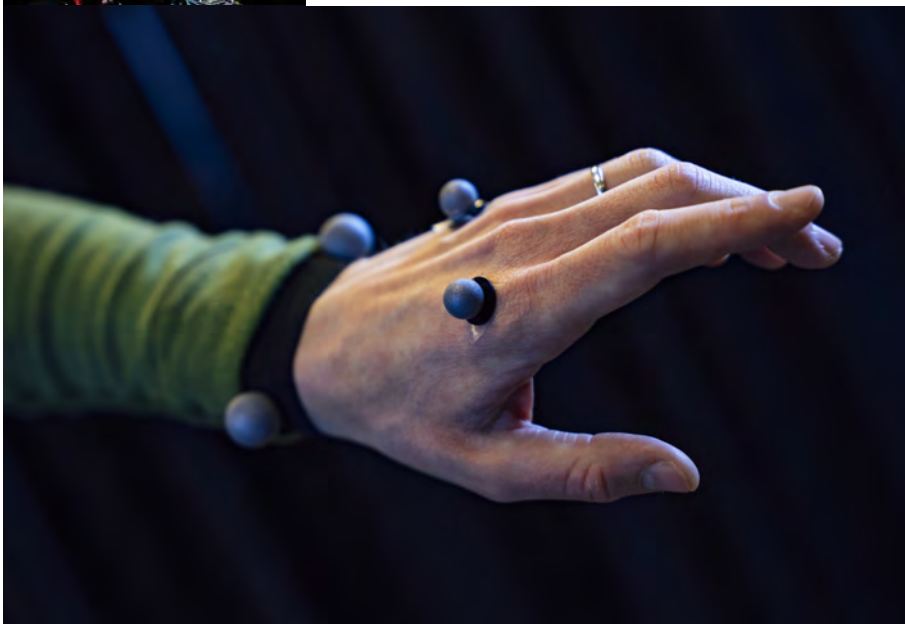




Reframing the Humanities at Lund University

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL AND GLOBAL RELEVANCE | 2025



RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COLLABORATION COUNCIL
OF THE JOINT FACULTIES OF THE HUMANITIES AND
THEOLOGY AT LUND UNIVERSITY



The Collaboration Council of the Joint Faculties of the Humanities and Theology at Lund University (Swedish: Samverkansrådet vid HT-fakulteterna vid Lunds universitet) brings together representatives from the faculty leadership, student representatives, departments within the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology (HT), as well as external stakeholders from the business community and public sector. The Council focuses on identifying and promoting collaborative initiatives that can contribute to the development of the HT Faculties and their societal engagement.

The Collaboration Council proposes the following five priority areas to strengthen the long-term impact, visibility and societal contribution of education and research in humanities and theology at Lund University:

1. Elevate the public narrative of humanities through inspiring, future-facing actions and outreach
2. Improve the recruitment of top talent
3. Implement new funding strategies to unlock major research ideas
4. Create lifelong student engagement by delivering visionary career guidance and strong alumni networks
5. Organising for the future



Reframing the Humanities at Lund University

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR NATIONAL AND GLOBAL RELEVANCE | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The humanities play a foundational role in cultivating analytical reasoning, historical understanding and ethical literacy – capacities that are indispensable in a world shaped by technological disruption and democratic backsliding. The humanities offer insights that guide decision-making beyond mere short-term efficiency, and grounds public discourse in analysis, values, context, and meaning. The humanities have always been central to the world's most pressing conversations.

Humanities education and research are under increasing pressure. Many disciplines face declining student enrolment, reduced funding, and marginalisation in strategic planning. This trend, which threatens the future of the humanities in Sweden as well as globally, is largely driven by political priorities that emphasise guaranteed immediate employability, economic growth, and STEM-oriented innovation policies. In such a climate, where utility and job-market alignment dominate educational agendas, the humanities are often perceived as abstract or impractical.

