A research-intensive university that aspires to the highest international quality and excels in creating value through knowledge, new insights and collaboration – connecting Denmark and the world
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**Preamble**

Aarhus University is a strong university that is internationally recognised for the high quality of its research, research-based degree programmes and consultancy services, as well as value-creating collaboration with both private businesses and public government agencies and institutions. The curiosity-driven creation of knowledge rooted in strong disciplines to the benefit of society is the university’s raison d’être, and has been so since its founding in 1928. And it will also serve as the lodestar of this strategy, which will set the university’s course toward 2025.

Aarhus University’s academic portfolio is broad-ranging, from the classic university disciplines of the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, health sciences and theology to business and engineering and education, environment and agrosciences. This breadth gives the university a truly unique ability to combine its strong traditions of excellence in these disciplines in the creation of research breakthroughs, and to establish close collaboration with a wide variety of industries, to the benefit of society as a whole.

Research is the foundation for all of Aarhus University’s activities. And not least for the university’s most important task: to educate students and to introduce them to new knowledge through research-based degree programmes that also develop their characters, creativity, independence and collaboration skills. In the eyes of the university, its students and graduates are the most important bearers of the university’s knowledge. For this reason, it is important that they – along with the university’s academic staff – take responsibility for bringing their knowledge into play and thus contribute to ensuring that society rests on a foundation of an informed democracy.

The 2025 strategy for Aarhus University describes the university’s vision, mission and fundamental values (see below). While the vision is in line with the university’s current strategic course, it also sets new and higher goals for academic development and the scope of national and international collaboration. The university’s goal is to strengthen its position among leading research-intensive universities while also creating crucial value for the individual and for society as a whole.

The realisation of the vision in concrete initiatives will create results that will enhance the university’s international reputation and impact on society.

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**AARHUS UNIVERSITY’S VALUES**

Our fundamental values are described in the Magna Charta of the European Universities.

We safeguard freedom of research and expression, in addition to individuals’ opportunities to realise their dreams and their potential, regardless of background. Open dialogue, tolerance and diversity are the very foundation of the university’s vocation. Because we regard the universities as one of the pillars of society, we assume co-responsibility for the development of a democratic, sustainable society.
Aarhus University’s vision

A research-intensive university that aspires to the highest international quality and excels in creating value through knowledge, new insights and collaboration.

Connecting Denmark and the world.
Aarhus University’s vision is to be a research-intensive university that aspires to the highest international quality and excels in creating value through knowledge, new insights and collaboration – connecting Denmark and the world. Aarhus University’s vision for 2025 will be realised through a focus on the following strategic commitments:

- Generating knowledge and research breakthroughs through research of the highest international quality
- Offering research-based degree programmes and public sector consultancy services of the highest international quality
- Contributing to shape the society of the future by encouraging the university’s students, graduates and researchers to bring their knowledge into play
- Contributing to international collaboration and the solution of major societal challenges through interdisciplinary research collaboration
- Generating innovation in established companies and startups through collaboration, both internally and with external partners
- Intensifying the exchange of talents and knowledge, locally, nationally and internationally.

This vision will set the course for Aarhus University’s development in the coming years, accompanied by consciousness of the fact that the university is also the framework for the fulfilment of individual dreams and ambitions.

The vision demands that the university apply its academic strength and breadth and its international position to the creation of value for society, both in Denmark and internationally. In the context of this strategy, value must be understood in a broad sense, and taken to include development, growth and welfare for society as a whole. Thus value cannot be construed solely as a question of contributing to economic growth, since the university’s role is also to develop critical, constructive dialogue and to frame human existence within a larger context, as well as to contribute to democratic development and a sustainable future.

New advances and breakthroughs in knowledge are created both within individual disciplines and in the encounter between them. The university will attract and inspire prominent, established researchers, promising junior researchers and talented students in order to enable them to contribute to breakthroughs in knowledge.

The university is one of the cornerstones of society, and its students, graduates and researchers help shape the society of the future through the knowledge they bring into play, from popular research communication to the general public to research-based public sector consultancy and researchers’ participation on government commissions and councils. The university’s vision is for researchers to
contribute more of their expertise to ensuring that society is founded on a well-informed, knowledge-based democracy.

