



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

GOVERNING DOCUMENT SLU ua 2020.1.1.-3420

Subject area: Visions and strategies

Document type: Objectives and strategy
Decision-maker: SLU Board
Organisational unit: Division of Planning
Reference: Boel Åström

Date of decision: 24/9/2020
Effective as of: 1/1/2021
Valid until: 31/12/2025
To be updated by: 31/12/2025

Document(s) repealed:

Annexe to: Decision by the SLU Board, 24 September 2020

SLU's Strategy 2021–2025

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Vision, mission statement and core values	4
3. Priority focus areas for the 2021–2025 period.....	5
3.1. SLU's next steps for sustainable development.....	6
3.2 SLU in the digital society.....	8
3.3 One SLU	10
3.4 Follow-up of SLU's strategy	13

Appendices:

Strategies for SLU's faculties

1. Introduction

SLU's strategy is intended to act as an internal governing document. It provides general guidance for the planning and prioritisation of activities within the university as a whole.

The mission of SLU is to conduct research and education at the doctoral, second-cycle, and first-cycle levels in the fields of agriculture and horticulture, landscape planning, food production, nature conservation, forestry and wood-based raw materials processing, fishery and aquaculture, and veterinary medicine and livestock husbandry. In addition, SLU conducts environmental monitoring and assessment. (SFS 1993:221)

In a changing world that demands solutions to complex challenges, SLU wishes to strengthen its role and act as a driving force for sustainable development. Our research, education and environmental monitoring and assessment have the potential to surpass their current contributions to sustainable production systems, innovations and increased knowledge that promote the transition to a sustainable society. SLU's strategy for 2021–2025 is based on this assessment.

The strategy includes both a general overview of our objectives, which are described in the box below, as well as our specific objectives and aspirations in three focus areas (see Chapter 3).

SLU shall be an attractive university for both current and future employees and students.

Both the free search for knowledge and needs-motivated research have a natural place at SLU. Research, education and environmental monitoring and assessment shall be characterised by high quality, a clear international dimension and strong links between the various activities.

The university also works to ensure that scientific results and data are disseminated and used in society, in both the short and long term. SLU's students shall be able to establish a good foundation for a changeable professional life. Important components include active collaboration with other higher education institutions, strong international engagement and cooperation with our sectors (see the regulation text above) and other stakeholders in society.

Gender equality, equal terms, and an environmentally oriented mindset shall permeate the entire organisation. Furthermore, SLU shall seek to ensure good leadership, an ethical approach and the efficient use of resources. SLU shall provide a good work and study environment in which equivalent terms apply,

regardless of the activity and place of business. Individuals shall be offered good opportunities for development.

2. Vision, mission statement and core values

Context: In a world that is grappling with climate change and a growing population, and in which ever more people live in urban environments, the pressure on natural resources and the environment is increasing. The knowledge available at SLU is increasingly in demand, because it makes it possible to open up new pathways and find new solutions. SLU is a world-class international university focusing on the cornerstones of human existence – such as clean water, sustainable food production, living landscapes, high standards of animal welfare, sustainable cities and the sustainable use of natural resources. We bring together people with different perspectives who share the common goal of developing knowledge that is essential to ensuring the best possible living conditions on our planet. By combining knowledge from different disciplines, starting from a system perspective, interacting with society at large, and using modern technology, we contribute to real change and create the right conditions for a sustainable, thriving and better world.

Vision

SLU plays a key role in development for sustainable life, based on science and education.

Mission statement

SLU conducts education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment in collaboration with society at large. Through our focus on the interaction between humans, animals and ecosystems and the responsible use of natural resources, we contribute to sustainable societal development and good living conditions on our planet.

Values

SLU's staff are bound by the common values for all state employees. The values are based on the basic legal principles for state administration according to the form of government as well as other laws and regulations:

- democracy
- legality
- objectivity
- the free formation of opinion
- respect
- efficiency and service

At SLU, these are supplemented with four basic values that provide guidance in everyday life, by describing the starting point for our activities, for contacts with the outside world, and for how we behave towards each other and others.¹

Scientific approach – The free search for new knowledge is the core of a university's activities. At SLU, we safeguard scientific integrity and good research practice.

Creativity – Creating new knowledge requires creative thinking and the challenging of entrenched ways of thinking. At SLU, we are convinced of the importance of establishing a creative environment and that this is encouraged by openness, freedom within a clear framework, playfulness and making the most of differences.

