

NOVA_{University Network} ANNUAL REPORT 2008



NOVA
UNIVERSITY NETWORK

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APPENDIX WITH ADDITIONAL TABLES AND FIGURES:

www.nova-university.org/PDFer/Appendix2008.pdf

Abbreviations of NOVA member institutions

AU-DJF - University of Aarhus, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences (member from 2009)
HU-AF - University of Helsinki, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry
HU-V - University of Helsinki, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
JU-F - University of Joensuu, Faculty of Forestry
LBHI - Agricultural University of Iceland
LIFE - University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Life Sciences
NVH - Norwegian School of Veterinary Sciences
SLU - Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
UMB - Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Text (where nothing else stated) and layout: Ulf Jonsell

Cover photo: Students participating in NOVA PhD course in Plant Pathology. David B. Collinge

WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

The year of 2008 was characterized by the expansion of the NOVA family. NOVA was happy to welcome the Faculty of Forest Sciences, University of Joensuu, Finland as NOVA's eight member. During the year the process to include the ninth member - Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, Aarhus University - from 2009 was carried out. The expansion of the network is a verification of the importance of the founding ideas behind NOVA.

The work of the course and project organizers in the subject networks is the basis of NOVA's activities. The combined work conducted in the networks resulted 2008 in increased numbers of both students participating in PhD courses and students on MSc level in mobility. As previous years, NOVA's courses are according to evaluations very well received by both students and teachers involved.

Many NOVA courses include a block of distance learning complementing the traditional campus course. It was therefore an important theme that was treated at the annual seminar in Helsinki, namely Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The seminar resulted in initiating a survey of the available ICT resources within the NOVA members and a plan in how they best can be utilized. The results will be presented during 2009. On the seminar the participants were also able to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Helsinki.

A foundation for an intensified cooperation with the Baltic universities in the BOVA network was laid 2008 by an agreement of cooperation that was signed when the two boards met in Jelgava, Latvia in October. Furthermore, NOVA and BOVA are now part of the same Nordplus network, which also guarantees a deepened cooperation.

The new organisational structure of NOVA launched in 2007 was with the relocation of the secretariat in May 2008 to SLU, Uppsala fully implemented. The secretariat will from now on follow the chair member, which rotates every second year.

The challenges of climate change, financial crisis and globalization makes it necessary to focus to a much greater extent on excellence in research, quality in education and life-long learning in our individual countries. For SLU the Nordic cooperation in NOVA is one important part of the ongoing efforts to increase internationalisation at our university and at the same time increasing mobility and broaden the job markets for our students and teachers.

Ultuna, April 2009.

Lisa Sennerby Forsse

Chair NOVA Board
Vice-chancellor SLU

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

1. ACTIVITIES 2008

1.1 PhD Education

A major part of the NOVA common funding was, just as previous years, used to fund intensive PhD courses. NOVA PhD courses are organized in subject network with one of the member institutions as host, which also is the receiver of the NOVA funding. During 2008 LIFE hosted five courses, HU-AF and SLU four courses each (Table 1). In total 17 PhD courses were funded by NOVA and attracted a total number of 391 students. NOVA's strategic goal for 2010 is to at least have 400 students participating in the PhD courses; a number that almost was reached 2008. 264 of the students (68%) came from NOVA members. On average 12% of the total number of PhD students on the member institutions participated in a NOVA course during 2008.

Both the total number of students and the number of NOVA students are significantly higher than average for the previous five year period, 2003-2007 (Table 2). Students from other Nordic universities constituted the second largest group followed by students from the Baltic countries. The travel support to Baltic PhD Students from NordForsk ceased during the year, but still 46 Baltic students (12 % of total) participated in a NOVA PhD course, which is

equivalent to the average 2003-2007. Only 5 students came from the rest of Europe and no one from outside Europe. The courses have become attractive international fora for young researchers, though the input of students from the rest of Europe could possibly increase by a wider spread marketing of the courses.

The total course funding for PhD courses 2008 is estimated to be 350 000¹ Euro, which equals 1325 Euro per NOVA student with a range from 810 to 2600 Euro per student for the individual courses. The course funding covers costs for running the course (e.g. costs for invited teachers, material, etc.) as well as board and lodging for the NOVA students.