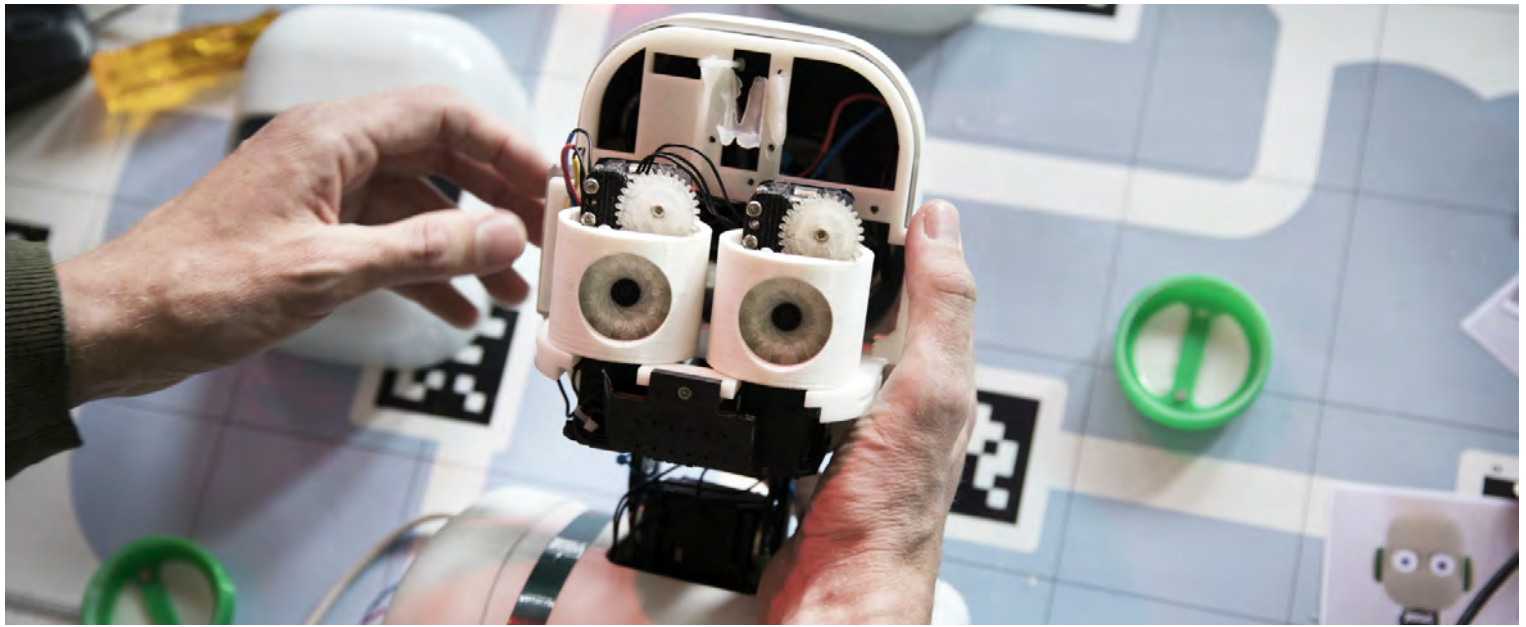
These trajectories must be changed.

While engineers design autonomous drones, students in the humanities ask: who decides where they fly? While business programmes simulate markets, humanities students ask: for whom is this economy really working? And while algorithms grow more powerful by the day, humanities students ask: what values should govern them?

In a world fixated on outcomes, the humanities invite students to seek meaning, consider broader consequences, and embrace perspective-taking. In an age of information overload, the humanities will cultivate their discernment. In a time of deepening polarisation, they will be offered nuance and complexity.

As universities globally shift their focus toward science and technology, there is a growing risk that the reflective, ethical, and civic dimensions of higher education will be neglected. Sweden, which is known for its democratic values, culture of equality, and social innovation, has an opportunity to set a different example. Lund University, with its history of excellence and breadth of expertise, and its strong humanities and theology research, is uniquely positioned to lead this effort.

Securing the future of groundbreaking humanities education and research is a strategic imperative. This document presents a set of actionable recommendations that Lund University can adopt to elevate the humanities and integrate them more deeply into interdisciplinary research, civic education, and societal decision-making. By doing so, the university can lead a humanistic renewal, nationally and internationally.



1. Elevate the public narrative of humanities through inspiring, future-facing actions and outreach

The future of the humanities will be determined not only by the quality of our teaching and research, but by how effectively we communicate their relevance. Public understanding shapes political priorities, student interest, and funding.

To strengthen the visibility and impact of the humanities, we must confidently and creatively assert their indispensable role in addressing global challenges, driving innovation, and enriching democracy. This requires both proactive storytelling and responsive engagement with urgent societal issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Lund Humanities Village

Establish a communications and engagement hub to showcase and launch campaigns to share high-impact humanities research, innovations and stories. This hub would host exhibitions, incubators, public events, podcasts, and accessible reports to reach the public, policymakers, and potential students.

2. Leverage cross-faculty synergies

Launch joint initiatives with other faculties (e.g., Humanities + Engineering on ethical AI, Humanities + Medicine on cultural dimensions of health) to show relevance across science and society.

