DARMA

Danish Association of Research Managers and Administrators

A qualitative organisational study to create a comprehensive overview of centralised research and funding support offices in key Danish research institutions.

DARMA Report

The Danish funding support landscape - Organisation of research support tasks at Danish public institutions

DARMA Special Interest Group for personnel managers

DARMA report

Organisation of research and funding support and tasks in Danish universities, university colleges and hospitals

Status: October 2024

1 Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from interviews conducted across various Research Support Offices (RSOs) at Danish universities, university colleges and hospitals, focusing on common themes regarding research and funding support. The report provides a snapshot of the Danish research and funding support landscape in the summer of 2024.

RSOs are primarily focused on increasing external research funding and improving success rates for strategically important grants. Central RSOs, especially in larger institutions, focus on complex funding opportunities, while all RSOs track applications, success rates, and grant sizes. Their role is seen as a service, providing expert advice tailored to researchers' needs, with highly specialised staff keeping pace with evolving funding landscapes. External funding's growing importance is creating resource pressures, inviting RSOs to streamline workflows.

At larger institutions, RSOs are divided into central and local units. Central RSOs manage larger, more complex grants and collaborate closely with local offices that are closer to departmental strategies and researcher needs. Post-award tasks are often shared with finance departments. The centralisation of pre- and post-award support fosters synergies that enhance project management. However, staff specialisation, especially regarding EU funding, can create bottlenecks. Collaboration between RSOs and other central departments like Legal and Finance is crucial, with RSOs often acting as the first point of contact for research-related support.

RSOs provide support across the entire grant lifecycle, from pre-pre-award activities that aid strategic decision-making to post-award management of funded projects. Pre-award services include information on funding opportunities, workshops, proposal reviews, budget finalisation, and support with non-scientific sections of applications. Post-award tasks, although varied, commonly include budget tracking, compliance with grant conditions, and communication with funding bodies. However, institutions differ in how

they define "post-award" responsibilities, often splitting them between RSOs and finance departments.

As the volume of grant applications and awards increases, RSOs are facing capacity challenges, prompting a focus on standardising tasks to maintain service quality. There is a growing interest in data-driven workflows, with some RSOs adopting systems for project management, dashboards, and funding tracking. AI tools are also being explored for potential efficiency gains. Institutional reorganisations are impacting the structure and resource allocation of RSOs, especially at larger universities.

In summary, RSOs play an important role in supporting research funding efforts at Danish universities. While they provide essential services, the increasing pressure on resources and the need for standardisation present ongoing challenges. Enhanced collaboration, streamlined workflows, and the adoption of new technologies may be key to sustaining high-quality support in the future.

2 Introduction and purpose of this report

This report provides an overview of funding and research support at Danish public institutions with research activities: universities, university colleges and hospitals, as is in September 2024. It originates from the DARMA Special Interest Group for personnel managers. The report does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire Danish funding and research support landscape.

Its purpose is to inspire a dialogue about the objectives, organisational structure, and tasks of funding and research support.

Denmark, renowned for its robust commitment to research and development, allocates substantial research funding through various public and private funding bodies, in addition to the funding opportunities provided by European research and innovation framework programmes and international sources.

RSOs play an important role in guiding researchers through the complexities of applying for external funding and ensuring compliance with respective terms and conditions. They also act as liaisons between researchers and funding bodies, ensuring that proposals align with the strategic priorities of the funding body and maximise the chances of securing financial support, while also ensuring that project implementation complies with the rules of the funding body. Finally, RSOs support research institutions in achieving their strategic research goals.

At a time when many RSOs are reporting significant increases in external funding applications and grants, research support is undergoing organisational and conceptual changes. Research support is increasingly a multifaceted role requiring a deep understanding of funding landscapes, policy developments, and emerging research trends, as well as strong skills in project management, administration, communication, and stakeholder engagement.

3 Methods

All elements of this report are based on qualitative interviews with leaders of central RSOs at 10 institutions in Denmark: 8 universities, 1 university college (professionshøjskole), and 1 central administration for hospitals in the Capital Region (Region Hovedstaden). There are many more public institutions in Denmark that conduct research and have research support offices. Thus, the report does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire Danish funding and research support landscape. The report focuses on these institutions because they are all represented in the DARMA Special Interest Group for personnel managers, who initiated this report. The qualitative interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide with a set of core questions.

The interviews were analysed thematically, and four core themes were identified for reporting on the individual interviews: Organisational structure, objectives and goals, main

tasks, and, finally, challenges and improvements. All individual reports have been approved by the respective interviewees. See the reports in Section 4.

Additionally, the four core themes are used for an overall analysis of central RSOs as represented in the 10 interviews. See Section 2.

4 Research and Funding Support: Main Findings

This section presents the main findings of the interviews, focusing on common themes. Statements from one or a few interviews that add interesting nuances to the dialogue about RSOs are included. The main findings are presented in five sections: 1. Objectives and Goals, 2. Organisational Structure, 3. Main Tasks, 4. Challenges and Improvements, and 5. Other. The findings are presented in bullet points for a quick overview.

