

ORU2020 Review Report: Culinary Arts and Meal Science (CAMS)

Unit of Assessment: Culinary Arts and Meal Science (CAMS)

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1. QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Is the environment well organised to promote quality research?

The research environment consists of (2) professors, (9) senior lecturers, (1) associate senior lecturer, (1) lecturer, (1) researcher, and (5) PhD students. A research unit consisting of 21 scholars (including both seniors and junior scholars) is not a large unit, which of course comes with some limitations. The unit is led by the head of subject and governed by the head of the School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts and Meal Science.

The environment is well organised to promote research. Staff meetings (monthly), supervisors' meetings (one per semester), and seminars (3-4 per semester) serve as platforms for the discussion on research and the PhD education.

PhD students have welcome-, planning-, middle- and final seminars as well as more frequent PhD seminars (one or twice a month). The PhD students also have two mandatory courses in CAMS guaranteeing a close connection to the research environment.

A PhD program consisting of five PhD students is also rather small. Studies have shown that groups of ten or more PhD students work much better than PhD programs consisting of fewer than ten PhD students. However, as pointed out during the meeting with the unit, the PhD students at CAMS are part of researcher schools and other collaborations that allow them to collaborate with broader groups of PhD students interested in similar topics.

The research of CAMS is organised in four distinct research groups:

- SenseLab – sensory experiences for the future
- Social and cultural perspectives on meals
- Learning and Teaching in Hospitality, Culinary Arts, and Meal Science
- Sustainable work life in the hospitality industry

The research groups complement each other. They are distinct enough to allow the organisation of research but similar enough to enable cross group collaboration.



The research groups lack formal leaders at the moment and have instead contact persons. A more formalized leadership of the research groups would be beneficial if the research groups are to work as organising units. This is something that CAMS is aware of and is also planning to move forward with.

Largely missing is also a supporting organisational structure around grant application writing. The self-assessment report indicates that there are no institutionalised grant application development and reviewing seminars, no shared application/call calendar, and few efforts are made to support and coordinate grant application writing at the moment. This is an important area of improvement.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that the move from the Faculty and Humanities and Social Sciences to the Faculty of Business, Science and Engineering has required some adjustment. Different research demands and different funding rules have proved difficult for CAMS.

1.2 Are the main research areas appropriate for the unit and its development?

The research areas are appropriate for the UoA. The research focus of CAMS is on the interdisciplinary field of food/meals and hospitality. The research conducted at CAMS is interesting, innovative and methodologically well developed.

The research groups are organised around different but interrelated areas enabling the development of distinct strands of CAMS research that also can be combined when called for (for example larger research programs, grant applications or specific publications). The unit has a diverse and interesting portfolio of research projects.

However, there is need to reflect upon the future focus of CAMS. Do some research groups need to be prioritized? Are there subjects or competences missing from CAMS research environment that needed to be secured in the future? These are difficult and often politically charged questions that nevertheless need to be discussed.

Also, while there are some exceptions, the majority of the research conducted is practical, managerial and, at times, normative in character. While there is a need for this research it could be complemented with more problematizing, theoretically focused research that addresses the underlying social and cultural mechanisms driving and shaping food production and consumption practices.

Finally, a research area or theme that could be further developed is that of sustainability. While there are projects that deal with sustainability and many of the publications produced by CAMS scholars touch upon sustainability issues, there is room for development. Much of the contemporary research on food production and consumption is preoccupied with issues of sustainability. CAMS could do more to (explicitly) engage in these discussions and address



and problematise the understanding of sustainability from the different perspectives of the research groups. This could also help build a platform to apply for grants and develop new collaborations.

1.3 Please comment on the unit's reflective analysis of their environment.

Do the structures and processes create good conditions for high-quality research with regards to personnel, leadership, academic culture, national and international collaborations?

While, as mentioned above, the research unit is well organized, there are a number of areas regarding recruitment, career development, and collaboration that need to be addressed.

Securing a continuous recruitment of PhD students is crucial both, as the self-assessment report makes clear, to provide senior lecturers the opportunity to supervise but also because PhD students are often a vital and vitalizing element of a research environment. While external grants could play a part in the funding of PhD students it should not be the only source of funding. Internal funding of PhD students is a must for most environments to maintain a stable PhD program.

