

Department of Political Science and Public Management

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# Strategy 2022-2026

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UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN DENMARK

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## **Vision, Mission and Objectives**

At the Department of Political Science and Public Management, our vision is to become a nationally and internationally highly recognized research and education environment within political science, public management, and journalism. To realize this, we aim to excel at being innovative and to provide strong societal relevance through our research and educational programmes.

Our mission is to produce and disseminate high-quality research, to educate students with strong labour markets qualifications and to provide value to society through our research and teaching. To realize our mission, our overall department strategy aims to achieve the four following objectives:

- Produce high-quality and original research.
- Maintain and further develop sustainable study programmes of high academic quality that create value to our students and society.
- Strengthen the outreach of our research and our focus on high societal relevance.
- Secure a motivating and inspiring work environment for all employees.

Our four objectives are interconnected. Contributing to solving societal challenges is only possible through high-quality research. High-quality research is only valuable if it is disseminated to the relevant societal actors. Strong educational programmes build on high-quality research and focuses on societal relevant questions. Strong educational programmes lay the ground for maintaining and expanding our research environments. And finally, strong research, educations and outreach are only possible to achieve if they build on a productive work environment, where all possible talents are developed, and all employees thrive and support each other. Employees at the department will contribute to the strategy in different ways to bring us closer to our objectives.

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### **Where do we come from, and where we are?**

Since 1998, the Department of Political Science and Public Management has expanded from a rather small department with one educational programme in Political Science to a large department on several campuses with several daytime study programmes (Political Science and Social Science, Journalism, European Studies and International Security and Law) and professional master programmes (Master of Public Governance, Master of Public Management, and Master in Intelligence and Cyber Studies).

As of January 2022, we have more than 130 employees with a rich variety of research topics and educational competencies, and we have more than 2500 students enrolled. We consist of five sections with different research and teaching portfolios. Our success is rooted in our common efforts to produce high-quality research, innovative study programmes as well as in our interest in answering real world research questions and interacting with relevant societal actors. We are characterized by a strong environment that accommodates a diversity of theoretical, methodological, and interdisciplinary approaches. We strive to take advantage of our diversity by collaborating across sub-disciplines and developing all the talents among our employees. We believe this makes us stronger and more innovative in our work with research, education, and our interaction with society. Over the past 5 years we have worked to develop our portfolio of focused and vibrant research collectives. This effort improved the quality and quantity of our research output significantly, which has been highly visible in, for example, the department's overall BFI counts and our successful track record with funding.

### **Where are we heading?**

We currently face several challenges related to resources and capacity. Still, high-quality research remains a key priority. Ground-breaking scholarship is increasingly conceived through cooperation rather than through individual scholars working alone. At the department we are convinced that this approach will also support the most innovative ideas and strongest research environments in the future. In 2022-2026, we will therefore further strengthen our effort in developing focused and vibrant research collectives at the department. To do so, we will continue to develop collective research agendas and projects, as well as international and cross-disciplinary cooperation. In addition, we will focus more on attracting external funding to support and consolidate these research agendas.

We will also maintain and further develop attractive and financially sustainable research-based study programmes of high quality and societal relevance. In the coming years, we face restrictions on study admissions, which means that our economy to a larger extent will be determined by our ability to retain students both in our full-time study programmes and in our professional master's programmes. Therefore, we must adapt now to ensure that our study programmes are of the highest quality and thereby attractive to students - and relatedly, that our students are attractive to the labour market. Our educational programmes provide important financial resources necessary to maintain staff volume and diverse competencies in our different research environments. Therefore, we will explicitly prioritize teaching skills in recruitment and promotion decisions.

We will also strengthen the outreach of our research and secure a high degree of societal relevance in our research agendas and educational programmes. We already have a strong track record when it comes to societal relevance, but we want to exploit this advantage further. We aim to be known as a department with especially high societal relevance. Therefore, we will work to disseminate our research in a more coherent and professional way as well as strengthen our connections with societal actors relevant for our research.

