

ORU2020 Self-Assessment: Business Administration

This self-assessment document is intended to provide an overview of the research environment, the quality of research and the development plan for each Unit of Assessment (UoA).

Name of the UoA	Business Administration
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Describe briefly who has been engaged and how the work with this self-assessment has been carried out	The process started out in the so-called professor group consisting of five professors who together wrote a first draft. The draft was then sent to the department heads of the UoA for review, after which all other researchers and PhD-students were invited to read and comment on it. Final revisions were made by the UoA coordinator with help from the professor group.

1. The unit's research environment

1.1 Describe how the UoA is organised in terms of:

- *Sub-units/links to external organisations etc.*
- *Formal leadership (board, head[s], director[s] etc.)*
- *The extent of teaching responsibilities at both undergraduate and graduate level.*

During the period of assessment, the Business Administration UoA has been organized in terms of two formalized research milieus (Centre for Empirical Research on Organizational Control/CEROC, and The INTERORG Marketing Research Center), each comprising some 20 researchers/PhD-students and led by a program director (Jonas Gerdin and Christina Öberg, respectively).

The overall purpose of this subdivision of the UoA into smaller units is twofold. First, they work as important milieus where researchers who share the same research interest (e.g., in terms of issues related to intraorganizational management controls and interorganizational networks) can come together and discuss extant and future projects. Second, they work as 'platforms' based on which the research foci of the UoA can be communicated to external parties. After all, the term 'business administration' says little about what kind of research that is conducted and is less known in the international research community.

Note, however that these research milieus are not intended to work as 'closed silos' research-wise. Rather, cross-milieu cooperation between researchers is encouraged and this strive for cooperation also extends beyond the research milieus per se. Furthermore, and as described in more detail below, the UoA has only one higher seminar series which means that researchers from both milieus jointly discuss paper manuscripts, strategies for external funding, etc.

Since the Business Administration department has very few 'teaching-only' staff, all researchers at the milieus have teaching responsibilities at the undergraduate and/or graduate level.

1.2 List the UoA's main area(s) of research

CEROC:

- Performance management in compulsory school and academia
- Sustainability management and reporting
- Public sector management control
- Management control as systems and packages
- Financial accounting, auditing and accounting history

INTERORG:

- Industry evolution and deregulation
- Business models
- The sharing economy
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- Strategizing among firms and including internationalization
- Supply chain management
- Sustainable business and circular economy

1.3 Reflective analysis of the unit's research environment

Identifying whether current structures and processes create good conditions for high-quality research is an important step in this self-assessment. You are therefore asked to reflect on a number of relevant factors below.

1.3.1 Personnel and recruitment

- *How are you currently working to ensure your personnel and recruitment efforts contribute to high-quality research?*
- *What strengths and weaknesses do you see in your current personnel and recruitment strategy?*
- *How are equal opportunities, with regard to gender, ethnicity and age, ensured in matters relating to personnel and recruitment?*
- *Here you should also include reflections on career support and the development of competence.*

It is well known that Swedish business administration departments compete for lecturers, especially so in a few sub-disciplines, and to some extent we have had difficulties recruiting people within the accounting sub-discipline. Overall though, we have been fortunate enough to recruit a number of promising lecturers from several 'old universities' (e.g. Uppsala, Stockholm, Linköping and Umeå), newer ones (e.g. Skövde) and from abroad. We are very pleased with our external recruitments. They have generally been somewhat further into their career than our locally recruited lecturers, circa halfway to 'docent'/associate professor. They have considerably strengthened the quality of both our research and education.

We like to think that the outcomes of our recruitments are more than windfall profits. The way research is managed in our UoA is known at other academic institutions, and based on what our applicants say before and after they have been hired, this is something that comes across as rather attractive. To put it simple – independent and ambitious young researchers find it quite enticing to

pursue a career without towering 'research leaders' setting the course and deciding what is relevant and not. It is a way of life we believe in and something also other oftentimes find attractive. Especially when the development, induced by funding agencies, the government and vice-chancellors typically go in the opposite direction.

If we recruit someone looking for 'academic leadership' and clear footsteps to follow, our model can obviously have its drawbacks, e.g. in terms of difficulties in finding collaboration partners within the UoA. But we have not experienced that so far. The few who have left us have done so due to their family situation and/or due to the strict policy of Örebro University with regard to promotion to professor. This part of the university's career system thus delimits, rather than facilitates, our possibilities to build strong research environments over time.

When it comes to equal opportunities, our recruitments have been fairly successful in later years. The ratio of men and women recruited as lecturers is very even and we have also recruited a few lecturers born outside of Sweden. This said, however, Swedish citizens with an ethnic background other than Swedish are almost none.

The recently hired lecturers, also those on temporary employments, are offered to have one of the professors as 'coach' in their pursuit to establish themselves as researchers. That goes for both our locally recruited lecturers/researchers and those from other universities. As described above, the coaching is intended to support them to become self-sufficient researchers; able and willing to apply for funding and to publish without being dependent on senior researchers. We promote collaboration and the vast majority do collaborate, although not out of dependency. We do not want to employ cogs in a machine designed by a few. We want to hire designers, or at least future designers in becoming, keen to learn what that takes. The underpinning rationale behind this personnel recruitment and career support strategy will be dealt with next.

1.3.2 Leadership

- *How are you currently working to ensure that the leadership of your UoA contribute to high-quality research? Describe how the academic research leadership and the formal leadership (head of division and head of school) ("enhetschef" and "prefekt", in Swedish) affect this work.*
- *What strengths and weaknesses do you see in your current leadership strategy?*
- *How are equal opportunities, with regard to gender, ethnicity and age, ensured in matters relating to leadership?*

Drawing upon extant scientific knowledge, the research leadership of the UoA seeks to contribute to high-quality research by facilitating autonomous motivation—a form of 'academic freedom'—among research colleagues. The premise is that autonomous motivation tends to make colleagues engaged in research activities which are self-emanated and volitional and accompanied by feelings of autonomy and competence, and strong relatedness to colleagues within the UoA. And importantly, this is a type of leadership has received strong support from the head of division and the head of school during the whole period of assessment.

