STEP by STEP

Strategic Advisory Board (SAB)
A development incentive at the UiO (University of Oslo), 2012-2017
Implementation and provisional results
Foreword

The UiO’s Strategy 2020 document, which was adopted in 2010, continues to pursue the objectives which the UiO has had during the last ten years. The development of improved academic quality has been the all-consuming challenge contained in these objectives. During this decade the UiO’s faculties and museums have placed priority on providing academic help designed to boost quality. In Strategy 2020 the core tasks – education, research, dissemination and innovation – are linked more closely to each other and greater priority than previously is placed on interdisciplinary cooperation.

In 2011 the University Board resolved to set up an international Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) in order to raise the UiO’s sights in this respect. They were tasked with assessing Strategy 2020 and the UiO’s follow-up work. The idea was that critical external appraisal would uncover any challenges that the University would be unable to see as clearly by itself. Such measures test the University’s willingness and ability to accept criticism, and the «Build a Ladder to the Stars» report sparked off many internal discussions when it was released in August 2014.

The Strategic Advisory Board has provided us with important inspiration, new insight and useful lessons. We have subsequently evaluated their advice and recommendations during an internal follow-up process, and in June 2016 the University Board placed priority on specific follow-up measures. It is still too early to assess the long-term effects of the SAB’s contribution to the UiO’s strategic work, but this report will serve to provide others with access when the time is ripe.

This report is a brief English version which only covers the SAB process. It is an extract from the Norwegian version entitled Step by Step which is a much more comprehensive document. It also contains summaries by the faculties and museums about their own developmental measures during recent years and refers to important common academic measures and administrative renewal at the UiO. In the Norwegian report the UiO’s working processes are placed in a wider context and include references to the changes which are currently taking place in the Norwegian university and higher education sector. In a separate chapter the Rector also sums up his eight years of experience as the head of the University of Oslo.

Both the Norwegian and English versions of Step by Step were written by Special Adviser Inger Stray Lien at the Management Support Unit, who served as the Project Manager when the SAB conducted its follow-up work in 2014–2016.

We hope that the experiences which we have acquired from using a Strategic Advisory Board will serve as inspiration for others.

Oslo, 1 March 2017

Ole Petter Ottersen
Rector

Gunn-Elin Aa. Bjørneboe
University Director
**Mandate for the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB):**


There are three main documents which are directly involved in the SAB process:

- **Strategy 2020**, which constitutes the basis for the whole process
  http://www.uio.no/english/about/strategy/Strategy2020-English.pdf
- **Build a Ladder to the Stars**, which is the SAB Panel’s report to the UiO
  https://www.uio.no/om/organisasjon/utvalg/strategic-advisory-board/sab-rapporten110814.pdf
- **An Organisational and Decision-making Structure which supports the UiO’s Strategic Objectives**, which is a report issued by the UiO’s internal G4 working group (the Underdal Group). This report has also been subjected to an internal consultation process.
  http://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/arbeidstilten/prosjekter/strategic-advisory-board/dokumenter/rapport-fra-gruppe-4-engelsk.pdf

Other documents which have emerged from follow-up by the SAB are available on the UiO’s website, but are only available in Norwegian at the moment.

The results arrived at by the following groups: **Educational Quality (G1)**, **Research Quality (G2)** and **Interdisciplinarity (G3)**, can be found on the **SAB-prosjektets nettsider**. These also include a number of presentations and notes supporting the work carried out by the Organisational and Decision-making Group (G4).

http://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/arbeidstilten/prosjekter/strategic-advisory-board/leveranser.html

In addition to these documents the University Board has processed a total of twelve SAB items during the period September 2014 – June 2016. These items relate to the provision of information, discussions and decisions and they are all available on the UiO’s website, but only in Norwegian:

http://www.uio.no/om/organisasjon/styret/moter/
In April 2010 the University of Oslo adopted Strategy 2020 following a broad, open process in which students and all the University’s employees were given the opportunity to participate.

The main objective was formulated as follows:

«The University of Oslo shall strengthen its international position as a leading research-intensive university by ensuring close interaction between its research, education, dissemination and innovation activities.»

This objective was based on the strong conviction that Norway could and should adopt greater joint international responsibility in order to find solutions to the major challenges facing society. Education, research, dissemination and innovation are the University’s contributions towards promoting increased understanding and involvement in essential national and global renewal processes. If Norway is to make a greater contribution, the country’s leading universities must also be more attractive partners for top foreign universities. In this respect we are measured primarily in accordance with our academic quality and research results.

Many other universities have the same ambitions as us. It has been said that the distance will increase between the best universities and other universities. In order for a Norwegian university to approach or be included in the international elite division in the future, it is necessary that the political will exists in Norway in order to take such a step up. The University of Oslo regards the ambitions contained in the Long-term Plan as being both inspirational and recognisable. In our experience it is necessary to engage in long-term academic development work in order to succeed in the face of increasingly tougher international competition. Priorities which need to be set locally in order to keep up often challenge domestic traditions and it may also be difficult to combine them with national requirements and expectations.

There is no simple recipe for achieving a beneficial interplay between research, education, dissemination and innovation so that they can produce positive synergies. We obviously have a lot to learn from others, but we also need to undertake further investigations and we have more internal experiences to share. This report outlines our successes and challenges and also addresses the time that such takes and the patience required.

Norway’s first Long-term Plan for Research and Higher Education was presented during the autumn of 2014 – just a few months after the Strategic Advisory Board’s report was presented. Thus the whole of the SAB’s working process took place before the Norwegian government presented its aspirations about how future research and education contributions could help to resolve major social challenges. This plan emphasises that the University’s innovation abilities need to be developed. Several academic fields of excellence will be cultivated in order to strengthen the sector’s international competitive abilities.

The Long-term Plan was followed up with unparalleled structural changes being made to the university and higher education sector. Over a three year period 33 state-run universities and colleges were whittled down to become 21 institutions, four of which were merged colleges with university aspirations. Before 2005 Norway only had four universities. Today it has eight and it could have 12 in just a few years’ time.

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1. Introduction

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Some academic environments and individual researchers at the UiO already have strong international positions. Based on experience it should be possible for more to achieve such positions if they make a conscious and systematic effort. Although we know that this will involve making choices and establishing priorities which challenge our traditional Norwegian university culture, there is considerable internal support at the UiO for proceeding in this direction.

Many other universities have the same ambitions as us. It has been said that the distance will increase between the best universities and other universities. In order for a Norwegian university to approach or be included in the international elite division in the future, it is necessary that the political will exists in Norway in order to take such a step up. The UiO believes that this is possible and also understands that more people would vote for this need in 2017 than would have been the case a few years ago.

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2. International Ambitions – Norwegian Reality

2.1 Strategy 2020

The aim of the Rectorate to go a step further towards developing the UiO to become a top international university was introduced back in the spring of 2009 during the rectoral election campaign, and the strategy process calling for more precise definition of objectives and measures commenced shortly after the new rector was appointed in August of the same year.

New plan measures

“In 2020, the University of Oslo shall be much more visible, attractive and involved in the international arena than it is at present. This objective shall be achieved by transcending geographical, academic and institutional boundaries. The University of Oslo shall be an action-oriented, engaged, open university that contributes to the development of society, and it shall become an even better place in which to work and study.”

It is easy to confine such objectives to paper, but it is a challenging task for management to implement them and to include employees in good working processes that are designed to look enthusiastically at the opportunities and challenges facing the academic environment. Strategy 2020 consists of three chapters which create inspiration for academic renewal and more extrovert activities, while two further chapters are devoted to how the University should boost its dynamism and adopt a personnel policy where recruitment and employee development contribute towards realising its academic objectives.

Strategy 2020 has 28 strategic objectives: six of these are associated with A boundary-breaking university, six with A teaching University, five with A socially involved university and the last 10 with internal improvements designed to achieve A dynamic university and A good university. The strategy establishes closer links than previously between research, education, dissemination and innovation at the UiO. The University’s role in society is broadly defined with clear emphasis being placed on dialogue and cooperation. At the same time the need for redistribution and placing priority on academic quality are emphasised as being important drivers of change, often requiring fairly thorough innovation and extensive efforts by offering new programmes, new curricula and new methods of teaching, and digitalisation has been a powerful driver of change, often requiring fairly thorough innovative thinking. Major changes in programmes of study are both time and labour intensive because existing courses of study must be completed in parallel with the introduction of new ones. Many employees are affected.

