



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
AARHUS UNIVERSITY



Sharing Information on Progress Report



2016

School of Business and Social Sciences (Aarhus BSS)

With our 2016 Sharing Information on Progress report, Aarhus BSS confirms its commitment to the Principles of Responsible Management Education.

Since Aarhus BSS has been one of the main providers of business professionals in Denmark for almost a century, and the school continues to deliver high quality research and education to our stakeholders, we see it as our main task to continuously prepare our graduates for the reality that awaits them upon graduation, and to equip them with competencies relevant for the development and welfare of our society.

In addition to the more specialised, targeted educational paths that span across the disciplines of business and social sciences, the teaching at Aarhus BSS explores important elements that may cut across many disciplines of business, social sciences and arts, such as global perspectives, cultural understandings, legal and governmental rules and regulations, technological developments, and with ethics and social responsibility incorporated in the national context of how educational institutions conduct teaching.

This Sharing Information on Progress report describes a selected number of the school's activities and initiatives which support the six principles for responsible management education, and which have been developed since the submission of our last progress report in

autumn 2014.

In addition, the report includes an overview of outcomes as well as the key objectives which will be in focus until the next progress report submission in 2018.


Thomas Pallesen
Dean, Aarhus BSS



Photo: Jesper Rais, AU Ko

Principle 1 - Purpose

At Aarhus BSS, we have a clear understanding of our role as an ethical and globally responsible contributor of talented graduates, relevant research and research-based knowledge to national and international bodies, institutions and businesses.

Since the last SIP, Aarhus BSS has acquired AMBA accreditation for its MBA programme. The AMBA criteria focus on programmes to be designed to develop holistic, innovative and socially responsible business leaders for high performance organisations in the global market through the development of knowledge, skills and values required to succeed in complex environments.

The school puts a lot of effort in developing students' skills and capabilities to equip them for the demands and requirements of domestic and international job markets upon graduation. Our international accreditations EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB all document Aarhus BSS' commitment to raise the standards of management education and provide effective learning environments which promote the development of students' managerial and entrepreneurial skills and their sense of global responsibility.

In 2015, a group of master's students from the Department of Economics and Business Economics won a case competition organised in collaboration with the Confederation of Danish Industry. The winning team offered their take on one of the biggest challenges currently facing the Danish business community, namely the shortage of qualified labour.

Since the autumn semester 2016, two new elective courses are offered as talent and honours programmes for master's students. The courses focus on digital transformation and teach the students how to apply analytical tools which they can use to understand the rapidly changing world – and which they can apply within their own field of specialisation.

Students learn what it means to work with digital transformation and become skilled at understanding large amounts of data, new systems, etc., and learn how to use this input to develop new knowledge and apply it in their specific fields, e.g. Marketing, Innovation Management, or Strategy, Organisation and Leadership.

During the courses, the master's students in Marketing learn how to understand a company's customers, students in Innovation Management learn how to apply data to develop new products, while the students in Strategy, Organisation and Leadership learn how to apply data in relation to the organisation, the development of employee competences and recruitment. Each honours and talent programme comprises one 30 ECTS course to be taken as an elective subject on the third semester of the Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration.

Principle 2 - Values

As already described in previous SIP reports from Aarhus BSS, the values of ethics and responsibility are rooted in the culture of both faculty and students at the school.

The school firmly believes that the students' ability to think critically and independently is central to fostering responsible behaviour and understanding of social responsibilities. Therefore, students at the school are familiarised with the concepts of ethics and responsibility already from the bachelor's level through a selected number of both mandatory courses and electives. This focus is present at master's level as well through, among others, teaching methods, curriculum, and class interaction.

The school continuously focuses on further developing its programmes and curriculum to correspond to the needs and demands of so-

ciety. Each degree programme has an advisory employer panel attached with members from relevant industries to advise the director of studies on the development of degree programmes, course elements, forms of teaching, types of examination and evaluation in relation to the demands of the labour market as well as competence requirements in a national and international context. Additionally, the employer panels are included in the strategy development work, particularly with regard to the correlation between the number of graduates from each programme and the potential labour market.

