AALBORG UNIVERSITY COMPETENCE STRATEGY

Part of Aalborg University's Strategy 2016 to 2021

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

CONTENTS

Introduction

Aalborg University's strategy *Knowledge for the World* provides a description of the strategic focus areas leading towards the vision for 2021. By focusing on select competences and specified approaches supporting the local competence development of all staff members at Aalborg University (AAU), Aalborg University's competence strategy aims to support the achievement of the objectives set forth in *Knowledge for the World*. The competence strategy provides the framework for the overall competence development at AAU and applies to all staff members and managers involved in teaching, research, administration, service functions and other functions at the University. Thus, the competence strategy provides a framework document which sets forth the framework of collaborations between staff members and managers on securing competence development.

FROM VISION TO ACTION

To prove effective, competence development must be involving and motivating. A high level of motivation is a prerequisite for competence development; thus, involving AAU's staff members and managers is a prerequisite for the successful achievement of competence development. Moreover, competence development must be meaningful. AAU's competence strategy is defined from four perspectives which form the basis for the methods for implementing competence development. Thus, by specifying tangible actions on how to work with competence development, the competence strategy may serve as a tool for both managers and staff members. In this way, the competence strategy will contribute to the practical implementation of the vision for competence development.

AAU'S COMPETENCE STRATEGY CONSISTS OF FOUR PARTS

PART 1 introduces the four perspectives which set out the joint framework of competence development at AAU. These perspectives are described in more details in parts 3 and 4, which describe the correlation between the perspectives, the selected methods and actions.

PART 2 provides a description of the specific competences which the Executive Management and the Main Joint Consultation Committee have given high priority. This part of the strategy is flexible and will be evaluated at least once a year within the management system and the consultation system. This seeks to ensure the continuous identification and prioritisation of both joint and local competence development needs and initiatives.

PART 3 provides a guide for how to work on competence development at AAU. Among other things, this section provides a description of specific tasks and responsibilities, such as how competence development may be included in an annual cycle. This section also refers to specific tools and templates.

PART 4 provides a description of the concept of competence and competence development at AAU. The so-called extended concept of competence and the concept of transfer, which are central to competence development, are explained in this section.

Henrik Halkier
Executive manager responsible for Competence,
*Organisation and Management*

Part 1 – Perspectives on competence development at AAU

The joint and overall efforts to support and complement local dialogues between managers and staff members are essential to the successful competence development at AAU since such dialogues form the basis of the development of competences. The illustration below depicts the four perspectives of competence development and is based on the notion that top-down and bottom-up processes may become complementary; thus, a dynamic interaction may exist between the strategic needs of the organisation and the individual/collective development needs of staff members.

Competence development at Aalborg University aims to create a competent organisation supported by qualified staff.

