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# STRATEGY

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## PREFACE

The world's welfare societies are under pressure from major global and societal challenges. The ability to adapt to change is more urgent than ever before. Universities are deeply implicated in these global trends, which demand that they assume even greater responsibility for the development of society. This is true in Denmark, and it is true for Aarhus University.

With this strategy, Aarhus University confirms and intensifies its commitment to the present course and affirms its strong engagement with society. The university will achieve these goals by insisting on its commitment to quality and its tireless endeavours to provide society with research and research-based education.

We must intensify our dialogue and interaction with society: Aarhus University pledges to take up the global and societal challenges we face. The solutions the world needs cross the boundaries dividing sectors, fields of research and nations. The interdisciplinary nature of our challenges sets the framework for the university's strategic emphasis on interdisciplinary research and a productive collaboration with industry and government.

Aarhus University is a research-intensive institution of higher education. The university will exploit this strength to consolidate its position as an attractive university for the many as well as for the few. Excellent research must be the foundation that ensures that all of the university's graduates acquire competencies the labour market values. At the same time, the university intends to focus even more on cultivating its most talented and motivated students. This will both strengthen the university's international competitiveness and increase our contribution to society.

Three priorities will drive development at Aarhus University in the period 2013-2020.

These priorities are:

- Basic research and core disciplines of the highest quality that will generate international research break-throughs and collaborate to produce new interdisciplinary research.
- Solid research-based degree programmes for all students combined with supplementary academic activities and challenges for the most talented and motivated students.
- Internationalised teaching and research programmes that contribute to the high concentration and mobility of talent at all levels.

Aarhus University is already among the world's 100 best universities, and in the top ten among the youngest of these. This gives the university a strong position from which to tackle the increasing competition for research funding and the brightest young talents. The university has the potential to achieve an even stronger position among the world's top 50 universities.

This strategy is the result of a process involving staff and students at all levels. It draws extensively on the contributions of the university's teaching and research programmes. It will be realised through the cooperation of managements, staff and students.

## THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

Aarhus University's strategy for 2013-2020 confirms and intensifies the university's commitment to the course that it has already set. It defines a clear profile that both sets ambitious goals and exploits existing strengths. The strategy must enable the university to continue to fulfil its role as one of the most important institutions in the development of the knowledge society. Over the course of the strategy period, the university will strengthen and clarify its profile as a comprehensive, research-intensive university that strongly prioritises its responsibilities to society and takes up the major challenges of today's world.

The university's role in society will become ever more important as both Danish and global society increasingly require knowledge and ability. This means that the universities must continue to supply graduates on all levels who can compete at an international level and produce research and research-based knowledge for the development of society. Moreover, the universities must both play their part in and benefit from intensified international collaboration and increasing global mobility.

Aarhus University, as a strong, modern university, is in a strong position to live up to these requirements; in a short space of time, it has achieved a ranking among the top 100 out of the 20,000 universities in the world. Since 2006, the university has approximately doubled its total number of students, its number of PhD students and its turnover. The organisation of the university supports this growth while also giving its staff and students the opportunities for immersion in their core academic specialisations and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Aarhus University has developed an organisation that continues to include all of the the classic academic fields – including but not limited to the natural sciences, the humanities, the social sciences and health sciences – and where the four core activities of research, education, talent development and knowledge exchange are equally valued cross-university areas, each with their own management structure and staff fora. The university's strategy builds on the opportunities for collaboration that this cross-university organisational structure enables.

Aarhus University thus finds itself in a strong position for further development. The university desires in all its activities to apply its strength to combining the quality of its core services with stimulating and challenging opportunities for the greatest talents. Therefore, the university will place special emphasis on three central strategic priorities which are absolutely crucial parameters for the university's ability to live up to its obligations to society and for the continued improvement of its strong international position:

- Basic research and core disciplines of the highest quality that will generate international research break-throughs and collaborate to produce new interdisciplinary research.
- Solid research-based degree programmes for all students combined with supplementary academic activities and challenges for the most talented and motivated students.
- Internationalised teaching and research programmes that attract research talents at all stages of their careers and ensure researcher mobility.

