

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FAROE ISLANDS SEPTEMBER 2021 – OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW TEAM

APPENDICES TO THE MAIN REPORT

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APPENDIX 1: THE LETTER OF APPOINTMENT/WORKING BRIEF FOR THE REVIEW TEAM.

Date: 18. november 2021
Your ref.:
Our ref.: 21/08838-41

Review Team for the review of the University of the Faroe Islands

This document is an updated version of a document created in August 2021. The changes reflect adjustments which have been made to augment the review team, including replacing a team member who dropped out for personal reasons, in light of the experience of a preliminary visit of the review team to the Faroe Islands in October 2021, and also to clarify aspects of the brief for the review team, which are felt by the Ministry to be important for the successful conduct of the review process. The changes include an appendix, which clarifies the roles and expectations of the members of the review team.

Dear

Malcolm Foley, Professor Emeritus, University of the West of Scotland,
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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture of the Faroe Islands would like to thank you for the conversations held recently.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture (with responsibility for research, education, and culture), we are very grateful for your willingness to participate in the team which will perform the important task of reviewing the University of the Faroe Islands. The intention is for Professor

Malcolm Foley to become chairman of the committee, and for the Ministry to be available with the secretariat function to the chair.

The law of the Faroese Parliament no 58 from 9th of June 2008, last amended 8th of May 2012, states that “the minister ensures that an evaluation of the University of the Faroe Islands is carried out. The evaluation must be executed by external experts” (§ 3, stk. 3)

History and Finance

Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, was founded in 1965 as an institution of higher education and research with a faculty of Faroese Language and Literature. The early development was relatively slow, first, in the early 1970s, with the establishment of a science department and later, in 1987, a department of history and social sciences. It was in 1987 that the institution was made a university and became the University of the Faroe Islands. In 2008, the Faroese Parliament passed a new law for Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, merging the Faroese Teachers' Seminar (founded in 1872) and the Faroese School of Nursing (founded in 1960) with the University. After the merger the University consisted of five faculties, all with different backgrounds and cultures. The law from 2008 also led to the establishment of a university board of seven people, where the majority (4) are appointed externally by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Culture. The board in turn appoints the University's senior management (Rector and University Director).

The total government grant for Fróðskaparsetur Føroya in 2021 is approximately 121 million DKK. The number of full-time students is around 950 and the number of employees is around 160 in total.

2013-2014 Review and Subsequent Development

In 2013-2014 the University had its first external review, with a focus on quality assurance and enhancement and on developing the University as an international actor, in alignment with the Bologna process.

During this evaluation the University went through a developmental stage focusing on producing policies and formalizing practices across the University, and strengthening integration, organization and management. However, for various reasons, the impetus of this development was not well sustained in the subsequent years, either within the University, or within government (the Faroe Islands do not as yet have a National Qualifications Framework and are not as yet part of the European Higher Education Area).

Over the past two years, following the appointment of a new Rector and with a new Minister in place, there has been a new initiative to deal with these challenges, both within the University and also the Ministry. Within the University, a Quality Unit has been created, under the oversight of a Pro-Rector (who is also a Dean of Faculty), and within the Ministry work is being done to develop a NQF.

The University has also joined the Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories and has successfully applied to become a signatory to the Magna Charta Universitatum (2020). However, overall, while progress has been made (unfortunately and unavoidably affected by the global pandemic), much work and development is required to meaningfully align activity with the expectations of the Bologna process.

Proposed Brief for the Review Team

The overarching objective of the review process is that it should be aimed clearly at supporting the progress and development of the University on its current trajectory. The framework for that

trajectory is established by the relevant law, mentioned already on page 1, and by the related executive orders, which were updated in the summer of 2021. Within that framework, the University adopted in 2020 its Strategic Plan, 2020-2024, based on extensive consultation with staff, students and external stakeholders – including the Ministry, local authorities and employers.

The University's mission, is summarized in the Strategic Plan, 2020-2024, as being to:

- Provide distinctive and high quality higher and continuing education to serve the evolving needs of the Faroe Islands.
- Conduct high quality research, especially that relevant to the critical social, economic, cultural, legal, and environmental needs of the Faroes, our wider region, and other countries and territories of similar size.
- Perform a wider public service in response to the needs of the Faroe Islands, including continuously developing the Faroese language within academic teaching and research and in wider pursuit of sustainable economic, social, and cultural development.

In the Plan, this mission is in turn linked to a vision statement, and to a set of commitments and priorities under six main headings.

Within this broad remit of supporting the progress and development of the University on the basis of its current trajectory, the primary focus for the review should be to support the strengthening of the quality assurance processes at the University, in accordance with the Bologna process and the ESG.

In addition, the review should have a particular focus on the operation of the Faculty of Education and on supporting the development and delivery of the main programmes – in teacher and pedagogue training – within that Faculty.

Review of the University

In seeking the support of international experts to conduct the review, it is recognized that the experts are the people with the expertise both to answer questions, but also to pose appropriate questions for an evaluation of this kind. Reflecting this, we welcome dialogue with and input from the review team itself regarding the development and finalization of the brief to which they should work. To assist the development of the brief, the external expert group will be provided with an outline of the development of the University and of its current situation and key challenges and invited to discuss that with key stakeholders prior to the finalizing of the brief itself. The key overall aim should be, as with the 2013-2014 evaluation, to 'evaluate to develop'.

At this stage, the main suggestions for the brief for the review team are along the following lines:

University Level

1. Review of the laws/parliamentary acts, executive orders and regulations concerning the University of the Faroe Islands. Do we have what is required to underpin the operation of the University, particularly in accordance with the ESG, in place (both at university and faculty level)? If not, what is needed by way of changes/additions?
2. Review of the internal quality processes at the University and recommendations for their further development towards ensuring a culture of continuous quality enhancement across all faculties and educational programmes, and in relation to the wider student experience. Where are we at, where should we be aiming to be in 3-5 years, and how should we be getting there?

The Faculty of Education

3. The Faculty of Education plays a vital role in educating students who will become teachers and pedagogues to serve the needs of the Faroese education system. How well is the Faculty operating to fulfil this role? And how might that operation be improved and strengthened, both in terms of the overall leadership and management of the Faculty, and also in terms of the design and delivery of the main programmes – in teacher and pedagogue education – including the work-based learning (practicum) parts? How would the strengthening of the Faculty and of the design and delivery of the main programmes link to the development proposed at University level? The Ministry recognizes that this level of scrutiny of the Faculty of Education in the context of an institutional-level review focused on quality assurance and enhancement is challenging, but it asks the review team to focus on the key aspects of assurance and enhancement at Faculty level, recognizing that some follow-up work by another team looking in particular at issues of curriculum might well be required.

Timeframe

The final report from the review team should be available by the autumn of 2022

Materials

This will be the second time that the operation of the University has been reviewed, and we therefore propose that data used for the first evaluation will be updated, that the University provides a written paper reflecting on the prior evaluation and the subsequent development, as well as intentions for the future, and that other material is produced as needed in close collaboration with the University's administration and management.

The First Meeting of the Review Team

We propose that the review team has its first meeting in the autumn. We would like to introduce you to Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, its history, its staff, and students. The members of the review team will have the opportunity to get to know each other, the university's management, and the relevant staff from the Ministry, and otherwise to become more informed about higher education and research in the Faroes and about the Faroese society as a whole, and particularly about relevant issues that characterize a micronation like the Faroe Islands.

We propose that the meeting be held in Tórshavn in week 43 (week beginning 25th October), and that approximately 4 days including travel time are set aside for the meeting. During the visit, we can also make more detailed agreements about practical matters regarding the content of the work, remuneration, etc.

In hope for a good cooperation. Thank you again for the forthcoming collaboration.

Sincerely

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture

REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FAROE ISLANDS 2021/22 APPENDIX TO BRIEF: ROLES OF REVIEWERS

All Reviewers are expected to conduct their enquiries from a range of perspectives upon the Quality Assurance/Enhancement of international Higher Education practices. Specifically, the approved documentation (whether governmental or from the University itself) that sets the direction of the University on an approach that leads to inclusion in the Bologna process and the EHEA should form the basis of the enquiries and evaluations being conducted.

Reviewers (with the exception of the Student Reviewer) are expected to have current, or recent, wide experience of academic management at the institutional (or at least Faculty) level, preferably relating to quality assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience. Reviewers should have personal and academic credibility with staff, including senior managers, heads of institutions and staff currently engaged in learning and teaching. Reviewers should have knowledge and exposure to the quality codes and practices necessary to secure the Ministry's and University's approved strategic aspirations. Reviewers should take opportunities to understand the system of higher education in the Faroe Islands. The Student Reviewer should have credible experience of studying within the learning and teaching strategies of more than one University and in more than one jurisdiction.

1. ROLES OF ALL REVIEWERS. All Reviewers will:

- A) relate positively and respectfully to all individuals in the University community;
- B) participate actively in discussions about strategic and operational approaches to the management of quality and academic standards in general, and the enhancement of student learning experiences in particular;
- C) assimilate disparate information (both written, in the form of the Reflective Analysis and other documentation produced by the University and government, and orally, in the subsequent discussions conducted with groups of staff) and analyze it to form reliable, evidence-based conclusions;
- D) communicate clearly, orally and in writing;
- E) work collaboratively and co-operatively in small teams, delivering effectively to tight deadlines;
- F) maintain the confidentiality of sensitive matters;
- G) participate actively in the drafting and ownership of a Final Report.

2. ADDITIONAL ROLES FOR THE STUDENT REVIEWER. In addition to the items at 1A to 1G above, the Student Reviewer will:

- A) give particular attention and priority to the student voice and experiences of being at the University;
- B) ensure that the Final Report is consistent with the feedback received from groups of students during the discussion phase.

3. ADDITIONAL ROLES FOR THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE REVIEW TEAM. In addition to the items at 1A to 1G above, the Chairperson will:

- A) act as a single point of liaison and advice for the staff of the University who are preparing materials and discussions that form the Review evidence;
- B) act as a single point of reference for staff of the Ministry;
- C) design the format for the discussion phase of the Review in sufficient time to allow the University to prepare;
- D) ensure that all interactions with staff and students at the University are conducted in a respectful and constructive manner and tone;
- E) lead the Review Team to evidence-based conclusions;

F) allocate tasks of oral questioning and report drafting to members of the Review Team in consultation with the members;

G) be responsible for the final draft of the Report and its delivery to the Ministry in the timescales agreed.

APPENDIX 2: THE UNIVERSITY'S REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS

**University of the Faroe Islands,
Reflective Analysis, 2022:
A document prepared to inform the work of the
International Team conducting the External
Review of our University**

Supplemented with five case studies – provided separately

August 2022

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Rector's Preface

Our University is small and relatively young. As the only University in the Faroes, we carry a large responsibility in providing research-based, higher education as well as a wider public service to Faroese society. Our University has not been able to develop as quickly as some newer universities elsewhere, reflecting the conditions of the Faroes as well as policy choices at various points. But over time we have grown significantly and today we have just over 1100 students and some 160 staff (not including PhD students), across more than 25 programmes and five 'faculties', and a growing central administration – a significant achievement for a country only in the past decade achieving a population over 50,000.¹

Our current vision for our University is that we will “grow together”, becoming, as we grow, a well-integrated, modern and professional University, working in partnership to deliver high quality learning and teaching, underpinned by high quality research, *in a culture of appropriate quality assurance and continuous quality enhancement*.

Over the years, and particularly recent years, we have taken important steps towards fulfilling this vision, and there are many further steps which remain to be taken. This is certainly true of quality assurance and enhancement (QAE), which is the focus of the external review. In terms of systemic QAE, we have only really begun recently – in the spring of 2020, just prior to the first corona lockdown, as we were starting to implement our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*.

We believe that we have done well to progress with our QAE work through the corona period – by developing new structures, units and processes, by building knowledge, understanding and commitment amongst our staff and students, and by generating data about students, staff and our activities, so as to be able to understand our challenges, make choices and decisions, and to chart our progress. We are pleased to have received some recognition and acknowledgement for our work in the recent period – for instance in the comments and feedback from External Review Team (ERT) members during their preliminary visit last October, and from the Danish authorities who recently assessed our institutional progress on QAE as sufficient to allow for the recognition of our law programmes as equivalent to those delivered in Denmark.²

Still, we know that there is much that remains to be done.

As we conduct our ongoing work, we have significant assets and strengths on which to build. Our recent survey of students showed that overall student satisfaction is within touching distance of the ambitious target (85%) we set in our *Plan* in 2020. Our recent survey of staff shows that overall satisfaction and loyalty amongst staff compares well with benchmarks. More generally, feedback from various sources indicates that staff and students generally believe that we are on a positive trajectory, and that they understand and are committed to the work. We believe we have improved our public profile in recent years and also our collaboration with government – evidenced in terms of our growing annual funding. Internationally, we have entered a new and important collaboration with the Network of Universities of

¹ For population data, see [Fólkatal | Hagstova Føroya](#)

² A short briefing document prepared for a key meeting with representatives of the Danish Ministry of Justice and, crucially, the Agency for Higher Education and Research, is available in the Teams folder for the External Review Team. See, “Developing a culture of quality assurance and enhancement at the University of the Faroe Islands: Strategy, progress and plans. Report for a meeting regarding accreditation of the Law programmes at the University of the Faroe Islands, 10/9/21”.

Small Countries and Territories and have submitted, in 2020, a successful application to become a signatory to the Magna Charta Universitatum (having pledged to do that as far back as 2014).

These are some of the key strengths and assets, and it is good that they are significant, because we also face significant challenges, which are clearly indicated in the phrasing of the vision stated above.

In terms of integration, we are developing from a situation in which the University has not been well integrated – with our faculties operating with a substantial ‘relative autonomy’ from a quite weak central administration. The institution, moreover, is also perhaps only now really coming to terms with a challenging merger process from 2008, which brought the previously independent colleges of teacher/pedagogue and nurse education into the University. The development of a new main campus for the University has been conceived as contributing to addressing these challenges of integration – and other challenges too. But the actual development has stalled for significant periods and while there has been some recent progress, things have been moving more slowly than we would like.

We have been able to strengthen the main administration in recent times, in part to achieve greater integration, but this is still a work in progress – both quantitatively and qualitatively. Related to this, and in terms of modernisation and professionalisation, we are developing from a situation in which our arrangements and practices have in various ways been lagging behind developments elsewhere – for example in terms of organisational structures, management systems, availability of tools and processes, production of reliable data, and other things.

Together, integration, professionalisation and modernisation are all essential to perhaps the central, current challenge we face, which is to develop not just a system, but an institutional culture of quality assurance and enhancement across all of our activities, progressively ‘tuning’ ourselves in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. In doing this, as is explained in this document, we have been starting from a low base.

As we do that, we hope and trust that the Faroe Islands will develop an appropriate national qualifications framework and, like our NUSCT partners in San Marino, will achieve membership of the European Higher Education Area. This will allow the Faroe Islands to become properly part of the European Mainstream in Higher Education – which is ultimately the vision shared by both our University, including our students, and the Faroese government and society.

We know there is a long way to go for us to go to fully achieve these ambitions, but we believe we have made significant progress in recent years and that the review process is helping us to think reflectively about how best we can achieve our ambitions more fully. We have high hopes that the External Review Team will help us further to crystallise our ambitions in practical terms.

Finally, we thank the Review Team for the helpful guidance provided to assist with the preparation of this document. We have used it as just that – guidance – to ensure that we are addressing all of the relevant headings and issues, while at the same time, very slightly adapting and re-ordering items at times, and more generally presenting things in ways that allow us to convey our analysis and reflections in the manner which seems to make most sense to us, and which we believe will provide the most helpful document to the Review Team. We have also tried to make it readable. We hope we have managed to do that.

Professor Chik Collins, Rector, Tórshavn, 12th August 2022

Section 1: Contextual Information about the Institution, Student Population and this Review

a. Summary information about the University, including history/origins, statutory and strategic framework, organisational structure and rationale, programmes and research areas.

i. *Origins and Main Development of our University*

Our institution was established by the Faroese Parliament in 1965 with the Faroese title, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya, and the ‘international’ title Academia Færoensis. The purpose was to conduct “research and teaching at higher education level”. However, the institution did not at that stage have university status. It was made a university in 1987 – retaining the existing Faroese name and taking the international title, the University of the Faroe Islands. In the early years, the scale was very modest, and the principal focus was language and literature. The institution was housed in the building which still today is the base for our Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature.

Our University, then, is a young institution, and it did not have access to resources to allow for the achievement of scale in a short period – developing instead incrementally. In 1972, a department of natural science was established and a decade and a half later, when becoming a University, a department of history and social sciences was added. This three-department arrangement continued until, in 2008, the previously independent Faroese colleges of teacher education and nurse training were merged into the University, to create the five department/faculty institution which exists today³:

- Faroese Language and Literature
- Natural Science and Technology
- History and Social Sciences
- Education
- Health Sciences

The merger was challenging, generating issues over an extended period. It is only in the fairly recent period that we can say that we are really coming to terms with those challenges.

The University has a central administration, overseen by a University Director, and hosting key overarching functions including Student Affairs, Finance, Human Resources, IT, Communications and two fairly recently created central units – our Quality Unit (QU) and our Research and Enterprise Unit (REU). The administration has also grown incrementally, and it has generally been small – even relative to the institution.⁴ It was only in 2019, for instance, that a specific HR function was developed (by which time the University already had some 150 FTE staff), and later that year the newly elected coalition government specifically recognised the need to “strengthen the administration” further.⁵

³ Between 2012 and 2016 two ‘Main Faculties’ were established (Main Faculty of Humanities and Main Faculty of Natural Sciences) but the five department/faculty structure was reinstated in 2016.

⁴ This was recognised in a Ministry-commissioned report on the financing of the University, which was led by the Head of Gjaldstovan, in 2018 ([Búskettgreining og fígjarlig stýring av Fróðskaparsetrinum \(kvf.fo\)](#)). The detail is discussed more fully in Case Study 2: Developing the Organisation.

⁵ However, it remains the case that the importance of administration – and its integral relevance for everything else that we do at our University – is not always fully recognised. In deciding our government grant for 2022, the Finance Committee of Parliament reduced the recommended level of grant by 2 million kroner and stipulated that administration (together with research) should bear the impact. This had an impact on preparations for this review.

ii. Statutory and Strategic Framework

The **statutory basis** for the current University is the Act Parliament no. 58, 2008 (with changes mandated by Act no. 51, 2012). This specifies that the University “is a public institution which operates independently of the political system”, aiming “to provide research-based teaching to the highest international standards”, giving “due consideration to societal priorities”. It indicates that the University should ensure “internal quality assurance of the programmes delivered”. Both this Act and the related Executive Orders – which the relevant government Minister is empowered by the Act to lay down⁶ – indicate that the University’s programmes are to be “structured pursuant to the Bologna provisions” and presented “in the terms of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System”.

The Act also indicates that University’s “highest authority” is its Board, which is “accountable to the Minister for the Institution’s operations” and has “the overarching responsibility for compliance with all statutory provisions, including decrees and orders, regarding the institution’s activities”. The Board is composed of four members, external to the University, who are appointed by the relevant government minister, together with two elected staff representatives. These members have a four-year period of appointment. There is also a student member of the Board, elected on an annual basis. All members have deputies who have full rights of Board membership in the absence of the member for whom they deputise. The current Board was appointed for the period 2021- 2024.

It is important to note that while the statutory framework for the University is couched in the language of the Bologna process, the Faroe Islands still lacks a national qualifications framework and is not clearly part of the European Higher Education Area. A recent review of the processes for recognition of educational attainment across the Nordic region (under the Reykjavik Agreement) found that due to this the Faroe Islands was not yet in a position to receive automatic recognition of its academic awards.⁷

In terms of the **strategic framework**: The first serious attempt at a strategic plan was in 2014 – *The University of the Faroe Islands: Goals and Strategy (2014-2024)*.⁸ The vision was that the University would “secure the future of Faroese society” – perhaps an overly heavy burden for any single institution. The main “*raison d’etre*” for the University was expressed in terms of growing research activity, and the overarching goal was to increase the number of students to 1500 by 2024, studying in research-based education programmes. Underlying goals were then expressed in terms of:

- Quality - internal quality assurance to meet high international standards
- Globalisation – international collaboration, and student and staff exchange
- Innovation – teaching methods, curricula design, research and development, collaboration, etc.
- Network – strengthening ties domestically and internationally.

There was also focus on the development of an “inspiring study environment for students”, on students playing an active part on the development of the University, and on collaboration with the relevant authorities “to make concrete plans for improving the institution’s physical conditions” – in particular through the major redevelopment of a University Campus. Finally, the document indicated that in 2019

⁶ The Ministry-approved translations of the relevant Act and the currently associated Executive orders have been made available in the ERT Teams folder.

⁷ Report: “Automatic recognition of educational qualifications from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland” – available in the ERT Teams folder.

⁸ Available in the ERT Teams folder.

the plan would be reviewed, and “necessary adjustments” made for the period until 2024.

The review of the 2014-2024 plan coincided with the appointment of the current Rector. That review indicated significant challenges in assessing progress, due to the lack of reliable data. More generally, it became apparent that the University was facing challenges against expectations of both the statutory and strategic frameworks, including quality assurance and enhancement, where despite some significant efforts to achieve progress in the years preceding and immediately following 2014, progress had stalled and indeed seen reversals. The result was that in too many parts of the University, basic aspects of QAE were lacking.⁹ This was summed up by our first Pro-Rector for Education in the statement to the External Review Team (ERT) during its preliminary visit, that we had begun from a situation which was ‘below zero’ in terms of formal QAE. The situation is also fully recognised in the brief provided for the ERT by the Ministry (page 2), and in the guidance which has been provided to the University for this reflective analysis document, as follows:

“The Review Team acknowledges, as indicated in the briefing document it has received, that the University, and indeed the Faroe Islands more generally, is at a relatively early stage in terms of engaging substantively with key aspects of quality assurance and enhancement, the Bologna Process and alignment with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. To that extent, it will be necessary to calibrate the underlying assumptions of the review process to the specific context and stage of development of the University – while also seeking to provide critical reflection and supportive input towards an acceleration in the process of engagement and alignment. Some of the more or less routine expectations which may be expected to be applicable in other contexts are at this stage only loosely or unevenly in place, and others are little more than aspirations for future realisation.”

The view of the Board in late 2019 was that there should be a major rewriting of the strategic plan, to establish a new basis for progress. The result is the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, approved by the Board in May 2020, following an extensive process of consultation with staff, students, and external stakeholders. The document provides a vision of “a well-integrated, modern, professional university, working in partnership and in collaboration, to serve the evolving needs of the Faroe Islands” (p.3), together with a fresh statement of the University’s mission, in providing higher and continuing education, relevant and impactful research, and a wider public service (p.5). Thereafter, the *Plan* provides detailed and measurable commitments and priorities under six main headings, namely:

- Education and Student Success – including the creation of a new Quality Unit to develop “clear policies and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of all of our programmes” (p.7).
- Research and Enterprise – a new Unit to support the development of research infrastructure and activity.
- People and Organisational Development – including improving operational structures and investing in HR and in support for staff development.

⁹ As the review documents make abundantly clear, recognition of this situation is not a criticism of staff, including the previous University leadership, or of the previous Board of the University. Between 2014 and 2019 the University faced many difficult challenges and there were key achievements. The focus on the *quantitative* growth of the University (driven by an apparent demographic crisis) perhaps led to some de-prioritisation of administration and quality issues (more programmes were seen as the priority to retain younger population on the Islands). Key administrative functions did not attract sufficient investment. Quality issues, in this context, could also be seen as an unwanted burden and a distraction from other, more pressing, priorities. Nonetheless, the situation from a quality perspective in 2019 was very challenging.

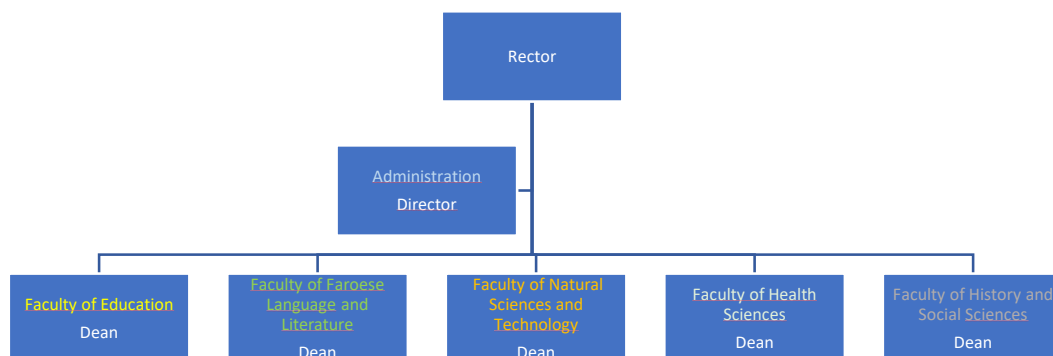
- The Faroese Language – recognising our “special responsibility” in developing the language.
- External Engagement and Partnership – strengthening the “external engagement, knowledge exchange and innovation culture of the University”.
- Resources – increasing the resources available and using them efficiently and effectively.

Beginning in August 2020, these commitments and priorities have provided the framework within which the Rector has provided a six-monthly progress report to the Board. To date, the Board has expressed strong satisfaction, and a clear desire for progress to be continued. The anticipation has been that by early 2023 we will be ready to start discussing a new plan, for implementation in 2023-24. The University community – and all of the staff - is aware that we are using the external review process to help towards formulating that new plan.

This, then, is the main framework within which the University has been developing and is expected to continue to develop. The objective of the review process is to support progress within this framework, with a particular remit to “support the strengthening of the quality assurance processes at the University, in accordance with the Bologna Process and the ESG”. The aim of this document is to support the ERT by providing a reflective analysis on behalf of the whole University community, as far as that has been possible, which can inform the team’s work.

ii. Organisational Structure and Rationale – and Institutional Cohesion

The development of the organisation of our University is the subject of one of the case studies for this external review process – Case Study 2: Developing the Organisation, and so there will be some limited repetition between this sub-section and that case study. Until 2019/20, the main organisational structure of the University, under the overall leadership of the Board was broadly as indicated below¹⁰.



¹⁰ For a period (2012-2016), the University operated with two Faculties and Deans, with sub-departments broadly mapping to the faculties indicated above, and with Deans primarily based in the central administration. However, this structure was abandoned based on feedback from staff, who found faculty leadership somewhat too distant.

The University Leadership Team was comprised of the seven individuals indicated in this diagram, with the Deans representing the five faculties.

When reviewing the previous strategy, it was concluded that there were some key challenges arising from this structure, which were calling for modernisation and professionalisation, including:

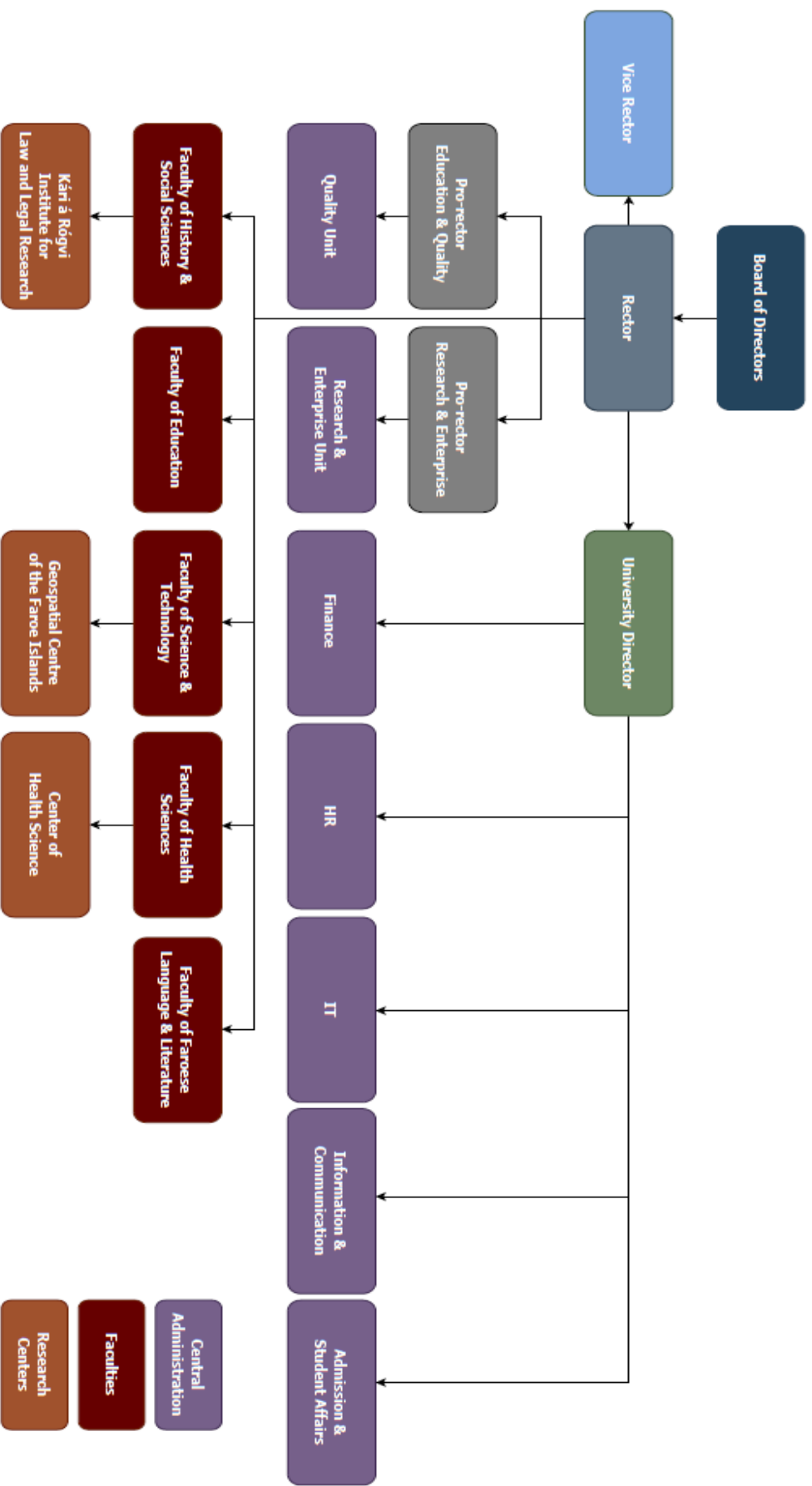
- A relatively weak and under-resourced central administration, at best struggling to oversee the operation of a single and well-integrated University – including the lack of central oversight/support for the main functions of the University, in education and in research.
- Following from the above, faculties which were tending to operate with a high degree of relative autonomy, leading to significant divergences in practices.
- A tendency to emphasise the ‘representational’ role of Deans, over a collective/corporate focus on responsibility for the leadership of the University as a whole.
- An underdeveloped system of management, whereby the University Leadership Team – and in particular the Deans and Director – were directly responsible for managing all of the University’s staff, making it very difficult for the Deans and Director to support staff and staff development.
- Insufficient opportunities for staff to gain experience of leadership and management as part of their career development, leading to critical issues in securing good succession.

In line with the first priority under People and Organisational Development in the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, this structure was reviewed, and in doing so we were seeking to modernise and professionalise to support the achievement of the commitments and priorities of the *Plan*.

The main developments, which initially were supported by additional funding of 1.5m kr. provided by government for the year 2020, have been:

- A re-focusing of a more professionalised University Leadership Team, including a further move towards a ‘corporate’ perspective on the leadership of the University as a whole.
- An ongoing strengthening and reorganisation of the main University administration, under the University Director, progressing towards greater institutional integration and cohesion.
- The creation of the new roles of pro-rectors for Education and Research and Enterprise, overseeing a new Quality Unit and a new Research and Enterprise Unit.
- The creation of Faculty Leadership Teams, led by Deans of Faculty, and including one or two Deputy Deans and a Faculty Research Leader – to support the Dean in meeting the responsibilities of faculty leadership, including the management of faculty staff, and to provide staff with opportunities to obtain experience in leadership positions before becoming senior leaders themselves.

An updated (and somewhat fuller) representation of the resulting structure is as indicated on the next page (though note that the development of the Faculty Leadership Teams is not represented there).



A key aim for these new arrangements has been to produce greater cohesion, through the cross-institution reach of the new central units and pro-rectors, together with the strengthened central administration more generally – in Student Affairs, Communication and HR. Other key drivers for cohesion include the creation of **an Extended University Leadership Team** (including Deputy Deans, Faculty Research Leaders and the main leaders of the administrative units overseen by the Director) which has met on a roughly 6-8 week cycle (covid permitting) to progress key University-wide matters.

While these various developments and innovations remain relatively new, the indications are that they are generally viewed positively and are seen to be achieving progress towards the desired objectives of modernising, professionalising, and integrating the University. This is reflected in feedback provided at a special all-staff event conducted at the end of 2021 to inform this reflective analysis.¹¹ It is also reflected in feedback we have received from students, including at a session organised to inform the writing of this document.¹²

We feel that there is continuing work to be done to develop our organisational structure to further meet our ambitions. Providing impetus towards this, several of our administrative staff have been making visits to other universities – in Norway, Denmark, and Iceland – to learn about how those institutions are organised and operate. One relevant suggestion has been to consider further reviewing the organisation of student administration across our University, bringing administrative staff currently within the faculties into a closer relationship with the centre. The idea here would be to achieve greater consistency and cohesion, and stronger support for the delivery of our educational programmes – while still maintaining a level of local secretarial/administrative support within the faculties. These issues are further explored in Case Study 2: Developing the Organisation.

iv. Programmes and Research Areas

Our **education programmes** are shown in the table below, which also has some explanatory comments.

Faculty/Department	Programmes	Levels
Faroese Language and Literature	Language and Literature	BA, MA, Minor
	Creative Arts (delivered since 2019)	Diploma/Bachelors
	Teaching Faroese as an Additional Language (delivered from autumn 2021, part time study)	Diploma - both BA and MA levels (60 ECTS)
	Faroese Language Summer Courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For speakers of Nordic languages (3 weeks, normally 2 years in 3) • For non-Nordic first language speakers (2 weeks, normally 2 years in 3) 	Check level
History and Social	Social Science	BSSc, MSc, Minor

¹¹ See “Developing our University’s Collective Voice in the Context of the 2021-2022 External Review”, available in the ERT folder. Detail of this feedback is provided in the relevant parts of this document.

¹² Detail of this feedback from staff is also provided in the relevant parts of this document.

Sciences		
	History	BA, MA, Minor
	Political Science	BSSc, MSSc
	West Nordic Studies (legacy, phasing out)	MSSc
	Economics and Management	BSc
	Law	BL, ML
	Leadership and Management (from Autumn 2021, part-time study).	MA
	Faroese Church History (supplementary for clergy trained elsewhere)	
Education	Teacher Training (4 year/240 ECTS)	BEd
	Pedagogy (4 year/240 ECTS, dual intake from 2023?)	BEd
	Student/career counselling (legacy – now concluding)	MA
	Supplementary Degree (Teachers and Pedagogy – upgrade)	BEd
	Pedagogy for Upper Secondary Teachers – 60 ECTS Diploma	Master’s and Bachelor’s level
Health Sciences	Nursing (dual intake, from January 2022)	BSc
	Health Science	MSc
Natural Sciences	Biology (2 titles, restructured 2020)	BSc
	Software Engineering (annual intake from 2022)	BSc
	Data Science (from 2023)	MSc
	Energy Engineering (‘General’ Engineering from 2021)	BSc
	Mathematics	Minor
	Marine Engineering – upgrading Vinnuháskúlin graduates	BSc

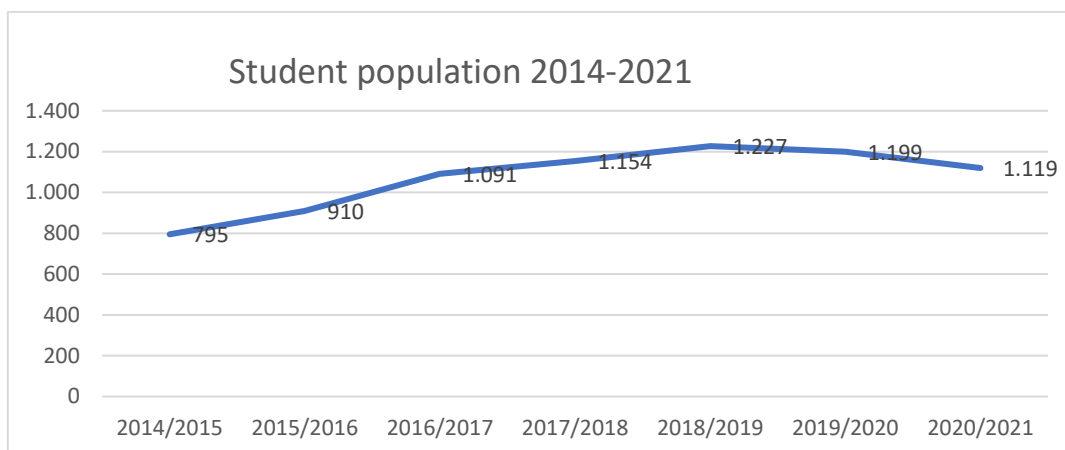
As can be seen from the explanatory comments, there has been some development in our provision in recent years. This reflects the statutory requirement that the University should continually be reviewing its provision to ensure it is meeting the needs of the Faroe Islands. It is the desire of our Board that a more systematic review should be undertaken when the External Review Team has completed its work.

The **main research areas** across the University currently are as follows:

Faculty	Main Research Areas	Comments
Faculty of Education	Pedagogy, inclusion and integration, bullying, applied Faroese language and linguistics, mathematical didactics, children's vocabulary	The previously independent college of teacher education was a teaching institution, and it has proved challenging to develop a research and publication culture in the Faculty post-merger, for various reasons – though there are recent improvements. There are six staff in research positions and no professor, and two PhD students
Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature	Linguistics (including sociolinguistics), literary studies, aesthetics	A long-established faculty with a strong research and publication tradition and most academic staff in research positions (6/9), including three professors (one in a half-time position). World leading in Faroese language and literature. Currently has 2 PhD students.
Faculty of Health Sciences	Nursing, epidemiology, public health, exercise physiology, gerontology, diabetes, and healthy ageing	The previously independent college of nurse education was also a teaching institution. While there are still only six staff in research positions, one being a professor (appointed in 2019) these have proved productive in terms of their external collaborations and their research outputs – many of which are of international standing. The faculty has six PhD students and a further two from external universities it helps supervise.
Faculty of History and Social Sciences	History, anthropology, sociology and social policy, political science, economics and business studies, law, theology	A well-established faculty with a strengthening research and publication profile and most academic staff in research positions (15), including two professors, both appointed in 2019 (one has been Dean for several years). In addition, the faculty has five PhD students.
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology	Computer science, Engineering and software engineering, biology, chemistry, ocean modelling, geospatial science	A long-established faculty with 12 staff in research positions and tending to have a high proportion in professor positions (50% of all professors were in this Faculty 2019-2022). Currently 4 PhD students.

b. Composition, key trends, and anticipated changes in the student population, including information on retention, progression and graduate destinations.

Numbers: In 2020/2021 our University had 1,119 registered students. This is a bit lower than the headline figure for previous years, with 2018/2019 seeing 1227 students. However, the numbers are not straightforwardly comparable, because until 2020 many long-term inactive students had been allowed to stay in the system. That year, inactive students were given the option to either complete their degree within a set period or be withdrawn. This resulted in some 200-250 students being withdrawn over a period of 18 months, most of whom had abandoned their studies.



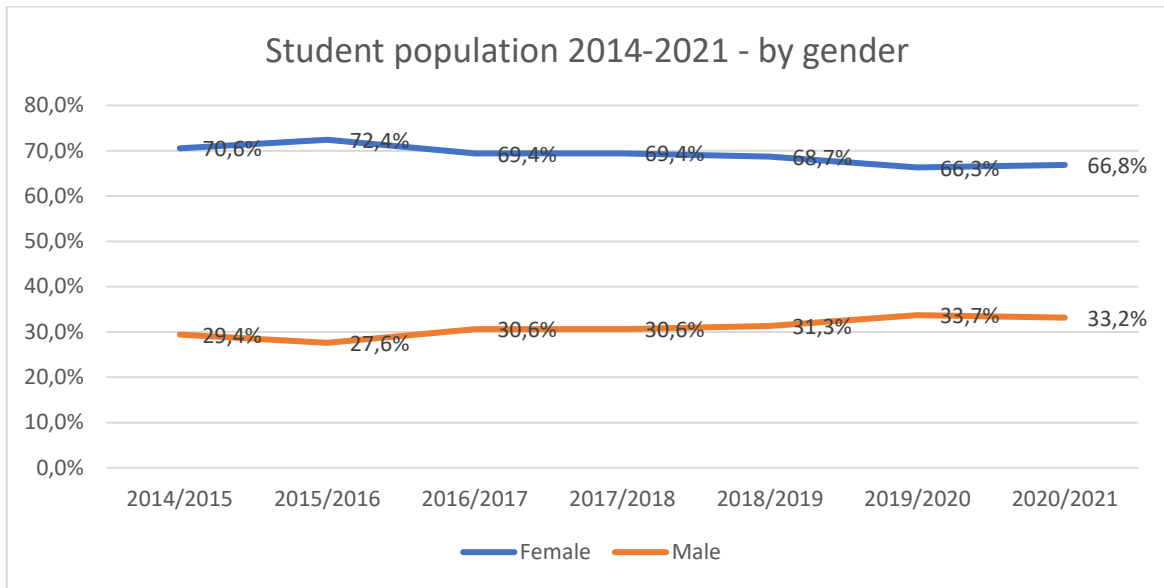
Gender: Two thirds of our students are female (2020/21), down from close to three quarters in 2015/16. Just over 40% of students are studying to become teachers, pedagogues, and nurses. These programmes are the most popular among applicants and have a relatively large intake every year, with currently some 120 available places. These professions attract a high proportion of female applicants, and nearly 85% of the students across these programmes were female in 2020/2021 (100% in the case of nursing).

Danish universities saw a shift from a majority of male students around 2000, when the total number of female students surpassed the number of males, and in 2020, 53% of all students at Danish universities were female¹³. However, the teacher, pedagogy and nursing programmes are not offered at universities in Denmark. At UK universities, 57% of entrants were female in 2020/2021¹⁴, and this has been roughly the same since 2016/2017.

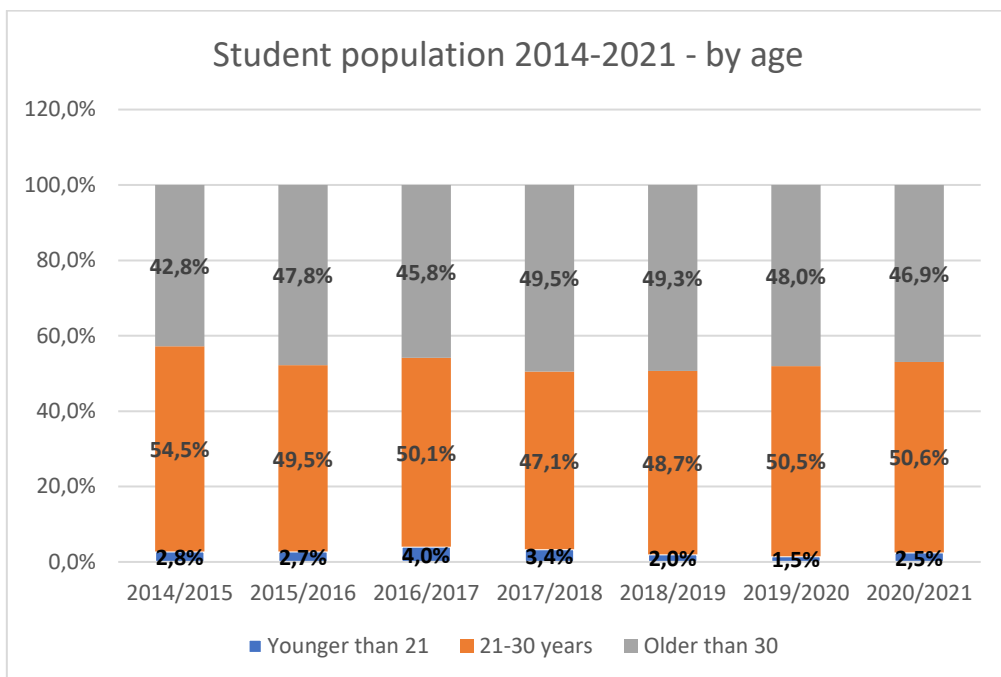
Unless the aforementioned professions become more attractive for males, we expect this gender imbalance to continue, also because we have just introduced a biannual intake of nurses, increasing the number of new students from 30 to around 50, and plans are to have an increased intake of pedagogue students. Our University has sought to attract more male applicant to these programmes and will seek to do so again as we go forward.

¹³ Danske Universiteter, https://dkuni.dk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/dkuni_tal_om_danske_universiteter_2021.pdf

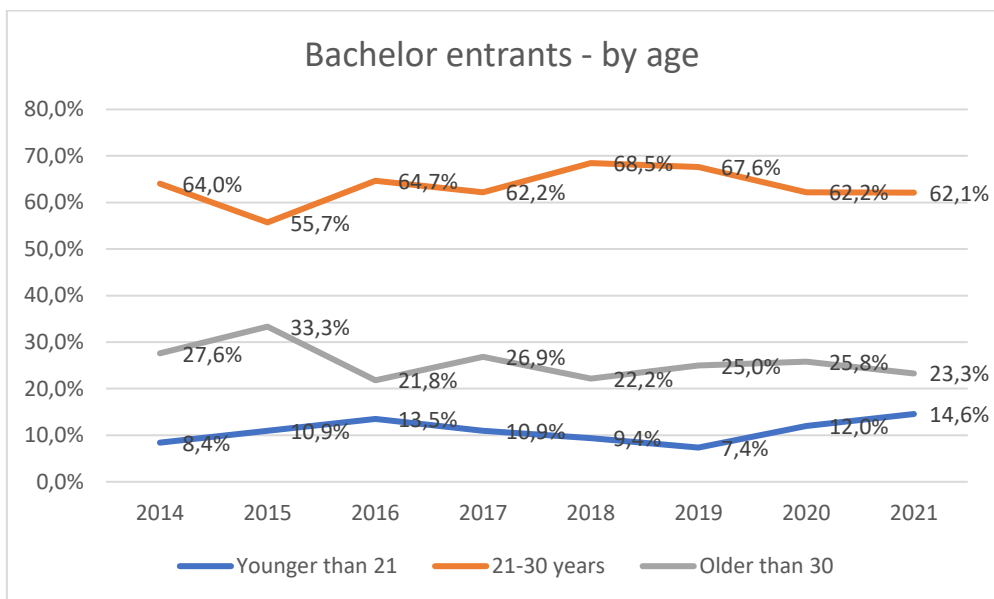
¹⁴ Higher Education Statistics Agency, [Who's studying in HE \(2022\)](#)



Age: In 2020/2021, just over 50% of the student population was between 21 and 30 years old and 46.9% was 31 years or older. From 2017 to 2019, the balance was the other way around, but since 2019, students in their 20s have been the slightly larger group. The proportion of students under 21 years old has been consistently low, and never greater than 4%.



If we look at the new entrants to bachelor's programmes, we have seen that the proportion of students under 21 rose slightly in 2020 and again in 2021. Well over half of new entrants to bachelor's programmes are between 21 and 30 years of age when entering.



It is common for young people in the Faroe Islands to take one or two gap years between completing upper secondary school and starting university. This makes them close to 21 years old before entering our University. From our student satisfaction surveys, we also know that half of our students have children under the age of 18 and many had children before they came to the University.

Mode of Study: The great majority of our students are enrolled as full-time students, since we offer few part-time programmes, and because only full-time programmes enable students to get student grants. Only around 6% of the students in 2020/2021 were enrolled as part-time students, but, as will be indicated in the next section, the ‘real’ number of part time students has been somewhat higher.

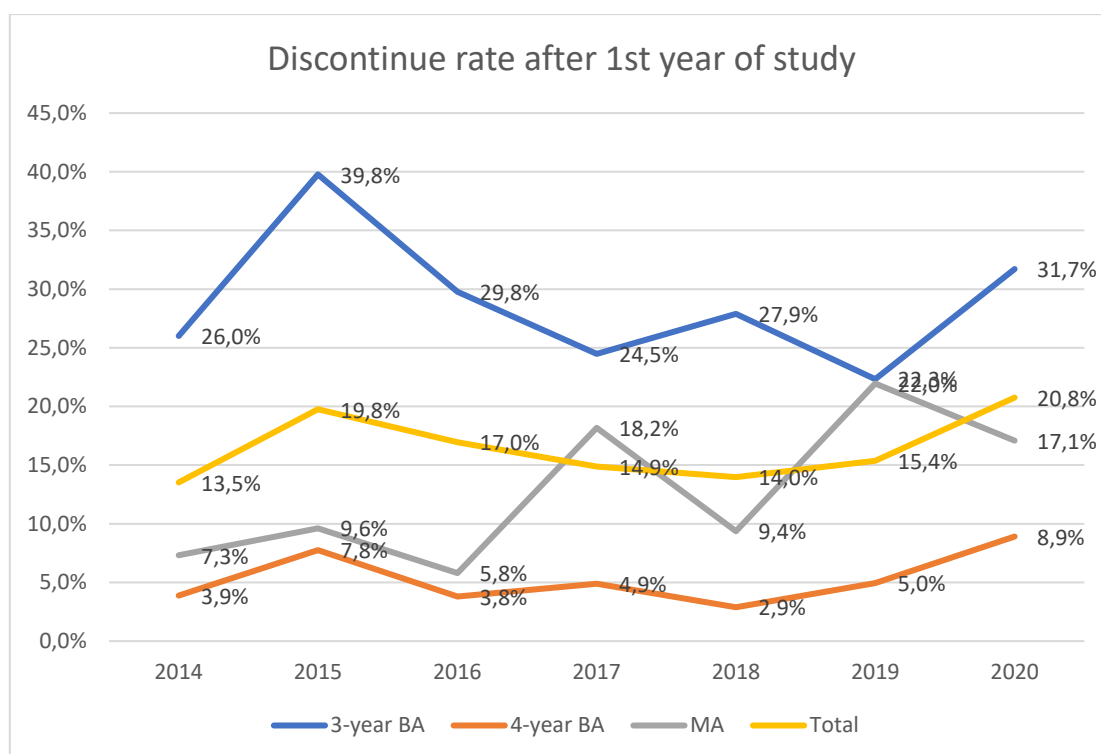
Previously most part-time programmes have lifted older diploma-bearing graduates up to bachelor’s level (for instance, for teachers). However, a two-year, part time postgraduate diploma in Careers Guidance and Counselling was offered between 2013 and 2015, which was later extended for progression (part-time) to a full MA. Since 2016, we have offered a master’s programme in Health Sciences on both a full- and part-time basis, and in 2021 a master’s programme in Leadership and Management was offered – only on a part-time basis. These programmes attract people already working and therefore these students are generally older. As we continue with these developments, we expect the proportion of students 31 and older to grow, and the number of part-time students will also grow.

More generally, given our demographic profile – relatively older students who are often also working parents – a heightened focus on the lifelong learning aspects of the Bologna process looks appropriate, with widening access to higher education, creating more flexible, student-centred modes of delivery, and improving the recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning. Students who study in the Faroes face some specific challenges. The cost of living here is high and student accommodation is very limited, so many must work while studying. Our Student Satisfaction Surveys also show that half of our students have caring responsibilities, also creating challenges. Student Affairs and student counsellors are receiving more enquires about the possibility to study part-time on some of our full-time programmes. Most of them mention that they need to work besides their studies, and then full-time studies can become too much.

ii. Retention, progression, and graduate destination

It is only since 2021 that we have had reliable data on progression and retention. The data was (in 2021 and again 2022) presented to staff and students, and all faculties have discussed the data and have agreed actions to address challenges.

Student retention varies across our University, with some programmes retaining and graduating a high proportion of students, while others are struggling. A difference can be seen between the 3-year bachelor’s programmes (in the older parts of our University – FLL, HSS and NST) and the 4-year bachelor’s programmes (in the newer parts – merged in 2008 – Education and Health Sciences). Of the 2020/2021 cohort, almost one third (31.7%) of new entrants from the 3-year bachelor’s programmes had discontinued their studies after the first year, compared to only 8.9% of students on the 4-year bachelor’s programmes.



The numbers also show a substantial difference if we look at students 12 months after what would have been ‘on-time completion’. The 4-year bachelor’s programmes have a total discontinuation rate of 22.9% (2016 cohorts in 2021), the 3-year bachelor’s programme have lost over 60% of entrants (2017 cohorts in 2021) and the master’s programmes have lost 27% of entrants (2018 cohorts in 2021).

Discontinuation rate 12 months after ‘on time’ completion

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
4-year BA	16,3%	22,3%	22,9%	-	-
3-year BA	40,4%	60,2%	57,4%	60,2%	-
MA	7,3%	17,3%	13,0%	22,7%	27,0%

Retention on master’s programmes varies greatly, with some programmes losing almost all students while others retain. Some programmes have intakes of new students every other year and numbers of new entrants can be very low.

Entrants to Master's Programmes

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Master's in Faroese	7	4	7	-	2	6	2	6	34
Master's in Health Sciences	17	-	-		24	-	24	-	65
Master's in Law	17	24	16	3	18	11	-	4	93
Master's in History	-	5	-	2	1	6	4	4	22
Master's in Politics and Administration	-	3	5	5	4	9	9	6	41
Master's in Social Sciences	-	10	9	4	3	10	2	10	48
Master's in West Nordic Studies	-	6	8	5	11	-	-	-	30
Master's in Public Health	-	-	24	-	-	-	-	-	24
Master's in Leadership and Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	26
Total	41	52	69	19	63	42	41	56	383

In the Student Satisfaction Survey¹⁵ from 2021, respondents who had considered leaving their studies stated that finances, workload, and doubts about the programme were the main reasons. Beginning 2022-23, we will introduce a process where the student counsellors contact students that discontinue – to further improve our understanding of reasons.

If we compare the four-year and three-year programmes, the 4-year programmes became part of the University after the merger in 2008, and these programmes have had a strong tradition of student support and counselling, which was not matched in the “older” parts of the University. We have, since 2020 increased student support and counselling in the other faculties to address this aspect and we hope to see a positive effect over the coming semesters.

The 4-year programmes are targeted at specific professions making it clearer what destinations most likely will be, while with many of our other programmes that is less clear. There are indications that this is one factor influencing retention rates. At the Faculty of History and Social Sciences, staff have been presenting information on graduate destinations to students in order to try to address this aspect.

Student progression also varies across the University. Our *Strategic Plan* aims “To have at least two thirds of students on track to successfully complete their programme of study on schedule”. Students completing their degree *on schedule* means that they finish no more than 9-12 months beyond their minimum (*on time*) period of study (following the Danish approach, where students have 25% leeway).

87.8% of our 2021 graduates completed on schedule, but as with student retention, the numbers for the individual programmes vary. Graduates from the 4-year bachelor's programmes almost all graduate on schedule (95-100%), while the figure is somewhat lower for the 3-year bachelor's programmes (82-85%, but with an apparent ‘blip’ in 2018). Just over two thirds of master' graduates were on schedule in 2021.

¹⁵ Participation rate in the survey was 56.8%, up from a 28% participation rate in 2019 survey. Our Student Council played a key role in this doubling of the participation rate as part of our joint commitment to ‘building a feedback culture’.

Graduates on schedule

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Graduates (on time + on schedule)					
3-year BA	85,0%	67,9%	81,8%	83,3%	82,5%
4-year BA	95,7%	98,4%	100,0%	97,5%	98,8%
MA	68,8%	78,6%	64,3%	70,0%	66,7%
Total	90,7%	85,7%	89,1%	89,6%	87,8%

While the proportion of 3-year bachelor's graduates completing on time or on schedule, is rather stable at about 82-85% (with the exception of 2018), the division between on-time and on-schedule graduates varies greatly from year to year, as seen in the table below.

Graduates on time and on schedule

	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
% of graduates on time					
3-year BA	70,0%	28,6%	54,5%	33,3%	65,0%
4-year BA	79,6%	87,3%	92,6%	96,2%	89,2%
MA	56,3%	42,9%	21,4%	10,0%	9,1%
Graduates on schedule					
3-year BA	15,0%	39,3%	27,3%	50,0%	17,5%
4-year BA	16,1%	11,1%	7,4%	1,3%	9,6%
MA	12,5%	35,7%	42,9%	60,0%	57,6%
Graduates – late					
3-year BA	15,0%	32,1%	18,2%	16,7%	17,5%
4-year BA	4,3%	1,6%	0,0%	2,5%	1,2%
MA	31,3%	21,4%	35,7%	30,0%	33,3%
Number of diplomas issued					
	129	133	137	135	156

The proportion of master's graduates completing on time went down from 56.3% in 2017 to only 9.1% in 2021. Around two thirds of master's graduates complete their studies no more than 12 months after planned completion, but there has been a shift from completing on time (56.3%) in 2017 to completing on schedule (57.6%) in 2021.¹⁶

We know that a relatively large number of our students become parents during the course of their studies, and this has an impact on how long it takes them to complete. However, this does not have implications for their completion time since students on leave will be 'paused'. For instance, 10 of the 21 new entrants on the bachelor's programme in Nursing in 2019 went on leave during the second year, and 12 of the 39 students on the 2016 cohort on the bachelor's programme in Pedagogy were on leave during the first year. A total of 40 leaves have been registered for the 2016 cohort in Pedagogy so far, and several students have multiple leaves during their studies. However, data show that these students generally complete their studies on time.

¹⁶ The numbers here are small. In 2017 we issued 16 master diplomas and in 2021 we issued 33. The students who completed on schedule in 2021 were from all the different master programmes. At the Faculty of History and Social Sciences (where the majority of the graduates are from), master students have been given the choice to submit their thesis in June or September. Most did so in September, and the consequence is that they are not "on time", because the deadline for that is August 1st.

As already mentioned, most of our master's programmes have only been offered as full-time studies, but the progression of master's students, together with data from the Student Grant Fund, showing that only 42% of our master's students were receiving student grants in 2020, tells us that the potential demand for part-time studies is almost certainly greater than we are currently catering for.

The University conducted its first **graduate destinations** survey in 2020 (for 2019 graduates) and followed up with another in 2021 (for 2020 graduates). The data show that almost all of our graduates were in a graduate destination within 12 months. For 2020 graduates, 97% were in a graduate destination, up from 85% of 2019 graduates, and 99% from both graduation years were either employed or in further studies. There is a strong demand for especially nurses and pedagogues and these, along with the teachers, often have jobs secured when they graduate. 87.9% of the respondents in the 2020 survey said that they felt well prepared by their programme for their employment.

c. Summary of the institution's follow-up on the previous External Review

The law governing our University states that: "The Minister organises a review and evaluation of the University of the Faroe Islands. The evaluation is conducted by external expertise".¹⁷ The previous (and, until now, only) evaluation was conducted in the period 2013-2014.¹⁸ The full report can be found in the folder provided for the ERT. The review principally covered:

- The University's status, laws, executive order, rules and regulations
- An assessment as to what degree the 2008 merger had been successful, in relation to the intention of the Parliament, and also to the internationalisation of higher education.
- Our internal quality assurance system
- Management and administration systems
- Our need for separate accreditation of programmes

The report repeated several times that the institution was "doing well considering the University's conditions" – perhaps seeming to indicate a lower level of expectation than might apply elsewhere. The expert group emphasised that their recommendations should not be seen as strict directives. Some recommendations were acted upon, to varying degrees, and others were not.

Education Recommendations

- *Recommended offering new programmes and educational/teaching collaborations considered particularly attractive to Faroese students, e.g., cultural, art and tourism related programmes and interdisciplinary programmes in economics, law and business, and IT.*
- *Emphasised the need to ensure research-based education in all areas and ensure close to practice collaboration with local institutions, e.g., the health and education sector.*

Follow-Up on Recommendations

In 2013/14 there was much national focus on emigration and 'brain drain' due to the poor financial situation in the country. One of the counter-measures was investment in the University, to provide more opportunities to study in the Faroes. Thus, the focus at that time on increasing the number of students to 1500 by 2024. There was discussion about whether to focus on a few programmes which had special relevance to the Faroes (particularly to the marine/fisheries sector) but was decided that our University had to offer programmes that prospective students would otherwise pursue abroad. This is in line with recommendation mentioned above and to a certain extent it worked, although

¹⁷ §3.1.

¹⁸ By an expert committee consisting of Professor, dr. jur. Linda Nielsen, University of Copenhagen (Chair), Professor, PhD Jón Torfi Jónasson, University of Iceland, and Professor, Dr. phil. Jürg Glauser, Universities of Zurich and Basel.

the resulting (in some cases) very small class sizes at times posed challenges.

The recommendation regarding programmes on culture and art was not implemented until very recently (2019) when a bachelor's programme in Creative Arts (with two tracks: creative writing and musical composition) was introduced. The recommendation regarding interdisciplinary programmes in economics, law and business has been discussed but not implemented yet. The software engineering BSc programme was already in place at the time of the review and other information technology programmes were not introduced. However, this year we are moving to an annual intake to this programme (rather than every two years) and in 2023 we will deliver a new Master's in IT.

According to the law governing the University, all teaching must be research based and to a certain degree this is the case, although far from all classes are taught by staff with research experience. Various factors (not least the difficulty at the time to attract sufficiently qualified staff as well as funding) have made it necessary to offer positions to staff without a doctorate, but this is something that we are seeking to address. As will be detailed in other parts of this document, key challenges lie in our Faculty of Education and also in Health Sciences.

Research Recommendations

- *Recommended a niche approach focusing on areas where the Faroes were well positioned.*
- *Recommended increased collaboration between faculties and Centres of Excellence*
- *Expanding cooperation with the business community and strategic alliances with other universities and institutions*

Follow-Up on Recommendations

Unlike the recommendation for education, for research the recommendation was more focused – to be 'world champions in niches'. No specific research strategy was put in place in response to this – affirmatively or otherwise. A key challenge here is that there are separate research institutions on the Faroes, which are already the main concentrations of research expertise in the areas which the Faroes might be positioned, for instance, the ocean (Havstovan) and aquaculture (Fiskaaling). Another is that the recommendation did not help to address the need for research in areas where the Faroes might be less well positioned, but where research was also needed. Also, organisationally, the University was not really set up to generate and implement a coherent research strategy, and arguably we are only really now getting towards the stage where that will be realistic.

The collaboration between the faculties has, by and large, not developed very strongly with staff and students commenting on a 'siloe'd' state of affairs. This can to a certain extent be attributed to the previous overall organisation of the University, mentioned above, and also the lack of a campus with shared spaces for all staff; but even where faculties are co-located, interfaculty collaboration remains limited.

Regarding extending cooperation with the business community and strategic alliances, we do not have data on this for the years following the last review, and there have been many changes in staffing since that time. However, despite some positive relationships (with, for instance, the Faroese power company, SEV) it is not apparent that there was a particularly concerted or effective response, and indeed the view of at least parts of the business community has been, and in places remains, that our University is not always 'easy' to connect or collaborate with. While we have had some useful and important collaborations with other universities, they have not been 'strategic'. However, more recently, some more progress has been made with the business community – including an important collaboration with the leading aquaculture business, Bakkafrost, which we are seeking to take to a strategic level, and a very productive collaboration with the IT employers, KT-Felagið. More generally, the University is working towards cooperation with the business

community in a more strategic way, through our Research and Enterprise Unit.

Quality Assurance Recommendations

- *The quality assurance of education should be centralised, professionalised, and expanded with a higher degree of registration, systematisation, and follow-up as well as a focus on quality enhancement.*
- *Work on the Bologna process should be continued and intensified, where the necessary resources can be secured - this is important, not least for the sake of mobility for the students.*

Follow-Up on Recommendations

Prior to the previous evaluation, the administrative functions relating to the study programmes were handled locally in the faculties/departments. A proposal was made to create a central Student Services (now Student Affairs) unit and a central unit was established, though with only two members of staff. Subsequently, this unit has been strengthened considerably and is now a vital and well-functioning unit within the central administration.

Prior to and during the evaluation a 'Bologna Group' was active at the University and the recommendation was to continue and intensify this work. However, this ultimately did not happen. Partly because of the focus on expansion (mentioned above) at the expense of quality enhancement, and partly because of some reluctance to engage with the substance of quality work, the main Bologna process work went into hiatus for some years and has only begun again in earnest with the arrival of the current Rector in 2019 and the establishment of the Quality Unit (established in 2020).

Other Recommendations

- *The expert group had further recommendations involving branding, improved communication and community outreach, joint staff events, improved IT utilisation, administrative assistance for researchers, and – last but definitely not least – a major campus redevelopment.*

Follow-up on Recommendations

Following (and to some extent during) the evaluation, the University underwent a rebranding exercise which sought to modernise the image of our University. A new home page was also launched (since redone twice). The then communications office was in charge of this and organised regular events for staff (some open to the public). The IT department was completely restructured and downsized so that most of the support and infrastructure was outsourced to an external provider. More recently, local support has been reintroduced and an ICT coordinator was also hired to (try to) ensure that the University was keeping up to date on educational technology. The Research and Enterprise Unit mentioned above aims, amongst other things, to provide research staff with support for funding applications and other things.

The last – and major – recommendation by the expert group is the building of a campus for the whole University. In 2017 a campus group was established and in early 2019 the group presented an overall campus plan with a vision for how the area of land between the main administration building and the Faculty of Education could be developed. After the presentation of the plan progress stalled, but in 2021 the group was reconstituted and in 2022 an architect competition is being held.

Overall, based on conversations with the colleagues who in the relevant period were then deans of the two main faculties, there was not a structured approach to deciding whether – or how – the expert committee's recommendations should be implemented. There certainly was a focus on trying to keep Faroese students in the Faroe Islands by offering programmes which were deemed to be

popular, and other recommendations – like the strengthening of the student affairs function – were also followed up.

d. Commentary on preparation for this external review process, including confirmation of the nature and rationale for the range of case-study topics included in the self-evaluation document.

The guidance provided for the preparation for the external review has been as follows: *“The underlying assumption for this Review and Evaluation is that it will be, to a large extent, evidence-based, accompanied by a reflective analysis conducted within the University and grounded in that evidence. The Review Team will want to see a document that is, to as great an extent as is possible in the circumstances, owned and understood throughout the University community, and it will conduct its interviews and investigations based upon that premise.”*

In the first instance, there has been a concerted effort over the period since the adoption of the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* to ensure that we have more and better data on our main activities. Initially, this work was progressed by a working group under the leadership of the Director. The work conducted by our colleagues in Student Affairs has been of particular importance – student numbers, retention and progression and destinations. There is ongoing work to be done to further improve both the availability and use of evidence¹⁹, but it is safe to say that our University is now in a much-improved situation with regards to evidence-based review (see Section 4d).

In terms of **ownership and understanding across the University community**, at the stage of formulating the University’s 2014-2024 *Goals and Strategy*, there was, according to the recollection of those who were here, fairly substantial consultation with staff. Also, according to their recollection, that document does not seem to have been an ongoing point of reference, discussion, and evaluation. With the current *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, we have sought to ensure that the document is more widely understood and owned and is an ongoing point of reference for reflection and evaluation. The process of formulating the *Plan* involved extensive consultation with staff, students, and external partners and a high level of consensus was achieved.²⁰

A principal focus for the discussions was to build understanding and commitment around the need for a sustainable system of quality assurance and enhancement.²¹ A key driver for this was hearing from students during the formulation of the new *Plan*. Since the approval of the *Plan*, in Spring 2020, there has been a continuing focus on wide understanding and ownership, as well as reflection, including:

¹⁹ Examples include the progressive institutionalisation and development of our mechanisms for securing student feedback at both programme and course levels, and for supporting the appropriate use of this feedback in the ongoing processes of quality enhancement.

²⁰ Extensive pre-drafting consultation across the University and also externally (roughly September-November 2019); meetings at each of the faculties, with specific staff groupings (e.g. administrative staff, professorial staff), and also with students, to receive comments and suggestions on an advanced draft (roughly December 2019-January 2020) – leading to substantial changes; an all-staff consultative event in Kongshøll with workshop discussions from cross-University groups to generate further useful feedback (February 2020); further responses from some staff members to a penultimate draft of the new *Plan* (February-March 2020), leading to further changes prior to final approval by the Board (May 2020).

²¹ “We will invest in a Quality Unit within the University administration, led by a Pro-Rector, which will develop, in dialogue and partnership with students, staff and external stakeholders, clear policies and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of all our programmes – in accordance with the Bologna Process. These policies and procedures will be implemented fully and consistently, creating a transparent culture of continuous enhancement” (*Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, pp.6-7).

- The work of the above-mentioned data group and the reporting to staff and students of data on progression and retention, student satisfaction, graduate destinations, and staff satisfaction – always related to the *Plan*, its commitments and its priorities;
- The creation of a Quality Enhancement Forum for Education, with representation from the faculties and from the student body, and a Research and Enterprise Forum, involving Faculty Research Leaders;
- The creation of the Extended University Leadership Team bringing a wide group of staff – including all who have management responsibilities for their colleagues – together regularly to progress key issues and initiatives (including a regular focus on quality and enhancement), with expectation of onward communication to Faculty and central administration meetings;
- Expectations of explicit reference to the *Plan* in applications for career progression and in the annual review conversations between staff and managers introduced in the Spring of 2021;
- Faculty and University-level events reminding staff of our mission, vision, commitments, and priorities and discussing progress against them.

The **specific preparation for this external review process** has involved building on this pre-existing work. This has involved encouraging staff to see the review process as an opportunity both to reflect collectively on our progress and development to date, and to seek the input of ‘critical friends’ whose brief is to seek to support our progress towards realising our shared goals. This has been the approach presented and discussed at our Extended University Leadership Team (EULT) meeting on 31st of August 2021, and then again at an all-staff event on the 8th of September 2021. These events prepared the ground for the preliminary visit of the ERT towards the end of October 2021, which included meetings of the Team with ULT and EULT, as well as other key staff and also students.

At that stage there was some disruption to the preparatory work, both due to a worsening in the covid situation, and also because of the perceived need of the Chair of the ERT and the Ministry to strengthen the Review Team and to further develop aspects of the brief for the Team and the guidance provided to its members. The latter work was done during the month of November, during which the covid situation was somewhat worsening.

However, the situation was not so bad to prevent going ahead with a further, all-staff event, held in the Nordic House on 26th November 2021. This was a structured event which brought staff together in cross-University groups to reflect on our development and progress in recent years – and to do so in the context of the preparation for the external review process. Staff were asked to focus on some main aspects of our *Strategic Plan*: How were we doing before our current *Plan*? How are we doing now in relation to the implementation of our *Plan*? How are you feeling about our progress?

At this event, which saw excellent engagement, both quantitatively and qualitatively, staff were encouraged to think in terms of “Developing our University’s Collective Voice in the Context of the 2021-2022 External Review”, and a special, short paper was written to frame our approach to the event and to the wider external review process (see Appendix 1). The document presented a kind of ‘philosophical approach’ which provided the basis for a presentation in Faroese to staff at the event by our then Pro Rector for Education. The document proposed that:

“It is important to recognise that any developing institution, while it seeks to speak with a single voice *as an institution*, is always in the process of constructing that voice out of a process of dialogue of many voices. This is, perhaps, particularly true of a university – and is certainly true of our University.

The success of any university depends on the success of the collaborative process through which its single voice is constructed. The voice needs to be constructed in dialogue

between different kinds and levels of staff, and also in continuous dialogue with students and external stakeholders.

This collaborative process must find agreement and consensus wherever reasonably possible. It must also recognise and leave space for disagreements and differences of emphasis within the given framework for development, where those are reasonable and legitimate. And it must seek to incorporate even those voices which question, in appropriate ways, the prevailing framework itself.

This process of dialogue and voice has some of the key characteristics of democracy, but it is not – and never can be – a ‘perfect democracy’. Much of the framework for development is externally given, and a university is also a place of employment, and so on. There are limits and boundaries. But the more we understand all this, and the more constructively we all engage with the process; the more democratic, inclusive and dialogical the process of construction of the voice of our University can be – then the more successful and harmonious (or at least less conflictual) our institution is likely to be.”

The task was then for us to reflect collectively and dialogically on the progress toward our *Plan* objectives, and a framework was proposed to help to “structure the process of dialogue and voice”. That involved seeing our University as “developing in ‘a space of transitions’ across a field of conceptual oppositions or dualities”, for example, the ‘traditional’ university vs. the ‘modern’ university, the ‘federal’ university vs. the ‘unitary’ university, the ‘Faroese’ university vs. the ‘universal’ university, the ‘ivory tower’ university vs. the ‘societally-engaged’ university. The aim was to:

“... seek to use these conceptual oppositions to structure the process of dialogue and voice which will in turn inform the writing of our reflective analysis document – a document which should speak with a recognisably singular, though by no means uni-accentual, voice on behalf of all of the groups who together constitute the University of (and for) the Faroe Islands.

Of course, the purpose is not to ‘choose between opposing alternatives’ – it is seldom a matter of either/or and often is a matter of ‘not only, but also’ – but to use the oppositions to help us to structure our reflections and discussions”.

The event was very well-received. We believe the most important thing about the event was that it took place, and that staff had the opportunity to discuss and reflect, and to provide extensive feedback – which is incorporated at various points in this document. We see this event as a template for future events and perhaps an example of good practice for other institutions.

Shortly thereafter, however the covid situation worsened significantly, leading ultimately, during January 2022, to our Ministry deciding that the main review visit should be delayed until after the summer, but also to a lot of our time being focused on the management of the covid situation. On the 16th of December 2021, ULT (carefully and with testing for covid taking place for those attending) took a day together with other key staff from the administration to start to work out our approach to the production of this document, including the choice of case studies, ultimately leading to the identification of a core writing group of four – the Rector, Director, and the coordinators of the QU/ Quality Unit and REU/ Research and Enterprise Unit – and a list of candidates for case studies.

The omicron situation also delayed our plan to hold a session with students.²² On the 16th of June an event was held with students who were either members of the Student Council or student representatives on the Faculty-level Study Boards. Students worked in groups to give feedback in

²² When the situation improved the Spring holiday and then the need for students to focus on coursework and exam preparation led us, in consultation with students, to delay the event until after the exams were completed.

response to a series of six main (pre-notified) questions about various aspects of the student experience: education programme; staff (academic and non-academic); counselling and support; study environment; feedback on their work, and perception of changes at the University in recent years. Students were also asked for a few sentences indicating their main comments for sharing with the ERT. The event was convened by our Communications Co-ordinator, with support from key central administration staff. No academic staff or members of the leadership were present for the discussions. Again, the feedback provided – which was both extensive and insightful - is incorporated at various points in this document.

Overall, the actual process of producing the documents has been a very challenging one, for various reasons. One is that our Pro-Rector for Education (Quality) came to the end of his period of appointment and did not wish to continue in the role (as well as being a Dean, a teacher, and a researcher). Another is that the main coordinator of our QU was partially redeployed to lead an important new programme in an area of their expertise, limiting the time available for other things – including preparation for the external review.

But, more generally, the production of the kind of document we have been asked for is challenging for an institution like ours, with limited expertise in doing this kind of work, and also with limited resources to support the conduct of the work. We have not, for instance, been able to free people from other duties to any significant extent, to allow them to prioritise this work. It did not help that as we were meeting on the 16th of December to discuss preparations, the Finance Committee of our Parliament removed 2 million krone from our budget for 2022 – and directed that we should reduce our spend on administration (and research).

Furthermore, as the challenge of omicron diminished, we found ourselves very busily dealing with a burgeoning of activity, as long-delayed activities and events started to happen. Everyone was very busy and time to devote to co-producing our documents was difficult to ‘protect’. The core writing group responded by organising special writing days which took place ‘off site’. However, ultimately, and we believe in all the circumstances largely unavoidably, much of the drafting of the document took place in the summer period, when other demands reduced. The core-writing group delayed and reduced their summer vacation to be able to progress the writing – for which we are very grateful. They worked ‘beyond the call of duty’, to be sure, and we must now ensure that they get time back.

All of this has also, we believe unavoidably, limited the scope to consult on the draft versions of the documents. It would definitely have been better to be able to do that to a greater degree than we have, but that would have meant asking other colleagues to engage during their vacation time. We have worked hard to ensure that the voices and views of both staff and students are ‘heard’ in the documents – and especially this main document – but further consultation on the drafts of the documents would almost certainly have strengthened that aspect further.

Furthermore, we have ultimately not judged it realistic to first produce the document in Faroese and then to have it translated for the ERT – both because we face a lot of challenges in finding suitable translators in any circumstances, and even more so in the summer and under time pressure, but also because we are working with an English template with terms for which there are frequently not readily available Faroese equivalents. Ultimately, the ULT as a whole felt the need to prioritise the production of a suitable document in English.

Finally, we are agreed that the process of producing the document has required more direct involvement from the Rector than would be ideal – certainly for future exercises. Again, this is something to reflect upon for the future as we strengthen both the wider leadership of our University and the administrative capacities at our disposal. We believe that the experience we have

achieved this time round will help substantially with that, but it will be important to ensure we learn from the experience in practical terms. *It will be helpful if there is not such a long time period before the next review process, and we encourage the ERT to comment on this suggestion.*

In the period between the submission of our review documents to the Team – on Friday 12th August – we will be undertaking further preparations, particularly with staff, but also, we hope, with students. Firstly, all of the main review documents – this documents and the case studies – will be made available on the staff intranet and staff will be notified of their availability. Short summaries of the documents will then be produced, in Faroese, which will be made available to staff ahead of two key meetings: (1) a meeting of the EULT on the morning of 30th August and, (2) an all staff meeting in our Kongshøll on the 31st of August. At these events we will present and discuss the main outlines of the RA documents in preparation for the visit of the Team in the following weeks.

Case Studies: Finally, the guidelines for this document indicate that we should briefly indicate the case studies which have been selected for inclusion in the document/process, and the reasons for their inclusion. The table overleaf seeks to meet that requirement.

Case Study	Nature/Rationale
1. The Faculty of Education	Reflective analysis of the operation of the Faculty of Education produced by the Faculty under the leadership of the Faculty Leadership Team. This is a requirement of both the brief for the external review team and also of the guidelines for preparation of the required review documents.
2. Developing the Organisation (to Support the Delivery of the Commitments and Priorities of the Strategic Plan)	Describing organisational development (mostly from 2008 onwards), this case study aims reflectively to analyse how our University has moved towards a more professional/modern organisational structure, and to provide the basis for discussions about possible further organisational developments, especially regarding student administration.
3. The New Annual Review Conversation Process for Staff – the My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation (MCPDC)	A narrative and reflective analysis focused on the development and introduction of a University-wide approach to annual review conversations with staff, which was identified as an important priority by both staff, the University Leadership, and the Board, and which aims to support staff in their contribution, collaboration, and professional development. We see this as an interesting case study of our collaborative efforts in moving forward with a major new initiative which ties together several vital aspects of our work, and which aims to support all of our staff to contribute, collaborate and grow in their roles.
4. Language and Language Policy	Reflective analysis of the evolution of language policy at our University, including the long overdue development and implementation in the recent period of our first written language policy. The discussion in this case study is of fundamental importance to the mission and purpose of our institution and it explores the complexity of the issues arising and the careful nature of the balancing exercise which has to be involved as we move forward as both the <i>Faroese</i> University and the <i>Faroese University</i> .
5. PURE Faroe Islands: Collaborative adoption of the PURE Research Information Management System	Reflective analysis of the adoption of PURE, in primary collaboration with the Faroese Research Council and the National Library but extending to a broader collaboration seeking to incorporate all of the publicly funded research institutions in the Faroe Islands. This work is an important aspect of our own development, but also a very interesting example of collaboration with, and to a degree, leadership of, other institutions and organisations on the Faroe Islands.

e. Impact of our approach to engaging staff and students in preparations for the review

On this, a great deal could be said, but we will limit ourselves here to a few 'high level' impacts.

Growing together as a more integrated, coherent and reflective academic community, understanding and owning our strategic commitments and priorities: The preparations have first and foremost provided a welcome opportunity for us to focus reflectively as a University community on our development as an institution of higher education and research in our own, very distinctive, Faroese context. In that process, staff in particular have been able to come together and to discuss and reflect, in an all-University context, on the main framework within which we are required to develop – according to the law and the related executive orders – and the strategic framework, with its various commitments and priorities, which was put in place in 2020. We believe that this has been very productive – the discussions have seen high engagement and received very positive feedback and we believe that the result is a more developed understanding and ownership of the work we are doing, how everyone contributes to it, how we are progressing against our ambitions and where we are going in the future.

Of course, as would be expected in any – especially large – institution, there is not absolute unanimity about every aspect, and some staff disagree with even major aspects of what we are doing. But at the same time, the great majority of staff seem broadly to be 'on board' and everyone, we feel, understands that their employment at our institution requires that they contribute to the delivery of our commitments and priorities, notwithstanding any disagreements they may have

Further modernisation and professionalisation: This latter aspect brings us to the issue of "modernisation and professionalisation", which are key terms in our current 'development discourse'. The preparations for the review process have both heightened our focus on these terms and also challenged us to reach new levels in acting in accordance with them. This has seen us developing our capacity to behave in practice as a modern and professional academic community, collaborating constructively to reflectively analyse our development and our ambitions, based on relevant data which we have taken the initiative to produce. It has meant engaging with experienced academic leaders from other territories to participate in a process of institutional review and developing the capacity to co-produce the substantial documentation required for the conduct of such a review. The documentation is of a kind expected of much larger and better resourced institutions at a much more advanced stage in terms of modernisation and professionalisation, and also their engagement with the QAE policies and practices which are the focus of this review. All of this is significantly developing the platform from which we will 'launch' our next stage of development.

Focus on quality and enhancement: The focus of the review process is "support the strengthening of the quality assurance processes at the University, in accordance with the Bologna Process and the ESG". This focus has been tremendously important for us, and of course all the work we have done to date with regard to the review process has been already supporting the strengthening of those processes. It has both been encouraging us to do that, in anticipation of the review which is to come, and also fostering discussion and awareness of what that work entails and its fundamental importance for our University at this stage in its development. In the body of this document, we have been required to detail not only what we have been and are doing, but also what we intend to do in the coming period. That has led us quite often to formulate thoughts and plans and to commit to them here, in writing. Depending on the feedback we will receive from the Review Team, we expect that many of these thoughts and plans will become specific commitments against which we will be expected to deliver. We will also, given what we have reported in Section 1c, expect to be held accountable for the delivery of such commitments – by our Ministry and future review teams – in a way which has perhaps not previously always been the case.

Faroese and International – Not only, but also ...: In our preparations for the review process, we have been challenged to formulate a perspective in which we are seen to balance, perhaps at a new level, the requirements we face as both the *Faroese University* and the *Faroese University*. At times, and for some, in the past, these requirements have been seen, not just as potentially competing priorities, but even as basic alternatives about which we have to make a choice. However, we have, we believe, made some progress in understanding that these are not alternatives between which we have to choose, but twin, eminently reconcilable and indeed mutually complimentary aspects of the basic mission and purpose of our institution, including as expressed in the legal underpinnings of our University – as well as in the widely agreed strategic objectives which we are working to achieve. We have also come to understand that our internationalisation, especially as we aspire to inclusion in the European Higher Education Area and participation in the Bologna process (and also, of course, Erasmus+), is not a threat to our distinctiveness as a *Faroese University*. Rather, as some of us have learned from our Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories colleagues, especially those in San Marino, such internationalisation is inherently a process aiming to value and preserve such distinctiveness, while also rendering it in basic ways compatible and exchangeable with the distinctive offerings of other institutions and territories with whom we seek collaboration and partnership.

Hearing voices – both student and staff: Finally, the preparations for the review process have seen us seeking actively to listen to, and take clear account of, the voices of key stakeholders – and especially the voices of staff and students. That should be apparent throughout this document, and very clear indeed in key parts of it. It is important that we note that the whole current trajectory of our institution – with the priority given to QAE – was fundamentally shaped by students in the meetings some of them had with the University leadership in the later part of 2019. Since then, we have been actively seeking and responding to the views of students in a new kind of way, and the preparations for the review have provided an opportunity to take that process further forward. It is pleasing for us that in comments reported later in this document, the students participating in our Student Council and the Faculty Study Boards say this so clearly themselves. Equally, the preparations for this review have given us a further stimulus to engage with staff around our development. As for students, we are able to report comments from consultations and workshops with staff where they acknowledge and welcome this.

There are many other impacts that we have thought about and could report, and some of them will be obvious to the Team from the extensive documentation they will be receiving, but these are the most salient high-level impacts we have considered it relevant to highlight.

Section 2: Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

Our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* confirms that, while starting from a low base level, we are committed to quality assured education and to continuously enhancing the student learning experience. Our commitment is in line with the goals of the Bologna Declaration, and in the Tuning approach to achieving them, whereby the student learning experience, forged through an institution-wide commitment to enhancing quality through student-centred learning, is at the heart of the evolution of high-quality educational programmes.²³ Here, enhancement is understood as an on-going process that is based on built-in quality mechanisms (according to the ESG) and an awareness among staff and students of their importance. The general principles of our commitment to enhancing the student learning experience are set out in our **Policy for Quality Enhancement for Education** (complying with ESG 1.1).²⁴

a. Student representation and engagement, including responding to the views of students.

“Student engagement and feedback is vital and essential for the quality of teaching and the student learning experience. Students are encouraged to participate fulsomely in the institution’s decision-making structures, committees and internal quality enhancement processes”.²⁵

Statutorily, as indicated in section 1, a student is directly elected to **the Board of our University** on an annual basis, together with a deputy student Board member. The current practice is that both the student member and the deputy student member participate in all meetings, where they are able to (and do) suggest agenda items, bring forward student views and receive responses.

Students are also represented in the **Study Boards** at each of our faculties. Those Boards are responsible by law for ensuring “high quality education and lectures”²⁶ and more generally are expected to “make sure that the programmes and lectures are continuously improved and developed”.²⁷ Study Boards are composed of three members of academic staff, together with three student representatives, all of whom should have deputies, and those are joined by a member of the Faculty administrative staff and a colleague from Student Affairs. Not all of our study boards were properly operational at the beginning of the current *Strategic Plan* period, but that has since been rectified.

Students are organised at the University via the **Student Council** – Ráð Teirra Lesandi (RTL) – which is in turn connected to a broader organisation, the Faroese National Union of Students – *Meginfelag Føroyskra Studenta (MFS)*. The latter includes students studying abroad. MFS recently became part of the European Students Union.²⁸ Since the later part of 2019, RTL has met on a more-or-less monthly basis with the Rector and Director of the University, and since 2020 this meeting has been formalised as “The Collaborative Meeting between the Student Council and the University Leadership” – with an agenda agreed in advance, proper minutes of the meetings with action points,

²³ See for example the following publications and guidelines: Gonzáles & Wagenaar (2008) *Universities’ contribution to the Bologna Process: An introduction*. 2nd Edition, Tuning Educational Structures in Europe; and Lookoff et al. (2010) *A Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles – Including Programme Competences and Programme Learning Outcomes*. Bilbao, Groningen and The Hague.

²⁴ Policy For Quality Enhancement for Education, available in the ERT Teams folder.

²⁵ Policy for Quality Enhancement for Education, p.2, available in the ERT Teams folder.

²⁶ Section 17(1) in the University Law.

²⁷ See “Standard rules of procedure for the Study Boards at the University of the Faroe Islands”, available in the ERT Teams folder.

²⁸ Our University was very happy to contribute to the assessment visit which ultimately validated the MFS candidacy.

and the chairing of the meeting alternating between the Rector and the Chair of RTL.

More generally, in recent years there has been a strengthening emphasis on **student representation, engagement and feedback** at our University – with the focus being on listening to, dialogue with, and responding to student views. This general initiative emerged out of discussions with RTL, and from

other feedback from students, all of which indicated both that students wished to exercise greater voice in relation to their education, with a particular focus on quality enhancement, and also that facilitating that exercise of voice would greatly help the progression of the University. Examples of this strengthening focus have included:

- Active support for RTL including in the revision of the statutes, regulations and procedures for the organisation, and the provision of resources for the operation of the Council;
- A shared leadership/student focus, via the above Collaborative Meeting, on the theme of “building a feedback culture” (as well as “student well-being”);
- Active participation of students in the processes of quality enhancement – with, for example, support for members of study boards in understanding and fulfilling their responsibilities; student participation in the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education, and periodic meetings between the staff of the Quality Unit and Student Council members;
- A survey of students regarding their experience of remote learning and teaching during the lockdown conditions of covid during 2020, with actions identified and followed up (see section 2g);
- Strengthening and improved implementation of a biennial student satisfaction and well-being survey, with dissemination of results to staff and students and follow-up actions identified at faculty level;
- Development, via the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education, and with extensive input from student representatives, of a single course evaluation questionnaire for implementation across the whole University, first implemented during 2021, with results collated centrally and disseminated to the faculties for reflection and action;
- The creation of a PhD Student Council, supported by the Research and Enterprise Unit, to allow for the exercise of student voice, leading to improving support and provision for PhD students (further details in section 2d);
- The inclusion of student representatives in the new advisory ‘collaboration councils’ for professional education in teaching, nursing, and pedagogy (as described in the new Executive Orders 100, 101 and 102) – the first of these councils has been established and the others are being established.

How well, then, are we doing in responding to the views of students? Here we can draw on what students told us at the special session in June 2022 which was organised with members of the Student Council and student representatives on the faculty study boards, in order to inform the preparations for the external review process and the writing of this RA document.

Students clearly indicated that they feel their views are actively sought, are valued and also that they are being acted upon – albeit to varying degrees, in different parts of the University, and on different matters. Here are some of their statements: “The regular meetings with (the University Leadership) and the Student Council makes students feel they are being heard, and it’s relatively easy to get influence up in the system”; “In general feedback from students to teachers is being taken note of, and students are being informed of changes”; “There is a will to make changes that improve the students’ experience”; “Course descriptions, course evaluations and feedback are better organised than before”; “The leadership is open for ideas from students and makes them happen (for example the recent event on exam anxiety, which the Student Council initially proposed)”; “Students

influence the decisions being made at both faculty and leadership level”; “We feel improvement in many ways at the University. Much has happened”.

However, there are also challenges. One challenge which has arisen in our collaborative efforts to “build a feedback culture” was summed up by one group of student representatives as follows: “Evaluation of courses is due after the course is done. Therefore, often students think that it isn’t necessary for them to respond, because it will not be of any benefit for their own education. In that case, students have to be responsible and acknowledge that they are part of an ongoing development of the student environment and programme”. This is something we will more explicitly address, together with RTL, in the next cycle of student course evaluation.

More generally, the student feedback indicates that the response to student views is uneven – and therefore not sufficiently systematic across the University – and also at times rather too slow. As one of the groups put it: “I wish I could become a student at Setrið in 20 years”. Students expressed frustrations about some courses starting without course descriptions being available, about lack of feedback on their work, delays in the return of assessed work, and more. These issues are not at all unknown in other institutions, but we have other reasons to believe that the issues have perhaps been rather more prevalent in some parts of our University than in institutions where QAE systems are more developed and robust.

As a University community, we fully understand that student participation and engagement, and responding to student views, are very much at the heart of the ESGs for quality assurance and enhancement. We believe that much remains to be done to develop our systems and operations to institutionalise these practices more fully as part of a culture of continuous assurance and enhancement. For instance, as an example, we need to formalise more fully the process through which academic staff receive, respond, and are seen to take action in relation to the results of course evaluation questionnaires²⁹, and link this also to the process of annual review discussions for staff. We also need to further strengthen the training and support for student representatives to fulfil their representational roles, and to continue more generally to build a culture of engagement, feedback and dialogue in which student voice is valued and acted upon. However, we also believe that we have taken significant steps forward in the past couple of years in this area.

b. Recognising and responding to equality and diversity in the student population, including widening access and mode and location of study.

The vision expressed in our *Strategic Plan* concludes with the following: “In all that we do, we will be committed to equality of opportunity, to inclusivity, and to supporting the well-being of our students and staff in an environment in which all can thrive and flourish” (The *Plan*, p. 4). This echoes the Bologna reform, in which equality, diversity, inclusivity, support and well-being are key values.³⁰

As with so many other aspects of our progress towards Bologna, we are at an early stage in our work on this. We do not as yet have specific policies beyond the generic statement above and we do not have any resourcing specifically for work in this area – such as, for instance, might fund an Equality

²⁹ This is one of the topics that will be discussed at a scheduled whole day meeting/workshop for all Programme Leaders that the Quality Unit is organising on 5 October 2022. Results from discussions will be taken forward by the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education (QEF), who write up procedures for *how* to make use of course evaluations, and *when* actions are required and need to be implemented. This initiative, resulting in written procedures, will be an integral part of future annual review discussions, to be outlined in an Annual Review Report for degree programmes.

³⁰ For details on how inclusivity and inclusive higher education is understood in the EHEA, see “Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA”, Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué from November 2020.

and Diversity Co-ordinator role, along the lines of institutions elsewhere. Nor do we as yet collect data about equality and diversity as part of our admissions process for students, or, in line with other employers on the Faroe Islands, as part of the application process for employment at the University. This is something which calls for wider conversation within the Faroe Islands, and that is something on which the University might be able to play a leading role. It would certainly be helpful for us to be able to collect data about equality and diversity in the student population, and amongst our staff, but that might initially prove controversial and face some obstacles in the Faroese context, where collection of such data is far from normalised.

In 2020, aware of the issues around the ‘Me Too’ movement in other places (prominently, at that time, in Denmark), we updated our policies for both students and staff on dignity and respect and communicated directly with all staff and students on the seriousness with which we take these matters. We did this again in 2021, after there were anonymous reports in our student survey of perceptions of bullying and harassment taking place. The University has also expressed support for Faroese Pride in recent years, and this year we proudly flew the Pride flag from our University flagpole.

Regarding **students with disabilities**: The law governing the university of the Faroe Islands (§ 20a) stipulates that “The University Rector shall arrange and ensure that students with disabilities are offered special pedagogical help or assistance, should they need it. If any student, due to a disability, is unable to attend and follow the general lectures, it is the responsibility of the Rector to ensure that they are offered an extension for their education and special educational material, for the student to complete their education.”³¹

Only some of our buildings are accessible for people with limited mobility and this is something that we will have to find solutions for, either by making the older buildings accessible or by moving teaching (all, of course, in the context of the redevelopment of the campus). We have not yet had the need to make such changes, but it is probably only a matter of time, and it could be that some prospective students with mobility challenges might not apply, knowing that the environment could be difficult to navigate.

When students apply, we ask about disability/special needs so that we can make any arrangements prior to the beginning of their study. However, not all applicants feel comfortable specifying this and, in those cases, we typically will not be aware until much later.

Our student counsellors have been dedicating a significant portion of their time to support students with special needs and have reported that the largest group of students by far is students with dyslexia. For some years now we have had a site license for CD-Orð (now IntoWords) for all students (and staff). This provides text to speech and writing assistance in many languages, including Faroese, and this has been a great help to students with dyslexia. In order to provide these students with even better support, in 2021 we commissioned a company, Málmót, to assist these students – and others with reading challenges – on a one-to-one basis, including screening, software support, teaching material scans, etc. So far 60 students are benefiting from this service, and we expect this number to increase over time.

Widening access: As underlined in the Bucharest Communiqué (2012, p. 1), “Widening access to higher education is a precondition for societal progress and economic development”. In practice, this means increasing the numbers and proportions of students entering our University who come from underrepresented groups, or ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds. On this, there are some key points

³¹ In discussions with government, we have been stressing the importance of the concept of “reasonable adjustments” in renewing the relevant executive order, which we are still awaiting.

to highlight. The first is that we actively promote the opportunity for all suitably qualified individuals to apply to study at our institution – regardless of background – and all of those admitted to full-time programmes are able to study free of any fee charges. They are also eligible for financial support from the government. These are important aspects of the Faroese context favouring wider access. It is also important to mention that we are not the most highly selective institution – a high proportion of applicants who meet the basic entry criteria are admitted to study, with the main exceptions being the teaching, nursing and pedagogy programmes, where applicants have outnumbered available places by a factor of 2-3 in recent years. However, we are moving to increase numbers admitted to some of these programmes (and have already done that for nursing). Also, some of those who do not access those programmes are admitted onto other programmes.

Where there is more of a challenge for us in successfully widening access is in supporting a higher proportion of those who gain access to successfully complete their studies – and this has already been indicated in Section 1b. Here, the challenge is broadly along the lines of learning from experience elsewhere about better supporting student success at various stages of the learner journey, and we say more about this in the section 2c, below. However here we can add that such support might usefully include programme-embedded support for study skills, some adaptation of curricula to support success in the early stages of programmes in particular, ‘demystification’ of curricula, and so on. Moreover, it will also usefully include improving the provision of feedback to students across our University.

To varying degrees, faculties are already identifying and working on the most salient issues in their own contexts, and as we progress on our wider journey of QAE, we will be looking to identify, support and share good practice across our University. Of course, it will be helpful if we are able to secure some specific resources to provide greater central support for this work (some relatively modest investment could likely have some significant impact on retention and progression).

Regarding **mode and location of study** (already outlined in section 1b), our student survey strongly suggests that access could also be improved if we are prepared, and supported by our partners, to offer more study opportunities on a part-time basis, and through blended-learning and distance learning. The latter seems particularly important, given our geography. This would accord with ESG 1.3³², which indicates that the implementation of student-centred learning and teaching “respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, **enabling flexible learning paths**”. Such paths include part-time studies, recognition of prior learning (including qualifications from overseas), access courses, smaller units of learning, and lifelong learning, including different forms of continuous professional development, and competence development for students, staff and the public at large.

As indicated in section 1b, currently the great majority (90%+) of our students are registered on a full-time basis, and face-to-face learning in our buildings, supported by the use of Moodle – and more recently Zoom – is very much the norm. But, as we have also indicated in section 1b, our student survey also shows that half of our students have caring responsibilities, in a context where there is also a high cost of living and very limited student accommodation. We have been receiving more enquires about the possibility to study part-time on some of our full-time programmes. Most of those enquiring mention that they need to work besides their studies, and then full-time studies can become too much. At the same time, student financial support is only available to students studying full time.

³² And also with SDG 4. See Michaela Martin and Ana Godonoga, [Policies for flexible learning pathways in higher education: taking stock of good practices internationally](#), IIEP-UNESCO Working Papers, 2020,

We are working to address these challenges, for instance by offering a part-time, master's programme in leadership and management, starting 2021, and more recently in developing an access study for this programme for prospective students not already qualified to bachelor's level. We are also developing, in consultation with government and employers, part-time study options for our IT programmes – including the possibility of securing an element of financial support for those studying part time. Clearly, it is easier to offer part-time options for programmes which admit students every year, and that is not the case for all of our programmes. Overall, it is clear that we must continue this work in order to get a better alignment between our study options and the real circumstances of prospective students' lives.

Another important consideration in terms of widening access is that of **language barriers**, especially in the context of increasing immigration to the Faroe Islands. Without an advanced level of Faroese *and* Danish and, increasingly, English, it is – under current conditions – a major challenge for those of non-Nordic origin to participate in our degree programmes.³³ Further detail on this is provided in Case Study 4: Language and Language Policy. Providing education for adults in Faroese as an Additional Language, such as will support the attainment of the advanced levels required for effective study, is a serious and underestimated challenge³⁴. Generally speaking, this means that prospective students with a non-Faroese and non-Nordic background do not (with a few exceptions) have access to our programmes and do not, formally speaking, have good, supported opportunities to develop the language skills required to do that.³⁵ This is a challenge that needs addressing for both social and economic reasons and our University is keen to contribute to doing that – both by supporting in new ways language education for those moving to the Faroes, and also by moving to offer some programmes in English. The latter is also important from the perspective of inward mobility as part of student exchange programmes, especially as the Faroes move towards participation in Erasmus.

c. Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey from pre-admission to post-graduation, including outreach, admissions, articulation, graduate attributes, assessment, employability, and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Supporting students at each stage of the learner journey is important in any context, but it is, as indicated in section 2b, of heightened importance in a context where our University is committed to increasing its student numbers and to widening access. While there is a lot of work that goes into supporting students, both from the faculties and from the student administration, the student experience has been variable across, and also within, faculties. A *systematic*, University-wide approach to supporting students in their learning journey has lagged behind what has been achieved elsewhere, and this is likely to be at least part of the explanation of the challenges we have faced with student retention and progression, particularly in the older parts of our University. This lag has been partly due to resourcing and partly to do with priorities, and in part it has also been to do with the partial and uneven follow-up on the recommendations from the previous external review.

However, more recently, our work towards strengthening our alignment with the ESG and the

³³ We conducted a cross-faculty language survey among Programme Leaders. The response rate was 85%. The aim was to get an estimation of the language situation and thus insight into the languages used in teaching, in study materials, and in assessment situations. This is discussed more in Case Study 4: Language and Language Policy.

³⁴ Although a part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Faroese as an Additional Language (FAL) for practicing teachers in the field was launched in 2021, it is as yet neither a research field nor a professionalised subject area.

³⁵ A recent exception to this was our Masters in West Nordic Studies, which attracted a number of students who would not otherwise have been able to study with us – as it was delivered in English. But this heavily depended on an international collaboration which came to an end in 2021.

philosophy of SCL, including the production and sharing of data on the student experience (retention and progression, student satisfaction, course evaluations, graduate destinations), has brought some improvements, and more generally this work has been focusing minds on further actions which are required. In the latter respect, our QU has led on the conduct of a series of Gap Analysis exercises across the institution, focused on ESG 1.2 (Design and Approval of Programmes) and 1.3 (Student-Centred LTA), and also 1.4 (Student Admission, Progression, Retention and Certification) and 1.7 (Information Management). At this stage, we have not yet focused on ESG 1.6 (Learning Resources and *Student Support*), but we will get to that. In the meantime, we can respond as follows.

Outreach: We undertake very little in the way of outreach work. In the past, we have made promotional visits to upper secondary schools, but that practice has largely been discontinued (primarily due to lack of support from the schools) – though it may be worth revisiting. In the Faroes, there are no local or national initiatives which reach out to specific parts of the population to promote and support access to higher education, but, especially given the ambition to increase the number of students at the University and to improve retention and progression, that would be worth at least considering.

Admissions: In June 2021 we received new Executive Orders which, for the first time, specified entrance requirements. This has improved transparency, as previously there were challenges with requests from within the University to change requirements close to application deadlines. In recent years the number of staff supporting admissions has increased from 2 to 4 and the process has been improved – though at this stage the process still needs to be codified. The team continuously seeks to ensure that applicants have all the information they require to inform their application.

Induction: Induction of new students takes place on a University-wide basis across a period of one week in mid-late August each year and is organised from Student Affairs, in dialogue with students and staff in the faculties. The approach balances the provision of information and guidance to students *en masse*, both in written form and through relevant presentations, with engagement at faculty and programme levels. Based on feedback from students, there has been a strengthening of the focus on students establishing relationships with their classmates, and student mentors have been used to support this work. Students also have the opportunity to meet relevant external organisations and companies as part of the induction week events. The week culminates with *SeturSamanShow*, which is a large event for all students and staff with entertainment, music and general fun. Each year, Student Affairs colleagues seek feedback from students on the induction experience, with a view to continuous improvement.

Articulation/Recognition of Prior Learning: The system of higher education in the Faroes is such that we have had limited need to consider articulation – compared, say, to the UK system. However, as vocationally oriented higher education has been expanding, we have been moving to do this on an *ad hoc* basis. Examples include articulation for marine engineering students coming from *Vinnuháskúlin* (The Centre for Maritime Studies and Engineering) to upgrade to a bachelor's qualification in our Faculty of NST, and discussions towards navigation students from the same institution to upgrade to bachelor's level at our Faculty of HSS. In the case of our Master's in Leadership and Management, we are in the process of designing an access route for prospective students who are able to demonstrate, say, a relevant vocational qualification together with significant relevant work experience. In that case, articulation is likely to be based on the completion of a specifically designed 30 ECTS access programme, which will raise the students' level and demonstrate the required knowledge and skills to undertake master's level study.

Otherwise, currently our main process for RPL is for Quota 2 applicants for bachelor's programmes – that is, applicants who lack the 'standard' entry qualifications. We need to establish a wider process

for all levels of admissions. As there is no national guidance on recognition of overseas qualifications, we use the database of the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Research.

On a less formal basis, colleagues in our Faculty of NST have been providing additional, summer tuition in mathematics for students entering the main IT programme – either as a ‘refresher’ for those returning to education, or as ‘enhancement’ for those entering from upper secondary grades at/close to the minimum entry requirement. This aims to improve retention and progression on the programme.

Student Counselling: This is one of our main investments in student support. Both the Faroese Teacher’s College and the College of Nursing had, prior to incorporation into our University, a position largely dedicated to student counselling, and this was retained after merger. Until recently, the three other faculties shared just 10 hours of staff time per week allocated to counselling. In 2020 this was increased to one full time position, and at the same time some steps were taken to create a more integrated counselling team across the institution. As indicated elsewhere in this document, this team has had a particular focus in the recent period in supporting students with disabilities/special needs (dyslexia, ADHD/ADD, and with other reading/writing needs), with additional resourcing provided. Our counsellors more generally advise and support students experiencing difficulties or in need of assistance.

Graduate Attributes: The discourse of graduate attributes³⁶ is not as developed in the Scandinavian context as in the UK and Australasia. It is not something we have as yet specifically focused on in our University. While our programmes are all described in terms of the generic and subject-specific competences attained by those graduating from the programmes, we have not as yet focused on expressing these as GAs, either at faculty or at University level.

Assessment: All courses are required to adopt and to describe, as part of the course description, the forms of assessment adopted as appropriate to assess achievement of the course learning outcomes. We are aware from student feedback that this has not been happening in all cases, and our Pro Rector for Education is communicating with teaching staff to address that. Teaching activities, and directed learning activities outwith class time, are then designed towards supporting students to achieve these outcomes and to be ready to demonstrate them in the adopted forms of assessment. Students who require extra support due to disabilities/special needs are able to access that through Student Affairs and our above-described arrangements with Málsmót. Others are encouraged to seek assistance/support from teaching staff and, as indicated above, the work of our counselling team extends to support with some aspects of study skills, including assessment/exams. Recently, based on discussions with the Student Council, some additional support was provided for students in relation to exam/assessment anxiety, and the intention now is to provide that support on a bi-annual basis, ahead of the main assessment periods. Support for assessment is one of the areas, especially in a widening access context, where some additional focus and investment would be likely to pay dividends.

Employability: There is a strong emphasis at our University in meeting “societal priorities” (the law), serving the “evolving needs of the Faroe Islands” and equipping our graduates “to develop successful careers” (*Strategic Plan*). The evidence from our graduate destinations surveys for those graduating in 2019, 2020 and 2021 is that our graduates in fact move in very high proportions into appropriate graduate destinations within a year or so of graduating. While this indicates that our graduates are both employable and actually employed, we are conscious that there is scope to

³⁶ Defined as “the high level qualities, skills and understandings that a student should gain as a result of the learning and experiences they engage with, while at university” (<https://www.stir.ac.uk/student-life/careers/careers-advice-for-students/graduate-attributes/>).

strengthen the focus on employability at our University.

Our largest programmes – namely the teaching, pedagogy and nursing programmes in the faculties of Education and Health Sciences – all have a strong professional focus and involve periods of supervised training practice. To varying degrees, but especially for the teaching and pedagogy programmes, there are indications from graduates that they would like to see this aspect of their education further strengthened. This is discussed at greater length in Case Study 1: The Faculty of Education. In other faculties there are various arrangements supporting employability of students, some systematic and some more *ad hoc* – including internships which are integral to some programmes and optional in others, project and dissertation work with employers, some part-time, paid employment opportunities which arise for students, and so on. Examples include: the required internship programmes for our Master's in Social Science and for our Bachelor's in Engineering; Bachelor's dissertations for the Software Engineering programme connected to IT employers, and for the Biology programmes connected to relevant employers in both the public and private sectors; students of Faroese Language and Literature working for an external organisation on language technology, and other students gaining part-time employment with the University administration and assisting with research projects. Students who participate in the Student Council and Study Boards also gain valuable experience – and references – to support their future employment.

While it is clear that there is a lot of good, employability-focused activity across our institution, and good graduate destinations outcomes, as we strengthen support for students across their learning journeys, it will be useful to make employability a more explicit reporting theme for faculties and programmes, and to link this to the discussion of graduate attributes.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship: Our University does not have a specific focus at this stage on enterprise or on entrepreneurship education, though some students have collaborated with the business incubator, Hugskotið, which is also a tenant of Sjóvinnuhúsið.

Overall, there is a lot of support across our University for students at the various stages in their learning journey and that has been strengthening in the recent period. We will be striving further to improve this, to make it more systematic, and to secure funding resource to support that, as part of our continuous work to enhance the student learning experience and to achieve greater student success. It may be that the initial discussions we have been having about the further professionalisation of our student administration will help us to make the most of the resources that will be available to us going forward.

d. Postgraduate taught and research student experience.

Regarding the **postgraduate taught (PGT) experience:** Currently (Summer 2022), our University has 195 students studying at master's level across the four faculties offering master's education: Faculty of History and Social Sciences (119 MA students), Faculty of Health (39 MA students), Faculty of Education (3 MA students) and Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature (14 MA students and 19 master's level diploma students). 25% of our master's students are enrolled on the Law programme. The main data sources which we can use to reflect on our PGT experience are our 2021 Student Survey and the student course evaluation questionnaires from the Fall of 2021.

More generally, we would say that we believe that the PGT experience is quite varied across our Faculties – which have quite different conditions and contexts (for instance, the relatively small and intimate context of Faroese Language and Literature, where all masters courses are delivered simultaneously to bachelor's students, compared to the quite different contexts of Health Sciences and History and Social Sciences).

We conducted a **student satisfaction survey** in 2019. The 2019 survey had disappointing results – both a low response rate (26%) and some challenging outcomes. In late 2019 and early 2020, the results were presented to, and discussed with, staff and students at a special event in our Kongshøll. There, it was agreed, we would conduct a further survey in 2021, seeking improvements in both respects – which were achieved generally. However, the improvement in the response rate for masters’ students (34% - 59 of 174 students) was lower than for the student body as a whole (59%).³⁷

The questions in the survey are categorised into three areas: studies and study environment, personal information, and financial situation. The table below shows some key questions and responses.

MA student survey 2021

Question	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
Overall, well pleased with the educational programme.	85%	7%	8%
I can recommend others to take the same education as me.	88%	8%	3%
In general, the courses I take are well planned	85%	14%	2%
Feedback I receive is satisfying and clear.	35%	39%	25%
I thrive in my education.	88%	10%	2%
I receive helpful information and/or counselling from non-teaching staff, such as faculty secretaries and Student Affairs.	75%	20%	5%
Overall, I am satisfied with the physical conditions at my faculty	71%	14%	15%

In addition, students indicated that they spent 30 hours a week on average on their education, including taught hours, and 80 percent indicated that it was necessary to have paid employment, averaging some 22 hours a week (reflecting the fact that our MA students are overwhelmingly aged 26 years and over, and that two thirds have one or more children living at home).

Overall, these responses are somewhat better than we might have imagined, and they achieve the main target set in our *Strategic Plan* (“85% indicating satisfaction in a regular survey”). However, clearly, we have an important challenge in relation to feedback, and also – as we know – in relation to the physical environment (with students here actually being a bit more forgiving than we might have anticipated).

When asked if they had considered discontinuing their studies, 47 percent answered yes. The main reason given was because of personal and financial issues (38%), however, doubts about their education (15%), as well as the workload (20% - perhaps again related to personal and financial challenges), were also mentioned. 47 percent indicated that they occasionally experienced significant stress in relation to their studies, affecting their everyday lives, and 19 percent said that they experienced significant stress often. While these figures are based on a relatively low response rate, they are concerning for us. Within the University, we have been seeking to do more to support students, improving induction and also strengthening student counselling and support for students with specific learning needs (mainly dyslexia). There is also, it seems clear, an issue of student finance, and we have been making the case to our Ministry about the need to address this – and our

³⁷ 80 percent of the master’s level respondents were female and 20 percent male. The majority were between the ages of 26-39 (54%) and 40+ (41%); only 5% were under 26. A third had been MA students for under a year when the survey was made, and 15% started before 2017, which means they had been MA students for four years or more.

students have been doing similarly.

We can also use data from the single **course evaluation questionnaire** which we introduced across the whole University. The evaluation is divided into six categories: course information; teaching material and instruction; student activity; communication of knowledge; feedback; and learning outcomes and satisfaction. Seventeen Master level courses ran in the Fall of 2021. All students were invited to respond for each course undertaken. The response rate was 58 percent – lower than we would have liked but affected by the covid circumstances at the time (limiting in-class completion). The headline responses are shown below.

MA course evaluation fall 2021

Faculty	% Overall well-pleased with the course: Agree or Partially Agree	% Disagree	Response rate
Faroese Language and Literature	97.7% (84.1% and 13.6%)	2.3%	N = 44 (60%)
History and Social Sciences	92.8% (79.5% and 13.3%)	7.2%	N = 83 (63%)
Education	90% (30% and 60%)	10%	N = 10 (63%)
Health Sciences	88.5% (84.6% and 3.9%)	11.5%	N = 26 (43%)

The questionnaire was issued with a slightly atypical range of response options, including a ‘partially agree’ option, but no ‘neither agree nor disagree’ option. In future it will be issued with the more standard range of options – strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree – which we believe will provide clearer results. From the results, it is clear that there is some scope for improvement. We would like to have a higher proportion of respondents clearly agreeing, especially in the Faculty of Education – and a lower proportion disagreeing, again in Education and also Health Sciences.

More specific responses were as shown in the table below.

Question	Agree or partially agree	Disagree
1. At the beginning, I was well informed about the purpose of the course	95.1% (82,8% and 12,3%)	4,9%
2. At the beginning, I was well informed about the learning outcomes for the course	93.8% (76,6% and 17,2%)	6.2%
3. I have received feedback on academic achievement*	73.8%* (52,2% and 21,5%)	7,4%
4. The feedback I have received has been helpful*	74.9%* (44,2% and 30,7%)	6,8%
5. The feedback I have received on academic achievements has been satisfying and clear*	71.2%* (48,5% and 22,7%)	9,8%
6. The instructor has been able to activate me in class	95.1% (78,5% and 16,6%)	4,9%
7. In my view the instructor has been well prepared for classes	98.8% (93,9% and 4,9%)	1,2%
8. The course has been well structured from the beginning to end	92.0% (76,7% and 15,3%)	8.0%

*18-19 percent of the responses indicated that feedback was not part of the course, meaning they could neither agree nor disagree.

Again, there are a number of the responses for which we would wish to see stronger agreement. And again, the biggest challenge in terms of improving the student experience is feedback – and that is something which we expected to be highlighted and on which we in the future must plan to focus, at

both institutional and faculty levels. Overall, the most pleasing response is no.6 – our students strongly agree that their teachers are well prepared. Our aim is to use these questionnaires as part of a continuous enhancement process, and we will aim to monitor progress at both faculty and University levels.

Overall, the PGT experience, based on the main available data is broadly quite positive – and in some respects better than we had anticipated when we agreed our *Strategic Plan* – but there remains scope for improvement, especially in relation to feedback, student support and, of course, the physical environment.

Regarding the **research student experience**, currently (Summer 2022) we have 21 registered PhD students (10 female and 11 male), scheduled to graduate between 2022 and 2026. All students are enrolled here, with a supervisor, but in most cases the student is also enrolled at another University abroad, with a supervisor (sometimes the main supervisor) there (this is referred to as ‘double registration’). Some PhD students also collaborate with other external organisations, getting access to data and specialised knowledge.³⁸ Our University does not as yet have its own PhD School, though this is something we are working towards.

Since 2014, 19 registered PhD students (13 female and 6 males) have completed their research studies at our University. The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology has graduated most PhD students (6), History and Social Sciences (5), Faroese Language and Literature and Health Sciences (3 each), and Education (2). Three PhD students have graduated every year since 2018 – this being the most the University has graduated in any year. The time spent on average since 2014 has been 4.8 years. Four students have discontinued their PhD studies since 2014.

When the student and staff surveys were made last year, the PhD students were not included as it was decided to have a **specific PhD survey**. That survey will be implemented later this year and the results will be used in developing the environment, well-being and formal arrangements for the PhD students. Consequently, at the moment we lack data to a degree.

However, last year, PhD students for the first time were invited to have an **annual conversation** about progress, contribution, and development with their Faculty Research Leaders (FRLs), based on an agreed conversation template, and focusing on issues including supervision, day-to-day work, personal and professional development, reflection, and collaboration. The conversations are intended to provide feedback and to help PhD students in raising relevant issues, where they may need to do that. The conversations are in large part confidential, but according to the FRLs, this experience has been seen as a positive one and has been welcomed by the students. On the positive side, some of the students have indicated that the conversations are valuable and rewarding, that colleagues and their supervisors are helpful, and that they have sufficient funds for courses and conferences abroad in their budgets. Some of the challenges mentioned are a feeling of loneliness

³⁸ Universities and organisations PhD projects are in collaboration with at the moment (continued overleaf).

Universities	Other organisations
University of Copenhagen (2 projects)	Deildin fyri Arbeiðs- og Almennaheilsu (3 projects)
Roskilde University: (3 projects)	Ílegusavnið (1 project)
Aalborg University (1 project)	Havstovan (1 project)
Århus University (1 project)	Fiskaaling (1 project)
Danish Technical University (3 projects)	Luna (1 project)
University of Iceland (1 project)	Vikmar (1 project)
University of Greenland (1 project)	SEV (1 project)
Danish School of Education (1 project)	Fótbóltsamband Føroya (1 project)
University of Malta (1 project)	

and some not feeling sufficiently part of the organisation, lack of relevant local research networks, as well as the desire for more PhD courses to be provided locally. Going forward, these conversations should help to enhance the PhD student experience.

However, there are important aspects of progress to report at this stage. One is that the REU is working towards arranging a **course for all PhD supervisors and potential supervisors** in collaboration with another University – most likely Akureyri in Iceland. Another is more general support for the strengthening of the research environment at the University, of which students are part, including the formation of the REU and the creation of Faculty Research Leaders. The REU has also supported the formation of a **PhD Student Council** with four members, who act as the voice of the PhD students, focused on addressing common issues and development challenges. The students have now been able to arrange their own social events. Another outcome has been a two-day **writing retreat** for PhD students on the island of Sandoy. The retreat was well attended and received, and another is being arranged later this year. We envisage more activities will come from the formation of this Council, helping to create a strengthening environment for PhD students.

We regard the fact that most of our PhD students take **PhD courses** at universities abroad as a positive thing. At the same time, we take seriously the desire for there to be more PhD courses at our University. Some faculties have been active in arranging PhD courses in recent years, including History and Social Sciences, Health Sciences, and Education. In 2021, notwithstanding covid, two PhD courses were held. History and Social Sciences hosted one on *Reflexivity in Research*, with 16 students participating and writing positive evaluations afterwards. The Research and Enterprise Unit arranged a PhD course in *Academic Writing*, open for all PhD students and potential PhD students, with 11 students attending and all providing positive evaluations. This year, three PhD courses are scheduled so far, both during spring and autumn. The deans together with the research leaders and the REU have discussed that all PhD students ought to take PhD courses here on academic writing, ethics, statistics, and also that they should take the University Pedagogy course. So, this area is in progress and our University is going in the right direction in terms of delivering a PhD school in the future.

Finally, our REU is keen to assist those who have finished or are finishing and have an interest in applying for additional funding for research projects or post-doctoral positions. 12 of the 19 who finished their PhD at the University since 2014 are now staff with us, mostly in teaching and research positions – partly reflecting that some of the PhDs were already staff before starting their PhD. This is not the case for the majority of the current PhD students and their career trajectories may be different.

e. Learning environment, including the use of technology.

As a University community, we feel the need to speak about **the physical environment of learning and teaching** at some length. Our University's activities are currently spread over seven buildings in Tórshavn. Four of the buildings are the main locations for teaching – the 'old practice school' (venjingarskúlin) for the Faculty of Education; Sjóvinnuhúsið for the faculties of Natural Science and Technology and Health Sciences; 25 Jónas Broncks gøta for History and Social Sciences, and Føroyamálsdeildin for Faroese Language and Literature. This latter building – small and cramped as it is – is still the only building ever built specifically for our University.

The other three buildings house the main administration – Gróthúsið and no.7 J.C. Svabos gøta (Student Affairs) – and the offices for the Faculty of Education staff – Nóatún. There is no main or central University building as such, no shared social space (cross-University) for students, and no main University library. There are currently small libraries in the faculties of FLL, Education and HSS

and there is currently progress towards the National Library of the Faroe Islands, which is adjacent to Gróthúsið on J.C. Svabos gøta, being designated as the University Library.

Beyond the lack of any central University buildings, the buildings we currently occupy present real challenges for us, though in different ways, both in general terms, and also specifically in relation to the learning environment. As indicated in section 1, there have been long-standing plans to address these issues through the major redevelopment of a single University campus, but that redevelopment has not yet actually commenced.

The old practice school is indeed old and has been badly neglected by the authorities responsible for it. Some believe it should simply be demolished due to fundamental issues – including the building having well exceeded its anticipated life span, its suitability for the Faroese climate, and fungal infestation which affects air quality and led to the relocation of staff offices to Nóatún. The space for the latter move had actually been created by the movement in 2018 of Natural Sciences and Technology from Nóatún to Sjóvinnuhúsið. Health Sciences relocated to Sjóvinnuhúsið at the same time, from Jónas Broncks gøta.

While these moves were occurring, a specially created Campus Group was developing a plan for the full-scale development of a new University campus in the area connecting the old practice school with Føroyamálsdeildin and Gróthúsið. This, as was indicated in section 1, came in response to a recommendation arising from the previous external review of the University. After some delay, the Campus Group was formed in 2017 and Strategic Campus Plan was produced at the end of 2018. Thereafter, however, progress stalled, but the Campus Group was reconstituted in 2021. At that stage it was believed that our occupancy of Sjóvinnuhúsið would continue, at least through the campus redevelopment period, and quite possibly beyond.

Sjóvinnuhúsið is an old industrial building, owned by the municipality, which was modernised in recent years. Staff were very reluctant to move there, and, notwithstanding its recent modernisation, the building has since posed many challenges for students and staff, including air quality, regulation of light, shared offices for staff, and lack of social and learning spaces for students. We have been able to address some of these issues better than others. While the lease was signed for a 10-year period, a clause in the agreement allowed the municipality to require us to vacate with a year's notice. Recently, the municipality sought to invoke that clause, leading ultimately to an agreement between the municipality and the government that we will vacate the building in phases between now and the end of 2024, and in return the government will take full control of the old practice school and also the land – Frælsið – on which it is located.

The plan is then for the government to pay for the renovation of the old practice school in phases, allowing for the phased movement of staff and students from Sjóvinnuhúsið to the renovated building, and for this to be linked to the phased building of the rest of the new campus on the wider site, which is now owned by government. In 2022 funding has been provided to the Campus Group to progress with preparations for this, including the planned commissioning this September of an architectural competition for the design of a central campus building.

Meantime, the physical aspects of our learning environments are, we have no doubt, far from ideal and this is reflected very clearly in feedback from both students and staff. Students participating at the aforementioned special session with members of the Student Council and student representatives on the faculty study boards were asked to discuss this and the following comments encapsulate their overall view: “The campus is our main challenge – it will solve many problems”; “The physical conditions at the University don't meet the requirements, and therefore the campus

redevelopment is absolutely necessary. But even if the conditions are out of date, the faculties do their best to utilise the resources at hand and to create a student environment.”

Further comments from the students included the following: “At the Faculty of Education the buildings are old (fungus etc) but the wings provide good room for student activities outside classes, group work, etc. There is a library on the faculty, but no librarian”; “At History and Social Sciences there is no canteen. It’s evident that the building isn’t built for teaching and doesn’t provide facilities for students after class. Therefore, students do not come together enough, even though there have been recent improvements with areas for students. As things stand, the kitchen area is used as a working space and so we do not have any room where we can be social”; “In Sjóvinnuhúsið the rooms are new, but do not support students being active at the faculty outside classes ... students might meet in the hallways, but otherwise not”; “We need a student environment where students can meet across year groups and programmes”; “The physical framework at most faculties is insufficient”; “It’s hard to create a student environment with this fragmentation”; “Setrið is fragmented – physically and socially (maybe it’s a bit asocial). It’s a problem professionally, socially, institutionally and culturally, that Setrið isn’t one unit”; “In general, the staff are trying very hard for students to thrive, even if the physical circumstances are not always optimal”.

These comments, which are reproduced here in order to convey the strength of the student voice on these issues, are very much in line with the results of our 2021 Student Survey. Almost half of those responding felt unable to express satisfaction with the physical environment at their faculty, and the figure was less than a third for the Faculty of Education. Only 40% agreed that teaching rooms were well-suited to their purpose, and in the Faculty of Education the figure was 17%. Across the University only 40% found it easy to find a place for study or group work. However, student representatives on the University Board have expressed concern that the current plan for campus redevelopment – and especially the investment in the old practice – might not lead to the required improvements.

Staff express similar views about the existing buildings, as indicated by responses to the 2021 Staff Survey. Under working conditions, staff were asked about whether the buildings and facilities at their disposal provided the right environment for teaching and administration, and with the exception of History and Social Sciences, the scores for all other faculties were well into the red zone (which starts at 60): NST, 40; HS, 44; Education, 34, and FLL, 32. Written comments from staff were focused on Sjóvinnuhúsið (difficulty of working in shared offices; lack of common space for students) and the old practice school (depressing conditions impacting on the learning environment).

As a University community, we are all aware of the challenges we face in achieving the kind of physical learning environment we believe our students and staff need and deserve. In various ways, within the scope and resources we have, we have sought to make improvements – most notably, recently, in the Faculty of History and Social Sciences, but also in our other buildings. However, addressing the larger issues is something which depends on the commitment and resources that need to come from others – and especially from government. Our Campus Group, which is led by the Chair of our Board and on which both students and staff are represented, is working hard to push forward with the plans for the redevelopment of a single campus, and the fact that the Ministry now owns the land at Frælsið, as well as the old practice school, is a significant new development. *As a University community, we would very much value the views of the ERT on this very salient matter, and hope that the Team will address the issue as a central aspect of its final report and recommendations.*

Regarding **learning technology**, the on-campus learning environment was, as will be detailed in section 2f, challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic. For some periods, on-campus teaching was

completely suspended and at other times it was substantially reduced. During these times, teaching and learning was, to the degree necessary, transferred on-line, mostly using Zoom. Zoom, as ERT members will probably know, is a cloud-based video conferencing service with opportunities for one-to-one meetings, group video conferences, screen sharing and recording. Teaching with Zoom has typically been organised as Zoom Meetings with video for host/teacher and students. Students have access to the full Zoom solution meaning that students can organise Zoom sessions without needing staff involvement and this has been popular for group work sessions.

The Moodle platform is used for communication and providing materials for students, in particular about courses, teaching plans and teaching material. A template for student course evaluations is also made available on Moodle. Moodle is an open-source learning management system (LMS) with inbuilt security and privacy features. The platform is well suited to create safe, flexible, and engaging online learning environments.

Technology is also part of some exams at the University. The digital exam platform is WISEflow and it is used for setting up and administering examination sessions. It supports a range of assessment types. Most students are familiar with WISEflow before entering the University because the platform is also used at the Faroese upper secondary schools. WISEflow has very useful features like a plagiarism detection facility (via Urkund), and as a preventive measure against cheating in exams, it includes a locked-down browser (the FLOWlock) to block all other applications on the examinee's device, preventing the student from accessing any unauthorised information during the test.

Students also have the same access as staff to online research articles using OpenAthens – previously students could only access online articles while on-site but through our collaboration with FRIS (Faroese Research Information Service – organised by the National Library) students can now access all material from home.

Below is a table listing learning technologies that staff and students have access to at the University:

Main Learning Technologies
Smartboards (Promethean) – used in most classrooms
EduRoam – allowing visiting staff and students wifi access
Zoom - full license
Office 365 - full license
SurveyXact - survey tool
OpenAthens - access to same research articles as staff
Studentaportalur - access to exam results
Online admissions application system
On-the-Hub - for discounted software
WAYF - allowing easy authentication
Urkund - plagiarism checking software
WISEflow (integrated with Urkund) - secure exam platform
Moodle – open-source learning platform
Krea - for urgent text messages
Portable video conferencing systems

Students can also purchase various additional software packages at a significantly reduced cost using OnTheHub.com. Although some software training is offered to students – e.g. as part of the introduction week – there is a need for a more structured and ongoing approach to training. At

other universities students can partake in relevant training sessions throughout the academic year (e.g. ‘power hours’) and this is something that our University is considering providing.

f. Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience.

In European countries and beyond, there have been dramatic changes in the nature of higher education, especially since the turn of the 21st century. The Bologna Declaration (1999) and subsequent agreements (communiqués) were a key impetus for this change and have provided a framework for student-centred reform of teaching and learning. Underpinning this reform was the assessment that traditional approaches were no longer fully serving the needs of students destined to work in a fast-changing world. Globalisation created a need for greater comparability between higher education systems, a need with which our University has to varying degrees at different times sought to align. A central aspect of this change process has been to focus intensively on student-centred learning (SCL), which includes constructively designed, outcomes-based education with intended learning outcomes at the centre, which is continuously subject to reflection and evaluation to achieve enhancement.

With that in mind, the question is: How *effective* is our approach to enhancing the student learning experience at the UFI?

Our University’s approach to managing quality is, as detailed also in Section 4a, an **enhancement-led** approach. That involves a focus on fitness for purpose, emphasis on SCL, co-creation of processes across faculties, student engagement, individual and collective commitment to developing a quality culture, and the development and use of an appropriate evidence base. It is necessary to underline that the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG, Part 1) underpin *all work* initiated and undertaken by our Quality Unit.

In this section, an overview will be given of some of the key areas that our University has prioritised, especially since the Quality Unit was established, as follows:

- The Quality Enhancement Forum for Education
- Our approach to SCL
- Course Evaluations
- Transparency tools

In terms of evidence-base, the course evaluations in particular, and also our student survey, give important insight into the effectiveness of our approach. It is equally important to show evidence of *how* we (staff, ULT and other stakeholders) respond to student feedback. However, currently evidence of the latter is lacking – it is still too early to say. For our plan to address this matter, see footnote 7 in section 2a above.

The **Quality Enhancement Forum (for Education)**³⁹ (also referred to as the Bologna Group – Bolognabólkurin) was (re)established right after the Quality Unit was instituted in 2020. Its role was to create awareness of the need for, and to establish and develop, an internal QAE system (based on ESG 1). As stated in a fairly recently agreed **Terms of Reference** “The Quality Enhancement Forum for Education” (QEF) has the authority to make decisions regarding education quality processes. The Forum will propose changes to other key education quality areas (e.g. policies and principles) to the University Leadership Team and other stakeholders across the university”. Its main tasks are as follows:

³⁹ From May 2022, The Quality Enhancement Forum **for Education (QEF)**. See ‘Terms of Reference’, approved by the ULT on 7 June, 2022, available in the ERT folder.

- to ensure that the University always fulfils the external requirements set for education quality work
- to contribute to the strengthening of an internal education quality system and education quality culture across the University
- to be a forum for discussion and decision-making regarding education quality processes, with suitable inclusion of relevant stakeholders across the university
- to propose changes to education quality policy, principles and standards to the University Leadership Team and other stakeholders across the university
- to ensure that staff at the respective faculties are well informed about the Forum's decision-making and the overall areas prioritised in the Forum
- to widely promote quality considerations and quality areas across the University
- to be a forum for discussion and decision-making regarding education quality processes
- to contribute to improvement and development of teaching, learning and assessment within the University
- to compile, evaluate, and respond to information on the operations of the University which relates to education quality
- to express a view on important changes in the operations of the University that may affect quality in its day-to-day practices and operations
- to discuss preparation and implementation of a self-evaluation, subject area reviews, and external evaluation of the University and to ensure follow-up

Central to this Forum is the fact that students are represented, that they are active contributors, and that all tasks and responsibilities have the ultimate objective of enhancing the student learning experience. In addition to two student representatives, the QEF consists of an academic representative (head of study board or head of study programme) and an administrative representative from each faculty, a representative from Student Affairs, two representatives from the Quality Unit and the Pro-Rector for Education and Quality. The Quality Unit chairs the meetings and coordinates the work of the Forum. The faculty representatives form a direct link between the Forum and the faculties and are responsible for communication to and from the faculties.

Approach to student-centred learning (SCL): Student-centred learning is the basis of our University's internal QAE system, as laid out in ESG 1.3. Approaches to SCL are both centrally initiated and the responsibility of individual teaching staff. Within this sub-section, four approaches to creating awareness about developing and implementing SCL will be outlined:

Discussions of SCL in the QEF: Student-centred learning has been a recurrent discussion topic in the QEF. Early on, members close-read and discussed *Student Centred Learning: An Insight Into Theory And Practice*⁴⁰. Prior to discussing, members were asked to reflect on SCL practice within their own faculty or unit, and to share their experiences and insight regarding practice with the Forum. The aim was to achieve a clear understanding of the concept and what is implied in an SCL approach to quality education: teaching, learning and assessment. A key word is transparency, as it is important for students to know what is expected of them, what competences are developed on a programme, and what the intended learning outcomes will be. In order to implement an SCL-approach to enhancement, the QEF members agreed that the following four aspects and conditions need to be in place:

⁴⁰ Attard, A. (Ed.) 'Student Centred Learning: An Insight Into Theory And Practice', Education and Culture DG, Lifelong learning programme, Bucharest 2010.

- Knowledge about what an SCL approach to teaching and learning is, and broad understanding of the concept and its components.
- Necessary conditions for SCL (including an institutional quality culture where SCL is central, powerful learning environments, pedagogical knowledge, and appropriate infrastructure).
- Staff training and competence development (staff need access to different forms of competence development, including pedagogical training and CPD).
- Access to appropriate support functions (see e.g. ESG 1.6), and that student feedback (e.g. course evaluations) is taken seriously and used for enhancement purposes.

The aim was also that QEF members subsequently and continuously should take a lead in promoting and discussing aspects of SCL in different fora, especially in faculty meetings. In terms of evidence, no survey has yet been conducted about the effectiveness of these discussions, but QEF members have reported that taking part in QEF meetings has been valuable, informative and has led to improved understanding. As for the future, with the newly approved 'Terms of reference for the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education', the Forum now has extended responsibilities *and* has the authority to make decisions regarding education quality processes.

Workshops on SCL: Since early 2020, the Quality Unit (QU), based on discussions with the QEF, has run short, two-hour workshops for staff on different topics relating to the Bologna Reform and SCL. The aim has been to create awareness among staff and to contribute to better understanding of requirements. This includes knowledge needed for the implementation of SCL and about outcomes-based education, together with the ECTS and student workload, and transparency in different programme documents (see section on Transparency Tools below, detailed in Section 4). Some workshops have been organised for specific target groups, for example Study Boards and newly employed teachers. Workshops offered in the spring semester of 2022 had the following titles: (1) Bologna, SCL and Course Descriptions; and (2) Assessing the Quality of Course Descriptions.

This is, in short, what the Quality Unit has been trying to do to support change. As yet, however, the effectiveness of these workshops is difficult to gauge. From the point of view of the QU, the workshops have on the whole, been successful with voluntary participants and constructive discussions, and overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participants have filled out evaluation forms after each workshop. Several staff reported improved understanding of international requirements, and key quality issues. However, attendance from across the faculties (and follow-up activities relevant to SCL and other quality issues) has not always been as we would have hoped. Going forward, we must secure broader engagement.

University Pedagogy Course (Setursnámsfrøði): The third initiative and approach to SCL that our University has initiated is a course for academic staff in university pedagogy. The course is organised by staff from the Faculty of Education, who have professional expertise in student-centred approaches to teaching, learning and assessment (TLA). The aim is to develop teachers' competences in providing high quality teaching and learning based on research, use of assessment for learning and active student participation.

This course, which has a workload comprising 10 ECTS at master's level, was first introduced in 2019. So far three cohorts with approximately 15 participants in each cohort have undertaken this course. The course is popular, and about 45 academic staff have either completed or are currently active on the course. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, and organisers have used feedback for enhancement purposes. They have reported that for some, initial resistance to university pedagogy and SCL has turned into positive engagement and an increased interest in teaching, learning and assessment methods. So, a large proportion of our teaching staff has taken an interest in SCL, reflecting on teaching methods and student engagement, and considering what

approaches to use for constructive alignment in educational provision and to support students in achieving intended learning outcomes. In that sense, very significant progress has been made across our University, and more is in the making.

Self-evaluation against ESG 1.3 by all five faculties (Summary): In September 2021, our faculties undertook a gap analysis exercise (self-evaluation), reflecting collectively on ESG 1.3, which states that “Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach”.⁴¹ The task was as follows:

- Please discuss and make an assessment of where you are at in relation to the ESG (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area).
- Questions to guide your assessment are: (1) Where are we now? (2) Where do we want to be in the future? (3) How are we going to get there?

The faculties mainly responded to the first question: *Where are we now?* Some gave responses to specific aspects in the guidelines, while others gave more general responses. On the whole, faculties reported that they comply with all of these aspects of SCL and teaching, though to varying degrees and with scope for improvement. What was most striking, though not unexpected, was the indication of what appears to be a voluntary approach to student-centred learning and teaching. For example, one faculty reported that “No procedures are in place to ensure consideration of students’ different needs for inclusive education; it is up to individual teachers how they respond to students’ different needs”. Along the same lines, other faculties mentioned the lack of guidelines, procedures and policies; all reported that attention is being paid in varying ways to the contents of standard 1.3, but not in a *systematic*, formalised and co-ordinated way.

All mentioned extra support, assistance and tools for students with e.g. learning difficulties (dyslexia in particular), and the role that guidance counsellors play in supporting this target group. In addition, some mentioned extra time given in written exams for students with special needs, (occasional) students of non-Nordic origin who are permitted to use English in written exams, and the possibility for students to take leave from their studies for a range of reasons (e.g. mitigating circumstances and maternity leave).

In terms of pedagogical methods, all faculties acknowledged the importance and impact of the course on University Pedagogy. One faculty in particular gave details on what they intend to do in the future:

- “Aim to send all teaching staff on the course “Setursnámsfrøði” in order to give staff tools to continuously improve on the quality of teaching, as well as sharing ideas and discussing methods with other teaching staff;
- Look into establishing a pedagogical forum consisting of relevant staff to exchange knowledge, ideas, teaching and learning methods etc.;
- Aim to join regional/international STEM networks in order to keep up to date with latest developments of teaching and learning, pedagogical methods, as well as quality assurance models related to STEM subjects”.

⁴¹ Guidelines for this Standard spell out that the implementation of SCL and teaching: respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths; considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate; flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods; regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods; encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher; promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship; has appropriate procedures for dealing with students’ complaints.

Increasing use of *formative* assessment was mentioned as being relevant and important for SCL. Some expressed a wish to make better use of formative assessment for student learning, and one faculty mentioned specifically that they, in the future, wanted to make increased and better usage of self-assessment and peer-assessment as methods of learning and developing autonomy in the learner. The actual assessment method is always described in the course description – or at least should be.

Regarding criteria for assessment, the data showed that staff have different understandings of what is meant by ‘assessment criteria’. Some referred to the valid 7-step marking scale, while others mentioned generic and specific assessment criteria relevant to individual courses – which, for transparency purposes, are always provided in a separate document (see *Figure 4.1* in Section 4a). Final exam assessments are always carried out by more than one examiner. In principle, students are assessed against the intended learning outcomes that are central to each course description, but it was not clear if this requirement is always what characterises assessment in practice. For example, in this respect one faculty reported that from their discussion it became apparent that not all staff are sufficiently aware of the role of the overarching Programme Description and of the Degree Programme Profile. This is a concern as intended learning outcomes in individual courses need to be linked to intended programme learning outcomes (that are central to both key programme documents) and therefore to the coherent composition of the Degree Programme. Arising from these responses, there is a need to re-emphasise the role of (1) learning outcomes and (2) assessment criteria.

Regarding appropriate procedures for dealing with students’ complaints, these are in place. They are laid down in the Executive order, included in Programme Descriptions (*Námsskipan*), and, in some faculties, these procedures have also been included in a supplementary document describing exam requirements.

Engaging students in learning activities, and thus ensuring a sense of autonomy in the learner, was reported on in a matter-of-fact manner as something that is underpinning university education. Whether guidance and support of students is adequate or not again depends on the individual teacher and less on institutional requirements, procedures and guidelines. In this respect, some mentioned the advantage of being a small university, e.g. that the close relationship between students and teachers often is an advantage and thus beneficial to ensuring a good, safe and productive learning process.

Finally, to our knowledge, this was the first time that faculties have undertaken this type of assessment exercise on SCL and teaching. Reflecting on these matters needs to be an integrated part of our University’s developing quality culture; therefore, we imagine that an assessment of ESG. 1.3 could become an integrated part of the annual review process of our degree programmes (see ‘Cyclical review processes’ in Section 4a).

In conclusion, faculties reported that undertaking this gap analysis had been a good reflective exercise, which had increased their awareness of quality issues and SCL.⁴²

⁴² For example, one specific faculty (NS&T) wrote the following summary:

- “We will strive to become even better at providing our students with relevant, clear and consistent information, update our existing guidelines in alignment with the Bologna framework, and in general promote a culture of student-centred learning. We are hopeful that the new agreement with Malmö will help ensure optimal learning paths that match the need of our students with learning difficulties and challenging circumstances”.

Course evaluations: Another quality area that has become a key priority is course evaluations (as reflected on in 2d). They constitute an important part of SCL, teaching, and the effectiveness of enhancing the student learning experience. Prior to the spring semester in 2021, our University did not have a common course evaluation questionnaire used in all courses across the whole University, and therefore did not have any quantitative performance indicators based on such evaluations. This does not mean that courses were not evaluated, but it means that evaluations were not carried out in a structured and coordinated way across the whole institution. Different faculties had different traditions and practices. Because of this situation, course evaluations and the design of a single course evaluation questionnaire became one of the key priorities to work on in the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education.

Towards a common approach with a single evaluation questionnaire: The *Plan* has the objective to have a satisfaction rate of 85% for study programmes. The *Plan* also states the aim to ensure that “we consistently secure and respond to student feedback” (ibid.). The questions discussed in the QEF were: How do we get this data? What do evaluation forms look like in different faculties? What questions are asked? How are course evaluations, qualitative and quantitative ones, carried out? And, how are results from evaluations used and acted upon for enhancement purposes?

The first step was to get insight in evaluation practices at our five faculties. This was done at a Forum meeting in December 2020 where faculty representatives had prepared presentations on practices in their respective faculties. It turned out that even within some faculties there were several evaluation forms that individual teachers used (or did not use). Practices ranged from fairly well organised to totally individualised, but with no evidence-base that could be used in terms of gathering data that was comparable across the institution. The next step was for QEF members to work in mixed groups where they were assessing available evaluation forms, discussing and trying to reach consensus on what questions they considered to be relevant to ask in a single course evaluation questionnaire. From a Quality Unit perspective, ownership of the process in developing a single evaluation questionnaire was important. Therefore, the discussion process continued at monthly meetings in 2021, resulting in a first version in the spring of 2021, with attached guidelines, that was tested at end of the spring semester.

The questionnaire is divided into six categories: (1) course information; (2) teaching material and instruction; (3) student activity; (4) communication of knowledge; (5) feedback; and (6) learning outcomes and satisfaction. At the end of each category, a section for comments is provided⁴³. Our aim is to use these questionnaires as part of a continuous enhancement process. Unfortunately, the questionnaire was not used during the first round by *all* teachers; the total response rate of the first round was 60%. During the second round, in the 2021 autumn semester, it was communicated clearly to all teaching staff that using the new course evaluation template was mandatory, that everyone should inform and encourage students to evaluate their courses, and that responses would be used for enhancement purposes. The guidelines for the course evaluation prescribe that all students will get 15 minutes during the last session of every course to fill out the questionnaire. In spite of substantial focus and encouragement, the response rate during the second round was not as

- “We have listed and assessed the current practices of several aspects of teaching and learning in our department. We have found that this has been a good exercise to reflect on, and identify areas that need improvement, to collaborate in coming up with ideas to enhance and align existing quality. We envisage that this will be done mainly by emphasising increased internal and external collaboration, good communication, more organised quality processes and various forms of professional development for teaching staff. We will continue to think of ways that enable us to follow up on our findings in the near future, without disrupting core tasks and responsibilities”.

⁴³ In a revised version, starting in autumn 2022, there is just one section at the end of the questionnaire where students have the opportunity to add comments.

high as anticipated (62,6%). A factor may have been that many of the courses in the autumn semester 2021 ended when all teaching was online, because of the pandemic. Results were collated centrally, analysed and then disseminated. First, this was done at meetings between the Quality Unit and Programme Leaders in all faculties, and then subsequently by sending the full results to the faculties for further reflection and action.

Results from the cross-faculty course evaluations in the 2021 autumn semester: In what follows, a few figures are presented which give an overview of findings from the second round of course evaluations. Figure 1 gives the overall response rate, which was 62,63% while Figure 2 shows the response rate at faculty level:

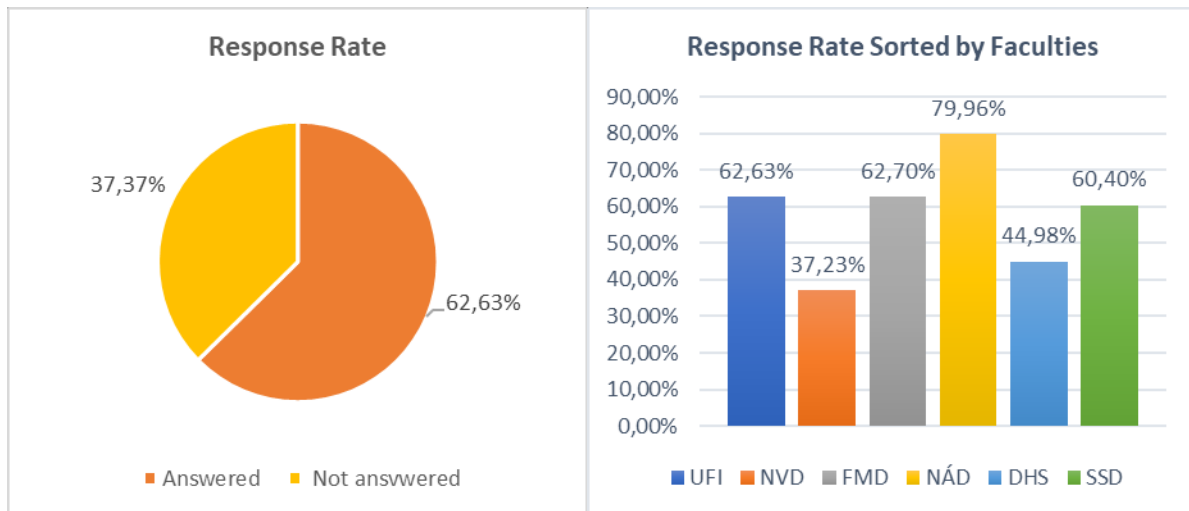


Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 show findings about the first questionnaire category, course information, which is important information that students are supposed to be well informed about at the start of the course. In Figure 3 below, students were asked to give their opinion on the statement: “I was well informed about the purpose of the course”. As the figure shows, most faculties (except DHS) reached the 85% target set out in the *Plan*.

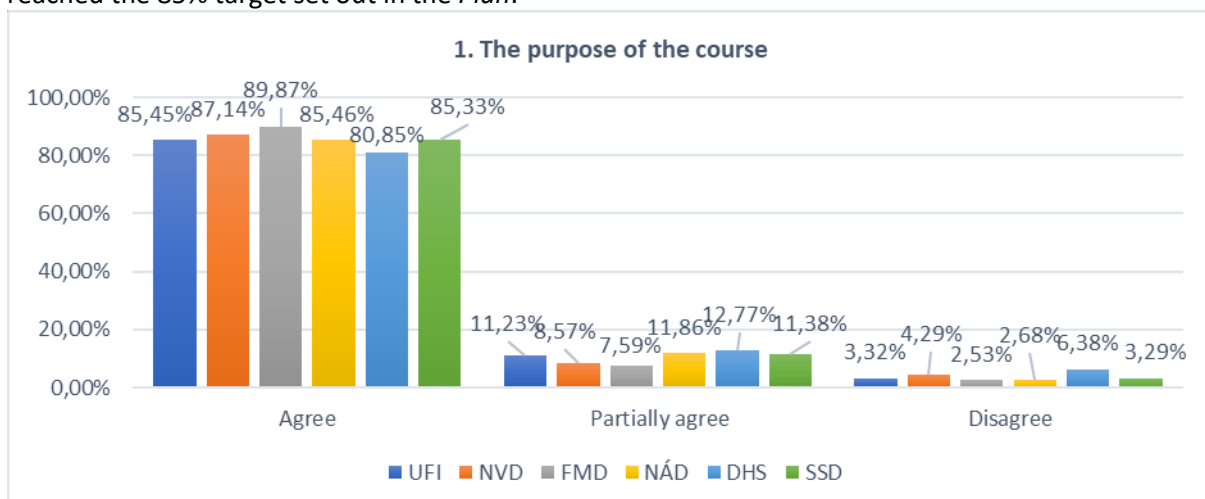


Figure 3

Figure 4 shows responses to the statement: “At the start of the course, I was well informed about learning outcomes”:

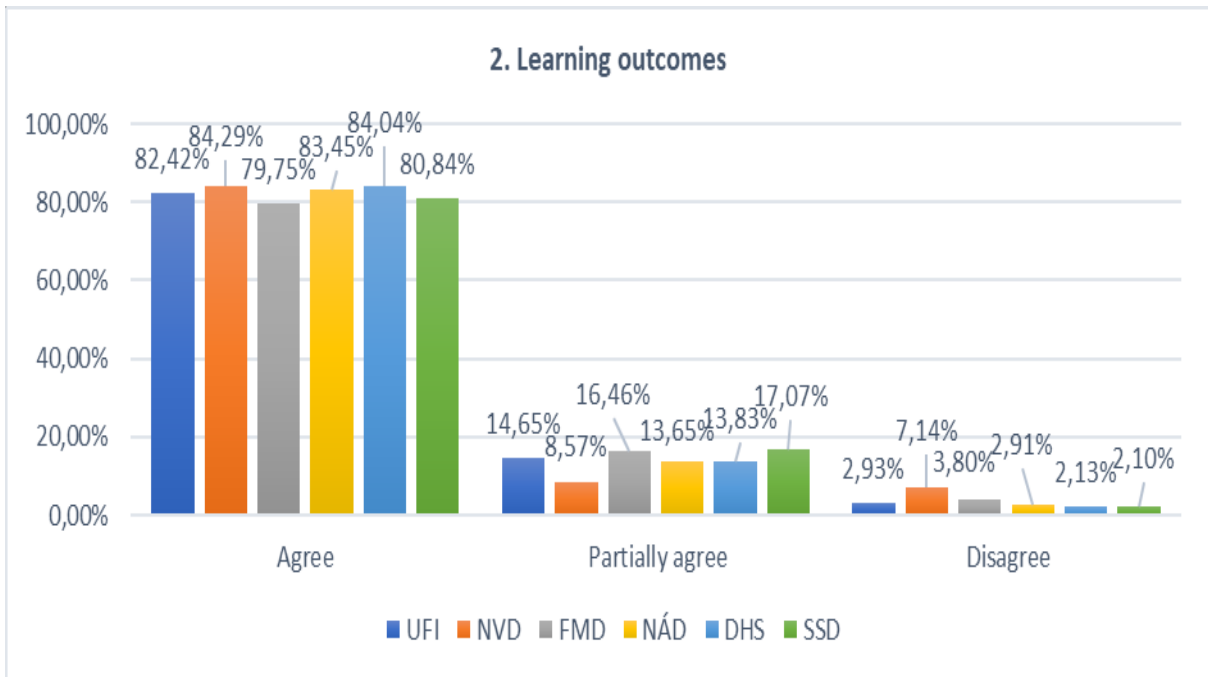


Figure 4

With regard to assessment method, responses to the statement “At the start of the course, I was well informed about assessment method” are shown in Figure 5 below. Responses vary from 61,7% to 80%. It is not clear why this variation is occurring, especially when having in mind that assessment method is always described in the course description.

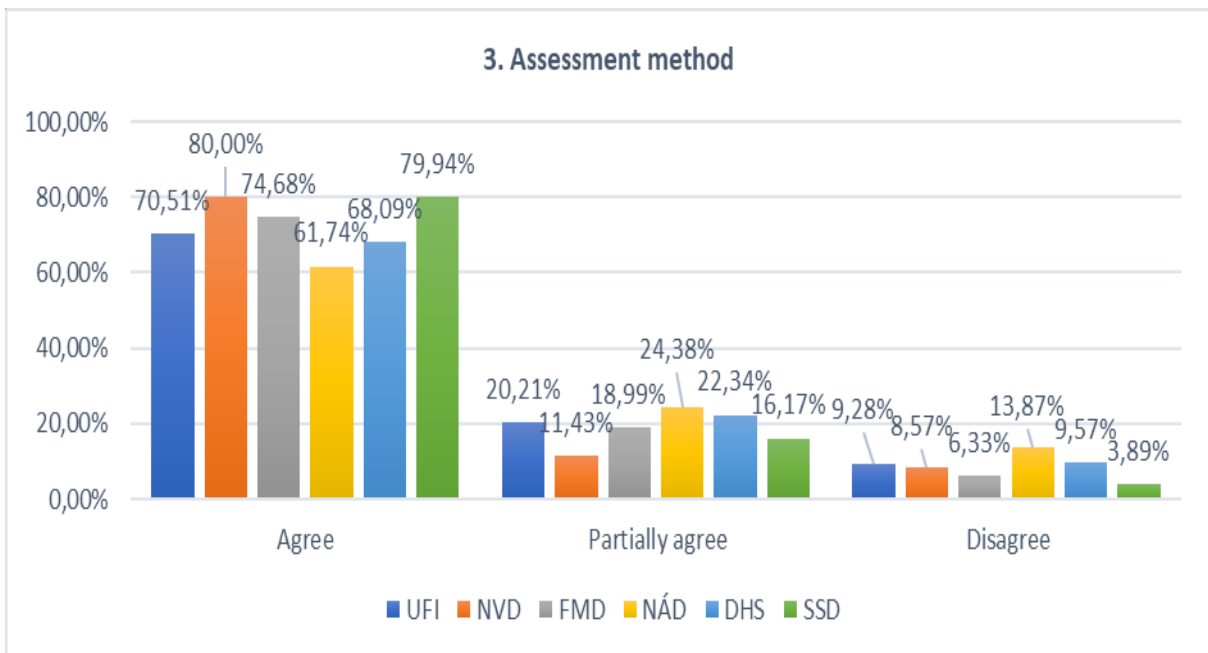


Figure 5

Finally, in Figure 6 below, the response rate to the statement “Overall I am satisfied with the course” is given. Also here, there is much variation in responses, ranging from 60 – 86%.

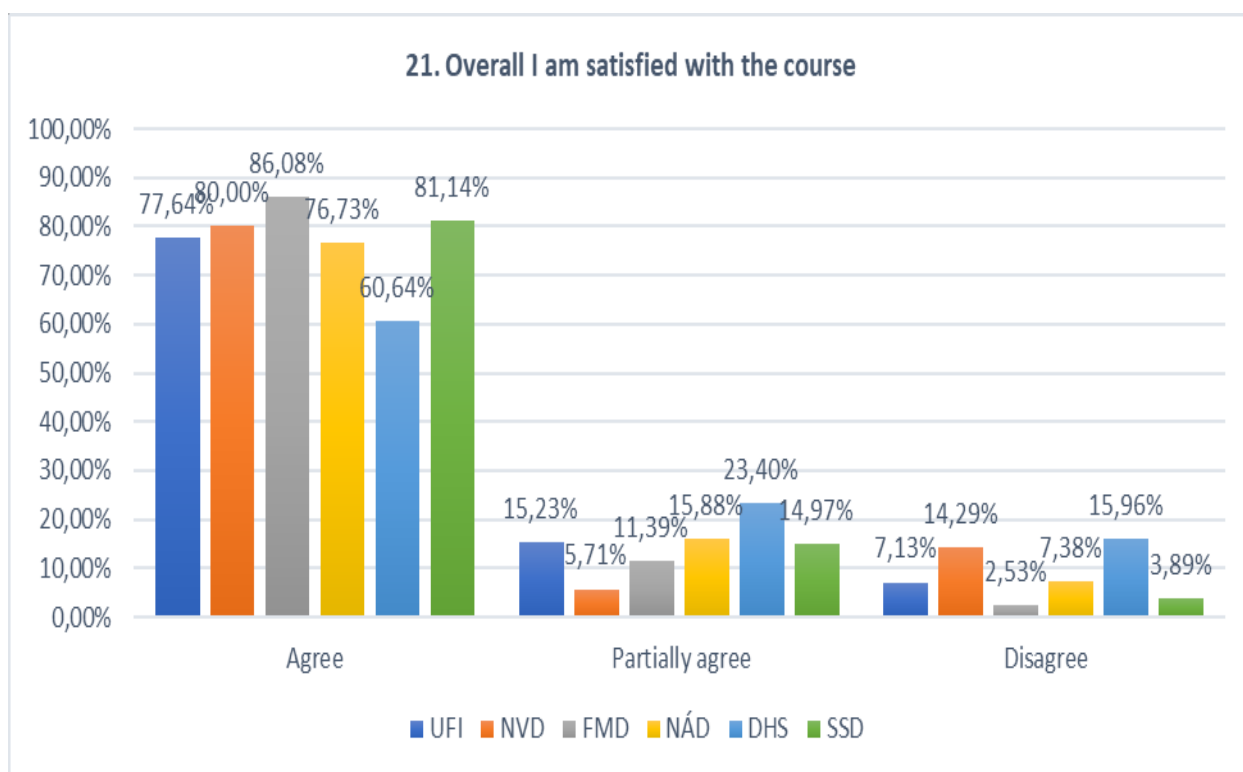


Figure 6

As indicated already, we do not at this stage have sufficient evidence on how dissemination of results has been further discussed and acted on at faculty level. This is an area we need to formalise more fully, e.g. by supporting the process through which academic staff receive, respond, and take action in relation to the results of course evaluations. One upcoming initiative in this respect is to make it mandatory to include results and *action plans* in the annual reviews of programmes (see section 4a), summarised in an Annual Review Report. That said, we do have some evidence currently from a few individual teachers describing how they have shared results with their students at the beginning of the next semester and discussed enhancement measures, thus signalling that the student voice is taken seriously and acted upon. But, the formalised process and thus evidence of effectiveness is at this stage lacking.

Transparency tools: The final quality area that will be briefly explored in this section has to do with the term ‘transparency’, in particular in relation to programme documents and their role as ‘navigation tools’. Degree programmes need to be described in transparent ways with programme learning outcomes at the centre. It is all about making transparent to the student both the contents and in particular the intended outcomes of a course or a degree programme are. Quality assurance and enhancement processes (QAE) are an integrated part of this picture. Transparency is therefore a keyword used in the context of the Bologna Process, which we are required, and aspire, to align with. Transparency is also important with regard to student workload (ECTS), approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, generic competences (i.e. transferable skills), subject-specific competences, and curricula more generally.

All these features are integral parts of our programme documents, which – with regard to purpose – may be referred to as ‘transparency tools’. For example, the short Degree Programme Profile, which is mandatory for all qualifications at our University, is a good example of a succinct ‘transparency tool’, a programme document that may be used for purposes of recognition, or as a Diploma Supplement. It contains international reference points and key information that students,

recognition bodies, employers, and other stakeholders can understand. For more details, see Section 4a, in the sub-section entitled Programme Documents as Transparency Tools.

Finally, in terms of **assessing how effective our approach to enhancing the student learning experience at our University is**, we have here tried to make visible what so far has been done and what is in the making in this respect. We have provided some evidence of effectiveness, mainly through our student surveys, single course evaluations, and more recently with feedback from students at a special session in June 2022 which was organised with members of the Student Council and student representatives on the faculty study boards. The aim of this session was to inform the preparations for the external review process and the writing of this RA document. At the same time, we have reflected on gaps that our students have identified, gaps that we are determined to address. Improving functions for our students (according to guidelines listed in ESG 1.6) is one such area. So, to conclude, we have evidence of some of our still fairly approaches and initiatives proving positive to the student learning experience, but also awareness of and insight in areas that need addressing in more systematic ways.

g. Impact of COVID-19 on the student learning experience and mitigations operationalised, and organisational learning from this experience.

Covid has not been as disruptive of the normal education process at our University as has been the case elsewhere, but it has been a major challenge. Our University acted early and took all learning online from Monday 16th March 2020. Special, socially distanced, staff training sessions in the use of Zoom were held on Friday 13th March and various support materials were made available to staff and then also to students. The ensuing lockdown period was 16th March until 2nd May – a period of eight weeks – whereafter there was a phased return to campus (beginning with staff). There have been episodes subsequently during which learning activities have been to varying degrees moved online (e.g. August 2020 and December 2021/January 2022). The impact on the student experience during the first and main period of lockdown was large. We were aware that would be the case and sought early to mitigate in as many ways as we reasonably could. From the outset, regular communication was maintained with students – both from the University leadership and also from Faculty level (primarily from programme leaders). Students were encouraged to reach out to us for any needs they might have – and especially if they were struggling. Pro-actively, we sought to introduce an aspect of personal tutoring, whereby staff would have allocated students who they would check in with (by telephone), to identify those who may have support needs. This was implemented variably across the faculties, with the Faculty of Health Sciences being most pro-active. Fortunately, we had at that time recently increased access to student counselling for three of our faculties (which had previously been sharing a small fraction of a position), and this allowed us to provide regular ‘drop-in’ sessions for students across the entire University – with some in English too.

Aware of the fact that some students were experiencing isolation, anxiety, and other issues, we also offered group sessions for students (and for staff) with a psychologist – which were well-attended and well-received. We increased the regularity of the (online) meetings between the Student Council and the University leadership during the early stages of the first lockdown, to obtain feedback and guidance from the student representatives on the student experience. On the technical side, students were given access to online tutorials in the use of Zoom, and we obtained a full Zoom license for student use – allowing access to the entire suite. There were also extended deadlines for the submission of assessments, as well as modifications to the form of assessments (especially exams) where required.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Early in the first lockdown, the Quality Unit provided a template for staff to propose any significant changes to assessments arising from the prevailing conditions, and such changes required approval from both the relevant Study Board and the Quality Unit itself. However, in practice there were very few cases in which

The main way for us to gauge the impact of covid-19 on the student learning experience is through the student survey we conducted in the autumn of 2020 (409 respondents – two thirds female and a third male). The survey⁴⁵ indicates that a large proportion of our students were at home with children (some 44%) and that many of these, and others, had study conditions which were less than ideal (with issues to do with space, privacy/disturbance, computer access, etc). Many experienced negative emotional states, and some 30% anticipated that the completion of their studies would be delayed by the pandemic.

The experience of online learning was somewhat polarised, leading roughly equal proportions to feel better (39%) and worse (36%) about using online learning as a regular part of their education in the future. However, only a relatively small minority (16%) were dissatisfied with the digital solutions the University put in place in the circumstances, and just the same minority disagreed with the proposition that teachers had managed to create quality distance learning during the pandemic.

However, the balance of views was such that online learning, while it had a fair proportion of adherents, and was seen as necessary in all the circumstances, had not delivered learning as effectively overall as classroom learning – 45% disagreed with the proposition that it had delivered as effectively, and only 29% felt it had. Only 8% believed they had learned *more* online than they would have in a classroom. Many students (as indicated in written comments for the survey) also felt the loss of the social dimension of learning, and the opportunities for informal conversations about learning which typically arise when attending more traditional classes. On the other hand, there were positive indications regarding attendance effects and also the focus of pedagogic effort during online teaching and learning.

According to both students and teachers (who were also surveyed⁴⁶), a substantial challenge was the lack of prior experience in online learning, especially amongst teaching staff. While some adapted quickly and delivered effectively, others struggled to a greater degree. There were also challenges in relation to equipment at times – suitable cameras and microphones – though steps were taken at various stages to provide more and better kit and also to ensure better support for staff in using that.

Overall, the student survey indicated that students (81%) felt that we had responded well to the challenge of covid-19 in 2020 – only 7% thought the overall response had been somehow poor.

How well or poorly do you think the University has responded to the changed circumstances due to COVID-19?

	Very well	Rather well	Neither well nor poorly	Rather poorly	Very poorly
All students	37%	44%	12%	6%	1%

significant changes were proposed. See “Approval Process for Course and Programme Modifications (extraordinary circumstances only – Spring 2020).”

⁴⁵ Olsen, E. 2021. “The effort with online learning was really appreciated but onsite learning is generally preferred – though a substantial proportion also favour blended learning, delivered by teachers who are *au fait* with the techniques of online learning”. Short report. University of the Faroe Islands. An additional document with results in percentages can also be made available.

⁴⁶ Simonsen, M.N. 2021. Experience of online teaching and learning at the university of the Faroe Islands. Experiences, Challenges, Solutions and Assistance (A survey of University teachers). Short report. University of the Faroe Islands

There were, of course, continuing challenges with covid-19 after the completion of the survey in 2020, and in particular during the period of the omicron variant at the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022. At that stage the University leadership sought to move most activities back online in order to assist with the societal effort to delay the spread of the virus during the most critical period. Both some staff and also students expressed impatience to return to our buildings and to classrooms, with RTL writing to the Rector stressing that they felt that the effectiveness of online learning still lagged behind that of classroom learning.⁴⁷ This perhaps indicates that more might have been done in the later part of 2020 and during 2021 to improve the delivery of online learning. We are aware that the continuing need to deliver online learning in other universities has led to rapid learning and development which have not been matched in our own context.

In terms of the **organisational learning from the experience of Covid-19**, there are a number of things briefly to highlight. On the positive side, the pandemic emphasised for us the importance of our existing commitment to become a more integrated and coherent University – because we needed generally a common approach to the crisis. Importantly, the need for the University Leadership Team to meet frequently and to agree on actions undoubtedly accelerated the process of integration. Another positive aspect is that our University took a leading role in shaping the policy responses of government to the pandemic, especially in the early stages. Our influence came both through the expertise of our staff, and also through the decision of the leadership, in consultation with the Chair of the Board, to go online at a still early stage – which undoubtedly shaped the discussions within government about their own actions. We believe that we were able to play the kind of role that a University should play, and that this compares well with experience in other parts of the world, including the UK.⁴⁸ Also of importance, is that dealing with the pandemic led us further to think about the nature of our student body and the challenges our students face – with many students with caring responsibilities, some with additional learning needs and others struggling with finances and well-being issues. This has led us to seek to strengthen the support we provide for students, both through our counselling team and through additional investment in special needs support, and also to focus more on student well-being issues in our discussions with the Student Council.

However, perhaps the most obvious challenge is that we were not particularly advanced in our use of online learning at the beginning of the pandemic, and while we have of necessity made some progress with online delivery during the pandemic, that progress has been limited (in part due to the relatively benign experience of covid on the Faroes), and uneven. This is something that we need to reflect on and deal with as part of our next Strategic Plan.

⁴⁷ Student Council (RTL) to the Rector in email sent 19.01.2022.

⁴⁸ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/why-arent-uk-universities-taking-lead-crisis>

Section 3: Strategy and Practice for Enhancing Learning and Teaching

a. Strategic approach to enhancement and impact of national and international priorities and related activity on policy and practice (for enhancing learning and teaching)

A meaningful, *strategic approach to enhancement of learning and teaching* at our University is, as indicated previously, a relatively new thing. There had been previous steps towards such an approach between 2011 and 2013, and some optimism associated with that. But in a context where there were also other pressing demands and challenges to do with resourcing, momentum was not sustained and ultimately the work was deprioritised and in some respects abandoned – though, of course, aspects of enhancement processes were maintained in various places and to varying degrees.

Since 2019/2020, this has been changed by the process of developing and implementing our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, which places a clear emphasis on enhancement and specifically commits us, amongst other things, to: “invest in a Quality Unit within the University administration, led by a Pro-Rector, which will develop, in dialogue and partnership with students, staff and external stakeholders, clear policies and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of all our programmes – in accordance with the Bologna Process”. Furthermore, the *Plan* commits us to ensure that: “These policies and procedures will be implemented fully and consistently, creating a transparent culture of continuous enhancement.”

Our approach has been to work to align ourselves with the European Standards and Guidelines. More specifically and practically, we have, as mentioned at the beginning of Section 2, been working according to the principle of progressively ‘tuning’ our policies and practices to ensure that we acknowledge and where appropriate retain the special and distinctive characteristics of our small, Faroese University, while at the same time ensuring compatibility with the ESG and providing a clear basis for recognition of our qualifications internationally. More generally, all of this means progressively placing the student at the centre, developing student-centred learning, and building a culture in which we gather and use all relevant data, including extensive student feedback, seeking continuously to improve the effectiveness of learning and the quality of the student learning experience.

As already indicated, building from an underdeveloped base, we began initially by working to ensure that we have basic programme and course documentation in place, and that in itself has proved challenging in various ways. Challenges have included lack of sufficient understanding of what has been required and at times securing acceptance of the support provided to develop that understanding and to secure action. However, as reviewers will be aware, this is not unfamiliar in other universities, perhaps especially in the early stages of developing quality systems, and often, indeed, beyond the early stages.

The main initial focus has been on ESG 1.2 and 1.3 (within the Quality Unit) and 1.7 (within Student Affairs), progressing to 1.1, with some other important aspects of work falling under other headings (including the conduct of the External Review of our University, which falls under ESG 1.10). Progress in many ways has been good, and has been achieved with limited resources, based on excellent good will and commitment from colleagues (not least that of our first Pro-Rector for Education, who took the role on a part-time basis while continuing as Dean of Faculty and also doing other things). Most of it has also been achieved amidst the generally quite challenging circumstances of the covid pandemic. At the same time, some of the progress has felt frustratingly slow and this has called for both patience and perhaps also for some moderate impatience – because we want progress to come quicker and believe that can be achieved.

In terms of the **impact of national and international priorities and related activity on policy and practice** (for enhancing learning and teaching), this has been described extensively in other parts of this reflective analysis document – which is focused the development of policy and practice to secure progressive alignment with the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA, which is our key national, as well as international, priority.

b. Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice within and beyond the University

As previously indicated, we are still at a relatively early stage in the development and implementation of a strategic approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching. Consequently, we have yet to develop a systematic approach to the identification and sharing of good practice institutionally. This also reflects the fact that until quite recently there has not been, at University or at faculty levels, either the systematic collation and sharing of data on which the identification of good practice would be based, or structures and processes which would lead to its sharing. However as documented elsewhere in this report, we have been progressively collecting and disseminating the data we need – progression and retention, student survey, course evaluation questionnaire data, graduate destinations, etc. – and are moving towards structures and processes, and ultimately towards a culture, of identifying and sharing good practice within the institution.

Precisely how we will do that remains to be discussed and agreed amongst relevant colleagues, not least the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education, and in consultation with the wider staff and student bodies. However, it is reasonable to envisage an annual reporting cycle for courses and programmes in which course and programme leaders report the relevant data – enrolments, outcomes, student feedback, etc. – and provide reflective evaluation and plans for enhancement. It is also reasonable to think that this would be shared with colleagues at some kind of annual review process, supported by our QU, through which innovative and good practice would be identified and shared.

In the meantime, in different ways and to varying degrees, staff and students at faculty level already share thoughts and reflections on what works well and new ideas and approaches to teaching and learning, but our challenge is to make the identification and sharing of good practice part of a more developed process and cycle at both faculty and university levels. Here there is a lot of good practice that we can draw on from other institutions.

An important development in this regard has been the introduction of the University Pedagogy course, which has brought staff together from across our University to learn collaboratively about teaching and learning in a modern university, and about practical ideas and tools for the design, preparation and conduct of learning and teaching, including assessment and quality issues. This, of course, involves learning about the identification and sharing of good practice beyond our own University. The course involves teaching observation amongst participants, and also by the course instructors, and has also involved mentorship for course participants. The description for this course is available for the Review Team in the shared folder.⁴⁹

The feedback for this course has been very positive and demand to participate has been high. We had not anticipated running it every year, but we have done that to meet demand. Unfortunately, delivery for the third cohort was interrupted due to covid around the turn of the year – but that cohort will now resume in September. Resources were provided to the first ‘graduating’ cohort to support them to continue to meet and to organise events, and there were some events, but partly due to covid that has fallen into abeyance. Nonetheless, all of this shows a clear appetite amongst our staff to engage collaboratively with learning and teaching discussions and developments and

⁴⁹ Course descriptor for University Teaching and Learning.

that is very much an asset which we must build upon as we seek to build a wider process of capacity building and enhancement, including the identification and sharing of good practice in learning and teaching.

c. Engaging, developing, and supporting staff.

There are several points at which engagement with, and development and support for, staff are highlighted in our *Strategic Plan*, including these:

- “Our staff will be supported in a culture which fosters growth, contribution and collaboration”.
- “We will ensure access to training and development opportunities for our staff to ensure that they are well-equipped for contemporary and emerging approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and especially those most relevant to our context and needs.”
- “(We will) support our people to make best use of our available resources to provide a conducive environment for them to build their profiles as international researchers ... strengthening our capacity and mechanisms for leadership, support, and mentoring ... particularly (for) earlier career researchers.”
- “(B)y supporting growth and communicating well, (we will) foster motivation to contribute to the success of our commitments and priorities.”
- “(We will) invest in our Human Resources capacity and in developing policies and processes to strengthen the framework to support our colleagues in making their contribution.”

On reviewing the *Plan*, the main writing group has been struck by the range of ways in which have been doing these kinds of things, and specifically in support of the commitments and priorities of the *Plan*. This statement is not, we believe, a complacent one – going forward we certainly want to be able to do more and better in all of these respects, subject to resources and other capacity challenges.

Many of the ways in which we have been engaging, developing, and supporting staff are mentioned in this document at various points. These include, as some main examples:

- Engagement with staff around the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan, including the reporting of important data (on, e.g., retention and progression, student survey, graduate destinations) to regular faculty meetings, and linked to that also the preparation, reported elsewhere, for the current external review process, with its focus on learning and teaching and quality assurance and enhancement;
- Specific support for the Faculty of Education, involving the participation of the Rector, the Director and HR, together with an external consultant, to deal with long-standing challenges in terms of professional working relationships;
- The creation of the Extended University Leadership Team and Faculty Leadership Teams to better support deans, to broaden the participation of staff in the leadership of the organisation, and to provide better experiential pathways towards senior leadership positions
- The implementation from 2021 of an annual review conversation (the My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation) for all staff, aiming to support their contribution, collaboration, and professional development needs – with resources being made available to support specific training and development requests;
- Creation of the Quality Unit and the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education (QEFE), with staff representation from all faculties, and conceived as a key communication channel between the Quality Unit and the faculties;
- A range of workshops and support sessions for staff in the QEFE and more widely, relevant

to the work they have been asked to do on fundamental aspects of quality – for instance on completing course documentation, writing learning outcomes and competences, etc;

- The delivery of the course in university pedagogy to three cohorts of staff over the past three years, reaching almost half of our University's teaching and learning staff and supporting their individual and collective understanding and development in the area of learning and teaching;
- Supporting study visits for key administrative staff to other universities in the Nordic region to allow them to learn about how things are structured, and key activities are conducted in those institutions, with a view to developing our own structures, approaches, and practices;
- The implementation in 2021 of a staff survey with wide dissemination of results and follow-up actions as appropriate – with a particular focus on the Faculty of NST, where the survey has provided a mandate for action on some issues of which we were already largely aware.

We believe that both the quality and quantity of this work has been significant, especially with the limited human resources at our disposal to support it. Our intention is to try to sustain and build on these kinds of initiatives, and this will be facilitated, we believe, by recent additional recruitment to our HR function – as well as by the growing experience of Faculty Leadership Teams. However, as with so many other things at our institution, some (fairly modest) additional resourcing would allow us much better to consolidate, build and develop.

d. Effectiveness of the approach to implementing University strategies for enhancing learning and teaching.

Strategy implementation is a challenge for all organisations, including our own. How far have we been able to find effective ways to work towards realising our stated commitments and priorities? Here, we reflect on this by considering the perspectives of the Board, the University Leadership Team, staff, students, and others. Before doing that, we should first mention key aspects of our approach which we believe have been helping us, and also some main challenges we have been facing.

Taking the latter to begin, firstly, we have understood that we will have at best limited resources to work with and that there can be unpredictability about their availability.⁵⁰ Secondly, while we have many excellent staff, few of them have experience of working, especially in leadership positions, in other universities – and it is difficult to recruit such experience, even when resources might be available to do that. This has various consequences. One is that what could seem to be 'normal' or 'expected' to those with wider experience, can seem unfamiliar or unnecessary to some here – meaning that energy needs to be committed to explaining what elsewhere might seem to be more or less obvious. Another consequence can be a heightened requirement for senior leadership to guide or oversee key developments, limiting the pace of change while capacity gets built. More generally, regarding pace of change, there is an important balance to be struck between ambition for rapid progress and realism about capacity and sustainability of progress. One of the working groups at our preparatory event held in the Nordic House last November for this review process described this as: "The balance of doing enough and doing too much at the same time".

We believe it is important that our *Plan* and our approach to implementing it has been cognisant of these challenges. The *Plan* identifies not just the things we are seeking to achieve, but also key organisational developments needed to achieve them, including forming our two central units (REU and QU), reviewing operational structures, and investing limited resources strategically, including in

⁵⁰ In 2020, for instance, we received an additional 1.5m kr. from government to "strengthen the administration" – enough to pay for the total costs of only 2 or 2.5 staff. More recently, in 2022, we have had our recommended budget, already reduced by 2.5m kr. from what we believed was necessary to carry forward existing activities, reduced by a further 2m kr. by the Parliament's finance committee. The committee indicated that we should reduce administration and research – in direct contradiction to our *Strategic Plan*.

the crucial HR function, and improving communication with all stakeholders. Moreover, we believe that the somewhat ‘pedagogical’ approach to the development, presentation and implementation of the *Plan*, including the investment of time in consulting with staff and students in particular about our commitments and priorities, and in building understanding and commitment in relation to them and how we are to achieve them, has helped to address the second key challenge mentioned above, and has supported positive progress.⁵¹ But perhaps the most important thing has been the new kind of engagement with students around the shared vision of quality assurance and enhancement presented in the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*. Indeed, in a quite fundamental way this vision has been driven by students and especially student representatives on our Student Council.

Bearing all this in mind, we will now summarise the perspectives on the effectiveness of implementation expressed by the Board, the University Leadership Team, staff, students, and others.

The University Board, as evidenced in the minutes of its meetings, has expressed consistent satisfaction with the implementation of the Strategic Plan overall, and especially in relation to the main commitments and priorities under Education and Student Success⁵², Research and Enterprise, and People and Organisational Development – though also under other headings.

From the perspective of the **University Leadership Team**, the main concern has been to achieve the right balance between ambition and sustainability of progress. The Team believes that the progress achieved in a relatively short space of time, and most of it under the challenging circumstances of the global pandemic, has been significant, and probably exceeding reasonable expectations – though with very much still to be achieved, coming from a less than ideal starting place. On occasion there has been some perception that we may have been trying to do too much all at the same time – for instance in the later part of 2021 and early 2022, when we undertook the staff survey and the dissemination of results and follow-up actions at the same time as we were dealing with the preparations for the external review process and the management of the omicron situation, as well as many other things. Ultimately, we negotiated that period reasonably well – though with a strengthened focus on finding the right balance going forward.

We have feedback from, **University staff** on this matter from the aforementioned event in the Nordic House on 26th November 2021. Here are some broadly representative summary answers from the (fairly large) cross University working groups constructed that day – taking those that were most focused on the main aspects of the *Strategic Plan*.

Q1. Where are we coming from? How were we doing before the current Strategic Plan?

Group A: Quantitative focus. Less structured and focused. Negative narrative. Fragmented organisation

Group B: Lack of procedures before. We didn’t know how many students we had. Teaching has not changed, but things around it. Before single talents were the trunk, but now we have a system that breeds sustainability and continuation.

Group C. Unorganised from faculty to faculty. Opportunism and ad hoc solutions.

Q2. Where are we now? How are we doing in relation to the commitments and priorities of the Plan?

⁵¹ Also of importance in this regard, is that recently, after much covid-induced delay (the intention had been for this to be happening in the Spring of 2020), we have been able to support key administrative staff to travel abroad to learn about how things are organised and operate in other universities – building knowledge and capacity, and generating ideas for our own development (for example in relation to the possible reorganisation of student administration).

⁵² Albeit, the Board is keen to conduct a more systematic portfolio review working towards our next strategic plan.

Group A: More quality minded, trying to be professional/pragmatic, more student-centred approach, more focus on drop-out and drop-out rates and ensuring student well-being. More information to consider and act on.

Group B: University pedagogy makes a difference. We were below zero and now we have zero in sight. We're working towards common grounds. This development must be prioritised with more teaching and research power.

Group C: Good that the administration has been strengthened and the new units established. More overall debate and firm procedures have intensified the focus on research.

Q.3. How do you feel about the process?

Group A: More bureaucracy, but it is necessary and we're on the right positive track and things are happening, and we're all trying to go in the same direction.

Group B: Consider new priorities in the Plan, because we have reached several of them. Good that we are getting streamlined practices, so we can strengthen a 'we-culture' and better co-operation. The learning environment is a challenge. Annual review conversations are good for our process of development as a whole.

Group C: We are on the right path. Good to feel that competent people are in the new units. Briefing for all and one voice from leadership to staff is good.

The feedback from this event was copious and not all of it was provided in the format which was requested (with a view to facilitating inclusion in this document). As would be expected in any institution, not all of it was entirely positive and there were many suggestions about things which need to be done – much of which the University Leadership is already broadly aware. Nonetheless, the responses above are sufficient to indicate that a large proportion of staff perceive that the implementation of our strategies for the development of our University in general, and the enhancement of our learning and teaching specifically, have led to noticeable and broadly welcome changes – and they have broadly positive feelings about that, albeit with exceptions, of course.

Regarding **students**, as explained in Section 1d, a group of students who were either members of the Student Council or student representatives on the faculty study boards (or both) participated in a workshop on 16th June 2022, reflecting on several main aspects of the student experience at our University, much of it directly relevant how we are progressing in terms of processes for enhancing learning and teaching. The students provided *lots* of focused and useful feedback – both indicating a perception of progress being made, but also highlighting key areas for improvement from the students' perspective.

In terms of *perceptions of progress*, comments from students included the following: "Teachers support the idea of students influencing how the teaching is organised"; "Impressed by the teachers' professionalism and how they are following procedures and guidelines"; "In general, feedback from students to teachers is being taken note of, and students are being informed of changes"; "There is a will to make changes that improve the student experience"; "The leadership is open for ideas from students and makes them happen ... This makes it easier to get other students to be active and to create an active student environment"; "In general, course descriptions, course evaluations and feedback are better organised than before. Corrective measures which are implemented are clear/visible"; "The course descriptions are available earlier than before – our first two years we didn't always get them ... it seems that things are better organised ... It has been a huge problem but has become much better"; "We notice Setursnámsfrøði" (the HE Pedagogy course); "Opinions from students are much more sought-after and we are represented in many groups and councils"; "The desire for better organisation and quality is much more visible".

In terms of *the need for progress to be continued* there was also a lot of quite pointed and very useful feedback – and some of it about quite serious outstanding challenges – including the following: “The structures of the programmes (in my part of the University) are influenced by changes being made randomly”; “The course descriptions are too bound to the individual teachers and new teachers don’t always sufficiently understand what the framework for the course descriptions must be. Teachers should follow a procedure that clearly says what must be ready before the course begins”; “We lack a uniform way for (giving) feedback, because it’s very different from teacher to teacher whether and how much feedback is given”; “At the Faculty of Education, course descriptions are not sufficiently organised and students are not getting enough information ... At the same time changes are being made in the descriptions in the middle of the courses and course descriptions are not available when the course starts”; “Workload is very changeable, easy at times and intense at times – this is the main criticism”; “Considerable difference between teachers with and without PhDs. We do not always get our study plan within due time”; “We need more teachers with higher education than just MA”; “Out of about 20 courses, the study plan has only been available at the start of about five of them”; “I have only had one feedback during all my time here. We only get the grade, but otherwise no feedback”; “On some programmes feedback is working very well, but on others there is more or less no feedback. Maybe it would be an idea to have a form to fill out. This could also be used for oral and written exams”; “I wish I could become a student at Setrið in 20 years”; “ECTS don’t always fit the workload and outcome”; “there is a need for better training for new teachers and part time lecturers”; “We must build a better culture in regard to receiving and giving feedback”; “Staff must keep to deadlines – for providing material and marks/grades”; “The website must be up to date. It almost cost admission to further studies because course descriptions were not available”.

Finally, with regard to **external stakeholders**, we do not have actual data on this, but we do have important indicators and anecdotal feedback from government, municipalities, employers, and others, broadly indicating a growing perception that the University is in a sustained process of development and change towards professionalisation and modernisation. One indication is the substantial overall funding increases we have been seeing from government – linked to increased expectations of delivery. We read this in part as indicating growing trust in the University to deliver on its strategic commitments and priorities. Another important indication is the recognition from the relevant Danish authorities as to the equivalence of our law programmes to those delivered in Denmark, and, crucially, the sufficiency of our developing quality system to assure and enhance those programmes going forward. Another indication is the growing willingness of the private sector – for instance, the IT Employers’ Association and the major almon producer, Bakkafrost – to collaborate with us.

Overall, and by way of reflection, it seems clear from the evidence above that the implementation of our strategy for enhancing teaching and learning has been effective in many ways and is leading to significant progress towards our strategic goals – and that this is seen and understood by the relevant stakeholders. This includes students. However, the student feedback in particular crystallises the challenges we still face in parts of our University, and also perhaps in general, in addressing what are quite basic aspects of learning and teaching. These aspects include the availability and quality of course documentation, adherence to course descriptions, the provision of useful feedback to students, issues of workload, the qualifications of teachers and the training they are required to undergo, adherence to deadlines, and more. Of course, we (as staff) are already aware of these issues and challenges and are working to address them, but the balanced feedback we are receiving from students gives us further encouragement, if any were needed, to continue energetically to pursue change.

We are very open to comments and reflections from the ERT as to how we can improve

implementation, taking account of the constraints and challenges we are likely to continue to face. As indicated elsewhere in this document, and in Case Study 2, Developing the Organisation, we are actively considering the benefits to be gained by centralisation of our student administration – much of which is currently decentralised – and we would particularly welcome the feedback of the ERT on that.

e. Cross-fertilisation between research activities and learning and teaching enhancement

The history of our University means that our faculties have developed in different ways; some are older with relatively established and stable identities (which can be good in ways and not so good in others), others are newer and more clearly challenged in their identities (which can be both problematic, but also a significant opportunity). As mentioned in section 1, the research traditions and cultures across our University reflect this – in some areas research is in fact quite new.

Across our University, we have around 100 FTE staff in academic positions, but less than half have contractual responsibilities to conduct research. Clearly, this is an issue in providing research-based teaching, which is a legal requirement for us, and this has previously been highlighted by an external review process focussed on the financing of the University.⁵³

In our *Plan*, two main priorities for research are having at least 60 percent of academic staff named as authors on peer-reviewed research publications, and the same proportion named as applicants on high quality external funding applications, in any two-year period.⁵⁴ By supporting staff in addressing these priorities we have been seeking to “ensure an increasing production of high-quality research across and between our faculties, underpinning the delivery of learning and teaching and contributing relevant and impactful knowledge, both for the Faroe Islands and the wider world” (*Strategic Plan, 2020-2024, p.8*).

Faculty of Faroese Language and literature is the oldest of our faculties (1965) with a well-established research tradition. 6 out of 9 academic staff are in teaching and research positions – three professors (including the only female professor currently at UFI). Two PhD students are also currently enrolled. The broad areas of research at our faculties are already mentioned in section 1d, and at FLL, the research is used widely in teaching across programmes and courses. Essentially, all teaching from associate professors and professors is research based. Courses in literary studies are based on UFI research on literary history and analysis, visual arts, and gender in literature; the courses in linguistics are based on UFI research on purism, sociolinguistics, syntax, and historical linguistics; and the course in aesthetics builds on UFI research within philosophy, aesthetics, and cognition.

The **Faculty of Science and Technology** is the second oldest among our faculties (1972). There are 11 members of staff with research responsibility, currently 5 being professors. In addition, the faculty has currently 4 PhD students. The research is organised in three research and education sections: Biology, Engineering, and Computer Science, and one research centre: the Geospatial Centre of the Faroe Islands (a collaboration with the Faroese Environment Agency). As part of the strategic development plans for our University, this Faculty aims to promote and enhance the existing research fields, as well as to prioritise research-based educational programmes. For example, biology has been expanded effectively by a new member of staff, and within IT, the programme will expand with a new master’s degree and no less than 9 new academic staff in the coming months.

⁵³ https://kvf.fo/sites/default/files/files/raettadfiggjarstyring_setrid_endalig_version_4_jh.pdf, May 2018.

⁵⁴ These ambitions were formulated in later 2019 and early 2020, before we had reliable data about existing activity. Consequently, the ‘targets’ were best estimates/guesses, reached in consultation with staff. They were also phrased slightly ambiguously, so as to allow scope for later, more precise, practical specification.

In general, scientific staff at the Faculty have highly integrated their research expertise and experience into the corresponding educational programmes. In addition, these research competences are also complemented and strengthened with experience from external affiliates from local institutions and industry who assist with teaching and supervision and collaborate on research projects. Within Computer Science, research is highly integrated into the courses where the two professors who have been with us for several years have expertise in data science, biostatistics, bioinformatics, algorithms and mathematics, artificial intelligence, cyber security, and wireless communication networks. Within the engineering programme, local research expertise in renewable energy systems is highly integrated in the taught courses, and at the biology programme, the research staff have integrated their own research expertise in pharmacogenetics, genetics, environmental epidemiology, epidemiology, mass spectrometry, genetics, evolution, genomics, ecology, and biodiversity into the taught courses.

The **Faculty of History and Social Sciences** is also a well-established faculty (1987), with the largest number of academic staff and around 15 staff members with research responsibility, two of them being professors, in history and in anthropology, with the historian being also the Dean. Further, the faculty currently has 5 PhD students enrolled. The researchers at the faculty are doing research in a wide range of areas as described in section 1d.

The research done by the faculty's researchers is highly integrated into parts of the educational programmes, and used in many different courses, especially in postgraduate study programmes. Law students, for instance, use articles and books based on the late Kári á Rógvi's pioneering research on law in the Faroe Islands and in the North Atlantic region. History students rely heavily on the work of Faroese historians who are (or were) based at the Faculty. At the interconnected master's programmes in social science, political science and history, students engage with many research projects conducted by in-house scholars, for instance in relation to migration, gender, youth, political institutions, fisheries & sustainable development, parliamentarism, food security, and the modern political history of the Faroe Islands. Of course, lecturers also often draw on research from other societies in their classes.

The **Faculty of Education** was created through the merger in 2008. It was not previously a research institution and therefore the research tradition at this faculty is not as strong. The Faculty has a comparatively low proportion of research staff, with only two associate professors, one of them being the dean, and four assistant professors, as well as 2 current PhD students. The teaching material used in this Faculty is very largely based on research conducted elsewhere, and a little from other faculties of our University, such as the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature and the Faculty of History and Social Sciences. As mentioned in section 1d, some research is being conducted at the Faculty, however, it is not sufficiently present across the programmes – visible in some courses, less so in others. More generally, the Faculty has been identifying challenges in courses which need more appropriate research underpinning generally. The Faculty of Education acknowledges these various challenges and is seeking to address them, with new staff and management initiatives, such as appointing a Faculty Research Leader as part of the Faculty Leadership Team. Also, in the coming period, two or three staff who are currently in teaching only positions may be transferred to research positions (as assistant professors).

The **Faculty of Health Sciences** was also created by the 2008 merger. There are 23 academic staff in the Faculty. Currently only six have specific research responsibility, and the Dean is the only professor. However, the Faculty has a relatively high production of research – especially peer reviewed papers. Currently six PhD students are affiliated to the Faculty and two are enrolled at other universities but with a UFI supervisor on the team. The Faculty has also managed to appoint some very productive affiliated staff, who are in close collaboration with research staff. In addition,

the researchers have close relations to other health research institutions in the Faroes and are part of the wider Centre of Health Science, which is a collaboration between the University, the Department of Occupational and Public Health, the National Hospital, and the Faroese Biobank. The Faculty also has close collaboration ties to research institutions abroad.

The Faculty conducts research of international standing, and research groups are led by experienced academics. Both bachelor's and master's students are encouraged to take part in research projects in their theses, and several master students have conducted smaller scientific projects themselves, some of which have led to peer-reviewed publications. The research of the faculty is continuously integrated in the teaching. The teaching in the nursing program more generally is based on research—as reported both in books and original research articles. Similarly, the curriculum for the master's programme consists of research-based textbooks and scientific research papers. Research methodology is an important part of the curriculum, integrated in both basic compulsory courses and more intensive complementary courses in qualitative and quantitative research methods. These courses are led by active researchers, who base their teaching in their research as well as inviting other active researchers to teach in their areas of expertise.

Summing up, we can see that the picture across our faculties is varied, but we can say that the integration of research in teaching is a goal that has not reached its potential yet across the University as a whole, most obviously because the majority of our academic staff are teaching lecturers, many of whom do not have PhDs. This is something that we are looking to address, though there are challenges with both finance and recruitment in doing that. Going forward, we will ask faculty leadership teams to reflect on their circumstances and to develop specific action plans.

Section 4: Academic Standards and Quality Processes

a. Key features of the University's approach to managing quality and to the setting, maintaining, reviewing, and assessing of academic standards, including use of external reference points (especially in a European context).

As we are still in the relatively early stages of developing our approach to managing quality and to the setting, maintaining, reviewing, and assessing of academic standards, in what follows we describe both our existing progress and the work we are currently focused on for the coming year. *At the outset, we should say that a key challenge for us in this regard is that the Faroe Islands does not yet have a national qualification framework.* We have been highlighting the need for such a framework to government in recent years and have received indications that work on a framework is to be prioritised. We would welcome the views and recommendations of the ERT on this matter.

Our developing approach to managing quality and to the setting, maintaining, reviewing, and assessing of academic standards, is *enhancement-led*. It takes inspiration from the Tuning approach. Tuning Educational Structures in Europe is a universities-driven project which aims to offer an enhancement-led approach to implementing the Bologna Reform. This approach focuses on the programme level, and on the continuous enhancement of programmes which⁵⁵:

- Meet an identified and agreed *need*;
- Have a well described Degree Programme Profile⁵⁶ (specifying generic and subject-specific competences developed);
- Have corresponding programme learning outcomes;
- Correctly allocate ECTS credits to the units of the programme (based on student workload, as per the ECTS Users' Guidelines);
- Adopt appropriate, student centred approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

In enhancement terms, the following questions then need to be addressed at regular intervals:

- *Are we doing the right things?* (e.g., based on local needs, and on local regulations (legal frameworks, etc); and by reflecting on and undertaking self-assessments towards the ESGs);
- *Are we doing these things in the right way?* (e.g., according to: requirements and reference points of the Bologna framework; qualifications frameworks such as QF-EHEA & EQF⁵⁷, and internal guidelines, processes and procedures that apply to programme documents);
- *How do we know this?* (evidence: e.g., surveys, course evaluations, feedback, external reference points, measurement (KPIs) and accountability);
- *Do others feel the same?* (external evaluation/programme reviews).

Our Quality Unit is in the process of developing an internal QAE system along these Tuning lines, rooted in both *national* and *international* external reference points, including:

National reference points:

- The **University Law** (provides the legal framework for our qualifications);
- The **Executive Order(s)** (details *how* the University Law is to be operationalised);
- Our **Strategic Plan** for 2020-2024 (contains statements of mission and vision, and sets out

⁵⁵ See <https://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/quality-enhancement.html>

⁵⁶ For details, see *A Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles, Including Programme Competences and Programme learning Outcomes*, Tuning 2010.

⁵⁷ A National Qualification Framework (NQF) has not been developed for the Faroe Islands yet. Therefore, with regard to e.g., programme design, we use QF-EHEA (Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area) and EQF (European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning) as guiding reference points.

- key priorities and commitments for our University);
- Our **Policy for Quality Enhancement for Education** (A general policy statement aligned with the *Plan*, and approved by the ULT on 15 February 2022);
- Our **Procedures for Programme Descriptions, Degree Programme Profiles and Course Descriptions** (specifying legal framework, purpose, description, requirements, responsibilities, etc for all three documents).

International reference points:

- **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area** (ESG 2015, Part 1. This key document reflects a consensus among all the organisations and ministries involved in the Bologna Process on how to take forward and successfully implement *quality assurance* in the EHEA);
- **The Bologna Framework** (the original Declaration and subsequent ministerial communiqués, which contain bi-annual agreements, key priorities, and reaffirmations of previous commitments to developing a more inclusive, innovative, interconnected, and resilient EHEA).
- **European Qualifications frameworks:** The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (**QF-EHEA**) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (**EQF**). The QF-EHEA is a framework covering the three cycles of higher education, indicating what knowledge, skills and competences are to be achieved to complete a bachelor, master, or doctoral degree. The EQF is an 8-level learning outcomes-based framework for all types of qualifications that serves as a translation tool between different national qualifications frameworks, facilitating transparency, comparability, and portability of people’s qualifications.
- **List of Key Questions for Programme Design and Programme Delivery, Maintenance and Evaluation in the Framework of the Bologna Reform:** This document is Annex I in the publication *Universities’ Contribution to the Bologna Process* (Tuning Project, 2008).

Design and approval of new programmes and periodic review of existing programmes

The final document mentioned above takes the form of a checklist developed via Tuning, with guiding questions for programme design, delivery, maintenance, and evaluation. It is intended to assist programme teams when preparing programme documentation and in reflection and quality enhancement. It covers the following areas: (1) Degree profile; (2) Learning outcomes; (3) Competences (generic and subject-specific ones); (4) Level; (5) Credits and Workload; (6) Resources; (7) Monitoring; (8) Updating; (9) Sustainability and responsibility; and (10) Organisation and Information.

All our staff are directed to this tool (available on our Intranet⁵⁸) and are required to use it when designing a new programme or when revising and evaluating existing programmes. Since our QU was formed, staff have also been able to receive support to make use of it. However, achieving full engagement has been a challenge and – to some extent – remains a challenge that the Quality Unit, led by the Pro-Rector for Quality of Education, together with the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education, is pursuing.

At this stage, we have yet to progress towards a systematic approach to monitoring, review, and revalidation of existing programmes – in accordance with ESG 1.9. This, however, is the main priority for the Quality Unit for 2022/23. Linked to this, our current, largely *ad hoc* approach to external consultation in maintaining, reviewing, and assessing academic standards, will be developed,

⁵⁸Annex 1, pp. 135-139 in *Universities’ contribution to the Bologna Process*. This document is available on our Intranet.

formalised, and organised in a systematic manner.

For both the validation of new programmes, and the review and revalidation of existing programmes, it is important moving forward that we strengthen and render systematic our approach to the inclusion of external experts – both academic and professional – in our QAE processes. As things stand, such inclusion has been done largely on an *ad hoc* basis – sometimes very well and sometimes not so much – and that is something we understand that we must address.

Programme Documents as Transparency Tools

The following three **transparency tools** in the form of **aligned programme documents** are required for each of our programmes: **(1) Programme Description (*Námsskipan*)**, **(2) Degree Programme Profile**, and **(3) Course Descriptions** (which elsewhere might be referred to as module descriptions). The Quality Unit, in collaboration with the QEF, has developed templates and guidelines for these. The level of abstraction in these and other transparency tools is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below:

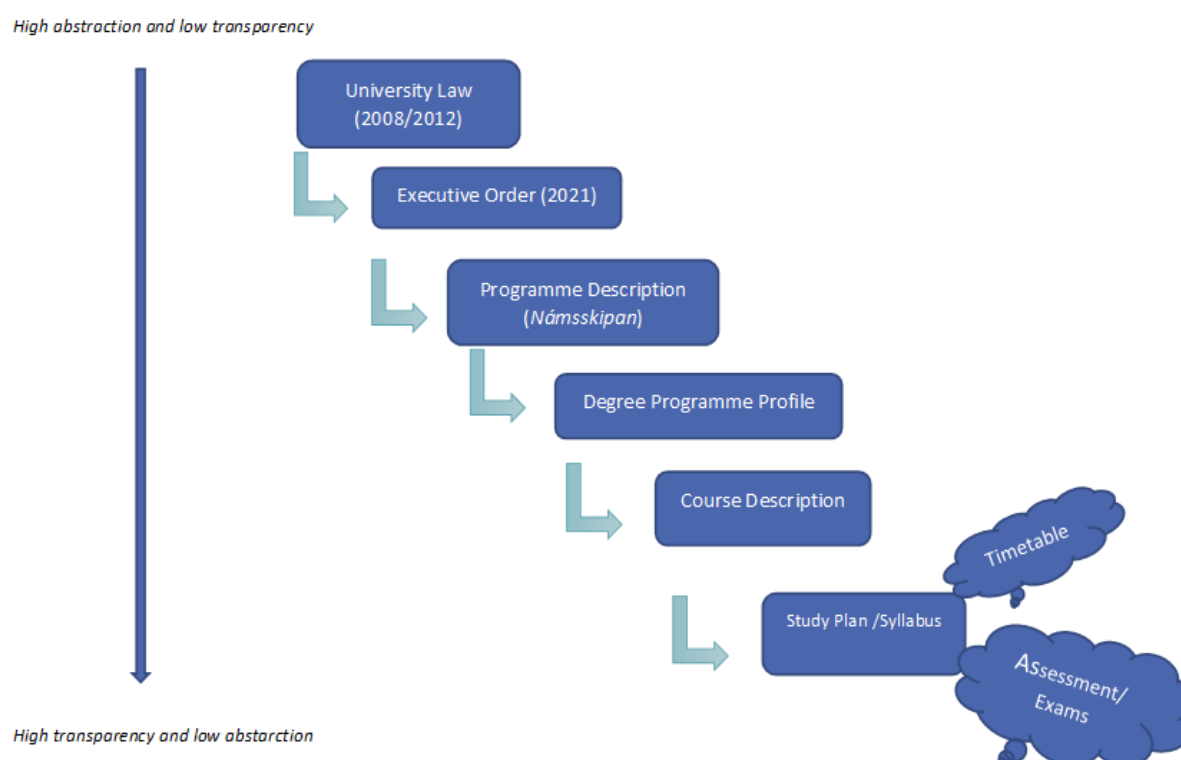


Figure 4.1 Transparency Tools

Starting from the top of Figure 4.1 above, the University Law for Higher Education lays out the main framework for our degree programmes. The Executive Order, last amended in 2021, operationalises what the law stipulates. Chapter 3 (pp.3-4) in the Executive Order determines and lays out what information and sections are required to be included in a Programme Description (*Námsskipan*).

As prescribed in our University’s **Procedures for Programme Description, Degree Profile and Course Descriptions**⁵⁹, the Quality Unit approves of all new and revised Programme Descriptions prior to formal approval in the faculty study board⁶⁰, and, in the case of new degree programmes, prior to

⁵⁹ This document outlines aims, approach, responsibility, and procedures for developing, assessing, and approving the documents mentioned. This document is now available in English and is in the ERT folder on Teams.

⁶⁰ It will be important for us to reflect on the terms of reference for the study boards within an aligned QAE system.

formal approval in the Ministry. Thus, a quality assessed programme description complies with internal guidelines (and the relevant Executive Order) and has been through an internal review process prior to formal approval. So far, Programme Descriptions have mainly been written in Faroese, but the longer-term goal is to have them in both Faroese and English.

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, all degree programmes are also documented, in accordance with Tuning, in a much shorter **Degree Programme Profile**.⁶¹ The key characteristics of a **Degree Programme Profile** are that it:

- Concisely describes the main features of a degree programme;
- Is a succinct tool used for purposes of transparency and recognition;
- May be used as part of the *Diploma Supplement* for recognition purposes;
- Contains **international reference points** and level indicators, thus providing **key information** that prospective students, enrolled students, the public, and employers can understand.

Both programme descriptions and profiles should be collaboratively produced – led by a Programme Leader (PL) but produced by a team of academics teaching the programme.

As also set out in the Procedures document, the subject specialist who is mainly responsible for a course writes (according to guidelines and in collaboration with other colleagues who may be teaching the course) a **Course Description** which:

- Makes use of the current template and guidelines;
- Is available in Faroese and in English;
- Is based on consultation with the QU as needed, and especially when in doubt about any aspect;
- Is sent to the faculty study board for approval;
- Is then sent to the Programme Leader for final approval prior to it being registered, made available on Moodle, and published in the Course Catalogue;
- Is made available to students prior to the start of the course.

In addition to the three key documents described in this section, academic staff are, of course, required to provide additional documents that contribute to the transparency of TLA activities – including (see Figure 4.1 above) for example a syllabus, typically in the form of a weekly study plan or scheme of work, assessment criteria and detailed information on examinations.

The role of our Quality Unit

The main purpose of the Quality Unit in all of this is, as already indicated, to develop an internal QEA system based on clear procedures and processes.⁶² The Unit is intended to serve as a **support unit** for staff – not itself (the Unit) to ‘own quality’, but to support everyone else to do that. Since establishment, the Unit has been creating awareness around international requirements and reference points, and why it is necessary to have a QAE system and culture in accordance with the Bologna Process. It has also been providing training opportunities and supporting staff in developing

⁶¹ “The Profile specifies the subject area or areas studied, identifies the level (first, second or third cycle) and indicates the special features that distinguish it from other similar programmes. The Degree Profile describes, in terms of competences and learning outcomes, what graduates will know, understand and be able to do by the time they have successfully completed the programme. The Profile spells out what can be expected of the graduates in terms of the kinds of tasks they are equipped to undertake, their level of expertise and the responsibilities they can assume”. *A Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles* (2010, p.15).

⁶² As indicated in our *Plan*, the Quality Unit “will develop, in dialogue and partnership with students, staff and external stakeholders, clear policies and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of all our programmes – in accordance with the Bologna Process. These policies and procedures will be implemented fully and consistently, creating a transparent culture of continuous enhancement” (p. 7).

and revising the three key documents described above, through, for instance, guidance for individuals and workshops for groups. Much progress has been made in producing aligned programme documents (by working intensively and collaboratively on ESG 1.2). We are now preparing to take the further step of introducing guidelines, procedures and action plans for regular review and (re)validation of our degree programmes (i.e. cyclical review processes – ESG 1.9).

Cyclical review processes

In terms of annual review and enhancement processes, our Quality Unit, in collaboration with the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education (QEFE), will also soon design an **Annual Calendar for Quality Work** (*Árshjól fyri góðskuarbeiði*), which will include a “Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle” (See Figure 4.2 below) or cyclical review process, with set deadlines regarding, for example, revision, assessment, submission and approval of programme documents, and also for the implementation of annual reviews of programmes, involving students and other stakeholders, including external ones.

It is intended that this Calendar will support our work to improve engagement of staff with our QAE processes and requirements, making the latter more transparent, and securing timely planning and implementation of relevant tasks – as well as supporting coordination and consistency in the management of actions at various levels of the University. The Quality Unit will introduce and seek validation for this tool during the autumn semester, first by discussing the proposal in QEFE, and then by introducing an approved version to programme leaders and members of study boards (including students) at a whole day workshop on 5 October.⁶³

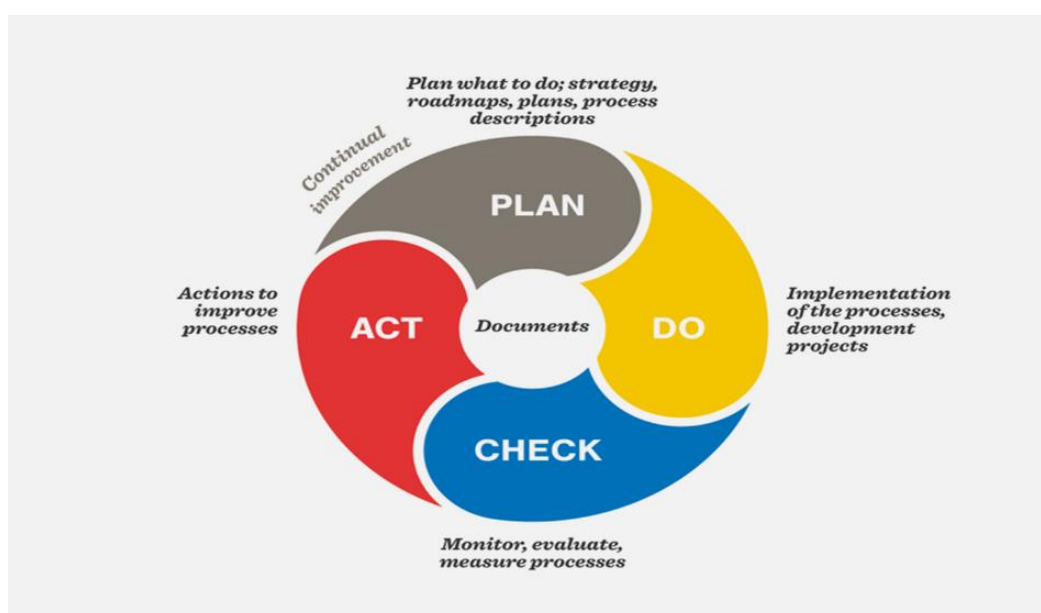


Figure 4.2: Continuous enhancement process that is part of our University’s quality enhancement processes (Source: <https://www.aalto.fi/en/governance/quality>).

Building capacity for internal QAE via external collaboration

In terms of building capacity within our Quality Unit, inspiration has been drawn from many different sources, including external collaborators. Both staff members in the QU have educational backgrounds within the field of educational sciences (which includes European education policies, quality systems, lifelong learning, and student-centred learning). In addition to key qualifications, staff at the Unit have established contact with individuals at other universities who carry out similar work. In particular, we have sought information on how other small universities, especially in the

⁶³ This particular workshop will focus on competence development for key academic and administrative staff who at faculty level are responsible for the implementation of our enhancement processes and procedures.

West Nordic Region, have developed their internal QAE systems. To mention but a few examples of external collaboration and competence development, staff in the QU have participated in:

- Online meetings on QA that were organised by the NUSCT network (Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories), spring 2021.
- Online seminars on QAE that were organised by the Quality Board for Higher Education in Iceland (Autumn 2021). This seminar series, with specialist presenters from Iceland and Scotland on a wide range of quality issues, was part of a Greenlandic Project for QAE in Higher Education. Our University was invited to take part in this project, which covered nearly every aspect of the ESG, Part 1.
- Study visits (jointly with our University's Research and Enterprise Unit and HR) at the University of Tromsø (UIT – the Arctic University of Norway), and in Iceland at the University of Akureyri (UNAK) and at the University of Iceland (HÍ). All three on site visits have yielded insights into internal QAE process, presentations, and led to knowledge-sharing and discussions with key staff at these Universities. They have also provided important contacts for further collaboration.

'Smallness' is of course a relative concept, and our University is indeed a very small one with limited resources for QAE systems and processes. However, as detailed in this RA document, an internal and robust QAE system has in parts been developed and is in the process of being further developed and harnessed, focusing on pragmatic and evidence-based solutions and action plans.

b. Commentary on action taken since the previous Evaluation and identification of matters arising from strategic aims towards European recognition.

We have already, in section 1c, both detailed the recommendations arising from the previous external review of the University and summarised the follow up actions taken. There were specific recommendations on quality assurance, regarding centralising, professionalising, and extending existing quality assurance and also developing an explicit focus on enhancement. More generally, the recommendation was to intensify the work around the Bologna process.

In important respects the ground at our University had already been prepared for follow-up actions on these recommendations. Initiatives were taken in 2011 (with the formation of a Bologna Group) and continued through to 2013. An internal report was written by an external Tuning expert, Arlene Gilpin, after a round of workshops that she delivered for staff in 2013, aiming to prepare for implementation.⁶⁴ Gilpin's estimation was that many of her recommendations could, if prioritised, be implemented within two years. She also predicted that our University could be a role model for other small universities in Europe, if there were to be a strong institutional commitment. See Figure 4.4 below, illustrating the relationship between institutional commitment and capacity.

⁶⁴ The Gilpin and Serbati (2013) report is available on the Intranet, in the Quality Unit section.

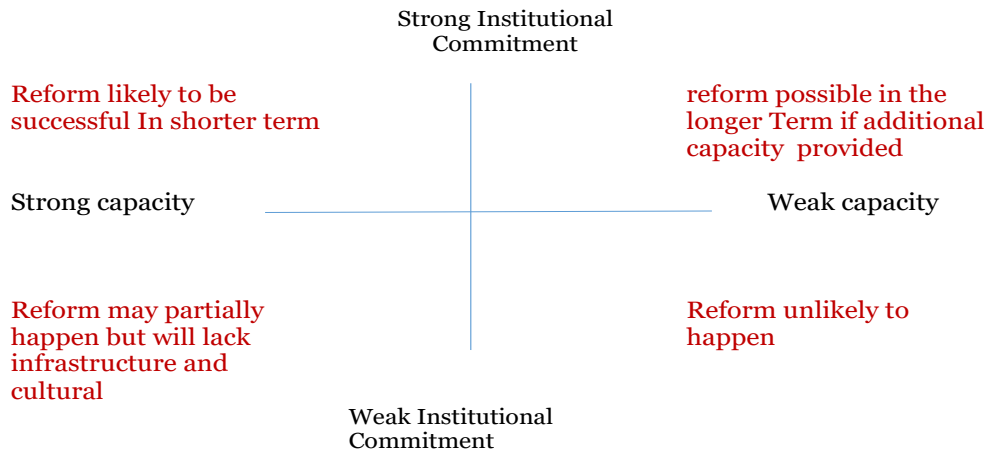


Figure 4.4: From the Gilpin & Serbati Report (2013)

However, as explained in section 1, progress was not sustained, and became a source, to a degree, of difficulty between staff who had a lead responsibility for implementation, and others who were to varying degrees unconvinced of the value of this work, and perhaps somewhat reluctant regarding implementation. The latter included staff at senior levels. The Bologna Group was not given sufficient support and had no authority to implement change. Within a relatively short space of time, the work was effectively abandoned, and it has only been in the period since the arrival of the new rector and the adoption of the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* that our University has returned to systematic work along the lines recommended. This document is to a large extent focused on describing and reflecting on the actions which have been taken since that time.

A very strong impetus for this new focus on QAE and a strategic aim towards European integration came directly from students who were the active members of the Student Council during the 2019-20 session. These students were very aware that our University was considerably further behind on QAE issues than they wanted and needed us to be, both for their student experience, and also for their achievements to be sufficiently recognised internationally. To a large extent, this understanding is the basis of the successful partnership we have developed with the Student Council in recent years.

Reflectively analysing this experience, we could say that in the earlier period (2011-2014) there were issues, in Gilpin's terms, to do with both institutional commitment and capacity (there was no Quality Unit in the earlier period, and quality was just a part of a much wider job description for just one main colleague). More recently, we have created different conditions – where capacity has been established (a QU with two FTE staff overseen by a Pro-Rector reporting directly to the Rector) and a strong institutional commitment, connecting the legal basis of our University to an expressed strategic commitment from our Board, based on extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders, has been instituted. This is the basis of the new progress we have been making and which we are thoroughly committed to sustaining.

As we progress with this work, we do so hoping that our own efforts will be supported by work within government to develop an appropriate National Qualifications Framework and to enter the EHEA. We are very conscious that this has been achieved by our NUSCT partners in San Marino and believe that we can learn from and ultimately emulate their achievement.

c. Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

As described in section 4a, our institution, working (we repeat) in the absence of a national qualification framework, has had to make prioritised choices on where to invest time and limited resources. As research-based degree programmes comprise our University's most salient activity, it was a strategic choice to focus on *aligned programme documents* (in accordance with ESG 1.2 and as already described in this document – section 4a), thus laying the foundation for further implementation of the ESG-standards.

As also described already, the next prioritised choices will be to introduce our Annual Calendar for Quality Work, which includes **cyclical review processes** and **approval procedures**. These emerging arrangements will include the following initiatives that aim to secure the effectiveness of academic standards:

- A reorganised Quality Enhancement Forum for Education (QEF) that has the authority and mandate to make decisions regarding education quality processes⁶⁵.
- At the level of individual study programmes, the introduction of an **Annual Status Report**. This report will be based on an annual evaluation meeting among staff teaching on the programme, and it will e.g., include key data for the past academic year (KPIs), status of quality standards, results from course evaluations, focal areas to address, a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, and an Action Plan for quality enhancement for the next academic year.
- A **Programme Review Report** that is produced in connection with the University's cyclical review processes of the whole **Education Portfolio** that are to be undertaken every 4-6 years. Such a cyclical review process will be based on ESG 1.9 which provides standards for on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes. This standard stipulates that "Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned". The standard in question further details that cyclical evaluations focus on:
 - The content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up to date;
 - The changing needs of society;
 - The students' workload, progression, and completion;
 - The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students;
 - The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme;
 - The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.

The above described cyclical and enhancement-led review processes, and reports, convey what the Quality Unit envisions and aims to prioritise – in collaboration with staff, students and the QEFE - during the next phase. This is all work relevant to our degree programmes and other qualifications that can be implemented in the coming years. In the next sub-section below, we will further elaborate on how we will ensure **academic standards**, with reference to ESG 1.5, by focusing on our **teaching staff**.

Assuring academic standards of teaching staff

According to ESG Standard 1.5, "Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff". It is further stated in the ESG Guidelines that "The teacher's role is essential in creating a

⁶⁵ See description and Terms of Reference for the QEF in Section 2f.

high-quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf. Standard 1.3)".

The *Strategic Plan (2020-2024)* conveys full awareness of the key role of teaching staff in creating high quality learning experiences. In the section entitled 'People and Organisational Development' (p. 10), it is emphasised that "People are at the heart of everything that the University can achieve. To thrive, it is essential we attract, recruit and retain talented staff, and, by supporting growth and communicating well, foster motivation to contribute to the success of our commitments and priorities. This requires a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment which is thoroughly professional and supports both positive relationships and growth. It also requires appropriate organisational structures and processes at both University and faculty levels, including a strengthened administration and modern and professional systems for work allocation, reporting and review".

With regard to student-centred learning, our *Plan* further underlines the following commitment: "We will ensure access to training and development opportunities for our staff to ensure that they are well-equipped for contemporary and emerging approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and particularly those most relevant to our context and needs".

Our Quality Unit contributes to and plays an important role in this endeavour, for example by continuously offering awareness sessions on quality areas and training workshops for teaching staff on different aspects of student-centred learning, in particular on the essential role of learning outcomes and outcomes-based qualifications (See Section 2f). It is a given that the University Pedagogy course, described elsewhere in this document (e.g., see Section 2f) even more so plays a key role in this respect.

Overall, we believe our University is on a positive path towards fulfilling these strategic commitments. Factors contributing to this structural development include investment in our Human Resources (HR) Office. Their role is to develop and lead on the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures for e.g. recruitment of highly qualified teaching staff and for their professional development (cf. Standard 1.6). In this connection, the professional development aspect of the annual review conversation for staff also provides possibilities for staff to request resources for relevant training and development (see below).

To what extent, then, is our University complying with the standards and guidelines set out in ESG 1.5 in our commitment to ensure the competence of teaching staff? To respond to this question, we will briefly refer to each of the quality indicators listed in ESG 1.5. The responses to the four indicators below are – in part – based on a self-assessment exercise made by our HR Office in September 2021.

- **Set up and follow clear, transparent, and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching.** Our University, we believe, meets this standard. As a public university, we are obliged to follow legal requirements for the announcement of positions, for the assessment of applicants' qualifications, and for recruiting the best qualified and best suited applicant for a position. Internal procedures are in place. Applications for new teaching staff are always evaluated by an internal appointment board who review applications before, in the case of teaching and research positions (assistant, associate and 'full' professor), sending them off to an external evaluation group for evaluation. When the HR Office receives the relevant evaluations,

relevant staff conduct interviews with applicants with support from HR. The internal appointment board then writes a recommendation report for the rector to approve. In terms of what is required of academic positions, see “Regulations governing positions (posts and roles) at the University of the Faroe Islands”⁶⁶.

- **Offer opportunities for and promote the professional development of teaching staff.** As written about in other sections of this document, and as underlined in the *Plan*, our University is committed to create opportunities for the professional development of teaching staff. In the annual review conversation (MCPDC) document that all staff are required to fill out, in Section 5, staff are invited to present requests for professional development and learning needs. This section is shared with our HR staff and decisions are made, depending on resources. Current provision mainly consists of small workshops and, with regard to pedagogical development, University Pedagogy. However, long-term goals are to include plans for the career development of teaching and research staff. Overall, we will be looking to continue to invest in and create opportunities for training and development for staff in all relevant areas of their work. As we strengthen our HR function, we will be looking to build a more co-ordinated and strategic approach to creating and promoting the professional development of teaching staff and thus to ensure the quality and academic standards of teaching staff.
- **Encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research.** Research, teaching and learning are inherently connected, they underpin research-based education offered at our University. The purpose of our University’s research is to enhance scientific and academic standards at the University, and in Faroese society at large; it is also to facilitate learning and teaching that is on an international level and continuously to strengthen the link between education and research. To contribute to strengthening this particular connection, our Research and Enterprise Unit (REU), led by a Pro-Rector, was also established within the University administration at the same time that the Quality Unit was founded. The aim of the REU is described in the *Plan*. It contains clear aims for encouraging scholarly activity with the purpose of linking education and research, for example by having “60% of our academic staff named as authors on peer-reviewed research publications in any two-year period, and for all relevant staff to be on an appropriate research trajectory as evidenced by annual review discussions” (p. 9). To support this strategic goal, each faculty has appointed a faculty research leader (FRL) who encourages new research projects. Another initiative has been to encourage teaching lecturers, who do not have research as part of their job position, to take part in projects carried out at their respective faculty. This, however, is an area that needs further attention and strategic planning.
- **Encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.** The main University-wide initiative in this area has been the University Pedagogy course, mentioned several times previously and described in section 2f, though, of course, there is innovation resulting from the initiatives of teachers at faculty level, and not least from the arrival of new staff who have in fairly recent years been educated elsewhere and bring relevant experiences with them. It is perhaps relevant here that students have (as reported in section 3d) informed us that they at times experience differences in the teaching of staff with and without PhDs, perhaps reflecting the teaching and learning experiences of those who have undertaken PhDs – often in other institutions. In this connection, the discussion of the identification and sharing of good practice across our University – see section 3b – assumes a heightened significance. Specifically in relation to the use of learning technologies, see section 2e. Our main initiative in this regard, beyond our use of the Moodle learning platform, in recent times has been the investment in remote teaching –

⁶⁶ <https://setur.cdn.fo/media/7770/regulation-governing-positions-at-the-university-of-the-faroe-islands-1st-july-2021.pdf?s=FOkwaHYNSEzzq97IbJhM059ZWkw>

primarily through Zoom – during the covid period. For some time, our University has been operating with a depleted IT staffing, due to health issues affecting a member of staff, but just recently we have been able, with welcome support from our Ministry, to appoint a new leader of IT with good and very relevant experience. This will allow us to redeploy some of our limited IT staff to engage more fully with the issue of supporting the adoption and use of learning technologies.

Finally, something perhaps worth mentioning here is that we have many indications that our graduates who go on to further study in Denmark, the wider Nordic region and elsewhere, tend to do well in their further studies. We do not take this as sufficient indication that our current arrangements for securing academic standards at our University are sufficient – and we have given clear indication of that above – but we do take a degree of comfort from the knowledge while we seek to develop the more systematic and robust arrangements we have in mind.

d. Approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation, including effectiveness of our approach to (data-informed) self-evaluation.