It takes time to develop good, sound research environments. Following the massive influx of students at the UiO during the 1990s, there was a definite move towards disintegration in many academic fields. There was a great requirement for targeted improvement of and greater awareness about what was supposed to constitute the research basis of these academic environments. Today most of these academic environments at the UiO have established research groups around priority areas of commitment. Developments in this direction have been taking place during the last 10-15 years, with the «Academic Priorities» project (2007-2009) serving as a joint internal starter and with the prospects of more external funding as an incentive. Several faculties mention the status of their academic environments concerned. Inclu-
dents are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences with each other about how to implement such links into both how research takes place and into what their tutors want to find out more about and why. Both the UiO’s education programmes and its research activities must take this into account. The academic environments are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences with each other about how to implement such links in practice and how this will affect the involvement and measurable results of students.

While such major change processes are taking pla-

- Summaries included in the report: “Quality and Relevance. Academic priorities for research and education at the University of Oslo. April 2009.
ce in parallel, the differences in working conditions will change between those who are successful in obtaining external grants and those who are not. For some employees these changes will primarily provide inspiration, while for others they will create frustration and insecurity. Regardless of the results, good management is necessary when many balls are being juggled at the same time and greater attention needs to be devoted to the working environment and personnel policy tools.

The changes made in the organisation of research have helped to trigger a need and greater demand for learning more about academic management and what constitutes research management. In addition other forms of administrative support are required when research projects become larger and external funding increases. By undertaking systematic work over a period of 10 years an internal programme for academic management at the UiO has been developed. This is a programme which has the capacity for 40 places, and in 2010 external participation was permitted for the first time. There has been considerable external interest and with effect from 2014 up to 15 of these places can now be filled by participants from other institutions. This programme has been highly appraised and critically acclaimed by many and it is subjected to constant renewal and improvement following consultation with the participants. It has recently been expanded and now includes a special programme for young researchers. A programme for educational managers has also been established in line with a similar model. With effect from 2017 this will also be open to external participation and its capacity will be extended to accommodate 40 places. Both of these offers cover tools and working methods and they are also valuable arenas for exchanging information and providing common insight into the cultural idiosyncrasies and specific challenges which face academic managers at an ambitious university.

2.2 Comparison with the best. Evaluation and ranking

A lot can be learnt from undertaking comparisons with others and this can serve as a great basis for improvement. However, if this is to be done in a professional manner it is demanding on resources. Furthermore, if it is to be effective it will need to be followed up by making decisions and implementing subsequent corrective measures. The UiO has initiated a modest degree of benchmarking or has carried out its own evaluations of the institution as a whole, but these are well-known measures for its academic areas and local units. One current exception is targeted benchmarking carried out in three phases in order to increase the UiO’s participation in Horizon 2020 and the EU’s forthcoming framework programme. This has been done internally under the auspices of the Management Support Unit (VØS), but in close contact with active academic environments and individuals, and it was completed during the summer of 2016. During the first phase the UiO’s activities and results were compared with those of a relatively large group of European universities, while the efforts of three Nordic and one British university were subjected to thorough analysis during a series of visits made during phase two. Specific measures were identified and these are now being followed up at the UiO – partly centrally and partly within the faculties’ academic environments. The measures comprise the development of expertise and a better support apparatus, along with selecting and using incentives for improved endeavours.

However, the following measures should also be mentioned: For example, an evaluation process was set up in order to evaluate the results of the UiO’s seven interdisciplinary investments in its academic prioritisation process, and when the UiO applied for admittance to LERU in 2009, a comprehensive comparison was undertaken internally between the UiO and those institutions which were members of this alliance at that time.

Academic evaluations

The Norwegian Research Council has long traditions in undertaking academic evaluations. Since 1997, thirty one disciplines have been scrutinised – including 10 subjects which the UiO also holds in its portfolio. Three major evaluations are currently taking place: Social science research, humanities research and education research. Several of the faculties have said that previous external academic evaluations have been extremely useful. They may not say anything particularly new, but external confirmation of an internal impression may also be very valuable.

The Norwegian Research Council is now discussing the future role of national academic evaluations. This is a topic which is being discussed at meetings being held between the institutions, and the intention is to reach a common understanding of what the Research Council can do to benefit the institutions’ own quality development work.

NOKUT’s evaluations

NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) has also established a practice which involves evaluation of the institutions’ quality assurance systems and some of the education provided. Since 2005, NOKUT has paid seven inspection visits to the UiO. These inspections have resulted in changes being made to several study programmes.

International league tables

Annual international ranking is here to stay. The UiO has reached first place among Norwegian universities in the international university league tables, and this has been the case ever since league tables were introduced in 2005. The results of such ranking attract regular attention from the media – especially if major changes occur between one year and another. It is difficult to compare institutions with such varied and multi-faceted activities as those offered by universities. The methods and tools used for doing this are constantly being adjusted and it is consequently not very easy to understand the reasons behind a change in place from one year to the next. The institutions are themselves responsible for ensuring that correct and complete basic facts are made available, but some tables contain a substantial reputation component which is based on reports from selected respondents who are contacted without the universities being involved. Although there is more openness than previously about the criteria and the weight applied to such, there is still a long way to go before full transparency is achieved.

The number of league tables is increasing, and the UiO is well placed on several of them. The same institutions often feature regularly at the top of these tables – many of them are American and English universities which operate with a high degree of international recruitment in respect of both employees and students, and many of them are privately funded. The UiO ranks among the top 20 universities featured on the Shanghai League Table which operate with a different working language to English. The UiO’s placement further down on all the other league tables varies considerably from year to year, and relatively small changes in results can have a heavy impact on its placement.

The UiO has gradually obtained considerable insight into how the most important league tables measure, weigh and obtain results. Some indicators can be influenced by better results, but if other institutions make great progress then the institutions with better results could nevertheless be ranked lower and many institutions place considerable emphasis on improving their positions.

International academic and subject area rankings are also on the increase. As far as academic environments are concerned these will generally be more relevant, more interesting and more useful than the institutional rankings. However, participation is time-consuming because a considerable amount of material has to be made available. Consequently some academic environments refrain from being involved. If this applies to those who are assumed to be best, the value of the league tables is weakened.

The figure shows the UiO’s position on three important league tables between 2012 and 2016. The UiO also performs well on Webometrics and Reuters Top 100 Innovative Universities.
3. The SAB process and internal UiO follow-up

Looking back from a historical perspective provides us with a useful reminder about how long it takes to realise basic, thorough change processes at a university. Radical changes are also often met by considerable internal resistance and put the implementation abilities of the organisation to the test.

The university’s managers work under fixed term contracts. For a long time they worked for just three years; today this period is 4 years and many Board members are replaced at the same time as the management. Being a university manager during a period of upheaval demands the ability to unite and build bridges internally and to communicate well with the authorities and external partners. Several examples exist where demanding processes take a new direction or where decisions are not implemented because the changes involved were met by heavy resistance.

Demanding change processes should therefore be designed with contingency measures for enabling their completion.

3.1 Before Strategy 2020

During the last half of the 1990s the University of Oslo experienced an unparalleled explosion of students. This occurred over a period of just a few years and resulted in queues, a lack of places and pressure on all the University’s academic resources. This situation occurred because high employment had made it very difficult for young people to gain access to the labour market. The solution presented by the authorities was to set up more places on programmes of study – primarily reasonably priced places on general courses of study. The UiO received many new places and many lectures had to be held in cinemas and large auditoriums in order to find enough space. For scientific employees it was a challenge to find enough time for research. Many of the new students were not very interested in studying and they struggled to find their feet in the university environment. The situation was far from satisfactory, for both teachers and students.

In May 2000 the Mjøs Committee presented its recommendations. The committee was appointed shortly after the first Bondevik government came into power, and NOU 2000:14 provided the basis for the major higher education quality reforms and simultaneously made it easier to achieve university status. Norway gained three new universities over the course of five years.

