



Dept of International Environment and Development Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences



STRATEGY 2010-2013



Strategic Plan 2010-2013

Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric

Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)

VISION STATEMENT

A world where human inequality, conflicts, environmental degradation and poverty has been substantially and sustainably reduced.

STRATEGIC GOALS 2010 – 2013

Noragric's strategic goals in this period are:

- *To promote human rights and social justice, reflecting the ethical awareness and commitment of its staff and students as well as the University's ethical guidelines.*
- *To consolidate and further strengthen the status of Noragric as an interdisciplinary academic department within the New University*
- *To conduct high quality, interdisciplinary research, combining natural and social sciences in environment and development studies and international relations, to enhance Noragric's national and international academic contribution, collaboration and recognition in the field*
- *To improve the education programmes in order to be attractive to students and to educate environment and development studies graduates who are well qualified for problem-solving, research and careers in public or private organisations.*
- *To sustain and increase Noragric's relevance to academic partners, civil society and policy-makers and to contribute to strengthening national capacities for interdisciplinary research and education among partner institutions*
- *To improve and expand information and communication services both within and outside Noragric.*
- *To attract and retain creative and committed staff through providing attractive conditions and an excellent work environment*
- *To secure that Noragric has a sound and sustainable financial situation*

Introduction

1. Background

Noragric is the *Department of International Environment and Development Studies* at the *Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)*.

The UMB strategic plan 2010-2013 shows the goals and objectives in the years to come. Noragric is one of eight departments at UMB and has developed its academic profile in international environment and development studies. This evolving interdisciplinary field examines processes of change in order to illuminate how human well-being can be achieved in a world where local and global political, environmental and economic changes are interconnected. Noragric's activities include research, education and assignments with a particular focus on developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Noragric is active in research, education, institutional collaboration and information/communication. With more than 40 years of collaboration between UMB and academic and professional institutions in Africa, Asia, the Americas and East/South East Europe, Noragric has established a broad network of worldwide contacts. Noragric has also been increasingly engaged with academic institutions in the North.

Noragric is led by the Head of Department, who works with the Leadership Group, the Education Committee (EC) and the Research Committee (RC) and reports to the Noragric Board and to the Rector of UMB.

2. A challenging and rapidly changing context

Noragric works in a globalised and rapidly changing world characterised by striking contrasts between, on the one hand, inequality, poverty and appalling living conditions for a large proportion of the population, and, on the other, positive trends of democratisation, economic development and human flourishing. Advances in technology, education and health remain out of reach or access is threatened due to social injustice, environmental degradation and the divided geographies of continents and rural and urban landscapes. Contemporary crises – pandemics, dramatic increases in food prices, destabilising economic recessions and human induced climate change – pose new challenges to knowledge production and education.

Through nearly twenty-five years of existence, Noragric has sought to address complex problems of poverty, environment and development. Noragric strives to maintain its historically informed, policy-aware and holistic approaches without becoming driven by policies, politics or fashions. The intensity of conflicts of many kinds – economic, cultural and military – call for research and education that is engaged, that carefully observes reality and fairly considers diverse viewpoints, interests and arguments. To

tackle complex and multilayered crises and challenges posed by the ideals and failures of development, competent and ethically aware students of change are as needed as ever.

3. Vision and Values

As an education and research institution,

Noragric's vision is a world where human inequality, conflicts, environmental degradation and poverty has been substantially and sustainably reduced.

Noragric aims to promote human rights and social justice, reflecting the ethical awareness and commitment of its staff and students as well as the University's ethical guidelines.

Noragric realises this vision by:

- Creative interaction, research and enhancement and dissemination of knowledge, skills and values in a dynamic professional and educational environment.
- Undertaking education and research guided by multi and inter-disciplinary approaches.
- Enhancing education programmes at Bachelor, Master and doctoral levels.
- Networking on national, regional and international level through institutional collaboration
- Dissemination through enhanced internal and external communication

4. Noragric's Status within the New University

Goal

To consolidate and further strengthen the status of Noragric as an interdisciplinary academic department within the New University

Strategic Focus Areas

Noragric, under the leadership of the Head of Department, the Board and the Leadership Group will during the strategy period:

- Enhance the status of the department within UMB as an independent academic, interdisciplinary and internationally oriented unit which supports the university in its global, development-oriented engagements.
- Engage constructively in the process of the re-organisation of the university following the merge with the Norwegian School of Veterinary Science and the National Veterinary Institute.

