

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 Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare (RKBU North) based on the following Terms of Reference.

Assessment

You are asked to assess the organisation, quality and diversity of research conducted by RKBU North 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 three aspects in your assessment:

1. Research relevant for young people's mental health in the Arctic

UiT aspires to stand at the forefront internationally when it comes to knowledge and expertise about and for the Arctic and the northern regions. The joint overarching societal mission, set by the Ministry of Health and Care Services and the Ministry of Children and Families in 2015, states that the RKBU North should contribute to strengthening the competence and quality of the services for children, adolescents, and their families, and thereby improve the mental health and well-being of children and young people living in the Northern part of Norway. The Directorate of Health (Hdir) and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs provide funding annually to the RKBU North to carry out research and innovation to enhance the mental health of children and young people, and to develop both community-based and specialized services in the northern regions. Over the past decades, one of our major strengths has been our efforts to develop, evaluate and disseminate knowledge about effective interventions that prevent mental health problems and promote well-being. This also encompasses research on strategies for the practical implementation of these interventions. Our applied research contributes to high quality services provided to the main target group, regardless of where the family lives, as well as the public service sector (municipal- and specialized health services),

decision-makers, leaders, kindergartens, and schools in the northern regions of Norway. We ask the committee to evaluate how well our research meets the need of our target group, also in view of our arctic location. We also welcome suggestions for research directions to maintain relevance to the northern regions and to strengthen the department's position for future research funding.

2. Improving quality in services for children, youths, and their families

One of our primary focus areas is preventive and health-promoting work with the goal of enhancing the mental health of children and young people. For the past ten years, these initiatives include developing, implementing, evaluating, and disseminating knowledge about effective health-promoting and preventive interventions targeting the mental health and well-being of children and young people. The department has several influential research projects with national and international collaboration that has received external funding (e.g., RCN, Kavli, Dam). Aimed at enhancing evidence-based practices in the field, these interventions are directed both universally, to all children and youths (e.g., anti-bullying), their families (e.g., parenting interventions including the Incredible Years), for children and youth at risk (e.g., children of mentally ill parents and refugees) or in the process of developing mental difficulties (e.g., anxiety, depression or conduct disorders). The department also conducts research on various factors and structures that influence the quality of health and care services such as studying collaboration and service quality in municipal services for children, young people, and their families.

As the UiT aims to contribute to innovative, democratic, and sustainable solutions to major societal challenges, digital tools and virtual reality elements has been developed to prevent mental health problems and improve social skills for children and adolescents. Two mobile applications have been developed and evaluated, with the potential to play a vital role in preventing societal challenges faced by children and adolescents (e.g., mental health problems and cyberbullying). In other research projects, virtual reality glasses are used both to train children and adolescents to face challenging situations (e.g., social anxiety) and to improve therapeutic competence for students within health science.

In reviewing our work, we would greatly appreciate the committee to evaluate the importance, quality and the societal impact of our research. We kindly ask the committee to evaluate how well our research addresses previous and future needs to solve major societal challenges in terms of mental health in a child and youth population. Do the committee see future research directions growing out of our current research activities that can position the department for future research funding? Additionally, we are grateful for advice on how to further develop to improve the quality of services benefiting children, youth, and families.

3. Evidence-based practice in mental health services for children and adolescents

UiT aims to solve major societal challenges through academic communities that shape research questions and methods that, in the short and long term, can provide a foundation in demanding decision-making situations. There is relatively strong agreement among practitioners, researchers, and politicians that interventions

within child and adolescent mental health should have the best possible documentation of effects. A challenge is that the quality and effect of interventions and measurement tools aimed at children and young people are not well documented, and many interventions are being implemented without any evidence of effect. Similarly, many Norwegian versions of tests are used without documentation of their psychometric properties. Through national collaboration with other research institutions, RKBU North conducts systematic reviews and meta-analyses of the effectiveness of mental health interventions, and treatments, as well as of the psychometric properties of tests for children and adolescents. The department has developed and operates the scientific journal *Ungsinn* that makes knowledge about the quality and effectiveness of various interventions available to both practitioners, researchers, and decision-makers. The department has also contributed to the development and operation of the scientific journal *PsykTestBarn* and the electronic resource *Implementere.no*. One challenge is to reach out to the practice field with knowledge to ensure the implementation of evidence-based interventions that benefit children, adolescents, and their families. We welcome the committee to evaluate the impact of our research in terms of implementing evidence-based practice in mental health services for children and adolescents. Additionally, we are grateful for suggestions for future research directions and how to make further use of our approaches to enhance societal impact.

In addition, we would like your report to provide a qualitative assessment of RKBU North 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 RKB North 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 RKB North 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 RKB North and RCN. The RKB North 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 RKB North.