All three of these central strategic priorities will contribute to strengthening the university's profile and strategic course and will make it a realistic possibility that the university's results can in the future lead to a ranking among the world's top 50 universities.

## MISSION AND FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

The mission of Aarhus University is to create and share knowledge on the foundation of its academic comprehensiveness and diversity as well as through outstanding research, the education of graduates with the competencies society demands and innovative engagement with society. By putting the latest knowledge to work, Aarhus University assumes co-responsibility for the development of society, meets society's justifiable demands and contributes to society's continued growth and welfare.

Aarhus University is a signatory of the European universities' Magna Carta. The university defends the research freedom of individuals and desires to maintain and develop a culture that promotes collaboration, critical dialogue, curiosity and the independent search for new knowledge and insight.

## VISION

Aarhus University is deeply engaged with society. This contributes to cultural enrichment, technological know-how and economic development. The university is involved in critical, open and innovative interaction with society on both national and international levels, and is a key motor for growth and a partner that creates value.

The major societal challenges are complex and cut across boundaries, sectors and academic specialisations. Therefore, solutions must be found through new interdisciplinary partnerships that themselves cut across the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. More break-throughs must be created at the intersections of fields of research, and the university's students must be trained to think and act across the boundaries defining traditional fields of research and study.

Research in strong core disciplines is the foundation for all the university's activities; together with research-based degree programmes, it forms the foundation for the university's activities. Aarhus University aims to ensure both breadth and depth in research and education: the university must be an attractive place of study for all students. All students must receive an education of the highest possible quality and graduate with competencies that are in demand on the labour market. At the same time, the university wishes to create programmes for the most talented and motivated students, in order to provide them with extra academic activities and intellectual challenges. This will prepare them to an even greater extent to fill a wide spectrum of key positions in professional life, both in Denmark and internationally. The combination of high-quality degree programmes and focus on talent development programmes requires a strong university and is of decisive importance for the university's competitiveness and its contribution to the development of society. Global competition contributes to defining the university's scope for action and development. The university's participation in the competition for the finest talents among both students and researchers must be intensified, and the international circulation of talent must be strengthened. The university must lead the way in establishing unique, modern research infrastructures that will provide the best possible frameworks for research and will attract top researchers from among the international research community. Degree programmes and teaching and learning environments must continue to be internationalised, so that cultural diversity and international experience become strengths to the benefit of all. In this way, Aarhus University will strengthen its position as a leading global university with the power to make an impact and to influence international policy development in research, innovation and education.

<b>MISSION</b>	Aarhus University is a comprehensive and research-intensive university that creates and shares knowledge.			
<b>VISION</b>	Aarhus University strives to be a leading globally-oriented university with a strong engagement in the development of society.			
<b>FUNDAMENTAL VALUES</b>	Aarhus University is a signatory of the European universities' Magna Carta. Research freedom, independence, study, curiosity and critical interaction with the surrounding world are thus essential values for the university.			
<b>GOALS</b>	<p><b>RESEARCH</b></p> <p>Increase the number of research areas in the international elite</p> <p>Focus on societal challenges and strengthen cooperation</p> <p>Attract more external funding</p>	<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Develop the quality of degree programmes in accordance with the highest international standards</p> <p>Educate graduates with strong competencies</p> <p>Accommodate diversity among students</p>	<p><b>TALENT DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>Offer talent development at the highest international level</p> <p>Recruit, develop and retain researchers with outstanding talent</p> <p>Offer talent development activities and programmes starting at Bachelor's level</p>	<p><b>KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE</b></p> <p>Intensify collaboration with the business community and the public sector</p> <p>Consolidate and develop the university's role of independent scientific consultant to the public sector</p> <p>Improved selection of further education programmes</p> <p>Strengthen contributions to the development of civil society</p>
<b>PRE-CONDITIONS</b>	<p>Good working conditions</p> <p>A good environment for study and work</p> <p>An accessible, visionary management</p> <p>The opportunity for further education</p> <p>A coherent, efficient and professional administration</p> <p>Optimal financial and legal framework conditions</p>			