In two previous strategy documents the UiO defined itself as being an internationally-oriented research university. The first time was in the University of Oslo’s Long-term Plan (2000-2004), in which the University’s international position was an important topic. The term “research university” was introduced during the planning work. Several European countries had already elected to give many types of higher educational institutions the opportunity to call themselves universities. Some of the “old” research-oriented universities introduced the new term, Research University, in an attempt to maintain their own identity, and the UiO wanted to indicate its association with this group.

However, the discussion about the importance and consequences of such a choice of direction first emerged in earnest in 2005, and the fact that the UiO was planning such a future perspective was fairly controversial. Many people – including those at the University – thought that this represented an ambition which would be difficult to gain acceptance for in Norway, and that the term indicated an unfortunate emphasis on prioritising research over education.

In 2001-2002 the UiO and the Universities of Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø all undertook their own institutional evaluations. Under the direction of the Ministry, these were conducted under the auspices of the former Norwegian Network Council.

These institutional evaluations were announced while the UiO was working on its own strategy, and the Ministry also called for a separate evaluation to provide a basis for external work. The UiO referred to the forthcoming evaluation in its strategy document and the University’s management made a deliberate decision to take advantage of the opportunity to review conditions within their own institution. A comprehensive process resulted in a very thorough – and surprisingly self-critical – self-evaluation which was given the title of EVA. Although a lot has changed during the last 10 years, the SAB is still finding aspects at the UiO which were identified as being challenges back in the 2001 EVA.

This external evaluation was also critical: “…the University … must create a stronger organisational base for making choices and priorities of profiling among a portfolio of tasks and activities for which there seem to be diffuse aims at present.” The Evaluation Panel also presented a...
number of more precise comments and recommendations for improvements.

This report was useful in terms of preparation for the forthcoming institutional review, but it was equally important as a basis for defining the need for quality development which the internal strategy work had already identified.

This was a time of major political discussions about the development of a strong, growing university and higher education sector which resulted in a number of reports and subsequent legislative amendments. NOU 2000:14 was just one of these. The time of the UiO's institutional evaluation coincided with the implementation of the Quality Reform (adopted by the Storting in June 2001). The UiO decided to use this reform to implement comprehensive changes in the education offered by the institution – something which was both in line with the conclusions contained in its self-evaluation and with the clear recommendations of the external panel.

The reform required considerable internal resources. A broader, more systematic programme for follow-up in other areas following the institutional evaluation was therefore never drawn up. Nevertheless there are still traces of this in several of the next strategy plans. The Strategic Plan for the University of Oslo, 2005-2009. In this the overall objective for the period was formulated as follows: «The UiO shall strengthen its position as a research university with high international standards.»

The decision to implement an academic prioritisation process at the UiO can be found in this document. It took a while before this work acquired form and direction, and the basis for the comprehensive process which commenced in 2007 is contained in a very concise document.

The work on academic priorities concerned all the faculties, but not all of them were so thorough. The process and results were summed up in the report entitled Quality and Relevance in 2009. This prioritisation work was highly significant for academic development at the UiO in subsequent years. It has been demanding work, but several academic environments have nevertheless subsequently taken the initiative to employ similar processes in order to achieve a higher degree of academic selection and greater concentration.

3.2 Using a Strategic Advisory Board (SAB)

The experience acquired from the institutional evaluation proved to be useful, both for setting up the SAB Panel and for organising its working processes. During the work carried out in connection with the 2001 self-evaluation (EVA), the UiO’s current rector was involved as the head of the internal working group which evaluated the UiO as a research organisation. The UiO was the principal and defined a mandate with a clear internationally perspective and ambition level. The Rector was the prime mover and responsible for taking the initiative, and he sought qualified advice from prominent researchers and university people with links to some of the world’s foremost universities. He wanted to know more about the UiO’s position in relation to the most prominent foreign universities. He also wanted to know which areas had obvious deficiencies and what would be necessary to ensure that the UiO could compete on a more level playing field with the best.

On this occasion there was no previous self-evaluation, but in the preliminary work carried out on Strategy 2020, the UiO reviewed a number of EU policy documents and documents from university and higher education sector unions and compared them with similar Norwegian documents. In 2009 Norwegian knowledge policy was still dominated by national perspectives, and this comparison showed that there was a considerable gap between Norway’s policy and global trends and the EU’s priorities.

Nevertheless the UiO decided to stick to the idea that it is essential, for both the UiO and Norway, that a Norwegian university should have international ambitions and want to measure itself against top universities, and this was what formed the basis of Strategy 2020.

Before the SAB Panel was set up, the University’s eight faculties, two museums and the University Library had prepared local strategy documents based on Strategy 2020. The heads of these 11 units were included in the SAB process right from the start.

In November 2012 the SAB Panel was appointed with the following members:

Esko Aho, Senior Fellow, Harvard University; tidligere minister for justis i Finland. Finland (påfødt i 1946)

Peter Apre, Professor, Johns Hopkins University, USA

Shuleen Sardar Ali, Professor, Warwick University; Pakistan/Soenbrannia

Inari Moi, Professor, Duke University, USA

Erwin Neher, Professor Emeritus, University of Göttingen, Tyskland

Franz van Vught, Professor, University of Twente, Nederland

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, University Professor, Columbia University, India/USA9

The appointment letter was fairly brief. Their task was to undertake a critical review of the UiO’s current position in relation to the context and direction it had specified in Strategy 2020, and then to consider whether or not the implemented measures and working processes which had been designed to realise the strategy had been correctly prioritised and had enough clout.

The Panel consisted of a broad spectrum of academics, and all the members had – or had had – links with top universities around the world, as well as valuable experience from other evaluation assignments. Several participants on the Panel also possessed prior knowledge about the UiO because they had been guest lecturers or adjunct professors or had been involved in some other type of academic cooperation.

The UiO is a large institution with a broad academic composition and considerable internal differences. In sightful, local organisation was essential so that the Panel could operate with manageable working conditions.

The working process was prepared with the involvement of considerable external participation when the SAB panel was visiting, with opportunities for questions and for testing hypotheses during the process. In addition key supporting documents and relevant statistics were made available on an ongoing basis.

The SAB paid four visits to Oslo between December 2012 and June 2014. The programme for these visits consisted of having conversations and discussions with key UiO personnel (researchers, students, deans and university managers) as well as with external interested parties (official representatives, organisations and trade and industry), along with internal meetings at which SAB members discussed their observations, analyses and recommendations.

Build a Ladder to the Stars

The SAB Panel called its report Build a Ladder to the Stars. The report was published in 2014. The recommendations of the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature, Bob Dylan, and it refers elegantly to Strategy 2020’s use of En nos petenis astra10 which is the motto of the strategy document.

The report was submitted in August 2014. Panel Chairman Esko Aho presented and explained the SAB’s advice to the UiO at a seminar held in Lysebu in September 2014. The University Board, the University’s management and the 11 heads of organisation level two (deans, museum directors and the library director) had all had advance access to the report. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss the organisation of a follow-up process.

The current Board – which has been in office since August 2013 – decided to organise the first phase of the follow-up work as a project and it tasked a steering group itself. The advantage of a project organisation was to keep the first phase of the work unified under one controlling body until measures had been prioritised, and then to allocate and place responsibility for implementation with ordinary line management.

In the introduction to its report the SAB stated that «As it stands, Strategy 2020 is rather general: it fails to give clear directions and set clear evaluation criteria, so that the present performance of the UiO appears not to be fully in line with the targets and level of ambition.»

In addition to more general observations about the UiO’s challenges, the SAB Panel provides some specific advice, but emphasises at the same time that the UiO must undertake and prioritise its own assessments and make up its mind about what it needs to address first.

The SAB report provided support for internal discussions and reflections on many levels throughout the follow-up period, both by the University Board and in internal meetings and fora. Full details about the administrative procedures and decisions of the University Board are shown in Appendix X.

