

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024

Notes for discussion

About the process

The Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 was the result of an intensive and extensive process. The work involved was set up as a project. The organisation of this project was headed by a Steering Committee and parallel to the project organisation a Strategic Council was established.

For the coming years, a less extensive strategic planning process is proposed. The strategy document for the next period will continue to build on the existing strategy. That is why only a revision of UiA's strategy of 2016 – 2020 is planned. At the same time, there are elements that the rectorate wishes to emphasise more in the new strategic plan. The renewed strategy should to a larger extent address today's major societal challenges, such as achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN).

At present, the period for the Strategic Plans is four years. We, however, consider planning for a more long-term perspective for the coming period. Even though the Strategic Plan is still to be revised every fourth year, it will thereby be possible to set more long-term goals for our institution.

The strategic planning process will be accessible to all. Every individual working or studying at UiA will be offered the opportunity to influence the strategy for the coming period. The rectorate aims to visit all university departments. One of the important objectives of these visits is to collect feedback on the new strategic plan.

Deadline for feedback to the Notes for Discussion is 1 February 2020.

We have created a specially dedicated page with regards to the strategic planning process that you can find on the UiA website. On this page, all are invited to give their feedback on the strategic plan.

www.uia.no/om-uia/strategiprosess

MILESTONE	WHAT HAPPENS	DEADLINE
Proposal to strategic process	Steering Committee decides on the outline for the strategic process	16.-17 October 2019
Notes for discussion published for public hearing	Notes for discussion are made available for public hearing.	1 December 2019
Deadline for feedback on the Notes for discussion	All within the organisation are offered the opportunity to give their feedback	1 February 2020
Draft for Strategic Plan prepared for public hearing	Draft for strategic plan is prepared, based on notes for discussion and feedback from public hearing.	1 March 2020
Deadline for public hearing for draft of Strategic Plan	All within the organisation are offered the opportunity to give their feedback	30 April 2020
Final version of UiA's Strategic Plan	Steering Committee finalises UiA's Strategic Plan during the June meeting.	June 2020

Part 1 – UiA's identity and profile

1. Vision and profile

The vision of the University of Agder is «Co-creation of knowledge». Interdisciplinary collaboration with external parties is part of UiA's identity and profile.

The choice of profile influences the image and position of the university. UiA's profile is characterised by a strong and widely established collaboration with the regional community, industry and commerce. This has been a conscious focus area for many years now. Both in its professional and institutional development, UiA has emphasised collaboration and interdisciplinarity.

By focussing on the vision «Co-creating of knowledge», and integrating this as a key element in all the activities of the university, the Strategic Plan of the period 2016 – 2020 has contributed to strengthening the university's reputation as a collaborative institution for higher education and research.

In today's strategy, we state that:

UiA aims to be an open and inclusive university, characterised by a collaborative working culture. Knowledge is created collaboratively when university staff, students and their surrounding community challenge one another.

UiA wishes to continuously develop its study programmes and research at a high international level. Development of knowledge occurs successfully when there is a field of tension between close collaboration and critical distance. In synergy with the larger community, UiA will seek to find new methods for internal and external collaboration. H

UiA aims to contribute to new insights and solutions for future generations by instigating regional, national as well as global collaborative projects. UiA wishes to act as a driving force behind societal, cultural and commercial development.

«Co-creation of knowledge» is not just a vision, but also a method. It expresses the culture we want to create at UiA. A co-creative university is obligated to a larger degree to develop interdisciplinary activities and seek collaboration partners outside the university.

Questions for discussion:

Have all units at UiA managed to integrate the «co-creation of knowledge» as a natural part of their identity and profile?

How can we continue to develop the vision «Co-creation of knowledge»?

2. Values and societal responsibilities

A strategy must always be built on a foundation of core values. A well-chosen set of core values enables the organisation to stand out and evolve in the right direction. In the Strategic Plan for 2016 – 2020, UiA's core values were not named explicitly. However, on UiA's website the core values are described as follows:

The core values of the University of Agder are: transparency, trust, integrity and respect. These values are reflected in a flat organisational structure which encourages students, technical administrative staff, lecturers and researchers to interact and inspire each other.

UiA's core values are also expressed in how the university performs its societal responsibilities. On the UiA website we read the following about social responsibility:

The University of Agder is aware of its responsibility towards society in several areas, socially, ethically, with a view to the protection of the environment and sustainable growth, in collaboration with volunteer organisations both nationally and internationally, and in synergy with the regional community and society as a whole.

