Appeal for the Continuation of the *Conservation and Restoration / Excavation Technology* Program at HTW Berlin

To whom it may concern:

The University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Berlin has provided an academically rigorous and internationally recognized education in the fields of *Conservation and Restoration / Excavation Technology* since 1992. The program trains conservators specializing in archaeological-historical, technical, and photographic cultural heritage—including film heritage—as well as excavation technicians with engineering qualifications. Graduates of this program, which initially conferred a diploma and, since 2006, Bachelor's and Master's degrees, have gone on to distinguished careers in museums, archives, and heritage institutions at municipal, state, and federal levels. Many contribute to research and teaching in universities and institutes across Germany and abroad, while others hold positions in the private sector.

The program's academic reputation extends well beyond national borders—approximately one-third of its students come from outside Germany specifically to pursue their studies at HTW Berlin. Conservators and excavation technicians serve a vital role in preserving and interpreting our shared cultural heritage. Their work not only safeguards artistic and archaeological assets but also advances global research and public understanding of history, thereby strengthening cultural awareness and civic education—cornerstones of a democratic society.

The termination of the state university contracts by the Berlin Senate in December 2024, however, has resulted in significant reductions in higher education funding. The ensuing budget recalculations and austerity measures have led to the elimination of study capacities and, in several cases, the discontinuation of entire degree programs. Within HTW Berlin's Department of Design and Culture, these measures are scheduled to take effect in December 2025. As a consequence, the *Conservation and Restoration / Excavation Technology* Bachelor's program is planned for discontinuation beginning in the winter semester of 2026/27, with both the Bachelor's and Master's programs set to be completely phased out by 2031.

The loss of this program would have serious and lasting implications for Germany's cultural heritage infrastructure. It is the only program of its kind in the country, offering an unparalleled range of specializations and an integrated academic approach that bridges the disciplines of art, technology, natural sciences, and history. Its discontinuation would leave a gap in the national and international landscape of conservation training that cannot easily be filled.

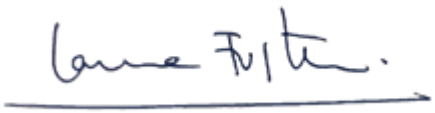
HTW Berlin has played a pivotal role within the European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education (ENCoRE) until 2024, when they resigned because they were beginning to face the new administrative situation. As an active and long-standing member, HTW Berlin has made a decisive contribution to shaping and advancing European standards in the academic education of conservator-restorers. Its engagement has been instrumental in defining professional competencies, promoting applied research, and strengthening the international recognition of conservation-restoration as an academic discipline. Through HTW Berlin's participation, ENCoRE has been able to foster greater cohesion, quality, and collaboration among European programs, positioning Germany as a leading voice in the protection and transmission of cultural heritage. The discontinuation of HTW Berlin's program would therefore represent not only a national loss, but also a significant weakening of this essential European network.

Cultural heritage preservation represents not only an academic pursuit but a public responsibility—one that reinforces democratic resilience and social cohesion.

In view of this, we respectfully urge the Berlin Senate and relevant government authorities to reconsider the planned termination of this program and to ensure its continued operation through sustained institutional and financial support.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued commitment to protecting Berlin's -and Germany's- academic and cultural excellence.

Sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Laura Fuster-López
CHAIR *(On behalf of the Board of* ENCoRE*)*

November 10th, 2025