

AAU COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2017-2019



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK



Content

Preface by the Rector	04
1. Purpose of the communication strategy	06
Strategic narrative	07
2. Overall objectives of AAU's communication	08
3. Focus areas of the communication strategy	10
4. AAU's principles of communication	14
5. Follow-up	15

Preface

WHY DO WE NEED A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY?

When I meet people new to Aalborg University, I immediately begin telling them what we do. I know that many of us do this. We tell other people about our jobs and about AAU as a place which is part of our everyday lives. A place in which we are part of communities within the community – research areas, degree programmes, projects and initiatives which all take part in defining our culture, identity and values.

At AAU, we seem to have a tendency to describe ourselves in humble terms – even though we are brilliant at bridging the gap between our research and the world around us. True, AAU may not be the largest of universities in terms of the number of students, staff members or funding, but we are world-leading in terms of educating our students in project-based and problem-based learning. None of the other Danish universities have managed to find common ground in using just one learning approach, but we have. I am proud of this; and we should all be proud of this. We can all hold our head high when we tell others about AAU and our very own way of doing things. In this sense, we are all AAU ambassadors.

AAU's strategy Knowledge for the World constitutes our common framework and direction. In our roles as 'ambassadors', this communication strategy will constitute a tool for our communication about AAU: how we work, how we educate students, how we conduct research and make new connections between people of different backgrounds. People who, despite their different backgrounds, unite through new knowledge brought to bear. We must remember that we are one university. Aalborg University may be a diverse organisation, but we are still one organisation and have one raison d'être: creating knowledge for the world.

Per Michael Johansen
Rector, AAU
June 2017



1. Purpose of the communication strategy

Aalborg University's communication strategy aims to define the overall direction of the University's communication toward 2021. In this strategy, we define our focus areas and principles for effective communication. The communication strategy supports the implementation of the University's overall strategy Knowledge for the World.

Faculties, departments, schools and campuses may also use the communication strategy as a guiding framework for preparing sub-strategies in relation to communication.

AAU'S STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

What is at the heart of what we tell other people about AAU? AAU's strategic narrative sums up the essence of our identity, culture and values. It tells the story of who we are, what we are capable of and where we want to go. All communication activities at AAU should be based on this narrative. The strategic narrative is designed to be used independently where there is a need to briefly define the essence of AAU. It must only be reproduced in its original form and thus must not be rephrased, altered or divided. However, the strategic narrative may be used as a platform for creating derived narratives for specific degree programmes, research projects or other activities.

Thus, the strategic narrative comprises a narrative frame from which derived narratives may be formed, such as a feature in the newspaper telling the story of how researchers and students have engaged in successful cooperation with a company on solving a specific problem; or an article published on the University's website on a new international cooperation agreement made between AAU, another university and several global businesses.

AALBORG UNIVERSITY – KNOWLEDGE FOR THE WORLD

All degree programmes and research activities at Aalborg University are problem and project-based and have an interdisciplinary focus.

Through strong interplay between staff and students and intense collaboration with public and private sectors, we offer degree programmes with a real-world approach and provide world-class research.

This results in new insights, new solutions to societal challenges and knowledge that changes the world.

2. Overall objectives of AAU's communication

The main objective is to ensure that Aalborg University is recognised for the valuable impact our research, education and knowledge collaboration have on society. Whether we are students or staff members, we should always seek to communicate clearly and give specific examples to show how our unique PBL approach permeates all our activities, and how PBL is the platform from which we collaborate with businesses, organisations and public authorities across sectors and disciplines to create knowledge that can be used in practice. Our strategic narrative is the foundation of such communication efforts.

Promoting a shared identity

Targeted internal communication promotes a shared experience of AAU having one shared identity. Everyone affiliated with AAU contributes in each their way to the external perception of AAU; therefore, we must communicate clearly about the University's activities to both staff and students. When staff members have broad and nuanced knowledge of their organisation, they not only become well equipped to communicate about their own area of expertise but also about the University as a whole.

Setting public agendas

AAU must be influential and set public agendas. We can do so by telling the media, NGOs, politicians, etc. about our approach to research, education and knowledge collaboration and our results. We should let the world know that AAU provides results and insights that make a difference and that our approach is key to future-proofing society's development in terms of creating new, valuable knowledge.

Showing prospective students what AAU stands for

AAU's learning model PBL should form part of the message conveyed to prospective students. We must show what PBL is all about and that PBL provides AAU graduates with valuable skills that set them apart from other graduates when they enter the labour market. We will show specific examples of what AAU students accomplish and thereby show the value of our learning model. Prospective students should see AAU as a place of learning where lecturers, researchers and fellow students are part of the same community. A place where we value working across disciplines and collaborating with others because we believe that both students, staff and collaboration partners can learn from one another.

Attracting qualified staff members

Qualified staff members make up the foundation of Aalborg University. When potential staff members hear and read about AAU, the take-home message should be that the University is an attractive place to work. This message should thread through all AAU communication especially in our job vacancies. Our focus is to highlight what we stand for and that we achieve our results on the basis of our unique approach to education, research and knowledge collaboration. When reading newspapers, specialist media, social media, etc., potential staff members should become interested in becoming part of AAU. As a result, we increase the possibility of attracting staff members who match AAU's visions and ambitions.

Motivating students

From the beginning of their studies through to graduation, AAU students should feel that the information they receive from us matches their needs and interests whether they receive information about seminar rooms, exams or social events. This is a prerequisite for motivating students to make their voices heard about matters such as their study environment. They should feel that engaging in dialogue with the University is worthwhile; that the University is open to their ideas and willing to meet their needs. It is also important that students perceive AAU as one organisation with the same core identity, culture and values. Students at the Aalborg, Esbjerg and Copenhagen campuses should have a similar experience of the quality of communication.