## RESEARCH

Strong core disciplines and excellent basic research are the foundation for all of the university's activities. Granting the individual researcher freedom and trust, in combination with respect for the long-term perspective, is the path to excellence in research. This is also the fundamental condition for the development, pursuit and realisation of ambitious, original research ideas – in the contexts of both basic research and interdisciplinary collaboration. At the same time, access to attractive and modern research infrastructure is an important prerequisite for achieving the research breakthroughs that are the ambition of both the researchers themselves and the university. Aarhus University wishes to ensure its researchers the best opportunities for specialisation in their core fields and for establishing new interdisciplinary collaboration. Through this, the university can contribute to discovering solutions that address society's needs.

### The current situation

Aarhus University has established a position for itself among the leading research universities in Europe. On the international ranking lists, the university is placed among the 100 best in the world and among the top ten among the youngest universities. Over a long period, many of the university's research areas have reported research results that figure prominently in bibliometric measurements of research impact. Calculations indicate that research from Aarhus University is cited 45 per cent more often than the world average, just as a number of the university's researchers have won highly coveted awards and grants.

### Strategic goals

#### Increase the number of research areas in the international elite

Aarhus University has a remarkably strong international position in a number of important research areas. In order to maintain and enhance its position as a leading international university, Aarhus University desires to develop research and research management talent and to be an attractive partner and workplace for top researchers. Researchers' competencies and opportunities for development are crucial to the quality of their work. Therefore, creative and inspiring research environments will be strengthened and further developed across the whole of the university. Aarhus University strives to offer state-of-the-art research infrastructure. Unique research stations, modern laboratories, databases, registers, research instruments and other research platforms are important pre-requisites for performing excellent research, and an important competitive parameter for attracting leading researchers and for collaboration with the most advanced research environments, both nationally and internationally.

#### Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- Strengthen basic research, the core disciplines and the research environments
- Support the most innovative researchers and research groups
- Attract talented junior researchers and top researchers
- Prioritise and support the development of good research management
- Establish, develop and maintain attractive, unique research infrastructures.

#### Focus on societal challenges and strengthen cooperation

In order for excellent research to be performed, researchers must have the freedom and the working conditions necessary to concentrate on academic and societal challenges, both within the traditional core disciplines and through new interdisciplinary projects. Strong core disciplines and basic research of high quality are the foundation for creating interdisciplinary research that contributes to the development of solutions to the major challenges facing society. The university will create the conditions to enable even more researchers and research groups to work together across main academic areas and areas of specialisation. New ideas and concrete solutions also emerge when researchers collaborate with industry and government. This collaboration must therefore also be intensified, to the benefit of all parties.

**Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Recruit and develop potential leaders of new interdisciplinary research initiatives
- Establish new interdisciplinary centres and research projects
- Support interdisciplinary research projects with the participation of the university's talented researchers early in their careers
- Establish research networks within and across the main academic areas
- Strengthen research collaboration with industry and government with the aim of increased innovation and added value for all parties.

**Attract more external funding**

From a strong current position, Aarhus University will improve the quality and level of activity of its research in coming years. In order to realise this ambition, it is vital to attract more external funding and thus provide the necessary flexibility and freedom for its research activities.

**Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Increase the resources available for research support
- Coordinate more and larger EU research grants
- Attract larger research centres and make focussed efforts to win prestigious research awards
- Strengthen collaboration with private foundations.

## EDUCATION

Aarhus University will prepare its graduates for the global labour market, which increasingly seeks personnel with both professional qualifications and competencies in the areas of collaboration, innovation and global understanding. Its graduates are the university's most important contribution to society: they hold key positions in all sectors and create value for society. The university's degree programmes are research-based, and must be of the highest possible quality. They must be developed in close collaboration between employers, academic staff and students, and they must be based on a high degree of research-integrated learning. Through this approach, the university accommodates the diversity of the student body and promotes talent development, as well as providing the conditions that enable students to succeed in international contexts.

