

# Södertörn University Development Plan 2020–2024

VISION

ETHOS

FOCUS AREAS:

- 1 Strong academic environments
- 2 An attractive and open university
- 3 Academic teacherhood and active student participation
- 4 Sustainable development in education, research and collaboration
- 5 Research about the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe
- 6 Södertörn University in the world

## Foreword

Södertörn University has produced a new development plan, which describes the position we aspire to and our ambitions for the 2020-2024 period. The university's overarching objectives are summarised in the vision statement on the next page; contemporary challenges, critical reflection and sustainable societal development are words that carry special meaning for us. In the section on our Ethos, we describe our core values and the way in which the university aims to work. Six focus areas have been identified as being particularly important in helping the university achieve its vision. My hope is that our development plan will provide inspiration and a shared focus for the continual development of all our activities.

Development work at the university is conducted in many ways, and everyone who works here contributes. The vision and intentions formulated in this document are meant to be used as guidance and inspiration for the many choices, decisions and standpoints that are made, both university-wide and within each unit. As the plan will be concretised close to practitioners, more specific objectives can be formulated based on knowledge of what needs to be done.

The contents of the development plan have been generated through an extensive and constructive dialogue between the university's staff and students. Open breakfast and lunch seminars were held in the spring of 2019 on staff-initiated issues, and dialogues with and between the university's organisational units were conducted. The aim of the seminars and dialogues was to identify important, university-wide development issues and provide a foundation for revisions to our vision and ethos. Over the autumn, a draft of the plan was sent out for broad consultation within the organisation.

For me personally, working on this plan has been interesting and rewarding. The discussions that have taken place have been inspiring, generating important knowledge and valuable opinions over and above those included in the finished plan. I would like to send my warmest thanks to everyone who has contributed their efforts and their wisdom!

Gustav Amberg, Vice-Chancellor

## Vision

Södertörn University will be a university that contributes to sustainable societal development through research, education and critical reflection on contemporary challenges.

## Ethos

Activities at Södertörn University are founded upon democratic and academic values. We work for an open society, freedom of expression, liberal education and critical reflection. The university stands up for basic academic values such as autonomy, collegiality, academic freedom and accountability, as well as scholarly integrity, and is a signatory to the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, a declaration signed by numerous European higher education institutions that defend academic freedom and institutional integrity.

Södertörn University conducts education and research in scholarly environments of high quality and societal relevance. Södertörn University has an international milieu, characterised by the closeness between teachers and students found at small higher education institutions and the breadth and quality of research found at large higher education institutions. Education and research are conducted in a broad spectrum of subjects in the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, technology and educational sciences, in established disciplines and in interdisciplinary groups, with respect for the differences between research and subject traditions.

Södertörn University is independent, pursuing development through the power of the search for critical knowledge, while emphasising the shared creation and dissemination of knowledge in partnership with other actors in society. The quality of our activities rests upon collegial influence, student participation and accountability at all levels of the organisation. Multidisciplinarity, multiculturalism and liberal education are concepts that remind us of Södertörn University's roots and provide a direction for the realisation of the university's vision.

Södertörn University's educational offering is distinguished by its foundation in research, societal relevance and the teaching staff's commitment and innovation. Programmes, courses and contract education are offered in many subjects at Bachelor's, Master's and doctoral levels. They are for students from all sections of society and at any stage of their life. The university's teaching environments are characterised by openness and accessibility, with all students offered the right conditions in which to develop and benefit from their studies.

Södertörn University is, and will continue to be, an attractive, inclusive and competitive workplace, in which everyone's expertise is utilised and where staff thrive and develop. Internal governance is characterised by trust, openness and participation. Activities are efficient and high quality. Opportunities for staff and students are provided on equal terms. The university's students are active and equal partners in their education, developing into knowledgeable and independent members of society, and are met with respect and the expectation that they are dedicated to their studies.

# Focus areas

## 1. Strong academic environments

To realise the university's vision, we will continue to build strong academic environments. Activities at higher education institutions are driven by dynamic and creative academic environments that unite education, research and partnerships with the wider community, and are places where students, teaching staff, researchers and external stakeholders meet in the search for new knowledge. The university will therefore continue to invest in subjects, programmes and research environments in which academic quality is developed through collegial involvement and responsibility and active student participation. Our academic environments must have disciplinary depth and a desire for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation.

The foundation of these environments must be core academic values, such as freedom of research, critical thinking, integrity and respect for differences in opinion, as well as interculturality and the promotion of liberal education and increasing diversity. The university defends these values at regional, national and global levels, and will continue to be active in the international *Scholars at Risk* network.

Södertörn University has several environments for research and education that are unique in Swedish academia. These assets will be further developed by giving researchers and teaching staff the opportunity to shape new academic fields in partnerships that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries, and work to safeguard and develop high-quality research environments will intensify. Subjects that have built up competence and quality will be encouraged to apply for degree-awarding powers at doctoral level.

