Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies

Adopted by the University Board, 12 December 2019
Common values\(^1\)

Uppsala University upholds the free pursuit of knowledge in education and research and stands up for academic integrity, diversity and quality. The independence of universities is a cornerstone of democracy. Moreover, it is an essential prerequisite for the freedom of individuals to choose their education and the ability of research to provide sustainable solutions to the challenges facing society. The University seeks to contribute to open and knowledge-based public debate with freedom of expression and human rights at its heart.

Academic freedom, collegial governance and student influence are fundamental principles at the University. All staff and students share a responsibility for the University’s development. The University’s activities are characterised by equal opportunities. The internal culture is distinguished by open, objective and critical discussion in which ideas and scholarly theories are constantly reformulated and questioned. The credibility of science and good research practice are defended. The University will preserve and enhance its diversity and its role and visibility in society.

The University is regulated as a government agency and is therefore subject to legislation on its governance, requirements for the correct legal management of official business, and other matters. Collegial influence plays a central role in the organisation. The University has a decision-making structure in which academic leaders are appointed for fixed periods on the proposal of electoral colleges or elected assemblies, and academically qualified individuals are in the majority in management bodies that decide on the contents and quality of education and research. The students have an active role in the University’s operations, are involved in educational development and participate in consultations and decisions.

\(^1\) This section is also in the Rules of Procedure for Uppsala University (UFV 2017/95)
Foreword

Uppsala University aspires to strengthen its position as a world-leading university. This requires education and research to play a prominent role in society and enjoy public confidence. The University also needs to hold an autonomous position with respect to the government, the business sector and funding bodies. Uppsala University contributes to development and innovation locally and nationally and is an active party in the pursuit of sustainable social development.

Uppsala University’s status and credibility in society depend in turn on the University behaving in a responsible, transparent and inclusive manner, and standing up for fundamental ethical principles, democratic values and equal opportunities.

The University also needs an ability to continuously develop and renew its education and research, so as to meet steadily changing circumstances and challenges in society and working life. This means ensuring that education and research environments have sufficient inherent capacity for renewal, and creating scope to allow new initiatives to arise.

Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies is intended to enhance the University’s status as a globally leading higher education institution, its position in society and its capacity to continually renew itself so as to meet present and future challenges.

This document describes the University’s goals and ambitions in the short and long term, along with fundamental requirements for achieving them. It focuses more on the goals – what the University wants to achieve and why – than on strategies for how to achieve the goals. This is a conscious choice. The University’s breadth, diversity and decentralised decision-making organisation make it natural to lay down overall goals at University-wide level. By and large, the business of fleshing out the goals and designing strategies for achieving them belongs more at an operational level in the disciplinary domains, faculties and departments.

Achieving our common goals requires the involvement of all of the University’s employees and students. Working and studying at Uppsala University entails certain obligations. The University must encourage and support staff and students to enable them to develop their fields, methods and organisations freely, boldly and with integrity. Having said that, this presupposes a joint assumption of responsibility for the broader research and education environment through collegial commitment, a positive staff culture and active student participation.

Eva Åkesson
Vice-Chancellor
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Education and research for a better world

The mission of Uppsala University is to gain and disseminate knowledge for the benefit of humankind and for a better world. The University is part of and defends the open society. Education enriches society with knowledge and fosters active and critically thinking members of society. Those who are educated at Uppsala University acquire knowledge, skills and approaches that enable them to participate in and lead the future development and renewal of society, and to engage in continued, lifelong learning.

Our research advances the frontiers of knowledge and develops methods to better understand fundamental natural, human and social phenomena, as well as contributing by scientific methods to solutions and knowledge bases for major societal issues. Uppsala University is open to the wider community. External collaboration is an integral part of research and education and contributes to sustainable solutions to the challenges facing society.

The University rests on the idea and fundamental premise that investments in education and research contribute to a better future. Our University will put all its breadth and combined strength into supporting sustainable development, engaging with the wider community and promoting openness and respect.

Sustainable development – the most important challenge facing society

The present and future challenges facing society largely concern the need for sustainability. The UN’s 2030 Agenda contains 17 sustainable development goals. The concept of sustainable development is understood in a broad sense and the goals are challenging. They span economic, social, political, technological and ecological aspects and involve local, regional and global perspectives.

