

Centre for Higher Education Futures (CHEF)
Danish School of Education
Aarhus University
Strategy for the period September 1, 2022 - August 31, 2027



Table of contents

Ambition	2
Centre architecture	2
Future research plans	4
Activities	6
Organisation	9
Summary of planned action	11

Ambition

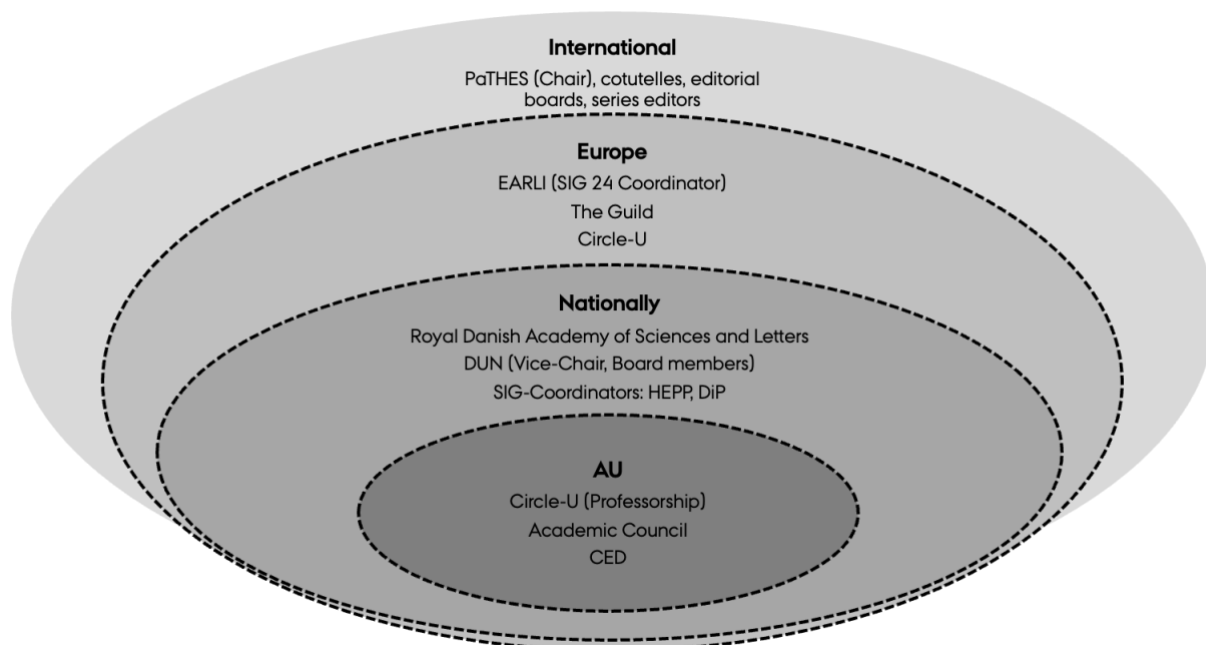
The aims of the Centre for Higher Education Futures are:

1. *Research*: Research the nationally and internationally transforming mandates and organization of universities and higher education.
2. *Networking*: Foster national and international personal and institutional connections, especially linking early stage with established researchers, in order to generate new thinking and collaborative publications and projects.
3. *Public debate*: Engage in public debate about the current challenges and future possibilities for universities and higher education in Denmark and beyond.
4. *Action*: Be a site for national and international research and experiments on new models for higher education and its institutional forms.

Centre architecture

CHEF's activities and collaborations take place in a research ecology, which works across four scales and builds on CHEF's achievements in networking, research, and leadership from the earlier cycles (2016-2021).

Diagram 1: CHEF's Research Ecology



(1) On the most local scale, we participate in collaborations at the Danish School of Education and Aarhus University through institutionally prioritized research partnerships. These include ARTS Academic Council, the Centre for Educational Development, and Aarhus University's Circle U activities.

(2) Nationally, CHEF is playing a leading role in associations to ensure national cross-institutional and cross-disciplinary networking and research collaboration on issues of national importance. On higher education, attention is focused on DUN: Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Netværk, where Søren Bengtsen is Vice-Chair and other CHEF members are on the Board and have initiated special interest groups in Higher Education Policy and Practice (HEPP) and in Digital Pedagogy and Learning in Higher Education (DIP). On policy issues, CHEF established a stakeholder network (from academics to industry) on the de-internationalisation of higher education, which produced several papers and newspaper articles. Sue Wright is working through the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters on this issue and other current national policies to bring CHEF members' research to a wider and influential audience.