Recruitment, promotion and competence development for researchers and teaching staff are central components in building up strong academic environments. Recruitment must have a long-term perspective, and internal processes must be developed with the aim of reducing the number of staff on temporary contracts. Employees must have good working conditions and have the opportunity for their qualifications to be assessed as part of clear and established career paths. We will continue to ensure that the university has a high proportion of teaching staff with doctorates. Our professional education and training programmes will provide relevant professional knowledge through partnerships with experienced practitioners.

One prerequisite for strong academic environments is a well-functioning academic infrastructure. This includes an advanced research library, as well as easily accessible and effective support functions for education and research. The transition to a system of open science will place increasing demands on a digital research infrastructure.

*Over the next five years, we will:*

- strive for a balance between education and research in our academic environments
- further develop a quality culture based on collegiality and core academic values
- increase the proportion of teaching staff who are employed on permanent contracts
- focus on a strong research foundation for the teacher and police education programmes
- develop strategies for the continued digitalisation of education and research

## 2. An attractive and open university

To realise the university's vision, we will continue to build an attractive and open higher education institution, one characterised by closeness between students and staff. The university will work with the surrounding community in a manner that makes it known for its accessibility and curiosity. Employees, students and the public will gather here, in engaging knowledge environments and with the library as an inspirational meeting place. We share the area with students and teachers from other higher education institutions, working in partnership with other stakeholders for a sustainable, inclusive campus. Together, we will invest in the creation of meeting places for students from different universities, as well as in research across institutional boundaries.

We will intensify our efforts to widen participation in higher education, utilising the differing backgrounds of students and staff on equal terms. Activities will provide space and support to meet a range of needs. The university will work to retain and develop existing competence, while undertaking strategic recruitment, with the entire organisation working together to achieve high quality and trust in each other's expertise and professionalism. University employees will have the opportunity to have their competence assessed through clear career paths. Competence development and good conditions are core issues and must be continually developed.

Building up an open higher education institution also entails supporting mobility between higher education and other sectors of society. Södertörn University will develop education and research in dialogue with the surrounding community, using scholarly expertise, critical thinking and integrity, so the community's needs and perspectives contribute to improved quality. Continuing work with strategic partnerships is important, so cooperation with societal stakeholders must be integrated into education and research. Long-term partnerships contribute to new working methods in teaching and new research ideas. Here, the university's alumni network can play an important role.

As support, the university will offer advanced administrative and technical support functions that can encourage and exploit our digital presence.

*Over the next five years, we will:*

- continue the development of Campus Flemingsberg as a knowledge-intensive meeting place
- strengthen our role as a knowledge actor for a wider target audience through an active digital presence
- create opportunities for mobility and close relationships with other sectors of society, businesses and alumni
- develop strategic partnerships in which the needs and perspectives of the wider community contribute to strengthening the quality of education and research

### **3. Academic teacherhood and active student participation**

To realise the university's vision, we will focus on academic teacherhood and active student participation. The aim is that teaching will be founded on the idea of academic teacherhood as a collegial task, characterised by combining solid subject knowledge, educational expertise and commitment and good professional judgement. To achieve this aim, there will be continued development of support for academic environments, provided by courses in teaching and learning in higher education, and educational skills and experience will be valued in employment and promotion processes, and opportunities will be provided for further educational qualifications. All teaching staff at the university will have adequate training in teaching and learning in higher education.

Active student participation means that students are invited to co-create their education. All students must be met with the expectation of interest and encouraged in their autonomous search for knowledge; forms for student influence will be vitalised and deepened. At Södertörn University, students should not be passive consumers in the classroom, but active participants in a shared learning process.

The university's courses and programmes must be characterised by high scholarly quality, societal relevance, international perspective and the desire to provide liberal education. Education must be based on research and current professional practice and, regardless of their level of education, students must be taught by active researchers and experienced professional practitioners. The opportunity to gain familiarity with working life through different forms of collaboration with external partners must be developed.

Our key concepts of multidisciplinary, multicultural and liberal education will continue to provide us with direction. Consequently, we will strive for interdisciplinary cooperation in our programmes and courses and for different cultural experiences to be recognised as resources in the quest for knowledge. Students are encouraged to become personally involved, to develop a broad understanding of society, and are given tools to aid their participation in society as knowledgeable and active stakeholders.

The importance of digitalisation will continue to increase over the upcoming period. Our digital competence and infrastructure must therefore be strengthened, and the university must develop education formats that utilise the opportunities offered by digitalisation, as well as responding to the expectations of students and the surrounding community vis-à-vis our flexibility and accessibility. The university's learning environments must be accessible, flexible and creative, and provide good conditions for interactive learning, regardless of whether education takes place on campus or via digital platforms. The university library must be a centre for learning and cooperation with the surrounding community.

*Over the next five years, we will:*

- formulate a strategy for academic teacherhood in dialogue with subjects and programmes
- clarify the value of educational expertise during employment and promotion processes
- develop forms for student influence and active student participation
- develop multidisciplinary working methods for courses and programmes
- develop strategies for digital and flexible learning

#### **4. Sustainable development in education, research and collaboration**

To realise the university's vision, we will focus on sustainable development in education, research and collaboration. Södertörn University has a broad understanding of sustainable development, which includes its economic, cultural, environmental and societal dimensions. Through partnerships with the public sector, businesses, non-profit organisations and other higher education institutions, both in Sweden and abroad, the university will use research and development to contribute to sustainable societal development, as well as to the critical analysis of issues that relate to sustainable development being used in decision-making. Partnerships and collaboration contribute to challenge-driven problems and long-term cooperation for mutual development.

