Research Strategy 2014-2017
Faculty of social sciences
LUND UNIVERSITY
Research Strategy 2014–2017 – Faculty of Social Sciences

Introduction

The Faculty of Social Sciences has a solid research tradition that is characterised by breadth of research issues, theoretical and methodological pluralism, a combination of basic and sector-specific research and continual critical dialogue between well-established and new research environments. The faculty has maintained the traditional principal fields, while constructing new multi-disciplinary research disciplines.

Understand, explain …

Most of the challenges of our time have been created by humans and have to be solved through societal processes. The duty of social sciences research is to elucidate the function and dynamics of societies, thereby creating the possibility of change. This requires a combination of knowledge and questioning of human behaviour, interpersonal relationships, norms and our social, economic and political organisations and institutions.

…and improve…

We are in a unique position to identify and analyse human and societal problems. We conduct successful, cutting-edge research in a number of fields that has high international impact and attracts significant resources, as well as producing results that provide highly relevant contributions to the development of society.

...in collaboration

Our research combines basic and more needs-driven research. There are many projects in which our researchers work closely with clients, and these span a wide spectrum of organisations.

Pioneering research contributes to societal development and guarantees that a degree in the social sciences from Lund University rests on a foundation of knowledge from research. This knowledge gives practitioners and other social and behavioural scientists the ability to deal with complex professional challenges in Sweden and abroad.

Future developments

There is strong competition within social sciences research. The level of basic funding from government appropriations is decisive in attracting external research funding. This direct funding provides for the growth of solid research groups, the recruitment of outstanding staff – especially doctoral students and young researchers – and is necessary for co-financing of grants that are obtained. The faculty’s primary task is to further increase the amount of research carried out, while preserving academic independence. This can be defined both in terms of the
individual researcher’s freedom to choose his or her area of research and in terms of organisational freedom for different disciplines. Tensions can arise between individual autonomy and a faculty-wide strategy. An effective strategy requires long-term planning and prioritisation without limiting the choices open to individual researchers.

**Objectives**

*The objectives for the faculty’s research are to:*

- carry out basic and curiosity-driven research
- generate and disseminate knowledge that contributes to sustainable societal development and the solving of societal problems

*The faculty shall continue to be characterised by:*

- an open and dynamic internal research environment in communication with other disciplines and external users
- an increasing number of nationally and internationally excellent research environments
- a continual increase in external research funding
- greater national and international visibility

*The faculty shall work on measures to develop the following areas:*

- internationalisation
- quality enhancement
- cross-disciplinary research
- allocation of direct funding on the basis of principles that support the research goals
- a good research culture through:
  - forums for the exchange of knowledge within and between departments and faculties
  - organised support for research applications and publications
  - a fair balance between teaching and research
  - opportunities for junior researchers, both men and women, to participate in research groups and research projects
  - visible academic roles, norms and values
  - highly skilled visiting researchers
- monitoring and reacting to national and European research policy

**Current situation**

The view of research as a natural and indispensable part of the work of a leading research university characterises the faculty’s operations. At the same time, there is a cultural shift with regard to responsibility for research. From having largely been an individual matter, collective responsibility is now taken and a larger number of researchers are provided with support in their work on applications, publications and participation in international research contexts.

The dimensions of the faculty’s research are increasing. Despite fiercer competition, our ability to attract external funding is continually on the increase.
(50% increase over the period 2010–2013), which is attributed to deliberate work on research and application issues. Successful research rests on a combination of competent individuals and inspiring research environments. Over recent years, a large number of new staff have been appointed. Active and outward-looking recruitment has resulted in a high number of applications for all types of post, from doctoral students to professors. Around half of the 100 academic staff appointed over the past three years came from posts at other Swedish or international universities.

**Collaboration within the research community**
The problems tackled in research are becoming increasingly complex. Research funding bodies increasingly grant support to large projects involving multiple disciplines. The faculty’s researchers therefore work to a greater extent in multi- or interdisciplinary projects, nationally and internationally. There is extensive collaboration between the faculty’s various research disciplines. In addition, there are well-established research collaborations with almost all the faculties at Lund University. The most frequent interaction is with disciplines in economics and medicine. The faculty’s researchers have also substantially increased their participation in the international research community through publication, participation at conferences and partnership in international projects. This has resulted in an increasing number of international research meetings and major conferences being organised at the faculty.

**Engagement with wider society**
Interaction with wider society is an integrated part of our researchers’ work. Studying social and psychological processes requires access to information about practices in public, political or other organisations. In order to gain access to these fields, we must be at the forefront and be able to offer relevant knowledge transfer without being governed by the interests of the organisations, which can hinder the genuine quest for knowledge. A significant proportion of the research contributions come from sector councils, which are interested in seeing problem areas illuminated. In this part of our research, there are therefore often users who contribute to the generation of knowledge and are keen to use the results to develop new modes of action.

**Management, organisation, funding**
Research is defined, funded and carried out at departmental level. The faculty management is responsible for quality assuring and maintaining infrastructure and supporting a culture that encourages creative research and efficient use of resources. At present, however, the faculty management only has limited means to provide financial support to encourage potentially pioneering research initiatives.

Decisions on the allocation of funding from government appropriations for research are taken by the faculty board. For issues that specifically concern research, the research committee is an advisory body under the faculty board, in which each department is represented by a research coordinator, who forms a link between the faculty and the department and supports the head of department and colleagues. Just over half of the faculty’s research is funded by government appropriations. Allocation of funding to the departments is carried out in accordance with the ‘faculty model’, which is based on the research publications,
PhDs awarded, external research grants and commissioned education in each research discipline. The model has been applied for three years.

**The faculty in figures 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Research funding sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professors 68</td>
<td>Government agencies 35 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers 53</td>
<td>Research councils 26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior lecturers 167</td>
<td>Sector councils 22 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assoc. senior lecturers, postdocs 21</td>
<td>Foundations 14 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers 16</td>
<td>EU 3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral students 140</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Research publications**

| Articles | 249 |
| Books    | 19  |
| Anthology contributions | 130 |

**Research parameters for follow-up**

In order to monitor the development of the research, the following parameters shall be followed up on an annual basis. Data is mainly registered at faculty level.

**Staff**

- Composition of academic staff (posts, age, sex, recruitment, sick leave)

**Publications**

- Articles in very highly renowned journals
- Books with particularly high distribution and citation
- Doctoral theses
- Proportion of international publication
- Open access publication
- Co-publishing patterns (with faculties, universities, countries, organisations)
- Citations

**Research funding**

- Development of internal research funding
- Development of external research funding
- Composition of funding from research funding bodies
- Partnership in international research projects

**Outreach**

- Keynote invitations for large international conferences
- Research and researchers in the media
- Research reports in external engagement projects
- Conferences organised

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1 The variables are intended to form a basis for analyses other than the annual compilation of publications for the allocation of direct funding.
2 e.g. level 2 in Norska bibliometrimodellen
Benchmarking to stimulate quality
Comparative studies of institutions often represent a good way to encourage quality enhancement. This type of evaluation is primarily meaningful when the comparison is between institutions that have many similarities and it therefore cannot be carried out for an entire faculty. In order to identify relevant comparisons that can be used to enhance quality, departments are encouraged to take the initiative and invite relevant national or international partners to participate in benchmarking.