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Tverrfakultære forskningsområder ved UiO, evaluering og forlengelse til 2015

Bakgrunn

De tverrfakultære forskningsområdenes etablering ble vedtatt av U-styret 25. november 2008 (V-SAK 3, saksnr 2008/20867), mens programplanene ble godkjent 28. april 2009. Vedtaket innebar at syv tverrfakultære forskningsområder skulle motta en årlig bevilgning på 1,5 mill kroner hver fra og med 2009.

Områdene ble evaluert i 2012-2013 (U-styret, V-SAK6, møte 2/2011). De ble evaluert på grunnlag av måloppnåelse i henhold til egne programplaner og det ble lagt vekt på den strategiske betydningen av områdene innad på UiO og utad. Utfallet av evalueringen skulle være avgjørende for spørsmålet om videreføring, nedleggelse og evt etablering av nye tverrfakultære forskningsområder med kjernebevilgning fra styret.

Områdene og deres respektive vertsenhet leverte egevalueringsskjemaer høsten 2012. Et panel bestående av fire fagfeller med erfaring fra lignende strategiske prosesser ved andre nordiske universiteter evaluerte de tverrfakultære forskningsområdene og skrev en rapport (vedlegg 1) på basis av egevalueringsskjemaene samt presentasjoner av og intervjuer med områdene og deres vertsenheter som fant sted ved UiO november 2012. Lederen av panelet, rektor Pam Fredman ved Gøteborgs universitet, la frem rapporten som grunnlag for diskusjon i møte med UiOs ledelse, dekaner, forskningsdekaner og ledere av de tverrfakultære forskningsområdene i mai 2013. På møtet diskuterte så deltagerne tverrfakultært samarbeid, prosess for utvikling av slikt samarbeid og videre planer for UiOs vedtatte tverrfakultære forskningsområder.

Hovedpunkter fra prosess

Proessen med evaluering av de tverrfakultære satsingene og ordningen som sådan, samt påfølgende diskusjoner blant UiOs ledelse, dekaner og lederne for de tverrfakultære områdene har tydeliggjort at det er krevende å få den nåværende ordningen til å virke etter hensikten. Panelet pekte blant annet på behov for sterkere forankring i ledelsen ved de involverte fakultetene, samtidig som områdene har virket for kort tid til at en god evaluering av måloppnåelsen for hver enkelt satsing er mulig. Panelet pekte likevel på en rekke positive og mindre positive trekk for de fleste av områdene.

Proessen har også avdekket at det i noen grad mangler konsensus om hva målene med ordningen faktisk er, og om Strategi2020 fordrer justering av mål. Samtidig er det bred enighet om at UiO har behov for å styrke tverrfaglig utdanning og forskning for å nå målene i Strategi2020. Det gjelder flere av målene under det Grensesprengende universitet, Læringsuniversitetet og det Samfunnsengasjerte universitetet.

Det er på denne bakgrunn behov for en grundigere prosess for å utvikle bedre mekanismer for fremming av tverrfaglig samarbeid innen utdanning og forskning. Det kan innebære mekanismer for å integrere tverrfaglighet i ordinær forskning og utdanning, samt utvikling av instrumenter i både større og mindre skala enn de nåværende forskningsområdene. De nåværende forskningsområdene kan, med visse



forbehold, forlenges i to år og kan danne kjernen i eventuelle nye satsinger fra 2015. Det anbefales at plan for nye tverrfaglige mål og tiltak fremmes for styret i løpet av 2014 slik disse kan lanseres i året for tverrfaglighet, 2015.

