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Strategy for the Faculty of Forest Sciences 2017–2020



Strategy aims and content

The faculty's strategy is based on the university-wide strategy adopted by the SLU Board in June 2016 and the strategic direction documents for education, collaboration and environmental monitoring and assessment (EMA) arising from that strategy. The faculty's strategy is intended to guide the work of faculty management from 2017 to 2020 and to form the basis of the departments' multiannual strategies and action plans.

To ensure that this strategy is transparent, the number of strategic objectives and intermediate objectives has been limited. To fulfil these objectives, the strategy has been supplemented with an annual action plan setting out concrete measures and activities.

The strategy is divided into areas of operation. These include: first-cycle and second-cycle courses and programmes; research and EMA as well as the focus areas presented in SLU's university-wide strategy. Some of these focus areas (students and the research infrastructure) are not presented separately, but have been integrated elsewhere. Equality is highlighted as an area in its own right. Internationalisation is an important instrument for achieving several of the objectives, but is not expressed as a strategic objective in itself.

The faculty's vision, mission and core values

The faculty's vision and mission are part of those shared by SLU as a whole. They crystallise the faculty's focus areas. The faculty's core values are the same as those of SLU as a whole.

2.1 Vision

The Faculty of Forest Sciences is a world-class actor of renown in forest research, education and environmental monitoring and assessment.

In fulfilling its own vision, the faculty is helping to fulfil the vision of SLU as a whole, i.e. ensuring that SLU is a world-class university in life and environmental sciences.

2.2 Mission

The Faculty of Forest Sciences develops knowledge about forest ecosystems and our sustainable use of these. This is done through research, education and EMA in national and international collaboration with forest sector stakeholders.

2.3 Strengths, weaknesses and the conditions imposed by the outside world

The faculty has a proven record of success in the field of forest research. Statistics on publications and extracts quoted in the field of ‘forestry’ show that, for the period 2011–2015, SLU’s research received greater recognition than that of any other university in the world.

The faculty’s research ranges from basic to application-oriented research. Successful basic research is being carried out in subjects such as plant biology and ecology. Some of the faculty’s researchers have top, international reputations in these subjects. The application-oriented research is proving successful in areas such as remote sensing and the *Future Forests* research programme. However, some research fields unique to SLU have lost ground in recent years. Doctoral courses and programmes are also seeing a decline in the number of students, especially those recruited from our own courses and programmes.

The demand for fully qualified forestry students is great. Yet the faculty is having difficulty recruiting new students for both Forest Science and the Forest Management programmes. Additionally, there are problems with the quality of the Forest Science programme.

The faculty has several outstanding world-class programmes in environmental analysis, but these are having difficulty attracting long-term funding from important organisations. Key challenges here are: providing the platforms needed to support the public measures taken in areas such as environmental objectives and conventions; and, carrying out advanced analyses in research.

It is particularly important to note a number of social trends. Urbanisation means that public awareness of forests and forestry is decreasing. At the same time, the demand for knowledge about forestry and the sustainable use of forest resources is increasing nationally and internationally. This increase is in step with society’s transition from a fossil-based economy to a circular bio-based economy. SLU as a whole and the Faculty of Forest Sciences in particular play a key role in nurturing the knowledge and skills needed for this societal transition. In this connection, the need for renewable raw materials from Swedish forests is expected to increase sharply. At the same time, social demand for other ecosystem services is expected to remain high or increase.

As forestry is traditionally a male domain, equality is an area that presents the faculty with specific challenges.

Strategic objectives for 2017–2020

3.1 Equality

The faculty shall combat discrimination and create and reinforce the right conditions to ensure that all students and employees have access to equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender, gender identity or gender expression, ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. The step towards creating a faculty that offers more equal treatment is being taken using a norm-critical approach. Norm criticism helps ensure that the power structures influencing students and employees at the faculty can be examined and challenged.

Strategic objectives¹

All faculty employees and students have an awareness of gender, equal treatment and norm criticism and help promote equal rights and opportunities in today's workplace, the study environment and the future workplace.

