

Action plan for research, artistic research, and innovation at the University of Agder for the period 2023- 2025

1.1 Purpose

The action plan is a tool for realising UiA's strategy for 2021-2024 within research, artistic research, and innovation. The plan is valid for the period 2023-2025.

1.2 Background

The goals and measures of the action plan are aimed at realising the following main objectives from UiA's strategy:

- *Our research and artistic research is outstanding, critical, innovative, and relevant to society.*
- *We are a recognised partner with visibility and relevance regionally, nationally, and internationally, and UiA has a clear role as facilitator and contributor for increased entrepreneurship and innovation.*

Achieving these goals is a continuous process, and this plan should complement the work of the organisation in achieving them. The measures in the plan are not exhaustive and will complement and add value to other priorities within UiA's research, development, and innovation (R&D) activities, primarily the strategic plans at the faculties and in teacher education.

This is the first action plan at UiA that includes innovation. It is not about each individual employee engaging in innovation, but that UiA's academic and research communities themselves define their contribution and role. There are different approaches to the concept of innovation, and we apply the sector's definition in this action plan. Innovation means new or significantly improved products, services or processes that are put into use and that provide increased value creation and/or benefits to society¹. In the higher education sector, R&D, education, and dissemination are the foundation for innovation and at the same time means to promote innovation. Innovations are research-based when expertise, knowledge and ideas arising from research activity are used in the development of improved products, services, or processes. Innovation includes contributing to increased competitiveness and sustainable social development.

The action plan is based on an institutional understanding of challenges and opportunities related to the university's social mission and the main objectives of the strategy. Four priority areas have been formulated with associated measures that will be raised in UiA's agenda for the period 2023-2025. The next chapter (1.3) describes the priority areas with goals and main measures, including who is responsible for the measures.

1.3 Priority areas, goals, and measures

Strong culture for research, artistic research, and research-based innovation throughout the organisation

Building a culture for research has been central at UiA both before and after the university accreditation in 2007.

Strengthening the culture for quality in research and research-based innovation requires continuous effort and willingness at all levels and within all disciplines. The understanding of quality varies between disciplines and reflects their tradition, history and framework conditions. UiA has a need to strengthen the research and innovation culture throughout the

¹ Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions, [Action plan for UHR Innovation 2022-2024](#)

university. It is important that UiA has a structure that promotes quality in research, artistic research, and research-based innovation in order to assert itself nationally and internationally, as well as to attract talented researchers with high ambitions. Quality in this context refers to the employees' overall scientific competence and the university's academic level of ambition.

The internal structures and support systems at UiA must promote quality in research, artistic research, and innovation. Visible services, support systems and incentives that promote research and innovation must be established and strengthened.

The UiA PRIFORSK centres play an important role in strengthening the culture of research, artistic research, and research-based innovation throughout the organisation. The centres play a key role in promoting and contributing to international research quality, also as an example for others.

Goal

UiA has structures that promote a culture of quality in research, artistic research, and research-based innovation.

Main measures

1. Implement principles for good, sound, and broad evaluation of research quality in assessments of research, researchers' research contributions and scientific career development² **Responsibility:** Faculty/PO/FOI³

2. Introduce a general rule stating that appointment to a permanent academic position at UiA requires formal qualifications for employment at the associate professor/professor level. Permanent employees without qualifications must have a career development plan.

Responsibility: Faculty/PO

3. Strengthen counselling and guidance services for good scientific practice.

Responsibility: FOI

4. Pilot an interfaculty mentoring scheme in collaboration with one or more UiA PRIFORSK centres, to ensure quality in major research and innovation applications.

Responsibility: FOI/Faculty

5. Assess existing and new stimulation schemes that strengthen the culture of research, artistic research, and innovation.

Responsibility: University leadership/Faculty/LU/PO/FOI

6. Highlight the breadth and scope of research and innovation activities at UiA internally and externally in various channels.

Responsibility: Faculty/LU/FOI/KA

7. Strengthen innovation competence in administrative support functions at faculties and teacher education programmes.

Responsibility: FOI/Faculty/LU

²The initiative is based on, among other things, UiA's responsibility for good practice for evaluating research through the signing [of the DORA declaration](#) and ongoing [national and international initiatives to improve the evaluation of research and researchers](#).

³See the list at the end of the document for explanation of abbreviations.

8. Strengthen efforts and instruments for increased student innovation and research-based innovation.

Responsibility: FOI/Faculty/LU

9. Develop a policy for commercialisation of research and development work.

Responsibility: FOI/Faculty

Time and space for research, artistic research, and research-based innovation

The individual employee's time for R&D tasks is the most important resource in the publicly funded research and innovation system.

Since time is such a central framework condition, it is very important that this is utilised as well as possible. In 2021-22, questions about institutional principles for the distribution of R&D time at UiA were reviewed in a separate process. In the report that forms the basis for adopted principles, the R&D concept includes research, academic and artistic development work, innovation and innovation work, and dissemination related to these activities. An important question related to time, which was not reviewed in said process, is how to ensure that the R&D time allotted can be allocated in a way that provides the most quality and results, without inappropriate pressure on the time set for these tasks⁴.

Provision must be made to ensure that employees have sufficient continuous time for R&D. Consideration should be given to arrangements that enable employees to have periods that are set aside to a greater extent for R&D work and with correspondingly smaller teaching tasks.

Goal

UiA has continuous time for R&D tasks and good utilisation of allocated R&D time.

Main measures

1. Develop and implement pilot projects and measures for alternative teaching planning and organisation to allow more continuous time for R&D.

Responsibility: Faculty/UA

2. Review the KFU scheme with the purpose of ensuring that the scheme functions as intended and stimulates and contributes to R&D activity and time and space for R&D

Responsibility: PO/ØCA/Faculty

3. Facilitate sabbaticals.

Responsibility: Faculty

External funding as an instrument for sustainability and quality in research and innovation

Compared to the sector as a whole and to most Norwegian universities, UiA has lower externally funded R&D activity and a lower influence in national and international competitive arenas.

This means that the research communities at UiA are not able to exploit opportunities and funds that could have contributed to further development of the quality and scope of our R&D activity, as well as further development and establishment of larger research and innovation environments. Increased participation and influence in the competition-based funding arenas is regarded as a particularly strong instrument for development of high-quality research and innovation projects. It is also an important instrument for contributing to sustainability in society.

⁴ Mapping of work tasks at UiA (NORCE, 2020).

There is a need to work strategically with sources of funding, instruments and calls for proposals to a greater extent than is currently the case. A strategic approach will ensure time to seek and utilise internal support schemes and services for research. It also ensures increased quality assurance and legitimacy.

Academic communities and researchers who work purposefully with highly competitive funding instruments must have access to good internal support schemes and services with sufficient capacity throughout the project life cycle.

Goal

UiA has a holistic and long-term approach to project development, project breakthrough and project implementation.

Main measures

1. Contribute to the development of national and international research policy and research policy priorities by participating in relevant nationally and internationally recognised arenas within academia, politics, industry and society, and ensure representation and impact.

Responsibility: University and faculty leadership and teacher education leadership

2. Further develop strategic and targeted collaboration with external partners on R&D activities.

Responsibility: University and faculty leadership and teacher education leadership

3. Better visibility and profiling of UiA's researchers and research and innovation activities through the use of various profiling channels.

Responsibility: Faculty/LU/KA

4. Develop competence (tools, routines, and processes) for better management and leadership of projects.

Responsibility: FOI/ØCA/Faculty

Goal

UiA has schemes that stimulate high activity and quality in applications for external funding and high quality in externally funded projects.

Main measures

1. Pilot incentives for research groups that receive outstanding assessments on selected calls for proposals, and for the development of ideas for research and innovation projects **Responsibility:** FOI/Faculty/LU/ØCA

Competence and time to exercise research and innovation leadership

In order to achieve the goals of the strategy, good competency in research and innovation leadership is needed. Leadership training shall ensure that such competence is built at all levels of the organisation.

Heads of departments have a particularly critical role in research and innovation leadership. There is therefore a need to ensure and strengthen department heads' room for action as well as competence.

Good administrative processes support leadership and researchers to conduct research and innovation. The type of support that can be expected is clearly situated and communicated, e.g. in role descriptions.

Goal

UiA has high competence in research and innovation leadership at all levels of the organisation.

Main measures

1. Strengthen competence measures for research and innovation leadership throughout the organisation.

Responsibility: PO/University and faculty leadership and teacher education leadership/FOI

2. Establish an arena for experience sharing and competence development in research and innovation management for department heads, professors, and docents respectively. **Responsibility:** PO/University and Faculty Leadership/FOI

3. Each faculty and teacher education programme considers measures to increase strategic focus on R&D

Responsibility: Faculty/LU

Goal

UiA has flexible and competent administrative support services for research and innovation activities.

Main measures

1. Better overview of available R&D support services and clarify division of responsibilities within the administration.

Responsibility: FOI/Faculty/LU

2. Review of the division of responsibilities between the Dean, the Faculty Director and the Head of Department in the field of research and innovation

Responsibility: Rectorate/University Director

3. Further develop competence and support systems for administration and leadership of R&D projects

Responsibility: FOI/ØCA

Abbreviations used:

- PO: Division of Human Resources
- FOI: Division of Research and Innovation
- ØCA: Division of Finance and Campus Management
- LU: Teacher Training
- UA: Division of Education
- KA: Division of Communication