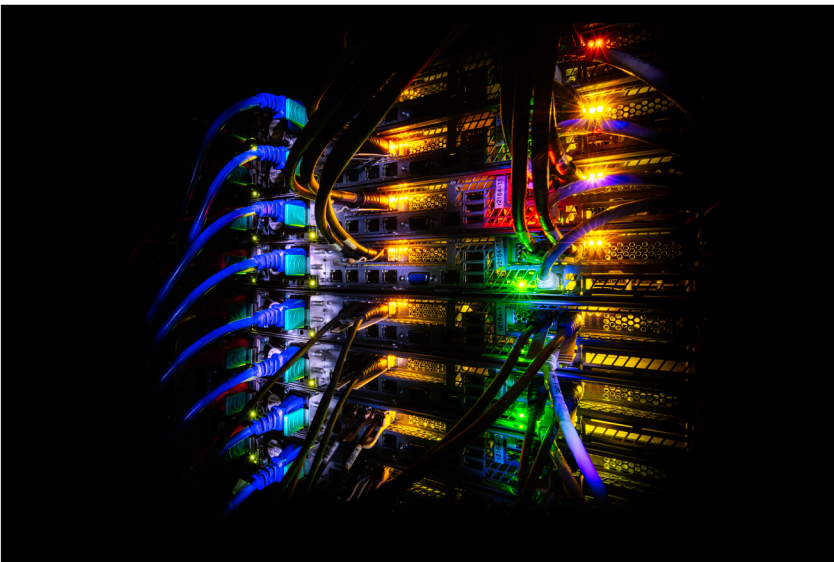




# Mission Statement and Strategy 2026-2030





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## Our Mission

### One Earth – Many Worlds

We share one earth with a multiplicity of environments and lived experiences. Research, teaching and services at the Department of Geography focus on understanding these many worlds of processes, experiences, and connections of and between people and environments.

We perform studies conceptually, in the laboratory, out in the field and from space, at scales ranging from the local to the global, benefiting from theories and methods contributed by human geography, geographic information science, remote sensing and physical geography.

We communicate our results, collaborating with decision makers and the public on possible routes to positive changes in the context of global challenges.

Delivering our mission is made possible by diverse teams of administrative and technical staff, early career and senior researchers and students.

## Our Vision

- 1. Understanding and tackling local and global challenges across scales and systems:** In our research, teaching and service we contribute geographical expertise to UZH's core research themes<sup>1</sup> and address global challenges related to: Global Change & Resilience; Impact of Digitalization & Technology; Distribution of Resources; Social Cohesion; Beyond the Sky and One Health. We will do so using inter- and transdisciplinary methods advancing basic knowledge and contributing to policy.
- 2. Teaching a new generation of geographers and Earth system scientists:** We foster and support interdisciplinary thinking in teaching geography and Earth system science, leveraging expertise across a breadth of geographic theories, methods and approaches to educate reflective thinkers with a wide range of knowledge and skills fit for jobs across academia, government, the private sector and practice.
- 3. Supporting government, industry and society:** We provide scientific expertise across a range of policy and interventions, communicating our research and its significance to the broader public and transfer results to stakeholders across society.
- 4. Inclusive working environment and sustainable careers:** We promote a diverse, inclusive, and equal working and teaching environment and foster sustainable careers within and beyond academia. Across staff, students and collaborators we will deliver continuous improvements in our working practices. A focus on wellbeing and inclusion underpins excellence in how we work and what we do. We will support responsible and reflective academic freedom and strive to co-produce knowledge with collaborators and colleagues across the globe.

## Our Strategy

The strategy is based on our mission and our vision, and was developed through a participatory process beginning in September 2025. It is centred around four pillars: research, teaching, services & outreach and community. In June 2026, the Departmental Assembly (InVers) voted to accept this strategy.

### Research

#### Preamble

We contribute geographical expertise to UZH's core research themes and address local and global challenges related to a just, peaceful, sustainable and biodiverse world. Our research is inclusive and addresses environmental and societal perspectives. We collaborate internally, nationally and internationally to harness the full breadth of disciplinary, inter- and transdisciplinary expertise necessary to achieve our research goals. In a competitive third-party funding environment, we share experiences and support one another in writing excellent grant applications and diversifying the funding options we target.



