



Goals plan for 2022-25

Department of Public Health



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0. Summary of the Department's most important goals

The Department of Public Health will ensure its position as a world-leading department within public health by promoting wide-arching interdisciplinary research with ambitious, scientific, and societal impact. This will be co-fertilized by an educational agenda covering most aspects of public health at the highest international level. The public health agenda is even more important now than 20 years ago when the Department of Public Health was founded. The societal challenges are growing locally and globally in particular regarding inequality, demographic change, migration, pressure on the environment, digitalisation, and other technological developments with major impact and potential health consequences. With increasing focus on these global challenges and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as drivers of the research agenda and funding opportunities requiring multidisciplinary approaches, the Department is in a unique position with a portfolio of research areas of significant societal importance. Indeed, the interactions between public health, social inequalities and limited planetary resources need to be addressed. The excellent research environment at the Department of Public Health represents disciplines from science, medicine, social science to humanities, and incorporates a public museum platform. Our study programs reflect this interdisciplinary property, and our research engages with key public health aspects including digital health technologies, big data collected and used in the health care sector, health inequality and personalized medicine that are studied both with the perspective of making them useful and studying their social and ethical impact. The Department will through a structured effort aim to further develop high quality research in the areas related to i) digitalization and high data complexity in health and across sectors, ii) public health interventions and innovation, iii) sustainability in global and environmental health, iv) life course analysis, and v) science and technology studies. Moreover, the research, education, and societal impact will increasingly be framed and integrated in relation to SDG interactions and long-term consequences of Corona.

Goal A: Recruit and nurture the best possible talent to fulfil our research, educational, and societal impact agendas

Talent is paramount in order to continue the development of the Department of Public Health as a leading player in the public health arena nationally and internationally. Our vision of wide-arching interdisciplinary research and educational programmes requires continuous commitment to retain,

develop, and recruit scientific, ambitious, and dedicated staff as well as competent technical administrative staff to support these developments.

Goal B Provide a strong framework for research- and evidence-based educational programs with societal relevance

The Department is dedicated to foster a strong and inspiring academic educational environment, in which research permeates all graduate programs benefitting from student participation e.g. in the learning environment and on study boards. The most relevant and new evidence-based teaching methods as well as use of open educational and online resources, will be introduced where appropriate, to improve learning outcomes and use of resources. Moreover, continued dialogue and collaboration with non-university stakeholders will be an important contribution to develop new research agendas and foster student- and staff mobility. The increasing focus on the SDG agenda prompts more integration of the sustainability aspects across the educational palette.

Goal C: Increase and understand societal impact of research at the Department

The increasing societal challenges in particular regarding local and global inequality, demography, migration, environmental strain, humanitarian crises, urbanisation, globalisation, digitalisation, and other technological developments have broad consequences for health. The Department will work on strengthening its contribution to public health in society both nationally and internationally and thereby contribute to the SDGs. Finally, the Department will develop its understanding of societal impact by incorporating external best practices. The understanding will be used actively in the daily life of the Department and as a tool to strike the appropriate balance between knowledge-disseminating and knowledge-producing partnerships for the key research areas.

1. Research. Attracting, developing, and retaining academic talent

In the 2017 evaluation of the Department of Public Health by a panel of prominent public health researchers, the Department was described as ‘world leading’. The continuous commitment to recruit the best minds in public health research is paramount. Equally important is the development and retaining of academic talent within the Department of Public Health. This includes support of diversity and an academic environment, which facilitates close cooperation and learning

opportunities between junior and senior academic staff. Important for this is a professional and obliging technical administrative staff to support scientific ambitions.

Goal 1.1 Recruit and nurture the best possible talent to fulfil our research, educational, and societal impact agendas (UCPH Goal 1.1 and 1.2)

Motivation

The Department of Public Health recognizes that attracting, retaining, and developing brilliant staff at both junior and senior level is critical. The Department will continue recruitment of national and international academic talents in public health at postdoc and assistant professor level to complement existing staff. The Department will actively search for academic talents, and develop recognizable and attractive career development systems to obtain scientific as well as societal impact. Attention to diversity is paramount in this recruitment and talent development. Attracting external funding within prioritized research and teaching areas, including the SGDs, will be an important part of attracting colleagues nationally and internationally.

Success in recruiting, retaining, and developing talent furthermore requires management focus, communication, and facilitation of clear career paths (e.g. tenure track from assistant to associate professorship) as well as possibilities of advancement (e.g. from associate to full professorship). ‘The ingredients’ needed for the development of career paths include development of pedagogical abilities, teaching and supervision experience, and mentorships by senior academic staff of junior academic staff. This also involves development of academic citizenship, funding and publication strategies. Further, to the Department the term ‘clear career paths’ includes an obligation to communicate when no immediate visible or viable career path is available/possible (e.g. from PhD to postdoc level or from postdoc to assistant professor level); and in this regard advice as how to best proceed with employment outside UCPH.