Despite the challenges which have been emphasised, the SAB recommends that the UiO should retain its strategy ambitions. They recognise that it will not be easy for a Norwegian university to be fully successful given the current frameworks and expectations. At the same time they express obvious concerns about whether or not the UiO will be able to implement its academic priorities and essential academic renewal under the current governance and management model. Their advice is to address this challenge and discuss how the UiO can make its working and decision-making processes more flexible and better adapt them to suit different types of tasks. It is particularly important to secure working processes promoting academic renewal and provide growth opportunities for promising bottom-up initiatives.

The SAB Panel’s comments about the challenging connections between UiO’s strategy ambitions and its existing governance model touched on a controversial aspect of university policy about its elected or employed managers. However, the SAB says nothing about how to recruit managers – they are more interested in the fact that the UiO needs better and more differentiated working and decision-making processes.

9 Institutional evaluation of the University of Oslo. The external panel’s report. ISSN 0300-5840

10 Qualities and requirements for research and education at the University of Oslo

8 Professor Spivak was unfortunately unable to participate in the SAB’s work

10 It was not petenis astra is the inscription on the foundation stone of the University’s Old Observatory. It was laid in 1827 when the first scientific buildings were being erected for the Royal Frederick University. The inscription means We also seek the stars – the poetic formulation used for the new Norwegian university’s ambitions at the time.


3.3 The SAB’s change dimensions

The SAB Panel was composed of people who are familia-
ar with the changes in the universities’ framework condi-
tions and with opinions about what type of role the univer-
\- sities need to aspire to in order to be involved in future social developments. Their insight into what is involved in respect of funder competition for grants, competent researchers and talented recruits was prima-
\- rily obtained from universities in the international elite division.

Several of the internal parties involved in the SAB’s follow-up have been interested in the fact that greater differences could be accommodated in a wider national institutional landscape than in a Norwegian one, and many elite universities have been able to define their unique positions more freely than the UiO is able to do in a country with a population of 5 million people. Thus following the SAB’s advice in full is probably neither pos-
sible nor desirable for the UiO. Internal considerations relating to choosing directions and the consequences of such must always be on the University’s agenda – both for the institution as a whole and for the faculties and individual academic environments.

This concerns, for example, the need to preserve aca-
\- demic diversity in respect of tuition while at the same time cultivating research environments with top exper-
tise. It also concerns preserving national requirements alongside preparation for stronger international compe-
tition and how academic working conditions must be de-
\- veloped in order to weigh individual employee’s needs for stability against the institution’s need for renewal. The SAB’s assessment of what is required for achieving the objectives contained in Strategy 2020 is therefore an important reminder about the fact that some difficult di-
\- lemmas require a high degree of reflection on the part of both the UiO and other Norwegian universities.

Innovation – a new challenge

The SAB Panel refers to the increase in expectations about innovation which universities all over the world are currently experiencing, and it introduces the con-
\- cept of ecosystem thinking in their report. Their point is that the UiO has not yet clearly defined its role and po-
\- sition as a leading research university…»

When the SAB Panel commenced its work this was a slightly alien idea for most people at the UiO, and in Nor-
\- way there was little political support for allowing uni-
\- versities to adopt a wider role as an innovator in society. In fact Norway’s universities have always had this role, but it is now in the process of being re-defined.

Two legislative amendments in 2002 tasked the uni-
\- versities with commercialising their research results and the UiO established the TTO company Birkeland Innovat-
\- ion as its operator for patenting and licensing ideas with commercial potential which are derived from re-
\- search at the UiO. From 2009 Inven2, (including Birkeland Innovation) is a joint commercialisation company for the UiO, the Southern and Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority and Oslo University Hospital.

However, commercialisation is just one aspect of what the SAB calls an innovation ecosystem. When the 2001 Lisbon Treaty gave European universities greater responsibilities in respect of contributing towards soci-
\- al innovation and renewal, this came on the back of the economic crises and unemployment which were having a negative impact on many European countries. In Nor-
\- way employment continued at a high, stable level for al-
most another ten years. It was not until the drop in oil prices during the autumn of 2014 that Norway’s econo-
\- mic vulnerability became so obvious that the necessity of creating new, future-oriented jobs appeared in ear-
\- nest on the political agenda.

This need was reinforced by the impact in all areas of society of new technology, new energy solutions and the powerful forces for change such as digitalisation. At the same time such major changes create new opportuni-
ties in a well-organised country with a well educated po-
\- pulation. New public measures have now been initiated which are designed to encourage creativity and renewal.

Turning today’s students into the founders of the future is a challenge which includes the universities and which is being addressed seriously in most academic environments. Knowledge about how new companies, new services and more efficient administration can be set up in practice is something which is rapidly being incorporated into the courses being offered and this is an insight that students are asking for. The state is also investing more money into encouraging student innovation.

In the Productivity Commission’s second report which was presented in February 2016, emphasis is placed on the quality of Norwegian education and research as being key factors in Norway’s transformation from being a resource-based economy to being a knowledge-based economy. The Commission recommends strengthening what it calls Norway’s «major» innovation policy and points to a direct connection between education levels and innovation abilities. At the same time it calls for long-term thinking and greater prioritisation of scien-
\- tific quality in the basic research conducted at Norwe-
\- gian universities in order to keep pace with knowledge developments on the international front and to secure innovation and adaptation abilities in Norway over time.

The SAB Panel also includes the University’s ability to engage in its own academic renewal in its innovation challenge to the UiO – making clear recommendations about creating good, inclusive arenas for internal aca-
\- demic discussions and better prioritisation and decisi-
\- on-making processes when making changes.

During the last few years the UiO has dealt more ef-
\- fectively with all aspects of its innovation challenges. There is still some way to go before an overall innovation policy can be defined and before an internal structure can link various internal fields of activity with coopera-
\- tion arenas and strategic partners, but these topics have now been clearly placed on the UiO’s agenda.

Profile dimension analysis

Instead of providing direct comments and advice rela-
ting to each of the 28 strategies which are included in Strategy 2020, the SAB Panel decided to perform a pro-
\- file dimension analysis with ten specific profile dimensi-
\- ons. The outer extremes of any of these dimensions are represented as opposite poles, while for others they are more complementary.

Using this chart the SAB has presented an image of the direction in which the UiO must and should move in order to more closely attain the objectives contained in Strategy 2020: –, to strengthen its international position and to be a regional university in more detail in the report – relate to the need to de-
\- sign working processes more specifically and with gre-
\- efer awareness in accordance with the tasks to be resol-
\- ved, rather than dealing with everything in accordance with the same procedures. The SAB believes that unfor-
\- tunately the decision-making processes at the UiO are uniform and that the organisation is unnecessarily bi-
\- rearchal. At the same time the SAB states clearly that the current governance model is hardly likely to enable the UiO to make decisions which could effectively help the institution to attain the objectives laid down in Stra-
\- tegy 2020. They believe that the UiO’s traditions and culture create too much resistance to important chan-
\- ge decisions and that its expectations for consensus are incorporated in the decision-making structure. This makes it hard to make decisions which involve consistent choices of direction and then sticking to them. At least this is how one could interpret them – and so there will be intense disagreement about whether or not this is a strength or a weakness at the UiO.

Four other change arrows are also prominent: the UiO is advised to take a long step towards becoming interdis-
\- ciplinary, developing and improving its competitiveness, becoming a more outward looking partner and exploi-
\- ting its high degree of academic autonomy so that it can far more deliberately define its future academic prioritii-
\- es and profiling.

SAB-UiO: Profile Dimension Analysis

Comprehension

- Focused

- Relevance-driven

- Disciplinary

- Interdisciplinary

- Co-operation

- Inward-looking culture

- Outward-looking culture

- Basic research

- Applied research

- Stability

- Accessibility

- Dependence

This illustration shows in which direction the SAB recommends UiO to move on each dimension. The longer the arrow, the more movement is needed (according to the SAB assessment).
The profile dimension analysis quickly proved to serve as a good basis for internal discussion, and many nodded in approval about the direction of the arrows and the emphasis which had been placed on change requirements and potential.

Anyone wishing to acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the background for the change dimensions and advice provided by the SAB to the University of Oslo in 2014 should refer to the SAB Panel’s report.