As a means of facilitating autonomous motivation (or academic freedom), we have not only intentionally toned down the reliance on 'top-down supervision' (see 1.3.1.), but also the use of output controls (i.e., to formally set and follow-up quantitative research targets such as the number

of high-esteemed publications and citations). The reason is that this latter way of exercising scientific leadership has been associated with so-called controlled motivation. A type of motivation which risks making colleagues satisfy the output targets in an 'instrumental' manner, thereby leading to research individualism, superficiality, and homogeneity. Instead, we seek to improve research quality, creativity, and collegiality by working mainly with input and process controls. As input controls in the form of strategic recruitments and attracting external research funding have been detailed in Sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.5, we here focus more on how we work with the research processes so as to contribute to high-quality research.

As mentioned above, perhaps the most important way of exercising scientific leadership in the broad sense is the bi-weekly higher seminars where researchers and PhD-students present and discuss their work-in-progress. At these seminars, we have an appointed discussant and, by tradition, the seminar climate is very developmental and quality-focused. These seminars are generally regarded as inclusive and therefore attract attendants of all kinds (e.g., in terms of different research orientations, female/male, senior/junior/PhD-students, Swedish-speaking/non-Swedish-speaking). Similar activities focused on improving scientific quality and creativity are also organized within the two research milieus and/or within smaller groups working on particular research projects. We also have a long tradition of collaborations between senior and junior colleagues within the UoA, and with (inter)national scholars as a means of improving our research processes and quality (see Section 1.3.4).

A potential weakness of this lack of top-down surveillance and follow-up can be a reduced focus on research productivity (see Section 1.4). It is also possible that a more top-down-oriented form of leadership—where research leaders to a larger extent decide how and what to study—could improve internal coordination and enable the swift (re-)allocation of intellectual and material resources to particular research topics (although, indeed, several such research topics have emerged naturally). It is also a matter of fact that all research leaders (professors and associate professors) are currently native-Swedish speaking, and all but one are men. It is difficult to say how such qualities of the current leadership affect research quality and creativity, but it is clear it is currently characterized by homogeneity rather than diversity.

1.3.3 Academic culture

- *How are you currently working to nurture a culture that is conducive to high-quality research? (e.g. with regard to open and respectful intellectual interaction, internal and external peer review, collegiality, creativity, ambition, freedom to define your research area etc.?)*
- *What strengths and weaknesses do you see in your current strategy for academic culture?*
- *How are equal opportunities, with regard to gender, ethnicity and age, ensured in matters of academic culture?*

In line with our 'academic leadership' described above, the right to take initiatives and the expectations to do so is a cornerstone of our academic culture. The newly recruited lecturer does not need to have a research application vetted by senior researchers in order to fit into a strategy, they can decide what working partners they want to have, internal or external. The same goes for publishing. The right to exercise this type of academic freedom is also reflected in our arenas, be it lunch tables, department meetings or seminars.

As briefly mentioned above, possible drawbacks of our academic culture are related to risks of fragmentation and as a consequence of that; research milieus with little in common and little to gain from cooperating. And, indeed, our research milieus probably cover broader fields than would be the case with research centres led by the type of 'academic leaders' celebrated in contemporary ideas of organizing research. But beneath that surface, both milieus have a solid foundation in the core theories of their respective empirical domains. The intense interaction in the whole UoA, within and between the two milieus, has so far created initiatives from below but without tendencies to fragmentation and seclusion. It is difficult to predict, but it could be the case that 'our model' would be more problematic if our milieus consisted of 2 x 35 instead of 2 x 20 people.

1.3.4 National and international collaboration

- *Describe your main collaboration partners, in the context of development of the UoA.*
- *What procedures are currently in place to establish and maintain both national and international collaborations and networks that contribute to high-quality research?*
- *What strengths and weaknesses do you see in your current collaboration strategy?*
- *How are equal opportunities, with regard to gender, ethnicity and age, ensured in collaborations?*

As for national collaborations, these gear towards institutes of technologies (Linköping, Chalmers, Royal Institute of Technology) and a number of business schools (SSE, Uppsala, etc.). The UoA has also hosted the major conference for Swedish academics called FEKIS.

As for international collaborations, the researchers in the UoA work actively with researchers around the globe and have also been visiting researchers at universities such as Seville, Firenze, Harvard, Stanford, Leeds, Freie Universität Berlin, and University of Technology, Sydney. The UoA has also organized a series of research seminars with international scholars from e.g., University of Exeter, Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Tampere, and Copenhagen Business School. Notably, this seminar series has resulted in several spin-offs, including one recruitment and several research collaborations.

Speaking about international collaborations, co-authorships are extensive with researchers in the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries, predominately. For example, UoA collaborates with scholars from Finland and Australia on digitalization. Researchers in the UoA have also been part of several EU proposals.

During the years, several international recruitments have been made with researchers and PhD-students natively brought up in Brazil, Iran, Finland, the UK, Germany and the Czech Republic. There is a dominance of female PhD-students in the group of international recruits.

While our national and international collaborations and recruitments have increased significantly during the assessment period, and also become more spread within the UoA, a weakness is that they are nevertheless strongly linked to a limited number of individuals and therefore vulnerable for staff changes.

