

In their meeting of 06.06.2022, the InVers (=department assembly) founded the Better Science Taskforce and mandated it to suggest measures for implementing «better science» at GIUZ. In their meeting of 01.12.2022, the InVers specified this task to include the proposition of measures that address the results of the employee survey of 2022. With this report, the taskforce presents an overview of the measures already being implemented and offers further suggestions. In their meeting of 08.06.2023, the InVers approved the report and tasked the Better Science Taskforce with the implementation of the identified priority measures (in yellow).

How do we define «Better Science» at GIUZ?

Better Science advocates for high-quality research, teaching and administration at universities. To this end, it calls for equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity and is committed to sustainable working conditions. The GIUZ Better Science Taskforce focuses on people with their needs, skills and actions as well as on the institutional conditions of knowledge production.

University staff are experiencing increased pressure through constant evaluation and quantification in research, as well as through demands on teaching and administration as well as regarding the acquisition of third-party funding. These experiences can contrast with a healthy workload that allows for creativity and openness. This not only affects the quality and diversity of academic work, but also the wellbeing of university staff at all stages of their careers. Diversity and equal opportunities at the university have at their core the aim of enabling everyone to pursue high quality research, teaching and administration.

To achieve this, the GIUZ's Better Science Taskforce pursues a dual strategy: It recognizes that change takes place in a field of tension between individual and group working conditions and structural dependencies.

Accordingly, on the one hand, it identifies concrete, implementable opportunities for change in the areas of work cultures and processes in the research groups and at the institute level. It discusses proposals for changes with all involved, before submitting suggestions for improvement to the responsible bodies for a decision, and accompanies their implementation. Changes towards a better working culture start at the individual level as well as at the level of the institute's culture. This means, for example, that responsible managers empower and support their staff and that institutional processes are efficient, democratic and inclusive.

On the other hand, Better Science requires a vision that thinks beyond individuals and institutes to initiate ideas and identify opportunities for structural change at the level of the faculty, university and beyond. This vision includes that all GIUZ members can engage with the Better Science vision, network and exchange ideas. In addition, the GIUZ also contributes to a better culture in science and university policy by advocating for good working conditions for all as a necessary precursor to workplace satisfaction and high-quality research, teaching and administration at universities.

Where do we start?

Better Science does not start from scratch. Many people at GIUZ and beyond have already invested time and commitment into improving our administrative processes, our working conditions and our working culture. The Better Science Taskforce acknowledges this valuable and often invisible work and builds on these previous efforts. It supports transformations already in progress, furthers existing initiatives and adds new impetus and ideas. As such, it forms one additional strand in the ongoing concerted effort of many people to foster further positive change.

The following suggestions encompass three focus areas: 1) Workload and workplace conditions; 2) Work culture and community building; 3) Career development and employment conditions. For each area, they present a problem statement derived from the employee survey, list measures that are already being implemented, measures delegated to other bodies and suggest further measures for discussion by the InVers:

1) Improving workload and workplace conditions

(by Sara Landolt, Frank Paul, Tumasch Reichenbacher & Karin Schwiter)

A) Problem Statement

In the employee survey and subsequent discussions many respondents problematised that their workload continuously exceeds their formal working hours by far, which creates dissatisfaction, health problems (such as psychological anxieties or burnout symptoms) and impedes a healthy work-life balance. To tackle the problem, they suggest abolishing unnecessary tasks, streamlining outdated processes and sensitising supervisors for people's workloads (esp. people employed part time) and for the importance of a fair division of labour. Furthermore, they demand measures to support employees in sustaining a healthy work-life balance at academia.

Furthermore, many respondents pointed to specific workplace conditions that impede them from doing their work and negatively impact their health. First and foremost, they problematised the excessive heat in the offices in summer, the missing meeting rooms and meeting booths to take online calls and the missing height-adjustable desks to ease back-pains.

B) Solutions already implemented or in progress

Abolish unnecessary labour

1) The size of circulation committees that review PhD dissertations submitted at GIUZ has been reduced from four to three members. This reduces the workload of GIUZ members who have the right to confer a PhD, who are main supervisors of dissertations or hold group leader positions.

2) The number of reviews required for a PhD dissertation has been reduced to the minimum required by the promotion regulations of the faculty. Whenever the main supervisor of a PhD is also the responsible faculty member, two reviews (one internal and one external) are sufficient. This reduces the workload of group leaders and other senior scientists who previously had to write the second internal PhD review for people in their groups.

