



# Digitalization, Learning and Social Change

Research Strategy 2030: School of  
Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences



## Preface

This document describes Strategy 2030, which applies to the research activities of the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences (LHS), one of four schools at Halmstad University. The strategy identifies digitalization, education, and social change as target areas for research within the School with attention paid to the Global Goals of Agenda 2030 and their focus on sustainability, gender equality and justice.

Various groups have been involved in working on the strategy, which was initiated by the Vice Chancellor of the University in the Spring of 2020. A dedicated strategy group composed of researchers and managers at the School has been responsible for developing the text in a two phase process. The first phase saw the development of a proposal which was then scrutinized by an international panel of experts in the humanities, social sciences, and education. The panel suggested modifications and additions which led to a revision of the proposal, which was then carried out by the strategy group. The evolving strategy has been the subject of presentations and discussions with the staff of the School on a number of occasions. Thus this document is the product of a joint collegiate process which all staff have been invited to contribute to in various ways. The strategy is based on a common vision and eight overall goals. Each overall goal is further associated with three measurable intermediate goals and key activities designed to achieve them.

## Vision for research at the School

The School will, in cooperation with its surrounding community, carry out nationally and internationally recognised research on *digitalization, education, and social change*, closely linked to the School's educational programmes and courses. Research at the School asks critical questions, challenges habitual ways of thinking, is driven by curiosity and has the potential to contribute to innovative solutions to societal challenges. Overall the vision is one of committed members of staff working together in an attractive research environment.

**To facilitate the positive development of research at the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences the School will work towards the following overall goals:**

1. Research at the School is characterized by an organizationally and socially attractive work environment

The most important resource of the School and its research is its personnel and we work together to be an attractive workplace offering a working environment that is good, physically and psychosocially, for all employees and students. One of the most important preconditions for successful research is the maintenance of a creative and inspiring shared culture, characterized by accountability and responsibility at both individual and organizational level. Developing such a culture begins with norms and rules about work environment and discrimination. High expectations of the combined research output must be based on clear elements of collegiate direction, individual discretion and social support from both colleagues and management. Collegiate direction and culture serves as a complement to line management, both in developing a basis for major decisions and in assessing the quality of operations. It is collegiality that facilitates participation by staff and students. Management at the School, in research as well as in education and administration, will be characterized by a high degree of professionalism, respect and sensitivity.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- Staff surveys indicate great satisfaction with the shared environment
- There are no sickness absences caused by deficiencies in the work environment
- The level of staff participation in joint research seminars is high