The school strives to support and improve the conditions for its students, faculty and staff through delivering graduates and research that make a significant impact on the growth and welfare of society. During the course of



2014 and 2015, an extensive quality assurance practice for education has been developed both at university and school level. The quality practice describes the roles and responsibilities in relation to the quality assurance work within education as well as the processes, division of responsibilities and annual cycle for each of the following five sub-policies:

- Recruitment and commencement of studies
- Structure and process
- Development of education, teaching and learning environment
- Study environment
- The relation between the degree programmes and the labour market

The main objective of the quality assurance practice is to ensure that the school attracts highly talented students from Denmark and abroad, and that the degree programmes completed provide the graduates with the opportunity of securing attractive jobs and careers and contribute with the most up-to-date knowledge, skills and interdisciplinary competences, all of which create value for society.

Moreover, by bridging the gap between business and social science disciplines, the faculty members can gain insights into how their field of expertise relates to business and society and vice versa. In doing this, the school strives to contribute positively to a sustainable society by bringing these new insights into the classroom

and educating students to not only master the core business disciplines required of managers and future leaders but to also gain the ability to rise to the challenges of unforeseen events and create new knowledge.



Principle 3 - Method

Denmark has a long history of very strict environmental regulation and has been recognised as a leader in clean technologies and home to providers of world class wind energy and clean process technologies and products. The acknowledgement of sustainability has reached a level where sustainability is no longer treated as a new or specialist issue, but has rather become recognised as an immanent and inseparable part of the general business environment. Consequently, elements of sustainability and corporate social responsibility have also found their way into the various subjects and courses introduced at the school's degree programmes.

At the majority of management programmes, during the introduction and teaching on specific theories, models and methods are presented through examples from industry (both corporate cases from Denmark as well as abroad). Everything introduced in a programme must be applicable in practice. During assignments, the students are provided with the opportunity to demonstrate that they can apply the theories, models and methods to solve specific problems. The balance between functional teaching and integrative teaching may of course vary a little across disciplines. However, given the overall emphasis on combining theory with practice, the majority of lectures include both dimensions in their teaching. The process of monitoring the balance is secured by formalised mechanisms, such as input from the regular and ongoing course evaluations and the

annual approval of all course descriptions by the director of studies as well as ad hoc student feedback to the school's administration and to the director of studies.

At bachelor's level, the school offers a number of profiles within the programme in Economics and Business Administration, which equip students to address the challenges and opportunities that companies face in a globalised economy and marketplace. During 2014, the profiles were revised to correspond to the needs of the business community, and today, the students have the opportunity to choose between seven profiles, including *Sustainable Business*, *Business in China and Other Emerging Markets*, and *Global Business*.

To ensure an international dimension in the degree programmes, the curriculum incorporates an understanding of management styles and practices from different regions and cultures, and includes diversity in examples and/or case studies. Examples encompass a range from prevalent international business standards to local norms and expectations.

Academic progress is rooted in the study programmes by emphasising core competencies and strong focus on core subject's specific courses, heavy emphasis on courses in methodology to support analyses and decision making, and communication and presentation skills to support the implementation of decisions.

Besides the theoretical areas covered in the study programmes, the students are encouraged to establish contact with companies throughout the study programmes, with the purpose of being able to apply their theoretical knowledge in companies, organisations, and public institutions and identify their skills and interests.

In all master's programmes, the students also have the opportunity to include an internship.

The students are encouraged to seek an internship through which they can learn how to apply their theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, focus their interests and verify whether it is the right career path to follow. The students receive academic credit for the internship by completing a report in which they apply relevant theory to a challenge they have encountered during the internship.



Photo: Lise Balslev, AU Kommunikation, Photo: Anette Ebbø



Principle 4 - Research

Aarhus BSS has a large number of strong research environments which cover the school's academic disciplines. The school has more than a dozen research centres, and two national centres of excellence funded by the Danish National Research Foundation are part of the school. All of these centres are nationally renowned for their high quality research and all see themselves as part of the international scientific community in regard to publishing and international collaboration.