1. Objectives and Goals

- The overall goal for research support is to **increase external research funding as well as success rates for external research funding applications** that are strategically important for their institutions. Central RSOs, especially at larger institutions, typically focus on the more complex and larger funding opportunities or particular funding bodies. Almost all RSOs monitor the number of applications, success rates, and size of grants. Due to the changing nature of the funding landscape, RSOs typically do not have key performance indicators for their activities.
- All interviewed RSOs consider themselves to provide a service that researchers can choose to use. It is important for RSOs to **add value to the application and grant administration processes**. They provide support tailored to the individual researcher's needs and offer expert advice to further improve applications and grant management.
- RSO staff are **highly specialised** and often have extensive experience in the research sector. RSOs consider it pivotal to stay up to date with the latest developments

regarding funding bodies, researchers, and various related agendas in the research sector. Larger institutions have RSO staff members specialised in one or a few funding bodies, whereas at smaller institutions, staff members work with many funding sources.

- External funding is becoming increasingly important for research institutions as well as for researchers, putting pressure on the available resources at RSOs due to a growing number of applications and grants. Thus, RSOs constantly focus on **optimizing workflows and standardizing the execution of frequent tasks.**

2. Organisational Structure

Collaboration between central and local RSOs

- Larger institutions have both a central RSO as well as local RSOs at faculties and departments, **typically dividing tasks and responsibilities** between them. At some universities, the central RSO often handles pre-award tasks related to larger and more complex funding opportunities or roles, often because critical mass is not present at the local level, or due to the size of the grants. Examples include the coordinating role of Horizon Europe research and innovation actions, Innovation Fund Denmark's Grand Solutions, Centres of Excellence by the Danish National Research Foundation, selected private funding bodies, and US and international funding sources.

- The **central RSOs work closely with the local RSOs**, which have knowledge about the faculty's or department's strategies as well as the interests and profiles of individual researchers. Applications and budgets are often approved at the local level. The central RSO can provide expert advice but does not make final decisions.

- Collaboration between central and local RSOs is typically supported by a structure of **regular meetings** between staff. Sometimes, central RSO staff members are assigned to specific local RSOs to ensure coordination. Sometimes, the central RSOs provide additional support to local RSOs that are short on resources for a limited time.

- RSO leaders at institutions with both central and local RSOs report a **careful balance** between providing tailored support to researchers and managing time-consuming and complex coordination challenges.
- RSO leaders at institutions with only central RSOs, on the other hand, report a **careful balance** between providing consistent, high-quality assistance and managing scalability issues and bottlenecks.

Central RSOs with both pre- and post-award services

- Typically, post-award tasks are shared between the RSO and the institution's central or local finance department. While the RSO covers project management-related tasks such as budget overview and expected expenses, preparation of consortium meetings, communication with consortium partners, or contact with the funding agency, the finance department administers project-related expenses and prepares financial reporting. Some RSOs do not consider the handling of project-related expenses and the preparation of financial reporting as post-award tasks, while others do.
- Some central RSOs at **larger institutions** assist with some or all post-award tasks for larger collaborative grants. At **smaller institutions**, the central RSO often covers both pre- and post-award tasks, including financial reporting.
- Leaders of RSOs with both pre- and post-award tasks report this setup as **positive**, as it provides consistency and continuity for grant holders and generally supports a high standard of project management due to the seamless sharing of experiences between pre-award and post-award staff.
- Supporting both pre- and post-award tasks within the same RSO creates **synergies**. Post-award expertise can inform pre-award tasks and improve project descriptions in applications, particularly the description of project implementation. Sometimes post-award staff assist with application budgets.
- Pre- and post-award teams are highly specialised and have **different qualifications and skill sets**. Typically, pre-award teams excel at reading and writing texts, whereas

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post-award teams generally prefer economic tasks. Both are strong at communicating with researchers and have a highly developed service mindset.

Composition of RSOs

- In addition to pre-award and often post-award services, **some RSOs have sister teams** within the same department, such as research data management, research ethics, and gender and diversity in research. At one university, the RSO is also responsible for PhD administration.
- Many RSOs have **specialised staff** dedicated to specific funding instruments, particularly the EU. On one hand, this allows for deep expertise and high-quality support. However, specialisation can create a high dependence on individual knowledge, resulting in a lack of robustness and sensitivity to workload issues.

Collaboration with other central departments

- Central RSOs typically have **significant collaboration with departments within the central administration** (and sometimes local levels) of their institutions on pre- and post-award tasks. This often includes the legal department and technology transfer office for contracts, the finance department for budgets and controlling, HR for hiring and employment conditions, and the library for researcher profiles and open science.
- Some RSOs use their comprehensive knowledge of the funding landscape to assist with the institution's strategic planning on external research funding. These RSOs work closely with the institution's **executive management**.
- RSOs are often—officially or unofficially—the **first point of contact** for any research support-related task and direct researchers to the appropriate department for assistance.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-pre award: Supporting executive management

- Some RSOs closely monitor national, European, and international research funding priorities. This is done, for example, through offices in Brussels and memberships in university alliances. These RSOs **support decision-making by informing executive management** about the research funding strategies of funding bodies, preparing background information for meetings with funding bodies and strategic partners, drafting responses to hearings, etc.

- Most RSOs register data on the institution's external research funding activities and analyse it regularly.

- Most RSOs **promote funding opportunities** internally to support the strategic research priorities of the institution, such as focusing on green transition or increasing funding from Horizon Europe.