Moreover, commitment to the creation of fruitful learning environments are highly important for junior staff (PhD level, postdoc level and assistant professor level) e.g. journal clubs, cross-sectional seminars, and research group meetings where scientific and pedagogical topics of interest may be discussed, reviewed, or rehearsed. Further, to attract competent technical administrative staff, the Department strives to offer an attractive and engaging working environment with development possibilities for all staff.

Challenges

Our greatest challenge is that budget cuts render external funding necessary for most recruitments and budget uncertainty makes it harder to give firm promises on future career paths. Furthermore, the external funding dedicated to specific research areas can limit the junior researchers' possibility to shape their own research profile.

Activities

We will:

- Recruit junior research talent through internationally oriented recruitment and career systems, including tenure track and by making career possibilities transparent from first interview.
- Ensure knowledge of possible career paths for early career researchers and possibilities for advancements at all levels.
- Develop and support early career networks for postdocs and assistant professors to foster new collaborations as well as keeping researcher that seek careers in e.g. industry associated with the Department.
- Actively invest in an innovative and creative working environment in order to retain and develop academic talents.
- Promote diversity in its broadest sense in the recruitment process and during development of talent.
- Include consideration of contributions to the digital development and SDGs in the recruitment process.

2. Education. Closer ties to research and practice

The Department is responsible for a suite of bachelor and master programs in the field of public health and contributes substantially with public health aspects to the medical and other health related educational programs. The Department also is responsible for clinical courses in General Practice. Furthermore, the Department is accountable for three of the PhD programs at the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences Graduate School. These programs form an inspiring scientific environment for the students and the programs are aimed at initiating a relevant variety of PhD courses and scientific events within each area. The different educational programs aim to further strengthen the links between research and practice as well as integrate SDG aspects. The digital

revolution offers many opportunities in the development of education but is also changing the requirements of skills to be learned in order to be active in health research and care.

Goal 2.1. Provide a strong framework for all academic communities to contribute to make programs research-based, and openly acknowledge excellent teaching (UCPH Goal 2.1)

Motivation

A strong and inspiring academic educational environment must be fostered through strong links between research and education. Research must permeate all degree programs, and students' commitment and active participation must influence and contribute to research. Moreover, research on learning in a digital world is necessary for optimum development.

Challenges

The obligation to teach in Danish on most courses leads to teaching overload of Danish speaking staff and limits the possibilities of international recruitment of senior staff and the attractiveness for potential PhD and postdoc fellows from other countries who also want to develop their teaching skills. The distribution of teaching responsibilities could be more encouraging for adapting digital teaching components. In addition, allocation and monitoring of teaching duties need to be transparent also for junior staff.

Activities

We will

- Increase opportunities for postdocs and PhD students to be involved with research based teaching building upon their own research activities or general fields of interest. For instance encouraging junior staff to organize PhD-courses within their speciality.
- Provide more students with an opportunity to undertake projects for BA, MSc, and Master theses as part of ongoing Department research projects.
- Encourage that the distribution of teaching duties and pedagogical methods are discussed in relevant fora.

Goal 2.2. Strengthen and coordinate the Department's initiatives within educational practice and share new evidence-based teaching methods, including feedback, tutorials etc.

Motivation

The application of the most relevant and new evidence-based teaching methods is needed to provide the best possible learning environment.

Challenges

Continuously implementing new evidence-based teaching methods take up considerable time among course coordinators and teachers involved with the planning of educational activities. A significant number of logistic, pedagogic, and administrative requirements need to be considered in the process of reforming the curricula and introducing new teaching approaches.

Activities

We will

- Nurture learning-from-the-best within the teaching of the Department.
- Encourage mentorship between senior and junior staff in the teaching setting so both can learn from each other.
- Organise seminars and group meetings discussing evidence-based methods involving all section and external inputs.

Goal 2.3. Target, develop, integrate, and disseminate the use of digital teaching methods and educational resources (UCPH Goal 2.3)

Motivation

By systematically making use of open educational resources (OER) and online resources produced by the staff, the Department can improve the learning outcomes of the programs hosted by the Department and optimize the use of resources.