3.4 Structure of the follow-up project

When the Board adopted a structure for follow-up work after the seminar held at Lysebu in September 2014—a decision was made to postpone the discussion relating to the UiO’s governance challenges. It was agreed that the UiO should initially address those challenges which concerned academic quality work and renewal. At the same time the Board also noted the interdisciplinary change arrow which stood out from the others as being the longest one. The members of the SAB Panel were not very impressed by the UiO’s interdisciplinary activities, but saw that there was considerable, under-leased interdisciplinary potential in an institution like the UiO which had considerable academic breadth and strong disciplines. The SAB had noticed that Strategy 2015-2020 made no mention of the fact that priority should be placed on interdisciplinary, but could find no convincing measures for realising such.

The Board decided to set up three working groups during the first follow-up phase: Education Quality (G1), Research Quality (G2) and Interdisciplinarity (G3). In discussions about the mandates for these groups they wanted to return later to how the governance challenge should be treated. They decided to keep a close eye on the development of the working process and elected itself to serve as the steering group for the follow-up project which was defined as a two-year project—i.e. until the end of 2016.

Anyone wishing to acquaint themselves more thoroughly with the background for the change dimensions and advice provided by the SAB to the University of Oslo in 2014 should refer to the SAB Panel’s report.

3.5 From recommendations to results—so far

The UiO’s profile analysis has already been discussed. It gradually became a good starting point for many types of discussions during the follow-up work, including at faculty level. However, during the earliest phase—when the follow-up project acquired its form and structure—a considerable amount of attention was also devoted to the specific proposed measures which were presented by the SAB.

A total of 36 such proposals were presented. Many of them concerned possible measures for improving the UiO’s teaching and research activities. Some of them were easier to get to grips with than others, and some indicated changes which had already been identified and dealt with internally in order to implement Strategy 2020.

There is obviously a connection between the change recommendations contained in the SAB’s profile analysis and their specific proposed measures, but not as direct a connection as might have been expected. The SAB emphasised that their profile analysis was not intended to serve as the ‘answers’ for the UiO, but as a tool to help the university with future internal discussions. Did they interpret the UiO’s challenges correctly? Did they pick up the controversial issues or those that it is impossible to change because of the institution’s culture or history? Did they understand the tensions between international expectations for a research university and national educational requirements? The SAB has a humble approach to changes of this type and emphasises that it is for the UiO to undertake an independent evaluation of their proposals—and place priority on measures and improvement processes which the institution really recognises and can achieve something with. They regard the proposed measures as being a basic list from which the UiO can obtain ideas.

Some proposals were put to one side without being discussed thoroughly—e.g. the proposal about consorting study fees. The SAB saw this as being a possible way for increasing study efforts. However, such a change cannot be introduced by a publicly funded university in Norway on its own. Nevertheless, the main reason for not following this advice was that the UiO management had previously clearly expressed their support, based on university policy, for the Norwegian ‘free principle’ and regarded the students as being a valuable part of the academic community—rather than customers or users of

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1. The mandate is reproduced in the working group’s report (page 5).

the University’s services.
In parallel with the SAB’s follow-up, activities at the UiO followed their regular annual cycle of budgetary and activity management. This includes a rolling three-year annual plan which is adopted each year along with the forthcoming year’s budgetary frameworks (June). The table below shows which individual matters are prioritised in these documents or are comprised by their own working processes/governance matters. In order to gain a deeper insight into this please refer to the documents and the information which are available on the SAB project’s website.

It was important that the SAB follow-up should not delay work which had already started, but that it should serve as inspiration and as renewed, reinforced justification for what had already been started. Good internal communications and the coordination of new measures along with what had already been put in motion were therefore essential for the SAB throughout the follow-up period – important both in order to prevent doubling up on work and frustration and in order to ensure coordination of parallel working processes in the run up to board items and decisions.

The table illustrates the fact that the areas have different levels of ‘impact’ - something which can probably be traced back to the extent to which the organisation was prepared for follow-up and action in each individual area. The Education Quality group (G1) had several more recent internal documents in its supporting material and was composed of people with considerable academic enthusiasm for the subject, along with theoretical insight and considerable practical experience. This group took its instructions from the permanent Education Committee, which is composed of i.a. the faculties’ teaching deans, and was able to discuss its thoughts and ideas with them.

The Research Quality group (G2) was identical to the forum for Research Deans – only supplemented by a representative from UiODoc (the Interest organisation for PhDs and Postdocs at the UiO). This group was already involved in several working processes designed to improve research at the UiO and work had been implemented when the SAB’s report was presented. It had many advantages, but was probably weakened by the fact that a modest number of new voices and new ideas joined in their discussions.

The last group – the Interdisciplinarity group (G3) – was composed for the occasion of people associated from various academic environments. Many of them did not previously know each other and it took a while for them to find common ground and an effective way of tackling their assignment. The basis for their work was more fragile than it was for the other two groups, and when it had concluded its work there was no established structure which could capture and continue their ideas, apart from the Department of Academic Administration, which is a purely administrative body. As a natural consequence of this, interdisciplinarity is different to the other two areas as regards follow-up. G3 is seeking a more clearly defined basis for how work can be carried out on interdisciplinary activities at the UiO. This serves to confirm the SAB’s impressions - interdisciplinarity at the UiO leaves much to be desired and entirely different resources are required in order to achieve results.

Having said that, some important clarifications have been made about the UiO’s three priority areas: UiO:LifeSciences, UiO:Energy and UiO:Nordic in 2016, both as regards the prioritisation of academic arrangements and future educational provisions.

The conclusions of the first three working groups (both Phase 1 and Phase 2) have not been collated into a separate report, but are available on the SAB project’s website: http://www.uio.no/forsk/ansatte/arbeidsstotte/prosjekter/strategic-consulting-board/leveranser.html.

Follow-up of the proposals presented by the last working group (G4)

In some areas it was easy for the last working group to get to grips with the problems and challenges forwarded to them by the first three groups. Other challenges appeared to be primarily based on a lack of internal clarification and/or closed working processes and did not suggest organisational changes.

The group supported the need for clearer allocation of responsibilities, better interaction between levels and more transparent working processes, but it thought that it is quite possible to achieve this within the UiO’s current organisational structure.

This working group could see no individual organisational measures which would single-handedly provide an easier way of achieving the objectives and ambitions presented by Strategy 2020 for the University of Oslo. Generally speaking the group saw the same challenges presented by the UiO’s current organisation and working processes as those pointed out by the SAB Panel. G4’s advice is to face these with a combination of measures which could jointly produce the required changes. These measures are reproduced in the report’s summary and fall under three main board categories:

1. Measures for clearer prioritisation of quality and innovative developments at all levels within the organisation
   A) by allocating resources to academic environments and measures
   B) by recruiting scientific personnel
   C) by recruiting managers

2. Measures for closer and more effective interaction between management levels
   A) by establishing better internal interaction structures (both bottom-up and top-down)
   B) by creating more unified, clearer management (regardless of how top manager are recruited and what the consequences of such might be)
   C) by promoting decision-making processes in which important academic choices of direction are discussed in more open fora before decisions are made
SAB – Step by Step 2017

APPENDIX 1

Working process. Timeline. University Board discussions of SAB items, 2014-2016

As a Board item, the SAB's follow-up work has item no. 2013/15825. The Board’s discussions took place during open meetings and all the Board documents are openly available in norwegian on the following website:
http://www.uio.no/om/organisasjon/styret/moter/

For the working processes of the SAB Panel please see:
http://www.uio.no/om/organisasjon/styret/strategic-advisory-board/

There is a separate website for the subsequent SAB follow-up:
http://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/arbeidsstotte/prosjekter/strategic-advisory-board/index.html

on which a number of supporting documents are openly available.

The University Board made its own decision to be the steering group for the SABs follow-up work. The Board's discussions therefore comprised a number of items (see the list).


3. Measures for ensuring economic contingency measures and space to manoeuvre in respect of academic developments where the various roles of the levels are more clearly defined

These measures are explained in the report which also highlights various dilemmas and organisational choices of direction on the basis of the diverse activities which take place at such an eclectic university as the UiO. There are many interesting considerations which need to be weighed up and management insight and strategic understanding are currently required in order to place academic environments in the right place and to exploit both national and international external funding opportunities. Interdisciplinary activities are a special challenge in an academic environment which is based on strict discipline and where the differences between the faculties are so great, as is the case at the UiO. G4’s report also includes an appendix which provides details about the institution’s organisation as at 2016 and a brief history of the institution.