Improving the recruitment processes and attractiveness of CAMS is a priority, as acknowledged in the self-assessment. More needs also to be done to improve the attractiveness of the PhD positions announced. Calls aimed at relevant and popular topics with the potential to attract a larger pool of applicants could be a way to achieve that.

Also important is providing current staff with the opportunity to develop as researchers so they can be promoted to associate professors (Docent) and full professors in the not-too-distant future. This is key to develop an open and productive academic culture that will enable the production of quality CAMS research.

Mentioned in the self-assessment is also the need to develop the visiting professor program and use these positions more strategically as to benefit junior staff but also grant application writing and network building.

It is clear that CAMS has developed collaboration, both nationally and internationally, but does not have a formulated strategy for how to strategically develop collaborations. More could be done to develop CAMS as a key partner and node of food and hospitality research in Sweden and internationally.

Please provide specific comments on the unit's research funding, publications and productivity.

CAMS has received very few external grants in the last five years. This is, as previously mentioned, an important area of improvement. Food research is relatively well funded and there are numerous opportunities. FORMAS and MISTRA, for example, have a number of

foods focused calls, relating both to the production and consumption of food and often linked to sustainability issues. FORTE is a possible funding agency for the work of hospitality workers (and has funded that type of research in the past). There are numerous EU calls focused on food (such as the previous SUSFOOD calls). In addition, food and hospitality can be used as an empirical field to discuss other issues of relevance allowing scholars from CAMS to apply to more theoretically driven calls made by for example VR or RJ.

CAMS has between 2013 and 2019 published 24 peer review papers, 4 books (1 peer reviewed) and 13 book chapters (4 peer reviewed) as well as a number of conference papers. NSD coverage is 100 % for peer review publications and high for WoS (83%) (these numbers drop when considering all publications but that is a not a meaningful analysis since the category “all publications” include a number of popular science papers as under the heading “articles in journals”).

The research productivity of the unit could be improved. While the number of total publications is substantial, the number of refereed per review papers is somewhat low in relation to the (mainly internal) research funding of the unit and the number of researchers on staff. However, there seems to be a trend towards more peer review papers (2018-2019), something the self-assessment attributes to the formation of research groups.

2. QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH

2.1 Credibility. Does the research environment produce creative and methodologically sound research of high quality? Please identify strengths and weaknesses.

CAMS research is very methodologically diverse. From sensory methods to observations and text analysis. The research conducted here is both methodologically rigorous and innovative. Few research units have such a wide range of methodologies at their disposal. This is an important strength.

However, while methodologically strong, much of the research conducted at CAMS seems to be less theoretically well developed. There is a strong track record of establishing and working with key concepts such as the conscious meal and the meal experience. Nevertheless, some of the studies seem less anchored in theoretical discussions and more practical in nature. There is now a wide range of theoretical resources used to conceptualise both food production and consumption (for example within sociology food) and also hospitality work (for example within organisation studies or work studies). More could be done here to draw on and also contribute to these broader theoretical developments.



2.2 Contribution. *Does the research make a contribution to the literature, the field and/or society? Please identify strengths and weaknesses.*

While the scientific contribution may not be strong by common standards (number of high ranked journal articles and citations), the research profile and composition of the UoA is well positioned to improve its impact in the future: a specific combination of interdisciplinary scholars, focused on a number of hospitality and related food issues, and with several ECRs (Early Career Researchers).

However, the type of scientific contribution made can be reflected upon. Connected to the discussion above, the research conducted at CAMS makes a clear methodological contribution, developing innovative methods for a wide range of topics from brand measurements to sensory aspects. The broader theoretical contributions are however not as clear. More theoretically ambitious projects that go beyond the practical and managerial issues would be an appropriate complement. It is important to keep in mind that the theoretical and the practical are not mutually exclusive.

The contribution to society is clear with several of the senior scholars engaged in public debate and discourse on food related issues. Several of the projects active in the UoA are also linked to societal benefits. In addition, the research produced at CAMS is closely integrated with the teaching at the school of Hospitality Culinary Arts and Meal Science. These are important strengths.

However, as the self-assessment makes clear, more could be done to engage with the industry. There are today several research projects involving the industry, most notably in the field of sensory research. But there is also room for improvement. The research that CAMS does has clear applicability.

