



ÅBO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY

– breaking boundaries



GOALS AND
STRATEGIES
2015–2020

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Introduction

This strategy document presents the guidelines approved by the Board of the Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU) for the development of the University in 2015–2020. The strategy is a roadmap that defines the operational goals and the overall investments necessary during the next few years in order to facilitate the achievement of the set goals. On the basis of this document, the university management, faculties and units will draw up specific action programmes for the implementation of the strategy throughout the university.

The strategy has been prepared jointly with the students and personnel of the Åbo Akademi University. It is a dynamic document that is intended to be continuously used, modified and further developed. Active and open communications across all levels and units is a vital prerequisite for enabling all those studying or working at ÅAU to contribute to the implementation of the strategy.

The strategy raises four central themes that are discussed in this document:

- The **boundary-breaking** approach to working
- The **profiling** of activities
- The **results** in focus
- The **well-being** of personnel and students





Åbo Akademi University's task – The Swedish university in Finland

The task of Åbo Akademi University is to provide an open, Swedish-speaking university environment for quality research and studies with a Nordic and international anchorage. Åbo Akademi University is particularly tasked with educating Swedish-speaking experts to satisfy the future needs in Finland.

The task of Åbo Akademi University is to provide a quality academic environment that will specifically meet the demand for higher education among the Swedish-speaking population of Finland. In research and education, ÅAU will nourish and advocate national bilingualism.

One fundamental task of ÅAU is to carry out scientific research of a high international standard that will, in the long run, serve the prosperity of humankind. ÅAU will provide an open academic environment that draws in and mediates new knowledge from all over the world and disseminates its own research results to the international scientific community. ÅAU will actively endeavour to exchange knowledge and interact with the surrounding society at both local and national levels.

Based on its research activities, ÅAU will provide its students with an academic education of high

quality. The study programmes will support the students' personal growth in becoming educated and critically thinking individuals, while also providing them with the competencies required in society and on the labour market. An important aspect of this task is to educate Swedish-speaking experts to meet the needs of Finnish society. This requires that ÅAU maintains a broad basis for the relevant areas of education.

Another task of ÅAU is to advance the development of Swedish-language culture in Finland and to cherish and mediate the Swedish cultural heritage in the country. As part of this task, ÅAU aspires to serve as a bridge between Finland and the other Nordic countries, and to advance Nordic collaboration within all of its activities.

Åbo Akademi University's values

Jointly approved values constitute the foundation for smooth operations and a clear identity. Åbo Akademi University's values comprise five selected ideals for working and encountering each other. These values are highlighted and pursued by ÅAU across all activities.

Diversity

The fundamental goal of Åbo Akademi University is to work toward Finland being a country where the Swedish language and Finland Swedish culture are blooming in enriching interaction with other languages and cultures. The Nordic community is important for us as it forms a wider framework for diversity and cultural exchange. In all our activities, we value diversity as a source of creativity and well-being. We respect difference and work actively to advance equal opportunities and gender equality.

Openness

Freedom of research, free access to information, as well as internal and external openness are fundamental values for Åbo Akademi University. In terms of research and education, we pursue and value dialogue and co-operation with organisations and stakeholders outside of ÅAU. Within our own organisation, we place a great value on open and honest communication that encourages dialogue between different groups and units.

Courage

Groundbreaking research and genuine learning call for new thinking and courage to turn away from

the old and habitual. At Åbo Akademi University, people are allowed to take risks and dare to succeed. We value and foster the courage required when aiming at supreme quality in all activities.

Participation

Åbo Akademi University values participation as a basic condition for motivation, quality and efficiency in teaching and working at ÅAU. Participation is present in all aspects, from inclusive pedagogics to the right to be heard and contribute to decision-making processes that affect one's own work. Participation, in turn, requires respect, commitment and responsibility from all those studying or working at ÅAU.

Sustainability

Research and education at Åbo Akademi University will pursue social, ethical, economical and ecological sustainability and a better future for people and the environment. Persistent endeavour toward these goals means that we will work in a result-oriented manner, continuously improve the quality of our working methods and jointly assume responsibility to ensure that our activities are economically sustainable.

