

Third Mission Strategy of the University of Klagenfurt

Preamble

One of the missions of universities is to contribute to the “welfare of society and the environment” and to “master the challenges faced by society” (§ 1 Austrian Universities Act). The University of Klagenfurt honours its legal mandate by closely integrating all three missions: the core tasks of universities, namely scientific research and teaching, as well as the Third Mission – the objective of conducting science with and for society. This involves the science-based exchange with societal actors as well as various kinds of transfer in the economy and in society.

This Third Mission strategy aims to provide a framework for positioning the university’s Third Mission activities internally and externally and to raise their profile accordingly. Even now, the realm of Third Mission at the University of Klagenfurt encompasses a wide range of activities, in line with the respective strengths of university faculties and centres. Their purpose is to promote lasting and transformative development in society, the economy and nature. They embrace the objectives of the European Union and the United Nations’ *Sustainable Development Goals*, as well as the social mandate in support of democracy, social cohesion, prosperity and competitiveness. Adequate measures are taken to promote and recognise third-mission activities at the University of Klagenfurt. However, it is up to individuals and their organisational units to decide upon the form and intensity of their involvement in the area of the Third Mission.

As the “academic backbone of the region”, the University of Klagenfurt seeks to underscore its future role as a factor in shaping transformation in the region. To this end, it strives to make every possible contribution to overcoming the social challenges that specifically affect the location. At the same time, it wants to contribute to solving major social problems at the national and international level.

Both visibility and effectiveness in processes of social transformation and design are highly significant for other strategic objectives of the University of Klagenfurt. Third Mission activities present opportunities to generate increased attention and a positive image, to make relevant contributions to regional development, and to reinforce the university’s reputation as an attractive, socially relevant educational institution and employer.

Third Mission Fields of Activity

The University of Klagenfurt’s commitment is based on a broad understanding of Third Mission activities. These contributions are made by members of all faculties and university centres, taking different forms depending on the discipline, and addressing specific stakeholders or social groups in each case. At the University of Klagenfurt, Third Mission activities and formats fall predominantly under the following three categories:

1. Knowledge and technology transfer
2. Social Engagement
3. Continuing education (the University of Klagenfurt has adopted a dedicated [continuing education strategy](#))

Examples of university-based, science-led contributions to shaping social change include:

Knowledge and technology transfer

- cooperating with industry, e.g. commissioned and grant-funded research;
- encouraging start-up ventures in all technical, economic, social and cultural fields represented at the University of Klagenfurt;
- offering scientific expertise in the form of expert opinions, written statements, and consulting services to support complex decision-making processes;
- addressing global, national, regional and local “grand challenges” in the spirit of sustainable development;
- developing know-how, technologies and patents;
- fostering open science, e.g. Open Source, Open Access, Open Data.

Social commitment

- providing expert representation and participating in advisory boards and consultative processes for governmental bodies, industry stakeholders, and administrative entities
- supporting inter- and transdisciplinary or participatory research and the integration of citizens in scientific processes (e.g. Citizen Science projects);
- establishing educational projects for and with pupils, creating long-term partnerships with schools (“partner schools”);
- 4. engaging through collaborative ventures with artists and creative professionals, encompassing exhibitions, literary events, and other artistic manifestations that bridge academic and creative domains.

The University of Klagenfurt pursues its Third Mission on the basis of scientific expertise and potential, applying these in a targeted, resource-efficient and focused manner to advance social development interests and objectives, thereby achieving a lasting impact and extending beyond its own scientific communities. This is based on the institutional consensus that participation and transfer initiatives can only be successful and sustainable if they are grounded in science.

Strategic Objectives

The University of Klagenfurt’s Third Mission strategy serves the following medium- to long-term objectives:

- The University of Klagenfurt is widely recognised for the Third Mission contributions of its researchers, both regionally and nationally, and is perceived as a driving force in the social dialogue.
- The University of Klagenfurt is established as the first point of scientific contact when it comes to overcoming the societal challenges faced by the region, and is a highly regarded cooperation partner among stakeholders.
- The Third Mission activities are given appropriate weight at the University of Klagenfurt; they are clearly visible and acknowledged as achievements at the University of Klagenfurt and are adequately reflected in the university’s internal systems.

Measures

The following measures aim to achieve the strategic objectives set out above:

Governance, recognition, incentives: The Third Mission shall become an integral part of university governance processes. Third Mission projects and efforts are systematically incorporated into job advertisements, recruitment and staffing decisions, evaluations, and target agreements. Here, the university is guided by the same exacting quality standards it applies to research and teaching. To encourage scholars to engage in Third Mission activities, measures are needed to ensure that these activities are recognised by the university. In addition to the measures outlined above, appropriate incentive structures for researchers and organisational units will also be developed.

Visibility and communication: The University of Klagenfurt's understanding of the Third Mission and its own responsibility in this context are clearly communicated both internally and externally. Contributions in the field of Third Mission are made visible through targeted communication formats, as they are in research and teaching.

Strengthening interfaces and services: Strengthening and developing Third Mission initiatives in line with strategic objectives requires appropriate support for scholars and their organisational units. To this end, we will take the following measures: (a) Third Mission support services offered by central facilities of the University of Klagenfurt are prepared in a transparent and target group-specific manner, are easily accessible and are adjusted and selectively expanded in line with the overall range of services (i.e. also externally). (b) Units with intermediary functions in the area of the Third Mission communicate their range of tasks and their role as central interfaces for both external and internal interested parties. (c) Support measures are expanded and extended through partnerships; cooperation and service agreements are concluded with the cooperation partners.

Strengthening university-wide Third Mission initiatives: At the University of Klagenfurt, thematic clusters and structures have emerged in the area of the Third Mission that are closely linked to the main areas of academic work. With these, the University of Klagenfurt aims to position itself as a strong partner in the region, nationally and/or internationally. In order to generate a corresponding societal impact, Third Mission initiatives that have reached a critical mass, offer high-quality and innovative services, and have the potential for widespread impact will therefore be systematically strengthened and promoted.

Start-up culture and entrepreneurial thinking as cross-cutting themes: The overarching goal is to increase the number of successful academic spin-offs and start-ups related to the fields of academic work at the University of Klagenfurt. To this end, a start-up culture and entrepreneurial thinking will be broadly anchored as central themes at the University of Klagenfurt. A transparent spin-off-promoting framework will be established. High-quality support services will be provided for employees, students and graduates interested in setting up a company, in collaboration with strategic partners.

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