- Leaders of RSOs that provide pre-pre-award services consistently report this as positive. They perceive the integration of strategic initiatives and overall research policy within the RSO as a way to **enhance the overall impact of research activities at their institution**.

Pre-award: supporting individual researchers during proposal writing

- RSOs provide **extensive support** for selected funding opportunities. They provide information and offer workshops on upcoming calls for proposals, match specific research interests with open calls, contact funding bodies for specific information, support collaboration with co-applicants at other institutions and their RSOs, comment on proposals, organize internal reviews, provide specific assistance with non-scientific sections (impact, project implementation, institutional profile, etc.), as well as administrative requirements, and, if relevant, interview training. Some RSOs also finalize budgets for applications.

- Some RSOs **advise researchers** on how to position themselves for selected, prestigious funding schemes. They provide guidance on competitive CVs, alignment between research ideas and the objectives of funding bodies, and the strategic composition of consortia. RSOs also advise researchers on funding plans and strategies for their specific research ideas.
- RSOs typically **don't write text for proposals** themselves but provide writing guidelines and text examples for non-scientific sections. Their comments on the scientific sections are from a layperson's perspective.
- RSO staff are typically specialised in either pre-award or post-award tasks. Only a few do both. Therefore, when a proposal is successful and leads to a grant, RSOs hand over the proposal to colleagues who manage the **grant agreement and post-award tasks**. These teams may be within the RSO or in a different department.

At-award: supporting researchers during grant agreement preparation

- RSOs support researchers during the period after the positive evaluation of an application and before the project starts.
- Some RSOs are responsible for negotiating the grant agreement, which typically includes negotiating the project start, budget adjustments, and minor changes in the description of the project, as well as negotiating consortium agreements or collaboration agreements.
- Other RSOs support this process together with other departments, particularly the Legal Department, or hand over the successful application entirely to a different team.

Post-award: supporting researchers during project implementation

- Interestingly, the interviews show no consensus among the institutions on which specific tasks are covered by "post-award". There seems to be agreement, however, that supporting the grant holder in complying with grant conditions, keeping an

overview of actual and expected project-related expenses, as well as upcoming deadlines for administrative tasks, are core post-award responsibilities.

- Post-award tasks are typically supported by project administrators or project managers.

- At some **larger institutions**, central RSOs assist with post-award tasks for larger grants. Often, part of the costs for this support is re-allocated internally and covered by the grant. Post-award assistance can include budget follow-up meetings, organising consortia meetings and writing minutes, submitting project deliverables, providing overall assistance with scientific reporting, and communicating with the funding agency.

- The administration of actual expenses, including the preparation of financial reports, is often done by the institution's Finance Department, not the RSO. Legal contracts are typically prepared by a separate legal team or department, and hiring is usually initiated by the institution's HR department. In these cases, the **RSO often acts as a link** between the grant holder and the respective department.

- At some **smaller institutions**, the central RSOs handle all or most post-award tasks.

4. Challenges and Improvements

- RSOs find that the **overall number of applications and grants is increasing**, and some RSOs find that they can no longer provide all the support they would like to. Many RSOs are focused on standardising tasks to provide consistently high-quality service, even under time pressure.

- **Data-supported workflows** are an area that RSOs would like to improve. RSOs typically have systems for application and project management, record-keeping, and journaling (e.g., Workzone, F2) and some have systems that provide overviews of applications and grants (e.g., Pure, spreadsheets), dashboards with statistics (e.g., PowerBI and Qlik), as well as systems to track funders' deadlines (e.g., Pivot-RP,

spreadsheets, funding databases). A few RSOs have data analysts on the team. Artificial intelligence tools for writing and chatbots are being explored.

- At the time of this report, several university administrations are undergoing **reorganisation**. Some RSOs at larger institutions have experienced several reorganisations in recent years, where tasks and resources have been moved between central units and local RSOs, or vice versa.

5 Research Support Profiles: 10 interview summaries

Summaries of the 10 interviews with leaders of central RSOs at research performing institutions. Each interview is reported under the five sections: 1. Organisational Structure, 2. Objectives and Goals, 3. Main Tasks, 4. Challenges and Improvements, and 5. Visualised Structure.

Research Support at Aarhus University (AU)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

Aarhus University (AU) has a well-established and intricate organisational structure dedicated to research support. The central research support office is one of three units in the administrative division AU Research Support. The unit plays a pivotal role and consists of 29 members divided into four teams: Strategy, Pre-Award, Post-Award, and Support.

The Strategy team is tasked with strategic research policy, including providing support to university leadership and engaging with EU policies in collaboration with AU's office in Brussels. The Pre-Award team, is responsible for assisting with grant applications, predominantly focusing on complex and strategic funding instruments. The post-award team handles the management of awarded EU-funded projects. Additionally, there is a Support team providing IT support, data analyses, secretarial services, and communications.

A significant organisational shift has been occurring since mid-2023, moving towards a partial decentralization. Previously, the central unit handled all funding instruments This change aims to balance the increased volume of external funding AU receives with the available resources by delegating responsibilities for certain funding instruments to the faculties, while the central unit continues to manage the more complex and strategic funding sources.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of AU's research support structure is to maximise the university's success in securing external research funding. This involves focusing the efforts of the central RSO on strategic and complex funding instruments, particularly from the Horizon Europe, which require specialised knowledge and experience. The goal is to provide high-quality support throughout the entire research funding lifecycle, from identifying opportunities to managing awarded projects.

Another task is to ensure efficient knowledge transfer and collaboration between the central unit and the recently established decentralised units. This is facilitated through a funding network and strategic coordination to maintain a seamless transition and consistent support standards across the university. The restructuring aims to enhance the overall capacity and effectiveness of research support, ensuring that both central and local units are well-equipped to handle their specific responsibilities.

3. Main Tasks

The main tasks of AU's research support units are divided between the central and decentralised structures, each focusing on different aspects of the research funding process.

Central Unit

- Strategy Team: This team is responsible for monitoring and influencing research policies at the EU level, supporting university leadership in strategic decision-making, and preparing position papers and responses to consultations.

- Pre-Award Team: This team specializes in assisting with the preparation and submission of grant applications for complex and strategic funding instruments, primarily from the EU. The pre-award team is responsible for identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice to enhance the quality and competitiveness of applications. The team provides detailed guidance on proposal writing, including the development of non-scientific sections and compliance checks.

- Post-Award Team: This team manages the administrative and financial aspects of awarded EU-funded projects. They handle contract negotiations, grant administration, financial reporting, and compliance with funding bodies' requirements. The support involves ongoing coordination with the researchers, the local project managers and the financial departments at faculty level. Administrative support for project coordinators is offered on a time-charge basis.

Local RSOs at the faculties

These units are responsible for supporting grant applications for other funding instruments, including national and private funds. Their tasks include identifying relevant funding opportunities, providing detailed guidance on application procedures. Post-award activities for these funding sources, such as project management and financial reporting, are managed at the faculty or department level.

4. Challenges and Improvements

One of the main challenges faced by AU's research support structure is the significant increase in external funding without a corresponding increase in support resources. This has led to the current transition and the establishment of a decentralised structure addressing this issue by redistributing responsibilities and ensuring that the new local RSOs are adequately resourced to handle their new roles.

Another challenge is the lack of an integrated IT system for managing grant applications and awards. There is a strong desire for a comprehensive system that can streamline these processes, provide better data management, and facilitate a seamless and more effective collaboration between the central and the local RSOs.

To improve the overall research support structure, AU is focusing on developing standardized processes and ensuring clear communication and knowledge transfer between the central and decentralised units. This includes establishing a common understanding of roles and expectations, maintaining regular communication through meetings and workshops, and creating detailed guidelines and resources to support the new structure.

In conclusion, while AU's research support structure is undergoing significant changes, the aim is to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency in managing the increasing volume and complexity of research funding. By addressing current challenges and implementing improvements, AU is well-positioned to continue its success in securing and managing external research funding.

5. Visualised Structure
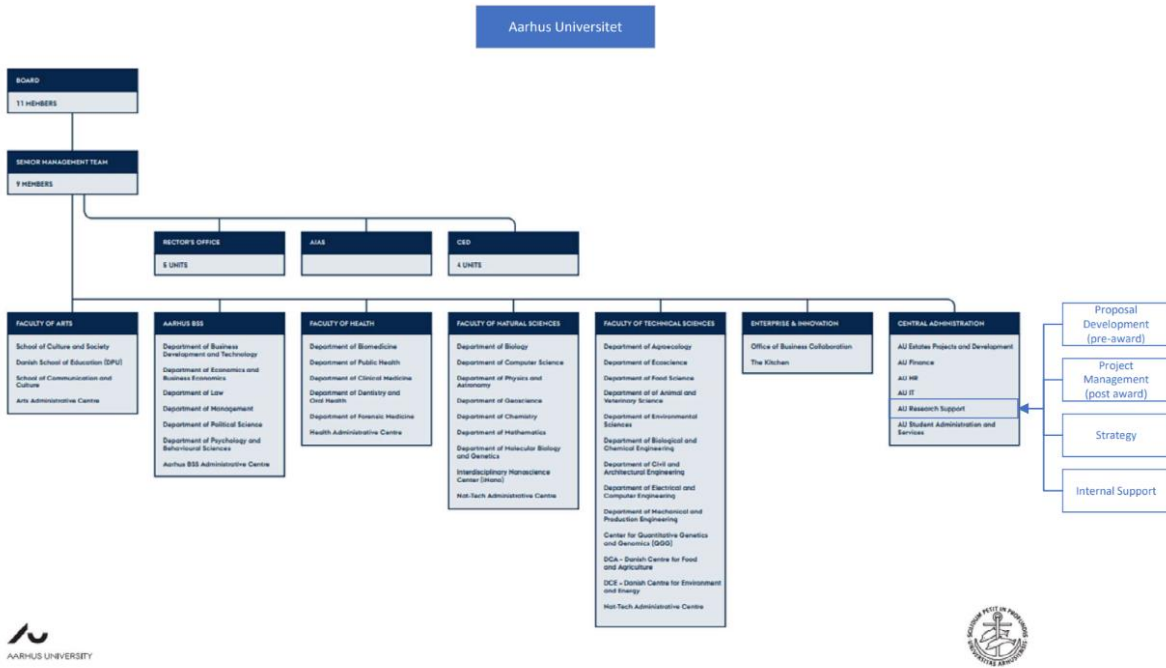
Research Support at Copenhagen Business School (CBS)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The Research Support Office (RSO) at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) is a centralised unit that functions independently within the institution. Previously part of the Dean's Secretariat for Research, the RSO has been restructured to form its own entity, reflecting its critical role in the research support ecosystem. This restructuring also included the integration of PhD administration into the RSO, creating a comprehensive support system for both research and doctoral education.

