

The humanities take centre stage

THE JOINT FACULTIES OF HUMANITIES AND THEOLOGY:
RESEARCH MANIFESTO FOR THE 2020s



The 2020s are not without their great challenges. The pandemic has confronted us with fundamental questions of life and death. Climate change brings our responsibility for the planet and future generations to the fore. War and conflicts continue to torment our world. Meanwhile, there are many other important issues on the agenda: democracy and globalisation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence, migration and integration, traditional and new media, education and learning, culture and aesthetics, religion and science. In all of these contexts, the humanities take centre stage.

Humanities research for the 2020s

Humanities research constitutes a fundamental pillar of the knowledge-based society of the 2020s. In our high-tech, globalised age, solid understanding of the humanities is of crucial importance. It creates understanding of the great contemporary issues, provides orientation in an entangled world, puts the rushing flow of the present into perspective, and helps us to develop good judgement.

At the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology, human culture is explored in the widest possible sense. We study ideas and actions, we analyse belief and thought, we investigate knowledge and learning. We conduct research in language, literature, history, cognition, culture, art, ethics and other fundamental elements of our existence. Rich, diverse humanities research is an important asset in a democratic society and an indispensable intellectual resource in a well-functioning public sphere. At the same time, much of our research focuses on questions beyond the here and now: we critically curate a cultural and historic inheritance, we open up new worlds in time and space, and we have a readiness for the unknown and the timeless.

The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology form an internationally oriented scholarly community. Our researchers use a broad spectrum of methods, theories, materials and infrastructure to study texts, images, artifacts and practices. There are strong and proud traditions within subjects here, but also a willingness to break new ground and to cooperate across boundaries and subjects. Our research is woven into our teaching and leaves indelible marks in both the academic world and society as a whole.





We need the humanities because:

- Humanistic knowledge shapes our perception of the world around us, and the role of humanity within it. Humanities research and teaching create the preconditions for individuals to understand and influence the development of society in a positive direction.
- The humanities give individuals the tools to orientate themselves in a global, interconnected world. Developments in technology, economics, natural science and medicine must be integrated with knowledge from the humanities.
- Humanities research should contribute to society and form the basis of decision-making, at both national and international levels. The stronger the connections between the humanities and society at large, the better our chances of making the right decisions for the future.
- Humanities research plays an important role for many enduring problems and acute societal challenges, for example in terms of the climate and environment, health and wellbeing, digitalisation and the democratic society.
- Knowledge and theorising in the humanities provide critical perspectives and ensure that society retains a nuanced understanding of its own history, present, and future.
- Areas of research within the humanities often benefit from being integrated with other research fields in order to create synergies and to develop new areas of research, both within the humanities and beyond.

