Strategy
for The Faculty of Social Sciences
2012-2016

January 2012
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The Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Copenhagen, is known for the diversity and high quality of the basic and applied research conducted, and for attractive research-based education programmes which appeal to many high qualified applicants. We need to maintain and build further on this position of strength.

Our Strategy 2012-2016 is ambitious but realistic, as we have a solid foundation with potential and talent among staff, and we have been successful in achieving goals in previous periods.

In many areas the Faculty has addressed the challenges and achieved the objectives of the last “Strategy 2008-2012”, and the action plans that followed. However, the main challenges - competition, internationalisation, new tasks and requirements - are still present for the years to come.

External changes imply both challenges and new opportunities. Just to mention a few, Europe and Denmark are economically and politically challenged by financial unrest and crisis and this will also imply changes and challenges for the University and the Faculty. The fast economic development in Asia is at the same time an opportunity and a challenge. New social conditions are directly reflected in today’s demands of the Danish universities: internationalisation, significant increases in student intake, closer relations to other parts of society and requirements to streamline operations and administration. Furthermore, the value generated by the universities is expected to be clear and measurable, while at the same time more and more public funding for research is being offered in competition.

The overall financial future for the universities in Denmark and therefore also for the University of Copenhagen and the Faculty of Social Sciences is uncertain, and it is not clear that the current level of funding can be maintained, even though we are expected to increase the number of students and the amount of external research funding obtained. However, the Faculty’s Strategy 2016 optimistically assumes that the income of the Faculty will not decrease dramatically due to future political cuts in public funding.

As the Faculty’s framework conditions are unstable and changing over time, it is not to be expected that a strategy can be formulated which can then just be followed unrevised for a five year period. Rather, one must expect that the strategy will need adjustments, and that new elements may be added as the future evolves. In particular, this strategy does not take account of the new organisational structure of the University of Copenhagen recently decided by the University Board to be introduced during 2012. Even if this new structure does not formally change the Faculty of Social Sciences, it is clear that merging four faculties into two very large faculties will have an impact also on the Faculty of Social Sciences. Any expansion of research and education in social sciences in relation to the two new faculties should be supplied by the Faculty of Social Sciences such that the scientific quality can be ensured and scare resources used efficiently.

Our vision
The Faculty of Social Sciences will be the leading academic environment in Denmark within the fields of Social Sciences and will gain a strong international position in order to contribute towards the University of Copenhagen’s goal of being one of the leading universities in Europe.

The objective of the strategy is to ensure that this vision is realised. The achievement of this will be reflected by a high degree of international recognition of the Faculty’s researchers and research, impressive academic reviews of the Faculty’s activities, a consistent high intake of competent students on the educational programmes and a high employment rate in attractive jobs for the Faculty’s graduates.

The Faculty will continue to focus on the classic core services of the University, i.e. research and research-based education within the five well-established academic disciplines; however, the Faculty will also address new challenges.

Strategy 2016 builds on the previous ”Strategy of the Faculty of Social Sciences, 2008-2012” and University of Copenhagen’s “Strategy 2016”. The strategy addresses the challenges of the Faculty by setting goals and making prioritisations based on information, assessments and suggestions that we have obtained from the recent research evaluation of each of the Faculty’s departments, from accreditation reports, study statistics, graduate surveys and similar background material, and from a large number of discussions in external and internal forums.

The target audience for this strategy is primarily staff, students and management at the University. The plan has been developed and discussed with staff and students and a joint ownership is essential for implementing the plan. A short summary of the plan together with a presentation of the Faculty will be developed for a wider audience.

The University’s Strategy 2016 identifies three particular focus areas for which specific objectives have been defined: education and increased cooperation, in part with society and in part internally. Within these fields, the University, in its entirety, has an untapped potential.

