Career and Competency Development for Academic Staff

Ambition, Principles and Areas of Action

2020

SDU

Preamble

Handling SDU's core tasks and realising SDU's strategic goals require talented, competent and committed academic staff and an environment for academic and personal development that makes it possible to attract and retain qualified employees.

It is a fundamental part of a university's activities to promote the career and competency development of academic staff. This takes place at all levels within SDU's organisation, within the individual research group, at departments and faculties and across the university. During 2019-2020, the subcommittee for competency development of academic staff under the Main Liaison Committee has drawn up this strategy for the career and competency development of academic staff at SDU in order to inspire, support and frame this work.

This strategy for the career and competency development of academic staff is aimed at all academic employees at SDU – both employees early in their scientific careers and seasoned academic staff in permanent positions. The strategy focuses on career opportunities at SDU, as well as within and outside the university sector. Correspondingly, the strategy also focuses on the competencies and skills needed to perform tasks and make a career for oneself both within and outside the university sector.

Career and competency development of academic staff is a shared responsibility for managers and employees. The strategy must therefore strengthen the dialogue on career and competency development between academic employees and their managers, e.g. at the annual performance and development review. As there is a big difference between the various faculties and academic environments, it is crucial that the strategy is translated into actions adapted to the local conditions.

The strategy was formulated by a working party set up by the Subcommittee for competency development of academic staff under the Main Liaison Committee during the summer of 2020. The working party consists of:

Alexandra Holsting, Associate Professor and Union Representative, Department of Language and Communication
Camilla Hørby Jensen, Head of Department, Department of Law
Kamilla Jensen Husen, Research Librarian and Union Representative, SDU's University Library
Kristian Debrabant, Associate Professor and Union Representative, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science

Jakob Ejersbo from SDU Human Resource Service has served as secretary for the sub-committee

Happy reading!

Ole Skøtt
Dean and Chairman of the Subcommittee for Competency Development of Technical/Administrative Staff

Construction of Strategy for Career and Competency Development of Academic Staff

The strategy consists of three parts

- *Competency development for academic staff at SDU*
- *Career development for academic staff at SDU*
- *Organisational anchoring of career and competency development for academic staff at SDU*

Competency development for academic staff at SDU

The first part of the strategy determines the ambition, principles and areas of action for **competency development**.

The 'Ambition' section describes why it is necessary to develop the skills and competencies of academic staff and what SDU wants to achieve by doing so.

The section on 'Principles for competency development' clarifies a number of principles for how competency development should be organised and what competency development must be based on, both in relation to the individual employee and the individual competency development activity.

The last part, 'Focus areas', points to a number of areas which support the academic employee's competencies toward performing their main tasks: research and teaching.

Career development for academic staff at SDU

The second part of the strategy determines the ambition, principles and focus areas for **competency development** for the academic staff.

The 'Ambition' section describes why it is necessary to develop the career of academic staff and what SDU wants to achieve by doing so.

The section on 'Principles for career development' clarifies a number of principles for how career development can be supported both based on the individual employee and their chosen career path, what goals can be achieved and who is responsible for the employee's career development.

The last part, 'Focus areas', points to a number of areas that will render visible the academic employee's career development opportunities and ensure opportunities for guidance and feedback.
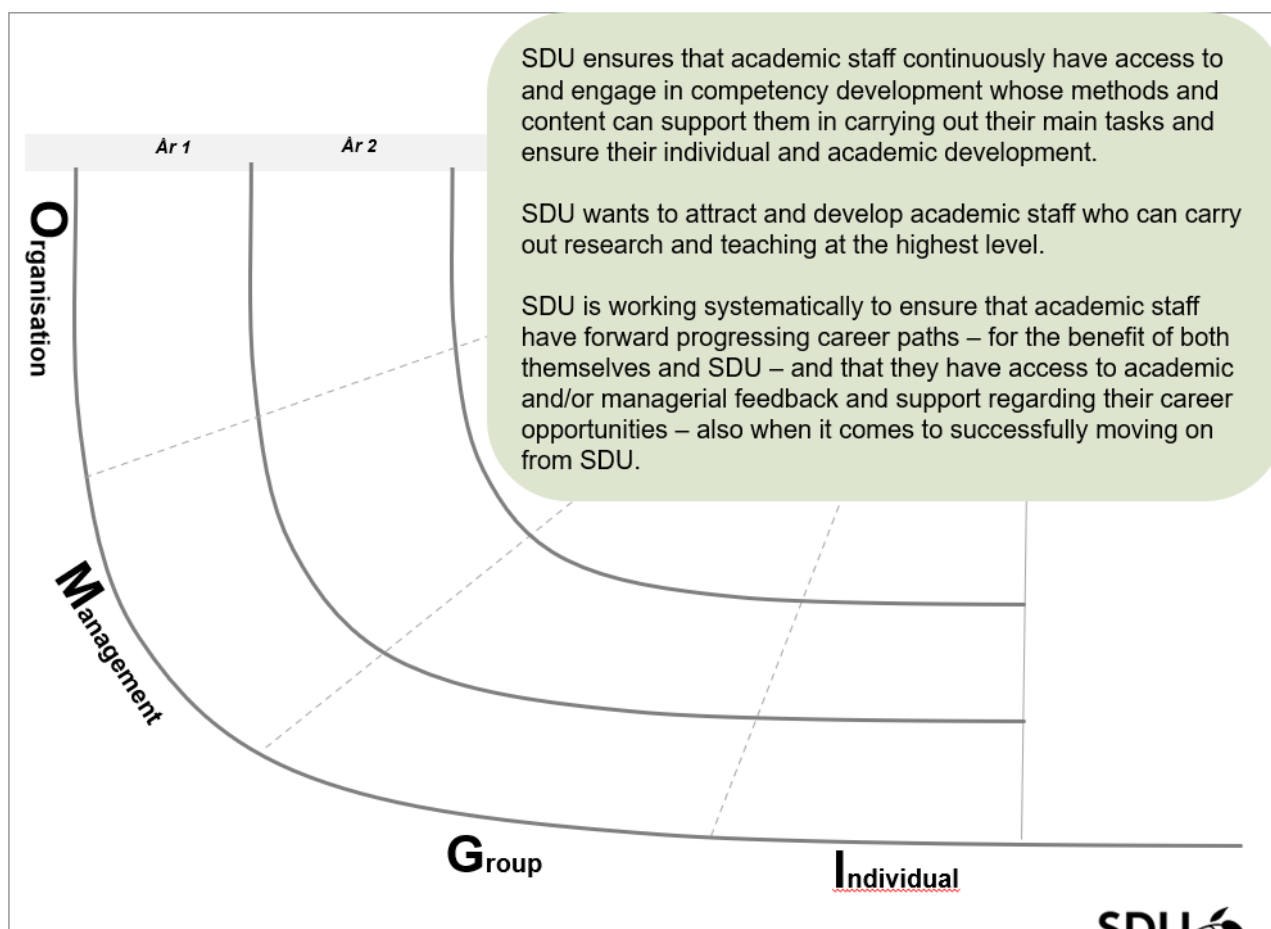
Organisational anchoring of career and competency development for academic staff at SDU

The section describes how the strategy is anchored in order to ensure that the strategy's ambitions, principles and focus areas are fulfilled.

The IGLO model

In order to ensure a well-founded starting point for career and competency development for academic staff at SDU, targeted and coherent efforts are needed to ensure that both individual academic employees and SDU's organisation as a whole develop. This targeted and coherent focus is structured according to the IGLO model, which focuses on how individual parts of the organisation can contribute to career and competency development at SDU.

- **I**ndividual in this context means the individual academic employee who is employed at SDU.
- **G**roup can be a group of academic staff who perform the same tasks, such as lecturers, grant recipients of external research grants or heads of studies. A group can also be comprised of academic staff with the same type of position in the position structure, such as postdocs or professors.
- **M**anagement in this context means managers with responsibility for strategy, finances and staff. First and foremost, the manager directly responsible for personnel. However the term also involves managers with overall and indirect personnel management responsibility. In relation to this strategy, the latter will typically be research and heads of centre, heads of department, deans and the Rectorate.
- **O**rganisation in this context refers to a group of managers and academic staff whose tasks include teaching, research and dissemination. At SDU, 'organisation' may apply to different levels, e.g. department, faculty and/or the entire university.

SDU ensures that academic staff continuously have access to and engage in competency development whose methods and content can support them in carrying out their main tasks and ensure their individual and academic development.

SDU wants to attract and develop academic staff who can carry out research and teaching at the highest level.

SDU is working systematically to ensure that academic staff have forward progressing career paths – for the benefit of both themselves and SDU – and that they have access to academic and/or managerial feedback and support regarding their career opportunities – also when it comes to successfully moving on from SDU.

Career and competency development for academic staff at SDU

I. Competency Development

Ambition

SDU ensures that academic staff continuously have access to and engage in competency development whose methods and content can support them in carrying out their main tasks and ensure their individual and academic development.

Principles for competency development

Competency development for academic staff is aimed at both research and teaching skills as well as general skills (skills that supplement the academic skills within the employee's field of research).

Competency development should be based on the specific context, such as the conditions and situation of the unit (university, faculty, department or research group) or the employee, or a function's tasks and framework for a function (PhD supervisor, head of studies, etc.).

The competency development should be organised with an eye to the different prerequisites, needs and conditions that academic staff have, depending on where they are in their career as researchers.

The content of the competency development should be based on practice and experience from academia and can consist of both external expert knowledge, internal knowledge sharing, soundboarding between peers and actual course activities.