Streamline outdated processes

3) The graduate school is currently devising a template for the annual PhD reports. This simplifies life for PhD students, supervisors and graduate school personnel, who have to fill, review and approve these documents.

4) The quarterly organisation of master examinations requires countless e-mails to align dates, rooms, examiners and co-examiners. The people in charge of exam organisation are working on simplifying the process.

Distribute tasks fairly

5) The revised promotion regulations now include the option to balance teaching between thematic areas. This will lead to a fairer division of teaching workload for PhD students.

Improve Work-Life Balance

6) The GIUZ leadership has implemented a self-commitment that meeting dates and deadlines always be set within working hours (e.g., no submission deadlines on Sundays). This will support GIUZ's stance that weekends are not for work.

Strengthen work-life balance in order to prevent health problems

7) A next group leader meeting will be dedicated to creating a healthier work culture to prevent mental health issues of employees caused by stress and work-overload. We plan to invite an expert to teach group leaders how to be sensitive to potential work-overload, how to identify emerging mental health problems, how to respond adequately and how to create a healthier work culture in their groups. We will strongly encourage all group leaders to attend.

Provide more meeting rooms

8) GIUZ has submitted a request to MNF that the offices behind the old geography library (K34a, b, etc.) and the back part of the former library study area (K22) are remodelled and converted into multi-use meeting rooms. This could include installing sound-proof meeting booths in parts of K22. The planning of this refurbishing project is in progress.

9) Employees can decide whether they want to offer their office to others in their group when empty (for meetings, taking online calls or to evade the excessive heat in summer) and have their door locks adjusted accordingly.

C) Problems delegated to other units at GIUZ or beyond

Regarding workplace conditions, the employee survey and subsequent discussions contain several sustainability-related measures. They range from very specific suggestions like installing water-saving devices in our taps and shower heads, stopping the sale of bottled water, turning the info-screens off or reducing office heating a few degrees to more general ones such as investing more funds in sustainability and taking measures for airmile reduction. We passed these on to the GIUZ sustainability group.

D) Suggestions for further measures

Strengthen work-life balance in order to prevent health problems

10) Make health prevention trainings more easily available to all employees. For this, offer a series of courses (for example on stress reduction, time management, work-life balance, and creating a supportive work culture) at GIUZ that are tailored to university personnel and open to all employees.

Reduce the excessive heat in our offices in summer

11) Launch a pilot project to cool our offices during the hot summer weeks without emitting additional CO₂. This could include adjusting and reprogramming our automatic blind control system or setting up a cooling-service that tours the department in the early mornings to open windows and close them again around 10 a.m. Such a task could for example be organised within research groups or assigned to cleaning or security personnel. The latter would have to be fairly compensated for this additional duty.

12) Allow an additional home-office day a week during the hot weeks in summer (above 30 degrees Celsius). Make it available to everyone who can fulfil their duties from home, including ATP.

Prevent health problems

13) Write a letter to "Bauten und Räume" and ask them to abolish the regulation that height-adjustable desks require a doctor's notice. Reallocate the height-adjustable desks that are not used to the people with back-pains who need them.

Reduce workload

14) Invers expects many people to be present at Invers meetings who have no right to vote. Declare attending the Invers as voluntary for all people without voting rights.

2) Work culture and community building

(by Isabel Hagen, Marisol Keller, Ross Purves & Magdalena Seebauer)

A) Problem statement

There is awareness and desire within GIUZ to stop all forms of discrimination and pave the way for equity and inclusion. In addition to this, to provide more transparent and better communicated routes to seek help and report problems. Valuing staff and clearly communicating expectations in groups with respect to e.g., workloads, holidays, and teaching is also an important element of leadership and communication at the level of individual line managers. At a departmental level there is a desire for more routes for two-way communication, faster and clearer communication in both German and English, and more opportunities for exchange. Finally, the importance of valuing staff and explicitly expressing appreciation for work well done is central to workplace satisfaction.

B) Solutions already implemented or in progress

15) MAV

Objective: Encourage staff to get to know each other, exchange experiences and therefore establish a more friendly working culture at GIUZ.

Implementation: GIUZ offers coffee and tea at the MAV and creates exchange opportunities in advance of the event. Furthermore, moments of exchange between the staff are created through the form and characteristic of the different inputs at the MAV. (Magdalena & Marisol, BSI Subgroup B)

16) Who is who

Objective: Making (unseen) work at GIUZ visible.

