

## Summary of the report *Research and Collaboration Support at Uppsala University – 36 Proposals for Change* (Reg. no UFV 2023/321).

### Terms of reference for the Inquiry

On 21 February 2023, the University Director adopted terms of reference for an inquiry into research and collaboration support at Uppsala University (UFV 2023/321). The aim of the inquiry is to draw up proposals for an efficient and effective organisation of research and collaboration support for management and researchers, serving the whole University. The organisation must be designed to meet the needs of stakeholders in the short and long term.

The inquiry encompasses the following components:

- Analysis of current needs and survey of current roles and responsibilities.
- Long-term objectives of research and collaboration support.
- If possible, proposals for several alternative solutions, one of which is recommended by the consultant.

### Background

The University Administration provides support to researchers and managers in the areas of external research relations, collaboration, innovation, research funding and research infrastructure. Support functions exist in several parts of the University.

At present there is a certain lack of clarity concerning what these support functions are intended to deliver, to what extent and to which stakeholders. Changes in the world around us and in the needs of different stakeholders are making new demands of research and collaboration support.

### Starting points and limitations

This inquiry focuses primarily on support associated with collaboration, innovation, research infrastructure and external funding of research.

The inquiry concentrates on divisions in the University Administration that provide support in research and collaboration. The inquiry will deal principally with research and collaboration support provided by Uppsala University Innovation Partnership Office and Uppsala University Innovation, along with relevant parts of the Faculty Office for Science and Technology, the Faculty Office for Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty Office for Medicine and Pharmacy, the Planning Division and the Division for Internationalisation. Other divisions that provide support in research and collaboration may also come into consideration.

The inquiry has a remit to analyse how the operations concerned can best collaborate to further enhance deliveries to management and researchers.

One limitation for the work of the inquiry is that its proposals must not inherently lead to higher costs or demand increased resources.

### Consultant's report and proposals

The consultant, Karin Röding, submitted her report *Research and Collaboration Support at Uppsala University – 36 Proposals for Change* to the University Director on 31 May 2023. The structure of the report is described below (chapters 1–10). Chapter 11, which contains the consultant's proposals, is reproduced in full.

## The contents of the report

Chapter 1 describes the inquiry's terms of reference including starting points and limitations. It also describes the inquiry's working methods. The inquiry is based on an analysis of various policy documents and previous inquiries, and on interviews with selected researchers and heads of department from the three disciplinary domains, relevant heads of operations, administrative directors, heads of division and heads of unit, and where relevant members of staff in the University Administration. Junior Faculty was offered the opportunity to meet the consultant and sent a written response when the interview had to be cancelled. As directed by the terms of reference, the consultant has held interviews with the employee organisations. The consultant has had conversations with approximately 75 individuals at the University; one or two people have participated in two interviews because they have multiple roles. In all, there were 34 interview sessions.

Chapter 2 contains an account of the overall objectives, development goals and strategic priorities set out in *Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies* (UFV 2018/641) and the University Administration's plan for their implementation. Chapter 3 lists background material of particular interest for the inquiry. Chapter 4 contains a description of units with roles and responsibilities in research and collaboration support. The units are described in terms of their tasks and staffing, and in other respects. Chapter 5 describes the advisory boards for research, collaboration and internationalisation and the Research Infrastructure Board. This chapter also contains an account of the Vice-Chancellor's management meetings.

Chapter 6 presents the results from the interviews conducted by the inquiry. The results are presented in aggregate form for the following groups: researchers and heads of department in the three disciplinary domains; Junior Faculty; heads of research support units at the faculty offices and the head of the Unit of Strategic Research Support (Planning Division); 'functional deans' in research, collaboration and research infrastructure; vice-rectors and administrative directors; UU Innovation Partnership Office and UU Innovation – managers and staff; employee organisations.

Chapter 7 describes the organisation of research and collaboration support at some Swedish higher education institutions. The institutions selected are Lund University, University of Gothenburg, Stockholm University, Umeå University, Karolinska Institutet and KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

The terms of reference require the inquiry to include an analysis of current needs and a survey of current roles and responsibilities. These are presented in chapter 8. The analysis focuses on UU Innovation and UU Innovation Partnership Office, internationalisation, junior researchers and newly recruited established researchers, inter- and multidisciplinary, and security issues.

