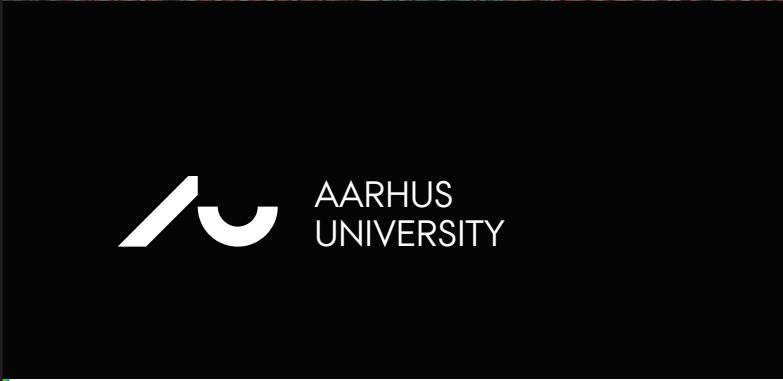




Strategy 2014-2020

Department of Culture and Society

Aarhus University



AARHUS
UNIVERSITY

THE STRATEGY

In recent years the relationship between cultural studies and society has been changing fast. Society used to be interested primarily in specialised competences related to languages or specific periods or topics, for instance. But these days the labour market for graduates of the humanities and theology is much broader, with graduates increasingly being expected to join and contribute to cross-disciplinary contexts as well.

The competences required for cultural analysis are in great demand – also in many social and economic contexts – and the focus of cultural studies on mankind as a product of culture and history, as a creator of languages and symbols, and as a communicator of knowledge plays a significant role in an increasing number of increasingly complex contexts. Graduates from the Department of Culture and Society already make a major contribution to these contexts, but we must continue to develop our subjects and academic skills so we can help to solve complex social problems in the current political, social and economic context. The department will use this strategy for 2020 to take up this challenge.

Social developments make new demands on cultural studies, but they also offer new opportunities. In terms of research this means that we are now involved in broader research collaboration with other disciplines; with the distinction between basic research and applied research growing smaller, and the links between research and knowledge exchange growing stronger. In terms of education, it means that we need to give the students general analytical and reflective competences anchored in strong expertise, experience of cross-disciplinary cooperation, and a perspective on their qualifications and competences that is focused on useful applications.

The department's strategy is described below in two general categories entitled "Research" and "Education". This is because these two categories constitute the focal point of all the department's activities, representing the central core services to which all our other activities and efforts relate. The categories "Talent" and "Knowledge exchange" are separate sections in the strategies at university and faculty level; but in this departmental strategy they are embedded in the sections about research and education respectively, with a view to linking specific activities to the concrete academic and managerial contexts in which they are most relevant. In the same way, the department's strategies for Educational IT and Internationalisation are integrated into the general categories because they are regarded as areas of activity which are designed to support and develop research and education activities respectively. The strategy focuses on the areas of activity to which the department will give special priority in the next seven years. The strategic objectives should be regarded as general indicators of the work of the department; while concrete goals, means and timetables for the development and implementation of individual activities will be identified in the regular plans of action associated with the strategy. In extension of the sections on research and education, which deal primarily with the development and prioritisation of the department's existing activities, there is a section entitled "Academic development areas". This section underlines a range of academic areas which the department believes have great potential for the (further) development and intensification of its activities, areas in which strategic priorities over the next seven years can sharpen the department's profile.

The department is already characterised by a range of effective and respected research and education activities. So the strategic areas of activity originate in (and build on) the department's existing activities, and should not be regarded in isolation. Behind the strategic objectives as well as the department's general work, there is a strong wish to ensure:

- Continued academic development and quality assurance of the department's activities and degree programmes
- Continued assurance of and priorities for the research freedom and creativity of individual members of staff
- An organisation in which new ideas and initiatives are given the space and time to develop from our subject environments and play an equal part alongside management initiatives and demands and initiatives defined from outside the department

RESEARCH

The Department of Culture and Society has a strong research profile, and the department's research programmes constitute a strong and significant point of departure for the focus of its strategic research work. The department is characterised by its internationally respected research environments, its success in attracting national research funding, and a pattern of publication featuring both high-ranking international journals and national publications focusing on communication.