Implementation: Members of the BSI Subgroup B produce a “Who is Who” for the Newsletter/webpage of GIUZ. We encourage other people to do so as well hoping for this format to be something that is realized by different members of GIUZ. (Magdalena, BSI Subgroup B)

17) Language barrier

Objective: Be more inclusive for non-German speakers as an institute.

Implementation: All mails from Head in English and German; administrative staff try to send mails in English where possible or provide links for automated translation (note this is a lot of work, and only communicating in English is also not inclusive to those who don't speak good English); automated English translation of InVers minutes.

18) Taking care of each other

Objective: We want to offer an open culture at GIUZ where people feel safe to formulate and communicate their complaints.

Implementation: Head of Department office hours instituted (with agreement these will be carried on), Feedback-Box (Implemented by Direktion (Jan, Alex, Norman, Ruth, Shaun and Magdalena) and revision of the “Confidential Advice” page to make clearer from whom to seek help in different situations (<https://www.geo.uzh.ch/en/department/confidential-advice.html> Magdalena and Ross)

19) Launch information campaign

Objective: For the Better Science initiative to truly make a positive impact, there needs to be broad support and understanding from people within GIUZ.

Implementation: We have launched an information campaign covering the *what?* (are we doing), *why?* (are we doing it), and *how?* (is it being done).

We will continue to use MAV for interaction and information about the activities and progress of the Better Science Task Force, and ways to get involved.

We have put up posters from the UZH campaign CommUNItY in the corridors, coffee room, and on the information screen for topics on diversity, equity, discrimination, harassment etc., together with points of contact.

C) Problems delegated to other units at GIUZ or beyond

Due to the established and planned activities of this subgroup we identified two crucial problems. The first one is the transferability of the activities from the subgroup to other staff of GIUZ. How can we make sure that the working culture is something that concerns more people at GIUZ and how can we nudge people to take action? Further on, we see the problem of the additional workload for the people who are engaged in this matter. By now very few people take over responsibility for creating a better working culture at GIUZ. This is not very sustainable and we present different solutions in the coming paragraph to the InVers.

D) Suggestions for further measures

20) Workshop on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Creating an environment for Better Science starts with information. We understand that attaining this information should not be an individual responsibility, and therefore suggest offering a GIUZ workshop on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for all GIUZ staff. This workshop will be run by an external facilitator, with the aim of not just discussing these issues, but also identifying concrete measures, and holding a second meeting six months later to report on progress. Considering the hierarchy structure in our workplace, we strongly suggest attendance by all supervisors and group leaders.

We will take inspiration from the GIVA workshop in January 2023 (with Abteilung Gleichstellung UZH) and 3G in June 2023 (with FieldSafe) in creating this workshop.

Enable support to realise events and exchange opportunities

21) Create a GIUZ calendar to promote quick and easy engagement with a clear timeline and support the realization of events. Events can include short inputs, stories, presentations, movie screenings etc. and will occur approximately once a week.

22) Implement a JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) awareness week/month once a year packed with informative and interesting events.

Add Better Science as a regular agenda item in InVers

23) To make thinking about Better Science a permanent feature of our culture, we propose adding a standing agenda item to InVers meetings allocated to Better Science.

3) Career development and Employment conditions

(by Xavier Balaguer Rasillo, Khauola Ettarfi, Hanna Hilbrandt & Shaun Jung)

A) Problem statement

One of the important fields of intervention for promoting Better Science at GIUZ concerns the improvement of employment conditions, possibilities for and transparency of career development. Two problems appear particularly pressing: A first key field of improvement concerns the creation of transparent and stable career development paths, with less international mobility requirements. This includes the necessity to widen and communicate internal and long-term career opportunities at GIUZ (equally for locally and for foreign-trained staff). This includes our recruitment strategies: Despite UZH signing the DORA agreement, assessment of applications or habitations do not regularly put quality over quantity.

Second, and relatedly, we seek to respond to uncertain job conditions at the mid-career stage. In particular, for the postdoctoral staff, the employee survey has demonstrated that working at GIUZ may cause feelings of insecurity, a situation which disproportionately impacts postdocs from abroad. Short term contracts, often for only one year, lead to a lower job security at this career stage. Moreover, we also witness that postdoctoral researchers are employed on 80 percent contracts, while expected to work a 100 percent workload. This problem is compounded by the lack of advice and coaching offerings on topics around career development in general. The resulting mental and emotional strain not only impacts our colleagues' research and teaching capabilities, it also impacts on their mental and physical health.

B) Solutions already implemented or in progress

24) The SNSF has decided to adjust the salaries of all PhD candidates by 3.5 percent in line with inflation from March 2023. The UZH Executive Board has decided to backdate this to January 2023, and to pay out the additional increase with the March salary.

