

Memorandum: Framework for Research Group Leadership at SAMF

Background

In relation to the establishment of research groups at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences (BSS), a 'Role Description for Heads of Research Groups at the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences' was adopted in 2015. The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce a new overall framework for research group leadership at BSS, which puts academic leadership at the centre to respond to the current opportunities and challenges faced by BSS.

The 2015 role description introduced and described the overall role and functions of the Head of a Research Group and reflected the assumption that a uniform practice would emerge across the individual research groups and departments in relation to the execution of this role. The anticipated uniformity was both reflected in the functions that were outlined in relation to academic leadership as well as the functions of a more administrative character. Experience has since shown that the role as Head of a Research Group has been interpreted and executed in many ways, and that there has been a tendency towards Heads of Research Groups being overloaded with administrative tasks at the expense of the professional development of the research group and its members.

Moreover, the role description from 2015 is inadequate when it is held up against the strategic context faced by the research groups at BSS today. The new strategic context is a result of several developments and challenges, which all call for strong academic leadership: (i) an ever more competitive publishing market, which increasingly stresses excellence; (ii) a changing funding landscape, which is characterised by a decrease in public funds, which is counterbalanced by a significant growth in private funds as well as an increasing use of thematic calls among funders, and (iii) an education market, which calls for an increasing focus on innovation and a life-long learning perspective in education, and an education market, which, in addition, is characterised by an increasing competition over declining youth cohorts.

With the introduction of a new framework for research group leadership at BSS, the faculty management seeks to promote two objectives, both closely linked to and anchored in the faculty's strategy. First, the new framework is to strengthen the core component of our research and education activities, namely academic leadership and professional development. Second, the new framework is to reinforce our well-established practice of allowing for flexibility and local solutions in relation to the execution of academic leadership and its emphasis on the pursuit of professional ambitions at the expense of functional tasks, which predominantly are administrative in nature. The framework should be seen as a backdrop for the ongoing dialogue on academic ambitions and professional development, which takes place between the faculty management and department management.

The framework puts forward certain expectations for the Head of a Research Group: that he/she will place emphasis on the academic ambitions and professional development of the research group and its members,

and that he/she will display a commitment to work with and pursue these objectives in a way that allows for disciplinary pluralism and stresses excellence. It also makes the Head of Department responsible for enabling the Head of the Research Group to focus on and give weight to these objectives by ensuring that administrative tasks and other responsibilities assigned to the Head of the Research Group do not conflict with and impede the realisation of the research group's full academic potential. Finally, the framework also assigns a joint responsibility to the Head of Department and the Head of the Research Group for ensuring that senior researchers, in particular professors, are more closely involved in and made responsible for contributing to the professional development of the research group.

Placing Academic Leadership at the Centre

The main responsibility of the Head of the Research Group is to support and realise the academic potential of the research group in the form of research excellence and high-quality research-based education. The overarching focus on professional development corresponds with the strategic course put forward in the faculty and department strategies, which the research groups have extensive freedom to implement through concrete initiatives and activities.

It is thus expected that Heads of Research Groups at BSS are capable of and willing to support SAMF's pluralistic culture and general strategic framework. A Head of a Research Group should be capable of uniting a research group around research ambitions and actions. The Head of a Research Group is expected to be capable of setting such a course and establishing such an ambition while taking the interests and identities of the individual researchers into consideration and ensuring that the members of the group contribute to each other's professional development.

The Head of Department and the Head of the Research Group should engage in a close dialogue about the interplay between the group's ambitions and the department and faculty strategies.

To the greatest extent possible, the Head of Department is to facilitate the academic leadership of the Head of the Research Group, both in terms of research and the content and quality of the education programmes. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to ensure that the other tasks assigned to the Head of a Research Group support his/her academic leadership and that these tasks do not deny him/her the ability to promote the professional development of the research group and its members. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the Head of the Research Group to retain a focus on professional development and not to let administration take centre stage. Tasks, which are not associated with professional development (such as administrative tasks related to staff and educational programmes as well as other types of administration), should only be ascribed to the Head of a Research Group to the extent necessary and appropriate for the academic leadership related to research and education.

Key tasks and expectations related to research group leadership at SAMF:

- It is a core task for the Head of a Research Group to **explore and support individual career opportunities and ambitions**, for instance, by helping the individual group members set career goals and supporting their ongoing professional development in relation to both research and education.

- It is also the responsibility of the Head of a Research Group to ensure a link **between individual ambitions and the overall coherence and strategic course of the research group**. A research group must create professional ties between individual researchers and strengthen their ability to pursue professional goals. These goals should both be reflected in the shared ideas and ambitions of the group.
- The Head of a Research Group is expected to establish a framework for the overall planning for the group, but he/she is not expected to take on the responsibility for its administration. The Head of a Research Group is thus expected to **contribute to the overall long-term planning and distribution of tasks in the group**, not least to ensure coherence between research and education, while the responsibility for **the more detailed planning and registration of teaching activities to the greatest extent possible should be automated and placed in the department's secretariat**. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to ensure that these types of administrative tasks only to a limited extent are placed in the research group.
- The Head of a Research Group is also responsible for developing and maintaining an open and inclusive culture of scholarly qualification. The Head of the Research Group should ensure a **division of responsibilities in research and teaching-related contexts that promotes a variety of career paths**. A pluralistic approach to career paths not only refers to disciplinary diversity but also gender equality at all stages of the academic career path. It is a joint responsibility of the Head of Department and the Head of the Research Group to ensure that administrative tasks, to the limited extent that they are assigned to the research group, are not distributed in such a way that they end up hampering career progression.
- The Head of the Research Group is responsible **for the research group's potential operating budget**. It is particularly important that the Head of the Research Group establishes transparent rules for the use of the operating funds, and he/she should, to the greatest extent possible, strive to organise the administration of the operating funds in such a way that it can be placed in the department's secretariat.
- It is the joint responsibility of the Head of the Research Group and the Head of Department to ensure a **broad involvement of the research group's senior members**, in particular professors, in the professional development of the group. Professors are expected to take responsibility for professional communities, including the research group.
- The Head of the Research Group and the professors must collectively distribute tasks and responsibilities in the group (including research seminars, interdisciplinary projects, review processes related to planned applications and projects, etc.), and the Head of Department must approve this distribution.

Department management

It is **the responsibility of the Head of Department's to organise the department management in such a way that it includes leading senior researchers and is based on academic leadership**. It is the Head of Department who appoints the Head of a Research Group. The Head of the Research Group should be involved in the management of the department, either formally or informally. The Head of Department is recommended to establish formal links to or forums of dialogue with leading senior researchers beyond Heads of the Research Groups.

Delegation of Authority

It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to provide a **clear description of the authority that has been delegated from the Head of Department to the Head of the Research Group**. The purpose hereof is to help individual employees navigate the departmental chain of command. It is also to clarify to the Head of the Research Group exactly what authority he/she has been delegated in relation to staff management. An example of such an act of delegation might concern staff development dialogues with the members of the research group. It is important that the description covers all the essential aspects of delegated authority in relation to staff management.

Onboarding

It is the Head of Department's responsibility to prepare a **tailored onboarding plan for the Head of a Research Group**. The onboarding plan should include an exchange of experience from one or more former Heads of Research Groups. The Heads of Department can cooperate on joint onboarding processes, which the faculty will then support in relation to planning.