Strategy for
the Faculty of Social Sciences

2008-2012

October 2008
The principal vision of the Faculty of Social Sciences: 

*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.*

1 Introduction

This strategy is based on the strong present academic position of the Faculty of Social Sciences (the Faculty), the new challenges that the Faculty is facing and, not least, the principal vision of the Faculty as formulated above. In addition, the strategic plan is a continuation of the principal strategy of the University of Copenhagen, as in "Destination 2012".

The principal objective of the strategy is to ensure that the vision of the Faculty of Social Sciences is realized. Among other things, the achievement of this vision will be reflected in:

- A strong position in international rankings;
- impressive academic reviews of the Faculty’s activities;
- a consistently high intake of competent students on the educational programmes of the Faculty;
- a high employment rate among postgraduate students from the Faculty and employment in attractive jobs.

An important aspect of the strategy is prioritization, which entails both selection and rejection. One of the priorities of the strategy is that the Faculty continues to focus on the classic core services of the University, i.e. research and research-based education within the five well-established academic disciplines of the Faculty.

This focus on classic core services and the goal of establishing the University of Copenhagen as a leading university both nationally and internationally imply that a high level of ambition with regard to research and teaching quality must be included in the strategy and its implementation. In this respect, the strategy builds on the excellent work which, to date, has been performed by the academic and administrative staff at the Faculty.
The strategic plan emphasises on a range of principal strategic goals and goes on to outline the way in which the Faculty of Social Sciences intends to reach these goals. By way of introduction, a number of important challenges are outlined to which the strategic plan should be considered the Faculty’s response. It goes without saying that the strategic plan is dynamic and may be revised in the interest of accommodating the Faculty’s own ideas as well as outside demand(s).

The Faculty of Social Sciences is one of eight faculties at the University of Copenhagen. It currently comprises 5 departments – Economics, Psychology, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology - all of which offer degree programmes from bachelor to PhD level. In addition the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS) is part of the Faculty and the Centre for Applied Computer Science, Building Services City Campus and the Faculty administration are all administrative units under the Faculty of Social Sciences which provide technical and administrative support.

2. Challenges

In general, both the University of Copenhagen and the Faculty of Social Sciences will face a large number of significant challenges in the years to come.

Increased competition

Competition for financial resources, employees and students will increase. In general, the Faculty should not expect to receive more unrestricted basic research funds or value added funding for teaching – rather the opposite. Consequently, a growing share of resources will have to be raised in a national and international competition for external funding. In addition, a growing share of internal university funds will be subject to competition as well. It is a challenge to increase the total amount of resources and apply these in an efficient way.

Globalisation and internationalisation

In the future, one must expect that talented researchers and excellent students will be increasingly mobile and that international competition for the most qualified ones will increase. Increasingly, universities and departments will be compared to one another. It is crucial to a research-driven university such as the University of Copenhagen that it gains a strong position in the international research community and participates in relevant international networks. The degree of internationalisation varies significantly from one department of the Faculty to another. Most departments and centres focus their attention on international students and researchers as well as to some extent exchange opportunities for their own students and researchers. However, departments tend to focus less vigilantly on full-scale internationalisation which includes international academic and administrative staff as well as international degree programmes, which are characteristic features of leading international universities.

If the University of Copenhagen and the Faculty of Social Sciences are to reach the goal of being among the leading universities and outperform other universities internationally, internationalisation must be strengthened.
A Wider portfolio and a higher level of quality

The Faculty is faced with the challenge of raising the quality of research and education while the same time undertaking new tasks. The portfolio of tasks has grown to include sharing knowledge with the outside world, more direct cooperation with private enterprise and public institutions, as well as activities linked to continuing vocational education. Furthermore, society demands higher education for an increasing share of the younger generation and would at the same time like to see that study programmes at an international elite level are being offered. Consequently, it is necessary to cover a broader range of activities while simultaneously increasing the quality of the core services, which, as resources are limited, requires a clear prioritisation.

In addition, increased competition, increased internationalisation, a wider task portfolio and expectations of change place heavy demands on the motivation and ability to change. This is true for the management as well for the academic and administrative staff. Among other things, the challenge is to ensure that the Faculty remains an attractive place of work while undergoing significant changes at the same time.

