

Appendix A: Terms of References (ToR)

The board of the Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT the Arctic University of Norway mandates the evaluation committee appointed by the Research Council of Norway (RCN) to assess the School of Sport Sciences (Idrettshøgskolen) based on the following Terms of Reference.

Assessment

You are asked to assess the organisation, quality and diversity of research conducted by School of Sport Sciences as well as its relevance to institutional and sectoral purposes, and to society at large. You should do so by judging the unit's performance based on the following five assessment criteria (a. to e.). Be sure to take current international trends and developments in science and society into account in your analysis.

- a) Strategy, resources and organisation
- b) Research production, quality and integrity
- c) Diversity and equality
- d) Relevance to institutional and sectoral purposes
- e) Relevance to society

For a description of these criteria, see Chapter 2 of the life sciences evaluation protocol. Please provide a written assessment for each of the five criteria. Please also provide recommendations for improvement. We ask you to pay special attention to the following aspects in your assessment:

UiT's strategy "Eallju – Developing the High North" emphasises the need to "*Develop knowledge, methods and instruments that contribute to solving major societal challenges*". An essential feature of the research at the School of Sport Sciences is to address a diversity of societal challenges (i.e., obesity, inactivity, elderly, preventive health, environment, safety) and we largely conduct applied research intended to be relevant to a variety of populations.

The School of Sport Sciences is a young department established in 2013 and is committed to conducting high-quality, rigorous, and relevant research across all subdisciplines of sport, exercise, physical activity and health. The School of Sport Sciences has a specific focus on 1) physical activity epidemiology, 2) skills and performance development in sports and physical activity, and 3) outdoor education (friluftsliv) and nature-based tourism. Over the last decade, we have established and developed a comprehensive research portfolio to include a variety of different research projects across physical activity epidemiology activity epidemiology (including cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, mental health, pain), E-health, physical activity prevalence and trends, female athlete health and performance (endurance sport and football), endurance exercise performance, biomechanics/athletic pacing, training adaptation, Olympic Games (youth OG, doping and anti-doping policy), sport and outdoor life infrastructure, avalanche safety and decision making, pedagogical and sociological perspectives on leadership and guiding in nature, and traditional (Sami) skills and knowledge in outdoor education (friluftsliv).

Research on *physical activity epidemiology* is focused on meeting societal challenges, such as obesity or the aging population, through the preventive aspects and mechanisms of physical activity. The main research areas are physical activity in relation to cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal health. We have also developed comprehensive expertise on methods for measuring physical activity using accelerometry in collaboration with Department of computer science, which also involves machine learning. The main body of this research utilises population-based studies such as the Tromsø Study or the Fit Futures study, and we have contributed to gathering data on physical activity in both of these large projects. We are also involved in several additional projects in the area of physical activity and cardiometabolic health. The main external research funding in this area is Helse Nord.

Our research on *performance and health of the female athlete* is demonstrated through two large research projects that started in 2019; The Female Endurance Athlete (FENDURA) study and the Female Football Research Center (FFRC), which together were granted 33 million in external funding from Tromsø Forskningsstiftelse. FENDURA is a research project aiming at improving the knowledge of how hormonal and other female-specific aspects impact exercise and performance. The primary objective of the FFRC is to obtain new and fundamental insights and knowledge on performance factors that influence sustainable development and health of female elite football athletes.

Additionally, in 2023 a new research area is in the process of being established, focusing on *sociocultural perspectives on sport, outdoor life and public health*, which will continue and expand our existing research focus on outdoor education (friluftsliv) and nature-based tourism, including avalanche decision making research. This will build on our current research conducted in outdoor life and avalanche safety (the department is part of Center for Avalanche Research and Education - the CARE project), with future projects being more focused on sociocultural perspectives.

A prominent feature of the research at our department is its interdisciplinarity nature, best exemplified by our close collaboration with computer science and machine learning (Department of Computer Science at Faculty of Science and Technology), public health (Department of Community Medicine), as well as Department of Psychology, Department of Physical Education, Clinical Medicine at UNN etc.

As such, we kindly ask the committee to evaluate the current balance between width and depth of our research portfolio, the research topics, and the existing collaboration strategy, which has developed over the past decade to better align with UiT strategies, in particular "*Develop more leading academic environments at the international forefront of knowledge development*" and "*Promote interdisciplinarity and enhance collaboration across disciplines, sectors and borders.*" We further ask the committee to evaluate the applicability of our research to future societal challenges, with a specific focus on the applied research nature of research in sport, exercise, outdoor and physical activity, and our Arctic location. We welcome suggestions for research directions to maintain relevance to society, and how best to optimally position the department for continued success with future research funding. We are currently in the process of reorganizing and merging our research groups, from three groups to two.

In addition, we would like your report to provide a qualitative assessment of School of Sport Sciences as a whole in relation to its strategic targets. The committee assesses the strategy that the administrative unit intends to pursue in the years ahead and the extent to which it will be capable of meeting its targets for research and society during this period based on available resources and competence. The committee is also invited to make recommendations concerning these two subjects.

Documentation

The necessary documentation will be made available by the life sciences secretariat at Technopolis Group.

The documents will include the following:

- a report on research personnel and publications within life sciences commissioned by RCN
- a self-assessment based on a template provided by the life sciences secretariat

Interviews with representatives from the evaluated units

Interviews with the School of Sport Sciences will be organised by the evaluation secretariat. Such interviews can be organised as a site visit, in another specified location in Norway or as a video conference.

Statement on impartiality and confidence

The assessment should be carried out in accordance with the Regulations on Impartiality and Confidence in the Research Council of Norway. A statement on the impartiality of the committee members has been recorded by the RCN as a part of the appointment process. The impartiality and confidence of committee and panel members should be confirmed when evaluation data from the School of Sport Sciences are made available to the committee and the panels, and before any assessments are made based on these data. The RCN should be notified if questions concerning impartiality and confidence are raised by committee members during the evaluation process.

Assessment report

We ask you to report your findings in an assessment report drawn up in accordance with a format specified by the life sciences secretariat. The committee may suggest adjustments to this format at its first meeting. A draft report should be sent to the School of Sport Sciences and RCN. The School of Sport Sciences should be allowed to check the report for factual inaccuracies; if such inaccuracies are found, they should be reported to the life sciences secretariat within the deadline given by the secretariat. After the committee has made the amendments judged necessary, a corrected version of the assessment report should be sent to the board of the Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT the Arctic University of Norway and the RCN after all feedback on inaccuracies has been received from School of Sport Sciences.