

# Strategy 2014-2020

**Department of Aesthetics and Communication**  
Aarhus University



AARHUS  
UNIVERSITY





## MISSION

The task of the Department of Aesthetics and Communication is to supply research, research-based education, talent development and knowledge sharing at the highest level within the department's broad subject range, thereby contributing valuable insight into human, cultural and social methods of expression and action.

## VISION

The Department of Aesthetics and Communication wishes to use its strategy to contribute to Aarhus University's ambition to be a globally focused university with a strong commitment to social development. The department wishes to achieve this goal by creating good frameworks for internationally acknowledged research and education environments that not only set the highest academic standards, but also meet the current needs of society for research, education and knowledge exchange on an ongoing basis. The department will exploit its broad subject range and strength in specific subject areas with a view to supplying innovative research in the humanities which increases our ability to understand ourselves as both bearers and creators of culture, by developing the department's subject areas, cooperating with international partners, and taking part in cross-disciplinary research projects. The department will continuously improve its existing degree programmes and develop new ones, including cross-disciplinary degree programmes that meet the needs of society for new competences, with a view to qualifying graduates from the department's degree programmes for an increasingly global labour market. Using the digital media, innovative forms of learning and other techniques, the department wishes to create modern, inspiring and inter-cultural spaces for learning which can attract talented students from Denmark and abroad. The department wishes to use its degree programmes to provide all the students with the skills needed to take action, the ability to critically analyse social trends, and the insight into meaning formation in human beings that is needed to make a difference on a labour market characterised by globalisation. The department wishes to use the internationalisation of research and education to attract the strongest research talents who are able to succeed in international research communities as well as helping to innovate the department's research efforts.

# RESEARCH

All the department's activities are (and must be) research based. Consequently, research of high quality with an international impact constitutes the basis of the department's strategy. In order to maintain the required research standard, it is vital that the freedom of research is protected, that good framework conditions are established for creative and dynamic research environments, and that sound and long-term financing is obtained.

## POINT OF DEPARTURE

Thanks to its many strong subject environments, which have already established international and cross-disciplinary networks, and its many opportunities for entering into strategic, cross-disciplinary partnerships at Aarhus University, the department has a good point of departure for developing its international impact. A number of the department's subject environments already publish in the most respected journals, participate actively in international networks and attract external funding for research projects; while other subject environments have not yet fulfilled their full potential in these respects. Having strengthened its research organisation based on the establishment of its eight research programmes, the department has created the conditions needed to increase its contribution to research to meet the needs of society for critical self-reflection and a humanistic understanding of social and cultural issues that is capable of generating value.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### **Increasing the number of research areas in the international elite**

*The department wishes to increase its international impact in its research fields. The main ways of achieving this goal involve raising the profile of the department's subject areas and its researchers at international conferences, focusing the department's publication profile with a view to publishing in channels of international repute, attracting and integrating strong research profiles and young, talented researchers in the department, and developing international research networks.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Implement a proactive professorship policy with a view to strengthening the top level of its research
- Ensure the best possible conditions for research at the department
- Work proactively to attract strong researcher profiles of international repute to the department
- Stimulate and support participation in central conferences and hold international conferences under the auspices of the department
- Expand its established international research partnerships and set up new, powerful researcher networks
- Continue to develop a supportive and facilitating research management, for instance with a view to focusing the department's overall publication profile and supporting individual researchers in their efforts to get publications accepted in respected publication channels
- Focus on opportunities for publication cooperation with international partners
- Increase active participation in the editorial staffs of international journals and assessment committees
- Increase the focus on researcher mobility, for instance by applying for Marie Curie Action schemes under the auspices of the EU

### **Focusing on the challenges facing society**

*The department wishes to enter into a larger number of binding cross-disciplinary research partnerships with a view to helping to meet current and future social challenges. This goal will be achieved by playing a proactive role in the establishment of cross-faculty partnerships at Aarhus University, and exploiting the strengths of the department (in the fields of IT in the humanities, linguistic and cultural analysis and creative innovation processes, for instance) with a view to contributing to strategic research contexts which target major social challenges.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Identify 2-3 focus areas at the department with a view to helping to meet major challenges, for instance in the areas known as "globalisation and multi-culturalism", "social cohesion" and "information and communication technology in the 21st century"
- Establish task forces which can draw up specifically targeted applications in the department's focus areas for programmes such as Horizon 2020, Marie Curie and the ERC
- Focus on the potential for entering into major cross-disciplinary research applications when recruiting new members of staff
- Increase its participation in international consulting and assessment panels