Collaboration is absolutely central to this strategy. Specifically, the university’s goal is to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, collaboration with the private sector and public sector institutions, as well as collaboration in regard to innovation. Only in this way can the university increase the value of its contribution to society while at the same time maintaining its position at the vanguard of the future needs of society.

Aarhus University's international collaborations are based on the vision of connecting Denmark and the world. With their strong tradition for international collaboration, the universities have a special role to play at a time in which international collaboration is facing political challenges, and in which the need to work together to find solutions to global societal challenges is greater than ever. Aarhus University’s goal is to make a significant contribution by intensifying its participation in the international exchange of knowledge and talents.

This vision centres on a vibrant campus environment where students, researchers and external partners are brought together in close collaboration. The university's main campus is already recognised internationally for its distinctive architecture and urban location. In the coming years, the university will develop and rethink its main campus to ensure that it is characterised by an even more vibrant, engaging and innovative environment for study and research and is operated and developed sustainably.
Aarhus University will work to realise this vision through the six core tasks of the university, which define the university’s mission (see figure above):

- Basic research of high international quality
- Research-based degree programmes of high international quality
- Contributing to society’s development and prosperity
- Research-based solutions to societal challenges
- Graduates for the labour market of the future
- Development of research talents and research integration.

The core tasks are in alignment with the tasks of the Danish universities as defined in the University Act. They can be grouped under the main headings of research, education and collaboration. In addition, the university has defined three overlapping areas in which research, education and collaboration supplement one another. Together, the six core tasks reflect the breadth of the university’s activities and provide a framework for the realisation of Strategy 2025.

In the following six sections, each core task will be described, along with associated targets, sub-targets and expected initiatives.
Aarhus University will further improve the quality of its research in its attempt to achieve the highest level of international excellence. For this reason, the university’s goal is to bolster:

- Research breakthroughs
- Career development and diversity.

**Research breakthroughs**

*Sub-target: Develop more research programmes with strong international impact.* The university’s goal is to generate more research breakthroughs. To achieve this, the individual disciplines will be strengthened and developed further with a view to achieving an even stronger competitive position internationally, and to ensuring that society derives greater benefits from breakthroughs in basic research. In addition, the university will continue to develop its research profile to ensure that it corresponds to society’s needs, now and in the future.

*Sub-target: Increased internationalisation.* The university’s goal is to achieve a higher degree of international competition for permanent positions and to recruit talented researchers with a high international level. In addition to bolstering international recruitment, this entails fostering a higher degree of international engagement among the university’s permanent academic staff members.

**Career development and diversity**

*Sub-target: Strengthening researcher career development.* The university’s goal is to give all researchers the opportunity to realise their potential and develop professionally. This applies both to junior researchers and established researchers.

*Sub-target: Better gender balance in research programmes.* The university’s ambition is to develop the talent pool to the best of its potential. To do so, the university must come close to achieving gender balance at university level, which will require significant progress during the strategy period –
particularly in regard to recruiting more female researchers to permanent positions and supporting the interests of female talents and their opportunities for pursuing a research career.

**INITIATIVES**

The university will continue the following ongoing initiatives:

- Expansion of engineering programmes
- Expansion of IT programmes
- Strengthening business programmes
- The primary and lower secondary school initiative
- Adaptation of graduate profile at the Faculty of Arts
- Norms for recruitment
- The Junior Researcher Development Programme
- More women in research.
Research-based degree programmes of high international quality

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Aarhus University's degree programmes are characterised by high academic standards and a good learning environment. Excellence in research and teaching are founded on the recruitment of talented students and outstanding researchers, combined with a supportive environment for learning and study. For this reason, the university has set the following targets:

- To be an attractive university for talented students
- To foster academic excellence in the degree programmes.

**An attractive university for talented students**

*Sub-target: To achieve a better match between applicant and degree programme.* The university will maintain its position as an attractive university, and will continue to admit students with good academic prerequisites who are motivated to immerse themselves in and engage in their degree programme and student life at the university. This target applies to both national and international students. While changes in government policy have posed challenges for the recruitment of the latter group, the university’s goal is to strengthen its position within the given framework and to attract the most talented international students.