1.3.5 Research funding

- *Please comment on the data provided regarding your current funding situation, including the balance between internal and external funding. Please describe your current strategy for research funding (at the UoA and/or sub-unit level) and how this contributes to high-quality research.*
- *What strengths and weaknesses do you see in your current strategy?*
- *How are equal opportunities, with regard to gender, ethnicity and age, ensured with your current strategy for research funding?*

The research funding data provided in the document 'Resources_Business Administration including scholarships' give rise to several observations. First, there has been a radical increase in research funding, from some 15 MSEK in 2015 to 29 MSEK in 2019. Second, this radical increase can almost exclusively be attributed to an increase in the external grants (from 6 to 16 MSEK). Third, the internal/external funding ratio in 2019 is 56% which seems substantially higher compared with the university as a whole (37%). Fourth, included in the external funding is an increasing amount of funding for PhD-students, as the internal funding for these have been significantly reduced.

Several reasons for this positive development can be identified. One such reason related to our focus on facilitating autonomous motivation/academic freedom is that the research conducted is rather broad, thereby opening up for various types of funders and different types of research grants. For example, we have attracted grants for everything from research on sustainability and business ethics to critical management studies, and from logistics to accounting history. We have also attracted grants for research conducted by means of various methods (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative) and for basic and applied research. The success of such a broad approach becomes evident not only in the large number of funders in the appended material (more than 20 different funders), but also in the different types of funding (ranging from funding from the Swedish Research Council and the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Healthcare, to The Knowledge Foundation and Vinnova). Another reason is that research funding is attracted by a large number of researchers. In fact, a majority of the researchers at the UoA actively and continuously apply for external research funding.

One of the strengths of our 'collective' ability to attract an increasing amount of external research grants, is that the time available for research increases also for those who do not have (a substantial amount of) research included in their employments. At the same time though, we certainly acknowledge that the amount of external funding that we have attracted over the last years, is not something that we can take for granted in the years to come. On the contrary, the increasing competition may imply we need to focus on a more limited number of research areas, in particular if we want to attract larger program grants offered by some research funders (as opposed to our current focus on attracting many smaller project grants). Also, it is important that we continually recruit researchers to balance an increasing amount of teaching in some areas. It has happened that the UoA has been forced to reject research funding for this reason.

1.3.6 Publications

- *Comment on your research output based on the provided bibliometric data.*
- *Are there any noticeable changes over time?*
- *What strengths and weaknesses do you see in your current publication strategy?*
- *How are equal opportunities, with regard to gender, ethnicity and age, ensured in your publication strategy?*

As suggested by the bibliometric analysis included in ORU2020, the UoA has (slightly) increased the number of publications during the period of evaluation (both in terms of 'full counts' and 'fractionalised counts'). Several observations can be made related to these numbers. One is that although the total number of publications have increased, there are large variations among the different types of publications included in the analysis. In fact, while the number of refereed journal articles have increased rather substantially in recent years (see Table 3 in the bibliometric analysis), the number of books, book chapters and popular science publications have gone in the opposite direction.

Another observation is the differences in coverage between Web of Science (WoS), Norwegian list (NSD), and Academic Journal Guide list (AJG, previously called the ABS-list). As can be expected, WoS and the AJG cover more articles than, for example, books or conference papers (while NSD to a larger extent covers also books and book chapters).

A third observation is that of those publications covered by the AJG, the number of publications in higher ranked journals (3-4*) have steadily increased when seen per three-year periods (see Table 11 and Figure 4). However, it is also worth noting that one reason as to why quite a few of the articles published are not covered by AJG is that several researchers within the UoA have published in fields not covered by this journal guide (such as education, informatics or psychology).

Behind these numbers lies a rather 'allowing' publication strategy within the UoA. As detailed in Section 1.3.2 above, this is based on the belief that it is important that all researchers feel autonomous, competent, and related in the sense that they feel support for their publication decisions from other researchers within the UoA. In other words, to avoid so-called controlled motivation and job-related stress, there are no requirements to publish only journal articles, let alone in outlets covered by WoS or in particular rating categories in the AJG. Having said that though, such formalized guidelines/incentives are provided by the university as such (e.g., when applying for internal funding and as a basis for the allocation of publication premiums), and to some extent by our AACSB-accreditation, which has arguably narrowed the publication focus also at our UoA.

One of the strengths that we see with this publication strategy is that it allows individuals and groups at different stages in their career to be part of, and contribute to, the ongoing debate within their respective fields. And, notably, this 'allowing' strategy has not decreased the ambition to publish in higher ranked journals, quite the opposite. However, there is a risk that the increasing focus on high quantity of WoS articles may come at the expense of more 'normal science' publications and fewer publications with the potential of radical-critical breaks with extant knowledge. This increased focus on WoS publications may also be the reason for the unfortunate declining number of popular science publications during the assessment period mentioned above.

1.4 Research productivity

- *Comment on data provided for your UoA concerning the research funding available and the research output.*
- *Describe differences between perceived time¹ and actual allocated time for research and how these differences may vary between gender and academic level.*
- *Describe how the time allocated for competency development is used in general terms for research purposes.*

From the UoA's point of view, the assumed positive connotation of 'research productivity' is not entirely straight forward. On the one hand, it is of course very important that taxpayers and other research funders 'get value for their money'. That is, it is crucial that their money is directed towards research areas of interest, and is used in an efficient and sustainable manner. On the other hand, however, a focus on research productivity can also lead to that we as researchers strive for the greatest measurable output (e.g., in terms of number of WoS publications) for the lowest risk and least effort. However, such way of thinking (which unfortunately is becoming more common within academia) is hardly beneficial if we want to address today's critical research challenges such as counteracting climate change.