The fulfilment of the strategic goal to stimulate the development of new courses and networks, as well as maintaining already established networks and course subject fields, is reflected in the result from the calls for applications. Two calls for applications for PhD course funding 2009 were made during 2008. In total 21 courses were granted an estimated total funding of 450 000 Euro and four new networks running PhD courses were created.

In addition to funding for running courses, NOVA has during 2008 funded two projects for planning of PhD courses in subject fields new to NOVA. Fol-

¹ This and subsequent figures in the paragraph are based on the 13 fully reported courses 2008-03-26.

Table 1. NOVA PhD courses 2008.

Network	Course Title	Host Member
Ethology	Abnormal animal behaviour	HU-V
Veterinary Parasitology	Annual graduate courses in veterinary parasitology	HU-V
Informatics (IT) in Agriculture	Bootstrap methods and their application	LIFE
Veterinary Clinical Research and Scientific Method	Clinical-and biomedical research and scientific methods. Experimental design in clinical studies.	LIFE
Plant cultures/Crop production	Crop production in a changing climate	HU-AF
Multifunctional Forestry	Ecology silviculture and economics of multi-functional forestry in northern Europe	LIFE
Forest Planning and Inventory	Markov decision processes: Methods and Applications	SLU
Bovine Mastitis	Mastitis research	HU-AF
Plant Microscopy	Microscopy in plant biology related research	SLU
Veterinary Epidemiology	NOVA Postgraduate course in Veterinary Epidemiology Part 2 (2008)	NVH
Agro-Biotechnology	Novel technologies for management of the beneficial and harmful microbes in the root system	SLU
Animal Breeding	Quantitative genetics with Integration of molecular genetics for animal breeding	HU-AF
Agro Ecology	Research methodologies in organic food and farming research	LIFE
SoilSoc	Soil degradation erosion and restoration	LBHI
Plant Pathology	Understanding plant-pathogen interactions in the post genomics era	HU-AF
Veterinary Pathology	Veterinary pathology: inflammation	LIFE
Wood Technology	Wood engineering products and their utilisation; Wood products marketing	SLU

Table 2. Number of PhD courses and number of students 2003-2008.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of PhD courses	17	13	16	14	14	17
Number of NOVA PhD students registered on a NOVA PhD course	270	186	162	200	197	264
Percentage registered NOVA PhD students to total number of PhD students on the NOVA member institutions	12.7	9.3	7.9	9.8	9.8	11.6

lowing the goals of NOVA's strategy 2007-2010, 25 courses should be offered 2010. The increase in course offers 2009 is possible thanks to a higher total funding compared to previous year. In order to reach 25 courses, additional funding or a reduction of the individual course grants will be necessary.

1.1.1 PhD Course Evaluations

A key strategic target for NOVA is to stimulate and facilitate the organisation of *quality* PhD courses. All NOVA PhD courses are evaluated using a standard evaluation form. From the courses reported 2008 the scores and the comments witness on a high course standard and a high appreciation by the students. On the general questions on course quality and if recommending the course, the courses got in general a score of 4.5 and 4.7, respectively, on a 1-5 graded scale, where 5 is most positive. The teacher's pedagogical skills were on average graded 4.0, with a higher scatter among the answers from the individual students than on the questions regarding the general course quality.

The typical comments from the students on the courses are that courses have been of high quality and that it has been very fruitful for them to take the courses. The workload has often been considered high and many students are asking for more time to network and socialize with their fellow students and teachers. The use of invited non-NOVA teachers are in general well received and the combination between internal and external teachers seems to be an appealing concept.

1.2 MSc Education

1.2.1 Mobility and Intensive Courses

The student mobility on Master level in NOVA is intimately coupled to the Nordplus network. The framework programme Nordplus, run by the Nordic Council of Ministers, finances student and teacher mobility, while NOVA funds courses and network projects. An important part of NOVA's activities on the Master level are the NOVA windows – common periods when intensive courses can be run. During 2008 the work with implementing the windows at the member institutions continued.

NOVA Intensive Master Courses (NIMC) are together with the NOVA windows an initiative in order to facilitate student mobility and pool economical and intellectual resources in the specific subject field. Eight courses were funded for 2008 (Table 3). The numerical goal for 2010 is 20 NIMC per year. A high number of NIMC is important for the full implementation and recognition of the NOVA windows from all parts of the organizations of the member institutions.