### Attracting more external funding

*The Department of Aesthetics and Communication is the framework for a large portfolio of degree programmes constituting its major source of income. This one-dimensional income exerts pressure on the department's research resources. To create a better balance between its income from education and research respectively, the department wishes to attract greater external research funding. The ambition is to achieve this goal partly by obtaining more funding in national competition, and partly by focusing on applications in the EU system.*

### Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will

- Continue to improve its application efforts based on the research groups formed under the auspices of the research programmes
- Assure the quality of its applications by carrying out internal peer-review procedures, improving contact with the research support unit, and following up on all unsuccessful applications
- Identify and actively exploit the potential for applications arising from the formation of the Danish Innovation Fund as well as applications to private funds
- Play an active role in establishing international consortiums with a view to participating in applications for Horizon 2020 (for instance) and supporting selected projects with a view to submitting applications in prioritised research areas
- Identify potential applicants for the ERC and support the submission of applications
- Ensure good administrative support for applicants



PHOTO: CAMI

# EDUCATION

Taking a university education is in particular a question of actively acquiring the latest knowledge with a view to gaining relevant competences that generate value. So it is vital that the department's degree programmes are based on updated research in the respective subject areas, that they are conducted using inspiring and inclusive forms of teaching requiring the independent and reflective acquisition of material, and that they demonstrate a strong sense of social commitment. The objective of the department's educational strategy is to provide graduates with sound subject knowledge and competences focusing on action, equipping them to behave professionally on an increasingly globalised labour market, as well as giving them the opportunity to make a critical, constructive and innovative contribution to social development.

## POINT OF DEPARTURE

The department's degree programmes are soundly based in strong research environments; and thanks to its broad subject range the department has good opportunities to create and develop new links between areas of knowledge as well as further cross-disciplinary cooperation for the degree programmes offered. The department is home to many subject environments which have great experience when it comes to developing practice-focused, entrepreneurial and inclusive forms of teaching in close contact with the students. However, the department needs to continuously consider its overall educational profile with a view to meeting contemporary needs for insight into the cultural developments which influence the way we perceive ourselves. Not least, it is necessary to strengthen the department's international degree programmes and educational elements, because the high educational quality of the department equips it to attract far more strong students from abroad, and because conducting more degree programmes in an inter-cultural learning space will improve the ability of all the students to succeed in a globalised world. In this connection, there is a need to increase the number of students on exchange.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### **Developing the quality of the department's degree programmes in accordance with the highest international standards**

*The department wishes to continue to develop the quality of its degree programmes in close dialogue with the students. In terms of content, quality involves ensuring a research base and relevance; but quality is also about good educational practice and the organisation of didactically well-structured degree programmes and courses. So in addition to ensuring the research base and social relevance of the educational profile of its degree programmes, the department wishes to support and develop inclusive forms of teaching with high study intensity.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Ensure research coverage for the department's portfolio of degree programmes
- Strengthen student learning processes by the greatest possible inclusion in research and research-like projects
- Structure the degree programmes with a view to optimising their study intensity and reducing delays and drop-out rates
- Continue to develop new forms of teaching, including IT-supported teaching, helping to create an inspiring study environment with the focus on learning which also helps to promote the digital competences of the students
- Provide the department's teachers with opportunities for educational and didactic competence development
- Improve the existing quality assurance and development procedures with a view to ensuring that the degree programmes always have the highest possible quality
- Bench mark the degree programmes on an ongoing basis with a view to spreading best practice in the area of education

### **Producing graduates with strong competences**

*The department wishes to produce graduates who have a strong subject base as well as good competences for taking action, including entrepreneurial, communicative and analytical competences. The goal is to produce graduates who can act flexibly with a view to generating value within a new labour market which is characterised by great width and mobility. As a result, the department wishes to offer degree programmes based on dynamic subject environments with a view to meeting current demands in both the private and public sectors and civil society, ensuring the action dimension in its degree programmes, and developing new cross-disciplinary degree programmes.*



PHOTO: ROAR LAVA PÅSKE

**Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Assess the learning goals of its existing degree programmes on an ongoing basis with a view to ensuring that these degree programmes always live up to society's need for humanistic knowledge and critical reflection
- Develop the specialisations that lie behind its degree programmes on an ongoing basis and ensure the link between research developments and the content of its degree programmes
- Improve the ability of its graduates to succeed in a globalised world by establishing inter-cultural spaces for learning based on an increased range of courses conducted in English
- Ensure that its degree programmes make it possible to convert insight into historical, cultural, media-related and linguistic issues into concrete action
- Ensure that all the students have the opportunity to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to their studies
- Develop new cross-disciplinary degree programmes in collaboration with other subject environments at the Faculty of Arts and Aarhus University