Specific educational challenges

In the future, a larger proportion of students will leave their university or change study programme/university after finishing the Bachelor degree, and, consequently, competition for students will increase on both the national and international level. Furthermore, it will be expected that Master’s programmes be completed within the prescribed period of study, i.e. two years, and further specialisation within the respective fields of study will be carried out as PhD studies as opposed to extended Master’s degree programmes. An attractive “postgraduate” degree programme (studies at Master’s and PhD level) with a flexible transition between the Master’s level and the PhD level which would have a wide appeal to external students, constitutes an unavoidable requirement for any department at the University that wishes to contribute to the international research excellence. Consequently, this type of degree programme must be given a high priority.

An excellent study environment will constitute a crucial element in the competition for the best and brightest students. The term “study environment” refers to student facilities as well as the academic and pedagogical aspects of teaching. In this respect, the relocation of the units of the Faculty of Social Science to “Centre for Health and Society” at City Campus poses a great challenge, but at the same time offers great opportunities.

Labour market requirements and expectations are changing constantly. Notwithstanding internationalization, the main educational task of the Faculty of Social Sciences will continue to be to educate competent graduates for the Danish labour market and to ensure their employability. The Faculty has a great responsibility for the employability of graduates and must ensure that the study programmes meet the requirements of the Danish labour market.

The Danish Government and the Danish Parliament focus increasingly on drop-out rates and the duration of study programmes, and have adjusted budget models with a view to reducing both.
The Faculty cannot ignore these cues as the current drop-out rates on several of its degree programmes are significant and the number of students that complete the degree programmes within the prescribed period of study is relatively low. The challenge is to make adjustments to ensure a satisfactory intake, a shorter duration of studies and a lower drop-out rate without impairing the quality of the study programmes. As a result, a high number of highly qualified applicants to the study programmes at the Faculty and excellent employment opportunities for graduates will, Faculty-wise, be considered to be a conclusive benchmark when evaluating the success of the degree programmes.

Specific research challenges

The vision of the Faculty is to assert itself internationally in order to contribute towards the goal of the University of Copenhagen to be one of the leading universities in Europe. This presupposes more and better research. Many other universities give priority to this area and steer according to a similar vision. Consequently, if the vision is to be realised, a high level of ambition that is supported by specific prioritisations and actions is necessary.

More and more research funds are being restricted to specific themes and/or related to interdisciplinary research projects, which necessitates an increased cooperation across academic borders. There is increased focus on strategic areas of research such as health, environment, climate, population development, security, Europe, developing countries and Asia, where, in addition to the thematic aspect, it is expected that researchers are willing and able to work across academic disciplines. The Faculty must participate in selected strategic areas of research - partly to be able to contribute to significant research related to major public and social issues and partly to be able to attract research funds.

An increasing proportion of public and private research funds - even the non-targeted funds – are allocated by way of competition in which one-man research projects will hardly stand a chance. Consequently, research must increasingly be carried out by research groups, and prioritisation of research fields will tend to be higher on the departments’ agenda when they are looking both to ensure international research excellence and to create a breeding ground for innovation and new initiatives within specific strategic focus areas.

Even though increased competition will set the underlying agenda for research, there is also a need to strengthen cooperation and strategic alliances between researchers and departments. The challenge and the dilemma lie in finding and promoting the most relevant links, all the while realizing that these cooperative partners most likely also constitute competitors for the same research funds.

The University of Copenhagen must safeguard its research independence and is committed to attaining the highest intellectual standard and the highest level of professional ethics. The boundaries of research independence are changing. Increased external financing – often accompanied by a demand for co-funding – and political re-prioritisation of strategic research squeeze research independence.
In order to strengthen research, researchers are expected to focus their attention on their publication channels, and at both department and personal level, better planning and structuring as well as a more evident prioritisation of research are expected. The boundaries of research independence have changed, and it is a challenge both to safeguard the University’s research independence and autonomy and to ensure an optimal structure of research.

**An attractive place of work: Recruiting and retaining academic and administrative staff**

The University is basically made up of its academic and administrative staff. The employees are the University’s paramount resource. Therefore, strategically speaking, it is of crucial importance to the future of the University that the right employees are appointed and talent is developed and cultivated. This applies to academic staff as well as administrative staff. Competition for competent employees will increase significantly, and this means that the Faculty must increasingly focus on being an attractive place of work.

In order to ensure that the Faculty attracts the utmost competent academic staff, it must recruit globally in open competition and advertise job positions with broad job specifications. In certain cases, this may pose a dilemma, when the Faculty wishes to prioritise strategic focus areas at the same time. It is a serious challenge to find a suitable balance between a highly competitive employment and retention policy and the aim of developing strategic focus areas and securing good promotion opportunities.

