



Háskólinn
á Akureyri

STRATEGY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF AKUREYRI

2012
2017

Publisher: University of Akureyri 2012
Supervision: Dagmar Ýr Stefánsdóttir
Photographer: Ragnhildur Aðalsteinsdóttir, Bjarni Eiríksson and more
Proofreading: Ingveldur Tryggvadóttir
Translation: Vera Júlíusdóttir
Design and layout: Stíll
Printing Ásprent



RECTOR'S ADDRESS

The University of Akureyri, founded in 1987, heralded a new era in university education in Iceland. UNAK's foundations are strong: the university has been constantly developing and growing for a quarter of a century. The student population has been steadily growing, to around 1600 students today. This growth is partly thanks to the fact that UNAK offers a progressive, yet consistent environment for research and study, with students and staff actively participating in the university's day to day operations.

The University of Akureyri is a place where students and staff feel well cared for in a personalised environment which stimulates creativity. We emphasise a close student - teacher relationship. Our graduates testify to the university's strength and are satisfied with the education and experience they have gained at UNAK.

The University of Akureyri has, along with the rest of Icelandic society, been through a difficult period for the past four years; however, we are now heading upwards. This new strategy is based on realistic expectations, coupled with a strong vision of the university's aims. We plan to further develop the programmes which have been at the core of UNAK's work in recent years: Education, Social Sciences, Law and Business Administration. At the same time we will build on the uniqueness of the University of Akureyri in terms of its programme offering, teaching and emphasis on research in the fields of Fisheries Science, Occupational Therapy, Media Studies, Modern Studies and Arctic Studies with a special focus on Polar Law.

The University of Akureyri has been a pioneer in Iceland in offering programmes and research which deal with the geopolitical issues facing the Arctic region. We plan to increase this role even further. Opportunities abound in this area for more international partnerships with universities in the neighbouring nations and with others who wish to take part in geopolitical debates on the future of the Arctic region. Those issues will become very high profile in the next few years.

I invite you, all University of Akureyri students and staff, to help us realise these aims, which will benefit us all. Finally I would like to thank all the many members of staff and students who have contributed to the great deal of work which has gone into shaping this strategy for the future.

Stefán B. Sigurðsson
Rector



ROLE

The University of Akureyri offers students an educational opportunity in an ambitious international learning and research environment. To its scholars, the university provides facilities and an environment for research and innovation, contributing to the growth and prosperity of Icelandic society while bringing in fresh currents. The university is keen to maintain an interactive relationship with society.

VALUES

The University of Akureyri is a progressive, independent and established knowledge community, committed to upholding the principle of equal opportunities.

Progressive The University of Akureyri makes use of the best available knowledge and technology in its teaching, research and development work. It has a broad minded approach, at the cutting edge of science and research.

Equality The University of Akureyri is committed to ensuring that students and staff can succeed in their work and studies, regardless of disability, sexual orientation, gender, race, persuasion, religion and origin.

Independence The University of Akureyri is an independent learning and knowledge community, and critical and independent thought are its guiding principles.

Trust Students and the community can remain confident that all work and any dealings with the University of Akureyri will follow its ethos of practical education, critical thought, best practice, and the good of society.



FUTURE VISION UNTIL 2017

The University of Akureyri is an internationally respected university which conducts important research with a strong connection to the community and the economy in all parts of the country. The University of Akureyri offers sought after study options at all degree levels, and Doctoral degrees in selected fields of study. The University of Akureyri has carved out a niche for itself, in Iceland and abroad, as a recognized centre for teaching and research in fields of study connected to Arctic region.

The University of Akureyri specialises in a personalised learning and research environment which is supportive of students and staff, and benefits from a cross disciplinary approach to study and research. The University encourages a personal relations between the students and the teachers, aimed at stimulating the students and honing their academic skills, thus helping them to meet standardised criteria in higher education. In this aspect the university is unique among higher education institutions in Iceland.