Challenges

The transfer of a course to a blended learning modality takes considerable time and resources. Resources often fail to be allocated to the course responsible to support the development of a blended learning curricular. In addition, a new blended learning course will have to await approval as part of an extensive and time requiring university administrative process. Furthermore, teachers and administrative support staff will require training in the use of the new Absalon (Canvas), Learning Management System (LMS), and the design and integration of e-learning modules.

Activities

We will

- Support initiatives that build in digital and blended learning components in existing courses in order to make course transition more gradual and thus less daunting for the current course leaders. This includes building on lessons learned during the Corona lock-down.

- For all new courses, explore the potential for blended learning as an integrated part of the structure.
- Incentivize course lecturers to transform their “regular” teaching material into long-lasting and widely available digital learning tools with the ultimate goal of making it available for the whole world (and not confined to the University of Copenhagen) either permanently or for a specified time-period when the material is deemed fully updated.

Goal 2.4. Strengthen student opportunities to work with practice-oriented elements and engagement with external stakeholders (UCPH Goal 2.2)

Motivation

The Department of Public Health acknowledge that a close dialog and collaboration with non-university stakeholders are important to improve the employability of the graduates, in Denmark as well as internationally. In addition, such partnerships offer valuable experiences, know-how and complements the university based curricular and foster relevance and impacts of university based research and education as also outlined in Goal 3.1.

Challenges

Developing and managing external partnerships may take up considerable time for a course coordinator and others involved with the planning and administration of educational activities. The inputs need to align with the many logistical, pedagogic, administrative, and legal requirements of the university. The development of case-based material requires considerable investment of time.

Activities

We will

- Develop problem- and case-based educational resources in close partnership with external stakeholders and through “Aftagerpanel”.
- Provide more students with opportunity for internships in the field of public health in partnership with both national and international partners.
- Provide more students with an opportunity to engage in a partnership with external stakeholders as part of the MSc thesis process.

Goal 2.5. Frame and integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals across the educational programs (UCPH Sustainability Agenda)

Motivation

The increasing focus on the SDG agenda in society at large, the private sector and not least from the student body prompts more integration of the sustainability aspects across the educational palette.

Challenges

For some educational programs the full sustainability agenda might be difficult to address at academic level.

Activities

We will

- Develop all study programs and relevant courses with respect to address of SDGs.
- Incentivize course lecturers to develop long-lasting and widely available digital learning tools and make these available for the whole world.

3. Collaboration and societal commitment – nationally and globally

In meeting the complex and dynamic public health agenda and the SDGs, the Department of Public Health is focused on ensuring societal impact of public health research and education through longstanding and diverse partnerships with key stakeholders, both at the national and at the international arena, several of which are mentioned in the above sections. We further seek to involve the public in our work both through public dissemination and engagement with our findings and, when appropriate, in the actual research process. Researchers collaborate closely with the public sector (municipalities, regions, and the clinic at different levels), with NGOs and with private companies (IT, consultancy companies etc.), in Denmark and internationally, in particular in countries in the global south. Intervention studies, nationally and globally, often involving both key societal partners and students alike, are tackling major public health challenges, such as identifying initiatives that are equitable for diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and age groups or exploring ways of reducing negative health effects of environmental factors (including climate change) and urbanisation. The candidates educated at the Department are important conveyors of the research and of competencies gained through the research based education, represent an important avenue of societal impact. We also see it as our task to contribute with perspectives and questions based on our research, which may challenge dominant ideas and assumptions about public health issues in society.

Goal 3.1. Increase societal impact of research at the Department (UCPH Goal 3.1,2,3)

Motivation

Given the complexity and dynamic nature of current and emerging public health challenges as well as the SDGs, it is paramount to ensure research and education that are responsive to societal needs, and to develop research projects in close engagement with public and private stakeholders. This has to be built on a dynamic two-way process that involves our understanding of public interests and concerns as well as the public's understanding of our research.

Identified as “a jewel in the Department's crown” by a 2017 international evaluation, Medical Museion provides the Department with a world-renowned section to help progress this goal (UMAC prize winner, 2019). It's popular and acclaimed exhibitions and events programme is based on close involvement in the Department's research, as well as its own distinctive multi-disciplinary investigations, which provides unique opportunities for innovative stakeholder outreach and visitor engagement. It represents a significant public platform not just for the Public Health Department, but also the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences more generally, and indeed the University at large – for anyone concerned with what it means to be human.

Challenges

Development of co-creative research engaging stakeholders requires substantial investments in skills and networks as well as considerations of academic integrity and freedom. Medical Museion's premises provide an ideal location to engage both stakeholders and the general public. But its historically important premises are in need of substantial renovations. A Carefully worked out and realistic redevelopment project is ready to be funded.

