



Háskólinn  
á Akureyri  
University  
of Akureyri



STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AKUREYRI  
2018 – 2023



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**Publisher:** University of Akureyri

**Photographers:** Auðunn Nielsson,  
Daníel Starrason and Nanne Springer

**Proofreading:** Finnur Friðriksson

**Design and layout:** Margrét Káradóttir

**Printing:** Litróf



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# RECTOR'S ADDRESS

The world will experience great changes in the next 25 years – some believe that these will be the most comprehensive changes that have occurred in the last 250 years. They will take place due to automation, artificial intelligence, interconnection of all things through the internet, new production methods and concentration of Earth's inhabitants into larger districts and interconnected cities. Jobs will disappear, others will be created and the infrastructure of communities will change. Climate changes are also already having a great effect – particularly in the Arctic region. These changes and their consequences must be taken seriously.

In a society of such rapid change, universities become key institutions. By providing students with an opportunity to acquire skills and competences through an academic and professional learning environment, they will be able to tackle these great changes. By strengthening the creativity of students and teaching them to make use of change as an opportunity, an environment is furthermore created that encourages innovation in society as a whole.

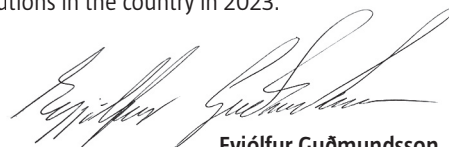
In a world where there is an abundance of information but, at the same time, a lack of wisdom and knowledge to make correct use of the information, universities become a focal point. They are the pillar that society relies on to acquire an understanding of and find solutions to the problems that confront the world. Such trust comes with power – and the universities have in fact become the fifth estate in the democratic communities of the present.

The University of Akureyri is thirty years old at the beginning of this strategy formulation period. During its first thirty years, the University has demonstrated how technological change can be utilised to adopt a flexible form of study – as well as to strengthen its research environment. With government accreditations that authorise the University to establish doctoral studies in its fields of expertise, the University of Akureyri is uniquely equipped to become a creative learning and research community with knowledge innovation as a guiding principle.

By formulating this strategy for the next five years, the University of Akureyri is taking the final step towards becoming one of the primary academic and educational establishments in the country. By carrying out the actions presented within the framework of this strategy, the University builds a strong foundation for being able to fulfil the role of strengthening Icelandic society so that it can address the great changes that await us in the next quarter century.

The main objectives of the strategy of the University of Akureyri for 2018–2023 are to strengthen the current learning environment, reinforce the infrastructure of the University and increase its emphasis on research. Doctoral studies will be the driving force of active research work in the University's fields of expertise, carried out in direct relations with society. It is furthermore the objective of the University to become carbon-neutral and exemplary in environmental affairs internationally.

For the objectives of this strategy to be realised, everyone, both University staff and the government, must walk in step. It is therefore important that the strategy and actions related to the strategy are not a document kept in a drawer but instead a dynamic work that is effectively followed through on in full cooperation with the government that is in place at each time. Above all, though, the exceptional work force of the University will form the basis for achieving the aims of this strategy. The employees and students of the University of Akureyri will be the key to establishing it as among the foremost educational- and research institutions in the country in 2023.



Eyjólfur Guðmundsson  
rector



# ROLE

## 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 in an international environment. The University of Akureyri brings in fresh currents to the country as a whole as part of an interactive relationship between society and the University.

# 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 is its guiding principle.

■ **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 2023

The University of Akureyri is a learning and academic community which actively participates in international and domestic scientific communities. The University plays a key role in promoting university education, research, development and innovation in Iceland, and the personalised and challenging study environment which the University offers is sought after by both Icelandic and international students. The University is particularly keen to utilise the possibilities of flexible studies and places an emphasis on cooperation with university- and knowledge centres which operate in rural areas. The University is a source of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The University makes use of cross-disciplinary communication in learning and research in order to develop a creative learning environment in all fields of study – a learning environment that provides students with an opportunity to improve the world, regardless of the field in which they will work. The University has up to 2,500 students in three Schools.

**The University of Akureyri** carries out active research directly related to the tasks of Icelandic society and, at the same time, contributes to increased knowledge in an international context.

**The University of Akureyri** offers an in-demand learning and research environment in all of the University's fields of study and has established a unique position as a recognised centre of learning and research related to the Arctic region.

**The course offerings** of the University of Akureyri cover the fields of social sciences, humanities, resource studies and health sciences. In 2023, the University furthermore offers engineering with practical project focus and places an increased emphasis on environmental and natural sciences with sustainability and mutual knowledge exchange between the University and society as guiding principles. The University closely cooperates with other universities domestically and abroad and offers studies in English which support such collaboration.

**The University of Akureyri** is one of the primary educational and research establishments in the country and is an active and respected participant in the Icelandic and international academic community, in addition to working with industry on innovation and strengthening of entrepreneurial thinking in the community.