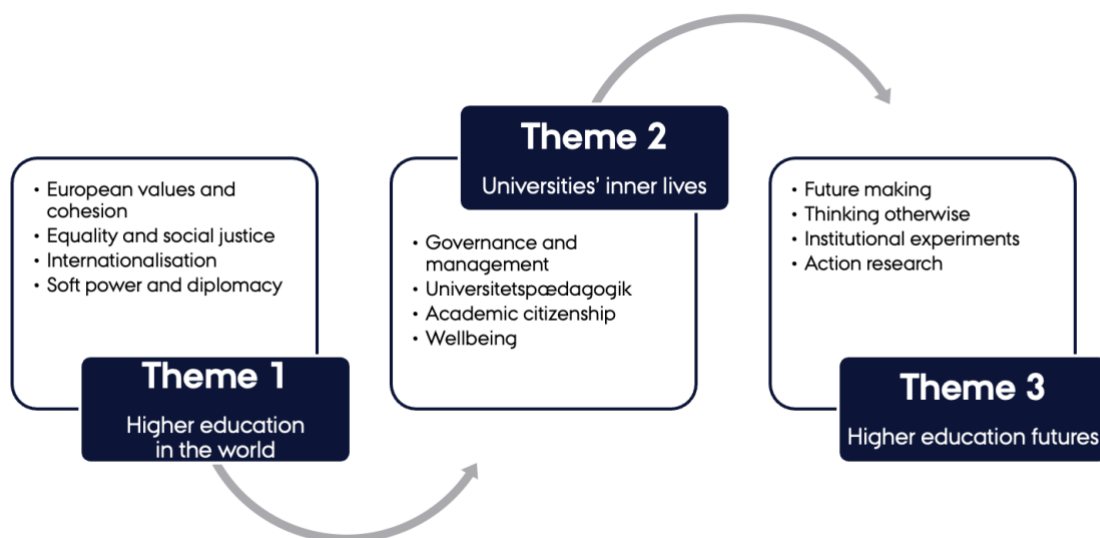
(3) On a European scale, CHEF is playing a very active role in developing Circle U's Think and Do Tank, with a project on sustainable education and new forms of international collaborative education. CHEF is also active in EARLI, the European Association for Research into Learning and Instruction. The project 'European Universities - Critical Futures' has established networks across Europe to develop new concepts and practices on six issues concerning the widening mandate of higher education and bring the results into discussions with the policy community. Especially important for CHEF's connections on a European level is The Guild – a strong and critical policy agent connecting EU politics with national university leadership.

(4) Internationally, CHEF's members now stretch from Australia and New Zealand, across China, Asia, and Europe to North and South America. These links are activated through CHEF's role in establishing and collaborating via PaTHES, the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society, and in numerous collaborative writing and other projects. Importantly, we are active in a triangle of relations with 'sister centres' REDI at Deakin University in Australia and GLEA at Coventry University in the UK, where we have dual degree PhD cotutelles with each other and collaborate on conferences and research projects.

Future research plans

The Centre uses the above architecture to bring research and dissemination activities together around three inter-related themes. First, there are clear signs that universities' educational, social, political, and economic mandate is currently changing in Europe, as are the roles of universities around the world. Second, what are the implications of these changes for the organisation and governance of universities and their inner life? Third, how can the above critical research be translated into action to build higher education institutions and practices for the future? Whereas the analytical and critical approaches to research in Themes 1 and 2 are grounded in disciplinary methods, when exploring their implications for practical developments in Theme 3, various forms of action research will be used. These three strands and the inter-relationships between them are captured in the diagram below. Themes 1 and 2 critically inform each other, and they both generate the agenda for action in Theme 3 – which again, loops back into new iterations of the research in Themes 1 and 2. The three strands are set out in more detail below.

