



# Target plan for 2025-2028

Department of Psychology

## Introduction to the Target plan

The Department of Psychology Target Plan for 2025-2028 is being drafted against the background of multiple, sometimes changing, influences. In 2023, the Department received a historically good research evaluation, which concluded that:

*"There has been systematic and substantial improvement in the organisation of the department, the performance of research as regards the attraction of grants, publications in high ranking journals (while keeping a broad range of publications and outlets), internationalisation of research and teaching. There is evidence of research which is world-leading in originality, significance and rigour across each of the Department's research sections."*

Most immediately, the ongoing plan for the Department, across all its activities, will be to strengthen this positive position, while also responding to more detailed feedback from the assessment panel on areas for improvement.

Responding to previous political agendas, specifically regionalisation, the Department took a proactive approach by opening up a new MA track on Clinical psychology within psychiatry in collaboration with Region Sjælland. In the target period, a focus will be on developing and implementing this educational track to ensure its longevity and success, and more generally to strengthen the links between the Department's research and educational offerings and practice within Danish society.

The Department's target plan is further embedded within the strategic goals of the university (as articulated in its new strategy document), especially the focus on being the best place for the best ideas and on lifelong learning, as well as on the emerging strategic foci of the faculty.

However, there are also immediate uncertainties that place limits on future planning. The Faculty leadership is currently undergoing a transitional period, with a new Dean (current Head of Psychology, Vibeke Koushede) to be in-role from 1 May 2024. As a consequence, the Department of Psychology is also facing a change in leadership with an expected start in August 2024. This, combined with the impending administration reform, MA

reform and move to Søndre Campus, will result in a number of substantial challenges and changes that need to be addressed during the budget period. It is the management's position that the future head of department must have the opportunity to shape the department's priorities, direction and goals in cooperation with the rest of the management and the department's faculty board. As such, this Target Plan is somewhat provisional, awaiting further development and input from the new leadership.

### **Target plan content**

#### **1. Education and teaching**

In the coming years, the Department plans to introduce new and strengthen existing connections between teaching and practice, ensuring our graduates are ready to work in Denmark across a range of psychological professions and that their professional development continues after graduation. This target spans efforts from the first day of enrollment, through specialist training, and to EVU offerings that support *lifelong learning*.

In addition, responding to the changing policy landscape around international students, in the coming period we will explore the scope for new masters programs targeted towards fee-paying international students, and engage in dialogue with international institutions in relation who may be open to partnering in this and facilitate the intake of this category of students.

Materially, meeting the overall target will include:

- Closer collaboration with external stakeholders (e.g., The Danish Regions, Kommunernes Landsforening, the Danish Psychological Union, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science), to evaluate current offerings and develop a coherent plan for the education of psychologists, from day 1 of enrollment to post-qualification specialist training.
- Strengthening our current expertise in evidence-based psychotherapies and links to practise. Although we have recruited new staff in this area, fully realising this target is dependent on further shared positions between the Department and Region Sjælland (of which we have, to date, only one) and the success of the new Master's track in Clinical psychology within Psychiatry. The latter was initiated in response to regionalisation, and is currently awaiting the first intake of students – though interest is currently strong, suggesting the potential for a viable educational offering. There is, however, a foreseeable risk to the sustainability of this program as it is currently underfunded. Sureing-up this financial situation is critical for the coming period. A main milestone and indicator of the immediate success is the enrollment of 25 students on this track by September 1, 2024, with < 5% leaving the track within the first year.
- Developing a new specialised Master's track in applied child and youth psychology / PPR as a response to the increased focus on mental health and well-being both in professional, public, and political arenas. This was tentatively addressed in our previous target plan but has been delayed due to the upcoming Master's reform. The MA track would include courses focusing on healthy development among children and youth, factors that support well-being and thriving across the early years and emerging adulthood, and courses building skills and competencies among psychologists to assess and address needs from community based support to therapeutic interventions. A main milestone is a description of the track approved by the study board and included in a revised MA programme curriculum by May 1, 2025.
- Developing more EVU offerings that integrate theory, scientific evidence and practice targeted towards updating the knowledge and skills amongst professionals already working within the broad field of psychology. A main milestone is the development and subsequent offering of at least one course on *Supervision theory and practice* and one course on *Low-intensity, manualised treatment* for postgraduate psychologists.

