



# Strategic Framework Agreement 2018-2021

Aarhus School of Architecture and the Minister for Higher Education and Science hereby enter into a strategic framework agreement

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ARKITEKTSKOLEN  
AARHUS



**Uddannelses- og  
Forskningsministeriet**

Aarhus, 18 June 2018

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Udskift med underskrift

Ingelise Bogason  
Chairman Of The Board

Copenhagen, 3 July 2018

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Udskift med underskrift

Tommy Ahlers  
Minister for Higher Education and Science



# Strategic Framework Agreement 2018-2021

The strategic framework agreement contains strategic objectives for the core tasks of Aarhus School of Architecture.

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## **Status and duration**

The strategic framework agreement is effective from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021.

In the event that, for instance, the financial situation of the institution should change substantially from what was expected, or if new challenges make changing the strategic objectives of the agreement expedient, the institution as well as the minister may initiate a renegotiation of the strategic objectives. Changes to the agreement require agreement between The School Board and the Minister.

## **Reporting and following-up on the achievement of objectives**

The institution submits an annual statement taking stock of the work with the objectives of the framework agreement. This status report should contain an overall assessment of the prospects of achieving the objectives, including documentation of developments in the established indicators. The status report should, furthermore, contain a description of implemented supporting efforts towards achieving the objectives and an updated forward-looking action plan that makes visible the institution's basis for realising the objectives.

For each strategic objective, indicators with matching specific data sources have been set up. If during the period of the agreement, new relevant data sources that can shed light on the development of specific indicators are identified, these may replace or supplement data sources in the agreement. The parties have to agree to any use of new data sources in the framework agreement.

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When the contract expires, the institution takes stock of the extent to which each of the strategic objectives has been ultimately achieved. This is done on the basis of a report of developments in each of the established indicators of the strategic framework agreement, including a description of supporting efforts during the period of the agreement.

Based on the institution's report, the ministry assesses the overall fulfilment of the objectives of the framework agreement

## **Strategic objectives of the framework agreement**

### **NEW AARCH – a Scandinavian elite institution for architectural development**

One of the most significant events for Aarhus School of Architecture in the coming years will be the move into new physical surroundings at Godsbanerealeerne, in Aarhus, in 2020. NEW AARCH is not merely the name of the new school in its physical form but also indicates a cultural change that focuses even more than previously on the relations of the school, research, and the education to society and the surrounding world. This change should be implemented while the school maintains an artistic approach to education and research in architecture.

NEW AARCH is also an ambition to be more than an institution that merely trains architects. Aarhus School of Architecture is to be an elite school based on a Scandinavian tradition - a school that combines an artistic method, knowledge of history and theory, and the deployment of the newest technologies in a clear professional profile for the benefit of society.

*Our vision is therefore that, with NEW AARCH, Aarhus School of Architecture should become an elite institution for architectural development with a clear focus on strong practise relations and external collaborations. The school should also lead the field when it comes to digital culture and fabrication.*

Aarhus School of Architecture provides education at Master's level, covering the architectural profession's many facets, from city and landscape planning to restoration, new construction, and building components.

Regardless of the scale, the school has, since its establishment in 1965, emphasised the core competences of the architectural profession: an artistic and holistic approach to assignments and the ability to work spatially and visually.

As an educational and research institution Aarhus School of Architecture should maintain a critical and experimental approach which can help move forward the architectural profession and help develop architecture and the profession in general.

The school's process of change is necessary and natural. There is a need for strategic adjustments of the way we think about a school. These are necessary because the world is changing: there is a more vocationally oriented focus, increased pressure from other professions, and, not least, changed opportunities resulting from digitalisation.

Aarhus School of Architecture is internationally recognised for its project-based teaching and broad approach to research. The school's research includes traditional academic research methods, artistic development work, as well as the design-based research method called research by design. The school also has historically strong relations to the architectural

profession and a dedicated staff that contributes significant efforts. Aarhus School of Architecture is, therefore, well equipped to handle the challenges and changes of the future.