### The current situation

Aarhus University has experienced a period of rapid growth in the area of education. The number of students has increased considerably; each year, around 7,000 new students begin their studies at the university. In general, the degree programmes offered at the university are characterised by quality, closely-knit, well-integrated academic programmes and good study environments that contribute to a closely integrated campus environment. The university's graduates are in high demand on the labour market, and their competencies are valued. The university's selection as the Danish Entrepreneurial University and the associated entrepreneurial activities contribute to stimulating both students' competencies and the university's close interaction with the business community.

### Strategic goals

#### **Develop the quality of degree programmes in accordance with the highest international standards**

To ensure the relevance of its degree programmes, the university must continue to adapt its course offerings and to develop the form and content of individual degree programmes to the highest standard of quality. The shared conception of quality must be explicit and must ensure that all degree programmes are research-based, answer to society's requirements, and are offered in attractive study environments.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Continually develop its degree programmes and their grounding in research
- Establish a common and explicit conception of quality
- Develop a coherent and broadly based quality assurance system that respects the diversity of academic disciplines
- Ensure continued high levels of satisfaction and well-being through the development of the study environment in collaboration with students and research and teaching programmes
- Ensure that degree programmes are continuously adapted to the needs of society.

#### **Educate graduates with strong competencies**

In the future, society will face multi-faceted problems. Solving them will require strong professional and academic qualifications, both within and across core disciplines. Consequently, the university's graduates must have useful and productive competencies that are both specific to particular fields and broadly based. The university must combine the strengths of its research environments with a focus on labour market's demand for both depth and breadth, thereby ensuring that its degree programmes are relevant for society and developed in collaboration with alumni and employers. It is particularly in the interaction between different approaches that new thinking arises; traditional academic disciplines are challenged and put into perspective, and acquire new relevance for society.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Develop new interdisciplinary degree programmes at Master's degree level
- Develop the interdisciplinary dimensions of courses and approaches to learning in the university's degree programmes in general
- Strengthen the internationalisation of the university's degree programmes and of students' international mobility
- Strengthen transparency and flexibility in order to ensure that students make more informed choices in the course of their studies
- Ensure coherence, transparency and mobility in the education system as a whole.

### **Accommodate diversity among students**

Aarhus University wishes to accommodate a growing and increasingly diverse student body with a variety of competencies and varying degrees of academic readiness. The university will create innovative learning environments that are based to an even greater degree on research. The university's learning environments must be more motivating for students and provide effective support to degree programmes, with space and time for contemplation and immersion. Highly motivated and able students must also be offered especially challenging learning environments in which to develop their talent in directions that add value in both research career paths and other broader social contexts.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Develop the digital learning environment to support learning in all of its phases
- Develop learning environments that focus on innovation, entrepreneurship and intercultural competence
- Ensure that excellent teaching and training in university didactics are recognised
- Ensure that teaching and degree programme development work is visible and achieves recognition
- Create opportunities for early talent development of the brightest and most motivated students
- Ensure that degree programmes are continuously adapted to the needs of society.

## TALENT DEVELOPMENT

The cultivation of research talents who are attractive internationally and who create value in the broadest sense for society as a whole and the specific professions they choose is something Aarhus University views as its special responsibility. Aarhus University will refine and strengthen its talent development efforts in an international perspective, with a focus not only on promising researchers, but also on students with exceptional abilities to fulfil the future needs of business and industry, as well as managerial positions in the public and private sectors. At all stages of their academic careers, the most motivated and qualified students will be offered special academic activities aimed at developing their special competencies. Together with research, the university's talent recruitment and talent development activities are important elements in achieving quality in its degree programmes and knowledge exchange activities.

### The current situation

Aarhus University has a venerable tradition for working with talented students as early as Bachelor's degree level, and was the first university in Denmark to begin recruiting students to PhD programmes before they had completed their Master's degrees. In the context of the national PhD studies initiative, the university has increased the number of PhD students significantly, and all PhD degree programmes have been gathered into four large, well-organised graduate schools. As a result of this development, a significant number of junior researchers at Aarhus University have achieved international recognition and have gone on to attractive positions at international universities and companies.

