

Season's greetings

Dear all,

The holidays are fast approaching, and I want to share the Christmas speech from the staff meeting on 20 December with those of you who were unable to attend. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a lovely holiday and thank you for your efforts in 2022. In addition to meeting up with colleagues, the many participants were given three excellent presentations by Stefan Kjerkegaard, Anne Mette Nyvad and Michael Mose Biskjær. They presented three ways to work with 'impact': through reflections on Humour in one of the many "Tænkepauser", in research projects in collaboration with the region on language acquisition and autism and, lastly, through humanistic innovation in teaching.

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What a year 2022 has been. On the threshold of 2022, we were primarily concerned with the coronavirus – which almost feels like a small problem now. The financial framework for the university, Arts and our school has changed significantly. We already knew this to be the case, but the pace of the change has been overwhelming. Initially, the degree programme resizing was manageable, but our general admission statistics, with a few exceptions, the slightly decreased student activity, uncertainty about the taximeter increase, war in Europe, the energy crisis and the dent made in our financial reserves all make the financial framework unstable and require us to act immediately.

This is why you will experience restrictions on appointing part-time academic staff and a limited, slow and cautious staffing planning. You will also experience restrictions on operating expenses.

Notwithstanding these restrictions, I want to focus on all the positives that take place: We teach, enter into agreements, publish and have ideas for projects, and many of you have received funding for exciting projects that will support our research, which is the backbone of our school and our key to contributing to culture and knowledge in society. I would like to thank you for this.

In our WPA advisory group and in the liaison and occupational health and safety committees, we are currently working on issues related to our work environment and well-being. There is a lot to be done. Among other things, we have prioritised work on stress, recognition and a good working culture. These are complex issues, and in uncertain times it is no less important to maintain our focus and assess how we can move forward with these issues at both school and department level. As an example, it is clear to me that there is often a lack of clarity – and sometimes a lack of speed – with regard to decisions and workflows, and I want to improve this issue. Solving this will not solve everything, but it is a good place to start. I wish to thank those of you who have taken on this task.

The political winds more than indicate that, in addition to tighter finances, we will need to rethink our degree programmes. The politicians and the new government build their visions for education on the work of the Reform Commission; the Commission recommends more continuing and further education, an increased focus on business-oriented competencies, an alteration of the admissions system (more people enrolled in 'welfare degree programmes'), as well as a changed structure of Master's degree programmes, which in most cases would be reduced to 1 year. The latter point has been included in the new government platform, entailing a major reform of our degree programmes, which we will need to address and seek to influence in the new year. Regardless of the outcome, the vision process is based on the expectations that we will need to work on graduate unemployment and

business-related competencies. Consequently, we need to continue to get better at promoting and showcasing our work.

Many departments are now focusing on ways to combine the academic depth of study programmes with the competencies that are in demand in a variety of companies and public sector institutions. In addition, the research committee has focused on the theme of 'impact' and new ways to achieve and showcase the impact of our researchers, teaching staff and graduates. Meetings with, for example, the Innovation Fund Denmark and the municipality, as well as a presentation by Davis Budtz, have in various ways contributed to our discussions on how to open new doors and enter into new collaborations. It has been a real pleasure to follow the process. Naturally, research impact is a broad term, and our research certainly bears relevance to and impacts our surroundings in many different ways – through our graduates, research contributions and communication.

In other words, much of our research is already oriented towards the outside world, and many of the degree programmes we offer include sought-after competencies - we are not disconnected from the world, we are closely linked to it.

We have a solid foundation for working with the reform. Very few people would think that shorter degree programmes and cost reductions in themselves could be particularly conducive to the level of knowledge in society, but let us focus on the fact that humanistic research does indeed contribute to an understanding of the scope of major societal challenges and their solutions.

Our strategic focus on cohesion, digitisation and foreign languages will be just as important in the coming years. Additionally, in collaboration with the other schools at Arts, we are currently focusing on culture and health, and in collaboration with other faculties and external partners in the region, we are focusing on how we can contribute to the fields of disease prevention, treatment methods, equality in the healthcare system, etc. By virtue of our research environments and our students, we can also contribute to the fields of sustainability, climate and inequality. Collaborating with the cultural and creative industries also brings our competencies and fields of study into play, allowing us to contribute to the growth and well-being of many people.

Undoubtedly, major tasks lie ahead in 2023 and onwards as we start planning the processes to meet the reforms.

But first, let us enjoy the Christmas holiday. Let us take a break and spend time with our family and friends. The break is well-deserved, and I want to wish you all a wonderful holiday with your loved ones.

Best wishes,
Unni