25) The SNSF has improved the mobility requirements of post-docs.

26) A reform has taken place to prohibit that the main and second PhD supervisors are from the same group.

27) The student admin tool has been adjusted to facilitate the administration of the PhD process and supervision.

28) Starting in 2023, UZH is creating "Lecturer" and "Senior Lecturer" positions for qualified postdocs. These positions will be permanent and are supposed to be well-resourced and independent. The number will be limited, determined by the departments' teaching and research needs. There will be two kinds of lecturers, focusing almost entirely on either teaching or research. The positions will be created and funded by the institutes. (<https://www.news.uzh.ch/en/articles/news/2022/academic-careers.html>). Currently we are attempting to procure additional information regarding these positions as well as the criteria and process for their creation. As a part of this reform, a separate project is under way to increase all PhD contracts from a workload of 60% to 80%.

29) The HR at MNF level, Caroline Bärtschi, has agreed to survey the job conditions at postdoc and senior scientist level and will provide a calculation of the percentage of working time of the employees at this level, according to gender, family status and nationality to provide further information on current employment conditions at GIUZ.

30) We are developing a proposition for a voluntary agreement to improve employment conditions for post-docs. The suggested agreement includes a commitment to hiring postdocs on full-time contracts (if the employee does not request a reduced work time percentage) for a minimum of two years when funding is available. In addition, a letter could be written to MNF that GIUZ supports longer-term contracts. We are currently

in the process of obtaining the relevant HR-data to have a more in-depth discussion on this in the professorium.

31) We are creating a job description template for postdocs, which includes an info sheet on onboarding and offboarding information as well as how to access mental health, coaching and career services (linked to UZH Career Services <https://www.careerservices.uzh.ch/de/beratung.html>). It will be based on the existing template for Senior Scientists as well as the existing welcome package.

C) Problems delegated to other units at GIUZ or beyond

The necessity to account for early career researchers in the GIUZ' airmiles reduction strategies has been taken up by the AirMiles Group.

The necessity to adopt adequate job titles for people doing administrative work (third space) has been passed on to the APT group. We suggest hosting a participatory workshop with the people concerned to discuss options for replacing "administrative assistant" e.g., by "administrator" or "administrative officer" or the like.

D) Suggestions for further measures

32) Introduce a set of welcome measures for postdocs

As researchers at the postdoctoral stage report a lack of job security, knowledge about career possibilities and transparency, we suggest a package of measures, consisting of:

- a) A mentoring scheme. In addition to the main supervisor, we suggest implementing a scheme through which postdocs can access a mentor at GIUZ or other departments who would be able to support the career development of the scholar (see for examples the scheme of the Group leaders);
- b) A set of two-yearly workshops: First, an onboardingworkshop organized in Fall would help the orientation of scholars who arrived in that year, introduce them to available support at UZH, including the mentoring scheme. Second, a yearly career guidance workshop would offer information on and discussion of selected topics, such as publication strategies, grant writing or the black-box of professorial appointments. One central element of both workshops would be an apéro to provide networking possibilities amongst the post-docs. Both workshops require a) the costs for the apéro and an external workshop-tutor as well as the work time of a senior staff member responsible for implementing these workshops (see also 4. Funding)
- c) In addition, we suggest writing a letter to the MNF Forschungskredit-Team (UFO) to demand a substantive reform of the funding scheme. This reform would focus on lengthening the time-scale for the UZH-doc and post-doc funding to 4-year (PhD) and 3-year (post-doc) funding.

33) Implement DORA principles in all job descriptions and evaluation procedures of candidates

Signal to external reviewers that they access quality over quantity;

Include Better Science principles in job descriptions for all career stages; as well as a diversity statement in (all) job descriptions. Provide templates for this and make them easily available to the people who recruit.

4) Funding

So far, the implementation of Better Science measures has relied on a few passionate people lending their free time to the topic. To allow for continuous work, prevent overburdening and to create scope for implementing more encompassing measures, we propose to seek project funding. As possible sources for funding, we plan to approach the Graduate Campus, the Equality Office, the RealLabor and the Faculty. Moreover, GIUZ may serve as a secondary source of funding, e.g., via professors' "Einrichtungskredite" or other funds that have not been needed for other purposes by the end of the year. Funding requests will include budgeted staff time for implementing measures. This approach will reduce the pressure on individuals to deliver Better Science activities as an add-on to already high existing workloads.