

Vision and strategic basis for degree programmes at Health, Aarhus University

Aarhus University's vision for degree programmes

Aarhus University's (AU's) vision is to strive to be a leading globally-oriented university, strongly engaged with society and supporting continuous development, growth and welfare. AU offers research-based degree programmes that are characterised by their strong academic professionalism. The good study environment is constantly in focus as an important element in student learning. Teaching practices and forms of instruction are continuously developed to maximise student learning outcomes, involvement and motivation. The university's graduates are innovative and capable of transforming knowledge and ideas into action in the national and international labour market of the future. The university's graduates are active alums who view their education as a foundation for life-long learning.

Educationally-relevant vision and strategic basis for the degree programmes at Health

AU's vision should be reflected in the individual degree programmes. The purpose of the formulation of the vision and strategic basis for the degree programmes at Health is to place the individual degree programme in a perspective that looks to the future and the world around us – both locally, nationally and internationally. The vision and strategic basis should contribute to clarifying the academic profile of the degree programmes and how the description of the degree programme's objectives, content, structure, form and methods systematically contributes to the achievement of the vision.

For the individual degree programme, the vision and strategic basis will be utilised by the director of studies as a guiding principle with which to specify or adjust the degree programme in the ongoing developmental work.

Health's degree programme portfolio – a perspective that looks to the future and the world around us

Health's degree programmes focus on healthcare and disease and comprise three main categories: The *degree* programmes aimed towards vocational studies within medicine, odontology and oral health; the *vocational-based* degree programmes in the form of advanced studies on professional Bachelor's degree programmes such as the Master's and professional Master's degree programmes in nursing; as well as the *health-related* degree programmes within public health science and sport science. A common factor in all of the degree programmes is their focus on the development of strategies for citizen involvement and a focus on people.

Health's degree programmes are partly aimed at the publicly-financed labour market and partly at the private sector. The degree programmes must support continuous development, growth and welfare in society. They must therefore not only contribute towards graduates gaining the requisite here-and-now competences, but also ensure future-oriented competences that cover digital skills as well as the ability to be innovative and to collaborate within and across sectors.

One focal point has been Denmark's opportunities for creating economic growth through the initiative in the life science industry (pharmaceutical and medico-tech). The private sector is

therefore increasingly looking for the core academic disciplines which Health's degree programmes can contribute with – partly in the form of collaboration with people employed in the healthcare sector and partly through employment of health science graduates.

International perspective

Demographic developments in society and increasing international mobility mean that Health's degree programmes require an international perspective, both in terms of the core academic disciplines and in the exchange of students and lecturers/researchers. Health's degree programmes must therefore contain elements that are attractive for international students and lecturers, for example by offering clearly defined elements/modules or whole semesters in English, and through the integration of international perspectives in teaching and the use of internationally recognised lecturers.

Vision for the degree programmes at the Department of Public Health

The Department of Public Health either offers or makes significant contributions to a total of ten further and continuing education programmes which are grouped around two main areas: The *health-related* degree programmes, public health science and sport science, together with *health-oriented* degree programmes, medicine and further education and training for healthcare professional Bachelors.

- **The Master's degree programme in Public Health Science**
- **The Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in Sport Science**
- **The Healthcare Master's degree programme**
- **The Master's Degree Programme in Optometry and Visual Science**
- **The Master's degree programme in Nursing**
- **The Master's degree programme in Clinical Nursing**
- **The Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in Medicine**

All of these degree programmes share an academic and theoretical foundation as well as training in a variety of methods for knowledge generation which contribute to the learning and understanding of aspects and correlations in complex issues. This includes i.e. the identification, delimitation and critical analysis of issues, data collection and analysis, synthesis and preparation of solutions and the implementation and evaluation of these.

The fields of study are general issues in relation to citizens/patients and the organisation of society and healthcare services and systems. Focus is on methods and interventions that are relevant to public health and quality of life seen in a broad health perspective, including health promotion, prevention, care and nursing, rehabilitation, optimising performance and patterns of disease and treatments.

Graduates from the degree programmes at the Department of Public Health will find jobs in both the public and private sectors. Many of them will be employed in a consultancy capacity that requires a global outlook and an eye for changes in demography, health status and diseases,

systems and social orders. The degree programmes must therefore also support entrepreneurship, innovation and proactivity.

The professional responsibility that follows with the core expertise which is built up through the degree programmes at the department requires a timely intervention in the form of identification of problems, generation and implementation of new knowledge and ethically responsible and caring, professional advice and communication to authorities, society, politicians and citizens. The degree programmes must constantly develop in step with changes in society's needs, and opportunities in the private sector should be cultivated.

