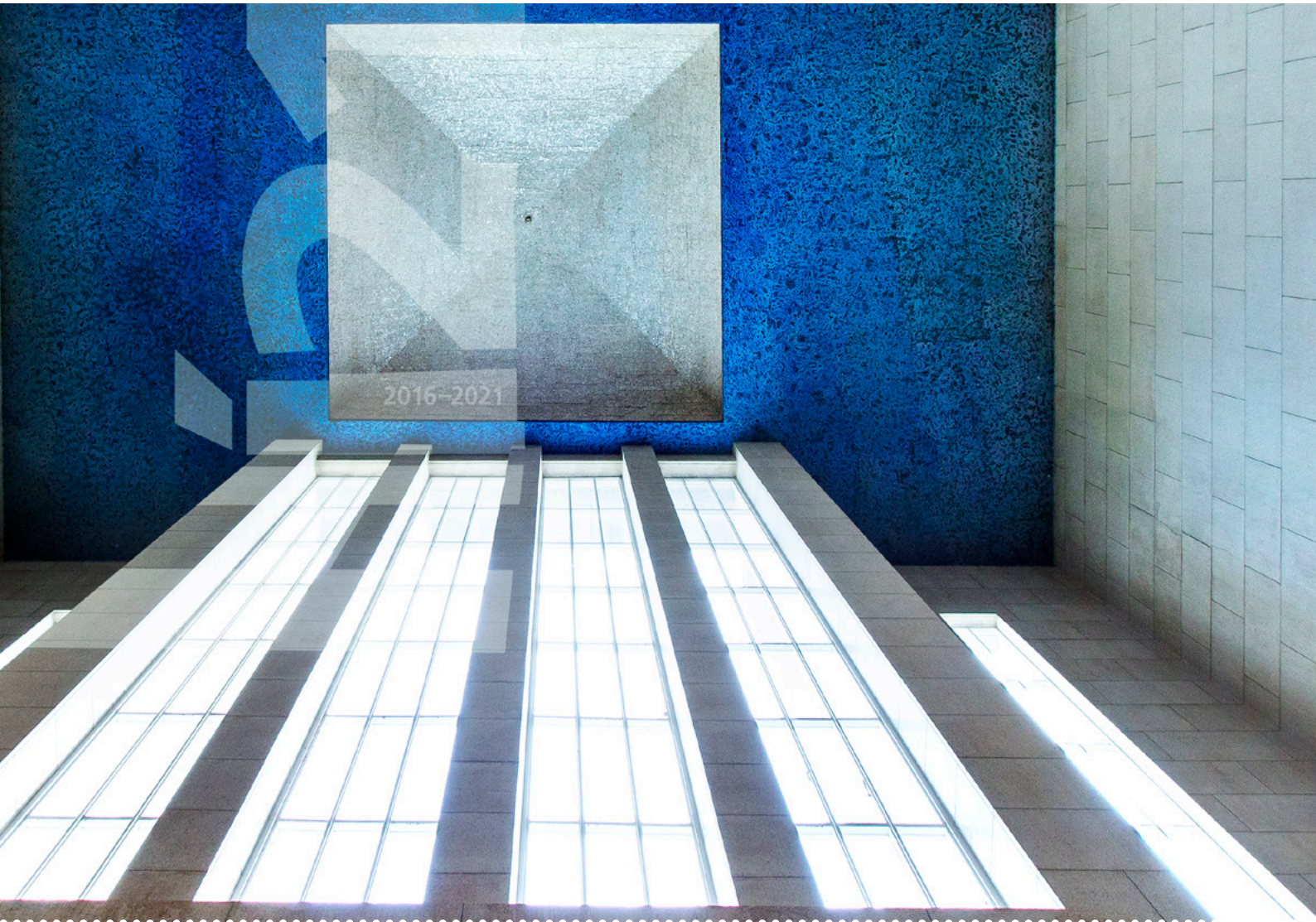




**UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND**  
**SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY – THRIVING SOCIETY**



**Strategy of the University of Iceland 2016-2021**



The Strategy of the University of Iceland 2016-2021 was approved by the University Forum on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016 and the University Council on March 17<sup>th</sup> 2016

## ■ INVESTING IN EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Universities are the foundation of knowledge-based societies in the 21st century. All over the world, nations are placing increased emphasis on the quality of education and dynamic scientific research in order to ensure national competitiveness, prosperity, and quality of life.