The Faculty will contribute to the University’s strategy, and will also give priority to matters of specific interest to the Faculty. The principal objective is to strengthen the quality of research as well as of the educational programmes offered. In addition to education and cooperation, the Faculty Strategy 2016 will continue to have research quality and internationalisation as specifically targeted initiatives. High quality of research is decisive for establishing a position as a top international university. Internationalisation is a key to increasing and improving quality of both research and education, and will be a common theme in relation to many of the Faculty’s initiatives. Research and teaching are often competing for the same financial and time resources. However, improved interaction between research and education, and closer relations between researchers and students can benefit both research and teaching.

The strategy covers the following topics:
1. Quality of research
2. Quality of education and studies
3. PhD degree programmes
4. Dissemination and community relations
5. Cooperation and interdisciplinarity
6. Recruitment and talent development
7. Research and teaching conditions
8. Administration and support

Topics 1-4 are the core activities, research, education and outreach activities, whereas topics 5-8 elaborate on initiatives to improve on quality, efficiency and support of one or more of the core activities. For each topic the strategy sets major strategic goals and describes how the achievement of the goals will be observed. Further, the strategy indicates which actions will be taken in order to achieve the goals. Some of the actions mentioned for topics 1-4 are expanded and clarified in topics 5-8.

It should be clear that not all goals can be achieved simultaneously, and that some of the goals are ambitions that the Faculty should expect to pursue permanently. Each year the Faculty will develop an action plan, describing the actions to be taken that year. Thus, the action plans will serve also to determine milestones for obtaining the goals set by the strategy.

An important aspect of a strategy is prioritisation. One of the core priorities is that the Faculty continues to focus on the classic core services, i.e. research and research-based education. The more specific prioritisations appear partly by the measures suggested in the plan and will also be visible in the annual action plans. The strategy plan emphasises new activities to improve quality and internal and external cooperation. Resources for some of these new activities will have to come from a more efficient organisation of the present activities and by attracting new (external) funding.

### 1. Quality of research

The Faculty conducts high quality research. This is confirmed by the research assessments carried out in 2010, by the ranking of the respective disciplines in international research rankings, and by an increased international visibility by means of high-profile research publications. However, there is still room and potential for improvement as also emphasised in the research assessments. In order to fulfil the basic vision of the University and of the Faculty to be an internationally leading research university, it is

**The objective of the Faculty to strengthen research in all departments and research units**

Strengthened research will be reflected in

- international research excellence within chosen fields of interest
- a high international level of all research within the Faculty
- a broad research foundation for all educational programmes and for applied research as well as for the research-based advisory services
- stronger relations between basic research and the more widely applied research
Among other things, the objective will be reached by efficient organisation of the research with fine research conditions for individual researchers and research groups, a visible recruitment and career policy with emphasis on quality of research, and explicit prioritisations. The objectives will be reached by:

- a targeted follow-up on the recommendations of the research assessments 2010 in all departments, and a new research assessment in 2015
- explicit prioritisation of current and potential fields of excellence with high international impact, and of disciplines that are particularly important for the educational programmes
- allocation of internal resources with a view to strengthening the quality of research and areas of research that are given priority (budget model, pay policy as well as financial support of travel, guests etc)
- quality development through research management, research committees, internal procedures for peer reviews etc at department and faculty level.
- research cooperation supported by organisation into research groups, teams, centres etc, also facilitating students’ contributions to research
- improved administrative support of research, project development and applications for funding (services provided to research staff, c.f. section on administration and support)
- strengthening of international recruitment and focus on talent development (c.f. section on recruitment and talent cultivation)
- better opportunities for coherent periods of time for research and better opportunities for researchers to visit internationally leading environments (c.f. section on research and teaching conditions)
- explicit requirements and expectations in relation to research productivity. (c.f. section on research and teaching conditions)

2. Quality of education and studies

The core of the Faculty’s educational portfolio consists of the five educational programmes in Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology, which are all offered at BA, MSc and PhD level. These educational programmes are widely sought and the admission requirements are among the most demanding at the University of Copenhagen. The educational programmes are well-branded and graduates are respected and in high demand. Thus, the Faculty holds an excellent position with which to contribute to the University’s development of even better educational programmes, and to ensure that more young people obtain a higher education. The Faculty will do this partly by an increased focus on quality of studies and further development of the existing programmes, and partly by introducing new study programmes. In developing such programmes we will aim at the international market for students, interdisciplinary challenges and/or the demand from the labour market for specific qualifications. The Faculty must ensure that
graduates’ academic qualifications are in line with what can be obtained at the world's leading universities, and that society’s demand for skilled labour is met.

