

# **Aarhus University**

## **Strategy 2013-2020**

*Aarhus University strives to be  
a leading globally-oriented university,  
strongly engaged with society,  
and supporting development, growth and welfare.*

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## Preface

Aarhus University seeks to be a leading globally-oriented university that, through its outstanding research and the education of graduates with relevant and sought-after competencies, promotes the development of society, both nationally and internationally.

In 2008, after undergoing a series of mergers with other educational institutions, Aarhus University set a new course for its future development. The university's vision was that it should take its place among the elite universities of the world and be a significant contributor to the development of society. In 2010, the university took a step further by embarking on a comprehensive academic development process. This created the necessary frameworks for a more productive utilisation of the university's entire academic range and competencies.

The strategy for the period 2013-2020 will intensify the university's continuing development – a development that is based equally on strong core disciplines and on interdisciplinarity, on high-quality, research-based education that provides additional challenges to especially motivated and able students, and on an intensified focus on internationalisation in the four core activities of the university, namely research, education, talent development and knowledge exchange. In this way, Aarhus University will continue to build on the results already achieved.

Competition for research funding and for talent will become even fiercer during the strategy period. Consequently, the university has set ambitious goals that will heighten its profile among the world's best universities.

The strategy has been realised with input from staff on all levels, and in all phases of the process. The strategy is thus based on the extensive work carried out in academic departments, main academic areas and core activities.

The strategy establishes the broad framework within which specific elements will subsequently be developed with full respect for the diversity which also characterises Aarhus University. On this basis, the strategy will be outlined in action plans in collaboration between management and staff to be implemented in their daily work of realising Aarhus University's vision for 2020.

**Vision:**

*Aarhus University strives to be a leading globally-oriented university, strongly engaged with society supporting innovation, growth and welfare.*

**Mission:**

*Aarhus University is a comprehensive, research university which creates and shares knowledge.*

**Values:**

*Aarhus University is a signatory to the European Universities' Magna Carta. Research freedom, independence, in-depth study, curiosity and critical interaction with the surrounding world are thus essential values for the university.*

**Motto:**

*Solidum petit in profundis*

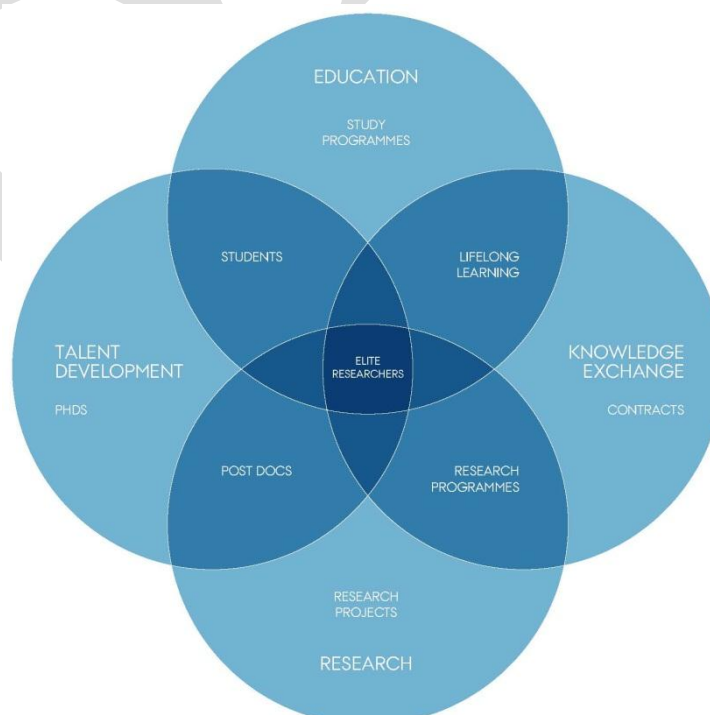
## The starting point for Aarhus University

Aarhus University's strategy for 2013-2020 confirms and strengthens the university's commitment to the course that it has already set. The strategy defines a clear profile that both sets ambitious goals and exploits existing strengths, and that will continue to enable the university to fulfil its role as a leading institution 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-based university that strongly prioritises its responsibilities to society and contributes to finding solutions to societal challenges.