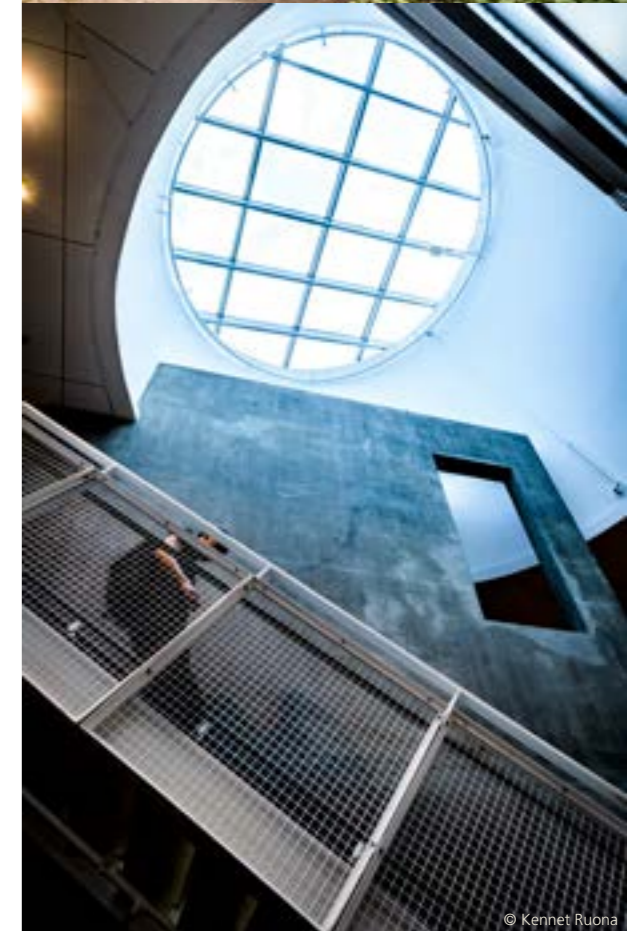


Our vision

During the 2020s, society will have great need of humanities research. The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology at Lund University have a responsibility to live up to the expectations of the wider world by activating and integrating humanities research where it is needed. Humanities research must break through, be far-reaching and provide an enduring knowledge base for society. Our approach springs from the idea that knowledge of the humanities should play a visible role in society, helping to set the tone today and in the future.

One central task for all researchers in the humanities is to identify relevant questions and provide the knowledge needed to deal with cultural, aesthetic, communicative, political and social problems. Analysis from the perspectives of the humanities is a given element of the ecosystem of knowledge and a well-functioning society.

Alongside continued development of the scientific traditions within the humanities, the field is also tasked with managing the knowledge accumulated over long periods of time and thus contributes broader perspectives on recurring conflicts and dilemmas. Knowledge and science always arise within a cultural and social context, and they are influenced by historical lineages and communicative structures. Without the humanities, society lacks the capacity to handle complex knowledge and to understand its long-term implications.



The humanities in local, national and global contexts

Above all, the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology are an important part of Lund University. The faculties are characterised by a breadth of subjects, interdisciplinary collaborations, robust research infrastructure and having a high public profile.

“The perspectives of the humanities and theology are necessary in order to, ‘explain, understand and improve our world,’ and to promote development that is sustainable over the long term in a constantly changing environment. The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology’s teaching, so closely aligned to their research, is needed to contribute to the positive development of society.”

From the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology’s strategic plan

Lund University’s most recent research appraisal (RQ20) sets out the ambition that research is to be appreciated by, and visible within, society at large, both nationally and globally. This is very much applicable to the humanities, and the report states that the humanities have a key role to play in the University’s ambition to understand, explain and improve the world. In the report, the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology are encouraged to develop collaborations within the faculties and to find new ways – including interdisciplinary ways – of combining tradition and renewal.

“The humanities and theology as a collective area cover very wide fields and responsibilities and serve as an important part of the University’s historical and contemporary identity, in languages, culture, history, and communication.”

From RQ20

At a national level too, a new dynamic understanding of the societal relevance of the humanities has emerged. It applies not least to the two most recent research bills, in which the humanities and social sciences are given a central role in efforts to understand issues concerning societal challenges such as the climate and the environment, health and wellbeing, digitalisation, long term provision of knowledge and the shaping of a democratic and robust society. A key point here is that these challenges cannot be solved through technical or scientific developments alone. The Government’s most recent research policy bill points to the vital importance of, among other things, skills such as critical thinking, understanding ethical issues, historical knowledge, and the ability to see problems from various perspectives.

“The humanities are an important part of the academic mission. Research in those areas teaches us about history, the wider world and ourselves. In a world wrought with deep conflicts and rapid change, we need to understand more about people and society and to strive for an in-depth dialogue about fundamental values.”

