

Strategy 2024-2029

Institut for Virksomhedsledelse (IVL)/Department of Business & Management (DBM)

Curiosity, Audacity, Tenacity

April 2024

At the Department of Business & Management (DBM) (see Appendix 1) we aim to produce distinct, internationally recognised knowledge in social science-based business domains. This is reflected in our research impact, in our educational programmes, where we educate the thought leaders and managers of the future, and in our participation in societal/political discourse to enable better informed decision making based on critical insights.

Under the conditions of a market society, we consider business to be *the* central societal institution that shapes the practices, imagination and desires of society through, and of, the management of consumption and production and associated managerial functions.

In the current context marked by significant political, climatic, social and cultural crises, the responsibility to develop knowledge and educate future leaders that contribute positively to society rests heavily on the shoulders of a business and management department.

We do not necessarily provide the solutions and answers to societal challenges. Instead, we seek to empower academics, students and practitioners alike to ask better questions.

Academically, business and management knowledge nurtures on a range of disciplines: mathematics, social/cultural anthropology, psychology, economics, sociology, arts, etc. At DBM, such interdisciplinarity exists in, and across, our core research groups.

Along the lines of the strategy of the Faculty of Business and Social Services (SDU BSS) and the University of Southern Denmark Business School, we aim to go beyond the obvious; in research, education and societal engagement.

We produce knowledge that is beyond the obvious through the fundamental academic virtues of curiosity, audacity and tenacity:

- We remain **curious** through our excellent research. Curiosity is, and should be, the driving force in any research-based institution. Despite the demands of daily life, the institutional pressures for instrumentalisation of research, the lack of funding and ever-changing promotional criteria, we insist on the foundational value of addressing knowledge generation through a curiosity-driven approach.
- We **audaciously** engage with topics and phenomena that are beyond the obvious merits of what is traditionally considered business administration topics, pushing the research frontiers, providing learners with knowledge and skill capacities that we believe are crucial for future business problematics, and at times confronting decision makers with uncomfortable truths that challenge conventional wisdom.
- We work with **tenacity** – the '*longue durée*' of the scientific endeavour is our hallmark, and we support junior and senior faculty in establishing long-term sustainable academic careers. Likewise, we acknowledge that building impactful knowledge communities requires a long-term collective effort that often temporally transcends current political and strategic initiatives, while remaining serendipitous towards such temporally shorter-term developments with strategic opportunism.

DBM Strategy 2024-2029

DBM's economic livelihood is to a large extent based on strong educational programmes. However, given that the institutional foundation of the university is to deliver research-based knowledge, DBM's strategy has a strong emphasis on research.

Excellence in Disciplinary and Mission-oriented Research

DBM strives to make excellent contributions in classic research disciplines and in interdisciplinary mission-oriented research that addresses key societal challenges. The department plays a central role in fulfilling SDU BSS's ambition for thought leadership in the areas of sustainability/climate, health and the digital transformation of society.

DBM's organisation into distinct research groups reflects a tradition of aiming for excellence in the key business and management disciplines. A significant part of our research activities focus on achieving excellence. This commitment implies an insistence on the long-term effort of a curious, audacious and tenacious research approach. It is pivotal that the department, through our research groups, participates in the foundational knowledge creation of the respective fields of business administration and social science, the relevance of which may not be immediately apparent under contemporary eyes.

Scientific publications are important outcomes of the research effort and shape the academic discourse. However, publications are also 'postcards from the edge' of understanding in our respective disciplines.

External funding is an important means through which to pursue new insights and knowledge claims for the better of society and business. It is not an aim in and of itself, but a necessary means to an end for critical knowledge production.

However, the changing funding landscape as well as societal expectations of universities also lead to a heightened focus on addressing grand societal challenges through interdisciplinary mission-oriented research. At DBM we ask ourselves the question: If business is part of the problem of contemporary crises, how can business also be part of the solutions?

