

Results of the survey on the status of family friendliness

at the Digital Engineering Faculty of the University of Potsdam and at the Hasso Plattner Institute August 2022







Preamble

The University of Potsdam has set itself the task of becoming a family-friendly university.¹ The Equal Opportunity Plan of the *Digital Engineering Faculty* (DEF) also notes that the faculty is committed to *establishing and developing study, research, and working conditions in a family-friendly environment that consistently takes into account the interests and realities of [parents'] lives in all areas of the faculty.² What such conditions look like in concrete terms and what family fairness means in practice must therefore be defined in dialogue with people who are to benefit from initiatives for family friendliness. Needs that should be particularly addressed are those of people with current and future family responsibilities. These include people who take care of children and those who care for relatives of all ages.

To this end, the decentralized Gender Equality Officers of the Digital Engineering Faculty conducted an online survey from February 25 to March 11, 2022, which was open to all members of the Faculty and the Institute. It was advertised by the Gender Equality Officers via email to the students and members of the Digital Engineering Faculty as well as the *Hasso Plattner Institute* (HPI). In February 2018, the then decentralized Gender Equality Officers conducted an initial survey on the status of equality at the faculty.³ This survey explicitly »focused on family issues as well.« For example, the survey addressed the potential need for lactation and diaper-changing rooms, as well as childcare options on faculty premises. In view of the drafting of the next equality plan in 2023, the results of this second survey will be used to record the current status of family friendliness.

The questionnaire was developed by the decentralized Gender Equality Officers Lisa Baumann, Lisa Ihde and Lisa Koeritz, who were advised by the Director of the Service for Families at the University of Potsdam, Dr. Dörte Esselborn. Feedback on earlier drafts was provided by Dr. Dörte Esselborn and Dr. Marcus Kölling, Chief Financial Officer at Hasso Plattner Institute. Comments on earlier drafts of the translation were provided by Dr. Sharon Nemeth. The Gender Equality Officers would like to thank them for their support.^a

^aComments by the Gender Equality Officers are highlighted in blue.

¹https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/service-fuer-familien/service-fuer-familien/familiengerechte-hochschule

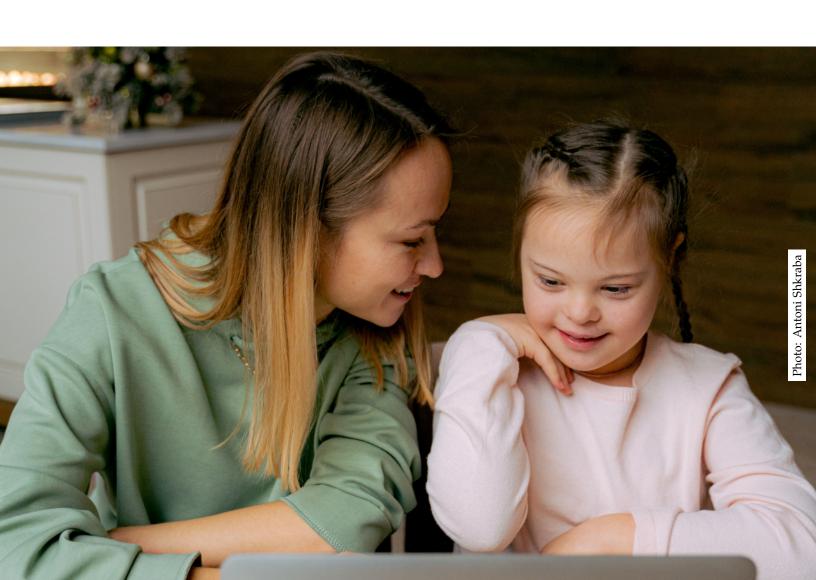
²https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/digital-engineering/dokumente/gleichstellungsarbeit/DEF_Gleichstellungsplan.pdf

 $^{^3} https://www.uni-potsdam.de/fileadmin/projects/digital-engineering/dokumente/gleichstellungsarbeit/Umfrageergebnisse.pdf$

1. Participation in the survey

A total of 130 participants took part in the survey. However, only 81 participants completed the survey. During the evaluation, answers that were given for test runs were removed. To evaluate the survey, all responses from participants who completed the survey were included in addition to all textual responses. Following a reminder, the Gender Equality Officers also made the survey available in English to make it more accessible to international students and employees.

An English translation should always be available for future surveys and other gender equality related public documents that are relevant faculty-wide.



2. Family situation of the participants

A particularly large number of parents took part in the survey: 51 participants said they had children. Of these, 22 said they had one child. 25 have two children and 4 have three children. One participant was caring for a relative, another stated that they were both a parent and caring for a relative. 29 participants were neither parents nor caregivers for relatives (see Figure 2.1). All age groups were represented among the children of the participants (see Figure 2.2).

