



INSTITUT FOR KOMMUNIKATION OG KULTUR

STRATEGY 2020-2025

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE



AARHUS UNIVERSITET



STRATEGY 2020-2025

School of Communication and Culture

The School of Communication and Culture works within Aarhus University's vision that, through research and teaching at the highest level, we can create value through knowledge, new insights and interaction with society. The School's strategy indicates areas in which our academic competences particularly contribute to and supplement the university's and faculty's strategies. It thus focuses on orientations we will adopt and areas in which we will make a concerted effort. We will do this against the backdrop of the good and competent work that is constantly delivered by the approximately 400 employees divided across nine departments within the School's wide range of academic disciplines, which include culture, communication, language, cognition, literature, aesthetics, media and IT and which result in us being able to offer more than 50 degree programmes to approximately 4500 students.

Since the previous strategy period, the School has developed extensively. While addressing external challenges, which, among other things, have resulted in a dramatic reduction in student enrolment, the School of Communication and Culture has revised all its academic regulations, focusing on close ties with research, employment and relevance. The students' time to degree has been significantly reduced, new quality assurance procedures have been introduced, the dialogue with the labour market has been strengthened through establishing subject-specific employer fora, the amount of external research funding obtained by our academic staff has doubled, which partly compensates for the decrease in revenues for educational activities, and staffing levels have been simultaneously maintained and strengthened through an increase in the number of women, researchers with an international background and professors. Since the previous strategy period, the School has integrated major new research and educational environments within international business communication. Despite challenges, it is a consolidated and in many ways strengthened School that now enters a new strategy period.

The School's strategy follows that of the faculty with a focus on research at an international level, relevant research-based degree programmes, and a contribution to interactions and collaboration with society and the surrounding world. It also prioritises maintaining a well-functioning organisation with a focus on equal opportunities, diversity, sustainability and a good work environment. These core areas are supplemented in the present strategy with mention of initiatives in some of the areas in which the School, across its research, teaching and interaction with society and the world, has particular challenges and responsibilities and makes specific contributions to the AU strategy: foreign languages, digitalisation, democracy and social cohesion.

RESEARCH

Background

Research is the basis of the School's activities, including its range of research-based degree programmes. It therefore remains our overarching goal to secure space and funds to strengthen diverse, free and independent research with both a national and international impact.

In recent years, the School of Communication and Culture has had an organisational focus on research through the research committee and the research consultant, by appointing a Deputy Head of School for research and business, and through work in the degree programmes and centres. The School of Communication and Culture will strengthen networks, innovation, and visible and collaborative research environments in a time of increased competition for research funding.

The School of Communication and Culture has experienced significant growth in external research funding. In a period of reduced education revenue, this funding has made it possible to expand the volume and vitality of our research environments. We will therefore maintain and – as a contribution to the AU framework contract's goal – endeavour to increase this level of external funding, including grants from the EU and major private foundations. We will similarly increase our interaction with the outside world and, together with other areas of expertise, contribute to formulating, understanding and solving societal challenges, including sustainable development. We view our academic areas within, among others, culture, communication and art as indispensable for critical, theoretical, analytical and historical reflection on and the constructive handling of urgent societal challenges such as sustainability, migration, marginalisation, globalisation and digital transformation.

We will also safeguard the freedom of research, basic research (including historical research), the research-based nature of all our degree programmes, and the researcher's time for research.

We wish to continue to be an attractive, international research environment and, in this connection, we wish to develop our recruitment and training of talented researchers at PhD and postdoc level.



Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- make visible its contribution to the challenges of the global society across its entire range of disciplines
- use its research organisation to, through collaboration and active research management, strengthen publishing, build strong research groups, and integrate temporary members of research staff, etc.
- support diversity and career opportunities by mobilising a wide range of internal applicants to apply for both large and small grants
- strengthen work in the post-award phase: project management, the inclusion of early career researchers, and interaction between external projects and teaching
- strengthen the School's impact by recruiting strategically and increasing diversity, where the focus remains on increasing the number of researchers with an international background and experience, achieving a better gender balance, and increasing the proportion of professors
- promote the recognition of a wider range of publication and dissemination formats, including software, exhibitions and podcasts – and make research accessible through increased use of open access.

EDUCATION

Background

The School of Communication and Culture's most important contribution to society is to educate graduates who can contribute professionally, critically, creatively and constructively to a changing national and international labour market.

In response to major reforms (degree programme resizing, study progress reform and institutional accreditation), the School has reoriented all its degree programmes with an emphasis on educational renewal and academic development. The guiding principles for our work have been and continue to be close ties with research, retention of students and relevance.

In the coming strategy period, the School of Communication and Culture intends to continue addressing the challenges of dropout and graduate employment. It also wishes to ensure that, in a time with smaller upper-secondary-school year groups and a changing educational landscape, its degree programmes remain attractive and relevant. With this in mind, we will strengthen the students' international competences.

Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- implement and consolidate the many new academic regulations, including those for the new supplementary subjects
- strengthen close ties with research as a distinguishing characteristic of university degree programmes
- strengthen the relevance of and interaction with the field of practice/employers/the world around us. Throughout their degree programme, students must be prepared for a variety of labour markets – including the private sector, where an increasing number of students are expected to find employment. One of the School's particular focus areas is developing the project placement
- work to retain students by focusing on recruiting and bridge-building, the commencement of studies, and teaching first-year students ('onboarding' initiatives)
- strengthen the study environment and work on the challenges to well-being that some students have experienced as a result of degree programme efficiency measures. The School of Communication and Culture wishes to be known for its good professional relationships between teachers and students
- continue with the developments in education and teaching, including activating formats within and outside teaching, such as the use of relevant EDU IT
- develop formats that allow for and combine practice and product orientations as well as in-depth and academic reflection
- strengthen the degree programmes' internationalisation. We will expand the students' international experience and intercultural competence, among other things, through exchange programmes
- promote diversity in the syllabus in relation to, among other things, geography, gender, culture and language areas.



KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE, BUSINESS AND INTERACTION

Background

During the previous strategy period, the School of Communication and Culture increasingly distinguished itself through its collaboration with the world around us: businesses, government agencies and institutions, cities, upper-secondary schools and other educational institutions, creative industries, cultural institutions and NGOs. This collaboration has already begun to influence both research and education, and our goal is to develop and strengthen it.

The School recognises a societal potential to increase the use of our graduates and the dissemination of our research. A particular focus area for the degree programmes is the private labour market, where a growing number of graduates are expected to find employment, including small and medium-sized businesses. It is our goal to realise this potential as much as possible by increasing our interaction with business and industry, government agencies and institutions, public institutions and cultural organisations. In this way, we will make visible and strengthen our contribution to understanding and solving societal challenges (for example, with regards to questions about democracy, sustainability, social cohesion and migration).

By demonstrating the value of our research and teaching through our actions in and collaboration and interaction with the world around us, we also intend to address the challenges that our field has faced in relation to employment and societal legitimacy.

Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- continue to develop our collaboration with internship host organisations, employers, organisations, businesses and the world around us as an integrated part of the degree programmes' curricula and working methods
- administratively support researchers' opportunities to collaborate with business and industry and organisations (including subsidised company internships) – and find ways for external parties to be included in the development of research projects
- use the resources and contacts that can be found in the alumni community
- develop the further education portfolio so that it becomes more employer-oriented rather than supplier-oriented
- develop clearer incentive structures around collaboration and knowledge exchange
- contribute to the understanding and solving of societal challenges. The School of Communication and Culture will continue to contribute to the AU strategy with our research into democracy, citizenship, and social and cultural cohesion.



INTERDISCIPLINARY INITIATIVES

In some areas across our research, education and knowledge exchange, we have particular challenges, responsibilities and opportunities in order to make specific contributions to the AU framework contract and strategy. Three of these areas – digitalisation, foreign languages, and democracy and social cohesion – are described below, in the knowledge that they only constitute a limited subset of the School's overall academic range.

It should therefore be emphasised that these focus areas do not represent an internal weighting or a resource-related prioritising of specific subjects over others. The School's contributions to new knowledge, to society's need for a qualified labour force and to the formulation, understanding and solving of the challenges of our time draw on the entire School's spectrum of research fields and degree programmes. All these fields and programmes are necessary for and contribute equally to realising the present strategy.



DIGITALISATION

Background

In relation to digitalisation, the School of Communication and Culture is a key player at both AU and in the Danish educational landscape. The School contributes a) teaching and research in information technology with a focus on, among other things, interaction, democracy, surveillance, empowerment and participation; b) teaching and research in the cultural and field-specific effects and consequences of digitalisation; c) the use of IT and digital tools and methods in subjects that do not have IT as their primary object. Owing to these strengths, the School of Communication and Culture views itself as a fundamental part of AU's strategy to "continue to drive the development of and at the same time research the social effects of" the digital transformation in society and research as well as in everyday and cultural life.

Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- contribute to setting the national agenda concerning technological understanding, digital literacy and computational thinking, etc. and, in doing so, promote technological competences within the humanities
- research the consequences of digitalisation for, among other things, cultural meaning formation, politics, public life, democracy and social cohesion, and aesthetics
- contribute to degree programme development and continuing education in the field, for example, in relation to the upper-secondary school sector
- integrate digital methods and tools into research, academic regulations and teaching curricula – and support this integration with the necessary competence development. The School of Communication and Culture does not only research into technology; it also researches with technology and computational methods within language, culture, human behaviour and politics across its various departments
- work to ensure that digital initiatives are adequately supported at both faculty and school level. With the digital development of research and teaching, there is a need for tools and support functions as well as time for competence development.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Background

The School of Communication and Culture is home to strong language environments within Danish and linguistics and the major Western European languages English, German, French and Spanish. In a time when other universities have abolished many foreign language degree programmes, the School of Communication and Culture has established a wide range of differentiated foreign language degree programmes by utilising the volume of students that follow from our extended collaboration between business communication, humanities language programmes and intercultural studies. Most recently, with its professional Master's degree in Conference Interpreting, the School has undertaken an important and resource-intensive national task. The School is home to the western unit of the Danish National Centre for Foreign Languages.

