

# Strategy 2017–2019

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*Department of Psychology (PSI), University of Oslo (UiO)*

This document describes the objectives and strategy of the Department of Psychology (PSI) for the period 2017–2019. The strategy will serve as a guide for decisions, choices and prioritizations at the departmental, programme council and section level. The document will first give a brief presentation of the current status, followed by a description of PSI's core values and objectives. Finally, we will describe the key instruments that we intend to employ to realize our objectives. The strategy is based on Strategy2020 – UiO's strategy to achieve the status of a leading international university – as well as on Strategy2020 at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

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## Status as of October 2016

PSI has approximately 170 full-time equivalents (FTEs), based on 75 permanent academic staff, 50 research fellows, 25 postdoctoral fellows and 20 administrative positions. We also have about 20 employees in additional positions. There has been steady growth in the number of FTEs from 130 in 2008. We have an international staff with colleagues from 15 different countries.

As of 2016, a new organizational model has been introduced at PSI. The Board (consisting of elected representatives of staff and students in addition to the head of department and the deputy head of department) is the Department's highest governing body. In the new model, there is one programme council for all four programmes of study. PSI is managed by an appointed head of department, a designated head of programme (who chairs the programme council), a designated head of research with responsibility for PSI's research activities, four heads of sections, the head of the Centre for Lifespan Changes in Brain and Cognition (LCBC) and an administrative head of office. The staff are organized in four sections (Clinical psychology, Cognitive and clinical neuroscience, Health, development and personality psychology, and Methods, organizational, cultural and social psychology) in addition to LCBC and the Administrative Department.

PSI's revenues have grown from approximately NOK 105 million in 2008 to NOK 173 million in 2015 and roughly NOK 190 million in 2016. The reason for this increase is that PSI has now more places on programmes of study and has received more external funding. PSI's revenues are mainly derived from four sources: a) the basic grant (linked to internal recruitment positions, internal rental income, earmarked funds and planned revenues), b) a results-based component (credit-related revenues), PhD candidates, publication points etc.), c) internal UiO initiatives (small research projects, leading research, gender equality initiatives and world-leading group), and d) external funding (RCN, EU, and the like).

In 2015, PSI's researchers produced 269 academic publications, which accounted for 208 publication points. This constituted 62% of the Faculty of Social Sciences' publications, and 29% of the publication points. In 2015, the number of publication points per FTEs in teaching, research and communication stood at 1.6, which is more or less on a par with the Faculty of Social Sciences otherwise. There is potential to increase academic production, even though we must keep in mind when considering the number of publication points per researcher that almost all academic publications are in the form of articles, and there is a substantial degree of collaboration with external partners. About 23% of PSI staff publications are at level 2 (2015), and this share can potentially be increased. There are approximately 135 students on the PhD programme, and almost 25 PhD degrees are awarded annually, constituting about 50% of the total number at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

A number of researchers and groups at PSI receive external funding or are partners in externally-funded projects (RCN, ERC, Horizon 2020 etc.) and the like. PSI is a partner in a current SFF project (NORMENT) and in two projects that have qualified for the final round in 2016 (music psychology/informatics, and a cooperation with the Faculty of Social Sciences). Externally-funded research constitutes a total of about NOK 30 million annually. In 2015, 17% of PSI's revenues were derived from external funding. This share can potentially be increased.

In recent years, PSI has put in place an impressive research infrastructure. This includes a variety of laboratories related to cognitive neuroscience, child research, social psychology, clinical medicine, infrastructure for the storage and analysis of data, as well as investment in MRI machines in cooperation with Oslo University Hospital. Funding has been acquired partly by external awards (by application) of infrastructure funding from UiO and by prioritized use of own resources. A resource group of research assistants who help to run the laboratories has also been created.

PSI has four programmes of study: a one-year study programme (60 credits, 100 places, throughput 38 credits per year per student), the bachelor's degree programme (180 credits, 170 places, throughput 43 credits per year per student), the master's degree programme (120

credits, 60 places, throughput 56 credit per year per student), as well as programmes of professional study (360 credits, 123 places, throughput 52 credits per year per student). The quality of admission is high for all programmes of study, and extremely high in the programme of professional study. The throughput measured in credits/per year per student is acceptable, but there is potential for improvement, particularly in the BA programme and one-year course of study.

The teaching incorporates varied forms of learning, even though traditional lectures and seminars dominate. There is potential for greater variation in the forms of teaching. The work duty account also indicates that some academic employees have an overly demanding teaching burden. The Student Barometer for 2015 reveals that compared with other educational institutions there is a potential for improvement in the students' perception of study quality on all our programmes of study, particularly on the MA and BA degree courses.