Chapter 9 consists of horizon scanning. The horizon scanning proceeds firstly from the description in chapter 7 of how other universities have organised their research and collaboration support, and secondly from an analysis conducted by the Planning Division in 2022 on behalf of the Advisory Board for Research concerning how certain Swedish and European universities work on EU funding. In addition, connections are drawn to formulations in the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance.

The terms of reference state that the inquiry is to include long-term objectives for research and collaboration support at Uppsala University. These objectives are presented in chapter 10. The objectives are based on *Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies*.

Chapter 11 contains the consultant's forward-looking proposals and recommendations. This chapter is reproduced in full below.

## The consultant's proposals and recommendations (chapter 11) in full

### 11. Forward-looking proposals and recommendations

The model that Uppsala University has chosen for the organisation of research and collaboration support (see chapter 4 for a detailed account) leads to obvious risks of suboptimisation, duplication or important issues falling between stools and so not being dealt with at all. It is also apparent from several of the interviews conducted as part of the inquiry that the arrangements are time-consuming and ineffective. Time is money. Another point raised by many informants is that Uppsala University ends up being reactive rather than proactive in research and collaboration issues where the University ought to occupy a prominent position in relation to national and international research funding bodies. As shown in chapter 7, most of the universities the inquiry has studied have a single support function for research and collaboration serving the whole university, which may also include educational collaboration with the wider community and innovation issues.

Furthermore, the current organisation clearly does not live up to the ambitious goals set out in the University's mission statement, *Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies*. To give some examples of these goals, the University aims to strengthen transdisciplinary and challenge-driven research, coordinate and concentrate the University's resources and exploit the potential of Campus Gotland. In addition, the plan adopted by the University Administration for achieving the University's goals and strategies will not be achievable with the current organisation of research and collaboration support. The relevant issues here include the division of responsibilities and activities and the coordination of support for University-wide research and education (see chapter 2).

The discussion document drawn up in 2018 (UFV 2018/693) came to more or less the same conclusions as this inquiry. That document observes that Uppsala University has not taken on the conclusions and recommendations from Q&R17 regarding organisational development. Q&R17 emphasised that support for research needs to be clarified, strengthened and coordinated (see chapter 8).

The proposals and recommendations below are based primarily on the remit as formulated in the terms of reference, i.e. the divisions in the University Administration that provide support in research and collaboration. Chapter 11 is organised on the whole in line with the terms of reference as formulated. The inquiry is instructed to deal principally with research and collaboration support provided by UU Innovation Partnership Office and UU Innovation, along with relevant parts of the Faculty Office for Science and Technology, the Faculty Office for Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty Office for Medicine and Pharmacy, the Planning Division and the Division for Internationalisation. The four areas singled out in the terms of reference are collaboration, innovation, external research funding and research infrastructure. The inquiry has had access to the terms of reference for the research evaluation Quality and Renewal 2024 (Q&R24) (UFV 2022/1003), which specify two University-wide themes for special evaluation: research infrastructure and inter- and multidisciplinary. These two areas are also relevant to this inquiry.

The main proposals are presented in sections 11.8 and 11.9. The proposals in sections 11.1 to 11.7 lead up to the main proposals, but also contain proposals that the consultant advocates implementing to streamline other functions at the University, such as international activities.

### *11.1 Collaboration*

Collaboration support at the University does not currently create the conditions emphasised in the first goal set in *Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies*: to strengthen the connection between education and research. Uppsala University has good preconditions for achieving this goal, but the collaboration support does not help in doing so. The mission statement also emphasises that collaboration is an integral part of education and research. Accordingly, collaboration support must encompass both of these.

The consultant proposes:

#### *Proposal 1*

Give UU Innovation Partnership Office (UUS) a new mandate that includes education.

#### *Proposal 2*

Phase out the Advisory Board for External Collaboration (see also proposal 22) and let decisions on verification for collaboration (VFS) be taken in future as decided by the Vice-Chancellor.

#### *Proposal 3*

Phase out UUS's share of responsibility for the Innovation Office (see also proposal 6).