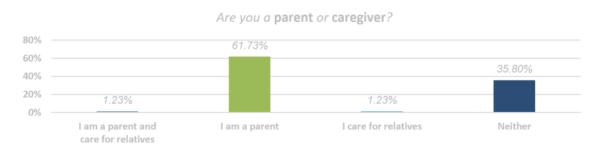


Figure 2.1: Frequency of selected answers to questions about family tasks expressed in percentages.

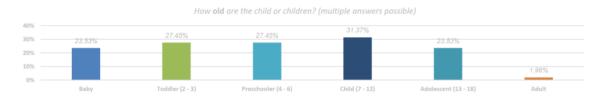


Figure 2.2: Frequency of selected answers to questions about age of children expressed in percentages.

The Gender Equality Officers note that the offers for parents should cover a broad age spectrum. In addition to baby changing and lactation rooms, there should also be childcare services as well as play facilities and toys and books for all ages.

3. Personal situation of the participants

Most of the participants were employed either at the faculty or at the Institute: 46 stated that they worked there. 13 were students. 22 participants both studied and worked (see Figure 3.1).

In addition, the participants were asked about their gender identity. 42 participants identified themselves as male and 37 as female. One participant does not identify with any gender, and a second participant chose the option »diverse«. In view of the underrepresentation of women at the Digital Engineering Faculty and at the Hasso Plattner Institute, a disproportionately high number of women participated in the survey.



Figure 3.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about student and work situation expressed in percentages.



4. Overall assessment of family-friendliness

The participants were asked how they would rate family friendliness at the faculty and at the Institute overall on a scale between 0 (very poor) and 100 (very good). The range of values used for the answers is between 0 and 100. The mean value is 46 and the median is 40. People with family responsibilities rated family friendliness somewhat lower than those without these responsibilities (mean value 45 and median 37).



5. Use of services

The survey showed that existing services are only used to a limited extent by the participants (see Figure 5.1). The most common reason is that there is no knowledge about it. Several participants noted that they would like to use the parent mailing list, but had not heard of it before.

Most participants stated that the provision of information about services by the faculty and the Institute is rather poor. On average, they rated this with 21 out of 100 points. There is therefore an urgent need for improvement here.

In addition, the physical distance of the work location to the available services prevented some participants from using them. For example, lactation rooms are not available on every campus.

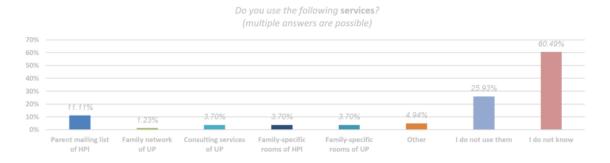


Figure 5.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about use of offers expressed in percentages.

The Gender Equality Officers recommend that in the future all students and members of the faculty and the Institute be informed about services on a regular basis. Especially the start of employment and the beginning of studies are good opportunities to share this information. In addition, information on family friendliness can be provided on the Hasso Plattner Institute website. This is already being done on the website of the decentralized Gender Equality Officers. However, it appears that only a few people are being reached in this way, and a more central placement is desirable. This information should be available to all students, employees, and visitors in German and English and barrier-free.

6. Existence of contact persons

The most frequent contacts for participants are their own superiors (see Figure 6.1). In addition, respondents also turn to colleagues, friends and family members.

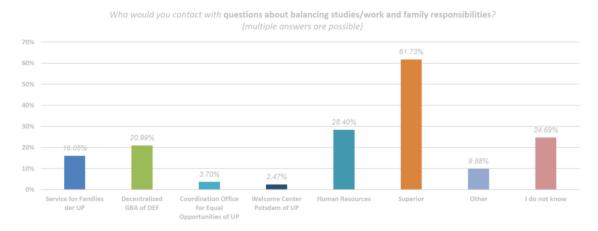


Figure 6.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about contact persons for compatibility issues expressed in percentages.

The survey revealed that although supervisors are often the first to be contacted about work/study/family balancing issues, they are not always sufficiently informed. Participants with family responsibilities rated their supervisors' knowledge of work-life balance measures at an average of 35, where 0 means not at all informed and 100 means very informed. In addition, the supervisors sometimes lack an understanding of the family responsibilities of their employees (mean 65).

The participants' assessment of their professors and lecturers was also mixed. Participants with family responsibilities rated them as poorly informed about relevant measures (mean 27). Participants also rated the understanding of their professors and lecturers about their situation as 45 on average.

These results shows that the support people with family responsibilities receive is very dependent on the person in charge. The Gender Equality Officers therefore recommend supporting supervisors, professors and lecturers, in particular, by raising awareness of family friendliness. Information on services and regulations should be prepared for all members of the faculty and the Institute and be easily accessible.

