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## **Strategy for AAU 2010-2015**

### **Introduction**

Aalborg University is a young, internationally oriented network university whose target is to contribute to the knowledge of the global society, the prosperity, welfare and cultural development of the Danish society, and to support regional knowledge dispersion and development. This specific profile contains the rationale of AAU's strategy and activities.

AAU's profile was developed for the purpose of value creation within education and research in dialogue with the surrounding society. The essence of the central output is the education of highly qualified and dedicated graduates who have worked in an integrated manner with industry, the business sector and public institutions already during their studies, as well as solution oriented and interdisciplinary research that meets both quality and relevance criteria. AAU's strategy 2015 is intended to outline AAU's specific profile and role in the overall Danish university landscape.

AAU Strategy 2015 should contribute to carrying on the positive development which the university has experienced during the past five-year strategy period and to establishing new strategic focus areas.

AAU's visions and strategic goals are to a large extent rooted in the study programmes and the academic environments at the departments and in the service sections, where the strategy must stand the test and lead to concrete results. AAU Strategy 2015 must therefore form the basis and the point of departure of the more concrete strategies which are being developed by main areas, departments, administrative units and the library.

With its strategic goals, the strategy should also form the basis of the coming negotiations with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation regarding a new development contract for the period 2011 and onwards.

## **Core Values**

### **Shared academic values**

AAU shares a number of basic academic values with other universities. These values are:

- Freedom of research
- Freedom of speech
- Independence of religious, political or commercial interests
- Scientific honesty and ethical integrity in science
- Pursuit of academic and educational excellence
- Formation through science
- Constructive critique

### **Distinguishing AAU values**

AAU is a new and modern university established during a time when knowledge, creativity and the ability to cooperate have become increasingly more important prerequisites for doing well, both for the individual, for enterprises and for the society in general. Thus, AAU's activities are founded on a number of new contemporary values. AAU is characterised by a problem based project methodology and a multi-disciplinary research practice which contribute to constituting AAU as a problem based, cross-disciplinary and innovative university in the sense that the project work of the students and the research activities of the university are to a wide extent established and combined in relation to the demand for new knowledge which is expressed by society and which often cuts across traditional academic disciplinary boundaries. The close cooperation between the university and the surrounding society has contributed to developing a set of specific values which constitute the basis for the outward-oriented, friendly and accommodating corporate culture which is characteristic of AAU:

#### **Creativity**

AAU considers it a fundamental value to break new ground within research, education and exchange of knowledge with our surrounding society. The university is constantly searching for innovative solutions within research by challenging traditional academic and scientific paradigms through cross-disciplinary cooperation and fruitful interaction between basic research and applied research and between research and education –in the shape of both research based education and education based research. Study programmes are constantly developing in a creative interplay between the university, our students and the recruiting bodies, and in this process the attempt to solve new problems derived from the areas in which the students will be engaged after they leave the university forms the basis of our study programmes and their development. Finally, the university is constantly searching for new creative forms of cooperation with our surroundings with a view to creating, exchanging and applying new knowledge.

#### **Openness**

The university regards openness as a prerequisite for the ongoing development of the creative and innovative potentials of the university. This involves openness to dialogue, new thoughts and ideas, to constructive critique and differing views. Internally, openness is also displayed through the maintenance of an open dialogue across research-related paradigms and alignments and in the co-influence and co-responsibility for learning and management of students and staff, for instance through inclusion of students and staff in decision making processes which affect them. Externally, the openness of the university is displayed in its engagement in regional, national and global development, in openness towards other universities, institutions and enterprises, and in the location of the university as an open meeting place and debate forum and its contribution to developing and consolidating the open democratic society.

#### **Cooperation**

The multiform types of cooperation at the university are characterised by an atmosphere of confidence and respect, and are at the same time boundary-breaking and of influence in a constant search for new cooperation forms, areas and partners. Internally, it is a question of cooperation across faculties, departments and sections in all its forms between managers and staff, between lecturers and students, among researchers, and between academic staff and technical and administrative staff. Externally, it is a question of cooperation with trade and industry, local authorities, regions, ministries and organisations as well as with other institutions of research and education. In this respect, AAU sees itself as a network university which is always prepared to consider a binding form of cooperation, if this is in the interest of both parties as well as society in general.

