

NOVA UNIVERSITY NETWORK

STRATEGY

2007–2010



The NOVA vision

“NOVA will be an outstanding Nordic university network that is recognised for elevating standards and benefiting students and scientists of all member institutions. Staff and students shall feel integrated in the Nordic life science environment, and NOVA will be acknowledged internationally for its quality and competence”

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Background

The NOVA University Network was established in 1995, and is a platform for cooperation within teaching and research between Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural universities. The seven NOVA members are: the University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Life sciences (LIFE), University of Helsinki, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry (HU-AF), University of Helsinki, Faculty Veterinary Medicine (HU-Vet), The Agricultural University of Iceland (LBHI), the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), The Norwegian School of Veterinary Science (NVH), and The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

NOVA in a nutshell

The NOVA member institutions are commissioned in their respective countries to build expertise and provide knowledge to society in the fields of agriculture, animal sciences, forestry, veterinary medicine, food sciences, environmental sciences, aquaculture and related biosciences. They contribute to developments within sustainable use of natural resources, food production, health and welfare protection of humans and animals, and to enhancing the capacity for use of land, water, plants and animals according to sustainable principles. The main task of NOVA is to initiate, administer and promote cooperation between the member institutions in education. NOVA shall:

- Enhance the quality and broaden the scope of teaching.
- Promote greater resource-efficiency and reduce teaching costs.
- Facilitate collaboration in scientific areas where the resources of member institutions are limited.
- Deal effectively with ongoing expansions within the field of scientific knowledge and the need for further specialisation.
- Increase the international competitiveness of member institutions.
- Be a proficient partner for dialogue with relevant sectors.

A wide range of activities has been carried out since NOVA was established. Cooperation networks have been established in many of the fields represented by the member institutions, and this has resulted in numerous high quality courses for PhD and MSc¹ students. At present approximately 40 NOVA networks are active.

¹ Throughout this document, the abbreviation MSc will also include the professional veterinary degree (DVM, Cand.Med.Vet., and Leg.Vet)

Challenges

NOVA member institutions are facing many new challenges. Life sciences are receiving increased political interest in topics such as global warming and the quest for alternative energy sources. Domestic productions are being met with competition from low-cost producers, and consumers of food, plant and animal products have higher expectations with respect to quality and safety. New trends within teaching and education are arising, and there is an increased focus on internationalisation. Following the Bologna process, the concept of joint degrees has been promoted in European higher education, but there are numerous obstacles pertaining to national legislations and semester structures in the creation of such degrees. Also, NOVA is facing competition from European networks.

Within NOVA lies a potential for member universities to meet these challenges together. NOVA may provide a foundation for networks to expand and attract other European partners, and thus facilitate internationalisation. It is a forum for discussion and dialogue, and by joining forces the standard and diversity of teaching will be elevated for all member institutions.

A new strategy for NOVA: NOVA in 2010

In an external evaluation performed early in 2006 the endeavour of NOVA to organise joint international teaching was praised. NOVA PhD courses were defined as success stories and NOVA was recommended as an example for other European regions for implementing the Bologna system. The evaluation also suggested certain organisational changes which have been implemented. The NOVA secretariat has been reduced which will leave a greater proportion of the NOVA budget for network and course activities. In the new strategic period, greater responsibility for NOVA activities will be placed at the institutional level.

NOVA shall continue to support and promote life sciences in the Nordic countries, and will do so by establishing functional networks within MSc and PhD education. Research cooperation will evolve from scientists meeting through NOVA networks. Students who participate in NOVA courses today will recognise and feel part of the Nordic life science community. When they lead our institutions in the future, they should know and recognise the potential that lies in cooperation with their Nordic colleagues.

The NOVA mission and main aim

Mission

NOVA will support and promote life sciences in the Nordic countries by facilitating cooperation in higher education. NOVA shall promote establishment of networks that will develop innovative and high quality education within their fields. The bringing together of students, teachers and scientists in NOVA networks and courses will enhance both education and research.

Main aim

NOVA will focus its efforts within PhD and MSc education; create specialized PhD courses of a high international standard, and increase course quality, diversity and student mobility within MSc education.