Our *Strategic Plan* indicates our commitment: “To ensure that the delivery and development of the education provided by the University is guided by reliable and up-to-date information, including feedback from students, which is collected and used systematically and clearly to secure all-round enhancement” (p.7)

These statements recognised that our University at that point lacked reliable data, including in relation to student numbers (notwithstanding that number of students was the main KPI for the preceding plan⁶⁷). We did at that time have reliable applications and admissions data, and also some data from student surveys, but the response rate to the 2019 survey was low – just 26%. The approach to student evaluation of courses, as indicated already, varied widely between – and even within – faculties, and there was no systematic approach to ensuring that such data, or other data (for instance, Moodle engagement data), was collected or used to inform decision-making and evaluation. Nor was there any systematic approach to the collection and use of research data.

This situation presented challenges, both in assessing progress against the preceding plan, and also in formulating appropriate priorities and targets for the revised *Plan*. To a large extent, these priorities and targets represented ‘best guesses’ reached in consultation with staff, and they included the following:

- To have at least two thirds of students on track to successfully complete their programme of study on schedule, 85% indicating satisfaction in a regular survey, and 70% progressing into graduate destinations within 12 months of graduation.
- To have 60% of our academic staff named as authors on peer-reviewed research publications in any two-year period, and for all relevant staff to be on an appropriate research trajectory as evidenced by annual review discussions.

We also made it a priority:

- To ensure we have appropriate information on our students, their progression, and their destinations, and that we consistently secure and respond to student feedback.”

Approach: *Subsequently, to a large extent we have been focused on working towards having reliable data of the kind other universities routinely collect, and on progressively making use of it for the purposes of evaluation and decision-making.* This includes for the purposes of the informing the

⁶⁷ This was, as indicated previously, because of apparent uncertainty about the basis on which non-engaging students could be withdrawn from their programmes.

Board as to progress towards implementing the *Plan* and deciding next steps – including thinking towards a new plan, to be formulated in the wake of the current review process. The main initiatives have been as indicated below.

- *Formation of a short-life Data Group:* In the autumn of 2020, a short-life working group was formed to identify how to address the main challenges in terms of generating the data we required to report on progress against the commitments and priorities of our *Plan*, including the data requirements of our developing QAE system
- *Student numbers, retention, and progression:* Próvbókin is our central system for registering admissions, courses, exams, awards, etc. It is an old system (based on an SQL database). The user interface is cumbersome and makes it difficult to reliably produce relevant reports, statistics, etc. With the strengthening of Student Affairs, we have been able – albeit manually – to produce accurate reports on student numbers (based on regular action to remove inactive students), and on retention and progression. Data has been presented each year to the Board, to staff (at Faculty level), and to students, and follow-up actions have been identified – particularly at Faculty level. In the 2022-2023 session, our student counsellors will take steps to contact all students who discontinue their studies, and to record data on reasons for discontinuation.
- *Student survey:* Since 2013 there have been 4 student surveys (2013, 2017, 2019 and 2021). However, there have been challenges with the response rate, as indicated above. In part, this seems to have reflected some scepticism amongst students about the results being used for enhancement purposes. In 2021 we were able, through energetic promotion of the survey and excellent collaboration with the Student Council, to double the response rate compared to the 2019 survey – from 28% to 56%. Following each survey, the results have been presented to the Board, to staff and to students and in the two most recent surveys at least we are able to say that follow-up actions have been identified and, to varying degrees, implemented- particularly in the case of the 2021 survey. We now intend to conduct a survey every other year – hopefully with further improvements in the response rate (and a PhD student survey is planned for this summer).
- *Staff survey:* After a hiatus of many years, we conducted a staff survey towards the end of 2021, and the data is, of course, highly relevant to the operation of the University as a whole, including the ongoing development and enhancement of learning and teaching. Again, the data has been presented across the University, and follow-up actions have been identified at various levels. A significant outcome has been the setting up of a working group in the Faculty of NST, supported by an external consultant (who previously supported the Faculty of Education successfully), to focus on issues crystallised by the Survey – though other faculties have also spent dedicated time taking ownership of, and working with, the results.
- *Course evaluations:* The first University-wide 'harmonised' course evaluation was conducted in the Spring of 2021 – albeit the first implementation was uneven. There was a much-improved implementation in the Fall of 2021, and a third implementation in the Spring of 2022. Results has been disseminated to the faculties where staff are expected to take ownership, and make use of, it in pursuit of enhancement. In the future, we will look to ensure that this data is used systematically as part of the annual review conversation – MCPDC – process.
- *Graduate destinations:* In 2020 we conducted a destinations survey – the first of its kind at UFI – of 2019 graduates, and the survey has been repeated, with some improvements to implementation, in 2021 and 2022 (for 2020 and 2021 graduates respectively). The data has been very strong and has been used extensively in marketing and promotion for recruitment and other purposes.
- *Research Information Management System:* When developing our current *Plan*, our data on research activity was patchy and incomplete and we had no professional research information management system (RIMS). At the end of 2020, we began the process of adopting the PURE RIMS, provided by Elsevier, and did this as part of a collaborative project with the Faroese

Research Council and the National Library. This is in the process of creating a single platform for all publicly funded research institutions in the Faroes. The collaboration is described in further detail in Case Study 5. We are making good progress in securing engagement of research staff with the system and will be working going forward to make use of the system to generate the research information we need.

A next step is for our new, fixed-term (until the end of 2023) Pro Rector for Education, who is also a professor of IT, to take the lead – as part of an agreed set of tasks for their current appointment – in “strengthening our collection and use of data relevant to the monitoring, reporting and progression of our main activities as a University, beginning with education quality data and extending to other areas (such as research quality data, resource/HR reporting and financial reporting).” Specifically, this will entail, “i. identifying key quality data within education and describing processes for collecting and utilising such data; ii. developing a first raw prototype for a data warehouse, either in collaboration with Skúlanet⁶⁸ or as a separate system for the University”.⁶⁹

Regarding the **effectiveness of our approach to self-evaluation and decision-making based on data**, the whole – or at least the great majority – of the University community believes that we have taken significant steps forward in recent years. A vital part of this has involved recognising that we did not have, and badly needed to have, the kinds of data that other institutions routinely collect in order to be serious about self-evaluation and decision-making. This has been a vital, early part of the self-evaluation process which has led to decisions and to focused actions which have brought about very real changes.

However, as has been indicated already, there is more that we need to do, in terms of strengthening both our collection and use of relevant data as part of the transparent culture of continuous self-evaluation, reflection, and enhancement that we are in the process of building. What we can say at this stage is that the most fundamentally important data is being generated and shared with the relevant people, both collectively and individually, and that we are all then finding ourselves challenged to reflect, evaluate and then to contribute to the enhancement process.

At times this can seem somewhat daunting, because as this document has shown there is much yet to be done, but the University leadership is focused on finding a good balance between, as staff indicated at our review consultation event in the Nordic House last November, “doing enough and doing too much at the same time”.

We very much hope that this review process will produce for us a benchmark against which we will be better able to answer this question in future years, because in some ways it is too early to say how effective our still fairly recently elaborated approach is proving. But we believe we are on a significantly clearer and better path than was the case until fairly recently.

⁶⁸ The Faroese government has commissioned the development of a common IT system (called Skúlanet/LFS) for the entire educational sector in the Faroe Islands (from primary school to university level). The system will replace the current system over time and will be developed and deployed in stages, with the first portion expected to be ready in 2023 and the final system expected to be ready in 2025. This new system will be centred around easy and reliable access to data, reports, statistics, and dashboards at all levels.

⁶⁹ Citing from the main agreed tasks for the fixed-term appointment.

Section 5: Collaborative Provision

a. Key features of the institution's strategic approach to collaborative provision (to include collaborative activity, online and distance learning, where delivered with others, and work-based learning).

b. Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience.

The collaborative teaching at UFI has been limited to the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology.

In 2010, in conjunction with the new bachelor's programme in Software Engineering, a collaboration was introduced whereby some 30%, or seven courses, for the programme were delivered by Mittuniversitetet, from Sweden. However, progressively these courses have been taken back to the Faculty – partly because of increasing local capacity here, and partly because of feedback from students reporting challenges in following the remote delivery of the courses which were mainly based on self-study and delivery of exercises. Students also reported issues with the Swedish language notes and exercises in some of the courses, although with time Mittuniversitetet translated most of that material to English and the textbooks were also in English. When Mittuniversitetet decided to change the programming language in their courses from C++ to Python and Java, we decided to make a similar revision of our program that we launched in 2020 with local teachers. The collaboration has now reduced to only ONE course being taught by the Swedish partner, and the aim, given the large increase in staffing which is taking place in the IT area, is to move towards phasing out that course as well.

Another online collaboration has been with the Danish Technical University (DTU, Copenhagen). In the engineering programme and the mathematics minor programme, Mathematics 1 & 2 as well as Statistics were all taught remotely by DTU. The teaching language was Danish but that has not been an issue for the Faroese students. Even though the teaching was being handled by DTU, the students had local support as well. By rearranging teaching duties, the teaching of Mathematics 2 and Statistics have more recently been handled by faculty staff.

In both these cases the arrangements were made at Faculty level, and the management was also handled locally. There was no strategic approach as such, but rather an *ad hoc* approach to finding solutions to programme delivery through working with overseas partners in situations where we had limited staffing and insufficient access to external teachers locally. These solutions were also not burdensome in terms of costs – because the collaborations were within the Nordic region, and this meant that the partner institutions were able to be paid by their own governments for teaching our students.

Moreover, these institutions are also larger than our own, and more developed in terms of QAE systems and processes. However, in both cases we have taken the teaching of the relevant courses back into our own hands because student feedback was such as to indicate that doing so would be to enhance the student learning experience.

Thank you for reading this far! 😊

Appendix 1 to the main Reflective Analysis Document: Developing our University's Collective Voice in the Context of the 2021-2022 External Review⁷⁰

Our University: An institution in development

The University of the Faroe Islands – our University – is a university in development. In this respect, it is no different from any other university – regardless of age, location, or other key and specific characteristics. But, of course, the actual process of development of any university – ours included – is in all of its main aspects fundamentally shaped by all of its key and specific characteristics.

Our University is young university. It has grown and developed gradually, compared to, say, Danish institutions of a comparable age. It is unusual amongst universities in being the only University serving the needs and aspirations of an entire – albeit a small – society. This has brought with it various developmental challenges and a lot of special responsibilities, to which we work very hard every day to live up. Our current stage of development reflects these characteristics – and others – in various ways.

As we are developing, we do so within a specific framework of law, regulation and strategic planning – which in sum reflects various societal, governmental, institutional and sub-institutional perspectives and voices, all of which have shaped the framework for development. This framework is, to varying degrees, given and established on the one hand, and negotiable and changeable, on the other.

Institutional Voice

It is important to recognise that any developing institution, while it seeks to speak with a single voice *as an institution*, is always in the process of constructing that voice out of a process of dialogue of many voices. This is, perhaps, particularly true of a university – and is certainly true of our University.

The success of any university depends on the success of the collaborative process through which its single voice is constructed. The voice needs to be constructed in dialogue between different kinds and levels of staff, and also in continuous dialogue with students and external stakeholders. This collaborative process must find agreement and consensus wherever reasonably possible. It must also recognise and leave space for disagreements and differences of emphasis within the given framework for development, where those are reasonable and legitimate. And it must seek to incorporate even those voices which question, in appropriate ways, the prevailing framework itself.

This process of dialogue and voice has some of the key characteristics of democracy, but it is not – and never can be – a 'perfect democracy'. Much of the framework for development is externally given, and a University is also a place of employment, and so on. There are limits and boundaries. But the more we understand all this, and the more constructively we all engage with the process; the more democratic, inclusive and dialogical the process of construction of the voice of our University can be – then the more successful and harmonious (or at least less conflictual) our institution is likely to be.

Review and Reflection

In the months ahead, our University is to be reviewed by an external team charged with helping us to evaluate our development and making positive recommendations to support our future progress – within the developmental framework currently in place. In the weeks ahead, our University must prepare a self-reflective analysis which will inform the review in very important ways.

⁷⁰ The conceptual framework for this paper is drawn from the thinking of the circle of philosophers and literary theorists associated with Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) – the so-called 'Bakhtin Circle'.

If the review process is to succeed, then it is vital that the reflective analysis we provide should speak on behalf of the whole University community. That means that it should speak with a voice which reflects, and as far as is reasonably possible, includes and incorporates, the many voices across our University.

Of course, our current *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* already does that. It was developed through an extensive process of dialogue between: government and Board; Board and leaders; leaders and led; staff and students, and internal and external stakeholders. The process was both bottom-up and top-down, focused inwardly and outwardly, acknowledging the past, assimilating the present and focusing on the future. It was governed by both down-to-earth pragmatic considerations for the here-and-now, and also high-minded principles and ideals inherited from the past and projected into the future.

Now we must collaboratively and reflectively analyse how well we are doing as we progress in the implementation of our *Plan*. That reflection must also be a process of dialogue and voice. What follows is a framework which has been collectively agreed by the University leadership to help to structure that process in a way which can support a good outcome.

Developing Our Voice through Dialogue

The process must recognise that our University is at a critical stage in its development, in a decade in which the entire world is at a critical stage in its development. At this time, our society, and our entire world, needs universities, knowledge, science, ideas, innovation, connectedness and collaboration – all to solve big problems – and it needs them like no time before in the history of humanity. Our world needs universities full of people who understand this and embrace the responsibilities and challenges that go with it, people who will work collaboratively to orient themselves to address these challenges.

This is a very powerful argument for coming together with common purpose. But for the purpose to be truly common, it must be constructed through dialogue and voice. A simple, but effective way to approach this process of dialogue and voice would be to think of our our University as developing in a ‘space of transitions’ across a field of conceptual oppositions or dualities, including:

- The ‘traditional’ university v’ the ‘modern’ university
- The ‘informal/ad-hoc’ university v’s the ‘formal/professional’ university
- The ‘federal’ university v’s the ‘unitary’ university
- The ‘Faroese’ university v’s the ‘universal’ university
- The ‘local/domestic’ university v’s the ‘international’ university
- The ‘quantitatively focused’ university v’s the ‘qualitatively focused’ university
- The ‘practical’ university v’s the ‘theoretical’ university
- The ‘ivory tower’ university v’s the ‘societally-engaged’ university

In the weeks ahead, we will seek to use these conceptual oppositions to structure the process of dialogue and voice which will in turn inform the writing of our reflective analysis document – a document which should speak with a recognisably singular, though by no means uni-accentual, voice on behalf of all of the groups who together constitute the University of (and for) the Faroe Islands. Of course, the purpose is not to ‘choose between opposing alternatives’ – it is seldom a matter of either/or and often is a matter of ‘not only, but also’ – but to use the oppositions to help us to structure our reflections and discussions.

Let’s talk together more – let’s grow together more!

**University of the Faroe Islands,
Reflective Analysis, 2022:
Documents to inform the work of the
International Team conducting the External
Review of our University**

Supplements to the Main Reflective Analysis

**Case Study 1
The Faculty of Education**

AUGUST 2022



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A Preface – from the Faculty Leadership Team, in Collaboration with the Rector

The Faculty of Education of the University of the Faroe Islands is, in its origins, the oldest institution of higher education in the Faroe Islands – dating from 1870. Our Faculty was for the great majority of the next 152 years an independent institution, the Faroese School of Teacher Education – before in 2008 it was merged into the University. By that time, the focus of the school had expanded to also include the training of pedagogues.

As this document will in places make clear, there were compelling reasons for the previous School to become part of the University – not least of which was the perception that teachers and pedagogues would need to be educated to a higher level if the future educational needs of the Faroe Islands were to be met. There was also a perception that the School was in other ways problematic, in its organisation and operation and in terms of the professional collaboration amongst those working there.

While there will always be debate about the accuracy of these perceptions, there is much less debate about the fact that the merger itself was not the easiest or least problematic of mergers, and a decade later there were voices in the Faroe Islands – both outside and inside the University, and some of them inside the Department/Faculty of Education itself – who believed and argued that the whole thing had been a mistake.

For these voices, the pedagogue and – especially – teacher educations were becoming “too academic” or “too theoretical”, not tightly enough connected to the realities of the profession. Some argued that the resource needs of the Department/Faculty were being neglected – by government or by the University – and that the need to focus on research as well as on teaching was diverting resources away from what really mattered. Some argued for a de-merger.

These voices were often projected loudly and in public, and the teacher education was typically the focal point of the criticism.

This is the context in which our Faculty became the focus of political, as well as public, attention and in 2019, the newly elected coalition government included in its agreement that our Faculty of Education would be evaluated. Ultimately, it was decided that the way it should be evaluated is via a special case study, as part of the wider external review of the University which is now taking place. Our Faculty has collaborated, under the leadership of our Faculty Leadership Team and with the support of the University Leadership and other colleagues in the administration, to produce this document for that purpose.

In the almost three years since the Coalition Agreement was struck, we have been through a period of much change and development. Firstly, a new Rector was instructed by the Board to focus on the issues arising in our Faculty and to challenge and support us to deal with them in a new way. Then a particular crisis came in October of 2019, when students raised public criticisms which were widely reported.

That led to meetings between the Faculty and the University Leadership which ultimately made it clear that the Faculty would require some special support over an extended period to establish some new basis for its future development. That process began early in 2020 and, though it was interrupted by covid, it continued later in the year and, together with wider University initiatives (including the creation of the Quality Unit and Faculty Leadership Teams), helped to establish a new basis for the Faculty to move forward.

Another important development has been that, at the suggestion of the University Leadership, the updated Executive Orders in 2021 included the requirement for the creation of a Co-operation Council for the three main professional programmes across the University – the teaching, pedagogue, and nursing programmes. These Councils are intended to promote co-operation and mutual understanding and support around the development of our professional programmes, in place of conflict and public controversy.

It is, however, important to point out that the Faculty itself has recognised and taken ownership of its challenges in a new kind of way. Leadership has been strengthened. Communication has been improved. Support for staff in their career aspirations and in their professional development has been placed on a new footing. Professional collaboration has been established as a clear expectation for everyone. Support at University level – for IT, in HR, in Student Affairs, in communication, and so on – has been strengthened and is increasingly being professionalised. Vitally, two new units – our Quality Unit and our Research and Enterprise Unit, each overseen by a Pro Rector – provide support on an entirely new level for the main functions of the Faculty. And all of this has been and will continue to transform the operation of the Faculty and its capacity to deliver against expectations and to meet the educational needs of the Faroe Islands.

Progress is tangible and we are committed to maintaining it and making it irreversible. But there is a long way for us to travel on this road.

As we look ahead, we have very much welcomed the opportunity to reflectively analyse our situation – our history, our present and our plans and hopes for the future – and to put it all down on paper for the attention of the External Review Team. We have approached the whole exercise in a spirit of openness and transparency. We have many challenges, but we also feel that we have a lot to be happy with, and indeed proud about, in terms of the work that we have been doing. Our staff are proud of our programmes, which we believe deliver good quality to our students and to the Faroese education system. We are convinced that they are of significantly better quality than the pre-merger programmes – and, of course, we know they can be improved and enhanced in various ways, and we are committed to ensuring that happens.

We understand the intention of the review is to ‘review to develop’, and to support us and our work as we progress with our part of the implementation of the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* – and we very much welcome that and look forward to the feedback and recommendations which will, we have no doubt, help us to do that.

The Faculty of Education Leadership Team, in collaboration with the Rector, Tórshavn, 12th August 2022

Our Vision for our Faculty

From our work on this reflective analysis, we have developed some simple shared vision of where we want to go as a Faculty, and also of how we aim to get there.

The main aspiration underlying our vision is that we develop further as a really well functioning academic and professional community, which develops a stronger research profile, both to underpin the delivery of our teaching and to address the education research needs of the Faroe Islands, while retaining and improving on our strong profile in terms of student retention and progression.

Moreover, we want to achieve all of this as part of a wider development of a culture of quality assurance and continuous enhancement of the student experience in our Faculty, closely connected to the development of quality assurance and enhancement across the wider University of which we are an integrated and vital part.

We see this as a very realistic and realisable vision, and it is one which we commit to realising in practice.

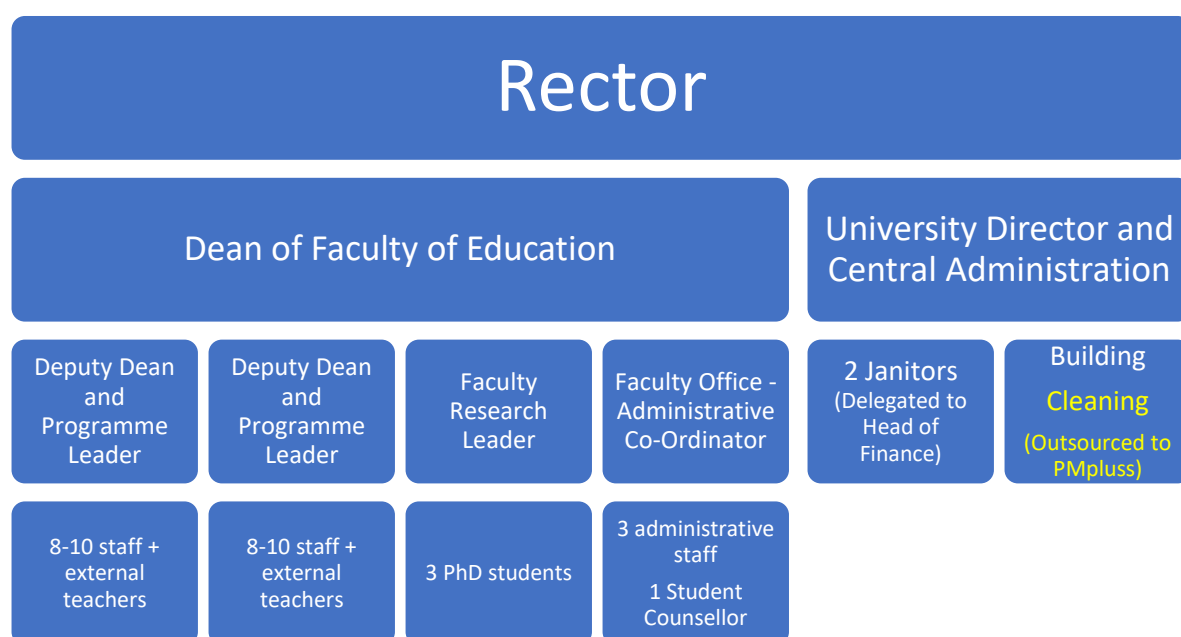
Section 1: Contextual information about the institution, Student population and this Review

The Organisation of our Faculty

In 2008, when the then The Faroese School of Teacher Training was merged into the University, the school had a Rector, together with two heads of teaching, each with 15-20% of their time allocated to the task. The heads of teaching were *not* affiliated to a specific programme. This arrangement continued until 2012, when the University was reorganised with two main faculties each with a Dean, and with programme leaders in charge of the individual programmes. Within our Faculty, were also the departments of Faroese Language and Literature and History and Social Sciences.

At our Faculty, two programme leaders were appointed, one for each of the main programmes (teaching and pedagogy). However, *all* staff referred directly to the Dean, who in our case had the responsibility for two other departments. This flat structure continued, although to a lesser extent, when in 2016 each of the five departments were re-established as separate faculties with their own deans. At our Faculty, that meant that around 30 people referred to the Dean.

In 2020, as is explained in the main RA document, this was changed so that the programme leaders now also became deputy deans, with line management responsibilities, and joined a Faculty Leadership Team (FLT). Subsequently, in line with other faculties, a Faculty Research Leader was appointed and joined this Team. These structural changes – resulting in the structure indicated in the diagram below (which does not show the other faculties) – have had a very significant impact on the development and progress of the department.



This structure made it possible to allocate the management of staff and PhD students among the members of the FLT which resulted in each leader having no more than 10 staff directly to manage. With this structure, we have much improved coherence between the demands and expectations, and staff awareness of their specific responsibilities. The communication has been improved and this has had a reassuring effect, improving stability. An important factor in this has been the adoption of a system of annual review conversations for staff, focused on contribution, collaboration and professional development (discussed in other documents produced for the review process).

Programme descriptions, programme profiles and course descriptions

Programme descriptions

Originally, the teacher and pedagogue programmes were described in an Executive Order from 2009, but in light of the merger, and the requirements of being part of the University, they were also then to be described in a programme description. This resulted in a certain discrepancy between the descriptions in the Executive Order and the programme descriptions. This became especially clear when the programmes were revised in 2016. There was a long wait for the Executive Order to be updated in order to reflect – and formally to authorize – the necessary changes. This only happened (despite repeated attempts to support the process from within our University) in 2021. So even though the programmes had changed, the ‘valid’ programme description was still from 2015.

This situation disturbed some students, and it became a major topic of discussion in autumn 2019. To meet this uncertainty among the students, a new programme description was made, which, however, did not fully comply with the description in the Executive Order. This was done in consultation with the Ministry, where we demonstrated that the content and the intention of the programme was the same as before.

Since the new Executive Order came into force, the Quality Unit has provided guidelines for how to write programme descriptions. All the main programme descriptions now are written according to the new standard, and the current situation (June 2022) is that they have been through the Quality Unit for approval, have received comments, and are ready for the Study Board. When they have been approved in the Study Board, they will be sent for translation (hopefully to be ready prior to September).

Profiles

In the past there has been more focus on the programme profiles than on the programme descriptions. There has been a focus on involving all staff in creating these profiles. Back in 2014, one thematic week was arranged, where staff only worked on writing profiles. This was done in groups. These were sent to the Ministry. After the change of the programmes in 2016, the profiles were not revised immediately, not before 2020, when the procedure from 2014 with a work week was used as part of a thematic week on quality assurance. The profiles were then sent to the Quality Unit before they were sent to the Ministry. The profiles are available in English.

Course descriptions

All courses have had course descriptions since 2008. The template has most of the time been in accordance with the regulations made by the Bologna Group. For a period, the Bologna Group was not active, and this meant that the course descriptions did not all adhere to the desired form. Since the Quality Unit was established, all course descriptions have been revised and the Bologna Group/Quality Forum for Education strengthened, with participation of new members from the Faculty.

In the past, it has happened that course descriptions have been changed just before an exam, for example that the form of the exam has been changed. This is no longer accepted.

One issue for our Faculty is that our course descriptions are changed rather frequently. The reasons are several, for example the structure of the course, such as length due to adjustments in the programme. Another reason is that there has been a tradition that new teachers are authorized to structure their courses according to how they think they can utilize their competencies best. It is under serious reconsideration whether this is the best for the student. Should the course

descriptions be more linked to the profession, so that we get a change from teacher-led course descriptions to put the professional destination of the student more in focus?

The Narratives

There are many ongoing stories about our Faculty, some of which we do not recognise. Here we present our perspectives.

The Narrative on the Faculty, the Merger, and the Conflicts of the Past

Firstly, it is necessary to explain how the programmes delivered by the Faculty of Education became University programmes. The teacher programme is the oldest higher education programme in the Faroe Islands, dating from 1870. The pedagogue programme is rather newer – dating from 1986. Until 2008, both were delivered by a School of Teacher Training, which was not part of our University.

The decision to make the teacher programme a University programme is connected to the shock that the Faroese Educational system got from the PISA pre-assessment in 2005, when the results – which were concerningly poor – became available in Spring 2006. In the Prime Minister’s speech the same year, it was announced, that:

- A parliamentary discussion on the PISA trial test would be scheduled;
- A legislative proposal for the teacher programme would be presented to the Parliament;
- Both the teacher and the pedagogue programmes should in future be on bachelor level and follow the educational system seen in the EU and in neighbouring countries
- .

All this was to seek to ensure that future teachers and pedagogues would be “better prepared to tackle increasingly higher challenges” in the future (Løgmaður, 2006, s. 33).

The plan was duly implemented, and in 2008 the first uptakes of students were received for the new programmes at BEd level for both pedagogue and teaching students. At the same time, the School of Teacher Training was merged into the University of the Faroe Islands (together with the School of Nursing). It is worth noting that the School of Teacher Training had a larger number of students than the old University at that time, around 200 compared with around 150 at the three, pre-merger departments of the University.

The School of Teacher Training had a long tradition for how the administrative flow should be for ensuring that all students were ‘processed’ correctly. This was possible although the number of office staff was the same number as in the other departments of the University. During the merger it turned out that the University would retain its systems, and this gave rise to some challenges, because although the University system had worked with few students, it was not so clear that it also worked for the larger number of students at our Faculty. This is mentioned as an example of the ways in which our staff at that time did not always feel valued as equal partners compared with the other departments. On the whole this is not a problem any longer, because administratively the systems now are merged in a way that all feel recognised.

The intention with the new teacher and pedagogue educations was reflected in a recommendation from an expert panel, that came with suggestions (45) to improve the public compulsory schooling. They emphasized the importance of the teacher and argued that only with more highly skilled teachers would the teaching be improved. The highly skilled teacher has a robust pedagogical knowledge as well as subject knowledge. Therefore, a suggestion was to follow a report submitted to the government in August 2006, that recommended research-based, bachelor’s programmes for teachers and pedagogues, in line with our neighbouring countries. They also pointed out that it

would be necessary to establish further and continuing education at the Faculty (Lakjuni, 2006, p. 12).

The new programmes started in August 2008. So, what happened to the programmes, and what happened in terms of research? What are the perceptions of the various stakeholders, and what are the perceptions of those responsible for the programmes and research?

The “problematic” faculty and the work to improve the working environment

There is a narrative that we are a problematic faculty, with disagreements between staff members, and that these disagreements go beyond the level of professionalism but move into private disputes. Although we are aware that these issues have a long track back in history, for the current staff members, the most relevant episodes are those mentioned below, with a culmination in 2009/10, but never really solved before the new University Leadership decided to do a thorough intervention in 2019/20, with an external consultant.

This intervention involved several working days with all the staff members. The rector, the university manager and the HR-coordinator all participated actively, stressing the importance of achieving a professional working environment.

The conflict: The teacher programme perspective

There are many potential lines of conflicts/confrontations in every teacher education – including the Faroese teacher education programme. Teacher educators have different educational backgrounds (natural sciences, social sciences, linguistics, creative subjects, pedagogical subjects), and they may think that precisely their subject area should receive more attention in the overall teacher training. At our Faculty, the issues were linked to various stated or imaginary groupings in the old teachers' college. Some employees argue that ‘the others’ have had privileges that ‘they themselves’ did not have. These conflicts lines (and groupings) were, for example, visible in the conflict:

Group I	Group II
Those who have a basic education as a compulsory schoolteacher or as a pedagogue	Those who have more than a basic education as a compulsory schoolteacher or as a pedagogue
Those who have a research degree (PhD) and who are allocated research time	Those who do not have a research degree and who don't get any research time
Those who teach the pedagogical subjects (psychology, pedagogy, didactics...)	Those who teach the classic university subjects (Faroese, English, mathematics...)
Those who teach the classic university subjects (Faroese, English, mathematics...)	Those who teach creative subjects (needlework, knitting, visual arts...)
Those who think it was a good idea that the teacher and pedagogue training educations were merged with the Faroese University	Those who think that the old teacher and pedagogue training educations were far better
Those who think that the internship should be a central and essential part of teacher education and should be given more space	Those who do not think that the internship should play a significant role in the overall education
Those who teach in the teacher training programme	Those who teach in the pedagogue training programme
Those who have offices close to each other (in the same building/department)	Those who have offices elsewhere
Those who worked closely with the Leadership team	Those who may have felt overlooked

In periods over the past 15 years, the 'power struggle' and 'the different positionings in various groups' have been quite visible and also disruptive to the climate in the department – and the disagreements have gone perhaps from being based on 'professional disagreements' to being a 'personal dispute', and there have been views about 'inclusion and exclusion'.

The conflicts first culminated in 2009/10, when 4-5 teachers either left the workplace voluntarily or left otherwise. The second culmination was in 2019/20, when the university management acted as mediators, and it was decided (1) that an organizational psychologist should help the leadership team to create a better (collaborative) climate between colleges, and (2) that twelve specific ground rules should be formulated for the Faculty

The climate has improved significantly as a result of this intervention. The reason is (1) that some of those who were most dissatisfied chose to find a new workplace, and (2) that the Leadership team – in close collaboration with the University leadership – has taken initiatives to create better collaboration. We can mention:

- The establishment of a Faculty Leadership Team with a combined programme leader and deputy dean role and with line management responsibilities for deputy deans relative to the programmes they lead. This has solved many of the issues.
- The annual review conversations for staff (MCPDC/Meningarsamrøðan), where each staff member has an ongoing conversation with their manager twice a year and put into words their contribution and their future plans.
- Meetings and working days at the Faculty, where major and salient issues have been debated.
- Research meetings in which all teachers can participate
- Mentoring schemes for all new teachers
- Initiatives aiming to get researchers and teachers to work together in teams.
-

The leadership team is sure that the semester scheme, which will be launched in 2022/23, will positively influence collaboration in the department. But we must be aware that potential lines of conflict tend to be present in a programme that contains as many professional aspects as the teacher education.

The conflict – The Pedagogue Education perspective

During the past 15 years, several conflicts have occurred between our teacher and pedagogue education staff. The conflict in 2009/10 included for a large part the Pedagogue Education, while the conflict in 2019/20 was more visible in Teacher Education. However, as some of these conflicts included teachers who taught on both the teacher and pedagogue education, this also impacted the pedagogy. For example, the personal disputes affected the communal areas, e.g., faculty meetings and the staff room.

The extent of conflict in the pedagogue education has been limited since the culmination of an extensive conflict 15 years ago, which, as mentioned above, resulted in 4-5 teachers leaving due to problems with collaboration. Since 2009/10, few conflicts have affected the working conditions, although the working environment and staff well-being has been affected.

The above-mentioned intervention introduced by the University Leadership was focused on teamwork, where the staff collaboratively discussed the disputes; this was done during several working days with all the staff members, where we had the opportunity to work with the issues of conflict, and this has resulted in a much-improved working climate. Indeed, in the most recent years, we have experienced an exceptional working environment with regard to collaboration. Staff from

the pedagogue programme (approx. ten staff members) have been working on developing the programme and preparing for a double uptake of pedagogues. It has been with a positive, motivating and energetic attitude. The teachers have prioritised the collaboration and emphasized the best outcome possible. We feel that there is a foundation for very good collaboration in the year to come.

The narrative on the teacher education: Historical background and development to the present

From 1870 to 2008, the Faroese teacher education was very similar to the Danish teacher education, and every time the Danish teacher education was changed or adjusted, the same changes tended to be introduced in the Faroe Islands a bit later (Holm, 1970; Nielsen, 1998). The Faroese School of Teacher Training had all the peculiarities typical of such institutions. The weekly schedule was very similar to a compulsory school and the students had an average of 28 teaching hours per week.

From 1968, the teacher education had its own practice school – and it was a requirement that a large part of the internship should be carried out in this practice school (Løgtingslóg um Læraraútbúgving, 1980). The internship filled a lot of the programme, and from 1991-2008 that amounted to 470 teaching hours in total for the 4 study years (Kunngerðin fyri Læraraútbúgving, 1991). However, the intended 470 hours prescribed in the 1991 Executive Order were not always actually delivered. In the years prior to the move to the bachelor education, the number was just above 300 (*Støðan hjá yrkisførleikagevandi útbúgvingunum á Fróðskaparsetri Føroya*, 2018).

A majority of the teachers on the teacher programme had a basic teacher education (not a bachelor's or master's qualification) – and until the 1990s several of them taught both at the teacher education and at the connected training school. Indeed, in the period 1962-2011, there were six rectors at the School of Teacher Training, and of these 5 had a basic teacher education. Many of the teachers taught in two subjects (mathematics/physics and chemistry, Faroese/English, Faroese/Music, Biology/Geography, Geography/Danish, English/Needlecraft, History/Pedagogy). None of the teachers had research duties – and there was little general perception that teachers conducting research might be useful.

The Executive Order on teacher education (Kunngerð um Læraraútbúgving, 1991) was pretty concrete. It specified in detail how the teacher education should be constructed, and how much each subject should account for. However, the content and teaching methods (syllabus) were not as fully documented.

In the 20th Century, the teacher education did not get much attention from the political system. The education was firmly established. Students were enrolled each year, and the 'drop out' rate in general was low. Those who qualified fulfilled their obligations as teachers and educators in the Faroese compulsory school – and in addition they were quite visible in Faroese life, for instance as writers, musicians, painters, church servants, coaches in sports, journalists, and as members of parliament and national government.

At the beginning of the 21st century, teacher and pedagogue students drew attention to irregularities in the School. They went to the newspapers to complain and demanded that the authorities should intervene and set higher demands for both educations. And together with the poor PISA results in 2005, these complaints led to a situation where a working group was given the task of revising the teacher and pedagogue educations in 2005/2006 (Egelund, 2005; Zachariassen et al., 2006). By this time, teacher education in our neighbouring countries was also receiving negative publicity; the decision to make the Faroese teacher education a university education was therefore not unique.

In the 20th century, an unwritten law was that a teacher education that was organised in a training college context was the best way to prepare students for teaching (Elstad, 2020). In the 21st century, the trend reversed in many countries. More and more people expressed the view that if teacher education were to be adequate and teacher work valued, then the only way to go was for teacher education to become a university education.

The Faroese teacher education has the same purpose today as it had when it was established 150 years ago, namely, to train teachers for the Faroese compulsory school (Fólkaskúalógin, 1997; Kunngerð um læraraútbúgving, 1991; Kunngerð um útbúgving av fólkaskúalærarum, 2021). However, the new bachelor's education that was implemented from 2008 was not a copy of the Danish teacher education. On the contrary, inspiration had been sought from Iceland and Norway. This also meant that the programme was in many aspects different from previous teacher educations.

- The use of language was different. In the new programme, teachers and students had to learn to talk about and relate to the Bologna process – using terms such as programme profile, course description, ECTS, module system, transparency, mobility, independent learning, study skills, and so on;
- From a quantitative perspective, the main differences were (1) that students should have 2-3 teaching days per week rather than 5, (2) that students should have 12-15 teaching hours per week rather than 28-30, (3) that students should be in internship for 180 hours in total rather than 470 hours;
- From a pedagogical perspective, teachers should get used to the fact that students may learn more, "when they study themselves" than when they "are taught in the teacher programme";
- From a logistical and content perspective, there were also many differences: Parallel teaching, where the students had many subjects simultaneously, was abandoned, and instead a radical module system, where the students had only one course/subject for a period was introduced. In the old teacher education, the courses almost always had the same titles as the schools subjects, and they were on the schedule for 1, 2 or 3 study years (Kunngerð um læraraútbúgving, 1991). In the new system, students were to have philosophy of science and method, language acquisition, creative learning, communication, humanities track, nature track, etc. (Kunngerð um lærara- og pedagogútbúgving, 2009). Some of these courses lasted only a few teaching weeks, with the complication that it could be quite short timespans between exams.

Teachers in teacher education and school people in general needed to get used to these changes. And not everyone thought that the new form would serve the Faroese school system better than the old one.

When the Faroese teacher education programme has been discussed over the past decade, the criticism has not focused on academic standards. Rather it has been argued that the programme is not sufficiently anchored in the Faroese school system. The critique has never been more visible and systematic than in October 2020, when the programme was having its 150th anniversary. The magazine of the Faroese teacher's union produced an issue focused on the programme, and representatives from the union, the student council and Faroese school leaders contributed their thoughts, including the following views:

- the programme had become too academic, or at least not sufficiently practice oriented;
- the degree was too narrow and did not reflect the school schedule newly graduated teachers need to work with;

- the practicum periods were too short;
- the students did not receive enough in-house teaching a week;
- there was not enough permanent staff on the faculty, and some school subjects were not represented;
- instructors with no experience in schools were employed at the faculty.
- staff did not conduct sufficient research in the Faroese school system.
- the teacher education programme had not been sufficiently financed since the merger with the university (Kjølbrot, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Olsen, 2018).

Despite the criticism, the teacher education has always had many applicants (77 on average since 2008, for 35 study places) and the high school average among the applicants has usually been high – sometimes the highest at UFI (Thomsen, 2020).

Situation today

The teacher education has been changed and/or adjusted several times since 2008. The teacher education described in the Executive Order on Teacher Education (Kunngerð um útbúgving av fólkaskúlalærarum, 2021) is very similar to the teacher education in neighbouring countries and is composed of 5 main elements (Námsskipan fyri læraraútbúgving, 2022)

- Pedagogical and didactic basic subjects (60 ECTS)
- Basic Faroese and Mathematics (20 + 20 = 40 ECTS)
- 3 electives (3 x 40 ECTS = 120 ECTS)
- Philosophy of science and methods & BEd. thesis (5 + 15 ECTS = 20 ECTS)
- Field experience is an integrated part of both basic subjects and electives
-

In the academic year 2022/23, teacher education will be organized as a semester system. Students will have two or three subject areas simultaneously through a semester, so that teachers have the opportunity to collaborate on teaching topics, theme weeks, internships, etc. Courses and electives will have fewer hours per week but will extend over a longer period of time. And all students will receive teaching 3 days a week for about 4-5 hours per day, instead of 2 days for 6 hours per day. This change is expected to strengthen both the study environment and the overall learning outcomes.

A challenge with teacher education today is that there are too few permanent teachers. Employing teachers for one year at a time to be responsible for an elective does not create the continuity that is necessary for teacher education to be as good as possible. However, this is done by necessity, and must be seen in the light of that we are obliged to provide opportunities for student teachers to obtain the skills to teach in all eighteen basic school subjects, and preferably also the other additional 8-10 subjects that pupils can choose from. Every year we only offer six electives, and these have to rotate from year to year, to give our students the opportunity to choose electives relevant to them. The optimal solution would be to have all school subjects covered, but that is not possible in a small institution as ours. On the other hand, using temporary teachers may impact on student satisfaction (see also Section 2 on student satisfaction).

The future

The future of teacher education at our University is, we believe, bright. Every year, there are many talented people in the country who apply for teacher training, and this is very important for the quality and status of the education.

In addition, we can demonstrate 7 things that have - or will have - a positive impact on the development of teacher education:

- According to §13 in the 2021 Executive Order for teacher education, "*the minister appoints a co-operation council for the education of compulsory schoolteachers. The purpose of the council is to promote co-operation between the parties responsible for the teaching profession in general*". The council is staffed with representatives from (1) Fólkaskúlaráðnum (Compulsory School Council), (2) Nám (National School Resource Center), (3) Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (UFI), (4) Føroya Lærarafelag (Teachers' Union), (5) Kommunufelagnum (Society of Municipalities) and (6) Ráð Teirra Lesandi (the Student Council) (Samstarvsráðið fyri læraraútbúgving, 2022). It is very important that people who are responsible for the school system have such a co-operative forum. The Council has got a good start, and in the coming period, all the members will be visiting our Faculty, where the programme leader will be explaining how teacher education is organized and structured. The purpose of the presentation is to puncture some of the prejudices that people may have about the education.
- In the academic year 2021/2022, we made an agreement with Nám (National School Resource Center) which gives all teachers and students at our Faculty access to all digital teaching material that Nám either produces or has on hand. This agreement will make teacher education more professionally oriented because it will be easier for teachers and students to draw new digital material into the daily teaching. It will also, (1) strengthen the practice because the students have the digital material on hand as they prepare for the internship, and (2) reduce the 'practice shock', because students will get better opportunities to read closely and assess varied teaching material during the study period.
- In the academic year 2021/21, a teacher in the teacher education programme was given the task of coordinating all internships. The tasks, which are being carried out in close collaboration with the relevant Deputy Dean/Programme Leader, are:
 - to put together an easy-to-understand internship handbook;
 - to have information meetings with school leaders;
 - to contact internship schools well in advance;
 - to find good internship supervisors all over the country;
 - to develop a system where evaluations of the practice are collected and analysed.
 This work was very successful, and the Faculty leadership has agreed that we should appoint an internship coordinator who can both organize the internship and research it.
- Recently, our Faculty has made a collaboration agreement with the teacher education UCL, Odense (DK), about internship opportunities for teacher students (Harryson, 2021b). The agreement gives Faroese students the opportunity to take the internship in Denmark and Danish students the opportunity to take the internship here. It also gives teachers the opportunity to visit each other and to have professional meetings of various kinds. Nordplus is financing the project, which, according to the plan, in the coming years will also include Iceland and Greenland (Hansen, 2022). A similar collaboration agreement was made with USN, Notodden (NO) a few years ago. This agreement is part of the SPIKA network and is also funded by Nordplus (Harryson, 2021a). Our Faculty and HVL, Bergen have also made an agreement to collaborate on both the internship and student exchange in 2022/2023. Such Nordic co-operation agreements will certainly strengthen the study offer and make the Faroese teacher education more attractive.
- In the academic year 2022/23, Faroese teachers – like teachers in neighbouring countries – will have the opportunity to take a continuing education course in internship guidance and mentoring. The purpose is to strengthen the collaboration between the teacher education and the schools, to improve the quality of the practice.
- It is generally agreed that the number of teachers who either have a PhD (or have started a PhD course) must increase in the teacher education over the next 5 years. It is important

that people do research in the Faroese compulsory school because we know too little about the school we are educating for and in which our students have to work.

Future Vision for the Teacher Education Programme

The main goal is to create a teacher education programme that is up-to-date and on the same level as the best teacher education programmes in the Nordic countries. At the same time as we strive to achieve this goal, we must remember that teacher training must be rooted in the Faroese public school and the challenges (and opportunities) that characterize a school system in a micro-community. The leadership team and the faculty are constantly working on this two-sided vision.

To reach this goal, we have to:

- **Strengthen the cooperation between teacher education and various stakeholders in the Faroese school system**, such as (1) the Ministry of Education, (2) the Teachers' Association, (3) NÁM (National School Resource Center), which publishes educational material for the Faroese primary and upper secondary school, and (4) the association for school inspectors. The various stakeholders have to speak the same language and strive for the same goals. For the past two years we have tried to establish a formal collaboration, and all stakeholders are interested in a wider collaboration
- **Strengthen the cooperation between the public school and our Faculty in regard to teaching placement (practicum)**. Trained teachers and student teachers have argued for a decade that fieldwork has a low priority in the current teacher education programme, and that this has a negative effect on the quality of the degree and the overall learning outcome. The leadership team has implemented several initiatives over the last two years, which aim to strengthen the teaching placement. However, we have to acknowledge that for financial reasons, students at our Faculty do not yet get as many practicum hours as students in other Nordic countries.
- **Strengthen research and research interest among teacher educators**. Our intention is that more and more instructors and researchers at our Faculty embark on research projects in the Faroese public school – possibly in collaboration with in-service teachers. This initiative would both strengthen the Faroese public school and the teacher training programme. The fact that the Faroese University established a Research and Enterprise Unit in 2020 and that our Faculty got its own Research Leader in 2021, will in the future make it easier to initiate various research projects in the public school – and to seek external funding for this work.
- **Strengthen cooperation between the instructors (and researchers) in teacher education** – especially between those in the field of general education and those in subject specific areas. The fact that the teacher education programme today has its own programme director and that the programme director is line manager for a number of the teaching staff, will allow us to progressively strengthen cooperation between the different instructors. And the fact that the teacher education programme will move from a modular to a semester structure from August 2022 will also have a favourable effect on collaboration between colleagues. In this regard, the Degree Profile is an important orientation and collaboration document. Furthermore, the new mentoring system for new teachers in the faculty will promote further collaboration between mentor and mentees.
- **Strive to lift teacher training in the Faroes to the MA level within a decade**. This is the trend in the other Nordic countries, and in a school system that is becoming more and more complex, it is necessary that Faroese teacher training keeps pace. If we are to achieve this vision for the future, it is necessary (1) that more of the teaching staff at our Faculty acquire research competence, and (2) that the cooperation between the Faculty of Education and the other faculties at our University becomes significantly more developed. Such cooperation would benefit the different faculties and the Faroese school system as a whole.

In this regard, the course in University Pedagogy, which has proven to be a central meeting place for colleagues across faculties, will continue to play an important role.

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The narrative on the pedagogue education: Historical background

In 1986 the pedagogue education was established at the School of Teacher Training, structured as a training programme of 3 years and 9 months (Seminarieuddannelse). The programme was fairly typical, with a large part of internship (10 months). The subjects were pedagogy, psychology, social science, natural history, Faroese, and creativity – involving several different creative subjects. At that time, the areas of practice were day care institutions, schools, children’s homes, children, and youth centres, protected workshops, 24-hour care centres, children’s libraries, and the social welfare office.

In the process of establishing the programme, the pedagogues’ union expressed their reservation that it was not highly influenced by pedagogues with experience within the field of day-care or special care. Instead, it was mainly teachers from the teacher education who influenced the programme and taught on it (Debess et al., 1985).

According to Hildur Patursson, a former member of the board of the pedagogues’ union and teacher on the pedagogue education, there was discussion about the demand or need for pedagogues in regard to how many students to admit. The result was a class with 24 students, and the admission was every second year (Patursson, 2021, interview).

In 2008, the School of Teacher Training was merged into the University and changed status from an institution to a department. The programme was changed to a 3-year Bachelor’s in Social Development and in order to get authorisation to work as a pedagogue an additional diploma of one year was needed. The largest change was that the teaching increased considerably, and the internship was decreased – from ten to six months (24 weeks). The programme was organised in the same manner as the teacher programme, with two basic years of foundation courses, first taken together with teacher students, and then two years with electives that the student could select. The Bachelor thesis was written at the end of the third study year. The fourth study year was one elective and a synopsis that focused on practice.

From 2008-2013, the new Department of Education retained a rector, but in 2012, the five departments at the University were merged into two Faculties, one for Science (Natural Science and Technology and Health Sciences), and one for Humanities (Faroese Language and Literature, History and Social Science, and Education). These new main Faculties were managed by deans. To run the individual programmes, programme leaders were appointed. Hence in 2013, for the first time, the pedagogue programme had a leader who focused only on this programme. Previously it had been managed by the same people that were responsible for the teacher programme, and it was obvious that the teacher discourse was having a great influence on the pedagogue programme. The whole first year was read together with the teachers, and the discourse was very much focused on teachers and schools. The course descriptions had a teacher’s perspective and lacked a specifically pedagogical theoretical foundation. This was the first main challenge for the programme leader, and the outcome was that co-teaching was abandoned, and new course descriptions were written by people with qualifications within the pedagogical field.

The first pedagogues with a bachelor’s degree graduated in 2012, and after two full rounds of the programme, it was evaluated in 2016. The conclusion was that the programme was good, well organised, and stable, and not requiring major changes. However, it was decided to shorten the two electives of 45 ECTS (which included 6 weeks of internship), so the number of electives could be increased to three electives of 30 ECTS with 2 weeks of practicum each. In addition, the size of some

of the basic courses was adjusted with the aim of giving space for a basic course in creative pedagogical activities, to meet the demand for prioritising creativity. The last part of the programme, before the thesis, became a long, individual, and independent internship. This way the internship could be used as empirical experience in the thesis. The diploma year was eliminated, and the pedagogue education became a 4-year Bachelor's in Social Development.

The situation today

On the pedagogue education programme there are currently (Spring 2022) 143 students. Normally there is a majority of females. In the years 2010-2021, there were on average 90% females and 10% men. This division is an ongoing challenge that we have been trying to address, especially in our promotion of the education – but with limited impact.

Every year since 2008, we have had an intake of 35 students on the pedagogue education, 20% from the Quota II system, which is 7 students, and 80% from the Quota I system, which is 28 students.⁷¹ We have enough applications, but despite this, the number has been fluctuating from year to year.

Study year	Quota I applications	Quota II applications:	Applications in all
2022	23	32	55
2021	25	43	68
2020	42	38	80
2019	35	29	64
2018	29	33	62
2017	21	19	40
2016	21	37	58

On average, over the 7 years since 2016, we have received 61 applications for the programme each year. The 'output' from the programme has been on average 27 graduates every year.

Currently, there is a substantial shortage of qualified pedagogues within the field – calculated by some as being 700 at this moment. The number is increasing annually due to the limited size of the programme, and we have been preparing for admitting a substantially increased intake. We were asked to submit financial requirements to the government in 2020 for 2021, and in 2021 for 2022, but so far funding has not been forthcoming. This presupposes that we will receive enough applications, and hence it will be necessary to make an extra effort in promotion and marketing.

Regarding preparation for delivery, we have had two groups of teachers from the programme making a proposal for a new structure that is designed for two classes. This was according to the request from government, which has asked for two specializations, one for day care pedagogues and one for special care pedagogues. The groups have finalised the proposal and we are ready for an extra class, if the financial resources should be forthcoming.

This year we are finalising some changes to the programme, by adjusting the structure of the first and second years of study, replacing the current module structure and having two-three subjects running at the same time. This will give the students the opportunity to work with the subject over a longer period of time, and the teachers will have fewer lessons in some weeks. This is a structure that will enable more cooperation in various ways. And we will be able to have the exams every quarter of the year, so we have four weeks with exams during the year.

In recent years we have adopted a new leadership structure in our Faculty, in line with a wider development across our University. We now have a leadership team supporting our Dean, with two

⁷¹ Quota 1 applicants are those with 'standard' qualifications, and Quota 2 applicants are those who lack these qualifications, but seek entry based on other criteria.

deputy deans, who also lead the main programmes, and a Faculty Research Leader – also, in our case, joined by our administration co-ordinator.

The biggest change is, that the programme leaders also are deputy deans and therefore have staff management, relieving the dean from some direct management responsibility, and making a better connection between staff and the PLs. This is without doubt a change that has created wider positive effects, regarding matters of dispute and having less questions regarding their work situation. This is also a change that demands an ongoing work process for the Faculty Leadership Team regarding progress and clear procedures for the work at our Faculty.

There is a need for more qualified teachers in permanent positions on the programme. We have teachers who are employed for a limited period a time, which can create discontinuity, unstable conditions and in some cases affect the students experience of the teaching.

Future vision for pedagogue education

The future vision for the pedagogue education is to:

- have the best possible pedagogue education;
- create the best circumstances for working together, cooperating across our fields of expertise;
- create a forum where we work together, sharing knowledge, cooperating, discussing subjects of relevance for us all and pulling together in order to create a collaborative community;
- have more research within the pedagogical area, in order to provide research-based teaching in all the courses. There is some research connected to the programme, but not enough.
- educate more students, in order to meet the demand for pedagogues- by taking in two classes instead of only one, hopefully from the summer of 2023.
- offer more continuing development courses for educated and trained pedagogues.
- Continue to cooperate with educational institutions in other countries about student mobility, teaching events and projects in different subjects within the pedagogical field in order to create development.
- Promote well-being amongst the staff/teachers as the foundation for cohesion, vigorous development, and growth – and overall job satisfaction

The narrative on research: The historical background

The still fairly recent history of the Faroese teacher and pedagogue educations as training school programmes has had its impact on the research activities at our Faculty. We have had to change from a training school identity, where the overwhelming purpose has been teaching, to becoming part of a University, where research is also of great importance. This change has been significant in relation to activities, but also in relation to the composition and profile of the group of employees, who were originally without developed research skills and research commitments.

In a cautious approach, over the years since the merger, several employees with research qualifications have been employed at the department, in addition to some existing staff members pursuing research qualifications. The first associate professor with a PhD was employed at the department in 2007 and the next in 2009. In 2013, five assistant professors were employed, two of whom did not have a PhD, but both pursued one as part of their work. In the year 2007/2008, the first PhD student joined. Since then, three employees have completed a PhD while employed (including the two mentioned above).

Despite an increasing group of employees with research qualifications, research activities at the department have been limited, especially in relation to publications, which have been few in

number. Most publications from employees of the department have been reports, and only a few publications have been peer-reviewed. Seven research employees who have been employed at our Faculty have left the department. The reasons are several, but it is possible that challenging research circumstances may have played a part.

The situation today

As of today, the situation can be described as 'research is in its infancy'. Eight of our 27 academic staff have research obligations: Two associate professors, three assistant professors with a PhD, one assistant professor who is working on a PhD, and two PhD students, soon to be three. In addition, there is a teaching lecturer with no research obligations, who, however, has a PhD and is active in research. Seven of these are associated with teaching in the teacher education, while three are associated with the pedagogue education, and they research especially in areas that are relevant to these educations.

The volume of publications, including in particular peer-reviewed publications, is growing slowly, and from a low base (see Appendix 2 with publications for 2020/21 and 2021/22). But still few of our own publications are used as teaching material in the main programmes. A review of the reading lists for the programmes in 2020/2021 shows that a total of 8 publications originating from our Faculty were used for reading, of which only two are peer-reviewed articles, with the others being an abstract from a PhD dissertation, and five reports (see Appendix 3, which shows in which courses these publications were read).

The last year has been some growing focus on research. A Faculty Research Leader was appointed in 2021 and is part of the Faculty leadership team. The aim is to support the increase of research activities. Concretely, this has resulted in research meetings being arranged approximately every 5 weeks for all employees, with research staff presenting ongoing research. Also, research meetings are organized, also every 5 weeks, only for research staff at the Faculty, where the purpose is to have a forum for researchers, to collaborate on research, to collaborate on applications for funding, to invite external researchers to give presentations, and the like.

As research has gained a greater role at our Faculty, some tensions have also arisen about the impact that research activities can have in relation to teaching. It seems that everyone at the Faculties agrees that research is important, but several employees have argued that it must not have the consequence that teaching is downgraded to fund research. On the other hand, it has to be emphasized that relevant research, especially in relation to the Faroese education system, can only improve teaching.

There are also views about concrete challenges that research staff highlight, and circumstances they are dissatisfied with. Some of these views are: (i) that the prerequisites are perceived as being different for researchers at the different Faculties at UFI, also among PhD students who have to teach more at our Faculty; (ii) that the teaching burden is seen to be greater at our Faculty than at other faculties; (iii) that the Faculty is thought by some to be underfunded, and therefore people who should do research, are asked to teach; (iv) when people teach, they do not have time to research, this is because there are so many students, and because the teacher is alone in the class – bearing in mind there is a lot of supervision during courses and many students who have to be examined; (v) that we have no research assistant employed, with the implication that the researcher must do all the work – from collecting material to proofreading.

The future vision

In short, we want to increase research activities. The intention is for us to be capable of participating in, and making our contribution to, international pedagogical/didactic research – including in particular that research staff at the Faculty will manage to increase the number of peer-reviewed

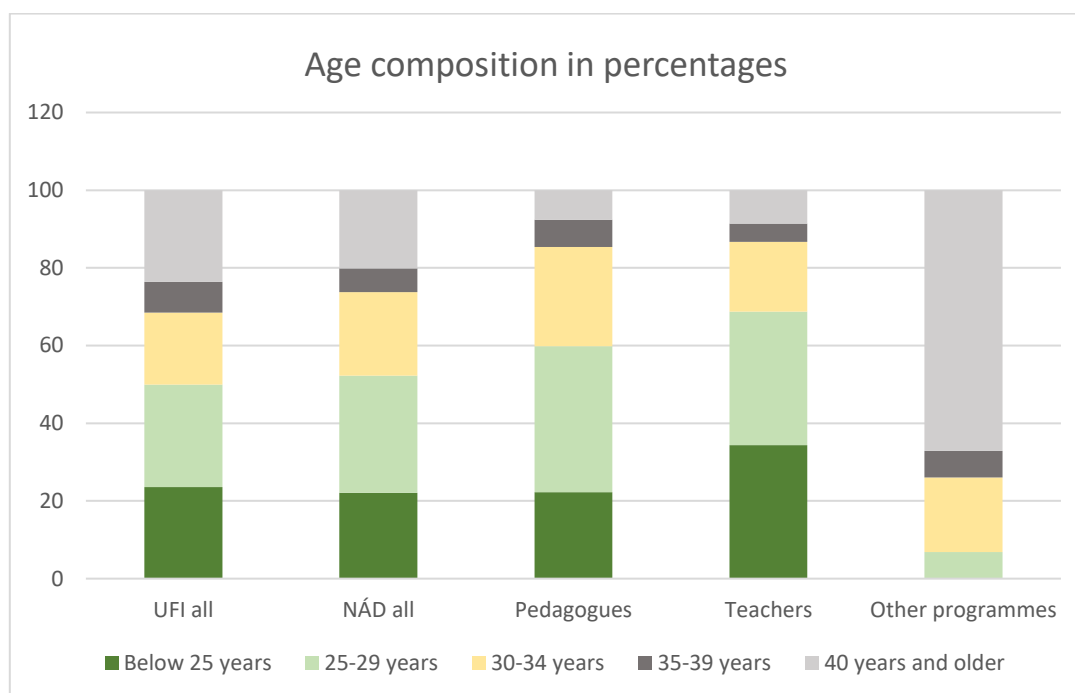
publications. One possibility is to try to provide improved conditions for researchers, so that they are capable of producing more peer-reviewed publications and/or that they receive benefits, e.g., in relation to teaching load, depending on how much they publish. It is also important that the research at the Faculty becomes an integral part of the teaching, so that the teaching can be based on Faroese research, which is rooted in an international context, but which takes into account Faroese circumstances. Finally, in order to strengthen the research qualifications at our Faculty, it is important to have more PhD projects. This requires a dedicated plan in relation to finding and/or developing qualified candidates and encouraging and supporting them to apply for funding for PhD projects – linked to the activity of the Faculty Research Leader and the University’s Research and Enterprise Unit.

In Appendix 6, we provide a more concrete perspective and related set of actions to support the strengthening of our research activity and the integration of research into teaching on our main programmes.

The student population

Teacher students youngest, students on continuing programmes oldest

On Oct 1, 2021, 358 students were registered to study at our Faculty. The age composition is quite similar to the University as a whole. This might be as expected, as our Faculty accounts for more than a third of all students at the University. Those studying to become compulsory schoolteachers are the youngest, with 34% younger than 25 years, and 68% below 30 years. Those studying to become pedagogues are a bit older, with 22% below 25 years. On the other hand, the group between 25-29 years is rather big, 38%, so together 60% of those studying to become pedagogues were younger than 30 years. Of the 73 students that are enrolled in other programmes (mostly continuing education), 49 students, or 67%, were older than 40 years.



Age composition of the students at our Faculty on Oct 1, 2021. Source: Próvbókin.

Gender

The student population is primarily female, particularly in the pedagogue education, where only 12-14% of the students are male, while for the teacher education, 32-33% are male, see tables below.

Bachelor programmes Students Autumn 2020	Number males	Number females	Total	% Males	% Females
Teacher programme	45	93	138	33%	67%
Pedagogue programme	21	151	172	12%	88%
Nursing programme	0	133	133	0%	100%
Other bachelor programmes	189	144	333	57%	43%
Total	255	521	776	33%	67%

In the higher educations, here with focus on the bachelor programmes, it is, in particular, the three professionally oriented programmes which have a majority of females (teaching, pedagogy and nursing). The other bachelor programmes across the University are generally more evenly distributed, apart from Software Engineering, where the males are in the majority, and Biology, where the females are in the majority (Jacobsen, 2021).

The new intake in 2021 for our two main programmes showed the same pattern as the student population in 2020 (see table below).

Enrolment 2021	Number males	Number females	Total	% Males	% Females
Teacher programme	12	26	38	32%	68%
Pedagogue programme	5	31	36	14%	86%

This is quite the same pattern seen in other countries and is somewhat predictable, as we see a split in the gender preferences already in their choices after leaving compulsory school. The males attend vocational training to a larger extent than the girls, while the females attend high school (see table below). As a high school certificate is required to be enrolled at University, there are already from the start fewer males that qualify. This is shown in the table below. In vocational and maritime educations, the males are in the majority, while in high school and higher educations, females are in the majority.

Education # Students Autumn 2020	Number males	Number females	Total	% Males	% Females
Vocational training	408	163	571	71%	29%
Maritime studies & Engineering	205	5	210	98%	2%
High school	614	1001	1615	38%	62%
Bachelor (UFI)	255	521	776	33%	67%
Master	48	122	170	28%	72%
Total	1530	1812	3342	46%	54%

The distribution of males and females to educations after compulsory schools. Source: (Jacobsen, 2021)

Few students with origin other than Faroese

Faroese society has a strong identity both as its own national cultural carrier and a strong affinity with Nordic culture. This must also be reflected in our education of those who must carry these cultural values to future generations, in relation to culture, tradition and language. At the same time, we have an obligation to consider immigrant children and their challenges with language and culture. These themes are dealt with in both our main programmes. For the teacher programme, we require a high level (A-level) in the subject Faroese to be admitted (Executive order from 2021 for teacher education), but do not require the same level for the pedagogue programme.

This also means that our programmes are probably the most demanding for people from other countries to apply for. It is not only our requirements, but schools and institutions also expect that students who have graduated from our education are approved as teachers in the Faroese schools. The law for the compulsory school states that those who come from other educational institutions must pass an extra course in Faroese in order to get a permanent job in the compulsory school.

However, there have been some students of foreign origin, and some have been successful, while others have struggled. From data from Student Affairs, we see that those who do not have Faroese as their first language to a much lesser extent pass basic Faroese.

In addition to struggling with Faroese, international students also have problems with Scandinavian, mainly Danish, which is widely used in learning resources. Although we are aware that these languages are needed, we have no formal requirements for any qualifications in this regard.

However, we have not had many students of overseas origin. As Student Affairs does not provide information on the origin, we have tried to remember such students over the last 10-15 years, and the number is around ten. In addition, about five have taken single courses, so we are dealing with less than one student of non-Faroese origin per year.

We do not have formal proceedings for how to cope with students of foreign origin. However, our general feeling is that we are keen to adapt and support those with a different background and to adjust the teaching and supervision to include them. For example, they get extra time when sitting exams, not only in Faroese, and they are allowed to write their assignments in English if the goal in the exam is not to prove their competencies in Faroese.

Section 2: Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

Course evaluations and wellbeing surveys

Course evaluations

Since 2008, the intention has been to evaluate each course each session. This was done in the beginning, on paper, and the administrative staff then processed the results. It was expected that the individual teacher conducted the evaluation according to a standard form. It differed significantly how much the individual teachers actually did this, and some students pointed out that they did not get the opportunity to evaluate some courses. When the University introduced the Moodle system, this gave opportunities for improvements, because the results were immediately available and could be processed. In some cases, it was also the teachers that looked after the evaluation together with the students. It can be said that the courses in general were evaluated, but it differed a lot how it was handled – and in some cases it was still not done.

Since 2019/20, the course evaluations have been considerably more arranged by the leadership and administration. Now there are specific Moodle 'courses' for evaluations, and the administrative

coordinator, together with the programme leaders, go into the classroom to get the evaluation done, while the teachers leave the room. This approach also has ensured a relatively high response rate; in 2021/2022 the mean response rate was 80% (Olsen, 2022). The procedure for the evaluations is described in a manual on the cooperation between teacher, programme leader and administration (in Faroese). Our Faculty had its own evaluation form since 2007, but in 2021/21 this was replaced with the new common evaluation sheet for the University as a whole. The new form was created in close collaboration with our Faculty, to ensure that there was reasonable continuity with the previous work. It is however not possible to compare the percentages for each question between the old and the new templates, because the scale has been changed.

The course evaluations show that during the study year 2021/22, 75% of the respondents agreed (41% agree and 34% highly agree) with the statement that as a whole they are satisfied with their course, while 17% partially agreed on this statement. 7% disagreed. The students are also asked to consider how much they have learned with regard to achieving the intended learning outcomes. Here there were similar results, with 76% agreeing on the statement (47% agree and 29% highly agree), while 19% partially agreed and 5% disagreed. As well as reviewing the evaluation results, the programme leaders also have a discussion with the course teacher about the results, focusing on what is good, and what can be improved.

The goal of the evaluations is to give the students a voice. We have not always been so clever as to give the students feedback on their evaluations – though we are now more rigorously adopting this procedure – but in cases where the evaluations have shown there are considerable problems, the programme leaders have met with the students to discuss the situation.

To enhance the students' voice, focus group discussions between the Faculty leadership, and student and teacher representatives once a year about the previous study year are being considered. This is also in coherence with the recommendation from the Expert committee from the external evaluation in 2014/15.

The overall results from the course evaluations can be seen in Appendix 4.

Student satisfaction

The students in general express satisfaction with their courses, especially when looking at question 21: "Overall, I am satisfied with the course". However, as a whole for the Faculty the satisfaction rate with our courses is 75% (see Appendix 4), which is below the goal of 85% in the Strategic plan for our University. It is also apparent that in particular the diploma for secondary teachers needs improvements as the students to a lesser extent than expected answer that the academic level of instruction has been high, and also they answer that the programme has not been sufficiently well structured. This reflects, we believe, the impact on the programme of the very unfortunate, sudden death of the previous coordinator. The evaluation of the module was in January, and after the evaluation changes in the structure were made (see discussion under the section "Postgraduate taught and research student experiences"). We expect these changes to have an impact next year. Apart from that, the satisfaction with the courses is, we believe, with some important exceptions, reasonably good. The Supplement Bachelor programme achieves high scores, but there are only 8 students in total, so that has no impact on the overall statistics (Appendix 4). In addition, there are only 2 courses on the programme.

The largest and most important difference is seen across the main programmes, namely the teacher and pedagogue programmes, where the satisfaction with the courses differs considerably, both within the programmes (between mandatory and elective courses as well as individual courses) and between the programmes (See table with Question 21 below).

Question 21: Overall, I am satisfied with the course	Teacher programme		Pedagogue programme	
	Mandatory courses	Electives	Mandatory courses	Electives
Agree	87%	74%	76%	60%
Partially agree	10%	18%	17%	25%
Disagree	3%	8%	7%	15%

Only mandatory courses in the Teacher programme meet the goal of a satisfaction rate above 85%. We have analysed these data further to find an answer to the difference (Appendix 5). The analyses suggest that the most important factors are mainly teacher oriented: the students want well-structured courses, good learning materials, well-prepared teachers who can communicate knowledge clearly, teachers that manage to activate the students in class, and finally, there are some issues with knowledge on learning outcomes and course workload. These are all skills that improve with experience and fit well with the fact that in the mandatory courses in the teacher programme, most teachers are experienced.

However, this also emphasises one critical aspect of our employment, as we often appoint people immediately before the teaching starts, and they seldom get more than one month for preparation. We need to reconsider this issue seriously if we want to increase the satisfaction rate.

The students' perception of learning

The students' perception of how much they have learnt is also a crucial part of the evaluation. Statistically, there is a close correlation between the questions on satisfaction and perception of learning, and therefore we also see similar percentages in the responses to both these questions (see table above and below). Overall, 76% of the respondents state that they have learned satisfactorily with regard to the intended learning outcomes, and this is distributed across the programmes as indicated below.

Question 22: According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned much	Teacher programme		Pedagogue programme	
	Mandatory courses	Electives	Mandatory courses	Electives
Agree	80%	78%	80%	61%
Partially agree	18%	15%	17%	29%
Disagree	2%	8%	3%	10%

Statistical analyses (Appendix 5) suggest that the most important factors on learning perception are mainly oriented toward communication, teaching material, feedback, workload, and teaching methods. We will here focus on the feedback issue.

Feedback issues

With the new evaluation sheet from 2021/22, feedback has been part of the course evaluation for the first time – indicating a significant oversight in past practice. Since the merger in 2008, there has been a section in the formula on how to calculate the workload, where each teacher is allocated 15 minutes per week for each student for individual supervision and feedback. Hence the time given depends on how many students you have, but for a 15 ECTS course, this can be between 30 hours (12 students) and 90 hours (35 students). This time is in addition to the time allocated to teaching. However, according to the course evaluations, this time given is not always used for providing feedback. 51% of the evaluations agree that they have been given feedback, while 22% partially

agree, 9% disagree, and 18% claim that feedback has not been part of the course (Appendix 4). This pattern is quite consistent between the two main programmes, and the responses correspond well with the questions on usefulness and satisfaction with feedback, see table below.

Respondents agreeing that ...	Teacher programme		Pedagogue programme	
	Mandatory courses	Electives	Mandatory courses	Electives
I have been given feedback on academic achievements	49%	57%	50%	50%
The feedback has been very helpful	46%	49%	50%	50%
Feedback on academic achievements during the course has been satisfactory and clear	54%	53%	51%	46%

The reasons for the low rate of feedback might be several. One important reason is the module system we have been using, where the courses are relatively short. Therefore, the teachers rely on summative feedback in the form of exams at the end of the course and do not find time for formative feedback due to the structure of the course. We intend to ensure improvements regarding formative feedback, as the courses now will be less intensive due to the switch from module to semester system. The Faculty Leadership Team, now fully aware of the issue, will focus more on this.

Formative Feedback

When our students evaluate the different courses in our main programmes, they pretty much agree on that the formative evaluation (or formative feedback) is not given high priority by the individual teacher – and that this is undoubtedly one of the weakest links in the two programmes. The leadership team takes this point of criticism very seriously, because leading educational researchers – for example John Hattie & Andreas Helmke – point out that formative feedback has enormous impact on students’ overall learning outcomes.

But why do so many of our teachers not pay attention to formative evaluation? Here are some possible explanations teachers have pointed out when they have talked to the programme leader about the problem.

- (1) At our faculty, each lecturer teaches between 12 and 15 hours per week in relatively short courses/modules. It is time-consuming to prepare so many lessons per week. And if a teacher has to give personal feedback to 30+ (including reading and commenting on assignments every week or every two weeks) in addition to (1) teaching and (2) preparation for teaching, then the workweek has too few hours. Especially if you are a new and untrained teacher (of whom we have many every year).
- (2) Compared to other faculties at our University, we have relatively many students per course. In the basic subjects we normally have between 28 and 37 students in every class. Teachers often complain that they ‘simply don’t have time’ to give formative (and personal) feedback to each student.
- (3) Since the merge, the students have handed in far fewer written products per course. This was not part of the educational plan and the agreement with the teachers, but the reason is mainly that many courses have become so short (3-7 weeks) in the BEd. degree, and for the same reason, there is a great focus on the exam and to prepare for the exam.
- (4) The students do not perceive feedback from their fellow students as “real feedback” – students must “learn to give each other feedback”, and that they are “asked to give each other feedback” is widely used in some courses at our faculty. – We don’t see this in the evaluation paper.
- (5) Many of the educators are not trained to give formative feedback and therefore do not practice formative feedback.

These five hypotheses (or possible causal explanations) should not be taken as excuses. But if you want to solve a challenge (or in this case a deficiency) you must first try to understand its' primary cause. And the reasons for the lacking evaluation are undoubtedly numerous and complex. But there is no doubt that over time the daily evaluation (or lack of evaluation) has developed into some "bad habits" and "blind spots" in the teacher's college.

But what will we do about the formative feedback in 2022/23? We have formulated three specific initiatives. Two initiatives focus on the structure of the programmes.

The semester system, which will be introduced in August 2022, will mean that each individual teacher will teach fewer hours per week over a longer period. This will give the teacher better opportunities to give formative feedback, because he will not have to plan as many lessons per week. This is a strategic and/or organizational change, which will make a big difference - and will create "space for the formative evaluation".

The teacher training programme will have courses every year where the students must submit 3-5 study products throughout the course in order to pass. This new practice is included in the new Programme Description from 2022. - The teachers have been given clear notice, that they must give constructive feedback on each individual study product throughout the course. The study products can be, for example, a written text, a PowerPoint presentation, participation in a discussion forum, a presentation for fellow students, a teaching plan, etc.