## Mission

It is AAU's objective to offer study programmes and conduct research within the humanities, engineering, science, social science and medical science. As a young, internationally oriented network university AAU's objective is to contribute to the knowledge of the global society and to the prosperity, welfare and cultural development of the Danish society, and to support regional knowledge dispersion and development. This is pursued through research, education of researchers, research based education, research based public-sector services and the exchange of knowledge with our surroundings, always to the highest international level.

Within this framework AAU has a *specific* mission within

- Problem based learning
- Interdisciplinarity
- Innovation

Our *problem based approach* ensures close interaction at the university between theory and practice, brings the university and the surrounding society closer together and trains students in solution oriented conduct through the application and development of the problem based project method of work. AAU is to be found among the world's leading universities as regards problem-based project work.

*Interdisciplinarity* within research and education is an offshoot of the problem based approach and one of AAU's strengths and specific areas of responsibility.

The *innovative approach* that emerges from the problem based, interdisciplinary approach will ensure the university a prominent position as a knowledge creating and culture bearing institution that contributes to technological, economic, social and cultural innovation in society through entrepreneurship and the transfer, communication and exchange of knowledge. AAU should maintain its position as one of Europe's strong innovative universities.

## **Overall vision**

### **A complete university**

AAU will expand its position as a university with an attractive internationally oriented research and learning environment which offers all the programmes characterising a modern university and conducts interdisciplinary research which transcends academic boundaries and contributes to building up Denmark as a knowledge society.

### **A centre of knowledge and learning**

AAU will create an environment where research and research based learning are given equal weight and interact as equal activities, and where students and researchers alike are able to satisfy their scientific curiosity and to develop as far as their commitment and talent will take them in close interaction with one another and with society in general.

### **An attractive workplace with a good atmosphere among colleagues**

AAU will focus on the well-being of staff and students by creating an attractive study and work environment in which academic and professional competencies go hand in hand with well-being, commitment and job satisfaction.

## Visions and goals

### Visions for AAU in general

The role which AAU has played from the beginning in Northern Jutland – based on the PBL study form with broad recruitment, completion on time and a high degree of employability as well as active solution focused research cooperation with the surrounding society has subsequently become in demand in other parts of the country. As a response to this, AAU has established activities in Ballerup (in cooperation with Copenhagen University College of Engineering) and in Esbjerg (in cooperation with University of Southern Denmark). AAU's two campuses in Ballerup and Esbjerg are being developed by expansion of research groups locally, while at the same time new research based study programmes are being accredited, offered and implemented at the two locations. AAU's campuses in both Esbjerg and Ballerup will be used actively to strengthen cooperation across the universities in the respective regions.

AAU embarks on this new strategy period in the firm belief that extended cooperation between Danish universities will contribute to creating synergy in the shape of Danish university research and university education at the highest quality level both nationally and in an international perspective. Closer cooperation between universities and other institutions of education will also contribute to meeting overall targets of attracting a larger number of young people to the university programmes and to other institutions of further education in Denmark.

Through the results of research and education, the university contributes with basic value increment in society. A university is particularly dependent on the ability of researchers to work independently and together with their peers to produce original, innovative and even surprising cognitive leaps within and across academic fields. It is therefore essential that a university is governed on the basis of confidence and trust, since academic results are not, by nature, suitable as planning and monitoring parameters. This does not mean, however, that the framework of research and education cannot and should not be monitored. Both research and pedagogical work thrive best in well-functioning management and administration frameworks which support the research and education activities and provide academic staff with the possibility to concentrate on their core tasks. It is therefore essential to establish a division of labour between managers, academic staff and administrative staff which eliminates duplication of work and places the tasks with the staff members best qualified to solve them. This distribution of work between administrative units at AAU is based on the practical principle that administration jobs should be carried out as closely as possible to the managers and environments serviced by the administrative unit in question. An effort will be made to establish a principled definition of the administrative tasks of academic staff and their need for administrative support. At the same time, AAU will further develop our administration and our university library to remain well-functioning support facilities for university activities and interaction with society in general.