The core faculty constitutes the foundation of the school's position as a provider of high-quality research, education and knowledge exchange, and as a partner for companies and researchers at other universities, nationally and internationally. The school's engagement in research that advances the understanding of the role, dynamics and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value expresses itself in many ways.

For instance, AIROD Advanced Interdisciplinary Research on Organisational Development research group will hold a conference in November 2016, launching the initiation of a new research project focused on circular economy. In connection with the launch of its new Circular Economy Package, the EU commission announced the following: "Our planet and our economy cannot survive if we continue with the 'take, make, use and throw away' approach. We need to retain precious resources and fully exploit all the economic value within them. The circular economy is about reducing

waste and protecting the environment, but it is also about a profound transformation of the way our entire economy works." Building on this call, the aim of the conference is to enhance the knowledge base needed in order to realise the changes on the ground. Specific attention will be paid to the interfaces between the different stakeholders in the economic system in order to identify obstacles that hinder and triggers that enable the development of a circular economy.

In June 2015, a group of researchers from the Department of Management were honored at the conference 'Energiforsk15' in Copenhagen, where they received the 'ForskEL-prisen 2015' for the best completed research project in the field of energy research. Their project "READY — Heat pumps in a smart grid future" has been carried out by a consortium of NEAS Energy, Neogrid Technologies, PlanEnergi, Ea Energy Analyses, Aalborg University and Aarhus University. The purpose of the project was to demonstrate how you can control many individual heat pumps according to electricity spot prices and the need for regulating power – i.e. to a greater extent make consumers use the power when it is there and not when it is not.

From 2015 to 2018, the Department of Law at Aarhus BSS has been appointed to hold chairmanship of the UNCRC Policy Centre "Hope for Children". Associate professor Caroline Adolphsen, who conducts research on children's rights, is the new chairman of the centre. The centre aims to protect and advocate the rights of children, e.g. through the work of lead-

ing researchers in the field, dissemination of their research and collaboration with children's organisations around the world.

Associate professor Carsten Bergenholtz from the Department of Management has initiated a research project with the aim of understanding how business students' ethical outlook is shaped. The project takes departure in a data collection setup, where surveys exploring the ethical outlook of business students are distributed at the start of their first semester at Aarhus BSS, and again at their sixth semester.

A long tradition of research argues that higher business education has a negative influence on the ethical outlook of students. The business students appear to have a higher degree of self-interest than students from other disciplines, and they display a higher degree of

greedy behaviour. The studies made so far on this topic are almost all cross-sectional, either based on one-off surveys or laboratory experiments, which means that it is still uncertain, when the ethical outlooks are shaped and what influences them.

Data from +500 students will be collected each year and are expected to provide a unique insight into not only the business ethics perceptions that business students have, but also into how these perceptions are shaped over time. Additionally, the fact that business students self-select elective courses during their fifth semester can further shed light on how ethical outlooks are shaped during their business studies. Understanding these mechanisms are crucial for being able to design business ethics education and influence the ethical outlook of future employees and managers.



Principle 5 - Partnerships

Aarhus BSS is actively engaged in partnerships with public and private organisations for the benefit of stakeholders and society at large.

An example of such partnerships is the Maasai Mara Science and Development Initiative (MMSDI) established at the Department of Management's Interdisciplinary Centre for Organisational Architecture in 2015. The MMSDI is an international project with the ambition of saving the unique ecosystem of Maasai Mara in Kenya through a public-private partnership and interdisciplinary research. The project started with a focus on wild animals and conservation, but if we do not come up with sustainable economic and political solutions, there will be no wildlife left to study. The project focuses on how to apply the principles behind organisational design in the complex system of stakeholders and interests in Maasai Mara.

During a two-day seminar in Aarhus in September 2015, Maasais, businesses and researchers discussed a research and funding strategy for the ambitious initiative. Vital issues were also how research can make an impact on a specific region like the Maasai Mara. Apart from 16 researchers from across Aarhus University, the researchers

come from two Kenyan and one German university. The local community and business are also represented in the founding group. Aarhus BSS' partners in the project are Maasai Mara University, University of Nairobi and Justus-Liebig University Giessen (Germany). The president of MMSDI is Professor Richard Odingo, former vice-president of IPPC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

Another example of extending knowledge and exploring jointly effective approaches to meeting the challenges of businesses is the research conducted at the Centre for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. The purpose of the centre is to generate knowledge about how to foster growth in SMEs and shed light on the challenges that SMEs face when trying to create growth and development.