The university's role in society will become ever more important as both the Danish and global society increasingly demands knowledge and competencies. Society justifiably expects universities to assume the role of cornerstone of the knowledge society. In consequence, universities must continue to supply graduates on all levels who can compete at an international level and provide research-based knowledge for the development of society. Universities must both play their part in and benefit from the growing international collaboration and increasing global mobility.

Aarhus University is in a strong position to live up to these requirements. The university is a strong, modern institution; in a short space of time, it has achieved a ranking among the top 100 institutions out of the almost 20,000 universities in the world. Since 2006, the university has roughly doubled its total number of students, its number of PhD's and its turnover. The university's organisation facilitates this growth while also giving its staff and students the opportunities for immersion in their core academic specialisations, interdisciplinary collaboration and the realisation of greater synergies between and across fields.

Aarhus University has developed an organisation that embraces 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 equal cross-cutting focus areas, each with their own management structure and staff fora. The university's strategy builds on the opportunities for collaboration that this university wide perspective permits.



*Outstanding research is the foundation for the university's other activities; together with education, talent development and knowledge exchange, it is what makes AU a coherent, modern university.*

Aarhus University's starting point is thus a strong position, with quality as its foundation. In all its activities the university aspires to use this strength to combine quality with stimulating and challenging opportunities for the greatest talents. Consequently, the university places particular focus on three overall strategic goals – goals that provide the framework for the entire strategy and underlie the four core activities of the university. Particular emphasis will be placed on *interdisciplinary research and education*, based on strong core disciplines and engagement with society; *high quality degree programmes and the development of talent among especially motivated and able students*; and *the strengthening of the university's international capacity*.

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

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## Vision

Aarhus University is closely engaged with society and wishes to strengthen its contribution to societal innovation, growth and welfare. The university is involved in open and innovative interaction with society on both national and international levels, and is a key motor for growth and development that adds economic, cultural and social value.

Strong academic core disciplines must be combined in new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration that will contribute to finding solutions to the societal challenges. These challenges are complex and cut across boundaries, sectors and academic subject areas. Therefore, solutions must be sought through partnerships that themselves cut across the boundaries of the traditional academic disciplines. Breakthroughs that transcend disciplines must be created, and the university's students must be trained to think and act across the boundaries defining traditional fields of research and study.

Global competition contributes to defining the framework for the university's opportunities. Aarhus University's participation in the competition for the finest talents among both students and researchers must be intensified in order to achieve greater circulation of talent internationally on all levels. The university must lead the way in establishing new research infrastructure that provides the best possible frameworks for research and attracts top scientists and scholars from the international research community. Degree programmes and learning environments must continue to be internationalised in order to establish cultural diversity as a strength of the university.

In this way, Aarhus University will strengthen its position as a leading global university with the clout to make an impact and to influence international policy development in research and education.






Outstanding research is the foundation for all the university's activities; together with research-based degree programmes, it forms the foundation for the university's activities and objectives. Aarhus University desires to ensure both breadth and depth in research and education, and at the same time to create optimal conditions for cultivating the talent of particularly highly motivated and able students. Offering them additional intellectual challenges will prepare such talented students for a range of key positions in Danish and international society. The combination of pervasive quality and a focus on talent development demands a strong university, and is crucial for the university's competitiveness and its contribution to the development of society.

Aarhus University's vision unifies the goals of its four core activities. These activities, separately and in combination, create the cornerstones of the work of realising this vision and of creating the Aarhus University of the future.

## Mission and values

The mission of Aarhus University is to create and share knowledge through academic breadth and diversity, 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 development, 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.