**3. Principal strategic priorities**

Most *degree programmes* at the Faculty of Social Sciences have a high application rate and the admission requirements are among the strictest at the University. Master’s graduates are highly coveted on the Danish labour market and the brands of the degree programmes are well-respected. At the same time, *research* at the Faculty covers a broad range of intellectual fields and a number of research projects and groups have an impressive international reputation.

Thus, although the Faculty is ideally placed, the future challenges and the combined visions of the University and the Faculty require significant changes and the need to prioritise.

In order to meet the challenges and realise the vision, the strategy defined by the Faculty must prioritise objectives and focus areas. In particular, the Faculty wishes to contribute towards the goal of the University of Copenhagen to establish itself as one of the leading universities in Europe in terms of basic research. Quality has to be the hallmark of the core services, i.e. research and education. The most significant asset is the large, varied and academically strong research communities. Another significant asset is the large number of highly-qualified Danish and international students who apply for the study programmes offered at the Faculty. A third asset is the dedicated and talented employees.
In order to support the objectives and the vision, the Faculty will, in the forthcoming year, pay special attention to:

- strengthening internationalisation as a means to increase quality of research and teaching;
- quality assurance and quality development of research, study programmes and knowledge dissemination, together with management and administration;
- strengthening the current portfolio of study programmes rather than cultivating new ones;
- establishing the "Centre for Health and Society" as an attractive campus area for both students and employees; and
- strengthening the resource base and the organisation whilst raising efficiency.

4. Objectives and focus areas

4.1. Research

The Faculty is characterised by high-quality academic research both basic and applied.

The Faculty’s ambition is

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\text{to safeguard the University’s research independence, to conduct excellent (basic) research subject to the competitive parameters which apply to the Danish and international research communities, and to achieve a strong position in the international research community.}
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The most important objectives are the following:

- More and better research. The high quality of research will be reflected in an increase in the share of research carried out at the Faculty that is published in top international journals and by renowned publishing houses.

- In general, the quality and scope of research will ensure that the Faculty is able to offer high level research-based study programmes.

- The Faculty will participate in selected strategic research fields which relate to its basic research.

These objectives include the following fundamental priorities:

- Quantitative expansion in the shape of an increased number of research projects, publications, etc. must not be achieved at the expense of quality.
As a result of open competition for resources, research will increasingly focus on the core strengths of the Faculty.

The Faculty will be open to new initiatives in interdisciplinary research, both nationally and internationally speaking, but will prioritise interdisciplinary initiatives that build on existing research competence and will operate with the expectation that interdisciplinarity presupposes disciplinary competences as well.

Relying on the impact of high research quality, the Faculty expects to obtain a significant increase in external research funds, including EU and other research funds subject to competition.

The Faculty will reach the above objectives by:

- strengthening recruitment and retention of the most talented researchers by always employing the most qualified applicants: focus on recruitment of researchers at the international level will increase, e.g. by advertising job positions with broad job specifications internationally in order to attract qualified and internationally oriented applicants and by encouraging departments to recruit top international academics;

- directing the Faculty’s research and research groups toward prioritised research fields by:
  - identifying and supporting actual or potential "areas of research excellence" of substantial international significance;
  - identifying and supporting the launch of theme-based disciplinary or interdisciplinary "focus areas" based on new requirements and opportunities with respect to research, teaching and the dissemination of knowledge;
  - actively supporting the establishment of research groups in order to strengthen the research environment, e.g. by ensuring a well-founded basis for external financing and by easing the integration of new employees and PhD students into the research environment.

- continued development of the Faculty’s principles for ranking of top periodicals and publishing houses in line with national and international development in the practice of ranking publications and publishers, together with continued development of the principles governing the awarding of rewards for excellent research.

- implementing research assessments based on internationally recognised academic standards by the end of 2010 at the latest.

- retaining research independence for the academic staff, aiming to expand the budgetary framework of research at the Faculty and, within existing budgetary limits, ensuring that the respective researchers/research groups are allowed consecutive periods of time for research.

- supporting mobility of researchers and international cooperation, including IARU.
4.2 Education

The most important product that the Faculty supplies to the external environment is competent graduates, i.e. its educational output. The present five well-established Bachelor and Master’s degree programmes in Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology are successful and their brands are extremely well-respected, as is proved by a generally very high rate of employment, high salaries amongst the employed and the degree of satisfaction expressed by employers. Consequently, the main educational ambition of this strategic plan is:

- to develop and assure the quality of the existing study programmes:
  - A continuous renewal of content, structure and pedagogical teaching principles and increased internationalisation of the existing Bachelor and Master’s degree programmes will ensure that these degree programmes continue to meet the highest international standards and contribute to the development of the knowledge society.

The main objectives are the following:

- to ensure that Bachelor and Master’s graduates from the Faculty have achieved an academic level in line with the level achieved by students at the world’s leading universities;

- to ensure that graduates from the Faculty (continue to) enjoy a high rate of employment and that the study programmes meet society’s requirements with regard to a qualified labour force;

- to be able to attract many highly-qualified applicants to the study programme, including talented international students;

- to increase the research-base of the study programmes, e.g. by giving researchers greater responsibility than previously with regard to teaching and academic supervision, regardless of whether this is handled by external or internal academic staff;

- to reduce drop-out rates and the duration of studies;

- to ensure the best possible study environment - both physical and academic.

These objectives include the following fundamental priorities:

- Main focus will be innovation and development of the existing Bachelor and Master’s degree programmes. This is based on the assessment that it is both desirable and necessary to introduce a number of new features to the existing, well-respected educational brands.
o Any new, large educational initiative at Bachelor and/or Master’s level will be regularly considered in order to meet society’s demand for a skilled workforce and in order to be able to attract large numbers of highly qualified students to the Faculty. New initiatives must be embedded in local endeavours and existing academic expertise of the departments, and the viability of the initiatives will be established from the interest that both students and future employers take in any such initiative.

o The Faculty will participate in the development of new part-time study programmes, short brush-up courses, summer schools as well as programmes of excellence/COME. For any initiative, it is a precondition that interest from students and future employers is demonstrated, that the planned study programme is research-based, that it has a reasonable financial foundation, and that it is not detrimental to the core study programmes.

The Faculty will reach above objectives by:

- conducting continued observation of graduates’ employment conditions and employability through close dialogue with “employer panels” and by making adjustments to the study programmes based on these observations;

- securing a high quality of teaching, among other things by:
  - requiring written proof of teaching skills and experience when hiring academic staff with teaching responsibilities;
  - requiring that every academic staff member with teaching responsibility continues to develop his/her competences by means of supplementary education;

- developing the study programmes, among other things by:
  - developing the “toolbox” of “quantitative methods” and IT, and integrating IT into the disciplines;
  - developing new interdisciplinary academic constituents, such as management, innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthening graduates’ “soft” qualifications in relation to teamwork, knowledge dissemination, etc.

- facilitating transfers of academic credit by means of active participation in the University of Copenhagen’s ”Internal Market” and entering into credit transfer agreements with other universities;

- strengthening internationalisation, among other things by:
  - ensuring that departments which enjoy a high rate of in- and out-going students focus their attention on quality rather than quantity. Satisfactory academic and linguistic qualifications of the in-coming international students are of major importance.
The quality of host universities and exchange agreements must likewise be assured;

- developing more full-degree programmes aimed at international students and raising the total number of courses taught in English to an adequate level for all disciplines in order to attract highly-qualified international students.

- improving student supervision by paying specific attention to: advisory services in relation to study activity requirements, supervision of international students, advisory services in connection with change of study as well as with career guidance;

- establishing an efficient “one-stop” service centre for all students at the Faculty and a well-organized student facility with workstations and library facilities;

- developing an incentive structure that rewards academic staff and departments for excellent teaching and educational development.

Research education

The Faculty educates PhD students for research careers as well as careers in the private and public sector. Until 2008, the responsibility for the respective PhD degree programmes offered at the Faculty was delegated to departments and bore a strong resemblance to an “apprenticeship”, even though PhD courses were being given a greater priority than previously, among other things due to the establishment of nation-wide graduate schools. At the beginning of 2008, the Faculty of Social Sciences established a graduate school, Copenhagen Graduate School of Social Sciences, which represents the framework for innovation of PhD degree studies at the Faculty.