That said, we make the following reflections regarding the research productivity at the UoA. On the one hand, we can conclude that output measured as the number of refereed journal publications produced by members of the unit increases by some 60% when comparing 2018-2019 (on average about 30 per year, Table 3) with the period 2013-2017 (on average 18 per year). At the same time, though, the amount of funding for research has almost doubled (see Section 1.3.5), thereby suggesting an overall decrease in research productivity (of course individual variations exist). On the other hand, however, we see a slight but steady increase of publications in so-called AJG 3-4* categories of journals, which suggests that more effort is required to become published. Perhaps even more importantly, several senior researchers at the UoA have in recent years been entrusted with other prestigious research-related tasks such as chief/associate/guest editorships at highly ranked journals and as organizers of large conferences/workshops (see also Sections 2.1 and 2.2 below). So, while our strive for publications in higher ranked journals, and being involved in more commissions of trust, can be seen as highly valuable for the UoA, they can also have negative effects on our overall research productivity. It should also be noted some funders, primarily Vinnova and the Knowledge Foundation (KK-Stiftelsen), require that quite a lot of time is being spent on activities which are not directly about conducting studies and/or writing research papers (e.g., to organize regular seminars for practicing professionals and writing follow-up reports to the funders). While such activities are most certainly seen as 'value-adding' for these stakeholders, they may negatively affect research productivity (at least when research productivity is seen purely from the perspective of certain forms of research output).

Additionally, perceived time vs. actual time for research is on average 85-90% which indicate that other tasks such as administration and teaching negatively affects research productivity. While there were no systematic differences between gender and academic level in the data collected, some female colleagues at the UoA have voiced a concern of being expected to take on a higher portion of the teaching, not the least on basic levels, when courses are understaffed.

¹ Please collect within the UoA the data needed to evaluate the time researchers in the UoA perceive that they actually have for their own research.

For competency development, the time available is explicitly used for research by research-oriented lecturers and professors, while others typically use those hours for course development work.

1.5 Strategic support from the university, if applicable

- *Describe how you have been able to utilise any of the university's research initiatives (e.g. after ÖRE2010, after ORU2015; Food and Health, Associate Senior Lecturers, Successful Ageing, Newbreed, research infrastructure initiatives 2017 and 2018, Senior Lecturers specialising in teaching and learning in HE, research within Teacher Education for Tomorrow etc.).*

The UoA has received support from four of the university's strategic research initiatives: Collaboration in technology development, Food and Health, Associated Senior Lecturers, and Senior Lecturers specializing in teaching and learning in HE.

The UoA participated as one of the pilots in the collaboration in technology development initiative testing the idea of a new form of senior position as 'samverkanslektor'. The UoA received funding for one such position with a focus on logistics and supply-chain management. However, after several recruiting attempts, we decided to withdraw the position due to a lack of suitable candidates.

Within Food and Health, the UoA received funding for the project *FoodBite* focusing on sustainable transports and consumption in the food value chain. The project was a collaboration between this UoA and the Computer Science UoA at the School of Science and Technology initiated in 2018. It was successfully completed in 2019. Apart from several research papers, a doctoral thesis is underway as a main deliverable from this project.

The UoA has benefitted from a recruitment of one Associate Senior Lecturer (post-doc) funded by the university's research initiatives. In brief, this lecturer has focused on management control issues in Swedish municipalities, including one recent study of how management control in Stockholm city has changed over a period of 25 years.

Finally, we have benefitted from a recruitment of Senior Lecturers specializing in teaching and learning in HE. In this role, this lecturer has, among other things, started a research project focusing on how perceived learning environment uncertainties among students in higher education may foster a surface approach to learning.

2. Quality of research

Although the quality of research is somewhat difficult to define concretely, it is related to four main aspects. *These emerged from a study that has examined quality with a view to create a multidisciplinary understanding of the generic dimensions of the quality of research in practice (Mårtensson et al., 2016²). ORU2020 utilises this approach and features the four aspects: the credibility of the research, its contribution, how well it is communicated, and how well it conforms to current standards. This section provides an opportunity for the UoA to reflect on the present status of its research in terms of these four aspects of quality.*

² [P. Mårtensson et al. / Research Policy 45 \(2016\) 593–603](#)

2.1 Credibility

This is a cornerstone of research quality that focuses on rigor, consistency, coherency and transparency to produce credible, reliable and valid findings.

- Describe how research credibility is shown in the UoA's research activities and output during 2015-2019 (e.g. high-impact publication, external research funding, invited keynote lectures, international commissions of trust or other measures of credibility in your area).
- Consider your strengths and weaknesses.

Several aspects can be seen as indicators of credibility in the research conducted at the UoA. Starting out with the notion of 'high impact publications', this is often illustrated by means of citations. While the total number of citations in absolute terms can be hard to interpret, the bibliometric analysis provided in ORU2020 shows that field-normalized citations (CNCI) on average amount to 1,2 during the assessment period (both in terms of full and fractionalized CNCI). This means that on average each publication attracts 20 percent more citations than the average in its respective category. It should be noted though that there is a rather large variance between individual publications (see Figure 9 in the bibliometric analysis). It can also be noted that when considering where the research output is published, a majority of the works is published in first quartile journals based on the impact factor of these journals. This is particularly interesting given the picture provided when analysing the research output by means of WoS and the AJG above.

Another indicator of credibility relates to the ability to attract external funding for research in competition with others. Again, from a credibility perspective, this is a particularly important and noteworthy aspect, for at least two reasons. First, the ability to attract external research funding is paramount as it underlies the formation of future research efforts which, in turn, enable an increasing stream of high-impact research output from the UoA. Second, and related, the importance of being able to attract such funding has increased during the period of assessment, not least due to how the government increasingly allocates funding for research via a performance-based research funding system. Arguably, the ability of the UoA to increase the ratio of grants versus direct funding from some 30 percent to more than 50, where large parts of the funding are attracted from large funders such as the Swedish Research Council and the Knowledge Foundation, is a clear manifestation of credibility.