Due to its location, the University of Akureyri plays a key role in promoting university education, research, development and innovation in the rural areas, and students come from all parts of the country to enjoy the personalised and challenging study environment which the university offers. The university is particularly keen to utilise the possibilities of phase structured and flexible courses, as well as of traditional on-campus courses, encouraging cooperation with knowledge centres which operate in rural areas and which are a source of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The varied course offerings at the University of Akureyri cover the fields of social sciences and humanities, health sciences, and environmental and biological sciences, with an emphasis on sustainability and mutual knowledge exchange between university and society. The university actively cooperates with other universities both domestically and abroad, and a part of its course offering is in English. The courses are available to students as on-campus courses, phase structured courses, or distance courses for a Bachelor or a Master's degree in all fields of study, and Doctoral degree studies are offered in selected specialisations within those fields.

The University of Akureyri is well respected and acknowledged as a centre for teaching, research, innovation and development, and it seeks to connect its work to society and its institutions both far and near.

STRATEGY 2012 – 2017

The University of Akureyri has defined certain goals towards its vision for the future, in the following areas:

- ▶ Research and innovation
- ▶ Learning and teaching
- ▶ Social responsibility
- ▶ Internal functioning and human resources

Projects in the time period 2012 - 2017 will be further defined in an action plan, developed by the University's schools, administration and support services, and introduced by the University Council. The action plan will undergo an annual review in consultation with university staff. During this period, we will be looking at selected European universities in particular in the Nordic countries and Scotland, in terms of their study offering, research output, knowledge transfer, teaching methods, quality management and operation. All work will be carried out according to European quality standards and the Bologna standards and guidelines.





RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The University of Akureyri enjoys a growing reputation as a research university, as the considerable increase in publications and citations in recent years shows. The university prioritises any research which meets international standards. The main focus is on research which is connected to Icelandic society and economy, as well as on the university's unique position in fields of study connected to the Arctic region.

With this in mind, the university will strengthen its collaborations with other domestic and foreign universities on teaching and research, which also will create a strong foundation for Doctoral studies. Master's studies will be promoted both as an independent degree as well as a precursor to Doctoral studies. The university will also emphasise collaborations with companies and institutions on development projects.

Research facilities, research environment and innovation

There are plans to increase participation in research and development work even further, in order to further establish the University of Akureyri as a research university. To that end, the University of Akureyri plans to:

- ▶ Improve the research environment and increase opportunities for scholars to lead and participate in research projects, by staying competitive both domestically and abroad
- ▶ Increase research cooperation with other universities domestically and abroad
- ▶ Encourage the forming of research groups
- ▶ Secure more external funding by systematically applying for competitive grants both domestically and abroad
- ▶ Strengthen research services and the internal support system for research
- ▶ Strengthen the operation of the UNAK Science Council
- ▶ Increase cooperation with outside bodies on research, development and innovation

Master's studies in all fields of study and Doctoral studies in selected fields

In order to strengthen its Master's programs and establish a Doctoral program, the University of Akureyri plans to:

- ▶ Increase course offerings at the Master's level both leading to a stand-alone qualification and as a precursor to Doctoral studies
- ▶ Strengthen cooperation networks on teaching and research with domestic and selected foreign universities
- ▶ Strengthen the support services around teaching and research activities
- ▶ Obtain approval from the Minister of Education to plan and launch Doctoral programs
- ▶ Build collaborations with domestic and foreign universities, and institutions and companies, on Doctoral programmes



STUDY AND TEACHING

It is important to the University of Akureyri to offer strong undergraduate programmes in its fields of study, Master's programmes in all fields of study and to launch Doctoral programmes in selected fields in active cooperation with other universities, domestically and abroad. The University of Akureyri strives to be among the best in the field in terms of developing a quality system for learning and teaching.

The University of Akureyri emphasises a positive, challenging and personalised learning environment. The University of Akureyri is in the lead in the field of distance learning in Iceland and has presented an opportunity for many students to attend university. The university meets the needs of its students e.g. by introducing more flexibility into the studies. All University of Akureyri courses emphasise independent learning, critical thought and up to date knowledge in the relevant field of study. The courses include field work and they are interdisciplinary in many aspects. There is targeted integration of teaching and research, aimed at preparing students for further study or active job market participation in the future.