### Strategic goals for the entire AAU during the period 2010-2015

AAU will

1. Maintain its position among the best 5% of universities in the world.
2. Further develop and strengthen its profile as a network university based in Aalborg and with campuses in Aalborg, Esbjerg and Ballerup.
3. Cooperate with other universities, research institutions, educational institutions and enterprises in order to achieve maximum synergy in relation to coinciding targets within research, education and knowledge exchange.
4. Maintain and further develop an efficient incentive structure and well-run service functions which will support the academic priorities of the university.
5. Enhance AAU's external profile.

## Research

### Vision for research

Modern solution focused research functions well in and is nourished by close dialogue with more basic research. Through its research AAU therefore wishes to promote both cognition and utility value by enhancing the academic basis for the understanding of humankind, society, nature and culture, and by providing a basis for utilisation of this knowledge. Initiatives which enhance both strategic and basic research will be provided with strengthened framework conditions in the coming strategy period. This will be achieved through a special commitment to the excellent research groups which have proved to be in the world league, combined with a broader commitment to well-established national and international research groups distributed across the entire range of academic disciplines at the university.

It is necessary but not sufficient in order to develop the university's role in the globalised knowledge society to cooperate with the surrounding society in a common effort to solve problems and generate values in society. The role of the university in society can only be maintained and enhanced if the university takes the lead in its efforts to generate new knowledge and create conceptual breakthroughs which will again pave the way for technological, economic, social and cultural leaps and solutions which were not previously considered possible.

Interdisciplinarity is an offshoot of the problem based approach and one of AAU's strengths and specific areas of responsibility. Therefore incentives to support interdisciplinary cooperation will be supported. This is an apparent way in which to make optimum use of AAU resources, and it also provides a possibility for contributing with innovative knowledge which it is AAU's specific responsibility to utilise and develop – in relation to both research based education and education based research.

Interdisciplinary research cooperation is a specific strength of AAU's research and a central prerequisite for the university's fulfilment of its task as a Danish knowledge entrepreneur in the global world. Strengthening university departments and academic environments may in itself result in new silo-formation, if the effort is not vigilantly followed up by initiatives to secure interdisciplinary cooperation. During the strategy period interdisciplinary work at AAU will receive extra attention, and new instruments and cross-disciplinary fora will be supported by both bottom-up and top-down management initiatives. AAU will utilise our unique combination of academic and profession oriented disciplines to secure strong international research areas across both traditional disciplines such as basic research and application-oriented research.

AAU will safeguard the freedom of research necessary to ensure a permanent capacity for re-adjustment, thus enabling new promising academic areas to be introduced and at the same time enhancing existing academic areas with growth potential. Likewise, AAU will draw on its special opportunities for generating new cognition provided by the problem based approach on the basis of its combination of academic disciplines, basic research and application-oriented research.

The university will strengthen its participation in the competition for external research funds when this will contribute to the strengthening of the research areas of the university.

### Strategic goals for research during the period 2010-2015

AAU will

6. Strengthen selected research environments in the world league, develop nationally leading research areas and ensure free research and internationally strong research environments within all academic fields of the university.
7. Support interdisciplinary research among strong research environments, for instance by strengthening the development of organisations and by removing obstacles to cooperation across organisational boundaries.
8. Secure the nursing of exceptional research talents through a high intake of PhD-students, strengthen the university's doctoral schools and strengthen cooperation between these and similar schools, in order to secure the recruitment basis for academic staff, among other things, and to contribute with research capacity to the business world.
9. Support university research cooperation with external partners and participation in global and international research cooperation, for instance by participation in EU programmes.
10. Secure free research within all academic disciplines of the university, whether directed towards problem matters in society or towards basic research.

## Education

### Vision for education

Today AAU offers a wide range of study programmes including all areas characterising a modern university. In the coming strategy period AAU must ensure the consolidation of the educational area with its many new initiatives.

AAU practices a type of education which results in a high degree of employability in the graduates and which makes it possible to recruit and educate students from different backgrounds, including talented young people from non-academic homes and environments who wish to complete a university education.

Through problem based and project organised education AAU will continue to ensure close interaction between theory and practice in its programmes. The university's research based programmes must provide students with a competence profile which will be an excellent stepping stone for their careers.

Within all faculties AAU will offer a wide variety of academic as well as vocational programmes characterised by student demand, relevance and applicability in relation to society's need for highly educated labour. AAU will maintain elite programmes within areas in which relevant preconditions apply. AAU wishes to profile itself more explicitly as an institution with a strong portfolio of further and continuing education programmes for highly educated staff and managers in the business world and in the public sector in areas with a sustainable demand.