7. Family-friendly working and study conditions

People with family responsibilities can also be supported with suitable work and study conditions. The participants made concrete suggestions for this.

For example, flexibility in the design of employment contracts is desired. It was also noted that it should be possible to extend fixed-term contracts for doctoral students without complications if they become pregnant or have children. Among the responses was also a request that scholarships such as those offered by the HPI Research Schools should be adaptable to the situation of PhD students and junior researchers who are pregnant or taking parental leave.

The Gender Equality Officers recommend that these opportunities be communicated to applicants, especially in the case of new hires, and also regularly to employees. This presupposes that the contact persons are informed about this situation and are available to answer questions.

Professional security also plays a role for participants. Among other things, they called for permanent positions, especially in the academic mid-level faculty, and the creation of more tenure-track positions.

A majority of the participants would like to be able to organize their studies or their work more flexibly (see Figure 7.1). Particularly the desire for flexible working hours came up frequently. Another wish was for flexibility in terms of location: participants also wanted to be able to take part in events remotely. It was noted that event times should be aligned with childcare times. There was also a desire for uniform regulations and an understanding of the need for working from home.

Would you like to have more services for flexible work and study



Figure 7.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about flexible working and study arrangements expressed in percentages.

Among the suggestions was special leave for the birth of a child and in exceptional circumstances when there is a heightened need to care for children at home, such as during the pandemic. There was also a desire for the possibility of taking additional unpaid leave to pursue family responsibilities.



8. Services for parents

Some parents who participated in the survey would like to see a wider range of toys, play facilities such as playgrounds and baby changing and lactation rooms (see Figure 8.1). These should be located at each campus. Currently, there is only one lactation room and another temporary one in the FQ Lounge at HPI¹, which are not accessible to all students and employees due to their location on Campus 1.² There is at least one baby changing facility on each campus.³

The Gender Equality Officers are working to ensure that the location of these rooms is better signposted and communicated. They recommend that when new buildings are constructed or newly occupied, these rooms should be taken into account in the spatial planning.

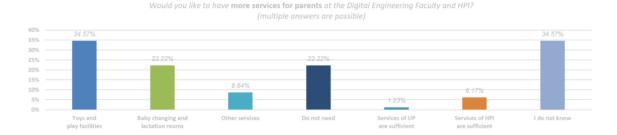


Figure 8.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about further offers for parents expressed in percentages.

There were also several requests for a parent-child day and summer program for children to introduce them to the Institute and the faculty.

Through such events, the visibility of parents is increased. In addition, the Institute and faculty management can send a signal that parents are part of the faculty and HPI and that they are supported.

 $^{^{1}} https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/digital-engineering/faculty/gender-equality-officers/special-rooms/fq-lounge-hpi$

²https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/digital-engineering/faculty/gender-equality-officers/special-rooms/stillraum

 $^{^3} https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/digital-engineering/faculty/gender-equality-officers/special-rooms/wickelmoeglichkeiten$

9. Services for people who care for family members

Like many parents, the participants who care for relatives expressed the desire for more flexibility and the possibility of working from home. However, one participant who is a family caregiver also noted that most services are geared toward parents.

Only two people who care for family members participated in the survey. The question is whether there are actually not more people at the Institute and on the faculty who care for relatives, or whether some people in this situation did not feel addressed by the survey. The 2018 survey only asked about the needs of parents. Additionally, the current Equal Opportunity Plan only looks at family friendliness in the context of parenting. However, the emails promoting the survey explicitly asked people who were caring for family members to participate. The decentralized Gender Equality Officers will therefore pay attention to and recommend that family-friendly measures, such as working conditions, information material, and discussions of family friendliness consider and include family caregivers.



10. Awareness

The survey revealed that a »thoroughly family-friendly policy, which [...] is supported by the Institute's management«¹ is desired.

Family friendliness is not only expressed in actions, but is also a conviction. This should be communicated and reflected in our mutual interaction with each other.

The participants also wished for more understanding from fellow students, colleagues and superiors. Especially if this group does not have family responsibilities themselves, they sometimes make unrealistic demands that are not compatible with the participants' situation. Participants mentioned, for example, an unintended exertion of pressure regarding appointments and a lack of understanding for the fact that capacities are limited when children are ill.



¹translated quote from participant

11. Interest in Networking, Coaching, and Consulting Opportunities

30,86% of the participants would like to see more offers for counseling and coaching, 27,16% for networking with others who also have family responsibilities (see Figure 11.1). The answers of the participants who wanted other offers were not about offers regarding networking, coaching or consulting, but about childcare services and understanding among teachers. These topics are dealt with in more detail in the following chapters.

