
Strategy 2012-2017

**School of Business
and Social Sciences**

Aarhus University



INTRODUCTION

The strategy of Aarhus University's School of Business and Social Sciences for the period 2012-2017 sets out how the school aims to build in the future on the results and experiences of the two internationally recognised constituent units – the former Faculty of Social Sciences and the former Aarhus School of Business. Hence, the aim of School of Business and Social Sciences is to ensure a position as a leading international research and educational institution benefitting students, businesses, organisations, the public sector and society at large.

Mission of School of Business and Social Sciences

As a broad business school, our mission is to add value to society by creating knowledge within and across the disciplines of business and social sciences and by educating our graduates to become innovative and responsible individuals with a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of a global world.

Vision of School of Business and Social Sciences

We aim to be a leading international broad business school through excellent research, talent development, knowledge exchange and research-based education.

The school's efforts to achieve its mission and vision will be guided by a clear set of goals and actions referring to the four main strategy dimensions of Aarhus University: education, research, talent development and knowledge exchange, supporting and contributing to the mission and vision of Aarhus University:

Mission of Aarhus University

Aarhus University is a comprehensive, strongly research-oriented university that creates and shares knowledge.

Vision of Aarhus University

Aarhus University strives to be a leading globally-oriented university with a strong engagement in the development of society.

DESCRIPTION

School of Business and Social Sciences is a broad business school, i.e. a school covering both traditional business disciplines, such as business economics, finance, accounting, organisation, strategy, management, marketing, entrepreneurship and business communication and disciplines usually found in social science faculties, such as economics, political science, public administration, psychology, and law. The school is the result of a merger within Aarhus University between Aarhus School of Business and the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The broad business school is one of the largest schools in Europe with more than 16,000 students, about 250 PhD students and close to 450 faculty members. The school is also host to several large internationally well-known, externally funded, research centres. The research and research-based education at the school cover all areas of the former Aarhus School of Business and the former Faculty of Social Sciences. In addition, the school contains engineering degree programmes at AU Herning with close connections to the business economics programmes.

In the future, the school's engineering programmes will be closely coordinated with the engineering programmes at the Faculty of Science and Technology at Aarhus University. Likewise, the language components in the business communication programmes will be coordinated with the language programmes at the Faculty of Arts at Aarhus University in order to harvest possible synergies within the university.

STATUS

Research and education

Research-based teaching is the foundation of the degree programmes at School of Business and Social Sciences, and the recognition of the value of teaching and learning at all levels across the school is essential. In the coming strategy period, the school will focus on further strengthening its highly recognised degree programmes which are characterised by high quality of learning and promising job prospects for graduates. Furthermore, the school will strengthen and develop its successful educational brands to provide graduates with comprehensive understanding of the global challenges and ensure that their qualifications meet the demands of both domestic and international job markets. Through explicit actions determining high quality of education, the school will strive to secure the national and the most prestigious international accreditations within its portfolio of academic disciplines.

School of Business and Social Sciences will facilitate collaboration and dialogue across academic, organisational and geographical boundaries without compromising the academic freedom of individual researchers, who are the core, persistent assets of the school. At the school, there is a common interest in taking the lead in delivering high-quality research and education and the school wants to support and improve the conditions for its students and faculty in order to achieve its high and ambitious goals of becoming an attractive partner and contributor to the global community in general.

Today, School of Business and Social Sciences faces many challenges which will be addressed in the coming strategy period. Higher education will become even more important in the future, which requires that the school creates high quality learning through teaching in new and more effective ways to meet the expectations of its stakeholders. Furthermore, an important element to ensure a continuous contribution to development of society is the school's portfolio of programmes within continuing education, designed to specialise graduates in handling various challenges of a complex knowledge-based society.

The school will focus on further improving the impact and the quality of the research undertaken at the school and widen the range of areas in which its research can contribute to advancing research frontiers, motivating individual researchers to publish in high-quality outlets.

Talent development

Talent development before, during and beyond the formal PhD programme presents another challenge to School of Business and Social Sciences with a view to positioning it among the international elite. Talent is spotted, nursed and developed largely by the school's academic departments, and the aim of the school is to develop general, transparent and internationally competitive and comparable career paths from pre-PhD-level training to tenured faculty employment and beyond.