Activities

We will

- Promote research engaging stakeholders, including target groups, in co-creative processes with direct involvement and participation in projects.
- At the global arena, enhance pan-European and Coursera initiatives on promoting the SDGs through the development of new MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), summer schools, and other collaboration within the IARU (International Alliance of Research Universities), LERU (The League of European Research Universities), and 4EU+ networks.
- Expand the strong collaborative partnership with universities and research institutions in East Africa, West Africa, Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Australasia with support from international aid agencies and private foundations.

- Encourage researchers to participate in public debate with perspectives from their research.
- Develop plans for modernization of the buildings at Medical Museion along with plans for better use of Medical Museion broadly by SUND.

Goal 3.2. Increase involvement in joint projects with non-university entities

Motivation

The research of the Department is in high demand from non-university entities, i.e. companies, municipalities, Regions, UN-city/WHO-Europe etc. This is driven by diverse forces such as digitalization and increase data awareness, a burden of disease that is moving toward multi-morbidity as well as by change demographics.

Challenges

Increased collaboration with non-university entities also entails the risk of jeopardizing our research integrity and independence; both actual restrictions and the perception of such can pose a risk to the Department. Internally not all of our researchers are fully aware of the potentials for interesting and impactful research as well as novel funding sources such collaborations could bring.

Activities

- Promote the use of industrial PhDs and postdocs.
- Develop networks of previous postdocs and other researchers now in non-university entities for partnerships with the Department.
- Develop collaborations with industry and regulatory authorities with regard to epidemiological methods and novel modalities for drug development.

Goal 3.3. Understand societal impact of research at the Department (UCPH Goal 3.3)

Motivation

Societal challenges are increasing especially in regard to inequality, demography, migration, environment, digitalisation, and other technological developments with large importance and consequences for health. Thus, for public health research it is pivotal to understand and document societal impact of research not only to funding bodies but also to society at large.

Challenges

It is difficult to assess societal impact especially if there is a long way from the research to impact and value chains are not clear.

Activities

We will

- Develop means for achieving and assessing societal impact. The Department will support assessment of societal impact of the Department's research.
- Showcase studies of good impact-oriented practices conducted in the Department to illustrate how we achieve societal impact.
- Ensure the documentation of societal impact is used actively in funding applications coming from the Department.

4. One unified and focused university. Organisation, employees, and physical framework

In order for the Department of Public Health to continue its development as a world-leading research and educational institution, all employees must work to ensure an efficient organisation that focuses on the core activities as well as to search for and be open to new agendas for research and education. This would enable the Department, both nationally and internationally, to appear as a strong collaboration partner. Management at all levels must be clear and professional to improve well-being at work, and to ensure that the Department develops the human skills and talents of all employee groups, uses its resources as effectively as possible, and operates with a shared mission. The cross-sectional collaboration between the research groups and between course leaders ensures the Department's coherence and an administration to further this is supported by management with a focus on dialog with the staff in day-to-day operation. Furthermore, the Department must take full advantage of being part of a high-level comprehensive University allowing involvement of all research and educational areas and disciplines to act cohesively in addressing the grand challenges.

Goal 4.1. An inclusive work culture with an emphasis on diversity (UCPH Goal 4.1.1,2,4)

Motivation

The Department of Public Health shares and works according to the common values rooted in both UCPH and the surrounding Danish culture, such as trust, equality, collaboration, and balance between work and family life. We must nurture our ambitious and dedicated staff and students, and be recognised for supporting an inclusive culture that welcomes and appreciates diversity in a broad

sense. It is the management's responsibility to provide the right frameworks that will support co-involvement and wellbeing, which are crucial to the creative process.

Challenges

Nevertheless, the cross-pressures of an ambitious academic environment with increasing demands for career development, external financing, research-aligned educations, and societal impact as well as administrative task are recognised challenges. Indeed, the Workplace Assessment in 2019 points to issues with work-life balance in particular among senior academic staff, career uncertainty especially for junior academic staff, and increasing administrative task burden and occasional harassment incidents that need to be further addressed.

Activities

We will:

- Ensure high quality in management at all levels. All research group leaders and others with managerial responsibilities are strongly encouraged to take formal courses in leadership available from the HR centres at the University.
- Ensure that management tasks are clearly outlined in, e.g., manager performance and development reviews, and that leaders are well-equipped to provide respectful and constructive feedback at performance and development reviews.
- Ensure that all staff, and leaders in particular, engage in recruitment and career-development processes that are unbiased and support diversity in its broadest sense.
- Ensure co-involvement of staff and students through the collegial bodies, School of Public Health, joint Research Leaders, and academic forums.
- Ensure an open and on-going dialogue regarding work-life balance and expectations, and provide assistance in how to achieve better balance.
- Ensure well-being at work by acting on job strains, such as inappropriate task allocations, and by promoting a respectful work culture that includes clear procedures for when and how to act on incidents of harassment and discrimination.
- Ensure that growing administrative workloads, including tasks from an increasing number of external and temporary projects, is compensated (mainly through external funding).