The report on student numbers for mobility on the Master level follow the academic year and, thus, the number for year 2007/08 is here reported together with a half year report for 2008/09 based on the numbers from fall semester 2008 (Table 4). The standard mobility (> 4 weeks) has been fairly stable over the last 5 years, while express mobility

Table 3. NOVA intensive MSc courses (NIMC) 2008.

Network	Course Title	ECTS	Host	Remark
BeeNOVA	Bee genomics, genetics and breeding	3	HU-V	
BeeNOVA	Bee Products and Economics	5	HU-AF	postponed to 2009
Landscape Architecture	Shape - workshop for advanced landscape designers	5	SLU	postponed to 2010
Plant Pathology	Plant Pathology in a Changing World	5	SLU	
SoilSoc	Bioinformatics for environmental scientists	3	HU-AF	
Pig Production	Sustainable pig production	5	SLU	
NOVA vet	Veterinary Ophthalmology	3	NVH	
Weed Science	Herbicide use, selectivity and ecotoxicology	3	LIFE	cancelled

Educational Consolidation about the Unconsolidated Ground

The SoilSoc network, the name abbreviated from "Soils and Society", is one of the thematic NOVA networks. Established in 2006, SoilSoc collaboration now brings together teachers and students from all five Nordic countries. Regardless of its inherently interdisciplinary nature, the subject field soil science represents a small discipline in most NOVA universities and faculties, making the benefit from joining forces on the Nordic level evident. The specific goal of the SoilSoc network is to increase, improve and internationalise the NOVA study curriculum related to soil: soil chemistry, biology, physics and pedology. Moreover, by linking soil-related questions to societal issues, we wish to increase the general soil awareness and attract more students into these profound but too often overlooked disciplines.



Field studies on a steep slope on SoilSoc's PhD course in Iceland 2008.

Photo: Kristina Lindström

The most visible form of the SoilSoc collaboration are the intensive PhD and MSc courses, the first of which took place in the summer 2008. The PhD course *Soil degradation, erosion and restoration* gathered 22 students with 13 nationalities to Iceland in mid-June. During the intensive 11 days the local experts, network members and invited teachers not only lectured about the misuse and reclamation of these vulnerable volcanic soils, but also showed an impressive amount of real cases on the extensive field trips. The one-week MSc course *Bioinformatics for environmental scientist* hosted in Helsinki in August combined lectures and exercises, teaching 23 students how numerical biological data can be analysed to serve soil research. Especially the professional course organisation and the motivating study atmosphere were praised in the feedback.

The SoilSoc courses are problem-based and interdisciplinary, attracting graduate (both PhD and MSc) students with widely varying backgrounds. Visiting students from non-NOVA universities and collaborative projects with developing countries further increased the diversity on the courses, challenging the participating students to develop communication skills with colleagues from different scientific and cultural environments.

Anu Mikkonen, SoilSoc Secretary

(< 4 weeks) has increased, which is encouraging for the NOVA NIMC initiative. During 2008 seven NIMC courses have been granted 5000 Euro each, which with a postponed course gives eight NIMC offers 2009.

Course recognition between the members is a strategically important for NOVA and is functioning well. The obstacles the arrangers of NOVA courses and programme structures on MSc level face stem from local admissions procedures and other differing regulations and routines. The local NOVA teams have an important function to overbuild the difficulties the course arrangers encounter.

1.2.2 NOVA/BOVA Pig Production Course

A separate application to Nordplus regarding a NOVA/BOVA intensive course in Sustainable Pig Production was submitted in April 2008 and was later

awarded 13 000 Euro. The course, which also had NOVA support, was run during the autumn semester 2008 with one intensive week at SLU, Alnarp and one intensive week at the Estonian University of Life Sciences. The course is planned to be given in a similar way fall semester 2009.

1.2.3 Erasmus Mundus Planning Support

In order to support the Nordic region in the European context, NOVA had 2008 two calls for Erasmus Mundus (EM) planning grants. Three networks, with at least two NOVA members, aiming for EM status were granted 10 000 each (Table 5). The grants are to be used for allocation of time for application writing and network support. Funding is only allocated the Nordic partners in the EM networks. EM applications are to be submitted during spring 2009.

Table 4. Number of Master students per academic year 2003/04-2007/08 and fall semester 2008.