3.2 Courses and degree programmes at first-cycle and second-cycle level

The faculty offers both professional and master degree programmes. The professional programmes are the three-year Forest Management and the five-year Forest Science programmes. The Master programmes offered are Management of Fish and Wildlife Populations in Umeå and Euroforester in Alnarp. The faculty has some 600 full-time students. Around 40 of these are incoming exchange students. The faculty's programmes and courses are unique. The prognosis for the next few years indicates good job prospects for people with academic qualifications in forestry. However, applications for these programmes and courses have decreased. In recent years, filling all the places on the Forest Science and Forest Management programmes has been difficult. This has serious consequences for the future skills supply in the forestry sector and academia. In order to attract the forest specialists of the future, the faculty must offer degree programmes and courses that are in demand, of relevance and high quality.

Strategic objectives

Degree programmes and courses at the faculty produce a competent workforce and contributes to social development, nationally and internationally.

¹ The intermediate objectives are presented in the faculty's *Equal opportunities plan*.

Intermediate objectives

- The faculty deploying the optimum level of teaching ability and creating more off-campus courses.
- The faculty identifying and developing (in cooperation with students and stakeholders) the kinds of professional competence that meet future needs.
- The faculty providing, via its programmes and courses, knowledge that contributes to a successful phasing out of fossil raw materials in favour of forest-based biomaterials.

Strategic objectives

The faculty offers programmes and courses that appeal to students and are well-publicised in general.

Intermediate objectives

- The faculty attracting more students through well-organised and effective recruitment.
- The faculty exploring the conditions for establishing forest science programmes and courses at other SLU sites.
- The faculty reaching out and recruiting new target groups (this is to be done by increasing the number of freestanding courses).

Strategic objectives

Faculty students are satisfied and serve as good ambassadors for SLU.

Intermediate objectives

- The faculty using modern teaching and learning methods and a student-centred learning approach.
- The faculty having a common thread running through its programmes and courses; and, providing a holistic view of the sustainable use of forest resources.
- The faculty promoting greater understanding of the global role of forestry (this is to be done by nurturing relevant knowledge in an international context and increasing the number of student exchanges with strategically chosen partner universities).

Strategic objectives

The status of teaching is high and the faculty's teachers enjoy good conditions.

Intermediate objectives

- Teaching in the faculty being research-oriented.
- The faculty actively seeking to improve the quality of its teaching and systemising the use of course evaluations.

- The faculty reinforcing career prospects in research and teaching (this is to be done by offering clear-cut assignments and increased funding for teaching posts).

3.3 Research and doctoral education

Research done at the faculty already leads the world in several fields. The faculty is to safeguard these positions while also reinforcing some of the fields that are unique to SLU. One important starting point is the fact that detailed development in various research fields is best managed by the faculty's departments. Consequently, such development will primarily be managed in line with departmental strategies and action plans. SLU's university-wide strategy (see below under intermediate objectives) also singles out several areas of development that are of importance to the faculty. In doctoral programmes, it is important that we reverse the negative trend as regards the number of graduating students.

Strategic objectives

Faculty research is of high-quality, relevant, based on sound business intelligence and leading-edge both in individual fields and interdisciplinarily in promoting the sustainable use of natural forest resources.

Intermediate objectives

- The new *Future Forests* being established as a key platform for synthesis-oriented projects and making the most of the strong brand name it enjoys today.
- The faculty collaborating on other future platforms at SLU (namely, *Future Animals and Health*, *Future Food* and *Urban Future*).
- The faculty actively promoting SLU-wide development in the research fields of bio-based materials, economics and the importance to human health of 'experiencing nature'.
- Synergies between faculty research, first-cycle and second-cycle degree programmes and courses and EMA being well-developed.
- Peer exchanges in the faculty being promoted.
- The importance of successful recruitment being highlighted.
- The faculty's communications with stakeholders being further developed.
- The faculty further developing its central infrastructures and providing its researchers with information on which infrastructures are available.

Strategic objectives

The faculty offering SLU-wide and world-class research fields particularly good opportunities for further development.