**Offering degree programmes that attract the best students from Denmark and abroad**

*The department wishes its degree programmes to be an attractive first choice for the best students from Denmark and abroad. So the ambition is to be known as a place where the greatest talents face outstanding challenges. Attractive courses, programme modules and entire degree programmes conducted in English are an important prerequisite for international mobility, so the department will keep a main focus on this area. In particular, the task involves creating entire Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, including joint and double degree programmes, in collaboration with strong international partners. Finally, the department wishes to create a study environment in which international exchanges form a natural part of any course of study.*

**Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Give the most talented students special opportunities, for instance for participating in research activities under the auspices of the department's research programmes
- Develop new international Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes and internationalise particularly suitable degree programmes and programme elements
- Develop cooperation with strong international partners regarding the creation of joint and double degrees
- Ensure good frameworks for and remove potential obstacles to Danish students studying abroad
- Use international networks as a platform for the recruitment of students from abroad
- Actively include visiting scholars in the teaching and use relevant teacher mobility schemes



# TALENT DEVELOPMENT

A regular intake of talents is not only a necessary prerequisite for the development of the department's research, but also the foundation needed to provide a highly educated workforce for all sectors of society. For these reasons, talent development is an important dimension in the department's strategy, and the objective is that the department should contribute to the faculty's PhD programme by creating talent development at the highest international level as well as recruiting excellent research talents from Denmark and abroad and supporting their degree programmes by integrating them into the department's research environments.

## POINT OF DEPARTURE

The establishment of the Graduate School of Arts has created a good point of departure for working with the faculty's PhD programme in future. The department can contribute by integrating its PhD programme and student researchers better at departmental level, by assuring the quality of the courses offered, by using its many international networks with a view to optimising the recruitment of talents, and by making a career in research a possible target for the students by focusing on talent development at an early stage.

PHOTO: JESPER RAIS





## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### **Offering talent development at the highest international level**

*The department wishes to contribute to the quality development of the faculty's PhD programme by integrating the PhD programme more thoroughly at the department, by entering into strategic international partnerships for the development of PhD courses, by making study periods abroad a natural feature of the PhD course, and by working in a carefully targeted manner on the quality of its supervision.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Integrate the development, completion and quality assurance of relevant PhD courses into its ordinary educational activities
- Ensure that its PhD programme activities take place on the best possible organisational platform
- Develop PhD courses in cooperation with the department's international partners
- Develop a culture of internationalisation among the PhD students with a view to turning a lengthy period of study abroad into a natural feature of the PhD programme and supporting the opportunities of the PhD students for gaining support for study periods abroad
- Ensure that the department's PhD supervisors possess the required supervision competence

### **Recruiting, developing and retaining excellent research talents**

*The department wishes to recruit the best research talents. So the ambition is to improve the attraction of PhD students from both Denmark and abroad. This ambition will be achieved by providing early supervision for potential applicants, using international networks as a platform for attracting applicants, supervising PhD students about opportunities for applying for postdoc grants, focusing on the integration of young researchers, and creating equal opportunities for all applicants.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Increase the efforts made to recruit young, talented researchers not only from among the department's students but also nationally and internationally via research networks
- Include non-Danish PhD fellows from the respective research networks in research applications
- Improve supervision for potential applicants, not least applicants from outside Denmark who are not familiar with the Danish system, and improve the support provided for supervisors
- Remain particularly aware of the importance of supervision for talented women who are hesitant with regard to pursuing a career in research
- Ensure the integration of PhD students in the other research and education activities of the department
- Provide career guidance for PhD students, including advising them about opportunities for applying for postdoc grants

### **Offering talent development at Bachelor's degree level**

*With a view to creating a pool of talent at PhD level, it is important to start working with talent at an early stage. So the department wishes to focus in particular on talented students from Bachelor's degree level and up.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Test various opportunities for developing talent at an early stage, including the experiences of the Danish upper-secondary schools in this respect
  - Invite specially qualified students to take part in specific research activities, colloquiums, seminars and conferences organised by the department's PhD programmes and units
  - Offer students with particular talents the chance to participate in PhD programmes and master classes under the auspices of the PhD programme
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# KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The university's knowledge is a major resource for society which should benefit both civil society and the private and public sectors. It is vital that the large amount of knowledge about culture, language, media, art, information technology, innovation processes and other areas possessed by the department's researchers is not only made available to society via the department's graduates, but also communicated directly in the form of knowledge exchange. So the department aims to intensify these activities by entering into binding partnerships with the business community and government agencies and institutions regarding research and development projects, developing and targeting its efforts in further and continuing education, and contributing to positive social development by interacting directly with civil society and presenting its research in an enthusiastic manner.