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	Fall 08
Number of Master students in standard Nordplus mobility		68	37	52	53	12
Number of Master students in express Nordplus mobility		17	35	50	73	48
Total	55	85	72	102	126	63
Percentage MSc students participating in Nordplus mobility	1.5	2.3	2.0	2.8	3.3	-

1.2.4 Funding of Other Network Projects

The NOVA network Plant Pathology launched in fall 2008 the MSc programme NorPath, with the first admissions to LIFE and UMB. The programme is a result of intensive network collaboration with financial support in the first phase from NOVA and in the second phase from the Nordic Council of Ministers via their funding scheme to promote excellent Nordic Master programmes.

The network in Aquaculture continued its educational collaboration on the Nordic level and plans and actions in developing common programmes progress. For the third year in a row, the popular introductory course in aquaculture was arranged. In 2008 it was held in Umeå, Sweden and attracted 33 students. The network in Biosystems Engineering, NORBE, have been given extended NOVA network support in order to develop a joint programme structure, where the new NOVA member from 2009, AU-DJF, is an important player.

The network Urban Forestry and Urban Greening (UFUG) decided to terminate its common MSc programme due to too few applicants. UFUG continues as a network and will run a PhD course 2009. The network SoilSoc has been funded for network support for 2009 (11 000 Euro). SoilSoc is actively promoting and developing its MSc opportunities in a NOVA context and is running NOVA courses on MSc and PhD level. BeeNOVA is active in offering courses within NOVA and has also been granted for network support and for developing distance learning (10 000 Euro in total). Course planning grants on MSc level have been allocated for a course in

Nordic landscapes (5 000 Euro) and for a course in the landscape architecture of Japan (5 000 Euro).

A summary of the situation on the MSc level is that NIMC are getting more popular by both teachers and students, but that national legislations and different routines and regulations at the member institutes, together with reluctance to long term mobility within the Nordic countries among the domestic students, are drags for the common MSc programme structures. NOVA should work for sharing experiences from launched programmes and utilize the close cooperation between the NOVA secretariat and the local coordinators to overbuild the administrative obstacles.

1.3 Other Activities

A workshop on quality assessment in connection to the NorPath programme was held in Copenhagen in May with twelve participants. The workshop was the second phase in a project on benchmarking of national procedures for quality assessment in Higher Education. Administrators from partner's central administration and staff from the area of Plant Pathology were participating.

The annual NOVA seminar was 2008 held in Helsinki on the theme of information and communication technology (ICT). It attracted 75 participants and the programme included presentations, workshops and panel discussions. Good examples from implementing ICT were presented. The board later commissioned to NOVA Peditnet to perform a survey on ICT resources and suggestions on a NOVA strategy on ICT.

The NOVA board met during a two day meeting in October the BOVA board in Jelgava, Latvia. The first day was devoted to presentations of the Latvia University of Agriculture and its research facilities. On the second day a joint meeting between the two boards was held and an agreement on the future

Table 5. Erasmus Mundus II planning grants awarded 2008.

Programme Title	NOVA Partners
MSc in European Forestry	<u>JU-F</u> , SLU
Food for Life	<u>LIFE</u> , SLU, HU-AF
European Master in Sustainable Aquaculture	<u>UMB</u> , SLU

Underlined member abbreviation indicates the lead member.



Photo 1. NOVA and BOVA boards met in Jelgava, Latvia in October 2008. Photo: Ruta Zaleckite

cooperation between the two organisations was signed (Photo 1).

1.4 NOVA Student Board

NOVA Student Board (NSB) is a freestanding organisation with support from NOVA, which gives the students' voice into the NOVA network. 2008 has been characterized by a good cooperation, with many views and ideas from NSB.

NSB is represented in the NOVA Board, in NOVA KUF, in the NOVA Executive Committee, and in the Local NOVA Teams. NSB has held three executive meetings during 2008. NSB has during these meetings welcomed two new student representatives from Joensuu; changed their name from Forum to Board; suggested pilot projects with courses at Bachelor level to the NOVA Board and KUF; made a revision of their folder; made a draft for a new NOVA T-shirt; assigned a Facebook person to further advertise NOVA among students; created a PowerPoint presentation for new students.

1.5 NOVA Organisational Bodies

The NOVA secretariat was relocated to SLU, Ultuna in May 2008. The slimmer organisation has demanded a greater role for the local NOVA teams, but also restricted the number of tasks the Secretariat can perform. During fall 2008 an internal project in order to diminish the administrative steps and a more effective web has started and is planned to be finished during summer 2009.

