

# ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

2023-2028

INSTITUT FOR KOMMUNIKATION OG KULTUR

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SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE  
AARHUS UNIVERSITY



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## 1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document replaces and combines previous framework documents, guidelines and policies relating to the organisation of research at the School of Communication and Culture, as well as providing a single presentation of the way in which the school organises its research – including central elements and stakeholders.

The document has been developed following the broad involvement of heads of department, programme directors, centre directors, the school forum and staff from across the school. Central elements of the previous organisational structure will continue, but a number of new elements are also introduced based on the experiences and ideas expressed during the process of involvement. The various forms of input have been specified and incorporated into the document by an internal working group consisting of seven members representing the school's organisational and academic scope: Lise Skytte Jakobsen, Stefan Kjerkegaard, Søren Pold, Sten Vikner, Anne Marit Waade, Peter Boenisch and Merete Birkelund. The work done by the group has been planned and supported by Carsten Stage and Pernille Roholt.

The document addresses and proposes remedies for a range of specific challenges relating to the way in which the school's research has been organised until now, while seeking to preserve the strengths and effective elements of previous practice. These challenges include: the often minimum level of coordination and interaction between departments, programmes and centres; unclear expectations regarding the work of the research programmes and research programme directors; the vague status of research centres in the organisation of the school's research; a lack of recruitment and evaluation procedures for the school's research programmes; a lack of systematic processes for competence development and feedback in relation to the work involved in research applications; insufficient focus on junior researchers; and difficulties in relation to taking and supporting strategic initiatives at school level.

These issues are dealt with in this proposed revision of the way in which the school's research is organised. One example of these revisions is the introduction of a more detailed description of the function of the research programme directors which identifies their responsibilities and obligations in relation to programme members – including young colleagues and junior researchers – while seeking to strengthen the collaborative interfaces between departments, programmes and centres.

One of the main objectives involves helping researchers to organise themselves in a way which is perceived as relevant and meaningful, and which contributes to the school's overall development and cohesion. In extension of this point, the organisation described here should be regarded as a pragmatic compromise which seeks to ensure a balance between transparency and flexibility, between mono-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary wishes, and between consideration of the freedom of individual researchers/departments and the need for strategic management of the school's research.

The new research structure will apply until December 2028. Before the end of this period, the research structure will be evaluated with a view to making any necessary adaptations and amendments.

Best wishes,

Unni From, head of school

Carsten Stage, deputy head of school for research and external collaboration

## 2. AMBITIONS AND BASIC ELEMENTS

The way in which research is organised at the School of Communication and Culture will support

- The freedom, diversity, quality and impact of the school's research.
- The active management of the school's researchers, including feedback at all career stages – for instance in relation to publications, applications and career planning.
- The wellbeing of our researchers, by promoting opportunities for joining meaningful and cohesive working/ research communities with both national and international dimensions.
- Opportunities for the dynamic development of both mono- and cross-disciplinary research environments with both local and external partners.
- Effective, transparent and flexible collaborative interfaces in relation to research at the school.
- Opportunities for the representation of researchers and research environments on relevant committees at the school.
- The achievement of the school's research objectives, as they are described in the school strategy.
- The ability to make priorities in relation to current research agendas and research policy agendas.

The way the school is organised is based on four core elements which are described in turn below:

- research programmes
- research units
- research centres
- a research committee

This structure is supported and developed by the deputy head of school for research and the school's research consultant. In collaboration with the research consultant and research programmes, the deputy head of school will take the initiative to launch relevant, cross-disciplinary activities such as workshops designed for junior researchers and an annual seminar involving research programme directors and heads of department. They will also offer opportunities for feedback and meetings to welcome the school's researchers.

## 3. RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

The main goal of the research programmes is to help the school's researchers and research to flourish and develop in extension of the general ambitions regarding the way in which the school's research is organised (cf. section 2). The research programmes can take their point of departure in one or more departments or academic fields and issues (for instance).

The school is also involved in cross-disciplinary programmes at faculty level which are initiated and monitored by the faculty management team. The school's PhD students are organised in a series of PhD programmes which are designed for them, but are also encouraged to become members of research programmes with a view to developing their academic network at the school.