The university will contribute to raising the level of education in Denmark in general and in Northern Jutland, South-western Jutland and the west end of Copenhagen, in particular by endeavouring to offer free access to all students who have the preconditions for completing the study programme of their choice.

By cooperating with general and vocational upper secondary schools as well as primary and secondary schools, AAU will contribute to breaking down barriers to commencing university studies which exist among many well qualified young people from homes with a non-academic background, and the AAU will work in favour of continued free university education in Denmark.

AAU wishes to be recognised for high-quality education and for educating graduates with high professional and social competencies. The university will strive to strike a balance between teaching and examination requirements, so that study programmes are completed within the stipulated time with high completion rates. The university will continuously develop its problem-based project educational model in relation to current demands and expectations, and AAU will ensure the development of the didactic competencies of academic staff in relation to problem-based and project-organised teaching.

Through efficient courses of study, AAU will be the university with the shortest distance from intake to job compared to other Danish universities. Along the way, and on completion of their studies, the students' competence profiles will be supported in order to enhance their job potential.

AAU will strengthen and optimise relations to graduates, who may act as ambassadors for AAU and liaisons to the business world, thus increasing recruitment to ordinary study programmes and further/continuing education.

### Strategic goals for education during the period 2010-2015

AAU will:

11. Be in the lead internationally within the development and application of problem-based project work in education.
12. Develop distance learning methods and ICT-supported learning processes for the promotion of problem based project work.
13. Be the university with the highest total share of students who complete their studies within the stipulated time and who compare favourably with the best in relation to quality and accommodation of the demands of the labour market.
14. Contribute to covering a local and national need of a university educated workforce and contribute to meeting the government's goal that 50% of a youth cohort complete a programme of further education, for instance by supporting pattern breakers.
15. Enhance further and continuing education, for instance by the supply and organisation of part-time master programmes.
16. Establish a strong health education main area which will help develop and renew medical science research and education in Denmark.

## Communication

### Vision for communication

AAU is active in a dynamic and vivid dialogue with the surrounding society. The university communicates knowledge to society in numerous ways, for instance through its production of graduates, publication of academic works, research and education cooperation with business enterprises and institutions, hosting of conferences, seminars and workshops, through press and media and through knowledge transfer via public-sector services.

AAU intends to contribute to improving the possibilities of business enterprises in the global market of advanced high-technology products and services with high knowledge content. Through exchange of knowledge and cooperation with the surrounding society, the university will act as a knowledge creating and culture bearing institution and contribute to technological, economic, social and cultural innovation.

This will be achieved through the education of graduates who have been well prepared for a professional career through research cooperation with the business world and the public sector and through the provision of ideas and inventions developed by university researchers as part of their research as well as through communication and continuation of cultural traditions.

AAU will work to promote knowledge intensive entrepreneurship and innovation. The university will cooperate with local and regional companies and business development agencies and with science parks, enterprises and universities nationally and internationally in order to promote knowledge based enterprises.

AAU will integrate an entrepreneurial culture in relevant programmes and encourage its students and researchers to test ideas and inventions with a commercial perspective through new or existing enterprises as an international role model within the area.

AAU has the best possible point of departure for servicing the public sector with research based counselling: A long tradition of problem-based science at a high international level and an equally long tradition of innovation cooperation with external partners.

During the strategy period this favourable point of departure will be used to further develop research-based public-sector services, which is a significant future business area for the university. Research-based public-sector services constitute an extremely efficient method of converting university research into practice through public regulation, norms, structural policy and other public-sector initiatives. At the same time, research-based public-sector services constitute an income source which may contribute to the continuous growth of the university's academic activities.

Great importance will be attached to the matching of mutual expectations between public-sector institutions and the university, so that public-sector needs will be met without compromising the academic qualities of the university.

The long-term vision is for AAU to become one of Denmark's significant contributors of research-based public-sector services, and for the university to become widely recognised for supplying unbiased public-sector counselling of the highest quality, characterised by relevance in relation to the needs of the public sector requiring it and by academic quality of the underlying research.