Goal 4.2. A cohesive organisation (UCPH Goal 4.2.1,2,3,4)

Motivation

As an organisation, the Department must endorse the vision of high-quality research and education with staff and students collaborating with both their academic colleagues and with society at large. We must break down barriers that may prevent collaboration, either internally or externally. The Department must provide services at the highest professional level with greater transparency in our processes and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities. We will continue the review of administrative areas to ensure that we have an efficient organisation that constantly strives to allocate as many resources as possible to core activities. Finally, we need to ensure that the buildings and associated organisations supports the ambitious research and education goals.

Challenges

The sectional organisation of the Department might limit interdisciplinary research. The limited resources for administrative support place heavy burdens on the administrative staff as well as the scientific staff; reduced time for core activities jeopardises both motivation and work-life balance. Likewise, the Corona-experience and the Campusplan discussions have challenged long-held beliefs on how we best use our buildings.

Activities

We will:

- Enhance staff mobility to support increased interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Work for enhanced external funding to support technical and administrative staff.
- Encourage trans-section research groups, internal “sabbaticals” to other sections, as well as inviting broader to section-research meetings.
- Ensure a Department-wide discussion on how our building mass best support close collaboration between sections as well as between staff and students.

Goal 4.3. Digital processes promoting research and education (UCPH Goal 4.3.1,2)

Motivation

Joint processes, systems and infrastructure must support research and education. Proper data management and procedures are paramount for research, especially with respect to sensitive data.

Challenges

Implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – together with increased public awareness regarding data privacy – means that there are now potentially severe consequences of inadequate data-handling procedures. At the same time, ‘big data’ (not least in types of data considered) and computationally intensive methods are increasing the hardware requirements.

Activities

We will:

- Actively support and drive KU-wide initiatives on streamlining data-safety, GDPR-compliance and the associated technical solutions.
- Support continuity and professional digital support for research and education, and work to provide sufficient University support, including high-performance computing.
- Set aside time and money for staff and students to develop the necessary digital skills.

Goal 4.4 Department of Public Health in one unified University (UCPH Goal 4)

Motivation.

The Department recognizes from its own multidisciplinary that the grand public health and other world challenges require involvement from all research and educational areas. The Department is fortunate being part of the high-level comprehensive UCPH and proud to be initiator or partner in a wide range of its cross-faculties initiatives already, such as School of Global Health, Center for Healthy Aging, Center for Health Economics and Policy, Center for Regulatory Sciences, Sustainability Science Center, Copenhagen Center for Disaster Research.

Challenges.

So far structural barriers have limited possibilities of developing cross-faculty education.

Activities

We will

- Further develop our commitment to cross-faculties initiatives in particular in relation to SDGs, digitalisation and internationalisation in relation to education as well as research .
- Develop cross-faculties initiatives in relation to outreach – in particular involving Medical Museion.
- Develop our climate and sustainability agenda as an organisation in concert with the UCPH vision.

5. Process and employee involvement

The Department Management Team and research group leaders finalized the Goal and Action Plan based on input from the assistant professor network at the Department. Furthermore, the School of Public Health (Educational Council) and the Local Collaboration Committee has been involved through continuous discussions. The updating of the goal plans have been prepared by the management based on discussions in the local collaboration committee, the research leaders' forum and with comments from the educational council.

The Department actively supports interdisciplinary collaboration across the sections through e.g. recruitment of cross-linking scientific staff and promotion of cross-cutting research themes especially i) digitalization and high data complexity in health and across sectors, ii) public health interventions and innovation, iii) sustainability in global and environmental health, iv) life course analysis and v) science and technology studies. Moreover, this is facilitated through on-going seminars, workshop and other forms of interactions involving all staff and in the research group leaders' forum (around 40 scholars) with special emphasis on the annual Department conference. Interdisciplinary and cross-sectional educational collaboration is promoted through the suite of public health educational programs led by the Department and the contributions to public health subjects in a range of programs at the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences. This is facilitated through the School of Public Health (Educational Council) with student representation, whereas cross-faculty collaborations is facilitated through e.g. the School of Global Health, specific educational collaboration agreements with other faculties, the Sustainability Science Centre and EIT Health initiatives. In particular, the five heads of studies and many members of study boards have continuing dialogue with students.