*Sub-target: Better retention.* A good introductory programme for first-year students builds on upper secondary programmes while also inspiring and challenging students academically from the very beginning. The university will approach the entire first year from the perspective of providing a good introduction to university education, which will provide a smoother transition for new students. Likewise, the university will also work to provide an even better learning environment for students – physically, socially and pedagogically.
Academic excellence in the degree programmes

Sub-target: Engaging teaching and learning. The university is constantly working to optimise the encounter between teacher, student and the subject, as this constitutes the central determinant of the quality of the teaching and of the degree programmes. At the same time, the university will make the most of the new opportunities offered by digital learning technologies. By doing so, the university will be able to engage students before, during and after class to a higher degree, which will improve student learning outcomes.

Sub-target: More electives in the degree programmes. Integrating more elective courses into the degree programmes will allow students to supplement their core subject with courses from other degree programmes, as well as benefitting from the university’s academic breadth and international partnerships.

Sub-target: Transferable skills. The university will offer students degree programmes that both provide deep subject-specific expertise and the opportunity to acquire transferable skills. This combination is important in order to better prepare students for the labour market of the future. The transferable skills acquired may both be academic, as in the sub-target above, and more generally. This applies not least to digitalisation, sustainability, entrepreneurship and character development.

INITIATIVES

The university will continue the following ongoing initiatives:

- Recruitment and admission of talented and motivated students
- Engaging Educational IT.

The university will launch the following new initiatives:

- Better introductory programme for new students
- Electives across degree programmes
- More Summer University courses
- Digital competencies for all students.
Contributing to society’s development and welfare

Aarhus University will significantly strengthen its contribution to the development and welfare of society as a whole during the strategy period. For this reason, the university has set the targets of increased:

- External collaboration
- Contributions to a knowledge-based democracy.

Collaborating with external parties

Sub-target: More projects with business and industry and the public sector. The university will increase external collaboration during the strategy period. The aim is to invite more companies and public institutions within the university’s walls in order to collaborate. Private companies must be able to benefit more from the entire range of the university’s disciplines with a view to increasing their competitiveness, and cooperation with public institutions must be strengthened so that the university becomes a preferred partner.

Sub-target: More innovation and entrepreneurship. Conditions for entrepreneurship must be improved, and students’ interest in this area must be stimulated. Students and researchers must have better opportunities for translating their ideas into concrete spinout companies. The long-term ambition is to establish a larger ecosystem for entrepreneurship and spinout companies at and around the university.

Contribution to a knowledge-based democracy.

Sub-target: Increased visibility of expert contributions to public debate. The university’s researchers already make a wide variety of contributions to public debate and popular research communication for
a general audience. The university’s goal is to increase its impact on society, which entails increased visibility in public debate and in relevant decision-making processes.

Sub-target: Continued development of research-based public sector consultancy. Public sector consultancy is a substantial contributor to our knowledge-based democracy. The university’s goal is to maintain and improve public sector consultancy services during the strategy period.

Sub-targets: Increased dialogue with decision-makers. The university’s goal is to bolster dialogue with decision-makers and key alums in order to take a more proactive approach to current political issues.

**INITIATIVES**

The university will continue the following ongoing initiatives:

- The business initiative
- The quality assurance system for public sector consultancy.

The university will launch the following new initiatives:

- Strengthening entrepreneurship
- Increased use of digital platforms for expert contributions
- Bolster dialogue with politicians.
Aarhus University will bolster and increase its contribution to solving the major societal challenges. For this reason, the university has set the following targets of increased:

- International collaboration
- Interdisciplinary collaboration.

**International collaboration**

*Sub-target: Establish partnerships with selected universities.* Because many of the challenges facing society cross national borders and require solutions that demand international collaboration, the university will establish strategic partnerships in regard to both research and education with selected research-intensive universities. Among other benefits, these partnerships will contribute to increased internationalisation.

**Interdisciplinary collaboration**

*Sub-target: More interdisciplinary activities.* Solving the challenges facing society requires interdisciplinary collaboration. For this reason, the university wishes to foster more interdisciplinary activities at the university, for example in relation to issues such as sustainability and social cohesion. The university is uniquely positioned to establish more interdisciplinary activities based in strong disciplines because it spans such a wide range of fields.
INITIATIVES

The university will continue the following ongoing initiatives:

- The Guild and the Circle U.-alliance
- Thematic interdisciplinary centres.