Åbo Akademi University – breaking boundaries

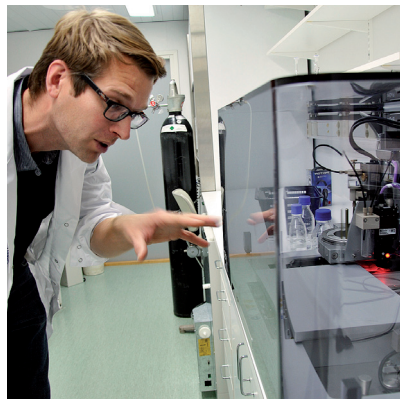
Åbo Akademi University is widely noted for scholarship at the highest scientific level within its profile areas, and for a Swedish speaking environment for internationally competitive research and education.

Our vision is that, by 2020, Åbo Akademi University will be a university that breaks linguistic and cultural boundaries, where the Swedish-speaking academic community is in full synergy with an international atmosphere, and where both education and research are of the highest quality.

ÅAU has a special position as the only Swedish-speaking multi-disciplinary university in Finland, and as such, it will lead the way in dismantling every kind of barrier to collaboration, diversity and openness. The proximity of various disciplines in a small university will be turned to maximum advantage in lively cooperation across subject boundaries, and ÅAU will develop new forms of interaction between the university and society at large.

As the boundary-breaking university, ÅAU will be highly attractive to students and researchers from all over the world and, in particular, from the Nordic countries. ÅAU will provide researchers with an exceptionally good working environment, and its profile areas will be internationally recognized for research at the highest level. In 2020, ÅAU will also have a strong reputation for study programmes and further education based on high pedagogical competence, extensive contacts with society and working life, as well as for the unique campus experience characterised by diversity, participation and culture.





Åbo Akademi University's profile

An essential aspect of Åbo Akademi University's strategy for 2015–2020 is the profiling of the activities. Profiling means that we pursue to differentiate more clearly from other universities and to highlight those areas that are distinct to or particularly prominent in ÅAU.

Research

The profiling of research means that Åbo Akademi University will define three to five focal research areas that are successful in national and international quality assessments or which are of special strategic importance.

- The focal areas may be based on national or Nordic spearhead units, or on the faculties' own development areas. A focal area may also involve a special investment in the establishment of boundary-breaking co-operation and interaction at the local, national and international levels.
- In terms of reaching the highest recognition within the focal areas, long-term investments are required in order to build up a sufficient critical volume that will attract the best researchers. ÅAU will make strategic investments to facilitate further development within these areas and, by drawing benefit from them, enhance the visibility and attractiveness of ÅAU as a whole.
- The quality of research is measured through continuous evaluation of the impact of research results by, for example, the number of external research grants and bibliometric methods.

Quantitative and qualitative indicators include, among others, those used by the State when allocating resources to universities.

- In compliance with the principles of open science, ÅAU will promote the transparency of scientific research by, for example, providing open access to research results, methods and data.

Currently, Åbo Akademi University has identified the following focal areas of research:

- Minority research
- Molecular process and material technology
- Drug development and diagnostics (in partnership with the University of Turku)

Expanding from the Finland Swedish perspective towards an internationally relevant profiling around minority issues is a key ambition for Åbo Akademi University during the coming strategy period.

Education

The Åbo Akademi University's study programmes will be profiled as being the best way to achieve a good position in working life. This is accomplished through our undergraduate bachelor programmes in Swedish, which equip students with broad and flexible competencies, our wide range of language

studies, and our master programmes that provide specialist knowledge and skills.

- ÅAU's profile as the boundary-breaking university is represented in our study programmes through inspiring and worthwhile contacts with alumni, working life and social organisations.
- By continuously developing the quality assurance system, learning and curricula, we will ensure that ÅAU graduates have the highest employment rates as compared with other universities in Finland.
- ÅAU is also characterised by its inspiring campus experience with many meeting places that foster creative culture and life-long learning.
- The study programmes are especially known for focusing on proximity and classroom education while also utilising digital and online resources.
- At ÅAU, both undergraduate and postgraduate studies as well as continued education are inclusive, participatory and based on top scientific and pedagogical competence and quality.

The overall responsibility for high-standard teacher training in Swedish Finland is one of Åbo Akademi University's primary undertakings during the strategy period.

Co-operation and interaction

An essential part of Åbo Akademi University's strategy is to open ÅAU to the surrounding society in order to strengthen its position as an international university in Finland. The boundary-breaking educational activities in the ÅAU vision mean active co-operation among the faculties, as well as interaction with major stakeholders in society. ÅAU will build solid educational and research partnerships with actors within business life, public organisations and cultural sector.

