

Strategy for the Norwegian Centre for Reading Education and Research

2016-2020

Introduction

The Norwegian Centre for Reading Education and Research (Norwegian Reading Centre) is the leading resource centre for reading and literacy in Norway. The centre has two main mandates as part of the Faculty of Arts and Education at UiS and also as part of a network of 10 national education centres (with a mandate from Kunnskapsdepartementet [*the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research*] and is directed by Utdanningsdirektoratet [*the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training*] pursuant to § 1.4 of the Norwegian Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges). This gives us a solid foundation in academia thereby making us an important national player within communication. The centre distinguishes itself from most other national centres with its research and educational tasks and from other university institutes with tasks directed at target groups within public or private kindergartens, schools, PPT (*Pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste* – educational and psychological services) and teacher education and with a national infrastructure for communicating and implementing R&D (Research and Development).

The Reading Centre's vision is access to and participation in written culture for everyone
Written linguistic skills are a prerequisite for full participation in modern Norwegian society. The Reading Centre's goal is that the greatest number of people possible gain access in the best possible way to the written cultural community. This is also a primary goal with a view to the needs of society. We are basing this on an understanding of literacy as an access skill,¹ where the profile and broad approach of the centre can be connected to access at three levels: *access to writing, access to text and access to the written culture.*² The centre's work on reading and literacy should cover the entire spectrum from kindergarten to adulthood, from literacy difficulties to the interests of highly-talented pupils and from subject-specific perspectives to perspectives covering many subjects.

Core values for the centre's vision include:

- A multidisciplinary and practical approach to reading and literacy
- Close co-operation between the needs of society, education, research and communication

¹ Nicolaysen, 2005

² Skaftun, Solheim & Uppstad, 2014

- Quality in all areas – within research, communication and education
- National orientation with an eye on global matters

Research and development

The Reading Centre will carry out high-quality research and research-based development work that will benefit Norwegian kindergartens and schools. Our goal is to achieve the best possible co-operation between research and development work, so that we utilise our research potential, ensure good-quality communication and facilitate practical research and development work. Multidisciplinary, practical approaches and diverse methods make up our core values.

Another goal is that research and development work be organised as projects.³ We will be a learning organisation that is continually developing college expertise. We also intend to build national and international networks. Programme areas for research are an important part of the infrastructure in developing the research environment at the centre. We will arrange different types of fora (a quantitative forum, qualitative forum, etc.), focus on networking and also earmark funds for internationalisation and infrastructure.

We want lots of ideas for the R&D initiative and will have an infrastructure that facilitates project initiatives ranging from early reading practice in kindergarten to full adult participation in the knowledge society. Research in as many of the centre's areas of responsibility as possible provides a quality basis for development work. It is one of our goals that assistant professors, temporary employees, PhD students and MA students be integrated into ongoing R&D projects and work with their more-experienced colleagues.

There should also be room for specialisation as a basis for developing particularly high-quality research projects. This involves, among other things, supporting research groups/individual researchers who are applying for RCN (Research Council of Norway) and EU funds and also staying informed and being ready when an initiative connected with the establishment of a centre of excellence comes to the fore.

R&D time should be differentiated based on expertise, production and/or funding-application approval.

We will focus on applying for external funding for research (RCN, EU, etc.), and another goal is to get more recruitment positions for the centre (PhD, postdoc).

National mandate, § 1.4

As a national centre, the Reading Centre in accordance with § 1.4 has national tasks that are given in a separate mandate from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The

³ See more about project organisation under Organisation and resources.

mandate states that the centre should contribute to the implementation and execution of the national education policy so that all children, adolescents and adults receive equal and customised high-quality training in an inclusive community. We will also contribute to raising the quality of reading education and be a national resource centre in the work of improving basic reading skills. Through these activities we will contribute to promoting a love of reading in kindergarten and primary schools. The mandate also states that the implementation and use of the national curriculum, the framework plan for kindergarten and national initiatives, included within quality development, assessment and competence building, should be a central part of our work.

Our close contact and communication with the educational authorities, schools and kindergartens helps the Reading Centre meet these guidelines.

We should always be well-equipped to accept assignments. This requires us to organise work in projects that involve employees with both practical and research skills. This means that we must also recruit, retain and provide continuing professional development (CPD) for our employees with important practical experience, and also we must retain a focus on areas or child/pupil groups that may be overlooked by bigger initiatives.

We will continue to focus on the national mandate and will work towards obtaining a greater share of basic funding and extended time horizons for additional assignments. We will actively seek competitive assignments (e.g. PIRLS [Progress in International Reading Literacy Study] and KfK [Kompetanse for kvalitet - Quality skills]) and will strive to influence the content of the annual letter of assignment.

All our communication and development work will be research-based. We will highlight the relevance of the specialist field with regards to the major challenges faced by society and increase the understanding of the importance of reading and literacy to ensure that the greatest number of people possible gain access in the best possible way to the written cultural community including those who need special assistance.

