

# Establishment of a new Flagship Centre between OUH and SDU in 2025

Call for expression of interest. Phase 1. Application deadline: May 7th, 2024, 12 p.m.

	<b>Launch of call</b>	<b>Application deadline</b>	<b>Deadline for response to applicants</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	February 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2024	May 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 (12 p.m.)	June 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2024
<b>Phase 2 (only by invitation)</b>	June 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2024	September 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 (12 p.m.)	October 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2024
<b>Phase 3 - Pitch (only by invitation)</b>	December 2024 (to be scheduled)		

## 1 Background and objectives

Odense University Hospital (OUH) and the Department of Clinical Research at The University of Southern Denmark (SDU) have during the latest decade strived to take a leading position at several areas within clinical research by stimulating research and increase the quality of research significantly.

An essential instrument to obtain these goals has been the establishment of several Elite Research Centres at OUH, which have asserted themselves at national and international level.

In 2023, a new joint strategic initiative between OUH and SDU was launched. The initiative was called 'Flagship Centre' and replaced what OUH previously has set up as Elite Research Centres. The focus for the Flagship Centre is to supply ambitious, innovative, interdisciplinary, and potentially ground-breaking research.

Only the best research environments with the most ambitious ideas will be able to be appointed "Flagship Centre".

The ambition is to establish Flagship Centres requiring equal collaboration between researchers affiliated at OUH / The Faculty of Health Sciences and researchers employed at other SDU faculties. The main goal is ensuring better treatment for our patients. However, the interdisciplinary approach leaves room for more holistically oriented research fields in form of both applied research and basic research.

The first Flagship Centre was launched on 1 January 2024, and **OUH and SDU intend to establish one new Flagship Centre in 2025.**

**It is expected that the Flagship Center will be established 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 for a period of five years with the opportunity for a five-year prolongation.**

At the termination of the funding, it is anticipated that the center has developed into an international leading research environment, and that the cooperation between the involved parties continues.

## 1.1 Requirements for a Flagship Centre

OUI and SDU expect that a Flagship Centre must:

- Perform research (clinical, basic and applied research) at the highest international level; research which leads to a noticeable boost in the research field.
- Be an interdisciplinary centre, which involves researchers from clinical and para-clinical disciplines as well as other research fields, e.g. applied research and basic research.
- Involve international collaborators and, where relevant, involve municipal and regional collaborators.
- Be established within a field where OUI and SDU already have a substantial strength.
- Consist of researchers from OUI departments, the Faculty of Health Sciences (SDU) and researchers from additional 1-2 faculties at SDU.
- Ensure that interdisciplinary and translational elements play a significant role in the establishment and management of the centre
- Attract excellent international researcher(s).
- Have a distinct clinical perspective when it comes to the research emanating from OUI.
- Ensure that the main part of the research funded by the grant is carried out equally by OUI and the collaborating department(s) at SDU.
- Be a pioneering centre and a role model for other research environments at OUI, SDU and in the Region of Southern Denmark.

## 1.2 Governance and management structure

The Flagship Centre must bring researchers together in new and interesting collaboration constellations.

It is a prerequisite that the Flagship Centre establishes a governance and management structure that embraces the fact that researchers are from different departments and institutions and that the Flagship Centre supports collaborations and not separate projects.