The Board’s concluding decisions

After the round of consultations was completed the University Board discussed the prioritisation of future work assignments at a separate meeting held on 20 June 2016. The Board's decisions are reproduced in their entirety in Appendix 5.

These decisions:

(I) comprise specific and direct follow-up of some of G4’s proposals:
2C Changes in the election regulations
2D Clearer responsibilities in respect of education quality
2E Search Committee for forthcoming rectoral elections

(II) point towards having separate board items which are being worked on and which will appear before the board at a later date:
2B Recruitment policy and career development
2G Platform for management at the UiO
2H Budgetary process

(III) comprise two items which are conditional on the implementation of more comprehensive work at a later stage during the strategic period:
2A Summary of experience acquired from the UiO’s academic prioritisation processes
3 Developing an integrated basis for promoting interdisciplinary cooperation at the UiO (a plan for action or something similar).
APPENDIX 1

Work of the SAB Panel

2012: 6 November Appointment of the SAB Panel
2012–2014 The SAB Panel’s working process - four visits in Oslo
2014: 11 August The SAB’s report, Build a Ladder to the Stars, was forwarded to the UiO.

2014:
10 September SEMINAR The SAB report was presented by Esko Aho to the University Board, the University’s management, the deans, the museum directors and the Library Director. Discussion about the direction of the follow-up work and the process involved
11 September DECISION ITEM 3 Advice from the Strategic Advisory Board. Further follow-up process after the Board seminar held on 10–11 September 2014
21 October DECISION ITEM 3 Strategy 2020 - Strategic Advisory Board (SAB). Prioritisation of areas for improvement and diagram for onward processes

2015:
27 January DECISION ITEM 3 SAB follow-up, 2015–16: Process, connections and draft mandates for three working areas
10 March DISCUSSION ITEM 1 Follow-up of the SAB’s report, 2015–16. Draft mandate for the working area entitled «Conditional academic consequences for the organisational and decision-making structure».
5 May DECISION ITEM 4 Follow-up of the SAB’s report, 2015–16. Approval of the mandate for the working area entitled «Conditional academic consequences for the organisational and decision-making structure».
23 June INFORMATION ITEM 2 Draft measures from the SAB groups and plans for future follow-up
16 September INFORMATION ITEM 2 Follow-up of the Strategic Advisory Board (SAB)’s report
20 October SEMINAR held by Group 4. For the University Board, the University’s management, the deans, the museum directors and the Library Director + key administrative employees for further follow-up after project completion. Presentation of the work conducted to date by Group 4. Discussion and clarification of expectations about the contents of the report

2016:
9 February INFORMATION ITEM 1 Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) Follow-up of proposed measures from the first three SAB groups.
14 March INFORMATION ITEM 3 SAB. Report from Group 4. «A organisational and decision-making structure which supports the UiO’s strategic objectives».
3 May DISCUSSION ITEM 2 SAB. Strategic Advisory Board (SAB): A «hybrid» election process for the rectoral elections at the UiO and a vice-rectorial office for education at the UiO.
20 June DECISION ITEM 3 SAB. Follow-up work Summary of consultations Group 4’s proposed measures. Conclusions and draft decisions (Appendix 5) Status of implemented measures following input from the first three working groups

APPENDIX 2

Process structure and participants

The University Board was the SAB follow-up project’s steering group.

The formal project management consisted of the University Director and the Vice Rector, but all the decisions relating to the preparation of Board items were discussed during the rectoral meetings. The organisations were kept up-to-date during the regular Information, Discussion and Negotiation (IDF) meetings, and other information was provided about the work in other fora as things progressed.

The chairman of the first three groups (G1, G2 and G3) were appointed by the University Director, and they chose their own members for their groups. The groups worked in parallel and in two phases during the spring of 2015. The final phase comprised their recommendations to G4.

The chairman and members of the last group (G4) were appointed by the University Director following consultation with the Board. The organisations were allowed to choose two participants and the UiO’s Senior Health and Safety Representative also attended.

The Project Secretariat comprised the secretaries of the four working groups and key employees from several administrative departments in order to ensure a good flow of information and an easy transition from project organisation to future follow-up by the regular line organisation. The Secretariat was responsible for websites, supporting material, organising meetings and all Board items, etc. Special Advisor Inger Stray Lien was the head of the Project Secretariat.

The internal working groups, G1, G2, G3 and G4

G1 Education Quality
This working group was set up for the occasion, but continued its work after the SAB process as a sub-committee of the Education Committee and it prepared proposals on an education vision for the UiO. In June 2016 this vision was presented to the University Board. Future work has provisionally been postponed.

BERIT IABSET. Dean of the Faculty of Educational Sciences (Chairman) Secretary: Anne Marthe Gibbons, Department of Academic Administration (AF)

Ragnhild H. Hennum, Pro-Rector

Bjørn Stensaker, Professor, Faculty of Educational Sciences (UV)

Monica Bakken, AF (Department of Educational Sciences)/LOS (Management and Support Units)/Faculty Director, Faculty of Humanities (HF)

Knut Merken, Professor, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MN)

Arild Engesdal Ruud, Professor, Faculty of Humanities (HF)

Line Wellersrud, student

Runar Mæland, student

G2 Research Quality
This working group was identical to the Forum for Research Deans which is one of the UiO’s regular committees. Consequently this group still exists, but with a slightly different composition of members. It plays an active role in all of the SAB’s follow-up items which concern its field of operations. With effect from 2016 the group also acquired responsibility for innovation, and at the same time the Vice Rector also became the Vice Rector for research and innovation.
APPENDIX 2

G3 Interdisciplinarity

This working group was set up for the occasion. It was disbanded after it has completed its work. At present there are no regular groups which are involved in interdisciplinarity at the UiO, although rectorial responsibility for such was allocated to the Pro-Rector with effect from 2016.

APPENDIX 3

Draft measures from G1, G2, G3 (Phase 1)

During Phase 1, the first three working groups placed priority on specific draft measures. These measures were intended to be implemented without any organisational changes. Their draft measures are explained and elaborated on in their Phase 1 reports. The reports resulting from Phases 1 and 2 are available on the SAB project’s website:
http://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/arbeidsstotte/prosjekter/strategic-advisory-board/leveranser.html

A short version is reproduced as an Appendix to the 2017-2018 Annual plan SAB follow-up items

15 provisional measures identified by the SAB working groups in their reports are shown below. These proposals will have an impact on the UiO’s annual plans for many years to come. Some of the measures have been included in this year’s plan, while the SAB groups will continue to work on others by making them more specific.

Education Quality (chaired by Berit Karseth, Dean)
• Preparation, incorporation and decisions relating to the UiO’s overall vision for educational activities at the UiO.
• Focus on first year students, including improved introduction arrangements/reception.
• Coordination of existing support resources for educational activities and development of a sharing culture.
• Establishment of available courses (subject and/or programmes) in connection with the UiO’s three interdisciplinary commitment areas.

Research Quality (chaired by Vice-Rector Knut Fægril)
• Development of procedures for more rapid employment in scientific jobs.
• Career development for research fellows and post-doctoral fellows.
• Maintain pressure on EU strategy and UiO:Horizon
• Draw up communication strategy in order to promote high-performance environments.
• Extend the use of search committees in connection with recruitment.
• Make use of bottom-up initiatives for making a more active contribution to international cooperation.

Interdisciplinarity (chaired by Vice-Rector Knut Fægril):
• Establish a clear, strategic platform for developing the three interdisciplinary commitment areas: UiO:Life Sciences, UiO:Energy and Unpacking the Nordic Model as flagships for integrated interdisciplinarity.
• Develop cooperative expertise for integrated interdisciplinarity for students and employees and make use of arenas in order to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and the development of expertise.
• Establish clear, interdisciplinary management responsibilities at all levels, based on organised management development and better expertise for team development.
• Amend rules and frameworks in order to achieve greater flexibility and mobility for participation in interdisciplinary activities for employees and students.
• Establish resource allocation mechanisms which will secure the development of promising, interdisciplinary projects and programmes.
### APPENDIX 4

#### Consultations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response from faculties, museums, level 2 centres and UB (the University Library)</th>
<th>Green = agree, yellow = uncertain, red = disagree, white = no response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency in the region</td>
<td>University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>Jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consultations were directly linked to the main draft proposals submitted by Group 4. All the consultation responses are available on the SAB's website. The Board asks that proposals relating to the composition and mandate of such a committee should be set up for selecting managers at all levels at the UiO (see also Decision Item F).