As a full-scale research university, with deep specialist knowledge and a skills base that ranges across a great diversity of fields, Uppsala University is well equipped to contribute to sustainable development. If this potential is to be fully realised, the necessary subject specialisation must be supplemented by increased efforts to initiate and carry out transdisciplinary education and research, as well as further development of the University’s many interfaces for collaboration.

Uppsala University aspires to a leading role in the transition to a more sustainable society. The education and research we conduct translate into new knowledge, better technology, improvements in the organisation of society and changed patterns of behaviour. The University will also contribute to sustainable development in its own activities. This requires us to set an example in the management of finite resources and to actively address the climate impact of our own activities.

Collaboration in education and research

The University operates at the heart of the society to which it belongs. In both education and research, contacts and interaction with other actors in society and industry are crucial. Collaboration enables the academic knowledge base to make an impact and be of use in society, while also providing new inspiration for education and research.

Collaboration with the wider community locally, nationally and internationally is a natural and integral part of education and research. In a comprehensive university, collaboration will obviously assume varying forms and involve varying content in different fields. However, collaboration is fundamentally equally relevant for all parts of the University, no matter whether the external partner is a company, a government agency, a local authority or region, or a civil society organisation.
collaboration is predicated on respect for the integrity of science and an understanding that the University operates under different conditions and with different goals than companies and other collaboration partners.

**Equal opportunities and gender equality – for attractive, open and inclusive environments for study and work**

Equal opportunities are a matter of rights for the individual and quality for the University. An equal opportunities perspective must be mainstreamed in all parts of the organisation and the University’s study and work environments must be characterised by openness and respect.

What we mean by ‘equal opportunities’ is that everyone working or studying at or contacting the University has equal rights and opportunities, regardless of their legal sex, gender identity or gender expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, age or social background. Systematic efforts are needed to widen participation to reflect the social and ethnic diversity of society. Teachers, researchers and students must be able to participate in and contribute to all parts of the University’s activities, whatever their background or gender.

Fundamental principles of openness, legality, impartiality, freedom of opinion, transparency and respect apply to university staff as they do to all public employees.
Overall goal: education and research of the highest quality and relevance

Uppsala University’s overall goal is to conduct education and research of the highest quality and relevance. The University is an integrated environment for education and research. The backbone of our activities is outstanding education and research across a broad range of fields in which staff and students together create a rich environment for education and knowledge.

Uppsala University will maintain and develop a leading national and international position that makes us attractive to staff and students, as an international partner for educational and research cooperation, and as a collaboration partner for other actors in society. This position both builds on and assumes that we achieve our overall goal: to conduct education and research of the highest quality and relevance. Our education and research must place us on a par in terms of quality with the best universities in comparable knowledge nations.

Learning and research environment for quality and relevance

**Education** of the highest quality grows out of the interaction between teachers and students. The contents and educational approach build on a scientific foundation. Our courses and programmes attract motivated students who contribute to educational development by means of active participation and constructive dialogue. They give students the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills and approaches that enable them to meet the needs of society. The range of programmes offered and contents of courses evolve in dialogue with alumni and representatives of the world of work and contribute to lifelong learning.

**Research** of the highest quality is conducted in accordance with good research practice and carried out independently, skilfully and boldly. It is innovative and distinguished by scholarly depth. Our research seeks answers to the most important questions, within the discipline or in a broader societal perspective, and helps to advance the frontiers of knowledge. Collaboration with the wider community is a natural, integral part of such research and contributes – directly or indirectly – to solutions to the sustainability challenges facing society. The ultimate goal is for research results to make a difference in society in the long term.

A good **learning and research environment** is secure, stimulating and challenging for students, teachers and researchers. It is distinguished by openness, intense scholarly discussion, a culture of quality and renewal, equal opportunities, a good work environment and respectful relations between students and members of staff. Such environments offer both physical and digital infrastructure, in the form of libraries, lecture halls, study spaces, pedagogical aids and research infrastructure.