Interdisciplinarity

It is obvious that many important challenges to society require an interdisciplinary approach. However, in order to do proper interdisciplinary research it is necessary to fully master the core disciplines, otherwise the interdisciplinary approach becomes a sign of low quality. School of Business and Social Sciences facilitates a proper interdisciplinarity, as many of the disciplines within the school will have to be imaginatively inter-combined to meet future challenges of society at large. In other words, lessons and approaches from e.g. psychology, communication, politics and law combined with those of marketing, finance, accounting and economics will contribute to keeping the school at the frontiers of knowledge and innovative thinking.

In addition, in-depth focus on traditional business disciplines combined with in-depth knowledge of disciplines such as law, economics, psychology and political science combined with experimental learning will challenge students to discover new insights. Teaching students to examine information from different perspectives to find creative solutions to the world's challenges and providing them with the opportunity to work collaboratively with fellow students from other closely related disciplines will enrich and enhance their skills and ability to adapt to any marketplace, to view and understand the world broadly and to be resourceful enough to change with the times, thus equipping them to become future leaders and specialists.

Internationalisation

Acting in a globalised world implies a challenge in itself and requires a continuous focus on flexible and adaptive knowledge as well as a global mindset. The school believes that the strength of its research and graduates will be optimised by hiring a significant proportion of faculty with international background, by providing students with the opportunity to go on exchange, by placing an increasing number of PhD graduates at other leading academic institutions and, finally, by recruiting talented international students to the school's degree programmes. The different aspects of mobility will become even more important to graduates and faculty in the future, and the school believes that an increased collaboration in research and education activities across its academic disciplines will provide for an advantageous starting point in meeting this demand. Furthermore, an international focus combined with scholarly openness and cooperation in research and teaching across the school's academic disciplines provides the school with advantageous quality coverage of major business and social science disciplines.

In the years ahead, the school will continue working towards further internationalisation, while still maintaining a strong focus on domestic markets and needs as well. This will be achieved through expansion of networks of both academic and corporate partners in Denmark and abroad with whom the school can share experiences, exchange knowledge, do benchmarking and develop common initiatives in alignment with the four main pillars of the modern Aarhus University – education, research, talent development and knowledge exchange.

Knowledge exchange

A very important element of knowledge exchange is to render services to the wider community as well as to the academic community. Services such as participation in the public debate through media appearances, public lectures, participation in public commissions and private and public boards have been an integral part of the activities of many of the school's faculty members in the past, and such services will only be increased in the future. Further increasing the visibility and knowledge of the school may also contribute to attracting highly qualified students both domestically and internationally.

STRATEGIC GOALS AND ACTIONS

Education

The school's strategic goal is to improve the quality of the research-based education provided at the school and increase the graduates' employment opportunities on domestic and international job markets.

School of Business and Social Sciences will ensure that all of its students, from bachelor's to PhD level, including international full-degree and exchange students, fulfil the necessary qualifications and enter the programmes with expectations and motivation to become active and successful students and ultimately attractive graduates to both domestic and international job markets by having good communication and presentation skills. By increasing the number of incoming and outgoing exchange students, the school aims to internationalise students' learning and broaden their knowledge of global cultures and challenges.

The school believes that an increased international focus will contribute to increasing overall student satisfaction, especially the students' opportunities to interact across nationalities and with academics on all AU Campuses.

The school will focus on simple, robust, flexible and cost-effective programmes and programme structures rooted in deep knowledge of the individual disciplines which allow it to integrate new subject areas and easily enter into interdisciplinary collaboration nationally and globally.

Metric for Success

The metric for measuring success will be the employment and remuneration rates of the school's graduates relative to those of graduates from comparable domestic and international programmes.

Actions

In order to achieve its strategic goal within education, School of Business and Social Sciences will:

- Ensure a high level of qualifications at entry by attracting top end high school students and by expanded use of qualification-based access to relevant programmes.
- Emphasise students' individual development by supporting them in identifying the right educational path, and by extending formalised elite education to more programmes.
- Significantly increase the fraction of teaching conducted by active researchers.
- Significantly increase the focus on didactic development of faculty through courses on supervision, teaching in a multicultural classroom, experimental learning and through comprehensive instruction in the use of modern educational IT.
- Increase the collaboration with businesses, organisations and the public sector through AU Career and AU Alumni services to promote employment prospects of graduates.
- Form a limited number of strategic educational partnerships with respected peer universities.

Research

The school's strategic goal is to significantly increase the quality of research output. A necessary condition for this is to significantly increase the external research funding.