Openness – Collaborating with others, both internally and externally at national and international levels, and being a part of a community are essential for the success of activities that have large elements of individuality and academic freedom. SLU's activities are characterised by curiosity as well as contact-creating communication and accessibility.

Responsibility – The driving force of individuals and groups and the desire to develop and achieve good results are key to a university's success. Everybody is each other's work environment, and should be considerate and take responsibility so that they and others have satisfaction and commitment.

3. Priority focus areas for the 2021–2025 period

Focus areas refer to overall areas of a general nature, which apply across faculty, departmental and subject boundaries. These focus areas indicate where SLU as a whole will invest its energies during the 2021–2025 period, in order to create the best possible conditions for allowing the organisation to develop in accordance with our vision.

The focus areas express priority objectives and ambitions that apply during the five-year period in question. The priorities are based on analyses of the current situation and the world around us, in which students and employees have had the opportunity to participate.

Objectives and ambitions are concretised both in the form of measures included in SLU's annual operational plan and in the faculties' strategies and annual operational plans.

¹ Values for SLU (reg. no SLU ua.2013.1.1.1-2727)

3.1. SLU's next steps for sustainable development

Justification: Through high-quality education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment, SLU has the capacity to assert itself as a university that makes a real difference in the transition to a sustainable society. Thanks to our specific knowledge of the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, we can cooperate with others to support and drive the transition necessary in order to achieve the global sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030.

Overall objective: In a changing world, SLU is a world-class university that plays a key role in the transition to a sustainable society.

Subcomponents:

- a) SLU's degree programmes recruit enough qualified students and doctoral students to meet the needs of a sustainable society.
- b) There is an increased demand for scientifically based knowledge and decision-making data from SLU.
- c) SLU is an attractive cooperative partner and driving force for the green transition of industry and other parts of society.
- d) The ability to adopt a system perspective and to integrate all sustainability dimensions has been developed.
- e) SLU leads the way by conducting ambitious internal sustainability work that includes all sustainability perspectives.

Meaning:

High-quality education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment are our strengths. By developing and making even better use of them, SLU's role in the transition to a sustainable society is enhanced. We will use our own activities as a test bed and example and continue to develop our collaboration with other societal actors.

SLU's degree programmes recruit enough qualified students and doctoral students to meet the needs of a sustainable society

Both in Sweden and globally, many more trained professionals are needed to create solutions for the transition to a sustainable society. SLU has a unique profile and educates students so that they can contribute to the sustainable management of Earth's production systems and natural environments, as well as the development of urban environments. It is therefore important that SLU receives an expanded educational mandate from the Swedish Government, and that students are recruited from all parts of the population. SLU must also succeed in recruiting more international students. When students and doctoral students graduate from SLU, they should carry with them knowledge and tools that they can use, both in their future professional lives and as citizens of society, in order to actively contribute to the transition to a sustainable society. Through strong research links and well-developed cooperation with external stakeholders, we will ensure that our degree

programmes address the future issues that are relevant to professional life and society. In order to meet the rapid pace social change, people who are already gainfully employed must have opportunities to absorb research-related knowledge. SLU has a special responsibility for lifelong learning in the areas described in our instructions (SFS 1993:221).

There is an increased demand for scientifically based knowledge and decision-making data from SLU

SLU shall strive to obtain more high-quality environmental monitoring and assessment assignments that strengthen its own operations and cause SLU to become more relevant and recognised. We shall also contribute to the development of an in-depth understanding of how scientifically and artistically based knowledge can spark processes of change in society. Open knowledge sharing and well-developed communication are important to the dissemination of research findings and environmental data, which thus become more useful to sustainable societal development efforts at the local, national and global level. (See Focus Area 3.2).

SLU is an attractive cooperative partner and driving force for the green transition of industry and other parts of society.

While safeguarding scientific integrity, SLU shall actively help to find solutions to societal problems. We have a particular responsibility to contribute to the sustainable transition and development of our sectors, including those commonly referred to as 'green industries' (see the regulation text on page 3). Cooperation with stakeholders shall be further developed and broadened to encompass new areas. Our campus environments shall be used as meeting places that stimulate cooperation related to knowledge development, innovation and entrepreneurship. In keeping with the policy governing SLU's contributions to the global implementation of Agenda 2030, we shall continue to develop international partnerships, including collaborations which aim to foster capacity development in low-income countries. Doctoral theses contribute to global knowledge development within SLU's areas. SLU graduates shall be internationally competitive in their ability to conduct research, development work and problem-solving efforts in all sectors of society.