From the Research and Innovation Bill, Research, freedom, future – knowledge and innovation for Sweden

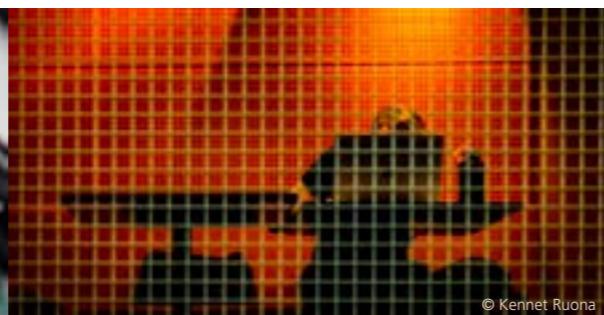
The research policy bill also makes clear that the humanities form an important knowledge base, necessary in order to reach the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030). Today’s European research policy strives to fully integrate humanities and social science research with global missions and main research areas. It is crucial for positive global development that questions and perspectives from the humanities set the tone for future investments in research.

“Technical solutions are often preconditions for new policy outcomes, but in themselves insufficient to have a meaningful impact. The lasting societal impacts that policy-makers seek are often equally reliant on insights from social sciences and the humanities.”

From Integration of Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon 2020



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Lund University Covid Cognition Station