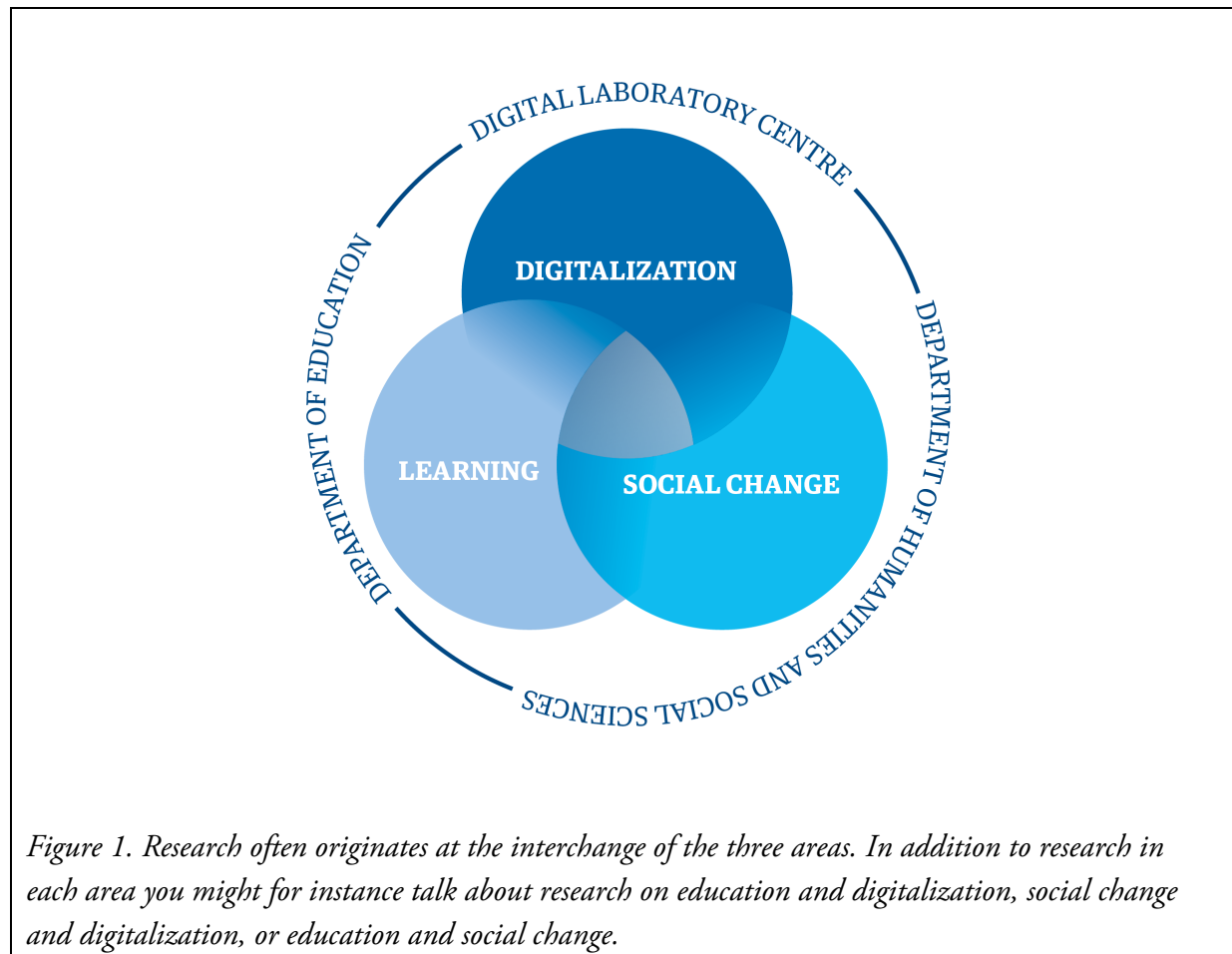
**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- Create an annually updated work environment plan for the School
- Carry out annual psychosocial inspections
- Carry out continuous education, focusing on the organizational and social work environment

2. The School's areas of research are clearly defined, are supported by the organization of the School, and are based on its vision

Research within the School is multidisciplinary and principally directed towards increasing our knowledge of digitalization, education, and social change, and will be organized in a way that supports our common overall research vision. Most research at the School will be carried out within the University's research framework and be directed towards the University's two profile areas, Health Innovation and Smart Cities and Communities. Therefore it is of central importance that research on digitalization, education, and social change is developed in harmony with these. The University-wide research programmes and the various research groupings within the School do not constitute organizational units, and research managers within these therefore

do not carry responsibility for staff or the work environment. Individuals who are active in research remain managed by their normal line manager.



Research within and between the three areas can be organized in different ways: as researchers working alone, as research groups within the School, or as groups that include members of other schools and universities. Research groupings require a management that coordinates their activities and facilitates collaboration, in the first instance relative to e.g. the research areas of the University but also to the surrounding community and international and national collaboration partners. Management at this level is closely linked to external project funding and carries a responsibility to support a culture that is characterized by creativity and collegiality. Researchers need to be sensitive to preconditions for research funding and societal needs, while defining the content of their research on the basis of scientific principles and social challenges such as the sustainability goals.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- The majority of research at the School is carried out within the framework of the University's research programme
- Research is principally carried out within the fields of digitalization, education, and social change