Intermediate objectives

- The faculty supporting world-leading environments (this is to be done via special-purpose measures resulting from dialogues between faculty management and the departments affected).
- The faculty supporting research fields unique to SLU (this is to be done via special-purpose measures resulting from dialogues between faculty management and the departments affected).
- Exchanges between world-leading researchers from other universities and research institutes being encouraged.
- The Faculty Board monitoring senior posts and making use of good forward planning (in consultation with the departments affected) to assess how senior posts should be filled when holders are due to retire.

Strategic objectives

The faculty's doctoral education enhancing its scope and resulting in broad subject knowledge as well as in-depth specialist competence. Our doctors attracting national and international attention for posts in universities, business, public authorities and other public bodies.

Intermediate objectives

- Especially in the fields offered only by SLU, recruitment to doctoral courses and programmes being increased via incentives.
- An overview of the faculty's research schools being carried out.

3.4 Environmental monitoring and assessment (EMA)

The primary purpose of EMA is to deliver supporting data for public decision-making on measures for sustainable development. The interest stakeholders take in EMA work carried out by the faculty is considerable. Through, for example, the further development of data hosting, the faculty shall continue to create decision-making support that is in demand and quality assured. The extent of our expertise shall be clarified and, in dialogue with stakeholders, the full extent of our expertise shall be used in developing the content and methods of our EMA work.

The EMA carried out at SLU needs to generate increased collaboration internally and externally. Consequently, the faculty should encourage different kinds of collaboration. Not least in research and teaching, existing data should be utilised to a greater extent and in new combinations.

Strategic objectives

EMA at the faculty being of high quality, crystallising both funding potential and the state of the environment. Nationally as well as internationally, they shall also be renowned and in demand.

The faculty's EMA programmes nurturing greater collaboration (to add further value to data) and being cost-effective in the development and running of their operations.

Business intelligence and close collaboration with researchers and stakeholders ensuring that the faculty meets future needs for EMA data and support for decision-making.

3.5 Collaboration

Collaboration shall ensure that, in promoting sustainable development, the faculty offers added value that is of great benefit to academia and society. By combining research-based knowledge with practical experience, new solutions enabling sustainable use and management of biological natural resources shall be devised. At the same time, the faculty shall improve the quality and relevance of its courses and programmes, research and EMA activities.

Strategic objectives

The faculty's external and internal collaboration benefiting society, attracting stakeholders in the forestry sector and improving the quality of the faculty's work.

Intermediate objectives

- Collaboration being linked to merit.
- The faculty's collaboration with external stakeholders being well-structured and appreciated.
- The faculty being known for efficient collaboration between departments, sites and other faculties.

3.6 Employees

Employee competence and employee creativity are essential for ensuring the high quality of our operations. They require a good work environment and well-functioning management. To create stability and a competitive academic environment, we need to base the use of our shared resources on a long-term strategy. Planning regarding the supply of skills shall be an important tool in recruiting new employees and ensuring the continuing professional development of existing staff.

Strategic objectives

The faculty being an attractive and stimulating workplace where employees feel happy and enjoy working under good management.

Intermediate objectives

- Career paths being clear-cut, clearly communicated and linked to relevant funding.
- Continuing professional development being inherent in appointments.

- Employees being encouraged by the faculty's vision and identifying with its mission and core values.
- Employees striking a good balance between their working and private lives.
- Leadership development being ongoing and acknowledged as important for the favourable growth of the faculty.
- Employees being very familiar with SLU's work in the field of environmental certification and complying with recommendations.

3.7 Our shared SLU

The faculty seeks to ensure that, besides feeling involved, confident and committed in and to our operations, employees and students also take collective responsibility for said operations. Our geographical spread is seen as a strength which should be better used.

The faculty shall provide competent operational support. This shall offer professional assistance, give good service and help ensure the quality-assured and effective exercise of public authority.

Strategic objectives

Employees and students feeling a sense of commitment to and pride in SLU.

Intermediate objectives

- Collaboration between different operational sites and departments working well.
- Procedures and methodologies at all faculties being harmonised.
- The faculty's administrative and strategic support resources providing professional, cost-effective and needs-driven support.
- The faculty having a functional and well-developed infrastructure for holding video meetings (with good support being available).