### Strategic goals

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

Highly qualified graduates create value for society and strengthen the university's opportunities for attracting promising young research talents. Aarhus University therefore desires to constantly develop its talent development and degree programmes, with a particular focus on quality. Degree programmes must be adapted to the needs of the global society for competencies that are suited to careers outside as well as within the academic world.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Strengthen talent development, from Bachelor's degree level and onwards
- Strengthen the internationalisation of the PhD programmes
- Develop strategic partnerships with highly respected universities
- Exploit its alumni network actively in career guidance and talent recruitment.

#### **Recruit, develop and retain researchers with outstanding talents**

Global competition to recruit the brightest research talents has intensified. It is essential for Aarhus University to attract, cultivate and retain the best researchers. Aarhus University desires to offer attractive and clear career paths and to work to ensure that the community within which talented international post-doctoral students can develop is as inclusive as possible.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Ensure diversity among research talents
- Develop a model that ensures attractive recruitment and career paths (tenure track-model)
- Participate actively in the international career market and facilitate talented graduates from Aarhus University obtaining employment at high-ranking international universities
- Focus on talent recruitment through academic networks
- Through the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, strengthen the recruitment of research talents to Aarhus University.

#### **Offer talent development activities and programmes starting at Bachelor's level**

The most talented and motivated students must be offered supplementary academic activities in special talent development programmes anchored in strong research environments. Talent development must be offered starting at Bachelor's degree level, and must be focussed on the entire diverse palette of students' talents. Different types of talent must be developed in these programmes in order to increase the value of graduates' contribution to society. Aarhus University wishes to attract and retain the greatest talents while at the same time contributing to strengthening the quality of the university's other degree programmes even further. While all students will be eligible to apply for admission to the talent programmes, only a few will be admitted.

**Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Develop and launch pilot projects for the talent development programmes
- Implement talent programmes across all main academic areas.

## KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Aarhus University desires to put the university's knowledge to use through close, enduring and innovative relationships with the business community, public authorities, organisations and society in general. The goal is to create economic, cultural and technological value and to develop the competencies of participating partners. Knowledge exchange builds on the university's strong research strengths and interdisciplinary research collaborations, and thus contributes to finding solutions to the challenges faced by society on local, regional and global levels. Aarhus University desires to create a common understanding of and respect for the importance of knowledge exchange between the university and society at large among staff and students.

### The current situation

Aarhus University has developed extensive, vital knowledge exchange activities. In the environmental and energy sector, the educational sector and the food and agriculture sector, the university has a unique position as supplier of research-based consultancy services to public authorities. Similarly, the university has set standards for collaboration in the area of health in its cooperation with the Central Denmark Region concerning Aarhus University Hospital, and with regard to the Danish healthcare system as a whole. The university also has a wide range of contracts with industry and significant knowledge and technology transfer activities, in addition to offering a wide range of further education courses that ensure lifelong learning for professionals from a wide variety of sectors. Through its interplay with the world it belongs to, Aarhus University contributes significantly to the development of civil society. The university's knowledge exchange activities have a significant scope on both a national and a European scale.

### Strategic goals

#### **Intensify collaboration with the business community and the public sector**

Aarhus University will contribute to value creation, innovation capacity and increased competitiveness in society by strengthening its collaboration with industry and government. This will take place through incorporating innovation and entrepreneurship in teaching, collaboration on concrete projects, effective knowledge exchange, technology transfer, the commercialisation of promising research ideas, career services and alumni outreach.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Strengthen and make more visible its cooperation with the business community and the public sector through concrete activities with a commercial focus
- Develop new platforms and models for collaboration with business and industry and its financing
- Enter into more cooperation agreements, accept more Industrial PhD students and appoint private-sector researchers to part-time industrial professorships.