Södertörn University will participate in sustainable development in the Stockholm region and its regional urban centres. Sustainable working life will be prioritised during the upcoming five-year period. The university must increase awareness of travel's environmental impact and offer a functional infrastructure for other ways of travelling, meeting and using digital platforms more effectively.

Courses and programmes must be characterised by sustainable development and lifelong learning in many ways. They must provide knowledge and skills with long-term viability, making students capable of handling new and unexpected issues throughout their lives. Education will be offered in different formats for wide-ranging knowledge provision in society, with the aim of providing students with the capacity to make active contributions to sustainable development, both as members of society and in their professional lives. Courses and programmes are linked to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals and encourage critical reflection about potential conflicts of interest.

Research into sustainable development will be conducted in a range of areas, using various theories and methods to generate knowledge, find solutions and address complex problems. Some research advances knowledge about the many challenges entailed by sustainable development, with current issues being the climate, environmental impact, growth and the conditions that are necessary if generations are to live in a sustainable world. The university will investigate and discuss these from a variety of perspectives and using subject-specific knowledge.

*Over the next five years, we will:*

- develop an integrated understanding of the various dimensions of sustainable development and the societal transformation to sustainable development
- formulate intended learning outcomes based on sustainable development in syllabuses and promote university-wide initiatives
- relate research and education to the needs of societal stakeholders for sustainable development and transformation
- review potential conflicts of interest in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, to arrive at a lasting balance and to work for a sustainable world

## **5. Research about the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe**

To realise the university's vision, we will focus on working internationally and promoting high quality research about the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe. As one element of this, the university will further develop and identify important themes in which to conduct research, and will support the establishment of creative and innovative research environments in this area, as well as environments for doctoral studies. Since the university's founding in 1996, this area has been one of the university's leading profile areas and will continue to be. Research into the Baltic Sea region and the countries in Eastern and Central Europe is now more relevant than ever. This part of the world has gained global significance through the growth of a new international order for security policy, as well as current issues relating to the environment and sustainable development, increasingly authoritarian political forces and challenges to free and independent knowledge production. Good quality research into the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe, that is of a high standing and based in a wide range of scholarly disciplines, is necessary to advance knowledge about current events and historical contexts.

The university's research focus on the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe will have a solid foundation in our environments for research and doctoral education. The university's founding principle for research is generally to develop environments of high international and regional relevance, research that is multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and subject-specific.

Alongside subject-based research, the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEEES) functions as an important resource for thematically specialised research in the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe. The Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS) recruits international doctoral students in all academic areas. Partnerships with the surrounding community, as well as international and regional cooperation with higher education institutions and other actors are and will continue to be characteristic of this profile area.

The focus for the next five years will be to develop and guarantee long-term support for the environments for research and doctoral education that specialise in the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe, so that innovative research problems are formulated and research can be conducted into new themes. The Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies provide unique potential for this and has been linked to the university since it was founded in 1996.

*Over the next five years, we will:*

- promote high-quality, curiosity-driven, critical research relevant to the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe
- conduct high-quality doctoral education relevant to the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe
- develop and strengthen international partnerships relevant to the research area
- increase societal knowledge about research into the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe through more effective communication

## 6. Södertörn University in the world

To realise the university's vision, we will focus on internationalising its activities. Research and all levels of education have a natural place in international contexts. Ideas, theories, research results and scholarly discussions move across national and cultural borders, so that students, researchers and teachers are part of an international context.

At Södertörn University, we reflect on our role and our responsibility in a globalised world of knowledge. This will continue to entail deep partnerships with international actors in education and research, and how the university regards itself as an intercultural meeting place for different perspectives, approaches and knowledge traditions.

Internationalisation work will be clearly characterised by awareness of how to integrate international, intercultural and global issues in order to increase the quality of research and education. We will therefore facilitate student mobility, expand our educational offering in English and ensure that recruitment of doctoral students and researchers is conducted internationally. The inflow and outflow of staff will increase, producing high quality research and bringing new perspectives. We will also utilise and be inspired by our current diversity as regards culture, language and experience. The university has great diversity, which will enrich our activities in an international and intercultural context more than previously. There is a conflict of interests between mobility and sustainability, and the university will support sustainable travel and invest in digital platforms that facilitate travel-free international contacts.

Increased internationalisation also means that the university will promote strategic international partnerships, both with other universities and with actors in other sectors of society. The university will continue to work to protect vulnerable researchers, whatever their nationality or discipline.

*Over the next five years, we will:*

- renew our internationalisation strategy, with a specific focus on research, staff and student mobility, collaboration and sustainable societal development
- implement measures to highlight the international and intercultural experience and knowledge of staff and students, not least linguistically
- promote the international recruitment of students and research staff
- increase opportunities for environmentally sustainable meetings, both physically and digitally