The centre's research focuses on the regulatory framework that governs the trade and industry and on internal drivers for growth, e.g. business development, innovation and leadership skills. The centre has entered into a strategic partnership with the companies Nykredit and PwC.



Principle 6 - Dialogue

In the recently developed strategy of the school for 2017-2020, one of the strategic actions put forward is to motivate faculty to disseminate research results and engage in public and private organisations as a means to raise and intervene in complex issues and make research findings widely known and acted upon. With this strategy, Aarhus BSS confirms and intensifies its commitment to the present course and affirms its strong engagement with society. Since the last SIP reporting, a number of new initiatives have fostered fruitful collaborations and knowledge exchange of relevant societal issues.

In August 2016, The Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences established a Centre for Quality of Life in collaboration with the Magistrate Department for Health and Care in the City of Aarhus. The purpose is to develop a foundation for helping the elderly increase their quality of life. The centre will study the quality of life among elderly people and will make use of the latest research in the field combining it with practise. This will be done through existentialist dialogue sessions with psychologists and a follow-up from the other employees at Health and Care. The aim is to increase the joy of life and the mental robustness of the elderly.

A new network 'Public reform as a permanent condition', including researchers from Aarhus BSS' Departments of Management and Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, as well as Copenhagen Business School and the Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research was granted DKK 1 million from the Danish Council for Independent Research in 2015.

The funding serves to facilitate collaboration with international members in the network on joint publications, conferences, PhD workshops and application for international funding. Through such activities, the network is working on establishing an international agenda for researching ongoing organisational change and reform as the more prevalent conditions for public organisations, and the implications for managers, employees and their work relationships.

International research collaboration enables comparisons of the general and country-specific ways in which reform pace influences the dynamics and functioning of public organisations and work life within them. The network leverages under-represented ethnographic methodologies, being particularly apt for the study of organisations in a process of continual reconstruction and instability.

In September 2016, Aarhus BSS was host to a two-day academic workshop titled "The status and future of the international human rights". The workshop gathered human rights experts from different parts of the world to discuss the human rights framework, whether the implementation has been successful as well as the future of human rights, both in Denmark and internationally, and included participants such as Professor Sir Nigel Rodley who is one of the 18 members of the UN Human Rights Committee.

Outcomes and future key objectives

As presented in this report, Aarhus BSS has well-established mechanisms in place to ensure that its education and research activities meet society's justifiable demands and contribute to its continued growth and welfare.

Having social science departments such as the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences, the Department of Political Science and the Department of Law, which also cater to other interests of society than most business schools, ensures a seamless cooperation and enables Aarhus BSS to address many more of the future challenges facing businesses and society. These challenges are complex and cut across boundaries, sectors and academic disciplines and their solutions must be found through new interdisciplinary collaborations that cut across boundaries of traditional academic fields.

For instance, there is a substantial value that arises in the interaction between business development, internationalisation, entrepreneurship and regulation on the one hand, and political decisions, psychological approaches to consumer and organisational behaviour, cultural understanding, sustainability, laws, demography, etc., on the other. At some point, they will all impact on a company's ability to

perform in any market and on its ability to develop strategies that will carry it successfully through any obstacle that derives from increasing globalisation. Aarhus BSS has recognised this value and many interdisciplinary initiatives have already been established between the school's disciplines, e.g. between economics and public policy, business administration and law, and business development and technology.

As part of its continued commitment to the welfare of society, the school will continue to educate students to think and act across the boundaries defining traditional fields of research and study for the benefit of society as a whole. This commitment will manifest itself through new interdisciplinary combinations between e.g. business and psychology, and business and politics. By providing an outstanding research and teaching environment, the school will continue to promote its overall academic objectives where excellence is key, and give students a solid return on investment for choosing a degree from Aarhus BSS.



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