To address this focus, the department is going through a process of initiating mission-oriented research platforms that cut across research groups, in addition to participating in faculty and university-wide platforms and beyond. We aim to develop these department-specific platforms as forums of interdisciplinary knowledge generation that can cross-fertilise into mono-disciplinary contributions. As such, we insist on a dialogic relation between mono-disciplinary and interdisciplinary mission-oriented research, and this insistence should guide us in remaining selective in our serendipitous endeavours.

We expect the platforms to be central in achieving the department's ambition of financing an increased share of research activity by external funding – an economic imperative in contemporary universities.

The platforms largely overlap with the three areas of thought leadership outlined in SDU BSS's strategy and are as follows:

Health & Technology – humans, organisation and innovation

The department has a critical mass of scholars working with health from both technological, organisational and citizen-consumer perspectives and has been centrally involved in SDU BSS's health and inequality research cluster as well as in a number of SDU-based platforms such as Human Health, Translational Hub and the SDU/OUH leadership forum.

In 2023, DBM launched its Health & Technology platform led by professor Dorthe Brogård Kristensen (https://www.sdu.dk/en/om_sdu/institutter_centre/i_virksomhedsledelse/sundhed-og-teknologi) and was lead in a multi-department-faculty application for one of the OUH-SDU Research Excellence grants. The platform holds great promise based on past successes and the current interest in a social science perspective on health (e.g., demonstrated by participation in an EU- financed consortium on cancer prevention. Work package PI Anna Schneider-Kamp).

The long-term aim of the platform is to establish a centre of excellence on the social and managerial implications of health and technology.

Key activities continue to be workshops with the Centre for Innovative Medical Technology (CIMT) and other key stakeholders at SDU and beyond; leverage initial applications for funding internally at SDU for external source.

Lead: Professor Dorthe Brogård Kristensen.

Digitalization & Technology

A number of scholars at DBM are working on digitalisation and digital technology in various domains and are delivering intellectual contributions in multiple ways (e.g., Ostermaier's work on ChatGPT published in Nature and Bajde's Carlsberg-financed work on the NFT economy). DBM is involved in the Digital Democracy Centre's (DDC) steering committee (Bauman) and is financing a PhD position at DDC. In the 2024-2025 timeframe, the ambition is to establish a research platform on digitalisation similar to the one on Health & Technology to leverage the interdisciplinary potential at the department. In the first instance through an open call workshop.

Leads: Associate Professor Andreas Ostermaier & Professor Domen Bajde.

Sustainability & Climate

Over the last few years, research on sustainability, circular economy and climate challenges has been growing in scale across the entire department. DBM was a key player in establishing the SDU BSS's Sustainable Markets cluster and is still heavily involved in it, including chairing the cluster (Emontspool). A number of externally financed research projects in the domain have been completed or are currently under way, and were chiefly funded by EU sources (Hannibal & Emontspool on Go Jelly, Hannibal on sustainability competencies, Askegaard on circular economy, Bajde on sustainable cities, Emontspool on Who Owns Nature?).

In addition to these success stories, DBM is host to one of SDU's centres of excellence financed by the SDU Climate Cluster (PACA, Wolf & Askegaard as PI's; CUHRE, Emontspool as work package leader).

To harness DBM's activities in this domain we are working to establish a DBM Climate and sustainability platform led by Emontspool & Hannibal.

Leads: Associate Professor Julie Emontspool & Professor Martin Hannibal.

Education – Business and Beyond

Currently, DBM is responsible for delivering teaching on more than 300 university courses across all faculties at SDU and at several campuses. Our key educational programmes, HA, MMA, cand.merc., and professional master's, however, are rooted in the SDU BSS at campus Odense. The educational landscape has been shifting, however:

- First, the political emphasis on regionalisation means that we are facing a situation of capacity limitation in Odense.
- Second, we are facing smaller cohorts of students.
- Third, in the business and management educational sector there has been a notable rise in educational opportunities that are not necessarily research-based (e.g., more vocational-based business admin educational programmes).

