

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY



# STRATEGY 2018-2023

Department of Sociology



## MISSION - why we are here!

The Department of Sociology is firmly rooted in the disciplinary heritage of sociology, and we work to ensure the discipline's continued relevance and development in light of the challenges facing societies in the 21st century.

Our mission is threefold:

1. to conduct sociological research of a quality, originality and significance that measure up to the best in the world, as well as engage in interdisciplinary collaborations that will benefit from our contributions.
2. to educate young professionals with strong analytical competences, methodological skills and reflective mindsets, making them valuable assets to society.
3. to continually interact with our environment to ensure that society's demand for knowledge and innovation in our areas of expertise are met in a timely, qualified and responsible manner.

## VISION - what we aspire to be!

The Department of Sociology aspires to be an internationally recognised powerhouse of sociological research that plays an agenda-setting role within our areas of expertise. We wish to strengthen our international networks further to be able to attract leading scholars from around the world as visitors, collaborators and as colleagues. The Department of Sociology should be attractive for sociological talent from everywhere in the world, as we nurture both academic performance, intellectual curiosity and innovative ideas in our collegial environment.

We aim to conduct research, which is not only of a high intellectual standard and originality, but also relevant to and demanded by the society around us. We wish to contribute robust knowledge and innovative ideas to address contemporary societal challenges and move sociological research into new territories in the 21st century. We wish to interact with our surroundings in ways that ensure the mutual exchange of knowledge and ideas in a fruitful fashion. This includes making timely and topical sociological knowledge and research results available to our immediate surroundings and continually respond to societal developments in Denmark and beyond in both critical and constructive ways. As part of a public university we cherish and

protect the freedom of research as a necessary precondition for delivering value to society.

We aim to produce professional sociologists, who are not only well versed in the theories and methods of the discipline, but also have a clear sense of how their skills and competences can be applied in various professional functions and in collaboration with other professions. The most profound impact we can make on society is most likely through our graduates, and we must support them in acquiring the knowledge, skills and competences required to succeed in their careers as sociologists and deliver value to society.

The Department aims to be financially stable by ensuring a diverse portfolio of income streams from both teaching, public research funding and private sources. Financial stability is a precondition for ensuring high levels of research activity, high-quality teaching as well as an institutional environment that fosters intellectual creativity and enables long-term planning.

The Department aims to provide a supportive working environment for all staff and students. We cultivate talent at all levels, celebrate diversity, respect work-life balance and include gender considerations in all our activities.



## **BUILDING ON STRONGHOLDS**, addressing challenges

The Department underwent a research evaluation by an international panel of distinguished sociologists in 2016 and our study programmes underwent a thorough assessment by an external panel as part of UCPH's quality assurance process in 2017.

In the current strategy period, the Department wishes to build upon the existing strengths identified in both evaluations and consolidate the initiatives we have already taken both prior to and following these evaluations. We furthermore wish to address the most pressing

challenges identified in the evaluations in a targeted and focused manner in the 2018-23 strategy. This will be manifested in a select number of strategic focus points, which are also closely aligned with the strategic ambitions of the Faculty of Social Science and the wider University of Copenhagen strategy 'Talent and Collaboration'.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **FUNDING**

The funding landscape for Danish universities is currently changing in several ways. In order to continue to strengthen the Department, our funding will need to be composed of more diverse and volatile sources than in the past. We will need to get a larger share of our research funding from public, private and European sources, which are highly competitive. Similarly, we expect that funding from teaching will increasingly be tied to various performance measures rather than simple throughput metrics.

### **INTERNATIONALISATION**

In order to compete successfully for research funding, we must both generate good ideas and establish strong track records. We believe that a key precondition for maintaining creativity and strong track records of both individual scholars and the Department as a collective is that we manifest our department internationally through publications in leading outlets, collaborations with strong environments abroad, participation in agenda-setting academic networks and – when relevant – also recruitment from abroad.

### **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY**

We are increasingly required to document that our study programmes can retain students from admission to graduation, that students complete on time and that they

acquire skills that are applicable in the labour market for professional sociologists. The evaluation has suggested our educational programmes have a very solid foundation, but that more can be done to ensure we deliver on these performance expectations.

### **KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND SOCIETAL IMPACT**

Universities are increasingly required to ensure and document that we deliver value to society. We must ensure that our research reaches not only our academic peers, but make a positive difference in society at large. We thus need to step up our efforts to engage in mutual knowledge exchange with our societal environment.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

None of the above challenges can be met unless our administrative support is well-functioning in all aspects. Nor can our goals be achieved unless we have a supportive working environment where all members of staff feel able to perform at their best.

## RECENTLY LAUNCHED INITIATIVES

We have already taken a number of initiatives to address the challenges outlined above:

- We have had a strong focus on increasing the quality of our research publications by formulating an explicit publication strategy which we continue to monitor.
- We have worked to internationalise the Department through international recruitment as well as increase international collaboration, networking and staff exchanges.
- We have organised a systematic quality control procedure with internal peer review of all research applications.
- We have established research groups as the academic infrastructure of the Department in order to nurture a creative and collegial environment for both junior and senior scholars.
- We have revised our study programmes at BSc and MSc level for the purpose of strengthening student retention, throughput and labour market uptake, as well as ensuring a closer linkage between research and education in the Department.
- We have initiated several activities to make students more aware of the wide spectrum of professional opportunities available to sociology graduates.
- Finally, we have spearheaded the development of a new teaching programme in social data science at the Faculty of Social Science, which includes close collaboration with external partners and future employers.

All of these initiatives will be continued and consolidated in the current strategy period. To that end, we will set some specific targets that will assist us in evaluating our performance on an annual basis.



## NEW STRATEGIC FOCUS POINTS

In addition to the initiatives already launched, the department will give priority to a select number of new issues to align ourselves with the overall strategies of the Faculty of Social Science, which is again embedded in the general strategy of UCPH. Both ongoing and new initiatives are detailed in the Goal and Action Plans of the Department.

The new strategic focus points can be summarised in four headlines:

1. Strengthening the links between education and practice
2. Strengthening our knowledge exchange efforts
3. Promoting digital competences in our research and education portfolio
4. Strengthening the working environment for all in the department

## IMPLEMENTATION: Annual goal and action plans

Goal and action plans developed and updated annually as part of UCPH strategy implementation plan.