The University of Iceland is a leading Icelandic university and an active participant in the international scientific and academic community. The University's success in recent years has earned it a place amongst the very best universities according to recognised international rankings. In order to consolidate this important success and create the foundation for further progress, the University presents a new Strategy, HÍ 21, for the period 2016-2021 under the title "Successful University – Thriving Society".

The Strategy emphasises research as the driving force of new knowledge, teaching and learning as the foundation of progress and prosperity, and the University's active participation in society and industry. Human resources are also given priority and an emphasis placed on equality, academic freedom, and professionalism in all of the University's work.



Reliable funding is vital to the development of the University. On the centenary of the University of Iceland in 2011, the government set a target of gradually increasing funding to the University to a level that is comparable to other Nordic universities. This target was later reiterated for the higher education system as a whole in the Policy and Action Plan from the Science and Technology Policy Council. Reliable funding for the higher education system is a key investment in Icelandic society. It is therefore crucial that the government's commitment of support for the University is honoured. Higher education is a wise investment and both national and international reviews have confirmed that the University of Iceland is an efficiently run institution.

The new Strategy for the University of Iceland has been produced in extensive collaboration with the entire University community and stakeholders from diverse fields of industry and society. It was also based on a various internal and external reviews of the University. In this way we have ensured that the Strategy of the University of Iceland meets international quality criteria.

The goal of HÍ 21 is to make a good university even better. The Strategy of the University of Iceland will serve as a guide to the future for us all – staff, students, and the society that the University serves and relies upon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jón Atli Benediktsson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jón Atli Benediktsson Rector



## ■ VALUES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND

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**Academic freedom** is the cornerstone of the University, promoting critical thinking, a creative pursuit of knowledge, tolerance, and progress

**Equality** is a guiding principle of the University and the basis of diversity and respect in the academic community

**Professionalism** and ambition characterise the work of staff and students and are the foundations of the trust that the University has earned in society

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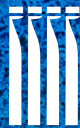
## ■ A LEADING UNIVERSITY

The University of Iceland plays a key role in the development of Iceland as a knowledge-based society. It is the country's leading scientific institution, provides education of professionals in diverse fields, actively collaborates with industry and society, and cultivates Iceland's culture and history. The University of Iceland collaborates closely with universities and research institutes all over the world and its strength as an international research university is evidenced by its position on lists of the highest ranked universities in the world<sup>1</sup>.

The University of Iceland's vision is to strengthen its position as a leading university. HÍ 21 is the University's strategy for the period 2016-2021. It includes five areas of focus that define the University's strategies and operations for the period. The focus areas of HÍ 21 are described by goals and measures that are directed at the University's core functions: research, teaching and learning, and collaboration with society and industry, as well as the University's human resources. These goals and measures will strengthen infrastructure, ensure quality, and enable the University to contribute to the development of Icelandic society, as well as strengthen its international collaboration and reputation. The measures will be evaluated and updated annually and information on the progress of the strategy published on the University website.

In order for HÍ 21 to reach its goals, it is essential that funding for the University of Iceland be comparable to other Nordic research universities. The University's funding is vital for its development and enables the University to secure non-governmental funding.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the list *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*, on which the University of Iceland has been ranked amongst the 300 best universities (top 2%) since 2011. In the year 2016, the University was ranked no. 222 in the world.



## A LEADING UNIVERSITY

### RESEARCH

THE DRIVING  
FORCE OF NEW  
KNOWLEDGE

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

THE FOUNDATION  
OF PROGRESS AND  
PROSPERITY

### ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

IN SOCIETY AND  
INDUSTRY

### HUMAN RESOURCES

### FUNDING

## ■ FOCUS AREAS OF HÍ 21

### **A progressive vision for teaching and learning that prepares students to participate in society and industry**

The University of Iceland plays a key role in the development of a modern knowledge-based society by preparing students to participate and work in a number of different fields, as well as preparing them for further study. The University emphasises the quality of study programmes, development of teaching methods, integration of teaching and research, and project-based learning in collaboration with society and industry.