#### *Proposal 4*

See proposal 25 for the future organisational placement of UUS.

### *11.2 Innovation and the Innovation Office*

Chapter 7 contains an account of the universities that the inquiry has drawn on for the choice of models for organising innovation activities. KTH has chosen to place innovation activities in a separate division, KTH Innovation, while others have combined innovation activities with other support for research and collaboration. The law that applies to innovation activities differs from the administrative law otherwise applicable at the University. It can also involve trade secrets or similar matters that are best managed in a separate organisational entity.

The consultant proposes:

#### *Proposal 5*

Let Uppsala University Innovation (UUI) continue to be a separate division under the operational domain Law, HR and Security.

#### *Proposal 6*

Give UUI full responsibility for the Innovation Office (see also proposal 3).

### *11.3 Support in connection with applications for external funding*

All disciplinary domains have decided on external research funding bodies for which they will provide support to researchers. The heads of department and researchers that the inquiry has met are unaware of these priorities. This leads to differences in expectations, which cause unnecessary frustration.

Some researchers consider they have received good support for their EU applications and other interviewees also think the EU support works well. The managers in charge of the EU coordinators state that it works relatively well because the EU coordinators are knowledgeable and competent, but that coordination and meetings are necessary several times a week. This is both costly and inefficient and does not live up to the University's goal of being resource-efficient. At the end of the first decade of this century, EU support was coordinated at the University Administration. Several

people whom the inquiry has met think that this was an efficient and effective way of organising EU support.

The dissemination of information about research funding bodies' upcoming calls for applications needs to be reviewed. There are newsletters, which are appreciated, but there is also information that fails to get beyond heads of department. There are hopes that a new internal website will lead to better and more coordinated information about research and collaboration support, whether offered internally or in calls planned by research funding bodies. In this connection, special attention must be paid to the needs of junior researchers (see details in section 6.2).

In the area of education, there is a clear organisational foundation with explicit responsibilities and an organisation that builds on the existence of several different levels to which students can resort. To begin with, students can contact the function for first instance questions. Although the inquiry has not had a chance to study how this is organised in detail, it considers that future work on the University's research and collaboration support could derive inspiration from the organisation of support for education and students (see proposal 11).

The consultant proposes:

#### *Proposal 7*

Regardless of other aspects of the organisation of research support, the disciplinary domains must clarify which external research funding bodies are prioritised and then communicate this to heads of department and researchers.

#### *Proposal 8*

Regardless of other aspects of the organisation of research support, EU support should be coordinated under a single manager in the University Administration.

#### *Proposal 9*

In the preparations for a new internal website, give priority to information about what internal research and collaboration support can offer, with clear references to the websites or equivalent information of external research funding bodies.

#### *Proposal 10*

In tackling proposal 9, give special attention to the needs of junior researchers. This must be done in close cooperation with Junior Faculty.

#### *Proposal 11*

Future work on research and collaboration support should draw inspiration from the organisation of support for education and students, with regard, for example, to a function for first instance questions.

#### *11.4 Inter- and multidisciplinary*

The inquiry has not managed to arrive at a consistent picture of what Uppsala University means by inter- and multidisciplinary and the results this is intended to lead to. The Vice-Chancellor has made it clear that this area needs to and will be given priority and both senior and junior researchers express a desire and a need to facilitate these kinds of research collaborations. Perceptions differ among the managements of the disciplinary domains (see section 6.5). The terms of reference for Q&R24 make inter- and multidisciplinary one of two University-wide themes for evaluation.

The consultant proposes:

#### *Proposal 12*

Uppsala University needs to define at University-wide level what it means by inter- and multidisciplinary and what these initiatives are intended to lead to.

#### *Proposal 13*

The potential for inter- and multidisciplinary in the different disciplinary domains must be formulated and communicated.

#### *Proposal 14*

The results of the Q&R24 evaluation should be able to provide a basis for new decisions in the area of inter- and multidisciplinary.

#### *11.5 Campus Gotland*

While *Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies* emphasises the ambition to exploit the potential of Campus Gotland, researchers engaged there feel that research and collaboration support is far off. Campus Gotland has special needs and special opportunities in research, collaboration and innovation, as mentioned in several places in the report.