PSI participates in several of UiO's interdisciplinary initiatives. The Department plays an important role in C-REX (Centre for Research on Extremism), enjoys a degree of participation in UiO:Nordic and has a more modest role in UiO:Energy. We have been actively involved in the start-up of UiO-Life Science, and expect to play a key role in this respect. PSI has advertised a joint position as associate professor in music psychology in cooperation with the Department of Musicology (Faculty of Humanities). The Department has received funding for an EU-funded Joint Master's programme related to psychology and global mobility, and inclusion and diversity, in collaboration with several other European universities.

PSI has extensive dissemination activities, with many write-ups in the media and many followers on social media. The Department has no, or at best very limited activities in respect of innovation and commercialization of research results. Nor is innovation (for example service innovation) a common topic in the teaching, even though it may feature in individual cases.

An overall assessment indicates that PSI has highly sought-after programmes of study, high admission quality and acceptable throughput. In the course of 2016, all programmes of study will be evaluated (internally and externally) and any necessary revision will be carried out in 2017. We have a relatively high level of research activity, even though this varies across subject groups and academic staff. Both production of publication points and the share of level 2 publications can be expanded. The degree of external funding is acceptable but can be increased. PSI has a robust economy and an efficient and competent administration. A new governing organizational model has recently been introduced. Overall, it is a strong and well-equipped organization that is tasked with formulating objectives and strategies for 2017–2019.

The point of departure for future progress and development is good. However, there is a constant need to stay up-to-date in relation to changes in the field and in the community we serve. Some of the development features we can mention are as follows:

- A fast-paced growth in knowledge in the psychology discipline
- A substantial increase in knowledge and technological development in genetics and neuroscience, which will assume greater importance for more and more areas of psychology
- A shift towards the more frequent inclusion of interdisciplinary cooperation and diversity regarding types of data and data sources
- A sharp rise in the degree of international cooperation and competition in research
- Increased requirements for more external funding and international collaboration
- A probable increase in the social burden posed by mental problems and mental illness (and drug addiction) in the coming years
- Continued investments to strengthen mental health care
- A strong focus on establishing psychologists in the municipalities
- An increase in the focus on prevention and early intervention

- Increasing unemployment means that it is vital to equip candidates with qualifications that lead to clear career paths
- Demographic changes: sharp growth in the ageing population and challenges in connection with migration, refugees and integration
- Greater emphasis on relevant practice in all courses of professional study, integration of theory and practice, as well as training in cooperation with other professions/occupational groups

### **Core values**

Research and teaching at PSI shall be based on the values and objectives described in UiO:Strategy2020 and Strategy2020 at the Faculty of Social Sciences. PSI will promote a higher level of quality, assume societal responsibility and work to develop solidarity in society and a sustainable environment. PSI will reflect both academic breadth and cutting-edge research, placing people first. Our teaching activities must have social relevance and offer a good learning environment to our students. Our research activities must be characterized by openness, academic freedom, commitment, creativity and credibility. Research as well as teaching, publication and dissemination of research results are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and national and international guidelines and agreements. Good research ethics are the responsibility of the individual researcher and project leader as well as part of the Department's system responsibility. Our highly qualified staff with their strong professional commitment are of central importance to our activities.

### **Main objectives**

PSI will be a key contributor to the research front in psychology.

PSI will develop, administer and disseminate knowledge that may benefit society.

PSI will offer programmes of study of outstanding quality in psychology, and provide high-level, work-relevant competence for PhD candidates.

## Education

### Sub-objectives

PSI will educate psychologists in advanced theoretical understanding, research methodology skills, empirical knowledge and practical skills that are suited for present and future needs for generalists in mental health.

Master's degree candidates will be educated to a high level of theoretical, empirical and methodological competence, with a profile that clarifies their competence and relevance for working life, both nationally and internationally.

The BA degree will qualify students for a master's degree course of study, as well as providing a general introduction to psychology that may be useful for those employed in administration, the business sector, teaching, the health sector and the like.

The one-year programme provides an introduction to understanding basic psychological concepts relevant to working life.

The doctoral degree programme will educate highly qualified researchers in psychology. The projects in the programme focus on various aspects of human behaviour and interaction, from clinical research questions via neuroscience to health and cultural psychology. The programme will offer high-quality courses relevant to the individual projects. It is vital to provide training in methodology that is applicable to the various arenas in which PhD candidates can find employment at the end of their PhD studies.