Medical Humanities

Digital History

Classical Languages

Humanities Lab

Religious Studies

Aesthetics

Monastica

Libraries of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

Art

Modern Languages

Oresund Region Studies

The Folklife Archives with the Scania Music Collections

Environmental humanities

Cultural Heritage

Ethics

Scandinavian Studies

HUMINFRA

The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

Didactics

LUCS Cognitive Zoology Group

Middle Eastern Studies

History of Knowledge

Literature

European Studies

The Lund University Digital Archaeology Laboratory

Sound Environment Centre

Labour History

Film and Media

Human Rights

Lund University Press

The Lund Gothenburg Responsibility Project

Democracy

Historical Studies

Sociology of Education

Lund University Cognitive Robotics Lab

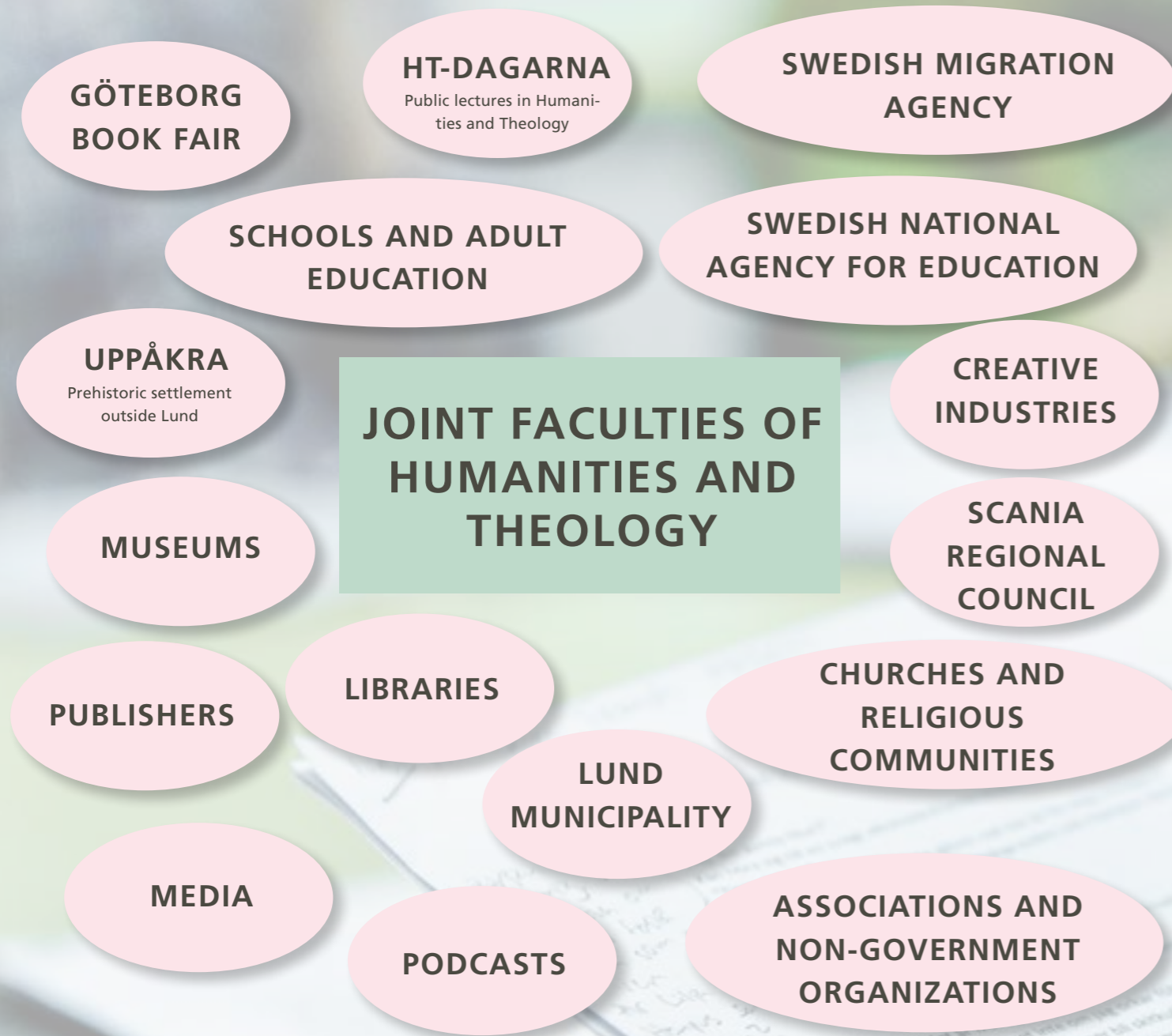
Health

Lund University Primate Research Station Furuviik

Society

Digital Cultures

Outreach and collaborations



Research platforms

Today, a significant part of the leading research within the humanities and theology is conducted in scientific environments outside the traditional subject and organisational divisions. The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology have therefore launched an investment in research platforms so that such inter-disciplinary research environments are given the opportunity to build and develop long-term inter-disciplinary collaborations.

CHRISTIANITY AND NATIONALISM | Research leader: Jayne Svenungsson

This platform is intended to develop a research environment within the rapidly growing interdisciplinary field that is concerned with the connections between Christianity and nationalism.

DIGITALHISTORY@LUND | Research leaders: Sune Bechmann Pedersen, Marie Cronqvist

A platform which brings together researchers from, amongst others, the historical disciplines of the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology – in collaboration with the Humanities Lab and the University Library – to encourage the development of new research projects in the field of digital history.

DIGITAL INTEGRATION ACROSS DISCIPLINES: ADVANCING CULTURAL HERITAGE DOCUMENTATION (DIAD) | Research leaders: Niclas Burenhult, Nicolás Dell'Unto

This platform will explore new territory within cultural heritage documentation through a targeted collaboration between two ground-breaking but distinct fields – those of digital archaeology and language documentation.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, MULTILINGUALISM, AND TEACHING (LAMINATE) | Research leaders: Jonas Granfeldt, Marianne Gullberg

A platform which aims to put Lund University on the global research map in the areas of language acquisition, multilingualism as well as language teaching and assessment.

SPACE HUMANITIES | Research leader: David Dunér

Intended to create an interdisciplinary association for research on issues related to the humanities and social issues that are raised by space research, such as historical, philosophical, ethical, cultural, conceptual, political, judicial and economic questions.

Researcher portraits

Research within the humanities and theology addresses a series of distinct phenomena and circumstances that make us human.

EMELIE LANTZ | Doctoral student in Human rights, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

“My research concerns social sustainability, what it means and what role equality plays in that broad concept. I have the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as my starting point, and I anchor my study in local collaborative projects between civil society and the city of Malmö.”



TORNIKE METREVELI | Postdoc in Sociology of religion

“I am interested in understanding how religion interacts with nationalism in everyday non-institutional settings and why local responses to religious-nationalist nexus can shape the character, timing, and behavior of state actors and their geopolitical visions and aspirations.”