3. Focus areas of the communication strategy

The focus areas of this communication strategy are based on the University's core activities. Internal communication is also an important focus area because it contributes to creating a strong sense of belonging and community for all staff – which is a prerequisite for effective external communication. Effective internal communication is the glue that holds our activities together and the basis for ensuring that we communicate consistently of AAU as one organisation.

Education

Prospective students should know what PBL means in practice. They should know how AAU students learn to produce knowledge-based products, processes and methods. Our communication focus is: 'show, don't tell'. We will show what AAU students achieve and how they achieve it; that our approach improves students' transversal skills and employability and prepares them for their professional lives. As a result, we will give prospective students a clear idea of what it means to be a student at AAU and the skills our degree programmes provide. We also wish to distinguish ourselves as a PBL university so that decision-makers, government officials, other educational institutions and not least the prospective employers of our graduates know what our graduates have to offer.



Research

Our aim is to support AAU's research strategies by communicating AAU's research results and thereby creating awareness and recognition of the University's contribution to society among funders/grantors, potential collaboration partners and tax payers. We take a systemic approach to research communication which corresponds to our approach to research. A key message is that we believe that the basis of interdisciplinary research is the interplay between monodisciplinary and multidisciplinary expertise. We must conduct in-depth research in order to create the foundation for research collaboration and for bringing these results into play in knowledge collaboration. As a result, AAU's research communication should generate support from our stakeholders, which might also positively affect our success rate in acquiring external funding.

Knowledge collaboration

At AAU, we believe that knowledge is created, developed and translated into use to benefit society. Whether we collaborate with small, medium-sized or large companies, public authorities or other organisations, knowledge collaboration is the crux of our approach. Therefore, the focus of our communication is to highlight the results of AAU's knowledge collaboration. AAU will thus position itself as a university that engages with the surrounding society and creates knowledge that changes the world. Our ambitions within this area are based on our long-established experience with knowledge collaboration.

Internal communication

A fundamental focus of the communication strategy is to enhance the perception of AAU as one organisation with one shared identity and culture. Effective internal com-

munication across our five faculties and three campuses is an important part of achieving this goal. All AAU staff members must have equal access to relevant information about everything from management decisions to PBL development projects. In this way, we will enhance the shared sense of purpose among staff and ensure that they can communicate externally on an informed basis, indicating that AAU is one university with a unique approach to delivering knowledge to the world. In other words: The more nuanced and accurate staff members' perception of their workplace is, the better they may communicate about it.

Alumni

AAU's communication with alumni should be engaging. We wish to encourage a lifelong attachment between alumni and their alma mater. Being an AAU graduate is not merely having completed a degree programme, but having a stake in AAU capital which comprises our identity, culture and values and provides a rich resource network. Through participatory communication, our alumni will have a say in what we offer our alumni, such as alumni events, further and continuing education, career events and mentoring programmes. Participatory communication gives us the opportunity to listen to our alumni and be accommodating towards their requests. Being engaged in communication with and about AAU should lead to new relationships, new learning opportunities and new opportunities in general, such as collaborations between companies, students and researchers. By activating and engaging our alumni, they also become ambassadors for AAU. They will become motivated to recommend AAU as a place of learning and as a collaboration partner, which will contribute to supporting University's core activities.

4. AAU's principles of communication

Based on a number of shared principles for communication, we can ensure consistent high quality communication. The core principles of AAU's communication are:

Integrated

AAU's communication must support our core activities. Therefore, it is essential that communication is embedded in all projects from start to finish. When new degree programmes are being developed, communication should form part of the process from the very beginning: How do we recruit students to this degree programme? How will our target audience perceive the programme and the way in which we describe it? The same questions could be phrased for both research and knowledge collaboration. Insofar as possible, AAU's communication staff will be available to provide advice on the communication process involved; thus, facilitating efficient and appropriate communication at a later stage.

Proactive

By being proactive in our communication efforts, we take responsibility for how the University is perceived both internally and externally. Rather than waiting for newspaper journalists, companies, prospective students or public authorities to contact us, we should be proactive and address whoever might be relevant to explain how AAU creates knowledge for the world. Proactive communication is a means by which we can achieve our strategic objectives. Therefore, we must be up-to-date with media agendas, political agendas and the trends in the business community. This will enable us to be at the forefront whenever the University can contribute to society and bring about positive change.

Knowledge-based

As a university, we have a particular responsibility to base our communication on actual knowledge regardless of whether it appears on en.aau.dk, in news media or on social media. The University's research and teaching activities are based on facts, evidence and insight, and so should our communication. Through our communication efforts, we will highlight that AAU creates knowledge for the world where knowledge is needed; that we have the courage to challenge prevailing views; and that the knowledge we produce makes an impact.

Receiver-oriented

AAU's communication efforts should be receiver-oriented. This means that we always consider our target audience, the media they prefer and the issues that concern them. By showing relevant examples of what AAU stands for and the impact of the University's activities, the target audience should learn that Aalborg University has not been founded to cater for its own needs but as a resource to benefit society. Not only AAU students and staff benefit from being part of the University, the knowledge and skills they acquire are brought into play in the surrounding society to benefit fellow students, children, friends, neighbours and not least collaboration partners. Just as AAU's core activities are outward-oriented, so should AAU's communication be receiver-oriented whether the target audience is laymen, upper secondary school pupils or ministers.

5. Follow-up

In midyear 2019, this Communication Strategy will be evaluated and updated as regards specific focus areas and benchmarks.



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK