



Western Norway  
University of  
Applied Sciences

**INTERACTION**  
**SUSTAINABILITY**  
**INNOVATION**

## Negotiating contested values

Building a new university embedded in  
and responsible for its region.

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Budapest, EUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
University values: what, why and how?  
April 29, 2022



# Western Norway University of Applied Sciences



17 500 students



1 800 employees



5 campuses



4 faculties

Førde

Sogndal

Bergen

Stord

Haugesund



# Academic freedom: the Norwegian context

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- › 2007: Stortinget (the Parliament) established academic freedom in the act relating to universities and university colleges
- › The national agenda
- › The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions: universities and colleges' own room for maneuver has decreased due to
  - › the introduction of more earmarked funds,
  - › more detailed results- and target-based management systems, and
  - › demands for efficiency improvement in the public sector
- › March 2022:
  - › Report on “Academic freedom of expression” was forwarded to the Norwegian Government.
  - › “Good expression culture must be built from bottom up every day.”



# Two perspectives

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- › Universities and Regional Engagement – From the Exceptional to the Everyday.
- › The regional engagement of universities requires a special approach and attention to the issue of academic freedom.



# UNIVERSITIES AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

FROM THE EXCEPTIONAL  
TO THE EVERYDAY



RSA Regional Studies  
Association

*A leading & impactful community*

REGIONS AND CITIES

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## Universities and Regional Engagement: From the Exceptional to the Everyday. (Routledge 2022).

- Cases from Norway, Poland, Italy, Brasil, China, and the Caribbean.
- Policy tends to be focusing on
  - exceptional outcomes such as patents or spin-off companies
  - a limited number of “best practice” cases
- Universities are diverse, and regions need a combination of forms of higher education and forms of engagement.
- Much of the dynamic interplay between the university and the region is characterized by “mundaneness” – the everyday activities of teaching, research, innovation, collaboration

The regional engagement of universities requires a special approach and attention to the issue of academic freedom.

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- › Universities have traditionally enjoyed an independent and free role in the development of science and disciplines.
- › The university of applied sciences` tradition stems from the former regional colleges primary aim was to prepare candidates to perform a specific trade or profession.
  - › Professional (vocational) training has traditionally been subject to significant regulation.
  - › Research has been assigned a specific role linked to the professional field or also with a particular responsibility for the region`s knowledge requirements.



# Building a new university embedded in and responsible for its region.

- › Five campuses geographically spread on the Norwegian west coast, deep fjords and high mountains bordering to the east
- › Campuses with a closely entwined history with its regional surroundings
- › Large hydropower resources and the sea has played a key role in the industrial, maritime, and economic development of the region.
- › Since the 1970s the oil and gas industry has evolved to play a prominent role.
- › The region is by far the most export-intensive in Norway.
- › The northern county (Vestland) of the region has set itself the goal to become the world's first zero-emission region by 2030, thus facing a formidable green transition and the southern county (Rogaland) is also preparing for a green transformation.
- › The contemporary sense of urgency: Climate change / Demographic changes



# Study programmes 2022



Health and social sciences



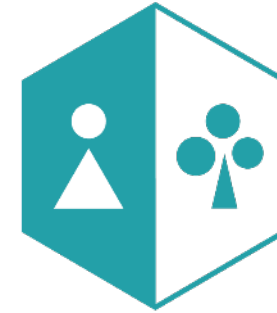
Sports, Nordic outdoors and public health



Engineering and maritime studies



Teacher education



Natural and social sciences



Finance and administration

44

Bachelor

36

Master

5

Ph.D.



# Research and development in close collaboration with public sector, community and industry



Health and well-being



Sports and public health



School and kindergarten



Society and innovation



Sea, environment and safety



Technology

Ph.D. program

Ph.D.-fellows

EU-projects

Erasmus projects

External research funding

# Values

- **Challenging:** We question the status quo by promoting decisiveness, critical thinking, and the ability to reflect.
- **Sharing:** Knowledge grows when shared. Through dialogue with society and each other, we contribute to the growth of new knowledge that will have an impact.
- **Closeness:** A close relationship exists between the students and staff, and between the university and the work life we provide candidates for. We work very closely with professional fields and working life and will continue to develop our studies in the best interests of the region.

# Vision

Knowledge that shapes  
people and society.

# Negotiating contested values – dilemmas

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- › the values of being a traditional educator, do not necessarily translate towards research or innovation.
- › sharing knowledge in close collaboration and dialogue with professions and working life will require “new” forms of dissemination than traditional academic outlets such as scientific journals
- › Sharing knowledge in close collaboration and dialogue with professions and working life will require more complementary rather than competing perspective on the value of academic knowledge.
- › building a `full` university and still collaborating closely with professional fields and working life for innovation in the region can create conflicts of values
  - › traditional academic values such as the integrity of research and critical thinking at distance can be at odds with values of closeness and co-creation of knowledge based on different stakeholders’ interests.



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> **THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**