Students must have good conditions for study and their psychosocial situation must be noticed and improved. A good study environment trains the ability of students to acquire, compare and critically examine different perspectives, theories and methods. A good research environment is characterised by a high attendance rate, active participation in seminars, and opportunities for planned and unplanned meetings. Individual researchers strive to maximise the quality of their own research and take collegial responsibility for the overall environment.

Strengths and challenges

Uppsala University is a research-oriented higher education institution. Research and third-cycle (doctoral) education account for more than 70 per cent of the balance-sheet total. The balance between research and education varies between disciplinary domains and faculties, and still more between individual departments. Strengthening the connection between education and research is a
challenge throughout the University. Another challenge is to create conditions for increasing the volume of education, both in terms of an expanded educational mandate from the state and by increasing the number of students paying tuition fees.

Uppsala University performs strongly in student recruitment, both nationally and internationally. The University offers a rich experience, in which students’ unions, student nations and other student associations contribute to an attractive educational and study environment. Uppsala has student exchange agreements with around 400 foreign universities and the number of internationally recruited students is increasing. Having said that, there is scope to further increase our attractiveness as an educational institution.

The capacity to conduct top quality third-cycle education in many different subjects is a particular strength. At the same time, it is a challenge to offer all doctoral students a research environment that is conducive to their development.

Uppsala University has a decentralised organisation with strong disciplines and autonomous departments, faculties and disciplinary domains. The University’s internal organisation, educational programmes and career systems are largely structured along disciplinary lines. In essential respects, development is driven by initiatives from below.

One of the strengths of the University lies in the many individuals, groups and environments that strive for excellence in education and research. The University performs well in terms of its ability to attract resources for research projects in the face of competition when the criterion is scientific excellence. Our research is published in leading journals or by high-profile publishers.

The strength that lies in intradisciplinary basic research needs to be supplemented by initiatives to stimulate challenge-driven research, which often requires both transdisciplinary cooperation within the University and well-developed collaboration with other actors in society. However, the decentralisation and emphasis on initiatives from below make it a challenge to bring about powerful, coordinated initiatives. Research infrastructure is increasingly large-scale and expensive, placing growing demands on the academic leadership at various levels to achieve prioritisation and concerted efforts.
Development goals for education and research

Based on the strengths and challenges identified above, six development goals are formulated for education and research at Uppsala University. These goals will guide the development work conducted at various levels. They are intended to reinforce the ability to stimulate, take up and prioritise between good initiatives for the renewal of education and research.

1. Expand education and strengthen the connection between education and research

The range of courses and programmes offered will be varied and flexible so as to stimulate tailor-made degrees with unique combinations of subjects and lifelong learning. Contract education will be offered to meet the needs of society and individuals. Work on developing eLearning and student-activating types of instruction will be stepped up. More courses and programmes will integrate methods for managing large quantities of data and exploiting the potential offered by digitalisation and artificial intelligence. The University will strive to increase the volume of education, focusing on:

- Being the first-choice alternative for Swedish students and attracting more international students.
- Increasing the range of internationally advertised second-cycle (Master’s) programmes with strong links to research.
- Increasing the number of places in freestanding courses.
- Developing more transdisciplinary programmes and courses based on new combinations of subjects, preferably across disciplinary domain boundaries.
- Ensuring the volume and breadth of third-cycle education and that all doctoral students belong to or have access to a stimulating doctoral education environment.

2. Develop research excellence and strengthen the capacity to attract prestigious grants in international competition

A publicly funded research university has a particular responsibility to create conditions for the long-term, curiosity-driven quest for knowledge that inspires the most fundamental research. The strength that lies in individual researchers and teams driving the frontiers of knowledge forward through top-quality basic research must be nurtured and further developed. The transition to open science must take place while respecting and preserving the quality-driven mechanisms that exist in established academic publishing. The University will work to:

- Maintain its nationally leading position in the competition for untied research funding.
- Strengthen its capacity to attract excellence funding in international competition, not least from the European Research Council, by more clearly supporting researchers applying for such funding.
- Be a leader in terms of proactive promotion of good research practice and ethics, and offer good support and good infrastructure for secure storage and open availability of data.