Key strategic areas for NOVA

1. NOVA networks
2. Quality PhD courses
3. MSc education
4. Political forums

NOVA strategy for 2007–2010

The NOVA strategy for 2007–2010 shall outline the network's focus and targets for the period. Annual action plans will be developed based on the strategy.

1. Key targets for the strategic period of 2007–2010

1. Establishment of Nordic networks.
2. Development of quality PhD courses.
3. Development of MSc intensive courses and joint programmes.
4. Establishment of political forums.
5. Market and make NOVA visible to students, teachers and scientists.
6. Continue supporting an active NOVA Student Forum (NSF).

2. Aims for the key strategic areas

2.1. Professional Nordic networks 2007–2010

Networks of cooperation between member institutions are core to NOVA's work. These networks include partners from at least three member institutions. A number of NOVA networks have been established and have cooperated to organise many PhD and MSc courses. The responsibility for establishing and running a network is placed at the institutions, and the responsibility for running a network may alternate between member institutions.

- a) NOVA will facilitate and stimulate the establishment and continuation of networks. Annual registrations will be made of NOVA networks with respect to their activities and their funding.

2.2. Quality PhD courses 2007–2010

NOVA has had great success in arranging innovative, top-quality PhD courses that attract both NOVA and international students. The courses are initiated, planned, and carried out by NOVA PhD networks that make use of the strengths and competences of individual NOVA members. NOVA will stimulate continuation of present successful courses and development of new courses.

- a) The aim for the strategic period of 2007–2010 is that by 2010 institutions in each country (except Iceland) initiate and arrange at least 5 PhD courses per year. A total of 25 NOVA PhD courses should be arranged every year that together attract a total of at least 400 participating students.

2.3. Cooperation within MSc education

NOVA stimulates Nordic cooperation at the MSc level in order to increase the number and quality of available courses to students. A number of successful courses have been held, but NOVA wishes to further increase Nordic student mobility at the MSc level by encouraging MSc recognition between institutions, establishment of new networks and increased activity within existing networks. NOVA will not define model areas for MSc cooperation. Rather, it will support networks in areas selected and prioritised by the faculties where there is a will and an ability to establish functional cooperation.

2.3.1. MSc Recognition

A main working principle for NOVA within MSc education is that all approved NOVA activities are by default mutually recognised by all NOVA members, this should facilitate student mobility.

- a) An aim for the present strategic period is that each member institution will actively seek, facilitate and encourage mobility opportunities for Nordic MSc students.

2.3.2. Intensive MSc courses

NOVA intends to provide students with a choice of top-quality intensive courses where Nordic expertise is fused. This is a flexible form of short-term mobility where students can benefit from competence that their own institution cannot provide alone. Furthermore, the intensive courses could provide a larger student body that would be especially beneficial for academic areas where the national student base alone cannot support such courses.

- a) An aim for the strategic period of 2007–2010 is that each institution organises two intensive MSc courses per year, and that at least 20 such courses will be offered annually between the NOVA members. The courses should be arranged during the so-called “summer and winter mobility windows” (see below).

2.3.3. Summer and winter mobility windows during 2007–2010

Summer and winter mobility windows are two week periods in January and in August open to intensive courses at the member universities. These windows will allow students

to move to other NOVA member universities to participate in intensive courses. Some disciplines may define their own mobility windows if this is coordinated between the member universities.

- a) Each NOVA member institution should make the necessary adjustments so that each MSc student at the NOVA member universities will have at least one opportunity, with no mandatory courses, to use a mobility window and take a course at another NOVA institution.
- b) The aim for the strategic period of 2007–2010 is that by 2010 all member faculties/programmes offer two mobility windows to facilitate student exchange.

2.3.4. MSc joint programs during 2007–2010

Joint MSc programs are offered in collaboration between two or more NOVA members. Students are awarded a final degree diploma from the home institution and receive documentation from the visited institution. NOVA MSc joint programs should be based on already existing local expertise and competence. They should be developed in mutual cooperation and delivered by the participating members.