### Strategic planning

#### Aim

We will use the UZH Development and Finance Plan for long-term development of professorships and groups contributing to core research themes, to engage with novel and emerging research topics and to maintain strengths across geography

#### Measures

- We will introduce an annual one-day Department Assembly strategy workshop to discuss the UZH Development and Finance Plan and review alignment with MNF and UZH strategies
- We will use the UZH 5-year Development and Finance Plan to anticipate and respond to the development of new research topics in geography and identify potential new research foci
- We will take advantage of our research clusters to facilitate research exchange between thematic areas, to showcase results and to enable effective transfer to practice and policy partners

### Third-party research funding

#### Aim

We will support both individual and project-based research funding to allow us to maintain and expand breadth, novelty and excellence across geography

#### Measures

- We will select and mentor early and mid-career researchers and support their applications for individual funding to programs including SNSF Mobility, Ambizione, SNSF Starting Grants and ERC Starting Grants and other opportunities
- We will document and share successes in third-party project-based funding acquisition to leverage knowledge within the department and reduce reliance on informal networks
- We will hold grant writing workshops for staff at all career levels and monitor their effectiveness

## Teaching

### Preamble

We lead the delivery of curricula for majors at BSc and MSc levels in Geography and Earth System Science and minors in Geography, Earth System Science and Spatial Data Science. Our students are exposed to a wide range of concepts, theories and methods across the breadth of Geography and Earth System Science and work in the field and lab using methods spanning qualitative and quantitative approaches from the social, natural and computational sciences. Our study programs are appreciated by students for their broad and attractive curricula and the chance to spend time in the field.



### Curriculum development

#### Aim

At a time of rapid change we will maintain rigorous training in fundamental geographic concepts, theories and skills, while taking advantage of new developments (especially with respect to generative AI), increasing inclusivity, teaching critical thinking and reflecting on best practice in evaluation

#### Measures

- We will introduce regular (4-yearly) reviews of study programs to identify strengths, share learnings and reduce redundancies
- We will monitor teaching loads across thematic areas, groups and individuals to ensure loads are equitably distributed
- We will reevaluate guidelines and template rubrics to be used in formative and summative assessment across our curricula, using internal and external expertise to anticipate rather than respond to change
- We will audit existing field courses for accessibility, sustainability, efficiency and affordability and identify opportunities for increasing our offering of field courses integrated within existing modules

### Student recruitment and retention

#### Aim

Attracting and retaining students across our study programs is key to our success and we will develop measures to advertise and promote our study programs across all levels and maintain or increase student numbers.

#### Measures

- We will develop and implement a marketing plan for our study programs
- We will provide support to incoming and existing students across all study programs by providing clear information in English and German about processes related to reasonable accommodations and any additional requirements

## Services & Outreach

### Preamble

Our research and teaching are supported by administrative and technical staff employed centrally and in groups, providing support in labs, IT, teaching, communication, human resources, finances, administration and beyond. The efficient and high-quality work of these staff is a key enabler of our overall performance. Delivering services in an increasingly complex, digitised environment requires agility and planning. We deliver services internally and externally that go beyond research and teaching, supporting government, the private sector and practice. Our outreach activities are well coordinated and highly visible.



### Providing excellent services

#### Aim

We work together to further coordinate services, using inputs from all of those involved to keep pace with rapid change in requirements, while providing a high level of service and supporting our administrative and technical staff in fulfilling careers

#### Measures

- We will continue regular exchanges with administrative and technical staff to identify key challenges and developments in services and make use of these in prioritising and targeting resources through project-based initiatives
- We will coordinate the provision of information about further education relevant to individual career paths across the department

### Communication

#### Aim

We take advantage of our visibility to position our expertise in public debates and use our network of staff, students and alums to position GIUZ nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence in teaching and research in geography.

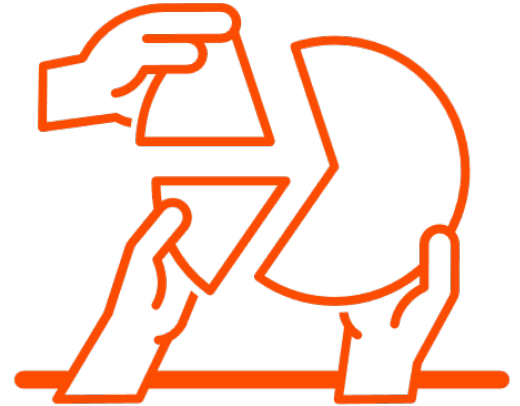
#### Measures

- We will develop a communication strategy to be used in planning, targeting and prioritising our communication activities and related resources
- We will create a sounding board including staff, students and alums for targeted review of key communication outputs

## Community

### Preamble

GIUZ thrives on the strength of a diverse and international community of staff and students. Together we have a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds and vary by position, role, and life stage. We are committed to diversity and belonging through our research and teaching activities. Our department is structured to represent this diversity, with committees that allow representation of different groups and allow different voices to be heard.



## Diversity and belonging

### Aim

We make diversity and belonging a key shared value, with all staff and students feeling welcome, safe, valued and heard

### Measures

- We will use our Diversity and Belonging Advisory Board to identify and triage priorities with respect to diversity and belonging
- We will advertise and promote different support services designed to resolve problems and provide coaching, workshops and support to staff and students
- We will share clear guidelines on the use of English and German and inclusiveness for staff and students

## Careers

### Aim

We recognise that, especially for early career academics, careers are often transient and precarious, and we provide support for staff in planning and developing their future careers within and outside academia

### Measures

- We will improve our onboarding and offboarding of all staff, and better use existing instruments (e.g. career talks) to help staff plan their careers effectively



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