

Strategy follow-up 2021

Faculty of Arts
Aarhus University



AARHUS
UNIVERSITY



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Strategy follow-up 2021

In 2021 AU started to return to a normal level of campus activity, having experienced major new challenges for staff and students alike in 2020 owing to the corona pandemic. As things started to return to normal, the Faculty of Arts decided to allocate a certain amount of specific post-corona funding to the re-establishment of academic and social activities for students.

The faculty's strategy follow-up presents a range of projects and activities that reflect its visions and values in our four strategic areas: Research, Education, Collaboration and Social Engagement, and Organisation. A range of cases and a variety of data have been selected to illustrate the kind of activities that support the faculty's strategic goals.

Research

The faculty's research production and external research funding in 2021 were affected by the challenges and limitations resulting from the corona pandemic. And a number of significant grants had already been acquired in 2020 for implementation in 2021. The provision of quality teaching and supervision online was extremely time-consuming, as was the task of ensuring academic integration and coordination despite the imposition of partial or full lockdowns. These activities reduced the amount of time available to academic staff for the completion of publications and the acquisition of external funding.

There has been a positive development in relation to the Velux Foundation's HUM-praksis projects and other broad collaborative projects at our schools. For instance, in 2021 the faculty's researchers contributed to a wide range of research-based development, insight, new discoveries and solutions relating to social challenges. The first case describes Professor Mikkel Rytter's project on [the integration of quota refugees in Denmark](#). This project is supported by [the Velux Foundation's research funding for the humanities](#).

Case

New knowledge about the integration of quota refugees in Denmark

After a break of five years, Denmark has agreed to accept a number of quota refugees, with about 400 Congolese mothers and children being allocated to municipalities all over Denmark in the course of 2021 and 2022.

These mothers and children come from a UN refugee camp in Rwanda, and after arriving in Denmark they will be monitored closely by anthropologists from the Faculty of Arts in a project entitled "Reorienting integration: Family-to-family as a model in Congolese UN-quota refugees' settlement and orientation towards a new life in Danish worlds". This project involves collaboration with the Danish Center for Social Science Research, the Danish Refugee Council and Danish municipalities.

The project is led by Professor Mikkel Rytter and will monitor Congolese quota refugees as they settle in Denmark and build new lives in local Danish communities. This will be done in ethnographic studies that follow the everyday lives of these families, using official statistics to provide a more general description of the way in which this group copes with Danish society and the welfare state in the years ahead. The project will give researchers the opportunity to be involved from day one, helping them to understand the various ongoing challenges associated with the construction of a radically new life. The experience gained in this research project will then be passed on to the Danish municipalities and volunteer groups at the Danish Refugee Council throughout Denmark, thereby forming a model for the reception of future generations of quota refugees. You can [read more about the project here](#).

FACTS: External research funding

In recent years, the Faculty of Arts has enjoyed a steady and generally increasing level of success when it comes to attracting external research funding. In 2021 the level of funding fell in relation to previous years, although it's worth remembering that a record-breaking level of external funding had been achieved in 2020 (DKK 311 million). The extension and postponement of projects owing to the corona pandemic may have led to a drop in both applications and grants. In addition, lengthy lockdown periods and travel difficulties probably had a negative impact on people's motivation to launch new projects. In particular, funding from the EU and the Independent Research Fund Denmark declined in 2021. The level of funding fluctuates from one year to the next (cf. the figures for 2014 and 2017), but in general the overall level of funding has increased in recent years.

Total funding	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total funding for the Faculty of Arts (DKK million)	122	215	244	152	220	224	311	164

Education

The Faculty of Arts offers research-based degree programmes of high academic quality in a wide range of subjects. One of the faculty's most important contributions to society is the education of graduates with core academic expertise as well as cross-disciplinary skills, knowledge and competences.

Case

Onboarding and retention

The faculty wishes to retain as many students as possible, which is why we focus on first-year didactics with a view to smoothing the transition from upper-secondary education to university. At AU the Faculty of Arts has helped to develop and implement an onboarding resource called study@AU in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Development. The faculty has also been the main architect of a cross-faculty project called Studiefaglige refleksionsrum, which develops and tests a new format for the development of the students' learning and study competences which is closely connected to our research and teaching. A range of local projects have been launched with an increased focus on digital formats for academic writing and peer feedback. All these initiatives are framed by a research-based form of first-year didactics which has identified five key points of focus in terms of the students' wellbeing and learning outcomes:

1. Structure
2. Coping strategies
3. Activity
4. Relationships
5. Transformation

At the Faculty of Arts, study@AU has been included in the introductory material that new students can access when they start their studies. Study@AU has been given a generally positive evaluation by the students who have used it. This material will be put into general use in 2022, with the Centre for Educational Development collaborating with the student counsellors to continue to develop and work on its full integration for new students. In particular, the focus will be placed on finding out which parts of the existing introductory material can be replaced by the new material.