## POINT OF DEPARTURE

The department's subject environments have a long tradition of knowledge exchange, and the department's researchers contribute their knowledge in a wide range of areas, for instance in projects such as "Smart City". A number of researchers also cooperate with institutions of culture and the creative industry. The two centres at Aarhus University called the Danish Centre for Culture and Learning (DCL) and the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI) constitute an organisational platform which provides opportunities for professionalising efforts in the field of knowledge exchange. In particular, the department has good potential for generating mutual benefits by developing its relations with upper-secondary schools, university colleges, the culture sector and the parts of the business community that deal with innovation, IT and the media.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### **Intensifying cooperation with the business community and the public sector**

*The department wishes to strengthen its cooperation with companies and public institutions by exploring opportunities for cooperation regarding research for the benefit of both parties, by participating in the development of business models that ensure the profitability of these activities, and by intensifying its exploration of the potential for creating joint PhD projects.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Create new research and development projects with a specific point of departure in the business community and public sector in cooperation with the DCL
- Take part in the development of profitable business models for knowledge exchange alongside the DCL, and develop additional innovation projects alongside the CEI
- Intensify efforts to cooperate regarding vocational PhD projects
- Increase efforts to attract vocational PhDs to the department

### **Consolidating and expanding the university's independent consultancy services for the public sector**

*The Department of Aesthetics and Communication has not served the public sector in this way to any great extent, but its researchers possess a range of competences which can be useful in this respect. In particular, this involves areas such as the use of IT across different sectors and the education/culture sector. The department wishes to fulfil its potential by focusing on its opportunities and including public-sector consultancy as a natural feature of the portfolio of its academic staff.*

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Work proactively to draw attention to the department's competences among relevant authorities and sectors, for instance by using the department's employer panel more actively
- Regard public-sector consultancy as an activity on the same level as research and teaching

### **Improving its range of continuing and further education programmes**

*The department wishes to help to achieve the ideal of lifelong learning. So the department must always have a sensible portfolio of continuing and further education programmes which live up to the ongoing needs of society for competence development.*



**Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Regularly assess its range of continuing and further education programmes in terms of the needs of society, development potentials and profitability
- Revise existing and develop new Master's degree programmes based on analyses of the current need for continuing and further education in society
- Create specific courses for specific target groups
- Initiate cooperation with other educational institutions regarding joint courses

**Strengthening its contribution to the development of civil society**

*The department wishes to make a positive contribution to social development by continuing to use its research within all the many fields covered by the department in the public debate and supplying enthusiastic and inspiring research presentations of high quality to organisations, associations and institutions.*

**Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Support opportunities for its researchers to take part in the public debate in newspapers and electronic media
- Continue the considerable work involved in giving lectures and other communication activities
- Cooperate actively with organisations and civil society institutions regarding relevant research



PHOTO: CAMI



## REQUIREMENTS

One vital premise for achieving the department's strategy is that the frameworks for development work are as good as they can be. So the establishment of such frameworks is an important part of the department's strategy work. The goal of the department in this area is that the frameworks should support the main activities as well as possible, and that they should be perceived as a natural and cohesive basis for an inspiring workplace. The department wishes to achieve this goal by creating a good working environment for both staff and students based on mutual trust and appreciation, developing a sustainable organisation of the department, ensuring good working conditions, developing good relationships with the students, contributing to the reorganisation of administrative support, and ensuring the financial foundation of the department's core activities.

## POINT OF DEPARTURE

The department is still finding its feet after the huge process of reorganisation that has taken place at Aarhus University. Work still needs to be done on improving the organisational frameworks and administrative procedures, and the sphere for academic debate needs to be developed with a view to achieving good communicative feedback structures. Owing to the rapid changes in the conditions facing the university's activities, it is also vital to make it possible to develop the competences of the department's employees and ensure the financial foundation on which our core activities rest. Based on this point of departure, the ambition must involve ensuring good frameworks for an inspiring working environment.

### **Consequently, the Department of Aesthetics and Communication will**

- Develop the physical and psychological working environment with the focus on participating in the decision-making processes, reducing the current level of stress, and ensuring good cooperative relationships based on trust and appreciation
- Develop a flourishing departmental organisation with particular focus on the profile and spheres of action of individual subject specialisations, clear staff management, and a sphere for academic debate based on good communicative feedback loops
- Clearly identify work functions and task portfolios
- Ensure good opportunities for competence development for all the department's employees
- Work to make long-term planning possible with a view to ensuring cohesive time for research and a fair distribution of working tasks
- Help to identify career pathways and work to create a better gender balance at the department
- Develop the tradition for good dialogue with the students in connection with vital decisions about education and their implementation
- Help to develop a cohesive administration with clear access points for the department's staff
- Work to create a good financial foundation for the core activities by focusing on profitability and potential increases in sources of income