### Performance goals

PSI will offer the most attractive and best evaluated programmes of study in psychology in Norway. Throughput will be increased and the drop-out rate will be reduced to below 50% for BA programmes, and under 10% for the MA and programmes of professional study.

The programme of professional study and the MA degree courses of study will point to clear career options on completion of the course of education.

PSI will follow up external evaluations of programmes of study, and will put in place a system ensuring continuous dialogue with future employers of psychologists and BA/MA candidates.

In 2016, the PhD programme will be evaluated. A revised programme will be completed in 2017. The orientation and portfolio of courses of study will be based on the evaluation. Our aim is to internationalize PhD education both linguistically and by using the EU and RCN funding schemes.

The proportion of thematic and/or pedagogical innovative teaching should increase, a system of boosting the pedagogical competence of both individual employees and research groups should be established, as well as a rewards system for teaching at a particularly high academic and pedagogical level.

Stable, binding and good agreements will be entered into with potential employers that will secure appropriate practice placements for both students on courses of professional study and master's degree students.

PSI will change programmes of study to support the government's greater focus on preventive and health-promoting initiatives, particularly in the municipal sector.

During the strategy period, an assessment will be carried out on whether, based on our research environment, there is justification for applying for the establishment of a Centre of Excellence.

## Strategies

### *Quality of teaching will be secured as follows:*

- The Programme Council is responsible for the quality of our programmes, and will play an active role in following up our strategy and quality assurance work.
- The sections are responsible for planning and implementing our educational activities.
- Resources for implementing educational activities will mainly be distributed at section level.

- Strategic funding will be available at departmental level to develop and promote educational activities that have a particularly high level of quality and/or are particularly innovative.
- Quality must be prioritized ahead of quantity in teaching.
- Our programmes of study must be research-driven. While teaching at a lower level may encompass dissemination of the best national and international research, teaching at higher levels must be linked to the lecturer's own research.
- Active forms of learning must form part of all teaching. Students are expected to demonstrate a high degree of responsibility for their own learning, attendance and active participation.
- Students must receive training in critical thinking, subject-related reflection, insight into the changing nature of scientific truths and awareness of psychology's role as a contributor to policy formulation in society via continuous feedback and dialogue.
- The forms of evaluation will reflect the learning outcomes that the individual course and the programme as a whole shall provide.
- When recruiting for academic positions, the Department's need for teaching competence must be part of the assessment. In respect of positions related to clinical skills training, it is also vital that the researcher has thorough knowledge of treatment and diagnostics within the applicable legal framework. We should aim to recruit the best available competence, nationally and internationally.
- Provision must be made for enhanced internationalization, including long-term partnership agreements with foreign educational institutions for teaching and student exchange.
- Relevant practical training must begin at an early stage and must be an integral part of programmes of professional study and master's degree programmes.
- PSI will promote an inclusive learning environment that supports the subject-related content of the programmes of study.
- PSI will have systems for continuous improvement of programmes of study and learning environments based on wide-ranging feedback from students, teachers,

former students, employers and other educational institutions nationally and internationally.

*Effective teaching will be ensured by:*

- adapting the scope and organization of teaching so that it can mainly be carried out using internal teaching resources. External resources will be brought in when there is a need for special expertise in areas where we have no coverage.
- employing modern technology in teaching, implementing teaching and evaluation forms that have proven to be effective, and proactively exploring new forms of teaching particularly suited to our subject.
- adapting awards systems, work duty accounts, structure and organization so that we achieve a flexible, robust and coordinated utilization of teaching and administrative resources that at the same time ensures holistic programmes of high quality.
- designing programmes of study so that students perceive them to be academically challenging and work-intensive.
- analyzing the mechanisms underlying the drop-out rate, and targeting efforts to eliminate the causes when possible and desirable to do so.

*Relevance to working life shall be ensured by:*

- prioritizing academic breadth rather than specialization in respect of both theory and practice within the framework of each study programme in our basic programmes of study.
- putting in place practice-based teaching in cooperation with the field of practice throughout the entire course of study, so that students acquire high ethical standards and skills that reflect both the growth of knowledge in the subject and societal needs and organization.
- incorporating mechanisms to ensure flexibility within all programmes, leaving room for necessary adaptation to changing societal needs.
- providing teaching on societal challenges in all four programmes of study at the systems level as well as the individual level.

## Research

### Sub-objectives

PSI shall have a number of research groups that are world-leading in their field.