### **Strong research infrastructure that supports the creation of knowledge and international collaboration**

The University of Iceland is the leading scientific institution in the country, conducting research in all academic fields. The University's dynamic research and innovation work has earned it a strong position in the international scientific community. Continuing research development will be actively promoted through investment in a solid infrastructure and support system, support for international collaboration, and enhancing quality and technical transfer of research.

### **The University has a wide impact and addresses the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The University of Iceland emphasises that the creation of knowledge should have a wide impact and that the University is a responsible participant in a society that promotes equality, diversity and sustainability. It is vital that research and study programmes tackle the complex challenges facing the world today and that the University is actively involved in Icelandic society and culture.

### **A great place to work**

The University of Iceland is a dynamic academic community in which a diverse group of staff and students come together to create and communicate new ideas and solutions. It is important for the University to be an engaging and ambitious workplace that attracts talented staff and students in a competitive international environment. Emphasis is placed on a vibrant and family-friendly work environment, equality and opportunities for professional development.

### **Quality culture and efficient information technology**

The University ensures that research and degrees meet international criteria and quality requirements, which is the basis for the trust the University has earned in Iceland and internationally. The success of the University is based on common values, clear strategy, systematic planning, performance reviews based on reliable information and continuous reform.





## ■ TEACHING AND LEARNING – THE FOUNDATION OF PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

The University of Iceland emphasises demanding study programmes, a positive learning environment for students, and high quality degrees at all levels of study. To prepare students for further study, participation in a democratic society and diverse professional fields, the University strives to continuously develop teaching methods and learning facilities, encourage innovation in teaching, and strengthen relations between higher education and industry. At the same time, it is important to provide teachers and students with support in their work and encourage students' engagement in their studies.

### GOALS

The quality of teaching and learning environment given greater weight and support in the operations of the University

The student-teacher ratio lowered to increase the quality of teaching and reduce workloads of teachers

Increased support for undergraduate studies

Master's programmes strengthened as an independent level of study and the framework, infrastructure and international connections for the programmes enhanced

The framework for doctoral studies strengthened and increased support for students and supervisors

Increased opportunity for students to participate in international collaboration

### MEASURES

- A comprehensive strategy created for teaching and learning and administration of academic affairs made more consistent. The strategy will address e.g. the development of teaching methods, evaluation of teaching quality, continuing education, part-time study, recording of lectures and distance teaching
- Pedagogical support for academic staff increased, e.g. through strengthening the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and hiring teaching experts in every school
- Systematic support for faculty plans that are created based on faculty reviews, e.g. through enlarging the Academic Affairs Fund
- Schools and faculties will work systematically towards improving student retention and graduation rates and will issue annual progress reports
- Support for sessional teachers increased and framework for sessional teaching strengthened

- Evaluate ways in which workloads can be reduced and the quality of study programmes may be increased by revising student admission, increasing the number of teaching staff, increasing efficiency in study programmes, and increasing collaboration between or merging of academic units
- A strategy formed on student admission and admission requirements

- Faculties make systematic use of student evaluations of teaching and hold regular meetings with students in order to enhance teaching quality and encourage students to be committed to their studies
- Faculties reward teaching staff at undergraduate and graduate level for significant contributions to teaching on the basis of clearer criteria for teaching quality
- An efficient teaching assistant system established within faculties to reduce teaching workloads and enhance the feedback students receive

- Support and quality assurance for the introduction of new programmes and regular evaluations of existing programmes increased, e.g. in consideration of learning outcomes and connections between the programme and the field, industry and international collaboration
- Study programmes consider ways to enable students to take courses in other faculties / schools
- Faculties increasingly involved in joint international Master's programmes

- The number of doctoral grants from the University increased by at least 10 over the strategy period in order to promote the continuation of a graduation rate of 70 doctoral students per year
- Doctoral studies strengthened, e.g. through organised programmes, clear procedures, support for a community of doctoral students and their participation in the international academic community
- Formal methods defined to better support doctoral student progression, including with regards to completion of studies
- All doctoral grants accompanied by disposable funds, e.g. to support doctoral students' participation in international collaboration