A COMPETENT ORGANISATION

STRATEGIC

SYSTEMATIC **THE TASK** **FLEXIBLE**

INVOLVING
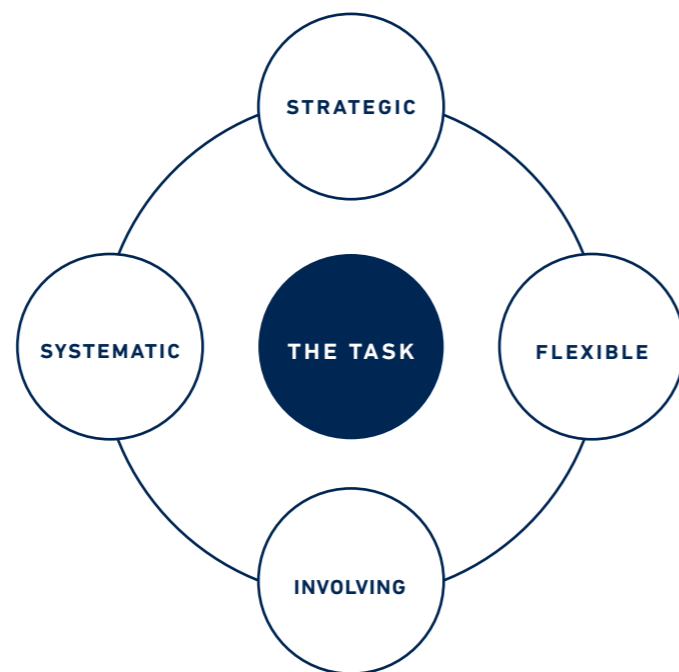
QUALIFIED STAFF MEMBERS

The task at hand is the starting point for competence development at AAU. This applies to current tasks as well as future tasks. In solving current tasks, it is essential that all functions and roles as well as the expected results are well-documented enabling all staff members involved to understand the tasks they are responsible for solving. This is a prerequisite for competence development.
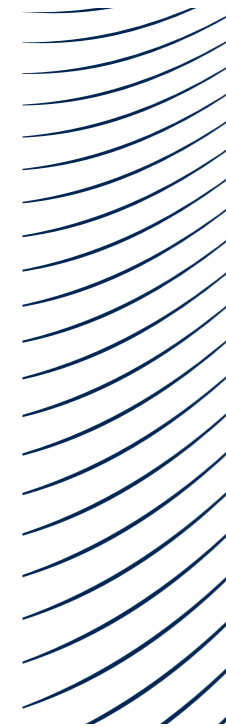
Competence development **must be strategic**, and when initiating concrete initiatives of competence development and skills acquisition, managers and staff members must consider all relevant parts of AAU management documents, strategy documents and societal trends.

Competence development **must be involving**. The task and its derived competence development must be discussed among management and staff members and must make sense when applied to the local context. Individual managers and staff members possess detailed knowledge of their own unit and this is essential to the successful implementation of AAU's strategy. Locally rooted competence development must provide a link between the competence development of individual staff members and the tasks of the unit.

In supporting AAU's goals and the continuous competence development of both staff members and managers, competence development must be supported by systematic activities. **This may be achieved through a focused managerial approach of prioritising and integrating competence development in the overall discussion of the objectives of the department, unit or group. Therefore, competence development must be incorporated as a natural part of the process of setting and implementing targets. Budgeting, annual cycles and performance and development reviews (MUS/LUS/GRUS) all form part of the systematic activities.**

Among other things, the approach towards competence development **must be flexible** and systematic activities must be supported by continuous dialogue between staff members and managers. Competence development is not an activity that only takes place once a year; it is an ongoing process. Along with new tasks and requirements, the competence requirements may change. Therefore, AAU must be prepared to change competence development efforts when needed. The flexibility of competence development must allow for activities to be implemented when the need arises and this must be prioritised in terms of time and money.

Competence development at Aalborg University **must create a competent organisation supported by qualified staff members** responsible for solving current and future tasks within research, education, knowledge collaboration and the administrative area. As a prerequisite, managers and staff members must focus on competence development.

Part 2 – Prioritised competence development initiatives

The prioritised competence development initiatives target a few overall competences to which the University has chosen to assign high priority in its initial implementation of *Knowledge for the World*. However, this does not suggest that the need for developing other competences is not present, nor does it suggest that other competences may not or will not be developed. As a minimum, the Main Joint Consultation Committee (HSU) must evaluate the activities related to the competence strategy once a year.

The selected competences are chosen on the basis of work conducted within:

- The steering group for competence, organisation and management
- The working group for the competence strategy (based on presentations from the strategy action plan groups for the focus areas research, education and knowledge collaboration)
- Workshop for AAU staff members held on 12 April 2016.

Furthermore, input received from discussions in the faculty consultation committees and the joint occupational health and safety committees have been included. The working group for competence and resource of the administrative strategy has also provided their input.

2.1. MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT, ACADEMIC STAFF AND TECHNICAL/ ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

As specified in *Knowledge for the World,* the overall management development at AAU must ensure the competent management of the University. Thus, throughout the strategy period, management development is given top priority. During 2016-2017, the University will establish a formalised management development programme, initially established to include managers at level 3. At a later stage, managers at levels 1 and 2 will be included in the formalised management development programme.

The University recognises that a substantial part of the day-to-day management takes place at level 4; thus, this level will also be given priority during the strategy period. In 2016 and the beginning of 2017, a pilot project implemented in select places of employment will seek to clarify how the competence development of heads of research, heads of sections, chairs of study boards and administrative middle managers at level 4 ought to be approached. The pilot project will also include AAU's future career development and talent management programme which forms an integral part of the overall competence development at AAU.

Competence Development at Aalborg University is to create a competent organization supported by competent employees.

In 2016, a number of practical, knowledge-based courses were launched to support the formalised management development programmes. These courses are carried out continuously and will form part of the introduction of new managers at AAU and will become a permanent offer for existing managers.