Finally, to secure a motivating and inspiring work environment for all employees, we aim for even stronger collaboration across the department's sections and the secretariat when it comes to research, education, and societal outreach. We expect everyone to contribute to tasks across the sections and educational programmes and to our overall community. Furthermore, we can only reach our full potential if we use and develop the talents of all our staff members. Our ambition is, therefore, to actively support everyone in achieving their best potential for developing their career regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, age, or how they practice their identity. We aim to be a department that is characterized by inclusiveness, transparency, plurality, and equality that can be an inspiration for others to follow.

Towards 2026, our efforts at the departmental level will, therefore, be guided by four key strategic priorities. We are also guided by other objectives (most of which are formulated at the level of sections or research collectives), but the following are the most important:

- **We will secure and strengthen our portfolio of high-quality research.** We aim for strong research collectives where collaborations between several researchers produce innovative thinking, provide answers to relevant societal problems, secure external funding, and contribute to the development of early career scholars.
- **We will maintain and develop a sustainable portfolio of study programmes of high quality and societal relevance.** We aim to explicitly prioritize excellent teaching skills, retain more students, and secure their employability.
- **We will strengthen the outreach of our research and focus on high societal relevance.** We will work consciously with societal relevance and outreach in all our research groups and define several types of relevance that each group may contribute to society. We will put in an extra effort to interact with and disseminate our research to the societal actors relevant in all our research areas.
- **We will secure a motivating and inspiring work environment for all employees.** We aim to have a productive, transparent, supportive, and inclusive work environment, where we benefit from working together across sections. We strive to use and develop the talents of all employees at the department.

To reach these four strategic priorities, we need a strong and united department. We also need a work environment where employees are present at and committed to the department. All employees should be able to identify both with their research sections and with the overall department. Thus, to secure that the department is an attractive workplace, we need to continuously nourish and support the department as a shared community.

In the following sections, we will describe our work within the four main objectives in more detail:

## Research

The Department of Political Science and Public Management consists of several well-established and highly internationalised research environments (research sections and centres). We strive towards high-quality research in all sections and centres. We will achieve this by securing funding for our research and by creating a research environment which is both stimulating, dynamic and cross-disciplinary.

We believe that a research environment should be characterized by curiosity and academic width and be capable of developing and adjusting to new challenges. Good research is research that is original, acknowledged by peers, and contributes to theoretical and practical developments within the targeted research fields. Good research is first and foremost driven by professional curiosity, academic skills, and the researcher's inner motivation.

Each section strives to produce research at the highest level within their respective research areas. The section strategies describe how the section defines high-quality research and how they work to achieve it. All researchers at the department aim to publish their research in international, leading academic journals (both general and field-specific journals) and with recognized publishers. We also publish our research with Danish publishers and in Danish journals, especially when it contributes to the Danish public debate and to reaching relevant societal actors.

We believe that high-quality research is easier to accomplish in collaborations among several researchers. We wish to take advantage of the variation across disciplines and produce new and original ideas that answer questions of societal relevance through interdisciplinary approaches. We will, therefore, encourage our researchers to collaborate both within and across the departments' sections and with other Danish and international researchers and networks. Thus, the department will continuously work on supporting and developing strong research collectives (both within the department and with external partners). As a part of this, we will support the development of early career scholars by including them in the different research collectives and networks in the sections.

In addition to securing a continuous development in our research environment, external funding will be a focus point in the coming years. Each section will strengthen and prioritize their efforts in securing external funding for larger research projects in the section. Furthermore, we will work to strengthen our review processes to improve the quality of our research applications even further.

Overall, we strive to be visible and recognized in the leading international research environments in our fields by producing high-quality and original research. To do so, we have the following aims:

### Aims

- We will continue our strong publication records at the department and to further increase the level of publications in the top journals at our targeted fields.
- We will work to improve our success rate in securing external funding for larger research projects.
- We will further develop research collaborations at the department and with external actors.
- We will support the development of early career scholars in our research collectives.

### Actions

The concrete actions needed to fulfil the aims differ between the sections, and are therefore specified in the respective section strategies. The head of department secures the implementation of the research strategy in close collaboration with the heads of sections.

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## Education

We have a wide and strong educational portfolio at the department that efficiently activates knowledge and provides value to the society: We provide classical research-based bachelor and master programmes as well as lifelong learning via professional master programmes and advanced courses targeted to professionals well underway in their careers.