One of our goals is to utilise synergy and collaboration to overcome the challenges related to the sustainability and profitability of small and medium-sized foreign language programmes, which have led to closures elsewhere. Together with the Danish National Centre for Foreign Languages and other educational institutions, the School of Communication and Culture will create political awareness of foreign languages as resource-intensive yet important and socially demanded competences (just like mathematics), strengthen language's place in the overall education system, and work to improve the funding of the university's foreign language programmes.

We will render explicit and develop the role of language subjects in a global world in which they highlight our cultural self-understanding through in-depth collaboration with and engagement in nations and cultures beyond Denmark. This includes a well-informed understanding of the political and societal debates currently taking place internationally, such as those related to climate and sustainability.

Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- work to increase student applications for foreign language degree programmes, including through bridge-building events. The School will also work to increase the transition rate from the BA to the MA in international business communication
- explore possibilities to further develop the strategic business communication, where several of our academic fields can contribute
- continuously modernise and develop its foreign language programmes, e.g. by integrating language technology and the use of relevant EDU IT
- increase and strengthen interaction and business collaboration in relation to business languages
- increase the amount of external research funding obtained for language research. Here we will utilise the synergies across all the language research environments, including Scandinavian studies, linguistics and cognitive science
- investigate and specify possibilities to offer foreign language as an additional competence in conjunction

DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Background

Several academic fields within the School of Communication and Culture research the development of democratic culture and public life and their contemporary as well as historical changes. Many programmes, units, centres and individual researchers are examining the processes of democratisation by which cultural institutions can include wider sections of the population and how these institutions have historically contributed – and currently contribute – to creating participation, informed citizenship and democratically formed publics. Other fields are investigating how changes in the media landscape lead to new opportunities and challenges for democracy, citizenship and social cohesion, for example, in terms of negotiating knowledge, identity, community and relationships in and across different societal segments and groupings. The focus, among other things, is on the significance of digitalisation, fictionalisation and aestheticisation for political communication, cultural narratives and societal inclusion and exclusion processes. This focus area contributes to AU's strategic focus on democracy and social cohesion and to "developing the critical and constructive dialogue, putting human existence into context, and contributing to democratic development".

The goal is to give our contribution to the field greater public visibility and impact and to increase external funding, recruitment and talent development.

Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- strengthen the School's contribution to public debate, adult education and our external partners' knowledge of and development of democratic culture and public life
- build a research infrastructure and facilitate synergies between fields working on democracy and social cohesion in a historical and contemporary context
- stimulate and support applications for external funding with a view to talent development and greater collective research initiatives in the field
- expand existing collaboration and support exchange with leading international research communities in the field
- continue to focus on educating graduates who are able to contribute critically and constructively to the democratic development of institutions, public life, and business and industry.

FRAMEWORK, WORK ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANISATION

Background

In order to achieve our strategic goals, it is essential that our organisation functions well. One of our priorities is to ensure that the School of Communication and Culture is a good workplace where the individual can thrive and develop and participate in stimulating collegial communities. So that the School can continue to be so, we must deal with the experiences of stress, the concern about coherent research time, and the desire for transparent management and proper collegial relationships that many of our employees express. We will therefore foster well-being and a good collaboration culture. In this way, the School of Communication and Culture wishes to be known as an attractive workplace that allows all its employees to fulfil their potential.

We wish to allow room for diversity, both in our academic work and in the respectful way we interact with our colleagues. We will therefore foster inclusivity, equality and diversity. A particular focus area in this respect is to increase international recruitment and to achieve a better gender balance at associate professor and professor level.

In order to be able to realise this strategy, we require well-functioning administrative support. We will develop the School's own administrative organisation and continue our dialogue with the faculty and the university on the best possible, flexible and professional support for our research and teaching activities.

Focus areas

The School of Communication and Culture will

- focus on workload, on the relationship between resources and tasks, and on work-life balance in the consolidation of the School after a period of extensive reform
- develop study and work environments in all the School's locations as well as on Campus 2.0
- strengthen both internal and external communication in order to ensure visibility and cohesion. On all levels, we must work towards a dialogue-based management where employee influence is made clear and management decisions are communicated in a way that makes it clear who is delivering the decision and why the decision has been made
- strengthen a democratic and inclusive culture – including the importance of student involvement in the degree programme board and the board of studies
- ensure professional and flexible administrative support at all levels
- continue to safeguard research time for members of academic staff
- promote collegiality, collaboration and the everyday professional community and, in this connection, for example, work on integrating colleagues employed on a fixed-term basis
- increase the diversity of recruitment (for example, through the use of search committees) and be aware of the composition of management teams.