You can learn more here: <https://studypedia.au.dk/>

FACTS: ECTS credits earned per semester per student on BA and MA programmes

During the period 2019-2021 the Faculty of Arts increased and maintained the number of ECTS credits earned on its BA and MA programmes. At BA level the faculty has exceeded the target of 28.6 for 2021. There was a slight decline at MA level between 2019 and 2020, but in general the trend is positive – particularly in the light of the lockdowns imposed during the corona pandemic.

BA level	2019	2020	2021
ARTS	28.5	29.0	29.0
MA level	2019	2020	2021
ARTS	25.3	25.2	25.4

University teaching and didactics at the Danish School of Education (DPU)

In line with DPU's strategic goal of strengthening and supporting the students' academic competences, in 2021 the school launched an initiative aimed at developing its educational practice and educational ideals by turning DPU into a laboratory for university teaching and didactics. This initiative has two main components. One involves boosting staff competences, while the other involves strengthening DPU's position in this field.

In extension of these two components, the working group has identified two objectives:

1. DPU has a framework that helps to ensure that its academic staff are informed of (and base their teaching on) the latest research, development and practice in university teaching and didactics at all times. The aim is to ensure that the students are always presented with enthusiastic and inclusive teaching.
2. DPU has the capacity to develop, implement and experiment with new teaching formats in its own practice, and to initiate and carry out research in university teaching and didactics.

These efforts place the focus on the students' academic competences and regard the students as partners in their own learning processes.

DPU's working group recommends that competence development initiatives are launched at both individual and collegiate level. These initiatives are linked to the Danish framework for crediting university teaching competences and the two related competence dimensions: 1) didactic freedom of activity (individual), and 2) collegiate freedom of activity.

At individual level, experimental teaching is used – as well as specific courses or participation in academic networks with a view to achieving greater independence in terms of the organisation of teaching and education.

At collegiate level, competence development involves teaching and education in collegiate communities of practice; using networks as collective spaces for development; providing systematic collegiate feedback; and developing the module co-ordinator role to include increased responsibility for didactic issues.

Alongside this investment in stronger competences, the necessary space and framework must be created so DPU's researchers can become involved in major development and research projects relating to university teaching and didactics in which it is advantageous to include the students as partners. This initiative is anchored in the school management team, and a steering group will be set up including the research programme director and a member of academic staff as well as the head of school, directors of studies and 1-2 heads of department. By arrangement with the school management team, this steering group will decide which projects should be launched under the initiative, as well as establishing the framework for allocating resources.

One of the first steps taken to support the initiative involves setting up a platform for knowledge sharing about research and publications relating to university teaching and didactics among DPU's researchers.

The implementation of this plan started in early 2022 and will continue until 2024, by which time the initiative will be an integral part of DPU's operations.

Collaboration and commitment to society

In recent years, the faculty has been working to strengthen its commitment to society through close collaborations and partnerships with external stakeholders. A number of major research grants are obtained in collaboration with companies, ministries, municipalities, university colleges, upper-secondary schools, foundations, associations, NGOs and cultural institutions such as libraries, museums and galleries/art exhibitions. We also try to give the students useful experience of the labour market that awaits them when they graduate, as well as helping them on project placements and while writing their thesis in collaboration with an organisation or company.

Case

Associate Professor Helle Strandgaard Jensen, who teaches a course on the curation and communication of cultural history, is responsible for ensuring that assignments are set by potential employers for second-semester students on the Master's degree programme in history. The students practise the art of relating their academic competences to final users in a teaching format which is reminiscent of the TV programme "Labrador's Den".

Graduates in the humanities working at small and medium-sized enterprises (Academics in Business Life)

Academics in Business Life was a growth and competence development project for small and medium-sized enterprises. The purpose of the project was to strengthen collaboration between the business community, business councils and the university, as well as building bridges between small and medium-sized enterprises and new graduates from the Faculty of Arts.

This project, carried out in the period August 2019-December 2021, was supported by the European Social Fund (a total budget of DKK 12.5 million), and resulted from collaboration between the Faculty of Arts and six business councils from the Mid- and West Jutland region.

The project enabled new graduates from the Faculty of Arts to take up three-month project positions in small and medium-sized enterprises that needed the kind of competences that the graduates could offer. The new graduates gained concrete experience of using their competences in small and medium-sized enterprises, and the enterprises gained greater insight into the kind of tasks that graduates could perform for them.

Since the project period, Arts Karriere (which is where the project was anchored) has continued to focus strongly on the private labour market for humanities graduates, for instance by using communication material from the project period when working with the students, by developing a tool to promote discussions of competences by companies and students, and by continuing to collaborate closely with business councils (using company cases in the teaching, for instance).