It must be ensured that there are both financial and time resources for competency development for academic staff, regardless of their form of employment.

Focus areas

Research-related skills
It is central that academic staff continuously develop their research skills and perfect their skills in their respective areas of research. This can, among other things, happen through conference participation, research stays, continuing education, network participation, etc.

Research-supporting skills
There are a number of tasks and requirements associated with conducting research. It is important that academic staff have the necessary legal, technical and project management skills needed to perform these tasks. Such skills may include knowledge of personal data legislation and research integrity or having skills in communicating and disseminating research; being able to consider gender issues and consequences in research projects; to seek fund funding; or to deal with new technology, such as machine learning and software for data management.

Higher education pedagogy
Development of competencies in higher education pedagogy must ensure that the quality and development of teaching, learning and methods of assessment are based on SDU's principles for activating teaching and active learning. Development of competencies in higher education pedagogy consists, for example, of central internal and external course offerings, soundboarding with peers and locally defined development initiatives for entire areas or education programmes.

Management development
Research is not only carried out individually, but also as coordinated collaboration. Work in large research groups and/or projects requires management, and therefore it is important that academic staff who are heading groups/projects acquire the necessary management skills. This applies to both skills to ensure

inclusive and efficient groups that allow the members to thrive and develop, and, for instance, to project management skills.

Language
SDU is an internationally oriented university. Academic staff must have access to relevant linguistic skills development that supports SDU's language policy and promotes their skills and opportunities for academic development. Development of linguistic skills consists, for example, of courses in both Danish and English and activities such as 'chat in Danish' and language partner schemes for international employees.

Other general skills
Research, teaching and dissemination include processes and workflows that require general skills. These may include IT and communication, press management, use of the voice in teaching, 'academic writing in English', as well as financial management and other administrative skills.

Career and Competency Development for Academic Staff at SDU

II. Career Development at SDU

Ambition

SDU wants to attract and develop academic staff who can carry out research and teaching at the highest level.

SDU is working systematically to ensure that academic staff have forward progressing career paths – for the benefit of both themselves and SDU – and that they have access to academic and/or managerial feedback and support regarding their career opportunities – also when it comes to successfully moving on from SDU.

Principles of career development

Work on career development must be done with understanding and acceptance that SDU's academic staff can create value for society both through career paths within and outside the university world.

All academic staff are supported in pursuing a career path based on the person's academic/research profile and development plans.

SDU works with career development so that it promotes diversity and equality among the academic staff and so that everyone has equal opportunities.

Academic employees who, based on their academic research background, have obligations and undertake tasks in addition to research and teaching, are supported in pursuing a career path within this. Such career paths can, for example, focus on the development of pedagogical practice, development and management of education programmes, research management and personnel management, as well as communication and establishment of collaboration with external actors.

In connection with career development, it must be clear who has managerial responsibility for ensuring a framework and resources for career development, as well as how this is supported by the organisation, at department, faculty and university level, such as RIO, Human Resource Service or others capable of providing career advice and soundboarding.

Focus areas

Making career paths visible
It is important that career paths for academic staff are transparent at all levels. Young researchers must form a clear picture of how their career path can take shape.

Visibility regarding career prospects for academic staff holding leadership positions for a period of time (e.g. heads of studies and heads of research)
As such assignments often involve a break from research, there should be clear career perspectives in performing the duties, or a special 'track' should be organised allowing those concerned to return to return to a more 'traditional' career path once the tasks in question have been completed.

Visibility regarding criteria for advancement
There must be transparency in relation to the necessary criteria and expectations for advancement in one's academic career. In this context, there must be clear eligibility criteria as well as clear recruitment criteria, and it must be made clear that these may differ.

Career guidance for all academic staff
SDU must ensure in a timely manner that academic staff who are unable or unwilling to continue at SDU receive the help and coaching they need to make good progress in their careers. This applies in particular to those employed in temporary positions. In addition to soundboarding and dialogue with the relevant manager, this can be done by adjusting the academic employee's task portfolio in a timely manner, allowing them to develop into their next job, rather than being phased out from SDU.

Ongoing feedback
All employees must regularly and at least once a year have the opportunity to discuss their career opportunities and development with the relevant manager, e.g. at the performance and development review or through career interviews.

Career and Competency Development for Academic Staff at SDU

III. Organisational Anchoring of Career and Competency Development for Academic Staff at SDU

In order for competency and career development to yield the greatest benefit for both the individual academic employee and for SDU, an ongoing dialogue is required between manager and employee and putting the annual performance and development review to good use.

SDU as an organisation must ensure that based on the above-mentioned ambitions, principles and focus areas, courses and offerings are developed and offered in a constructive interaction between central units (e.g. RIO, Human Resource Service and SDUUP) and faculties, PhD Schools, departments and research groups).