The last initiative has a more pedagogical focus. The leadership team will

- encourage all permanent lecturers to participate in the course in university pedagogy
- organize meetings for all teachers and researchers throughout the academic year, where we focus on how formative evaluation can be included as a natural and integrated part in every course
- inform all mentors in 2022/23, that formative evaluation must be a focus point in the collaboration between mentor and mentees

The leadership team is convinced that these initiatives will have a measurable positive effect within a very short time.

Well-being surveys

Going back some years, student well-being surveys were not conducted regularly at our University. More recently, these surveys have been done every two years, in 2017, 2019 and 2021. The results for the Faculty of Education indicate that well-being improved significantly between 2019 and 2021 – though in part that may be to do with the low response rate in 2019 (Egholm, 2019, 2021a).

The results from the surveys show that 79% of the students at our Faculty are overall satisfied with their education, which is slightly less than for the University as a whole, where 82% are satisfied, see the table below. In both cases, this marks a significant improvement on the 2019 outcomes – but especially for our Faculty. On the question of how well structured the courses are, we are still lagging behind the rest of the University (having dramatically improved since 2019), while on other parameters, such as availability of course descriptions and reading lists, we are level with the rest of the University. We are also level on the issue of feedback. The table also shows that we are relatively good in the crucial aspect of having the teaching coherent with the learning outcomes. Overall, however, there is scope for improvement, and in some respects, significant improvement is required.

The table below shows percentages of students that agree on the statements below (from the surveys of 2021 & 2019). First the responses from the whole University (UFI) are presented and the last two columns give the responses from the Faculty of Education (EDU).

Statements	UFI 2021	UFI 2019	EDU 2021	EDU 2019
Overall, I am satisfied with my education programme	82,2%	73,0%	79,3%	60,2%
I can recommend others take the same education programme as me	84,6%	73,4%	83,2%	59,3%
The courses I am studying are generally well structured	67,7%	41,2%	61,2%	20,3%
The courses I am studying generally have clear and appropriate learning outcomes (NB: in 2019 this was combined with the question on structure above)	72,9%		71,1%	
The teaching I receive is in line with the listed learning outcomes for the courses	72,9%	na	79,3%	na
Overall, teaching staff are good at explaining and guiding me through the subject matter	76,0%	na	74,1%	na
Overall, the teachers are good at handing out materials in good time – for example over platforms like Moodle	70,6%	53,9%	74,8%	39,0%
Overall, I get relevant information about my courses before they start – such as the course description and reading list	76,5%	na	76,7%	Na
Feedback on academic achievements, such as assignments, is satisfactory and clear	51,6%	41,9%	51,7%	39,8%

The 2021 wellbeing survey also showed that students at the Faculty of Education on average use 32,03 hours weekly for studies (Egholm, 2021b). This includes teaching lectures, independent studying, assignments, and group work. The average for the University at whole is 34,06 hours.

Here it is worth noting that the teaching year at our Faculty is 40 weeks and not 30 weeks. At the Faculties at UFI, where students receive 2 ECTS per week, the study year accounts for 30 weeks a year, while in the Faculties where students receive 1.5 ECTS per week they study for 40 weeks a year. So, although our students study 2 hours less per week, they study for ten weeks more; hence, there is no reason to assume that they put less effort into their studies than at other Faculties.

According to our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, there is certainly room for improvement, as the aim there is for 85% indicating satisfaction in a “regular survey”. The regular surveys mentioned are probably well-being surveys rather than individual courses. In the 2021 Student Survey, our Faculty obtained a score of 79% agreeing that “overall I am satisfied with my education”. Further to this, the course evaluations clearly indicate where we can find improvements. From the course evaluations we see that it is typically more inexperienced teachers that get low scores. We are considering having educational days (or seminars of 1-2 hours) throughout the first six months or the whole year to support them. This is considered more appropriate than giving them a massive introduction in the first week. Also, at the beginning of the academic year, the new teachers have many other things to concentrate on. In addition, in 2021/22, we introduced a mentoring scheme for new staff, which will be expanded in 2022/23. We are sure that this initiative will have a positive effect on the quality of the teaching.

The goal of 70% progressing into graduate destinations within 12 months of graduation, we have no problems meeting, as our graduate destinations survey shows that virtually all have got a relevant job very soon after graduation.

Student representation and engagement, including responding to student views

The Study Board

The study board has 3 students from the main programmes (teacher and pedagogue), typically in a ratio of 2-1 (teacher-pedagogue or vice versa), even if in one year only teaching students were represented. In addition, there are also 3 representatives of the academic staff. It has been the request of the Quality Unit that one of the staff representatives was also a member of the Quality Forum for Education (see main RA documents). The Study Board has not always been active, but since 2016 it has been operating. It processes and approves all credits, advance credits, programme descriptions and all exceptions that are applied for. Our administrative coordinator is the secretary. The Board meets as needed; typically, there are eight meetings a year, and if something is urgent, an emergency meeting is held.⁷² The Board also has also provided us with procedures for credits.

Our Board was an active participant when COVID-19 hit in the spring of 2020, at a time when many examinations were imminent. It approved the changes that we recommended in the examination methods, but at the same time, also had constructive comments. The Board has also had many useful questions about programme descriptions, which it has received for consultation.

In addition to the formal areas, the Board also allows the students to have a voice that has an impact on the study environment in general. Members have also been an active part in organising social events, both as thematic afternoons, for example, afternoons with competitions where the students in groups present relevant tasks and challenges for each other, and also some Friday evening events.

Other forums with the students

Initially there at our Faculty was a local Student Council for our students, but now there is only one Student Council for the whole University. Students of our Faculty are active members of the council, and they have regular meetings and events where they use our premises, especially the canteen.

A sports association is in the process of being established locally, but the plan is to expand the association to the entire university. Various equipment has been purchased, including, five indoor rowing machines and some equipment for strength training. The purpose of such activities between the students is to increase well-being and to create an environment where the students feel they have a sense of belonging.

Few formal complaints

According to the law for the University, the students have the opportunity to complain, especially on issues regarding examinations. As a whole, there have been few complaints, less than one per year.

⁷² We will incorporate the days where the Study Board meets in the annual calendar of the Faculty.

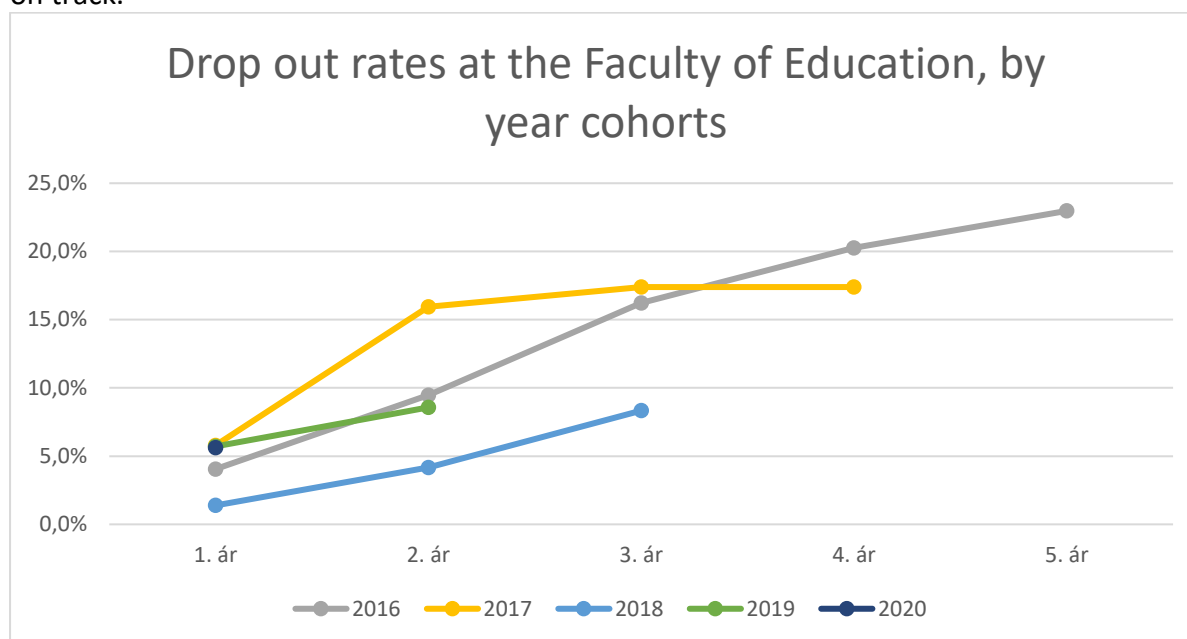
Student Retention and Progression

Our historic and continuing focus on teaching is probably the main reason behind the Faculty's high achievement of student progression and retention – as indicated by data from Student Affairs.

Programme	Year started	Number started	Number not completing	Number completed on time	Number completed in total	% completed
BEd as pedagogue	2008-17	338	71	195	274	81%
BEd as teacher	2008-17	381	58	242	309	81%
BEd supplement as pedagogue	2012-19	31	2		29	94%
BEd supplement as teacher	2012-19	39	13	26	26	67%
MA in guidance and counselling	2015	20	5	5	12	60%
Postgraduate Diploma in guidance and counselling	2013	45	15	25	28	62%
Postgraduate Diploma in pedagogy for secondary school teachers	2019-20	27		6	6	100%
Diploma in pedagogy for secondary schools teachers	2020	5			5	100%
Competence validated vocational part of the old Pedagogical programme for secondary school teachers	2019-21	32		32	32	100%
Pedagogical introductory course for secondary school teachers	2017-21	102			102	100%
University Pedagogy	2019-20	31		31	31	100%
Swimming Instructor	2014-21				106	
Supplement course in Faroese for teachers with foreign diplomas	2020	21		17	17	81%
Overarching pedagogical leadership	2020	43	1		35	81%

According to our University's *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, the priority is to have at least two thirds of students on track to successfully complete their programme of study on schedule, which to a large extent has been achieved. According to the data from the Student Affairs our students have since 2016 had a mean drop-out rate of 4,6% each year. Accumulated this adds up to around 23% for the period of 5 years that we define as being on track when studying for a 4-year Bachelor (see figure below). In addition, there are of course some late

completions, but they are relatively few, as on average 93% of our students still enrolled are on track.



Although these outcomes are generally quite good, there are variations both in terms of study year and field of study, and considerable dropout some years in a particular programme – as well as challenges in some of the master’s level programmes, such as Guidance and Counselling.

One part of the explanation for our low drop-out rate is likely that our graduates are pretty sure to get a job upon completion – that is a motivating factor. Another factor is that our programmes have many applications, and typically, less than half of the applicants are admitted. Due to the limited intake, the applicants generally have relatively high grades from upper secondary school, and therefore they are generally well prepared for the studies. We also have compulsory attendance. That is practised such that if students are absent to a certain degree, the teacher or the study counsellor gets in touch with them. The attendance obligation is sometimes questioned whether it is appropriate for University studies, but it certainly has a positive impact on retention and progression.

During the last decade, our Faculty has had a full-time student counsellor who has been functioning between the programme leaders, the administration, and the students. The counsellor plays an active part, both when prospective students inquire about the possibilities for studies, and also when they encounter problems, and when they are looking for other guidance, for example, regarding studying a year at another university.

Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey

As indicated above, we are the only Faculty at our University which has a full-time student counsellor who supports students before admission, for example, helping out with what is required to be admitted, possibilities for merits, continuing education etc. After admission, the students use the student counsellor for advice on general issues arising during their studies and permission for leave. The counsellor is also used for confidential conversations on private matters that can affect the student’s studies. This function is much appreciated and takes a lot of strain from the leadership, administration, and individual teachers.

Our programmes are closely connected to the profession, the future workplace of the students (schools and institutions) and with the trade unions. Both the teachers’ and the pedagogues’ unions

in the induction week get the opportunity to meet the new students, and they also have a meeting with the students in the final year of their study. The unions also show a keen interest in the programmes and their content, and there have been regular meetings between the teachers at the programmes and the committees of the unions, once a year or so.

In addition to these connections, the individual students also get a close connection to the profession during their internships. We are aware that both students, professional teachers and pedagogues at schools and institutions as well as school principals and institutional leaders all agree that the internship is too short, and the staff at our Faculty also to a certain degree agree on this. However, there are different challenges for the programmes. With regard to the teacher education, it is not so much the number of weeks they are on internship, but rather the number of hours per week they are allowed to use. The pedagogues are more focused on the number of weeks, in particular when the students need to do internships in electives within vulnerable areas, such as special needs. On the whole, the students gain a lot from the internship according to the evaluations and also to what they communicate in other ways, including assignments. However, the outcome of the internship also depends on the supervisor in the school/institutions, and that can vary considerably. In addition to internship, many of our students work at pedagogical institutions/schools during their studies.

Unfortunately, what defines the length of the internship at both educations has no pedagogical or didactic foundation but is defined by the agreement between the Teachers' and Pedagogues' Unions and the Ministry of Finance, which defines the payment per hour the student is at the school/institution. As we are not part of this agreement there is not so much we can do with that other than prioritise our study activities so we get the best learning outcome as possible within the budget.

Employability

All our students who want to get a relevant job after completing their studies, are quickly able to do so. For the teachers there seems to be a good balance between our graduates, supplemented by those that have studied abroad, and then the number of teachers leaving the profession

.
For the pedagogues we do not meet the demand, as there is a need for several hundred pedagogues in the forthcoming years; this shortage of qualified/trained staff in the field of elderly care and child development is seen as a threat to the quality of service within the welfare area (Búskaparráðið, 2021). We have prepared a suggestion for a new structure that will make it possible to have an additional intake of pedagogues each year, and are ready to do so from August 2023, if funded to do so.

Postgraduate taught and research student experience

PhD-students

At the moment there are only two PhD students enrolled at our faculty (who are working on gender in the preschool area, and the inclusive school), but there are four more due to start in the coming year. There will be one focused on music in an educational context, two on physical literacy – one with regard to wellbeing and another on physical performance – and another on Faroese teaching. One challenge we have is the lack of qualified researchers that can take on the supervision of PhD students. Another challenge is that the subjects studied at our faculty often have at least two dimensions: a subject dimension and pedagogical/didactical dimension. Part of this can be addressed with external supervisors (from abroad or from other faculties here) combined with supporting supervisors from our own research staff group.

We have tried our best to provide our PhD students with as good conditions as possible, but we are aware that we have two types of PhD students, the regular PhD students that are externally funded,

and then those that we try to fund ourselves. The latter are appointed as assistant professors tasked to teach half time and conduct research the other half time. Assistant professors are paid according to the agreement for academic staff, with annual increases in the salary, and therefore they might get higher salaries than the regular PhD students, but at the same time also have a higher teaching load. This system is to some minds not optimal; although people value the full salary, those in assistant professor positions on a PhD track at the same time report that they feel the strain of teaching.⁷³ Nonetheless, this seems the only way the Faculty at the moment can really attempt to educate more staff to PhD level who will then teach on our own programmes, especially bearing in mind that in the future we can expect at least the teacher programme to become master's level (requiring staff with PhDs as teachers).

In our annual conversations (see the appendices for Case Study 3), the PhD students mention the importance of a research environment. They acknowledge that the conditions are improving, but also that they would like to have a supervisor at our Faculty (or supporting supervisor), as it seems to be more distant supervision when it is necessary to go to another Faculty (not to mention another country). This wish probably indicates that the working environment at our Faculty still is largely focused on teaching while less on research and the PhD students; therefore, they said they would appreciate having a person at the Faculty they can discuss research issues with on a more daily basis. This claim was made a year ago, and since then, we have appointed a Faculty Research Leader who has arranged regular research meetings. We expect that we, to a certain degree, have found a solution to meet this challenge of the PhD students.

Otherwise, the PhD students appreciate their working conditions and the support they receive from us at the Faculty and the recent initiative from REU (Research and Enterprise Unit) with establishing a PhD forum for PhD students at the University, and other forms of support (see the main document, Section 2).

Studies at master's level

Postgraduate Diploma for Teachers at Upper Secondary Schools

Since 2019 we have provided a 60 ECTS diploma for teachers at Upper Secondary Schools. Candidates with a bachelor's degree or above take a *postgraduate* diploma. Hence, we have two separate programmes. This is provision the Ministry has asked for and is done in cooperation with the Secondary Schools. The National Agency for Education (Undirvísingarstýrið) decides how many candidates each school is allowed to send to our programme, depending on finances. Then it is the schools that choose which teachers they send, and our task with the enrolment is to ensure that the students qualify for the studies and to assess whether they can get some credit from their, in many cases, extensive teaching experiences.

The setup of the programme is somewhat complicated. In addition to the "standard" students, many want to get their professional achievements validated – as they, in many cases, have been teaching for many years before being offered a place in the programme. Upon successful validation of their credit from prior teaching, the students can be exempted from all or parts of the practical part of the diploma. The practical part accounts for 25 ECTS, or almost half of the programme.

There have been some challenges with this programme, mainly because we, unfortunately, lost one crucial staff member (who died unexpectedly). We have done our best to run the programme according to the Executive Order and programme description – and in cooperation with the schools and authorities – but, according to the only course evaluation we have from 2021, we have not been sufficiently successful with that. To improve the students' experience, we have recently appointed

⁷³ At the same time, we note that these arrangements would appear highly desirable to many people in other places.

an academic administrator to ensure all procedures are dealt with, in addition to the appointed coordinator, whose task is to arrange the teaching.

Master's in Leadership and Management

The present master's in Leadership and Management originates in a diploma requested by the Ministry of Culture in 2016/17 to enhance pedagogical leadership in the compulsory schools. The reason for the request was that the Government (from 2015-2019) had put forward some goals for the compulsory schools in their coalition agreement: "targeted and organised competence development and further training of management, teachers and pedagogues will be arranged, and the individual institutions will get greater autonomy" (Dam, 2018). The programme was established as a mixed approach with a supplement to bachelor level combined with courses in pedagogical management. Forty-two students enrolled in this programme, of which 25 completed (60%). Others stopped when they had upskilled their qualifications to bachelor level.

This programme for school principals ran from 2017-2019, but already while the programme was running, there was voiced a demand for a leadership programme at Master's level. Therefore, in the autumn of 2020, a 15 ECTS master course in General Educational Leadership was offered at our Faculty as part of the new leadership and management programme at master level. Forty-two students have completed this course, but not all have enrolled in the full Master's in Leadership and Management programme yet.

The diploma from 2017-2019 firmly focused on education, while the new programme is at a more general level and is (at the moment) running primarily from the Faculty of History and Social Sciences. We expect we will be involved again when the students write their theses, as those employed at educational institutions will probably write within our area.

Diploma in Faroese as a second language

Our University was asked by government to provide a diploma programme for teachers of children and youngsters with Faroese as a second language – this is in response to the increasing number of immigrants, of which some are living as immigrant families, while others are immigrants by marriage. Immigrants to the Faroes have extra challenges, due to the impact of Danish in the Faroese system.

Both the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature were considered for the delivery, and designing the programme was a joint effort with staff from both Faculties. The Ministry intended to equip teachers in both compulsory school and upper secondary school with tools to meet the students, some of whom do not speak any language the teachers know.

Whether the programme should be located at our Faculty or FLL also depended on the main content and learning outcomes of the programme – should it be a language programme or a more pedagogical programme? It ended with becoming a language programme, and with that followed some requirements for formal language skills prior to enrolment. In addition, if this should be on Master level – which the Ministry wanted – then the students should at least be on bachelor level prior to enrolment. As this became a language programme, our Faculty has not been as involved in the programme as initially expected, although several staff members have been teaching on the programme.

Postgraduate Diploma/Master in Guidance and counselling

This programme started in 2013, as a cooperation between the University of Iceland and our Faculty, first as a part-time, postgraduate 2-year diploma with 45 enrolled students, of which 30 (67%) have completed. Following that, students could continue to a master's, and of the 30 that completed their

diploma, 20 continued their studies. Of these, 12 have completed (60%). According to the student registry, five active students are still on the programme; these have received notifications that the programme is closing.

One challenge some students had was their old education from before the teacher education became a university degree. Therefore, they struggled with the academic standards they had to meet. Another challenge has been that we have been very dependent on outside resources, as both the programme manager and most teachers were external. This has meant that the programme never became really integrated into the Faculty, and no research is available on this important area. That said, one of our staff members upskilled their competencies by completing the education.

What we learned from this is the importance of providing “bridge courses” to upskill applicants’ academic qualifications, but – and this is the primary learning – also the importance of ensuring that we also are upskilling our own competencies and are taking ownership of programmes like this when the opportunity is there.

Bridging course to qualify for master studies

Upgrade to BEd for teachers and pedagogues

Since 2012, those with pre-university level pedagogue and teacher educations have had the opportunity to upgrade to bachelor’s level with a Supplement to Bachelor of Education programme, which accounts for 30 ECTS. Considering its importance for the student success, the interest in this course has not been as high as we would like. It has been offered every year since 2012 and has been running seven times. In total, 29 teachers and 31 pedagogues have either completed or are in their final stage of the programme. In the coming study year, the supplement degree will not run, due to low application numbers (5). Instead, these applicants will be offered participation in a new access programme being prepared for the Master’s in Leadership and Management. Then we will supervise those students who want to write within our area.

Learning environment, including the use of technology.

This issue is discussed also in the main Reflective analysis document, but we will explore the issues further here. Our Faculty is located in a relatively old building that has not been maintained for many years, and this has put some restraints on the usage of the building, particularly the ground floors. However, there seems to be a solution emerging, which is very much appreciated (see main document).

So, while there has not been so much focus on the rooms themselves, in recent years there has been a focus on improving the ICT equipment. In 2019 we started to replace the old technology from before 2010 with the newest interactive displays from Promethean. Built-in are the possibilities for direct student interaction on the screen. The old equipment was mainly used as a screen for PowerPoint presentations by teachers, and it could be challenging to use a guest computer – or for students to use their computers on the displays. Such ‘old-fashioned’ equipment was part of a critique raised, claiming our graduates were not sufficiently skilled to utilise technology and that the schools needed to upskill them during their first year of employment. The head of the Teachers Union pointed out this as a problem back in 2014 (Elsa Bergitta í Skúlablaðnum, 2014).

However, new technology alone does nothing on its own, and one challenge for the Faculty is the lack of ICT-didactics skills. In 2016 we got approval for a position in ICT-didactics, and we were lucky to get a person with exactly these skills. However, as there at that point was no ICT support at the University, neither for staff nor students, the appointed person felt overwhelmed with requests for support, and resigned in 2018. Since then, while we have seen significant new investment in ICT support at University level – including the recent appointment of a full-time member of support staff

and a new, full-time IT leader – we have not managed to find a suitable replacement for the vacated faculty position.

Therefore, we still are to a degree in an ICT limbo. We have displays that can be used interactively in teaching. However, these possibilities are not sufficiently utilised, and much of the teaching is still as it was before, namely teacher lead PowerPoint presentations. So, to meet the demand for graduates with reasonable ICT skills for starting teaching at schools and institutions, ITC courses are conducted with external teachers.

If we want a rapid development within the ICT didactics area, the best way is probably to provide up-skilling courses for staff. Such a course could include staff from the whole university. At the same time, it is necessary to reappoint to the position in ICT didactics, with the primary goal to up-skill teaching staff. The reason is that if the teaching staff are not using the ICT equipment, our students will not, to the degree they otherwise might, learn to use it.

Facilities

Our Faculty has its main teaching activities in a building that was inaugurated in 1969. It was a magnificent building intended to house both the teacher programme and a relatively large school, where the teacher students could have their internship, and also room for 20 boarding teacher students (prior to more recent transport connections). With students boarding at the school, together with the rector of both teacher school and the principal of the compulsory school, it was a lively environment.

With improved transport connections, the need for boarding was reduced, and after the change to a university system, where the students need not attend every day, the demand for boarding decreased. The teaching staff that previously had not had office facilities in the building, gradually got the old sleeping quarters as offices. This was a huge improvement for the staff.

This had, however, an impact on the level of activities in the buildings, and with no boarding students, the service in the canteen also suffered. During some periods there was no provider to run it. Since 2018 the canteen has been open and is used also for other student activities. We have learned from this challenge that the canteen is a crucial central point for the place and its activities.

Unfortunately, there has been minimal maintenance of the building in these more than 50 years, and one outcome is that the basements are affected by mould. The staff offices were in the basement, and in 2018 it was necessary to relocate staff to another building – Nóatún. The teaching and the offices are therefore now located in separate – though proximal – buildings.

The compulsory school moved into a new building in 2020, and since then we have been waiting for an agreement between the Municipality and the Ministry on what will happen with the buildings. At the moment, it seems as there is a solution on the way, which will involve other faculties sharing the building as part of the wider plan for campus redevelopment. This is very much appreciated by our Faculty, as we see the possibilities and strengths in the architecture. In recent years, while waiting for a solution, we have been able to invest in new furniture and ITC equipment, hence the learning spaces are reasonably well equipped.

The library

Our Faculty library has reached a turning point; either large investments must be made to bring the existing library up to date, including finding larger premises and hiring a librarian more or less full-time, we must have the (nearby) National Library (Landsbóksavnið) as our library. Then we can, at Faculty level, focus on the digital part of information on literature and on finding resources

Both students and staff have access to all electronic books (E- and S-books) from Nám (National School Resource Center). Our long-standing request for this was granted in autumn 2021. Not all teachers have made use of this resource yet. Several would like us to make a subscription for all publications from Nám. Here the main problem is the space – as it is now the library in addition to the main section also is distributed in several classrooms with subject areas. That might have made sense when the teaching corresponded to the library section, but that is not possible anymore. However, our teachers and students have access to digital editions. One way to encourage the use of these digital resources is to get the advisors at Nám in the respective line subjects/subjects to give a talk about the material and help people log in to gain access.

Responding to diversity in the student population, including widening access and mode and location of study

Impact of COVID-19 on the student learning experience and mitigations operationalised

As described in the main reflective analyses, a survey on the challenges when a higher education institution has to change from onsite to online teaching within days was conducted in the autumn of 2020. The majority of the students were supportive and thought that our University had reacted well to the circumstances of COVID-19.

Statistically, there are no indications that our students have responded differently than students from other Faculties.

As a pedagogical faculty, we hoped that we had managed the online teaching well, especially regarding pedagogical issues, but according to the table below we are on level with the rest of the University.

	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		No online teaching	
	UFI	EDU	UFI	EDU	UFI	EDU	UFI	EDU
We have learned as much with distance learning as we do when we meet for teaching face-to face	29%	26%	10%	7%	45%	43%	17%	25%
We have learned more with distance learning than when we meet for teaching face-to-face	7%	9%	19%	16%	57%	51%	17%	25%
The presentations with distance learning have been as good or better than when we meet for classes on site	18%	15%	16%	16%	49%	45%	17%	25%
The teachers have allowed us to participate without turning our video on	65%	53%	8%	5%	12%	19%	16%	23%
My attendance for teaching with distance learning is worse than when we meet for classes on site	17%	17%	11%	7%	56%	52%	16%	25%
I have spent more time on my studies during the Corona time	16%	17%	29%	21%	42%	40%	14%	22%
Distance learning is more targeted than regular teaching	19%	19%	24%	15%	42%	42%	16%	23%
In the future, distance learning should be more prominent at the University	29%	24%	17%	13%	41%	41%	14%	21%
My teachers have managed to create quality distance learning in the Corona time	49%	41%	19%	17%	16%	17%	16%	25%

In the open questions, the students from our Faculty, when asked about the benefits of online teaching, mentioned more convenience-related issues rather than pedagogical, e.g., less time for travelling, easier to adhere to the attendance requirements when they or their children were sick etc. The drawbacks were such as technical issues, lack of motivation, communication, concentration, and social interactions. A clue to the lack of interaction during online teaching might be found in the fact that 65% of the students said that their teacher had allowed them to participate without turning their video on. When the students were asked how much they had learned by using distance education, only 29% said they had learned the same as if they were onsite, and only 18% said that the presentations had been as good as when they were onsite.

Regarding the teachers' performance, students were also supportive, acknowledging that teachers generally had performed well given the circumstances. However, they also suggested that the teachers needed to activate the students more. As one of the students pointed out: "The University should arrange courses for their teachers to improve their competencies to organise the distance teaching. And following that, you should use distance teaching as part of the ordinary teaching."

The online/Zoom teaching in 2021/22

Further to what is reported in the main reflective analysis document: Since March 2020, we have periodically had to move some, or all, teaching online – mostly using Zoom, though some teachers opted for Teams instead, intending to support the student with the system they will probably use when they become schoolteachers. This teaching was evaluated in two steps, in Autumn 2020, as part of a survey of all students at our University, and as part of the course evaluations in spring 2022, when there again had been a partial lock-down in the preceding December and January. The evaluations in Spring 2022 contained questions on the Zoom-teaching and were only done for the teacher students evaluating their internship. The data below are based upon 71 student replies from 6 electives.

From the tables below, it can be seen that the students in spring 2022 still preferred onsite teaching, as 84% claimed they learned more from onsite teaching, although the teachers, to a certain extent, had managed to keep the teaching interesting. However, 48% of the students indicated that the Zoom-teaching was having a negative impact on their well-being. When comparing these results with those from 2020, we can see that the attitude toward online teaching might have become more negative, as a similar question had been posed in 2020, where 51% disagreed that they had learned more with distance learning than with onsite learning. If the 25% that in 2020 said they had not received online teaching are added to these 51%, we get 76%, which still is below the 84% that in the course evaluation said that they learned more onsite.

<i>“This study year has been affected by COVID-19, and part of the teaching has been on Zoom. Have you learnt more from Zoom teaching than from onsite teaching at EDU (Faculty of Education)? Or the opposite? I learn...”</i>				
	Much more from onsite teaching at EDU	More from onsite teaching at EDU	Somehow the same	Much more from Zoom teaching
Total	68%	16%	14%	3%

<i>“What impact has Zoom-teaching had on your well-being in the teacher education?”</i>					
	Zoom teaching had a very positive impact on my wellbeing	Zoom teaching had a positive impact on my wellbeing	None	Zoom-teaching had a negative impact on my wellbeing	Zoom-teaching had a very negative impact on my wellbeing
Total	1%	6%	45%	34%	14%

<i>“To what extent have the teachers managed to make the zoom-teaching interesting?”</i>					
	Very well	Well	Tolerable	Poorly	Not at all
Total	7%	30%	48%	14%	1%

Organisational learning from this experience.

Our experiences with the online teaching were that students prefer not to use this option when considering learning, and the teachers also prefer to have the students in a classroom. However, it is increasingly accepted that ICT skills, both in their own right and as a tool to acquire other necessary skills, are considered essential. We have the responsibility to ensure that our students have the required skills when they enter into the profession, but we also know⁷⁴ that they, to a considerable extent, expect to copy our way of teaching rather than what we have think we may have taught them (do as I say, not as I do). In addition, as long as we have the mandatory attendance requirements, it would enhance the students’ opportunities if we made the options better for participating in the class online, while most of the class is onsite. Therefore, we have invested in a hybrid system, which will be implemented at the start of this study year (Aug. 2022), facilitating opportunities for teachers and students. In addition, we need to offer some courses for our staff on best practices for conducting online teaching. On this, we have been in contact with the University of Highland and Islands, in Scotland, where colleagues have several decades of experience with distance teaching.

⁷⁴ Data from a survey of our students from 2014

Section 3: Strategy and Practice for Enhancing Learning and Teaching

Strategic approach to enhancement and Impact of national and international priorities and related activity on policy and practice.

Our strategic approach to enhancement is in alignment, of course, with the rest of the University – as described in the relevant section of the main reflective analysis document.

Regarding the impact of national and international priorities on policy and practice for enhancement, we would add to what is stated in the main document as follows. Our programmes are under constant scrutiny from the public, politicians, and the educational system (including the trade unions). These refer a great deal to the Danish system and, after that, to other standards. Interestingly Denmark is now the only Scandinavian country where the teachers are not at a Master's level, so we are expecting a change in that direction and need to prepare for a political request to deliver a Master of Education.

Other activities we have had are thematic weeks with all the students on the UNESCO World Goals, both in 2018 and 2019. Last year we had a similar thematic week with the subject "Research-based teaching" – our goal with this theme was to raise awareness of the students of what research is and the difference between "research-based teaching" and "delivery of knowledge".

Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice within and beyond the University

Our Faculty has taken the lead in delivering the important and successful University Pedagogy course, which after three rounds, 30-35% of all University teaching staff have passed or are in the process of completing. The course is discussed more extensively in the main reflective analysis document. It started in 2019/20 at the same time as the Pedagogy for Upper Secondary School Teachers. The participants have come from all faculties levels of appointment, from established professors to new assistant professors, teaching lecturers and PhD students.

It is a 10 ECTS course and is constructed of 5 parts:

- The first part is a residential course where the participants work with themes: university history; the tasks of a modern university; youth culture and students in the 21st century; the teacher role; teacher cognition; research-based teaching; the Bologna paradigm; course descriptions and the connection between learning outcomes, content, teaching and assessment method, and our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*.
- The theme of the next part is Teaching methods: lectures; group work; thematic work; cooperative learning; place-based learning; scenario didactics; flipped classroom, and student-centred learning.
- The theme of the third part is assessment methods. The students work with different formative and summative assessment methods, the use of rubrics and the role of constructive feedback.
- The fourth element is teaching observation. Students are observed by other participants, and by the course teachers, and themselves observe other participants, and also observe colleagues that have previously taken the course.
- Finally, they write an assignment and have an oral presentation with an opponent.

Those who have passed the course are able to organise a continuing development event one or two days a year. In 2021, John Hattie was a guest lecturer (online) for such an event. The course has also been a very positive factor for building bridges between the Faculties at our University. Two teachers

from our Faculty are responsible for the course. In addition, six other teachers from our Faculty have been guest lecturers.

Engaging, developing, and supporting staff

Further to what is indicated in the main reflective analysis document for the University as a whole: At our Faculty, there is a tradition of having an introductory week for the students, but last year we also began having an introductory week for new staff. This is especially important for the new teaching staff, as they have tended mainly to focus on their teaching and, to a lesser degree, on the whole, supporting system. During this week, they are introduced to all the main systems they will meet at our University. These include Moodle, Outlook with Calendar tasks, Intranet, Wiseflow, Teams, and Registry, to mention a few, and most of them have their peculiarities. This has been welcomed, and the new Staff Handbook has proved a great success. As well as saying "hello", we are also trying to become better at saying "good-bye" to staff, as we often hope to see them again.

When scientific staff wish to participate in a conference, they are expected to have a presentation/poster in order to participate. As a rule, staff are allowed to travel abroad once a year, but this can increase if other bodies fund them. Courses and conferences in the Faroe Islands are in general granted.

In addition to the regular Faculty meetings, we also have professionally focused meetings with specific topics and regular research meetings, some only for research staff, while others are for all staff. As is the case for the University as a whole, we are now in the second implementation of the "My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation" process. This process has generally been much appreciated by staff and plays a vital role in our overarching approach to engaging, developing, and supporting staff.

Effectiveness of the approach to implementing University strategies and enhancing learning and teaching

In our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, the goal is that 85% of the students should be satisfied with their courses. By looking at the course evaluations from 2021/22, we do not meet this goal: only 75% of our students are satisfied using this scale (see table below). Only the PhD course we have arranged and the Supplement to BEd meet the goal. These are, respectively, a short course and a short programme and statistically do not account for more than other single courses at the Faculty. In addition, when looking into the answers to the question on what they learned, there are indications that satisfaction and learning outcomes are not entirely connected, particularly when looking at the short courses/programmes. As a whole, there is coherence between satisfaction and stated learning from the courses.

When analysing which courses are receiving low marks, there is a tendency for new lecturers to get lower marks – with that in mind, it might be a challenge to meet the goal of 85% satisfaction because we are more dependent on new lecturers. On the other hand, this is yet another reminder that we must work to get a more stable workforce so that as few people as possible are in temporary positions.

Question 21 in the course evaluation: “As a whole, I am satisfied with the course”

	Supplement to BEd	Teacher programme	Pedagogue programme	Secondary School Teachers	PhD	Total
Totally disagree	0%	1,60%	3%	0%	0%	2,20%
Disagree	0%	3,80%	6,70%	10%	0%	5,20%
Partially agree	7,10%	13,70%	19,90%	60,00%	0%	17,10%
Agree	35,70%	42,90%	40,10%	30%	50%	41,30%
Totally agree	57,10%	37,60%	30,40%	0%	50%	34,10%
Sum Agree and Totally agree	92,80%	80,50%	70,50%	30,00%	100,00%	75,40%

Question 22 in the course evaluation: “Considering the stated learning outcome I have learned a lot from the course”

	Supplement to BEd	Teacher programme	Pedagogue programme	Secondary School Teachers	PhD	Total
Totally disagree		0,50%	1%			1%
Disagree		4,10%	4,60%			4, %
Partially agree	21,40%	16,20%	21,00%	50,00%		19%
Agree	42,90%	45,30%	49,20%	40%	50%	47%
Totally agree	35,70%	33,50%	24,20%	10%	50%	29%
Sum Agree and Totally agree	78,60%	78,80%	73,40%	50,00%	100%	76%

Cross-fertilisation of research activities and learning and teaching enhancement

Our Faculty has eight employees with research duties: two associate lecturers, three assistant professors and three PhD students. In addition, there is a teaching lecturer with a PhD. Some teaching lecturers in our Faculty are also, to some extent, involved in research projects.

Appendix 1 provided an overview of subjects that our Faculty research. Although there are several research subjects, the research publications are rather few. See the publication list for the year 2020/21 and 2021/22 in Appendix 2.

A review of the bibliography in the course descriptions for teacher and teacher training in 2020/21 shows that relatively few publications written by our colleagues were used in teaching. In total, eight publications originating from our Faculty were used in teaching in 2020/2021, two of which are peer-reviewed articles, together with a summary from a PhD thesis, and five reports. See Appendix 3, which shows in which courses these publications were used.

This is, of course, not the only way the research at the Faculty can be integrated into teaching, but it indicates that the research is not used very much as teaching material. It is reasonable to state that the research is not highly integrated into any course but is visible in some (Appendix 3) and more or less absent in all the other courses.

It can also be noted that publications from authors from other faculties at our University were used in teaching at our Faculty, including in particular publications from Faroese Language and Literature – these were used in courses in Faroese at the teacher and pedagogue programmes.

To summarise, there are several areas where research projects are ongoing, but rather few publications emerge from this. In addition, few publications written by researchers from our faculty are used in teaching.

As mentioned in Section 1, in Appendix 6, we provide a more detailed set of actions to support the strengthening of our research activity and the integration of research into teaching on our main programmes.

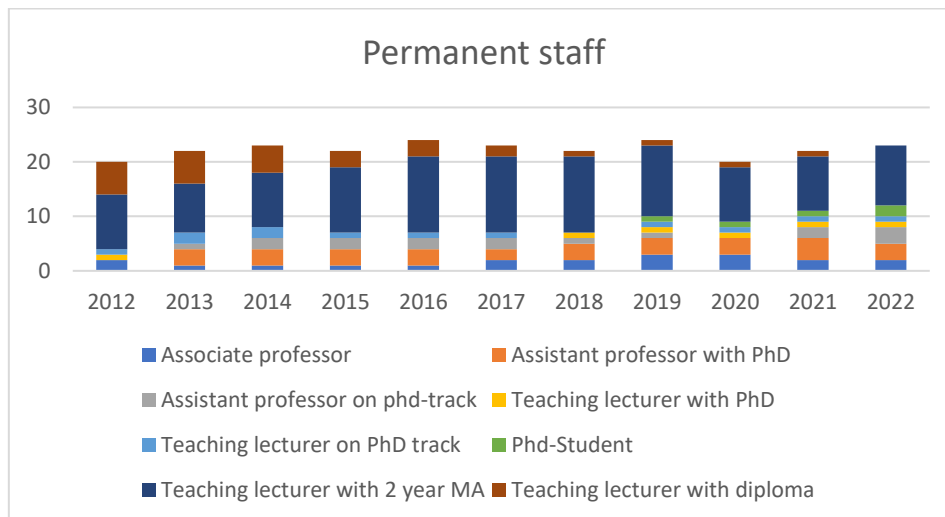
The changes to the staff profile

The further and continuing educational programmes that the 2006 expert panel saw as an important factor in upgrading qualified teachers, are funded through the National Agency for Education (Undirvísingarstýrið), and the funding is distributed such that Nám (National School Resource Center) offers short courses (no ECTS obtained), while we offer longer courses for teachers and pedagogues. A 2018 report from the Ministry recommended that this arrangement should continue (MMR, 2018, p. 15).

Programmes/courses that the Faculty of Education has offered as further or continuing education are:

Only Faculty of Education	Supplement degree to Bed for teachers and pedagogues	30 ECTS
	Faroese for teachers with foreign teacher certificates	10 ECTS
	Single elective	30-40 ECTS
	Pedagogical management and leadership for school principals	60 ECTS
	Teaching Faroese as a second language (week-long course)	2 ECTS
	Practicum supervision for teachers and mentoring new teachers	15 ECTS
	Practicum supervision for pedagogues	10 ECTS
	Diploma in pedagogy for secondary school teachers	60 ECTS
With other Faculties at UFI	Faroese as a second language – diploma – Faculties of Education/Faroese Language and Literature	60 ECTS
	Master in Leadership and Management, including pedagogical leadership (delivered by Faculties of History and Social Sciences/Education)	120 ECTS

One aspect of the merger was the necessity to give the existing faculty staff the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications, because not all had the required 2-year master’s qualification required to be able to teach at bachelor’s level. This requirement was pointed out by the expert panel for the report “Pedagogue and Teacher Education” (Zachariassen et al., 2006). This goal has been achieved, see figure below.



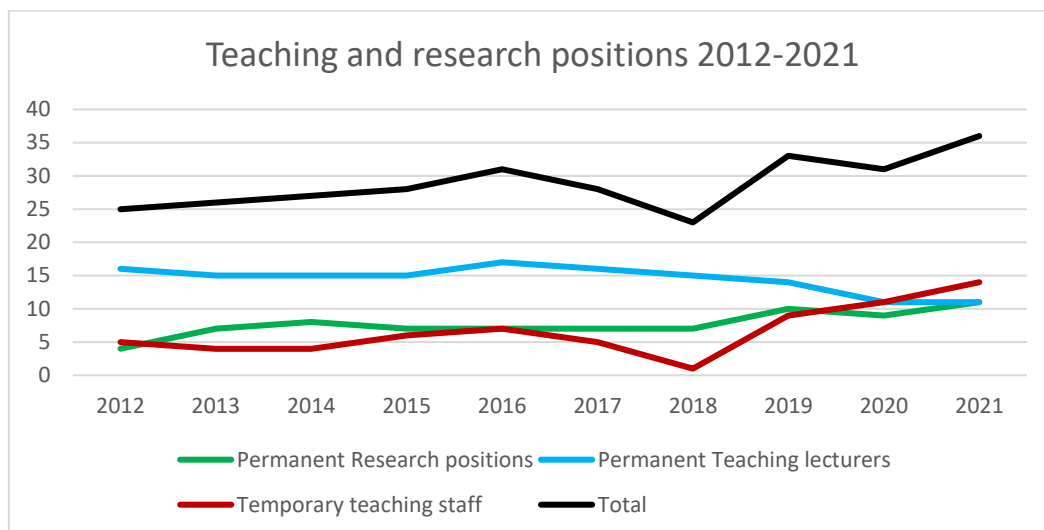
The figure shows the number of staff in permanent positions according to their job descriptions. 2019 was the first year that a ‘regular’ PhD student was appointed, and in autumn 2022 the next one will start. 2022 was, significantly, the first year with no employee in the group “Teaching lecturer with diploma”.

However, the panel went further and said that “in the forthcoming 5-6 years it is necessary systematically to ensure that teachers at the School of Teacher Training get the opportunity to obtain research qualifications, so the scientific level at the institution increases, and the quality of the educations is assured” (Zachariassen et al., 2006, p. . The reason for this was to develop and prepare the institution to offer education on a master’s level within 5-10 years. As indicated elsewhere in this document, this goal has been only partially achieved and we are working towards further progress.

The staff with regard to research and teaching

The graph below shows the number of teaching staff, receiving salaries above 100.000 kr. during a financial year between 2012 and 2021. The data is from the national economy management system (BSL, 2022).⁷⁵

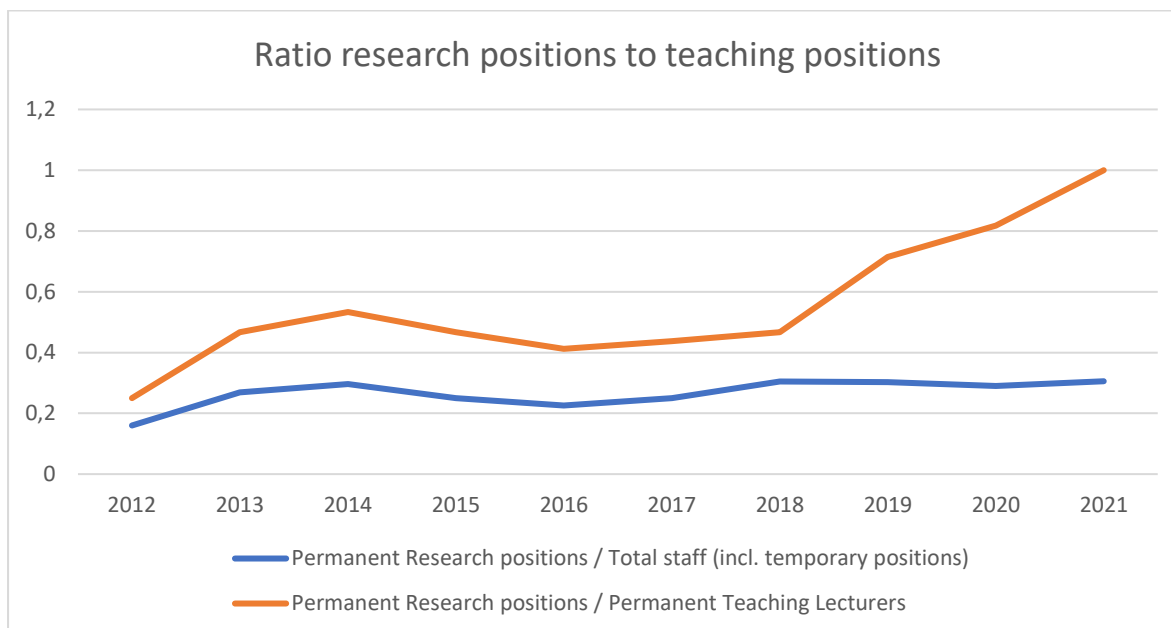
⁷⁵ The reason for not going further back is because it is difficult to analyse the number prior to that, as the last students of the School of Teacher Training graduated in 2011, and other types of teaching staff were involved together with the staff teaching at the bachelor programmes.



The total number of staff has increased in recent years. The permanent teaching positions have decreased in number at the same time, as there has been a slight increase in permanent research positions. Part of this change is that a few teaching lecturers have upgraded their qualifications to a PhD or have started on that path. Another explanation is that as people in permanent teaching positions have retired, we have tried to appoint people with research skills. However, there is a limited supply of people with relevant skills and interest in research. Therefore, in recent years the positions have been increasingly appointed with temporary teaching lecturers. This ensures that we can continue looking for research candidates, but at the same time it creates tensions and affects the staff satisfaction, both within the temporary staff, but also within the permanent staff. In 2022, three permanent positions have been filled with teaching lecturers, in all cases it was with persons that already had been in a temporary position.

The teacher programme involves all subjects taught in schools, and, since we moved to bachelor's degrees, it has not been possible to have all subjects represented in terms of permanent positions, as the courses offered are dependent on what subjects are chosen as electives in any year. The pedagogue programme is more stable, with most offers running every year. However, the fact that we are advertising for temporary positions might have an impact on the number of applications.

From the graphs, we see that the number of teaching staff has increased slightly and is around 30. These teachers have the task to teach 350 students. The share of the permanent staff group with research expectations has increased in the recent years, and hence it is also expected to see more research publications the forthcoming years.



To be able to provide programmes as continuing education after bachelor's level, it is crucial to get more research staff, especially staff with a PhD. This work is in progress, and although we aim for increasing the ratio of research staff, we have faced obstacles, for example we have lost some of our research staff (two in 2021 – one passed away and another resigned). With regard to the 'permanent' staff (here we also count assistant professors), we have managed to increase the ratio of research staff to teaching lecturers, so that they now are in a relatively equal number, but when compared with the total number of scientific staff, the research staff still are a minority at the Faculty with a rate of approx. 0.3 (see figure above). This has been the situation more or less since 2012.

The Faculty Leadership Team is aware of this situation, and one attempt to improve the conditions is, as mentioned earlier in this document, to try distributing the teaching better so that it is possible to combine projects and teaching. This is done by switching from a system where the students only have one module at a time to a semester system with several courses running simultaneously. With this, which will be fully implemented in the forthcoming study year (2022/23), it is expected that teachers can organise the work better, and the teaching load will be distributed better across the year.

Many staff at our Faculty have the perception that the teaching load at our Faculty is higher than at other faculties, and that this is, also in their view, part of the explanation for why relatively few peer-reviewed articles are published, and in general few research projects are ongoing. On the other hand, this is the Faculty of Education, with a tradition of being focused almost entirely on teaching and students – virtually to the exclusion of research – and not all staff have as yet (or at least until recently) been aware, or convinced, of the value or importance of research as part of the core activity of the Faculty. This has been changing recently, in part due to staff turnover, and in part due to changing perception. Nonetheless, while there are not so many research projects running the teaching staff seem to be more willing to take on extra teaching responsibilities, especially within continuing education.

Teaching and examination methods and results

The two main programmes are each multifaceted, where the students have humanities, science, social and creative subjects. For the teacher education, there might be to a greater extent the extra formal layer of didactics on top of the subjects than is the case for the pedagogue education, in

particular, of course, the electives on school subjects. Each subject has its own didactic tradition, which is also expressed at the individual course/elective level in the programmes.

The teachers write the course descriptions, with approval of the programme leader, and one requirement is that teaching methods are described. However, this is often worded in rather general terms, so in preparations for this review the teaching staff had presentations for each other where they showed examples of their teaching methods:

- Lectures and PowerPoint presentations from teachers;
- Group work of different kinds (Cooperative Learning, Problem Based Learning, etc.);
- Working with cases, portfolios, logbooks;
- Role play, song, and drama;
- Student presentations, either individually or in groups, sometimes with opponents;
- Discussions in plenary;
- Visits to schools, institutions, museums etc.;
- External experts giving a presentation or discussion in the classroom.
-

What is not mentioned is feedback, which also to a certain extent fits with the information from the course evaluations above. This might reflect the compressed teaching during the relatively short modules that we have been running, where teachers have not found time to give feedback. However, the teachers have been given time for this (see Section 2, Feedback issues).

Examination methods

In the course descriptions, the exam form also is described, and it is fair to say that the most common exam form is the “combined exam”, with both a written and an oral part. Some courses are also evaluated with an assignment only, and these assignments are often within a theme that the students choose themselves. Few written exams, where the students sit for an exam for a certain number of hours, are conducted, and few oral exams are without some kind of written essay that also is evaluated. One of the reasons for the frequent use of the combined exams is the perception that this is the form of the BEd-project, on which they need to get some training.

In the written assignments, there are different forms, e.g., long or short texts, synopsis, teaching presentations, combined teaching material, podcasts, creative products, portfolios, etc. The tasks in the assignments are often worded as “to reflect on teaching” or “reflect on pedagogy”, and the students are encouraged, and sometimes required, to use internship experience as examples, and reflect on these.

There is a requirement of attendance, and with lower percental attendance than 75%, the student has to write an assignment within the themes that were taught when the student was absent. If the absence is more than 40%, the student is not allowed to undertake the exam. A very few courses are passed based only on attendance, together with compulsory active participation and tasks, on which students get feedback. However, this will be changed this coming study year (2022/23). Some courses in the teacher programme will do just that and require 3-5 study products throughout the course to pass. Similar examination methods have also been used in the pedagogue programme.

Results and discussion on the examination marks

At the University we have a shared examination register where it is possible to extract examination results across Faculties and across programmes. Below, some statistics from the examination register are shown for the study year 2020/21. The statistics on the study year 2021/22 will be available early autumn 2022. The marks from our Faculty are relatively high, both for the basic courses and the electives, and also for the BEd-thesis. Regularly we have used external examiners

from Roskilde University Center and from the University of Iceland. These examiners assess our students at the same level as our own staff.

The exams at our Faculty compared with the University as a whole

According to the University examination register, in the period of September 1, 2020 until August 31, 2021, in total 314 courses have been examined at our University, and of these 84 were conducted at our Faculty (27%). The number of student examinations was 3,787, of which 1,483 were from our Faculty; this corresponds to 39%, see table below. On average, for the whole University, there are 12 students for each course examination, while at our Faculty, we have 18. The point of mentioning this is because we are considering decreasing the number of combined exams, as this is very demanding for both teacher and examiner, especially in the larger classes, of which some have 35 students.

	Number of course exams with marks	Number of course exams based on passed/not passed	Number of course exams in total	% of all course exams at the University	Number of student exams	% of all students at the University	Number students per exam
Education	58 (69%)	26 (31%)	84	27%	1479	39%	18
University	249 (79%)	65 (21%)	314	100%	3788	100%	12

The examinations at our University are in two categories – those with marks and those based on passed/not passed. According to the Executive Order for examinations at our University, it is stated that a maximum of one-third of examinations can be assessed as passed/not passed (calculated in ECTS). At the University as a whole, 21% of the examinations are marked as “passed/not passed”. This fraction is higher in our Faculty, 31%. Although we are close to one-third, the Executive Order also states that the internship is exempted from the Executive Order's limitations, so we should be on the safe side regarding the number of courses marked as passed/not passed.

Some statistics on courses marked as passed/not passed

As mentioned above, 31% of the courses in our Faculty in the study year 2020/21 used the grading scale passed/not passed. This is quite close to the upper limit of 1/3 that we, according to the executive order, are allowed to use, calculated from the ECTS. When looking closer at the numbers for passed/not passed courses, it can be observed that the reason that we are so close to the upper limit is due to re-examinations and adjustments for students on leave, and not least that some extensive internships also are included.

When only considering regular courses and excluding re-examinations, it is evident that there are some issues with the diploma in pedagogy for secondary school teachers, as there are far too many of the obtained ECTS from courses assessed with the grading scale passed/not passed, also when the internship is exempted from the calculations. This was for the study year 2020/21, and when realising this, changes were made for the next study year, so all compulsory courses in the programme will now be assessed with the 7-step grading scale. The internship counts for 42% of the total workload, measured in ECTS, and the passed/not passed grading scale is now only used for the internship in this programme.

	Teacher programme			Pedagogue programme			Supplement to BEd			Pedagogy for Secondary School Teachers		
	ECTS		%	ECTS		%	ECTS		%	ECTS		%
	Tils.	St.		Tils.	St.		Tils.	St.		Tils.	St.	

Compulsory courses	90	30	33%	90	20	22%	15	5	33%	20	20	100%
Basic internship	15	5	33%	30	0	0%				25	25	100%
Electives*	180	60	33%	150	15	10%						
Internship connected to electives	60	20	33%	30	0	0%						
Independent internship	0	0	0%	15	15	100%						
Bed project	15	0	0%				15	0		15	0	0%
	345	115	33%	315	50	16%	30	5	17%	60	45	75%
Total without internship	270	90	33%	240	35	15%				35	20	57%
Re-exams etc.	17			20								

* Electives for teachers: each student takes 30 ECTS per year + 10 ECTS internship. 6 electives are offered, in total 180 ECTS + 60 ECTS internship. Electives for pedagogues: each student takes either one or two electives per year (2 if they are 3rd year students, 1 if they are 4th year students), 25 ECTS for each elective + 5 ECTS internship. 6 electives on offer, in total 150 ECTS + 30 ECTS internship.

Students not passing exams

When considering how large a fraction of the students do not pass an exam, the number at our Faculty is significantly lower than at the University. There are several possible explanations, one that our students are getting good instruction, supervision and counselling, another may be that they have higher high school marks, and that they can choose electives according to their strengths. However, this has not yet been analysed in detail but is among the issues that need further investigation. The data are shown below.

	% not passed	% marks "-3" and "00"	Not passed in total
Education	0,8%	1,4%	2,1%
University	4,4%	5,1%	9,5%

Students achieving relatively high marks

In addition to the fact that few get the marks -03 and 00, relatively few get the marks 02 and 4. Also, it can be observed that more than half of the grades at our Faculty are either 10 or 12, and only 16% of those who pass are below the mark 7. For the whole University, this number is 28% (see table below). Our students, on average, then, achieve higher marks than across the rest of the University, (see table below). Part of our future analyses, as mentioned above, is to look closely at this.

		Marks given calculated in % of all courses using 7-step marking scale – only passed courses included (data from 2020/21)				
	Mean marks	% "02"	% "4"	% "7"	% "10"	% "12"
Education	8,5	4%	12%	27%	33%	23%
University	7,4	6%	15%	28%	26%	17%

Further, one of our questions that we are still working on is whether our experiences with the Bachelor thesis (see below) indicate that the assessment method can significantly impact the outcome.

Bachelor's theses in general achieve high marks

In total, 125 bachelor theses were examined at our University during the study year 2020/21, of which 63 were from our Faculty, and 62 were from the other faculties. This corresponds to 50% of the total number of bachelor's theses, which is typical of the annual distribution. This also corresponds to the narrative in our Faculty that we are the largest faculty with most students and that we are pretty good at guiding and supervising our students through their education.

The table below shows that at the University as a whole, 64% achieve high marks of 10 or 12 for the bachelor thesis, while the figure in 2020/21 was 68% for our Faculty. However, our Faculty is not more generous with the 12-mark, and in general, the table below shows that the marks for the bachelor thesis at our University are high, but that our Faculty is at a comparable level in this regard.

		The marks given according to the 7-steps marking scale for the Bachelor theses 2020/21 in percentages							
	Mean marks	% "-3"	% "00"	% "02"	% "4"	% "7"	% "10"	% "12"	10- and 12 marks together (%)
Education	9,3	0%	2%	0%	10%	21%	38%	30%	68%
University	9,1	0%	2%	0%	10%	23%	32%	32%	64%

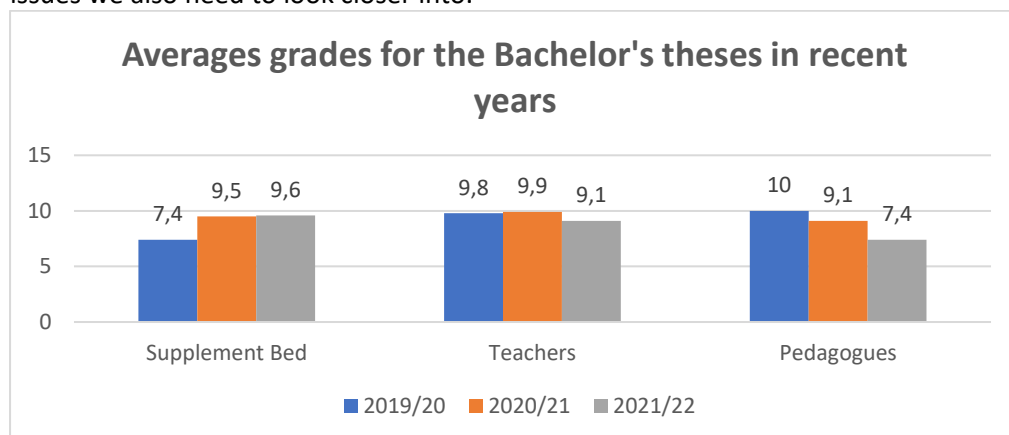
Our Faculty leadership team has discussed the marks for the bachelor thesis, as we were concerned that these might, in some cases, be too high. In particular, we found it disturbing if it was the case that a written 'average' thesis should be able to obtain top marks if they did a good presentation in the oral part.

In 2020/21, there were changes in the regulations for the bachelor examination so that the mark could only increase one step. At the same time, it was decided that the oral part should be individual, also for those in a group writing the thesis. In addition, the external examiner and the supervisor should agree in writing before the oral examination on the marks for the written thesis – the agreement should be based upon a relatively comprehensive form, so the same weight should be used for the exams.

We, therefore, were quite excited to see whether these new regulations had made any changes in the mean marks. Still, when comparing the marks from 2020/21 with those from 2019/20, it turned out that although there was a slight decrease in the mean marks, this had also occurred at the University as a whole (see table below). However, when comparing the marks for the bachelor theses for the study year 2021/22, they turned out to be at the lower end of the average grades given at the University. This shows that it is essential to continue the work to ensure that the marks are striking the right balance and that the students at our Faculty get the marks that map clearly to the achievement of the relevant learning outcomes. We intend to implement a double examination of the written part of the Bachelor theses, starting with 10-15% of the theses. This will be done during autumn 2022.

Mean marks for the Bachelor projects	Education		University	
	Mean marks	10- and 12 marks in %	Mean marks	10- and 12 marks in %
2019/20	9,5	70%	9,6	74%
2020/21	9,3	68%	9,1	64%
2021/22	8,6	58%	8,5	58%

We have also looked into the grades bachelor's projects have obtained according to programme in recent years. There has been a considerable decrease in the marks for the pedagogue programme, while not so much for the teacher programme and the supplement degree (see figure below). These issues we also need to look closer into.

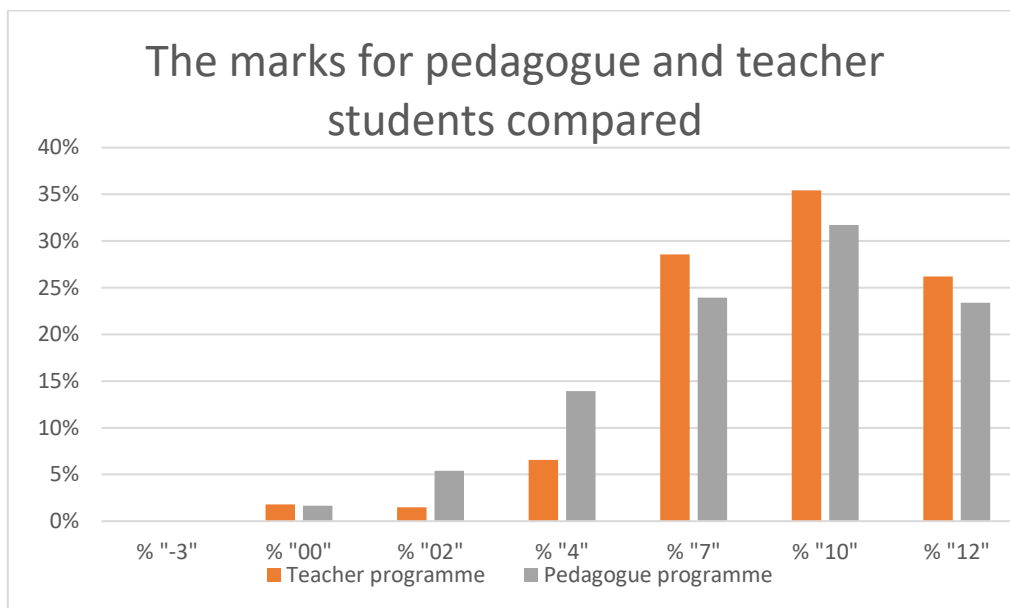


Examination grades according to programme

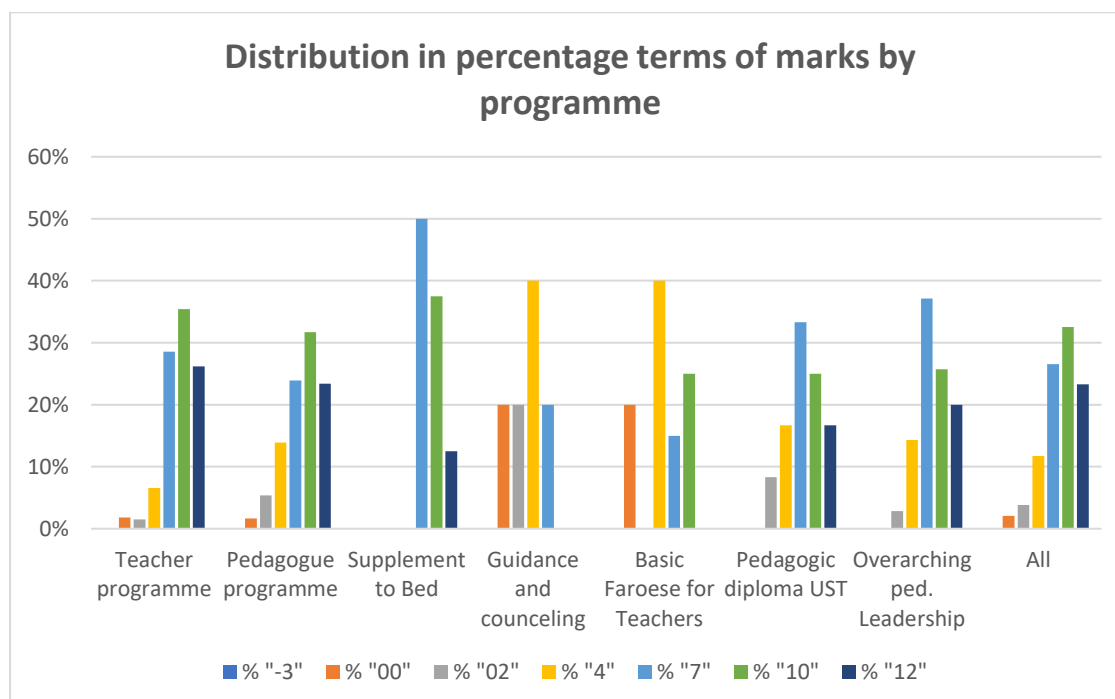
The average grade for courses across all the programmes at our Faculty is relatively high, namely 8.5, and if only considering our main programmes, it is slightly higher, namely 8.6 (see the table below where the marks for 2020/21 are shown). The numbers for the study year 2021/22 will be available in August 2022.

Programme	Average grades in 2020/21	Proportion at grades 10 & 12 in 2021/22
The teacher programme	9,0	62%
The pedagogue programme	8,3	55%
The supplement to BEd	8,8	50%
Master in guidance and counselling	3,4	0%
Basic Faroese for those with teacher diplomas from abroad	5,2	25%
Pedagogical diploma for upper secondary school teachers	7,7	42%
Master course – Overarching pedagogical leadership	8,2	46%
Average of all our programmes	8,5	56%
Only teacher and pedagogue programmes	8,6	58%

In particular, the mean grade for the teacher programme is high (9,0). The student teachers have a tradition of having higher averages from high school already when they apply for a study place. They also tend to have higher averages from high school than the pedagogue students, so this can be part of the explanation for this difference, especially compared with the pedagogues, as illustrated in the figure below.



The students on the BEd Supplementary degree for primary and lower secondary school teachers and the pedagogue students also obtain higher average grades. However, this is probably because the bachelor thesis counts for half of the total assessment. As we saw in the previous section, it is common for the bachelor's thesis grades to be higher than for courses. We are also aware that another reason is that there are no low grades. The most common grade is 7, which also is the lowest grade issued, as can be seen in the figure below.



As the above figure also indicates, the Master's in Guidance and Counselling, on the other hand, has had relatively low average grades. This can probably be explained by the fact that the students had been given a final deadline for when the dissertation should be submitted. Originally, the dissertation should have been completed and submitted in 2017, but given the final deadline, several managed to take up the challenge and completed their thesis. We consider this quite an achievement. The single course "Basic Faroese" for teachers with their education taken abroad also

has a relatively low average grade; this is partly because some participants had special needs, such as dyslexia, and because they did not grow up with Faroese as their mother tongue.

The Faculty Leadership Team has discussed the examination methods used and has seen that very few courses are examined by an exam where the students are tested on the full curriculum at a written exam. On the other hand, the most used assessment is in two steps, with both a written and an oral part, which is similar to the examination for the bachelor project, and which seems to give higher marks than the other exams.

Other issues worth considering about the marks awarded include:

- On entrance our students have high average marks than for other parts of the University;
- Whether our students commit more time to their studies than those at other Faculties. Our students obtain 1.5 ECTS per week, while at some of the other Faculties, they obtain 2 ECTS per week – our students, that is, commit 40 weeks of study compared to 30 in other parts of the University (excluding the Nursing students).
- We have yet to find evidence for the impact of the education, experience etc. of the teachers and external examiners in terms of awarding grades, and also as to whether there are differences between the internal and external examiners. To ensure that the examiners as far as possible working to common standards and expectations, we are developing a handbook for examiners for all courses – along the lines of something we already have for the BEd-thesis.
- One critical issue is whether the learning outcomes are appropriate and can be assessed with the chosen examination method. Do we assess the course curriculum in full or perhaps more partially?
- One topic we are working on right now is to assess to what extent the teaching material is research-based and the course literature sufficient. In this context, we also have to consider when in their education the students should be expected to read research articles.

Section 4: Academic Standards and Quality Processes

This section is dealt with in full in the main document, and as part of the University, we are covered by the same standards and quality processes that apply to the rest of the University. The work on quality enhancement is highly appreciated. The Faculty has since January 2019 had an annual working week for staff dealing with the ESG requirements. At first this involved minor steps, but when the Quality Unit was established, this was a huge step forward.

In addition to the information provided in the main document, we can add that the staff survey conducted in 2021 gave us relatively low scores. The results also showed that there in many cases were large differences in the answers, indicating that the issues might not affect all to the same degree. We spent two days of our week on quality assurance this January to discuss the results of the survey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research areas at the Faculty – active projects

Areas	Preschools	Compulsory schools	Upper secondary school	University
Teaching methods		Hans 1	Kalpana Vijayarathan	Kalpana Vijayarathan, Hans Harryson
The schools and the University during COVID-19 – pupils, teachers and school principals / students and university teachers		Katrin av KÁK, Kalpana Vijayarathan, Erla Olsen	Katrin av KÁK, Erla Olsen	Erla Olsen
Inclusion – inclusive education		Frida Poulsen		
Immigrants – teaching of immigrant children and preparation of students at NÁD to teach these children		Kalpana Vijayarathan		
Gender (children and staff)	Ivonna Johansen			
Bullying and wellbeing		Katrin av KÁK, Frida Poulsen Erla Olsen		
Language acquisition		Sissal Rasmussen		
PISA-analyses		Erla Olsen, Ingi Heinesen Højsted		
Mathematic didactics		Ingi Heinesen Højsted		
Culture area		Poul Guttesen		
Climate change		Erla Olsen		Erla Olsen
Usage of ITC in the teaching in schools in Tórshavn Municipality		Erla Olsen, Ingi Heinesen Højsted, Páll Isholm, Laufey Blåsvær		
Preschools in the Faroe Islands		Ingi Heinesen Højsted, Sissal Rasmussen		
Physical literacy		Helgi Winther Olsen		

Appendix 2: Faculty Publications in 2020/21 and 2021/22

Publications in 2020/21

Peer-reviewed publications 2020/21

- Højsted, I. H.** & Mariotti, M. A. (2021) Signs emerging from students' work on a designed dependency task in dynamic geometry. In Y. Liljekvist, L. Björklund Boistrup, J. Häggström, L. Mattsson, O. Olande & H. Palmér (Eds.) Sustainable mathematics education in a digitalized world. Proceedings of MADIF12. The twelfth research seminar of the Swedish Society for Research in Mathematics Education, January 14–15 in Växjö (pp. 111-120). Swedish Society for Research in Mathematics Education. http://matematikdidaktik.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MADIF12_dokumentation.pdf
- Højsted, I. H.** (2020). A “toolbox puzzle” approach to bridge the gap between conjectures and proof in dynamic geometry. In A. Donevska-Todorova, E. Faggiano, J. Trgalova, Z. Lavicza, R. Weinhandl, A. Clark-Wilson and H. G. Weigand (Eds.) Proceedings of the 10th ERME TOPIC CONFERENCE (ETC10) Mathematics Education in the Digital Age (MEDA) 16-18 September 2020 in Linz, Austria (pp. 215-222). Johannes Kepler University. <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02932218>
- Højsted, I. H.** (2020). A quantitative study on the usage of dynamic geometry environments in Danish lower secondary school. In B. Barzel, R. Bebernik, L. Göbel, M. Pohl, H. Ruchniewicz, F. Schacht & D. Thurm (Eds.) Proceedings of the 14th International Conference on Technology in Mathematics Teaching – ICTMT 14: Essen, Germany, 22nd to 25th of July 2019 (pp. 297-304). Universität Duisburg-Essen. <https://doi.org/10.17185/duerpublico/70789>
- Højsted, I. H.** (2020). Guidelines for utilizing affordances of dynamic geometry environments to support development of reasoning competency. *Nordic Studies in Mathematics Education*, 25 (2), 71–98.
- Højsted, I. H.** (2020). Teachers Reporting on Dynamic Geometry Utilization Related to Reasoning Competency in Danish Lower Secondary School. *Digital Experiences in Mathematics Education* 6, 91–105. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40751-020-00059-3>
- Pedersen, M.K., Bach, C.C., Gregersen, R.M., **Højsted, I.H.** & Jankvist, U.T. (2021) Mathematical Representation Competency in Relation to Use of Digital Technology and Task Design—A Literature Review. *Mathematics* 2021, 9, 444. <https://doi.org/10.3390/math9040444>
- Vijayarathan, K.** (2021). School Leadership Challenges in Faroese Compulsory Schools During the COVID-19 Crisis. *Faroese Scientific Journal*, [S.l.], pp. 5-35. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18602/fsj.v0i0.126>

PhD theses 2020/21

- Højsted, I. H.** (2021) Toward Marvels in Dynamic Geometry Teaching and Learning: Developing guidelines for the design of didactic sequences that exploit potentials of dynamic geometry to foster students' development of mathematical reasoning competency. [Doctoral dissertation, Aarhus University] AU Library Scholarly Publishing Services. <https://doi.org/10.7146/aul.413>
- Rasmussen, S.M.** (2020). Færøske børns tidlige sprogtilegnelse – Udvikling og normering af en færøsk version af CDI- forældrerapporter. Prentað á Syddansk Universitet

Other publications 2020/21

- Harryson, H.** (2020): Innlit – eitt stórt áratíggju eftir, at fyrstu næmingarnir vórðu innskrivaðir á Skúlan við Løgmannabreyt. UMMR & Tórshavnar Kommuna.
- Ólavsstovu, V.** 2020. Skúlin í talgilda altjóðagjørda heiminum, Frøði 1/2020
- Olsen, E.** 2020. Kunneiki um læring og menning er fortreyt fyri vitan og vøkstri / Knowledge of learning and development a prerequisite for expertise and growth. Tíðargrein. Sosialurin 3. juli.

Olsen, E. 2021. The effort with online learning was really appreciated but onsite learning is generally preferred – though a substantial proportion also favour blended learning, delivered by teachers who are *au fait* with the techniques of online learning. Short report. University of the Faroe Islands.

