

NOVA University Network

Strategy

2004 – 2006

NOVA Board decision 2004-02-27

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Background

Mission

The NOVA University Network has been devised to initiate, administer and promote active cooperation between the Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural Universities in education, teaching and research.

Historical background and main concerns

For cultural, geographic and historical reasons, the Nordic countries decided to launch a platform of cooperation between the Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural universities (NOVA). NOVA was established in 1995, and has been financed on the basis of funds provided by the various university members.

The institutions behind NOVA sought to create a joint platform in order to achieve the following:

- to develop means of and tools for cooperation in scientific areas where the resources of each individual university member are too limited;
- to enhance the quality and broaden the scope of research, research education, teaching and the learning experience of the students;
- to deal more effectively with the ongoing expansion of the field of scientific knowledge and the need for further specialization;
- to promote greater resource-efficiency and to reduce teaching costs;
- to increase the international competitiveness of member institutions in their spheres of competence;
- to become a more proficient partner for dialogue with relevant sectors, including industry.

Background and challenges

The member universities are commissioned by their respective states to build expertise and provide knowledge to society in the fields of agriculture, animal science, forestry, veterinary medicine, aquaculture and related biosciences.

The NOVA member universities thus deal with socially vital sectors and issues, including sustainable use of natural resources, food production from natural resources, job creation in agribusiness and related fields, the safeguarding of the health and welfare of

animals and people, and enhancement of the capacity for use of land, water, plants and animals according to sustainable principles.

NOVA aims to create a platform for efficient and innovative cooperation in the fields of scientific education, teaching and research. A wide array of activities and projects has been carried out since the network was established in 1995. On average, more than 90% of the financial resources for the NOVA network have been provided from the member universities own funds.

Challenges in relation to bio-production on farmed land, in the forest, in the sea, and in veterinary medicine in the Nordic countries are on the rise. Domestic production is being met with strong competition from low-cost producers. Higher expectations from consumers of food, plant and animal products as well as other services entail major challenges for producers and experts.

In recent years, all NOVA universities have been subject to financial cutbacks and declining student recruitment to certain programmes. At the same time, each institution must cope with the growing specialization of scientific fields and the added difficulty of maintaining specialists at a high international level in all areas of research and teaching.

The activities within the network have been hampered by various obstacles. NOVA is subject to a number of constraints pertaining to collaboration within and outside its sphere of responsibility. Thus far, the network has not been afforded the full acceptance, status and recognition that it needs within the NOVA member universities.

The Board's initiative

In light of the situation outlined above, the NOVA University Board has embarked on an initiative to review the Network's status and achievements, assess how resources are used, and formulate new guiding principles for the 2004-2006 period.

The intention of the Board is to clarify the mission, focus, strategies and objectives as well as the limits

and priorities for the NOVA University Network (for the remainder referred to as NOVA UN or NOVA). The Board will determine a course of action to guide the reform processes and lay down a strategy for the next three years.

In order to strengthen the focus on specific areas, the Board has agreed on the following:

1. Teaching

- The NOVA UN shall focus on two areas of education: advanced level/MSc and PhD teaching.
- Priority shall be given to mutual recognition of BSc level degrees as the starting point for MSc level studies. As a rule, education at bachelor level will be the responsibility of the member institutions.

2. Research networks

- New research networks shall in principle be accepted only as a direct continuation of successful MSc/PhD networks, or if they include such activities. NOVA UN shall not take responsibility for funding research projects.

3. Teaching networks

- Teaching networks shall only be supported within priority areas. Requests for new networks shall be approved by the permanent Advisory Committee (KUF). Pedagogical cooperation shall be continued.

Strategy 2004 – 2006

Vision

The NOVA member universities shall use the NOVA University Network as one of their primary organizations for international cooperation in scientific education and joint actions. They shall have confidence in the network, and be cognizant of the benefits that NOVA membership offers. Internationally, NOVA will seek to achieve recognition – as a model, for the scientific competence and quality of its work, and for the effective and innovative ways in which the Network has established successful cooperation. This vision is to be fully realized by 2010.

Tasks 2004-2006

The NOVA University Network shall:

- facilitate cooperation and sharing of competence in education between the Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural universities;
- facilitate the delivery of higher quality in teaching to all member institutions at equal or lower costs than each member institution can deliver on its own;
- serve as a forum for discussion of teaching and education matters among its members;
- co-ordinate, on behalf of the NOVA institutions, actions relating to common research and education issues vis-à-vis the Nordic Council of Ministers, NMR, and other organizations of special Nordic interest, including industry;
- work to overcome internal and external constraints that may counteract the collaboration in education, teaching and research.

