

# Education and Research Strategy for University of Gävle, 2021 – 2030



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## Introduction and summary

This document presents University of Gävle's two overall operational goals and six principal strategies for the time period 2021 – 2030. The goals and strategies are based on the University's vision, mission statement and core values, and to facilitate an understanding of how the goals and strategies interact with these, their interrelationship is described below.

University of Gävle's overall operational goals are:

- *The University's integrated research and education environments are internationally renowned.*
- *We are a challenge-driven university that, locally and globally, creates societal impact.*

The University's principal strategies are:

- *Via strategic prioritisations, we create integrated research and education environments that promote the quality, reputation and relevance of our courses and study programmes.*
- *Via the building of interdisciplinary research areas, we develop knowledge that has impact.*
- *Via sustainable, internationally oriented education and research, we take a clear position in the global arena.*
- *Via long-term collaborations and strategic partnerships, we contribute to societal development.*
- *Via advanced forms of web-based teaching and investment in innovative learning environments, we take a leading position in lifelong learning.*
- *Via leadership that promotes employee participation, collegial responsibility and student influence, we create favourable conditions for operational and organisational development.*

All strategies emanate from the University's mission statement and aim to achieve operational goals and, in the long run, fulfil the University's vision.

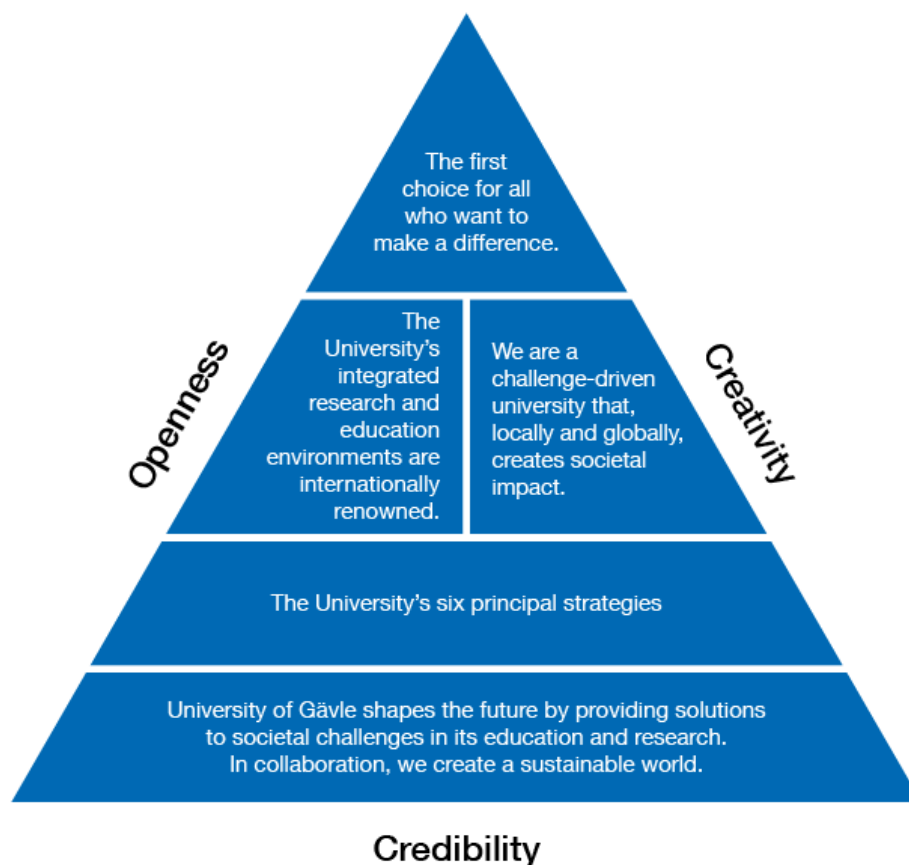


Figure 1. The Vision pyramid

## Vision, mission statement and core values

Together, the vision, the mission statement and the core values, form the basis for the operational goals and strategies described in this document. The interaction between vision, mission statement and core values, goals and strategies can be described as a pyramid (see Figure 1).

## What do the vision and the mission statement mean?

At the top of the pyramid, the vision expresses the long-term goal University of Gävle strives to achieve. It must be the guiding principle for underlying objectives and strategies as well as for all governance. At the base, the mission statement describes the University's fundamental mission and purpose – the reason why the University exists. The University's mission statement is essentially the same as that of all higher education institutions in Sweden. Nevertheless, it points to certain aspects the University would like to emphasise in particular. In the middle of the pyramid, the overall operational goals articulate the vision in a concrete manner, and the strategies describe key choices, priorities and overall courses of actions to be used to attain our overall operational goals. The core values identify values that must be especially safeguarded and paid particular attention to when we carry out our activities in order to attain our vision. Below, a more detailed description of the meaning of the vision, the mission statement and the core values is provided.