You can learn more here: [Academics in Business Life | Aarhus University \(au.dk\)](#) and [Humanities graduates in the private sector \(au.dk\)](#)

Case

Labradors' Den

MA students on the course in cultural history know all about the concept of the Labrador's Den. The local version of this reality show, "The Labrador's den", is employed in the teaching and is more pedagogical than the version shown on TV, the aim being that the whole experience should be a useful part of the students' learning process. The students face a panel of Labradors' and pitch the projects they have been working on during the semester. The focus is on the communication and presentation of cultural history. The Labradors come from a variety of organisations (major industrial companies, small local museums and municipal offices, for instance). Each pitch lasts no more than three minutes, after which the students are given feedback on everything from the content of their product to the delivery of their pitch. There's no money at stake, but the products that are presented are often used by the organisations involved – or by the students themselves. This kind of collaboration sometimes starts not in the Labrador's Den, but at the beginning of the semester. During the first month of the course, the students visit a number of companies and organisations which are interested in solving a variety of communication problems, or which need help to reach new target groups. For instance a municipality which wants to persuade more people to hang out in the town squares; a major industrial company which wants to reach out to more families and young people; or a small museum which wants to attract commuters who use the nearby station on a daily basis. In all three cases, the students were able to provide innovative communication ideas after presenting their pitch in the Labradors' Den. AU has been collaborating with external partners on this course for six years now, and all the parties involved have clearly benefited a great deal. Companies and cultural organisations gain access to innovative forms of communication (tiny history books for the children of their employees, a guided tour of public toilets, or Tik-Tok videos about an ancient crypt, for instance). The Labradors' Den format teaches all the students how to pitch their ideas. But even more importantly, they are given the chance to use their special knowledge of history to create communication products. They learn to define and express the kind of expertise that they can offer to the labour market after graduation. And the Labradors' Den also teaches them to pitch their ideas effectively.

FACTS: Academics in Business Life

	2020	2021	l alt
No. of new graduates in project positions	17	17	34
No. of enterprises with a new graduate in a project position	21	33	54
No. of new graduates offered an extension by their enterprise	8	9	17

Organisation

The Faculty of Arts is a large and complex organisation characterised by a wide range of disciplines, decentralised and central functions, and a great number of supporting specialised functions. The continued development of the faculty's positions of strength in terms of research and education depends on all staff groups and functions throughout the faculty joining forces in a professional, close and trust-based collaboration with a view to achieving the faculty's development potential in full.

Case

Arts' uddannelser er attraktive og indgår i en bred fagvifte, der tilsammen danner en unik uddannelsesprofil. Med sine uddannelser bidrager fakultetet væsentligt til, at 25 procent af en ungdomsårgang får en uddannelse på det højeste niveau. Fakultetet har uddannelsesmiljøer med tradition for faglig og pædagogisk udvikling og er med et Institut for Uddannelse og Pædagogik og et Center for Undervisningsudvikling og Digitale Medier godt rustet til at udvikle nye digitale, innovative og interkulturelle undervisningsformer. Med uddannelser lokaliseret på store institutter og organiseret omkring solide fagmiljøer har Arts de bedste betingelser for at udvikle nye uddannelser af høj faglig og didaktisk kvalitet, der kan tiltrække mange studerende såvel nationalt som internationalt.

Changing the way the Faculty of Arts is organised

The faculty tries constantly to maintain the best possible form of organisation with a view to containing and supporting all its functions, including its broad range of research and teaching activities. During the winter of 2020-2021, the faculty management team discussed ways of maintaining and developing a flexible organisational structure to support the diverse research areas and degree programmes which characterise the Faculty of Arts. The faculty management team, the School of Communication and Culture, the School of Culture and Society, the Danish School of Education, the Administrative Centre Arts, the Faculty Liaison Committee/Faculty Occupational Health and Safety Committee, the Forum for Education and the PhD Committee/PhD programme directors discussed ways of strengthening the faculty's organisation, including the internal organisation of the School of Communication and Culture. And finally, the option of setting up a fourth school was also debated.

Based on these discussions, the faculty management team decided to

- maintain the current school structure
- ask the School of Communication and Culture to strengthen its internal organisation and decide whether it wants more than one board of studies
- set up a working group to identify collaborative structures in relation to our degree programmes and present proposals for possible adjustments
- set up a working group to provide proposals for a collaborative body for language subjects which can help to strengthen collaboration between courses with a language dimension at the School of Communication and Culture and the School of Culture and Society, as well as functioning as a point of access for external partners in the field of foreign languages

The task of strengthening the organisation will continue with due consideration for the need to comply with the relocation agreement.

As one aspect of the way in which the faculty is organised, the faculty management team discussed opportunities for strengthening the competences of our heads of department. A development project was launched to design a specific course for heads of department at the Faculty of Arts. This course will prepare the ground for the course in AU management, which is a basic management course in which heads of department are also encouraged to take part. The AU management course gives new managers greater awareness of the task of management at AU, and of how managers can ensure quality, efficiency, and a sense of direction and wellbeing in their respective departments.

Heads of department completing an AU management course		
2019	2020	2021
1	2	8

In 2022 the faculty management team are working with AU-HR to develop a specific course for heads of department at the Faculty of Arts, focusing on practical challenges and dilemmas such as how to be a manager for your departmental colleagues. This course will start in the spring of 2023.

Background

On 13 December 2019 Aarhus University adopted its strategy for 2020-2025, and in June 2020 the faculty management team adopted the strategy for the Faculty of Arts for the period 2020-2025. The faculty strategy is closely connected to AU's overall strategy.