BETTO VAN WAARDEN | Researcher in Media history, Marie Curie Fellow

“My research investigates how parliaments have used emerging forms of mass communication to bring democracy closer to the people in the past and contributes to discussions on how parliamentarians should engage with new media like Facebook and Twitter.”



MOA PETERSÉN | Associate professor in Digital cultures

“For me, trying to help to solve society’s problems is a given. I am researching in two projects: one about the climate crisis, and one about digital exclusion as a result of technological advances. This has never been about career choices – these are existential choices.”



LISA HELLMAN | Researcher in History, Pro Futura Fellow, Young Academy of Sweden

“My research is concerned with those who lose out on globalisation: when groups are forced to migrate over great distance, what strategies do they use, and how does this connect the world in new ways?”

PETER JORDAN | Professor of Archaeology

“Archaeologists collaborate widely across the humanities and natural sciences; this openness enables us to generate unique long-term understandings of the human condition, including major shifts in health, well-being and social equality, as well as the ultimate sustainability of our activities on the global environment.”



MELINA TSAPOS | Doctoral student in Theoretical philosophy

“A philosopher’s task is to help untangle complex issues and clarify definitions. In my case, I work toward an increased understanding of conspiracy theories, what they are, and who the people that believe in them are.”

YLVA HAMNELL-PAMMENT | Doctoral student in Educational sciences

“In my research, I wish to support learning in schools through investigating how students’ use of the language and symbols of chemistry affect their reasoning about, and understanding of, chemical processes in the laboratory classroom.”



BIBI JONSSON | Professor of Literary studies

“My research into Nazi literature poses the question of whether it is possible to apply ideological determinations to a single poem or poetry as a whole, as long as belles-lettres is regarded as comfortable literature, and associated with aesthetics and ethics.”

MIKAEL ROLL | Professor of Phonetics, Wallenberg Academy Fellow

“The anchoring of language within the brain is being researched in order to improve methods of teaching and rehabilitation. We see links between the thickness of the cerebral cortex and linguistic ability, and that brain areas are instantly activated when the listener predicts what the speaker is going to say.”



MARIANNE GULLBERG | Professor of Psycholinguistics, Director of Lund University Humanities Lab, Wallenberg Scholar

“I study how adults learn new languages and multilingualism. Since language is central to success in life – in school, health and work – it is important to understand how this acquisition takes place, and how multilingualism affects both the young and the old.”



SHIRLEY CHAN | Doctoral student in Library and information studies

“I investigate the challenges of preserving digital traces of online communities on social media and contribute to the understanding of how these information technologies influence our current and future access to and use of information online.”

MARINA SVENSSON | Professor of Modern China studies, Director of the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies

“My research on modern China spans several different areas. I am interested in questions around ideological and political controls in, for example, the university world and on the internet, but also in documentary photography and film.”



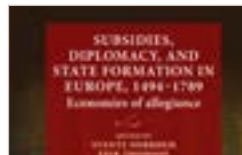
MATHIAS OSVATH | Associate professor of Cognitive zoology, Young Academy of Sweden

“I study how cognition in the animal kingdom has changed over geological time. This is in order to understand which principles govern cognition: whether there is more than one way to build cognition, or whether it must follow a certain order in its structure.”

ELISABET GÖRANSSON | Associate professor of Latin

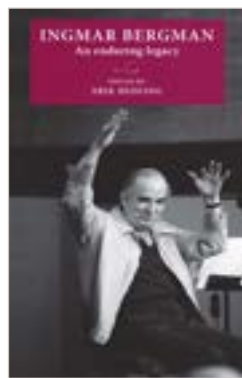
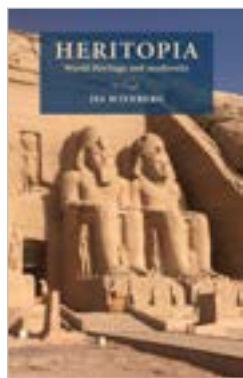
“I am passionate about making older texts accessible. The Monastica platform is an example of an interdisciplinary project aimed at highlighting such texts. I work mostly with Latin, a language central to our European history.”





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