- The Digital Laboratory Centre (DLC) plays an active role in externally funded research projects

**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- Develop the DLC to enable the lab to function as a common research platform
- Run a School-wide seminar series on digitalization, education, and social change
- Support research groups and their leaders to enable them to be included in research programmes

### 3. A collegium of teacher-researchers assumes joint responsibility for linking educational programmes and courses to research

A collegium of teacher-researchers forms the basis for links between research and the School's educational programme. Concrete aspects of this are: teaching that is in line with the latest research, teachers making use of their own research when teaching, and students being trained in scientific methodology and critical and independent thinking. At the same time teachers must make research relevant to the students and involve them in knowledge-building processes grounded in a scientific approach based on curiosity. The latter means creating conditions that enable students to participate in and contribute to the School's research through their own independent work. When possible, students should be invited to and involved in research carried out at the School and research-related activities such as seminars, workshops, and conferences. Research should aim for greater societal relevance and stronger connections with the life of work through joining theoretical perspectives to practical application in various areas, in particular in connection with digital technology. Research should study and problematize not only the digital technology that is used within education but also the digitalized society that will establish the conditions for the future professional life of the students. In research, education, and collaboration the Digital Laboratory Centre will be used as a resource. One precondition for a collegium of teacher-researchers is that personnel recruitment provides adequate staffing levels for the needs of teaching while allowing space for research as part of the job, without the risk of damage to the quality of the education programmes.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- Students are familiar with the research that is associated with their education, including the School's own research
- Research projects make use of student associates
- Students choose to enter upon research careers

**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- Encourage researchers to write course literature for the School's educational programmes
- Describe and analyse the link to research in all programme and course evaluations
- Arrange an annual Panorama Day when all researchers introduce their work to the students

#### 4. Research contributes to a culture that supports collaboration, quality, and high productivity

An increased proportion of the University's internally distributed funds will serve to support a substantial increase in the School's research output. These internal funds will principally be used to support efforts to obtain external funding and for research developing the areas of digitalization, education, and social change and contributing to the university-wide research programmes. The basic idea is for the internal funding to be invested rather than consumed and used in a way that generates further external funding and increased research output. The School will strengthen and develop nationally and internationally visible groupings that have good chances of obtaining external research funding. In cases when such areas of strength consist of substantial groupings they are to be managed by research managers. In order to develop a new generation of research managers and to support positive career development the School will create supportive structures and activities in which senior researchers, such as senior lecturers and professors, have a particularly important role to play. The School will develop sustainable models of collaboration with the surrounding community. Practice-related research will be prominent in this collaboration.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- Researchers at the School are frequently published in channels that are recognised by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) – "the Norwegian list"
- External funding exceeds the internal allocation
- The proportion of professors and senior lecturers increases

**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- A senior lecturer qualifying group will support lecturers seeking promotion to senior lecturer
- A transparent, achievement-oriented model will distribute internal research funds
- A well-developed research service will provide support during the process of application for external funding

#### 5. The School environment contributes to successful recruitment and retention of staff

With an ambition to grow its operations and research output the School requires a balanced plan for dealing with new staffing requirements. The School needs to use successful recruitment to increase the proportion of research staff with the aim of expanding the volume of externally funded research and, in the longer perspective, creating a stable research operation. To avoid losing competent staff it is important to act in such a way that staff shortages do not occur. Recruitment processes are time-consuming and costly and in a situation of expansion a proactive approach is essential. Recruitment is to be focused on attracting staff members with the potential to develop the research in line with the School's overall vision and the University's profile areas. Recruitment processes must always consider both research and education in a way that supports the development of a collegium of teacher-researchers. Access to research education is critical for

the School's ability to develop a competitive and complete academic environment. In addition to recruitment, career development for employees of the School is an important means of developing a collegium of teacher-researchers.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- The number of applicants per advertised position is high
- There are no cases of staff leaving because of deficiencies in the work environment
- The number of doctoral students completing their research education at the School increases