## The meaning of the mission statement

The University's mission statement states that "University of Gävle shapes the future by providing solutions to societal challenges in its education and research. In collaboration, we create a sustainable world." The mission statement proclaims that education and research are the University's core activities, which is true of all of Sweden's higher education institutions. At the same time, it provides direction and voices an ambition. The phrase "University of Gävle shapes the future" points to the fact that we intend to take an active part in the development of society and in breaking new ground and shaping the conditions for the society of tomorrow. The phrase "providing solutions to societal challenges" in the first sentence puts this ambition in concrete terms by explicitly connecting the shaping of the future to the societal challenges identified in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the sustainable development goals adopted by the United Nations.

Thus, the first sentence expresses that education and research at the University must be given a direction that ensures that they clearly contribute to solutions to the global societal challenges.

The second sentence in the mission statement emphasises the importance and value of joint collaboration with the surrounding society. The Swedish Higher Education Act stipulates that higher education institutions must collaborate with the surrounding society and inform about their activities, ensuring that benefit is derived from their research findings. Accordingly, our mission statement is essentially the same as that of all other Swedish higher education institutions. However, it contains an additional specification which in itself is a key choice; external collaborations at University of Gävle must aim to create a sustainable world.

## The meaning of the vision

The vision of the University is concisely stated: "the first choice for all who want to make a difference." It contains two long-term goals. The first one is to be "the first choice." To be the first choice means to be the higher education institution that students select as their first choice for the education they seek. An integral part of this ambition is that the academic environments the University offers must be attractive for its teachers and researchers to work in. Further, it means that the University is to be a partner that is sought after by other higher education institutions, the business community and by the surrounding society. The second part of the vision expresses, in similarity with the mission statement, our ambition to be an active co-creator in a positive development of society. To "make a difference" means to give substantial contributions in our educational activities and in our research to the solution of some of the global societal challenges identified in *Agenda 2030* in collaborations with the surrounding society and with other higher education institutions.

## Overall operational goals

The University's most general goal, the vision, is intentionally abstract in nature, partly to ensure that the vision stays relevant for a long period of time. Thus, the vision needs concrete goals and strategies. The University's two overall operational goals are:

*The University's integrated research and education environments are internationally renowned.*

*We are a challenge-driven university that, locally and globally, creates societal impact.*

The two operational goals are clearly connected to the University's vision; in order to be the first choice for students, university teachers and partners, the University must build integrated research and education environments that are internationally renowned. To make a difference in the best way possible, the University must prioritise education and research motivated by societal challenges and that create local and global societal impact.

The first goal builds on what the University calls "the knowledge dimension" and the second one on "the challenge-driven dimension." These two dimensions, and the meaning of these two goals, are described in more detail below.

#### The overall operational goal in the knowledge dimension

The goal targeting the knowledge dimension clarifies the University's ambition to build integrated research and education environments: "The University's integrated research and education environments are internationally renowned." In addition to the description below of integrated research and education environments, this operational goal contains yet another objective, namely that the University's integrated research and education environments must be *internationally renowned*. This means that although the integrated environments primarily aim to organise and strengthen the activities internally, it is expected that these will contribute to building that good reputation which makes the University the first choice for students as well as teachers and research students.

At the beginning of the strategy period 2021-2030, the activities in education and research at University of Gävle are part of integrated research and education environments in varying degrees. Some environments are close to fulfilling the requirements described in our strategies, while others lack important components. Similarly, some study programmes and research projects are more easily connected than others to a potentially integrated environment. Our ambition is to establish several, but yet a limited number, of integrated environments at the University during this strategic period. No decision has been made in advance regarding how many they should be, or which are the ones that should be selected.

#### The overall operational goal in the challenge-driven dimension

Behind the overall operational goal, "We are a challenge-driven university that, locally and globally, creates societal impact," lies two motivations:

- In decisions regarding the direction of its activities, the University must prioritise education and research that clearly and credibly contribute to solving societal challenges. This is what makes the University challenge-driven.
- The societal challenges that the University's research and education tackle will meet a regional, national or international need, which should ensure that its efforts generate benefits and added value in the surrounding society at large.

The concentration on challenge-driven research is expected to lead to an increase in research and third-cycle education. Research must be conducted in close collaboration with external partners—regionally, nationally and internationally—and is expected to be funded primarily from external sources.

As in the interpretation of the vision and the mission statement, the starting point for the societal challenges targeted in this operational goal is the goals for sustainable development in *Agenda 2030*. Therefore, these global challenges will serve as a starting point in identifying what a societal challenge is. The aim of the University's research in the challenge-driven dimension is to give a substantial contribution to the efforts to reach the global Sustainable Development Goals.