- promote the opportunities, if the faculty model is decided by UMB, particularly by strengthening the cooperation with like-minded departments focusing on environment, resources, landscape and development.

5. Research

Research at Noragric is carried out under the leadership of the Head of Research assisted by the research cluster leaders. Researchers have the main responsibility for the quality and quantity of contributions in knowledge generation and dissemination. The PhD programme is central to Noragric's research and capacity development.

The Research Committee is the representative and elected body for the academic staff and is chaired by the Head of Research. The Research Committee is responsible for coordinating research activities and research project acquisition; enabling clusters to be creative units of research and related activities; facilitating the production of high quality scientific publications; developing the PhD programme and selecting PhD students; and administering competence funds. The Research Committee will regularly call meetings of academic staff to discuss its areas of responsibility.

Research is organised into six clusters, groups of researchers with shared interests and an elected leader. Clusters are engaged in research, project development, seminars and networking. The academic fields overlap and members interact and cooperate across clusters, for example through associated member status. Cross cutting issues are poverty and gender. The six clusters at present are:

- Agricultural Development, Livelihoods and Environmental Change (ADLEC)
- Conflict, Human Security and Development (CHSD)
- Environmental Governance and Protected Areas (ENGOPA)
- Rights, Accountabilities and Power in Development (RAPID)
- Resources, Risks and Governance (RRG-Net)
- Governance and Climate Change (GOVCLIM)

Goal

To conduct high quality, interdisciplinary research, combining natural and social sciences in environment and development studies and international relations, to enhance Noragric's national and international academic contribution, collaboration and recognition in the field.

Noragric shall develop and strengthen the links between macro and micro levels of analysis to ensure that its contributions are more relevant to debates and discussions on policy alternatives.

Strategic Focus Areas

In the strategy period focus will be on climate and development, food security and sustainable livelihoods, human security, and poor people's rights to land and other natural resources.

In the strategy period, under the leadership of the Head of Research, the Research Committee will:

a) Expand and diversify academic staff

- Retain and recruit high quality academic staff.
- Keep the balance between natural and social sciences in the recruitment of new academic staff.
- Strengthen the research capacity on globalisation, climate and development policy and other relevant areas.
- Increase the number of female academic staff in permanent positions, including by giving priority to qualified female candidates in recruitment and promoting female scientific staff in qualifying for full professorship.
- Increase the number of academic staff from the global South.
- Extend and strengthen the participation in national and international research networks.
- Actively participate in the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI).

b) Strengthen the quality of the PhD programme and PhD research

- Regularly update and improve the PhD programme and PhD courses.
- Maintain a total number of 30 students.
- Produce an average five PhD graduates each year.
- Recruit four to eight PhD students of high academic quality per year, from both the South and North, seeking gender balance, and considering the interest of research fields for Noragric and the availability of supervisors and working space.
- Encourage PhD students to publish articles in peer reviewed international journals under the guidance of their supervisors, who may be co-authors.
- Expand the Research School network and, through it, arrange two academic workshops for PhD students per year.

c) Improve the quality and quantity of publications by staff and students

- Maintain an average of 1.2 publication points per academic staff per year.
- Maintain a minimum of one popular science contribution per staff per year.
- Publish in high quality and high impact journals, scientific monographs and edited volumes published by reputed publishers.
- Increase the share of publications in peer-reviewed open access journals.
- Reward staff for high quality publications and other academic achievements.
- Reduce administrative tasks placed on academic staff.

d) Expand the funding for research and maintain a high level of academic freedom, independent debate and democratic participation

- Increase the number of sources of funding and funded projects, particularly long-term projects, through sustained collective efforts.
- Improve the quality and quantity of research applications.
- Defend and promote academic freedom in all projects and programmes.
- Nurture an environment of academic pluralism and open debate.
- Sustain an enabling environment for the continuous development of clusters as the department's dynamic units of research and related activities.

6. Education

Goal

To improve the education programmes in order to be attractive to students and to educate environment and development studies graduates who are well qualified for problem-solving, research and careers in public or private organisations.

Strategic Focus Areas

The Head of Education leads the education activities together with the Education Committee, Programme Leaders and teachers. In the strategy period, under the leadership of the Head of Education and the Education Committee, Noragric will:

a) Maintain and improve the current education programmes:

- Bachelor of Science in International Environment and Development Studies
- Master of Science in International Environmental Studies
- Master of Science in International Development Studies
- Master of Science in International Relations (offered jointly with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs)
- Formalize collaboration with NUPI for teaching and student supervision.
- Establish links/collaboration with like-minded organisations to strengthen our educational capacity and programmes (e.g. invite NUPI for guest teaching, etc).

b) Achieve high quality of all education programmes, secure their international recognition, and attract excellent students from all parts of the world

- Maintain and improve programmes and courses to ensure theoretical, analytical, and methodological progression and a balance between knowledge, skills and values.
- Offer students a comprehensive study environment including classrooms, group rooms, study rooms, lounge, ICT services, library services and writing support.

- Improve student satisfaction and sense of identity and belonging through academic and social events.
- Expand the opportunities for and information about studies and field work at universities abroad as part of degree programmes.
- Practice systematic course reviews in consultation with teachers.
- Review and follow up the quality of courses offered at partner universities.
- Conduct bi-annual meetings with involved faculty to discuss status and improvements of programme.
- Strengthen core courses.
- Expand the scientific staff in the direction of e.g., research methods, sociology, political economy, development history, globalization, international relations and trade policy.
- Review relevance of our education to the job market following UMB's market study.
- Consider internships for students with organisations (e.g. NGOs in Oslo or partners in our networks)
- Reinstate arrangements for local supervisors for field research.
- Strengthen links with Northern universities.
- Examine reasons for drop-out from the study programmes.
- Improve English language and writing skills.

c) Secure quality and sustainability of staff within the education programmes

- Maintain one academic leader for each programme.
- Anchor courses in permanent staff to secure continuity.
- Recruit staff where gaps arise, including in sociology/social anthropology, political science and academic writing.
- Distribute teaching equitably among staff (15 credits per year).
- Support the strengthening of pedagogic skills among teaching staff.
- Review and expand the incentives for teaching.
- Hold meetings with teaching staff each semester to review problems and progress.
- Review recognition of teaching experience and its contribution to professor competency.
- Consider and invite discussions on new pedagogical approaches and methods.

d) Strengthen the link between research and education

- Improve the training in proposal writing and field research.
- Expand the formal arrangements with research institutions nationally and abroad to improve support and local supervision for student research.
- Strengthen ties to the Master's programmes by linking students' research projects to ongoing research projects of the staff.
- Improve student supervision by better linking student research to staff interests and existing projects.
- Offer incentives to students to participate in existing research projects.

e) Secure the economic sustainability of the education programmes

- Improve marketing, including attractive and informative web pages. Enhance Noragric's brand identity.
- Maintain a high number of high-quality applications.
- Maintain annual admission at 40 students for the BSc and 30 for each of the MSc programmes.
- Ensure that courses are well integrated in education programmes, and terminate courses (at BSc and MSc levels) that are isolated or attended by less than ten students.
- Review the pool of universities abroad and define and further strengthen/ develop geographic options for students to go abroad for a semester.

7. Institutional Collaboration

Goal

To sustain and increase Noragric's relevance to academic partners, civil society and policy-makers and to contribute to strengthening national capacities for interdisciplinary research and education among partner institutions.

Strategic Focus Areas

Noragric, under the leadership of the Head of Department, the Institutional Cooperation Coordinator and Projects Leaders, will in the strategy period:

a) Expand and increase the quality of institutional cooperation programmes

- Promote cooperation with partner universities in the North and the South for improved quality and impact of research, education and advisory services.
- Establish and maintain student exchange agreements with selected universities with excellent relations and a high activity level.
- Enter into Memoranda of Understanding or institutional cooperation agreements with selected universities for staff exchange, sabbaticals and joint research.