Skála, Rúna í (2020) Samvirkan - ein verkætlan í Skúlanum og Frítíðarskúlanum á Fløtum

Vijayarathan, K. (2020). Whisper of Butterfly Wings. Sprotin.

Vijayarathan, K. (2021). Professional Inclusion of a Native Foreigner: a quasi-personal uphill journey, Fjølur, pp. 70. <https://www.mfs.fo/professional-inclusion-of-a-native-foreigner>

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Publications in 2021/22

Peer-reviewed publications 2021/22

Andreasen, R.S. (2021) Útlitini fyrri einum málskifti. Fara vit tosa enskt? Kanningar av hugburðinum hjá froyingum til froyiskt, enskt, froyiskt-enskt kotuskifti og til danskt. *Setursrit* 12. Tórshavn: Fróðskapur, 119 s.

Oddsdóttir, Th., Ragnarsdóttir, B.A., **Ólavstovu, V.** í, Nyqvist, E-L, Kristjánsdóttir, B, (2021). Når klodsen falder på plads. Ordforrådet, indholdet og kulturen i teksten – elevernes reaktioner. *Milli mála* 13, 40-82. DOI 10.33112/millimala.13.3

Harryson, H. (submitted 2022) Teacher Education in the Faroe Islands.

Rasmussen, S.M. (2022) Faroese children's first words. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0332586522000051>

Verbrugge, L.M.H., Bjarnason, G., Fagerholm, N., **Magnussen, Ey.**, Mortensen, L., **Olsen, E.**, Plieninger, T., Raymond, C.M., Olafsson, A.S. (2022) Navigating overgrazing and cultural values through narratives and participatory mapping: a socio-cultural analysis of sheep grazing in the Faroe Islands. *Ecosystems and People* 18(1), 289-302. DOI.org/10.1080/26395916.2022.2067242

Vijayarathan, K and Óskarsdóttir, E. (in press). Analysis of policies supporting teachers to tackle linguistic and cultural diversity and facilitate inclusion from the perspectives of Iceland and The Faroe Islands in Beaton, M.C., Hirshberg, D. and Turunen, T. (in press) *Education, Equity and Inclusion: Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable North*. Springer, Netherlands.

Vijayarathan, K. (in press). Policy equity contexts in inclusive education for immigrant children in The Faroe Islands in Beaton, M.C., Hirshberg, D. and Turunen, T. (in press) *Education, Equity and Inclusion: Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable North*. Springer, Netherlands.

Other publications 2021/22

Antoniussen, A. (2021) *Námsfrøðingaútbúgvingin 2020/21*. Ársfrágreiðing við tilhoyrandi skjalasavni. Námsvísindadeildin, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya.

Dali, N. (in press) Faroese cords, bands, braids, and garters – traditional parts of the national heritage. Proceedings of the conference *Nordic and World Braids and bands 2022*. Svendborg, Denmark 15.-20. August 2022.

Harryson, H. (2021) *Læraraútbúgvingin 2020/21*. Ársfrágreiðing við tilhoyrandi skjalasavni. Námsvísindadeildin, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya.

Olsen, E. (2022) *Ársfrágreiðing fyrri Námsvísindadeildina lestrarárið 2020/21*. Námsvísindadeildin, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya.

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Appendix 3: Usage of research from the Faculty of Education in teaching

The teacher programme 2020/2021		
Course	Peer-reviewed literature & PhD theses	Reports (not peer reviewed)
Teaching and learning I	Harryson, H. (2018) Undervisningskompetence og lærerkompetece. Den Pædagogiske diskurs i læreruddannelsen. Ph.d. ritgerð. (PhD Thesis on teaching competences and teacher competende – the pedagogical discourse in the teacher education)	Harryson, H. (2012) Aftursvar. Fólkkúlagrunnurin og Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (Response – survey with the last teacher students from before the Merger)
Teaching and learning II	Harryson, H. (2018) Undervisningskompetence og lærerkompetece. Den Pædagogiske diskurs i læreruddannelsen. Ph.d. ritgerð. (PhD Thesis on teaching competences and teacher competende – the pedagogical discourse in the teacher education)	Av Kák, K., Biskopstø, O. & Olsen, E. (2019) <i>Happing í fólkkúlanum – ein spurnarkanning</i> . Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (Bullying in the compulsory school 2019– a survey) Harryson, H. (2012) Aftursvar. Fólkkúlagrunnurin og Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (Response – survey with the last teacher students from before the Merger)
Language development	Rasmussen, S. M. & Bleses, D. (2018). Faroese childrens' vocabulary acquisition: A Faroese adaptation of the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories. <i>First Language, 38</i> (6), 641-668.	
Basic mathematics	Højsted, I. H. (2020). Guidelines for utilizing affordances of dynamic geometry environments to support development of reasoning competency. <i>Nordic Studies in Mathematics Education, 25</i> (2), 71–98.	
The Child in Transitioning from Pre-School to Elementary School (together with pedagogues		Matras, K. et al. (2014) <i>Eygleiðingar í forskúlanum. Kunning og niðurstøða</i> . Fólkkúlaráðið. (Observations in the pre-school. Information and conclusions)
Special Pedagogy: Theory and the Profession		Biskopsstøð, Kák, & Mýri (2015) <i>Happing í fólkkúlanum - ein spurnakaning</i> . Mentamálaráði (Report on bullying 2015 in the compulsory school).
Numbers, algebra, and geometry		Olsen, E., Ólavstovu, V. & Hilduberg, R. (2019) PISA

		frágreiðing 2018. Mentamálaráðið (Report on the PISA results from 2018)
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The pedagogue programme 2020/2021		
Course	Peer-reviewed literature & PhD theses	Report (not peer reviewed)
Pedagogy and didactics I – theoretical part		Av Kák, K., Biskopstø, O. & Olsen, E. (2019) <i>Happing í fólkkaskúlanum – ein spurnarkanning</i> . Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (Bullying in the compulsory school 2019– a survey)
Pedagogy and didactics II – practical part		Av Kák, K., Biskopstø, O. & Olsen, E. (2019) <i>Happing í fólkkaskúlanum – ein spurnarkanning</i> . Fróðskaparsetur Føroya (Bullying in the compulsory school 2019– a survey)
Language and preschool reading acquisition	Rasmussen, S. M. & Bleses, D. (2018). Faroese childrens’ vocabulary acquisition: A Faroese adaptation of the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventories. <i>First Langugage</i> , 38(6), 641-668.	
The Child in Transitioning from Pre-School to Elementary School (together with teachers)		Matras, K. et al. (2014) <i>Eygleiðingar í forskúlanum. Kunning og niðurstøða</i> . Fólkkaskúlaráðið. (Observations in the pre-school. Information and conclusions)

Appendix 4: Course evaluations for 2021/22

			Secondary teacher programme	Supplement programme	Teacher programme	Pedagogue programme	Total.
Information	Q.1 At the start of the course, I was well informed about: The purpose of the course	Agree	50%	93%	85%	83%	84%
		Partially agree	40%	7%	10%	14%	12%
		Disagree	10%	0%	5%	4%	4%
	Q.2 At the start of the course, I was well informed about: Learning outcomes	Agree	70%	79%	83%	80%	82%
		Partially agree	20%	21%	12%	15%	14%
		Disagree	10%	0%	5%	4%	5%
	Q.3 At the start of the course, I was well informed about: Assessment method	Agree	30%	86%	62%	66%	64%
		Partially agree	60%	14%	24%	21%	23%
		Disagree	10%	0%	14%	13%	13%
Teaching material and instruction	Q.4 According to purpose, contents and learning outcome the material chosen for the course has been	Good	50%	93%	84%	79%	81%
		Average	50%	7%	13%	19%	16%
		Poor	0%	0%	3%	2%	3%
	Q.5 How big a part of the teaching material have you read or in other ways prepared	75-100%	60%	71%	58%	70%	64%
		50%	40%	7%	23%	23%	23%
		25% or less	0%	21%	19%	7%	13%
	Q.6 The academic level of instruction has been:	High	20%	86%	64%	61%	63%
		Approp.	70%	14%	35%	34%	34%
		Low	10%	0%	1%	6%	3%
	Q.7. The course workload has been:	Too heavy	17%	0%	5%	6%	5%
		Approp.	83%	100%	92%	91%	92%
		Too low	0%	0%	3%	3%	3%
Student	Q. 9 How many hours on	0-10 hours	10%	36%	16%	9%	13%

			Secondary teacher programme	Supplement programme	Teacher programme	Pedagogue programme	Total.
	average a week have you spent on this course (i.e., classes, study, preparation, home assignments and group work)?	10-15 hours	40%	36%	17%	15%	16%
		15-20 hours	40%	21%	19%	15%	17%
		20-30 hours	10%	7%	35%	37%	35%
		30-40 hours	0%	0%	13%	20%	16%
		More than 40 hours	0%	0%	2%	4%	3%
	Q.10 I have participated actively in class	Agree	80%	71%	80%	74%	77%
		Partially agree	10%	29%	17%	23%	20%
		Disagree	10%	0%	3%	3%	3%
	Q.11 The instructor has been able to activate me in class	Agree	80%	79%	78%	73%	76%
		Partially agree	20%	21%	18%	19%	18%
		Disagree	0%	0%	4%	9%	6%
Communicate knowledge	Q.13 The instructor has succeeded in communicating knowledge clearly	Agree	50%	86%	80%	76%	78%
		Partially agree	50%	14%	16%	19%	18%
		Disagree	0%	0%	4%	5%	4%
	Q. 14 In my view, the instructor has been well prepared for classes:	Agree	80%	93%	90%	87%	88%
		Partially agree	20%	7%	10%	9%	9%
		Disagree	0%	0%	0,5%	4%	2%
	Q. 15. The course has been well structured from beginning to end:	Agree	10%	86%	74%	67%	70%
		Partially agree	50%	14%	19%	22%	21%
		Disagree	40%	0%	7%	11%	9%
Feedback	Q.17 I have been given feedback on academic achievements:	Agree	50%	36%	53%	50%	51%
		Partially agree	50%	7%	23%	22%	22%
		Disagree	0%	7%	9%	9%	9%
		Not part of course	0%	50%	15%	19%	18%
	Q.18 The feedback has been very helpful	Agree	30%	36%	47%	50%	48%
		Partially agree	70%	7%	27%	20%	24%
		Disagree	0%	7%	11%	10%	10%
		Not part of course	0%	50%	15%	20%	18%
	Q.19. Feedback on academic achievements	Agree	30%	21%	54%	49%	51%
		Partially agree	60%	21%	22%	20%	21%

			Secondary teacher programme	Supplement programme	Teacher programme	Pedagogue programme	Total.
	during the course has been satisfactory and clear:	Disagree	10%	7%	9%	10%	9%
		Not part of course	0%	50%	15%	21%	19%
Learning outcome and satisfaction	Q. 21. Overall, I am satisfied with the course:	Agree	30%	93%	81%	70%	75%
		Partially agree	60%	7%	14%	20%	17%
		Disagree	10%	0%	6%	10%	8%
	Q. 22. According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned much:	Agree	50%	79%	79%	73%	76%
		Partially agree	50%	21%	16%	21%	19%
		Disagree	0%	0%	5%	6%	5%

Appendix 5: Statistical Analyses of Course Evaluation Data

The results from the course evaluations were statistically analysed. The software used was SPSS 28.01. The questions are shown in Appendix 4. Our primary interest was in the questions on students' satisfaction with their course (Q22) and their perceived learning from their course (Q23). The dataset consists of categorical data. Here, they are analysed in two different ways: 1) "as is" with all categories based on strings, and 2) binned into three categories, arranged on a Lickert scale in three steps (Agree, Partially agree, Disagree).

Firstly, a correlation analysis was conducted (the binned data, Bivariate, Spearman). The two questions on course satisfaction and learning outcome are closely correlated (0,762). In addition, it turned out that both the course satisfaction and the learning perceived were significantly correlated to all the questions in the questionnaire apart from those related to workload (Q7 "The course workload has been..." and Q9 "How many hours on average a week have you spent on this course"). Categorical regression has been conducted, using the full dataset based on strings. First, all factors were included, and then a second analysis was done using only the significant factors from the first analysis. *The analyses indicate that the foremost factor explaining course satisfaction (Q21) is the factor of perceived learning (Q22).* However, other factors also contribute, although to a much lesser degree and are not significant on their own in a model with these factors only:

	All responses: Course satisfaction	F-value	Model statistics
1	Q. 22. According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned much	40,4	N = 766 F= 236 p <0,001 Adj. R ² = 0,71
2	Q. 9 How many hours on average a week have you spent on this course	2,7	
3	Q. 15. The course has been well structured from beginning to end	1,9	
4	Q. 19. Feedback on academic achievements during the course has been satisfactory and clear	1,8	

By analysing the individual main programmes, other factors than the perceived learning (Q22) remained significant in the second analysis, although model statistics did not maintain the same high F and R2 values as when all the data were together:

	Pedagogue programme: Course satisfaction	F-value	Model statistics
1	Q. 22. According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned much	61,8	N = 372 F= 50 p <0,001 Adj. R ² = 0,59
2	Q. 15. The course has been well structured from beginning to end	19,2	
3	Q. 14 In my view, the instructor has been well prepared for classes	13,1	
4	Q. 4 According to purpose, contents and learning outcome, the material chosen for the course has been	12,6	
5	Q. 11 The instructor has been able to activate me in class	11,4	
6	Q. 6 The academic level of instruction has been	4,8	

	Teacher programme: Course satisfaction	F-value	Model statistics
1	Q. 22. According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned much	56,2	N = 364 F= 299 p <0,001
2	Q. 19. Feedback on academic achievements during the course has been satisfactory and clear	4,1	

3	Q. 14 In my view, the instructor has been well prepared for classes	0,7	Adj. R ² = 0,83
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Six factors were found to be relevant for the course satisfaction for the pedagogue programme, while only three were identified for the teacher programme.

The same pattern as with course satisfaction (Q21) was found when analysing for factors explaining the learning perception, as only the same two factors (Q21 Overall I am satisfied with the course, and Q 19 Feedback on academic achievements during the course has been satisfactory and clear). Therefore, a more rigid analysis was conducted using stepwise linear regression. Here the binned data were used. A statistical model suggests that these factors were the most important to explain the course satisfaction with the courses at our Faculty during the study year 2021/22:

Predictors	Dependent variable: Overall, I am satisfied with the course
1	Q22 According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned a lot
2	Q15 The course has been well structured from beginning to end
3	Q4 According to purpose, contents and learning outcome, the material chosen for the course has been....
4	Q14 In my view, the instructor has been well prepared for classes
5	Q13 The instructor has succeeded in communicating knowledge clearly
6	Q11 The instructor has been able to activate me in class
7	Q2 At the start of the course, I was well informed about learning outcomes
8	Q7 The course workload has been....

The most important factors on course satisfaction, as suggested by stepwise regression, are mainly teacher oriented: the students want courses that are well structured, good learning materials, well-prepared teachers who can communicate knowledge clearly, and also appreciate being activated in class. Finally, there are some issues with knowledge on learning outcomes and course workload.

The stepwise regression suggests these factors explaining the learning perception:

Predictors	Dependent variable: According to the learning outcomes of the course, I have learned much
1	Q21 Overall I am satisfied with the course
2	Q13 The instructor has succeeded in communicating knowledge clearly
3	Q4 According to purpose, contents and learning outcome the material chosen for the course has been....
4	Q17 I have been given feedback on academic achievements
5	Q2 At the start of the course, I was well informed about learning outcomes
6	Q5 How big part of the teaching material have you read or in other ways prepared
7	Q9 How many hours on average a week have you spent on this course
8	Q13 The instructor has been able to activate me in class

The analysis suggests that the most important factors on learning perception are mainly oriented toward communication, teaching material, feedback, workload, and teaching methods.

Appendix 6: The approach to integrating research into the teaching

Aspiration	How we will get there
That the teaching at the faculty will be undertaken more collaboratively	Most courses have until now been run by one single teacher. This makes the system quite vulnerable and dependent on the teacher. We see in the course evaluations that it newer teachers can benefit from more support. With the teaching instead conducted as teamwork, new teachers have much better opportunities to get help not only with the teaching but also with the organisation of the course, which the course evaluations point out is crucial for the students experience. Teachers might have personal preferences on teamwork, and some prefer to work individually. However, we have started a process to change the teaching structure, replacing the 'module' system and instead using a semester system. This change began last year and will be fully implemented this coming study year (2022/23). With this, teachers need to collaborate more, and the Faculty Leadership Team will follow up on issues that might come up, expecting that we might find more ways of supporting staff to enhance the student experience and the quality of the teaching and learning.
That all teaching staff include relevant research in their teaching	We mainly consider research on Faroese topics and issues as relevant, either conducted in the Faroes or otherwise having professional relevance to the subjects we teach. We want to ensure that we base our teaching more fully on such research. We can do better in informing staff of new research and publications, even by having a "bragging" wall accessible for students and teachers. Here also, relevant master theses could be shown. We have started with research meetings open to all staff once a month, where we present our projects. This is also an opportunity to inform on publications and encourage using the results in the teaching.
That more teaching staff engage in research projects	Here we need to work more long-term and create a plan for how we, step by step, develop a stronger research environment. We can do more to ensure that we are inclusive when working on projects, encouraging and supporting participation.
That the staff profile at our Faculty becomes more research-oriented	The easiest way to achieve this goal would be to appoint researchers in all available positions. We have tried that, but our specific requirements for both subject and didactic knowledge are an obstacle, as there are few of these candidates. Therefore, we have now taken a new approach when applying for a permanent position that we appoint them first as temporary teaching lecturers with the opportunity to be transferred to an assistant professor position when they have an approved project that can lead to a PhD within our area.
That more research is conducted at the Faculty	More resources in terms of staffing and funding are required to increase the amount of research. Here we need to get better at obtaining funding for research and projects from the national budget and by getting research grants. In addition, more cooperation is needed within our own Faculty, with other Faculties at our University, and with other universities. To get more research momentum, we can define research areas that we will focus on within a specified period, for example, the forthcoming three years.
That we will be providing a Master's programme in Education of which we have full ownership	This is closely connected to the vision of increasing the number of our research and research staff. We see several potential groups that would benefit from such a programme, depending on what specialisation the programme will provide. That could be within special needs, classroom management, or general pedagogy and didactics in secondary school (for people with at least a bachelor's degree in a school subject). In this report, we put forward the goal to have a master's programme running within the current decade, but looking at our neighbouring countries, we expect the demand to arise sooner. Therefore, we have as a focal point to start preparing this.

**University of the Faroe Islands,
Reflective Analysis, 2022:
Documents to inform the work of the
International Team conducting the External
Review of our University**

Supplements to the Main Reflective Analysis

**Case Study 2
Developing the Organisation
August 2022**

Introduction

Focusing on organisational development, this case study aims to describe and reflectively to analyse how our University has moved towards a more professional/modern organisational structure in recent years, and in particular since 2019/2020, in accordance with the commitments and priorities of the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*. In doing so, it seeks also to provide some basis for continuing discussions about further organisational developments – discussions on which we would welcome the contribution of the External Review Team.

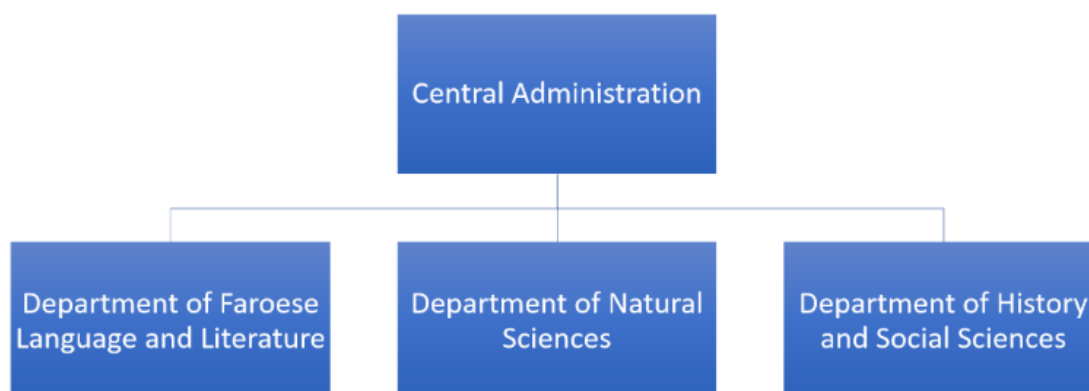
The particular focus is the organisational development of the main administration of our University, and towards the end especially the development and strengthening of our student administration. It is widely felt amongst colleagues, in both the main administration and in the faculties, that a focus on the student administration is of special importance as we work towards the broader modernisation and professionalisation of a single, well-integrated and cohesive University, with common regulations and procedures, and staff who are well-organised and supported to deliver highly competent and efficient administration.

Background and Context

In order to understand the context for this case study, it is necessary first to review the main lines of the past development of our institution, with a special focus on the administrative side of things (some of this information is also mentioned in briefer detail in the main reflective analysis document).

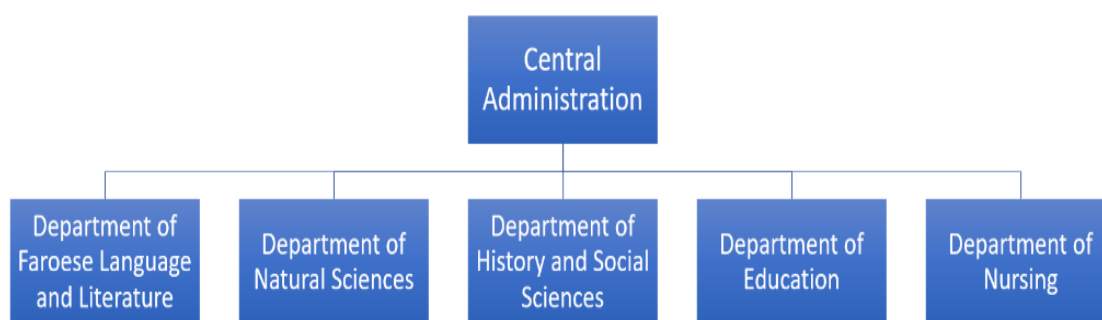
1965-2008: As described in Section 1 of the main document, our University was founded in 1965 and until 2008 it consisted of three main academic units, called at that time ‘departments’: Faroese Language and Literature (est. 1965), Natural Sciences (est. 1972) and History and Social Sciences (est. 1987). During the first 43 years the organisational structure was flat with a very small central administration: the rector (only a 20% position), a ‘university secretary’ (later university director), and a bookkeeper, as well as cleaners, janitors and IT staff who were shared with other institutions in the local area – e.g., the National Archive, the National Library and the National Museum.

The three departments were largely self-governing with limited inter-department interaction, each managed by a head of department and a local departmental secretary. Most tasks related to finances were at the time handled locally by the latter secretary. There was collegial leadership, meaning consensus-based decision making among the rector and the heads of faculty.



2008-2012: The merger between the ‘old university’ and the Teacher Training School (est. 1870) and the Nursing School (est. 1960) meant a big jolt to the system, with, amongst other things, a large

(relative) increase in the number of students, as well as a more developed organisational structure – with two new departments. Each of these new departments had previously, as separate schools, had their own rector who, after the merger, became a head of department instead (reporting to the University Rector). As is often the case with mergers, there were issues of organisational culture and divergent practices. The merger also added to the number of buildings to manage, and the university buildings were no longer clustered in the small area called "Debesartrøð".



2012-2016: In 2012, after only a few years with five departments it was decided to create two faculties (or, in Faroese *megindeildir* – ‘main departments’), as follows.

Faculty of Humanities, consisting of:

- Department of Faroese Language and Literature
- Department of History and Social Sciences
- Department of Education (previously Teacher Training School)

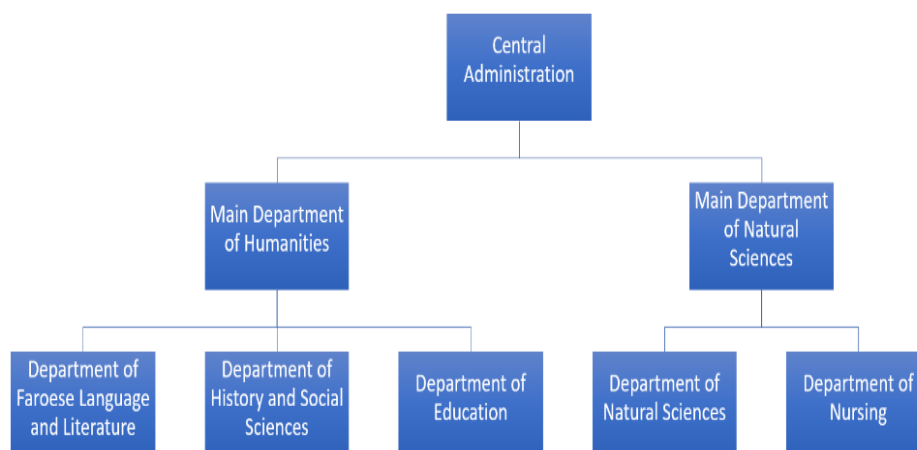
Faculty of Natural Sciences, consisting of:

- Department of Natural Sciences and Technology
- Department of Nursing and Health Sciences (previously Nurse Training School)

The two ‘new’ departments had each retained their own rector, but with the new structure the two main faculties were led by deans instead (who in turn reported to the rector). The two deans were physically placed in the central administration building, i.e., at some remove from their departments (although they would spend certain days out in the departments). The thinking behind this was that a closer collaboration between the central administration (the Rector in particular) and the deans was necessary.

The faculties were spread over several buildings (one over three buildings and the other over two buildings) and the faculty administration was still physically placed with the faculties, although formally they reported to the University Director (the role of ‘university secretary’ had at that time recently been redefined as ‘university director’ as a result of a more complex administration). A finance department was also established as part of the central administration and most of the finance related tasks were thus taken from the faculty secretaries, although some did still remain with them.

The resulting structure is shown below.



The student affairs function was also established in 2014, as part of the central administration (it had previously been handled locally by the faculties themselves). In addition, a number of other developments pertaining to the organisation took place in the same period, including:

- 2012 Staff survey
- 2012 'Avriksáttmáli' (a short-lived, performance contract with the Ministry – in lieu of a strategic plan)
- 2013 Programme leaders were introduced
- 2013 Outsourcing of IT
- 2013 EURAXESS Service Center established
- 2013 Finance function centralised
- 2013 Student Council established
- 2014 Faculty study boards were introduced (only for humanities) - not for Natural Sciences.
- 2014 A central 'student affairs' function created (though manager did not start until 2015)
- 2014 Finance, IT and Student Affairs all report directly to the rector (leaving the university director with only the archivist, janitors, cleaners reporting to him)
- 2014 Academic Council first established (short-lived)
- 2014 Membership of the International Association of Universities
- 2014 Staff survey (follow-up to survey in 2012)
- 2014 Job description for faculty secretaries agreed upon
- 2014 Student survey
- 2014 First University-wide induction/freshers week
- 2014 First strategic plan ('Fróðskaparsetur Føroya - mál og mið (2014-2024)')

A key reference point for the University in this period, informing the 2014 plan, was the publication in 2012 of a book titled *Exit Føroyar* ('Exit Faroe Islands') by Heri á Rógvi and Høgni Reistrup (neither were University staff) was published. The book – which created quite a stir in the Faroe Islands as well as in Denmark – warned against accelerating population decline in the Faroes. It found that half of the young people who moved away to study abroad never moved back again, and that this was especially the case for women. There was a six-year period with negative net migration to the Faroe Islands and this worrying trend did not end until 2014.

It is perhaps not surprising that the only University on the Faroe Islands was moved in this period to adopt a strategy to grow the number of University students in the Faroes as quickly as possible (thereby hopefully countering the general trend where young people would leave and not return).

To quote the 2014 plan: "The University must grow. ... This means that we must have more students and more researchers and that our buildings/facilities must be modernised and centralised." More specifically, the stated goal was to reach 1500 students by 2024.

2016-2019: The structure with two faculties lasted only four years. The 2014 staff survey showed that the faculties felt that not having local management was not working for them and as a result the current arrangement with 5 'faculties' was created (in Faroese, the term department – *deild* – is still used). This period also saw the establishment of some key functions in what an organisation of a relatively large size (by Faroese standards) was increasingly. An HR coordinator was hired (previously basic HR related tasks had largely been handled by the Head of Finance and others) and the role of archivist was merged with that of executive secretary (50/50 split). Prior to this the organisation and minute taking relating to all leadership/board meetings and events was handled directly by the University Director and the Rector had no dedicated secretarial assistance, either. The Student Affairs office was also further strengthened and consolidated, through taking responsibility for the main student records system, *Próvbókin*, and the addition of a further member of staff – as well as assuming some limited responsibility for the oversight of student counselling in the older parts of the University.

A key development in this period was that in 2018 our Board and Ministry together commissioned an independent analysis of the University with a focus on financial management. A working group consisting of staff at the university and representatives from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance was assembled. The chair, and main author of the resulting report, was Leif Abrahamsen who was (and remains) the head of a central department under the Ministry of Finance (*Gjaldstovan* – the 'payments office', but in practice it is much more than that).

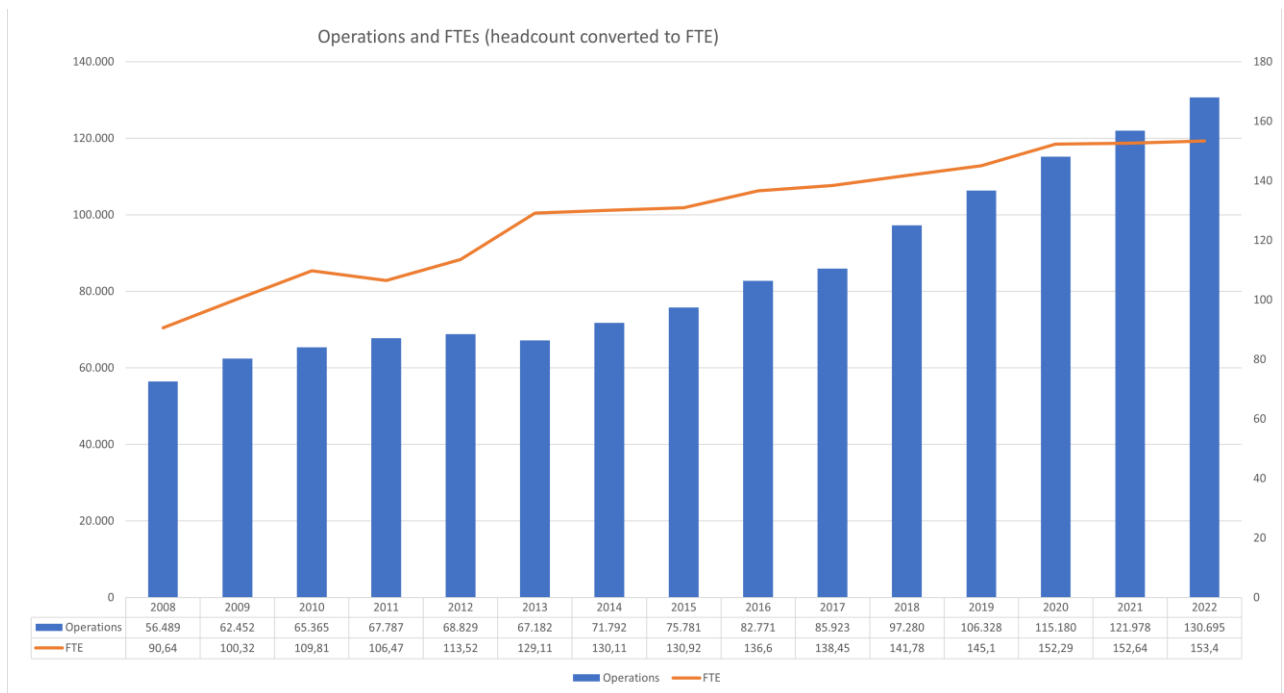
The background was that the University had struggled to make ends meet in the preceding couple of years and there was a perceived lack of trust between the University leadership and the Ministry. Therefore, the Board and Ministry wanted an assessment of how the University handled its finances (also compared to other universities) and a proposal for a mutually agreed budgetary model.

In terms of administrative functions, the evaluation report stated: "while the academic staff has (almost) doubled in size, the administrative staff has practically stayed the same. ... It is difficult to rectify this since it is difficult politically to sell the message 'to exchange warm hands for cold hands'..." (p. 16). In this perhaps unfortunate metaphor, the 'warm hands' are academic staff while the 'cold hands' are administrative staff. The report stated: "if we used the ratio from 2008 for the fiscal year 2017, then UFI ought to have 59 administrative staff which is 16 more than is the case currently. Of course, there is not a need for this number, but there is a need for more than are in place today." (p. 17)

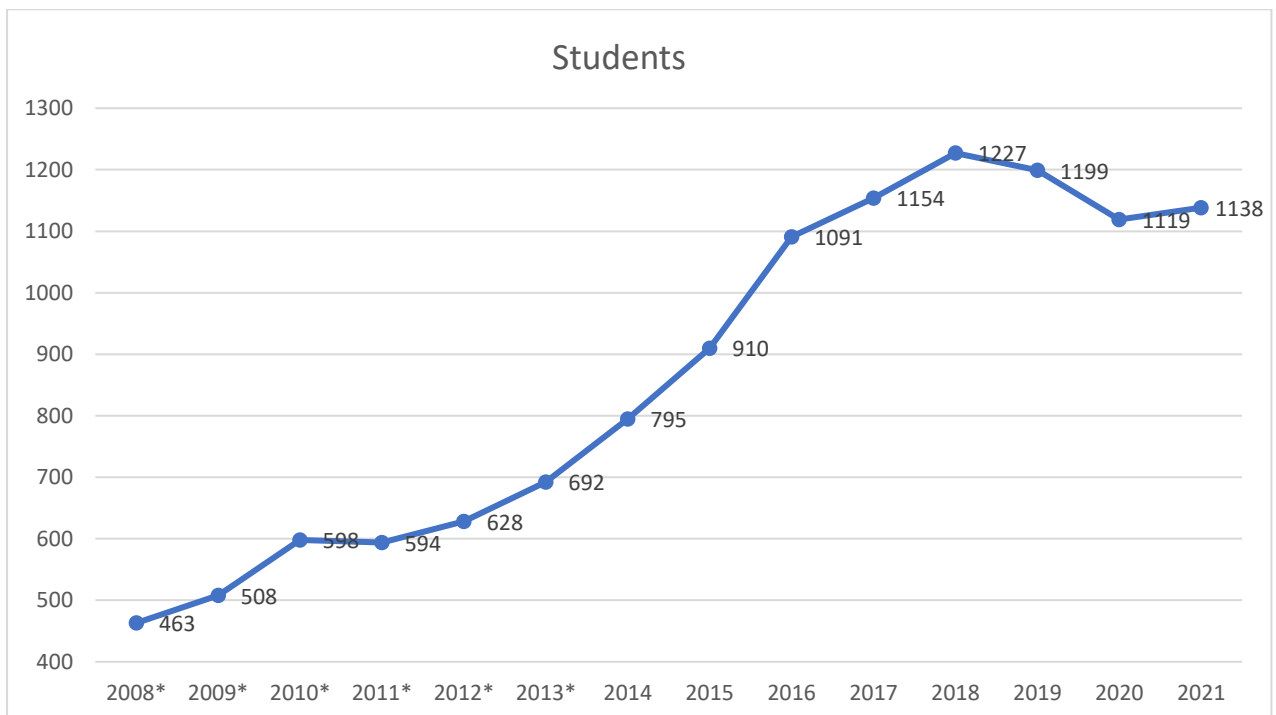
While the impetus for the evaluation was challenging (perceived lack of trust), the result was a net positive for the University. Although the report suggested that some changes should be made to financial operations, it also stated that, by and large, the University was run in a responsible way and it highlighted the need for further funding and a strengthening of the university administration. Since the report was written by an external party with high credibility within the political system, it became easier for the University to argue its case. In order to grow the number of students and staff it was necessary to increase the funding (which almost exclusively came, and still comes, from the Faroese government). This was likely a factor in some additional funding, referred to below, which was provided for the purposes of "strengthening the administration" in the 2020 financial year.

As can be seen in the graph below, as a result of increased government funding, the University's operations and staff numbers (in headcount and FTEs) has continued to increase, and indeed has

almost doubled in monetary terms (not adjusted for inflation) between 2013 and 2022 (though, of course, we have been doing a lot of new things as a consequence).



Also, the graph below⁷⁶ shows that the number of student has grown significantly since the merger in 2008. The number of students continued to grow until 2018 and then declines in 2019 and 2020. The primary cause for this is the disenrollment of inactive students that previously had been allowed to remain enrolled despite being inactive in terms of ECTS production.



⁷⁶ Numbers from “Búskettgreining og fíggarlig stýring av Fróðskaparsetrinum” (2018) and internal numbers.

2019-present: In 2019, a new rector was appointed and a new *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, was developed ('*Mál og mið: 2020-2024*'). The new *Plan* placed a much stronger focus on quality assurance and enhancement, as part of a wider project aiming to achieve professionalisation and modernisation of an integrated University. This had some important implications for the then current organisational structure, which have already been outlined in section 1a*ii* of the main Reflective Analysis document.

The key challenges included:

- A relatively weak and under-resourced central administration, at best struggling to oversee the operation of a single and well-integrated University – including the lack of central oversight/support for the main functions of the University, in education and in research.
- Following from the above, faculties which were tending to operate with a high degree of relative autonomy, leading to significant divergences in practices.
- A tendency to emphasise the 'representational' role of Deans, over a collective/corporate focus on responsibility for the leadership of the University as a whole.
- An underdeveloped management structure, whereby the University Leadership Team members were directly responsible for managing all of the University's staff, making it very difficult for the Deans and Director to support staff and staff development.
- Insufficient opportunities for staff to gain experience of leadership and management as part of their career development, leading to critical issues in securing good succession.

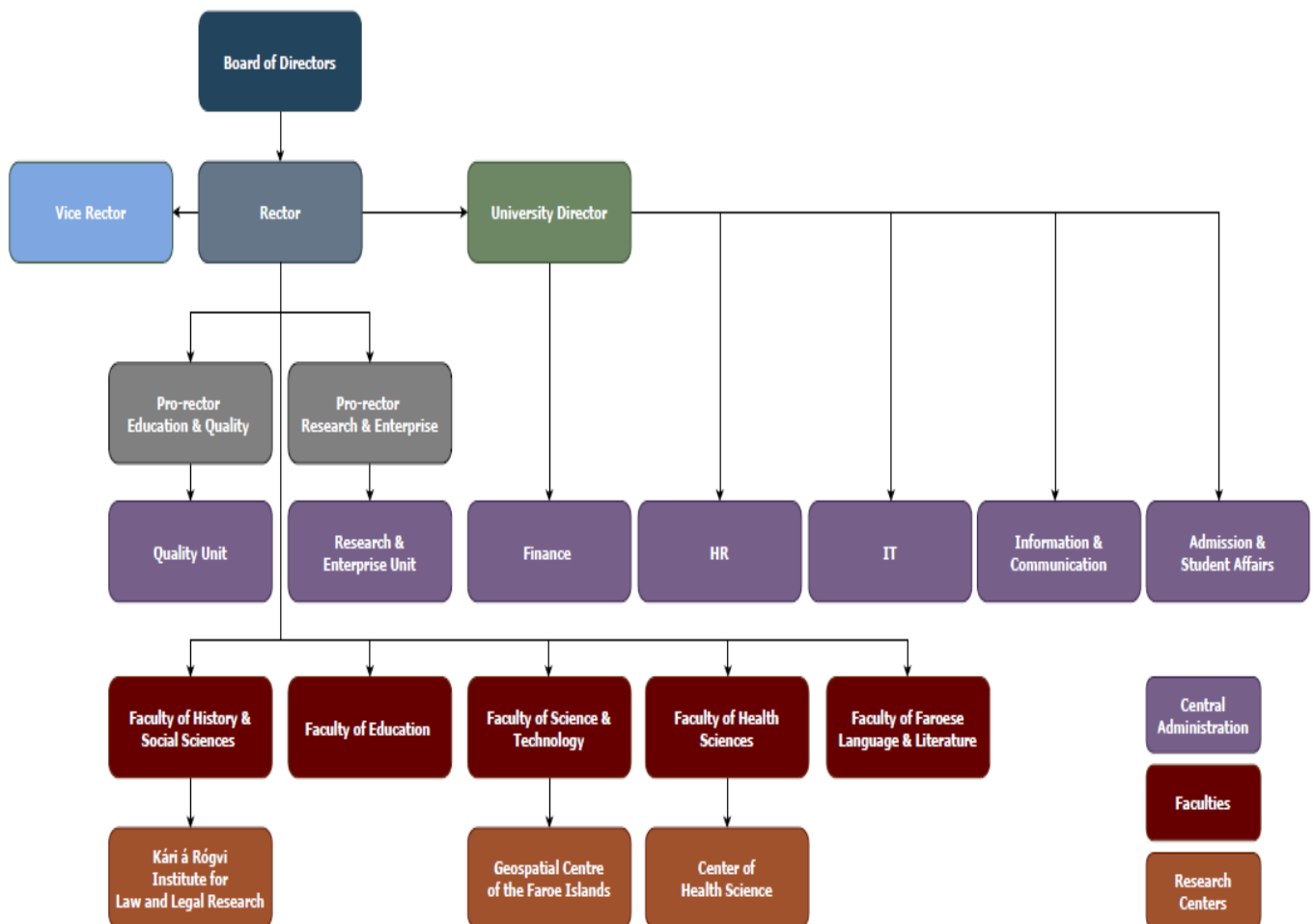
The main changes arising, which initially were supported by additional funding of 1.5m kr. provided by government for the year 2020, included:

- A re-focusing of a more professionalised University Leadership Team, including a further move towards a 'corporate' perspective on the leadership of the University as a whole.
- An ongoing strengthening and reorganisation of the main University administration, under the University Director, progressing towards greater institutional integration and cohesion.
- The creation of new Quality Unit, to "develop in dialogue and partnership with students, staff and external stakeholders, clear policies and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of all our programmes – in accordance with the Bologna Process" and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. The Unit began with one member of staff, which has since increased to two.
- The creation of a new Research and Enterprise Unit, focusing on supporting researcher and enterprise activity, across the institution. This Unit also began with one member of staff, which has since increased to two.
- The creation of the new roles of pro-rector – for Education and for Research and Enterprise – to oversee these units. In each case this mean the partial (30%) redeployment of an existing Dean, while their faculty was recompensed for their time.

Another key focus of organisational development was to address the outdated management structure. The deans and the University Director had at that time as many as 30 or more direct reports and this was deemed unsustainable (see also Case Study 3: The New Annual Review Conversation Process for Staff). Consequently, a more developed and distributed line management structure was introduced with the aim that a manager should ideally not have more than 8 direct reports (though in practice we have not yet been able to achieve that in all cases). The introduction of such line management has been absolutely vital, but also not unproblematic. As a public institution, there is not much leeway for rewarding staff who take on extra responsibilities, and line management responsibilities have not in our context been understood to be something which staff in more senior positions can be expected to carry, unless they wish to do so.

Ultimately, this challenge was addressed through the creation of Faculty Leadership Teams, led by Deans of Faculty, and including newly appointed Deputy Deans and also a Faculty Research Leader. The teams were conceived as providing support deans in meeting the responsibilities of faculty leadership, including the management of faculty staff, and also as providing staff with opportunities to obtain experience in leadership positions before becoming senior leaders themselves. Nonetheless, the financial rewards for taking these positions – and indeed all leadership positions at our University – are very modest indeed. They are, unfortunately, both beyond our immediate control, due to national regulation, and also, in our estimation, not commensurate with the associated responsibilities. This is something we believe that government should review.

An updated (and somewhat fuller) representation of the resulting structure is as indicated overleaf (though note that the development of the Faculty Leadership Teams is not shown).



A key aim for these new arrangements has been to produce greater cohesion, through the cross-institution reach of the new central units and pro-rectors, together with the strengthened central administration more generally – in Student Affairs, Communication and HR. Other key drivers for cohesion include the creation of an **Extended University Leadership Team**, (including Deputy Deans, Faculty Research Leaders and the main leaders of the administrative units overseen by the Director) which has met on a roughly 6-8 week cycle (covid permitting) to progress key University-wide matters.

While these various developments and innovations remain relatively new, the indications are that they are generally viewed quite positively and are seen to be achieving progress towards the desired objectives of modernising, professionalising, and integrating the University. This is reflected in feedback provided at a special all-staff event conducted at the end of 2021 to inform this reflective analysis.⁷⁷ It is also reflected in feedback we have received from students, including at a session organised to inform the writing of this document.⁷⁸

We feel that there is continuing work to be done to develop our organisational structure to further meet our ambitions. Providing impetus towards this, several of our administrative staff have been making visits to other universities – in Norway, Denmark, and Iceland – to learn about how those institutions are organised and operate.⁷⁹ One relevant suggestion arising from these visits has been to consider further reviewing administration across our University, bringing administrative staff currently within the faculties into a closer relationship with the centre – to achieve greater consistency and cohesion, and stronger support for the delivery of our educational programmes – while still maintaining a level of local secretarial/administrative support within the faculties. We go on to discuss this below.

Focus on the Administration

We saw earlier how, after the financial review of 2018, finances continued to increase, and also student numbers were increasing. At the same time, the number of staff in teaching and research positions also grew, broadly in line with the increase in students. However, the number of administrative staff did not grow correspondingly (and in proportional terms actually decreased).

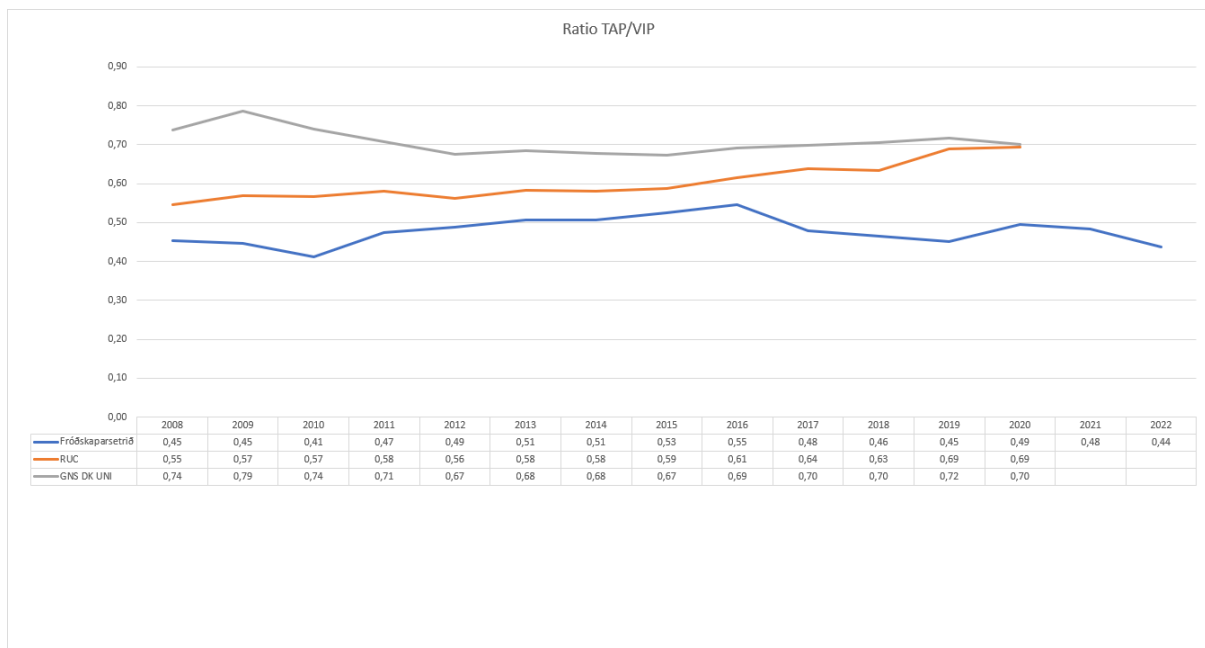
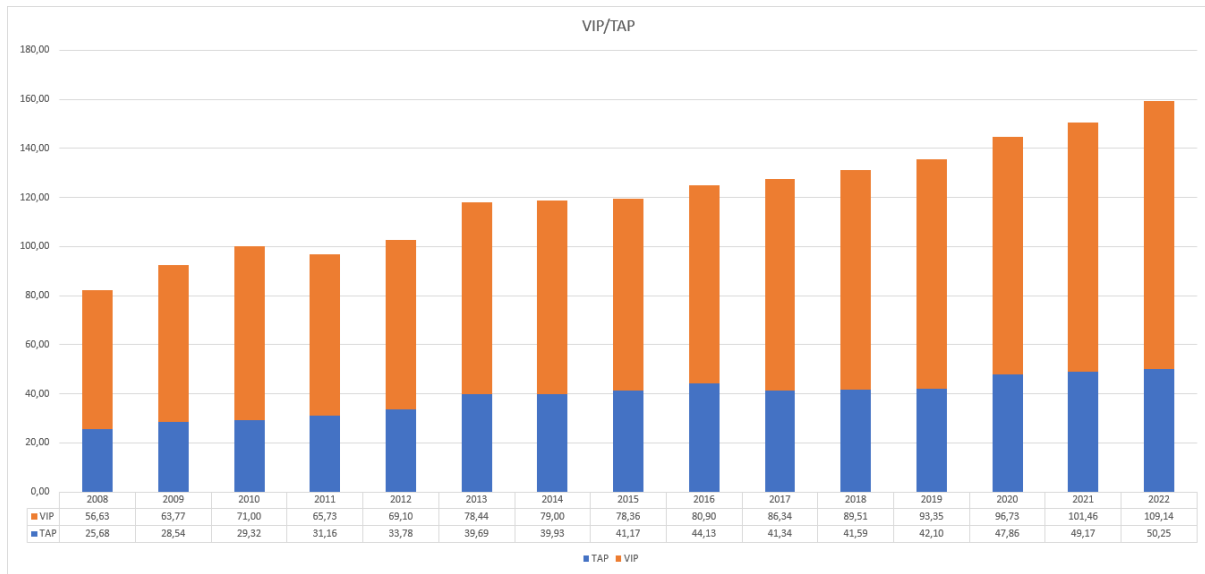
This can be seen in the two graphs below. The first shows absolute numbers of staff in teaching and research positions ('VIP' - Videnskabelig Personale in Danish, shown in orange) and administrative/support staff (TAP - Teknisk/Administrativt Personale in Danish – shown in blue). The disproportion in growth is very clear.

The second graph shows the TAP/VIP ratio for our University (the blue line) compared to the average for the 8 Danish universities (the grey line), including Roskilde University (the orange line – added separately since it has had the lowest TAP/VIP ratio of the 8 Danish universities). In this case we can see our University continuing seriously to lag behind the much larger Danish institutions, even with Roskilde catches up with their average. Of course, these much larger institutions could be expected to benefit from economies of administrative scale, which are not available to our University

⁷⁷ See “Developing our University’s Collective Voice in the Context of the 2021-2022 External Review”, available in the relevant Team’s folder. Detail of this feedback is provided in the main RA document.

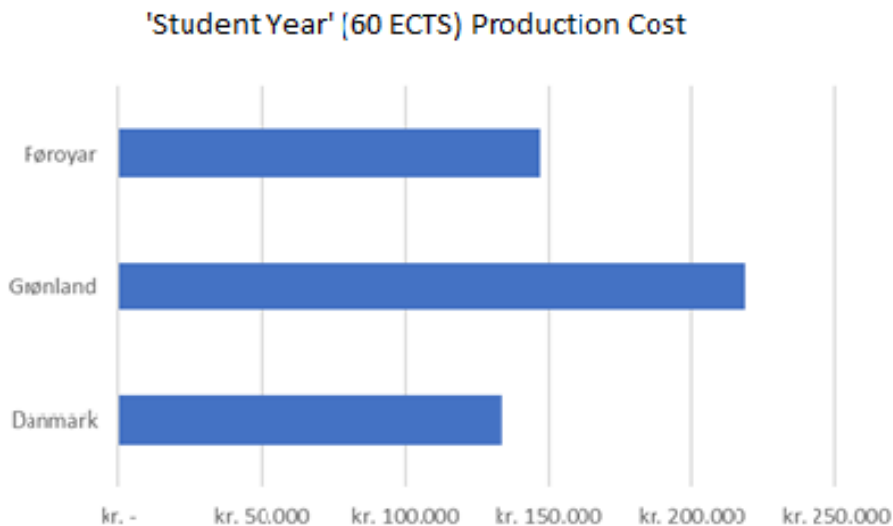
⁷⁸ Detail of this feedback from staff is also provided in the relevant parts of the main RA document.

⁷⁹ Additionally, UFI is an active member of NUAS (Nordic University Administration Society) and our staff have recently been given the opportunity to join the many NUAS subgroups, which promises to provide valuable insight into how other Nordic universities are organised and operate. With all of this in mind, organisational development has been chosen by us as one of the case studies for this review process, and we will be pleased to receive feedback from the ERT on that.



The aforementioned 2018 finance report also looked into the cost of producing 60 ECTS at our University compared to Danish universities and the University of Greenland (the latter being of a similar size). As can be seen in the graph below⁸⁰, despite the economies of scale in the Danish context, a 'student year' (60 ECTS) is only marginally more costly in the Faroes compared to Denmark, but considerably less expensive than in Greenland (also a small university).

⁸⁰ From "Búskettgreining og fíggjarlig stýring av Fróðskaparsetrinum" (2018)

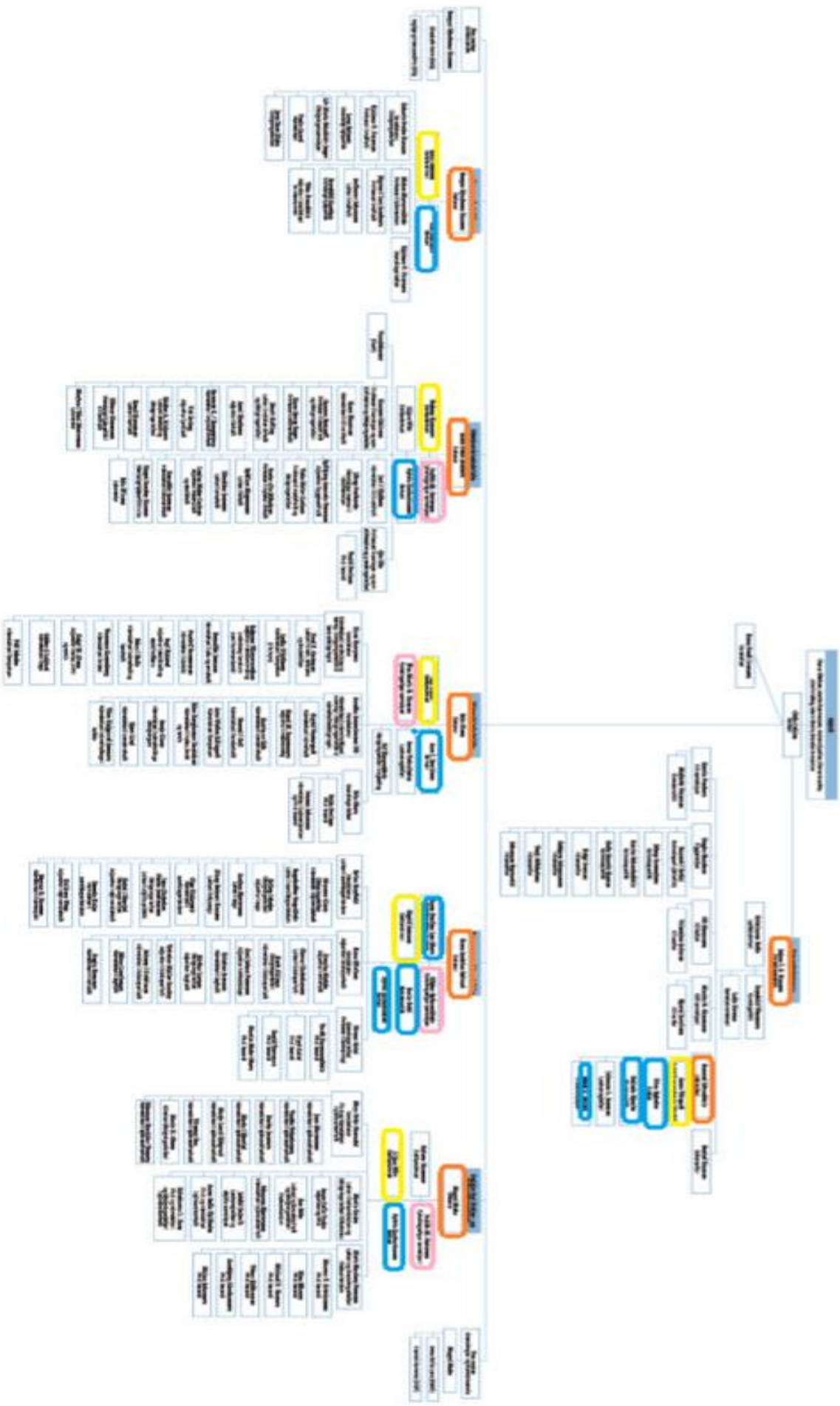


The situation in the period of the formulation of the previous plan was one which some would describe as approaching an existential crisis for the Faroes – due to the aforementioned population decline and loss of young people to migration. In that context, very high expectations were placed on our University – as expressed in our 2014 mission statement, "The University of the Faroe Islands secures the future of the Faroe Islands". Given this, it is perhaps, in one way, understandable that strengthening the administration was not a high priority for all the relevant stakeholders at that time; but it is something that has led to significant challenges for our University – which we have been working hard, with some welcome support from government, to address. Here it is also useful to note that the Ministry itself has had quite limited resources allocated to the higher education sector, considerably limiting the support that they can provide to our University – though there has been some increase in resourcing in the recent period.

Student Administration Analysis: Current arrangements, challenges and possible remedies

So far this document has provided a contextualised overview and analysis of the developing organisation of our University. Although the administration was shown to still be relatively small compared to other universities, considerable progress has been made in more recent years, including through strengthening Student Affairs, the addition of the HR function, the introduction of a Quality Unit and a Research and Enterprise Unit, and other things previously mentioned. However, the part of the administration dealing specifically with the administration of students and educational programmes has some longstanding challenges which the leadership feels the need to try to address going forward.

The organisational chart below illustrates this. The chart itself is very large and difficult to present, but the key aspect to highlight is the dispersal across the organisation (both in the central administration and among the faculties) of the roles involving student administration. These roles are highlighted in colour – orange, yellow, blue and pink (the precise reasons for the different colours are not so important here). The (non-coloured) [enlargeable graphic](#) itself can also be accessed online, should readers want to look at it more closely.



From July 2022, our Interim Pro-Rector of Education and University Director have collaborated in leading a group conducting a preliminary analysis of the student administration processes and tasks at our University. The focus has been charting the challenges that the faculties and Student Affairs are facing in dealing with student administration. The analysis has based on written material from Student Affairs and the faculties, as well as on interviews with programme leaders, faculty secretaries and others.

It is important to note that as we write (August 2022) this analysis is at a preliminary stage. In the coming weeks there will be further fact finding, analysis and consultation with staff.

The analysis has been organised around 5 main areas:

1. Approval and evaluation of educational programmes and courses
2. Admission and disenrollment of students for/from educational programmes/single courses
3. Administration relating to teaching/project supervision
4. Administration relating to exams
5. Student counselling and other student services

In what follows, we present for each of these main themes both some of the initial key observations arising from the fact-finding conducted so far, and then some potential remedies which have been mentioned as part of the discussion.

1. Approval and evaluation of educational programmes and courses

This area includes administrative tasks related to the description and ongoing quality control of programmes and courses, and encompasses most procedures related to quality enhancement, such as development of quality systems and approval and evaluation of new and amended programmes and courses.

<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The faculties believe that the Quality Unit has considerably strengthened quality enhancement work during the last couple of years. • Programme leaders are asking for more common regulations and procedures, for instance in relation to development, approval, registration and publication of programme descriptions ('námsskipanir'). • The faculties have very different procedures regarding development and approval of course descriptions • The role of study boards and their level of authority and competence is somewhat unclear. • The faculties lack shared procedures for following up on course evaluations – particularly when it comes to external teachers. 	<p>Possible remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More shared regulations and procedures for all programmes, e.g. registering and de-registering to/from courses, shared exam types, shared procedures for bachelor and master level projects and shared rules for re-examinations. • Common terms of reference for study boards across faculties and ongoing training and support for study board members. • Develop a shared general framework for UFI study plans. • Develop shared 'annual cycle' ('árshjul') for quality control, including approval of course descriptions and course evaluations.
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2. Admission and disenrollment of students for/from educational programmes/single courses

This includes the ongoing monitoring of student engagement, issuing of diplomas, handling of complaints related to admissions and disenrollment, handling applications for leave of absence and changes to student information (e.g. name changes).

<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The faculties are pleased with the development and operation of Student Affairs. • Some procedures are affected by lack of an IT solution – e.g. Quota 2 applications are evaluated only in hard copy (paper). • Admission procedures to single courses are not the same across the faculties and are quite time consuming. 		<p>Possible remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen use of IT systems for admissions. • Centralise administration of admissions and disenrollment of single course students in Student Affairs ('one door in policy'). • All applications for leave of absence to be handled by Student Affairs (via student counsellors).
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3. Administration relating to teaching/project supervision

This includes manning of courses and project supervision, enrolling students to mandatory and elective courses, room booking, issuing key cards and Learning Management System administration (Moodle).

<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring external teachers is demanding for several of the faculties. • Signing up for (or withdrawing from) courses happens via Moodle, but there are no common procedures across faculties. • Time-consuming to create individual syllabuses for students who are falling behind – not least in relation to signing up for or withdrawing from courses. • Moodle support varies from faculty to faculty – provided by both the IT department and local super users in the faculties. • The distribution of administrative tasks between the faculty office and programme leaders/teachers differs from faculty to faculty. 		<p>Possible remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide shared procedures for registering and de-registering to/from courses and strengthen IT support in this area. • Organise all Moodle support in one support unit/team. • Develop shared best practices for distribution of tasks between student administration and programme leaders/teachers.
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4. Administration relating to exams

This includes approval of, and agreements with, external examiners, organising exams and re-exams, registering and de-registering students to/from exams, handling preapproval, merit, sick leave, registering exam results as well as handling cases of plagiarism and complaints from students relating to exams. Also, administration of the IT system for exams (WISEflow). Ph.D. study activity is also covered by this.

<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures relating to exams are relatively similar across faculties. • Faculties are satisfied with the administration as a whole. • Faculty offices spend a lot of time organising exams. • Students apply for preapproval and merit at the faculties – procedures are quite heavy and time consuming. 		<p>Possible remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop shared examination types and shared rules for registering and de-registering to/from exams (including applications for sick leave). • Strengthen IT support in relation to administration of exams. • Student Affairs to handle plagiarism and exam complaints. • Centralise administration of pre-approval and merit in Student Affairs. Student Councils should only deal with cases of a precedential ('prinsippiellari') nature.
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5. Student counselling and other student services

In addition to general counselling and support for students, this also covers counselling and support for special needs students, including applications for exemptions or special exam setup.

<p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good collaboration between faculties and student counsellors. • Some uncertainty about the division of tasks between programme leaders and student counsellors. Students who are falling behind for various reasons are particularly demanding. • Different procedures when applying for exam exemptions. 		<p>Possible remedies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should be encouraged to avail themselves to a larger extent of student counselling. • Regular meetings between student counsellors and programme leaders should be scheduled. • Develop shared procedures for how to apply for exam exemptions via student counsellors.
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Here we repeat, this analysis is at a preliminary stage and in the coming weeks we will enter a process of further fact finding, analysis and consultation with staff. *We are including the preliminary findings in this case study since it would be valuable to us to hear the views of the External Review Team about the challenges described and possible remedies so far identified.*

Concluding Reflection

In a relatively short timespan, our University has transformed as an organisation from a single 'department' focusing on the development and preservation of Faroese language and literature into a University with five faculties and 25+ educational programmes at all higher education levels. The 2008 merger in particular was a very large shift. No merger is uncomplicated and a simultaneous merger of two larger institutions with a smaller entity always carries the potential for a major disruption and challenge for any organisation. That, in conjunction with a political push for fast growth in student numbers and educational programmes, created a situation where, metaphorically speaking, the exoskeleton – i.e., the administration – did not expand in line with the expansion of the larger body it has been intended to support.

Thankfully, today there is more of an understanding, both internally and externally, that the administrative functions must be prioritised in order to reach both the expectations of the law and executive orders, and also the widely endorsed commitments and priorities of the Strategic Plan. However, as the VIP/TAP ratio graphs above showed, we are still trailing considerably behind other universities.

The student administration part in particular is something that needs to be prioritised in order to ensure that our University delivers what is required, and that we are able to support the efficient and effective delivery of an international quality, and continuously improving, student experience.

Developing our organisation is a continuous process and much work is still needed in order for us to live up to the goals set forth in our *Strategic Plan*. However, we are encouraged by the progress already made and how we have managed to make some significant improvements over a relatively short period of time, making some creative use of limited funding and resources. For our future progress, we would very much welcome any reflections or suggestions which the External Review Team may have to offer.

**University of the Faroe Islands,
Reflective Analysis, 2022:
Documents to inform the work of the
International Team conducting the External
Review of our University**

Supplements to the Main Reflective Analysis

Case Study 3

**The New Annual Review Conversation Process for
Staff – the My Contribution and Professional
Development Conversation (MCPDC)**

August 2022

Context: As indicated in the main reflective analysis document, the development of our University since its founding in 1965 has been incremental, and the investment in, and development of, overall managerial and administrative functions and capacities has been limited – and has lagged behind the more general development of the institution. This has been acknowledged in recent times by the Faroese government, and there has been a commitment to strengthening the overall managerial and administrative capacity of the organisation.

The arrival of a new University Director in 2017 led over the next couple of years to some important strengthening, including the creation of managerial secretary capacity and, importantly, the appointment in May 2019 of our University's first dedicated HR Co-ordinator. Previously, HR duties had largely been handled by the Head of Finance as a 'side task'. However, while welcome, the new appointment meant still a very small central HR function for an organisation with some 150 staff.

On arrival in 2019, our current Rector wanted to use the new HR capacity to support the implementation of a system of annual review conversations for staff, drawing on his experience in helping to develop and implement such a system at the University of the West of Scotland. Previously there had not been such a system at our University. The Director had monthly 1-to-1 meetings with his key direct reports and there had also been annual conversations for most staff at one of our faculties, mostly focused on well-being. Otherwise, there was nothing systematic in place.

However, it was soon identified that the prevailing arrangements for the management of staff were not suitable for the implementation of such a system, and this was particularly the case at faculty level, where all members of staff – both those in teaching and research positions and those in administrative and support positions at faculty level – reported directly to a single manager, the dean. In some cases, this meant a dean being directly responsible for the management of 30+ members of staff. The University Director was also directly overseeing too many staff – including cleaners and janitors.

These arrangements were creating all kinds of challenges, because it is not really possible for a manager directly to support such large numbers of staff and to deal with all of the associated communication and tasks arising – or at least it is unlikely that they would be able to do it very well and in ways which are recognised as appropriate in a modern and professional University. Some of the issues arising at our largest faculties were tending strongly to confirm this. In one case, there was no dean in place, and it was proving very difficult to find someone willing to take the responsibility. More generally, however, we were hearing from staff, to varying degrees across different parts of the institution, that they were dissatisfied with issues in getting access to and responses from their managers.

Overall, given the existing arrangements, it would have been, at best, very difficult indeed for the deans and director to implement a meaningful annual review conversation process, with the production of the associated documentation, for so many members of staff.

Strategic Plan, 2020-2024 and Faculty Leadership Teams: At the stage of formulating our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, based on extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including, of course, staff, all of this was recognised – in the section on People and Organisational Development, which established the following priorities:

- To review and develop our organizational structures, modernizing and professionalizing in line with developments elsewhere, and investing available resources to achieve that.
- To at least double our investment in our Human Resources office, which will develop and lead on the implementation of appropriate policies for the University, including those for workload allocation, annual review and positive working relationships.
- To establish and maintain strong and consistent communication across the University, particularly between leaders and those they are responsible for leading, and with all other relevant stakeholders.

The actual implementation of these priorities, which were approved by the Board together with the overall *Plan*, in the Spring of 2020, was somewhat delayed by the global pandemic, but by the later part of 2020 progress was made in terms of the creation of Faculty Leadership Teams – with one or more Deputy Deans in each faculty, supporting the Dean, together with a Faculty Research Leader.⁸¹ This enabled a distribution of management responsibilities within faculties, and at the same time a parallel redistribution within the administration took place. All of this created a system of management which made the implementation of a system of annual review conversations much more feasible, and on this basis, we proceeded to draft and consult on such a system.

It is important to note that such a system had by this stage been discussed by the Board. It in fact set implementation as a key priority for the University leadership. The Board also very helpfully approved an updated version of our “Regulations Governing Positions at the University of the Faroe Islands”, which was by then significantly out of date (including in terms of some of the basic job descriptions) and needed to be refreshed in order to inform the implementation of the MCPDC process.⁸²

Outlining a System and Consulting with the Extended University Leadership Team: Initially, an outline of the *purpose* of a system of annual review of contribution and professional development for staff, and also of a *process* for it, together with some broad *guidelines* and an *outline of opportunities and benefits* for both parties to the conversation, was drafted. This document later provided the basis for the guidelines provided to staff for implementing the system (see Appendix 1). The document was shared with the ten recently-created Extended University Leadership Team (EULT) – comprising all staff with management responsibilities – and presented by our HR Co-ordinator at the EULT meeting on 26th January 2021.

In that document, the purpose of such a system was described as one that “begins from the strategic aims of (an) organisation, and then matches objectives proposed by and agreed with staff to the contributions they aim to make across the year”, and as one which “at the same time aims to support staff to achieve their objectives and to progress in their careers”. More generally, it was explained, “the whole process typically aims to ensure very good mutual understanding between managers and staff, and to support everyone’s well-being.”

The document then continued: “In some organisations, this kind of process is referred to as the ‘annual review process’ and in others as a ‘performance development review process’. We believe that the name that will best describe our process is the ‘My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation’ (MCPDC) – because it is a process of ongoing conversation focused on

⁸¹ In one Faculty – Natural Sciences and Technology – it has not been possible to appoint a Deputy Dean. There are two in Education and two in History and Social Sciences, and one each in Health Sciences and Faroese Language and Literature.

⁸² This was itself a significant organisational task consuming a great deal of senior staff time.

supporting staff to achieve their contribution objectives and their professional development goals, and to progress in their careers”.

In presenting the system in these terms, we were seeking to allay the potential fears of some teaching and research staff that we might be considering implementing a system which was somehow alien to the academic environment. We were not seeking, that is, to “drive performance”, and even less to infringe academic freedom, but rather were seeking to support everyone to contribute, collaborate and communicate really well, in pursuit of the agreed commitments and priorities of our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, and to support them also in their aspirations for professional and career development. In doing all of this, moreover, we were clearly responding to the wishes for staff, who had been asking in different ways for precisely these kinds of things in the conversations around the formulation and implementation of our *Strategic Plan*.

At the EULT meeting, the HR Co-ordinator also presented a timeline (year wheel – see Appendix 2) for the first implementation of such a system, which was to be organised on a ‘cascade’ principle – with the Chair of the Board conducting the first conversation with the Rector in February 2021, and then the Rector meeting with the rest of the ULT thereafter, and so on through the management structures of the institution. In this way, the aim was to seek to align, in a constructive way, the thinking of all staff with the strategic commitments and priorities which had been, after extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders, approved by the Board

The EULT welcomed the proposals and offered valuable comments and suggestions, discussing potential challenges in conducting conversations and how to handle them. Members stressed the importance of careful preparation and guidance for implementation and the need to earmark resources to support professional development requests. It was agreed that there would be a ‘workshop’ on implementation as part of the subsequent EULT meeting on the 23rd of February. Meantime, the proposals would also be shared with the University’s Collaboration Committee on the 4th of February and guidance documents in both English and Faroese were to be prepared, together with a template for the main document which would form the main basis of the conversation process. As soon as the main documents were ready, the process would begin.

Consulting Widely: Over the next few weeks, the Rector addressed specially convened meetings of each of the faculties and the main administration, together with the HR Co-ordinator. The Rector presented on the implementation of the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* over the previous year, under the main headings:

- Where are we coming from? (Including an analysis of the issues identified in the 2019 review and update of the previous *Goals and Strategy, 2014-2024*, and the challenges these issues presented);
- Where are we going to? (Reminding staff of the main Mission, Vision, Commitments and Priorities of the *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*);
- How are we getting there? (Detailing carefully the organisational changes being implemented to support implementation of our *Plan*, and their rationale, and explaining the main foci of activity in that period, including the strengthening of the HR function, the reorganisation of the management system, and the impending implementation of the MCPDC process).

Following from that, the HR Co-ordinator presented more on the detail of the MCPDC process – including the main rationale, approach, guidelines and schedule for implementation.

Over the same period, the plans and associated documents were presented for consultation and feedback to both our University's Collaboration Committee and Health and Safety Committee (due to the relevance to staff well-being). These are both committees which to a certain extent had fallen into abeyance in the period prior to the autumn of 2019 and had been reconceived (especially in the case of the Collaboration Committee) and re-activated in the ensuing months.

The responses from all of the above fora were generally very positive – both about the fact that such presentations and consultations were taking place, and also to the substance of the proposals presented for the annual review conversations. Several staff indicated that they felt such conversations would significantly improve the operation of the University, their working relationships, their general well-being and feelings about their work, and also support their professional development and career aspirations. Overall, the proposals were welcomed and seen to be in line the key aspirations of the *Plan*.

The feedback from the Collaboration Committee was particularly helpful – welcoming the fact that the ethos of the system was appropriate for a University context and also that there were no plans to individually 'rate' individual staff members for their 'performance', but rather that there was a focus on 'contribution, collaboration and professional development'. While the latter emphasis was seen to have more of a focus to it than was perhaps the case in other Faroese institutions which conduct annual reviews (in which cases the emphasis tends to be largely on 'well-being' issues), the focus was also seen to be very appropriate in addressing salient issues in the organisation.

The Collaboration Committee was also interested in plans for the sharing of the content of the main MCPDC document which was to be produced by members of staff and their managers (see Appendix 2). It was agreed that the document would only be seen by the member of staff and their manager, and then the manager's manager – who would be invited to add their own comment to the document, which would then be shared with the staff member. The only part of the document to be shared with anyone else was section 5, containing the Professional Development Plan and requests, which would be forwarded separately to HR for collation and subsequent action.

Some staff members in the weeks ahead of implementation expressed some reservations about how the documents were to be used and asked about bringing trade union representation to their MCPDC meetings, but they were reassured that these were not disciplinary meetings and were intended to support staff in their employment and contribution. The relevant staff seem to have accepted this reassurance; in the event, no staff actually sought to bring trade union representation with them to their meeting.