The ability to adopt a system perspective and to integrate various sustainability dimensions has been developed.

SLU shall increasingly produce knowledge and deliver decision-making data on complex issues that may entail various conflicting objectives. The breadth and depth of SLU's research and environmental monitoring and assessment are essential to our knowledge of sustainability issues. However, in order to contribute more clearly to the achievement of the global sustainable development goals, we must increase our ability to adopt a systemic perspective and to integrate ecological, social and economic dimensions. Through numerous new working

methods that also stimulate transdisciplinary² approaches, we shall strengthen the ties between research topics (both present and future) at the university.

SLU leads the way by conducting ambitious internal sustainability work that includes all sustainability perspectives.

Through its lofty aspirations regarding the sustainability of its own organisation, SLU can lead the way for other public authorities. In our efforts to become a climate-neutral university that simultaneously maintains a high level of productivity and protects biodiversity in our own agriculture and forestry, SLU's internal sustainability work shall be based on knowledge and facts. In SLU's land use and development of campus environments, knowledge about environments that foster human well-being and health shall contribute to expanded sustainability perspectives. Trained managers and leaders shall set a positive example by focusing on the promotion of sustainable working life. SLU shall promote a sustainable student environment by consistently taking into account the student perspective on various issues and continually developing student influence.

3.2 SLU in the digital society

Justification: The digital transformation is a profound and global societal change that has a major impact on our everyday lives. As a university, it creates many new opportunities for us, but it also imposes new demands on every part of our organisation. This focus area covers how our organisation is choosing to use the opportunities of the digital transformation to benefit our activities and to create the right conditions for the development and use of digital technology.

Overall Objective: SLU contributes to the digital transformation and uses it to support the transition to a more sustainable society and increase the quality of our activities.

Subcomponents 2025:

- a) SLU makes full use of the opportunities of digitalisation in its education, research, and environmental monitoring and assessment.
- b) The content of the degree programmes is adapted to students' future professional roles in the digital society.
- c) SLU is on the cutting edge of research related to digitalisation within our areas.
- d) SLU has developed the infrastructure and system capacity and ensured the necessary competence and expertise to meet the opportunities and needs of the digital transformation.

Meaning:

² As defined by the *Swedish National Encyclopaedia*, 'transdisciplinarity' entails the crossing of boundaries between and beyond disciplines and the integration of knowledge and perspectives from various scientific disciplines as well as non-scientific sources.

There is great potential in applying the opportunities of digitalisation to education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment at SLU. Digitalisation also creates new conditions for collaboration and internationalisation. As a tool, it is crucial to achieving the vision of an SLU that is a driving force for local and global science and education-based development aimed at promoting sustainable life.

SLU makes full use of the opportunities of digitalisation in its education, research, and environmental monitoring and assessment.

SLU is at the forefront of digital development in, for example, forest resources, biodiversity, animal health and aquatic environments. We will use this knowledge and experience to become a leader in digital development in all our areas. Strategic collaborations will be necessary to achieve this. An important component is how computer-driven science, machine learning, and other emerging technologies in the field of AI can be used to develop new knowledge that underlies the interpretation and understanding of complex systems. The large amounts of data generated in our research and environmental monitoring and assessment can be used for this.

Digitalisation will also contribute to open science, where information and the communication of research results and open data are made available, refined and adapted for stakeholders and society at large. Digitalisation has radically transformed the possibilities of communicating and cooperating remotely. These opportunities must be developed and used to a greater extent within SLU, thus allowing us to overcome geographical barriers and contributing to the achievement of 'One SLU'. In this effort, the experiences we have gained in the spring of 2020 will be an important contribution.

The digital transformation also provides opportunities to conduct teaching in new ways, in digital learning environments. When used wisely and in relevant contexts, it can provide higher quality than traditional forms of teaching. This may be particularly important to SLU's expanded efforts to make our degree programmes available both nationally and internationally and to contribute to lifelong learning, for example through open education. One important goal is to learn as much as we possibly can from the digitalisation of our degree programmes that occurred in the spring of 2020.