Main areas for development and change

- 1 Focus on the priority areas of advanced level/ MSc education and PhD courses
- 2 Overcoming constraints to collaboration
- 3 External relations and finance
- 4 The identity, profile, image and organization of NOVA UN

Strategic objectives

1. Focus on priority areas

Strategic objectives:

- **Initiate mutual course recognition and facilitate student mobility at MSc level. (Status report to be submitted by the end of 2004.)**
- **Develop and carry out an experiment using e-based learning, funded from outside, in at least one model area. (To be established at the end of 2004 and evaluated at the end of 2005).**
- **Evaluate the form of NOVA PhD courses to ensure that these correspond to the needs and desires of the NOVA member universities. (To be completed during 2004).**
- **Evaluate the results of the NOVA-BOVA cooperation. (To be presented to the Board before July 2005.)**

2. Overcoming constraints to collaboration

Strategy:

The Bologna declaration shall be applied as the basic platform for educational cooperation in order to overcome constraints in the Nordic collaboration.

Strategic objective:

- **Implement the principles outlined in the Bologna declaration in all the relevant NOVA UN activities and in the appropriate areas within the NOVA member universities. (Status report by the end of 2005.)**

3. External relations and finance

Strategy:

The NOVA UN must maintain good relations with its non-member donors if it is to promote and develop external ties, and obtain a sufficient amount of external funding. The Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) represents the most important non-member body for efforts during the 2004-2006 period.

Strategic objectives:

- **Strengthen the role of the NOVA UN as the preferred and supported partner of the Nordic Council of Ministers within NOVA member universities' spheres of responsibility in the Nordic countries. (Confirmed through visibility in NMR documents and policies by the end of 2004.)**
- **Increase external funding. (Plan for financial prospects shall be presented to the Board in June 2004).**

4. The identity, profile, image and organization of the NOVA UN

4.1. Identity, profile and image

Strategic objective:

- **Ensure that a majority of institution faculty members acknowledge NOVA as their network for scientific education within the Nordic and Baltic regions, and are willing to make use of their membership when this is appropriate. (To be established by the end of 2005.)**

4.2. Organization

Strategic objective:

- **Establish an organizational structure and functions that correspond to the mission and efforts of the NOVA UN during the new strategic period, that facilitate increased efficiency and that define the various areas of responsibility. (To be completed by the end of 2004.)**

The role and responsibilities of the NOVA Board

The NOVA University Network is governed by a Board consisting of the rectors (KVL, SLU, NLH, NVH, LBH) and deans (HU-AF, HU-VET) and one student representative from the member institutions.

Role and responsibilities

The NOVA Board is commissioned by the member institutions to:

- Define the mission of the NOVA UN.
- State the vision, the long-term objectives and the strategy for the NOVA UN.
- Provide a solid economic platform for the organization.
- Review and evaluate the organization and performance of the NOVA UN.
- Supervise and evaluate the NOVA-BOVA co-operation.
- Appoint and dismiss the Rector of the NOVA UN.

The NOVA Board shall accordingly make decisions about:

- Objectives, strategy and organization of the NOVA UN.
- Budget and financial arrangements.
- Principles, policies and priorities for the day-to-day activities of the NOVA UN.
- Proposals and recommendations from the permanent committees or from the Rector.
- Annual reports and annual accounts produced by the Rector.

A chair and a vice-chair of the Board are elected from among the Board members (rectors or deans). The chair and vice-chair constitute the Executive Committee with the NOVA Rector serving as the secretary. The positions are normally held for a 3-year term, rotating among the member institutions.

The role and responsibilities of the NOVA UN Advisory Committee (KUF)

The NOVA UN Board will authorize the establishment of a permanent Advisory Committee (Committee for Education and Research, abbreviated KUF).

Tasks

- All KUF members, except the student members, are responsible for ensuring that the NOVA UN is given a firm policy foundation at the home universities, and that the NOVA UN becomes an accepted, wellknown and acknowledged partner for the faculty members.
- The KUF shall supervise the progress and evaluate the results of NOVA-sponsored projects.
- In cooperation with the NOVA Rector, the KUF shall draft important principles and regulations to be submitted to the Board.
- The KUF shall direct and support the budget planning and other operational efforts, and shall serve as an advisory group to the NOVA Rector.
- The KUF shall establish a reliable procedure for prioritizing NOVA UN projects.
- The KUF shall create a consistent and accepted policy for regular professional evaluation of all NOVA UN projects.