The main objectives are:

- to develop ”Copenhagen Graduate School of Social Sciences” into the main framework of the PhD degree programmes offered at the Faculty of Social Sciences whilst maintaining a strong focus on quality;

- to increase the total number of PhD students at the Faculty of Social Sciences;

- to give greater priority to formal PhD courses and the progression requirements of the PhD degree programmes, and to reinforce research-based supervision;

- to give greater priority to internationalisation of the PhD degree programmes.
The Faculty will reach above objectives by:

- implementing initiatives that strengthen PhD students’ opportunities for studying at top universities abroad and providing more and better opportunities for admitting competent international students to the programmes at the Faculty;

- continuing to offer five PhD degree programmes in "Copenhagen Graduate School of Social Sciences” (Economics, Psychology, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology) and introduce the 4+4 PhD degree programme into all of the PhD degree programmes while retaining the 5+3 PhD degree programme and also introducing the 3+5 PhD degree programme;

- furthering cooperation on the PhD programmes with other universities and research institutions.

### 4.3 Knowledge exchange and community relations

The most significant method for exchanging knowledge with society is without doubt the large number of highly qualified graduates that the Faculty of Social Sciences educates. Besides education, the Faculty’s academic staff has always participated in the dissemination and exchange of knowledge through public debate and participation in boards, committees and commissions. The dissemination of knowledge has mostly taken the form of broad, academic insight rather than specific research results. To date, the Faculty has not compiled any list of its employees’ academic skills or made these skills systematically visible, and no policy or incentives for knowledge exchange have been decided upon.

The general objective is

> to ensure that the Faculty of Social Sciences continues to develop and strengthen both knowledge dissemination and community relations.

Specifically, the Faculty aims:

- to define a general policy for knowledge dissemination as well as incentives for the exchange of knowledge.

- to increase the visibility of the activities of the Faculty, including the dissemination of knowledge.

- to strengthen the dissemination of research results

- to focus on dissemination of strategic knowledge rather than to develop a comprehensive and detailed registration of all activities that disseminate knowledge.

- to give greater priority to the dissemination of research at an international level.
4.4 Academic and administrative staff

Competition for competent academic and administrative staff will increase significantly, and the Faculty of Social Sciences must, therefore, increase its effort to be an attractive place of work significantly.

The main objective is

*to ensure that the Faculty is an attractive place of work to both national and international employees*

The Faculty will reach above objective by:

- involving employees in the implementation of the strategy, improving top-down and bottom-up dialogue at the Faculty, and strengthening in-house information to, and communication with employees and students.

- implementing the staff policy of the University of Copenhagen by turning the attention of the central liaison committee (FSU) and the local liaison committee (LSU) at the Faculty towards selected principles among the 10 basic principles of the staff policy that applies to all academic and administrative staff.

- ensuring that the “Centre for Health and Society” is an attractive place of work, both physically and psychologically speaking.

- implementing, in accordance with the plan of action of the University of Copenhagen, a plan of action for attracting more women researchers.

- strengthening career guidance for PhD students and employees at assistant professor level and giving greater priority to services provided to international employees.

- participating actively in the University of Copenhagen’s management development programme.

4.5 Organisation and resources

Traditionally, the Faculty has had a highly decentralised organisational structure, and, to a great extent, both financial resources and decision-making power have been assigned to departments. This type of organisational structure has a number of advantages, but also results in research, teaching and administration being organised in at least five different ways.
If the Faculty is to realise its ambitious goals for research and education, it is crucial that administrative support and the use of resources support the main academic objectives.

The main objective is

*to optimise the academic and administrative organisation, to attract further resources and ensure an efficient and goal-oriented use of resources.*

The Faculty will reach above objective by:

- developing the in-house budget model with a view to ensuring that the budget principles support the strategy of the Faculty to the greatest possible extent;
- ensuring that, within the framework of the overall wage policy of the University of Copenhagen, the principles for salary supplements at the Faculty support the general objectives of the Faculty to the greatest possible extent;
- benchmarking relevant academic and administrative key figures against the key figures of selected national and international universities;
- establishing efficient research services, among other things, in relation to external funding;
- ensuring that the goals of the formal contracts into which the departments enter contribute to the realisation of “Destination 2012”, the strategic plan of action of the University of Copenhagen, and the strategy of the Faculty of Social Sciences;
- contributing towards the objectives of the campus plan of the University of Copenhagen by establishing the “Centre of Health and Society” as a successful campus area for the Faculty of Social Sciences and parts of the Faculty of Health Sciences, including ensuring the establishment of the new building as is included in this plan;
- optimising the infrastructure, including the establishment of a joint IT-service unit at the “Centre for Health and Society” and ensure well-run library services; and
- arranging for the optimal structure as regards administrative procedures at the Faculty and the departments, respectively, which will ensure an optimal and efficient support of research, teaching and knowledge dissemination.