- Study programmes organised to facilitate student participation in international exchange programmes
- Opportunities for students to take part of their studies abroad introduced and promoted
- Faculties evaluate students' access to language learning that could enhance their professional skills



## RESEARCH – THE DRIVING FORCE OF NEW KNOWLEDGE

The free pursuit of knowledge and scientific research that meets rigorous ethical standards form the foundation of a research university. Rapid growth of research has characterised the University of Iceland in recent years, which has promoted the development of Icelandic society, earned the University respect internationally, and created new opportunities for collaboration. It is crucial to consolidate this success and ensure continued development in the interests of dynamic research-based study, scientific research, and innovation. Research infrastructure, national and international collaboration must be strengthened, and an environment must be created which supports research of the highest international standards.

### GOALS

### MEASURES

Research infrastructure<sup>2</sup> improved through reliable funding, effective management and systematic sharing of resources

- A need assessment of researchers and academic units for research infrastructure, together with an implementation plan, produced
- A plan formulated regarding access to, and storing of, research data
- The University's system of funds and grants connected to research reviewed in order to ensure maximum support for research
- The review of the structure and roles of the University research centres implemented

The impact and quality of research evaluated based on diverse research activities and different disciplinary conventions

- The system for evaluation of research revised following a review of the Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions

Enhanced recruitment in research and systematic support for young researchers

- New academic staff have reduced teaching duties for at least one semester and will receive start-up funds to launch their teaching and research careers
- Work facilities for postdoctoral researchers improved and their rights reviewed
- The Division of Human Resources will seek suggestions every year from schools, faculties and support service personnel in the interests of continually reforming the hiring process

Progressive international collaboration

- A comprehensive strategy formulated regarding international collaborations, with emphasis on prominent foreign universities
- Researchers who have been successful, e.g. in acquiring domestic funding, encouraged and supported in applying to foreign competitive funds
- Guidelines for using the University's research funds reviewed to better support international collaborative projects
- Increased support to enable foreign academics to stay/work at the University for short periods

Innovation and technical transfer of research results increased in all academic fields

- Innovation and technical transfer of research results incorporated into study programmes, e.g. in the form of short interdisciplinary courses
- Efforts made to raise researchers' awareness of innovation and opportunities for application and knowledge transfer in all academic fields

Support for grant applications and research project management increased and adapted to better meet the needs of researchers

- Support for the administration and management of research projects and writing of international contracts increased, e.g. through specialised services for grant recipients
- Provide active researchers with increased flexibility for conducting research
- Processes relating to research grants within the University simplified, e.g. by allowing grants to be awarded for more than one year and by considering evaluations from other competitive funds

Faculties and study programmes systematically integrate teaching and research

- Active researchers involved in teaching for first-year undergraduates
- Teaching staff present their own research to undergraduates and encourage students to take part in domestic conferences as part of their studies
- The integration of teaching and research addressed in faculty strategies

<sup>2</sup>Research infrastructure entails equipment, facilities, databases, services, systems, computer networks and anything else required for research work in all academic fields.



## ■ ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY AND INDUSTRY

The creation of new knowledge and its practical application are the key to improving the quality of life and supporting a prosperous society. The University of Iceland takes a proactive role in society, industry, and culture with the aim of ensuring the University's work has a wide impact. Emphasis will be placed on communicating the results of research and innovation in diverse ways, promoting a general understanding of science, and using expert knowledge to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and promote a discourse on urgent social issues.