Training and Support for Managers: The next stage was to provide some training and support for implementation for managers, and this was done at the EULT meeting on the 23rd of February 2021. Ahead of the meeting, members were provided with documents as follows:

- The now formalised guidelines for implementation (based on the document provided at the EULT meeting in January) (see Appendix 1);
- An updated 'year wheel' – timeline for implementation (see Appendix 2);
- The main template for the Conversation process (see Appendix 3);
- A short document providing advice on SMART objectives (see Appendix 4).

An extract from the minutes of the session, relating to this 'workshop' part of the meeting, is provided in Appendix 5. EULT members worked in groups initially to discuss how they would prepare for and approach the conversation process, before the HR Co-ordinator presented their own thoughts on the matter. Thereafter, it had been intended to return to group work, but the discussion

by this stage was proceeding so well in the larger group that it was decided to continue on that basis. Discussion focused on how one might approach a conversation when a colleague did not want to set objectives for the year ahead, how staff should be reassured about confidentiality, how documents should be stored in order to align with confidentiality requirements, and how long a typical conversation might last. Suggestions were received about how best to phrase key sections of the document in Faroese – and these were taken up – and how those who had a fairly large number of staff to deal with would spread the workload, especially on first implementation. There was also discussion about PhD students, and whether they would be included in the system.⁸³

Finally, it was agreed that the template for the main conversation would be presented to staff at Faculty and administration meetings, but after EULT members had their own main conversation, so that their experience could inform the discussions at faculty and administration levels. At the end of the session, EULT members expressed optimism and excitement about the new opportunities presented by the system, at the same time as noting the substantial workload which would be involved in implementing and sustaining it. It was noted that the HR Co-ordinator would be able to support staff in various ways.

First Implementation: By this time, first implementation had already begun – with the Chair of the Board conducting the conversation with the Rector, and the Rector had also scheduled the conversation meetings for the University Leadership Team. The guidance provided to the Rector by the Chair of the Board had been that he was very pleased with the approach to date and felt that a reasonably successful first implementation would be a major step forward for the University.

Thereafter, implementation progressed on the cascade principle and as it did so, feedback was almost all very positive – notwithstanding the significant workload demands for some staff and the unfamiliarity of such a system for many staff.

In the first section of the template (see Appendix 3), completed prior to the conversation, staff were asked first to reflect on the contribution they had been making to the University over the previous 12 months, in light of the commitments and priorities of the *Plan*. Next, they were asked to reflect on their professional development and growth over the same period, and finally on their collaboration and professional working relations. We found that on this first implementation, staff were often keen to reflect on a period of more than 12 prior months – even their entire time at our University – and generally this was accommodated and was found to be very helpful and productive.

In the second section, to be completed after the main conversation, both parties were asked to reflect and comment on the conversation itself. Then, in the third section, again to be drafted ahead of the main conversation, staff were asked to provide a series of objectives which “should very largely relate to your role and duties and should be aligned with aims of your group, unit or department, in broader alignment with the University’s *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*”. These were to be discussed at the meeting and agreed as part of the dialogue, before finalising the document.

In the fourth section, staff were asked to write about their future career, and then to link this, in the fifth section, to a Professional Development Plan, including any requests for associated support. Anticipating that there might be resource challenges, staff were encouraged to think creatively and were reminded that not all development need imply large expenses – including training that could be provided ‘in house’. However, there was also reassurance that resources would be made available on a prioritised basis.

⁸³ It was decided that PhD students would have a conversation with the Faculty Research Leader in the Faculty with which they were principally affiliated, and that the conversation in that case would be guided by a bespoke template. See Appendix 6.

A final section of the document provided the basis for preparing for and recording an Interim Review Conversation which would take place later in the year and would aim to provide “an opportunity to reflect on progress made towards the agreed objectives and identified development goals, to consider any significant changes or challenges and to reflect on working relationships and collaboration” at that stage. Any support needs were to be discussed and agreed, together with any revisions to the agreed objectives.

Outcomes and feedback: It soon became apparent that staff were approaching the whole process with real seriousness – with documents being drafted and revised, sometimes on more than one occasion, as part of the conversation process. Staff were conscious that the manager’s manager – in most cases the Rector, a Dean or the Director – would review the document and comment. Staff were thinking about their role and their contribution, and often doing so by relating to the *Plan*, and engaging with the challenge of formulating useful SMART objectives. Both staff and their managers were commenting positively in section 2 of the document (as seen by the next manager) on the experience of the conversation, its outcomes and its benefits. And staff were generally receiving positive and encouraging feedback from both their direct manager and also the next manager about their contribution to the organisation, as well as support for their career aspirations and their professional development plans and requests. Staff were feeling more appreciated.

One outcome of the experience was that managers themselves were submitting professional development requests. These requests were met in various ways, one of which was the provision of a training day open to all managers later in the year, which had a high participation level and was very well received. The main focus was employment law, including recruitment; employment rights; absence management; vacation entitlements; changes to employment; managing difficult situations, and termination of employment. Another outcome was that three EULT members were supported to undertake the first course in the new Master’s in Leadership and Management which started in the autumn of 2021. Two of the three completed the course successfully, the third having to withdraw due to personal circumstances.

By the 1st of September 2021, HR colleagues (staffing in the HR area had by that time been increased, in line with the *Strategic Plan* priority) were able to report that professional development plans had been submitted for 95% of employees. By the 1st of April 2022, more than 60% of staff had been able to fulfil one or more of the requests made as part of these plans – and the figure would most likely have been higher had it not been for the challenges posed for travel and in-person meetings by the continuing covid pandemic. Moreover, some staff had been able to engage with professional development opportunities which had not been recorded on the PDP – including visiting other institutions abroad, and the employment law training noted above.

Perhaps most significantly, while a degree of reluctance and perhaps even opposition had been anticipated, in practice this was rather minimal and relatively unproblematic. More typically, staff were positive, and even enthusiastic about the new opportunity presented and seem to have been convinced about the rationale and benefits presented.

This, at least, was the feedback which was received on numerous occasions during discussions at ULT, EULT, the Collaboration Committee, the Health and Safety Committee and in other conversations – of varying degrees of formality. But there is also confirmation of this from comments received in the Staff Survey and also at the special session held with staff at the Nordic House at the end of November 2021.

Comments included, from the Staff Survey: “the early conversations (MCPDC) should continue; it stimulates individuals to come with good contributions to our University. The conversation helps us analyse challenges that come with our responsibilities and gives us an opportunity to seek support in-house to develop staff’s professional development”.

And from the large working groups convened for the special event at the Nordic House:

- “The staff interviews (MCPDC) are good for the University’s process of development as a whole”.
- “The MCPDC –ensures that people are seen and heard”.
- The MCPDC has been a good experience, including that:
 - It’s good to reflect on what one has done, and yes, one has actually done things!
 - (We have) the possibility to request going on courses (for professional development)
 - Assess status, find out about needs, and clarify if people are able to do what needs to be done in order to progress in their careers
 - Follow up and secure progress
 - Earlier on you needed to confront people (to get things done), now people know what is expected and have to make their contribution
 - Good to write down your plans

We can also report that managers welcomed the opportunity to engage with those they managed in a new way and as part of a formalised, University-wide process in which all were expected to participate. Some felt able to be more open and clearer with some staff who were perhaps contributing somewhat below expectations, or not always collaborating in the most constructive and professional way with their colleagues. A few staff expressed critical views about what the University was doing for them, and some of those received verbal and written responses which challenged aspects of their approach, contribution and collaboration in return. In some cases, these conversations fed into continuing conversations, with different kinds of outcomes. Some have led to new and better understandings around expectations, and some have perhaps been a factor in a number of colleagues deciding to leave the University, leading to vacancies and the recruitment of new staff to the institution – for whom the expectations around contribution, collaboration and professional development associated with a modern, professional and integrated higher education institution, working to achieve agreed commitments and priorities in a strategic manner, will be clearer from the outset than has perhaps always been the case in the past.

Towards Second Implementation: While the first implementation of the MCPDC went well, we have been conscious that this was just the first stage of a much longer process which will have to continue in a good way if results are to be delivered and if staff are to continue to trust, and provide support for, the system. As one of the working groups at the special event in the Nordic House last November put it: “The conversations have started, but if feedback and follow-up are lacking, that can result in blowback. It may be too soon to evaluate the conversations. The goal is professional development and development of the workplace.”

In December 2021 and January 2022, the first implementation was the subject of discussion and evaluation in ULT, the Collaboration Committee and the Health and Safety Committee and some changes and simplifications were made – in part to avoid staff repeating themselves in different sections of the form. Perhaps most importantly, the second conversation was to begin from a discussion of the specific objectives agreed during the first implementation – and a new conversation template was issued accordingly, with a revised Section 1.

There was also discussion about making use of some IT system to support the process, beyond emailing Word documents. While HR and the University Director favoured this approach, others felt that the existing approach was better for staff trust in the confidentiality of the system (since it meant there was no central location from which anyone else would be able to access the documents). In the end, this latter view prevailed. That, of course, also has some disadvantages in terms of oversight and administration, but it was felt that the trust issue was the more important consideration. HR colleagues are also keen to ensure that they receive information about training and development undertaken by staff, so that they can provide accurate information centrally. HR will be following up on this.

Some Challenges with Second Implementation: It has been unfortunate that the situation with omicron at the end of 2021 and beginning of 2022 led, in various ways, to a delay in progressing with the second implementation – both due to restrictions put in place and also due to staff being absent with infection. It also meant that EULT did not meet between November and March (scheduled meetings for December and January had to be postponed).

At the March meeting of EULT (see Appendix 7 for the relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting), the HR Co-ordinator presented on the implementation plans and schedule, and the modifications which had been made to the paperwork and approach – including the decision to prioritize trust in the confidentiality of the system. It was anticipated that the second implementation would be less time consuming, partly because we were not discussing prior years of contribution, as had been the case at first implementation for many. The agreed action point was: “All EULT members to engage with and promote the MCPDC process for themselves and those they manage in the coming weeks – reviewing achievements against objectives for 2021-22 and setting new objectives for 2022-23”.

Since then, second implementation has been progressing, again on the cascade principle, beginning from the commitments and priorities of the *Plan* – for the Rector, the members of the University Leadership Team, and so on. However, the delay caused by omicron has had some impact. At the June meeting of the EULT colleagues remarked that the delay had meant that implementation had drifted into the period of examinations and graduation, hindering progress to a degree. But there have been other challenges too. The ending of the covid restrictions saw a great burgeoning of activity – with long-delayed conferences and events now, and quite suddenly, being able to take place, all placing additional demands on staff time. We have also had some unfortunate absences of some senior staff, due to illness and bereavement.

Cumulatively, these kinds of challenges mean that we are not as far ahead with implementation at this point (August 2022) as we were last year. By the time the ERT is visiting in September, we will have made more progress and also be able to report a clearer picture. But we are committed to ‘catching up’ and ensuring a good second implementation – which will be a major step towards securing consistent, ongoing implementation as part of the regular, annual routine of our University. That is very important to the Board, the University leadership and the staff at our University. We believe it will also be very important for the student experience and for the achievement of our research and enterprise commitments and priorities – indeed for all of our commitments and priorities.

The slogan for our *Strategic Plan* is *Let’s grow together!* We believe that the consistent implementation of our MCPDC process will help us to give meaningful effect to that slogan in many ways.

Some concluding reflections: If we were to do it all over again, what would we do the same and what might we do differently, if we were able to?

Overall, as indicated above, the development and implementation of the system has gone well. There was good and effective communication and consultation, leading to good understanding of purpose and commitment to delivering. Had we had more resources and better lead in time – unaffected by covid – then it would have been good to have been able to allocate more time for managers to prepare for implementation. A useful aspect of that would have been to have more training and support for managers. The ‘workshop’ at the EULT in February 2021 was certainly very useful, as was the later employment law training, but perhaps another half-day session based on role playing for ‘difficult conversations’ would have been beneficial. It would also have been good to have a still broader distribution of management tasks – as some managers still had arguably too many staff to deal with.

However, at the same time, it was an achievement to manage the extent of distribution that we did, based on where we started. In practice, the process in many ways has to be about ‘learning by doing’ and having support for colleagues as that happens – from HR and higher-level managers. In this regard, it is important, we believe, that the manager’s manager has sight of, and input to, the process. That, we believe, has been an important support for managers in implementing the system.

Moving forward, there are some further things to consider. In our *Strategic Plan* we state the priority: “To at least double our investment in our Human Resources office, which will develop and lead on the implementation of appropriate policies for the University, *including those for workload allocation, annual review and positive working relationships.*” We have not yet progressed to reviewing our systems for workload allocation and adopting a single system across the University. As we do that, we must seek to integrate the annual conversations with the workload allocation conversation. And another aspect of integration must be to link all of this to our use of the PURE research information management system, which is the subject of another of the case studies for the ERT to consider.

We are very interested to receive comments and suggestions from the ERT on our development and implementation of our system of annual review conversations for staff, and the manner in which we will progress with it in the future.

Appendix 1: Guidelines for the MCPDC Process

My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation 2021-2022

1. Purpose of the My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation:

In contemporary, professional organisations, including in higher education, it has for many years been standard practice for staff at all levels to go through an annual process with their managers of objective setting for the year ahead, and reporting of progress against agreed objectives for the year past. This process begins from the strategic aims of the organisation, and then matches objectives proposed by and agreed with staff to the contributions they aim to make across the year.

This annual process at the same time aims to support staff to achieve their objectives and to progress in their careers. Linked to this, staff as part of the process discuss their professional development needs and are able to seek support to help them fulfil those needs. More generally, and very importantly, the whole process typically aims to ensure very good mutual understanding between managers and staff, positive working relationships across the whole university, and to support everyone's well-being.

In some organisations, this kind of process is referred to as the 'annual review process' and in others as a 'performance development review process'. We believe that the name that will best describe our process is the 'My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation' (MCPDC) – because it is a process of ongoing conversation focused on supporting staff to achieve their contribution objectives and their professional development goals, and to progress in their careers. Importantly, the whole process is conceived and designed to fit with the general culture and values of university life (academic freedom, collegiality, public service, intrinsic motivation) and the specific mission of Setrið – in a modern and professional way.

2. The Process and Guidelines

The MCPDC is, as the title suggests, a conversation between a member of staff and their manager. It is an ongoing conversation across the course of each year, with some key dates for completion both of main stages in the conversation, and, importantly, of the documentation which records the conversation. The conversation, as with all professional exchanges, must be based on mutual respect, honesty and openness about expectations between colleagues.

Our MCPDC will begin each year with the Chair of the University Board going through the process with the Rector – discussing the work of the previous year, agreeing objectives for the coming year and discussing plans for professional development. The process will then cascade through the organisation – the Rector will go through the process with the Deans and the University Director, and then the Deans and the University Director with the next level, and so on.

The central aim is to align everyone's broad thinking, with the vision, mission, commitments, and priorities of the University's Strategic Plan, 2020-2024. These are of course broad statements, set by the University Board. They are based on extensive consultation with the entire University community and are based on key principles and values, such as freedom of research. The aim is to support staff to contribute very well in relation to the Plan, while giving opportunities to develop professionally.

The process: The process will begin in the Spring and carry through the early summer of each year.

1. To begin, the relevant staff at each level will be asked by their manager to complete the relevant sections of a template reviewing their contribution to the work of the University, their working relationships and their professional development in the preceding 12 months. Staff will also be asked to formulate more specific objectives for the coming 12 months, linked to their position and responsibilities, as well as possibilities for professional development. The template should then be shared with the manager, at least 48 hours prior to a conversation meeting, together with any issues which the staff member would like to discuss.
2. Staff will then meet with their manager to have a conversation about the year which has passed, reflecting on successes and challenges, aspects of professional development, what has been learned for the future, and providing mutual, constructive feedback. The conversation should then progress to defining more fully and agreeing appropriate objectives and professional development plans for the 12 months ahead.
3. An important aspect of the whole process is that appropriate objectives will be SMART – meaning that they should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. Such objectives should never compromise academic freedom or reduce academic work to ‘bean counting’. Rather, they should focus attention on suitable goals and support people to meet them. Guidance will be given about SMART Objectives in a separate document.
4. In finalising the completed template, the participants should make a final, brief comment and sign the document as an accurate record of the conversation. The document will then be shared with the manager at the next level, but the whole document will not be seen by anyone else at all. Only Section 5, the Professional Development Plan, will be shared with some others (see below).
5. The Professional Development plan (section 5) and requests will be collated, reviewed by the relevant managers, and decisions made about support that can be provided to support staff development. Staff will then be advised of decisions and about resource allocation. A special fund is being created for this.
6. Later in the year there will be another stage in the conversation, to review progress. Staff will send brief comments to their manager, together with any issues they may wish to discuss, prior to a further, short in-person conversation. Comments and agreements will be recorded by both parties.
7. In the Spring the whole process will begin again. At that stage, staff will be able to discuss progress against the objectives and plans agreed previously.

Guidelines: Some broad guidelines for the process are as follows.

Before the conversation: Preparing is key to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the conversation, and this is important for both participants.

- Participants should be aware of the vision, mission, priorities and commitments of the Strategic Plan, and understand the principles and purpose of the MCPDC process;
- Set aside some time for thinking, planning and drafting and reviewing the documentation.
- The main conversation at the beginning of the process should take around 90 minutes, and this time should be identified in the participants’ calendars. The meeting later in the year will typically be around half that time.

During the main conversation:

- The staff member should play a key role in setting the agenda, in accordance with the overall expectations of the process;
- The main conversations should take place in an appropriate environment, in which participants can feel comfortable and safe;
- The conversation should be professional and respectful. Both parties should seek to listen and understand the position and perspective of the other, asking open and clarifying questions;

- Participants should give and receive feedback in a constructive and professional manner – without matters ever becoming personalised.

After the main conversation:

- The documentation must be completed, and each stage of the process fulfilled;
- The objectives and plans should be referred to and kept in mind to focus activity during the year;
- When challenges arise, or when new opportunities or demands arise, it will be important to think about these in the context of established objectives and plans, and, from time-to-time perhaps, to modify objectives and plans in an agreed and appropriate manner.

In the event that participants in the conversation are not able to reach agreement about important matters – which is not so common in these processes – there will be the possibility to refer to the manager at the next level.

3. Opportunities in the Process

There are important opportunities for everyone involved in the MCPDC process.

For the staff member, the MCPDC is, amongst other things, an opportunity to:

- Reflect upon their contribution to the University as part of a meaningful and ongoing conversation with their manager;
- Have a real influence on their own work situation and set an agenda that suits both them and their group, unit or department;
- Have a sounding board and receive supportive feedback about, and documented recognition of, their contributions and plans;
- Consider their own professional development and future aspirations and seek feedback, guidance and support towards fulfilling them;
- Voice their needs and expectations regarding management support and discuss and agree these on an ongoing basis.

For the manager, the MCPDC is, amongst other things, an opportunity to:

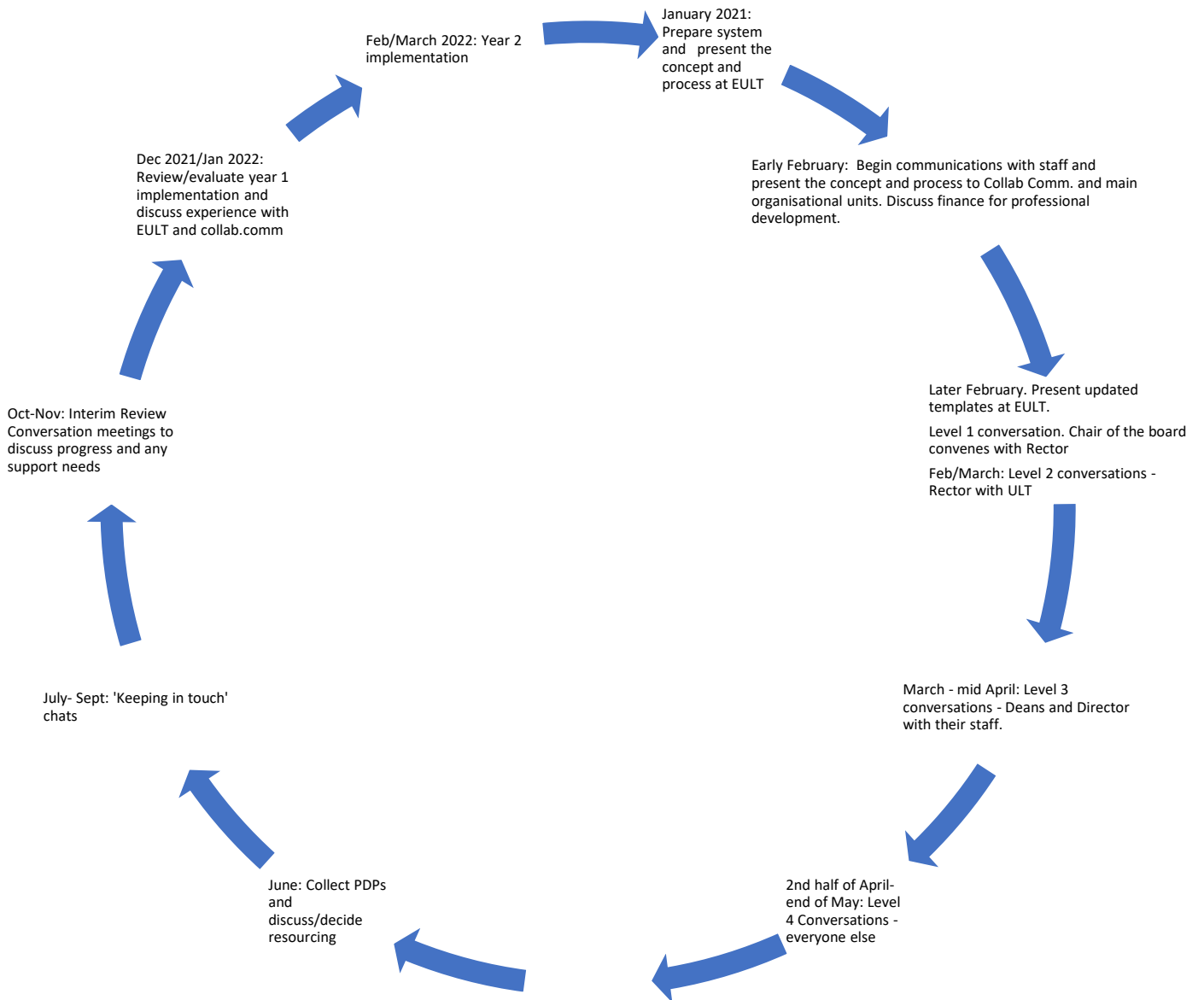
- Have a sustained conversation with the staff they manage about their contribution and development and career plans, in which both parties are able to learn and grow;
- Plan strategically to ensure that contributions and development plans align with the needs of the staff group, unit or department, both in the short- and also the longer-term;
- Support staff as individuals to contribute and develop in a range of ways and to achieve appropriate goals which staff members themselves are able to play the main role in setting;
- To build confidence in others and in themselves about what everyone can achieve.
-

The MCPDC will be monitored by the University's Leadership Team on an ongoing basis. It will also be discussed by the Collaboration Committee and, as appropriate, by the Health and Safety Committee, prior to its implementation each year. Through these discussions, the MCPDC process will be reviewed and amended as appropriate.

We will not get everything perfect – probably ever, and certainly not in the first years – but we will all benefit from investing in, and making the most of, the process from the beginning and then improving things as we go forward.

Let's Grow Together!

Appendix 2: 'Year Wheel' for First Implementation, 2021-2022



Appendix 3: The MCPDC template for first implementation



My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation (MCPDC), 2021-22

Please note: This document must be completed electronically.

Staff name:	Date of main conversation:
Position:	Faculty/Department:
Manager:	Annual Conversation Period:

The MCPDC aims to support our staff to contribute and develop by:

- Having clarity of expectations about their contribution to UFI and the delivery of the commitments and priorities of the Strategic Plan, 2020-2024, through drafting and agreeing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) objectives;
- Reflecting on, and having an ongoing conversation with their manager about, their contribution to UFI;
- Discussing the development of their professional capacities and experiences;
- Identifying and getting support towards their career development goals.

Please note that the contents of this document will be seen only by your manager and by their manager. The only exception to that will be Section 5, which will be shared with Human Resources staff and the University Leadership Team, to allow them to make decisions about resourcing and provision of professional development.

SECTION 1: Reflecting on 2020-2021

The staff member should complete this section (parts 1a-1c) and send to their manager in advance of the first, main conversation.

1a. My Contribution: Please reflect on your contribution to your group, unit, department and the University over the past 12 months – focusing on your key tasks, roles and areas of responsibility.

- How does your role and your contribution mainly relate to the goals of the Strategic Plan?
- How successful has 2020-21 been in terms of contributing to the goals, and what are the key indicators or evidence for success?
- What has gone well and what has perhaps not gone so well?
- What conclusions should you draw for the future?

My Contribution comments (staff member):

Manager's comment:

<p>1b. My Professional Development (Growth): Please reflect on how your professional development has been in the past 12 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you had goals? What have been the key challenges? • How have you developed in your capacities and experiences? • What have you learned and how have you grown?
My Professional Development (Growth) comments (staff member):
Manager's comment:

<p>1c. My Collaboration: Please comment on your collaboration and professional working relations across the past 12 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been best and most rewarding? • Have there been challenges and how have you dealt with them? • Have you needed or received support?
My collaboration comments (staff member):
Manager's comments:

SECTION 2: Summary Review of 2020-21

This section should be completed immediately after the main conversation.

Comments arising from the main conversation about 2020-21:	
Your comments (staff member):	
Date:	Signed:
Manager's comments:	
Date:	Signed:

Next Level Manager's Comment			
Signature:		Date:	

SECTION 3: 2021-2022 Contribution

This section is for the staff member, in advance of the first, main conversation, to:

- Think about and draft SMART objectives (roughly 3-5) which will guide their contribution to the University over the next 12 months.
- SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. Guidance on SMART Objectives is provided in a separate document.
- A SMART objective can take the form of a broad statement about a general area of work, followed by more specific statements about particular things that are planned.
- SMART objectives should very largely relate to your role and duties and should be aligned with aims of your group, unit or department, in broader alignment with the University's Strategic Pan, 2020-2024.
- SMART objectives can also be developmental, linking to professional development and/ or career aspirations.
- SMART objectives should relate to individual circumstances, for example, if staff work part-time, or have some special circumstances.

SMART Objectives: What will success look like over the next 12 months.		
Objective description: What will be done?	Timeframe: When will it be done by?	What additional support and resources (if any) might you need?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

SECTION 4: My Future Career

My Future Career
<p>Please use this section to say something about your short- and longer-term career intentions, goals and aspirations, including your aspirations for professional development. Please draft this section prior to the first, main conversation.</p>

SECTION 5: Professional Development Plan

This section should be used to outline specific, and reasonable, requests for professional development to support growth over the next 12- 18 months, in line with your role and objectives.

Careful consideration should be given to resource commitments for training and development activities, as resources will inevitably be limited. A lot of professional development and growth can in fact be achieved with very limited, or even no additional, resources – it need not always entail international travel or other large expenses. Please try to think creatively! You should also consider what development you might need to support your future career aspirations.

Again, this section should be drafted and sent to the manager prior to the first, main conversation.

Remember, this is the only section of this template which will be shared with Human Resources staff and the University Leadership Team, to allow them to make decisions about resourcing and provision of professional development.

Learning & Development Need (linked to the needs of the individual, department and Setrið)	Resources/support requested	By when?

SECTION 6: Interim Review Conversation

- The Interim Review Conversation (IRC) is an important part of the MCPDC process. It is best conducted six or seven months after the main conversation meeting.
- The IRC provides an opportunity to reflect on progress made towards the agreed objectives and identified development goals, to consider any significant changes or challenges and to reflect on working relationships and collaboration.
- **Staff should prepare for the meeting, review the previous sections of this template, and draft the relevant parts of this section (marked with an *)– sending it to their manager ahead of the IRC.**
- The other parts of the section should be completed during or immediately after the meeting.
- On-going conversations between the individual and the manager during the previous months should support this meeting.

* Review and reflect on progress against SMART objectives in Section 3, above.
Any agreed changes/additions to objectives as a result of the IRC.
Any agreed support to be provided to help achieve the objectives.
* Review of progress on the Professional Development (Growth) Plan in section 5, above.
Any agreed changes to the Professional Development (Growth) Plan as are result of the IRC.

Comments

The manager may provide a comment on the progress at the mid-year stage.	
Signed:	Date:
The staff member may provide a comment on the progress at the mid-year stage.	
Signed:	Date:

Appendix 4: MCPDC Process, Guidance on SMART Objectives

SMART Objectives as a tool for thinking and planning

SMART Objectives are an aid to help you think and plan whilst setting your objectives. It is not always necessary or possible to embed all aspects in every useful objective, but thinking through the points below will generally help a useful and appropriate SMART objective to emerge.

A Perfect SMART objective will combine all the main aspects of the following:

"S

- Make sure objectives are clear and understood to avoid confusion.
- The objective should describe the result that is desired, in a manner that is reasonably detailed, focussed and well defined
- What outcomes are we looking to achieve?

"M

- You should generally be able to track progress and measure the result of the objective.
- How will you know when the objective is achieved?
- What measures of success will you use?

"A

- Make sure objectives are challenging, but also attainable.
- The objective should be generally within the individual's control, or at least their sphere of influence.
- Are the resources to achieve this objective available or can they be made available?
- Does the employee have the right skills and knowledge to be able to achieve the objective?

"R

- Make sure the objective aligns to the strategic priorities of the University, and your role within it
- The objective should be relevant to the employee and the relevant department.

"T

- Objectives must have a specific deadline.
- Identify target dates, including interim milestones and plans to monitor progress
- Think about what could compromise the deadline.
- Is the deadline also realistic?

Appendix 5: Extract from the minutes of the EULT meeting of 23rd February 2021 regarding the “workshop” on MCPDC Implementation.

Workshop on the ‘My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation’ (some documents will be circulated in advance) (KP, CC and all)

- i. *The process and the template (10 minutes) (CC and KP)*
The conversations have started with the chair of the board and the rector and will now cascade through the whole organisation. CC and KP outlined the process for the MCPDC and spoke about how to approach the completion of each section of the template before and after the conversation.
- ii. *Groupwork – preparing as a staff member (10 minutes)*
Members were divided into groups of 3 and 4 to discuss how they as staff will prepare for the conversation with their own manager.
- iii. *How to prepare as a manager for the main conversation (10 minutes) (KP and CC)*
KP presented how one as a manager is supposed to prepare for the conversation. It was advised that the manager prepares and makes sure that they are well informed about the tasks that the staff member is occupied with. The conversation should be objective and one way to keep it like that is for the manager to keep the focus on the tasks and how they are dealt with. It was advised to keep track of that throughout the year. Development (frleikamenning) should take up a good part of the conversation. It was further advised to continuously relate things back to the strategic plan.
- iv. *Groupwork – preparing as a manager (10 minutes)*
Staff were supposed to be discussing in groups again but because the discussion went well from the item above the discussion continued with the whole meeting.

It was asked how one can go forward with the conversation if a staff member does not have or want any goal. It was advised to take things back to the strategic plan and reflect on how one’s job is related to the overall plan. Furthermore, if one does not necessarily want to be promoted to further positions the focus can be on how one improves what one is currently doing.

One feedback from the Collaboration Committee when the document was presented in early February was that it should stand clear what parts of the document are only shared between staff and manager and what is shared with HR and further leadership. The part about professional development (page 6) where one can put wishes forward for courses or other development means will be shared with HR and the leadership as it might be related to an overall financial decision. Except for that page, it was asked how a manager is to make sure for the staff that all material is confidential between the two when the manager needs to store it somehow for the 6 months follow up conversation. Is it safe to keep on a personal drive or should it be stored elsewhere? That needs to be discussed further where the archiving 360 system can be a potential solution.

It was further asked how much time one is supposed to use on the conversation where the answer was one to one and a half hour. In some cases, it will also be suited to have a group conversation like KP will have with the cleaners.

The MCPDC document has now been translated to Faroese from English. For the Faroese version, there was some feedback on the language used. It was suggested improving the document with some minor tweaks making the language more personal. **Action point: EH and MAM to send suggestions to KP.**

Some managers are managing up to 12 people. It will take up a lot of one's time to go through that number of conversation in the spring. Options for postponing some of the conversations to later in the year or next year was discussed where it was also argued that that may give an impression to staff that some conversations are more important than others. It was rather advised to divide the conversation of staff to before the summer holiday and after instead of altogether postponing some to next year.

There was a discussion on whether Ph.D. students should do the MCPDC. Ph.D. students already have regular follow ups every sixth months in relation to their biannual report. On the other hand, it was argued that it will be good for Ph.D. students to have some development conversation with someone from outside the advisory team – especially since we do not yet have a Ph.D. school. It was decided that the faculty research leaders take that discussion forward.

Action points:

- **KP and MM to communicate arrangements to PhD students and main supervisors, as well as Faculty Research Leaders.**
- **All research leaders then to organise conversations with Ph.D. students.**

Finally, it was advised that faculties go through the template with staff in faculty meetings before the conversations are planned. It was recommended however, to do that after the EULT team has had the chance to have their conversation with own manager in order to understand the challenges better. **Action point: FLT's to organise Faculty meetings to do this.**

v. *Open discussion and summing up (10 minutes) (All)*

CC asked for feedback from members about how the feeling is about going forward where the meeting reported being optimistic and excited about the opportunity.

Appendix 6: Annual conversation about progress, contribution, collaboration and development for PhD students at the University of the Faroe Islands, 2021-22

Name of Student:

Main Faculty:

Title of PhD Project:

Institutions involved (including other Universities):

Start-date and funding period:

Supervisory team (names and institutional affiliations):

Conversant: (person the conversation will be with):

Date of conversation:

The student should, prior to the conversation, provide answers to the questions below in the space indicated, and then send the completed form to the conversant (normally the relevant Faculty Research Leader), preferably 48 hours prior to the conversation. As well as answering the questions, the student can feel free to write anything else they want to mention or add to the conversation in the space provided at the end.

Best to read all the questions through before you start to answer, to save repetition.

After the conversation, both participants should comment on the conversation itself, and then sign the document (typing the name is fine).

The completed document will be shared with the relevant Dean and the Pro-Rector for Research and Enterprise. The contents will, of course, be dealt with sensitively.

Progress, Supervision and Day-to-Day Working

- Q: How is it going with the PhD project (including co-operation with your supervisors)?
A:
- Q: Is your progress reporting up-to-date and have any issues or concerns about progress been highlighted by anyone?
A:
- Q: Are you getting access to the *subject-specific* courses and training needed for your project?
A:
- Q: How are your day-to-day activities and do you have a good environment for your activities?
A:

- Q: Have you presented your work for an international conference or journal? If not, do you have plans to do so and have you been doing other things?

A:

- Q: Is there anything that you think your Faculty or the University could do to help you with your progress and your experience?

A:

Wider personal and professional development

- Q: What else have you been/are you doing and contributing to the work of the Faculty and University during your time as a PhD student?

- A:

- Q: Have you worked out a plan with your supervisory team to support your personal and professional development towards your future career aspirations (first, mention what those aspirations may be)?

A:

- Q: Are you following up on this plan? Do you have a sense that you are growing and developing in a meaningful way during your PhD studies?

A:

- Q: Would you welcome some more opportunities to develop your knowledge and experience of academic life as part of your personal and professional development? What kinds of things might be useful?

- A:

Collaboration

- Q: How is your collaboration and general interaction with other PhD students? Any suggestions about how to improve that?

A:

- Q: How is your collaboration with the wider faculty and research community on the Faroe Islands?

A:

Reflection

- Q: What would you say are the 2 or 3 best things about your experience as a PhD student here at UFI?

A:

- Q: What would be main things that you think could realistically be improved?

A:

- Anything else to mention or discuss:

To be completed after the conversation

- Comments on the conversation from the student:

- Comments on the conversation from the conversant:

Student signature (typing the name is fine) and date:

Conversant signature (typing the name is fine) and date:

Appendix 7: Extract from Minutes of EULT, 15th March 2022

Second implementation of the 'My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation'.

CC explained that it was the Board who wanted us to implement the MCPDCs to begin with and we are now at a stage where we need to implement it again – although it will be in a modified form.

Then KP showed where the material is to be found on the Intranet (*Setursnet* → in the folder *HR* and then in the *5.1 Mítt íkst og mín yrkismenning 2022/23*). KP said that the feedback from the last round was that some found it too demanding and time consuming, but many staff were very happy about the opportunity to reflect upon the work and their job description. Also, in the feedback from the staff survey, staff expressed that they appreciate the possibility to have the conversation with the leader. And many have used the conversation as a possibility to change the job description somewhat. This year, KP expects the conversation to be less time consuming because we only go one year back in time. JH added that a handwritten signature is not necessary, but a typed name and an email is enough when finalizing the paper. It has been discussed to find a new system to share the conversations, but it is the quality of the conversation, and trust/confidentiality, that is the most important and not the system or the way it is shared and therefore we continue with sharing the files the same way as last year.

KP also presented the year wheel 2022-23 for the MCPDC and when different levels of the organisation are scheduled to have the conversations. In June, Katrin will collect part 5 (the professional development plan) and send it to the deans.

It was asked if the questions have been changed from last year and KP answered that some of the questions are deleted. Another EULT member mentioned that last year staff were encouraged to think outside the box when they consider their professional development and the member asked for more guidance in terms of getting more specific ideas of the scope of the cost. KP replied that she will try to provide some general guidelines, but not everyone will get the same and should expect to get the same. We must also remember to try to prioritize those who did not get the wish fulfilled last year.

Action Points

- **All EULT members to engage with and promote the MCPDC process for themselves and those they manage in the coming weeks – reviewing achievements against objectives for 2021-22 and setting new objectives for 2022-23.**
- **PURE engagement to be an aspect of all MCPDC discussions with staff – encouraging engagement and including, where appropriate, in objective setting for 2022-23.**

**University of the Faroe Islands,
Reflective Analysis, 2022:
Documents to inform the work of the International
Team conducting the External Review of our
University**

Supplements to the Main Reflective Analysis

**Case Study 4
Language and Language Policy
August 2022**



Context and Background: Reflection on language at, and the language policy of, the University of the Faroes Islands requires some context and background, which will also explain the emphasis on language and language policy in the strategic plan.

Danish was for centuries the official language of the Faroes. For example, already by the time of the Protestant reformation (c.1540), Danish had become the language of administration, and of legal and ecclesiastical matters, and more generally the medium through which all contacts were made with the outside world. Later, when education became compulsory, Danish was the medium of instruction. The underlying educational goal was transition of the pupil to the institutionally and politically dominant language, Danish.

The long-term effects of these conditions have, in various ways, impacted the language situation and shaped people's language values and practices. This situation prevailed far into the twentieth century. In that sense, the history of the Faroese language is a history of suppression and minoritisation, a history of diglossia,⁸⁴ with Danish being imposed as the dominant *high* language and Faroese, people's home language, as the *low* variant.

The history, however, is also one of struggle, contestation, and concerted revitalisation efforts, closely linked to the Faroese nation-building process. The struggle for recognition of the Faroese language was an integral aspect of the national movement, beginning in the late 19th century. Arising from this, Faroese was recognised as equal to Danish in schools and churches in 1938/39, and as the official language of the Faroe Islands in 1948.

The founding of our University in 1965 was seen as a continuation and further progression of the language struggle. Hence, our University's first faculty was – without any public/political dispute or debate – the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature. Following from the Home Rule Act of 1948, our University was part of a wider nation building process, establishing trusted institutions on "Faroese soil".⁸⁵

With its almost poetic Faroese name, Fróðskaparsetur Føroya was established first and foremost as an institution that should 'take care' of everything considered specifically Faroese, and at the core of its responsibilities lay the Faroese language. This was understood to be a special, and indeed *unique*, responsibility, which perhaps no other institution of research or higher education in the world at that time had – nor, concerning specifically Faroese, indeed has had since. That said, there are other higher education institutions⁸⁶ that have similar responsibilities.

Strategic Plan, 2020-2024: This responsibility remains an important part of our University's *raison d'être* and a defining part of the mission and vision expressed in our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*. One of the six main headings in the *Plan* is 'The Faroese Language', which recognises "the profound importance" of

⁸⁴ A term used to describe asymmetrical power relationships. See e.g., Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

⁸⁵ It could be mentioned in this context that many other institutions back then were regulated by Danish laws and Executive orders and financed either completely or partly from the Danish government's contribution to the running of Faroese society each year. Fróðskaparsetur Føroya was seen as *genuinely* Faroese.

⁸⁶ Other HEIs with similar (or to some extent related) responsibilities include Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland), the Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Northern Norway, and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Isle of Skye, the latter which has played a crucial role in the linguistic and cultural renaissance of Gaelic in Scotland.

this responsibility for Faroese society, undertakes to take this responsibility “very seriously at all times”, and specifies four commitments and priorities our University will pursue in practical terms, as follows⁸⁷:

- To develop and implement a clear language policy and be a language role model amongst universities in similar sized countries and territories with their own languages.
- To promote the use and development of Faroese academic language, including precise scientific terminology in all disciplines, and to support the publication of high-quality academic work in Faroese.
- To support the teaching of the Faroese language at all levels of education and its use and development in wider society, and to seek to do so also amongst Faroese people living abroad.
- To support research in, and the teaching of, Faroese for non-native speakers, and particularly for those whose native language is other than Scandinavian.

These specifically linguistic commitments and priorities, together with all other specified commitments and priorities in the *Plan*, are the subject of regular reports to the Board. They reflect continuing societal expectations; Faroese politicians across political parties – as well as many other voices – would argue that they are required for our workings to reflect the will of our Parliament and of the Faroese people.

The ‘language question’, here meaning the preservation and strengthening of the Faroese language, is a widely – and at times emotionally – discussed obligation of our institution. Simultaneously, using Faroese is also considered more ‘natural’, both by most of our University staff and students, and also by the surrounding society – it is understood in ways as a democratic duty, and as connecting our institution’s operations to Faroese society.

However, at the same time it is crucial to recognise that teaching at our University was, from the beginning, conducted both in Faroese and in other Scandinavian languages, as teachers and researchers visited and helped develop new programmes, including programmes and courses in Faroese Language and Literature. As in many other places in the world, students were presented with material written in different languages, mainly Faroese, Danish, Norwegian and English. Thus, our University is special, not just in its being Faroese and conducting research relevant to Faroese society, but also in the implicit requirement for students to know *at least three* languages in order to be able to study here, namely Faroese, English and Danish (and for language students, also other Nordic languages and occasionally German).

A special quality of our University still today is therefore its *deeply rooted multilingual culture, thriving alongside a very strong, historically developed commitment to the preservation and strengthening of the Faroese language*. The Strategic Plan clearly reflects this in mentioning not only Faroese and English but also Scandinavian languages. More generally, Faroese society strongly exemplifies the notion that language is more than simply a tool of communication, but also a cultural phenomenon, especially in the sense that language creates or is a precondition of culture.

However, again, in daily life, people on the Faroes have a very pragmatic approach, and use for instance Danish or English, when needed – even while at another level these languages are also considered (and in ways almost certainly are) invasive or directly ‘threats’ to Faroese. In an exploration of these issues from 2012, *Ærlig talt, Who Cares?*, our Professor of Faroese Language, Jógvan í Lon Jacobsen, calls this a discrepancy between ‘idealistic’ and ‘pragmatic’ attitudes. Part of this dualism is, as expressed by

⁸⁷ See p.12 of *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*.

Jacobsen, that people see “language as the main symbol of one’s nation and identity”. This particular stance is, as outlined above, an integral part of the ‘ideological’ basis of our University, highlighting the specific role that our University has in relation to the sustainability of Faroese.

The Development and Reception of our Language Policy: The strong feelings and explicit idealism connected to the Faroese language as the ‘mother tongue’, and the implicit character of practises connected to language usage, may be the key reasons for the very late arrival of an official language policy for our University. The Faroese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture presented a report in 2007 about an official language policy in the Faroe Islands. A recommendation in the report was that the University should adopt a language policy to support and strengthen the position of the Faroese language across all fields of higher education and research.

However, it was only after a rather lengthy process – including extended hiatuses when little at all was done – that in 2020 the development of such a policy became a specific focus of attention. By April 2021, the policy had been fully drafted (taking primary inspiration from the policy of the University of Iceland), consulted on (including at Board level), agreed and adopted.

The process was, then, quite lengthy. Some years previously, the initiative had been handed over to the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature where a draft proposal was made by members of staff headed by a professor. In 2020, the draft was translated into English and further developed in a dialogue between the Rector and the Dean of Faculty. A more developed English version was then sent back to the Faculty for comments, adjustments, and additions. This took a while, but eventually a proposal was presented to the ULT for comments. The Rector and Dean of Faculty took responsibility for finalising the document, and, after another round of hearings, the language policy was finally agreed upon at a ULT meeting, before being taken to, and approved by, the Board (the Language Policy document is attached, in Appendix).

The process was, then, both ‘bottom-up’ (the relevant section of the *Strategic Plan* reflected the views of staff first and foremost) and ‘top-down’ (with the role of the Ministry and the University leadership). The initiative of the Leadership seemed necessary, as the language policy had been unfinalized for some years, without it really being clearly on anyone’s agenda – such that very little was happening, and no progress was being made. The aim, during the lockdown conditions in 2020, and in part stemming from Rector’s need to report to the Board on the specific commitments and priorities of the *Plan*, was to involve all internal stakeholders in the process. The adoption of a policy was seen by the leadership team as inevitably being an official, public statement from the University, which would most likely be the subject of scrutiny and debate. Moreover, there was no prior document to work from as this was the first, laying the ground, so to speak (and thus the tendency to ‘lean’ on a policy from our West Nordic neighbours in Iceland).

It was difficult to know exactly how the language policy was going to be received, before the real and practical implementation had begun. Implementation and final acceptance are, of course, connected. The implementation can be expected to reveal different interpretations of the language policy document and these interpretations again will reflect different positions concerning the dialogue between internationalisation and local/national responsibilities in relation to language and language use.

In anticipation of this, our Language Policy provided for the creation of a ‘bottom-up’ Language Forum, as follows (see Appendix, section 3xiv):

“The University will have a language forum that refers to the Rector, or their nominee, and includes a representative from each faculty, the central administration, and students. This committee will collaborate with the Faroese Language Council as appropriate. The forum should from time to time advise the University Leadership Team and other staff on relevant matters, make suggestions on how to implement the language policy of the University, generally monitor its implementation, communicate relevant information to interested parties as appropriate, and evaluate the policy and its implementation as needed, to inform periodic revisions and updates”.

When the Policy was officially announced and presented on our webpage, it was welcomed positively by “Føroya Mál”, an association for teachers of Faroese in the upper secondary schools, but otherwise – and somewhat to our surprise – public reactions were few. As far as the leadership of the University is aware, there were no negative responses.

An Evolving Language Context: Our language policy was developed in a period of perception of an evolving language context, both in our University and in wider Faroese society. There are several aspects to this. English has increasingly become the language of research and higher education internationally. Indeed, to a certain degree, English is seen as an indicator of international standards and quality. Faroese society is changing as well, in the wake of globalisation, as people from many other places have come to our Islands to live and to work, and the number of languages spoken in homes increases⁸⁸.

Another aspect is that our language policy must also be an integral aspect of the wider strategy for our University, as reflected in law, executive orders, and the agreed strategy of our Board – based on consultation with relevant stakeholders. And this is clearly and explicitly focused on the internationalisation of our University and becoming increasingly part of the international community of research and higher education. The adoption of the language policy in 2021 and the implementation of it therefore goes hand in hand with the ambitions to make the Faroese University also *an international University*. At the same time, it reflects our University as an integral part of a small society in a time of rapid change.

While our University has its own unique history, connected to a national movement and a language struggle, it is in key ways not so much different from other universities in the Nordic region, including in its language policy. Language/linguistic homogenisation (or different kinds of “Englishes”) is an issue of debate in Scandinavian countries, where especially research within the humanities is very closely attached to the national languages.⁸⁹ As in other universities in the region, we are committed to operating in an increasingly international environment and must take part in networks, both formal institutionalized networks, and informal networks connecting for instance researchers and also administrators – and, of course, this also means student mobility.

Internationalisation – specifically meaning for instance student and staff mobility and collaboration with other universities – became a strategic objective for the University of the Faroe Islands many years ago, though perhaps somewhat more ambitiously with the new leadership in 2019 and the *Strategic Plan*,

⁸⁸ About 100 different languages were identified as citizens’ first language in the 2011 Faroese Census. Figures from January 2022 show that 4.2 percent of the population, representing 107 nationalities, reside in the Faroes (<https://integration.fo/lyklatoi>)

⁸⁹ See for instance the report on parallel language use by Gregersen et.al. made on behalf of the Nordic Council at <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1203291/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

2020-2024 (which through its emphasis on QAE and Bologna is seeking to create a key basis for that internationalisation).

Teaching and Research: Concerning language, our University is in this respect no exception in a Nordic or European context. Internationalisation means an increasing use of English, especially in research. Regarding teaching, our University has somewhat implicitly adopted the view that in order to attract foreign students and ensure mobility (outgoing and ingoing), it needs to offer courses in English. However, in practice, very little has been done to implement this. A collaboratively developed and delivered English master's program in *West Nordic Studies* was launched some years ago (2016), but proved problematic for various reasons, including resourcing – and also student experience. Unfortunately, at the point when the student experience issues were being increasingly resolved, the other partners in the collaboration decided to discontinue the collaboration. This has left us for the meantime with no programme open to international students⁹⁰ – other than those who might already be fluent in Faroese. This is something which is a source of frustration to the representatives of the Faroese government abroad – for instance in Iceland – who are very keen to have options for students coming from their territories to study in the Faroes.

Ad hoc cooperation with other universities on courses taught in English – and also in Scandinavian languages – happen, but nothing more systematic in the development of programmes has yet materialized, and the Faroe Islands has not yet joined the European Erasmus-programme (there are indications that it may do so soon⁹¹), although participation in other European programmes is possible, for instance Erasmus Mundus.

While teaching is conducted in Faroese throughout our University, at both BA-level and MA-level, with a few exceptions, there is no doubt that within research English is increasingly preponderant. A rough count of scientific, peer-reviewed articles published by researchers at our University in 2019 shows that only three were in Faroese⁹², 97 in English, and six in other languages, mainly Scandinavian. Books are not included in the count, but they tend to be written by researchers within the humanities and often in Faroese, peer reviewed as well as not peer reviewed. PhD-dissertations within the humanities are regularly written in Faroese, especially within literary studies and history. The public interest in such cases is quite significant and the dissertations therefore tend to be published as books shortly after the defence.

The only Faroese scientific journal, *Fróðskaparrit*, originally had as its mission, when founded in 1952, to develop a Faroese language of science. Today around half of the articles in the journal are published in English and occasionally articles are published in Danish. Crucially important though, it is the only scientific journal that publishes scientific articles in Faroese, and this remains its overriding mission. Editors of the journal are almost without exception researchers at our University.

It is, however, important also in this context to remember that the total amount of research output from our University has increased dramatically in recent years, and this is one of the reasons for the

⁹⁰ The only exception is a biennial Summer Institute in Faroese language organised by the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature. For more info, see: <https://www.setur.fo/fo/utbugving/adrar-utbugvingar-og-skeid/faroese-summer-institute/>

⁹¹ There is an in-principle agreement that the Faroes can join the scheme as a 'third country', but for the meantime the priority for investment remains Horizon Europe.

⁹² <https://www.setur.fo/fo/setrid/tidindi/frodskaparsetrid-samtykkir-malpolitikk/>

progressive imbalance between English and Faroese. The number of publications in Faroese may have decreased a little, especially if books are taken out of the count, but it is primarily the number of publications in English that has increased, reflecting the internationalisation of the Faroese research community.

The National and the International: The *dichotomy* between internationalisation and national responsibilities – expressed partly as a distinction between the use of English and Faroese – is clear in our language policy. A more precise way of expressing this is perhaps to speak in terms of *dialogue, rather than dichotomy*. There is a constant dialogue between the international and the national, the English language and Faroese (and regularly also Scandinavian languages). Regarded as the ends of a continuum, our University seeks to balance between them. The Faculty of Language and Literature offers summer courses in Faroese for Nordic students and an international Summer Institute for students outside the Nordic region; both are very popular. But Faroese is still our only programme in language (BA, MA and Minor), reflecting the focus on Faroese as our very special responsibility (other languages are taught in universities elsewhere, implicitly understood as a sort of division of labour with other universities, you could say). In 2021, reflecting the commitments and priorities of the language section of our *Strategic Plan*, a Master-diploma in Faroese as an Additional Language was launched, responding positively to demographic changes in Faroese society⁹³, and discussions are coming and going about establishing also having studies in English.

Our language policy in this light has two overarching aims. First, it aims to identify and describe the role of the national language (Faroese) and the role of other languages (especially English) in teaching, research, and administration. The policy states that Faroese is “the official language” of our University and that we are committed to “promote the use and development of Faroese academic language, including precise scientific terminology, in all disciplines, and to support the publication of high-quality academic work in Faroese”. This is a clear commitment to the original purpose and basis for the founding of Fróðskaparsetur Føroya in 1965, as well as a way of underlining the connection and responsibilities to Faroese society.

The policy, however, also addresses the question of internationalisation by underlining the role of our University in the international academic community. In that context, the policy notes, “the predominant languages of exchange are English and the main Nordic languages”. It further notes that “English is also of great importance to the institution” and further that when working with “Nordic partners, for instance in Nordic projects, at conferences and during examinations, the University will encourage and support use of other Nordic languages as appropriate”.

The language policy clearly reflects both everyday business at our university and our international ambitions, mentioning three languages in particular, Faroese, English, and Scandinavian (mainly meaning Danish).

The Use of English and Associated Issues: The arrival of an English-speaking Rector in 2019 reflects the internationalisation of our University (and the Faroese labour market in general). It has also further

⁹³ The 60 ECTS postgraduate diploma in Faroese as an Additional Language has language teachers in compulsory, upper-secondary and adult education as its target group. The launch of this programme was timely as meeting the language learning needs of newcomers to the Islands has increased drastically, especially during the last couple of decades. The aim of the programme is to develop teachers’ competences to teach Faroese as a Second/Additional Language at different competence levels.

opened up some of the discussions about language that have taken place at the University for some years. While the staff survey in 2021 showed strong support for the Rector, there are some members of staff who have criticised the use of English at meetings, saying for instance that they do not always feel comfortable and able to express themselves sufficiently in discussions. After the first visit by the External Review Team (also led by an English-speaking chair), the issue was raised by a member of staff, leading to two members of the Board discussing the situation with the Rector. Occasionally, individual members of staff, speak Faroese at internal meetings where the Rector is present, and perhaps chairing the meeting, with the Rector receiving some assistance in following their contributions.⁹⁴ It is understood by all that this is perfectly acceptable.

While reactions of the kind mentioned above are deeply felt and understandable, when it concerns internal matters, they may also reflect for some staff an uncertainty in relation to the wider development and direction of our University and the level of internationalisation. In the feedback from the staff event in the Nordic House arranged to inform the review process (including input for the reflective analysis), some of the large working groups were tasked with discussing the section of our *Strategic Plan* focused on the Faroese language. Some participants spoke about the status of the Faroese language, expressing for instance the need to continue to “respect and support publishing in Faroese” (which, of course, is happening). The discussion within the University in many ways seems to reflect a general discussion about the future of the Faroese language in a time of growing reach of media (social media especially), digital communication etc. A much-debated survey in 2018 showed that Faroese schoolchildren use many English words in their daily communication.⁹⁵

The staff survey did not address language use directly. Only two out of 41 mentioned language in their comments. One comment stated that English has become too dominant (“too much spoken”) At the Nordic House event and also in the staff survey members of staff expressed satisfaction with the overall leadership of our University, with the adoption and implementation of our *Strategic Plan*, with the formalization of procedures, with the agreement on a language policy, and with the more systematic approach to internationalisation. There were also, however, some critical comments on the language issue at the Nordic House event.

In any institution, both formal and informal channels of communication are important. Previous Rectors have been Faroese and have chatted and had informal communications with members of staff on a daily basis. The current Rector is highly communicative, participates in all formal communication, and answers promptly all inquiries from members of staff, but informal discussions can sometimes pass him by. In an institution which has, perhaps more than many others, been characterised by informal communication, this can be a drawback.

⁹⁴Our Rector has asked that we indicate that he has, as he committed to do at the outset, spent significant time and energy on trying to progress in understanding and speaking Faroese, but he has found that difficult to sustain for various reasons, and the specific language learning support he has been able to receive from the institution itself has been largely limited to resourcing to seek external help. From his perspective, he has had to make decisions about how best to spend his time when he is working as Rector on a fixed-term contract. He has not felt able to devote his working time to learning the language, because there has been so much else to prioritize, and he has found that he has had to spend a lot of his personal time on leadership and management tasks too – which he has willingly done. There is perhaps something to be learned here about what might be done in future to support language learning for mature and experienced professionals who are brought to the Faroe Islands. The Rector stresses that he has received excellent support and extensive, daily briefings on all relevant matters, both internal and external, from all relevant colleagues, for which he has been very grateful.

⁹⁵ See <https://www.setur.fo/fo/setrid/tidindi/fara-vit-heldur-at-speaka-enskt/>

At the same time, our University has perhaps been characterised by too much informal communication, and this is something which has also now been getting addressed. In line with the wider professionalisation and modernisation of the institution, 'followership' and support has largely (though not at all exclusively) been created by establishing fora that include both the Rector and the wider parts of the university, i.e., by establishing new formal structures and procedures in a managerial, positional way rather than through informal personal contacts and chat.

However, this process of formalization and professionalization happens within a University, (a workplace), in which informal practises still to a fair degree prevail, and often members of staff still expect informal chats across all hierarchies and divisions, and some still prefer those to be in Faroese. Indeed, at times, informality is an expectation by external stakeholders as well (including in government and its agencies), who at times prefer "short cuts" to Deans or professors – including when a greater degree of formality and working through the official structures of the University in a more professional way would be appropriate and also more efficient.

The partial tendency that English on the one hand is perhaps seen to be connected to formal procedures and being used in at least some, key formal communications and in much high-level decision-making (see e.g. minutes from the ULT and EULT meetings), while, on the other hand, Faroese is used in informal chats and discussions (see e.g. invitations to university parties, excursions, updates from HR, communication between the QU and programme leaders etc.) – this can perhaps tend to give at least some members of staff the impression that English now more generally is the "high" language of our University.⁹⁶

At the event in the Nordic House, a response from one of the workshops was that "the administration must be conducted in Faroese". This concern may be justified – and it is to a certain extent globally inevitable – in research, but otherwise it is something discussed and addressed by the leadership team with a view to making sure that no one feels nor experiences such a division in day-to-day business (administration on a daily basis *is* conducted in Faroese, and the respondent may actually have been referring to leadership).

This is true formally for instance in the language policy (manifesting Faroese as the language of the University) and the aforementioned establishment of a Language Forum, and also in the practice of making it clear to staff that when they prefer to speak in Faroese they should do so – for instance at EULT meetings and also elsewhere. In practice, then, such meetings are often operating in both English and Faroese.

Apart from the first presentation and concluding comments by the Rector, the staff event in the Nordic House was conducted entirely in Faroese, apart from one group which accommodated staff who lack proficiency in Faroese (mainly staff from the Faculty of Natural Science and Technology). Since there are other members of staff, apart from the Rector, who lack proficiency in Faroese (and indeed we are likely to see increasing numbers of staff in this category as we recruit to serve the needs of the Faroes), staff look upon talking English as a necessary and courteous consideration.

⁹⁶ However, as colleagues have indicated, this perception is perhaps not so deep. For example, from the day our Quality Unit was founded, every meeting has had an agenda and minutes, and these have been formally written in Faroese. The same applies to our Quality Enhancement Forum for Education. Work in these fora is well (and formally) documented with minutes and action points in Faroese. This is true also of other University fora.

This understanding and tolerance of 'language mix' is widespread. The question is not one of either/or, and the feedback from staff, both at the event in the Nordic House and in the staff survey, clearly reflects this. At the same time, there is some concern about the future status of the Faroese language (as is the case elsewhere with other, 'larger' language too), especially within research and partly within the University itself as the use of English has been extended in relationship to leadership and management in particular (not nearly as much in relation to teaching as is the case elsewhere).

The strategic objective of course is that the language of our University must and shall remain Faroese, but that research and publishing internationally requires a strong command of English and that the development of programmes and courses taught in English is a necessity for our cooperation with other Universities to facilitate student mobility especially, but also many other aspects of collaboration and more general international presence. It is also widely understood by staff, students and external stakeholders that having an English-speaking rector with much relevant experience has led to many important and much-needed developments at our institution.

Multilingual Language Practices – Some Survey Results: As mentioned above, a distinctive feature of our University is the prevalence of multilingual practices. While Faroese is the most widely used medium of instruction in all degree programmes across all faculties, and the most widely used language of communication among students, teachers, and other staff, it is part of reality and our context-specific conditions that most study materials used, even at the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature, are not in Faroese but in other languages, mainly Danish and English. Naturally, this impacts language production, a situation well known in other 'small' (in terms of numbers of speakers) or minority language contexts.

In practice, as mentioned above, this means that in order to study at our University, generally speaking, students have to be highly proficient in at least three languages: Faroese, Danish and English. If not fluent speakers of these languages, or if not having high literacy levels, at least the ability to read academic texts in Danish and English is a necessity and a key skill required for successful studies.

This characteristic of the language situation has several implications, for example in relation to individual students' different language competences, for the inclusion of students with a non-Faroese or non-Nordic language background, and in particular in relation to the strategic goal of promoting "the use and development of Faroese academic language, including precise scientific terminology in all disciplines" (The *Plan*, p. 12). For the latter challenge, it is important to consider that the vast majority of teachers/researchers employed at our University have studied abroad, and so have developed their academic expertise through the medium of other languages.

As yet, perhaps surprisingly, given the history and origins of our University, no specific research⁹⁷ has been conducted that documents its linguistic environment – for instance: What characterizes language practices in different classrooms and in different subject fields? How students cope with navigating this specific multilingual environment? To what extent multilingualism is used as a resource, or what role language(s) play(s) in terms of retention and student success rate? And so on.

⁹⁷ Research at the University of Iceland has shown that, despite having good competence in English, operating multilingually, as is common at our University, increases workload for both students and teachers. See e.g. Arnbjørnsdóttir, B. (2012) "Four Languages in a Changing Nordic Linguistic Environment", in K.J. Knudsen, H.P. Petersen & K. Á Rógvi, *Four or more languages for all: Language policy challenges of the future*. Novus Press.

A typical (and assumed) scenario is what in sociolinguistic literature is referred to as ‘translanguaging’⁹⁸, which may be understood as making use of several languages in order to make meaning or phrased differently, drawing on different language resources. The teacher may predominantly use Faroese, but at the same time they may, while communicating in classroom discussions, presentations, and interaction, make heavy use of scientific terms and expressions from other languages, Danish or English.

In order to get an overview of the linguistic landscape characterizing our study environment, our Quality Unit conducted a small survey among programme leaders in Spring 2022. The aim was to get insight into day-to-day language practices in classrooms, including the medium of instruction, language(s) of study materials, and language use in written and oral assessments. The survey was online, organised as a questionnaire, and included space for additional comments. The survey was sent to programme leaders who were asked to give an estimation of the situation on their respective programmes. The results, therefore, give an indication of programme leaders’ views and understandings, rather than a comprehensive assessment. The response rate was 85%.

As anticipated, the language practices in teaching and assessment situations are characterized by a combination of Faroese, especially in spoken communication, and use of Danish and English.

First, respondents were asked to list the languages used in each individual degree programme. Figure 1 shows the results. The use of languages is weighted in percentages. Respondents were asked to weight the answers with a sum of 100%. In general, the results indicate that the vast majority of teaching is in Faroese, combined with Danish/Scandinavian and/or English. Eight respondents answered 100%, meaning that all teachers on the programme teach in Faroese. In contrast, one responded that English was the medium used on the programme.

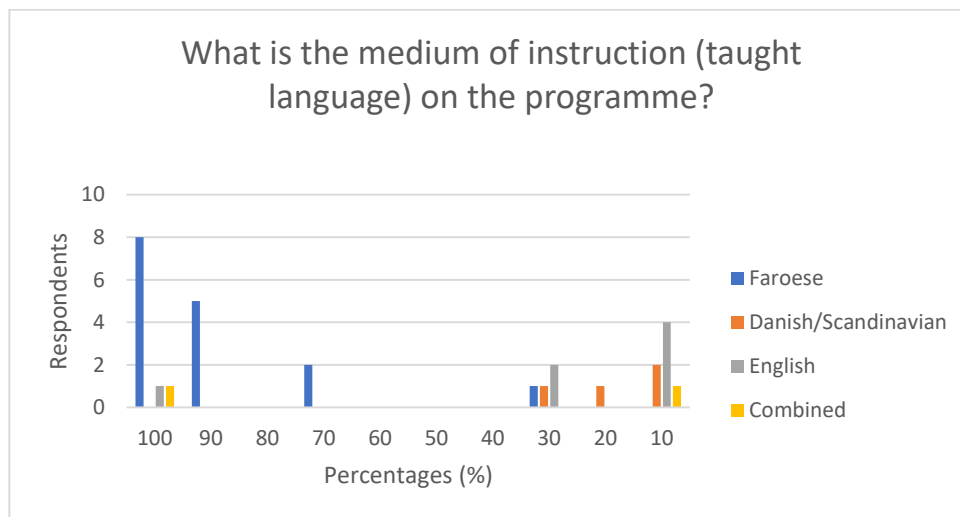


Figure 1

Figure 2 below shows responses to the question: What is/are the language(s) of study materials used on the degree programme? Programme leaders were asked to list the languages used in teaching materials, weighted in percentages. Compared to the results in Figure 1, where an absolute majority of the

⁹⁸ E.g., García, O. and Wei, L. (2014) *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

respondents answered that the medium of instruction is Faroese, the results in Figure 2 indicate that languages in study materials are primarily in Danish and English, though combined with a minor part in Faroese. One respondent answered that all teaching materials are in English (100%). All other respondents indicate that the languages used in materials are a combination of English, Danish/Scandinavian, and Faroese. Seven programme leaders estimated that only 10% of the materials used are written in Faroese. Danish/Scandinavian and English are the most frequently used and the highest weighted languages in terms of teaching materials.

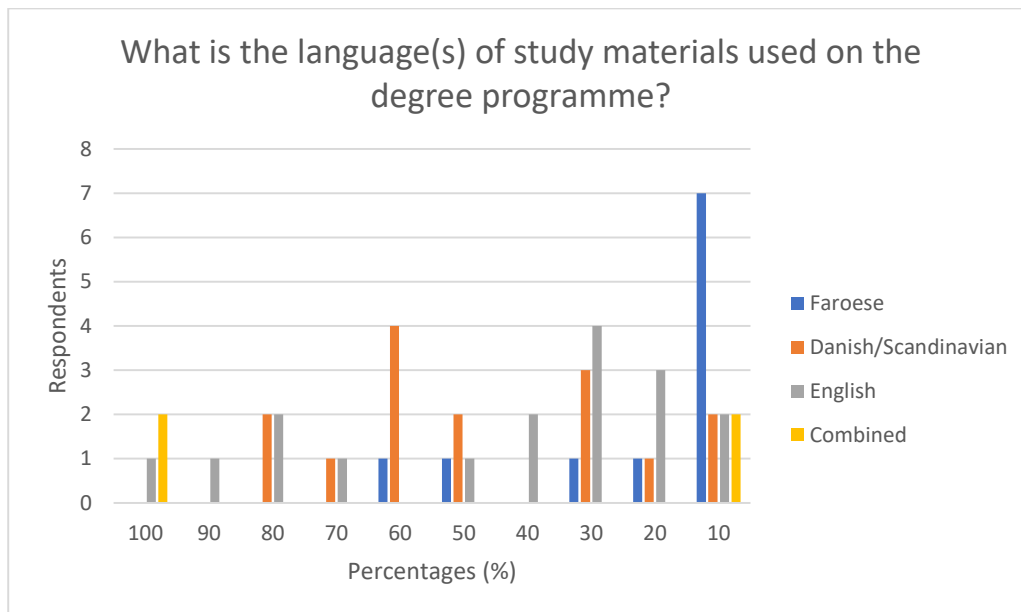


Figure 2

In many subject areas, then, there is an extreme lack of materials in Faroese, making it necessary to make use of materials in other languages. It is given that the combination of different languages in teaching materials requires that our students must have high proficiency in at least three different languages and be able to switch between these languages. This also means that in most disciplines access to academic terminology in Faroese is highly limited. As indicated already, the survey does not explore how students are able to navigate this linguistic environment, but it merely provides an estimated overview of languages used in teaching, materials and in assessments.

What languages must students be able to use in oral exams? In comments on this question, one programme leader explained that for the most part exams are conducted in Faroese. Most examiners understand Faroese, at least, but sometimes when it is not possible to find a Faroese-speaking subject specialist within a field, students are asked to use Danish or English during oral exams. This may pose challenges for some students. Occasionally the opposite happens, i.e., that a student asks for permission to use Danish or English as they feel more fluent in one of these languages than in Faroese. Valid executive orders, and our language policy, permit such flexibility in language use across the curriculum.

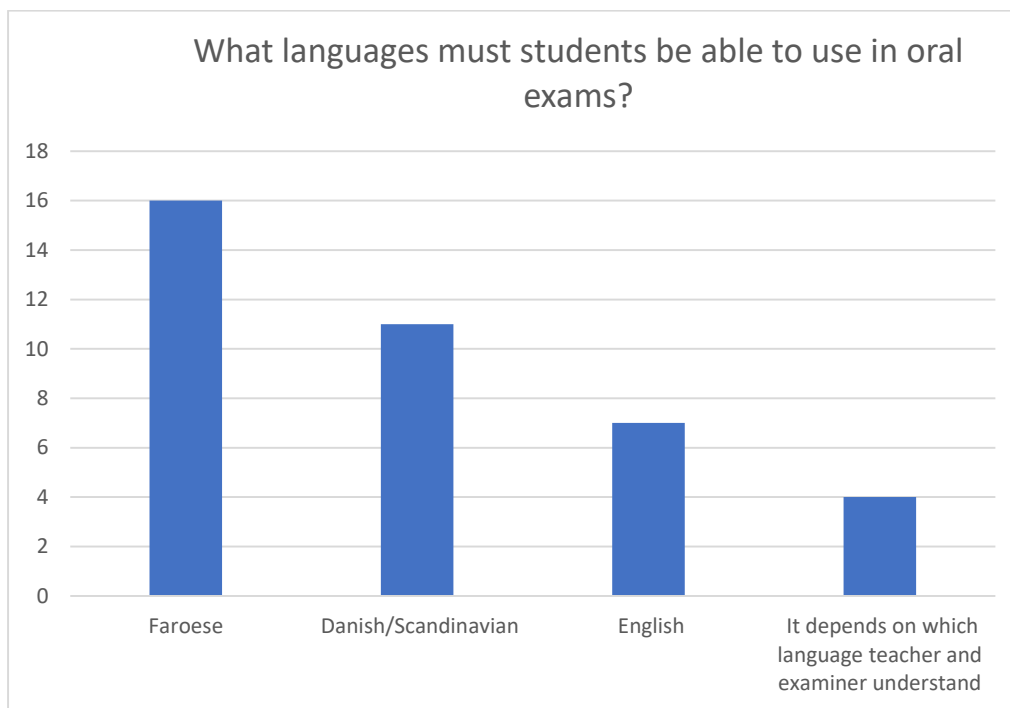


Figure 3

Which languages are used in written assessments? Responses to this question – shown in Figure 4 – show no significant difference with the preceding question, about exams (Figure 3). The language used in written exams is mostly Faroese, but, again, it also depends on availability of external examiners, and whether or not they understand Faroese. Thus, students are expected to be flexible in their language use in exams. That said, some of the respondents have indicated that in relation to assessment situations, it is always optional for students to choose which language they prefer to use. Again, valid executive orders, and our language policy, permit such flexibility

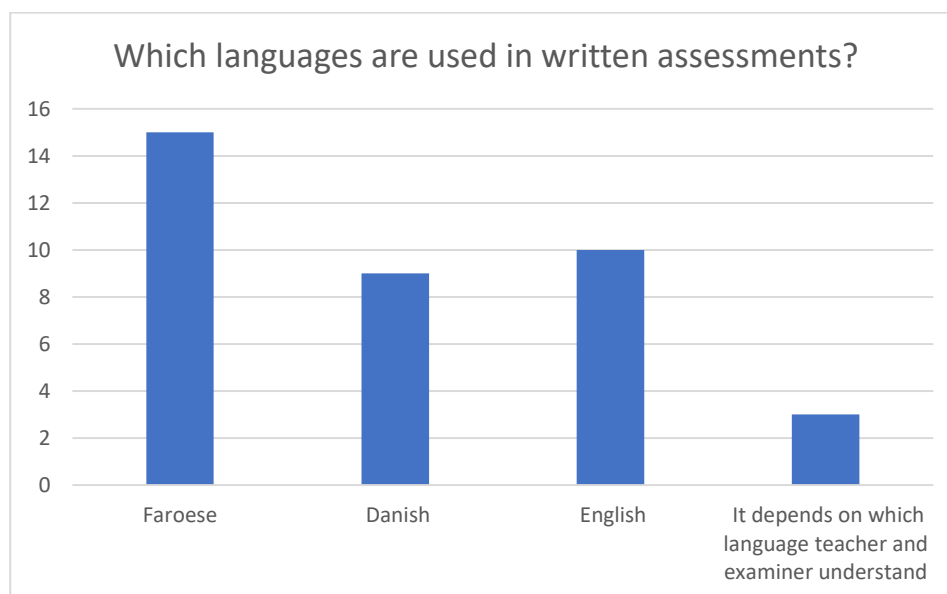


Figure 4

If we are to get more precise data on language practices and language-related questions, more surveys and studies will be required, including, perhaps, classroom observations and interviews with focus groups. In the survey, programme leaders were also asked about language(s) used in bachelor, master, and PhD theses. Several respondents felt they could not give a precise picture as language use was not a factor that had been systematically registered. However, the indication was that it is highly mixed, though with an increasing number of theses at all levels being written in Danish or increasingly in English. This again was dependent on language choice, materials, and availability of supervisors. Languages are indeed in competition, mainly for practical reasons as the survey about language use shows.

Implications and future directions: The Faculty of Language and Literature was the foundation stone of our University. Today it is the smallest of the five faculties. The reason is primarily that until recently Faroese was the only subject taught and the only programme offered at the Faculty – indeed there was at times reluctance to change this, and it is only recently that additional programmes have been added (in Creative Arts and Faroese as an Additional Language). Faroese has certainly not been under resourced compared to other programmes offered. However, some feel that as a faculty it may have been under resourced in other ways, since for decades it has had wider public service obligations in public committees connected to language and language policy.