De syv områdene med sentral årlig bevilgning var: Demokratiprogrammet, Kulturelle transformasjoner i globaliseringens tidsalder (Kultrans), Kunnskap i skolen (KiS), Levekår i utviklingsland (LeVE), Miljøendringer og bærekraftig energi (MILEN), Molecular Life Science (MLS) og Religion i pluralistiske samfunn (PluRel). MILEN er vedtatt integrert i UiO:Energi som ble opprettet som en langsiktig tverrfaglig og tverrfakultær satsing for forskning, utdanning og innovasjon innen energi av U-styret 19. juni 2012 (V-SAK 11, saksnr 2011/8241). MLS overtok EMBIOs virkeområde og budsjett i tillegg til sin funksjon som tverrfakultært forskningsområde, og MLS sitt områdestyre er oppnevnt fra og med 15. februar 2009 med en virketid på inntil 5 år (saksnr 2009/2447). MLS og UiO:Energi har således utvidet mandat og er etablert som særskilte satsinger av U-styret. Forslag til vedtak under berører for disse satsingene derfor kun sentral tildeling som tverrfakultært forskningsområde (på 1.5 mill per år). Forhold knyttet til virkeperiode og mandat for MLS områdestyre og UiO:Energi styre vil bli omhandlet separat i egne styresaker.

Forslag til vedtak

På basis av evalueringen og etterfølgende diskusjoner blant UiOs sentrale ledelse og enhetsledere anbefales det at styret fatter følgende vedtak:

UiOs 7 tverrfakultære forskningsområder, Demokratiprogrammet, Kulturelle transformasjoner i globaliseringens tidsalder, Kunnskap i skolen, Levekår i utviklingsland, UiO:Energi, Molecular Life Science og Religion i pluralistiske samfunn, videreføres for en periode på 2 år, ut 2015. Videreføringen forutsetter at vertsfakultetet støtter forlengelsen, og at minimum ett annet fakultet/museum/senter forplikter seg til videre deltagelse. Den sentrale tildelingen til områdene skal være på 1.5 mill NOK per år.

Universitetsstyret skal vedta ny plan for mål og tiltak knyttet for fremming av tverrfaglig forskning og utdanning innen utgangen av 2014.

Gunn-Elin Aa. Bjørneboe
Universitetsdirektør

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Vedlegg 1: Evaluation of the Interfaculty Research Areas at University of Oslo

Evaluation of the Interfaculty Research Areas at University of Oslo

1. Background and Terms of Reference

The seven Interfaculty Research Areas (IFRAs) were established by the UiO University Board in November 2008, and their individual plans were approved in April 2009. Each IFRA has received an annual allocation of 1.5 million Norwegian kroner from 2009 for a period of 5 years. MLS^{UiO} deviates somewhat from the other Areas, as it builds on an already established strategic and multi-disciplinary cooperation between the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Dentistry. It is organised directly under the University board, has an annual central allocation of approx. 35 million Norwegian kroner and substantially larger responsibilities as compared to the other Areas. The University Board decided that the IFRAs were to go through an evaluation in 2012, each on the basis of their individual plan.

The objective is to evaluate the UiO IFRAs as an instrument for the UiO to *strengthen its international position as a leading research-intensive university through a close interaction across research, education, communication and innovation (Strategy2020)*. The goal of the Strategy2020 is for UiO to increase its contribution to academic developments internationally, as well as to the task of resolving the challenges facing society today. One of the key objectives embraced in Strategy2020 is *greater interfaculty co-operation*, other key objectives include *increased emphasis on quality in research and teaching; increased internationalisation; improved follow-up of students and employees; better management; and a higher level of interaction between external and self-funded research*.

The evaluation should identify scientific, educational, communication and innovation activities achieved within the IFRAs with a special focus on added value. Evaluation of results should be based on the individual IFRA plans. The evaluations should also assess whether organisational and financial circumstances are suited to promote the IFRAs performance.

2. Interfaculty Research Areas at UiO

The panel brings to the review process the conviction that interdisciplinary research and education must be a major feature of any university that aspires to be world class. Many of the greatest challenges and opportunities that we face cannot be addressed simply within the confines of the classical disciplines. Progress depends on combining the expertise from diverse disciplines, and thus the modern university has to facilitate these cross-disciplinary collaborations if it is to remain at the cutting edge of human knowledge and innovation.