### 3.1 Applications and evaluations

The research programmes are established for a three-year period and are approved by the head of school based on a programme application containing specific objectives and criteria for success for the programme concerned and interaction with the school's general objectives (as described in section 2 and in the school strategy).

The school forum and school management team advise the head of school with regard to the establishment of programmes and the composition of a research committee.

Before the programme period expires, each research programme must submit a written evaluation of the work done by the programme during the period concerned. The programme will be evaluated on the basis of the work it has done to help achieve the school's general objectives and the criteria for success that the programme has identified in its application. These programme evaluations are supplemented by a joint, school-based questionnaire whose purpose is to include the perspective of the programme members.

Evaluations are processed by the school forum, research committee and school management team, after which the final decision regarding the establishment of a programme will be made by the head of school. In connection with the evaluation, it is possible to re-apply for programme status if relevant.

### 3.2 Framework and finances of research programmes

With a view to ensuring equal and fair access to information, resources, feedback and organisational representation, the school recommends that all its researchers should be members of a research programme.

It is possible to be a primary member of one programme and a secondary member of other programmes. Researchers wishing to become members of a research programme should contact the programme director concerned.

The research programmes consist of at least 20 and no more than about 55 primary members. There may also be a number of secondary members. The goal is to ensure that the number of programmes does not prevent the research committee from functioning effectively, and that the programmes are not too big and difficult to manage. The members are school staff in the categories PhD, postdoc, (teaching) assistant professor, (teaching) associate professor and professor. In certain circumstances, the head of school may choose to

ignore the demand for a minimum number of participants in a programme. In such cases, small programmes are advised to share the same representative in the research committee.

Programmes must allow both open, joint activities and more limited activities for specific units.

All the school's programmes receive an amount based on their number of primary members. This amount is used to provide regular, practical support for research activities.

### 3.3 Research programme directors

Once a programme application has been approved, all tenured members of the programme concerned can announce their interest in becoming its director. Joint applications may be submitted by researchers who wish to share the role of programme director, for instance in order to ensure that different departments or locations are represented in the programme management. The application process and assessment criteria are defined in an invitation from the head of school.

Based on the applications that are submitted and the CVs of the candidates, the head of school decides who should be appointed as the research programme director(s).

Research programme directors are appointed for a three-year period and refer to the relevant head of department in connection with HR issues, and to the head of school when academic issues are involved.

In order to ensure the dynamism and flexibility of the system, research programme directors can normally retain their position for two periods. If a programme director wishes to stop before the end of a period, the head of school will make a call for expressions of interest for a new program director amongst the research programme members.

[The research programme director](#) manages the research programme, a task which consists of:

- Leading and establishing a strong research environment and working community by motivating and inspiring the members of the programme, for instance by arranging writing retreats, research seminars and knowledge-exchange activities helping to raise awareness of the research done by the programme members.
- Contributing to the wellbeing of the researchers and opportunities to join meaningful academic communities, collective exchanges and innovative collaborations.
- Introducing new members of staff to the research programme, offering them the chance to discuss the ways in which the programme can support the research done by the staff concerned.
- Establishing and updating the programme's website and communicating with members about the activities of the programme.
- Supporting the programme's junior researchers with targeted initiatives.
- Ensuring internal knowledge exchange and development in the programme by arranging an annual meeting with the leaders of the centres and units involved in the programme.
- Taking responsibility (in cooperation with the research programme's units, centres and members) for drawing up research objectives and plans in accordance with the school's research strategy and the needs of the members.

- Developing and supporting relevant interactions between departments and research programmes.
- Supporting the ongoing, explorative task of giving feedback and performing reviews in connection with the quality assurance of research applications from school staff.
- Taking part in and contributing to initiatives relating to the school strategy (career and application workshops, for instance).
- Contributing to the school's research committee, which advises the head of school in all issues relating to research.
- Ensuring that programme funding is used as well as possible and in accordance with the guidelines.
- Providing information about potential candidates among the research programme's members for awards (or the membership of councils and committees)..

The research programme director is not responsible for monitoring the research done by members of the programme. This task is performed by the head of school.