**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- The School will establish a recruitment group
- The School will work towards an increase in the proportion of research in job descriptions
- The School's doctoral students will have access to research education at the University

## 6. Research at the School forms a natural part of the profile areas and research programmes of the University

Research at the School will wholeheartedly adopt the university-wide research strategy and its activities will be developed into natural parts of the two profile areas of Health Innovation and Smart Cities and Communities. A strengthened focus on social science and humanities perspectives on technological development and digitalization will be an important aspect of this. The Digital Laboratory Centre will constitute a central part of this development and position itself as an important collaboration arena for different research programmes at the University. The School will actively strive to publicize the skills of research groups and individual researchers in order for these to be included in the University's various research programmes and contribute scientifically to them. The University's other schools and its two profile areas will therefore have a clear image of research at the School. Researchers from the School will participate in the bodies managing and determining content and development within the University's profile areas and research programmes.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- The majority of research is carried out within the University's research programmes
- Researchers from the School initiate and lead at least one university-wide research programme
- Researchers from the School participate and drive progress in the University's two profile areas

**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- The School will provide support for researchers in initiating and participating in research programmes
- The School's various competencies will be made visible within the University
- Recruitment processes will be carried out with reference to research programmes



## 7. Research at the School achieves international recognition in a way that attracts students as well as international collaboration

The School will establish and develop international research collaboration. Such collaboration will take the form of activities for students in the education programmes as well as for research groups. There will be a structure for the renewal and supplementation of international agreements on collaboration and exchange and for the development of opportunities for collaboration within national, Nordic, and European programmes. The School's international credibility will be strengthened through international recruitment, mobility, and international cooperation in the development of new educational programmes. The opportunities afforded by digitalization constitute a central aspect. This includes, for instance, ideas such as digital seminars, guest speakers, scientific conferences, and educational activities of various kinds. The Digital Laboratory Centre will coordinate and develop this work. Employees' international experience and research networks will be valued and opportunities for such experience to benefit colleagues and the School will be developed. Recruitment will be carried out in such a way that international encounters are possible even "at home". The School will develop courses and programmes at elementary and advanced level that can attract students from other parts of the world.

### **Measurable intermediate goals:**

- International collaboration generates external funding
- A number of international researchers and professors are formally affiliated to the School
- International cooperation agreements can be linked to actual joint activities

### **Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- The role of the Digital Laboratory Centre will be made clearer in relation to internationalization
- The School will concentrate its efforts on a number of major EU funding initiatives
- The School will host one or more major international conferences

## 8. The School's communications contribute to a shared story and support the other goals of the strategy

Internal as well as external communication will be designed in such a way that it supports the School's other goals. The School will develop skills within the organization to deliver various forms of support for communication and contribute to a broad understanding among researchers at the School of how the different building blocks of research communications work. Strategic communication activity, for instance in the form of dedicated communication plans, will support both the standing of individual researchers and their combined ability to attract external funding. Communication plans will be designed in a way that supports the development of new research networks and collaboration with researchers at other universities. An important part of the communications will also be the creation of a shared story about research at the School, including

a School identity that contributes to a good work environment. Research at the School will be highly visible both locally and nationally and this visibility will help publicize the profile of the School and make it desirable in a number of contexts where change is under way, among decision makers and in the economy, public authorities, and the general public. Researchers at the School will participate in the public discourse in various ways and the School will organize activities that showcase ongoing research and in doing so also promote collaborative research. The School's external communications are also intended to add to the attractiveness of the educational programmes and the School's ability to recruit staff.

**Measurable intermediate goals:**

- The School's research is visible in the media
- The profile and direction of the School informs the content of its communications
- Visit and downloading statistics indicate high external visibility

**Key activities to achieve the goal:**

- Carry out continuous skills development for various forms of research communication
- Develop strategic communication plans for the School's research projects
- Ensure that all researchers annually update their individual information in the School's staff database



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