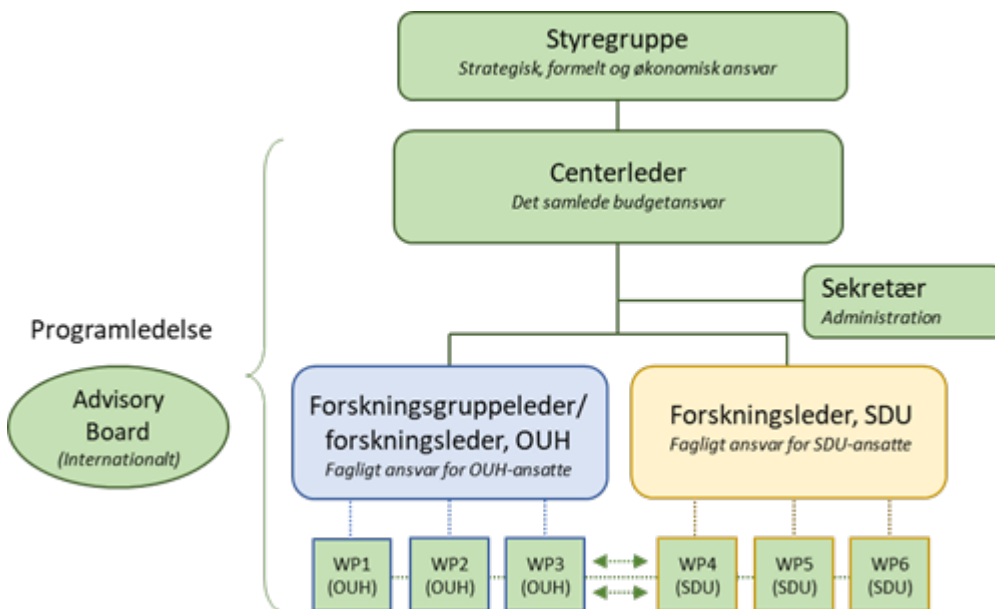
A Flagship Centre:

- Consists of several research groups. The groups must collaborate on solving a complex research question closely linked to clinical practice with the possibility of involving both applied and basic research.

- Can vary in size and organisational form, depending on the subject field and problem area. It is crucial that the researchers share an overall idea or vision and that the centre has a well-defined structure and composition. Hence, the whole must amount to more than the sum of the individual elements would otherwise do, and necessary and complementary skills are expected to be brought into play.
- Has a cross-institutional steering-committee.
- Has a centre-leader who is an excellent researcher as well as a visionary leader who manages to build the framework for a creative and dynamic research environment.
- Has an international advisory board.
- Consists of several work packages (WP) and WP leaders. A relatively equal distribution between WP leaders associated with OUH/SDU and WP leaders from other faculties at SDU is expected.
- Regarding governance and management:
  - The establishment of a governance and management structure is a prerequisite for each research centre.
  - The reference lines must follow the structure / customs in the local environment at OUH and SDU.

A setup for the organisation and collaboration structure between departments / researchers at OUH and SDU must be included in the expression of interest. There might be individual differences in the setup (program management level) which will be respected as far as possible.

Example: Governance and management structure



A cross-institutional **steering committee** consisting of Heads of Departments from involved SDU departments, the Director of Research (OUH), a member from SDU's executive board (a dean), the Head of research and Department management from the department at OUH to which the centre is primarily affiliated. The steering group has the overall formal, strategic and financial responsibility.

**Head of centre** has the overall responsibility for program management. The head of centre may be a research group leader or a research leader at OUH or SDU. The centre leader may be fully employed (100 pct.) at SDU or be employed in a combined position between OUH and SDU.

The **research group leader or research leader** (from OUH and SDU respectively) has the professional responsibility and focuses on the coherence between the locally placed WPs. In addition, he/she must ensure that researchers are invited to transversal meetings.

The **WP-leaders** are responsible for the daily progress of their own WPs.

## 2 Budget

The funding of the centre is for a five-year period of a total of DKK 14 m with the possibility of funding for another five-year period with an additional DKK 14 m.

We expect the payout to follow the model below.

Current funding:

Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Funding DKK m	1	2	3	4	4

Funding by a possible prolongation:

Year	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Funding DKK m	4	4	3	2	1

OUH and SDU will each finance 50 pct. It is important to keep the economy between OUH and SDU separate. This implies that the share of funding from OUH will be placed on an OUH research account, while the SDU contribution will be placed on a SDU research account.

Similarly, grants from external funds which concerns OUH-related research must be placed at OUH and SDU-related research grants must be placed at SDU.

Initially, it is possible to apply for funding for five years only. The funded amount is fixed (a total of DKK 14 m) and will be disbursed with a gradually increasing amount. If the centre is granted a prolongation, the funded amount will also be fixed, but with a gradually decreasing amount for a five-year period.