This is why we clearly express our values, such as academic freedom, autonomy, diversity, equal right to education and by our solidarity with students and scholars living in more challenging conditions than our own.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals to Transform our World by the United Nations aim to erase poverty, fight against inequality and put a hold to climate change within 2030. The UiA strategy for 2021 – 2024 should reflect that UiA wishes to comply with the sustainable development goals. In order to obtain these goals, we need new knowledge across all areas of expertise. The sustainable goals can only be reached by concrete action and a change in the way we teach, research, and in how we restructure our own organisation.

UiA has a special responsibility with regards to its contribution of knowledge and accountability to democratic developments within the public debate. That is why it is vital to encourage critical thinking, ethical reflections and digital competence. Universities and university colleges in general play a crucial role when it comes to maintaining democracy, protecting human rights, promoting gender equality and inclusion, and counteracting of extremist ways of thinking.

In the Strategic Plan of 2016 – 2020 «Global mindset» is one of the three priority areas. At the same time, the strategic plan states that UiA must be aware of its uniqueness as a Norwegian institution. A global mindset may be considered as an integral part of UiA's identity, both in terms of values as well as methods. Under the Questions for Discussion, point 4 (Education) and point 5 (Research), we would welcome your feedback on in what way a global mindset could characterise UiA's education of students and its research activities.

Questions for discussion:

Which values should be part of UiA's core values?

In which way should UiA express its societal responsibilities during the coming years?

Which of the UN's sustainable goals should be especially important for UiA?

How can we integrate a global mindset as a natural part of UiA's identity?

Part 2 – Society Involvement

UiA's responsibility towards involvement in the surrounding society is defined in the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. The responsibility of society involvement can broadly be defined as society's expectations of the university's activities within research, education, innovation and communication on the one hand, and the university's own ambitions towards its contribution in solving today's major societal challenges on the other hand.

In its "Long-term plan for research and higher education", the government selected the following five long-term priorities:



UiA offers higher education and research in those professional areas that are within the university's expertise. The university is to communicate and share its expertise with students and with the general society. UiA should contribute towards innovation and value creation, and collaborate within civic and working life in order to solve societal challenges.

3. Major societal challenges

UiA is highly committed to taking its responsibility towards society. We wish to contribute with our knowledge and research in order to solve today's major societal challenges.

In the long-term plan for research and higher education, the government especially emphasises the importance to facilitate the transition towards a greener and sustainable welfare society. The government aims to:

- Focus on education, research and technologic innovation which contributes to reaching the emission targets to mitigate global warming, sustainability and the green shift.
- Facilitate opportunities for research and innovation in order to enhance the quality and productivity of the public sector.
- Enhance knowledge about which factors positively contribute to an inclusive working life in which more citizens participate over a longer period of time, in the context of today's challenges with increased migration and an ageing population.

In addition, UiA aims to contribute to regional societal challenges. These consist for example of exclusion and public health, as well as the increasing need to ensure competent professionals in all parts of the region.

Questions for discussion:

In which way can UiA's expertise contribute to solving the major societal challenges?

How can UiA contribute to reaching the sustainability goals of the UN?

4. Education

Universities and university colleges must offer study programmes at a high international level.

In today's strategic plan «Learning and Education for the Future» is a selected priority area:

UiA aims to be an excellent university to study and teach at. We have high ambitions for the students' learning, the quality of our study programmes and the staff's commitment to their teaching.

We aim to develop our study programmes in the synergetic area between the unique content knowledge of the subject, societal challenges and changes in the labour market. In order to ensure that our students succeed in the future labour market, their ability to absorb new knowledge, to think critically as well as their ability in applying knowledge in new ways, are crucial. A dynamic learning environment accommodates the development of competence and encourages personal growth.

