1.1 Rooted in the Rhineland – at Home in the World

Globally recognized top-level research and a history rich in tradition shape the image of the University of Bonn. Founded in 1818, today it is a modern research university with an international impact. Our 35,500 students, 550 professors and some 6,500 staff benefit from studying and working in the unique atmosphere of historically significant buildings paired with an excellent research infrastructure.

The University of Bonn is not only an extremely attractive place to do research and teach but also has a unique locational advantage in Germany. The international Federal City of Bonn and the surrounding region are home to a large number of scientific institutions, research funding organizations, UN agencies and other institutions that operate internationally. The University of Bonn’s regional roots and networks are a gateway to the world that sustainably strengthens the university’s international network.

Insider Info: Where’s the uni?!

Ask people in Bonn the question “Where’s the uni?” and they will probably reply, “That depends!” This has nothing to do with being non-committal – a trait often ascribed to people in the Rhineland – but with the fact that the university does not exist in Bonn. It is located in more than 370 buildings spread all over the town. The most striking is undoubtedly the main building in the town center, the former residence of the prince electors, now home to the Arts Faculty and both Theological Faculties. In combination with the ‘Hofgarten’ – the grounds of the residence – this landmark has a considerable impact on the university’s unmistakable flair.
In the interdisciplinary research field of immunology, Bonn researchers have also made a name for themselves with their outstanding results. Take the “ImmunoSensation” cluster of excellence, in which highly-qualified specialists in immunology, sensory systems and neurodegeneration work together closely. As a result, some 33 million euro flow into the university coffers. Following the award of the Leibniz Prize to Gunter Hartmann and Christian Kurts in 2012, the cluster could boast another prize winner in 2016, Frank Bradke.

Physics and astronomy, moreover, achieved huge success in the Excellence Initiative with the approval of funding for the Bonn-Cologne Graduate School of Physics and Astronomy (BCGS), a collaboration between the universities of Bonn and Cologne. In this structured program, physics students can study for their Master’s and doctoral degrees.

In the field of detector physics, Bonn is also one of the premier locations in Germany. In 1989, Bonn scientist Wolfgang Paul was awarded the Nobel Prize for developing the ion trap that bears his name. Currently, a new detector physics research facility is under construction in the immediate vicinity of the existing laboratories and the Bonn accelerator ELSA.

Economics is another priority area at the University of Bonn. With its research focus on game and contract theory, monetary and international macroeconomics, labor market economics, the financial economy and experimental economic research, it is one of the leading institutes in Europe. For his contributions to game theory, Reinhard Selten is the only German to have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics to date.

With a global reputation and a network to match, the University of Bonn is a research university with clearly defined fields of excellence in research. The success of Bonn’s researchers is evidenced by two Nobel Prizes, numerous Leibniz Prizes and other academic honors as well as “third-party funds” amounting to approx. 154 million euro, which are raised each year in stiff competition with other researchers. When it comes to acquiring third-party funding for natural science, Bonn actually comes in first place in Germany.

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Insider Info: Uni Bonn TV – research viewing
On the University of Bonn’s YouTube channel you can access videos and audio clips on important themes in higher education policy, research and teaching. The main focus is on the university’s Collaborative Research Centers and Clusters of Excellence. So you will be able to get an idea of the various research projects and the various fields of work at the University of Bonn even before you leave the comfort of your own desk at home.

www.youtube.com/unibonntv

Bonn’s Gallery of Scholars
Famous people have taught and conducted research at the University of Bonn:

August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767 – 1845)
Literature and humanities scholar
Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776 – 1831)
Archaeologist
August Karl von Stradonitz (1829 – 1896)
Chemist
Heinrich Hertz (1857 – 1894)
Physicist
Felix Hausdorff (1868 – 1942)
Mathematician
Maria Grafin von Linden (1869 – 1936)
Parasitologist and first female professor at a German university
Josef Schumpeter (1883 – 1950)
Political economist
Karl Barth (1886 – 1968)
Theologian
Ernst Robert Curie (1886 – 1956)
Physicist
Wolfgang Paul (1913 – 1993)
Physicist and Nobel Prize Winner
Joseph Alois Ratzinger (geb. 1927)
Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI
Reinhard Selten (1930 – 2016)
Economist and Nobel Prize Winner

From left to right: Maria Grafin von Linden, Wolfgang Paul, Reinhard Selten, Joseph Alois Ratzinger

1.2 Research University Bonn

Bonn is an internationally-visible center of research and teaching in the full range of mathematics. In addition to numerous research projects and non-university research institutions, Bonn hosts Germany’s only cluster of excellence in mathematics, the Hausdorff Center for Mathematics, for which more than 57 million euro have already been raised. Many academics with international reputation conduct their research in Bonn, including MPI Director Gerd Faltings, who is the only German holder of the Fields Medal. In 2016, Peter Scholze was awarded the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize and is the youngest recipient of the prize in its over 30-year history.

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1.3 The University of Bonn – a Global Player

If you speak to a member of the university in the grounds behind the main building, there is a very good chance that he or she will come from North America, Asia or another European country. From Australia to Zimbabwe, nearly 4,500 students and some 700 researchers from more than 140 countries currently enliven the academic and social life of the city.