3. Use knowledge diplomacy as a tool for engagement

Position Lund University as a European leader by hosting recurrent high-profile events, that bring together researchers, artists, journalists, and decision-makers to tackle one grand challenge each time.

4. Establish a rapid-response humanities team

Create a central team ready to contribute media commentary or issue policy briefs when global or national events require historical, ethical, or cultural insight, ensuring the humanities are part of urgent public debates.

5. Track and highlight impact

Develop and track activities that demonstrate how humanities contribute to society (e.g., policy influence, innovation, media reach, partnerships, alumni engagement) to both showcase our contribution and hold ourselves accountable for relevance.



2. Improve the recruitment of top talent

Competition for the next generation of researchers and educators is intensifying both nationally and internationally, and the landscape for research funding is shifting rapidly. These developments call for new strategies regarding staff composition and recruitment. Securing the future strength of the HT Faculties in research and education through strategic recruitment must be a top university priority. Below are some key recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Focus on global talent scouting and international hiring

Create a dedicated unit for global talent scouting and align with strategic priorities, including creating recruitment opportunities with other leading universities and faculties.

2. Enhance attractiveness through competitive packages and clear career pathways

Offer start-up packages in collaboration with external funders and other faculties. Align internal calls for doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers with strategic recruitment initiatives and calibrate professorial salaries to remain competitive with leading global universities. Strengthen transparent, merit-based career development toward professorship.

3. Promote flexible and open-rank recruitment structures

Increase flexibility in hiring by enabling appointments at different academic levels (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor). Promote open-rank recruitment calls and leverage excellence initiatives (e.g. WAF, Pro Futura, ERC, VR) to attract both early and senior researchers.

4. Leverage the University's and region's strengths

Highlight the Öresund region's proximity to the continent, vibrant cultural life, and strong innovation ecosystem (including the potential of Lund Humanities Village) throughout recruitment processes.

5. Support integration and language development

Foster broader academic and creative engagement within the University and beyond. Ensure mentorships for all international hires. Clarify the balance between research and teaching.



3. Implement new funding strategies to unlock major research ideas

The research funding landscape is a dynamic arena that must be actively managed to support researchers' ambitious research ideas. For the humanities to thrive, the HT Faculties must move from participation to leadership in national and international funding. Securing research funding is not just about money; it is about influence, visibility, and defining the questions that shape Europe's future and make groundbreaking humanities' research possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase participation and success in strategic research calls

Strengthen institutional capacity to effectively engage in strategic research calls at national and international level. This includes to proactively match opportunities with potential applicants, and to offer guidance in how to find, join or lead EU consortia. Provide incentives, such as academic recognition and seed funding to encourage participation.

2. Support applications for EU funding

Offer full pre-award and post-award support, including co-funding, financial and legal assistance, and administrative continuity. Clarify the faculties' role as an enabler and partner for EU grants (such as the ERC, MSCA, and collaborative EU projects).

3. Use research funding to build careers and strong research environments

Include EU opportunities at all career stages, from PhD to professorship, and make them part of structured career counselling. Position funding not only as an individual achievement but as a way of building strong, sustainable research environments.

4. Foster excellence through mentoring fora

Establish a dedicated funding mentoring forum that brings together ERC grantees and experienced experts at the HT Faculties and other faculties at Lund University, to promote cross-disciplinary exchange, foster excellence, share best practice, and strengthen institutional and individual capacity for high-impact research.

5. Expand visibility and partnerships

Launch strategic efforts to increase the HT Faculties' presence in international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral networks and alliances. Build global partnerships that amplify HT research and make the Faculties a visible, attractive leader in networks shaping Europe's research agenda.



4. Create lifelong student engagement by delivering visionary career guidance and strong alumni networks

The HT Faculties equip students not just for their first job, but for a lifetime of meaningful impact in society. Excellence in education is about relevance, responsiveness, and engagement with the world beyond the university. Strengthened career services and collaborations with employers, cultural institutions, and public agencies will help students translate their learning into action and shape careers that align with their values while addressing societal needs. Additionally, the HT Faculties should invest in alumni relations as a bridge between education and lifelong professional growth. HT alumni are cultural leaders, policymakers, educators, entrepreneurs, and innovators. By fostering a living network of former students, the HT Faculties can create mentorship opportunities, open doors for internships and employment, and build a shared sense of purpose across generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen career services for the humanities

Develop a dedicated Humanities Career Centre; a space (physical and digital) where students can explore unconventional career paths, connect with mentors, and work on real-world challenges with external partners.