3. Strengthen transdisciplinary and challenge-driven research

The University will develop more high-profile, thematically oriented research environments, particularly linked to sustainable social development. Researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds will cooperate on common problems, in collaboration with partners and stakeholders outside the university sector. Forms for organising transdisciplinary initiatives will be developed to
ensure that emerging thematic initiatives are linked to existing discipline-oriented research environments and support the connection between research and education. The University will work to:

- Strengthen its capacity to obtain external research resources from funding bodies that primarily support challenge- and needs-driven research, such as Vinnova, Formas, the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (Mistra) and the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research, in Sweden, and from the European framework programmes.

4. Coordinate and concentrate the University’s resources

The University will strengthen its capacity to carry out concentrated, coordinated initiatives in education and research, and not least in the area of infrastructure. Conditions will be improved for developing proposals, coordinating priorities and pooling resources. This will make it possible to free up scope for new prioritised educational, research and infrastructure initiatives. The University will work to:

- Establish systems – at department, faculty, disciplinary domain and University level – that encourage the regular production and prioritisation of proposals for new initiatives and their insertion into ordinary operational planning processes.

5. Exploit the potential of Campus Gotland

The education and research environment at Campus Gotland offers particularly good opportunities for testing new paths and exploiting the potential of multi- and interdisciplinarity and regional collaboration. Campus Gotland will contribute to the capacity of the University to meet the challenges facing society in the future, for example in the area of sustainable development. Campus Gotland will be a living environment with a high presence of staff and students. The target of 1,500 full-time equivalent students at Campus Gotland lays the foundation for continued development. The University will work to:

- Create organisational conditions for integration and multidisciplinary cooperation at Campus Gotland within the framework of the model incorporating activities at Campus Gotland in the University’s faculty structure.

6. Develop collaboration as an integral part of education and research

The University will take a proactive and coordinated approach to collaboration, both as a means of increasing the quality and relevance of the University’s education and research, and as a means of turning new knowledge to account in society. The perception that collaboration is an integral part of education and research will be more widely embraced throughout the University. The University will work to:

- Clarify incentives for developing expertise in collaboration as an aspect of pedagogical and research expertise.
- Further facilitate the creation of long-term, mutual collaborative relationships in both education and research.
- Further strengthen cooperation with the University’s strategically most important partners, including Region Uppsala and Uppsala University Hospital.
Strategic priorities
Alongside the development goals, Uppsala University is actively seeking to advance the general conditions for education and research of the highest quality and relevance. The University’s efforts focus on five strategic priorities. These are quality assurance and enhancement, internationalisation, education and research infrastructure, talent attraction and career systems, and support functions and the wider university environment. These priorities are general prerequisites for the development of education and research.

Quality assurance and enhancement
The University’s quality assurance and enhancement system is based on the existing culture of academic quality, which is actively maintained, continuously reviewed and renewed by staff and students, with the support of management at all levels. A good balance must be struck between quality assurance and quality enhancement, and between what is regulated in common and what is shaped within departments, faculties and disciplinary domains. The quality assurance and enhancement system will lead to needs-driven analyses and measures, and will contribute to education and research of the highest quality and relevance.

Staff and students share the responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. The University management has overall responsibility. Each disciplinary domain/faculty is responsible for the quality of education and research in its own field. At departments, the head of department is responsible for the quality of activities.

Education and research of the highest quality and relevance builds on the premise that the University as a whole, with all its education and research environments, is animated by academic values and an established and open culture of quality. Various forms of external review play a vital role, along with knowledge and experience exchange. Ensuring that these systems are in place and operate well is a responsibility of management at all levels. University-wide quality assurance and enhancement guidelines set the framework for these processes and are balanced against the requirements and demands of the Swedish government and parliament, society and other stakeholders.

Quality assurance and enhancement will safeguard and promote the quality of education and research
Quality assurance and enhancement will prevent, identify and remedy failings, support effective operations, and encourage improvements and innovative thinking. Quality assurance and enhancement will be systematic, include all teachers, researchers and students, and inform day-to-day activities.

Quality assurance and enhancement will emanate from and strengthen the academic and collegial culture
Quality assurance and enhancement will be an integral part of the academic culture and will apply a scientific approach based on objectively supported analysis and peer review, along with dissemination of results and experience.