In future the department wants to make a distinct, focused effort to support research and subject environments that might benefit from special measures to increase the number of international publications and externally financed research activities with a view to developing a more international profile.

Parallel to a greater focus on internationalisation, the department will continue to give high priority to applying its research-based knowledge in a national context, for instance by contributing to the public debate about both historical and current social issues.

One special priority at the department will involve increasing the academic cooperation between the department's many related academic areas and fields of interest. As it heads towards 2020, the department wishes not least to give top priority to research creativity and cross-disciplinary synergy.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strengthening the department's international profile and impact

The Department of Culture and Society wants to supplement its many national research projects with more international projects in cooperation with others. A number of researchers at the department already have an international profile which qualifies them to take part in major EU applications and other similar initiatives. So one of the goals is to make a distinct strategic effort to support researchers who want to be the main applicants for international projects, as well as researchers who are still developing an international profile.

Consequently, the department will

- Prioritise academically relevant international cooperation agreements and exploit the strategic partnership agreements entered into by AU with a view to forming strong international networks of researchers
- Support the participation of its researchers in regional and international consortiums with a view to optimising their opportunities to take part in and lead international research projects
- Strengthen research at the highest level by applying a proactive professorship policy
- Increase the incoming and outgoing mobility of researchers at the department
- Support the participation of its researchers in editorial work at respected international journals
- Ensure the necessary departmental support and incentive structure in relation to working with international research applications
- Increase its proportion of international level 2 publications

Giving high priority to social commitment and dialogue with the world around us

The research carried out at the Department of Culture and Society is largely characterised by its foundation in society, and the department attaches importance to the fact that this research also contributes to social development and the solution of current social challenges. As a result, in future the department wishes to consolidate and expand its established knowledge-exchange activities with the world around us, as well as strengthening its cooperation with institutions of culture, private foundations, and partners from organisations and the business community.

Consequently, the department will

- Increase the proportion of external partners associated with the department
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- Increase the extent of the services it provides for the authorities when this is relevant in terms of research generation and development
- Ensure and draw attention to the importance of research communication and participation in the public debate as an important element in the work of individuals and the department
- Work actively to support interaction and cooperation between PhD students and junior researchers and both private and public players
- Make the department's research available to external parties through supplementary and further education activities for the benefit of both social development and ongoing research development

Strengthening and developing the potential for academic synergy and interdisciplinary cooperation at the department

Interdisciplinary cooperation creates academic dynamism both in and between academic environments. And most of the cultural and social problems to whose solution modern universities are expected to contribute are best solved in cooperation between several subject disciplines. So the Department of Culture and Society wishes to support and encourage cross-disciplinary synergy at university, faculty and department level – as well as in individual research programmes.

Consequently, the department will

- Ensure the dynamic organisation of its research to permit development, exchange and cooperation between different subject areas thanks to the ongoing revision and (new) development of research programmes and units
- Support and develop interdisciplinary exchange in and between its research programmes
- Establish an interdisciplinary and academically focused forum across the boundaries between its research programmes and subject environments, with the focus on innovative, forward-looking strategic departmental efforts and the deliberate inclusion of the department's junior researchers
- Establish a high-profile and annual open series of departmental lectures with the focus on the future challenges facing research into cultural studies





Photo: Moesgård Photo and Media Laboratory, Rikke Grøn Larsson

Stimulating and supporting creativity in research among individuals and groups of researchers

The department expects a high academic level from all its staff, and also wishes to support staff retention and development efforts. Research depends on having the time for in-depth study – both individually and collectively. So the department's goal is to stimulate free research in its subject environments and create the best frameworks and opportunities for good research ideas and projects.