The objective of the Faculty is

- to strengthen the quality of education and teaching
- to develop new courses and educational opportunities, focusing in particular on the international market, interdisciplinary challenges and demands of the labour market
- improve study efficiency

Among other things, improved quality of education and studies will be reflected in:
- graduates with academic qualifications at high international level and qualifications that match society’s demand
- excellent employment prospects for graduates, i.e., graduates obtain attractive jobs matching their high qualifications
- graduates from the Faculty are recognised as candidates for top positions in society
- study programmes attract a large number of highly qualified applicants from national and international prospective students
- excellent teaching evaluations
- academic staff engaged in teaching and educational development and satisfied with the outcomes

Among other things, new courses and educational opportunities will be reflected in:
- 1 to 2 or more new (MSc) degree programmes offered
- sufficient English-taught courses offered to ensure that for each subject field a MSc covering core subjects is available also for non-Danish-speaking students
- more international degree students
- extended interdisciplinary collaboration and additional interdisciplinary opportunities

Among other things, improved study efficiency will be reflected in:
- an increase in the number of students completing the programmes within the prescribed period of study
- reduced drop-out-rate
- students studying full-time

The objectives will be reached by:
- pedagogical and didactical development, including the development of a joint understanding of research-based teaching that can serve as a basis for developing and documenting educational quality
- improved interaction between research and education, and closer relations between researchers and students
- increased (interdisciplinary) academic cooperation, including further development of ‘the Faculty’s Internal Market’, such that students have access to a large variety of, for example, elective courses, even if the supply from each programme is reduced. (c.f. section on cooperation and interdisciplinarity)
- increased collaboration between teachers and researchers within and across disciplines on teaching, and on course and programme development.
explicit expectations to students about study activity (full-time studies, independent studies, etc)
focus on offering a substantial amount of teaching and classroom hours in each course, rather than a large supply of, for example, elective courses
focus on universal services covering all students, rather than individual accounts and options
continued improvement of the physical and social study environment
recognition of teaching qualifications and teaching quality as equally important as research qualifications and research quality when hiring new academic staff, as well as in the everyday life of the departments, including salary supplement decisions.
possibilities and incentives for all academic staff members to develop their courses, teaching and teaching qualifications.

3. PhD degree programmes

The Faculty educates PhD students for research careers as well as for careers outside the university in the private and public sectors. The Faculty has a successful PhD programme within each of the five academic disciplines organised in the joint graduate school, “Copenhagen Graduate School of Social Sciences”. Under the framework of the graduate school, a number of initiatives shared by the PhD degree programmes are developed and implemented, while the actual academic content of the discipline is the responsibility of the department. The number of PhD students has increased rapidly in recent years because more resources (nationally) have been earmarked for PhDs. It is a challenge to ensure that PhD students are admitted to research disciplines within which a future demand of PhD graduates can be expected, and to ensure study efficiency and completion of studies. At the same time, the PhD programmes must be continuously adjusted and developed in order to constantly ensure the international competitiveness of the programmes.

The objective of the Faculty is

to strengthen the quality and efficiency of the PhD programmes

The fulfilment of the objectives will be reflected in

- a large number of highly qualified Danish and international applicants for PhD scholarships
- full employment in relevant positions for PhD graduates
- positive evaluations of the PhD programmes and degrees from students and committees
- PhD theses of high international standards published as journal articles or monographs
- completion of PhD degree within the prescribed period of study

The objectives will be reached by:

- follow-ups on the recommendations for PhD programmes made by the research assessment panels 2010 in all departments
- a survey among PhD graduates
- taking employment prospects into account for prioritising the total number of PhD students enrolled in the respective disciplines and funded by internal resources
- using the industrial PhD scheme to obtain funding and strengthen collaboration with firms
- improved opportunities for interdisciplinary courses
improved quality of supervision and course portfolios
- systematic verification of supervisory qualifications, among other things, through follow-ups on half-year assessment reports and summative reports
- increased focus on “placement” and career counselling, as well as close dialogue with employers