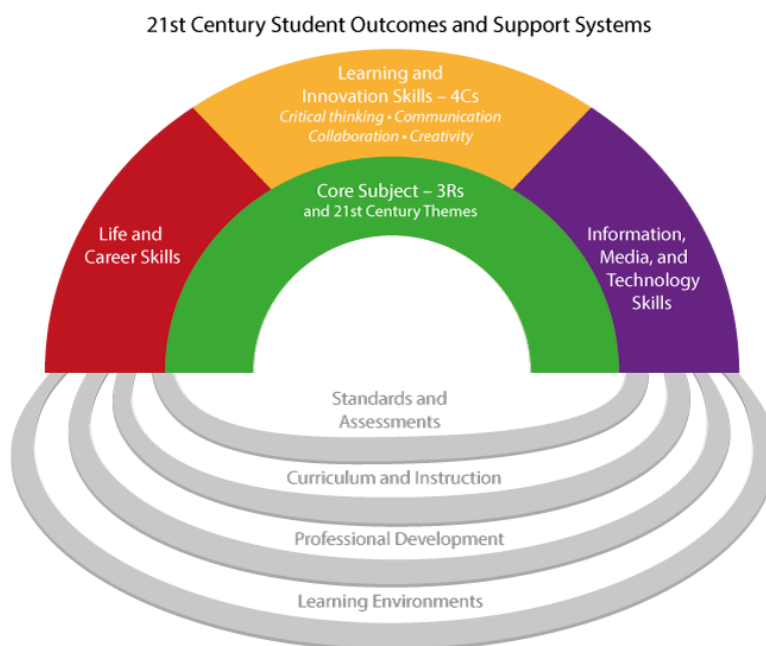
Research and professional or artistic development affect the students' ability to learn. We must develop and use future-oriented, varied, participative and practical teaching methods. Such optimal learning conditions will provide our students with life-long learning skills and an active attitude to civic participation.

UiA aims to enhance its offer of continuing learning programmes, specially adapted to the region's needs and the present societal developments.

The priority area «Learning and Education for the Future» makes clear that UiA has high ambitions for the students' learning and future work prospects, the development of critical reflection abilities and personal growth. UiA wishes to be an excellent university to study and teach at. Several decisions and measures are taken to help achieve the objectives of the priority area. UiA established a Centre for Teaching and Learning which is about to implement a programme for enhancing the educational quality. Furthermore, a complete programme for increasing the teaching competence of all staff with teaching activities as part of their work.

During the visits of autumn 2019, the rectorate emphasised that UiA should work towards changing the students' role from being passive recipients of knowledge to being active participants in a knowledge community. UiA will continue to develop new ways of teaching and assess, and emphasise the relevance of offered study programmes for future working life and society.

UiA wishes to educate candidates who are well-prepared for the future. Questions are raised as to whether today's educational system sufficiently prepares students for life after education and equips them with the expertise, skills and literacies they will need in future working life and society. The «21st century skills» overview below, presents the key skills of future working life.



Kilde: Partnership for 21st Century Skills

UiA aims to deliver candidates who can contribute to creating a greener and more sustainable society. The future global market will offer new career opportunities in the labour market, on which our students will be more attractive job candidates.

Questions for discussion:

In what way can UiA ensure higher education at a high international level that provides students with the skills they need in their future working life?

How can we increase the number of students who prefer to study at UiA ?

How can UiA educate prospective candidates with skills that can help achieve sustainability?

5. Research

Universities and university colleges should ensure research as well as professional and artistic development at a high international level.

In today's strategy, research, professional and artistic development are mentioned under the priority area «Learning and Education for the Future». Here, we can read as follows:

Co-creation of knowledge through education, research and artistic development should be an integral part of all UiA's activities. Our study programmes and our teaching must be of the highest professional quality. Our students should be connected to, and included in, research activities at an early stage in their studies. In such a way, critical reflection skills, learning abilities and expert knowledge are obtained. UiA will continue to improve its study programmes by means of research-based knowledge and research of both its own study programmes as well as teaching methods.

Furthermore, under «Societal involvement and Innovation» we can read the following:

Research and professional or artistic development form the platform for the university's participation and contribution to tackling today's major societal challenges. UiA should facilitate for interdisciplinary approaches whenever this leads to better results. Students should be involved in relevant societal research projects and development activities.

During the visits of autumn 2019, the rectorate emphasised that research must be at the core of the revised strategy, in order to strengthen the popularity and reputation of UiA as a research university.

Questions for discussion:

How can UiA strengthen its popularity and reputation as a research university?

How can UiA deliver relevant research that contributes to solving the major societal challenges?

6. Societal Involvement and Innovation

Today's priority area «Societal involvement and Innovation» leads the way in how UiA will contribute to solving the complex challenges of the future. UiA is to collaborate with the region with regards to the complex challenges of the future. The co-creative learning centre CoLAB was established, and the regional co-creative area I4Health was opened during the autumn of 2019.