- a) The first three Joint Masters Programs, in Aquaculture, Biosystems Engineering and Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, are currently underway. An aim for the strategic period of 2007–2010 is that these programs will be fully established and that they will enhance the development of further joint programs.
- b) An aim for the strategic period of 2007–2010 is to initiate at least one more NOVA joint program and that by 2010 each member institution should be participating in a new joint program with at least one other member institution.

2.3.5. Joint MSc education.

MSc joint degrees are MSc programs offered in collaboration between two or more universities where the students are offered a final diploma which is shared between the collaborating universities. A number of obstacles such as national legislations etc have so far prevented establishment of joint degrees between NOVA institutions.

- a) During the strategic period 2007–2010 NOVA will also evaluate the possibilities and obstacles of establishing MSc joint degrees between NOVA members.

2.4. Establishment of political forums

The NOVA University Network is in itself a forum where all member universities, including students, teachers, researchers and administrators may exchange ideas, experience and best practice. Specific forums may arise from questions that come up in the universities or in the networks. Discussion forums are a valuable spin-off from established networks, and NOVA may support such forums directly if relevant topics arise.

- a) An annual NOVA seminar shall be arranged and shall be used as a forum for discussion of relevant topics that concern member universities.
- b) Specific forums outside of the annual seminar may be supported directly if topics come up that merit further discussion.

2.5. NOVA visibility

NOVA will work to enhance its visibility among students, teachers and scientists, and to become fully integrated in the local administrations.

- a) During the strategic period 2007–2010 the responsibility for NOVA visibility at each institution will largely be placed with the local NOVA teams (see appendix 4.). The local teams will prepare annual action plans that shall include plans for promoting local NOVA visibility.

2.6. The NOVA Student Forum (NSF)

Students from the NOVA member universities work together in a common student forum. Meetings are held 2-3 times per year in one of the countries. The NOVA Student Forum is a forum for discussion of NOVA matters among students and brings the student's voice into NOVA. During the strategic period 2007–2010 NOVA will continue to support NSF in their activities.

3. Internal cooperation 2007–2010

Well functioning internal NOVA networks are essential for the success of NOVA. Therefore, networks that show high quality cooperation shall get the highest priority.

4. External cooperation 2007–2010

NOVA helped create the Baltic Forestry, Veterinary, and Agricultural University Network (BOVA). BOVA is now independent, and has several active networks that arrange a number of PhD and MSc courses each year. A letter of intent has been signed by the Chairmen of NOVA and BOVA, where there is mutual agreement that the two organisations will seek cooperation opportunities during the next strategic period.

- a) During the strategic period of 2007–2010 NOVA will prioritise BOVA as a partner for cooperation. NOVA member institutions will receive BOVA students to their courses, and will encourage NOVA students to attend BOVA courses.
- b) During the strategic period of 2007–2010 NOVA the establishment of contact between NOVA and BOVA networks will be encouraged.

NOVA networks may be used as a platform to expand into a broader international context in areas where this is relevant, but NOVA will not actively seek cooperation opportunities outside the network. It is perceived as a success if NOVA networks are invited as partners in Erasmus Mundus programmes, but NOVA will not provide financial support to activities in the extended networks.

5. Funding 2007–2010

Activities in NOVA are funded through membership fees, and the method by which these fees are calculated must be optimised. NOVA will apply for relevant Nordplus funding for student and teaching staff mobility, intensive courses, and development of joint programs. NOVA will work to maintain and increase support from The Nordic Council of Ministers for short term mobility courses. Course organisers seeking NOVA funds are encouraged to apply for additional funding from other sources. The NOVA Secretariat will lend their expertise in seeking such funds. However, the secretariat does not prioritise central fundraising activities.

- a) An aim for the strategic period of 2007–2010 is to develop and implement a new method for calculating NOVA membership fees.

6. Organisation and responsibilities 2007–2010

See appendices:

- Appendix 1: role and responsibilities for the NOVA Board
- Appendix 2: role and responsibilities for KUF,
- Appendix 3: role and responsibilities for the NOVA secretariat and the NOVA Executive Committee
- Appendix 4: Administrative tasks for member universities

7. Action plans 2007–2010

During the strategic period of 2007–2010 annual action plans will be prepared that are based on the strategy.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The role and responsibilities for the NOVA Board

The NOVA University Network is governed by a Board which consists of the rectors (SLU, UMB, NVH, LBHI) and deans (LIFE, HU-AF, HU-VET) and one student representative from the member institutions (appointed by NSF).