A final aspect of credibility relates to various forms of assignments of trust that members of the UoA have held during the assessment period. This will be further elaborated in Section 2.2 below, but from a credibility perspective, it can be noted that during the period of assessment, researchers within the UoA have held various commissions of trust locally as well as nationally and internationally. Locally, such commissions of trust include that researchers from the UoA have acted as members of the advisory board at the business school, the faculty committee of education, the faculty board, the gender equality committee, and the university board. Nationally, such commissions of trust include that members of the UoA have acted as board members of FEKIS (The association of business administration higher education institutions in Sweden), The Swedish Association of Academic Writers, and The Swedish Higher-education Authority's committee (UKÄ) for evaluating successful pedagogy in higher education. Moreover, researchers at the UoA have been frequently engaged as reviewers for academic positions (14) and as external reviewers and/or members of examining committees for doctoral theses, at other universities (20). Internationally,

such commissions of trust include acting as editor-in-chief (1), associate editor (2), and guest editors for special issues (5). Members of the UoA have also acted as editorial board members at some 10 international journals, ad-hoc reviewers for almost a hundred different international journals, and as chairs/track-leaders at some ten conferences. Members of the UoA have also acted as board members of Nordic Academy of Management (NFF), and acted as faculty opponents and members of grading committees.

The overall impression thus is that the UoA's relative standing in terms of credibility is rather strong. And importantly, these achievements are not due to one or two key (senior) researchers. Rather, quite many researchers have made significant contributions which, in turn, decreases the risk of being severely affected if one or two key researchers decide to leave the UoA.

On the negative side, however, it can be noted that while the percentage of publications in so-called Q1 and Q2 journals is rather high (some 70%), there is no sign of increase over the assessment period (see Figure 11). Also, there is a long-term negative trend when it comes to the percentage of publications in top 1%, top 10% and top 25% when it comes to citations and CNCI (see Tables 15-16).

2.2 Contributory

This refers to the contribution of the research to the literature, the field, and society (forskningens bidrag till det egna fältet/området men också till samhället i övrigt, in Swedish).

- *Describe the main contributions from the UoA's research during 2015-2019 to the literature, the field or society, including originality, relevance and generalisability/transferability of the research.*
- *Comment on the UoA's other academic contributions (i.e. editorial work, peer review, research assessment, etc.).*
- *Consider your strengths and weaknesses.*

As suggested above (see e.g., Sections 1.1 and 1.3.5), the research conducted within the UoA is rather broad in the sense that it covers various types of research topics, approaches, and methodologies. This variation is also reflected in how the research contributes to various scientific fields.

Overall, the following 'unified efforts' can work as illustrative examples of such scientific contributions during the period of assessment. A first example covers four different projects involving more than ten researchers from the UoA, with a common interest in how an increased reliance on various forms of performance measurement systems to govern the educational sector, contributes to transform the identities of teachers/researchers. Apart from contributing to explain how come these systems may come to engender so-called 'performer identities', we elaborate on the type of conditions that can inhibit (or at least temporarily hold back) such changing identities. Notably, these results have not only contributed to the field of management accounting and control as such, but has also helped to bring a control perspective to the fields of educational research and business ethics.

A second example of 'unified efforts' is focusing on new ways of conducting business, a focus area which not only involves several members of the UoA (including several PhD students), but also scholars at Jönköping, Stockholm School of Economics, KTH, University of Sydney and researchers

located in the UK. In brief, this focus area engages in the front-edge of business development, while in parallel developing new digital research methods. Its foremost outputs are the across-universities and across-countries collaborations along with many publications in areas of marketing, organizational research and sustainability, and a presence in the national debate.

A third example involves a group of researchers from the UoA sharing a common interest in sustainable business and sustainable economy. They contribute to an increasing body of knowledge on circular economy, sustainable supply chains and sustainable business as well as with theoretical elaboration of the characteristics and functioning of a sustainable economy in general. Concepts such as degrowth, de-coupling and what can be called distributed control mechanisms are used to problematize and contribute to the development of the field. This group collaborates with researchers from other disciplines at the university as well as with colleagues at research institutions across Europe, US and Australia, as well as with industry and private sector actors.

In all these examples, various forms of research publications constitute a main source of contribution. As described above, however, many of the researchers at the UoA have also contributed through acting as editor-in-chief and associate/guest editors at leading journals. In a similar vein, many researchers at the UoA have contributed to research through acting as editorial board members, ad-hoc reviewers, and as chairs/track-leaders at conferences.

We believe that our focus on facilitating autonomous motivation/academic freedom is a major strength as it enables us to contribute to many different streams/disciplines of research. But then again, such research diversity can also be seen as a weakness. After all, a focus on a limited number of research areas could possibly increase our impact in these areas. Also, our academic contributions as editors and editorial board members are as of now limited to rather few individuals which makes us vulnerable to staff changes, at least in the short run.

2.3 Communicable

This aspect concerns knowledge transfer (including “tredje uppgiften”, in Swedish). It has to do with how accessible and understandable the research is, and how well the results reach various communities (research, professional and lay) not least the research-teaching link. In a broad sense, communicability deals with the impact of the research.

- *Describe which communities (academia, public sector, trade and industry and/or society as such) the UoA aims to impact, how well the research reaches these intended communities and how the transfer of knowledge is reflected (i.e. by citations, use in professional or educational contexts, keynote or expert assignments, media presence, or other measures applicable to your field)*
- *Consider your strengths and weaknesses.*

The UoA has a strong record of communication with several communities in academia, public sector and in the industry.

In academia, the UoA has impact on several research associations and networks such as NFF (Nordisk Företagsekonomisk Förening), FEKIS (Föreningen Företagsekonomi i Sverige), EGOS (European Group of Organisational Research) and the IMP (Industrial Marketing and Purchasing) Group, by being active board members, conference chairs, and track organizers. Also, as mentioned above, several

members of the UoA have acted as special, associate and editor-in-chiefs for highly respected journals, and the research conducted is cited reasonably well.

In the public sector, the UoA has had an impact on national and regional organisations in multiple sectors. In the logistics and supply-chain management sector through collaborations with Region Örebro County (RÖL) in *arranging Forum för Logistik*. This is a network of regional actors focusing on development issues and regional strategic positioning. In addition, there is ongoing collaboration with the office of the Örebro County Industry Officer (Örebro kommuns Näringslivskontor) and Business Region Örebro (BRO). The UoA is also been represented in the national R&D arena *CLOSER* which has a national mandate from the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Swedish Transport Administration (TrV) and Vinnova to facilitate research and development in the sector. In the education sector, the UoA has contributed by bringing a control perspective to the field.