	<p>VISION</p>	<p>Aarhus University strives to be a leading globally-oriented university, strongly engaged with society supporting innovation, growth and welfare.</p>			
	<p>MISSION</p>	<p>Aarhus University is a comprehensive, research university which creates and shares knowledge.</p>			
	<p>VALUES</p>	<p>Aarhus University is a signatory to the European Universities' Magna Carta. Research freedom, independence, in-depth study, curiosity and critical interaction with the surrounding world are thus essential values for the university.</p>			
	<p>GOALS</p>	<p><b>RESEARCH</b></p> <p>Increase the number of research areas among the best in the world</p> <p>Attract more external funding</p> <p>Achieve research breakthroughs and focus on societal challenges</p>	<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Enhance the profiles of the university's degree programmes and graduates</p> <p>Accommodate student diversity</p> <p>Develop the quality of degree programmes in accordance with the highest international standards</p>	<p><b>TALENT DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>Offer researcher talent development at the highest international level</p> <p>Recruit, develop and retain researchers with outstanding talent</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 independent, research-based consultancy</p> <p>Develop continuing and further education activities</p> <p>Strengthen contributions to the development of civil society</p>
	<p>PREREQUISITES</p>	<p>Good working conditions</p> <p>Good study and work environment</p> <p>A visionary, accessible management</p> <p>Staff opportunities for continuing and further education</p> <p>An efficient, professional administration adequate to AU's needs</p> <p>Optimal economic and legal frameworks</p>			

*Aarhus University's vision unifies the university's mission, values, strategic goals and basic premises.*



## Research

The foundation of all the activities of Aarhus University is research of the highest quality. It is therefore crucial for the future development of the university to create the best possible framework and working conditions for researchers. Freedom and time for in-depth exploration are the foundations for research breakthroughs, which take place in the context of both strong core disciplines and interdisciplinary collaboration. At the same time, access to attractive and modern research infrastructure is a very important prerequisite for pushing the knowledge frontier forward. Aarhus University desires to ensure its researchers the best opportunities for strengthening their core fields and for increasing interdisciplinary collaboration. The objective is to give the university's researchers optimal conditions for contributing to finding solutions that will meet the grand challenges facing society.

### Current position

Aarhus University has established its place among the leading research universities in Europe. On the international ranking lists, the university is positioned among the 100 best universities in the world. 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, and many of the university's researchers have won highly coveted awards and grants.

### Strategic goals

#### **Increase the number of research areas among the best in the world**

Researchers' competencies and opportunities for development are crucial for the quality of research. In order to maintain and enhance its position as a leading international university, Aarhus University therefore desires to develop research and research management talent among researchers and to be an attractive partner and workplace for top researchers nationally and internationally. Therefore, creative and inspiring research environments at core discipline and interdisciplinary levels will be maintained and further developed across the whole of the university. And therefore, Aarhus University will also continue its determined efforts to develop and offer a unique and modern research infrastructure. This is an important prerequisite for researchers to be able to conduct outstanding research, and an important factor for attracting leading researchers and closing collaboration agreements with the best research environments nationally and internationally.

Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- Strengthen research environments and provide dynamic support for the most advanced research groups
- Prioritise and support the development of good research management
- Provide attractive and unique research infrastructures

#### **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 that the university attracts more external funding and thus provides the necessary flexibility and freedom for its research activities.

Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- Attract both talented junior researchers and high-profile senior researchers
- Prioritise resources for research support
- Win and coordinate more and larger EU research grants
- Attract larger research centres, key awards and more funding from private foundations

### **Achieve research breakthroughs and focus on societal challenges**

The prerequisite for major research breakthroughs and research of high international quality is that researchers have the freedom and the working conditions to concentrate on academic and societal challenges. Research breakthroughs are achieved both within traditional academic disciplines and through new interdisciplinary initiatives.

Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- Recruit and develop potential leaders of new research initiatives
- Establish new interdisciplinary centres and research projects
- Strengthen interdisciplinary research projects geared towards talented younger researchers
- Establish research networks within and across the main academic areas
- Strengthen collaboration with the business world and the public sector

## Education

Aarhus University will prepare its graduates for the global labour market, which increasingly seeks employees with both academic qualifications and competencies in the areas of collaboration, innovation and global understanding. The university's research-based degree programmes must be of high quality and must be developed in close collaboration with employers, academic staff and students. During their studies, students will be given the working conditions and opportunities to develop their full potential through innovative and creative teaching and learning processes.

### Current position

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. The university's graduates are sought-after and valued on the labour market. Aarhus University consciously exploits the strength it derives from its character as a university in open interaction with the society it belongs to. 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

#### **Enhance the profiles of the university's degree programmes and graduates**

In the future, society will face multi-faceted problems. Solving them will require strong professional and academic qualifications, both with and across disciplines. Consequently, the university's graduates must have useful and productive competencies that are both specific to particular fields and more broadly applicable. It is particularly in the interaction between fields 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, in close collaboration with alumni and employers
- Develop the interdisciplinary dimensions of courses and approaches to learning in the university's degree programmes in general
- 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 student diversity**

Aarhus University wishes to accommodate the diversity of its student body by intensifying the research basis of education in more differentiated, innovative and motivating learning environments. This will allow the university to meet society's expectations that students begin their studies earlier and complete them more quickly, as well as the demands of the labour market for graduates with relevant, productive competencies. 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 and broader social contexts.

Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- Develop digital learning environments to support learning before, during and after formal teaching sessions
- Develop learning environments that focus on innovation, entrepreneurship and intercultural competence
- Create opportunities for talent development in the form of especially challenging courses
- Ensure that the work invested in teaching and degree programme development is visible and achieves recognition

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

In order to ensure the relevance of its degree programmes, the university will continue to develop the range of programmes it offers and the form and content of individual programmes, so that they are always of the highest quality. There must be a common, explicit conception of quality across the university that ensures that all degree programmes are research-based, answer to society's requirements, and are offered in attractive study environments.

Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- 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 student satisfaction and well-being through the development of the study environment in collaboration with students and academic environments
- Ensure that degree programmes are continuously adapted to the needs of society

## Talent development

For Aarhus University, a core task is nurturing and developing research talents who are attractive internationally and who create value – defined in a broad sense – for society in general and in specific professions. The university will focus on researcher talent development and create learning environments that will allow the most motivated and able students to begin developing their talent as early as possible. The university's recruitment and development of talent, in combination with research, makes a decisive contribution to the quality of the university's degree programmes and knowledge exchange activities.

### Current position

Aarhus University has a long tradition of success in 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 its number of PhD students significantly; furthermore, all PhD courses have been gathered into four large, well-organised graduate schools. As a result of this development, many younger researchers at Aarhus University have received recognition and prestigious awards in recent years and have gone on to attractive positions in international universities and companies.

### Strategic goals

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

Highly qualified graduates create added value for society and help to give the university a level of visibility and a stamp of quality that are vital for attracting outstanding 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:

- Further strengthen the university's talent development from Bachelor's degree level upwards, and develop pilot projects for highly motivated students with able talents
- Strengthen the internationalisation of the talent development programmes
- Develop strategic partnerships with noted universities
- Use its alumni network actively in career guidance and talent recruitment

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

Global competition to recruit the brightest research talents have become tougher in recent years. It is essential for Aarhus University to attract and retain the most outstandingly talented researchers. Aarhus University desires to offer attractive and clear career paths and to ensure that the community within which talented international post-doc's can develop is as inclusive as possible.

