



**Bern University of Applied Sciences**  
Communications

Falkenplatz 24  
3012 Bern, Switzerland

T +41 (0)31 848 33 00

mediendienst@bfh.ch  
www.bfh.ch

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**Bern University of Applied Sciences**

### **Annual Report 2020: a raft of successes and a significant rise in student numbers**

**The past year was marked by a raft of successes and key changes at management level. The university made further progress towards its strategic goals in the areas of sustainability and digitalisation. The number of bachelor's and master's students increased by 7%. Gratifyingly, the number of first semester students grew by 11%.**

In September 2020, Professor Sebastian Wörwag became the new president of Bern University of Applied Sciences (BFH). He looks back at what proved to be both a momentous and a successful year for the university: 'The coronavirus pandemic has shown that BFH is adaptable. Despite the rapidly changing situation, we have successfully fulfilled our remit to deliver practice-based teaching and applied research,' Sebastian Wörwag states. In his view, not all consequences of crises are negative – they also offer opportunities to develop new innovations. BFH used its expertise, for example, to develop the 'Corona Science' app and to analyse the impact of the pandemic on Swiss SMEs. 'It is important to me that we use our knowledge to help solve the problems currently facing society,' Sebastian Wörwag emphasises.

#### **Committed to sustainable development**

In this spirit, BFH has forged ahead with its strategic focus on 'Sustainability' over the past year, playing its part in readying the world for future challenges. In collaboration with partners, for example, the university developed two innovative processes for generating industrial products from biological raw materials. The 'lactate platform' can be used to produce valuable chemicals (for use in plastics or pharmaceuticals, for example) from plants instead of from crude oil. And the extraction facility for biomass uses sawmill residues to produce substances that can replace crude oil-based products in the construction industry. Sustainable development at BFH received additional impetus with the opening of the 'HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute'. The competence centre plays an active role in developing and transition countries and is involved in tackling the most urgent challenges arising from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#### **Forging ahead with digitalisation**

In its new strategy 'Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age', BFH sets out guidelines on how to develop teaching in an integrated, forward-looking way. During the coronavirus pandemic, the strategy helped the university to switch to remote teaching within a short space of time. In research too, digitalisation was an important issue. The introduction of Open Access marked a milestone for BFH: the public can now access all types of BFH publications free of charge via the ARBOR (Applied Research Bern Open Repository) document server.

#### **Significant rise in student numbers and positive financial return**

The number of bachelor's and master's students increased by 7%. Gratifyingly, the number of first semester students grew by 11%. The new degree programmes 'International Business Administration', 'Digital Business Administration' and 'Multimedia

Communication & Publishing' played a role in this success. In the area of continuing education, we saw the successful launch of the MAS Cyber Security. This is designed to prepare experienced IT specialists for the growing demands in this field.

BFH's financial outcome is also gratifying. The annual financial statement shows a revenue surplus of CHF 5.4 million, with an operating result of CHF 3.1 million. Revenue has risen slightly against the previous year to CHF 302.3 million. This is primarily attributable to higher revenue from research (CHF 3 million) and the significant rise in student numbers. For further facts and figures relating to students, staff and finances, see our digital Annual Report.

### **Changes in management**

In addition to the appointment of the new president Sebastian Wörwag, there was another change in management at BFH. In September 2020, Ute Seeling took over as head of the School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences. And in July 2020, the board of Bern University of Applied Sciences selected Peter Staub as the new director of the department of Architecture, Wood and Civil Engineering. He took up the post in February 2021.

### **Looking to the future**

BFH will continue to help towards meeting government guidelines, particularly in the fields of sustainability and digitalisation. In addressing current issues such as cyber security and ageing society, it aims to strengthen the position of the canton of Bern as a university location. And it will remain actively committed to ensuring that successful progress is made with the two campus projects in Biel/Bienne and Bern.

[bfh.ch/annualreport2020](https://bfh.ch/annualreport2020)

### **Contact**

Franziska Liniger, Co-head of Communication BFH, T +41 (0) 31 848 33 19,  
[mediendienst@bfh.ch](mailto:mediendienst@bfh.ch)