Currently, the Research and PhD Support (RPSO) at CBS consists of 11 Research Advisers members, a Head of Office, a department coordinator, and a team leader for PhD administration, along with five PhD consultants. This setup is designed to ensure a focused and specialised approach to research support, covering all pre-award activities comprehensively. Post-award financial management and administrative tasks, on the other hand, are managed by a dedicated project unit within the finance support structure, which operates separately from the RPSO.

Despite being a central unit, the RSO maintains strong connections with individual Departments through dedicated contact points. Each Research Adviser is assigned to specific Departments, acting as the main liaison and providing tailored support. At the Departments a VIP assigned as Funding Coordinator (FC), responsible for the coordination of the departmental process and dialogue with researchers and RSO. This model ensures that while the structure is centralised, there is effective communication and collaboration with the decentralised research units across CBS.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of CBS's RSO is to enhance the efficiency and success rate of research funding applications, thereby improving the overall quality and impact of research activities at the institution. This involves providing comprehensive pre-award support, from the initial idea stage to the submission of grant applications.

Another key goal is to foster a proactive and collaborative research environment. The RSO works closely with researchers and Departments to identify and pursue funding opportunities, offering both reactive support (responding to researcher-initiated requests) and proactive engagement (actively identifying potential applicants and encouraging them to apply for relevant calls).

Departments and researchers are considered the main clients and partners of the RSO, and maintaining strong relationships with them is essential for the effective functioning of the support system. The RSO also strives to continuously improve its services by incorporating feedback from researchers and staying updated on changes in the research funding landscape.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

The RSO at CBS is responsible for identifying funding opportunities and disseminating call information to relevant researchers and Departments. This involves monitoring funding calls, organizing information meetings, and providing detailed guidance on aligning project ideas with funding criteria. The office also assists with the development of proposals, including detailed budget preparation and ensuring compliance with funding requirements.

The RSO is organized into three specialised groups focusing on private, EU, and public funding. Each group handles both national and international dimensions. This specialization allows staff members to develop deep expertise in specific funding streams, providing targeted support that increases the chances of success.

In addition to proposal development, the RSO undertakes strategic tasks such as compiling collaboration agreements and ensuring proper registration in systems like Pure, and reporting to both central level, departments and external entities. The office coordinates the entire application process, from initial contact with researchers to final submission, including organizing internal peer reviews and providing detailed feedback.

Moreover, RSO is engaged in numerous external networks, working groups and committees, which strengthen RSO insights into the strategic and political streams guiding both the national and international funding landscape.

PhD Support

PhD Support is the focal point for the PhD area at CBS as far as the PhD school, the departments and the general administration of the PhD program are concerned, from enrolment in the PhD school to the awarding of the Ph. d. degree. The areas of responsibility in PhD Support cover e.g. over preparation of private and double degree contracts, course planning incl. budgeting, financial management of the PhD area, changes in enrolment, follow-up on completion of education elements, information about and enforcement of rules and procedures etc. There is a large amount of case processing and contact with many different stakeholders.

Post-Award Tasks

Post-award financial management and administrative tasks are handled by a separate project unit within the finance support structure and outside RSO. This includes budget adjustments and financial reporting, ensuring that projects are managed efficiently and comply with funding requirements.

The project unit works closely with the RSO to ensure a smooth transition from pre-award to post-award phases. The RSO prepares comprehensive project packages in Pure, which are then transferred to the project unit for further management. This coordination ensures continuity and consistency in project administration, allowing researchers to focus on their scientific work.

4. Challenges and Improvements

Research Support

One of the main challenges faced by CBS's RSO is balancing the workload and ensuring sufficient resources to support an increasing number of funding applications. The growing interest in securing research funding has led to a higher demand for support services,

which can strain the current resources. Ensuring robust support for all researchers, especially during peak times, requires careful resource allocation and prioritization.

Maintaining strong connections with the Departments and ensuring effective communication between the centralised RSO and decentralised research units is another ongoing challenge. The RSO strives to mitigate the potential downsides of centralization by fostering close relationships with institute-based funding coordinators and maintaining regular dialogue with researchers. This approach helps ensure that the RSO remains responsive to the needs of the research community.

Formalizing and standardizing processes is a key area for improvement. Developing clear internal deadlines for different levels of support helps manage the workload and ensures that researchers receive timely and comprehensive assistance. The RSO is also working on refining the integration of pre-award and post-award functions to ensure smooth transitions and effective project management.

PhD Support

The PhD field has undergone major changes in recent years. In 2020, the 3 PhD schools at the time were closed down and 1 combined PhD school was established.