During the visits of autumn 2019, the rectorate emphasised that UiA should clarify its role in contact with society and notified that there will be an increase in external research collaboration as well as an increase in continuing study programmes.

In today's strategy, it is mentioned that «UiA should play a role within innovative thinking in the public debate:

UiA should make a difference for students, employees and the larger community. UiA should collaborate with the region about the complex challenges of the future. UiA must strengthen its relevance and visibility by challenging, supporting and contributing to the development of society.

UiA must play a clear role as facilitator and contributor to innovative developments in societal, cultural and working life, as well as strengthen research-based innovation within the region and beyond. This should occur in close collaboration with the community at large.

Employees and students at UiA should be active contributors and participants to the public debate. The university aims to secure a free, critical and open database and will contribute with analyses of the culture, society and working life of the future.

UiA will increase its commitment to the development of the regional cultural life and industrial and public sector. Employees and students should be active on several forums in order to ensure that the university stays closely involved in the major societal challenges, such as sustainability, economic development, diversity, equality, migration and social justice.

UiA plays an important role in the innovative ecosystem of the region. The regional community and industry face considerable challenges. This requires cooperation between several parties and the facilitation of innovative activities. Innovation is a prerequisite for the ability of companies and the industrial sector to be competitive and to deliver quality in a productive way.

In 2016, UiA established the centre UiA Nyskaping, which is both a student incubator as well as a catalyst for the commercialization of research. UiA should continue to improve the facilitation of effective innovation processes so that good ideas can be realised and commercialized.

Questions for discussion:

Which of UiA's areas of expertise should contribute to tackling the major challenges of the future in collaboration with external societal parties?

In what way can UiA stimulate innovation?

Part 3 – UiA's development towards 2030

UiA's strategy defines a long-term development plan on how UiA should position itself and how to realise its societal responsibility. Strategic planning is about analysing where one is today and where one wishes to be in the future. In order to achieve a good strategy, it is therefore necessary to start with a thorough analysis of where we stand today and assess all strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks.

The development objectives should reach further than the strategic period 2021 – 2024. UiA's strategic plan for 2021 – 2024 will guide the direction of the university towards 2030.

UiA's strategic plan is to be the result of an executive choice on how UiA will position itself and on how to realise its societal responsibility. Moreover, the plan should contain a clear action plan on how to reach concrete goals. The vision, core values, achievement of societal responsibility and other priority areas will all contribute to achieving the long-term development goal.

7. Where is UiA today?

The University of Agder has always been, and still is, a growing and developing university. Its growth has been considerable ever since its establishment on 1 September 2007. As of today, there are 13000 students at UiA, as well as 250 PhD students and 1300 fulltime positions at its campuses in Grimstad and Kristiansand. UiA has strengthened its research activities and established several priority research centres. UiA is leading the way when it comes to practice-related activities and collaborates extensively with business enterprises, the public sector and the community at large.

Yet, UiA also faces some challenges:

UiA is confronted with more competition, both from established as well as from new parties, nationally as well as internationally. Analyses of student numbers indicate lower student enrolment numbers in general, but UiA seems to experience a stronger effect of this trend than other institutions. After the student admission of 1 September 2019, the numbers indicate a decrease of about 5% compared to the autumn admission of the previous year. One of UiA's challenges consists in being considered a more attractive choice for both Norwegian and international students. At the same time, it is increasingly difficult to recruit the best employees and to receive research funding.

National and global changes occur faster than ever before and are partly unpredictable. Any business enterprise or public institution should be prepared for disruptive changes. The gap between static and dynamic organisations will increase. An institution such as UiA should be willing to change, able to adjust to new conditions and technology, seize new opportunities to make itself stand out in the competition for students and staff. Meanwhile, we must respect the university's fundamental role and its core values.

Questions for discussion:

What are the strengths and opportunities of UiA?

What are the risks and challenges that UiA faces?

Which disruptive changes should UiA be prepared for in the coming years?

8. Where should UiA be in 2030?

The Strategic Plan for 2021 – 2024 will lead the way to where UiA shall be in 2030. Therefore, it must set clear objectives that represent the long-term ambition of UiA as a centre of knowledge. Identity, profile and reputation are important factors, as well as professional integrity and popularity with both students and researchers. The vision “co-creation of knowledge» forms the starting point of discussions on development goals and priority areas (see chapter 1).

Questions for discussion:

Which long-term development goals should UiA prioritise?

What kind of measures must we take to arrive at our aimed destination in 2030?