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Lund University's strategy for sustainable development 2019–2026

Approved by the vice-chancellor 19 September 2019

Lund University is to understand, explain and improve our world and the human condition and by doing so act as a driving force for sustainable development. The University works actively to integrate an overall approach to sustainable development in all its activities: education, research, external engagement and organisational development.

1. Background

In a sustainable world, people's needs are met without compromising future generations' possibilities to meet their needs. This requires that society addresses a number of major challenges so that economic development is within the framework for social and environmental sustainability, and the Earth's resources are not depleted. Such a global vision for sustainable development is expressed in the UN's 17 sustainable development goals from 2015. The UN's Agenda 2030 states how these goals are to be achieved. The sustainable development goals form an integrated and indivisible whole in which the different goals address all dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. As the goals by their very nature are linked, there is a need for solutions that create synergies and lead development forwards, while there is also a need for knowledge on how to identify and manage goal conflicts.

The issues relating to sustainable development are not new, but have become increasingly topical due to the fact that the striving for social sustainability with basic human rights such as the right to a satisfactory standard of living, health, work and education and gender equality for present and future generations is being made more difficult by ongoing climate change, overexploitation of the Earth's resources, depletion of biodiversity, other environmental pollution and conflicts. In many cases there is little time to identify and implement solutions to meet these challenges, as delays in working towards sustainable development successively lead to a desirable future being increasingly difficult to realise. Meeting these challenges requires knowledge about how sustainable development can be achieved and how knowledge can be converted into action. This is supported by knowledge from many different areas that are also integrated into a holistic perspective.

Lund University's strategy for sustainable development complements the University's strategic plan and observes the Higher Education Act¹. The strategy covers the University's entire organisation and all employees. Implementation of the strategy is to be carried out in harmony with other relevant

¹ The requirement for Sweden's higher education institutions to promote all dimensions of sustainable development is stated in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434 Chapter 1, Section 5).

strategies, policy documents, the policy for sustainable development, regulations and statements, and be adapted to the affected organisations' conditions, opportunities and needs. The aim of the strategy is consequently to provide a direction and establish a number of visions, not to regulate how the implementation is to be carried out. The visions concern management and further development of ongoing activities, as well as new aspects of activities.

With its comprehensive range of disciplines, Lund University can follow the holistic approach of Agenda 2030 by creating and conveying knowledge with a scientific and artistic basis.

2. Visions for sustainable development

Sustainable development is a basic condition that affects the University's education, research, external engagement and organisational development. Education equips undergraduate and postgraduate students to meet challenges and promote subject-relevant perspectives on sustainable development. Curiosity-driven research plays a crucial role by contributing to the understanding of our world and thereby to preparatory knowledge for already recognised or currently unknown future challenges. The breadth of the University is utilised to create cross-boundary and interdisciplinary research and education focusing on identified needs for knowledge and sustainable solutions. Sustainable development is promoted in society by making research visible and participating in processes where scientific knowledge informs decisions and supports new solutions. The University utilises opportunities to strengthen all parts of the organisation and activities by practising what it preaches and proactively working to develop in relation to the global sustainable development goals. The strategy is used and applied in all activities at the University, but how this is done varies between programmes, fields of research and other areas of activity depending on their content and form.

2.1 Overall visions

- Lund University integrates sustainable development in its education, research, external engagement and organisational development, and the University's employees are well aware of their roles in this work.
- Lund University is involved in local, regional, national and global social arenas² in order for scientific knowledge to provide leverage in society's striving for sustainability, in both the short and long term.
- Lund University is a prominent voice in the field of sustainability within research and teaching as well as in public debate and cultural life.
- Lund University communicates its sustainability-related work within the organisation and to wider society in ways that make it easy to both reach out and gain access to its activities.

2.2 Education and student participation

A basic understanding and knowledge of sustainability is included in programmes in all cycles and within all subjects. This contributes to continuous reflection on the relation between education and sustainable development so that sustainability aspects are integrated in the students' future professional roles. As a part of a functioning student influence, students also participate in the work of integrating sustainable development in Lund University's activities.

Visions for education and student participation:

² Arenas and initiatives are used as an overall collective term that may refer to long-term or fixed-term development work, virtual or physical forums, external engagement activities, etc. Different types of initiative may be relevant for different parts of the University.