The UoA also impacts the industry sector by way of participatory and collaborative research projects and activities. This research has been funded by, e.g. The Knowledge Foundation, Vinnova and The Swedish Retail and Wholesale Council (Handelsrådet), all requiring a high level of practical relevance and impact to grant funds. Several reports from Handelsrådet have been produced which are widely spread and adopted in the sector. In addition, books about E-Business and E-Retailing have gained significant traction in the sector.

However, the most significant impact is made in the project activities as such in collaboration with industry to investigate shared problems as knowledge and insight is translated across R&D- and Business Development functions in companies and the researchers at the UoA. This is achieved through meetings, seminars, workshops and other means of direct interactive knowledge sharing and translation. And, while its immediate impact is sometimes hard to estimate, it has the potential of being important in the longer perspectives and in indirect ways impossible to foresee ex ante.

This active collaborative research approach enables the integration of industry and research into the teaching of the UoA. Results are routinely used in teaching and research-based cases are used as teaching tools. Industry people also contribute to teaching by sharing their experiences by means of guest lectures. Research findings are increasingly also communicated by researchers serving as teachers in executive education programmes for industry and private sector companies. However, the executive education activities can be expanded and enhanced.

Research from the UoA is regularly cited in industry and sector wide journals such as *Aktuell Hållbarhet* and *Transport och Logistik* and researchers from the UoA serve as experts in juries and forums to bestow awards in sustainability, circular economy and sustainable food, to mention but a few. Some are featured in pod-casts and 'talks', and are active on various social media platforms using these to spread information on current research, but also aiming at being active voices promoting science-based knowledge in public debates and discussions, etc.

In addition, members of the UoA serve as experts in national organs, for example, as judge in Patent- och marknadsöverdomstolen and evaluators at the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ).

One of the main weaknesses is that the distribution of these activities across the personnel of the UoA is uneven. It is often the same researchers who are asked to comment on something or to be in a jury. While this may be due to seniority, this creates some vulnerability, and a more resilient approach is preferable in which a wider variety of people are given the opportunity to engage with

media and industry. While this is partly out of our hands, the UoA seek to broaden the participation among its researchers and scholars and also to enculture the younger researchers into communicating with the wider society in many different ways. However, this enculturation is at present rather ad hoc.

2.4 Conforming

Quality research should conform to certain standards in terms of ethics, regulations, sustainability and morals.

- *Describe how the UoA works to ensure that the research conducted within the unit aligns with ethical and other standards and regulation.*
- *Describe how doctoral students develop knowledge about ethical and other standards and regulations.*
- *Consider your strengths and weaknesses.*

Usually, research at this UoA does not need ethical approval beforehand as it does not handle sensitive and personal data. However, if this is the case, or if we suspect that we may get such data as a byproduct of a data collection, we apply for ethical approval, although it is rare. This said, however, ethical assessments are always done in relation to our research. And, in line with the leadership approach adopted by the UoA, ethical conduct and moral standing is something that is encultured among researchers and usually discussed in the smaller research team in relation to specific activities or issues of relevance. At a minimum, we adhere to the standards and guidelines issues by the Swedish Research Council. In this way, it is also encultured into our junior researchers.

Many of our doctoral students follow the campus courses in research ethics which, at times, have had a slight tilt towards scientific misconduct in general and to the exposed status patients and clients might have as the objects of research in medicine, clinical psychology, etc. More subtle problems, which not necessarily qualify as scientific misconduct, is more often a theme that appears in the dialogue between the supervisors and the doctoral student. Questions about what is proper, reasonable, trustworthy etc., might be experienced as rather pressing by the doctoral student, e.g. when studying internal conflicts or controversial changes in organizations. In such cases, it is important that the supervisors engage in the concerns of the doctoral student and respond, even though it is not always the case that the predicament of the doctoral student can be solved by applying a rule-like logic.

3. Development plan for the UoA

Because future development is a central part of ORU2020, this section provides an opportunity to describe the capacity that your UoA has for maintaining and enhancing quality research. While sections 1 and 2 focused on what has been accomplished over the past five years and on your current situation, this section is concerned with development potential, i.e. what might be accomplished in the next five years. Such a plan underscores the UoA's capacity for development by outlining strategies of why and how the plan will lead to advancements. Development is not simply doing "more" research. It involves a vision for using the current situation (for your UoA) as a platform and planning for future activities that will enrich the quality of the research.

Describe your development plan for the UoA for the upcoming five-year period. This might include specific plans for each sub-unit. Focus on areas in need of development identified in sections 1 and 2 as well as any other areas with potential for further development, underscoring each point's priority. Indicate what support (internal and external) is needed in order to realise the plan.

3.1 The vision

Describe the vision for the UoA and/or its sub-units in five years.

What would you like to maintain and what would you like to improve/develop?

The self-assessment provided in Sections 1 and 2 points to several strengths and areas for improvements that should form the basis for future work within the UoA. If we start with perceived strengths, we should seek to uphold or even amplify the following ones during the upcoming five years.

To begin with, we believe it is worthwhile pursuing a rather informal culture and leadership that seeks to foster feelings of autonomous motivation, academic freedom and organic development. Again, we believe that this fosters research quality, creativity and collegialism while counteracting job-related stress and the development of an 'academic performer identity', i.e. an identity which above all stresses the strive for the greatest measurable output (e.g., in terms of number of WoS publications) for the lowest risk and least effort.

Arguably, such an orientation is also important if we want to avoid deterioration of a second strength that we want to further amplify in the coming years, namely the strong link between research and education. That is, in an academic landscape that becomes increasingly output-oriented, it is important to keep cultivating a research culture that does not segregate research from teaching, but rather works to integrate these in various ways.