Moreover, 2018 will see the establishment of a management academy offering short, specific courses to supplement the established management programmes. 2018 will also see the implementation of a management evaluation course to further develop and strengthen the personal skills of AAU's managers. Management development is based both on the tasks assigned to managers and the context in which they work. The professional skills of managers are essential in terms of overall task performance, and their personal skills are essential to staff management, leadership, staff wellbeing, etc.

In including more than merely professional qualifications, the so-called extended concept of competence thus constitutes a broad framework for management development at AAU. Furthermore, this concept focuses on the concept of transfer and how competence development is transferred to the daily activities of managers thus making a difference for the staff who work with the manager.

2.2. COMPETENCES FOR ENGAGING IN PROJECT WORK

Many projects are undertaken by staff from across the organisation and not through the usual line organisation. The vast majority of development projects and change projects are carried out by cross-organisational, temporary and often complex project organisations.

We therefore need to strengthen the collaboration skills of staff members and managers working together across the organisation and engaging in various types of projects. These skills must provide for a common background and understanding of the tasks and responsibilities connected with project work and thus create a more efficient implementation of project work at AAU.

In general, project work should be approached on the basis of the task at hand; this means that the desired project skills may differ in certain areas, such as research management and IT management. However, this diversity must rest on a shared, organisational understanding of project work conducted at AAU. If the parties involved in a project have no shared understanding of the processes in interdisciplinary project work, the process and outcome

of such activities, often involving different professional groups, organisational units and levels, may prove less successful.

Project sizes are varied and range from large strategy projects such as Knowledge for the World to small efficiency projects or development projects for managing research projects and developing robust study programmes. Therefore, each project role needs to be strengthened through competence development. This applies to project participants and project managers as well as to decision makers, such as members and chairs of steering committees.

2.3. TEACHING SKILLS

Research-based teaching is one of Aalborg University's core activities. We continuously focus on the quality of our study programmes and consistently strive to further develop the quality and relevance of these. Our ambition of striving towards enhancing the quality and relevance of study programmes depend on an array of factors. Among the most essential of these are the pedagogical competences of our lecturers in planning, conducting and evaluating research-based teaching and supervision. New methods for teaching, supervision and evaluation are constantly developed, not least due to technological developments in IT and other media types used for educational purposes. Such new developments and knowledge must be made available to our lecturers as part of their ongoing pedagogical competence development in accordance with AAU's policy on pedagogical competence development; however, AAU's lecturers also have an obligation to stay informed and be actively engaged in their own competence development. Furthermore, AAU's lecturers must be able to obtain the English language proficiency level required for teaching study programmes offered in English.

At present, completing the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors forms a compulsory part of the assistant professorship at AAU. Upgrading the pedagogical skills of lecturers prior to and after their completion of the course in university pedagogy for assistant professors may enhance the overall quality of teaching. Initiatives such as involving postdocs at an early stage of their teaching careers and the continuous upgrading of the pedagogical skills of associate professors and professors may provide for the increased quality of teaching at AAU.

Furthermore, we are seeing an increased need for strengthening the teaching skills and communicative skills of our administrative staff, who increasingly conduct teaching activities within their areas of expertise.

Part 3 – AAU competence development guide

This part of the competence strategy provides a description of a number of activities aimed at supporting the strategic competence development at AAU. Competence development is a comprehensive and well-defined theme; thus, this chapter is by no means exhaustive and merely serves as an inspiration for staff members and managers at AAU.

In general, part 3 is based on the correlation between AAU's strategy *Knowledge for the World* and the actual competence development requirements of the organisation, groups and individual staff members. Moreover, part 3 provides a description of the various organisational levels at AAU and their roles in terms of competence development. Part 3 also presents an example of an annual cycle in which competence development efforts are illustrated through a range of activities.

Thus, when considering present and future competence development requirements within the organisation, this must be done through the application of a local and present perspective as well as an organisational and strategic perspective. The tasks and responsibilities related to competence development at Aalborg University may be illustrated in four organisational levels:

1. Aalborg University
2. Main areas
3. Units/departments
4. Staff and managers

The correlation between strategy, objectives, tasks and competences on several organisational levels

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ARE LOCAL ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE OVERALL STRATEGY