Diagram 2: CHEF's model of iterative research



1. The changing mandates and positioning of universities in the world

Over the last twenty years, following the Lisbon Strategy (2000), university reforms have narrowed the focus of their activities on driving European countries' competitiveness in a global knowledge economy. Now there is a sudden widening of their mandates, as European universities are called to address a range of crises including climate change and a need to devise a sustainable future, the realization that globalization leads to deep inequalities at home and abroad, problems of massive population movements occasioned by war,

environmental disasters and economic devastation, and challenges to democracy and liberal values. President Macron's Sorbonne speech in 2017 and the EU's social summit in Gothenburg in 2018 heralded a widening of universities' mandate to include what EU documents refer to as the Social and European dimensions – not least by establishing new European university alliances such as Circle U. In Denmark as well as other European countries, universities' attention is drawn to the ways they use their resources to shape both their local environment and the formation of Europe during global geopolitical shifts. Indeed, European universities are responding in very different ways to neo-protectionism in the USA and China's increasing global ambitions as well as threats from Russian expansionism and opportunities in Africa and South America. Universities are embedded in a complicated dynamic of global science diplomacy rather than an open marketplace for knowledge, whilst concepts and practices of internationalisation and mobility are being re-thought and flows of internationally mobile students are already reflecting these geopolitical shifts. CHEF's activities will explore how universities are responding to the expanded mandate of universities and their roles across these three entwined scales: in developing local economies and communities, in fostering European values and cohesion, and in how they act in the world.

2. Universities' organisation and inner Life

The second theme explores the implications of universities' changing roles and mandates for its internal life. Next year will be the 20th 'anniversary' of major reforms to the governance and management of Danish universities. As in many other countries, with the aim of making universities 'world class' and driving competitiveness in the global knowledge economy, a new cadre of managers and administrators has been developed. Academics and students have been faced with changing expectations about their work and identity, often embedded in new performance criteria, funding incentives and penalties, faster throughput, quality assurance systems, and human resource management. Now the massification of higher education is being re-thought, with an increased focus on the range and location of post-school education and qualifications. This change is giving rise to at least three issues. First, the nature and role of higher education (cast in the vocabulary of '*universitetspædagogik*') is at the centre of discussions in Danish universities and Circle U, especially with a heightened focus on sustainability, creativity and collaboration, and new opportunities posed by digitalisation and hybrid mobilities. Second, there is renewed interest in the concept of academic citizenship. This concerns both the impact of new institutional hierarchies and implementation process on academic freedom and other core values, and the experiential knowledge gained by academics' and students' contributions to the running of the university and the development of society. Third, well-being and the effects of audit culture on the emotional and existential lives of staff and students have come under the spotlight, not least because of the loss of academic labour and students'

drop-out rates through stress. CHEF will aim to bring critical and practical thinking to these emerging issues affecting universities' inner life.

3. Higher Education Futures

The third theme is to explore the practical implications of our critical research about the changing mandates and internal transformations of universities. The Centre will develop its international links to experimental projects, e.g., University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)'s strategy to work with the municipality and other local 'anchor' institutions to use their resources and education for local wealth creation; and Mondragon cooperative university's contribution to fostering a 'digital humanities' economy in Bilbao, Spain. Other examples include the foundation of new institutions promoting a re-thinking of liberal arts education in Europe. While not translatable to other contexts in their entirety, how do these examples of 'thinking otherwise' help bring a critical and reflexive perspective to discussion about issues 'at home' (not least '*udflytning*') and possible ways of developing the university in future? These experiments raise questions about the future of the built form of universities, how their governance and management can best harvest initiatives from across their staff and students, and how they deploy their economic and educational resources for optimal public benefit.

Activities

The Centre will work on the above three themes to fulfil its ambitions in the following ways

1. Research

Research catalyst: CHEF has established a platform for integrating research on its three themes through a programme of 'low key' CHEF Talks for members to develop their ideas for new projects and discuss work in progress, and 'high key' workshops and conferences that inspire high quality, locally relevant and internationally recognised research on current and future developments in higher education. In these activities, CHEF has taken care to generate a mutually supportive environment between early career and senior researchers, which has proved very fruitful in fostering new ideas and high-quality research.

Research projects: The Co-Directors are currently leading DFF-funded projects that address Theme 1 (European Universities - Critical Futures) and Theme 2 (Research for impact: Integrating research and societal impact in the humanities PhD). A Circle U project on 'sustainable education' involves Chairs (including Wright) and masters' students from the seven universities with the aim of generating an agenda for future action research (Theme

3). Ten other projects, led by colleagues at DPU, are affiliated to CHEF, contribute to CHEF's activities, gain from CHEF's networks and collaboration, and disseminate through the CHEF platform. CHEF aims to apply for EU-funding during the present period in order to lift its research agendas and project collaboration to an even stronger European and international level.