- ÅAU develops Nordic co-operation, joint education (joint examinations and double examinations) with other universities, as well as international student and personnel exchange.
- ÅAU endeavours to open its campus for more lively knowledge exchange with the University's alumni and Finnish society, with special emphasis on the primary operating areas, Turku and Vaasa.
- ÅAU actively assumes the responsibility for education in Swedish Finland and, jointly with other research universities and the universities of applied sciences, for planning future study programmes.

Strategic goals

Research

- ÅAU will be the best university for researchers in Finland.
- ÅAU research will be most highly acknowledged within its profile areas.

Education

- ÅAU study programmes will be challenging, participatory and based on top pedagogical and scientific competence.
- Knowledge and skills acquired by the ÅAU graduates during their studies will be the most desired assets on the labour market.

Co-operation and interaction

- ÅAU assumes responsibility for the Swedish and Nordic in Finland.
- ÅAU will be distinguished by boundary-breaking co-operation, courage and openness.

Sustainable structures

- Sustainable economy is accomplished through efficient and smooth operations.
- The well-being of personnel and students contributes to the attractiveness and success of ÅAU.

Research

1. Identify and support the focal areas and development areas

Research at Åbo Akademi University will be internationally top-ranking within specific focal areas. This is of essential significance for the purposes of reinforcing ÅAU's attractiveness among researchers and students, maximising the level of ambition within all research activities, and securing sustainable economy. Top-ranking focal areas require not

only a sound basis of multifaceted and high-standard research across all disciplines but also a focused allocation of resources to ÅAU's strength areas. ÅAU will develop its capabilities to identify and support potential future top-research environments. Additional support must be given to cross-disciplinary co-operation that brings together the intellectual and material resources from several subjects and faculties. ÅAU conducts quality assurance through an external assessment of the university as a whole.

- Support promising researcher teams and new research areas of strategic significance.
- Support cross-disciplinary research co-operation across the faculty boundaries.
- Establish a professional organisation to facilitate the submission of more and better applications for external funding, especially from the EU and European Research Council.
- Conduct external assessments of the quality of research in order to identify the areas of strength, the areas of development, and need for future measures.

2. Provide time for research

For Åbo Akademi University to be able to maintain a high scientific level across the board and to reach the top within the selected areas, it is vital that all of the academic personnel are guaranteed sufficient time for research. This will be the guiding principle in the drawing up of work and teaching plans, as well as in the development of the administration and support systems. It is the duty of the academic leadership to encourage ambitious research projects of high quality and to follow up on the results of research.

- Streamline the administrative processes in order to ensure sufficient time for research and teaching.
- Provide all the teachers with an opportunity to continually conduct research.
- Set standards for the volume and quality of publishing, specifically adopted to suit various fields of research.
- Encourage publishing in high-ranking channels of publication.

3. Develop an internationally attractive environment for researchers

Åbo Akademi University will provide an attractive and inspiring environment for research. In order to excel in terms of research results, ÅAU must recruit the best researchers and guarantee them an inspiring environment and good terms of employment. ÅAU's intellectual resources are coordinated and focused by competent academic leadership. Those employed on a fixed-term or grant basis constitute an essential part of these resources. Co-operation, freedom and stability create proper conditions for innovative research.

- Invest in the recruiting and career development of junior researchers with an emphasis on the capabilities to apply for external funding.
- Guarantee participation and equality for those employed on a fixed-term or grant basis.
- Develop leadership and team spirit within research.

Education

4. Develop study programmes and views on learning

Åbo Akademi University continues to invest in the enhancement of the pedagogical competence of the teaching personnel. Students' ability to study is promoted by supporting the first year of studies and a strong feeling of community, accompanied by sufficient individual guidance. ÅAU continuously develops its examination structure and improves the processes of study administration and scheduling in order to facilitate the smooth progress of studies and to increase the throughput. Quality assurance

of education is conducted by means of, for example, external evaluation and accreditation of selected study programmes.

- Perform continuous evaluation of the teaching methods and views on learning.
- Invest in the teacher team.
- Increase the weight of the pedagogical portfolio in recruiting.
- Develop research-based and varying education and teaching methods that activate and motivate students, thus engaging them in scientific practices and ways of thinking.
- Provide students with support to find the right path for studies at ÅAU.