2. Collaborate with other top universities

Secure internationally competitive education at the advanced level by focusing resources strategically and collaborating with leading universities.

3. Integrate career development into the curriculum

Embed project-based learning with NGOs, think tanks, media organisations, cultural institutions, and businesses directly into courses, so students graduate with both academic depth and practical experience.

4. Build the “HT Global Alumni Network”

Create a dynamic online platform where alumni can share career opportunities, provide mentorship, host regional meetups, and collaborate on international projects. Alumni success stories should be systematically documented and shared as part of our public narrative.

5. Alumni as ambassadors

Establish a programme where alumni actively represent Lund’s humanities on national and international stages – in schools, at conferences, in media – strengthening recruitment, policy influence, and public understanding of the humanities and offer alumni exclusive access to online lectures, micro-courses, and research updates, ensuring they remain part of the intellectual life of the faculties and can continue to contribute their experience back into academia.



5. Organising for the future

University faculties are built upon strong departments. Most support functions are designed to serve departmental needs. However, the departmental structure risks lock-in effects that counter the ability to reorient and reframe educational and research agendas. Going forward, HT needs to consider critical strategic choices to strengthen the Faculties' capacity to meet the ambitions outlined in this document. Reorganisation is not about dismantling existing strengths, but about building new connectivity: flexible platforms, centres of excellence, and faculty-level mechanisms that complement departmental foundations. By rethinking structures, HT becomes more outward-facing, interdisciplinary, and strategically aligned with Lund University's broader mission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create internationally visible centres of excellence

Develop and support flagship centres that showcase the strengths and innovation of the humanities at Lund University. These centres should attract leading scholars, foster high-impact research, and offer interdisciplinary programmes that enhance the global reputation of the humanities. Visibility should be reinforced through international partnerships, public engagement, and strategic communication.

2. Establish and fund a dedicated unit within the HT Faculties tasked with monitoring international academic mobility, current migration policies and their consequences, and geopolitical shifts to identify and manage strategic recruitment opportunities.

3. Empower faculties to initiate cross-departmental collaboration

Contribute to and advocate for a culture where faculties at LU are better empowered to initiate collaboration across their disciplinary boundaries both in education and research. Be active in relevant discussions with LU's central leadership and coordinate proactively with other interested faculties.

4. Enhance advocacy and external engagement

Strengthen the HT Faculties' ability to engage in strategic dialogue and advocacy in order to advance the interests of the humanities. This includes influencing policy, securing external funding, building partnerships with governmental and cultural institutions and promoting the societal value of humanities research and education.

5. Build temporary flexible platforms at the faculty level

Set up temporary, faculty-level platforms that address urgent societal themes (e.g., Humanities in War and Conflict, Humanities & AI). These act as incubators for new curricula, research projects, and collaborations, with the ability to spin off into permanent units (if successful).

**THE COLLABORATION COUNCIL OF THE JOINT FACULTIES
OF THE HUMANITIES AND THEOLOGY AT LUND UNIVERSITY
SAMVERKANSRÅDET VID HUMANISTISKA OCH TEOLOGISKA
FAKULTETERNA VID LUNDS UNIVERSITET | 2024–2026**

- **Bo Ahrén**, Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Medicine and former pro-vice chancellor responsible for external engagement
- **Emma Börjesson**, Chair of the Humanities and Theology Student Union (HTS) until summer 2025
- **Jonas Hafström**, former Chair of the University Board
- **Charlotte Lorentz Hjorth**, Cooperation office, Project Manager European Culture and Creativity Innovation Policy Platform (ekip)
- **Sara Håkansson**, Deputy Dean, Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology, Deputy Chair
- **Elisabeth Roos Lindell**, Chair of the Humanities and Theology Student Union (HTS) from summer 2025
- **Maria Lindholm**, Senior Analyst and EU Coordinator, Swedish Research Council
- **Gabriella Nilsson**, Head of Department, Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences
- **Johannes Persson**, Dean, Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology, Chair
- **Mikael Roll**, Deputy Head of Department, Centre for Languages and Literature
- **Paul Schrotti**, Chair of Novation Tech SpA, Board Member of Axel Johnson International AB and the Färgfabriken Foundation
- **Anna Kvist**, Secretary

Also participating:

- From LU Innovation: **Sophie Hydén Picasso**, special contact person for the HT Faculties and advisor on research funding
- From Cooperation Office: **Lisa Thelin**, Head of Division
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