#### **Consolidate and develop the university's role of independent scientific consultant to the public sector**

Aarhus University desires to initiate new national and international activities in the area of public-sector consultancy on the basis of the university's research.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Increase turnover as well as the academic range and comprehensiveness of its research-based public sector consultancy activities
- Ensure the recruitment of staff for public sector consultancy and develop staff competencies in the area of consultancy services
- Increase dialogue and collaboration with public authorities and the business community
- Ensure that research-based public sector consultancy is visible and that its value is recognised.

### **Improved selection of further education programmes**

Further education plays a crucial role in the improvement of the general levels of education and competencies in society. Aarhus University desires to contribute to lifelong learning by strengthening its range of further education activities and thus supporting the development of a coherent educational system on both national and international levels.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Broaden and extend its range of further education activities, so that the needs of existing and future employers and professions can be met
- Include further education in the development of the university's overall educational and graduate profile.

### **Strengthen contributions to the development of civil society**

As a key institution of knowledge and culture, Aarhus University desires to contribute to cultural and social development through its interaction with society at large. The university will contribute to the support of civil society through collaboration, advisory and consultancy services, capacity development, knowledge dissemination, participation in public debate, knowledge transfer through for example the Danish University Extension and Aarhus University Press, and participation on councils and boards.

#### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Contribute to the development of and actively participate in civil society through collaboration with individuals, associations and organisations
- Contribute to promoting public debate through inspirational and creative communication of knowledge
- Apply the university's competencies to building capacity in both public and private sector contexts.

## PRECONDITIONS

Aarhus University's vision for 2020 is based on the presumption that the university's own support functions are of high quality, and that the university will constantly strive to influence and optimise the economic and legislative conditions the university operates under.

The staff and students must experience the university as an inspiring setting for their own professional and academic development. The university thus assumes its responsibilities as a large, modern workplace that ensures opportunity and development for all. This requires good working conditions, opportunities for further education for all employees, a good study and work environment, the involvement of staff and students in decisionmaking, and a visionary management that is readily accessible.

The university's support functions in AU Administration, the department secretariats and the deans' offices must contribute to the realisation and development of the university's academic ambitions and mission both in the university's four core activities and in its main academic areas. Users must be closely involved in consolidation and development of these functions. The ambition is for the university's academic environments to maintain their focus on the university's core activities in collaboration with the administration, which must be relied on to provide coherent, cost-effective and professional service. Furthermore, long-term planning work must ensure that the university has at its disposal the physical framework that is adequate to its academic goals.

In dialogue with relevant parties, Aarhus University will work actively to establish the economic and legislative frameworks necessary to give the university the autonomy needed for the achievement of its strategic objectives. More external funding, the development of new, relevant degree programmes, and full internationalisation of the research and educational environments are just some examples of areas where Aarhus University will work, either alone or in collaboration with public authorities and other Danish or overseas universities and institutions, to ensure the best possible frameworks for the development of the university, to the benefit of society.

### **Consequently, Aarhus University will:**

- Further develop and improve its work and study environments
- Involve staff and students in relevant decision-making processes
- Carry out professional management development
- Ensure that the administration is modern, professional and coherent
- Enter into dialogue with relevant actors with a view to bringing about and ensuring the best possible economic and legislative conditions for the university's activities and development.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

The 2013-2020 Aarhus University strategy covers a seven-year period. Immediately after the strategy is adopted, concrete goals for each strategic theme will be identified and scheduled. In 2016, an interim evaluation will take place that will form the background for any necessary adjustments to the strategy for the remainder of the period.

The activities will be described in specific action plans drawn up within the main academic areas, departments, centres and cross-university core activities. The action plans will establish and prioritise clear and measurable goals each year, so that the achievement of strategic objectives can be monitored and followed up. A number of strategic goals are also described in the university's development contract for 2012-2014 with the Minister for Science, Innovation and Higher Education. The university submits annual reviews of progress on the development contract to the ministry.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis. This review will form the basis for the prioritisation of the use of the university's strategic funds and for reports to the board, and will also be used in continuous monitoring and to providing information externally. In this way, the university will ensure transparency and coherence in its strategy work, connectedness with the development contract, and continuous work towards the achievement of the university's vision for 2020.