Nordic Humanities Center
- for Challenge-Based Inquiry

The Nordic Humanities Center for Challenge-Based Inquiry is an innovative and ambitious center of advanced study that fosters new ways of doing humanities research. The center has been established in a collaboration between the faculties of the Humanities at the University of Copenhagen and the University of Southern Denmark with the generous support of the A.P. Møller Foundation. Over the course of six years, the center will each year gather a group of scholars at the two universities to marshal insights from the humanities and develop new perspectives, nuances, frames, and narratives for one of the many global societal challenges we face.

To handle urgent challenges such as inequality, war, health, artificial intelligence, or the climate crisis, we often turn to the natural sciences, the social sciences, or to technology. But insights into culture, language, history, or psychology from the human sciences are central, if often overlooked, resources for addressing societal matters of concern and building better collective futures. We need a more precise understanding of the nature of the challenges we face and their historical and cultural preconditions, and we need new visions for our future coexistence and actionable models that are based on the knowledge produced in the human sciences. Uniting scholars from two humanities’ faculties, the center engages leading scholars in a collective, interdisciplinary, and creative endeavor to offer alternative perspectives on and potential solutions to some of our contemporary grand challenges.

Each year, the Nordic Humanities Center will host a new team of six senior fellows from SDU and UCPH, one international fellow, and two junior fellows based on an call at the two universities. The first project will address a specifically Nordic theme and evaluate and reassess the status and future of “the Nordic model” from a humanities perspective. From this Nordic starting point, the next four research teams will each focus on a pressing challenge of a local, regional, and global nature. The specific challenges and research teams will be selected from the best applications from senior researchers at UCPH and SDU. The challenges can be further concretized through a more specific case study, but general themes could for example be:

- Sustainable futures – based on the understanding of cities, landscapes, infrastructures and views of nature
- Digitally driven societal change – based on the understanding of language, communication and interaction between humans and machines
- Conflict, solidarity, and diversity – based on aesthetics, art, film, design, architecture and literature
- Local and global cohesion, education, equality, new family forms – based on a reinterpretation of cultural heritage and historical narratives

The subject matter is global, as are the challenges, but in exploring such topics, the center’s researchers will examine the interplay between a Nordic viewpoint and the larger European and global perspectives while uncovering the historical backgrounds for contemporary challenges. The center will thus highlight and mobilize the resources of the humanities to develop new understandings, ideas, and visions of national, regional, and global relevance.