A third strength that we arguably should seek to develop further in the upcoming years is our ability to attract an increasing amount of external research funding. And arguably, this ability of ours is related to our strive towards strengthening a research environment where individual units/groups experience that they can thrive and flourish depending on their particular interests and expertise. Because again, our ability to attract external grants is neither entirely dependent upon the work of one or two research 'stars', nor focused on a very narrow set of research topics/questions. Rather, it is our multiplicity that has enabled several grants from more 'council oriented' funders like Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Swedish Research Council, and more 'practice impact-oriented' funders like the Knowledge Foundation and Vinnova.

A fourth strength that we wish to pursue is the collaboration with the international research community. One indication of this strength is the many assignments as editors, editorial board members, and peer-reviewers at highly regarded international journals. Another indication is the many research collaborations, including shorter or longer 'sabbaticals' at different schools located in quite many countries.

As noted above, the self-evaluation conducted in Sections 1 and 2 also highlights several areas for improvement. One such area is related to the number of citations. Indeed, such number is far from a perfect measurement of research quality as it may be the result of 'strategic publishing' where research is increasingly becoming homogenized to fit with 'normal science' areas where discussion

circles are large. Also, the overall number of citations measured in terms of field-normalized CNCI seem satisfactory since, on average, each publication attracts 20 percent more citations than the average in its respective category. This said, however, the number of citations is a crude indicator of the UoA's impact on the research community/ies to which we want to contribute. And, there is a long-term negative trend for the UoA as a whole, e.g. measured in terms of number of top 1%, 10% and 25% publications (again, see Figure 6).

Another area of improvement relates to the practical impact of research above and beyond that which materializes within particular research projects. An indication of this is that the number of popular science publications and contributions to public debate on key topics are decreasing during the period of study from a rather low level (see e.g. Tables 4 and 5). Another indication is the low level of executive education focused on particular industries and/or topics related to our research expertise.

Yet another area of improvement is to decrease the UoA's vulnerability to staff changes. While a strength is that we are not dependent upon one or two 'research stars', it nevertheless is the case that far from all researchers at the UoA have international collaborations, attract external research funding on a regular basis, uphold positions as editors and editorial board members at highly regarded journals, and take an active part in industry and public sector networks.

Finally, if not a weakness as such, a challenge in the future is to balance the encouragement of autonomous motivation and academic freedom with a feeling of unity and belongingness to the UoA as a whole. After all, in an academic landscape that becomes increasingly competitive, it is more important than ever to maintain or even strengthen a research environment where individual units/groups experience that they can thrive and flourish depending on their particular interests and expertise, but in so doing they also feel that they have a responsibility for the development of UoA as such. This 'need for balance', is further accentuated as we grow organically and to a larger extent rely on international recruitments thereby potentially contributing to more heterogeneity within the UoA.

3.2 The plan

Describe how you plan to realise the vision.

Please use the same structure as in 3.1 above.

As described above, a first strength of the UoA that we want to amplify further during the coming five years is our focus on informal culture and leadership so as to foster feelings of autonomous motivation and academic freedom. In so doing, we see it as important to continue to work primarily with input controls (e.g., by means of good recruitments) and process controls (e.g., by means of recurrent research seminars and collaboration between juniors and seniors). This said though, and given that we are currently experiencing an increasing 'competitive and performative' focus in contemporary academia (including within our own university), output controls such as the recurrent follow-ups of WoS publications and citations are increasingly affecting research activities as our UoA. Hence, it is important to create a form of 'zone of protection' that can help to shield the research environment from being too dominated by the whims and wills of external interests, as currently

materialized by e.g. research/er performance ranking devices and university administrators. That is, we must continue to foster an 'allowing' discourse.

Note, however, that this intended toning down of output controls within the UoA does not imply that we in any way—now or in the future—should discourage researchers from publishing in well-established journals and publishing houses. On the contrary, it is of greatest importance that our research is disseminated through channels which are well read among the scholars to whose research we want to contribute. And, notably, the bibliometrics reported above shows positive trends both in terms of number of peer-reviewed publications and publications in higher ranked journals (again, see Figure 4 in the bibliometric report). This said, however, it is important to also in the future stay focused on research contents rather than on 'counts', not least through thinking through how we talk about research achievements and quality.

Also, while we should continue to encourage our researchers to exercise their academic freedom, we should also facilitate the formation of larger groups of researchers focused on a particular topics, methods, theories or the like. The premise is, that such joint focus is likely to propel better research and increased possibilities to attract research grants, both internal and external. Again, however, such formations of research teams should be based on mutual interest and benefit, not on coercion underpinned by resource dependence.

The formation of groups and teams is arguably also important for our further efforts to keep a strong link between research and teaching. In fact, while there are a number of a formal requirements at the university level to ensure such a strong link (including that all teachers are expected to be active researchers and that those who receive internal research funding should be engaged in at least 20 percent teaching), we believe it is in and through an active 'collegium' (kollegium) that this link is materialized and strengthened. That is, there needs to be a number of active forums where teachers/researchers with different experiences can meet to discuss, reflect upon, and test their arguments about their work—regardless of whether it relates to research or teaching—that these can be integrated. Apart from sustaining the higher research seminar series referred to above, it is therefore also important to ensure that questions related to the research-teaching nexus are regularly a part of the agendas of various collegial meetings.

As described above, yet another strength that we want to amplify in the upcoming five years, is our ability to attract external research funding. Again, part of the past 'success' in this respect is due to that our different types of research orientations enable us to apply from many, very different research funders. However, competition is becoming fiercer. Furthermore, the UoA has so far focused on attracting many minor grants ranging from a couple of hundred thousand SEK to some six millions. However, at least in some areas we have during the past years built the foundation necessary for competing for significantly larger grants. In particular, this applies to grants from the Knowledge Foundation where we have attracted several so-called HÖG-grants which is the smallest type of grants from this particular funder (max. four millions). However, after successfully completing several such projects, the likelihood to be granted so-called Synergy-funding (max. ten million) is significantly increased. So as a means of improving the likelihood of attracting such grants, the UoA should try to ensure that a few individuals and at least one research group has taken part of the so-called KoVe-program developed by Grants office (focused at researchers and groups who wants to 'take the next step'). Of course, we should also continue to improve the quality and competitiveness of our other applications for external grants by, for example, having research seminars focused on writing successful applications for external funding.