Academic breadth will be exploited through research across sections, in interdisciplinary cooperation, with collaboration across departments and faculties, and with external actors.

Our international commitments must be increased in respect of research work, funding and exchange of researchers.

PSI shall have a research structure that creates predictability and ensures free research irrespective of general economic conditions.

Our researchers must be allowed sufficient time for their research. Teaching outside the ordinary framework should not supplant time for research.

There must be strong research groups in all sections.

### Performance goals

PSI will gradually increase the degree of external funding to up to 25% of PSI's total budget.

PSI will increase the number of publications in the strategy period by 10%.

During the strategy period, all sections shall have applied for funding for at least ten externally-funded research projects (EU, RCN, the Norwegian Extra Foundation for Health and Rehabilitation, the Regional Health Trusts, the Norwegian Cancer Society, and the like).

PSI shall have at least five research groups that have submitted applications to take part in larger initiatives (for example Oslo Life Science). PSI researchers shall act as the coordinator for at least two of these, and be a partner in at least five Horizon 2020 applications.

At least three researchers shall have been granted ERC funding during the strategy period.

PSI shall be a partner in SFF projects.

Several PSI researchers will have had a period of study abroad and several external researchers will have spent a longer period of study at PSI during the strategy period.

PSI will call attention to all research activity at the Department during the strategy period. Our aim is that all sections should hold at least one seminar annually to present their research activities.

### Strategies

#### *Quality shall be assured as follows:*

PSI will prioritize research of high quality. This is the prime consideration, and quality will be prioritized over quantity.

We will conduct an ongoing discussion of how we define quality in the various disciplines within the field of psychology.

Research groups that are seeking to advance the research front or are in the process of doing so will be prioritized through the use of strategic funding.

Internal research resources will be governed strategically both at the departmental and section level.

Through the Research Ethics Committee, PSI will be a driving force in ensuring that academic staff and students have access to information about research ethics principles, and that they comply with these.

#### *Academic breadth will be ensured as follows:*

We will develop a culture for recognition and understanding of academic breadth at the Department.

PSI will dedicate its efforts to promoting the unimpeded development of high competence to ensure the best results going forward.

PSI will build up new, strong research groups.

We will establish a separate programme for research assistance and infrastructure that ensures that the Department's activities are not overly vulnerable to fluctuations in funding.

We will offer a modern technical and IT infrastructure.

The allocation of an annual lump sum to all researchers will mean that they receive backing for their research.

*Cooperation shall be secured as follows:*

The Department and sections will be encouraged to establish strong research groups that cooperate within and across sections, as well as with external partners.

Interdisciplinary activities and temporary initiatives aimed at cooperation will be prioritized.

We will put in place a research infrastructure that promotes collaboration across research groups and sections.

*Recruitment and competence will be secured as follows:*

When recruiting for academic positions, we will attach considerable weight to the Department's needs for research competence, and aim to recruit the best available competence, nationally and internationally.

In respect of positions funded over the basic budget, the share of postdoctoral fellows will be increased, whereas the share of doctoral research fellows will be reduced.

Double competence positions will be used strategically in order to achieve the Department's research goals.

A career planning system for young researchers will be established.

We will develop a culture and a system for exchanging experiences (examples of good applications, mini-seminars etc.). We must be better equipped to learn more from each other.

*Internationalization will be secured as follows:*

We will promote international cooperation through strategic funding and external applications.

We will develop a local grant scheme to support stays abroad for those on research sabbaticals.

PSI will develop a guest lecturer programme to make visits to PSI more attractive.

*Parameters and resources will be secured as follows:*

Departmental leadership will make active efforts to ensure that our researchers are able to apply for funding outside the Department. This entails efforts to place PSI researchers on programme boards, committees, councils etc. where parameters are set and funding is allocated, and also as evaluators of research applications.

All leaders will have greater competence in external funding.

We will enhance our administrative support to those applying for external funding and international cooperation.

## **Research communication**

In December 2015, the Board of PSI adopted a separate action plan for communication. Please refer to [this](#) (pdf in Norwegian).

## **Innovation**

During the strategy period, PSI will report on whether there are any projects, methods, knowledge or specific teaching that represent innovation and constitute initiatives that are in great demand by society, including outside the university, possibly in connection with selling courses, seminars and project cooperation.

PSI will consider improving the integration of knowledge about innovation (including service innovation) in educational studies.

## **Working environment**

PSI shall have a good physical and psychosocial working environment.

The working environment will reflect the increasing number of international employees in our department.

Decisions and processes will be transparent and of the highest ethical standards.