This cosmopolitanism is not new: The University of Bonn has fostered relations with European, Asian and American universities for many years. Cross-faculty cooperation agreements exist with over 70 universities around the globe, and there are ERASMUS agreements with no less than 300 European universities, all with the aim of exchanging students.

But the University of Bonn is a global player in research, too. Its researchers have an extensive network of contacts all over the world, involving more than 1,500 collaborations. This kind of partnership is essential for a research university.

Amongst the fellows and award winners of the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the University of Bonn has long since been one of the most sought-after universities in Germany.

In regional terms, too, the University of Bonn makes full use of the opportunities offered by its location in the ABC-region (Aachen-Bonn-Cologne). The three ABC-universities cooperate in many areas. And top-class non-university research institutions, such as the Forschungszentrum Jülich, workplace of the 2007 Physics Nobel Prize Winner, Peter Grünberg, the Life & Brain Center on the Venusberg, or the caesar Research Center in Bonn complement this multi-layered research landscape.

The University of Bonn – Facts and Figures:

- Cooperation agreements with more than 70 partner universities worldwide
- Just over 300 partner institutions in the European ERASMUS network
- More than 1,500 international research projects worldwide
1.4 We Didn’t Get Where We Are Today Overnight …

... it took us nearly two centuries. On October 18, 1818, King Friedrich Wilhelm III founded the "Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn". In the intervening years, the University of Bonn has had its ups and downs.

Foundation and Revolution

Founded in the Age of Idealism, the new university was imbued with the spirit of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s Prussian cultural policy: together with Berlin and Breslau, Bonn was one of the three Prussian universities to introduce Humboldt’s vision of the unity of teaching and research. Professors no longer had to restrict themselves to reading aloud from existing textbooks. On the contrary, they were explicitly permitted to write the contents of their lectures themselves. The background to this was the ideal of the free researcher, unchallenged by the authorities, deriving the contents of his teaching from the results of his research.

A revolutionary idea up to this time, the universities (with a few exceptions like Göttingen, Jena and Halle) had had the sole task of educating future public servants, judges and the clergy. Research was the prerogative of academies and learned societies. At the University of Bonn, we are still committed to Humboldt’s ideal of the unity of research and teaching to this day. Back in the decades immediately following its foundation, the pioneering university was a motor for enormous growth in Bonn. Eminent academics were drawn to the town on the Rhine, followed by famous students. In the course of the 19th century, it also gained a reputation as the ‘Princes’ University’ – this was where the sons of Germany’s ruling houses came to study.

Decline and Destruction

When the National Socialists came to power in Germany in January 1933, this marked the end of the university’s long period of prosperity. Many professors and students were dismissed as a result of ‘Gleichschaltung’, the alignment of the entire university to Nazi ideology. Irrespective of their reputations and academic achievements, lecturers were forced to leave simply because they were Jewish or held political views that deviated from the ideology of the party in power. Felix Hausdorff, the mathematician who took his own life in 1942, was one such example. Intellectual dehydration was finally followed by physical destruction: A heavy air raid on the center of Bonn on October 18, 1944, completely destroyed the main building of the university.

Reconstruction and Growth

The university did not remain inactive for long, however. Indeed, the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität already opened its doors again for the winter semester of 1945/46. In the following years, many new buildings were erected and student numbers increased continually. The University of Bonn even started to attract outstanding researchers again. Today, 550 professors are involved in teaching and research at the university, and there are several thousand academic, technical and administrative staff. The university is one of the major employers in the region.

Famous Bonn Alumni

When they were students in Bonn they were largely unknown. This was to change later, as the following examples illustrate:

- Hofmann von Felsilschäben
  Philology student from 1819
- Heinrich Heine
  Law student from 1819
- Karl Marx
  Law student from 1835
- Prinz Albert von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha
  Law student from 1837
- Adolf Kolping
  Theology student from 1842
- Friedrich Nietzsche
  Philology and Theology student from 1864
- Luigi Pirandello
  Philology student from 1889
- Konrad Adenauer
  Law student from 1895
- Robert Schuman
  Law student in 1904

The University of Bonn
1.5 Rectorate, University Council, Faculties – the Most Important University Bodies

Rectorate

The university is managed by the "Rektorat", a steering committee chaired by the Rector who is elected for a period of six years. The Rector is the official representative of the university. In addition to the Rector, the committee currently comprises five Deputy Rectors and the "Kanzler", the head of university administration.

University Council

The "Hochschulrat" is composed of three members from the university itself and seven leading personalities from academia, politics and society. It advises the Rectorate and supervises their activities.

Senate

Altogether, there are 24 members of the "Senate": representatives of the teaching, academic and other staff as well as students. The Senate is charged with matters such as changes in regulations and monitoring the Rectorate’s annual statement of accounts.

Faculties

These seven faculties constitute the core of the University of Bonn:
- Faculty of Catholic Theology
- Faculty of Protestant Theology
- Faculty of Law and Economics
- Faculty of Medicine
- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences
- Faculty of Agriculture

The faculties are headed by a Dean or Dean’s Council. They are responsible for organizing matters relating to studies and examinations, the range of courses offered and evaluation. The Dean also chairs the Faculty Council which is responsible for faculty regulations, including examination regulations.

Faculty Conference

The "Fakultätskonferenz" is a committee of the Faculty Deans. It advises the Rectorate and the University Council on all matters relating to research, teaching and studies that are of basic importance to the university as a whole or to its central bodies.