Quality assurance and enhancement will be transparent, effective and efficient
Quality assurance and enhancement will be decentralised, tailored to local conditions in the University’s disciplinary domains and where necessary coordinated. Quality assurance and enhancement will be designed to maintain a good balance between resources used and benefit. The quality assurance and enhancement system, its components and the division of responsibilities will be known to teachers, researchers and students, and to external stakeholders.
Internationalisation

The University operates in a global context. Internationalisation is not an end in itself; it is a strategy that supports the University’s development and contributes to the quality and relevance of education and research. International recruitment of staff and students enhances our skills base and widens our educational range. International research cooperation improves the quality of our research. Improving and strengthening Uppsala University as a dynamic and lively environment for education and research requires active, careful and focused internationalisation efforts. International cooperation, like all the University’s activities, must be based on our common, fundamental values.

International cooperation and exchange will be deepened

Increased international cooperation and exchange are conducive to the renewal and development of education and research. Students at Uppsala University must always be aware of links to current research and, when possible and relevant, be included in an internationally oriented research environment. Research at Uppsala University aims to contribute at the forefront of international research and promote a globally sustainable development of society.

Internationalisation will drive quality and enhance skills

Staff and students will be given the opportunity to acquire intercultural skills so as to improve their potential to develop and compete in a global perspective. Collaboration with both public and private actors abroad will be intensified to further the usefulness of education and research in a global perspective. More members of staff and students will spend time abroad or gain international experience in some other way.

The University will be an attractive choice for teachers, researchers and students from all over the world

Good education and research environments at Uppsala University will be safeguarded and enhanced by harnessing the skills and diversity of experiences possessed by teachers, researchers and students with backgrounds in other countries. The University’s education and research environments must be prepared to manage the challenges and needs of internationally recruited teachers, researchers and students. Teachers and researchers with linguistic backgrounds other than Swedish will be better integrated across the University’s entire range of activities: in education, research, administration and management positions. The University’s educational programmes will be attractive and competitive in a global perspective.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a key resource for education and research at an internationally leading university. Access to learning environments, research facilities, experimental equipment, databases, libraries, collections and biobanks paves the way for scientific and scholarly breakthroughs and knowledge creation. Access to world-class facilities lays a foundation for strengthening the position of Uppsala University as an internationally leading and attractive research university. The University will continue to develop good education and research infrastructure to support and contribute to the renewal of education and research. This requires a long-term perspective that takes account of existing national and international strategies for education and research infrastructure.

Appropriate infrastructure will support education

The University will provide appropriate and flexible physical and digital infrastructure for education. All types of teaching premises need development and modernisation to accommodate new teaching technology for both on-campus and distance education, new teaching and learning methods, and advanced apparatus and computer infrastructure for education. The learning environments and educational resources offered must be accessible to all students regardless of any disabilities.
Strategy work and processes for prioritisation in research infrastructure will be strengthened
The University will develop its internal strategy work on research infrastructure to reinforce systematic and coordinated efforts, whether national or local, such as prioritisation processes and structures to guarantee long-term funding and governance. Uppsala will be a clear voice in the shaping of national research infrastructure strategies.

More use will be made of existing research infrastructures
Existing research infrastructure and facilities need to be given greater visibility and prominence to improve use and coordination and to enhance the University’s attractiveness. Conditions will be improved for collaboration on research infrastructure, for example in education, industry and society. This will benefit the University through increased knowledge transfer and by making the usefulness of research more visible.

Talent attraction and career systems
Well-qualified teachers, researchers and other staff are crucial to enable the University to achieve its overall goal of conducting education and research of the highest quality and relevance. Good education depends on teachers who are engaged in research. Uppsala University aims to be an inspiring environment that enables teachers, researchers and students to develop academically and professionally, and that makes the most of a diversity of experiences and individual initiatives. The pursuit of excellence and the needs of education and research will govern the approach to talent attraction and career paths. Criteria and procedures for assessing qualifications and potential in recruitment and promotion processes must be relevant, transparent and reliable, regardless of whether they concern the assessment of research, educational, collaboration or leadership qualities, administrative qualifications or personal suitability.

Successful talent attraction and clear career paths demand long-term, organised action to enable the University to attract, recruit and develop skilful teachers, researchers and other staff. Adjunct teachers will be recruited in close dialogue with external parties and their recruitment will broaden the University’s expertise and strengthen long-term external collaboration.