### 2.1 Eligible costs

- Equipment, apparatus, instruments etc.

- Salary for new appointed researchers (“VIP-løn” in Danish). Buy outs of existing employees follow normal practice for the individual areas/organisations (e.g. state or regional wage agreements).
- Technical/administrative salaries (“TAP-løn in Danish).
- PhD stipends (OUH PhD-students only one year)
- Running costs, establishment and running costs for bio banks and databases
- Travel costs (non-eligible for OUH-employees)
- Conferences fee
- Open Access /other publishing costs

## 2.2 Non-eligible costs

- Overhead (since the centre is internally funded).

*Please note: You are not expected to have prepared a budget for the phase 1 application.*

*In phase two we will be asking for a detailed budget, including expectations regarding external funding. The leverage factor depends on the area the applicants are from but should be ambitious. For the clinical and experimental areas, at least 1:2, meaning that at least 66 pct. of the funding should come from external funds.*

## 3. The proposal

The application process consists of two phases:

- Phase 1: Expression of interest
- Phase 2: Detailed proposal

### 3.1 Phase 1: Expression of interest

A Flagship Centre must bring researchers together in new and interesting collaborative constellations. It should be clear from the expression of interest how the Flagship Centre will strive to achieve a closer interdisciplinary and translational collaboration between OUH and SDU when the Flagship Centre is established.

The expression of interest must be written in **English** and be a maximum of **3** pages excluding front page and appendices. Please use no less than **pitch 12**.

Please draw up your expression of interest according to the below outline:

#### **Frontpage**

Name of the proposed Flagship Centre (long Centre name and short name (acronym))

- Name of hosting departments at both OUH and SDU
- Names, academic titles, and e-mail addresses of the main applicants from OUH and SDU. Specify who is to be Head of Centre and co-head of Centre.

The main applicant (sender of the expression of interest) will usually be the proposed head of the Centre. The main applicant can either be a professor from OUH or from a Department at SDU. The main OUH applicant will usually also be Head of Research at the OUH Department. A professor at OUH who wants to be a co-applicant or head of a Flagship Centre, must be approved by the head of research and the department management at OUH. Documentation must be enclosed in the appendix.

Content in the letter of interest (max 3 pages)

### **1. Introduction (approximately ¼ page)**

- Briefly explain the background for your suggested Flagship Centre and describe the Centres overall goal(s)

### **2. Purpose and vision (approximately ½ page)**

- Describe the purpose and your vision for the Flagship Centre in short (e.g. next five years) and long term (e.g. 10 years)

### **3. Research and focus areas (approximately ¾ page)**

- Clearly identify the research and focus areas that will be addressed and explain why these areas are important and how they address current challenges or create new opportunities.

### **4. Relevance and need (approximately ¼ page)**

- Argue for the overall relevance of the Flagship Centre and describe the specific needs the Flagship Centre will address

### **5. Societal Impact (approximately ¼ page)**

- Clearly articulate how the Flagship Centre's activities / research will affect patients and society. Discuss the potential benefits and outcomes the research could bring, emphasizing e.g. improvements in healthcare, new treatments, quality of life etc.
- Highlight specific initiatives or strategies the Flagship Centre will use to ensure that results translate into tangible societal benefits / benefits for the patients.

### **6. Innovative aspect (approximately ¼ page)**

- Highlight the innovative aspects of the research or approach used in the Flagship Centre and show how the Flagship Centre could bring something new and unique to the research community

### **7. Objectives and expected results (approximately ¼ page)**

- Set clear objectives for the Flagship Center and explain the results you expect to achieve within a specific time frame. (If relevant you can upload a Gantt chart in the appendix)

## **8. Partnerships and networks (approximately ½ page)**

- Describe how the Flagship Centre will function as a translational hub – e.g. emphasize the importance of having researchers from both institutions and how this integrated approach will enhance research and its translation into clinical practice. You could describe specific initiatives that will strengthen collaboration, fostering an integrated research culture, as well as discussing the benefits of having an interdisciplinary team capable of applying research to (future) clinical practice and contributing to scientific knowledge.
- Describe possible collaborations with other (national or international) researchers, institutions, companies or organizations. Describe how this will strengthen the Flagship Centre's opportunities and contribute to its success