We are therefore delighted to see this tenant clearly and consistently reflected in the university's new strategic plan and in the university's initiative to support and develop interfaculty research areas. The initiative on IFRAs is in line with the UiOs strategy stating that UiO should "take responsibility for helping to resolve global challenges". Moreover, it is also stated that the breadth is strength for the university in that new knowledge need interdisciplinarity and that there "must be a balance between supporting high performing academic units and ensuring development and renewal in other academic units".

There are eight faculties at the UiO. The leadership (host faculty) and participation in the seven IFRAs is presented in the table below (o = host faculty, x = participating faculty). In the case of LEVE, it is hosted by the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM).

	DaIaP	KIS	Kultrans	LEVE	MILEN	MLS	PluRel
HUM	X	X	O				X
LAW	X	X	X	X	X		X
MN		X			X	O	X
MED				X		O	
OD						O	
SOC.SC.	O	X	X	X	O		X
THEOL							O
EDU		O	X				
KHM							X
SUM				O	X		

HUM: Faculty of Humanities; **LAW:** Faculty of Law; **MN:** Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences; **MED:** Faculty of Medicine; **OD:** Faculty of Dentistry; **SOC.SC.:** Faculty of Social Sciences; **THEOL:** Faculty of Theology **EDU:** Faculty of Educational Sciences; **KHM:** Museum of Cultural History; **SUM:** Centre for Development and the Environment

Interdisciplinary endeavors tend to be slower and more cumbersome to start up than projects or programs within already established scientific fields. Ample time is needed for the participating researchers to learn about each other's' perspectives and approaches, to develop common tools to handle interdisciplinarity and to shape efficient meeting places. The panel therefore will express our view that it is premature to make definite statements about the accomplishments and added values of the seven IFRAs after only 2 ½ years of operation.

Moreover, the self-evaluation reports, which are at the foundation of our review, do not provide a sufficient basis for answering all the questions posed to the panel – neither exhaustively nor with great certainty. In particular, the task of evaluating what added values the IFRAs have created or how much increase in external funding and international publications they have accomplished seems to us to be intrinsically difficult to perform in the absence of comparative data specifying the situation of the respective faculties and research teams before the start of the initiatives. In addition the structure at UiO as in most other universities is such that the affiliation for funding and publications is the department.

By the same token, the international/Nordic perspective of the IFRAs is difficult to evaluate. Some IFRAs have established connections with both international and Nordic research groups or organisation but it is not obvious if this would have happened without the IFRAs. The international/Nordic outreach should be promoted in the coming years.

In this situation, our review will focus on advice for the future and suggestions on what is needed for the respective IFRAs to develop and produce added values of the types described in the university's strategic plan. Among those, the added values of strengthening interfaculty collaborations and international cooperation seem particularly important to us.

We also note that, in order to fulfil the strategy of the UiO, the coupling of the IFRAs to innovation should be clarified. It is necessary that innovation include not only products but also processes and services, technology and ideas for the society as a whole.

Obviously one aim with the IFRAs is to interconnect competencies that are situated in different faculties. The competencies under the MLS IFRA would probably have been collaborating also without the IFRA scheme, as the initiative predates the establishment of the IFRAs.

The priorities for the faculties have to be in line with the IFRAs to support researchers to work across disciplines and faculties. In the plans for most of the IFRAs PhD student involvement is crucial. These students have to be enrolled by the faculties (the faculties are the PhD program owners, but the individual PhD student is normally enrolled in the relevant department). The commitment of the faculties is also a prerequisite to support interdisciplinary development of courses/programmes on master/bachelor levels. The UiO strategy states that research, education and innovation should be interconnected. The panel suggests that UiO consider establishing research schools within the areas, as this may make them more competitive and relevant for e.g. EU applications.

With the exception of MLS, which has a large number of PhD students as well as some post docs, the panel was surprised that the other IFRAs did not mention to include post docs – only PhD students¹.

3. Implementation and organisation

There are several different centres at UiO, of which some have similar goals and missions including Centres of Excellence. It is not clear to the panel how these centers are organised in relation to faculties and the IFRAs and the panel raise the concern that there might be unwanted competitions. In the case of SUM this centre also hosts one IFRA and the relation is unclear. MLS is the host of two centres with their own boards.

The organisation of the IFRAs has by and large been built from the bottom up. The panel does however see that if some of the structural processes had been organised top down the IFRAs probably would have met less (administrative) obstacles – e.g. with regard to the PhD education structures. Bottom-up processes are not always conducive to what one wants to achieve, which does not exclude the fact that engagement and interest of researchers is essential.

The panel got a general impression that the line organisation at UiO is rather rigid, and that it is not conducive to activities that require more of a matrix organisation. IFRAs are one example and this was expressed in remarks by participating scholars such as “can’t afford to spend time within IFRAs” as long as this does not count and becomes an extra burden that does not initially pay off. This includes also the educational system where the organisation of teaching hours hampers interdisciplinary courses and programmes.

Leaders of the IFRAs are responsible for strategic development as well as for personnel, and their knowledge of strategy and management at the larger UiO is needed. Yet, the IFRA leaders have not systematically been enrolled in the leadership programmes of UiO.

¹ The members of the evaluation panel are grateful for the opportunity to visit University of Oslo as part of the review process of its seven interfaculty research initiatives. Our visit was carefully arranged by Pro-rector Inga Bostad, rector Ole Petter Ottersen, senior advisor Katinka Grønli, research coordinator Lena Cappelen Endresen, and all the leaders and representatives of the seven IFRAs who presented their work for us.

Financial circumstances: The allocation to the IFRAs of 1, 5 mill. NOK per year is not a large sum. The IFRAs have nevertheless as a whole done significant and impressive research, education and outreach efforts for this sum, and UiO as such has harvested relatively much for little spending. The panel believes that the impact of the IFRAs require more funds either by larger funding from the central UiO level, or in the form of in kind support from the faculties. This could include the possibilities for IFRAs to develop PhD activities and possibly hire post docs.

Currently all IFRAs have their own organisation structure, and some of them have used most of the annual allocation for administration. Adequate administrative support is a key, since interfaculty cooperation often requires special services. Again, consistent leadership – where the university level, the faculty level and the local IFRA level converges on goals and strategies is crucial. The alternative would be to embed the IFRAs in the existing structure of departments and centres.

4. The individual IFRAs

4.1. Cultural Transformations in the Age of Globalisation (Kultrans)

Kultrans investigates processes of change in society – similarity and difference, continuity and disruption, tradition and innovation – within different contexts of communication and opinion and in different cultures. The focus of the research is the local and global effects of globalisation, from both historic and contemporary perspectives.

Kultrans has worked according to its plan and with focus on the five core research areas. Within these areas, Kultrans has developed multidisciplinary projects that would not have come through otherwise. The research training of 7 PhD students has been an important added value. Kultrans has had good success in obtaining external funding – about 20% of what they have applied for. Nevertheless, Kultrans would have liked the program to have developed even more. They wished to have included more PhD students, and that those who were appointed had been even more engaged in the IFRA activities. The IFRA needs better support from the other faculties – and not to be confined to the humanities (although the humanities are much needed for the consolidation process).

The representatives in the steering committee have changed and the panel's concern is that the commitment of the faculties might be weaker.

Kultrans has been able to connect to the 'outside world' on themes that otherwise are hard to communicate. The outreach effort has been successful for some themes, but has not promoted 'Kultrans' as such. Kultrans should improve their outreach and innovation.

The panel's view is that Kultrans is developing well, however, they should be careful not to develop too broad and see to it that there is a visible red thread. For this a distinct plan is required. A more focused mission and a red thread may help to make Kultrans more visible as an IFRA.

The input of the academic director has been large and his role vital in activating and fuelling the Kultrans activities. It is not so clear what kind of tools have been used to 'get to know each other' and develop as an IFRA. To find and develop tools to strengthen the cross-faculty

activities is an important challenge. The panel reckons that it is wise of Kultrans to develop cooperation with the Faculty of Medicine (like they have started with the milk and blood themes), and they should continue to have activities across faculties.

The panel suggests that Kultrans consider to reinforce the interdisciplinary quality of its research training by requiring that the associated PhD students have double supervisors, from two disciplines. Another suggestion is that the faculties give the students merits for joining the research school/focus of Kultrans, e.g. credit points and not just that they achieve important common knowledge.

In sum Kultrans has shown that interdisciplinarity can work and there is a potential for further development.

4.2. Molecular Life Science (MLS)

MLSUiO includes research on biological processes and phenomena, where a central element is the analysis of biomolecules involved. The overall goal of MLSUiO is to promote and to facilitate quality and renewal within the molecular life science research area at the UiO. MLSUiO will promote interdisciplinary and interfaculty research and other research measures that have strategic importance for the scientific area of molecular life science. MLSUiO aims to contribute to the best possible framework necessary for good interfaculty research, optimal use of resources and recruitment to scientific research.

The panel view is that the MLS is a structure that promotes the plan as it provides a place where the centers, the faculties, and the university hospital can meet. The panel also applauds that MLS has embedded the natural sciences in their work on molecular life science.

The panel does however not regard MLS as an interdisciplinary area, it is rather a collaborative network – and as such it is very valuable. The panel also notes that compared to the other IFRAs the different structure and nature of MLS makes comparative evaluation impossible. Evaluation of MLS as such is on the other hand too large a task to tackle given the mandate and time the panel has. This evaluation focusses on points and impressions made during the interview.

To achieve globally recognized and competitive scientific results, molecular life science researchers are very dependent on functional infrastructures and bioinformatics resources. Several expensive high-throughput technologies must be available and MLS has been the key organizer of these resources. These activities are essential since they provide cost-efficient strategies for the university to manage expensive infrastructures. The panel recommends the university to consider stronger funding policies for developing core facilities and other key infrastructures playing a major role in molecular life sciences fields. MLS should also have career development plans for highly trained academics and technical staff members working on the services fields. The initiative taken around developing a common educational and research platform for bioinformatics is important and the panel congratulates MLS for recognizing this important area.

The panel recommends that MLS should coordinate stronger the decision making across the faculties and disciplines within life sciences. The panel suggests that MLS do more earmarking and target areas for multidisciplinary research so that PhD education and post-

doctoral positions could better serve as a tool for strategic choices. Life sciences could benefit from collaboration with humanities and social sciences especially in researcher training. It should also be considered whether MLS will maintain the molecular focus, or if it should broaden its scope to life science as a whole. Finally, MLS would gain on a stronger interaction with the University Hospitals.

MLS did not mention how innovation services and commercialization is handled in their presentation. Collaboration activities with the industry were also lacking. If the network could also take care of awareness related to innovation matters they would be enabling stronger competition in the future Horizon2020.

4.3. Knowledge in Schools (KiS)

Knowledge in Schools - KiS - is a strategic and multi-disciplinary cooperation between five faculties at the University of Oslo; the Faculty of Educational Sciences, the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law. The Department of Public and International Law is the programme partner department at the Faculty of Law. KiS' goals are: To stimulate educational research from multiple perspectives, and to communicate this research to the outside world.

KiS has successfully managed to create a meeting place for the educational community through their development of breakfast meetings.

The steering committee has representatives from involved faculties and in addition a PhD student and the Norwegian association of School leaders, which the panel sees as an advantage. However, based on the self-evaluation and the site visit the panel's impression was that KiS seems to operate mainly within the Faculty of Educational Sciences without sufficient involvement from the other faculties with some exception for the Faculty of Law where the collaboration has resulted in a common externally funded research project. Also within the Faculty of Educational Sciences, there seems to be a concentration to one department. Thus the structure of KiS does not seem to promote interdisciplinary research and innovation. The university therefore should take responsibility to ensure collaboration with the other faculties, in particular the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Again, joint commitment by all three levels, University, faculty and department is required to give the needed support for the IFRA.

It is also the view of the panel that the KiS must not only strengthen the interaction with the other faculties at the university but also with schools. The innovation opportunity here is implementing and testing out new teaching and learning methods in collaboration with committed schools.

KiS' collaboration with Stanford will open new perspectives to improve and develop the area of KiS. The panel suggests that UiO consider that ProTed be a platform for KiS, where KiS could provide and add the international perspectives to ProTed, which has a national focus.

The panels view is that KiS is not developing according to its potential. Measures must be taken to leverage the interfaculty interaction and the interaction between research and innovation/implementation in schools.

4.4. Environmental Change and Sustainable Energy (MILEN)

MILEN is the University of Oslo's interfaculty research area on environmental change and sustainable energy. MILEN's goal is to facilitate interfaculty and interdisciplinary research on environmental change and sustainable energy and to strengthen the University of Oslo's renome as an important contributor to the work in solving important energy and environmental challenges.

The University Board decided in June 2012 to create a new long-term strategic interdisciplinary Energy Initiative: UiO:Energy. The initiative is premised on the University's strategic ambition to help achieve key research policy objectives and meet societal needs for new knowledge in *health care, the environment, sustainable energy* and the effects of *global climate change* on life and health. It will support and enhance cooperation across disciplinary divides and between UiO research teams and international as well as local partners. It is designed as a comprehensive programme, with research at the core but with ambitious plans also for enhancing the University's contributions to education, communication and innovation.

The UiO:Energy is starting in the fall of 2012, and MILEN is to be integrated into the Initiative by the end of 2012. A proposed function for MILEN within the UiO:Energy is to further develop the MILEN platform into an operative coordinating unit for education (from Bachelor to PhD level) and communication (e.g. campus outreach, seminars, workshops, meetings with industry and relevant governmental bodies).

The panel thinks that one of the main achievements of MILEN is that it has managed to develop respect, joint interest and research between the social and the natural scientists within energy research. It will be important for the success of the UiO:Energy, and for the integration process of MILEN into UiO:Energy that this work and achievements will be continued so that MILEN ensure that social science will have a key role in the UiO:Energy. This is both because the capacity within social sciences within the energy sector is unusual and a strength for UiO, and because they are immensely important when addressing the global challenges within the energy and climate domain.

The multidisciplinary PhD courses that MILEN have developed and established are also among MILEN's achievements that the panel recognises. It is however the recommendation of the panel that the future UiO:Energy make sure that research and education is well integrated, and that MILEN's role in UiO:Energy also includes research and not solely education and outreach.

It is important to create an integrated new entity, and not to share labour between research, education and outreach units. It is also important to make one integrated organisational structure, not end up with different boards for the different aspects of UiO:Energy.

4.5. Livelihoods in Developing Countries - health, the environment and poverty (LEVE)

LEVE coordinates collaboration between the Faculty of Social Sciences, Law, and Medicine, and the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) on patterns of poverty and illness resulting from new complex risks associated with globalization. LEVE's research focuses on developing countries and takes a human-rights-based approach.

The initiative to create LEVE emanated from the departments and not on the Faculty level and this is reflected in the steering committee, which does not have representatives from the Faculties. Thus the representatives lack the mandate needed to support the progression and the potential of LEVE. The importance of a commitment on all three levels is apparent.

LEVE has been an incubator for the Lancet Commission for Global Governance for health. It seems that LEVE has done good outreach, and they claim that players outside the university (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), other civil society organisations), have expressed that in LEVE there is finally an address for them at the UiO.