In addition to clinically-oriented education, we seek to respond to new technological developments to ensure that our students have knowledge and competencies to navigate the evolving digital informational environments and engage with technology thoughtfully and productively. Reciprocally we will draw on research-based knowledge to inform educational practices around emerging technologies. Meeting this target will include:

- Consolidating current staff expertise, and cross-faculty collaborations, especially with SODAS. A range of researchers within the department are already engaged with technology and psychology in different forms and contexts, including educational, therapeutic, cognitive and psychiatric. Yet, there is currently no joint focus. Consolidation of expertise will be facilitated by new educational offerings across BA, MA and EVU, such as:
  - *The digital child*. This kind of course could focus on topics like screen time, digital literacy, psychological safety online, optimised classroom design.
  - *Technology, Psychological Practice, and Society*. This kind of course could focus on topics such as new technological developments, covering for example AI, wearables, monitoring devices, gamification etc. It would also focus on the implications of these technologies for assessment practices, psychotherapies, user-led interventions, online communities as sources of support and harm, as well as the moral and ethical implications of technologically-assisted, -enhanced, or -mediated psychological practices.
- A first milestone in a stepped approach is the development and integration of the first of these courses into the course catalogue by Spring 2025, which will then be followed by the development of additional course offerings across educational levels (BA, MA, and EVU) based on evaluations.

Climate change and sustainability are also areas in which current expertise and teaching capacity could and should be developed – also responding to the strategic focus of Faculty and University on this topic and to desires expressed by students, for example through the recent climate assembly at SAMF which argued for dedicated space for this topic within the curriculum. Currently, dedicated expertise in this area is limited and typically

connected to staff on temporary contracts. The topic itself has also been evolving rapidly in recent years as we move from the problem definition as “global warming” to “climate change” and now “climate crisis”. Demands for new knowledge and innovative research have accordingly become more pressing. Meeting this target will include:

- Making potential to research and teach topics connected to climate change and sustainability as an additional criteria for evaluating new permanent appointments. Here desired expertise could include knowledge of: The wider context of social and societal change that surrounds climate and sustainability; effective interventions to generate more radical lifestyle change and larger-scale shifts towards sustainability; individual and collective coping with the physical and mental health consequences of the climate crisis.

The recent research evaluation noted the opportunities for strengthening the methodological offerings within the department profile – both in terms of staff expertise and in the education. With respect to the former, recent staff appointments have brought in people with methods expertise, especially in relation to clinical trials, applied research and mixed methods. To further meet this target, we will:

- Explore potential for collaboration across the faculty to open up students to high quality qualitative and quantitative methods training offered in different social science departments (e.g., with Anthropology, Sociology, and SODAS).

Responsive to student needs and wishes, we will also engage in an ongoing examination of diversity in the curriculum, including diversity of perspectives, methods, and also the representation of human diversity across the education. In addition to this examination, we will also meet the need for more diversity by evaluating potential new appointments in relation to their capacity to research and teach about diversity, as well as channelling the current resources we already have in this area to be more visible in the education via developing new courses/ course content on diversity.

## **2. Research**

The department will continue to support a range of different research topics, methods and theoretical approaches to secure the pluralism for which we were praised in the recent research evaluation, and to ensure academic freedom among our researchers. However, sometimes strategic decisions will need to be made to prioritise specific projects for support. These strategic decisions will be guided by specific priority areas where we see productive synergies between our research potentials, societal development and the teaching needs outlined above. Following on from the above educational targets, priority areas for research also include:

- Evidence-based psychotherapy
- Healthy psychological development through childhood and youth
- Technology in society and psychological practice
- Climate change and sustainability

Strategic decisions will also be guided by the goal of maximising productive synergies with the evolving focus of the Faculty on:

- Welfare and inequality
- Society and security
- Sustainability
- Technology and Society

Although the recent research evaluation praised the breadth, quality and significance of our research, there were also concrete suggestions for how we could further strengthen our research profile. Feedback specifically focused on improving the visibility of our research (to society, stakeholders, and

students), strengthening boundary spanning collaborations within and beyond the department, and strengthening in-house expertise in methods. In order to address these areas of improvement, we will:

- Explore opportunities to collaborate across departments within the Faculty of social sciences to open up access of students and staff to a wider pool of expertise around research methods (quantitative and qualitative; see also Education, above).
- Develop cross-department research collaborations that connect departmental priorities to the priorities of the Faculty. To facilitate this, we will prioritise applications for seed funding (an internal scheme) for research activities that include new cross-faculty or cross-disciplinary collaborations.
- Collaborate across the Faculty to improve researcher access to the unique resource of Danish registers. This will involve co-financing a liaison between the faculty and Statistics Denmark (see Resources and Infrastructure, below)

### **3. Innovation and impact**

Consistent with the focus of our teaching and research strategies, we will seek to build links to end-users of psychological knowledge. One important audience for this is the professional community, and attracting qualified psychologists back to the department to update knowledge and skills through EVU. In the preceding sections we propose new educational offerings and research activities around evidence-based psychological practice, normal psychological development, well-being and thriving among children and youth; new technology, the digital child, and; new challenges for the climate crisis and sustainability. To connect these activities to innovation and impact, we will:

- Map potential stakeholders, audiences, funders, and partnerships that would connect to each of these topics in order to identify opportunities for impact and innovation.



- Identify points of interdisciplinary collaboration that could bring innovation to our research and teaching on these topics and direct strategic resources to these collaborations (e.g., through seed funding).

#### **4. Collaboration, partnerships, public sector consultancy, etc.**

The agenda mapped across the preceding sections above (above) indicates a strong desire to create innovation and impact especially within clinical practice and in areas of psychological practice directed towards supporting healthy development among children and youth. Meeting this need requires partnerships with the public sector, for example with the regions, and institutions like daycare, schools, and hospitals. The success of the new MA tracks in Clinical psychology within Psychiatry and in PPR is both embedded within and dependent on external partnerships and collaborations. As noted under Education, these kinds of links could be further strengthened by additional joint appointments spanning the Department and research practitioners in Region Sjælland.

Furthermore, collaboration with a range of relevant stakeholders is relevant to the educational target to evaluate current offerings and develop a coherent plan for the education of psychologists, from day 1 of enrollment to post-qualification specialist training (including The Danish Regions, Kommunernes Landsforening, the Danish Psychological Union, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science).

#### **5. HR and organisation**

In the previous 5 years the Department has been through a period of both expansion (i.e. through new hires in multiple areas) and reorganisation of its leadership structure. The latter was recognised as valuable in the recent departmental research evaluation, and as such there are no specific plans to

engage further restructuring in this area. In addition we have recently been through initiatives related to improving conflict resolution and building a stronger sense of community within the department and across its various groups. As such, there are no plans to further target these areas in the coming period.

The most immediate HR and organisational need for the target period is the hiring and onboarding a new head of department (anticipated August 1, 2024).

## **6. Resources and infrastructure**

As noted under Research, above, one target is to collaborate across the Faculty to improve researcher access to the unique resource of Danish registers. This target is responding to expressed wishes for researchers in Psychology for smoother and more organised access to registry data, with lower ‘entry costs’ for individual researchers. This desire has also been expressed by researchers across other social science departments including SODAS, Political Science, Sociology, and possibly also Anthropology (the remaining department, Economics, already has its own in-house support for accessing these data). To meet this target, in collaboration with other departments, we will co-finance a liaison between the faculty and Statistics Denmark in the form of a designated data manager for Danish registries, who would be based at the SAMF Data Lab. This person would be responsible for building a “motorway” into DS similar (and inspired from) the existing set-up at the Econ department.

A completed *Budget memo 2025-2028* must be attached to the Target plan. Prose text in the budget memo should be kept to a minimum.

The Target plan is prepared in an inclusive process in which, as a minimum, the councils and committees laid down in the statutes are involved.

#### **About 2024**

**With Strategy 2030 being adopted in December 2023, departments and faculties may find it difficult to fully include the strategy in the Target plans this spring. It is to be expected that the ties to the strategy will be more evident from 2025 onwards as the University 'moves into' and unfolds the new strategy.**