In order to address SDU's ambition for quality through talented people, we will work towards improving the reputation of university-based business and management educational programmes, with a strong focus on the HA programme – arguably the cornerstone of our educational portfolio.

Through an overhaul of educational portfolio of the University of Southern Denmark Business School, we will work to increase the quality and reputation of the HA at campus Odense. To that end we aim to pursue the following:

- Engage in a reform of the HA under the auspices of the University of Southern Denmark Business School.
- Increase the required GPA for enrolment in the HA: Currently the official GPA entry requirement for admission to the HA is 6. In 2023, however, the marginal entry requirement was 6.3. We aim to raise the required GPA to 7 or above to reflect SDU's quality strategy.
- Initiate a talent track within the HA programme where top motivated students get the opportunity to engage in excellent specialised learning experiences taught by top scholars.
- Continue and sustain our work on improving the study culture experiences, e.g. through a boost of our Business School Days and the University of Southern Denmark Business School Career Hub.

DBM is responsible for the University of Southern Denmark Business School's professional master's programme. Over the last few years, we have witnessed a volatile student market. To address this challenge, the heads of studies of the MMT, MPI and MBA programmes have undertaken preliminary market research to seek to understand the motivations for student enrolment in that market.

The goals for the coming years are:

- Rethinking the professional master's area – what content and format should we offer? Should our professional master's programmes be consolidated or continue separately?
- Bolstering the MBA so that it is accreditable for AMBA in alignment with SDU BSS's triple-crown accreditation ambition.

Societal Engagement – Business as a Central Societal Institution

Working for and with society is a cornerstone in SDU's strategy and, more generally, for the legitimacy of the university in contemporary society. At DBM we are already well-attuned to societal and business needs through our relevant educational programmes, policy advice given by our internationally recognized staff, and, e.g., through real-life business and societal challenges addressed in bachelor and master theses.

However, the department needs to be more prolific in terms of engagement with societal stakeholders. In the coming years, DBM will have three focus areas for societal engagement:

- *Profiling*: Developing a systematic exposition of existing and ongoing societal engagement.
- *Engaging*: To further engage with the regional and national business community we will launch an annual business conference where businesses, students and researchers will have the opportunity for mutual engagement and cross-pollination.
- *Relating*: DBM, as part of the University of Southern Denmark Business School, will increase its activities in engaging with relevant business and political networks, as well as gathering and drawing upon our regional, national and international alumni networks.

Talent Development

Since the establishment of DBM in 2021, our aim has been to nurture a culture in which external funding activities are a natural part of being an academic community, in order to generate impactful knowledge. Since 2021 we have seen a development where we have both had success in obtaining excellence grants (e.g., DFF and Carlsberg) and more mission-oriented grants (e.g., EU Horizon). We also had the ambition of increasing our application activity for projects and programmes that would have a larger scale and impact. In 2021 the average grant application amount was approx. 1.8m DKK; this is expected to increase to approx. 3.2m DKK in 2023. It is the ambition of the department to establish sustainable, long term research centres on the basis of external funding in the coming five years – research centres that work from the principles of curiosity, audacity and tenacity. The likelihood of this is high based on recent grant awards both externally and internally (e.g., the establishment of the SDU Climate Cluster PACA at DBM).

We strive to support junior and senior faculty in remaining curious, audacious and tenacious to develop their talent. To do this we support, e.g., research stays at relevant high-reputation institutions, enable presentations at international conferences as well as provide resources for basic operating expenses for carrying out research that aims to contribute to research at the highest international

level. We currently have two members of the SDU BSS Talent Track as well as a track record of engagement with DIAS (1 former and 1 current DIAS Fellows as well as a Chair) and will continue to pursue such opportunities. However, talent is something which is nurtured on a daily basis in vibrant, creative and ambitious communities of scholars. Therefore, a fundamental approach to talent is to make sure that disciplinary environments, e.g. in research groups, focus on the development of talent. When we educate young researchers, talent should be honed in all areas of the department's activities (no research talent without educational talent; no talent in societal engagement without a talent in research ambition). We strive to train talents that are holistic in their approach to the academic enterprise.