4. Dissemination and community relations

The most significant form of knowledge dissemination will remain the large number of highly qualified graduates that the Faculty educates. In addition, the Faculty’s staff have always participated widely in communication and knowledge dissemination in the public sphere and have also participated in councils, committees and commissions. Often this is the sharing of academic knowledge in a broad sense rather than the dissemination of specific research results. Much dissemination is initiated by demand from media, institutions, organisations or firms, or by the researcher him-/herself, but, the Faculty also carries out institutional dissemination by way of pamphlets, websites, contribution to “the Festival of Research” and newsletters at department as well as faculty level. To a greater extent, the Faculty has focused on strategic dissemination activities rather than detailed recording of each activity.

Some research units have particularly strong community relations. The research programme of the Employment Relations Research Centre (FÅOS) is for the main part funded by trade unions, employers’ organisations and the Ministry of Employment, and it has a close dialogue with the labour market parties and with the relevant administrative/political institutions. The Danish Centre for Military Studies (CMS) is funded by Danish Ministry of Defence and carries out strategic research and provides research-based public sector services. The Faculty will continue and strengthen such research activities with strong community relations and intensive dissemination activities founded on solid research.

Community relations are also facilitated by employer panels, which in particular focus on education.

The objective of the Faculty is

*to increase visibility of the Faculty’s activities in general and, in particular, to strengthen the dissemination of actual research contributions and research projects*

The objective will be reached by:

- giving greater priority to and ensuring systematic dissemination and “marketing” of, for example, all “top-publications”
- systematically disseminating all PhD theses as an integrated part of PhD procedures
- systematically updating information on researchers and research projects in CURIS (Copenhagen University Research Information System)
- an annual dissemination event at every department or jointly held by several departments/at faculty level
- further developing the collaboration with the employer panels
- prioritising and systematising relevant information and key figures about units and activities as well as selecting and implementing relevant new electronic information channels.
5. Cooperation and interdisciplinarity

The Faculty comprises five departments – Anthropology, Economics, Psychology, Political Science, and Sociology – all of which offer degree programmes at BA, MSc, and PhD level. These departments and degree programmes make up the Faculty’s core, and these core disciplines must continue to be refined and strengthened. At the same time, an untapped potential for interdisciplinary cooperation – in terms of research and education – exists, both internally at the Faculty, between faculties and in relation to external partnerships.

The Faculty is a strong partner in the “Asian Dynamic Initiative” (ADI) and “European Research at the University of Copenhagen” (EURECO). Both initiatives are run jointly with other faculties and it will be a high priority to develop and strengthen both of them. Further, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) will be integrated into the department of Political Science and be an integrated part of the Faculty’s boosted Asian activities.

The Faculty is the natural focal point for social sciences development research and teaching. The Faculty will encourage more collaboration within this field across its departments and with external partners and other faculties at the University.

The Faculty of Social Sciences is located at the Centre for Health and Society and cooperates with the Faculty of Health Sciences on research and in particular on teaching, but this must be further developed. The Faculty will investigate how to intensify cooperation with the Health Faculty and exploit untapped opportunities.

The objective of the Faculty is to **better exploit this potential for interdisciplinary collaboration in order to strengthen research and education**.

In terms of research, the point of departure is that academically strong disciplines are required for successful interdisciplinarity. On the other hand, multi- and interdisciplinarity are necessary for addressing comprehensive societal challenges, such as climate change, demographic development, migration etc. Furthermore, a growing share of research is funded externally, and private as well as public donors often focus on thematic programme-based research. And finally, new opportunities for and challenges to basic research across disciplines manifest themselves on the edges and in between the established disciplines.

The objective of the Faculty is **to strengthen research within interdisciplinary fields, internally as well as externally**.

