed! We advocate for an expansion of vegan and vegetarian offerings at every Studierendenwerk location — and at all times.

2.5 Topic: Student Housing

The shortage of affordable housing is a major problem. Most Bonn students did not grow up in the greater Bonn region and therefore cannot move into a family apartment — or simply do not want to anymore — which means they must find new housing.

Student dormitories are typically the first point of contact. However, they do not offer nearly enough space for everyone and are therefore often overwhelmed. With around 3,700 dormitory places and roughly 7,000 applications each year, first-year students must anxiously hope to receive a spot. For those who do receive one, the next shock often comes after moving in: the safety situation in some dorms is catastrophic. We will continue advocating for dormitories to remain affordable, become safer, and — above all — become available to all students. We demand more affordable student housing and the development of new dormitory buildings.

It is not uncommon for city-owned housing to sit empty. We want to continue supporting projects that make use of the city’s full housing stock. Particularly helpful are initiatives where older residents make their unused apartment space available to students.

But all these projects are long-term undertakings — we also need immediate help for the current housing emergency. Therefore, we support the creation of emergency sleeping facilities for students who urgently cannot find housing or lose their housing on short notice.

2.6 Topic: Social Issues, Inclusion, and International Students

We demand a BAföG system that is truly accessible to everyone. Buried under layers of bureaucracy, many students struggle to receive financial aid despite being eligible and in need. Months of waiting, financial insecurity, and pressure to complete studies within a tightly defined standard period create unnecessary stress on top of existing concerns about housing and exams. We need transparent processes, less bureaucracy, and eligibility criteria that better reflect students' real-life circumstances.

Students with disabilities or chronic illnesses have a fundamental right to study free from discrimination and with equal opportunities, including the right to receive compensatory adjustments. However, these rights are far too rarely exercised—often due to lack of awareness, shame, or fear of additional hurdles. We want to encourage a shift in mindset so that students can access support without barriers and so that compensatory adjustments come with clear rules, short administrative paths, and low thresholds.

Accessibility must be taken for granted at the university. This includes accessible seating in lecture halls, elevators that can be used without special keys and offer enough space for wheelchairs, as well as ramps and automatic door openers in central buildings. Additionally, we advocate for a campus-wide tactile guidance system for blind and visually impaired individuals, enabling safe and independent navigation for everyone.

First-generation students often face significant disadvantages at the beginning of their studies compared to those from academic families. Targeted support is needed to address the social and structural challenges these students encounter. Accompanying programs like „BeStrong!“, clear and accessible language in early semesters, and low-threshold counselling and mentoring services can help reduce social inequality.

International students face major challenges even before their studies begin: complex enrolment procedures, language barriers, and a lack of orientation in the German higher

education system. At the same time, their interests are underrepresented in many university committees. We therefore demand clear and transparent enrolment processes, multilingual information resources, contact persons in all areas of university life, and stronger institutional representation for international students.

We also want to ensure that students with children are supported through flexible childcare services, family-friendly opening hours, and individualized support structures. Higher education policy must consider all lived realities—regardless of origin, disability, income, or family responsibilities.

2.7 Topic: Student Culture

A lecture hall is not only a place for learning. Culture—and especially student culture—is fundamentally important. A lecture hall can be a cinema, a forum, a space for music, and so much more. We want to support and preserve student culture and the spaces it needs.

Student culture is extremely diverse: from interest groups for historical instruments to vegan cooking groups to discussion groups on societal topics such as the influence of artificial intelligence. We value this diversity and want to maintain a pluralistic cultural landscape.

Culture needs space: space in our schedules, space in university buildings, space in our minds! Creating and preserving space for expression is very important to us. We need places where student culture can emerge and be lived. In particular, we must create low-threshold, easily accessible spaces for all student cultural groups and creative individuals.

A campus festival for Bonn: We want to continue supporting the Campus Festival—a festival by students, for students, with music and culture for everyone—free of charge and embedded in the daily reality of student life, offering a welcome break from everyday stress.

The cultural ticket must be preserved. Many students cannot afford visits to theatres, operas, or similar cultural venues. The cultural ticket ensures that all students can experience such cultural offerings. Entry at the evening box office for €3—for everyone!

2.8 Topic: Transportation

Mobility is a central part of daily student life. Whether going from a lecture to the cafeteria or from one campus to another—the journey must be fast, simple, and reliable!

One of the most important aspects of student mobility is cost. Students are often in precarious financial situations and frequently threatened by poverty. This is why we advocate for an affordable semester ticket with nationwide validity.

But mobility is not just a cheap semester ticket; we must actively drive forward the mobility transition. In the climate crisis, the university must demonstrate what a sustainable mobility transition can look like. This does not mean individual transport with electric cars, but rather a strong and reliable public transport network and a well-developed cycling infrastructure.

The public transport network in Bonn has room for improvement. We want to ensure that bus and tram lines run more reliably and frequently. Lines such as 61, 600, 601, and 632 are essential for quick connections between lectures and university sports offerings. We demand that students can attend any event. Poor bus connections and insufficient service frequency should not prevent students from attending courses or visiting the cafeterias.

To promote sustainable transport, we want to strengthen the bicycle as a mode of transport and continuously expand infrastructure at university locations. It is unacceptable that bicycle parking spaces are scarce. In particular, we want to maintain and promote cooperations such as those with Nextbike/Welo.

2.9 Topic: TV-Stud

Student employees often have contracts that are too short, low pay, and insufficient vacation entitlement. This is why the **TV-Stud movement**, organized significantly by us in Bonn, brought a major strike of student employees to the streets for the first time in 2023. As a result, although we have not yet secured a collective agreement, we now have a contractual agreement with nationwide minimum wages and minimum contract durations of 12 months.

To ensure this is implemented in Bonn, we need a functioning SHK Council (SHK: Student Assistant) and a staff council that represents student interests. These bodies have agreed with the university on the following measures:

1. Mandatory involvement of SHK representatives, analogous to the State Staff Representation Act (LPVG), for matters such as job postings, terminations, denial of vacation requests, and workplace design.
2. Expansion of collective competencies, including the conclusion of service agreements, convening staff meetings, access to SHK employee distribution lists, etc.
3. Expansion of individual rights for SHK representatives, including mandatory release from duties analogous to the LPVG, coverage of training costs, and provision of appropriate rooms and work equipment.
4. Establishment of a non-rectorial arbitration board to resolve disputes regarding measures contested by SHK representatives. This board should be either independently appointed or equally represented by staff and employer representatives.
5. Legal determination of the minimum size of SHK representative bodies, analogous to §13 LPVG, scaled according to the number of employees represented.

We need a TV-Stud, integration into the TV-L system with all its benefits, higher vacation entitlement, longer sick pay, and every improvement won for all collectively bargained employees.

2.10 Topic: Abuse of Power

Whether for a thesis, PhD, or internship, as students we depend on our supervisors to provide fair guidance and to evaluate our academic work fairly. Unfortunately, this power imbalance is everyday reality at universities. Advanced students and PhD candidates often collaborate with their thesis supervisors on research projects. Supervisors are usually also direct employers. This multiple dependency creates fertile ground for abuse. Even minor personal conflicts can, in the worst case, end an academic career. A single person can decide whether you complete your degree or PhD while simultaneously controlling your pay.

These structural foundations for abuse of power are a problem. We want to change this and demand better structural conditions for students to combat this inequality. We will consistently advocate for the enforcement of labor rights for all student and research employees and demand that students have the option to decide whether their supervisor also evaluates their thesis in the end.