

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 Department of Clinical Dentistry, Faculty of Health Sciences based on the following Terms of Reference.

Assessment

You are asked to assess the organisation, quality and diversity of research conducted by the Department of Clinical Dentistry 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:

- **Develop knowledge and methods that contribute to solving major societal challenges**
UiT's strategy "Eallju – Developing the High North: UiT's strategy towards 2030" acknowledges the need for academic environments that *develop knowledge, methods and instruments that contribute to solving major societal challenges*.

One of the major societal challenges is to increase the awareness of oral health as an integral part of general health and well-being. The department aims to promote positive attitude and behavior toward a better oral health, especially in the north of Norway. Mapping the status of oral health and oral health illiteracy via research and dissemination of research findings is one of department strategies to solve challenges in the society.

The research activities at the Department of Clinical Dentistry (IKO) focuses on oral health communication, behavioural dentistry, preclinical and clinical research, especially in domains related the knowledge and practices of graduating European dentists on the prevention and management of oral diseases, including oral infections.

The department have also used data collected from population-based studies conducted in the north of Norway to facilitates cross disciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to educate the next generation of dental researcher. The Department of Clinical Dentistry play a role in the dissemination of research findings for the enhancement of better public policies and public outreach, especially in the north of Norway.

We would like the evaluation committee to evaluate the Department of Clinical Dentistry research output taking into consideration the infrastructure and resources available in the department. We welcome suggestions to strengthen our research output and ability to meet future challenges, reduce vulnerability and strengthen our position for external research funding. It has been the case that the department finds it particularly challenging to recruit academics with double qualification/competence (PhD degree and specialization in one of the 8 recognised dental specialties in Norway). We also kindly ask the committee to evaluate our ability to obtain and retain talented academic as a young and ambitious department, especially on measures deemed to be necessary for recruiting academic with clinical experience.

Research conducted the Department of Clinical Dentistry:

- **Research on dental public health, oral health communication, oral health psychology and behavioural dentistry**

The overarching thematic focus of research has been communication related to health topics, both in terms of communication between dental health professionals and patients and between patients. The research conducted include aspects related to communication, oral health illiteracy and the relationship between stakeholders in the context of healthcare. A substantial part of research activities has investigated the phenomenon of dental anxiety. Most recently the department has also taken interests in how attitudes and psychological phenomena among dental health professionals are related to their clinical practice and life in general, for instance how mentalization capabilities among dentists and dental students impact their perception of clinical encounters and quality of life. We ask the committee to evaluate the quality and impact of the research projects. It is in the department interest to get feedback in measures to boost international collaboration in externally funded projects. We also welcome suggestions for further direction on how to position the Department for research lead in behavioural dentistry and dental public health.

- **Research on preclinical, clinical and experimental dentistry**

The department is conducting research on oral biomaterials, evidence-based practice, and identification of clinical and molecular biomarkers for future oral disease risk assessment. The department aims to use clinical data obtained from large epidemiological studies conducted in the north of Norway (for example, Fitfuture and Tromsø Study 7) to map the oral health status among the population in Norway, primary in the north of Norway, for a better prevention and evidence-based approach to deliver high quality oral health services. Combating antibiotic resistance is one of the research priority themes at the Faculty of Health Sciences. The department research output aims also to emphasis the role of dental health professionals in Norway and elsewhere to preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics by advocating for responsible use of antibiotics in the community. We ask the committee to evaluate the quality and impact of the research projects in terms of boosting and strengthening collaboration in the research environment at the department.

Infrastructure available at the Department of Clinical Dentistry:

The Department of Clinical Dentistry is a small entity that has approximately 30 work-years divided between teaching activities (50%) and research activities (50%). The department has been and is still suffering from difficulties in recruitment of academics with double qualification/competence (PhD degree and specialization in clinical disciplines). Currently we have approximately 1.2 works year in the 7 major dental specialities in Norway. The department has a small research laboratory with one lab technician that focuses on two domains of research activities, i.e., oral biology/microbiology and dental biomaterials. The Department of Clinical Dentistry also has access to common research platforms at the Faculty of Health Sciences. The department has no clinical unit(s) that are dedicated to clinical research. However, the department is conducting clinical research projects (for example, Fitfuture and Tromsø Study 7) in collaboration with the Public Dental Health Service Competence Centre of Northern Norway to collect clinical data for future research purposes. We ask the committee to evaluate the importance, quality, and use of the available research infrastructure at the department. We also welcome suggestions for further improvements of the department's research infrastructure. The committee is also invited to make suggestions on how to streamline our clinical research in the upcoming years. Furthermore, the committee can give an account for a better recruitment of academics in the northern part of Norway.

In addition, we would like your report to provide a qualitative assessment of the Department of Clinical Dentistry 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 Department of Clinical Dentistry 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 Department of Clinical Dentistry 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 Department of Clinical Dentistry and RCN. The Department of Clinical Dentistry 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 Department of Clinical Dentistry.