Consequently, the department will

- Seek to ensure that the organisation of research and teaching tasks increasingly allows for the long-term planning of continuous periods for working on major projects and publications and planning international project applications
- Create the space needed for innovation and creativity by exploiting the university's opportunities for research visits at home and abroad
- Maintain and develop an open, dialogue-based and creative research environment both in and between its respective academic areas

Increasing the focus on cultivating talent and strengthening the organisational frameworks for the department's junior researchers

Assistant professors, postdocs and PhD students are the department's future, and are vital in any innovative and dynamic research environment. It is only possible to supply top-level research and education if we recruit and retain the best talents within the department's research and education areas. The Department of Culture and Society wants to be an attractive environment for the best Danish and international talents within its subject areas.

Consequently, the department will

- Develop and strengthen cooperation between the director of studies, heads of section, research programme directors and PhD programme directors with a view to creating clear frameworks and objectives for the PhD degree programme
- Work towards the increased integration of PhD students and postdocs in its research and education environments
- Collaborate with the research programme directors and PhD programme directors to prioritise individual career guidance; as well as using the career guidance resources of the Faculty of Arts and AU for more formalised and focused processes of career strategy for the department's PhD students and postdocs, also with a view to continuing their careers outside the university
- Ensure that the department's PhD students and postdocs are internationally competitive, thanks in part to greater focus on international exchange, the development of international networks and the focused guidance of individuals with regard to a publication strategy even while they are still working on their PhD degree programmes
- Work towards a greater degree of internationalisation of the activities of the research programmes with a view to integrating the participation of the department's international researchers and talents in the academic dialogue at the department
- Develop the department's recruitment practice with a view to ensuring the recruitment of the best candidates both nationally and internationally

EDUCATION

The department's portfolio of degree programmes has a wide scope, but is strongly linked by a range of research and interest groups from across the department's subject areas. This gives the department plenty of opportunity to support and develop academic cooperation across the range of its degree programmes for both academic and resource-related reasons.

Thanks to the experience gained in its international Master's degree programmes, the department also has a sound point of departure for internationalising its existing degree programmes and taking new initiatives in this area. The educational experiences gained on the department's international degree programmes form a central knowledge base for the further development of international study and learning environments at the department.

The volume of students on the department's degree programmes varies a good deal, reflecting fixed admission quotas or the interests of students and employers. However, for reasons related to both resources and quality, there is a need to increase the intake on the department's smallest degree programmes – particularly at Master's level – and/or to reinvent the way these programmes cooperate with related programmes not only at the department, but also across departments, faculties and institutions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Converting academic synergies and activities into relevant and innovative educational activities

The department wants to exploit the potential for cross-disciplinary cooperation in educational areas in which such cooperation can contribute to increased quality and study intensity and the improved exploitation of resources. Further development of cross-disciplinary cooperation is an obvious step to take in connection with the development of new educational initiatives, but can also be seen as a tool for the quality assurance and development of the department's existing programmes.

Consequently, the department will

- Optimise the use of teaching resources across the department's existing degree programmes
- Increase and develop the department's contribution to cross-disciplinary educational activities at the Faculty of Arts
- Develop new educational initiatives within a range of the department's subject areas



Photo: AU Communication, Jesper Rais

Supporting and developing the internationalisation of the department's degree programmes, educational approach and study environment(s)

In the field of education, internationalisation contains a considerable growth potential for the department. In addition, increasing the focus on internationalisation will help to show that the department's educational and study environments are attractive and respected subject environments for both researchers and students.