## **9. Governance structure and leadership (approximately ¼ page)**

- Provide a brief overview of the planned governance structure for the Flagship Centre, including the leadership structure (organizational diagram can be uploaded in the appendix)
- Identify key individuals and their roles in the Flagship Centre

## **Appendices**

- Signature document signed by (host) head of department from SDU and (host) head of department at OUH
- A declaration of collaboration from any scientific or academic participants listed in the application
- Relevant CV.
- Timeline/Gantt chart – voluntary
- Relevant approvals (if any) – e.g. Danish Data Protection Agency, ethics committee etc.
- A list of proposed members of an advisory board including at least two European members (not Danish citizens)

## **Assessment**

The assessment of the received expressions of interest will be carried out by a group consisting of three representatives from SDU's RI Council (Council for research and innovation) and two representatives from the OUH's Research Council as well as a (one) patient and/or relative representative. The assessment will be focused on the application's strategic relevance, on its cross disciplinaryity and on its inclusion of clinical elements.

Based on the assessment the group will select up to five proposals that will proceed to Phase 2. The deadline for response to applicants is June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024.

### 3.2 Phase 2: Detailed proposal (call to be announced at a later stage)

The applicants who will proceed to Phase 2 will be invited to submit an extended proposal with detailed account for work-packages, international contacts, plan for PhD and postdocs and expected societal impact. In addition, a detailed budget including expected external funding must be submitted.

- The proposal must be a maximum of 21 pages and be drawn up in English (template will follow).
- The application deadline for Phase 2 proposals is expected to be September 15th 2024.

#### **Assessment:**

The assessment of the detailed proposals will be carried out by external international reviewers who will score the projects with a focus on scientific quality and excellence, innovation, interdisciplinarity, translational aspects, risk/reward, perspectives for societal impact etc.

Based on the assessment up to three proposals will proceed to Phase 3. The deadline for response to applicants is October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### 3.3 Phase 3: Pitch

The final applicants will be given the opportunity to present their proposal in front of a panel consisting of:

- Dean Simon Møberg Torp, The Faculty of Humanities
- Dean Ole Skøtt, The Faculty of Health Sciences
- Dean Henrik Bindselev, The Faculty of Engineering
- Dean Marianne Holmer, The Faculty of Science
- Dean Peter Møllgaard, The Faculty of Business and Social Sciences
- Medical Director Kim Brixen
- Medical Director Bjarne Dahler Eriksen

The panel will assess the proposals for flagship centres based on strategic relevance, crossdisciplinarity and on its prospects for clinical application. The panel will then select the new Flagship Centre between OUH and SDU, and the announcement of the New Flagship Centre is expected immediately after the meeting.

Other guests at the Pitch-meeting will be members from the RI-council, Heads of involved Departments at SDU, members from the OUH Research Council, and members of the executive boards at OUH and SDU respectively.

## 4 Evaluation of performance



The Flagship Centre will be subject to a performance contract that specifies the centers expected goals and outcomes. The Flagship Centre will be evaluated annually by a steering committee in regard to the goals in the performance contract on quality and quantity in research, education of PhD students, postdocs, external funding, and international collaboration. It is a decisive criterion for success that the Flagship Centre will obtain external funding every year. Any grants from the Region of Southern Denmark will not be included in this connection as well as grants and stipends from SDU and internal funds at OUH.

The program management should have an external evaluation made by the international advisory board.

After 3½- 4 years, it will be estimated whether or not the Flagship Centre is well-functioning according to the criteria for the Flagship Centre. If so, the funding can be prolonged for another 5 years by the steering committee.

## 5 How to submit an application

Please forward your proposal to [ouh.forskning@rsyd.dk](mailto:ouh.forskning@rsyd.dk) entitled "Flagship Centre" in the e-mail heading.

Questions may be directed to: [ouh.forskning@rsyd.dk](mailto:ouh.forskning@rsyd.dk)