The consultant proposes:

#### *Proposal 15*

Research and collaboration support officers must visit Campus Gotland regularly to pick up on ideas in the areas of research, innovation and collaboration. Online meetings are not an adequate substitute for an in-person presence.

#### *Proposal 16*

Uppsala University must allocate resources to acquiring increased knowledge and expertise about the European structural and investment funds, of which the European Regional Development Fund probably best matches activities at Campus Gotland.

#### *11.6 Internationalisation*

Section 8.2 discusses the two units in the University Administration involved in international issues that are relevant to this inquiry. In the interviews that have focused on internationalisation, the need has been expressed for the University to pursue a unified international strategy. Without a strategy, it is difficult to prioritise among the networks in which the University has chosen to participate. The Advisory Board for Internationalisation does not have a mandate to operate strategically (see section 5.3). As the University has not indicated what participation in these international networks is intended to achieve, work on international issues is largely steered from below. An international strategy approved by the University Management Team could set out the direction of international operations for the coming decade. The basis for such a discussion will be provided by the task assigned to the Planning Division in the Operational Plan for 2023, i.e. to identify the international networks in which the whole University participates and submit proposals on how involvement in these networks can be coordinated.

The consultant proposes:

#### *Proposal 17*

Instruct the University Director to draw up a proposal for an international strategy, to be discussed and approved in the customary manner before adoption by decision of the Vice-Chancellor.

#### *Proposal 18*

Based on the adopted international strategy, conduct a strategic discussion in the Management

Council on which international networks or partnerships the University should participate in and why.

*Proposal 19*

Instruct the Planning Division to follow up the strategy by drawing up 3-year action plans aimed at achieving the goals of the strategy (see also proposal 21).

*Proposal 20*

Trim the Division for Internationalisation to focus on student issues such as mobility and fees and make it once again a unit under the Student Affairs and Academic Registry Division.

*Proposal 21*

Amalgamate the research-related international issues currently handled by the Unit of Strategic Research Support and the Unit for Global Partnerships into a single function placed at the Planning Division.

*11.7 Advisory boards and committees*

The existing advisory boards are not regarded as having a strategic role and do not have a significance commensurate with the amount of work, and therefore cost, that each meeting generates. The cost in this context consists of the hours that the meeting takes multiplied by the number of members on the advisory board plus working hours for planning before the meeting and after the meeting. The advisory boards do not contribute to the resource-efficiency posited as one of the goals in the University's *Mission, Goals and Strategies*. Moreover, two of the advisory boards are chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. The role of an advisory board is to advise the Vice-Chancellor, but if the Vice-Chancellor chairs the board the Vice-Chancellor participates in the decision or the board rather than receiving advice.

The Research Infrastructure Board is considered to have found appropriate operating procedures and the process that leads to the University's standpoints ahead of meetings of the Swedish universities' reference group for research infrastructure URFI (see section 5.4 for details), is generally appreciated by the disciplinary domain managements. Research infrastructure has become increasingly important in all disciplinary domains. The terms of reference for Q&R24 (UFV 2022/1003) state that research infrastructure is one of two University-wide themes for special evaluation:

Research infrastructure (Panel 1) The evaluation will examine the work of the University Management and the disciplinary domains/faculties on research infrastructures over their entire life cycle, i.e. from initiation to discontinuation. Rather than evaluating the research infrastructures as such, the evaluation will focus on the University's approach to research infrastructure as an enabling condition for good research.

The consultant proposes:

*Proposal 22*

Close down the advisory boards for collaboration, research and internationalisation as soon as possible.

*Proposal 23*

Retain the Research Infrastructure Board and evaluate its activities within three years.

### *11.8 A new research and collaboration organisation to serve the entire University*

The model that Uppsala University has chosen for the organisation of research and collaboration support (see chapter 4 for a detailed account) entails a risk of suboptimisation, duplication or important issues falling between stools and so not being dealt with at all. It is also apparent from several of the interviews conducted as part of the inquiry that the arrangements are time-consuming and ineffective. Time is money.