Teaching staff will be given opportunities for professional development in teaching and learning in higher education and subject teaching. Conditions will be created for teachers to develop their educational skills and to enable them to apply for distinguished university teacher status. Educational leaders will be supported in developing their own role, and in initiating, stimulating and implementing educational development work.

This strategy partly reflects implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code).

Recruitment will follow an analysis of skills needed and strategic considerations
Work on talent attraction programmes will be developed to make considerations of long-term recruitment and development needs an integral part of the continuous strategic discussion at all levels of the University.

The University will offer clear academic career paths
The University will give all members of staff career development opportunities. Staff in teaching positions may enter in a career-development position or be recruited at a higher level. Recruitment to the position of associate senior lecturer (assistant professor) has an increasingly key role as the first step on the academic career ladder. It must be ensured that such recruitment occurs on a strictly meritocratic basis, and the tenure track system must be clarified. Research and teaching staff, including doctoral students, will be offered career guidance.
**Academic leadership will be broadened and strengthened**
Academic leaders are facing greater and more complex demands. The University will give all teachers and researchers opportunities to develop their leadership skills and to prepare early in their career for academic management roles. The role of head of department is vital and will be supported by targeted measures.

**The University will offer good development opportunities for other staff**
Staff working in support functions at the University are facing greater and more complex demands. An increasing share of such staff members have a background in teaching or research, or some other form of higher education, and work at the interface of core and support activities. Clear career paths and good development opportunities are essential to recruit and retain competent staff in this category.

**Support and wider environment**
Uppsala University is a meeting place for knowledge, culture and critical dialogue. The University aims to offer an inspiring and well-functioning physical, social and cultural environment. The cultural heritage, traditions and active student scene are important aspects of the wider educational context. Well-functioning work and education environments underpin education and research of the highest quality and relevance.

Uppsala University operates in urban settings that are characterised by development and regeneration, both in Uppsala and in Visby. The Uppsala region has a great capacity to attract people, companies and organisations with knowledge, skills and capital. Uppsala University will be an active driver in innovation systems in Uppsala and on Gotland and will contribute to sustainable community planning. Scope will be provided for regeneration and development while allowing traditions and historical values to help create an attractive, open and inclusive environment.

Uppsala and Visby have unique university settings. Cultural values must be preserved, but equally, present-day staff and students must experience their surroundings as both secure and living. In collaboration with the local and regional authorities and other external actors, the University will actively conduct long-term planning of both physical and social environments.

The University’s operational support services consist of the University Administration, Uppsala University Library, Uppsala University Innovation and support functions at disciplinary domains, faculties and departments. The administrative support, advice and expertise provided by operational support services provide a framework that enables the University to conduct its principal tasks and achieve its overall goal. Operational support services also ensure that the University performs its duties as a government agency in a legal and economical manner.

**Operational support will be coordinated, efficient and quality-enhancing**
University-wide and local support functions must interact with and reinforce one another. Increased coordination and a clear division of responsibilities and duties will ensure the quality and efficiency of the University’s support functions. The resources allocated to support functions must be used cost-effectively and must always be guided by the needs of the University’s core activities. The University’s operational support services will develop their working methods and administrative processes on the basis of context analysis and research-based knowledge.

**Technology and support will be developed for meetings and eLearning**
The technology for digital and virtual meetings must be accessible, robust and easy to use. With activities on Gotland and widespread educational and research partnerships, Uppsala University needs to be at the cutting edge of technology and skills for such meetings. This requires investments in new technology and skills enhancement.
Uppsala’s unique university environment will be preserved and developed
The University has many education and research facilities, as well as libraries, museums, gardens and other operations of high cultural historical value, located in the middle of a rapidly growing urban area. The wider academic environment in Uppsala also includes student nations, students’ unions, associations and learned societies that contribute to an attractive educational and study environment. The University’s ambition is to preserve existing environments but also to actively participate in planning for sustainable solutions that will reinforce them.

Enhanced collaboration with local and regional authorities on development
The University will be actively involved in work on comprehensive plans and development plans, both in Uppsala and on Gotland. The University is dependent on its location in attractive urban settings and can also contribute to their development.