During the period of the contract, 2018-2021, Aarhus School of Architecture will be working with the following strategic objectives for its core tasks:

1. Students should achieve a high learning benefit
2. Graduates should possess clear and relevant competences
3. Research of high quality that can contribute to developing the profession
4. Strengthened competences that support the digital transformation of the profession

## **Strategic objective 1**

### **Students should achieve a high learning benefit**

The common strategic quality development of Aarhus School of Architecture should support the students in achieving a high learning benefit.

During the period in question, Aarhus School of Architecture will work intensively towards maintaining the students' assessment that there is a high learning benefit and will, by means of common strategic quality development for the school's staff, focus on further developing the quality of the content of the educational programmes, the organisation of teaching, and the didactic skills of teachers.

### **Motivation and ambition for the objective**

In the school's efforts towards becoming an elite school, it is essential to create a common foundation for organising educational programmes and for developing the quality of teaching. At present, the quality of the education is being developed in very individual ways, and the necessary knowledge exchange between the school's teachers is not always implemented. It is important that in the future quality should be developed communally within the framework of a cross-disciplinary, transparent experience and knowledge acquisition with the aim of enhancing the quality of the education.

A significant indicator of a high learning benefit is the students' assessment of the quality of their studies. The architecture students assess the quality of the education as high, which is important to maintain in the future. A major reason for the students' high degree of satisfaction with the quality of teaching is the very way teaching is organised at Aarhus School of Architecture. A characteristic of this is the close dialogue between the students and the school's teachers and between the students themselves in the school's studios, where all the school's students have permanent study spaces.

The students in particular express great satisfaction with the teachers' commitment, professionalism and ability to give feedback. However, the way teachers communicate knowledge is not assessed as highly as the other parameters.

In the future we will consequently focus on common strategic efforts to develop quality, for which the school's teachers work together on subjects including dissemination, competence development, clarifying learning objectives, clearer profiles for individual study units, and strengthening the cohesion between research and teaching.

### **The basis for assessing the fulfilment of objectives**

The fulfilment of objectives is based on a comprehensive assessment of the achieved effect at the end of the period covered by the agreement. The final status report, which, as mentioned above, includes documentation of developments in the established indicators and an account of the implemented supporting activities, is part of the assessment of the fulfilment of objectives.

The students' assessment of the quality of the education

- "The quality of my education is generally high" (2016, average: 4.0, questionnaire survey conducted for Uddannelseszoom, UFM)
- "My teachers are good at communicating their subject when teaching" (2016, average: 3.7, questionnaire survey conducted for Uddannelseszoom, UFM)
- "The teachers communicate the subject matter in the best possible way" (2018, 64% of the students either agree or strongly agree. A teaching evaluation carried

out by Aarhus School of Architecture following each semester, the annual average of which is stated in the school's status report)

- "The overall course of this semester has helped students meet the prescribed learning goals in the best possible way" (2018, 70% of the students either agree or strongly agree. A teaching evaluation carried out by Aarhus School of Architecture following each semester, the annual average of which is included in the school's status report)

The competences of teachers

- The proportion of study plans that are to a significant degree based on research in the school's research labs (the baseline is to be determined in 2018, after a qualitative assessment by the school's management of the extent of research in study plans. A survey carried out by the school each semester)
- The proportion of teachers in permanent positions who teach courses in the newly established didactic laboratory (the baseline is to be determined in 2019. A survey carried out by the school on a yearly basis)

## **Strategic objective 2**

### **Graduates should possess clear and relevant competences**

Strong relations to practice and external cooperation should help the school's graduates acquire clear and relevant competences that support the needs of society.

For this reason, Aarhus School of Architecture wishes to focus on the network building of students and graduates and their awareness of their own competences, and also on strengthening the school's dialogue with practice on the content of educational programmes.

#### **Motivation and ambition for the objective**

Aarhus School of Architecture finds that the school's graduates are not sufficiently aware of their competences and their relevance to the labour market. This is confirmed by the most recent alumni survey (questionnaire survey conducted for Uddannelseszoom, 2016, UFM). Moreover, the school's external examiners point out that the students need to be more aware of the needs of practice and the need to balance theoretical learning.

Aarhus School of Architecture has already worked systematically with the graduates' clarification of competences over the past few years through enhanced employment efforts and career guidance. This initiative has, so far, created good results and appears to be speeding the entry of graduates into the workforce.