- Develop at least one new programme in Asia and one in Latin America.
- Involve UMB departments and local research institutes in Noragric's institutional cooperation.
- Use the Institutional Cooperation Forum for discussion of issues and exchange of ideas on institutional cooperation.

b) Strengthen the funding base through strong and diverse partnerships

- Supply advisory services to local, national and global stakeholders including researchers and academics, practitioners, , policy-makers and the public.
- Expand the Frame Agreement with NORAD, while attaining a higher level of research-based activities and ensuring timely and high quality delivery.
- Develop a strategy for public-private partnerships.
- Ensure that institutional cooperation agreements are adequately funded.

8. Funding and Financial Management

Goal:

To secure that Noragric has a sound and sustainable financial situation

Strategic Focus Areas

The Noragric Board and the Head of Department, assisted by the Leadership Group and Project Leaders, have the responsibility for securing that Noragric has a sound and sustainable financial situation. Noragric, under the leadership of the Head of Department and guidance of the Board, will in the period 2010 - 2013:

a) Diversify funding profile and secure a balance between research, education, institutional collaboration and assignments

- Maintain awareness among staff that project acquisition, income generation and fund-raising are shared responsibilities.
- Give priority to long-term programmes and projects.
- Increase core funding by adapting to the UMB budget model.
- Undertake professional fundraising efforts without violating the integrity and independence of staff and the organisation.
- Seek multiple funding sources for research and education activities, including the Norwegian government, the Norwegian Research Council, the European Union and other sources.
- Seek to utilize the opportunities for increased funding, including corporate funding more effectively
- Improve the quality of submitted research applications.

b) Noragric will create a transparent and efficient budgeting and financial management system

- Use the available data-base to account for time use and results in income generation. Staff with income generating responsibilities should account for time use and results in income generation through the Agresso project database tools for time registration.
- Budget for costs such as time use, travel expenses, library services, and PhD training.
- Use established procedures to secure that new projects and budgets are approved by the Head of Finance.
- Promote joint planning and budgeting.
- Generate systems for a better overview of expenses and surplus at any request and time of the year.

9. Information and Communication

Goal

To improve and expand information and communication services both within and outside Noragric.

Strategic Focus Areas

Information management is an important aspect of Noragric's work. Results from research and education must reach those who need the information and contribute to public debate on international environment and development issues. Information dissemination is done through various channels and is a shared responsibility of all staff, supported by the Noragric Communication and Information Group (library, communication- and web advisors, and IT staff). The library carries a special collection on Noragric's key academic areas, supplementing the UMB library collection.

Improve the quality and quantity of external communication

- Prepare a communication strategy and mainstream it in all activity areas.
- Promote staff awareness of information as a shared responsibility and common good.
- Ensure that research outputs are accessible, including through open sources, aiming to contribute to public debate.
- Actively use UMB's repository for scientific papers and other publications.
- Improve the visibility and recognition of Noragric through seminars, newsletters, external websites and networks, including alumni networks (e.g. global.no, reporter.no, EADI, Eldis etc)..
- Regularly inform the UMB communication department about Noragric activities.
- Explore the use of emerging technology in communication with institutional and other partners (e.g. teleconferencing, distant lecturing, Skype, wikis)

- Integrate a communication strategy for our main projects and assignments from the outset.
- Identify information gaps and keep partners informed of Noragric's activities through various means (seminars, electronic newsletter, internet, etc).
- Promote optimal use of Noragric's information resources through co-operation with internal and external user groups and information providers.
- Use the intra- and extranet effectively.

Improve internal information and communication

- Make important information, including minutes of meetings, available on the intranet.
- Identify ICT and other training needs among staff.
- Identify the needs of academic staff for communication and administration support.
- Maintain and improve the competence of information management staff.
- Reception services should be professionalized, with a qualified person familiar with archival services. (Upgrade status of receptionist as an important and welcoming gateway to Noragric).
- Identify communication channels to provide feedback from department staff to the central administration, especially regarding user-unfriendliness of electronic management tools, in order to improve user friendliness and efficient use of staff's time.
- Optimise communication amongst staff by identifying channels for informing staff, both formal and informal.

