

Centres for Excellence in Education Call for proposals 2019

Diku will award funding for new Centres for Excellence in Education in 2019. Universities and university colleges are invited to apply for 4 to 8 million Norwegian kroner annually for five years for new centres. The funding and centre status are awarded for five years, with the possibility of continuation for another five years, subject to an interim evaluation.

The application deadline is 29 April 2019, at 12:00.

1. About the SFU initiative

The Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education (SFU) is a national initiative to recognize and stimulate excellence in Norwegian higher education. The initiative was established in 2010 and is funded by the Ministry of Education and Research. There are currently eight centres. The initiative is administered by Diku.

Through the SFU initiative, leading academic communities in Norway are awarded resources to further develop their teaching and education. The initiative is a long-term effort to stimulate the development of education and innovative approaches to learning in higher education at the bachelor's and master's levels. The centres have a particular responsibility to disseminate knowledge and practices leading to enhanced quality in higher education both within and outside their host institutions.

A significant element of the initiative is to promote excellence in R&D-based¹ education and teaching. The SFU initiative is designed to further and reward the work that takes place in the interaction between students, academic staff, support services, professional bodies, the labour market, and the wider society. The initiative will contribute to strengthen the knowledge base of educational activities in the community and for higher education in general. The initiative also seeks to contribute to developing new forms of student involvement and partnership.



Centres for
Excellence in
Education

¹ 'R&D-based' here means 'based on the forefront of knowledge gained from research, academic and artistic development work and work experience' (Universities and University Colleges Act, § 1-3).

2. Goals and expected results

The overall goal of the SFU initiative is to contribute to the development of excellent quality in higher education.

The SFU initiative shall:

- stimulate universities and university colleges to establish and develop academic communities that offer excellent education
- contribute to knowledge-based analysis and development of teaching and learning, that underpins quality enhancement and innovation capable of making significant impact
- contribute to sector-wide development and dissemination of knowledge and excellent educational practices
- contribute to stronger interaction between higher education and relevant societal and professional fields

An SFU must therefore:

- offer excellent R&D-based education
- develop innovative ways of working with R&D-based education, including exploration and exploitation of digital opportunities
- encourage student engagement and ownership of learning
- contribute to the development and dissemination of knowledge and practices about the design of teaching and learning environments that are conducive to learning
- relate to international developments in higher education and in the relevant field of education

3. Organisation and duration of an SFU

Host institutions

An SFU is integrated into an institution (the 'host institution') that is responsible for its activities. The host institution is the applicant of funds and SFU status. The host institution carries the responsibilities in the contract with Diku. This includes the practical, academic and financial responsibility for establishing, running, monitoring and integrating the centre into the institution.

Consortia

A host institution may collaborate with other institutions or other types of organisations, for instance academic support units, research institutes, or enterprises/other organisations for practise training. International collaboration partners may be included in the Centre.

An SFU consortium consists of a host institution and one or more collaboration partners that organise and run the SFU in partnership. Consortium partners are formally committed partners that are essential to the results of the SFU.

Associated partners that contribute to the implementation of specific tasks or activities may also be included. Associated partners are not considered part of the consortium.

Management and organisation

The centre must have clearly defined academic leadership with relevant competence and experience, and an organisational structure with clearly articulated management responsibilities. The centre must be organised in such a way that the progress and impact can be monitored and evaluated effectively.

The centre must be an integral part of the host institution and, if relevant, its consortium partners. Key members of the centre staff must be employed by the host institution or its consortium partners.

Student participation and co-creation with students at all levels is essential.

Duration and funding

SFU status is awarded for five years, with the possibility of continuation for another five years, subject to an interim evaluation after three to four years. Resources are allocated annually to the centres after approval of an annual report and accounts.²

The host institution and consortium partners, if applicable, are expected to contribute substantial and specified co-funding to the centre. Co-funding can be in-kind staff costs or financial contributions, for example PhD students, visiting staff, infrastructure, resources for travel, etc.

4. Assessment criteria

An academic community that is awarded SFU status must distinguish itself in terms of:

- I. documented quality in existing teaching and education
- II. an innovative and feasible centre plan, including a clear plan for dissemination of knowledge and practices.

I. Documented quality in existing teaching and education

Quality in education is contextual and multifaceted. Important preconditions for innovative quality work include consideration of the global knowledge base, the learning environment, programme design, internationalisation, digitalisation, educational competence, student involvement and learning outcomes, including relationships with the labour market and the wider society. All quality aspects must be seen in developmental terms and as interrelated.

² Allocations are subject to continued funding by the Norwegian Parliament.

Proposals for status as an SFU should comment and reflect critically on:

Input factors

- What are the distinctive academic, educational and managerial competencies of the institution/consortium and how is this related to the proposed area of activity of the centre?
- How are the institutional management, the academic community, and the students actively engaged in and supportive of the educational mission of the centre?
- How does the management ensure that resources are provided, adequately deployed and monitored?
- How is the proposed centre integrated into the institution's wider efforts to develop quality in education?

Process factors

- How does R&D permeate the development of teaching and students' learning?
- How are teaching and learning methods used in order to promote students' learning?
- How is the students' learning assessed and monitored?
- How is student engagement and ownership of learning promoted? What are the methods for student feedback and following up the students' learning?

Outcome factors

- How is student achievement related to intended learning outcomes?
- How is the teaching and education (content and design) relevant for continued education and/or research training, the labour market, and the expectations of the wider society?