- All students acquire knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and how their programmes relate to this, and thereby contribute expertise in their future roles in society.
- There is continuing professional development within sustainable development for all employees at Lund University.
- The University supports student initiatives in sustainable development and there are opportunities for students to participate in work to achieve the goals of the strategy.

2.3 Research

Lund University's research develops relevant scientific knowledge that increases understanding of problems related to sustainable development, the possible solutions that exist and the potential undesirable effects of solutions that can arise. As sustainability-related problems are complex and the solution to a problem can sometimes cause another, Lund University also develops research that increase understanding of such connections. An important component in the University's research is to use scientific facts and a broad approach to critically review society's problem monitoring and decisions in the area of sustainability. The University's research is both critical and solution-oriented and generates knowledge that contributes to new perspectives on sustainable development. Both curiosity-driven and needs-based research form the starting point and inspiration for interdisciplinary and cross-boundary research that is responsive to society's knowledge needs concerning sustainable development.

Visions for research:

- Research of the highest quality creates the basic knowledge about, and innovative solutions to, sustainability-related problems.
- The University's researchers are well aware of the relevance of their own research to sustainable development and how their research relates to other fields of research concerning sustainable development.
- Forms of interdisciplinary and cross-boundary research on sustainable development are well developed, which among other things entails dedicated initiatives² that bring together research at various faculties.
- Strategic external engagement with a broad spectrum of collaborating parties helps to identify research needs for sustainable development and to produce knowledge that meets these needs.

2.4 External engagement

Lund University is involved in strong external engagement regarding sustainable development issues with an aim to identify areas in need of research and education. This external engagement contributes to research being used to support decisions and for critical analysis of issues relating to sustainable development. This is achieved by employees taking part in relevant local, regional, national and global arenas and there engaging in discussions with a broad spectrum of organisations in society³, making available new knowledge that can support decisions, collaborating on the development of solutions that create sustainable development, and identifying new research and education needs.

Visions for external engagement:

- Lund University generates knowledge that is relevant for sustainable development in collaboration

³ E.g. other higher education institutions, public authorities, the business sector, civil society and citizens.

with organisations in society, but also contributes by critically reviewing society's efforts regarding sustainable development.

- Researchers at Lund University play a prominent part in sustainability-related local, regional, national and global arenas by compiling knowledge, drawing up research agendas, and as experts.
- Dynamic and integrating arenas for external engagement with public authorities, the business sector and civil society are used to jointly contribute to sustainable development.
- Lund University provides resources for academic capacity development in developing countries through partnerships and student and teaching staff exchanges.

2.5 A sustainable organisation

Lund University's operations strive to constantly improve their sustainability management and show in concrete terms that sustainable development works in practice. The work and study environment is inclusive, enriching, stimulating, safe and secure. The international environment that characterises Lund University contributes to promoting, spreading and deepening a positive understanding of other cultures, ideologies and frames of reference for human behaviour.

Visions for the organisation:

- Lund University maintains a good, safe, secure and accessible work environment in all respects.
- Lund University is a resource-efficient organisation, with a minimised climate and environmental impact.
- Activities at Lund University are based on gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity and use the strengths that this entails.
- Lund University works for the integration of new arrivals in Sweden and their entry into working life, including academics.

3. Implementation and follow up

The strategy for sustainable development affects, and sets requirements for, all parts of Lund University. Faculties and other organisations within the University develop their specific strategies as well as plan and run their operations based on the strategy for sustainable development. Faculties and equivalent organisations draw up their own action plans that outline division of responsibilities, roles and resources in order to realise the visions in the strategy as well as how these plans are to be followed up, evaluated and, if required, revised. As the focus, conditions and organisation of work on sustainable development management varies between the University's different units, these determine how the work to achieve Lund University's shared vision and goals is to be conducted and followed up. Overall reporting, with associated evaluations of how the strategy is being implemented, is carried out annually within the framework of the annual report processes at faculty level and for Lund University as a whole.

- Managers and management groups at all levels are responsible for considering matters relating to sustainable development in decision, implementation and follow up processes.
- All employees are responsible for their work contributing to the realisation of the strategy's intentions.