2. Networking

International collaborations: CHEF-members have extensive international networks that are maintained and extended through collaboration on projects, exchanging draft papers for comment and co- authorship of publications. Some of these collaborations are formalised links with Sister Centres. CHEF has recently submitted a NordForsk application (as research lead) with the aim of creating a network across leading research centres in the Nordic countries. CHEF has developed multiplex collaborations with REDI at Deakin University in Australia (with whom AU has a 'priority partnership' agreement) and GLEA at Coventry University in the UK. CHEF has arranged Cotutelle agreements on behalf of the ARTS faculty with these universities, in which the partners provide stipends for dual degree students. CHEF currently has one PhD student who is funded by Coventry University, with two more in process, and a Deakin-funded student is in the process of applying to AU. (DPU's mathematics didactics has also benefitted from two Deakin-funded students under this cotutelle arrangement). The proposed EU project mentioned above involves Deakin and Coventry and other partners from Circle U.

Publishing: is also a means for converting networking into tangible results. CHEF has developed a publishing infrastructure to ensure the whole range of its activities from work in progress to polished research reaches the public domain.

- Working paper series: CHEF has its own working paper series titled *Working Papers on University Reform* with its own ISBN-registration.
- Journals: Wright is founding co-editor of *LATISS Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences* (New York: Berghahn) and Bengtsen is an Editorial Board member for the journals *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* (Lausanne: Peter Lang) and *Teaching in Higher Education* (London & New York: Routledge).
- Book series: Bengtsen is co-editor of two book series *World Issues in the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education* (London: Routledge) and *Debating Higher Education – Philosophical Perspectives* (Dordrecht: Springer). Wright is co-editor of the book series *Higher Education in Critical Perspective* (New York: Berghahn).

3. Public debate

University members: CHEF aims to provide university members and leaders with a space for meta-analysis and reflexive thinking about higher education. CHEF has successfully engaged university leaders at Danish universities in an event exploring different approaches to student well-being and the aim is to continue facilitating inter-institutional research collaboration and events across universities in Denmark. Another way to do this within AU is through CHEF's annual lectures. The first, by Professor Jane den Hollander, Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University involved the Australian Ambassador and AU's Pro-Rector, Berit Eika, in a discussion of how to translate research on gender inequalities in university policies and action. The second, by Professor Ronald Barnett from the Institute of Education, UCL, questioned the future of the humanities, with Dean Johnny Laursen as discussant. That event resulted in plans for further CHEF events in the ARTS faculty to raise discussion on current policy issues.

Policy community: CHEF also aims to establish dialogue between critical researchers and members of the higher education policy community in Denmark and Europe. CHEF organised an online event for The Guild to discuss their strategy paper on the future of higher education, co-authored by Berit Eika. The project, European Universities - Critical Futures ended its major conference with a panel including EUA, the Guild, EASSH, Professor Pavel Zgaga, former Minister of Education and Professor Ellen Hazelkorn who has vast experience of research to inform policy. The project is further developing these links and also receiving invaluable assistance from Lina Christensen, Senior EU adviser at Central Denmark's EU office. While CHEF has made progress, there is still work to be done in fulfilling this ambition over the next period.

4. Action

CHEF members are involved in a range of experiments aimed at translating critical research into new concepts and practices of higher education and new organisational forms for the university. These range from the 'playful' higher education to cooperative universities. While some experiments are taking place in Denmark, more are occurring in different parts of the world. One aim in the next period is to seek opportunities to use CHEF's extensive network and knowledge about experimental higher education and alternative universities as Danish and Circle U universities engage with their widening mandates.

Organisation

Although CHEF draws its members from across the Danish School of Education (DPU), it is organizationally anchored in the Department of Educational Philosophy and General Education and will receive its administrative and institutional support primarily from here.

Co-Directors

The centre is co-directed by Associate Professor Søren S.E. Bengtsen based at DPU in Aarhus and Professor Susan Wright based at DPU in Emdrup. They share the leadership responsibilities and collaborate closely on a daily basis by email on the running of CHEF. The Co-Directors hold monthly Zoom-meetings to discuss research strategy and activities (newsletter, events, communication on website and social media, ongoing project collaboration and applications, external partnerships, etc).

The Co-Directors ensure cohesion and synergies across the two Danish School of Education campuses in Aarhus and Emdrup and enable the inclusion of a wide range and scope of research approaches to the field of universities and higher education.

The Co-Directors have divided leadership responsibilities between themselves.