### Strategic communication goals during the period 2010-2015

AAU will

17. Be among the leading universities in Europe within innovation and academic entrepreneurial culture, for instance by participating actively in European Consortium of Innovative Universities, and through its net-based communication of peer-reviewed or otherwise quality-tested research.
18. Engage actively in local and regional development seen in the light of the challenges of global competition, including further development of the match-maker scheme and match-points, and cooperate actively with over a thousand enterprises and institutions.
19. Expand its research-based public-sector services from 2010 to 2015 and win the public-sector service tasks which the university has so far accomplished, and participate in the competition for relevant tasks which the public sectors in question decide to subject to competition.
20. Parallel to its endeavours to preserve the majority of current funds for research-based public-sector services, to seek cooperation as a partner with other research and consultancy institutions which have not yet merged with a university, provided the tasks are of professional relevance and commercial interest.

## **Internationalisation and globalisation**

### **Vision for internationalisation and globalisation**

The world is facing a paradigm shift, and in this process there is a great need for new solutions to a wide variety of globally important problems. The universities have a central co-responsibility for contributing to the development of the global society. Knowledge obliges, and during the coming period AAU will not only continue and upscale problem-based learning and solution focused research, but will also work actively to develop new types of knowledge sharing.

At AAU, one in ten students, about half of all PhD students and one in four of the academic staff are foreigners. AAU recruits talent and experience at all levels – PhD, postdocs, assistant professors, associate professors and professors – from all parts of the world. AAU will create a good framework for international research and educational environments, for instance through shared information, reception and counselling functions. For decades, researchers at AAU have developed and used their international networks and participated in international competition as regards publication, profiling and funding. A number of AAU's study programmes have been developed with English as their language of study. The university has a large number of international students, and many Danish students take part of their education outside Denmark.

One future strategic step will be to extend the level of successful internationalisation by actual globalisation. AAU must be prepared to utilize new opportunities efficiently, when, as is expected, education programmes abroad and cooperation on shared academic agrees become possible. In order for this process to become successful, it is necessary that legislation is in place, and that the development of the required globalisation and internationalisation competencies is integrated in the overall university strategy for competence development and quality assurance in order to promote cooperation relations globally, among other things. International activities must be developed so as to become integrated aspects of the management framework of the departments and of the study programmes. Through a coordinated effort in favour of international and global activities it will be ensured that synergy is reaped across faculties and academic areas. AAU will continue to develop its international profile and position within research and education. University researchers and students must be motivated to cooperate across national frontiers and must be well prepared professionally, culturally and in terms of language skills to act in a globalised world.

AAU will give greater priority to cooperation on capacity building in the fields of research, education and institutional activities in third world countries together with other universities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Development Cooperation, trade and industry and national and international organisations.

### **Strategic goals for internationalisation and globalisation during the period 2010-2015**

AAU will:

21. Encourage further development of international cooperation relating to education and research and the exchange of students, researchers and research results as well as other relevant staff together with the approximately 800 high-quality universities worldwide which AAU is actively involved with.
22. Offer programmes, build up units and establish networks abroad in fields that will enhance the university's research and education.
23. Maintain Danish and English as parallel languages. This means that staff are free to express themselves in Danish and English, dependent on the context in which they are speaking, and that staff are obliged to be able to understand both Danish and English. AAU will therefore contribute to enhancing the English and Danish language competencies of university staff.

## **Work and study environments**

### **Visions for work and study environments**

AAU will focus on the welfare and job satisfaction of staff and students by creating attractive work and study environments characterised by a high level of professional competence, appreciation, openness, commitment, creativity and responsibility, with a view to nourishing the best potentials in students and staff.

As is the case for all knowledge intensive enterprises, AAU is characterised by a high degree of self-management among its staff. Researchers and other staff often make an extraordinary effort, and as the present years see a larger increase in the number of tasks than anticipated in our budgets, there is a need for an active personnel policy which takes care of the relationship between tasks and resources and the work environment factors which are particularly important for the support of core activities at the university. This applies to both research and education environments as well as to the technical and administrative sector of the organisation. AAU has taken its first step towards a broad effort to promote a good work environment through the work place evaluation and development process which was implemented in 2009-2010, and which maps out important focus areas for the years ahead.