Organization

- The KUF shall consist of one representative from each member university/faculty, and two student representatives appointed by the NSF. The NSF can appoint a local student to act as an extra member when a meeting is held at or close to a member university location.
- The chair is appointed by the Board for a period of two (2) years, and is permanently co-opted to the NOVA UN Board.
- The university-appointed KUF member is the head of the local NOVA group.
- The NOVA Rector serves as the secretary of the KUF.

Strategic objectives 2004-2006 regarding the KUF

- **Achieve acknowledgment by faculty members of NOVA as their network for scientific education within the Nordic and Baltic regions, and ensure their willingness to make use of NOVA membership when this is appropriate.**
- **Establish an organizational structure and functions that correspond to the mission and efforts of NOVA UN during the new strategic period, that facilitate increased efficiency and that define the different areas of responsibility.**

Plan for implementing the new role of KUF

- 12 February** The telephone conference meeting was the last meeting in the old order.
- March:** Personal discussions at each member university with the KUF member and the proposed members of the Team NOVA.
- 31 March** The local board member appoints the local KUF member and the Executive Committee appoints the chair of KUF no later than 31 March.
- 2-4 June** NOVA seminar.
- 15 June** New working order of KUF will come into force 15 June 2004, and will last until 31 December 2005.
- 16 June** The first KUF meeting according to the new working order.
- October** Evaluation conducted at the final board meeting in 2004 (mid-term evaluation).

The NOVA Rector

Position and mandate

The Rector of NOVA is appointed to serve as the executive head of the NOVA University Network for a term of six years. It is a full time position, and the NOVA Rector shall in this capacity remain impartial in relation to the individual member institutions.

Responsibilities and tasks

The Rector reports to the Board on the NOVA UN organization, operation and financial situation. Responsibilities in this context include:

- Executing decisions taken by the Board and the KUF.
- Initiating actions needed in order to realize the NOVA strategy and achieve the stipulated objectives.
- Preparing for the Board and KUF meetings and serving as secretary of both fora.
- Preparing and drafting the budget.
- Preparing and presenting reports and evaluations requested by the Board or the KUF.
- Representing NOVA in relation to the Nordic Council of Ministers and the NOVA-BOVA cooperation.

The Rector is the head of the NOVA secretariat and supervises the NOVA projects.

The Rector represents the NOVA UN externally and in operational matters relating to the NOVA universities.

The Rector supervises the marketing and fund-raising activities of NOVA.

The Local NOVA Team

Background

The NOVA UN has been established to facilitate cooperation between the NOVA universities. It is imperative that there be commitment to the NOVA UN concept and strong support for its efforts within each university if the NOVA UN is to successfully fulfil its obligations.

Strategic objective

- **The majority of the faculty members shall acknowledge NOVA as their network for scientific education within the Nordic and Baltic regions, and shall be willing to make use of their membership when this is appropriate.**

Proposal

Each member university/faculty shall have a smoothly functioning local organization. It is proposed to introduce a Local NOVA Team, led by the local KUF member, with responsibility for the following:

- Creating a firm internal policy foundation for the NOVA UN and making it well known within the university/faculty.
- Acting as the local support organization for all NOVA Networks and network members at the home university.
- Acting as the primary contact between the home university and NOVA staff in all relevant operational matters.

Other tasks include:

- Carrying out local NOVA activities and administration processes.
- Providing information about the NOVA UN, and representing the organization and its interests at home.
- Providing information, service and support to local network members and project leaders in order to strengthen their NOVA role and enhance their NOVA participation and affiliation.

Organization

As a minimum, the Local NOVA Team shall consist of the KUF member as responsible leader, one main local coordinator and a student representative. The main local coordinator shall be responsible for contacts between member institutions and the NOVA secretariat. Beyond this, it will be up to each member university to further establish the local organization.

Plan for implementation of Local NOVA Teams

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| 27 February | Decision to establish Local NOVA Teams according to proposition above. |
| March | Personal discussions at each member university with the KUF member and the proposed members of the Local NOVA Team. |
| 31 March | The local board member appoints the local KUF member and the Executive Committee appoints the chair of the KUF no later than 31 March. |
| 2-4 June | NOVA seminar. |
| 15 June | New working order of KUF will come into force 15 June 2004, and will last until 31 December 2005. |
| October | Evaluation conducted at the final board meeting in 2004 (mid-term evaluation). |

NOVA Projects and Project Management

Background

The NOVA UN Board has pointed out the need to enhance efficiency in relation to NOVA projects and project management. There are two types of NOVA projects:

- **NOVA Network projects:** run by NOVA networks, with rotating leadership, owned by the involved member universities, and conducted with NOVA financial support.
- **Administrative NOVA projects:** run by NOVA staff, under the auspices of the NOVA Rector.