- DPU-related research leadership: Bengtsen has a seat on DPU's Research Committee with Wright as substitute. Both co-directors are members of DPU's Internal Review Panel.
- National research leadership: Bengtsen is Vice-Chair of Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Netværk (DUN) and Main Coordinator of the CHEF-initiated Special Interest Group Higher Education Policy and Practice (HEPP). Wright is CHEF's main link with the Danish Royal Academy's growing activities on higher education.
- International research leadership: Wright leads on CHEF's engagement with European alliance, notably Circle-U (Professorship) and The Guild. She is the main anchor person for developing the PhD Cotutelle partnerships and other collaborations with Deakin University and Coventry University.

Steering Group

The Co-Directors have been very effectively supported by a CHEF Steering Group drawn mainly from Aarhus University. However, several members have changed location recently and the Co-Directors plan to revise the constitution of the steering group for the next 5-year period. A steering group of 7-9 people will consist of leading scholars in higher education. A third will be from Aarhus University; a third from elsewhere in Denmark; and a third will be scholars of international renown based outside Denmark.

The Steering Group's roles are to:

1. Ensure CHEF is in the forefront of current and future trends and topics in higher education research in Denmark and internationally (e.g., reasserting freedom, integration, democracy and other core values of universities and society, sustainability, digitalization, innovation and entrepreneurship, higher education teaching and learning, wellbeing, and mental health).
2. Strengthen CHEF's organizational anchoring in Aarhus University and connections with European and international networks and policy communities. This includes informing CHEF of current and future tendencies in national and international policy and institutional leadership, together with changes and priorities in the academic milieus and teaching and learning practices.
3. Contribute to CHEF's activities, including CHEF's programme of events each semester, disseminating information through CHEF's social media, website, and newsletters, and representing CHEF in various committees, networks, societies, and associations nationally and internationally.

Membership

The Co-Directors consider the previous categories for CHEF membership no longer fit with the way the centre has developed. We therefore plan to make a new distinction between CHEF Fellows and CHEF members.

CHEF Fellows

CHEF fellows will commit to making a substantial contribution to the centre in one of a number of ways:

- Regular participation in CHEF Talks, Panel Debates and CHEF conferences, such that they make an important contribution to the knowledge and ideas under current debate.
- Leadership of a research project clearly linked into CHEF's networks, events and knowledge exchange and dissemination.
- Ambassadors for CHEF in research environments and programmes in DPU and AU, other Danish universities, and international universities and networks.

When appointing CHEF fellows, the expectations about their contributions to CHEF will be made clear, as well as the benefits that this position conveys. These include:

- Profiling your research and updates of your projects and publications on CHEF's website.
- Presenting your research in a CHEF talk or webinar and holding a real or online conference with support from CHEF.

- Support in developing research projects and networking and help in building a community of Danish and international researchers, practitioners and policy makers concerned with the future of universities and higher education.

CHEF Members

CHEF members are participants who are always welcome to attend and contribute to activities without making a commitment to playing a major role in the development of CHEF's ideas, projects, and events.

Membership will continue to be open and free to students, academics, administrators and leaders from the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, other faculties and higher education institutions in Denmark, international colleagues, and members of higher education policy communities.

The members of CHEF come a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds including educational sciences, anthropology, philosophy, history of ideas, sociology, geography, political science, organisational studies, cultural studies, computer science, digital design, design thinking, media studies, information studies, pedagogy, didactics, and language studies.

CHEF Members will constitute the majority of CHEF's membership nationally and internationally.

Sister Centres

CHEF has developed multiple connections and activities with two of its sister centres. REDI at Deakin University in Australia and GLEA at Coventry University in UK. We will sustain these and seek to develop similar links with other 'sister centres' around the world, notably in the other Circle U universities.

Summary of Planned Actions

1. Apply for research funding for projects on the key issues facing higher education (widening mandate, higher education pedagogy, societal impact and value).
2. Use existing funding sources (notably cotutelles) to strengthen collaboration and exchanges with Deakin and Coventry universities.
3. Seek similar collaborations with other sister centres, notably in Circle U universities and in the Nordic region.
4. Continue CHEF's well-attended activities online or blended (CHEF talks, seminars, and conferences).
5. Refresh and revise the membership and functions of the steering group.

6. Establish criteria and selection method for CHEF Fellows.
7. Update and develop CHEF website and communication including news features, project updates, newsletters, social media, and membership profiles.
8. Continue to develop CHEF's engagement with university leaders at Danish universities in order to facilitate inter-institutional research collaboration and events across universities in Denmark.
9. Try to find ways to open more dialogue between critical researchers and the policy community, especially in Europe.