A discussion of current and future tasks is both of relevance to all staff members and managers at AAU and an essential part of defining the current and future competence development requirements. This must be discussed at several organisational levels, such as in consultation committees, in units and departments and between individual managers and staff members.
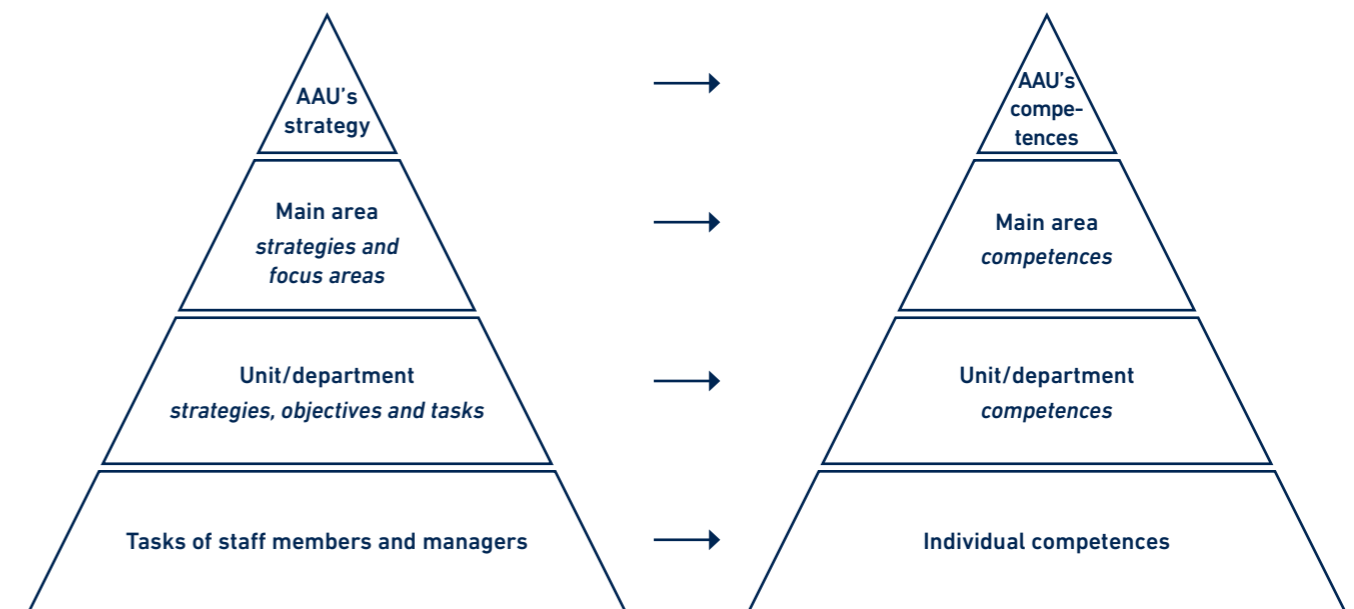
Through its definition of new competence requirements and an enhanced focus on existing competences, Knowledge for the World alone defines an array of needs. Thus, AAU's competence strategy supports the overall building of competence at AAU through the three initiatives described in part 2; management development competences, project competences and teaching skills.

At the same time, individual staff members may need to develop and strengthen their competences for working on specific tasks, and units and departments may need to focus on specific competences related to teamwork. The diversity of the strategies, focus areas, objectives and tasks of our organisational levels gives rise to various competence requirements which cause for local consideration. Moreover, this local focus must be supported by an orientation towards the overall organisational tasks and development requirements of AAU; and thereby create organisational cohesion.

CONSULTATION COMMITTEES

1. On the basis of the mission, vision and strategy of AAU, the Executive Management and the Main Joint Consultation Committee (HSU) are responsible for determining the overall strategic competence areas of AAU. The Main Joint Consultation Committee will discuss and evaluate these competence areas once each year. Both the Executive Management and the Main Joint Consultation Committee are responsible for discussing how competence development activities are financed.

2. While taking Aalborg University's overall strategy into consideration, the main areas and consultation committees identify their own competence development focus areas. Moreover, consultation committees are responsible for discussing how competence development activities are financed; and the main areas are responsible for the allocation of the resources from the Competence Development Fund. This will be explained in more detail.

3. In collaboration with units and departments, the local consultation committees (LSU) will determine the specific objectives of the competence development of each unit/department on the basis of their existing strategies and future objectives and tasks. These may be identified and determined through dialogues on the unit's objectives and tasks, which may be discussed during local theme days. Subsequently, group performance and development reviews (GRUS) may form part of such process.

4. Staff members and managers will identify individual competence development objectives through performance and development reviews (MUS/LUS). Specific competence development activities will subsequently be determined. The agreements made must be included in an individual action plan which provided an outline for the further development and subsequent evaluation of competence development.

