Date *May 2026*

1. General Information

Acronym of the national network:	*DGWF*
Full Name of the National Network:	*Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung und Fernstudium e.V (The German Association for University Continuing and Distance Education)*
Country:	*Germany*
Year of Establishment:	*1970*
Official Website:	*www.dgwf.net*

2. Contact details

Representative of the National Network

Title (Prof./Dr./Mr./Ms.):	*Dr.*
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Position:	*Managing Director*
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End date of the mandate	*September 2027*

3. Background

Please provide a brief description of your network (maximum 200–300 words), including:

- Date of establishment
- Founding purpose
- Membership structure (e.g., number and type of member institutions)

- Key milestones or achievements
- Governance structure (if relevant)

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung und Fernstudium e. V. (DGWF) was founded in 1970 as a national non-profit association dedicated to promoting university continuing education, lifelong learning, and distance education in Germany. Since its establishment, DGWF has served as a central platform for exchange, cooperation, and professional dialogue among higher education institutions, researchers, practitioners, and policy stakeholders engaged in the field of scientific continuing education and lifelong learning.
The association was established to strengthen continuing education within higher education institutions, support professionalisation in the field, and contribute to the development of quality standards, research, innovation, and policy dialogue. Over the decades, DGWF has accompanied key developments in university continuing education in Germany, including digitalisation, internationalisation, microcredentials, lifelong learning strategies, and widening participation.
Today, DGWF has approximately 339 members, including 213 institutional members such as universities, universities of applied sciences, continuing education centres, and related organisations, as well as individual members from academia and practice.
An important feature of DGWF is its strong regional and thematic network structure. Regional groups across Germany facilitate exchange and cooperation at local and state level, while thematic working groups address current developments and strategic topics in continuing higher education. This structure enables both nationwide collaboration and close connections to regional higher education systems and policy contexts.
DGWF is governed by an elected executive board and regularly organises national conferences, specialist events, publications, and collaborative initiatives. The association also engages in international exchange and cooperation in the field of university lifelong learning and continuing education.

4. Focus

Please describe the main objectives and areas of activity of your National Network. Your response may include:

- Core mission and strategic goals
- Main areas of work (e.g., accreditation, policy advocacy, coordination, training, research, etc.)
- National and/or international collaborations
- Services provided to members
- Current priorities

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung und Fernstudium e. V. (DGWF) promotes, coordinates, and represents university continuing education, lifelong learning, and distance education within the German higher education sector. Its core mission is to strengthen the role of continuing higher education as an integral part of universities' societal responsibilities in teaching, research, and knowledge transfer.
DGWF supports professional exchange, policy dialogue, research, and innovation in the field of university continuing education (UCE). The association acts both as a representative body for its members and as a professional network facilitating collaboration among higher education institutions, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers at regional, national, and international levels.
Main areas of activity include:
• policy dialogue and advocacy concerning the framework conditions for university continuing education and lifelong learning;

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• promotion of quality development, innovation, and professionalisation in UCE;
• support for research, publications, and knowledge exchange;
• organisation of conferences, workshops, symposia, and thematic working groups;
• networking through regional groups and national expert networks;
• fostering national and international cooperation in lifelong learning and continuing higher education.

Current priorities include:
• the role of universities in lifelong learning and social transformation;
• digitalisation and flexible learning opportunities;
• recognition of prior learning (RPL) and widening access to higher education for non-traditional learners;
• internationalisation and European cooperation;
• microcredentials and new certification formats;
• sustainable organisational and funding structures for university continuing education.

Through its conferences, publications, expert groups, and collaborations, DGWF contributes actively to shaping the future of university lifelong learning in Germany and within the broader European context.

5. Key Activities (Optional)

Please list up to 5 major ongoing or recent initiatives, projects, or programmes.

- *Organising the annual DGWF Conference, thematic specialist conferences, and regular expert workshops for professionals in university continuing education.*
- *Coordinating regional networks across Germany that facilitate exchange and cooperation between universities, continuing education centres, and practitioners.*
- *Developing statements, recommendations, and position papers on current higher education and lifelong learning policies, including topics such as microcredentials, RPL, digitalisation, and funding frameworks.*
- *Publishing professional and academic contributions on university continuing education and lifelong learning, including conference proceedings, reports, and practice-oriented publications.*
- *Representing German university continuing education in national and European networks and fostering international cooperation and exchange in the field of lifelong learning.*

6. Additional Information (Optional)

Any other relevant information you wish to share (publications, annual events, statistics, strategic plans, etc.).

7. National Network's social media pages (Optional)

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/dgwf/

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