# STRATEGY 2018–2023

Actions related to the strategy are divided into four categories

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

The following chapters specify the primary objectives, actions and measures which the University as a whole adopts for the period 2018–2023. Behind each category there then lie objectives, actions and measures of individual Schools, Faculties and other units. Each School is responsible for implementing its part of the strategy which the University's central administration is then responsible for as a whole.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The basis for increased research at the University of Akureyri will be enhanced activity of research groups which will forge ahead in their fields of study or to address comprehensive challenges in society at each time. Research groups are the core of the University's doctoral studies where doctoral students will be funded through domestic and foreign research funds.

The research community at the University of Akureyri will furthermore provide students with skills for innovation in a wide context and in all fields of study. A new and creative approach is a prerequisite for students being able to tackle the diverse environment they will face following their studies and, at the same time, encourages students to make use of the opportunities which consist in the expected changes.



## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

| OBJECTIVE  | ACTION   | MEASURE   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Strengthening of research.</b>  | Forming of research groups in all fields of study.   | Total research points will increase by 7.5% per year (3-year average).  |
| <b>Doctoral programmes in all fields of study.</b>                               | Development of administration for doctoral studies and use of authorisation in all fields of study to establish doctoral programmes.   | There will be 30 doctoral students in 2023.   |
| <b>Increased efforts to obtain grants from competitive funds.</b>                | Stronger support for the process of applying to research funds by reinforcing Research Administration and increasing allocations to the UNAK Science Fund so that applications can be collaborated on internationally. | Funds for research from competitive funds will increase by 5% per year, or by a total of 35% in 2023 based on 2018. |
| <b>Increased participation by the University and its students in innovation.</b> | Lectures and general presentations for students. Participation by the University in innovation- and entrepreneurial associations.  | Participation and success of students in innovation- and entrepreneurial competitions.                              |

# RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

# I LEARNING

The learning community at the University of Akureyri is personalised and challenging. Programmes are offered at all levels of study with an emphasis on flexible course offerings in undergraduate and Master's studies. Doctoral students actively participate in the learning and research community at the University of Akureyri by being involved in teaching and undertaking research in connection with their studies.

All University of Akureyri programmes emphasise independent learning, critical thought and integration of up-to-date knowledge in each field with traditional learning materials. There is targeted integration of teaching and research at all levels of study, aimed at preparing students for further study or job market participation.

# LEARNING



## LEARNING

| OBJECTIVE  | ACTION  | MEASURE   |
|--|---|---|
| All course offerings coordinated in a flexible form of study with the specific emphases of each field.   | Teaching strategy of Schools technically coordinated within the professional needs of each field of study.  | Adoption of flexible course offerings will have been completed in all Schools in 2020.  |
| Programmes in all fields of study have passed the review process of the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education.                                  | Self-evaluation of Schools, Faculties and other units. Institution-level review for the University as a whole in 2021.  | Conclusion of the review process of the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education will demonstrate that UNAK continues to enjoy the full trust of the Quality Board.   |
| Students have trust in and are pleased with their studies at UNAK.   | Teaching strategy of Schools carried out with active assistance from support services. Programmes/courses offered for academic employees on teaching methods, flexible studies and feedback to students.  | The results of a student survey will demonstrate that over 90% of second-year students are pleased with the studies and that over 95% of graduates recommend the University to others.  |
| Studies at UNAK will become more international as regards course offerings and composition of the student group.                                       | Studies in English will be offered within all fields. An emphasis will be placed on recruiting foreign exchange students and foreign students pursuing graduate studies to a university degree.   | In 2023, at least 5% of students at the University will come from abroad, and the same will apply to up to 30% of students in Master's and doctoral studies.  |
| Demanding studies that prepare the individual as regards academic work methods, professional knowledge and responsibility as a participant in society. | International comparison of the content of studies will be part of the quality assurance system of the University and methods within QEF II will be used during the period to evaluate individual Schools. Students will receive coordinated teaching in critical thinking and scientific work methods and will be obliged to familiarise themselves with the code of ethics of the University, Schools and Faculties as it appears at each time. | In 2023, one Faculty in each School will have undergone a review of research activity and international comparison of studies according to the methodology of QEF II. Each year, all of the University's students will sign a declaration confirming their knowledge of the University's code of ethics and their commitment to pursue their studies with responsibility. |

# | SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The University of Akureyri is exemplary in the Icelandic and international community. The University has an active environmental strategy, behaves responsibly in all business dealings, has transparent administration and a responsible scientific position regarding the most prominent challenges facing the world at any given time. The University places an emphasis on good relations with the community through an effective conversation with the public, industry and government institutions. The University is furthermore an active participant in the international academic community and therefore encourages its staff to take part in public debates with an emphasis on scientific arguments.

SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY



## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

| OBJECTIVE  | ACTION   | MEASURE   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>UNAK is an active participant in social discussions with an emphasis on human rights, democracy, equality and scientific knowledge. In so doing, UNAK creates trust in scientific knowledge in modern society.</b>        | Increased participation of employees in public debates with an emphasis on professional presentation of issues, honouring scientific work methods and the University's code of ethics at each time.  | Points in the D-category of the point assessment system will increase by 10% each year. UNAK will be among the 10 highest-rated institutions in surveys on public trust in the institutions of the country.   |
| <b>UNAK is a leading institution internationally in environmental affairs of higher-education institutions by being a carbon neutral educational establishment and sustainable in terms of environmental considerations.</b> | Adoption of a transport- and environmental strategy. Active measurement of use of fossil fuels in all operations of the institution. Strengthening of forestry as a countermeasure to the use of fossil fuels.   | UNAK will be neutral in 2020 in terms of its use of fossil fuels versus binding of carbon dioxide through forestry. The University will use green accounting and be able to demonstrate sustainability in its operations.                                 |
| <b>UNAK leads research and innovation that strengthen Icelandic society and reinforce its ability to undertake the challenges of the present day.</b>  | Research groups will use as a point of reference the objectives of the Science and Technology Council on social challenges.  | A number of applications to research funds concerning projects on social challenges. A number of innovation projects, innovation awards and companies established by UNAK students and employees.   |
| <b>Strengthening of cooperation between health institutions and UNAK Schools with a special emphasis on telehealth issues, geriatrics and health-care services.</b>  | Strengthening of the Institute of Health Sciences at the University of Akureyri as a forum for collaborating with other institutions in the health care system. Special support for the aim of Akureyri Hospital (SAK) to become a university hospital.        | In 2023, at least 20 persons will have a clinical title in health sciences. Furthermore, there will be active study- and research agreements with at least 10 institutions in health care- and welfare services.  |
| <b>Increased course offerings that appeal to a broader group of students and, at the same time, take into account the needs of the business community for increased education in technical fields.</b>                       | Presentation of a plan on the adoption of engineering with practical project focus at UNAK and execution of an analysis of course offerings and teaching methods based on gender perspectives and the needs of those who are non-native speakers of Icelandic. | The gender ratio of students will be as equal as possible and there will be no more than a 60/40 division between genders. Engineering with practical project focus will be offered from fall 2020, as well as studies in Icelandic as a second language. |

## INTERNAL FUNCTIONING AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The University of Akureyri is a research and learning community where diversity is celebrated and conditions created to ensure that both students and staff enjoy their studies and work. The institution's employees are its most important resource and UNAK will therefore contribute to the strengthening and development of its staff members at each time through active professional development and transparent hiring and advancement processes. The University is exemplary in professional administration at all levels of management and attends with care to its role as a public service institution.

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OFFICE



## INTERNAL FUNCTIONING AND HUMAN RESOURCES

| OBJECTIVE  | ACTION   | MEASURE   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>An active human resource strategy that supports the University's academic community. The cornerstones of such a strategy are equality, integration of work and personal life and transparent processes.</b> | Adoption of a new human resource strategy, as well as the hiring of a human resource manager. Clear hiring processes.  | In 2023, over 90% of staff will be pleased or very pleased in their work. Over 90% of newly hired staff members will be pleased with the induction process a year after starting work.  |
| <b>There is equal pay for equal work irrespective of gender or origin.</b>   | Adoption of an equal pay certification based on job descriptions and transparent processes for grouping of jobs into salary grades.  | UNAK will receive an equal pay certification, and annual equal pay surveys will be carried out where unexplained difference in the total salary of the genders will be within +/-0.25% on an annual basis.  |
| <b>Enhanced international relations of staff to research groups and higher-education institutions.</b>   | More research activity will lead to an increase in the number of research semesters of academic staff. Therefore, the research semester fund must be strengthened. Furthermore, clear work processes for professional development leaves of employees in basic services and funding of these leaves will be established. | The aim shall be that at each time, 10% of academic employees are on a research leave.<br>At least 80% of employees in basic services will make use of professional development leaves over a five-year period.   |
| <b>Professional development of all employees enhanced as part of strengthening human resources.</b>  | Employee interviews will be purposefully used to develop personal goals and a plan for the University's support for the continuing education of each individual. Courses will be offered in university pedagogy.   | All employees will have an active professional development plan that is approved by the human resource manager and their immediate supervisor.<br>Up to a 30 ECTS programme in university pedagogy will be established, which UNAK employees may pursue free of charge. |
| <b>Professional and transparent administration at all levels of management.</b>  | A training process for administrators will be developed, both for those who are hired in that capacity and those who are elected within academic units.  | Over 80% of employees will be pleased with management/managers at the University in job satisfaction surveys (for example, SFR - Union of Public Servants/VR surveys).  |

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