2.3 Communicative. *Is the research appropriately communicated to the scientific, professional and lay communities? Please identify strengths and weaknesses.*

CAMS scholars write papers, book chapters, books as well as popular science pieces. The participate in and also organise conferences and workshops.

Communication research to the general public is one of the strengths of CAMS. Several of the researchers are actively engaged in public discourse on food and hospitality issues, writing for example, popular science articles.

2.4 Conforming. *Are there sufficient routines for ensuring conformity with standards for ethics, sustainability and other regulations?*

The environment ensures that ethical standards are implemented, also training doctoral students in observing respective regulations and research ethics.

3. THE UNIT'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Please provide feedback as a critical friend. The focus should be on how the unit may best develop its research and enhance quality over the next 5-year period.

3.1 Observations and analysis

Please provide observations, reflections and analyses regarding the unit's development plan. You should include relevance of the plan (Is the plan realistic with a focus on an important and clear path forward? Are there sufficient resources and organisation for meeting the unit's goals?) and highlight strong areas that can be enhanced as well as areas in need of development.

The plan proposed is realistic and addresses the main weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and also corroborated by the evaluation team's analysis.

The focus on developing grant applications by, among other things, compiling and analyzing the unsuccessful grant application, involving external partners in discussions regarding future research grants, and enlisting the help the Grant office is a great suggestion.

Similarly, the emphasis on developing visiting professor program and the development of research communication through active conference participation and hosting seems like an adequate response to the weakness identified in the self-assessment.

However, the needed resources to put the plan into action hinges on the unit's ability to secure both internal research funding (for PhD and visiting professors for example) and external funding (to increase research time and output). This is a possible risk.

Also, a better-defined strategy regarding how to attract staff as well as a clearer understanding of what types of competences are needed to develop the research environment is needed.

3.2 Recommendations

Please provide suggestions for what the unit should focus on and how improvements might best be realised.

Discuss and develop the research focus of CAMS

Sustainability could be a key topic for CAMS research and much can be accomplished in this field applying the unique research approaches of the research unit. This can also be an era that allows for cross-research group collaboration.

In addition, we also see the need to complement the often practical, technical, and applied research approach at CAMS with more theoretically driven understanding of the social and cultural mechanisms shaping food production and consumption, engaging, in the processes more with the broader international research field of food studies. To be clear, this type of research already exists at CAMS, it is more a matter of developing this strand.

Continue developing the research groups

The work done with the research groups seems to have contributed to the environment and the plan for these groups is promising.

Improve recruitment processes and strategies

Continue on the path towards more internationalisation and work to improve recruitment strategies and processes. Broader themes when announcing positions could be one way to accomplish this.

Develop organisational structures and procedures supporting grant application writing

This is a key area of improvement. There is a need to develop and institutionalise grant writing routines. Grant application workshops, a shared yearly grant schedule, visiting professors with a focus on grant application writing, and enlisting the assistance of the Grants Office are a few of steps that can be taken to accomplish this.

Increase productivity by supporting peer review paper writing

While there is clearly a need to improve both research productivity and impact, the strategy when moving forward needs to be anchored in and adapted to the aims and goals of the CAMS unit. A journal target list that includes both high ranked journals and developing journals within the CAMS field is one example of how to accomplish this.

Recurring paper writing workshops, focused on the practicalities of paper writing, could also be part of a supporting infrastructure aimed at improving research productivity. These types of workshop useful for all scholars but especially beneficial for Early Scholars Careers scholars.

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4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Please summarise your review and provide a closing statement.

CAMS is an interesting research unite with a unique combination of competence. Combining their different disciplinary backgrounds and research competence, CAMS scholars approach food and hospitality – and in particular the meal experience – from different vantage points producing both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research of high quality.

As both the self-assessment report and the analysis of the evaluation team make clear, there are number of areas that are in need of improvement. CAMS however shows great potential and is uniquely positioned to take on many of the challenges that are focal at the moment in food and hospitality studies. To accomplish this, the unit needs to continue developing its organisations and routines, secure external funding, and be willing to discuss and also to some extent adapt or complement its research focus. Also crucial for CAMS to achieve its potential is support from the faculty and/or the university to fund PhD students, developing the visiting professor program and recruit new members to expand the research groups of CAMS. A recommendation is therefore that ORU engages in a dialogue with the UoA to discuss the needs of CAMS and what can be done to support the units progress.