5. Graduate students with competencies that are relevant for society

Åbo Akademi University continuously develops the study programme contents and learning so as to enable the graduates to find good positions in working life. In its study programmes, ÅAU pays particular attention to the need for Swedish-speaking experts in various fields of society. The ÅAU graduates have knowledge and skills based on research, critical thinking, responsibility and good language proficiency. ÅAU emphasises the meaning of language skills and facilitates language studies within all undergraduate degrees. Goal-oriented and efficient studies are promoted through increased interaction between the study programmes and the corresponding sectors in working life. Students gain a proper induction to working life and information about the labour market relevance of different study programmes.

- Encourage internationalisation by providing opportunities for studies abroad and by better integrating international students.
- Encourage and facilitate practical work and training as part of studies.
- Continually update the study programmes so that the graduates will have the highest employment rate in the country.
- Advance general understanding about the currently valid conditions for students' subsistence (in co-operation with the student office).

6. Develop competitive and pedagogically elaborated researcher education

Åbo Akademi University provides doctoral students with pedagogically elaborated and high-standard researcher education. The process of selecting doctoral students is transparent and based on consistent criteria, setting high quality requirements for both the applicants and the educational environment. Doctoral students are actively involved in both research and teaching within their units, thus giving them an opportunity to gain diverse competencies. Thematic courses crossing the subject boundaries contribute to the establishment of multidisciplinary networks and innovative new research clusters. Common researcher courses at ÅAU, as well as mentor programmes, support doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers in their efforts to publish in top international publications and successfully seek employment and research funding.



- Oversee the selection of students and dimensioning of researcher education with an emphasis on quality aspects.
- Develop the pedagogical component of researcher education toward the highest international standards.
- Offer common researcher courses that will support the doctoral students' career development.
- Introduce a mentor programme for postdoctoral researchers.
- Provide supervisors and project managers with leadership training and continued education in pedagogics.
- Develop supervision to cover the researcher education as a whole, not just the thesis work.

Co-operation and interaction

7. Create an authentic campus experience

Åbo Akademi University will develop the best possible environment to release people's potential and capabilities. In this context, a creative culture together with an inspiring campus experience, all the way from libraries to catering and physical activities, becomes essential. This will contribute to the experience of ÅAU as the Alma Mater for lifelong learning, a pleasant community to remember and cherish. For increased synergies, we need to create attractive meeting places, both informal and formal. A flexible organisation with great latitude calls for clearly defined, concentrated and attractive facilities. The idea is to highlight the campus experience as an interface between the physical space and the experienced space, thus stimulating knowledge evolution at all levels.

- Bring together activities into stronger campus environments in co-operation with the funds and foundations.
- Create meeting places and working premises that allow for participatory interaction between students and personnel, between different disciplines and subject areas, between research and education, and between leadership and activities.
- Open the campus for interaction with alumni and local community.

8. Invest in open co-operation across the boundaries within Åbo Akademi University

In the borderline areas between different fields of research, there are many complicated questions that call for a broader approach. It requires the ability to work together in larger entities across disciplines, yet with a properly anchored knowledge base in one's own discipline. Åbo Akademi University actively supports a dialogue between different lines of research and areas of education in order to develop the capabilities toward barrier-breaking activities.

- Support and provide conditions for generating strong cross-disciplinary research entities.
- Have advanced students involved in research and researcher students in teaching as part of their education.
- Develop the co-operation between support services, faculties, disciplines and study programmes.

9. Interact with the primary stakeholders of Åbo Akademi University

Åbo Akademi University has an important role and function as the educator of Swedish-speaking experts for Finnish society. It is the link that brings together different interest groups within the economy, society and education in Finland. The research carried out at ÅAU and the education provided by ÅAU within its study programmes are essential for the building of a sustainable and competitive society. Through efficient technology transfer processes, ÅAU maximises the societal and commercial benefits of innovations made at ÅAU. All this leads to a multifaceted development environment for ÅAU's research activities.

- Build strategic partnerships with research institutes and educational organisations, especially the University of Turku, University of Helsinki, University of Vaasa, and Novia University of Applied Sciences.
- Actively develop the relationships with business life through efficient technology transfer processes.
- Increase the education and research co-operation with employers and other co-operative partners.
- Invest more heavily in profiling and marketing ÅAU to upper secondary school students.
- Increase interaction with alumni and other stakeholders.