We continuously develop our study programmes and courses to ensure that our educational activities are of high quality as well as societal relevance. To create the best conditions for learning, we work with innovative teaching forms and course development, as well as experiment intensively with digitalization of teaching tools.

Our unique combination of study programmes gives us a distinct profile as a department. The portfolio of programmes provides us with the opportunity to leverage synergies in this unique combination, for the collective advantage of both students and programmes. This entails developing joint courses, joint teaching, new teaching approaches, as well as the continued development of the pedagogical skills of our lecturers.

However, teaching activities across many programmes and the reduction in student intake due to regionalisation and employment outcomes challenge department resources. We must, therefore, continually monitor our teaching obligations and the economy of all study programmes to ensure that we use our resources in the best way possible, always having the right competences among our teaching staff. The income from our educational activities is the department's most essential means of income and provides the foundation for both the short-term and long-term economic health of the department.

### Aims

- Maintain and further develop study programmes of high academic quality that create value to our students and society.
- Explicitly prioritize excellent teaching skills and the teaching demands in our study programmes in hiring and promotion decisions.
- Retain an increasing number of students and foster graduates' employability.
- Secure the economic sustainability of our study programmes and a fair distribution of resources between them.
- Secure the ownership and responsibility in all study programmes, with a special focus on those programmes that are not anchored in one section.
- Introduce an attractive and distinguished international master's programme in political science located in Sønderborg.

### Actions

The concrete actions needed to fulfil the aims differ between study programmes, and are therefore specified in the respective study programme parts and section strategies. The vice head of department secures the implementation of the educational strategy in close collaboration with the heads of studies and programme responsables.

## Societal relevance

At the Department of Political Science and Public Management, we believe that our work should provide value to society. We address societal challenges in our research, and we have a strong track record in contributing to and interacting with society. Our research sections are actively working on strengthening societal relevance both in and via their research. We aim to further coordinate, reinforce, and continually develop these efforts in the coming years.

We will enhance our cooperation with principle societal actors about societal issues. This could be in the form of direct collaborations about real-life problems or dissemination of relevant research. Furthermore, it is important to communicate our research to the broader public. We also believe that our work with societal relevance should include reflections on possible practical translation and operationalisation of our academic insights, so it becomes easier for external actors to implement our knowledge. Consequently, we need to think about how we ask societal relevant questions in our research and how we interact with relevant societal actors, and at the same time adhere to the principles of scientific freedom and independence. Thus, we must continue to do and communicate our research, even if it goes against the conventional thinking in society. We will also continue to cultivate and support the societal relevance of our study programmes by ensuring that the professional and academic competencies of our graduates are strong and match the demands of the labour market. Finally, we will work systematically to strengthen the communication of our work to the surrounding world through appropriate channels. This will require that we actively work to be part of the most important societal debates relevant to our research areas.

Our work with societal relevance is a continuous effort. We will make a relevance report every second year that illustrates the diverse approaches to societal relevance at the department. Societal relevance will be defined and described by the research sections in this biennial report to document the ways in which each section contributes to this effort. This work will clarify what we already do, what works, and how to strengthen our efforts in the future.

### Aims:

- Provide value to society by actively taking part in the public debate and strengthening our collaboration with relevant societal actors.
- Contribute to develop practical solutions in areas where our research is relevant by being a part of and influencing the processes where important decisions are made.
- Work towards a stronger outreach strategy and support structure for increased communication within the department.

### Actions:

- Write and update (every second year) a departmental relevance report which describe tools for relevance in all larger activities/units (e.g., professional master's programmes, revenue-funded activities, study programmes, sections etc.). Based on this, we will identify and brand different approaches to societal relevance at the department.
- Make contributions to societal relevance an explicit part of our Scholarly Qualification Matrix.
- Train our researchers in the communication of their research in order for them to have a bigger impact in news media, social media, and other relevant communication and meeting forums.
- Secure that all larger research projects have an outreach plan.
- Provide staff the possibility of consulting with an expert on outreach.