Consequently, Aarhus University will:

- Develop a tenure-track model
- Ensure diversity among talented students
- Participate actively in the international careers market and facilitate the employment of talented graduates from Aarhus University at high-ranking international universities

- Focus on talent recruitment through academic and professional networks
- Strengthen the recruitment of talent to the Aarhus Institute for Advanced Studies

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## Knowledge exchange

Aarhus University desires to put the university's knowledge to work through closer and innovative relationships with the business community, public authorities, organisations and society in general. The goal is to create economic, cultural and social value and to develop the competencies of participating partners. Knowledge exchange builds on the foundation of the university's strong research activities and results, not least its interdisciplinary research collaborations, and thus contributes to finding solutions to the societal challenges on local, regional and global levels. Aarhus University desires to create a common understanding among staff and students of the importance of knowledge exchange between the university and society at large.

### Current position

Over the years, Aarhus University has developed extensive, vital knowledge exchange activities. In the energy and environment and the agriculture and food areas, the university has a unique position as supplier of research-based consultancy services to public authorities. Similarly, the university has set national and international standards for collaboration in the area of health in its cooperation with the Central Jutland Region concerning Aarhus University Hospital. In addition, the university has many partnerships with business and industry, performs significant transfer of new knowledge and technology, and offers many continuing and further education courses. Through its interaction with the larger world, Aarhus University is making a significant contribution to the further development of society at large. On both a national and a European scale, the economic value of the university's knowledge exchange activities is significant.

### Strategic goals

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

Aarhus University desires to contribute to added value, innovation and competitive ability for society by strengthening and further developing its collaboration with the business community and the public sector through entrepreneurship, innovation in teaching, cooperation on specific projects, effective transfer of technology, careers services and alumni activities.

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
- Enter into more cooperation agreements, accept more Industrial PhD students and appoint more private-sector researchers to part-time industrial professorships

#### **Consolidate and develop the university's independent, research-based consultancy**

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 and broaden the academic breadth of its research-based public sector consultancy activities
- Recruit staff for public sector consultancy and develop staff competencies in the area of advisory/consultancy services
- Increase dialogue and collaboration with public authorities and the business community

- Make its research-based public sector consultancy activities and services more visible both internally and externally

### **Develop continuing and further education activities**

Continuing and further education play a crucial role in the improvement of the general levels of education and competencies in society. Aarhus University therefore desires to contribute to lifelong learning by strengthening its range of continuing and 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 continuing and further education activities, so that the needs of existing and future employers and professions can be met
- Include continuing and 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 advisory and consultancy services, capacity building, 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
- Use the university's competencies and capacity in public and private leadership fora



## Prerequisites for realising the strategy

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 framework the university operates in.

The university's support functions 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. Aarhus University is already focusing on ensuring this and will continue to do so throughout the strategy period. The aim is that the university administration should be adequate to the university's needs, efficient and professional. Consequently, the university will continue to develop and adapt its administrative organisation and administrative performance in the light of its academic ambitions and strategic goals. Furthermore, long-term planning must ensure that the university has at its disposal the physical infrastructure that is adequate to its academic goals.

Staff and students must experience the university as an inspiring setting for their own work. This requires good working conditions, opportunities for continuing and further education for all employees, a good study and work environment and a visionary management that is readily accessible.

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. Attracting 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
- Carry out professional management development
- Ensure that the administration is modern, professional and adequate to the university's needs
- Enter into dialogue with relevant actors with a view to bringing about and ensuring the optimal economic and legislative conditions for the university's activities and development

## Follow-up and evaluation

Aarhus University's strategy 2013-2020 covers a seven-year period and will be divided into two periods, one from 2013 to 2016 and the other from 2017 to 2020. Activities for the first period will be sketched out and planned during the first six months of 2013. The first period will be evaluated in 2016, and the strategy will be adjusted as necessary at the same time as the activities are planned out for the remaining period up until 2020.

The activities for both periods will be described in specific action plans drawn up within the main academic areas, departments, centres and interdisciplinary 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 Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education. Reports will be made annually in tandem with the development contract.

Follow-up on the strategy will be carried out annually. This follow-up will form the basis for the prioritisation 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, linkages with the development contract, and continuous work towards the achievement of the university's vision for 2020.