

Organisational framework for Interdisciplinary Clusters

Preamble: purpose, overall success criteria and organisational principles

For the faculties, the **purpose** of establishing Interdisciplinary Clusters is to facilitate collaboration through the establishment of broad, interdisciplinary consortia across departments and faculties that are open to all researchers employed at AU. The consortia collaborate among themselves and with external partners on cross-cutting research and strategic outreach activities that have a clear potential to contribute to the development of society. The clusters thus cover fields of research areas of long-term or even enduring strategic importance to society.

There are **two overarching, equitable success criteria** for the activities of the clusters:

- a. The clusters must increase awareness of their research in society and facilitate interaction with external partners in Denmark and internationally. Partners can be from innovation environments, special interest organisations, companies or the public sector.
- b. At the same time, the clusters must create an academically strong consortium at AU to serve as a point of engagement for relevant competencies and disciplines at AU with the potential to promote strategic research efforts. The consortium must also engage with relevant academic environments at other research institutions in Denmark or abroad.

The clusters cover different fields of research, and therefore vary in size, in the nature of their external relations and in the methods employed to facilitate collaboration. Each cluster is therefore governed by an independent steering committee composed to reflect the faculties' involvement in a given cluster (see below). The steering committee is the body agreeing the individual, concrete expectations and development plans with the cluster leadership. This must be done according to the common **organisational principles** described below.

1. Financing

- The clusters are funded by the faculties.
- Usually, at least two faculties will join forces to fund a cluster.
- The faculties' contribution is generally DKK 250,000 per year, faculty and cluster.
- The budget for each cluster, i.e. the faculties' combined contributions to a given cluster, is a minimum of DKK 500,000 per year per cluster.
- The contributions are determined for 5 years, see also below under 'Reporting and evaluation'.
- The faculties' contributions are primarily intended to cover the salary of a cluster coordinator (part-time position for administrative officer/special consultant). The faculties' contributions are not intended to cover the salaries of academic staff or technical/administrative staff – except that the faculties' contributions may be used to cover a function salary supplement for the cluster leader (see section 2 below). In addition, the faculties' contributions must be used to realise the cluster's annual key objectives aligned with the cluster's steering committee (see section 3 below)
- The faculties' contributions are expected to be geared through external funding, which will also contribute to the cluster's central operations and activities. Concrete expectations as regards applications for funding from specific foundations/calls are agreed in connection with the cluster's development plan or annual objectives (see section 3 below), as relevant.
- At the end of the year, any unused funds will be returned to the faculties (in proportion to the size of their contributions).

2. Organisation

Steering committee

- The clusters are managed by a steering committee.
- Steering committee members are the vice-deans for research of the faculties that are financially involved in the cluster.
- The steering committee chair is the vice-dean for research from the same faculty as the cluster leader.
- Once a year, the vice-deans for research inform their faculty leadership team about the progress of the cluster's work (e.g. after steering committee meetings, see below).

Cluster leader and leadership team

- The cluster is headed by a cluster leader, who is a researcher with open-ended employment at AU. The cluster leader is appointed by the steering committee.
- The cluster leader is paid a function salary supplement of DKK 50,000 annually. The cluster leader's head of department allocates the function salary supplement and decides whether this is to be covered by the department budget or paid by the faculties' financial contribution to the cluster. If the function salary supplement is to be covered by the faculties' financial contributions, the steering committee is informed at the time of the appointment of the cluster leader.
- The cluster leader is supported by a cluster coordinator (see section 1 above), who is usually employed at the same department as the cluster leader. The cluster leader is responsible for recruiting the cluster coordinator.
- The cluster leader collaborates with a leadership team. The leadership team consists of 3 to 7 members. The cluster coordinator is part of the leadership team. The composition of the leadership team is approved by the steering committee and should reflect the diversity of the open, interdisciplinary consortium that makes up the cluster (in terms of academic expertise, PhD age, gender etc.).
- The procedures and division of work of the leadership team are decided by the cluster leader.