Another point that deserves emphasis is that Uppsala University ends up being reactive rather than proactive in research and collaboration issues where the University ought to occupy a prominent position in relation to national and international research funding bodies. As shown in chapter 7, most of the universities the inquiry has studied have a unified support function for research and collaboration serving the whole university, which sometimes also includes educational collaboration with the wider community and sometimes also innovation issues.

In at least one of the interviews with heads of units for research support at the Faculty Offices, the opinion has been expressed that if a single university function for research and collaboration support is established, there should still be some support in these issues at the Faculty Offices. The person or people in this role would provide management support to the vice-rectors and serve as a bridge between a new organisation and the Faculty Offices. At first sight, this looks like a good idea, but nonetheless the consultant has ended up deciding not to propose this. The reason is that a university that has provided suboptimal support for a long time must now streamline its efforts. If some such function or functions are established at the Faculty Offices, the consultant has misgivings that before long many more people at the Faculty Offices will be involved in these issues. Under the present proposals, the vice-rectors will receive management support from the new university division for research and collaboration support (see proposals 24 and 25).

Uppsala University has taken security issues extremely seriously. Thorough training has been given particularly in the Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology and similar measures are planned later in the two other disciplinary domains. The Chief Security Officer has stressed that the most important factor for success with regard to security-sensitive research activities is to address the issues at an early stage of a research project. According to the Chief Security Officer, proximity, training, expertise, a systematic approach, support and control are key terms guiding security management (see section 8.5 for further details). In the proposals presented below, some of the functions, above all those related to support and training now at the Security and Safety Division, should be transferred to the new organisation for research and collaboration support, while the Security and Safety Division otherwise retains its functions, of which control and monitoring are the most important. By law, the protective security manager is directly answerable to the head of the authority (i.e. the Vice-Chancellor). The inquiry has not had a chance to analyse the placement of this role, which is currently exercised by the Chief Security Officer, in any depth and therefore presents no proposals on this point. The issue remains for the University to discuss before taking a decision on it.

In this connection, the consultant would like to point out that coordinated administrative support plays a vital role for efficient resource use. In the current situation, there are parallel administrative activities in some areas in the University Administration and the Faculty Offices. No one has overall operational responsibility for all administrative activities at Uppsala University. In an organisation with several organisational levels, it is important that there is a level of the University that has overall operational responsibility for administrative activities. Previously the University Director's



operational responsibility for the University Administration included the Faculty Offices. This responsibility should be reintroduced (see proposal 28).

In the consultant's experience, coordinated methods, functions and procedures often lead to reduced administration and consequently lower costs. A lack of working methods and procedures generally leads to higher costs, as well as uncertainty and frustration.

The consultant proposes:

*Proposal 24*

Establish a new single university support function for research and collaboration. As at other successful universities, this division should be named the Research Support Office (RSO). The RSO should be assigned to the Planning, Finance and Management Support operational domain.

*Proposal 25*

The activities currently conducted at the Unit of Strategic Research Support, the research support units at the Faculty Offices and UUS will provide the main components of the new division RSO. This means that the specialist expertise currently found in these five units will be pooled to provide well-qualified support to the University's researchers, departments, faculties, vice-rectors and the Vice-Chancellor's Office. The administrative directors will serve as the bridge between the Faculty Offices and the newly established division RSO.

Certain functions of the Security and Safety Division will be transferred to the RSO (see proposal 30).

*Proposal 26*

Appoint a second deputy vice-chancellor with responsibility for research. The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) stipulates that the vice-chancellor must have a deputy (Chapter 2, Section 10), but there are no legal obstacles to appointing a second deputy vice-chancellor. This has been done at other universities, such as the University of Gothenburg, for a long time. The Vice-Chancellor's Team would then consist of three members, i.e. the Vice-Chancellor and the two deputy vice-chancellors. The two deputy vice-chancellors would be on the same level, though one of them must be designated the Vice-Chancellor's substitute to comply with the statutory requirements.

*Proposal 27*

Expand the former trio group by adding the deputy vice-chancellor for research (see proposal 26), and hold quartet meetings rather than trio meetings.

*Proposal 28*

Give the University Director central decision-making and operational responsibility for the support organisation at Uppsala University, including both the University Administration and the Faculty Offices.