Still, it was difficult for the panel to assess the added value, the things that would not have occurred if the IFRA had not been initialized. As for the other IFRAs publications and external money are affiliated to the departments. Among their achievements are a number of multidisciplinary publications, some of them to be published in 2013 at Cambridge and at Oxford University Press, the organization of student and faculty seminars and five successful applications for external funding. All in all, LEVE express that their mission and plan was to be a catalyst and a network. However, in the view of the panel LEVE has greater potential than what has been achieved so far. They complained on the hardships of being an IFRA organisational structure and of the indicators of success of LEVE, and wanted to raise the problem of quality indicators for excellent interdisciplinary work.

The panel believes that the IFRA leader should be more proactive and interact more with the faculty leadership. For LEVE to develop it is necessary with more commitment from the deans, and the dean at the Faculty of Medicine in particular. Both the university, the faculties and the departments have to support this.

4.6. Democracy as Idea and Practice (DaIaP)

Democracy as Idea and Practice is an interfaculty research programme with participants from several areas of research at The Faculty of Social Sciences, The Faculty of Humanities, The Faculty of Law and other faculties at the University of Oslo. Presently, about 50 researchers at the University of Oslo are associated with the programme. Their research covers a wide range of topics in the field of democracy research, and deals with normative as well as empirical problems.

Democracy research is an important area and in line with the university strategy. The steering committee has representatives from the participating faculties and so has the Advisory board. However, the commitment and support from the faculties and departments is unclear and the number of PhD students that are connected to DaIaP are only two. It is the panel's view that the involvement of students and supervisors is needed to develop the interfaculty approach. However, DaIaP has organized PhD workshops, courses and summer schools and an impressive record in organizing international conferences and seminars.

The panel is unsure as to what extent the DaIaP leadership at the Faculty of Social Sciences ensures the active involvement of the Faculty of the Humanities and the Faculty of Law. The activity during 2012 appears to be declining and the homepage reflects this. It is the panel's view that continuous activities are needed.

One of the self-evaluation questions was the added value of creating the IFRA. Based on the self-evaluation and the site visit it is not clear that there are achievements that would not have been possible without being an IFRA. Many network activities have been supported, but it is not evident that they are "inter- and multi-disciplinary research projects that would otherwise not have been developed" as it is stated in the self-evaluation report. It is also the view of the panel that DaIaP needs more connection with the faculty leadership / deans.

The international collaboration of the IFRA seems to be good, but it was difficult for the panel to understand well the focus and function of the programme, its connection to the deans, and its mandate.

The panel suggests to explore possible coordination between the DaIaP and PluRel, as there are some similar questions raised in the two IFRAs. E.g. when it comes to cultural prerequisites to democracy, PluRel could help providing interesting case studies. PluRel is more nationally oriented and DaIaP more internationally oriented, hence they could complement each other.

4.7. Religion in Pluralist Societies (PluRel)

The aim of PluRel is to develop and communicate knowledge concerning the outcome of religions and worldviews being met and challenged by other value traditions and changing social conditions.

The IFRA PluRel involves more faculties than the other IFRAs. The mandate for the representatives is unclear and the real engagement is in the view of the panel questionable. Again the panel would like to raise the importance of commitments from all levels.

PluRel gave the panel a good impression, and the commitment from the host faculty seemed strong. PluRel seems to be in line with the strategic priorities of the faculty. A strength of PluRel is their potential to contribute to global societal challenges (these were mentioned: Immigration, inclusion including gender issues, dialogue, Human Rights issues, and human dignity issues). It seems, to the panel, like a good idea to discuss these issues with the PluRel board and see whether they can be the focus for the continuation of PluRel.

According to PluRel, the area has reduced fragmentation in religion studies at UiO and has made cooperation between disciplines that traditionally had tensions come together.