In all its activities AAU will support diversity, since diversity in research, education and cross-institutional cooperation is believed to provide both academic and social values. Diversity as regards gender, age and cultural background will receive utmost attention during the coming strategy period. Equal rights as a framework condition and value generating balance between genders, nationalities and age groups at the university should create equal opportunities for anyone with talent, cooperation skills and energy. Attention will also be directed towards accessibility to the workplace and study facilities for staff and students with special needs. The university will be a socially responsible workplace.

It is AAU's aim that academic environments are characterised by respect, openness and acceptance of differences, and that the straight-forward and appreciative social conventions between management, staff and students continue to be developed. Competence development of university managers and staff are considered an important aspect of personnel policy. AAU will be an open, flexible workplace with dialogue based decision-making processes. AAU attaches importance to an open dialogue between management, staff and students, thus securing co-influence for staff and students on university activities and development.

AAU will be an attractive and professionally developing workplace for its staff and students. The study form makes it possible for the university to offer an environment in which students are in close contact with their supervisors and their fellow students. The university will further develop a cooperative culture in which student questions will be answered in physical and social environments where work and learning facilities for students, academic staff and technical and administrative support functions are mixed with each other. AAU will endeavour to provide staff and students with the best framework, thus enabling them to develop both professionally and socially.

AAU is characterised by an outward-oriented, friendly and accommodating corporate culture, and AAU will cooperate with the public and business sectors on making the local environment an attractive place to live and work for staff and students with a variety of cultural and sports-related activities and educational opportunities for university students and staff.

### **Strategic goals for work and study environments during the period 2010-2015**

AAU will:

24. Further develop an attractive work and study environment for staff and students by implementing an active personnel and work environment policy and by securing an inspiring study environment for the students.
25. Endeavour to secure gender equality in professional careers, improve the gender balance in university study programmes, and encourage a productive multiplicity among staff and students.
26. In continuation of the 2009 work environment survey implement the action plans for all departments and sections as well as for main areas and the university as a whole with a view to increasing job satisfaction among staff, for instance by focusing more on appreciation, cooperation across personnel groups, adaption of work load to available time, better information about management decisions and co-influence of staff.
27. Secure continuous improvements in study environments on the background of the evaluation of study environments. This will be implemented in connection with the further development of physical facilities in the three university campuses.
28. Secure recruitment of well-qualified academic and technical/administrative staff through a favourable reputation, a large number of PhD graduates, good recruitment and introduction policies and well-run service functions for university staff.
29. Secure co-influence of students and staff on management processes on the basis of well-functioning cooperation fora, efficient communication and dialogue at all levels.

## **Sustainable campus development**

### **Vision for campus development**

As a central institution in the knowledge society the university must also be a vibrant physical meeting place for all citizens with an inquisitive mind. University campuses must be well-run and provide an attractive physical setting for research and educational activities as well as for the planned and casual meeting between students, researchers and visitors. AAU campuses must also include good examples of new sustainable solutions, which may serve as inspiration for their surroundings.

AAU considers it one of its essential tasks to contribute actively to a sustainable development locally, nationally and internationally. AAU will improve its physical framework on the background of a sustainable campus development which gathers university activities in the Main Campus, Aalborg City Centre, University Campus Esbjerg and University Campus Ballerup.

AAU will work for a more sustainable development – in the surrounding society as well as on campus. This will be implemented both through local initiatives in departments and sections, and through common initiatives implemented by the university environment committee and the Technical Services Unit of the university.

Thus, AAU will, among other initiatives, support a sustainable campus development by means of concrete targets for sustainable operation of the university and integration of relevant sustainable aspects in the study programmes.

AAU will give priority to university campuses developing into good settings for a fruitful and active campus life for students, staff and visitors alike.

### **Strategic goals for campus development during the period 2010-2015**

AAU will:

30. Endeavour to make university premises and outdoor areas the settings of an attractive academic and social campus life.
31. Prepare a complete sustainability strategy and a complete sustainable plan for the physical extension of the university in Aalborg, Ballerup and Esbjerg in cooperation with the Danish University Property Agency and the local authorities in Aalborg, Ballerup and Esbjerg, and take concrete initiatives to implement environmental improvements and CO<sub>2</sub> reductions at the university.
32. Further develop distance teaching methods and video conference technology in order to support learning and cooperation across the geographical locations of the university.