Yet another strength described above is our different forms of collaborations with the international research community, such as editorships and editorial memberships at research journals and paper co-authorships. A key to further strengthen and broaden this quality within the UoA is to encourage participation in different forms of international collaborations. While the attendance at international research conferences can typically be funded by the UoA, longer stays at international universities and business schools (both for experienced researchers and PhD students) require external funding. In other words, issues related to increased international collaborations must be taken into account when applying for external funding. Of course, we should also (with the help of Grants Office) apply for scholarships or the like which are explicitly focused on facilitating international research collaboration.

As noted in Section 3.1. above, one area for improvement relates to the decreasing number of citations. Based on previous writings in the self-assessment it should be clear that we do not see the number of citations as an end in itself. However, if seen as an indicator of the quality of our research, we envisage that the decreasing trend could be dealt with in a number of ways. First, we need to continue our efforts to recruit promising researchers, as these will help ensure that, at least in the long run, the UoA will continue to produce research with high quality. Importantly though, and not least because of the difficulties to recruit within one or two of the sub-disciplines, it is also important to ensure that we develop our own 'future research leaders' through, for example, our PhD-program and mentoring programs. In the former case—i.e. when it comes to the PhD-program—a particular challenge that we need to address relates to the funding of a sufficient number of PhD-students to ensure an even flow, and a 'critical mass', of students (see discussion above about how to increase external funding). Second, together with the university management, we need to find ways to retain those associate professors that leave us just because they cannot be promoted to full professors. Again, this part of the university's career system clearly delimits our possibilities to build strong research environments which, over time, also has clear effects on output measures such as the number of publications and citations. Third, and finally, we need to continue to work with various forms of quality enhancements regarding the research currently conducted. Again, such efforts include having an active research seminar series, the encouragement of national and international collaborations, efforts to increase the external research funding etcetera. Arguably, while it may take some time before the effects of such efforts are materialized, they all constitute important leading indicators for outcome measures such as the number of publications and citations.

As noted above, another area for improvement relates to the practical impact of our research above and beyond that which materializes within particular research projects. In particular, it seems important to turn around the negative trend for popular science publications, including 'critical debate articles'. This is a tricky task as the university's internal systems for allocating research funding to lecturers (so-called 'rörlig resurs') essentially only consider the number of WoS publications. So again, we must continue to work on fostering a form of 'zone of protection' that can help to shield the UoA from being too dominated by such external demands.

Finally, and related to the issue of finding a balance between the interests of individual researchers/sub-units and those of the UoA as such, it is important to identify activities where the interests are either clearly overlapping (and hence can be strengthened) or where a fruitful interplay between them can be fostered. Such efforts are, of course, overlapping with various other aspects in the plan, so here we only shortly draw attention to a few examples of such activities. For example, we need to take measures to enable growth/maintaining competence within different sub-units.

Arguably, this is not only pivotal for the different sub-units as such, but also for the UoA e.g. in terms of being able to give master and PhD courses within our areas of expertise. Another example relates to the support provided for (inter)national collaborations. While this primarily relates to individual researchers/research groups, it is of utmost importance also for the overall research environment of the UoA. Yet other examples include the upholding of forums for internal collaboration, such as holding internal seminars, organizing common conferences such as the upcoming NFF conference, giving courses where researchers from different sub-disciplines work together, and writing larger research applications for 'program/environment funding. Arguably, such activities should help ensure that new/larger 'network links' are established within the UoA, and hence, that it is held together as one unit.

3.3 Support needed to realise the plan

Describe the support (internal and/or external) needed to realise the plan.

Please use the same structure as in 3.1 and 3.2 above.

The need for support to realise the plan has, at least to some extent, manifested itself in the plan as such as well as in the other parts of the assessment. Below, we summarize and further elaborate on the most important needs.

One crucial issue that has surfaced several times in this self-assessment relates to recruitments. Indeed, this is an area where we already receive a high degree of administrative support (e.g. from the personnel department). However, given the difficulties to recruit within some sub-disciplines, due to a high competition for a few candidates, it would facilitate substantially if we were able to, once and a while, offer better terms than the standard solution.

Another such issue relates to the lack of possibilities to be promoted to full professor. Again, this is not only important for future recruitments, but also for being able to retain those who have, for example, been strategically recruited with the potential to become 'future research leaders'. To avoid a 'brain drain' in the long run, we believe it is strategically important to remove this 'ceiling'.

Yet another issue that relates to funding, concerns the strategy for providing strategic resources within the university. As of now, the internal systems for 'rörlig resurs' favour more experienced researchers (who have many WoS publications). But to address the perceive imbalances within the UoA described above (e.g., that most senior researchers are men and native-Swedish speaking), there need to be a stronger focus on junior researchers.

The funding of PhD students is an issue that has, to a large extent, been submitted to individual units/researchers within the university. Potential long run effects of this are that certain types of PhD projects (such as conceptually or critically oriented ones) will be 'crowded out' in favour of more industry-specific and applied types of projects. To avoid this, we believe it is strategically important that the university retakes a broader responsibility for funding PhD students.

It is also of uttermost importance that the university system for co-funding (medfinansiering) of research projects in cases where the funder does not pay full overhead is very transparent and

'generous'. If not, there is a risk that we need to turn down external funding of research projects and PhD-students.

Finally, we need help from Grants Office, in particular in terms of access to their KoVe program mentioned above.