#### APPENDIX 5

### Board decisions, 20 June 2016

1. The Board would like to thank everyone for their input to Working Group 4’s report (the Underdal Group) during the consultation process.

2. Based on the proposals submitted by Working Group 4 and the input received during the consultation process, the Board has agreed on the following follow-up:

   A. This is based on continuing to pursue quality-based academic priorities at the UiO during the forthcoming years. The Board asks that the experienced acquired from the priority academic processes which have been implemented in various academic environments should be systematically summed up during the course of the remaining strategy period (2020). It is requested that project plans in this respect should be presented during the autumn of 2016 and these should also include academic and administrative opportunities associated with internal interdisciplinary cooperation at the UiO and the academic environments at other institutions (see also Decision Item 3).

   B. The Board has noted that there is broad support for the work which has been commenced in order to draw up a new recruitment policy for the UiO and to help young researchers plan their careers. The Board asks for the views received during the consultation process to be included in these work processes. The Board’s will wait to discuss these measures until the recruitment issue is presented during the autumn of 2016 and the draft career policy for scientific recruitment positions at the UiO is available.

   C. The Board asks the University Director to present amendments to the UiO’s elections regulations which will take into account the proposals submitted by Working Group 4 to remove any obstacles to allowing external candidates to be selected for level 2 and 3 management positions. The Board also asks for the election regulations to be amended so that search committees can be set up for selecting managers at all levels at the UiO (see also Decision Item F).

   D. The Board has noted the high level of support provided by the consultation process for introducing clearer academic management responsibilities in respect of education quality at the UiO and the fact that several respondents believe that vertical interaction at the UiO should also be improved in respect of other primary tasks. The Board supports the establishment of a job as Pro-Rector/Vice Rector for Education which shall become effective in connection with the next election.

   E. The University of Oslo shall still have an elected rector who is also a the chairman of the board.

   F. The Board shall set up a search committee tasked with searching for rectoral candidates and propose candidates so that the electorate are provided with a good selection basis.

   The Board asks that proposals relating to the composition and mandate of such a committee should be presented to the Board’s first meeting during the autumn, along with suggested qualifications for the UiO’s rector in line with the Board’s discussions (see also Decision Item C).

   G. The Board has noted that better processes and arenas for academic discussions are being sought at the UiO, both in order to promote academic creativity and innovation and to set academic priorities with a high degree of collegial influence and legitimacy. Such arenas must also address the UiO’s requirements in respect of developing more interdisciplinary research and education in line with the SAB’s challenge and as sought by many of the respondents during the consultation process. Efforts should also be made to ensure that level 4 (and 5) are engaged at the main faculties. In light of this, the Board will look at the options available for establishing an academy for excellence in education as proposed by SAB working group 1.

The Board believes that the university’s management and managers at various levels should be jointly responsible for establishing an internal, transparent and inclusive meeting structure which will also comprise these types of fora and agendas. The facilities and functions of the deanship meeting must be regarded as being an important aspect of this. The Board assumes that the deanship meeting will serve as a consultative body for the University’s management.
The Board also refers to the fact that internal interaction is an important topic when creating a new management platform at the UiO (ref. draft Annual Plan, 2017-19).

The Board notes that the consultation showed that there is considerable understanding for the need for having greater economic space in which to manoeuvre, especially at the top of the organisation, but that many respondents were wanted to know how this money would be used and they expressed reservations about the fact that academic renewal would primarily be favoured and that bottom-up initiatives and proposals should be sought. At the same time they warned against achieving this by having an internal application bureaucracy. The Board asks the University Director to continue working on how considerations of this type could be incorporated in future annual budgetary work with as little bureaucracy as possible.

3. The Board has also noted that much of the input received during the consultation process called for measures and initiatives designed to promote interdisciplinary cooperation at the UiO. The University Director is therefore requested to put forward an item during the course of the autumn of 2016 to initiate initiatives designed to promote interdisciplinary cooperation at the UiO.

The Board has noted the status reports which were presented about the work being undertaken on measures relating to northern research and education, including the removal of unfortunate obstacles which might prevent this (ref. previous measures adopted in the 2016-18 Annual Plan).

4. The Board has noted the status reports which were presented about the work being undertaken on measures relating to educational quality (Appendix 2) and research quality (Appendix 3).

**APPENDIX 5**

So far just considered in local academic priorities and northern area initiatives.

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**APPENDIX 6**

**SAB proposals for specific improvement measures**

Prepared follow-up February 2017. This list is not complete, but was prepared on a discretionary basis in February 2017. It will also be subjected to amendments during the forthcoming years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G1, G2, G3, G4</th>
<th>Changed by G3 and G4</th>
<th>2016-19</th>
<th>Board item:</th>
<th>1+ Å2016/19</th>
<th>Board decision of 20.06.2016. Items 2G and 2H included in the Board's decision of 20.06.2016.</th>
<th>A local UiO centre will be established in 2017 which further increase the international mobility of its students and academic staff.</th>
<th>Practically bottom-up initiatives (both in research and education) and implement top-down measures to facilitate interdisciplinary education and research.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1. The UiO should develop strong bases on local strengths, with the aim of becoming a major global presence in fields rooted in its specific location.</td>
<td>The offer to develop research programmes at the UiO (ref. draft Annual Plan, 2017-19).</td>
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<td>2. The UiO must work harder to reach out to global talent and make competition on an international scale a top priority in hiring.</td>
<td>The need for the UiO to safeguard researcher-driven initiatives by making it easy for individual researchers (young and experienced) for developing teams/scholars and small teams to begin building up new initiatives, which may not fit into any larger programmatic investments. This is crucial for genuine research creativity. Over time, such small researchers (young and experienced) for developing teams/scholars and small teams to begin building up new initiatives, which may not fit into any larger programmatic investments. This is crucial for genuine research creativity. Over time, such small researchers (young and experienced) for developing teams/scholars and small teams to begin building up new initiatives, which may not fit into any larger programmatic investments. This is crucial for genuine research creativity. Over time, such small researchers (young and experienced) for developing teams/scholars and small teams to begin building up new initiatives, which may not fit into any larger programmatic investments. This is crucial for genuine research creativity. Over time, such small</td>
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8. Interdisciplinary initiatives based on collaborative efforts (as opposed to integrated interdisciplinarity) should not be organised in the same ways as the three milestone initiatives.

G3 and G4: point to the need for clarifying different models

Included naturally in the follow-up of the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 3

Included in the draft recruitment strategy.

9. To further interdisciplinary activities, the UO should facilitate appointments across departmental and faculty boundaries, as in the US system of joint appointments.

G3: Poor cooperation and flexibility in connection with job planning is inhibiting stable personnel resources. In respect of interdisciplinary cooperation.

Not yet followed up. Included in the Board’s decision mentioned above.

G3: See above re. the organisation of ambitious inter-faculty initiatives.

Included naturally in the follow-up of the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 2A

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 2A

Included in the faculties’ work on academic prioritisation.

10. For successful institutionalisation of prioritised interdisciplinary areas, it is necessary to rethink existing governance structures. When creating new University Institutes, certain principles should be followed: they should be independent of existing faculties (i.e. not led by the Rectorate), and obtain resources both from current university funds and from new resources.

G1, G4: Requirement for strategic clarity in interdisciplinary projects.

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 9.

To further interdisciplinary activities, the UiO should facilitate appointments across departmental and faculty boundaries, as in the US system of ‘joint appointments’.

11. When major new interdisciplinary initiatives are considered, the UO should commission an international competitiveness analysis to assess whether the UO has a realistic chance of becoming a world leader in the relevant areas. If these chances turn out to be limited (for instance because of the need for large investments), then the initiative should be dropped. A similar competitiveness analysis should also be undertaken when existing initiatives are evaluated.