Appendix 1

The **Department of Business & Management (DBM) (in Danish: Institut for Virksomhedsledelse, IVL)** was established in 2021 by merging two research groups from the former Department of Business and Economics (Accounting and Finance) and five from the former Department of Marketing & Management (Consumption, Culture and Commerce; International Business & Entrepreneurship; Management of People; Strategic Organization Design; and the Center for Integrative Innovation Management). Staff are primarily based in Odense, but some groups are, or have staff, in Kolding and Slagelse.

The department employs a total of around 100 staff and offers a wide range of subjects in business administration and social science. Its research ranges from accounting and finance over innovative business development to new forms of consumption and anti-consumption – in addition to organisational design at an abstract-mathematical level and management studies from an empirical, practice/culture-oriented perspective. In addition to contributing to the research frontier in these research areas, the ambition is also to create synergies between research, teaching and dissemination.

DBM is a significant part of the University of Southern Denmark Business School and is responsible for teaching in all business administration programmes as well as in BSc/Master's programmes at a number of engineering programmes.

Universities today are facing new challenges and opportunities due to increased competition, growing public awareness and greater mobility of staff and students. Therefore, DBM strives to attract employees who can deliver relevant, innovative and high-quality research and teaching – and who are actively engaged in society. To enable this, the department will support staff with simple, efficient and transparent administrative processes handled by a service-minded administration unit.

DBM collaborates extensively with the stakeholders outside the university to strengthen the quality and relevance of its research, and the department disseminates its knowledge to regional, national and international companies and institutions in a variety of formats and media. In addition, there are many collaborations with all other faculties at SDU as well as a range of international collaborators.

Research Groups

DBM is nothing in and of itself, but serves as a platform for a portfolio of distinct, identity-bearing research groups across business administration disciplines.

DBM aims to foster knowledge of excellence and relevance by supporting the endeavours of the research groups. These endeavours are reflected in quality university education in central business topics, and beyond.

DBM consists of the following research groups:

- **Accounting** focuses on the analysis of accounting as an information system, and all aspects of accounting are included in the group's research, including financial management, financial accounting and auditing.
- **Finance** covers both theoretical and empirical research through the application of advanced mathematical-statistical models grounded in microeconomics. The group's primary research areas are asset pricing, asset allocation, capital structure and financial transactions.
- **Consumption, Culture and Commerce** interrogates consumption and markets from an approach that primarily uses qualitative and ethnographic methods. The group explores a wide range of fields in which consumption plays a central role, including symbolic consumption and branding; the marketisation of health, care and welfare; the consumption of digital services; the meanings of material culture; processes of globalisation; moral economy and the politicisation of markets.
- **International Business & Entrepreneurship** focuses on the dynamics of emerging markets and Industry 4.0, with a particular interest in SMEs. The group is globally oriented and aims to contribute to a better understanding of the internationalisation potential of SMEs in areas such as new technologies, intercultural understanding and the integration of migrants.
- **Management of People** studies how management takes place in public and private organisations, and the group seeks both to contribute to theory development and to provide research-based advice to practitioners. It thus works reflexively and constructively to explore and propose new, sustainable ways of organising people's working lives; for instance, in HR management, frontline management, employee relations and performance management.
- **Strategic Organisation Design** works with three main topics: 1) How micro-processes influence the macro-behaviour of organisations 2) How multi-level adaptation can enable success in dynamic environments. 3) Strategic organisation of learning and innovation in organisations that include different agents and levels. There is currently little knowledge about how structured organisational design can help companies in practice. The group wants to fill this gap through theoretical and empirical work that will elucidate the relationship between organisational design and actual performance.
- The **Center for Integrative Innovation Management** combines the social and engineering sciences in close collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering, based on the belief that product development requires management to drive growth and competitiveness. The group researches new methods for ensuring the success of innovative companies in emerging international markets and takes a multidisciplinary, practice-oriented approach, focusing on the entire innovation process – from idea to commercialisation and implementation.