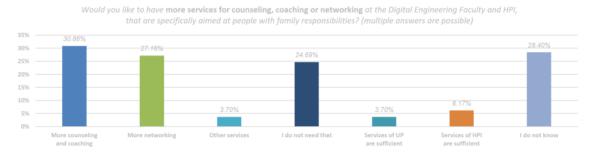


Figure 11.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about more counseling, coaching, or networking services for people with family responsibilities expressed in percentages.

For students and employees at the faculty, the Service for Families is a good contact point for advice, which should be advertised more strongly. In September 2019, the then decentralized Gender Equality Officers organized a family afternoon, which gave parents the opportunity to exchange ideas while having a barbecue together. Similar events should therefore be offered again in the future and also be aimed at people who are caring for family members. In addition, the offers of the University of Potsdam, such as the family café, can be advertised.^a

^ahttps://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/service-fuer-familien/angebote/gruppenaustausch

12. Emergency care and parent-child office

65,43% of the parents surveyed would like to see childcare organized by HPI (see Figure 12.1). In addition to cooperation with daycare centers, the establishment of a company daycare center or the awarding of daycare subsidies was also suggested. Furthermore, some participants would like to receive support in finding childcare services.

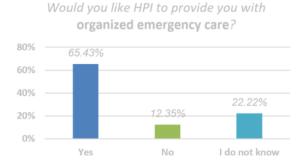


Figure 12.1: Frequency of selected answers to question about organized emergency care expressed in percentages.

Students and employees of the faculty can already organize short-term care for their children through the Service for Families.^a Employees of the Institute also have a need for this, as the survey showed. The Service for Families at the University of Potsdam also refers to various counseling services for childcare.^b

 $^{{\}it ^a} https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/service-fuer-familien/angebote/kinderbetreuung/flexible-kinderbetreuung$

 $[^]b \text{https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/service-fuer-familien/angebote/kinderbetreuung/regelmaessige-kinderbetreuung/kindertagespflege}$

If students and employees would like to take their children with them to their place of work or study, the faculty and the Hasso Plattner Institute do not yet have the appropriate facilities. For this reason, 56,79% of parents would like to see parent-child offices, (i.e., rooms that offer both workstations and equipment for childcare, see Figure 12.2). These are sought-after at every research group or at least every campus.

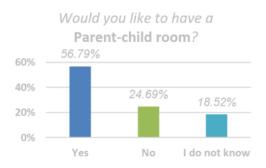


Figure 12.2: Frequency of selected answers to question about parent-child offices expressed in percentages.

There is currently a parent-child room in House 1 of the University of Potsdam on the Griebnitzsee campus.^a However, this is less accessible for people who work or study at the faculty and the Institute. There is also a children's corner in the FQ Lounge with chairs, toys and children's books. However, the facility is not sufficiently childproof. Of course, the use of appropriate facilities assumes that the presence of children on campus is accepted and that parents feel comfortable bringing their children with them.

 $^{{\}it a} https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/service-fuer-familien/angebote/orte-fuer-familien/campus-griebnitzsee.html$

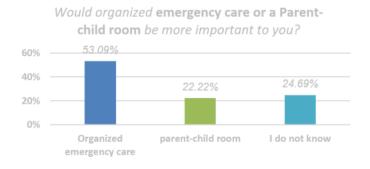


Figure 12.3: Frequency of selected answers to question about which service would be more important in percentages.

13. Desire for further services

Measures to support employees in coping with stress and coordinating family tasks were also proposed. Reference was made to the services offered by the Fürstenberg Institute, which provides support and advice to employees and managers with family responsibilities for client companies. The desire for support in family planning also came up. A suggested cooperation partner would be the company Apryl (formerly OVIAVO). Sports activities for relaxation were also requested.



¹https://www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/work-life-service

²https://apryl.co/

14. Conclusion

The results of the survey show that information about rooms and advisory services for people with family tasks should be made more accessible, as well as shared regularly, and be available in English. It has also been shown that it is necessary to take into account the needs of people with family tasks more fully when planning new buildings or policies. Additionally, the participants of the survey showed interest in events and offers especially for people with family tasks, such as parent-child days or family afternoons. In summary, the results of this survey make it clear that family friendliness at HPI is not something that should only be the responsibility of the Gender Equality Officers. It also needs to be a special concern for the Institute and faculty management who can pass this message on to the students and members of the faculty and the Institute. Together, we can all contribute to making HPI and the faculty a family-friendly place. The Gender Equality Officers also recommend that the status of family friendliness, as in this survey, be reviewed regularly in the future through surveys as well as through interaction with individuals with family responsibilities.

The Gender Equality Officers would like to thank all participants for their time and detailed responses.