Role and responsibilities

The NOVA Board is commissioned by the member institutions to:

- Define the mission of NOVA.
- State the vision, the long-term objectives and the strategy for NOVA.
- Provide a solid economic platform for the organisation.
- Review and evaluate the organisation and the performance of the NOVA.
- Supervise and evaluate the NOVA-BOVA cooperation.

The NOVA Board shall accordingly make decisions about:

- Objectives, strategy and organisation of NOVA.
- Annual activity plans.
- Budget and financial arrangements.
- General principles, policies and priorities for the activities of NOVA.
- Proposals and recommendations from the permanent committees.
- Annual reports and annual accounts provided by the Executive Committee.
- The NOVA Secretariat is responsible for the secretarial functions in the Board.

Appendix 2

The role and responsibilities for the NOVA Advisory Committee (KUF)

The NOVA Board has authorised 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 NOVA is given a firm policy foundation at the home universities, and that NOVA becomes an accepted, well-known and acknowledged partner for the relevant faculty members.
- In cooperation with the NOVA Executive Committee, KUF shall draft important principles and regulations to be submitted to the Board.
- KUF shall direct and support the activity planning, the budget planning and other operational efforts, and shall serve as an advisory group to the NOVA Executive Committee.
- KUF shall follow a reliable procedure for prioritising NOVA projects.
- KUF shall supervise the progress and evaluate the results of NOVA-sponsored projects.
- KUF shall follow a consistent and accepted policy for regular professional evaluation of all NOVA UN projects.

Organisation

- KUF shall consist of one representative from each member institution/faculty, and two student representatives appointed by NSF. NSF may appoint a local student to act as an extra member when a meeting is held at or close to a member institution.
- The chair is appointed by the Board for a period of two (2) years, and is permanently co-opted to the NOVA board.
- The University-appointed KUF member is the head of the local NOVA team.
- The NOVA Secretariat is responsible for the secretarial functions in KUF.

Appendix 3

Role and responsibilities for the NOVA Executive Committee and the secretariat

The NOVA Executive Committee (EC) shall consist of the Chairman of the NOVA Board, Chairman of KUF, a student representative, the Secretary General, and the Central NOVA Coordinator. The two latter persons comprise the NOVA Secretariat.

Responsibilities and tasks for the EC:

- The EC shall have the main responsibility for preparing items before the NOVA Board and KUF.
- The EC has the responsibility for taking decisions on the delegation from KUF and the NOVA Board.

Responsibilities and tasks for the NOVA secretariat:

- The NOVA secretariat shall have secretarial functions for the NOVA Board and for KUF.
- The NOVA Secretariat has the responsibility for the daily administration in NOVA.

Appendix 4

Administrative tasks for member universities/faculties

Each NOVA member institution/faculty shall have a smoothly functioning local administration. The basis for this administration is the local NOVA Team, led by the local KUF member.

Tasks

Each local NOVA administration is committed to undertake the following administrative tasks:

- Appoint a specific local NOVA Coordinator as contact person for the NOVA secretariat, ensuring that necessary contact is established between local partners and the NOVA secretariat.
- Provide KUF with an annual plan of local NOVA activities (at the first KUF meeting of the year), and provide KUF with a follow up of the local annual plan (at the last KUF meeting of the year).
- Act as local support organisation for all NOVA Networks, network members and students at the home institution.

Other tasks include:

- Carrying out local NOVA activities and administrative processes.
- Ensure local administration of NOVA Nordplus mobility, every x year act as central coordination point for the NOVA-Nordplus network.
- Ensure meetings with and necessary support to the local NOVA Team.
- Appoint a secretary to the local NOVA Team.

Organisation

As a minimum, the local NOVA team shall consist of the local KUF representative as responsible leader, one main local NOVA Coordinator and a student representative. Beyond this, it will be up to each member institution to further establish the local organisation.

A more detailed list of local administrative tasks can be found on the following link:

www.nova.university.org/