Strategic Orientation of the Department of Psychology at the UZH (2022-2032)

The strategic planning of PSYCH is based on four goals:
(1) to develop existing strengths;
(2) to contribute to science-based solutions to social problems;
(3) to improve the quality of psychological research;
(4) to focus researchers' time on research and teaching.

The first three goals define the priorities that PSYCH wishes to set for the next 10 years; the fourth goal serves as a guideline for the organisation of work.

Goals

(1) PSYCH covers a wide range of topics in psychology with the common theme of «Lifelong Health and Human Performance». Our strong presence in three research areas and our goal to continue to develop and expand in these areas make PSYCH appealing to students.

(a) Development across the lifespan (several professorships on different aspects of development at all stages of life; Jacobs Centre for Productive Youth Development; UFSP Dynamics of Healthy Ageing; Healthy Longevity Centre; IMPRS LIFE; Developmental Science Network);
(b) Clinical Psychology (several professorships in psychopathology, psychotherapy and mental health; Psychotherapy Centre, important and successful further training programmes).
(c) Psychology of social relations (several professorships in social and organisational psychology).

(2) In the coming decades, Europe and the world will face two increasingly pressing challenges, to which psychology can make a significant contribution. PSYCH aims to establish a scientific foundation to address these challenges with confidence.

(a) Demographic change: People are living longer and remaining healthy for longer and can provide valuable services to society beyond retirement age. This potential has not yet been fully utilised. Psychology can help promote performance and quality of life in old age, creating optimal conditions for people to utilise their potential. Ensuring future generations have the best conditions to realise their potential is also crucial.
(b) Global ecological crisis: A sustainable economy requires a significant shift in consumer behaviour. Psychology can effectively persuade individuals of the value of these changes and increase their willingness to adopt them.
Climate change and species extinction are also likely to force large populations to migrate; Europe will be a destination for this migration and these people will not be fully welcome in European societies. Psychology can effectively alleviate tensions resulting from migration by promoting mutual understanding and openness to foreign cultures; addressing mental health issues among migrants; and countering the perceived threat of migration to democracy and human rights.

(3) The quality of psychological research faces three challenges that PSYCH would like to address:

(a) Psychological findings must be based on robust, replicable research results. This requires the implementation and further development of «open science» practices as well as secure, forward-looking and sustainable research data management.
(b) Psychological research findings should be generalisable in two respects: they should be tested beyond the specific conditions of controlled laboratory experiments and also be applicable in realistic, everyday

situations, and they should not only be obtained and tested on well-educated individuals from Western post-industrial societies.
(c) We need to work towards the formulation of more precise theories that are less open to interpretation, as this is a prerequisite for the rigorous empirical testing of theoretical assumptions.

(4) Academic staff at PSYCH should be able to prioritise their working time for research and teaching.
We are committed to academic self-governance. However, the core tasks of academic work – research and teaching – are at the centre of our activities. For this reason, we want to make the processes of self-administration at PSYCH as efficient as possible, and also work towards a careful use of the scarce resource of working time in academic self-administration at other levels of the university.

Focal Points
PSYCH would like to achieve the above objectives by focusing on the following five focal points. In addition, PSYCH aims to strengthen research and teaching on methods as a cross-cutting theme across all content areas. Sustainable research data management is the basis for the long-term visibility and usability of the research results achieved in all the areas mentioned. This plan is the result of a consensus-building process among the professors at PSYCH.

(1) Mental Health
This focus area is based on the strength of clinical psychology at PSYCH (**Goal 1b**) and expands to the broader topic of mental health. It includes health psychology and the prevention of mental illness, such as promoting healthy working conditions. This priority area also contributes to countering risks to psychological health caused by the global ecological crisis (e.g. research on the consequences of traumatisation among migrants, the effects of stress on health, and conditions of resilience to mental disorders) (**Goal 2b**). The focus area is also suitable for strengthening interfaculty cooperation, particularly with the Faculty of Medicine. This can be achieved through joint professorships, (competence) centres, research facilities, and initiatives. It is suitable for use in psychosomatics, psychiatry, neurology, oncology, gynaecology, dermatology, public health, and family medicine.

(2) Sustainability | Sustainability Psychology
This focus area is concerned with the conditions under which people can experience, support and help shape the necessary transition to an ecologically sustainable economy and way of life. Psychology can make a significant contribution to ensuring that people see this transition as an opportunity and a shared task, rather than as an imposition and a threat *(**Goal 2b**).*

(3) Development across the Lifespan | Lifespan Development
With this focus, PSYCH builds on one of its existing strengths (**Goal 1a**) and contributes to solving problems arising from demographic change. The aim is to provide people at every stage of their lives with the best possible conditions for learning and realising their potential (**Goal 2a**).

(4) Cultural Psychology
Cultural psychology pursues two goals. One is the study of the cultural conditioning of experience and behaviour, and the related distinction between psychological phenomena and processes that vary according to culture and those that are common to all people. The other is to investigate the causal processes by which cultural influences shape individual people and by which people's actions have an impact on their culture. On the one hand, cultural psychology will make an important contribution to meeting the challenges of migration by analysing the conditions for successful intercultural understanding (**Goal 2b**).On the other hand, it will contribute to improving the quality of psychological research by overcoming the limitation of empirical research to people from the researchers' narrower socio-cultural environment and systematically examining the intercultural generalisability of psychological findings (**Goal 3b**).

(5) Prosocial Action | Prosociality
This focus develops the strength of PSYCH in the study of social relationships (**Goal 1c**) and focusses it on the conditions and processes of acting for the benefit of others and the community. This focus is highly relevant to numerous social problems, including: How can generativity towards future generations be strengthened on the one hand and, at the same time, solidarity between younger generations and the demographic segment of old and very old people (**Goal 2a**)? How can we promote the willingness to help people who are forced to migrate to the prosperous North? When are people willing to give up privileges that are incompatible with a sustainable lifestyle (**Goal 2b**)?

(6) Cross-cutting issue of methods
Across all research questions, PSYCH aims to improve the quality of research by focusing on the development and application of appropriate methods (**Goal 3**). This includes (a) new methods of data collection resulting from the digitalisation of everyday life, such as the time-dense recording of experience and behaviour in everyday life using mobile devices (**Goal 3b**); (b) the development and testing of interventions that are tailored to the individual and their current intervention, commonly referred to as 'just in time interventions'; (c) the further development of quantitative methods for modelling complex data structures; (d) the formalisation of theories with the aid of computational models (**Goal 3c**); (e) the further development and meta-scientific evaluation of «open science» measures to improve the replicability of psychological results (**Goal 3a**).

These strategic considerations will form the basis for planning professorships, longer-term positions (such as lecturers and scientists), and research infrastructure over the next 10 years. PSYCH will recruit individuals who can contribute to the formation of closely cooperating research clusters on the planned focal and cross-cutting topics and establish links between them.