The university’s goal is to launch the following new interdisciplinary initiatives:

- Sustainability
- The cohesiveness of society.
Graduates are Aarhus University’s most important contribution to society, and they must have internationally competitive competencies which make them sought-after employees and prepare them for a changing world and a changing labour market. For this reason, the university’s goal is to bolster:

- Development of the degree programme portfolio
- Connections between students and the labour market.

Development of the degree programme portfolio

Sub-target: A future-proofed graduate competency profile. The university will adjust the competency profile of its graduates to align more precisely with the needs of both the private and the public sector without compromising on quality. The number of graduates with long-cycle post-secondary degrees on the labour market will increase strongly in coming years. This means that more graduates will need to find employment in the private sector or become entrepreneurs, since public sector demand is not expected to increase significantly.

Sub-target: Development of the continuing and further education of the future. The university’s goal is to meet society's increasing demand for the continuing education of the workforce through research-based further and continuing education, for example in connection with the increased digitalisation of society. The existing models for further and continuing education are under pressure. For this reason, the university wishes to work with new models that can meet the need for new competencies on the part of both graduates and the labour market now and in future.

Connections between students and the labour market

Sub-target: More degree programmes with business-oriented elements. The aim is to give all students the opportunity to collaborate with relevant companies during their studies. This will allow students to establish an affiliation with the labour market before graduation.
INITIATIVES

The university will continue the following ongoing initiatives:

- Educating more engineers
- Educating more IT specialists
- Adaptation of the graduate profile at the Faculty of Arts
- Adaptation of the MSc in economics and business programme
- The business initiative.

The university will launch the following new initiative:

- Develop further education programmes in digital competencies.
Development of research talents and research integration

The high quality of Aarhus University’s research, education and collaboration can only be maintained if the university continues to work with researcher talent development and the integration of research into degree programmes. For this reason, the university’s goal is to bolster:

- The PhD degree programmes.
- Research integration.

The PhD degree programmes

*Sub-target: Increased internationalisation of PhD degree programmes.* The university will attract more international talents to its PhD degree programmes and increase the international mobility of the university’s own talents. During the strategy period, the university will bolster the internationalisation of its PhD programmes by cooperating with the university's international alliance partners. This will enhance PhD students’ international networks and their opportunities for pursuing a successful career, either within academia or in other sectors.

Research integration

*Sub-target: More immersive modules in degree programmes.* The immersive modules will serve to further the university’s ambition to increase research integration in the degree programmes in order reach an even higher level of academic excellence.

*Sub-target: Increased interaction between students and researchers.* The university will foster a higher degree of researcher-student interaction, to ensure that students gain an even better and earlier introduction to the nature and methods of research. This will strengthen the students' own competencies and the academic quality of the degree programmes.
INITIATIVES

The university will continue the following ongoing initiatives:

- More senior members of academic staff per student*.

The university will launch the following new initiatives:

- Joint courses with partner universities and more study abroad
- Further development of talent tracks and longer Master's theses
- Earlier training in research methods.

*Permanent members of academic staff.
Implementation and follow-up

The 2025 strategy will apply for a five-year period. In connection with the development of the strategy, targets, sub-targets and concrete initiatives have been set, just as currently ongoing strategic initiatives and the strategic framework contract have been incorporated into the strategy. This means that quantitative performance indicators have already been defined for some of the initiatives. In the course of their implementation, performance indicators will be defined for the remaining initiatives.

The university will monitor the implementation of the strategy closely and draft action plans in collaboration with the faculties, schools and departments. Each year from April to June, the university will follow up on the indicators and ongoing activities for the past year, and will then determine the activities for the coming year. In this way, the university will ensure the availability of the necessary resources, administrative support and, not least, local and discipline-specific ownership of the strategy.

In addition, implementation and follow-up will also provide an opportunity for the university to launch new initiatives, which will enable the university to react appropriately to any alterations in its framework conditions, and not least meet new and unforeseen needs on the part of society. In this regard, the university’s goal is to respond with greater agility, thus increasing its contribution to society.