According to the cooperation agreement, competence development must form part of the work conducted in consultation committees and must be subject to evaluation once a year.


Illustration to show how the various consultation committees as well as GRUS and MUS reviews contribute to the dialogue on the objectives, tasks and competences of the workplace.

ANNUAL CYCLE FOR COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT – A SYSTEMATIC TOOL REQUIRING FLEXIBILITY

Applying a systematic approach towards competence development may create a basis for cohesion between current and future tasks and the desired competence development of the unit and the individual staff member.

Since our work tasks and economic latitude may change, change becomes a fundamental condition, and therefore, a systematic perspective cannot stand alone. Staff members and managers must be able to restructure in terms of economy, time and competence development activities. Therefore, in seeking to apply a systematic approach towards competence development, AAU staff members and managers must be able to adopt a flexible approach and react to any changes which may call for planned activities to be altered.

Below is an example of an annual cycle for competence development followed by a more detailed description of each of the activities included in the annual cycle. It must be emphasised that the budgeting process of each unit may impact how the annual cycle is structured most appropriately.

Example of competence annual cycle
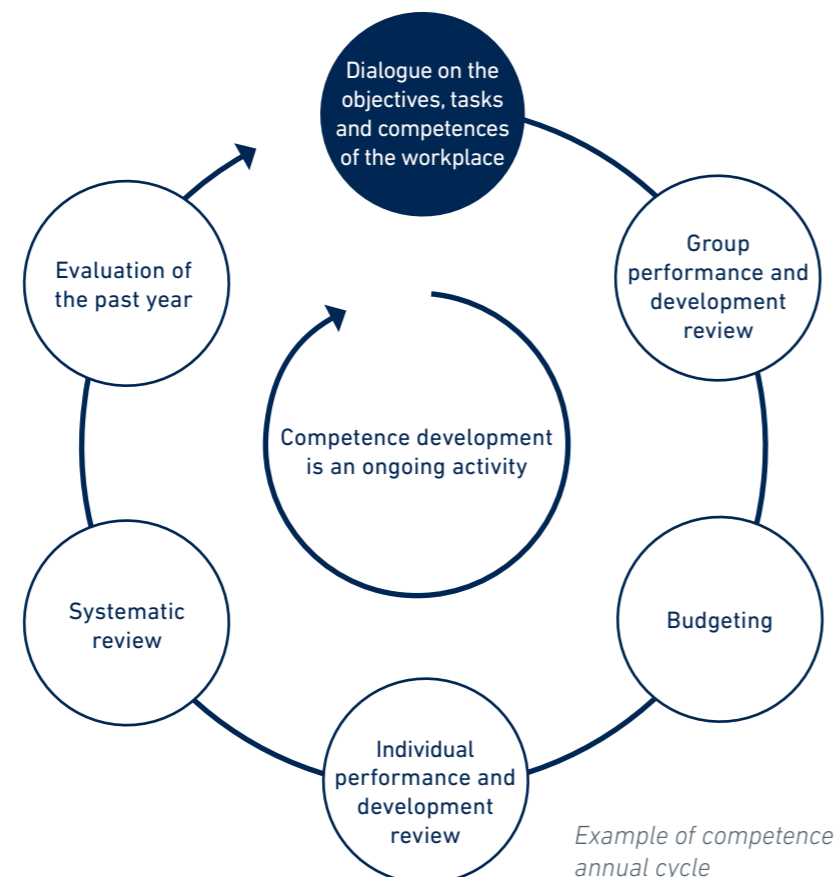
DIALOGUE ON WORKPLACE GOALS, TASKS AND COMPETENCES

At least once a year, it is essential that staff members and managers explicitly address existing and future objectives and tasks and discuss whether the required competences for achieving and solving these are present in the workplace. The extent of such discussion depends on the nature and scale of the changes which the workplace is facing. In the event of major, radical changes, it may be necessary to involve all staff members over a period of time, while smaller adjustments may only involve the affected group over a short period of time.

In this discussion, the strategic perspective is supported by an involving perspective which allows for staff members to participate in the process of systematic competence development.

In taking a systematic and strategic approach towards competence development, staff members and managers must conduct regular assessments to determine whether the required competences are present in the workplace. This may be done by carrying out a gap analysis enabling staff members and managers to assess existing and future tasks in relation to the competences required to solve future tasks. Another tool which may be used to spark a discussion on the competence requirements of the workplace is the SWOT analysis.