It seems that not all the projects under PluRel are as active. Possibly PluRel should focus, and have less projects. The panel also observes a shortage of international perspectives and collaborations and would like to see measures taken to strengthen these aspects.

5. Recommendations and advice for the future

The IFRAAs are all different but there are common features as well as individual aspects. The panel hereby express its general recommendations and advice for the future.

The IFRAAs should help intertwine competencies that otherwise are distributed across the organisation. These Initiatives have initiated and facilitated cross borders interactions, but some of the obstacles that they have met are possibly due to the fact that the identification of the IFRAAs was to a large extent a bottom-up process. The interest and engagement of the individual researchers and research groups is crucial but if the process was more top-down, with clear commitments from all three levels, central University, faculty and department some of these obstacles might have been removed. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to provide support to the IFRAAs from the top down, from the UiO Board, and subsequently commitment from all three levels of authority – central University, faculty and department.

More continuous communication between the faculties / deans and the IFRA leaders is essential. Possibly more of the responsibilities for cross faculty cooperation should be placed at the faculties. But this recommendation also goes to the IFRA leaders, who should actively engage the deans, and involve them in the strategic decisions of the areas. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to promote active interactions of the faculty and IFRA leadership and to ensure the faculties responsibility for cross faculty cooperation

The funding of the IFRAAs (with the exception of MLS), including in kind, conditions, from the UiO, the faculties and departments has not provided optimal conditions. As expressed previously the commitment from all three levels is required to support the development of the IFRAAs. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to ensure that all three levels, the UiO, the faculties and departments take responsibility for resource allocations needed to develop the IFRAAs and to reach their goals

It is important that the foreseen achievements of IFRAAs is clarified not only for evaluations but also for their strategies and plans. This requires instruments to monitor the IFRAAs. Any publications or project funding has departmental affiliations, which is likely to remain for other and evaluation purpose. However, the added value of being connected to IFRAAs needs to be seen. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to clarify the expected achievements to the IFRAAs
- to introduce earmarking of publications and external funding

The number of PhD students associated with IFRAAs is often less than wanted according to the IFRAAs plans. This does not seem to be due to lack of interest but rather to the structure of the IFRAAs and the commitment of faculties and departments, where the responsibility for the PhD enrolment and education lies. To get more EU level funding for researcher education the structure might have to be restructured, and for the development of interdisciplinarity this is

crucial. To fulfil the UiO strategy education on all levels should be connected to the IFRA. The panel also see the engagement of post docs important. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to consider restructuring of research education to facilitate PhD involvement in IFRA as well as in centres
- to promote interdisciplinarity by introducing and support double supervisors and pair of students who study common questions from disciplinary perspectives.
- to support educations on all level to the IFRA by taking responsibility on all three levels to eliminate structural obstacles
- to promote post docs funded by more than one faculty

The panel notes that outreach and innovation in general is not high on the agenda of the IFRA. To succeed in applications to Horizon2020 will be difficult for all the IFRA because innovation is weak in all of them. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to clarify expected achievements concerning outreach and innovation
- to support the IFRA with competence to develop its connection to innovation processes

The leadership of the IFRA is a crucial factor and to take that responsibility competence is required. As far as the panel understand, the IFRA leaders have no interactions with each other. These leaders have a lot to learn from each other and this might involve also leaders of some centres with similar structures. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to start a leadership programme where leaders of the IFRA are able to exchange experiences and best practices and acquire leadership competence

The importance of cross disciplinary and intra faculty research to meet the global challenges has been taken clearly expressed in the strategy of UiO, but to realize this goal is a challenge itself. To achieve this goal all three levels of the university need to take responsibility and promote such development. The panel's recommendation to the UiO

- to consider to appoint a "Dean or pro vice chancellor for research" for the whole university, with a special responsibility for cross disciplinary and intra faculty research.

If UiO aspires to be top class international university and wants to *strengthen its international position as a leading research-intensive university through a close interaction across research, education, communication and innovation*, it has to take interdisciplinary research seriously.