Consequently, the department will

- Increase the number of international full-degree students on the department's existing and future degree programmes
- Strengthen and support both incoming and outgoing mobility through formalised and attractive exchange and partner agreements with relevant universities outside Denmark
- Explore the potential for converting some existing degree programmes or lines of study into programmes conducted in English
- Establish a cross-disciplinary network for staff on the department's international degree programmes
- Launch pilot projects in the field of IT-based course and teaching formats, preferably involving international cooperation
- Contribute to the establishment of a strong and cohesive international study environment at the department

Assuring and developing the quality, relevance and financial sustainability of the department's Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes

The department's Master's degree programmes are highly specialised and academically well founded; but they vary in terms of student volume and the extent to which they attract attention on the education market. Focused, strategic efforts in relation to these programmes will help to maintain and develop their current high level, as well as helping to make the department's smallest programmes more attractive and sustainable.

Consequently, the department will

- Increase student admission on the department's smallest degree programmes
- Strengthen the links and interchanges between the department's Master's degree programmes, research programmes and research units
- Develop teaching collaboration across related degree programmes not only locally, but also nationally and internationally
- Analyse the potential for and implement relevant measures in relation to honours programmes within the department's degree programmes
- Reduce drop-out rates and degree-completion times on the department's degree programmes by adopting qualitative measures
- Increase its focus on forms of teaching, study intensity and the study environment, including the use of IT-supported activities
- Enter into active cooperation with the department's two employer panels with a view to increasing the focus on the future employment situation of graduates
- Strengthen its contact with existing and potential labour markets for graduates, and integrate input from them in the ongoing development and quality assurance of its degree programmes

Strengthening the recognition of excellent teaching, teaching development and educational efforts

The point of departure for a good education and study environment and the work involved in educational quality at all levels is the encounter between teachers and students. An increased focus on teaching and related development efforts will help to increase study intensity and quality in the degree programmes, attract more students who are (even) more dedicated, and form the basis for increased academic sparring and educational development among all the department's staff.

Consequently, the department will

- Give high priority to ensuring that the department's teachers get the opportunity to develop their educational competences and enter into educational partnerships and projects at department, faculty and university level
 - Continue to support the development of new forms and formats of teaching that promote study activity at both Bachelor's and
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Master's level

- Launch pilot projects in IT-based forms of teaching and learning in specially selected parts of degree programmes when this is deemed to be financially sustainable and when it generates as much experience and perspective as possible
- Attach importance (in both word and deed) to teaching competences and commitment when recruiting new members of staff

Strengthening knowledge exchange in the field of education

The department has a range of effective placement and thesis partnerships with companies, organisations and public institutions, making it possible to establish a dialogue with the labour market for which its graduates are qualified.

By strengthening its contact and cooperation with graduates and alumni, the department wants to expand and use this network even more.

Consequently, the department will

- Identify and systematise its work with the alumnus network and contact with graduates of all the department's degree programmes with a view to supporting these activities in cooperation with AU Alumni
- Retain and expand contact with placement hosts and other external partners associated with the teaching at the department to improve and evaluate placements as part of a modern university education
- Include relevant visiting teachers in teaching contexts, in which they can help to add perspective and current relevance to knowledge, learning and communication
- Launch the task of identifying potential supplementary and further education initiatives across the subject environments with a view to making joint efforts in this area
- Ensure the integration of career guidance at the relevant level in connection with introductory events and other similar events in cooperation with AU Career and subject-specific study guidance



Photo: AU Communication, Roar Paaske

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The strategic focus areas outlined above are associated to a large extent with the organisation, prioritisation and development of existing activities. The expectation is that these areas of focus will lead to a general boost in the department's academic profile, cohesion and financial freedom, thereby contributing to the continuing academic development of the department. A good research environment is dynamic and creative. At the Department of Culture and Society there must be (and there will be) room for new, unforeseen research and education initiatives between now and 2020; but it is already possible to indicate a range of specific academic areas which can be developed in the upcoming strategy period.

In particular, the department wants to develop research activities and any related educational initiatives within the following areas:

- Current and future area studies
- Perspectives of the humanities on cultural and social change
- Health research in the humanities
- Scientific perspectives and approaches in the humanities
- Cultural studies research into the climate and environment
- Ethics, technology and sociality
- Digital development within cultural studies



Photo: Jørgen Weber