GROUP PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW (GRUS)

In general, the group performance and development review (GRUS) is a forward-looking development-oriented conversation focusing on the joint tasks and responsibilities of the group. This conversational form is particularly helpful for working groups, research groups or teams who work together for longer periods of time and therefore may need to form a common understanding of their objectives, tasks, roles and form of collaboration.
The GRUS review is useful in particular when combined with the above annual cycle:

- when used to follow-up on or in relation to a theme day during which the present and future tasks and competences of the workplace are discussed
- when used to uncover the competence development requirements of the group in preparation for MUS reviews
- when used after MUS reviews; the group may share their competence development plans and subsequently plan the future workflow of the group

BUDGETING

Addressing the financial resources and time resources required for implementing an activity is central to strategic competence development.

Based on the discussion of the objectives, tasks and competences of the workplace and perhaps the discussions of the GRUS review, a cost estimate for future competence development activities may be prepared. This estimate may be included in the budgeting process of the coming year. When the final budget has been determined, the manager will have a clear definition of the financial framework for competence development and may thus prioritise competence development activities in preparation for the upcoming MUS/LUS reviews.

Managers may also choose to conduct MUS/LUS reviews ahead of the budgeting process; thus, the requirements of the financial framework for the competence development activities may be established prior to the budgeting process.

PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS (MUS/LUS)

The performance and development review (MUS/LUS) is a conversation between an individual staff member and their manager and is thus an essential part of their mutual dialogue. The MUS/LUS review is an essential element for ensuring the continuous competence development of staff members. The MUS/LUS review is a natural element in an employment at Aalborg University, and it must be conducted once each year.

Preparation is key to the success of MUS/LUS reviews. Managers are responsible for preparing for, conducting and inviting staff members to attend MUS/LUS reviews. Staff members are responsible for providing input to their own competence development. During the interviews, staff members may influence the discussion relating to their own future tasks and competence requirements.

Staff members and managers are equally responsible for agreeing how to follow up on the interview. As part of the development review, and before planned development activities are initiated, it is essential that staff members and managers consider how newly acquired competences may come into play.

Additional information on all relevant aspects related to MUS/LUS reviews at Aalborg University is described in the AAU Manual.

www.aauhaandbog.aau.dk/faces/viewDocument/890

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

After having conducted MUS reviews, managers must systematically follow up on all reviews to identify whether any of the development areas of staff members overlap. Subsequently, the management might gather to follow up on and evaluate MUS reviews to form an overview of the overall development requirements of the unit/department. This overview may also enable the unit/department to prioritise the overall financial framework. The discussion may be based on the following questions:

- Which specific competence development requirements were uncovered?
- Are the desired competence development activities consistent with the future tasks of the unit/department?
- How do you plan to prioritise the funds available for competence development?

Following the management discussions and subsequent discussions with individual staff members, the prioritisation and the background of this may be communicated to all staff members at a staff meeting.

Individual teams may follow up by conducting GRUS reviews during which the themes and areas of development discussed in MUS reviews may be coordinated and embedded. In applying a coordinated approach to problem-solving, this may serve to strengthen the overall competences of the team.

Following up on MUS reviews and the quality of such follow-ups are essential to how staff members experience whether or not their MUS reviews have an effect. Therefore, it is essential for staff members that their manager follow up on MUS reviews and that the activities discussed during such reviews are implemented and evaluated.
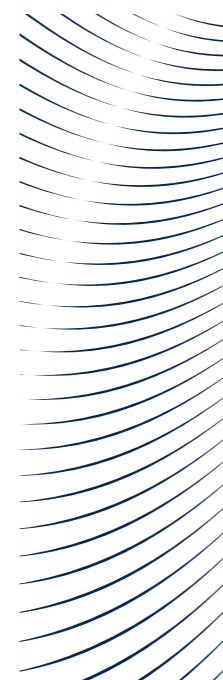
EVALUATION OF THE PAST YEAR

As a minimum, competence development efforts must be evaluated once a year. This evaluation must be conducted by the consultation committee. Evaluations of competence development must focus on the actual learning and benefits achieved through development activities instead of merely focusing on quantitative observations. Thus, identifying the correlation between competence development activities and its practical application in everyday work practices is essential to the evaluation. This calls for the consultation committees to actively study this correlation. The process of this evaluation should be included in the preliminary discussions in the consultation committee.

Moreover, staff members and managers must engage in continuous discussions of individual competence development activities. This means that the evaluation must be incorporated in and form part of the follow-up of competence development activities and must be included in the action plan for MUS/LUS reviews.