G3: Pointed out that obstacles to the development of interdisciplinary activities must be removed and that employees must be able to reside at other faculties.

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 10.

G3: See above re. the organisation of ambitious inter-faculty initiatives.

Included naturally in the follow-up of the Board’s decision mentioned above.

G3: See above re. the organisation of ambitious inter-faculty initiatives.

Included naturally in the follow-up of the Board’s decision mentioned above.

12. Even strong and high-ranked universities are not uniformly excellent in every field. The UO must decide on its priorities and select its pickaxe. The UO should of course be competent in all fields it addresses, but should strive to achieve world-class excellence only in its specialisation.

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 12.

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 12.

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13. The UO should strive to develop a more competitive and performance-oriented culture.

G3: Pointed out that obstacles to the disbursement of interdisciplinary subjects must be removed and that employees must be able to reside at other faculties.

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 13.

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14. The UO should pay more attention to excellence in education (teaching, quality of study programmes).


Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 14.

Several faculties are making major changes to their education programmes.

Taking place to some extent at all faculties.

15. While the UiO’s already deeply engaged in national and international collaboration, integration and interaction with outside resources has not reached the level we think is necessary. The UiO should develop structures for facilitation interaction with local and global partners and stakeholders, in ways that do not simply seek to slot them into its own existing practices and traditions, but also potentially allow the university’s structures and practices to be changed by them.

The UiO should pay more attention to excellence in education (teaching, quality of study programmes).


Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 15.

Several faculties are making major changes to their education programmes.

Taking place to some extent at all faculties.

SAB: General Academic Focus (15 draft measures)

Discussed/presented
by Groups 1, 2, 3, 4

Annual Plan measures/
Board consideration

Other type of activity/follow-up

1. Currently the bulk of student education takes place in relatively isolated disciplinary silos. The rigid structure of study programmes limits interdisciplinary activities and restricts mobility. We encourage more flexibility in interdisciplinary activities and broader programmes. While we are aware of national restrictions, we recommend that the University should consider developing a more general introductory first-year study programme, maybe modelled on the idea of a ‘liberal arts’ style freshman year. Students can then choose their specialisation a little later when they know more about what it is to be a student and what they are interested in.

G1: Pointed out that obstacles to the disbursement of interdisciplinary subjects must be removed and that employees must be able to reside at other faculties.

Included in the Board’s decision of 20.06.2016, Item 1.

Repealed in Board decision of 20.06.2016: the UiO’s frameworks and policy for the development of interdisciplinarity

This is addressed in White Paper no. 16. The UiO’s follow-up must be clarified.

2. Excellence in education (teaching, quality of study programmes) has so far not been given sufficient attention. The UO should consider developing specific excellence programmes for ambitious students (‘honours programmes’, or even an ‘honours college’ option for UiO’s most ambitious).

G1: Å2017/18: Board item relating to absence and study success being drawn up.

No political will to discuss study fees at the UiO.

3. While we understand that the Norwegian cultural climate is hostile to tuition fees, we want to remind the UiO that tuition fees can give students a greater stake in their education. A good system of tuition fees, offset by grants, will not disadvantage underprivileged students. It will also make international collaboration and exchanges easier for the UiO.

G1: Å2017/18: Board item relating to absence and study success being drawn up.

No political will to discuss study fees at the UiO.

4. The UO must develop tools for handling under-performance among students. Under-performance wastes resources and lowers the quality of the UiO’s degrees. The UiO should consider introducing clearly defined performance levels, e.g. saying that a student needs a specific mark to continue on a given programme.


All faculties focus on first-year students. Focus on integration in academic environments and follow-up along the way.

5. In order to prevent drop-outs the UiO should do more to encourage a sense of class or cohort identity among its students, and provide greater social support and encouragement, particularly in the first year. It should consider canceling end of first year (‘exit’) interviews with students to learn what works and what doesn’t. The UiO should also consider developing a policy for part-time students or students who want to study in a life-long-learning perspective.

G1: Å2017/18: Board item relating to absence and study success being drawn up.

All faculties focus on first-year students. Focus on integration in academic environments and follow-up along the way.

6. The UO should develop a more outward-looking culture. External contributions from academics and practitioners (speakers, visits, short-term residencies, etc.) should be integrated into projects and study programmes, not just be considered as special events, disconnected from teaching and research. Regular interaction with such visitors will likely inspire UiO students to aim higher. In some cases, the visitors may assist in identifying valuable post-doctoral opportunities abroad. Such visits can be facilitated through greater collaboration with other institutions and organisations, not least in the Oslo area, but also elsewhere in Norway, and in the Nordic countries.

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Challenges identified in the project entitled Integrated career policy for scientific personnel in respect of sector mobility. Difficult for the UiO’s researchers to find entry into strategic partnerships in the private sector.

7. Teaching and research staff in the strategic focus areas must be well connected internationally and senior scholars and researchers in all areas should be role models for international connectedness and mobility.

2017 February. Board item on exchanges

International mobility – a topic in integrated career policy

Continued on the next page
8. Students should be encouraged to spend time abroad at an early stage in order to develop an international mindset and become “global citizens.” Hence, international mobility must be integrated into the individual programmes of study. Particularly while studying for the BA, students should be encouraged to spend time abroad. The UiO’s dual passport scheme is a recognition earned abroad. Administrative procedures related to mobility should be as simple and non-bureaucratic as possible.

9. The UiO should consider establishing more ambitious forms of international education in fields congruent to the UiO’s culture and expertise, including, but not limited to, joint programmes and degrees. In this respect, strategic partnerships, not least with Nordic partners, should be important for the UiO.

10. The UiO should consider ways to make it easy for UiO students and faculty members to benefit from interaction with many of the prominent practitioners in every field (government, culture, business) who regularly visit Oslo.

11. The UiO should adopt a far more active role in initiating international research collaborations, particularly in relation to its major strategic focus areas, since such collaborations are important for gaining access to talented scholars and researchers.

12. Recruitment policy has to become more outward-looking and more focused on attracting global talent. The UiO should change its recruitment policy on the institutional level and use the way it is, and the UiO’s excellent working conditions as a competitive advantage when it comes to attracting the best scholars and researchers in the world.

13. Individual performance criteria and incentives for teaching, research and learning should be developed for students as well as for faculty members. The UiO would benefit from having greater transparency of performance at all levels of the organisation. The present tools available to the university leadership to reward good performance and to limit or improve under-performance are insufficient.

14. The UiO should consider developing tenure-track assistant professorships, as in the U.S.

15. The UiO should develop mechanisms for venture funding.

16. The UiO must make it easier to move resources from an existing area, project or programme to new areas, in order to be able to implement its focus and prioritisation strategies, and in order to be responsive to changes in the external environment.

17. Young researchers and scholars need more mentoring on broader career perspectives than they are currently getting. There is insufficient support for developing skills in grant applications, which are crucial for their future careers.

18. Funding of maintenance and renewal of buildings – a major challenge

19. The UiO must build up its private fundraising efforts.

20. The UiO must be a national innovation player. It must develop the right conditions, including the right forms of governance, for innovation initiatives.
Strategy 2020 is the UiO’s most important governance document. It is ambitious and contains long-term perspectives. In 2012 the UiO’s Board set up a Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) in order to assess the standing of the UiO from an international perspective. Build a Ladder to the Stars was released in 2014 and contains the SAB’s advice about the improvements which the UiO should now prioritise.

Step by Step provides an insight into how the UiO has continued to work with the advice provided by the SAB Panel. It sums up the process which has been implemented and provides the status as at spring 2017 of the follow-up measures which have been prioritised and implemented by the Board to date. Several of the SAB’s proposals are being considered and are expected to be realised as time goes by.

The English version of Step by Step is a summary of a far more comprehensive Norwegian report which, in addition to a review of the SAB process, presents the faculties’ development processes and improvement measures during the last few years. It also discusses important joint measures and administrative renewal at the UiO and places the work being conducted by the UiO in a national context where major changes are currently taking place in the university and higher education sector.