*Proposal 29*

Make a new manager responsible for ensuring that the RSO has the specialist expertise needed to provide good research and collaboration support to researchers, heads of department, faculties and vice-rectors in the three disciplinary domains. Give this manager a mandate to represent Uppsala University in the issues falling within this remit, in the manner determined by the University Director.

*Proposal 30*

Place matters relating to some security issues (see introduction to this section) at the RSO. This primarily concerns support and training.

### *Proposal 31*

The RSO should have expertise in ethics and a compliance function. A function of this kind exists at Karolinska Institutet, for example (see section 7.5 for more information). According to the analysis conducted at the University Administration in 2022, several of the universities studied were planning to introduce a Compliance Office or similar (see chapter 9).

### *Proposal 32*

In accordance with proposal 25, the activities currently conducted at UUS should be transferred to the RSO. The remit should be reformulated to include educational support to collaboration projects (see proposal 1). To prevent the proposal leading to inflated costs, other activities now conducted by UUS should be given lower priority or stopped.

### *Proposal 33*

The terms of reference stipulate that the proposals presented must not demand increased resources. When various functions are brought together, this often generates synergies that can free up scope for new functions such as a Compliance Office (see proposal 31).

### *Proposal 34*

In the annual budget decision approved by the University Board, resources will need to be redistributed from the disciplinary domains to the University Administration. The budgetary management and other budget decisions that may result from the proposals in this report are left to the Planning Division for further preparation before decisions.

### *11.9 Tone at the top – closing comments*

In preparing this report, the image has emerged of a university that is fragmented when it comes to research and collaboration. There is a risk that issues affecting the whole University are not discussed and consequently not prioritised. The consultant considers that this may be partly due to the excessively slim nature of the University's top management, which in practice consists of just two people – the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. To be sure, there is a University Management Team and a Management Council led by the Vice-Chancellor, but several of their members solely represent their own disciplinary domain, not the University as a whole. Going by the consultant's own experience, a large management council is not a preferable arrangement, as this is not always conducive to honest dialogue and taking responsibility.

The way departments organise their support functions is a responsibility for heads of department, not for the University's management. The support available to researchers varies depending on their department. Large, 'rich' departments (as they are sometimes said to be) are able to finance more support functions, including research support functions. Reportedly, some departments do not even have an administrative manager, and as a result administrative responsibilities fall to the head of department, who may not be properly qualified for this role. This also appears to result in unnecessarily costly administration that does not live up to the quality that other parts of the University expect. The Legal Affairs Division has pointed out that agreements that come from departments with good administrative support are generally of superior quality. This makes the work of the Legal Affairs Division on agreements more efficient. Although no proposals are presented in response to this observation, the University's management should address the way departments are organised.

From a national perspective as well, representatives of other universities perceive Uppsala University to be fragmented (see chapter 9). Apart from the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, no one has a mandate to represent the entire University's research, innovation and collaboration. Several of the universities studied by the inquiry (see chapter 7 for details) have a designated

function to represent the institution's research and research strategy. The consultant proposes appointing a second deputy vice-chancellor (see proposal 26). A person in this role could also participate in advocacy vis-à-vis external research funding bodies. Most other universities also have a strategic research committee or equivalent (see proposal 35).

Uppsala University's presence in Brussels, for example, appears to be marginal. Other universities have joined up with other actors to conduct active advocacy in Brussels (see proposal 36).

The consultant proposes:

*Proposal 35*

Establish a strategic research council or research board chaired by the deputy vice-chancellor for research (see proposal 26). Three members (professors or senior lecturers) should be chosen from each disciplinary domain. These members should not be the vice-rectors. Three doctoral students or postdoctoral researchers should be members. There should be an odd number of members and the chair should have the casting vote (see also chapter 7 for inspiration from the organisation at other universities).

*Proposal 36*

Rules of procedure for the research council or research board should be drawn up focusing on University-wide research issues and the University's future advocacy activities.

Finally, one question came up repeatedly during the interviews conducted.

*What does Uppsala University want?*

This question relating to the University's strategy for research, collaboration and internationalisation is something that the University's management must take with the utmost seriousness in order for the University to truly fulfil its potential.