The evaluation may take the form of a follow-up MUS/LUS review during which the established action plan is reviewed and perhaps adjusted.

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IS AN ONGOING ACTIVITY

Competence development involves more than just course participation. A number of different methods may be used for developing the competences of staff members, and these may be applied and combined according to the intended development goal. Workplace learning taking place within the workplace is often a quick and efficient method of implementing competence development, while more extensive, formalised learning processes may support larger organisational change processes and competence development.

At the same time, what motivates one individual may not motivate another, and what may constitute an efficient learning process for one individual may not be effective for another. The method of choice also depends on whether a development process is targeted individuals, a group or the entire organisation.

Examples of different learning environments:

LEARNING TAKING PLACE OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE

LEARNING TAKING PLACE AT THE WORKPLACE

- **COURSES**
- **STUDY PROGRAMMES**
- **CONTINUING EDUCATION**
- **INTERNSHIPS**
- **JOB ROTATION SYSTEMS**
- **NETWORKS**

INTERNAL COURSES, E-LEARNING AND WORKSHOPS EXTERNAL TRAINERS

- **NETWORKS**
- **ON-THE-JOB TRAINING**
- **COACHING**
- **FEEDBACK**
- **MENTORING SCHEMES**
- **JOB SHADOWING**
- **ROTATION**
- **NEW TASKS**
- **PROJECT WORK**
- **TEAM ORGANISATION**
- **PROJECT ORGANISATION**

Source: The Agency for Competence Development in the State Sector

THE COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT FUND

In connection with the collective bargaining procedure, AAU receives funding from the Competence Development Fund for the support of individual competence development. This constitutes a supplement to the competence development having already been planned within the unit. At Aalborg University, the main areas are responsible for allocating funds from the Competence Development Fund. Together with the focus areas of the AAU main areas, the AAU competence strategy forms the basis of the allocation of the funding from the Competence Development Fund. It is essential that this opportunity to receive financial support is communicated to staff members, and this may be done during MUS reviews or at staff meetings. The implementation must be made in accordance with the guidelines stipulated in the AAU Manual: The Competence Development Fund – instructions and application procedure.

www.aauhaandbog.aau.dk/faces/viewDocument/2509

PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF AAU'S QUALITY ASSURANCE

The lecturer is the most important resource for the quality of teaching and study programmes. In order for AAU to continue to develop innovative teaching methods and forms of learning, it is essential that the pedagogical and didactical competences of AAU lecturers are continuously developed.

The head of department is responsible for ensuring that assistant professors, associate professors and professors continue to develop their pedagogical competences, such as through activities planned on the basis of teaching evaluations and annual MUS reviews. Furthermore, the head of department is responsible for ensuring that all part-time academic staff (D-VIP) are offered the

opportunity to develop their competences in accordance with the study programme(s) they teach. In collaboration with the study board and the head of school, the head of department is responsible for following up on the student evaluations of the teaching as well as any evaluations of the department's study programmes. Lecturers are responsible for documenting their own pedagogical competence development. All lecturers must compile a portfolio/CV which must be continuously revised. It should include both the lecturer's competence development activities and future goals.

Pedagogical competence development is part of AAU's quality assurance system and further information is available in Danish at:

www.kvalitetssikring.aau.dk/paedagogisk-kompetenceudvikling/

Part 4 – The Concept of Competence and Transfer
(Prepared in collaboration with the Department of Learning and Philosophy)

Competence is the ability to perform actions, both in one's professional life and in other contexts. In the traditional sense, competence is having the necessary knowledge, skills and motivation to be able to act in a suitable manner. However, the Danish researcher Knud Illeris emphasises the holistic nature of the concept of competence. He argues that competence consists of a person's holistic rational and emotional decision-making potential and capacity within a given field, and this is realised in their assessments, decisions and actions in both familiar and unfamiliar situations.

Competence is thus a complex concept and is used in many different ways. The two main conceptions of competence involve a differentiation between potential and actions. On the one hand, competence may be defined as a person's qualities and resources such as their experience, knowledge and skills. On the other hand, competence may be understood as the qualities and resources of a person which are displayed and used in practice. Both definitions are included in Illeris' overall definition of competence which includes both potentials and their realisation through actions. However, in some cases it may be beneficial to distinguish between competence as a potential and competence as a concrete action. In particular, this distinction allows for recognition of the fact that a person may possess competences which cannot be expressed in their actual task performance because the framework for the job is too narrow.