Stakeholder board

- The work of the leadership team is also supported by a stakeholder board. The stakeholder board advises the cluster leader in relation to (1) the key objectives agreed with the steering committee (see section 3 below) for the current year, (2) the future development of the cluster.
- The steering committee decides the composition of the stakeholder board after consultation with the cluster leader. The composition can be adjusted in connection with the steering committee meetings (see below).
- Members of the stakeholder board are typically heads of department and representatives of important external partners.
- The stakeholder board is convened by the cluster leader for at least one annual meeting with representatives of the leadership team. The steering committee can be invited to participate in the meeting with the stakeholder board.

3. Reporting

- At the start of a cluster's five-year funding period, the cluster leader presents a draft 'mission statement' as well as a development plan with up to 10 key milestones for the next five years. The mission statement and development plan are decided by the steering committee in connection with a start-up meeting between the cluster's steering committee and leadership team.
- Once a year, the steering committee determines the key objectives for the cluster, in consultation with the cluster leadership. This is done in connection with an annual meeting between the steering committee and the cluster leadership team (see section 6 below).

- The cluster leader reports once a year to the cluster steering committee based on the central deliverables established the previous year. The reporting is based on the attached generic template. The mission statement and development plan are revisited and adjusted as needed.

4. Starting new clusters

- Deans take initiative to start a new cluster, cf. the purpose and overall success criteria for clusters.
- The framework for a new cluster can arise through several mechanisms, such as (but not limited to) (i) the consolidation/growth or merging of interdisciplinary networks, (ii) external changes calling for new approaches and strategic efforts, or (iii) as a new opportunity arising from the organic growth and diversification of the faculties' recruitment activities and research profiles.
- The dean's appointment of a potential cluster leader marks the start of preparatory efforts aimed at preparing a brief prospectus for the formation of a new cluster. The process identifies the strategic objectives and relevance of the cluster, the academic resources of the departments and faculties, and the first draft of the mission statement and milestones. The complementarity (and possible synergies) with interdisciplinary consortia, especially at AU, is also described.
- The cluster is established when an agreement has been made by the faculties on the provision of total funding of at least DKK 500,000 annually.
- New clusters usually start up on 1 January of the following year.
- At the start-up of a new cluster, the steering committee is appointed and in turn appoints the cluster leader on the recommendation of the deans of the faculties represented on the steering committee.

5. Evaluation of clusters

- As a general rule, clusters are evaluated every five years with reference to (1) the overall success criteria for clusters (see the beginning of the document under 'Success criteria'), and (2) the cluster's own mission statements and development plan for the five-year period, as agreed with the cluster's steering committee.
- The evaluation process is initiated after a steering committee meeting in year five of the five-year funding period (unless the evaluation is brought forward, see above), and must be completed before the summer holidays of the same year.
- Based on the evaluation results, the deans of the faculties represented on the steering committee decide whether the cluster is recommended for funding for a further five years. Before making a decision, the deans consult with their respective faculty leadership teams.

6. Annual planning cycle for clusters

Mid-February: The cluster leader submits the annual report to the chair of the steering committee and summarises the objectives and results for the past year (or for new clusters: proposal for mission statement and development plan) and presents proposals for key objectives for the current year.

March/April: Meeting between the cluster's steering committee and leadership team (cf. attached agenda template as a minimal model). The chair of the steering committee convenes and chairs the meeting and appoints a minute-taker. Minutes are approved by the participants in writing.

- The annual report is presented by the cluster leader and approved by the steering committee (possibly with conditions/follow-up regarding activities in the current year).
- If the annual report cannot be approved based on or due to a failure to meet the results agreed as key objectives for the past year, the steering committee may recommend that the evaluation of the cluster by the deans be brought forward (see section 5 above).
- Proposals for key objectives for the current year are qualified and finalised by the steering committee.

- Proposals for (changes to) the composition of the stakeholder board are discussed with and approved by the steering committee, as necessary.
- (Changes to) the mission statement and development plan are discussed with and approved by the steering committee only when necessary.

April/May: Meeting between representatives of the cluster's leadership team and its stakeholder board. The agenda and meeting content are planned by the cluster leader according to the two overall advisory tasks of the stakeholder board (see first item under 'Stakeholder board' above).

Enclosures

Generic template for annual report (*work in progress*)

Generic agenda for steering committee meetings (*work in progress*)
