



Rector's executive summary

In June 2015, the University of Copenhagen (UCPH) management team initiated the development of a research assessment model with the following three aims:

1. Documentation of past performance: To bear witness to the quality of the research produced in individual departments through assessments based on internationally recognized academic standards.
2. Development of the current state of the art: To reflect on strengths and weaknesses in order to promote excellence in individual departments.¹
3. Strategy and benchmarking: To establish a tool to help enhance research quality at UCPH based on a systematic assessment of each department's research strategy and performance.

A research assessment was intended as a tool for improving research quality at departments across the entire university, and at the same time allowing the leadership of the university to get an overview of the quality of research.

In the period from 2016 to 2018 every department and faculty at UCPH (or equivalent at faculties without departments) have made a huge effort in conducting research quality assessments.

Each department was assessed by an external peer review panel appointed by the dean. These peer review panels were provided with the following information for use in their assessment of research quality in the given department:

- The department's strategy and self-assessment.
- The faculty's latest strategy and UCPH Strategy 2016.
- Brief CVs (excluding publication lists) for the faculty VIP
- A list of publications in the past years by all academic staff in the department.

¹ At faculties which do not have departments, an organization reflecting the line management is used.

- A representative selection of publications exemplifying the department's research.
- A bibliometric analysis based on data from CURIS and performed by UCPH University Library.
- Miscellaneous facts and figures about the department.

Each panel assessed the provided information and conducted site visits and interviews with department management and researchers. Each panel submitted a report to the Head of Department. Upon completion of the peer review reporting process, the dean of each faculty prepared an executive summary of the department reports and submitted a summary to UCPH's rector.

The six executive summaries by the faculty deans comprise the basis for this university report.

Main conclusion

The faculty reports demonstrate a very high standard of research activities at UCPH, as evidenced by panel assessments ranging from "very high level" to "excellent".

UCPH researchers have a proven track record of excellence in national and international research communities, conducting widely recognised research within a high quality infrastructure. Made possible in part by a remarkable level of external funding, research conducted at UCPH continues to make broad and significant impacts in society.

A core component of UCPH's vision is "*... to be among the world's best universities measured by the quality of research*".² The executive summaries cited in this report provide firm evidence that UCPH is manifesting this vision in its current research activities. This is shown by UCPH's high level of excellent researchers who conduct high impact research.

Yet as with any undertaking, there is still room for improvement. The broad and multifaceted nature of research activities at UCPH is accompanied by an equally diverse range of areas ripe for improvement, such as areas within careers, gender and diversity, research communication and interdisciplinarity.

² University of Copenhagen, Talent and Collaboration, Strategy 2023

Three key factors that have enhanced the quality of research

Excellent researchers

UCPH is home to an impressive collection of world leading researchers at the senior and junior levels. This expertise serves as the foundation for strong and dynamic academic environments – internally at UCPH and in various international networks that further contribute to maintaining high quality in the university’s research activities.

External funding

All of the executive summaries noted the great success of UCPH departments in securing the external funding that is so vital to conducting excellent research and an expression in itself of the high quality and relevance of the research at UCPH. The faculties of UCPH have dedicated and ongoing efforts to continue building the level of external funding – efforts whose significance and impact are confirmed by the findings of the peer review panels.

Infrastructure

To attract, develop and retain excellent researchers, UCPH exhibits a strong commitment to maintaining and building high quality infrastructure, including state-of-the-art laboratories, access to data and core facilities, and research environments conducive to collaboration and mutual inspiration.

Three critical strengths of UCPH

The executive summaries point to three critical strengths of UCPH:

Research output with high impact

UCPH faculties produce extensive scientific output, measured both in terms of publication volume in prestigious journals and impact factor. UCPH research – at the individual and research group levels – is internationally recognised and competitive.

Societal impact of research

The societal impact of UCPH research is evident in scientific fields such as agricultural production, human and animal health, and primary and secondary school education, as well as in the social arena, where UCPH research often plays a pivotal role in political decision making processes.

International collaboration inside and outside academia

Driven by an ambition to strengthen collaboration with the public sector, industry and the international university community, the majority of UCPH’s faculties engage in extensive partnerships – domestically and

internationally, inside and outside academia. The results documented by the executive summaries confirm that these collaborations constitute one of the key strengths of UCPH.

Three critical weaknesses of UCPH

Given the major differences in the size, fields and history of faculties at UCPH, it comes as no surprise that the faculties identified a diverse range of weaknesses. Nevertheless, the contours of overall trends also emerged regarding the university's critical weaknesses.

Career, gender and diversity

Although one UCPH faculty was praised for its gender balance, the clear overriding tendency at UCPH indicates a need to focus more effectively on gender balance, clearer career paths, and diversity in recruitment within Faculty VIP.

Clear research strategy

The majority of faculties must hone the clarity of their research strategy and improve the visibility of their research strengths. UCPH is encouraged to intensify communication of research strengths and raise its profile in relevant scientific communities. Some of the peer review panels found that a clearer research strategy could improve opportunities for international collaborations in which UCPH is a preferred partner.

Interdisciplinary research

Despite a high degree of interdisciplinarity in some UCPH faculties, the majority of faculties could significantly increase their departmental, sectoral, and faculty collaborations. This interdisciplinarity can unlock doors to new fields of research.

Conclusion and plan of action

UCPH research demonstrates strong performance in terms of output, societal impact, and international collaborations inside and outside academia. Meanwhile, the university must intensify its efforts to overcome challenges relating to careers, gender and diversity, research strategies, and interdisciplinarity.

UCPH gained important and beneficial insight by conducting this research quality assessment. The self-assessments and the peer review panel reports enabled the departments and faculties to identify and explore their respective strengths and weaknesses, providing a strong foundation for

efforts to improve research quality. The strengths and weaknesses chronicled in the six executive summaries confirm the efficacy and expedience of UCPH's ongoing initiatives and efforts to improve the research quality.

Rooted in Strategy 2023, "Talent and Collaboration", and the individual department and faculty strategies, UCPH charted the following action plan to maintain its status as a university conducting research at the highest international level, and to position UCPH among the world's best universities in terms of research quality:

Careers, gender and diversity

One key area of focus in the UCPH Strategy 2023 is *Attracting, developing and retaining academic talent*. This headline comprises five underlying projects that aim to increase the university's focus on academic talent: 1) career processes for associate professors, 2) criteria for research career steps, 3) career development and clarification among young researchers, 4) recognition of excellence in teaching and 5) Equal treatment in recruitment, retention and career development.

Besides initiatives at the university level, several faculties are going to address issues pertaining careers, gender and diversity in the coming years. These initiatives include performance frameworks, the development of criteria for scientific staff, and the founding of a committee for gender and equality in research and management.

Research communication

To raise the international profile of researchers and strengthen the university's position internationally, UCPH must improve the clarity and reach of communication regarding research conducted at UCPH.

Some UCPH faculties have already formulated strategies for improving the visibility of research and promoting closer collaboration with foundations and political stakeholders. Alongside these faculty initiatives, UCPH has formulated a new branding strategy that aims to ensure a strong and clear profile. Initiatives under the branding strategy include communication courses for all academic staff, greater focus on showcasing how UCPH impacts and shapes the world around us, and intensified cross promotion efforts.

Interdisciplinarity

Heightened interdisciplinarity at UCPH will improve the university's capacity to help address many of the biggest societal challenges of our time. Therefore, UCPH is striving to further expand its already robust array of

collaborations transcending the boundaries of sectors/departments/faculties. These efforts include a strategic initiative under the Strategy 2023, whereby UCPH aims to “enhance internal staff mobility to support increased interdisciplinary collaboration”, and a new budget model that will “make financial management more flexible”³ for the sake of increased interdisciplinarity.

Infrastructure

UCPH is renowned for its state-of-the-art infrastructure, but retaining a spot among the elite international universities requires ongoing maintenance, renovation and expansion. UCPH is committed to dedicating the necessary resources at the faculty and university level to uphold our well-deserved reputation as a leading international university for research.

External funding

One key factor enhancing the quality of research at UCPH is the high level of external funding, which is a direct result of dedicated efforts by the faculties and especially by the researchers. However, the flipside of this coin is that external funding in some instances fails to cover all indirect costs, thus causing a drain on UCPH’s strategic resources. In connection with the new budget model, UCPH has launched a series of initiatives to improve the proportion of covered indirect costs.

This round of research assessment identified and confirmed existing strengths and weaknesses of UCPH, thus enabling efforts to further develop and improve the quality of research performed at UCPH.

To ensure alignment and comparability between this and the future assessment, UCPH will continue using the same (slightly adjusted) protocol and template for self-assessment.

In the coming years and until the next round of research assessments in 2022/2024, UCPH will endeavour to mitigate the most critical weaknesses through the initiatives detailed in this report. Interaction between initiatives at the university and faculty levels and department and researchers will enable UCPH to realise its vision of being among the world’s leading universities and conducting research of the highest international calibre.

³ University of Copenhagen, Talent and Collaboration, Strategy 2023