The content of the degree programmes is adapted to students' future professional roles in the digital society

The digital transformation also has a profound impact on the content of education at SLU. In this context, perhaps the biggest challenge is to determine how SLU's degree programmes can prepare our students for a future professional role in a society that has been transformed by the digital revolution. This imposes great demands on the content of all our degree programmes, as well as the professional development of our teachers. The development of SLU's degree programmes is necessary in order to integrate subject areas such as technology and digitalisation in relation to our strengths.

SLU is on the cutting edge of research related to digitalisation within our areas.

SLU is well positioned to spearhead research in our areas of activity related to the opportunities of digitalisation, both internally and in collaboration with other higher education institutions, public authorities and industry actors. The possible range of such efforts is large, and may include new research into the potential of digitalisation in our areas of activity, e.g. data-driven life science, and the impact of digital transformation on sustainable production systems and natural resource management, as well as social and ethical aspects of digitalisation. As an important prerequisite for this endeavour, we must ensure the long-term availability of necessary competence and expertise within this field at SLU.

SLU has developed the infrastructure and system capacity and ensured the necessary competence and expertise to meet the opportunities and needs of the digital transformation.

The development of digital infrastructure, technologies and systems, including sustainably secure digital services that protect the privacy of their users, is essential to our future operations and requires continuous work. Crucial factors in this focus area include access to computational capacity and capacity related to data storage and networks, digital communication solutions, and systems for the dissemination of results and data from research and environmental monitoring and assessment. Other important elements include the development of operational support via well-functioning and resource-efficient digitalised support processes, as well as competence development and assistance relating to the use of digital infrastructures.

3.3 One SLU

Justification: The emphasis in this heading is on the first word, 'one'. By seeing SLU as one – as a whole – we strengthen our combined capacity to be the driving force for change necessary in order to achieve our vision. 'One SLU' that collaborates internally, with equivalent and equal opportunities for students and employees, can work more efficiently and with unified strength. 'One SLU' also makes what we stand for clearer to the outside world.

Overall Objective: A stronger, unified SLU – both internally and in our external contacts

Subcomponents:

- a) Active and systematic work to promote a good work environment, gender equality and equal terms is conducted, wherein proactivity and internal learning are guiding principles.
- b) SLU has stronger, cohesive environments, wherein our mission to conduct first-cycle education plays a larger role and has gained increased status.

- c) SLU has seized the opportunities offered by a geographically dispersed organisation by facilitating and strengthening collaboration across geographical and organisational boundaries, as well as between areas of activity.
- d) The harmonisation of procedures and processes has created equal opportunities, regardless of the part of SLU to which employees and students belong.
- e) By combining the role of university and the role of expert authority, SLU has advanced the development of knowledge.

Meaning:

Active and systematic work to promote a good work environment, gender equality and equal opportunities is carried out, wherein proactivity and internal learning are guiding principles.

A work and study environment that is free from discrimination and which is characterised by inclusion is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable professional and student life. Gender equality means that everyone must have the same power to shape society and their lives, regardless of gender. At SLU, important elements for achieving this objective include gender-equal career paths and funding opportunities, as well as the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in our degree programmes. SLU shall be more proactive in its systematic work aimed at preventing ill health and accidents, combatting discrimination, and promoting equal opportunities for students and employees. In these efforts, it is essential that SLU combats restrictive norms and power systems linked to the grounds of discrimination³. It is also important to provide internal learning opportunities which allow members of the organisation to share good examples, learn from each other and work together as 'One SLU'. The work to promote gender equality and equal terms helps to increase SLU's attractiveness as a university. It contributes to the quality of teaching and research by making use of everyone's skills.

SLU has stronger, cohesive environments, wherein our mission to conduct first-cycle education plays a larger role and has gained increased status.

The development of the quality and societal relevance of SLU's degree programmes must be a clear focus for all parts of the university. Cohesive environments with close links between education, research and environmental monitoring and assessment provide good conditions for achieving a high level of quality and renewal in all the university's activities. This is also a fundamental aspect of the idea of the 'global university'. It is therefore desirable that the university continue to grow by increasing the scope of its education. More departments must achieve a better balance between education and research, and

³ Gender, gender identity or gender expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age.

more teachers/researchers must conduct both teaching and research. For example, this means that the education is further backed up by strong research in the same field, and that research is stimulated through student participation. The knowledge-building of the environmental monitoring and assessment provides valuable material for students and researchers to refine, and its presence at SLU thus enhances the other areas. Cohesive environments and the increased status of education at the internal level also allow SLU to better contribute to social benefits at the external level. To achieve stronger cohesive environments, it is necessary to develop the competence provision processes that support them.