### 3.4 Interfaces between departments and programmes

It is vital that the school's departments and research programmes work together to support the school's research. The heads of department and research programme directors share responsibility for maintaining these joint efforts. Among other things, this means that:

- The heads of department can include the relevant research programme director in connection with welcoming new staff and conducting other forms of staff development dialogues (with junior researchers, for instance).
- The programmes can include the heads of department in connection with planning and conducting seminars, strategic initiatives and activities if this may benefit the programme and/or department concerned.
- The heads of department and relevant programme directors can meet before staff development dialogues are conducted to discuss the overall strategic status and potentials of research at the department. These meetings will be arranged by the research consultant. The research programme directors can also be included after staff development dialogues are conducted with researchers who need various kinds of support (feedback regarding the way their research plan is worded, for instance).
- In collaboration with the heads of department, the programme directors can plan formats for knowledge sharing regarding programme activities in the departments, for instance in connection with staff meetings or department seminars.
- The departments are welcome to establish a research council in which the head of department, relevant programme director(s) and a selection of the department's senior researchers meet to discuss the development of the department in terms of research strategy. These meetings can be convened jointly by the head of department and research programme director(s) concerned.

## 4. RESEARCH UNITS

Research units focusing on specific themes can be established under the research programmes. These units are dynamic working communities which can be established quickly and (unlike centres) without involving the school's committee. The aim is to make it easy for a group of researchers wishing to join a collective initiative to organise themselves in a research unit under a programme.

These research units can apply for funding for their activities via the research programme with which they are affiliated.

Such units can be set up by arrangement with the programme director. Their size depends on what the researchers deem to be suitable and academically justifiable. The units must be presented on the websites of the research programmes to which they are affiliated.

Each unit appoints its own coordinator.

The lifetime of these units has not been defined, but their level of activity will be evaluated by the programmes as part of the overall programme evaluation process. Units can be discontinued on the joint initiative of the unit manager and programme director if they have been inactive for a lengthy period of time.

## 5. RESEARCH CENTRES

School staff are welcome to propose that centres should be established. Research centres at the school form the framework for a group of researchers with a clear focus on a specific research area and a clear, proven need for a strong external profile. It is possible to collaborate across different schools/faculties.

Here are some examples of the activities carried out by research centres: joint publishing, collaborating and developing applications, inviting visiting professors, PhD courses, workshops, conferences, and sharing knowledge with society.

### 5.1 Applications and evaluations

- Applications for the establishment of new centres can be submitted each year and should be sent to the research consultant. The appropriate application form must be used, and applications (including appendices) must be no more than eight pages long. Research centres are set up for a four-year period.
- Applications will be discussed by the research committee, the school management team and the school forum, after which the head of school will make the final decision.
- Centres involving collaboration agreements with parties from outside the Faculty of Arts are subject to the approval of the dean or rector.
- In order to prevent initiatives from overlapping, the head of school must consult the other schools (to discuss the name of the centre, for instance).
- The school will inform the faculty of decisions to establish new school-based research centres.
- Research centres will be evaluated after four years. This evaluation will be performed by the research committee and the programme director responsible. Centres can be discontinued on the joint initiative of the centre director and programme director if they have been inactive for a lengthy period of time.
- At the end of the four-year period, research centres can re-apply for centre status. When re-applications for centre status are made, the final decision regarding continuation will be made depending on the evaluation and a separate, new application.

### 5.2 Framework of research centres

- Research centres may involve collaboration between more than one school or department, although they must have an organisational base at one particular school.
- Each centre must have a centre director. As a general rule, each centre director may only be the head of one research centre.
- Centres must always be affiliated with the research programme that is deemed to be the most academically relevant by the centre director. Members of centres are allowed to be primary members of programmes other than the programmes with which their centres are affiliated.
- The programme is the central point of focus for feedback regarding (and the development of) the centre's activities.
- The deputy head of school for research will convene an annual seminar for centre directors to support knowledge sharing and feedback at school level. This seminar may also contribute to the evaluation of the centre's activities.
- Centres may not be places of employment for the staff taking part in their activities. Centre directors at school-based research centres do not have HR responsibilities, but they are in charge of collaboration regarding the centre's research activities.
- The school's research centres must be presented on the school website and may also choose to be presented on the research programme website.
- A website must be created for each centre, and the centre director is responsible for keeping it up to date.