5. Visualised Structure

CBS

Board of Directors

Academic Council — President

General Consultation Committee

Deputy President | **Dean of Research** | **Dean of Education** | **University Director**

Departments | **Research Support** | **Programme Adm.** | **Shared Central Services**

Non-economic post award / project management

Research Support | Ph.d. administration

Finanance and Analysys

Economic post award tasks
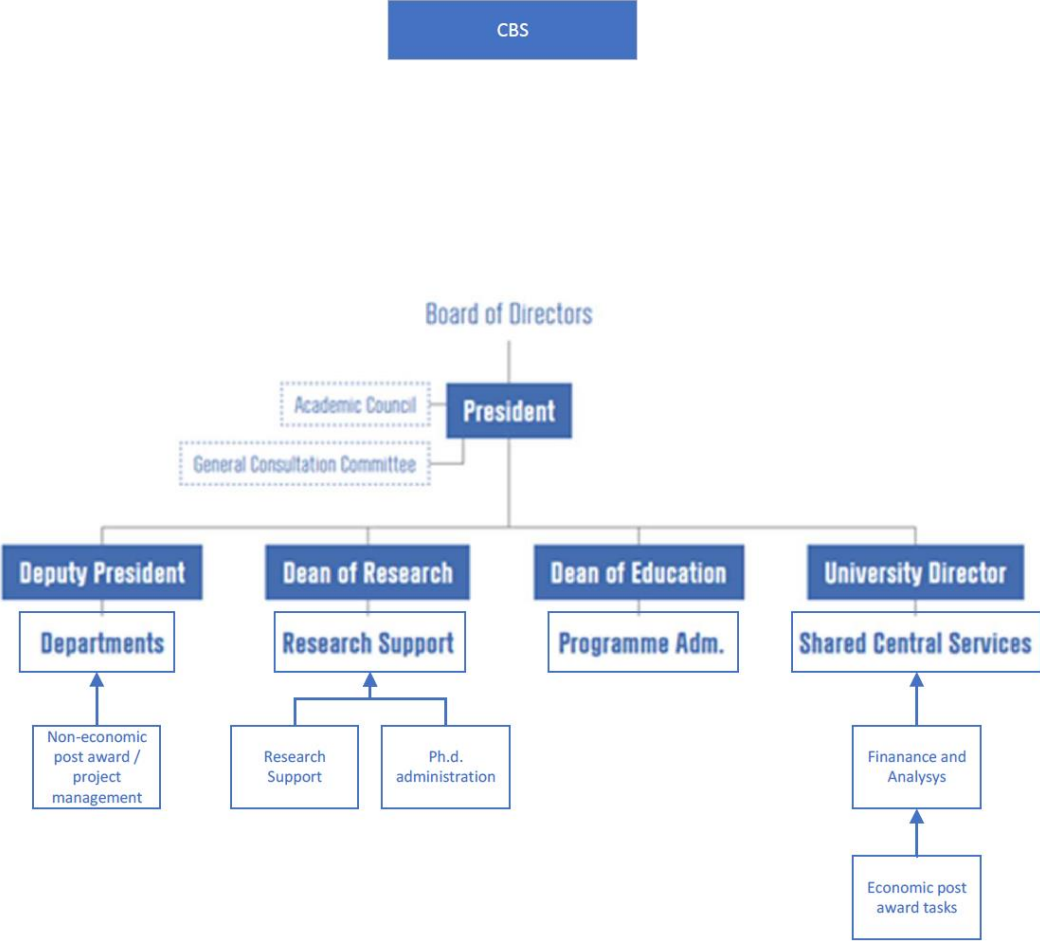
Research Support at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The Research Support Office (RSO) at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) is a centralised unit within the university's central administration. This office is an integral part of the Research, Advice, and Innovation division, which also includes units like the library, legal services, and data management. The RSO at DTU is staffed by nearly 20 employees and is divided into two main teams: pre-award and strategic teams. This structure allows the office to focus on securing funding for research projects.

The pre-award team consists of nine staff members who specialize in assisting researchers with the preparation and submission of grant applications. This team handles the more complex and infrequent funding opportunities, such as large EU grants and major Danish public and private foundations. Researchers can choose to utilize the services of the pre-award team, although it is not mandatory. This team works closely with local fundraisers situated within the various departments of DTU. These local units are responsible for day-to-day research support and more frequent funding applications.

The post-award responsibilities, including financial management and compliance, are coordinated and largely handled by the departments themselves, with support from notably the central Office for Finance and Accounting, and occasionally some advisory support from the pre-award team when needed. This decentralised approach allows for support tailored to the needs of individual research projects while maintaining a centralised oversight and specialised support for strategic and high-stakes funding applications.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objectives of DTU's Research Support Office are to maximise the success rate of research funding applications and enhance the quality and impact of research activities. The RSO aims to provide high-quality, professional support that aligns with DTU's strategic goals and priorities. This involves focusing on securing significant funding from strategic

sources, such as EU Horizon Europe and major Danish foundations like Innovation Fund Denmark and Novo Nordisk Foundation.

By offering tailored advice and support, the RSO helps researchers navigate the complexities of the funding landscape and develop competitive proposals. Additionally, the office seeks to continuously improve its services and stay updated on changes in the research funding environment.

Efficient resource allocation is also a critical objective. The RSO strives to balance the workload between the central office and the local units to ensure that all researchers receive the support they need without overwhelming any single part of the organization. This includes developing standard processes and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

The pre-award team at DTU focuses on several key areas to support researchers in preparing and submitting successful grant applications. This includes identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice, and helping develop project ideas and proposals. The team actively monitors funding calls and disseminates information to researchers. They also organize information meetings and provide detailed guidance on aligning project ideas with funding criteria.

Proposal development is a core task for the pre-award team. They assist researchers in drafting proposals and ensuring compliance with the requirements of funding bodies. The team reviews drafts and provides feedback to improve the quality of submissions. This process is highly collaborative, with team members often taking the lead on specific funding programs, such as ERC or Carlsberg, to ensure that all aspects of the application are thoroughly addressed.

Process planning is another aspect of pre-award support, including discussion of the application process plan with the applicant. This ensures that researchers stay on track and submit high-quality proposals on time. The team also helps with mock interviews for

researchers invited to present their proposals to funding bodies, providing them with the necessary preparation to succeed.

Post-Award Tasks

While the primary responsibility for post-award tasks lies with the departments, the pre-award team provides advisory support when needed.

The pre-award team occasionally assists with post-award tasks by providing expertise on specific funding instruments. For example, they might help interpret the requirements of a complex EU grant.

Collaboration between the central financial administrative units and the departments is essential for effective post-award management. These units handle detailed financial administration and ensure that all reporting requirements are met.

4. Challenges and Improvements

DTU's RSO faces several challenges, including balancing the workload between the central office and local units and ensuring seamless coordination. The decentralised structure can lead to inconsistencies in how support is provided. There is also the challenge of maintaining up-to-date knowledge and expertise across a wide range of funding programs and ensuring that all researchers have access to the support they need.

To address these challenges, the RSO continuously evaluates its processes and seeks to implement improvements. This includes developing more standardized processes and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens. The office also focuses on enhancing communication and collaboration between the central office and local units to ensure that all researchers receive consistent and high-quality support.

In summary, the Research Support Office at the Technical University of Denmark works through a combination of centralised expertise and decentralised support to maximise research funding success at DTU.

5. Visualised Structure
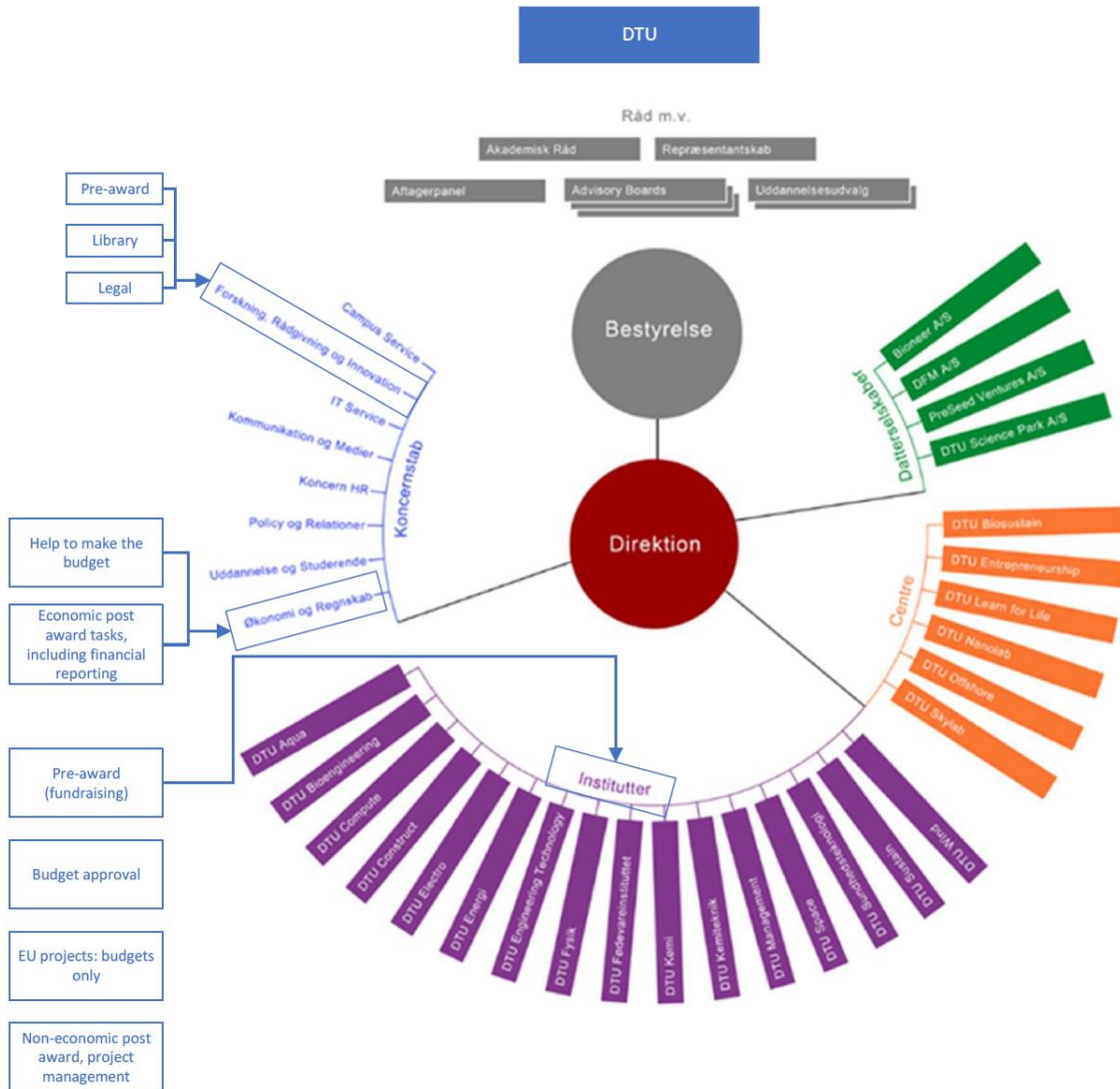
Research Support at the IT University of Copenhagen (ITU)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The Research Support Office (RSO) at the IT University of Copenhagen (ITU) operates as a central entity within the Finance Department. This structure ensures that research support is consistently managed across the university, without decentralised counterparts at individual institutes. The central RSO consists of 12 staff members, equivalent to 11 full-time positions, plus a team leader. This centralised team focuses specifically on funding-related tasks, including grant writing and project reporting, while excluding other research support areas such as research data management and publication support.