10. Invest in international visibility, mobility and strategic partnerships

As the only Swedish language university in Finland, Åbo Akademi University has a unique position, both

domestically and in the Nordic context. Our goal is to be foremost among the universities in Finland in terms of international co-operation, especially with our Nordic colleagues. ÅAU prioritises recruiting students from Finland and the Nordic countries by highlighting ÅAU's ranking in both research and education. ÅAU will achieve the set objectives through its new, more clearly Nordic profile and a research orientation that is linked with goal-directed research and educational co-operation.

- Invest in highly visible international recruiting of researchers and students.
- Encourage increased international mobility among researchers, teachers, personnel and students.
- Create strategic partnerships, especially in the Nordic countries.

Sustainable structures and the well-being of personnel

11. Achieve and maintain sustainable economy

A sustainable economy is achieved when all units and individuals at Åbo Akademi University deliver the result that has been defined and agreed upon in terms of education, research and interaction. A sustainable economy provides those in charge with a solid foundation for the annual planning and implementation of activities concerning education, research and any other obligations as agreed. A proactive and goal-oriented approach is necessary, especially in terms of applying for and receiving external funding.



- Develop a financial model that will provide a long-term perspective for the basic funding of the new educational structure.
- Improve the economic steering and reporting.
- Raise the quality and increase the quantity of applications for external research funding.

12. Develop the research and educational infrastructure

One condition for successful and productive education and research is the provision of appropriate premises and infrastructure for personnel and students. Local co-operation and shared investments in expensive research infrastructure jointly with, for example, the University of Turku, have many advantages, including reduced acquisition costs and increased utilisation rates. A long-term real estate strategy with clear and realistic objectives, drawn up in collaboration with the Åbo Akademi University Endowment, is necessary in order to safeguard the availability and continuity of facilities. Åbo Akademi University will exploit modern information and communications technologies and introduce the best new working methods, especially as concerns teaching.

- Guarantee access to top-level research infrastructure.
- Develop learning environments for digitalised teaching and continually improve the educational infrastructure.
- Draw advantage from the available digital courses offered by external producers, and within ÅAU's own teaching portfolio, invest in classroom teaching, dialogue and presence.

13. Improve leadership and well-being

A thriving personnel and organisation is able to deliver high-standard research results and to motivate themselves, each other and students to achieve the set objectives. In a thriving organisation, individuals spur each other and share their knowledge and experience for the benefit of the entire organisation. Excellent performance is recognised and rewarded. Åbo Akademi University is a high-standard expert organisation that requires exemplary leadership and well-functioning support processes. Through their own example, supervisors at all levels show the personnel how to make decisions transparent. They also ensure that all instances or groups within ÅAU have the opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes that concern them. Quality assurance of all processes is continual.

- Invest in and provide training in professional leadership within research, education and administration.
- Develop smooth support functions and processes through increased interaction in the daily academic activities.
- Introduce career planning for all researchers and teachers (publishing, financial planning and financial responsibility).
- Ensure that the personnel's individual objectives, responsibilities and resources are in balance and mutual correspondence.

Implementation of the strategy

The executive management of Åbo Akademi University will draw up an action programme with defined responsibilities and indicators, and the programme will be updated as needed on the basis of the results of the strategy follow-up. The programme will also serve as an intermediate strategy for ÅAU to facilitate a smooth response to any essential need for change as caused by external factors. The action programme will be implemented through operations at faculty level and within the university services in compliance with ÅAU's annual plans for activities and finances.

The strategy is implemented partly through active and open communication, partly through the faculties' proposals for operational strategies, leading to annual plans for activities and finances, which are systematically monitored. The strategy follow-up takes place on an annual basis both as part of the Board's annual report and through continuous reporting.

The quality of the implementation of the strategy is assured through ÅAU's policy for leadership and quality management, as approved in a separate steering document, with the following objectives:

- To guarantee well-functioning and continual development of activities
- To guarantee the revision and development of quality at all stages of activities
- To support the development of a shared quality culture.

Åbo Akademi University's management initiates, encourages and monitors the implementation of the strategy. The practical implementation of the strategy is led by the Rector's executive group, faculty boards, committees and executive groups. The strategy is only successful when each individual within the ÅAU community takes part in its implementation.



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