A central aspect is the documented strength of the current teaching and education, as compared to teaching and education offered by others within the same discipline area, both nationally and internationally.

Feedback from important stakeholders (students, alumni, labour market representatives, professional bodies, international networks etc.) documenting the quality of education should be included in the proposal. For professionally oriented programmes, both the R&D-base and the relationship with the field of practice should underpin proposals.

II. The Centre Plan

The centre plan outlines the vision of the centre, its strategy and plans. In the plan, the applicant should describe the changes the centre will bring about and how these are to be achieved. The applicant should also outline plans for the dissemination of knowledge and practices within its own institution(s) and to other academic communities.

The centre plan should include a description of how the centre is organised, both internally and in relation to the host institution. Access to resources, management structures, and relations to the wider research and education around the centre should be described. It is important that the budget for the centre corresponds with the centre plan and reflects the centre's ambitions and activities.

Proposals for SFU status should comment and critically reflect on the following three areas:

The Centre's contribution to innovation in education

Outline the proposed centre's strategies and plans for excellence in educational development and innovation.

- Why is this centre important to higher education (considering the knowledge base, labour market, societal needs, etc.)?
- What are the intended novelties and transformations of current practices?
- How does the centre explore and take advantage of digital opportunities?
- How are students active in the development and innovation processes?
- How does the centre plan reflect and relate to international developments in higher education?
- What are the key steps to be taken for the ambitions to be realised? Important milestones should be specified.
- What outcome and impact will the SFU centre award deliver that would not be achieved without support?

Evaluation and impact framework

Outline an evaluation and impact framework for the work of the centre from a student, staff, institutional and wider stakeholder perspective.

- How will the centre work to contribute to and stimulate institutional development over time?
- How will the centre measure the results in terms of added value from the SFU award?
- How will the knowledge developed and the results achieved by the centre be embedded in the institution(s) after the SFU status ends?

Dissemination of knowledge and practices

The centres have a particular responsibility for disseminating knowledge and practices to the wider education community, creating impact at the local, national and international levels.

The centre plan must therefore include a clear plan for dissemination, clearly linked to the changes in knowledge and practice the centre aims to generate. The centre proposal should comment and reflect on the following areas:

- What plans do the centre have for sharing knowledge and practices developed by the centre?
- What role will the centre have in development and dissemination of higher education quality at the host institution and partners, across academic disciplines?
- What role can the centre have in development and dissemination of higher education quality at a national level, both within and across academic disciplines?
- How can the centre, including consortium partners and associated partners, contribute to development and dissemination of higher education quality beyond the national level?

The centre plan must describe what dissemination approaches and activities will be used with different target groups, as well as how relevant academic communities and other stakeholders will be involved. It is also important to demonstrate how the academic leadership will be involved in this work.

5. The application process

Who may apply?

Host institutions may be universities, specialised universities or university colleges. Each host institution can submit a maximum of five proposals. Institutions that submit more than one proposal should not rank their submissions.

The 2019 call is open to all fields of education.

How to apply?

The proposal must be written in English and submitted through Diku's application platform ([Espresso](#)) within the deadline. The proposal must be complete when submitted.

The following items are required for a proposal for SFU status:

- 1) Completed application form in Espresso
- 2) Centre proposal, with content as outlined in section 4, *Assessment criteria* (I. Documentation of quality in existing teaching and education and II. Centre plan), maximum 12 pages.
- 3) Appendices:
 - a) A list of references.

- b) Budget for the centre for the five-year period 2020-2024, including explanations of costs, according to budget guidelines.
- c) Brief statements from the institutional leadership of the host institution and any consortium partners. The statement(s) should express the Centre's institutional foundation and significance, as well as confirm the institutions' committed co-funding if the centre is awarded SFU status.
- d) CVs of the proposed centre leader and two to five key members of the centre team. Each CV must not exceed two pages.

The centre proposal and appendices must be uploaded as a single PDF file.

Assessment of proposals

The proposals will be assessed based on the criteria above. Assessment is given on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 7 (highest), and written feedback will be provided.

The assessment process has two stages:

1. Assessment of all submitted proposals and selection of the best candidates for progression to the second round.
2. Site visits at the selected institutions. The visits are undertaken in order to provide further insights through interviews with members of the proposed Centre teams and key stakeholders such as students, staff, senior management and other partners. Additional information might be requested prior to the site visit.

An expert panel with student representation will conduct the assessment and make recommendations for awards. Diku appoints the members of the expert panel. Diku's Board, or the body the Board authorizes, will make the final decision.

The SFU status is awarded based on quality. If there are multiple applications of equally high quality, the academic range of the SFU portfolio may be given priority.

6. Contract and reporting

If awarded SFU status, the host institution will be required to enter into a contract with Diku. The contract outlines Diku's standard terms and conditions and the respective rights and obligations of the contracting parties. The contract must be signed by a representative holding the requisite authority to legally bind the host institution.

If the SFU is a consortium, the host institution must ensure that a consortium agreement is signed and in place prior to signing the SFU agreement with Diku.

The agreement shall regulate the organising and the running of the consortium, including the respective rights and obligations of the partners.

Until a binding contract has been signed, Diku reserves the right to revisit the decision regarding allocation of funds.

7. Contact information

Questions regarding the Centres for Excellence in Education can be directed to:

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