The degree programmes build on a solid research foundation that is continually expanded, as they must contribute to knowledge generation and continuous evidence-based development of health and the healthcare sector. Society's rapid developments, including developments in demography, cultural diversity, health inequality and developments in the healthcare sector's organisation and systems, all make demands of proactive and preventive work. For this reason, the healthcare sector is currently undergoing a significant restructuring that includes e.g. a geographic dispersion of activities across sectors compared to the previous centralising at hospitals and similar institutions. This is a challenge in relation to the complexity of the issues and methods for data generation, collection and analysis, and a significant factor in terms of readiness for tomorrow's labour market is for our graduates to be prepared for lifelong learning in continuously changing organisational frameworks.

The complexity of the issues often calls for interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and sectoral collaboration. The degree programmes must contribute to the involvement of a plurality of stakeholders from different bodies, professions and environments. They must also support an active citizenship in the development of the healthcare system as well as the well-being and health of the population. The students can contribute to this through project work and in other ways, and should be stimulated to produce creative innovation, methods and solutions. There may therefore be a need for expanding the research foundation further, e.g. through postgraduate affiliation with the academic environment.

The international aspect must be an integral part of all the department's degree programmes with the purpose of developing the academic standards and providing the students with a deeper understanding of international and multicultural perspectives and challenges.

Strategic basis for the degree programmes at the Department of Public Health

The strategic basis provides overall guiding principles for how the objectives, content, structure, form and method can support the vision for the degree programmes.

The degree programmes at the Department of Public Health have a wide range of individual profiles and specific tracks, but also a degree of overlap. The portfolio of degree programmes must therefore be further simplified and clarified for applicants and employers.

Purpose and objective

The core academic disciplines in the individual degree programme must be clearly stated in the description of the degree programme and the qualification profile. This should also specify how the individual elements of the degree programme contribute to the gradual development of core academic disciplines, and how this is brought into play in a perspective that looks to the future and the world around us.

Content

The degree programmes comprise a large amount of knowledge and a variety of methods that must be learned. However, with the rapid development of knowledge and technology, it is necessary to prioritise content. It is important to focus on training in fundamental principles, mechanisms and systems. Cross-disciplinary collaboration must be supported in the degree programmes with a view to qualifying the overall efforts for the population's well-being, health and the development of an efficient healthcare sector in the best possible way.

The content of degree programmes should be reconciled with future functions and jobs and should contribute to the distinct profile of the individual degree programmes. The hallmark of the degree programme in public health science is its interdisciplinary competences to understand healthcare issues on an individual, group and system level and to analyse and implement health-promoting initiatives in society nationally and internationally. The hallmark of the degree programme in sport science is performance and health promotion with a focus on the body and motion, particularly in socio-cultural contexts. The hallmark of the further education and training education for the professional Bachelor's degree programmes is the researched-based development of the healthcare sector's organisation, systems, practices and technologies.

To supplement the structuring of the core academic disciplines, the degree programmes should introduce the students to other elements of relevance to their later careers:

For example, presentations of the work of researchers and professionals in the field as inspiration for topics in the current public debate. Similarly, they should be introduced to communication forms and methods, as well as examples of how the core academic disciplines come into play in national and international social and healthcare development, collaboration within and across sectors and institutions, technological and digital developments and the life science industry.

Structure

The structure of the degree programmes must be motivating and meaningful for the students. This means that already at an early stage of the programmes there must be elements that are of relevance for future careers and job functions. Health science further education and training programmes must take particular account of the expertise and work experience which the students bring with them, and that some of these students may be far from a study routine in terms of time management.

The structure of the degree programmes should ensure that the students gain a well-defined understanding of the core academic disciplines, but should also contain elective components and flexibility, so that the individual student can pursue their own interests and wishes within specific

subject areas.

There must be sufficient time allocated for reflection, in-depth study and project work, and the degree programmes should be structured so that there is a possibility of interaction with the outside world.

Form and method

The degree programmes must balance knowledge and practice so that the students acquire sound knowledge of theories, mechanisms and principles, and at the same, receive the necessary experience with project organisation and management as well as interdisciplinary collaboration.

The use of digital learning technologies should support learning and development of the academic language, while classroom participation should support the dialogue between researchers and students. Elements must be developed to support learning technologies that can be used in instruction, learning and reflection.

All degree programmes should contain a balanced proportion of project work to support knowledge development and knowledge exchange. Opportunities for collaboration with society, including the private sector, should be expanded. The degree programmes should offer students the opportunity for involvement in actual problems and issues and contribute to value-creating initiatives for the benefit of citizens, patients, the healthcare system and society.

Tests and exams should as far as possible be used to support learning, for feedback and for monitoring of progression, while at the same time acting as documentation for the partial and final competences.

The degree programmes must be continuously developed, so that a high educational and didactic level can be maintained. A significant element will be to ensure the students' development of meta-competence, understood as the ability to reflect on the learning process and how the learning of the principles in the individual course elements can be transferred to the learning of other course elements.