The Committee for Education and Research (KUF) has during 2008 held four meetings, of which two were video meetings. The Board has held three meetings during 2008. Minutes from KUF and board meetings are available on NOVA's web site.

2. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS 2008

The NOVA profit and loss report for 2008 (Table 6) is highly influenced by the non-common currency used within the member countries. The common "NOVA currency" is Euro, but the accounting at SLU is performed in SEK. Thus, NOVA's finances are affected by changes in SEK to EUR exchange rate. During 2008 the Swedish krona lost about 15 % to the Euro, which has led to a substantial currency loss for NOVA. The currency loss is treated as a cost 2008 and can mainly be attributed to a revaluation of allocated course and project grants.

The main external fund giver has been the Nordic Council of Ministers via the Nordplus framework programme for mobility and other projects. Support to NOVA PhD courses in forestry related subjects, with in total 12 000 euro, has been given by SNS - Nordic Forest Research Cooperation Committee – and the cooperation between SNS and NOVA will, as stated in an agreement signed in December 2008, continue 2009.

The result is due to the high currency loss negative, but not as negative as budgeted. The main reasons to this are; higher amount regained grants than budgeted (i.e. allocated grants that have not been used), less grants allocated on MSc level than expected, lower cost for secretariat, no university VAT was needed to be paid, and a much higher internal interest than budgeted.

The balance statement 2008 (Table 7) shows that the major liabilities consist of allocated funding. The equity is as due to the negative result slightly diminished.

Table 6. Profit-and-loss report 2008, budget 2008 and 2009 (Euro).

	2008			2009
	Budget	2008-12-31	%budget	Budget
Member fees				
LIFE	147 659	147 659	100%	145 156
UMB	135 203	135 203	100%	131 358
NVH	31 943	31 943	100%	31 377
LBHI	9 584	9 584	100%	10 668
HU-AF	79 591	79 591	100%	74 360
HU-V	22 135	22 135	100%	19 446
SLU	224 492	224 492	100%	214 393
JU-F	14 393	14 393	100%	13 944
AU-DJF				24 299
Total Member fees	665 000	665 000	100%	665 000
University V.A.T.	-10 000	0	0%	0
External funding	100 000	70 787	71%	42 000
Total Fees & Ext. funding	755 000	735 787	97%	707 000
Activities				
PhD courses	-400 000	-433 992	108%	-450 000
MSc projects	-200 000	-160 753	80%	-200 000
External projects	-100 000	-70 787	71%	-42 000
NSB	-15 000	-15 362	102%	-21 000
Annual seminar	-20 000	-18 316	92%	-20 000
Pedictnet				-10 000
Total Activities	-735 000	-699 210	95%	-743 000
Regained project grants (funding not used)	40 000	55 732	139%	40 000
Secretariat				
Salaries	-54 000	-66 161	123%	-69 400
Project administration (salary + travel)	-36 000	-14 225	40%	0
Travels	-7 500	-5 488	73%	-7 500
Other	-15 000	-9 468	63%	-15 000
Total Secretariat	-112 500	-95 342	85%	-91 900
Total Activ., Secr., Reg. Grants	-807 500	-738 820	92%	-794 900
Result before interest and currency	-52 500	-3 033	13%	-87 900
Internal interest	5 000	21 530	431%	10 000
Currency loss		-48 505		
Result	-47 500	-30 008	71%	-77 900

Table 7. Balance statement 2008 (Euro).

Assets		2008-01-01	2008-12-31
Cash		613 971	666 385
External		3 775	
Internal			82 126
Computers		11 060	9 901
- depreciation		-9 348	-9 244
Other			
Total Assets		619 458	749 167
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity	2008-01-01	-175 418	
	Result 2008	-30 008	
	2008-12-31		-145 410
Allocated funding	Internal	-357 156	-544 249
	External	-32 979	-14 273
Notes payable		-53 091	-44 724
Unpaid salary		-573	-513
Currency loss ¹		-241	
Total Liabilities & Equity		-619 458	-749 167

¹ Currency loss is for 2008 treated as a cost affecting the result.

CONFIRMATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT BY THE BOARD

Lisa Sennerby Forsse
Chair NOVA
Vice-chancellor, SLU

Ágúst Sigurðsson
Rector, LBHI

Per Holten-Andersen
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Jukka Kola
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Seppo Kellomäki,
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Anders Johansson
Chair NSB 2008



The Nordic Forestry, Veterinary, and Agricultural University Network

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