Learning, teaching and study environment

In order to grow as an education community the University of Akureyri plans to:

- ▶ Be exemplary in terms of study environment and attitude towards students
- ▶ Strengthen even further the university's reputation for a personalised study environment
- ▶ Organise more courses and study paths as phase structured and flexible studies
- ▶ Be a pioneer in the quality management of learning and teaching, in accordance with international standards
- ▶ Strengthen professional cooperation and quality awareness among teachers and staff
- ▶ Follow the latest developments in information technology, and upgrade technical equipment for study and teaching
- ▶ Train and support teachers in order to improve their skills in educational studies, teaching techniques and syllabus creation, especially pertaining to phase structured and flexible studies in active cooperation with domestic and foreign specialists
- ▶ Increase cooperation with continuous education centres and university centres in Iceland

Integration of teaching and research

The integration of teaching and research is a prerequisite for operating a successful university. In order to strengthen this aspect, the University of Akureyri plans to:

- ▶ Strengthen research based Master's studies
- ▶ Encourage student participation in research conducted by university teaching staff
- ▶ Develop strong cooperation networks around teaching and research with other domestic and foreign universities, with an emphasis on the sharing of teaching and study paths
- ▶ Invite acknowledged, domestic and foreign scientists to present their research projects
- ▶ Make use of opportunities within Arctic region cooperation, with a focus on strengthening research based Master's and Doctoral studies
- ▶ Improve teaching and training in information literacy



SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The University of Akureyri wants to be acknowledged as a centre for knowledge and learning, which can be utilised and applied in most areas of society. The university wants to maintain a good relationship with communities both near and far, and be visible to the general public. The University of Akureyri encourages university staff to actively participate in public debate.

In order to increase its social responsibility, the University of Akureyri plans to:

- ▶ Increase cooperation and communication with other education levels
- ▶ Establish connections and cooperation with institutions and companies wherever applicable
- ▶ Increase cooperation and contact with other higher education institutions
- ▶ Increase the public profile of university faculty and encourage staff to be active in public debate on account of their theoretical knowledge
- ▶ Work with institutions and companies on innovation and development
- ▶ Publicise research, innovation and development work successes and outcomes to the public
- ▶ Set goals and determine ways to integrate ethical and sustainability issues into all fields of study
- ▶ Uphold the principles of human rights and democratic process in the university's operations
- ▶ Set a good example on environmental issues



INTERNAL FUNCTIONING AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The University of Akureyri is an ambitious education community. Its main resource is the knowledge and experience of its staff and good working conditions for staff remains a priority. There is a strong emphasis on creating a supportive and dynamic work environment where the knowledge and skills of the employees can thrive and grow.

Internal functioning

Professional and targeted management is the key to the successful operation of the University of Akureyri.

As a part of its plan to create an ambitious and effective education community, the University of Akureyri will:

- ▶ Adjust its quality system to the new procedures for self assessment and external assessment of universities presented by the Quality Board for Icelandic higher education
- ▶ Strengthen support services and administration
- ▶ Ensure safe registration, data storage and distribution
- ▶ Increase follow up to plans and projects
- ▶ Use social media in university work, as applicable
- ▶ Regularly publish the status of the university's key performance indicators
- ▶ Continuously develop the marketing and promotion of the university

Human resources

The University of Akureyri will reach its targets through the concerted and strong team effort of its employees, and the principle of equal opportunities is upheld in all areas of human resources. The university's human resources strategy is a part of this strategy.

In order to reach its targets for human resources, the University of Akureyri plans to:

- ▶ Place greater emphasis on equal access and equality
- ▶ Employ professional management practices
- ▶ Attract quality staff and ensure a streamlined hiring and welcoming process
- ▶ Help employees to succeed, and encourage continuous training and retraining.
- ▶ Make sure employees can find a good balance between work and personal life
- ▶ Offer increased flexibility for retirement
- ▶ Use staff appraisals to improve the environment, facilities and well-being of employees

*University of Akureyri
Solborg, Nordurslod 2
600 Akureyri · Iceland
Tel: +354 460 8000
E-mail: unak@unak.is*

www.unak.is/english



**Háskólinn
á Akureyri**
University
of Akureyri



STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AKUREYRI

2012 2017