### 5.3 Financial issues

- The school is responsible for the funding of school-based research centres, but funding may also be based on external project funding or similar sources of funding. The approval of school centres does not imply any guarantee of funding or compensation for the hours of work invested in them.
  - Research centres are entitled to submit direct applications for the funding of their activities.
  - Applications for funding for operating costs can be submitted each year. The deadline and guidelines for applications will be announced in the newsletter no later than one month before the deadline.
  - Research centres which are set up in accordance with the school's centre policy can normally achieve funding of no more than DKK 10,000 per annum. Funding is allocated with due consideration for the number of centre participants and the organisational foundation of the activities in question.
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## 6. THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

It is important that the research committee has the right size, enabling it to represent the school's research environments as well as being operationally effective. The research committee consists of the research programme directors, a representative of the heads of department, and a number of PhD programme directors defined by the research committee.

Other representatives can be added to the research committee if the committee deems this to be strategically important for the school.

The core task of the research committee is to contribute to political and strategic discussions relating to the school, and to develop the research programmes through mutual feedback and knowledge sharing. The committee also offers to perform regular reviews of research applications produced by the school's researchers, and contributes to internal qualification processes in relation to specific sources of funding. If this is deemed necessary, initiatives can be launched with a view to developing specific competences among the committee members (reading applications and providing feedback on them, for instance).

The research committee is responsible for organising an annual seminar designed for the school's postdocs and assistant professors. The aim of this seminar is to support these young researchers in their career development and help to boost their profile at the school. An annual seminar will also be held at which research programme directors and heads of department meet.

The school management team is represented on the committee by the head of school and the deputy head of school for research, with the latter being responsible for planning and conducting the meetings. As a general rule, the committee meets once a month.

## 7. BUDGET FRAMEWORK AND FUNDING

The largest share of the school's research resources (basic research funding amounts to about DKK 160 million in the 2022 budget) is invested in salaries and used to fund the research time spent by most of the academic staff. External research funding comes on top of this (about DKK 70 million in 2022). This research time also includes editorial work, participating in conferences and planning, peer reviews, participating in groups of researchers, receiving visiting researchers and drawing up external applications, as well as competence development.

In addition to this research funding, an amount is set aside each year in the budget to facilitate research. Some of this funding is administered primarily by individual researchers (travel funding, for instance). Other funding is distributed at school level with a view to improving research conditions and development and achieving the goals of the school's research strategy.

The way in which research is organised, as described in this document, is funded by the school's basic funding. The budgetary framework is determined each year when the budget for the following year is finalised. In 2022-2023, the school has allocated up to DKK 2 million to support researchers, research programmes and activities aimed at strengthening the school's strategic initiatives.

The budgetary framework – and the way it is divided between pools – is not fixed. The annual amounts stated below are estimates based on consumption in 2022.

### *School research programmes – DKK 1 million*

All the programme members have the opportunity to suggest programme activities or apply for funding for activities conducted under the auspices of the research units.

### *School research pool – support for research initiatives – DKK 400,000*

Applications are welcome from all assistant professors, associate professors and professors submitting major applications (ERC, Sapere Aude or the Danish National Research Foundation, for instance). The school management team can also use this pool to support specific groups of researchers which have the potential to produce strong applications for a basic research centre.

### *School research pool – support for strategic collaboration projects – DKK 150,000*

Applications are welcome from all assistant professors, associate professors and professors applying for national or international grants requiring collaboration with external parties.

### *Ongoing funding for individual/collective activities – DKK 150,000*

Applications are welcome from all assistant professors, associate professors and professors who need modest amounts at short notice to carry out small-scale (but central) activities.

### *School research centres – DKK 300,000*

With a view to supporting the school's research organisation, centres can apply for up to DKK 10,000 to carry out specific activities.

This funding is disbursed in accordance with the following principles:

*External funding*

Staff are encouraged (as far as possible) to apply for external funding for activities and events such as conferences and visits by visiting scholars.

*Single-pool funding*

With a view to improving the degree of transparency regarding the funding of the school's activities, applicants are encouraged to apply for funding from only one of the school's pools instead of applying for funding for the same activity from several internal pools/sources of funding.

*Spending entitlement of heads of department*

Heads of department have the option of providing support for small-scale research/development activities or ad hoc competence development at department level amounting to up to DKK 10,000 per activity, if this can be accommodated within the school budget as a whole.