We will contribute to policy decisions on language and reading in kindergartens and schools and will be the preferred specialists in the area of reading and literacy for kindergarten staff, teachers, PPT, managers and owners of schools and kindergartens, the authorities, the UH (*Universitets- og høyskolesektoren* - the university and university college) sector/teacher trainers, parents and the general public. This will be achieved through active communication with a major emphasis on innovative and web-based communication directed at target groups and also through being active in the media and in state planning as well as working with other players in the field.

We will communicate recent research-based knowledge in a practical manner that is adapted to the needs of the recipients. The form and content of the knowledge we impart should be of high quality and should be communicated in a way that it is perceived as relevant for the specialist field and reaches users.

Education and learning environment

The Reading Centre will be actively involved in the faculty's education programme and particularly in teacher training. We will provide high-quality, research-based education and guidance that is relevant to practice and gives the faculty an advantage when competing for the best students – at all levels of education.

Having active researchers teaching at the Reading Centre is a wonderful resource. Employees with senior lecturer/professorial status are responsible for subjects at master's level.

The Reading Centre aims to be a leader in web-based education and assessment, and in order to reach out to multiple student groups, most of the study programme at the centre will be a combination of web and session-based teaching.

It is important to meet students both at an early stage during their primary education and when studying for masters' degrees. We will be involved in the different teacher training programmes with education and guidance in our field and will retain and develop master's courses.

Together with IBU (*Institutt for barnehagelærerutdanning* - Department of Early Childhood Education), IGIS (*Institutt for grunnskolelærerutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk* - Department of Education and Sports Science) and IKS (*Institutt for kultur- og språkvitenskap* - The Department of Cultural Studies and Languages) we will participate in and influence the design of new holistic learning aimed at kindergartens, primary, and lower and upper secondary schools. Our contribution to education will not consist solely of education through single lectures. We would like to have primary responsibility for courses or perhaps work closely with the course co-ordinators. There will be formal fora at the centre for course co-ordinators and relevant subject teachers.

We will supervise a significant number of master and PhD students, and we will be active in recruiting students to write master's theses in our specialist fields. We will have employees with solid supervisory skills. Our goal is to have master and PhD students included in ongoing research and development projects. We will aim to offer PhD courses connected to larger ongoing projects at regular intervals.

We will continue to offer further education courses at least at the same level as present. These courses provide good contact with the field of practice. We welcome a focus on further education from KD (*Kunnskapsdepartementet* - the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research) in the future, and will strive to ensure that this is more closely connected with our other assignments from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and to our existing programmes of study.

Strategic alliances and internationalisation

We will work closely with the field of practice (particularly kindergartens and schools), with other national centres and with the contracting authorities, Udir (*Utdanningsdirektoratet* - The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training) and KD.

We will maintain good working relationships with the academic community nationally and internationally through research and development projects, joint publications and researcher mobility in Norway and abroad.

We will work on strengthening employee mobility through RCN and EU programmes and other mobility schemes. We will arrange and set as an objective that all research fellows have a period of study abroad.

Organisation and resources

In recent years the Reading Centre has developed into a multidisciplinary centre with extensive involvement in research and development, education and communication. A multidisciplinary college co-operates in developing and communicating new knowledge connected with reading and literacy.

The Reading Centre will facilitate CPD for all employees and recruit the most talented candidates for scientific and administrative positions in order to achieve good results within research, education and external work and to excel nationally and internationally. We will take a systematic approach to increase both scientific and administrative expertise among all employees. Regarding scientific staff, we will have an appropriate division between research and practice expertise. To ensure a multidisciplinary approach, those of us in scientific positions should have a good balance between different subject skills. Our administrative staff should have a broad range of professional skills that enable the centre to achieve its goal of providing high-quality administrative services.

The centre should be well organised: The centre manager should be surrounded by a management group with area managers and office managers with responsibility for different fields. The office manager and area leaders for the national centre should be responsible for human resources. Reference groups for the different areas should advise the area managers/office managers and also give employees the opportunity to influence decisions. There should be a meeting place for co-operation across established subject boundaries and skill levels. The programme areas for research should help strengthen co-operation – locally, nationally and internationally.

Project organisation, ranging from practical development projects to basic research at an SFF (*Senter for fremragende forskning* - Centre of Excellence) level, should be our preferred work method. By project we mean an academic initiative with a particular time frame that involves a group of professionals and where there are concrete, binding deliveries with some form of quality assurance (internal quality assurance or RCN). The project organisation

should involve employees with different skills so that researchers can participate in, for example, the development of materials and tests, and employees who do not have research skills can participate in research projects. During the project, we develop a respect for each other's areas of expertise through multi-disciplinary participation; we develop the individual's professional career and seek to provide the required quality assurance while also achieving greater R&D dividends for the centre.

We will reduce the number of temporary employees by employing more people for permanent assignments. This will make things more predictable for both management and employees and also reduce work pressure.

The Reading Centre should be an attractive workplace – professionally and socially. Working here should be enjoyable (evaluated through employee surveys and annual performance appraisals). The professional and psychosocial work environment should be characterised by mutual respect and tolerance across subject boundaries and skill levels. The Reading Centre should be a place where all employees can thrive and develop. We value a multidisciplinary and integrated academic community where there is respect and room for diversity and different perspectives.