Among these obligations is a close attachment to the official Faroese Language Council. For many years, the University (specifically the Faculty of Language of Literature) was looked upon as the primary caretaker for the Faroese language. Indeed, in public debate, the phrase “setursføroyskt” (University-Faroese) means a very correct and ‘pure’ way of using the language. In order to make a clear distinction between research and teaching on the one hand, and the overseeing of the Faroese language on the other, the Faroese Language Council was provided by the Ministry with its own institution/secretariat in 2012. The aim was to separate the normative work with Faroese, from research in Faroese and research in language generally.

Public opinion, however, still connects the Faculty of Language and Literature to the caretaking of the Faroese language, partly due to the relatively many resources at the Faculty compared to the small secretariat of the Language Council, and partly due to a provision in §8 in the law about the Language Council according to which the latter must cooperate with and make use of resources at “Fróðskaparsetur Føroya” (thereby making the aforementioned separation and distinction somewhat blurred). For example, when a version of a Faroese spelling corrector used by many schools, public institutions and private companies proved outdated, pressure built on the Faculty to develop a new version. The Faculty made this part of a plan to develop research/investigations into language technology together with colleagues from the University of Tromsø and launched a new spelling corrector in August 2020 (it is in use - and very much so - but still needs some finalizing work).

More widely with regard to the very important question of language technology, at least five students of the Faculty have been involved with language technology projects outside our University, primarily at the Institute for the Visually Impaired (Sjóndepilin), as assistants. This has been to some degree a lucky coincidence. However, based on good discussions and collaboration with those involved at more senior positions in these projects, in June 2022, we sent a memorandum (“Upprit um máltøkknidepil”) to the Ministry about the establishment of a language technology centre at the University. This proposal was, strongly supported by the Institute for the Visually Impaired (Sjóndepilin).

We regard this potential avenue of development as tremendously important for the Faculty and indeed for the future of the Faroese language. Fortuitously, already we have been able to bring key contributors to those external language technology projects into positions of employment at the Faculty, so that their expertise is not dissipated and lost. As our Rector indicated when speaking at a special event to mark the completion of the prior, external projects:

“Too often in my working life I have seen important centres of knowledge and expertise reach a certain stage of development – and then somehow be allowed to disintegrate. Someone important leaves, funding runs out, the ‘baton’ in some way gets dropped and is not picked up – and somehow this is allowed to happen.

We need to make sure that is not allowed to happen in this case. It *must not* be allowed to happen; the stakes are simply too high. I was able to learn this with the help of a kind of language technology, called Google, which took me to a very relevant web page, that of a Nordic journal, which begins by reporting the “brutal message” of a two-day conference of Nordic and other specialists held in 2021 looking at the latest developments in language technology. Their “brutal message” was that: *“Languages that are not used in the digital world will not survive.”*

That brought the whole issue home to me very effectively. Think of all of the work that has been done over so many years to revitalise, preserve and develop the Faroese language The great value of that work is clear, and in one sense no-one will ever be able to take any of that away. But in another sense, it *could*, actually, be taken away – quite quickly, some people have told me. Faroese could *not* survive.

Now, our University was in its original conception ... about the preservation and development of the Faroese language. That is, as our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* says, a “a special responsibility” which is “of profound importance for the whole Faroese society in terms of social inclusion, democracy and development”, and it is, our Plan continues, a responsibility “which the University will take very seriously at all times”.

And that is why our University hopes very much to become a – and we hope the – key focus point for the future of language technology here on the Faroe Islands.”

So, we hope very much to receive the necessary government support to make this happen, and we will welcome the views of the ERT on this vital matter. Can our University meet its obligations to the Faroese language without this investment? In support of our ambition in this area, we are working with partners at the Danish Language Council and elsewhere to host, here in Tórshavn, the main Nordic language technology conference, the Nordic Conference on Computational Linguistics, *NoDaLiDa*, in 2023. We will work to make it a great success – and a vital step towards the development of a centre for language technology in the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature.

Regarding other applicable solutions to challenges concerning the Faroese language, the distance between the university and external stakeholders is very short. As mentioned, Faroese as an Additional Language was offered as a new one-year Master’s diploma in August 2021, especially targeted at teachers in primary, lower- and upper secondary schools. The many challenges facing Faroese society and the status of the Faroese language in the wake of the internationalisation of education (needless to mention research of course) and the much-changing labour market – together with globalisation more generally – will possibly, in some sort of reverse logic, strengthen the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature, adding new areas of research, new tasks and evolving public demands, and likely new subjects to teach.

The strategic plan mentions as a priority – apart from developing and implementing a language policy and supporting the teaching of Faroese for non-native speakers – “a growing number of collaborations on the Faroe Islands and internationally providing innovative contributions impacting on societal needs”. As with Faroese as an Additional Language, the development capacity in language technology is in

alignment with the *Plan*, while the University leadership at the same time has been promoting another expressed priority. This is the development of “scientific terminology in all disciplines”, as well as getting the Language Forum to start to work well, under professorial leadership, in trying to balance the different opinions on the use of English and Faroese. Scientific terminology here means ideas, concepts, and frequently used terminology, not every single term or designation within each discipline. Language practices tend to differ from one faculty to another. In this respect the agreed language policy and the implementation of it underscores the overall commitment in the *Plan* to pulling the university together.

In reaching this overarching goal, it is important for us to strike the right balance between the use of Faroese and the use of English (and at times of other Scandinavian languages), in order to be able to continue to secure the kind of generally very good support we have been receiving from members of staff, and from Faroese society in general. At the same time we must be developing, as we are required to by law, executive orders, and in line with our widely agreed strategic commitments and priorities, as a modern, professional institution of higher education and research, which is developing “in dialogue and partnership with students, staff and external stakeholders, clear policies and procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of our programmes, in accordance with the Bologna Process ... (so) creating a transparent culture of continuous enhancement”.

As we tread this path – being both the *Faroese University* and the *Faroese University* – it will be important that the Language Forum, established under the terms of our Language Policy, comes into full operation and plays its role. Each faculty is represented on the Forum, which is chaired by a professor with relevant expertise. To date, to some extent due to covid, there have been few meetings and no announcements, guidelines or consultations have been sent out by the Forum. This may be an indication of doubts among the members of the Forum on how to proceed with the policy, and the University leadership will be meeting with the Forum in the coming months to discuss that and to encourage the Forum to progress with its important work. This work is crucial to realising our strategic aspiration to become “a language role model amongst universities in similar sized countries and territories with their own languages”. One way to progress with that aspiration will perhaps be to make that aspiration a focus for our collaboration with at least some of our partners in the Network of Universities of Small Countries and Territories.

Appendix: Language Policy of the University of the Faroe Islands

1. Introduction

The University of the Faroe Islands is the primary higher education and research institution in the Faroe Islands, the nation's only university and its foremost knowledge centre. The University undertakes research and research-based teaching at a high international level, providing for synergy between research and teaching to serve the evolving needs and priorities of the Faroes and their wider region.ⁱ

Faroese is the official language of the Faroes. The Faroese community, which is largely responsible for resourcing the University, prioritizes its language in a wide range of areas including schools, public administration, mass media and in cultural institutions. Reflecting this, the University is the only university in the world with an obligation to conduct research-based teaching in Faroese.

The Faroese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture presented a report in 2007 about language policy. A recommendation was that the University should adopt a language policy to support and strengthen the position of the Faroese language across all fields of higher education and research in the Faroe Islands.ⁱⁱ

More recently, *The University of the Faroe Islands, Strategic Plan 2020-24* has acknowledged the "special responsibility" of the University in "preserving and developing the Faroese language". The *Plan* highlights that this responsibility "is of profound importance for the whole society, in terms of social inclusion, democracy and development, and it is one which the University will take seriously at all times". To support this, the *Strategic Plan* indicates that the University will support "the usability and usage of the Faroese Language", and identifies the following commitments and priorities:ⁱⁱⁱ

- *To develop and implement a clear language policy and be a language role model amongst universities in similar sized countries and territories with their own languages.*
- *To promote the use and development of Faroese academic language, including precise scientific terminology, in all disciplines, and to support the publication of high-quality academic work in Faroese.*
- *To support the teaching of the Faroese language at all levels of education and its use and development in wider society, and to seek to do so also amongst Faroese people living abroad.*
- *To seek to contribute to improving the teaching of Faroese to non-native speakers, and particularly for those whose native language is other than a Scandinavian language.*

2. The University of the Faroe Islands: The primary higher education and research institution in the Faroe Islands, a part of the international academic community and a developing University which can benefit from the contributions of non-Faroese speakers with relevant experience.

The University has a special responsibility to support the usability and use of the Faroese language. It also, as part of the international academic community, must actively participate in a wide range of collaborations with overseas partners, and actively prepare students for, and support staff towards, such. In the latter respects, the predominant languages of exchange are English and the main Nordic languages. The institution is also a developing university, which can benefit from the contributions of people who are not Faroese speakers but have relevant experience of benefit to the development of the University. This language policy reflects the requirement for the University simultaneously to address all of these needs.

The foundation of the policy is that the primary spoken and written language of the University is Faroese, whether in teaching, research, or administration, unless specific and appropriate circumstances dictate otherwise. The University will seek to ensure that the use of the Faroese language across the institution is of consistently high quality – in terms of spelling, grammar, and so on, in letters, emails, job descriptions, curricula, course descriptions, on the University website, and so on.

As already indicated, English is also of great importance to the institution and to its staff and students and the University should also seek to ensure that staff and students are supported in terms of their English competences. Moreover, as the University includes both international teachers and students, the University will strive to ensure that all important information about the institution should also be available in English. When working with Nordic partners, for instance in Nordic projects, at conferences and during examinations, the University will encourage and support use of other Nordic languages as appropriate.

3. Implementation

To implement this language Policy and to secure a high-quality use of the Faroese language, the University of the Faroe Islands will take the following steps:

- i. The University will undertake a review of the academic language guidance and language support that is available across the University for both students and staff and will seek to identify best practices and support their wider implementation and development across the University.
- ii. Course descriptions will be catalogued and available on the University website. If the course does not follow the general rule that courses will be in Faroese, this must be pointed out in the course description. If international students follow a course in Faroese, the teacher will try to clarify the material without changing the language of teaching, or with as little change as is reasonably possible. International students may ask questions, have presentations, submit written work, and undertake examinations in their own language, or in English, according to what may be feasible.
- iii. Teaching in English and in other languages will be limited to courses that involve the teaching of other languages, courses delivered by teachers who do not have sufficient Faroese and courses delivered in another language as part of international collaborations. The University may decide to offer postgraduate programmes partially or entirely in English. For such programmes, certain minimum language proficiency requirements will typically be made for students.
- iv. Assessments will generally be held in the same language as that in which the course is primarily delivered, but this may also depend on the language competences of available examiners (including external examiners). In courses delivered in English or another language and taught by a Faroese teacher, the faculty may, on request and depending on the language competencies of all the relevant examiners, allow students to be assessed in Faroese. In courses delivered in Faroese, the faculty can allow students to write their assignments and have their exams in English or one of the Nordic languages, or in another language, according to what may be feasible and arranged with the faculty staff, also taking account of the language competences of available external examiners.
- v. Doctoral theses should be written in Faroese, where that is in accordance with the wishes of the student and the views of the faculty. Where that is not the case, another language will be chosen. The faculty and the supervisory team will in each case assess if there are sufficient independent experts in the relevant field who have adequate skills in the chosen language, to ensure sufficient availability of qualified opponents. Theses written in a language other than Faroese must include an abstract in Faroese, and theses written in Faroese must include an English abstract.
- vi. The University will aim to provide support for tuition in Faroese for non-Faroese staff, who will be able to request some partial reduction in workload to support their efforts. Non-Faroese employees of the University are expected, within a reasonable timeframe (approximately 3-4 years), to attain a reasonable proficiency in Faroese (particularly in comprehension). Faroese language competence will be an important consideration when positions, and especially permanent positions, are being filled, and the language policy of the University will be referred to in job adverts.
- vii. Faroese teachers and students are encouraged to participate in collaborations in which other languages are the primary means of exchange (e.g., Nordic languages and English). The University

will work towards providing support for academic English for teachers and students, in particular for PhD students.

- viii. International students will be offered an opportunity to participate in courses and other activities in Faroese at the University where that is feasible and appropriate. International students undertaking a course taught in Faroese may, dependent on available resources and opportunities, be offered some support towards tuition in Faroese. Exchange students may also be offered such support.
- ix. The University will take positive steps to ensure that speakers of sign language^{iv}, visually handicapped and dyslexic students and staff can be supported as well as is reasonably possible in their studies and work at the University.
- x. Academic staff will be encouraged to communicate their field of study in Faroese - in teaching, general communication in books, articles, and reviews (in Fróðskaparrit), various media, study material and so on. Translation of classic or highly influential scientific and theoretical texts into Faroese will also be encouraged and supported, within available resources.
- xi. Academic staff will be actively encouraged to promote the use and development of Faroese academic language and precise scientific terminology in Faroese and to communicate these to students and the public. Each disciplinary grouping within the University will be encouraged to collect and disseminate the relevant innovations in their field.
- xii. All meetings and other activities within all fields of study and within the administration of the University should be held in Faroese, again unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise (see section 2, above). University management and those chairing committees will seek to ensure that participants who do not sufficiently understand the language of exchange in any given context can participate in meetings and other activities as fully as is reasonably possible.
- xiii. Written material and general information from the University's administration and its faculties, for example meeting requests, minutes of meetings, invitations to lectures, advertisements for various activities, information updates, and so on, should be provided in Faroese, unless specific circumstances require otherwise, but will typically also include an English and/or Nordic text as needed. Internal or working papers may be written in English as needed.
- xiv. The University will seek to use language technology and guidance to support students and staff in their use of the Faroese language. The University will therefore seek to ensure that suitable language technology is made available, dependent on resources, particularly for staff and students who may have particular needs which can be supported by such tools.
- xv. The ICT environment of the University will be Faroese to the extent that is reasonably possible. Teachers and students will be encouraged to participate in translating open software.
- xvi. The University will have a language forum that refers to the Rector, or their nominee, and includes a representative from each faculty, the central administration, and students. This committee will collaborate with the Faroese Language Council as appropriate. The forum should from time to time advise the University Leadership Team and other staff on relevant matters, make suggestions on how to implement the language policy of the University, generally monitor its implementation, communicate relevant information to interested parties as appropriate, and evaluate the policy and its implementation as needed, to inform periodic revisions and updates.

3. Oversight and responsibility The University administration and individual faculties, centres and institutes, as applicable, are responsible for more detailed implementation and realisation of the University of Faroe Islands' language policy. The Rector is ultimately responsible for the policy and may authorise a temporary deviation from individual provisions, as necessary.

ⁱ See the Law passed by the Løgting no. 58 as of 9. June 2008, amended by law passed by the Løgting no 51 as of 8th May 2012, § 2, and *The University of the Faroe Islands, Strategic Plan 2020-2024*.

ⁱⁱ *Málmørk* 2007:55.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The University of the Faroe Islands, Strategic Plan 2020-2024*, p.4 and p.12.

^{iv} About Sign language, see *Málmørk* 2007: 107, p2.

**University of the Faroe Islands,
Reflective Analysis, 2022:
Documents to inform the work of the International
Team conducting the External Review of our
University**

Supplements to the Main Reflective Analysis

**Case Study 5
PURE Faroe Islands
August 2022**

Introduction: In 2020 the University of the Faroe Islands, the Faroese National Library and the Research Council of the Faroe Islands began the work of collaboratively adopting a research information management system for the Faroe Islands. The adopted system is PURE, which is provided by the leading publisher, Elsevier. The system has been set up to allow the collaboration to incorporate all of the many public research institutions in the Faroe Islands, and their staff, and to act as a national repository for research publications about Faroese affairs and/or by Faroese scholars. For these reasons it is being called *PURE Faroe Islands* – and it can be accessed [here](#).

Strategic Plan, 2020-2024: In our *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024*, under Research and Enterprise, we have committed ourselves:

- “To promote and enable research of international quality across all our faculties and relevant to all our education programmes”;
- “To support our people, and make best use of our available resources to provide a conducive environment to build their profiles as international researchers”.

Under External Engagement and Partnership, we have prioritised:

- “To have a growing number of collaborations with partners ... providing innovative contributions impacting on societal needs”.

And under Resources, we have prioritised:

- “To strengthen our use of digital platforms, and work with external partners to develop new digital capacities, to support the existing and emerging needs of our University”

PURE Faroe Islands is addressing these commitments and priorities and progressively providing much needed domestic and international visibility of, and access to, the extensive research conducted by publicly funded institutions across the Faroe Islands

The Collaboration and Initial Implementation

Initially, towards the end of 2020, anticipating a budgetary surplus due to corona, we approached the Research Council and the National Library with the idea of collaborating on the adoption of PURE in the manner described above. In the first instance, our University needed a professional system of research information management for our own purposes. This was both to ensure that we developed a “single source of truth” about our research activities and outputs – one which fully and accurately recorded all of the relevant information – and also to ensure that this information was accessible in appropriate formats to all relevant stakeholders, both internally (for various kinds of management, planning and decision-making purposes) and externally, and also both domestically and internationally.

A key consideration in all of this was also for the University to be able to demonstrate clearly the extensive research being done across the University and its relevance to the Faroe Islands. It was also important that we should have a clear perspective on the research underpinnings for our education programmes – where were we doing well and where was research needing to be strengthened. However, it was apparent that there was limited visibility – and indeed awareness – of the full range of research that was being conducted more widely on the Faroes, across the many publicly funded research institutions. Visibility was partial even for those overarching institutions one would most expect to have an overview – the Research Council and the National Library – and even more so for

government and the wider public itself. There was also, it appeared to our recently arrived Rector, surprisingly limited collaboration, and no real strategic collaboration, amongst the many research institutions on the Islands.

In this light, we felt that we could use our own adoption of PURE to serve wider needs on the Faroes and also to start to generate some more of the collaboration between research institutions that seemed to us to make sense in such a small society. However, this also, inevitably meant that developing PURE Faroe Islands would be a complex undertaking, requiring excellent communication, promotion and strong leadership from the three main collaborating institutions. One can get a sense of this when reviewing the list of publicly funded research institutions (and their various departments) in the Faroes – which is provided in the table below.

Pure Faroe Islands	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Faroese Marine Research Institute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Birds / Fuglur ○ Demersal / Botnfiskur ○ Environment / Umhvørvi ○ Marine Mammals / Havsúgdjór ○ Pelagic / Uppsjóvarfiskur ○ Technical / Tøkni • The Faroese Food and Veterinary Authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aquaculture Department ○ Chemical Laboratory ○ Chief Veterinary Officer ○ Food Department ○ Microbiological Laboratory ○ Pathological Laboratory ○ Veterinary Department • P/F Fiskaaling - The Faroese Aquaculture Research Station <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biotech ○ Ecology ○ Fish Health ○ Fjord Dynamics • The Department of Occupational Medicine and Public Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Centre of Health Science • The Faroe Islands Agricultural Agency • The Faroe Islands Genetic Biobank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FarGen ○ The Centre of Health Science • The Faroe Islands Hospital Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The National Hospital of the Faroe Islands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diagnostic Centre ○ Emergency Centre ○ Medical Centre ○ Psychiatric Centre ○ Surgery Centre ○ The Centre of Health Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Faroe Islands National Museum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dep. of Archaeology ○ Dep. of Botany ○ Dep. of Building Heritage ○ Dep. of Ethnology ○ Dep. of Marine Zoology ○ Dep. of Terrestrial Zoology • The Faroese Geological Survey • The National Archives of the Faroe Islands • The National Library of the Faroe Islands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faroese National Department • The Research Council of the Faroe Islands • The University of the Faroe Islands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Faculty of Education ○ Faculty of Health Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Centre of Health Science ○ Faculty of History and Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Kári á Rógvi Institute for Law and Legal Research ○ Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature ○ Faculty of Science and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Geospatial Centre of the Faroe Islands • The Faroese Environment Agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cadastre ○ Department of Land and Sea Charting ○ Energy ○ Environment Protection ○ Forestry Service, Plant Research and Nursery ○ Land Registration Act and National Register ○ The Geospatial Centre of the Faroe Islands

In early discussions, the Research Council indicated that there had previously been discussion about the need for a professional research information management system for the Faroes, but with no real action. Both the Council and the National Library were enthusiastic about the proposed collaboration. Importantly, initial discussions with Elsevier indicated that the kind of collaborative approach envisioned to serve the needs of the Faroe Islands as a whole was both feasible, and also something Elsevier was willing to support.

In initial meeting between the heads of the three main collaborating institutions, it was agreed that the University and the National Library would share both the start-up costs of adopting the system, and then the ongoing annual costs, on a 50:50 basis. thereafter, two working groups were set up and were attached to the project:

- A **steering group**, comprised of the Rector of our University and the directors of the National Library and Research Council;
- An **implementation group**, with two staff from the University (one from IT and one from the Research and Enterprise Unit (REU)) and two from the National Library (one from IT and one librarian). The representatives from the University were tasked with dealing with the technical issues involved in adopting PURE, with the overall implementation and usage of the system, and with supporting staff in using PURE. The two colleagues from the National Library were tasked with assisting with importing and categorising content and with other aspects of librarianship.

The two working groups then met regularly to address the issues and challenges that arose in adopting the system, and to figure out how to meet them. For the first six months the meetings were held in conjunction with a designated PURE consultant based in Denmark, who set a deadline for when first to go public with PURE Faroe Islands. It was agreed that that should be done in September 2021, to coincide with the annual research event delivered by the Faroese Research Council in collaboration with the University. The aim was that we would by that time have substantial engagement with the system on the part of the main University researchers, and then use that as a basis on which to launch and publicise the system, encouraging engagement from others – both within the University and also from the other research institutions.

In the following months the two groups met regularly – quite frequently meeting also together – to progress with meeting the September deadline. The system was set up to include all of the relevant research institutions. Next user profiles were created for the relevant University staff – some 150 in total (including full- and part-time staff, PhD students and affiliated staff). Guidelines were developed to support researchers in accessing the system, populating their user profiles and adding research outputs and other content. However, it soon became apparent that staff needed additional encouragement and assistance with these tasks, and so some support sessions were provided.

Staff at both the University and the National Library were involved in validating the content added to the system – primarily the research outputs. These aspects of workflow have been vital in ensuring the quality and reliability of the data. When challenges arose, the relevant group or the groups together met to seek to deal with them and ensure continuing progress. The aim has been to ensure speedy validation whenever possible, and generally speaking, that has been the case.

Based on the work done in the six-month period following March 2021, we were able to go public with PURE Faroe Islands – albeit as a system in development, with still only incomplete information for the University – at the Faroese Research Council’s annual research event, *Vísindavøka*, in September 2021.

Ongoing Implementation

At the point of going public, it was clear that more would need to be done to encourage and support University staff to populate their user profiles and add content. For that reason, during October, November, and December 2021 the implementation group held four workshops for staff on how to get started using PURE. At the workshops the users received short introduction to the system and a detailed introduction to the guidelines, followed by personal help with populating their profile. Those who participated were the most research active of staff and those who were eager to make their research visible, domestically and internationally. The workshops were well attended by research staff, but there was less engagement from those in purely teaching positions. Our aim throughout has been to have all staff in teaching and research positions using, and regularly adding content to, the system.

Since Summer 2022, a student assistant has been employed to assist with adding content to the system. This process is time consuming, especially for staff who have a lot of outputs and a long research career behind them. The student assistant has been assisting them in ensuring content is ready for validation.

At the same time, the collaboration – primarily through the Research Council – has been reaching out to other research institutions to secure their engagement with the system. In general, the other research institutions have been very positive about the opportunity provided by the collaboration. Based on this, we have begun to add content with two of the largest and most important institutions, the Faroese Marine Institute, Havstovan, and Fiskaaling, the Faroese Aquaculture Station.

Some of the other institutions are very small with limited human resources to administer a research system like PURE. The challenge is to get the institutions integrated into the workflow as well to learn how to use this system, that is quite complex and has expansive possibilities. The plan is to have more – if not all – of them well integrated by the end of this year.

Challenges and Development

Most significant changes include challenges, and this process has been no exception – both on a technical level and with progressing with securing the required engagement. These challenges are, we believe, fairly common with the adoption of PURE,

One challenge is that not all university staff have been populating their profile with the information requested, and too many have not yet started on their profiles. This was expected, especially from staff in teaching lecturer positions. Currently (June 2022), there are 149 profiles attached to the University. 66 (44 percent) of the profiles have been populated and research output and other relevant activities have been imported to the system. All research staff have more or less been populating their profiles and some few teaching lecturers, affiliated and PhDs have too. More workshops will be held in the later part of 2022, targeted towards the groups of staff who are lagging behind in this regard.

In June 2022, it was agreed that managers would ensure that engagement with PURE would be an aspect of all annual review discussions for staff going forward, including the interim review conversations held half way through the year, Staff who have not sufficiently engaged with the system should agree an objective to do that, to be reported on in due course, and be directed to the Research and Enterprise Unit for support, as required.

At the current stage, our focus remains on securing engagement with PURE Faroe Islands, both within the University and also from the other research institutions on the Faroe Islands, and ensuring that we

have full, reliable and up to date information on research personnel, expertise, activities and outputs associated with all of these institutions. In the longer term, there is much greater functionality in the system which we will progress towards making use of.

In the meantime, we felt it would be useful for the purposes of our reflective analysis to write up the broad lines of the development of PURE Faroe Islands. Like everything else we are doing, we are doing it with limited resources and alongside the many other tasks and priorities that we are handling. As we continue to increase and improve administrative support for the development of our University, we are keen to ensure that PURE will become an established system and routine that will benefit our University (staff and students), as well as the wider network of research institutions on the Faroes, and of course wider Faroese society – promoting visibility and transparency of research activity, as well as research collaboration, both within the Faroes, and also between the Faroe Islands and other territories and nations.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION POSED BY THE EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM AFTER REVIEWING THE UNIVERSITY'S REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS

EVALUATION VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FAROE ISLANDS SEPTEMBER 2022

INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY TEAM

The following questions of comprehension and clarification have arisen as a result of the Review Team having read the documentation provided by the University Team (ie the Reflective Analysis and its Appendices). The Review Team thanks the University Team for its comprehensive coverage of the issues and acknowledges that the material provided so far gives a solid basis upon which the visit can be conducted and conclusions reached. The Review Team is aware of the challenging circumstances in which this paperwork has been completed, not the least of which has been the Covid19 pandemic, its consequences for staff engagement and its continuing aftermath. The Review Team recognises the substantial effort and consideration that has been undertaken by the whole University community to get to this stage.

After the Review Team receives the University's response to the questions below, the Chair of the Review Team will provide a schedule of sessions for the visit. For the purpose of cohesion, the questions have been grouped into categories. As far as possible, this document reflects the wording of questions posed directly by Review Team members.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

- FIU has 1.100 students. Is this number in headcount or FTE students? If it is in headcount, how many FTE students does FIU have? I assume that even though most programmes are offered full-time, it is not mandatory for students to enrol in 30 ECTS per semester, is that right?
- What status does the outcome of this Review have to ensure delivery of the direction and recommendations it produces. Is there a process by which the University adopts the outcome, secures priority, resources and 'buy-in'? Or is the Review simply advisory to the Ministry?

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE IDENTITY AND DIRECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

- Does FIU have an inclusion plan for people with disabilities and special needs?
- Does FIU have an equality gender plan?

- How does FIU maintain its contributions to the maintenance and development of Faroese language in society and school through the development of dictionaries, language technology (cf. case study 4, p. 12), translation work and development of terminology, contribution to textbooks and teaching material for primary and secondary schools, language advice to, or cooperation with, private sectors, etc.
- How does FIU develop scientific dissemination in Faroese to the wider public through contributions in public media, public debate, exhibitions, contribution in Faroese to media for children, etc?

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE OPERATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS AWARDS

- How is the Board and its Chair appointed?
- How is the rector appointed?
- Who/what approves the composition of the ULT and how are the various roles decided in the context of the stated strategic direction of FIU?
- How are the Deans and the rest of the ULT appointed?
- What are the hiring processes in place for new FT faculty and adjunct faculty?
- Does FIU have a career progression plan for staff?

QUESTIONS REGARDING SHARED PROCEDURES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

What is the procedure for establishing a new bachelor's or master's programme?

How often is the University Quality Handbook updated and how is it shared with staff and students?

Can we see the processes of:

- establishing a new programme?
- its subsequent development process, including industry, government or professional body involvement and quality checking?
- securing the coherence of individual, constituent parts of a programme (ie how do the modules fit together and how is progression of cognitive and other skills secured by level of study)? Is this applied consistently across Faculties?
- process of securing consistency of academic achievement by students across Faculties – is there a means by which the intellectual skills and knowledge to achieve an award in one Faculty is comparable with another?
- external validation of programme outcomes which secure confidence in meeting international standards and expectations?

- annual monitoring of programmes, processes of reflection upon feedback and student performance and the continued relevance of stated outcomes. What are the processes for making changes to programmes which arise from these reflections?
- periodic evaluation of programmes and their continued relevance to the Faroese economy, society and identity. What are the processes for the withdrawal of a programme which is no longer deemed viable, relevant or necessary?
- how students contribute to quality assurance and enhancement. Is there a means by which students can co-create course content?
- how programmes which are delivered by more than one Faculty are led and consistency of student experience secured?
- A flow chart and associated documentation and examples of minutes of meetings that demonstrate the approaches, etc would be useful to assist understanding of the above?

QUESTIONS REGARDING APPROACHES TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

- In the RA document there is no information about continuing education (Lifelong Learning - LLL). Does FIU offer LLL programmes? If so, how many students are enrolled in LLL programmes and how many programmes are offered every course?
- Which is the format of the short Degree Programme Profile? Does it follow the structure of the Diploma Supplement?

FIU offers 3 and 4 years BA degrees and 1 and 2 years MA degrees. What are the main reasons for establishing the length of a degree?

- The section 5a of the RA document is empty. I would like to know the strategic approach to provide online and distance learning in the future.
- In the RA document there is no information about continuing education (Lifelong Learning - LLL). Does FIU offer LLL programmes? If so, how many students are enrolled in LLL programmes and how many programmes are offered every course?

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDENT BODY, ITS EXPERIENCE AND INVOLVEMENT

- Some programmes at FIU have very few number students. Is there a minimum number of students to continue a programme? How do small numbers affect the delivery of content and student engagement?
- Do the student and deputy student leader on the University Board have the equal right to vote on all University matters?
- Given the lack of a single campus, does the Student Service help students find accommodation?

Prof. Malcolm Foley
Chair of the Review Team on behalf of the Review Team

APPENDIX 4: RESPONSES FROM THE UNIVERSITY TO THE QUESTIONS OF CLARIFICATION POSED BY THE EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM AFTER THEIR REVIEWING THE UNIVERSITY'S REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS

REVIEW VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FAROE ISLANDS

SEPTEMBER 2022

INITIAL QUESTIONS FOR THE UNIVERSITY FROM THE REVIEW TEAM, WITH ANSWERS PROVIDED BY THE UNIVERSITY

1. QUESTIONS REGARDING THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW

Question: *UFI has 1,100 students. Is this number in headcount or FTE students? If it is in headcount, how many FTE students does UFI have?*

Answer: The number of students given in the main RA document is a headcount taken during the 2020/21 session. Taking the situation as of August 2022, 1,048 students were registered for programmes at our University. Of those, 946 were registered for full-time studies and 102 were registered for part-time studies. As our registration system can, unfortunately, not easily give us exact data on single course registrations, we have made a qualified estimate based on numbers from the faculties. Converting part-time students and single course students to FTE, we calculate an FTE of some 1,020 students for the current semester.

Question: *I assume that even though most programmes are offered full-time, it is not mandatory for students to enrol in 30 ECTS per semester, is that right?*

Answer: Full-time students are expected to register for 30 ECTS per semester and part-time students for 15 ECTS per semester – and typically they all do that. At present, there is no specific regulation requiring a student to register for a certain amount of ECTS per semester, but we work with a definition of an “active student”, which is a student that will graduate no later than one year after originally intended/envisaged date of completion (this follows what happens in Denmark). A FT student enrolled on a 4-year bachelor’s 240 ECTS programme must produce at least 48 ECTS per year to be considered *active*, and a FT student enrolled on a 3-year 180 ECTS bachelor's programme must produce at least 45 ECTS per year. Students who do not produce ECTS in accordance with these expectations must have an alternative study plan approved by their programme leader in order to continue their studies.

Question: *What status does the outcome of this Review have to ensure delivery of the direction and recommendations it produces. Is there a process by which the University adopts the outcome, secures priority, resources and ‘buy-in’? Or is the Review simply advisory to the Ministry?*

Answer: According to the law (Article 3.3), it is the relevant government Minister who organises the external review of the University.⁹⁹ Nothing is said about how the conclusions and recommendations of the Review should be dealt with, and what formal status they should have.

The most logical process would seem to be as follows. The final conclusions and recommendations of the review process will initially have an advisory status. These conclusions and recommendations should arrive in mid-December. However, these conclusions and recommendations will already reflect some exchanges and discussions between the draft report (anticipated in October), and the final report – so, to a degree at least, the conclusions and recommendations can be expected to reflect some aspects of agreement and consensus between all parties. The University will give its response to the final conclusions and recommendations in later January. That would be likely to involve the Ministry presenting the final conclusions and recommendations to the Board and the Board then responding, in consultation with the University leadership, leading to the production of a broadly agreed response document, indicating what all parties intend to do in response to the final conclusions and recommendations in the months and years ahead.

Regardless, the board is committed to taking the conclusions and recommendations of the current review very seriously. Also, the Ministry is committed to ensuring that the next review commissioned will have a specific focus on the actions taken to respond to the recommendations of the current review.

2. QUESTIONS REGARDING THE IDENTITY AND DIRECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

Question: *Does UFI have an inclusion plan for people with disabilities and special needs?*

Answer: People with disabilities and/or special needs can currently enrol in all UFI programmes, providing they meet the general academic requirements for that programme. According to the law governing the University (English language version in the ERT folder), once the student has been admitted: “The rector of the University of the Faroe Islands must make arrangements to ensure that any students with disabilities who need special educational assistance or support are offered such assistance and support. The rector shall make arrangements to ensure that students who cannot follow the regular teaching offer, owing to a disability, in special circumstances are offered extended terms of study and special study aids, so that such students can complete their programme of study. The Minister may lay down more detailed rules governing special education support.” (Article 20.1-3).

In recent years we have seen a growing number of students with declared or emerging/identified disabilities and/or special needs, and in some cases the special arrangements required can be quite costly (e.g. sign language interpreters, accessibility modifications, etc.). Currently, this extra cost has to be taken from our University’s general budget, which can be problematic, due to the fact that the budget is determined some several months before we know what the special requirements may be, and in fact the budget allocated takes no specific account of special needs provision that may be required.

For this reason, we have been in talks with the Ministry about an executive order for students in HE with special needs; this executive order, we have proposed, should include a provision for funding whereby the costs are borne by government, separately from the main financial allocation to the University. The Ministry has indicated that the new executive order will be ready early in the new year.

Another important aspect of the new executive order, we hope, will be to interpret the legal responsibility of the University – and of government – in terms of the concept of ‘reasonable

⁹⁹ “Landsstýrismaðurin skipar fyri eftirmeting av Fróðskaparsetri Føroya. Eftirmetingin verður gjørd av uttanhýsis serfrøði.”

adjustments'. This is an important concept in other territories and can, we are sure, be used productively to interpret the practical application of the current law.

We have written about increased support for students with dyslexia in section 2b of the main reflective analysis document.

Question: *Does UFI have a gender equality plan?*

Answer: At this point we do not have a specific gender equality plan. However, we would like at this stage to add the following comments.

- We state in our codes of conduct for both staff and students that: "The University does not accept any harassment or differential treatment based on gender, sexuality, age, race, nationality or ethnic origin, religion, disability or political views".¹⁰⁰
- We also include the following statement in all UFI job adverts: "The University is committed to fostering a good, healthy, and inclusive work environment which values diversity and where everyone is guaranteed equal rights, equal respect, and equal opportunities."
- For all selection committees for positions at the university, the HR department emphasizes gender balance and requires a good reason/explanation in any cases which might be an exception to that. More generally, gender balance is monitored during and following every recruitment process, including when inviting people for interviews.
- Our payroll system provides an accurate gender balance overview at each Faculty. Overall, the balance looks good, but we need to focus more on the gender balance in the ULT (1 woman out of a total of seven members) and in our professorial group (1 woman out of a total of 11 professors).
- The creation of the Extended University Leadership Team has ensured a significant increase in women in leadership positions and an improved progression pathway to ULT for all staff in the future.
- A more specific gender equality plan would be very beneficial and a good tool for us to secure better gender equality.

Question: *How does UFI maintain its contributions to the maintenance and development of Faroese language in society and school through the development of dictionaries, language technology (cf. case study 4, p. 12), translation work and development of terminology, contribution to textbooks and teaching material for primary and secondary schools, language advice to, or cooperation with, private sectors, etc.*

Answer: There are several institutions in the Faroe Islands taking care of these matters, especially within the primary, secondary, and upper secondary school system. For instance, the publicly funded publishing house, Nám, is responsible for resourcing the school system with teaching material in Faroese, and employs both editors and professional subject-consultants.

The University's actual cooperation and contacts with Nám are both direct (based on contracts and formal requests) and more indirect. In cooperation with Nám, a professor of linguistics at the University has published since 2015 three volumes of a new Faroese Grammar, and the fourth – and final – volume is on the way. A History of Faroese Literature is being published (so far one volume), and otherwise research outputs and advice from researchers at the University are used by others in the development of textbooks for teaching and other educational material (for instance recently in the development of the CEFR-level for Faroese as an Additional Language). Nám also arranges 1-2 days courses for teachers in upper secondary schools and sometimes hires researchers from our University to teach the courses.

¹⁰⁰ This is quoting the staff code of conduct, but the student code is almost identical.

Some years ago, the Ministry made an agreement with a private publisher, Sprotin, to have all Faroese dictionaries available on one platform/website. This turned out to be highly successful. As a result, Faroese dictionaries are easily accessible online on lab tops and phones (see sprotin.fo). These dictionaries are in part products of the University, most importantly the Faroese-Faroese dictionary, which is still edited by members of staff at the Faculty of Language and Literature who communicate with the private publisher about updates etc.

Concerning the development of terminology, this is something formally allocated to the national Language Council. The Language Council, however, is closely attached to the University (as mentioned in the review documents provided), both formally (by law), and also informally, as the activities of the Council are housed at the University, making contacts between members of the Council and researchers at the University easy and regular. The Language Council has a website where new words are listed.

Moreover, linguists at the Faculty of Language and Literature over the past 20 years have developed digitised collections (corpora) for research. In June this year, the University sent the Ministry a memorandum (including a proposal) for a Language Technology Centre to strengthen research and to provide language technology solutions for Faroese society (see Case Study 4).

Furthermore, in addition to our University's contributions to the maintenance and development of Faroese language in society and school described above, extensive language work takes place on an everyday basis within all faculties and units across our University. For example, with regard to programme documents, our Course Catalogue in particular, it is a requirement that all course descriptions are available in both Faroese and English. The same applies to other documents (guidelines and procedures). For some staff this is no problem at all, as they are competent users of both languages. However, in some instances this requirement poses additional challenges. Some Faroese staff may not be sufficiently competent to translate the documents themselves, and international staff often do not have sufficient knowledge of Faroese to undertake this translation task.

In addition to translation tasks, there is a demand for language support (e.g. proofreading) and advice. Our University does not have a language centre or even a staff member whose principal role it is to support staff with their translation work. External translators are therefore used in many instances. This particular issue relates to our Language Policy. In order to comply with our policy, the area of language support, translation and proofreading needs to be strengthened – which requires, of course, additional resourcing. This particular challenge is not without significance in terms of the maintenance and development of Faroese language.

Question: *How does UFI develop scientific dissemination in Faroese to the wider public through contributions in public media, public debate, exhibitions, contribution in Faroese to media for children, etc.?*

Answer: Our main platform for scientific dissemination of all kind is now increasingly Pure Faroe Islands - pure.fo. For the wider public, dissemination in Faroese regularly starts with a story on our website – setur.fo. News and updates on the website are shared through social media, mainly our Facebook profile, with currently 4.500 followers. Whenever we think the material has value as actual news, we send out a press release to the media and contact editors in order to promote further coverage.

Media professionals frequently visit our website and regularly publish stories from the site on their own initiative. Our researchers and experts are also frequent guests in studios and appear as experts in various outlets to explain matters in their areas of expertise. In general, researchers at the University have easy access to the Faroese media.

Relevant to mention also is the popular scientific magazine *Frøði*, published twice a year, with contributions from scientists employed at different institutions and from different areas of research, and including the university as a main contributor. *Frøði* is published by *Fróðskapur – Faroese University Press* – with financial support from *Føroya Fróðskaparfelag – the Faroese Society of Science and Letters*.

Faroese University Press also publishes the only scientific journal in Faroese, *Fróðskaparrit*, and regularly publishes peer reviewed academic books and doctoral dissertations written in both Faroese and English. Occasionally, the University Press publishes smaller academic books, not always peer reviewed, targeted at a broader public audience, especially within teaching. These publications, called *Setursrit*, are often based on seminars or for instance modified MA-dissertations/theses or other similar cooperations between one or two researchers and students.

The University arranges many public events during the year to present and debate research. Larger public events are held in our main venue, Kongshøll. They are promoted well in order to get members of the public and the media to come. Smaller events are held at faculty level, for instance at the Faculty of History and Social Sciences, where the public can attend more informal lunch lectures and ask questions. On their own initiative, faculties occasionally arrange more subject specific lectures, mostly on current issues of debate, in Kongshøll. Lately the National Library has arranged a series of so-called afternoon lectures in cooperation with the University.

Our researchers are well represented on the programme for the annual Researchers' Night, which is arranged by the Research Council of the Faroe Islands. Besides shorter lectures on site, it gives our researchers the opportunity to travel around the islands to present their research, which is important also in maintaining the wider visibility of University and evidencing its relevance and impact. It also provides the researchers with the opportunity to meet school youth and children, who are one of the main target groups for the event. The public broadcaster, Kringvarp Føroya, makes a screen version of all the lectures on Researchers' Night and broadcasts them during the winter period.

3. QUESTIONS REGARDING THE OPERATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS AWARDS

Question: *How is the Board and its Chair appointed?*

Answer: The four main *external* board members, and their deputies, are appointed by the Minister responsible for Higher Education. The two staff representatives are elected by the University's staff. The two standing for election who top the poll become the main members, and the next two become deputies. Similarly, the student member is elected by students – the person topping the poll becomes the main member and the next highest becomes the deputy member. At the first meeting of a new Board, the Chair and Deputy Chair are selected by the Board members from amongst those who are external to the University. All members get to vote.

Question: *How is the Rector appointed?*

Answer: According to the University [law](#) (Art. 13.2), the Rector is appointed by the Board ("Stýrið setir og loysir úr starvi rektara"). The formal requirements are that suitable candidates should have leadership experience, knowledge of research environments, experience and insights in the field of education, and also an understanding of the interaction between the University and society at large¹⁰¹. The process of appointing a Rector follows the general procedure for appointments in the public sector in the Faroe Islands, with an appointment committee comprising board member(s), employee(s) and someone with qualifications comparable to those required for the position being filled. The appointment committee recommends a candidate to whom the job should be offered, and the Board accepts or rejects that recommendation.

Question: *Who/what approves the composition of the ULT and how are the various roles decided in the context of the stated strategic direction of UFI?*

¹⁰¹ "Rektari skal hava royndir av leiðslu og kunnleika um granskingarumhvørvi, skal hava royndir og innlit í útbúgvingarøkið og hava skil fyri samspælið millum stovnin og samfelagið sum heild."

Answer: In the regulations for the organisation of the University, approved by the Board in November 2011, and reflecting the University Law, it is specified that the Rector, Deans and University Director constitute the University Leadership Team. More recently, as indicated in the main reflective analysis (RA) document, we have created the roles of Pro Rector for Education and Pro Rector for Research and Enterprise. Between early 2020 and early 2022, these roles were taken on a part time basis by two of the existing deans. More recently, the role of Pro-Rector for Education has been filled on a short, fixed-term basis by a person coming from outside the University (who is not a Dean), and the Pro Rector has occasionally joined ULT. More recently still, having had their appointment extended and the fraction of appointment increased, the Pro Rector is being included in all ULT business.

The duties of the relevant staff are further specified in the *Regulations Governing Positions (posts and roles) at the University of the Faroe Islands* – which is available in the ERT Teams folder. This document was updated in 2020/2021 to accommodate various new roles which had recently been created (for instance, Pro-Rector, Deputy Dean, Faculty Research Leader) and to update other post and role descriptions (for instance, programme leader, Dean, Vice Rector).

The main ULT roles which are highlighted in the current *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* are the Pro-Rector roles.

As indicated in the main RA document, in recent years there has been a focus on ensuring a ‘corporate’ ULT, in which all members are focused on the operation and development of the University as a whole, as well, of course, as Deans having a representational role in relation to their ‘own’ faculties.

Question: *How are the Deans and the rest of the ULT appointed?*

Answer: The procedure for the appointment of the Rector is explained above. The University Director and the Deans are appointed by the Board on the recommendation of the Rector. The University Director position is a permanent position which is advertised following the standard procedures for permanent positions at the University (but unlike other permanent positions, the Board has to approve the appointment).

The appointment of Deans is described in our 'Regulations Governing Positions (posts and roles) at the University of the Faroe Islands' (which can be found in the ERT folder): “Commonly, existing staff members are appointed to the role of Dean for a three-year period, with the possibility of extension, and are responsible for the overall academic and administrative leadership and management of the faculties. Deans report directly to the Rector. It is also possible for the position of Dean to be advertised externally and filled by an external applicant (as a post, rather than as a role), either for a fixed-term period, or on a permanent basis.”

In terms of the current Deans, all five have been recruited from the internal staff, though one position was filled in 2021 following a recruitment process which was open to both external and internal applicants. In that case there was only one applicant, who was the existing Dean. In the case of another Faculty, the position of Dean was advertised externally when the existing Dean stepped down after completing their period of appointment. However, there were no external applicants and it was not possible to secure a satisfactory appointment from the internal applicants. A solution was found when the previous Dean agreed to take the role for a further three-year period, which will soon come to an end. In the near future, we also anticipate that a Dean will come to retirement. In that case, it will be possible to advertise externally – because a salary will be available to support that. Otherwise, the availability of finance is generally a constraint on our ability to advertise externally.

A concern in relation to the role of Dean is that the financial reward for assuming the position is very slight, relative to the burdens of the role. This seems to be one of the factors which limits interest in taking the role, especially for those who would be internal applicants.

Question: *What are the hiring processes in place for new FT faculty and adjunct faculty?*

Answer: Appointment processes are described in the “Regulations Governing Positions (posts and roles) at the University of the Faroe Islands”, articles 8–10, as follows:

Article 8

Appointments (evaluation committee and selection committee) and Career Progression

8.1 For the appointment of teaching and research positions (not including the position of Teaching Lecturer), the Rector, on the recommendation of the Dean, appoints a selection committee. The task of the Selection Committee is first and foremost to make a comprehensive assessment of whether the academic qualifications of the applicants are suitable for the intended position, whether the applicant’s research interests and research qualifications are relevant to the University, and whether there is a possibility for collaboration within and outside the University. The selection committee will, on the basis of the comprehensive assessment, present a recommendation to the Rector as to which applications should be submitted for evaluation to the Evaluation Committee

8.2 As indicated in Art. 8.1, the Rector, on the recommendation of the relevant Dean, appoints also an evaluation committee, usually of three or four people, and at least two of whom come from another university or research institution. The members of this committee will have at least the same level of qualifications and skills as those required for the position they are evaluating. The task of the Evaluation Committee is to assess the academic qualifications, skills and competences of applicants against the requirements in the job description, as well as any special provisions and regulations that apply to the position. The Evaluation Committee is required to provide an assessment as to the suitability of the candidates referred for evaluation, and a ranking of candidate suitability from the perspective of the Committee. The Rector appoints the Chair of the Evaluation Committee, who will be internal to the University. The Chair coordinates the work of the Committee and ensures that the evaluation is adequately documented and agreed by the Committee as a whole.

8.3 The Selection Committee then bases its subsequent work on the Evaluation Committee’s academic and professional assessment. Firstly, candidates are selected for interview in a further shortlisting process, and then interviews are conducted with the selected candidates. The Selection Committee takes a comprehensive approach and issues a recommendation to the Rector regarding which applicant is the overall best match for the available position, and also indicates suitable reserve candidates, as appropriate.

8.4 For teaching and research posts with a term of less than a year, the Rector may authorize an exemption from the Evaluation Committee requirement, meaning that any applications will be assessed by a Selection Committee, as per Art. 9.

8.5 For staff in teaching and research posts seeking to progress from an assistant professor post to an associate professor post, or from an associate professor post to a professor post, the guidelines, procedure and documentation for completion are provided in Appendix 11.

Article 9

9.1 For positions other than research and teaching positions, the Rector appoints a Selection Committee on recommendation from the relevant Dean, University Director or Head of Human Resources. The Selection Committee assesses applications following the general administrative procedures for the public sector in the Faroe Islands. The Dean, University Director or Head of Human Resources submits a recommendation to the Rector stating which candidate is most suitable for the position, based on a comprehensive overview of the field. The Rector, as in the case of teaching and research positions, has the final say and appoints a candidate for the position.

9.2 Project positions, such as Ph.D. or postdoctoral researcher, will be appointed following special agreements and in consultation with the rector.

Article 10

10.1 Temporary derogations: In special cases and with good reasons, the Rector may authorize temporary derogations from the provisions stipulated above. The Rector may also, in exceptional circumstances, appoint people for fixed term positions of up to one year. However, no such appointments may be extended, except in evidently exceptional cases, and then only with a clear time limit for the extension.

Question: Does UFI have a career progression plan for staff?

Answer: We do not at this stage have a specific career progression plan for staff.

For staff in teaching and research positions, the well-established process is that people progress from the fixed-term position of assistant professor to the permanent position of associate professor, based on an external evaluation and also the needs of the University. This is described in article 5 of the *Regulations Governing Positions* document (available in the ERT Teams folder). Staff in associate professor positions are then able to put themselves forward for promotion to professor, based on meeting the relevant criteria – and again subject to an external evaluation which informs the final decision.

In both cases, there are further written guidelines for staff (currently in Faroese Only), as well as a template to be completed when putting themselves forward for promotion (in English). Both of these documents will be made available in the ERT Teams folder.

More generally, and for all staff, career progression (and also professional development) has, since 2021, been a formal aspect of the annual review conversation – MCPDC – process. Another important development in recent times has been the creation of Faculty Leadership Teams – with Deputy Deans and Faculty Research Leaders supporting Deans – and the Extended University Leadership Team (with DDs and FRLs as well as key leaders in the administration participating). All of these colleagues now also have specific line management responsibility for relevant staff.

All of this means that there are now more opportunities for staff to progress their careers in leadership and management.

4. QUESTIONS REGARDING SHARED PROCEDURES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

Initial comment: In general terms, as fully reflected in the main RA document, we fully appreciate that we have a fair distance to travel in relation to the very useful questions posed in this section, and we are committed to ensuring that we continue the direction of travel we have already established in this direction, and indeed accelerate the rate of travel.

Question: *What is the procedure for establishing a new bachelor's or master's programme?*

Answer: New programmes emerge initially in different ways. However, in almost all cases they emerge in response to an expressed need from Faroese society. This is fully in keeping with the mission of our University.

For example, the Master's in Leadership and Management, which was launched in 2021, was established due to a request from external stakeholders, including Tórshavn Municipality (which is one of the largest public employers) and also the Faroese House of Industry. These stakeholders identified a need for competence development and professionalization of employees in leadership positions at different levels in their organisations.

Another example is the recently established part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Faroese as an Additional Language, also launched in 2021, where the request to provide a qualification for teachers teaching Faroese to pupils who do not have Faroese as a first language (and to adult migrants) came from the Ministry of Education (UMMR). This reflects changing demographics in the Faroes and

consequently the increasing number of pupils, especially in compulsory education, who do not have Faroese as their first language. Funding for the establishment of this part-time diploma was earmarked and directly mentioned in the national budget for 2021.

A challenge with the latter programme was that the Ministry expected that students (i.e. teachers already employed at different levels within the public education sector) were to be enrolled in the programme already from the autumn semester in 2021, although all of the required programme documents (see p. 73 in the RA) were not at that stage sufficiently completed. Funding for 2021 could not be transferred to the next academic year, 2022, and would therefore be lost. There was some discrepancy between how ministerial staff and University leaders understood what was required in order to establish a new programme. Naturally resources need to be in place, which they were in terms of financial means, but other resources need to be in place too, including qualified academic and supporting staff, and programmes themselves need to be well prepared, designed, evaluated, quality assessed and formally approved prior to their launch. An example like this one perhaps further highlights why clear and appropriate procedures and processes for establishing new programmes need to be in place.

A third example is work currently under way at the Faculty of Science and Technology. In the current calendar/financial year, funding has been provided to establish a new master's programme in Data Science beginning in 2023. In addition, a working group is currently preparing a short-cycle Diploma Degree in Web Development. These programmes are to be delivered in part because of a concrete wish from the IT industry (KT-felagið) and different stakeholders within the IT sector in the Faroes, as there is a severe shortage of IT specialists and practitioners across many sectors in society, and also, perhaps most importantly, because the IT field is seen specifically as a priority for sustainable economic growth in the Faroes. The working group preparing these programmes has had a longer lead-in time for the required development work.

More developed institution-wide procedures for the development and approval of programmes are certainly required. For future plans on this matter, see the sub-section entitled *Cyclical review processes* (p. 75) in the main Reflective Analysis document and footnote 62 (also on p. 75).

From initial requests and wishes, final decisions for establishing a new programme are made at senior management level, that is, between the Rector, ULT, relevant Dean(s), the Ministry and (possibly) other relevant stakeholders. However, there are no formalized procedures for such decisions as yet. The Quality Unit has not hitherto been part of such initial discussions, but has been consulted at a later stage in the development process.

When it has been decided that a new bachelor or master's programme is to be established, and public funding has been guaranteed, normal practice is that relevant Deans (and/or other staff in leadership positions) consult academic staff with relevant subject expertise and invite them to be part of a working group (WG) that is tasked with preparing the new programme. Such a WG may include external consultants (as was the case with the part-time Master's in Leadership and Management). In the case of the postgraduate diploma in Faroese as an Additional Language, the WG coordinator consulted their own personal networks to get feedback on the draft degree programme profile. Often other WGs – for instance the WG developing our current engineering programme in 2020/2021 – consult academic networks abroad.

From this stage onwards (i.e., when it has been decided that a new programme will be developed), our University has procedures and guidelines for how to proceed with the establishment of new programmes, especially with regard to developing programme documents. This has been described in the Reflective Analysis, Section 4a, pp. 71- 76. These procedures and guidelines include the following key documents:

1. Procedures for Programme Descriptions, Degree Programme Profiles and Course Descriptions (available in the ERT folder. Also, see p. 72 in the RA).
2. *A Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles, Including Programme Competences and Programme Learning Outcomes*, Tuning 2010.

In the process of developing a new degree programme, staff in the Quality Unit provide support and guidance. Also, prior to formal approval of a new programme, first by the Faculty Study Board and then at the Ministry of Education¹⁰², programme documents need to be quality assessed and approved by the Quality Unit. Since the Unit was established in 2020, staff in this unit have worked closely with WGs on new programmes, especially in terms of providing support with the writing of required programme documents (including individual module/course descriptions) and with formulating competences developed on a programme and intended learning outcomes. Because of the need to focus on getting programme documents in place (including documents for already existing programmes), work on more detailed procedures for new programmes has had limited initial priority. These conditions and priorities have also been described in the RA report (see Section 4c).

Question: *How often is the University Quality Handbook updated and how is it shared with staff and students?*

Answer: We do not yet have a well-consolidated quality handbook. That said, we have a Quality Unit section on our *Intranet* which functions as a type of University Quality Handbook. There, staff have access to all relevant templates, guidelines and procedures they are required to use in connection with establishing and developing new programmes, and in writing degree programme profiles and individual course descriptions. Students do not have access to the Intranet. Therefore, our Quality Unit has suggested that we develop a digital quality handbook that is available to all staff, students and the public on our University's webpage.

With regard to updates and changes to the procedures and guidelines referred to above, the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education (QEF) is empowered to discuss changes and make recommendations and some decisions on potential updates and other revisions. This responsibility has been laid out in the Terms of Reference for the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education (also available in the ERT folder). For more info on this Forum, see Section 2f, pp. 49-50 in the main RA document.

Question: *Can we see:*

- *The Processes of establishing a new programme,*

Answer: See our response to the first question in this section. As indicated and illustrated there, there is no 'standard' process for *establishing* new programmes, but once a decision has been made about developing and delivering a new degree programme, there are processes and procedures in place for doing so, and these are currently being further developed. Also, please see Section 4a in the RA document for details of current procedures (including new cyclical review processes), and also Section 4f (p.78) for plans in the making.

- *Its subsequent development process, including industry, government or professional body involvement and quality checking*

¹⁰² The University Law (Section 3, part 1) states that: "The University sends a petition for the new programme to the Ministry. The Minister then gives a formal approval based on a descriptive curriculum report for each programme. The petition needs to be transparent in its structure and content and it also must have a plan of how the programme is being funded."

Answer: To some extent, the subsequent development of a programme has been outlined above. For more details of the subsequent development process, please see Section 4a in the main RA document. The Tuning approach, which is a source of inspiration that we draw on in relation to quality processes (e.g., programme design and programme delivery, maintenance and evaluation in the framework of the Bologna Reform), underlines the importance of including relevant stakeholders in the consultation process. This is mostly done on an ad hoc basis.

That said, we have examples of programmes at our University where professional bodies are *always* involved. A good and well-functioning example is our bachelor's programme in Nursing. For other professionally oriented degree programmes, such as teaching and pedagogy, advisory 'collaboration councils' that include different stakeholders have recently been established (as prescribed in the new Executive Orders 100, 101 and 102). For more details, see Section 2.a.

With regard to quality checking, please see Section 4a & 4f in the main RA document on cyclical review processes (p. 75 & p. 78) and upcoming approval procedures (p. 78). Deadlines for all of these review and approval processes will be part of our Annual Calendar for Quality Work that is in the making.

- *How we secure the coherence of individual, constituent parts of a programme (i.e., how do the modules fit together and how is progression of cognitive and other skills secured by level of study)? Is this applied consistently across Faculties?*

Answer: The short answer to the latter question is no. This is partly due to structural challenges, which include staffing issues (academic/research and supporting staff). Some programmes have too few permanent academic staff to deliver the full programme and therefore rely heavily on external teaching staff (from the local community) or external guest lecturers from abroad. We are fully aware that staffing challenges may impact negatively on quality issues, which include securing the coherence of individual, constituent parts of some programmes.

From different sources, including course evaluations, we have learned that some teaching staff have made substantial changes to course descriptions that form part of a programme, e.g., in terms of contents, learning outcomes or assessment method, without appropriate process and approval. This is not in line with existing quality enhancement procedures at our University.

Therefore, we are currently discussing better quality assurance processes in relation to programme descriptions and individual module/course descriptions. We need more resources and competence development training for (new) academic staff, in particular for members of our Study Boards, so that they are able to scrutinize, for example, course descriptions and thus double check contents, how modules fit together (coherence), programme structure and order of programme components to ensure progression, competences emphasized, etc and thus to ensure quality.

- *The process of securing consistency of academic achievement by students across Faculties – is there a means by which the intellectual skills and knowledge to achieve an award in one Faculty is comparable with another?*

Answer: Currently, as we are only quite recently into the process of developing an internal quality assurance and enhancement system, it is difficult to give a precise answer to this question. One notable challenge for us is the absence of a National Qualifications Framework. As explained in the main RA document (p.71), "A National Qualification Framework (NQF) has not been developed for the Faroe Islands yet. Therefore, with regard to e.g., programme design, we use QF-EHEA (Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area) and EQF (European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning) as guiding reference points". In addition to consulting these documents for overarching consistency and comparability across faculties, another central transparency tool is the ECTS system. As described in Section 2f in the RA, the Quality Unit has run workshops for academic staff

on different aspects of the Bologna Reform and student-centred learning (SCL). This has included workshops on ECTS with a focus on how to estimate student workload with the purpose to secure consistency, and on creating better awareness among staff across faculties that ECTS credits can only be obtained after successful completion of work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved. We are of course aiming for reasonable consistency in student workload and in securing consistency of academic achievement by students, both within individual programmes and across Faculties, but at this stage we do not have sufficient evidence to show to what extent we succeed in this ongoing endeavour. What we put great emphasis on when we welcome new students is, for example, a good introduction programme in order to prepare students for what is expected of them, and what it means to be a university student. In addition, all teachers are required to give students thorough insight into the main programme documents outlined above (also as detailed in the main RA document), into teaching and learning approaches, assessment methods, and intended learning outcomes.

- *External validation of programme outcomes which secure confidence in meeting international standards and expectations*

Answer: The short answer is that we do not currently have guidelines and procedures in place for external validation of programme outcomes. What we intend to do in this respect has been outlined in the RA report, Section 4c. In particular, we aim to introduce a Programme Review Report that is produced in connection with the University's cyclical review processes of the whole Education Portfolio that are to be undertaken every 4-6 years. Such a cyclical review process will be based on ESG 1.9 which provides standards for on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.

Meantime, we have evidence that there is trust in our system and in our degree programmes. This claim is based on long-term experiences with graduates from our University being on par with students from other universities when they continue their studies abroad. Although undertaken on an ad hoc basis, existing agreements with other universities – and participation in joint educational activities with other universities – support the claim that our graduates are fully on the academic level with graduates from other universities. That said, formalized procedures, including a robust QAE system, are both preferred and required, and we are in the process of constructing and implementing those.

- *Annual monitoring of programmes, processes of reflection upon feedback and student performance and the continued relevance of stated outcomes. What are the processes for making changes to programmes which arise from these reflections?*

Answer: As described in the RA report, Section 4c, we do not have a practice in place yet for an annual monitoring of programmes, but work is in progress regarding this matter. For example, the next priority for our Quality Unit will be to introduce an Annual Calendar for Quality Work, which includes cyclical review processes and approval procedures. The introduction of an Annual Status Report for programmes will be introduced in 2023. As described in the RA (p. 78), "This report will be based on an annual evaluation meeting among staff teaching on the programme, and it will e.g., include key data for the past academic year (KPIs), status of quality standards, results from course evaluations, focal areas to address, a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, and an Action Plan for quality enhancement for the next academic year". Based on the outcomes of these annual evaluation meetings, changes and enhancements will be made to programmes.

Moreover, at the next scheduled meeting of the Quality Enhancement Forum for Education, discussions will start on how to utilize results from student feedback and course evaluations in a consistent way, notably for quality enhancement purposes. This topic will also be an item on the agenda for a workshop planned for programme leaders and study board members on 5 October (see Footnote 63 in the RA report).

- *Periodic evaluation of programmes and their continued relevance to the Faroese economy, society and identity. What are the processes for the withdrawal of a programme which is no longer deemed viable, relevant or necessary?*

Answer: As indicated above, we are only now beginning to perform systematic, periodic evaluation of programmes; including their continued relevance to the Faroese economy, society and identity. Currently, no formalized process is in place for withdrawing programmes that are no longer deemed relevant. An example of a programme being withdrawn and replaced in recent years is when the Energy Engineering programme, which had very low student numbers, was replaced by a new general engineering programme, which immediately secured better recruitment. Another is when three biology programmes, also with low student numbers, were reduced to two – linked to additional energy on recruitment, which proved successful in maintaining the programmes.

- *How students contribute to quality assurance and enhancement. Is there a means by which students can co-create course content?*

Answer: As described in the RA report, Section 2.a, pp. 32-34, and in our Policy For Quality Enhancement for Education, students, especially in the recent years, have been represented and actively participating in key committees and internal quality enhancement processes – including the QEFE.

As for the latter part of the question, how students can co-create course content, there is no University-wide approach to this, though it is quite likely that it is happening in practice to varying degrees in different parts of the University – in part reflecting the small cohorts for some of our programmes. This is something we have not had an opportunity to look into in the time available to respond to these questions.

- *How programmes which are delivered by more than one Faculty are led and consistency of student experience secured?*

Answer: Our University only has very few programmes that are delivered by more than one Faculty. Examples include two of the programmes mentioned above: The Master's in Leadership and Management, which is based on collaboration between the Faculty of History and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education, and the postgraduate diploma in Faroese as an Additional Language, which is based on collaboration between the Faculty of Faroese Language and Literature and the Faculty of Education. In both of these cases, WG members responsible for preparing and delivering the programme come from two Faculties, but the programme is delivered from a 'main' faculty – History and Social Sciences and Faroese Language and Literature, respectively. Otherwise, programmes are always based in a particular faculty and led by a faculty member where the programme is based. With regard to securing consistency of the student experience, we do not have a more elaborate answer than what has been described above already, and in the RA report (Section 2).

- *A flow chart and associated documentation and examples of minutes of meetings that demonstrate the approaches, etc would be useful to assist understanding of the above.*

Answer: We have no documents available in English to assist understanding of what has been described above.

Overall: As indicated above, we fully appreciate that we have a fair distance to travel in relation to the questions posed in this section, and we are committed to ensuring that we continue the direction of travel we have already established in that direction, and indeed accelerate the rate of travel.

5. QUESTIONS REGARDING APPROACHES TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Question: *In the RA document there is no information about continuing education (Lifelong Learning - LLL). Does UFI offer LLL programmes? If so, how many students are enrolled in LLL programmes and how many programmes are offered every course?*

Answer: Our University does not currently have an explicit Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategy and nor do we offer LLL programmes *pe se*.¹⁰³ However, we are conducting activities which can reasonably be seen to fall under the broad heading of LLL, including continuing education. (e.g., our own University Pedagogy course, pedagogy for upper secondary school teachers, upskilling for trained nurses, Faroese as an additional language, and leadership and management education for people already in employment). In a more general sense, we offer learning pathways for mature students, since our students are, on average, older than students elsewhere and a large proportion of our students are parents. This challenges the 'traditional' concept of HE learning as catering to younger individuals with fewer obligations. For this reason, we have already decided to make the development of Flexible Learning Pathways (FLP) – another concept related to LLL – a strategic priority for development across the coming academic session (part time study, with distance and asynchronous learning opportunities, etc.).

Question: *Which is the format of the short Degree Programme Profile? Does it follow the structure of the Diploma Supplement?*

Answer: The format is laid out in the Tuning booklet *A Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles*. As quoted in footnote 61 (Section 4a, p. 74) in the main RA document, the short Degree Programme Profile "specifies the subject area or areas studied, identifies the level (first, second or third cycle) and indicates the special features that distinguish it from other similar programmes. The Degree Profile describes, in terms of competences and learning outcomes, what graduates will know, understand and be able to do by the time they have successfully completed the programme. The Profile spells out what can be expected of the graduates in terms of the kinds of tasks they are equipped to undertake, their level of expertise and the responsibilities they can assume".

The short Profile can be a standalone document, e.g. as an information (and navigation) tool for prospective students *and* for enrolled students in an extended (degree) course catalogue. However, it can also be used as part of the Diploma Supplement. According to *A Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles*, "When included in the Diploma Supplement ... the Degree Profile serves as an important element for recognition". For more info on the purpose and utility value of the short Degree Programme Profile, please see page 74 in the main RA document.

Diploma Supplements (DS) issued at our University follow set guidelines that are based on standards agreed by the Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). To fill out the different categories in the DS template, staff from Student Affairs make use of the short Degree Programme Profile as they copy key information from the profile into the DS. Needless to say, but this is one of several reasons why it is a must that the latest versions of the Profiles are always available on our webpage and known to our students.

¹⁰³ LLL has so far not been a prioritised area, despite LLL being central to the Bologna Reform. According to the Prague Communiqué (2001), "Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life".

Question: *UFI offers 3- and 4-years BA degrees and 1- and 2-years MA degrees. What are the main reasons for establishing the length of a degree?*

Answer: Our University law and Executive Orders stipulate the length of our programmes. Reasons for establishing the specific lengths of programmes are based on the degree structure that came along with the Bologna Reform. The most common structure, as laid out in the 'The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area' (QF-EHEA), is the 3+2+3 framework. This means that first cycle degrees typically consist of 180 ECTS (3 years' FT studies), but they also include degrees including 240 ECTS credits. Bachelors with a professional orientation (e.g., Nursing and Teaching) typically belong to this latter category; they have the length of 240 ECTS in some Nordic countries as periods of practical training are included in the education.

As for master's level degrees, the QF-EHEA lays out that degrees include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle. For a full master's degree, our University follows the most common Nordic norm which is 120 ECTS (2 years of FT studies). When students at our University complete 60 ECTS at master's level, they do not get a master's degree but a postgraduate Diploma. Master's degrees consisting of 90 ECTS, which are common in the UK, have never been offered at our University. Although the QF-EHEA does not specify the length of third cycle programmes, the length of three years for a PhD Degree is specified in our legal frameworks referred to above.¹⁰⁴

Question: *Section 5a of the RA document is empty. I would like to know the strategic approach to provide online and distance learning in the future.*

Answer: Our apologies, we should have been clearer. The text under 5b is in fact our response to the headings provided for both sections 5a and 5b in the main RA document.

Here we can add to what is said there partly by referring to our answer to the first question posed in this section of this (current) document. We can add that at our Extended University Leadership Team meeting on the 30th of August 2022, our University Director, Head of Student Affairs and main Quality Unit Co-ordinator were tasked with forming a working group to identify main steps to be taken to progress towards offering part-time and flexible learning pathways, including online and distance learning, on a more systematic basis beginning in 2023-2024. This will include lobbying government for part-time financial support towards living costs for part-time students.

6. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDENT BODY, ITS EXPERIENCE AND INVOLVEMENT

Question: *Some programmes at UFI have very few number students. Is there a minimum number of students to continue a programme? How do small numbers affect the delivery of content and student engagement?*

Answer: At present, we do not have an established minimum number of students required to run a programme. This means that we do, as the main RA document indicates, have some small cohorts on some programmes – albeit for some of these programmes there is substantial sharing of courses with other programmes (e.g. in the Faculty of History and Social Sciences).

While the cohorts on some of our programmes are always likely to be smaller than those found elsewhere, we feel that we do need to discuss minimum cohort sizes, and perhaps to advertise

¹⁰⁴ For more details about degree structures in the Nordic region, please see the Nordic/Baltic recognition Manual on: <https://norric.org/> Regarding HE collaboration and recognition issues in the Nordic Region, see The Reykjavík Declaration:

<https://www.norden.org/en/declaration/nordic-declaration-recognition-qualifications-concerning-higher-education-reykjavik>

programmes which are to be delivered subject to a certain minimum initial recruitment. *Perhaps* we are, in some cases, seeking to deliver overly specialised courses, and it might be wiser for us to invest our limited resources in more 'generic' programmes which provide a basis for more specialised study elsewhere after successful completion. That is something we have to a degree already been discussing and taking action on.

At the same time, if we are to train the specialists which our society is likely to need, we will inevitably have small cohorts. We know that people who have graduated from small cohorts have gone on to make important contributions, based on their education, to Faroese society.

Small cohorts do, we understand, have implications for delivery of content and student engagement, some positive and some less positive. In some cases, students are able to experience student-staff ratios similar to those at very elite universities in other territories and are able to benefit from extensive contact with, and feedback from, staff. On the other hand, students can feel the absence of a substantial peer group and the kind of student environment and student experience that might be typical of other institutions. It is not always clear that the size of a cohort impacts as much as might be expected on the manner in which content is delivered, and this is something which we might do well to investigate further

Question: *Do the student and deputy student leader on the University Board have the equal right to vote on all University matters?*

Answer: There are very few occasions when matters are taken to a vote – generally issues are dealt with by consensus, with occasionally members noting a reservation of some kind. As and when matters are taken to a vote, the main Board members would have a vote to exercise, and in the absence of the main Board member, the relevant deputy would exercise the relevant vote. The student member of the Board is a full member, with a right to vote.

Question: *Given the lack of a single campus, does the Student Service help students find accommodation?*

Answer: While we do not have a single campus, in practice the University buildings are spread over a distance such that it is possible to move between the furthest separated buildings with a 10–15-minute walk, or a short bus ride on a regular, free bus. Regarding assistance for finding accommodation, no system is in place but (given the small size of the Faroes), staff will from time to time be able to point students to available housing that they have knowledge of. The University has recently been in talks with a landlord who proposed that the University should take on the management role for a house which has been refurbished for student housing, but our conclusion was that we don't currently have the resources or expertise to take on this role – however, that might change over time.

APPENDIX 5: SCHEDULE FOR THE MAIN VISIT OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM IN SEPTEMBER 2022

Schedule for the main visit of the External Review Team in September 2022.

Tuesday 13 September 2022. Meetings as follows:

1. Chair of the Board, Rector and Director (with a short presentation on recent developments since the RA from the Rector)
2. Pro Rectors and Deans
3. A selection of at least 12 students of the University to include at least two students from each Faculty, students at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels, due account to be taken of matters of diversity in the group (7 women and 7 men were selected)
4. A selection of a maximum of 15 members of staff, at least two of whom have worked at the University for more than ten years and at least two who have worked for less than two years and to include staff at all levels and grades (ie teaching, researching, administrative, mid management). Due consideration to be given to diversity (8 women and 7 men were selected)
5. Members of the Quality Unit and a selection of five Programme Leaders from across the University's Faculties with due consideration for diversity where possible.

Wednesday 14 September 2022 (main focus of the day to be the Faculty of Education). Meetings as follows:

1. Dean and Faculty Leadership Group (2 women, 2 men)
2. A selection of ten students of the Faculty to represent the range of levels of study and taking due consideration of diversity (7 women, 3 men were selected)
3. A selection of at least twelve and maximum fifteen members of staff of the Faculty - at least two of whom have worked there for more than ten years and at least two have worked for less than two years. All levels and grades of the Faculty to be included (as above), with due regard to diversity. Four staff on Teacher programmes were selected along with five on Pedagogue programmes and two on both. Four Administrative staff were selected. (12 women and 3 men).
4. A selection of staff with predominantly research roles including Research Leaders, Professors and research active staff (7 women; 3 men)

Thursday 15 September 2022. Meetings as follows:

1. A selection of at least ten Programme Leaders in the Faculties with a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to include at least two who had been in that position for more than five years and two with less than two years. Due consideration to be given to diversity. (6 women; 4 men)
2. University Research Leadership
3. Professoriate

Friday 16 September 2022. Meetings as follows:

1. Rector and Director with the Chair of the Board
2. Initial feedback upon conduct and early findings to Rector, Director, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry and Ministry staff

Monday 19 September 2022. Meeting as follows:

1. Meeting of the Review Chair at the Ministry of Culture, Education and Foreign Affairs to communicate early outcomes and agree structure of this Report.