The overarching general research objectives of School of Business and Social Sciences are to improve research quality and widen the range of research at the very frontier. Research output from the school has been steadily increasing for years, and numerous of the school's researchers and research groups are working at the international frontier in collaboration with colleagues from prestigious universities worldwide. However, too much research is still accompanied by a low-risk publication strategy with frequent publication in journals below the best and most cited field and general journals, and in monographs and books by less prestigious and less cited publishers.

Increased quality of research output must lead to more publication in high-quality outlets. To further support this strategic focus, the school will develop clear and comparable standards for publication in high-quality outlets and, consequently, support departments in linking individual researcher rewards and career advancement to performance as measured according to these standards. These quality and quantity standards will be dynamic and strike a suitable balance between conserving incentives for departments and faculty to publish in traditional core general and top field journals and inducements to publish in high-impact journals outside and between traditional field boundaries in order to encourage novelty, academic openness and collaboration across fields.

Furthermore, increased external research funding is inevitable for enhancing the research base and securing academic autonomy at department level. Thus, faculty members, departments and the school as a whole are required to navigate an environment in which external, topical and limited-length project fundings play an increasing role. This will be composed of funding from sources that largely support researcher-driven basic research initiatives, such as the Danish National Research Foundation and the European Research Council, as well as sources that mainly support more applied and strategic research and innovation initiatives often involving industry such as the Danish Council for Strategic Research, a very large fraction of EU framework programmes and most initiatives involving large private domestic and international potential donors and research partners.

Metric for Success

Since excellent research requires ample funding, and since attracting external funding is predicated on innovative research ideas and internationally competitive CVs, important metrics for measuring performance will be the amount of external research funding attracted as well as the scale of publication in top research outlets.

Actions

In order to achieve its strategic goal within research, School of Business and Social Sciences will:

- Increase publication in high-quality outlets, i.e., research journals with high but field-dependent impact factors and other prestigious outlets in accordance with the field traditions.
- Develop clear and comparable standards for publication in high-quality outlets and introduce department (or field) lists of preferred outlets.
- Improve faculty support in relation to applications for external research funding – especially from international and private sources.

Talent Development

The school's strategic goal is to further strengthen and improve the recruitment of the most talented researchers.

Talent development concerns a period of more than ten years from the spotting of potential research talent at the end of undergraduate studies to the maturing of senior researchers at the end of junior faculty positions.

With this strategic goal for the coming strategy period, the school will strive to ensure that employment at School of Business and Social Sciences is a natural career choice for the most talented researchers and upcoming researchers.

Metric for Success

The success of the school's efforts will be measured by the ability to attract highly qualified applicants and retain top researchers in faculty positions at senior levels.

Actions

In order to achieve its strategic goal within talent development, School of Business and Social Sciences will:

- Deepen initiatives and models to recruit the most talented students both internally and externally into the PhD field programmes.
- Participate actively in domestic and international job markets for university faculty, particularly for junior faculty.
- Facilitate the use of flexible and competitive career paths, including tenure-track positions as a mode to attract faculty.

Knowledge Exchange

The school's strategic goal is to further improve its portfolio of continuing education programmes to reflect the needs and demands of society, with particular focus on MBA and MPA programmes.

An integrated part of the activities of an academic institution is knowledge exchange and contribution of different kinds of activities and services to stakeholders and society as a whole. The complexity of society, globalisation and the knowledge-based economy are all well known concepts. The challenge is to meet a growing need for up-to-date knowledge, which means that the need for continuing education is increasing.

The school will focus on further strengthening the activities and services within continuing education, networks and relationships, alumni and career services, as well as public consultancy and research, as it acknowledges the importance of knowledge exchange and close dialogue with society.

The school will build on the experiences from its close relationships with businesses and institutions as well as its alumni, who are considered a very important resource in this endeavour.

Maintaining a close dialogue with stakeholders will serve to ensure that the school constantly develops and intensifies its connection and relevance to society as well as enhances the extent and quality of its continuing education programme portfolio.

Metric for Success

The success of the school's strategic initiatives within continuing education will be measured by completion rates and improved earnings of the portfolio of programmes.

Actions

In order to achieve its strategic goal within knowledge exchange, School of Business and Social Sciences will:

- Strengthen and increase corporate partnerships to identify the need for continuing education as well as research collaboration.
- Establish partnerships with international peer universities to improve the quality and scope of initiatives within continuing education.
- Expand the availability and quality of alumni activities across the school with particular focus on continuing education.

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Mission

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Vision

We aim to be a leading international broad business school through excellent research, talent development, knowledge exchange and research-based education.



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