Strategic objective

- **Establish an organizational structure and functions that correspond to the mission and efforts of the NOVA UN during the new strategic period, that facilitate increased efficiency and that define the different areas of responsibility. (To be completed by the end of 2004).**

Requirements for qualification as a NOVA project:

A proposal is only qualified for acceptance as a NOVA project if the following requirements have been met:

- it defines clear and measurable objectives;
- it contains an activity plan with milestones;
- it specifies a proposed time-frame and assigns individual responsibility for each milestone;
- it specifies a budget for the activity plan;
- it stipulates report periods in accordance with KUF requirements.

The NOVA Rector proposes that the following elements shall be used as guidelines:

1. Each NOVA network project shall:
 - be formally localized to a specified NOVA member department;
 - be run by a network of at least two and preferably three or more NOVA member representatives from the relevant subject area, with a rotating leadership if possible.
 - have a clear, agreed-upon mandate, explicitly supported in each relevant member university/faculty.
2. Each member university is responsible for training and ensuring the competence of its network members. The NOVA Rector and staff will assist in the training and supervision of these networks.
3. The NOVA UN shall reconsider the principles for financial support for NOVA projects.

In the view of the NOVA UN Executive Committee, it is important that NOVA provide project leaders or responsible persons with substantial financial support in order to enable them to set aside time in their institutional environment. It has been proposed that NOVA reconsider its principles for financing projects, and that focus be placed on redirecting funds from project operations to project planning and implementation.

Model areas 2004

As a result of discussions between the NOVA Rector and the Executive Committee, eight scientific areas were designated as NOVA model areas for 2004.

The NOVA Rector and staff recommend the following list of priority areas:

- Agroecology
- Aquaculture

- Biosystems engineering
- Crop pathology
- Food science
- Horticulture and DSH (Dansk-Svensk Hortonomutbildning)
- Urban greening/Urban Forestry
- Veterinary medicine, final year differentiation and intensive courses.

Evaluation and performance indicators for NOVA projects

Strategic objective

- **Create a consistent and accepted policy for a regular professional evaluation of all the NOVA UN projects. (To be developed and decided by the end of 2004).**

Spheres of responsibility

- The NOVA Rector is responsible for preparatory activities in connection with the development of a consistent policy for the regular evaluation of NOVA and NOVA-related projects.
- The Board will formally adopt the policy and the KUF will implement the process in each member university.
- The KUF is responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the policy through its Local NOVA Teams.
- The NOVA Rector will be commissioned to develop any necessary methods and instruments, and to carry out and/or supervise the actual processes in cooperation with the KUF.

Outline of a project plan

- Establish an administrative NOVA project for this purpose and commission the NOVA Rector to submit a project plan for the KUF to decide upon.
- Define the key quality parameters in measurable form for the different types of projects: PhD courses, MSc development projects and administrative projects (the NOVA staff).
- Obtain approval for the key quality parameters (the KUF).
- Commission the NOVA Rector to develop methods and processes for implementation of a reliable procedure and carry out a quality evaluation of 10 projects from different areas of the 2003-2004 projects.
- Submit the results to the KUF for analysis and evaluation. Proposals for changes will be presented to the Board before the end of 2004.

Statistics

Need for statistics

In the light of various requests and requirements in connection with reports based on quantitative data, it will be necessary to define which types of statistical data are important and to determine the extent to which such data are essential for recipients within and outside the NOVA system. This will require an analysis of the situation and a dialogue with the institutions and individuals who have submitted the enquiries.

Need for better quality

Given the frequent requests from board members and others for various forms of statistical data, and

in keeping with the intent to ensure that the NOVA UN can provide the highest quality services, the NOVA Rector recognizes the need to establish a professional procedure in relation to statistical material. Quality here means the ability to compile and present data tailored to the needs of the end-users and produced in as efficient a manner as possible.

Proposal

The KUF shall commission the NOVA Rector to conduct the necessary preparatory efforts in relation to the designation of a satisfactory procedure, and present the results to the KUF in form of a draft submitted for decision by 1 September 2004.