10. Personnel Management

Noragric is a knowledge centre and an arena where people and partner institutions meet. Its success is based primarily on having highly committed and professional staff at all levels of the organisation. Noragric's personnel policy is linked to that of UMB's. Based on the values of creativity, accountability, confidence, respect and a sense of belonging, it aims to motivate staff to thrive, build their competence and contribute creatively to realising Noragric goals.

Goal

To attract and retain creative and committed staff through providing attractive conditions and an excellent work environment.

Strategic Focus Areas

Noragric, under the leadership of the Head of Department, assisted by the Leadership Group, will in the strategy period:

a) Recruit and retain, high quality academic and administrative staff, enhancing a diverse environment

- Through recruitment facilitate the creation of teams with diverse and complementary competence and backgrounds within and between teams, ensuring gender, age and geographic diversity in the organisation.
- Aim to have more than forty percent of each gender among both academic and administrative staff, emphasizing nationality, gender and age diversity among staff.
- Invite international guest researchers for short stays.
- Increase the number of women scientific staff.
- Obtain at least 1 new UMB PhD fellowship each year.
- Encourage scientific staff to meet the qualification requirements of becoming professor.
- Encourage mutual respect and professional attitudes amongst all staff.
- Keep senior employees working to the benefit of both the department and the individual.

b) Further professionalise the staff and the organisation

- Consult, develop and implement the Personnel Policy for all staff.
- Develop job descriptions and hold annual co-worker talks with all staff, using these to improve competence building, career development and job satisfaction.
- Maintain systematic, goal-oriented and effective competence building, keeping in mind both individual and institutional objectives.
- Encourage staff to work in international settings, for example international organisations or partner institutions, for periods of two to four years.
- Reduce the administrative tasks of scientific staff to enable them to increase the time devoted to research.
- Provide adequate infrastructure and administrative support.
- Recruit staff to strengthen Noragric's research capacity in areas such as globalisation, climate change, and development policy.
- Encourage teamwork, inter-and cross-disciplinarily.
- Maintain and regularly update the Noragric manual "Rules and Regulations".

c) Maintain and strengthen an excellent working environment

- Ensure that Noragric provides a conducive working environment for all staff and students.
- Ensure that staff have the opportunity to shape and develop their own working situation and tasks.
- Ensure transparency and participatory decision-making through democratic bodies and procedures and clear employee rights and obligations.
- Encourage informal meetings and social interaction.
- Promote professional, respectful and cooperative staff relations.

- Regularly update and share information on organisation, safety and the work environment.
- Ensure that each staff member has sufficient input into their own working situation, meaningful tasks and clear reporting lines.
- Encourage Noragric management and staff to work more efficiently to diminish stress (fewer and briefer meetings etc).

11. Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2010-2013

To implement this strategy, Noragric, under the leadership of the Head of Department, the Board and the relevant bodies will:

- In consultation with staff and students, prepare an Annual Action Plan and Annual Budget, which identifies actions, targets and timing concerning the objectives and measures identified for each activity area.
- With the Leadership Group, review progress with regard to the Strategy and the Annual Action Plan once per year.
- With staff, review the progress at least once per year, when preparing the next year's Annual Action Plan and Annual Budget.
- Revise the Strategy after two years (at the end of 2011).

12. Assumptions

This strategic plan takes cognizance of various assumptions in the realisation of the strategic goals. Key assumptions of the Noragric strategic plan are:

- UMB policy and regulations will not change substantially.
- Noragric will continue to exist as an independent department within UMB
- Noragric will continue to enjoy the support of the traditional donors and attract new funding during the period covered by the strategic plan.
- Shifts in traditional donors' interests will not substantially affect Noragric.

13. Risks

Main risks which may negatively affect Noragric activities during the strategy period are:

- The envisaged UMB reconstitution and its implications for Noragric create some risks and uncertainty.
- Fragile external political environments may affect some of the partners located in conflict zones.
- Income-generating will be reduced due to factors beyond our control.