The objective will be reached by improving incentives and developing frameworks for interdisciplinary research at the Faculty, among other things, through the following initiatives:

- establishing 2 to 4 new major, primarily externally funded inter-/multidisciplinary research projects/centres
- “seed money” and PhD funds for interdisciplinary projects
- forums for ”younger researchers and heads of research” across the Faculty’s disciplines
increased cooperation with other faculties in relation to strategic research initiatives, including the partnership between the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Social Sciences as regards the Centre for Health and Society.

**In relation to education**, students demand more comprehensive information on and improved opportunities for attending courses across disciplines without obstacles, and simultaneously also considerable academic progression. There are also untapped possibilities for basing the courses on the Faculty’s research across departments. At the Faculty of Social Sciences, the departments only practise a limited coordination of the range of courses offered and a limited cooperation in terms of jointly offered courses and course sequences, staffing of courses etc. For example, there is, in relation to quantitative methods, an untapped potential for cooperation and increased progression for the range of courses offered at the MSc and PhD levels, and the labour market demands more candidates with strong qualifications in quantitative methods.

Non-flexible curricula and lack of information, as well as the departments’ focus on their individual revenues continue to pose obstacles to a more efficient ‘internal market’ at the Faculty.

The objective of the Faculty is

**to improve the quality of the educational programmes by making ‘the Faculty’s Internal Market’ work, and by means of strategic educational cooperation with other faculties and institutions within prioritised fields of interest**

The objective will be reached by:

- a joint shared plan for the strengthening of quantitative methods across the disciplines at the MSc and PhD levels and improved joint access to data
- fewer obstacles for students, including improved information and guidance in terms of course options across the disciplines
- focus on economic obstacles for developing the internal market
- introducing a range of courses that is offered to students at other faculties, including financial incentives for new interdisciplinary course initiatives
- new study facilities, for example, in connection with the reorganisation of the Faculty libraries.

### 6. Recruitment and talent development

The Faculty’s researchers and lecturers are the basic foundation for high quality research and teaching. Thus, recruitment and talent development are essential for quality. Internationalisation, increased mobility and increased competition have fundamentally changed the academic labour market, and the Faculty must seize the opportunities that are handed to it.

The objectives of the Faculty are

- **to increase the number of highly qualified – international – applicants for academic positions and continue to professionalise the recruitment process**
- **to strengthen the internal talent development and to render career opportunities at and outside the Faculty more visible**
The objectives will be reached by:

- searching, contacting and nursing potential applicants, participation in international job fairs and drafting of job advertisements in a way that ensures the best/largest possible pool of applicants
- internationally oriented assessment committees, clear guidelines for assessment committees, short assessment periods and efficient job interviews
- long-term staffing plans, systematic discussions of career plans and opportunities for “junior staff”, as well as requirements of comprehensive international experience prior to permanent employment
- ear-marked Faculty funding for recruitment and retention of extraordinary qualified researchers
- “Out placement” support in relation to a career outside the Faculty and outside academia for employees who may wish to pursue this.

7. Research and teaching conditions

As a leading research university, the University of Copenhagen has a distinct obligation to manage and safeguard both basic research and academic freedom. At the same time, the conditions are changing. A larger share of research funds must be obtained externally subject to competition; and society demands more and better education without increasing the funding. The international mobility of researchers and thus the competition for top researchers have increased dramatically. The University must strike a balance between several objectives, taking account of individual research agendas and career paths as well as institutional formation of groups, cooperation and contributions to “a joint agenda”. We must contribute both education and research, ensure that education is research-based, and that students participate in and contribute to research whenever possible.

Research is time consuming, in particular when aiming at the highest international level, and researchers often experience time for research to be the most scarce resource and need more coherent research periods. As the number of students and the teaching obligations increase, it is difficult to ensure such periods. Declining free funds for basic research implies that significantly more external funding is required if the scope of the Faculty’s research is to be maintained.

The present distribution of working hours between research, teaching and other tasks is thus under pressure, and in the future, each researcher must expect a part of the research time to be externally funded – either individually or in participating in larger projects with colleagues. Furthermore, increased cooperation across disciplines will make differences in working conditions more visible and increase the pressure for harmonisation of working conditions across disciplines and departments.