In teaching, the mandatory short internship during the Bachelor's degree programme and the voluntary one-semester internship during the Master's degree programme provide the foundation for students' relations to practice and students' network building. To this we can add mentoring systems and design realisation, which are firmly anchored components of the Master's degree programme, during which individual students are supervised by

practicing architects and engineers who take part in practice-oriented teaching courses. These focus areas need to be strengthened further over the coming years.

In the future, Aarhus School of Architecture will, consequently, further strengthen the involvement of practice by extending the school's mentoring system, through strengthened internship efforts, and a more formalised dialogue with the employers of the school's graduates, among other initiatives.

### **The basis for assessing the fulfilment of objectives**

The fulfilment of objectives is based on a comprehensive assessment of the achieved effect at the end of the period covered by the agreement. The assessment of the fulfilment of objectives is part of the final status report, which, as mentioned above, includes documentation for developments in the established indicators and an account of the implemented supporting activities.

The graduates' assessment of their competences

- "There is a match between what I've learned during my studies and the skills required by my present or most recent employer" (2016, average 3.3, a questionnaire survey conducted for Uddannelseszoom, UFM)

The future employers' assessment of the competences of our graduates

- In 2018, Aarhus School of Architecture will conduct a graduate employer survey, in which the employers' assessment of the competences of the graduates will be mapped. The study should help strengthen the further organisation of the education. (A survey carried out by Aarhus School of Architecture's every second year in cooperation with the newly established Dialogue Forum for Architectural Education and Practice (DAP))

The unemployment rate of graduates

- The unemployment rate for the fourth to seventh quarters (17.6% for 2014 graduates, unemployment key figures from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science)
- The graduates' unemployment after six months. (25% for graduates from 2017, Aarhus School of Architecture's annual survey of graduates' gross unemployment rate, i.e. graduates who are out of work, who are at the disposal of the labour market and receive unemployment benefits, cash benefits ('kontanthjælp'), or starting allowance ('starthjælp'). The survey is based on data from DREAM)

### **Strategic objective 3**

#### **Research of high quality that can contribute to developing the profession**

Strong relations to practice and external cooperation should ensure that the school's research of high quality contributes to developing the profession.

The support of the growing societal need for research-based knowledge within the architectural profession and mutual knowledge sharing should be improved. To achieve this objective Aarhus School of Architecture should establish an improved framework for the school's dialogue with the profession, several different forms of cooperation, and strengthen research efforts aimed at practice.

### **Motivation and ambition for the objective**

The architectural profession currently shows great interest in strengthening research cooperation with Aarhus School of Architecture. This is expressed, among other ways, through an ever increasing number of requests from the profession. Aarhus School of Architecture sees a need to find more ways and different ways of establishing co-operation with the common purpose of developing the profession - from less formal knowledge sharing over 'mini PhD courses' to the well-known industrial PhD.

The school's special research method research by design has a great, as yet unresolved, potential for connecting research and practise and thereby strengthening the research quality and its application. Research by design is characterised by the fact that it is based on the architectural profession's own design methods, tools and processes. It is anticipated that this research approach will provide a unique platform for further strengthening research cooperation with practise: in this context practise should be broadly understood as practitioners of the profession, including architects, engineers and developers, but should also include the decision-makers of the profession, such as state authorities and municipalities.

Research by design is continually being developed at Aarhus School of Architecture which has, so far, gathered knowledge of methods from practice through the EU-funded ADAPTr project (practice-based PhDs) and other research in the field of research by design, among others.

In the future there is a need to further strengthen research efforts in connection with practise. This concerns both the amount of researchers/PhD fellows who are working with practise and the extent of external funding which Aarhus School of Architecture manages to attract and use in the area. It is also a matter of strengthening the framework for communication, dialogue and knowledge sharing with practise.

### **The basis for assessing the fulfilment of objectives**

The fulfilment of objectives is based on a comprehensive assessment of the achieved effect at the end of the period covered by the agreement. Included in the assessment of the fulfilment of objectives is the final status report, which, as mentioned above, includes documentation for developments in the established indicators and an account of the implemented supporting activities.