FUTURE COMPETENCES

The need for competence development changes in step with changes in the labour market and the society in general. Analyses often point to three driving forces for change: firstly, new technology (especially information technology), which may alter our work processes and the interplay between companies and institutions, on the one hand, and markets and users, on the other hand; secondly, globalisation, which may cause distant markets to become neighbouring markets so that our collaboration partners are found all over the world; and finally, new demands from markets, consumers and users, such as safety requirements and environmental issues. Such changes mean that flexibility, innovativeness and openness of outlook become key qualities in work organisation and business culture, which in turn affect the need for competence development.

The general competences that staff members need in today's society have been widely discussed. These key competences include:

- Information management; the ability to select, organise and absorb relevant information
- Self-management; the ability to organise one's work processes under changing conditions and with changing collaboration partners
- Interdisciplinarity; the ability to move between different areas of expertise and utilise the knowledge found in these
- Personal and interpersonal communication; the ability to express knowledge, experience and emotions in order to work effectively in teams and in other contexts
- Reflection and evaluation; the ability to analyse and make decisions on one's own work life on the basis of organisational values and objectives
- Risk management; the ability to predict, handle and learn from the multiple risks in life (such as unemployment, personal conflicts, health problems, etc.)

PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

Learning is central to competence development, and successful competence development demands relevant the learning methods.

Competence development must thus be based on an understanding of how we learn. According to psychological learning models, learning occurs simultaneously in two "spaces": An external physical and social space in which we act and get reactions and an internal mental space in which we attempt to make sense of the link between our actions and the consequences of these actions.

Knud Illeris defines this notion of external and internal spaces as practice and reflection. Practice is the context in which competence development is displayed, and reflection is the inner thought process that sustains learning and relates this to competences already acquired. According to Knud Illeris, the three preconditions for successful competence development are:

Commitment – Practice – Reflection

Prior to any form of competence development, it is therefore crucial to encourage individual staff members or teams to get actively involved in their own development process because this will result in a higher learning outcome.

INFORMAL OR FORMAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

The two social spaces wherein competence development takes place are in the workplace or work situation and in an independent education space specifically intended for learning.

Workplace learning may be an integral part of ordinary work procedures (e.g. when colleagues help or advise one another) or it may be more systematically organised. Some approaches to competence development stress that new skills are better acquired by learning in practice. The workplace thus becomes a social community where the required practical knowledge is maintained and handed down. New members are gradually included in this community of practice and learn work procedures and professional quality criteria while being introduced to the work culture.

Practice learning is an important element in the acquisition of professional skills. But it is also important that part of the learning is based in independent institutional spaces for teaching and learning. Naturally, school-based learning must be organised independently but aim at the skills required in the work. In such a space, experience can be thematised and linked to systematic dissemination of knowledge; we may experiment with different ways of working; and we have the opportunity of diving into professional knowledge that may not immediately be applicable to our work, but may strengthen our broader professional competence.

TRANSFER OF LEARNING TO THE TASK

When we learn something, the general idea is that we will use what we have learnt. However, in many cases activating this new knowledge in one's practice is not easy. This is called a problem of transfer. The concept of transfer refers to how and under which circumstances knowledge and skills are transferred from one context to another. As part of competence development, transferring formally acquired knowledge and skills – whether acquired through an education programme or a further education course – to work practices is highly relevant but also difficult. Various factors may hinder the transfer between education and work. Specialist knowledge acquired during an education programme may have been organised in a way that makes sense in the teaching context, but in the work context this specialist knowledge may need to be used in a different way. Time pressures may also interfere with the application of spe-

cialist knowledge. The workplace also have procedures that were not anticipated in the education programme. These factors may hinder transfer and bringing new competences into play.

Transfer must be supported by linking the context in which the skills are acquired with the context in which the skills are to be used. When a member of staff returns after a training course, his or her duties can be adapted to suit this situation and allow them the opportunity to try out their newly acquired skills. Courses can also be organised to provide interplay between the workplace and the course content during the course and discussions of daily work tasks and improvement of these can be a course activity. These links may also be established by promoting mentoring schemes etc. Supporting transfer is important in order to benefit from the organisation and the individual staff member's investment in competence development, but also in order to create a breeding ground for new ideas and procedures.

AALBORG UNIVERSITY COMPETENCE STRATEGY

Part of Aalborg University's strategy 2016 to 2021