## **Work Environment, Gender and Equality**

A good working environment is the foundation of any successful organisation, and we strive for an intellectually stimulating and socially well-functioning workplace. We believe that the embrace of human diversity breeds innovation, and we believe that diversity cultivates a thriving working environment. It is our ambition to create a work environment that is characterized by collaboration, inclusiveness, transparency, plurality and equality, and which actively supports all members of staff regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, age or how they practice their identity. Overall, our vision is to have a department that supports everyone in achieving their best potential in the development of their career. At the core of our culture is the understanding that we can only reach our full potential when we use the talents of all and create a department that can be an inspiration for others to follow.

An important part of a good work environment is to have clear goals and predictability in relation to expectations (e.g., expectations for career development and workloads). We will, therefore, continue our work in the sections to secure continuous discussions about career development with the immediate manager as well as transparent and balanced teaching plans to create the conditions for an appropriate work-life balance for all employees. Collaboration and a sense of shared community will also be in focus both at the department and in the sections. We will work to support a shared identity, which distinguishes us as a department, and we will strengthen collaborations and knowledge exchange within and across the departments' sections.

To ensure the possibility and transparency of different career paths and equal measures of merit, the department will revise its Scholarly Qualification Matrix. We will increase transparency around the use of the matrix in hiring processes. Furthermore, we will institutionalize practices of mentoring within the department, in line with defined elements of 'merit,' for example, by giving early career scholars the opportunity to take on tasks at the department that will benefit their career. The role of more experienced staff will here be a supporting role. Thus, we strive for improved career counselling for early career scholars with a focus on supporting their development as independent scholars.

Another important dimension in a good work environment is the gender and equality balance. The department has come a long way in the past five years in relation to this, and the previous strategy has contributed significantly to achieving a more gender-balanced department. We wish to build on our positive experiences and continue to address gender-related issues at the department. In 2021, we established a taskforce to discuss the issue of gender and equality at the department. The taskforce came up with several recommendations for action, and we will follow these as much as possible in the coming years. Thus, during 2022-2026, the department will widen the focus on issues related to gender and equality. We aim towards establishing family friendly policies, for example in relation to planning meetings and teaching obligations. The department will also increase its efforts to take active note of unconscious biases. Language is important across all communication channels, and we will promote an inclusive language. The department will take action if employees and/or students treat and disrespect staff based on gender biases. We will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment or other forms of demeaning action and inappropriate behaviour at the department. We will strive to ensure transparency and to maintain excellent data-records on gender and equality. To strengthen an inclusive work environment based on plurality and equal opportunities that support all staff in achieving their potential, we have the following aims:

### **Aims:**

- To continuously secure transparency on workloads, decision-making and information relevant to employees work and career prospects (including gender statistics).
- To secure a strong community and a shared identity at the department.
- To institutionalize best practices of mentoring and career counselling to increase the independence of junior colleagues from older scholars.
- To secure a department with a good gender and equality balance.



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Actions:

- Secure the possibility of continuous discussion with the head of section about career opportunities as well as workloads (research expectations and teaching responsibilities) for all employees.
- Arrange social gatherings and professional events to support collaboration across the sections and secretariat and strengthen the community at the department.
- Revise the Scholarly Qualification Matrix (clarifying the understanding of 'merit' and 'talent' and emphasizing the possibility of diverse career paths).
- Increase focus on individual career planning and mentoring of early career scholars (PhD, post doc, assistant professors and young associate professors) by institutionalizing a mid-way dialogue between PhD student and HoD and offer all early career scholars a mentor.
- Work to include junior researchers in work processes, applications and tasks that may be beneficial for their career.
- To implement recommendations from the taskforce of gender and equality as much as possible e.g.:
  - Work with unconscious bias training of both staff and students, and as a part of this promote an inclusive language.
  - Establish clear benchmarks for measuring equality and ensure that a continuous collection of data is institutionalized and made publicly available
  - Put work environment, gender, and equality on the agenda at department and section meetings, and every other year evaluate the gender and equality status at the department.

## Section strategies 2022-2026



You can find all our section strategies [here](#).

## Educational strategies 2022-2026



You can find all our educational strategies [here](#).