SLU has seized the opportunities offered by a geographically dispersed organisation by facilitating and strengthening collaboration across geographical and organisational boundaries, as well as between areas of activity.

SLU is always close, for students, employees and the world around us; it is a great asset to be present throughout the country. This yields increased opportunities for various types of collaboration with broad regional roots, which are consolidated within SLU to create a national whole. The outside world shall be able to turn to 'One SLU' and interact with the entire university as a collaborative partner in all our breadth, not just with each of our individual parts. By finding ways to work around the distances and create a sense of belonging and equivalence, this strength can be used to the fullest. The world around us then encounters a unified image of SLU, regardless of geographical location.

Internal collaborations provide the potential to explore and strengthen, and are made possible by bridging physical and mental barriers. One prerequisite for this is an organisational culture in which openness to new collaborations is self-evident. It is difficult to change a culture. Nonetheless, it is essential if we are to seize the opportunities that exist in a large knowledge organisation such as our university. At the heart of such an effort is a responsibility to ensure the freedom of research, a culture of mutual respect, a curiosity for other people's research questions, and a willingness to take responsibility for the scientific dialogue about the conclusions drawn from research results. This feeds the development of knowledge and generates new research questions, which is a central prerequisite for our internal collaborations and our scientific development.

The harmonisation of procedures and processes has created equal opportunities, regardless of the part of SLU to which employees and students belong.

SLU's various activities and places of activity/study all offer something unique that is worth protecting. At the same time, it is important to create equivalence and provide equal opportunities, regardless of activity. For example, this may apply to conditions for exercising good leadership and employeeship, as well as the quality of our learning environments. Harmonised administrative processes and terms, as well as appropriate organisational solutions, can be the means by which to achieve this end. All employees and students are a clear part of 'One SLU'.

By combining the role of university and the role of expert authority, SLU has advanced the development of knowledge.

SLU has long had a unique mission that unites two distinct roles. These two roles – that of the university and that of the expert authority⁴ – are both deeply rooted and constitute a self-evident aspect of ‘One SLU’. When the outside world turns to SLU as an expert authority, SLU also reaches out to the entire world in its capacity as a governmental authority that conducts education at all levels, research, and environmental monitoring and assessment. SLU is thus able to offer something more.

It is therefore important that SLU preserve, clarify and develop its dual role. SLU shall be the first choice to contact when it is necessary to obtain expertise within our areas, and our collaboration with other expert authorities shall be developed. While both our roles are closely linked and strengthen each other, it is also important to make the difference between them clear to the outside world. Scientific debate about the interpretation of research results (often with conflicting conclusions) falls under SLU’s role as a university and shows how new knowledge develops. In its expert role, SLU can develop syntheses of such a scientific debate, in order to describe the current state of knowledge.

3.4 Follow-up of SLU's strategy

Follow-up of SLU's strategy and operational plan will be done according to the annual cycle for strategic processes and operational planning that the vice-chancellor has established (SLU ua 2019.1.1.1–3933).

To assess progress, a follow-up of the previous year's work is performed each spring. This is done during the management's operational dialogues with the faculties and during the university administration's operational follow-up. Follow-up is done of the priority measures that are linked to each subcomponent and which are described in SLU's annual operational plan. Furthermore, an aggregate analysis is performed for each sub-component/focus area. In connection with this, the need for new measures and possible changes regarding the implementation of measures already decided are also analysed. The process and forms of follow-up will be specified in a separate document. An account of the follow-up is submitted annually to the SLU Board in June. Follow-up is also carried out in connection with the faculties' follow-up dialogues with the departments.

Every year during the autumn, an overall discussion is held on the need for measures and priorities during the next financial year. The result is entered in the

⁴ Development and implementation of e.g. decision-making data for government decisions, longer investigations/statements of opinion, environmental monitoring and assessment assignments, the compilation of environmental monitoring and assessment data, reference laboratories, risk assessment functions, etc.

university's annual plan for operations and financial allocation, which is approved by the SLU Board.

At the end of the strategy period, a follow-up of the overall strategy implementation, including the faculties' work, is carried out as part of the development of a new SLU strategy.