Clear and visible requirements, teamwork, professional management and leadership and open dialogue between management and staff are important for the work environment.

The objective of the Faculty is to render demands and expectations in relation to the individual researcher and teacher more visible, and to foster optimum research and teaching conditions that are in line with the objectives of the Faculty and realistically respond to the tightened framework conditions.
The objective will be reached by:

- a policy for research sabbaticals, focusing particularly on those in connection with research stays at top foreign universities and stays in relation to international research cooperation
- a distribution of time between research, teaching and other tasks, which realistically responds to the tightened framework conditions
- a policy for workload reduction that provides incentives for obtaining external funding, but also ensures that researchers who successfully attract funding contribute to the research-based education
- department norms (/principles for reimbursement of time) for academic staff’s teaching and administrative tasks that are realistic, and take into account that improved teaching qualifications should not only improve teaching quality but also lead to more efficient use of time, such as time for preparing lectures and classes.
- visible requirements to research productivity, pedagogical development and external funding addressed systematically in performance and development reviews (“MUS”).
- professionalising management and leadership
- increased focus and effort by management to attract external funds, including more direct contacts with funding organisations, firms and decision-makers.
- attention to work environment and stress prevention.

8. Administration and support

Research, teaching and dissemination constitute the mission of the University and the Faculty. The objectives within these areas cannot be realised without efficient administration and technical support supplied by highly qualified staff. Internally as well as externally, there is pressure to streamline and economise on administration and to channel funds to the core activities. However, the core activities are highly dependent on effective administrative support, so the challenge is to streamline administration to back core activities in the best possible way. Furthermore, it is a challenge to get the administrative units at department, faculty and university levels to collectively work together. Finally, it is a challenge to recruit and retain highly qualified administrative staff in a time characterised by reorganisation, efficiency improvement and cuts-backs. The latter is even more urgent following the increasing complexity of many administrative tasks.

As internationalisation and more external funding are essential goals in the coming period, the Faculty will focus particularly on administrative support of internationalisation and research support. The parallel use of the Danish and English languages for communication to and among staff and students should be developed to ensure that communication is efficient and includes all relevant parties, and simultaneously avoids unnecessary translation.

The objective of the Faculty is to

*develop and strengthen the administration in order to ensure that the requirements of core activities are fulfilled and cost effectiveness is ensured*
Among other things, this will be reflected in

- improved services in relation to internationalisation and external funding
- improved English language qualifications among staff
- stability and quality in administrative performance
- user satisfaction at all levels and among staff as well as students
- elimination of the “us and them” culture by building on a founding principle of collaboration and mutual respect between the respective administrative units as well as between the administrative staff, the academic staff and the students
- cost effectiveness measured by benchmarking against other similar units
- well-functioning IT and library services.

The objective will be reached by:

- higher priority for administrative services to external funding and internationalisation
- continued development of the organisation and placement of the administrative units, including increased integration of the administrative staff at department and faculty levels
- securing a balance between new administrative tasks and resources
- user satisfaction surveys
- higher priority to electronic administration procedures
- consolidation of organisation and service in relation to IT and libraries
- strong focus on the implementation of new joint administrative systems
- focus on qualifications among administrative staff (by training and recruitment policies)
- a language policy including allocation of resources for developing language skills.

**Closing remarks**

Highly qualified staff and students are a prerequisite in realising the Faculty’s objectives in relation to research, education and dissemination.

*The good place to work* will, consequently, be key to realising the Faculty’s objectives. The latest workplace assessment indicated that an improvement in the collaboration between management and staff is called for. A goal of this strategy is thus to improve dialogue between management and staff through the formal channels as well as informally by management and staff members enjoying face-to-face dialogues and meetings. Furthermore, the Faculty will continue to work for more women in research and management.

*The good place of study* is decisive for a good study environment and life. The latest survey of the study environment indicates that, in general, there is a great level of satisfaction with regard to the study environment at campus; however, this should not lead to inaction. We continue to face many challenges, including matters in relation to international students, and to maintaining a good study environment for MSc students.