## Education and research strategies

To reach the overall operational goals, the University has developed six principal strategies. These strategies aim to provide guidance in prioritisations and choices regarding the direction of the activities, and they apply to all parts of the organisation, within faculties as well as within the professional and management support services.

Via strategic prioritisations, we create integrated research and education environments that promote the quality, reputation and relevance of our courses and study programmes.

An integrated research and education environment concretely refers to a group of university teachers, researchers and doctoral students of a defined scientific field that the University offers first-cycle, second-cycle and third-cycle courses and programmes within, and which hosts a number of research projects, mainly with external funding. The organisation will make prioritisations with the purpose of creating integrated research and education environments with a critical mass of professors, senior lecturers and other teachers with educational qualifications. These will guarantee academic quality and operational sustainability over time. Such an environment facilitates student recruitment within a field that is in demand in the labour market. Courses and study programmes offered will secure both a steady inflow of students in the educational progression that the environment offers and a stable financial basis. An integrated research and education environment presents a close connection between education and research and also contributes to one or several of the strategic research areas.

Via the building of interdisciplinary research areas, we develop knowledge that has impact.

The University will concentrate its research to strategic research areas which clearly contribute to solving current and future societal challenges. A strategic research area unites research on current and future societal challenges that by their sheer complexity demand interdisciplinary research efforts. Our research will be conducted in a close relationship with external partners, regionally, nationally and internationally, and is expected to generate external funding to a high degree. A strategic research area encompasses the whole University and is based on its present and future capacity. The choice of fields of action, as well as prioritisations among challenges, will be decided in interaction with researchers at the University and with its partners on a regional, national and international level. Priorities will be made to create favourable conditions for attracting external funding from, and in collaboration with, external partners and research funders. One goal is that a strategic research area must provide the conditions to establish programmes or agreements in which the University and its partners can make substantial provisions to joint productions as well as to research and third-cycle programmes.

Via sustainable, internationally oriented education and research, we take a clear position in the global arena.

The University has the ambition to operate within an international context and make a difference there. We will establish priorities to increase our international collaborations in education and research by actively creating good conditions for student and teacher



exchanges across national borders. We will also strive to increase the proportion of distance learning with international admissions, especially within our integrated research and education environments. The University will utilise and develop technology and infrastructure which bridge distances so as to facilitate internationally, environmentally and socially sustainable contacts. To contribute to the creation of global societal impact, the University will make priorities aimed to increase its participation in relevant international cooperation bodies and to establish long-term international collaborations via its partnerships with higher education institutions outside Sweden.

Via long-term collaborations and strategic partnerships, we contribute to societal development.

The University will collaborate with businesses, public sector organisations and civil society within its education and research, which will contribute to the development of the University's activities as well as to the development of society at large. These collaborations aim to produce knowledge which is useful to and applicable in society, while enhancing the quality and relevance of the University's education and research. The University's collaborative efforts will form an integrated part of our education and research, and they will be characterised by a persistence in building long-term relationships with different actors in society. We aim to be an accessible and stable partner for co-production and innovation, regionally, nationally as well as internationally. The University will prioritise collaborative efforts which contribute to the strengthening and development of our integrated research and education environments and those which meet the demands of skill supply, research and lifelong learning. Moreover, we will prioritise collaborations and partnerships that create innovation and societal impact as well as strengthen research within our strategic research areas.

Via advanced forms of web-based teaching and investment in innovative learning environments, we take a leading position in lifelong learning.

The University strives to be at the forefront within learning and teaching, regarding pedagogy, technology as well as infrastructure. The University will take a leading position as one of the strongest higher education institutions within web-based learning, while offering innovative, stimulating and attractive learning environments on campus. Lifelong learning should be seen as the individual's learning process from basic higher education to different forms of professional development in which the individual is stimulated and provided with tools that give access to, and enable development, in critical thinking as well as research-based knowledge and innovation. Our processes to create new attractive learning environments are to be carefully elaborated and efficient, which in turn will enable the individual to renew and broaden skills over time, both in our web-based and campus-based education. Our professional educational support will be flexible and adapted to different learning environments and learning formats.

Via leadership that promotes employee participation, collegial responsibility and student influence, we create favourable conditions for operational and organisational development.

The University actively and consciously strives to include members of staff and students in operational and organisational development. This objective will be reached via advanced

forms of collegial participation and responsibility, through active involvement of students and their representatives in organisational development and in decision-making as well as through an active employee dialogue. Our leadership and our employeeship build on our core values openness, creativity and credibility, which are all manifested in, for example, a leadership built on trust, an open dialogue and shared, solution-focused responsibility. One prerequisite for the success of this strategy is that the University systematically targets the promotion of measures to further gender equality, inclusion and equal opportunity. In this way, students and members of staff will be given equal opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, development.