### GOALS

The university is a forum for new ideas and dynamic collaboration between researchers, students, industry, institutions and society, promoting a prosperous community

Diverse science media used to promote interest in and understanding of science, support its practical application, and inspire diverse scientific collaboration

Various methods employed so that expert knowledge at the University is used in decisions relating to policy making, the competitiveness and prosperity of society

Productive and mutual collaboration and communication with preceding school levels

### MEASURES

- A network forum for the University and Icelandic industry established in order to promote increased collaboration between students and researchers with institutions and industry
- The development and operations of the University of Iceland Science Park used to support the University's operations and strengthen its connections with industry
- The expansion and operation of the University of Iceland's regional research centres shall be strengthened and better integrated into the work of schools and faculties
- An alumni network used to strengthen connections between former and current students as well as other patrons of the University of Iceland
- Faculties and other academic units define their connections with their professional field in relation to study programmes, research and continuing education

- Scientific work that attracts attention within the international scientific community highlighted
- The University's connections with companies and institutions promoted, as well as research that leads to innovation
- Students in all academic fields supported in active participation in community or outreach programmes related to their field of study

- Methods developed to promote the use of academic knowledge in policy decisions affecting society, e.g. by making research results more accessible
- The University of Iceland stands for vibrant discourse with the general public and professionals on pressing societal issues
- Criteria developed for rewarding academic staff for important contributions to social development
- Establishing formal processes and systematic introductions to assist immigrants use their university education in Iceland

- University administrators actively engage with educational authorities and other school levels to promote consistency and collaboration between all school levels
- Connections between University faculties and subject teachers in upper secondary schools strengthened
- Promotion programmes directed towards upper secondary school students enhanced and the number of grants available for a diverse group of exceptional students increased
- Strengthening programmes that increase the interest of students in science at all school levels



## HUMAN RESOURCES

The success of the University of Iceland depends on the quality of its staff and students. The University must be competitive for human resources, both in Iceland and internationally. The University aspires to attract talented staff and students and build a tight-knit University community. It is therefore important to nurture the University's human resources by providing a work environment that promotes well-being, equality and health.

### GOALS

Administrators enable staff and students to balance their employment or study duties with family responsibilities

A positive, environmentally friendly and encouraging work environment that promotes the health and well-being of staff and students

The development of the University campus to promote a cohesive University community

Equality and diversity within the University community promoted

Emphasis placed on enhancing administration, quality processes, and the use of information technology

### MEASURES

- University operations (e.g. meetings, timetables and examinations) organised according to the balance of work/study and family responsibilities
- A family strategy formulated on the basis of a needs assessment and carried out by the Division of Human Resources
- Evaluations of research automatically take absence for parental leave into account

- Opportunities for professional development within the University administration increased, e.g. through continuing education and professional transfers
- Sports facilities improved and staff and students offered diverse, low-cost opportunities for exercise
- A strategy to support positive communications implemented in all schools under the direction of the Division of Human Resources
- A mentoring system for new academic staff introduced
- An environmental management system along the lines of ISO 14001 adopted in order to promote a sustainable University community

- A long-term vision conceived for the University campus and used to prioritise the University's building projects
- All University schools developed on the University campus. Emphasis placed on moving the School of Education and future premises for the health sciences in connection with the building of the new Landspítali University Hospital
- Transport and safety of staff and students on the University campus improved, e.g. with a shuttle, employee cars, walking paths, better use of car parks, improved parking for people with disabilities, and facilities for bicycles

- The composition of the student body analysed, interventions and promotions developed if systematic barriers are in place or if underrepresented groups need increased support
- An assessment of a gender-based wage gap, possible causes analysed, and a reform plan formulated as needed
- Administrators' knowledge of diversity and equal opportunities supported and an Equality Award established
- The University official language strategy reviewed with the aim of supporting both the Icelandic language (the official language of the University) and the international work of the University

- A review of the University's structure and administration system used to ensure efficiency and clarify responsibility
- The duties of a head of faculty clarified and strengthened through longer terms of employment and increased support
- Key information on students and study programmes, research, human resources, and finances defined and uploaded to an information forum for use in day-to-day management
- Work processes clarified and more efficient use of information technology, e.g. through the comprehensive design of software systems





## ■ KEY MEASURES FOR HÍ 21

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Retention and graduation rates  
Student satisfaction  
Student outcomes after graduation  
Number of graduated doctoral students

### RESEARCH

Standing in international rankings  
Number of publications and citations  
International collaborative networks  
Non-governmental funding

### ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Collaboration with industry  
Collaboration with society  
Number of youth attending UI's educational events

### HUMAN RESOURCES

Job satisfaction  
Workload on staff  
Gender wage differences  
Grades in international quality reviews