#### **Research partnerships with practice and external collaborative partners**

- The ratio of researchers/PhDs engaged in research cooperation with practice and external collaborators (baseline: 46% of the school's permanently employed researchers/PhD fellows in 2018, a survey conducted by Aarhus School of Architecture)
- Externally funded research activities (baseline: DKK 4.5 million in 2017 stated in Delregnskab 3 (sub-statement 3) of the financial management system of Aarhus School of Architecture)

#### **Practice and external partners' evaluation of research cooperation**

- An annual evaluation of the satisfaction of the partners with whom we engage in ongoing research cooperation and of the extent to which the school's formalised research projects contribute to creating value for the company/institution to which the partner belongs. The purpose of carrying out the evaluation is to strengthen the quality of future collaborations (baseline will be established in 2018, a questionnaire survey conducted by Aarhus School of Architecture).



#### **Strategic objective 4**

##### **Strengthened competences that support the digital transformation of the profession**

Students who possess *digital dannelse* (digital 'bildung') and research in digital fabrication should support the ongoing transformation of the profession.

Aarhus School of Architecture should therefore achieve this objective by means of knowledge about digital fabrication and design and reflect critically on the use of digital tools. In addition to this, the school wishes to strengthen the digital skills of academic staff and students as well as research efforts in the digital area.

#### **Motivation and ambition for the objective**

At the moment, significant digital changes are taking place in all of society. This also applies to the architectural profession and the building industry, where Aarhus School of Architecture should to a greater extent contribute to ensuring that the profession is well-equipped for construction in the future. The building industry and not least the architectural profession express the need for more knowledge on how to use digital tools and the vast opportunities that arise from digitalisation. The profession primarily aims at making methods more efficient, whereas the school, being a knowledge institution, wishes to contribute new knowledge about creative uses, critical reflection, and train architects who possess digital *dannelse* ('bildung') and are relevant to employers, in the short as well as the long run.

As a knowledge institution, the school has an opportunity to develop the latest knowledge in the field, not least due to the workshop facilities the school has built up in recent years; facilities that contain state-of-the-art equipment, such as 3D scanners and robots, which should be continuously developed to keep them up to date with digital developments. It is also essential that Aarhus School of Architecture ensures a continuous, thorough upgrading of the staff's digital skills, to improve their ability to communicate knowledge both to the students and, through research, to the profession.

Digital design and production processes are becoming more and more important to the development of the architectural profession. It is therefore essential that the school's students and graduates should also in the future have a thorough and broad knowledge of digital tools and methods. It is no longer sufficient that the students are acquainted with specific digital tools. The students must possess digital *dannelse* ('bildung'), enabling them to identify digital possibilities and limitations and understand how the technology is central to the profession's further development. In this respect it is crucial that the school makes use of the potential inherent in its special approach and the experience that has been gathered so far, and which provides good opportunities for the students to independently test and develop ideas in the school's digital workshop facilities.

In the future there will be a need to strengthen the digital skills taught to students to obtain nuanced digital *dannelse* ('bildung'). Aarhus School of Architecture should also focus on digitalisation in connection with competence development of the school's staff and possible recruitment.

#### **The basis for assessing the fulfilment of objectives**

The fulfilment of objectives is based on an overall assessment of the achieved effect at the end of the period covered by the agreement. Included in the assessment of the fulfilment of objectives is the final status report, which, according to the above, includes documentation for developments in the established indicators and an account of implemented supporting activities.

The students' assessment of their digital skills

- "I feel sufficiently qualified to work digitally" (in 2018, 66% of the students either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. A study environment survey carried out by Aarhus School of Architecture, employing a scale from 1 to 5, with response options ranging from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree'. The survey is expected to be carried out on a yearly basis)

The competences and research of teachers

- The share of the school's researchers within the digitalisation of the architectural profession (22% of the school's permanently employed researchers/PhD fellows have research projects within the area of digitalisation in 2018, based on the school's annual mapping of research projects with digital elements)

The future employers of our graduates' assessment of the graduates' digital skills

- In 2018 the school will be conducting a graduate employer survey on, among other things, the digital competences of graduates in order to subsequently improve the organisation of educational programmes. (A survey carried out by Aarhus School of Architecture every second year in cooperation with the school's Dialogue Forum for Architectural Education and Employers (DAP))