The centralised structure at ITU allows for a streamlined and focused approach to research support, with all activities coordinated through the central office. This setup is distinct from other universities where research support might be more fragmented across various departments or faculties.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of ITU's RSO is to maximise the efficiency and success rate of research funding applications while minimizing the administrative burden on researchers. The RSO aims to support researchers in securing external funding, particularly for expanding their research areas through PhD and postdoctoral hirings. This involves lifting as much of the administrative load as possible from researchers, allowing them to focus on their scientific and academic work.

A key goal is to facilitate the realization of researchers' academic ambitions by providing strategic advice and comprehensive support throughout the funding process. This includes guiding researchers in identifying suitable funding opportunities, developing competitive proposals, and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the funding bodies. By providing comprehensive support to researchers, on these areas, the RSO provides administrative help to the research conducted at ITU.

3. Main Tasks

ITU's RSO maintains a streamlined and efficient funding application process through the use of standardized procedures and tools. This includes the use of systems like PURE for the registration and tracking of project applications and awards, and F2 for journaling and documentation. By leveraging these systems, the RSO ensures that all necessary steps are followed efficiently, supporting transparency and accountability in research funding activities.

Pre-Award Tasks

The pre-award team at ITU's RSO is responsible for identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice, and assisting with the preparation and submission of grant applications. The process begins with an expression of interest from the researcher, signalling their intention to apply for external funding. The RSO helps researchers navigate various funding options, develop project ideas, and prepare detailed budgets.

Key pre-award tasks include

- Conducting sparring sessions with researchers to develop project ideas and align them with suitable funding opportunities.

- Providing detailed guidance on proposal writing, including the development of impact sections and ensuring compliance with funding requirements.

- Coordinating parts of entire application process, including organizing internal peer reviews and providing detailed feedback.

- Assisting with administrative tasks such as completing forms and ensuring all necessary documentation is in place.

The RSO also plays an important role in ensuring compliance with the requirements of the funding bodies, reviewing and providing feedback on proposal drafts to improve their alignment with funding criteria.

Post-Award Tasks

Once a grant is awarded, the post-award responsibilities include financial management and compliance support. The RSO handles the administrative aspects of project execution, such as tracking expenditures, preparing financial reports, and ensuring adherence to the funding requirements. The RSO is the first point of contact for all questions related to the grant; not only the financial aspects, but also hirings, travels or collaboration agreements. These tasks are implemented together with the administrative departments in charge (HR and Legal). This ensures that projects are managed efficiently and comply with the terms set by the funding bodies.

Key post-award tasks involve

- Providing ongoing support to researchers, helping them navigate any administrative issues that arise during the project execution phase.

- Providing an overview to researchers on actual and planned project-related expenses.

- Tracking project expenditures and ensuring correct financial reporting.

- Communicating with the funding bodies and/ or project coordinators on all administrative issues, such as eligibility of costs, changes in project duration, re-budgeting and financial reporting

- Maintaining compliance with funding requirements and preparing necessary documentation for audits.

4. Challenges and Improvements

One of the main challenges faced by ITU's RSO is balancing the workload among a relatively small team while managing an increasing number of funding applications. With 12 staff members, each responsible for multiple tasks, ensuring that all researchers receive adequate support can be demanding. This challenge is exacerbated by the growing complexity of funding requirements and the need to stay updated on various funding opportunities and grant conditions. Increasing the robustness of the support structure therefore is a priority.

Maintaining effective communication and coordination between the RSO and researchers is an important focus area. Researchers are required to go through the RSO for all funding applications, which allows for consistent strategic funding advice and sparring to all researchers regardless their research area. However, it can sometimes lead to bottlenecks, especially during peak application periods. Ensuring that all applications are processed efficiently and that researchers receive timely feedback and support is crucial for maintaining the high success rate of funding applications.

To address these challenges, ITU's RSO continuously evaluates and improves its processes. This includes developing more standardized procedures and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens. The use of PURE and F2 systems helps in tracking applications and managing documentation effectively. These tools provide a structured approach to handling research funding, ensuring that all necessary steps are followed, and that information is easily accessible.

Another strength of ITU's RSO is that it provides both pre-award and post award support. By ensuring a smooth transition between these phases, the RSO can provide more consistent and comprehensive support throughout the entire project lifecycle. Therefore, enhancing the integration of pre-award and post-award functions is an important focus area for the RSO.

In summary, the Research Support Office at the IT University of Copenhagen works through a combination of centralised expertise and structured processes to ensure ITU's research funding success.

5. Visualised Structure
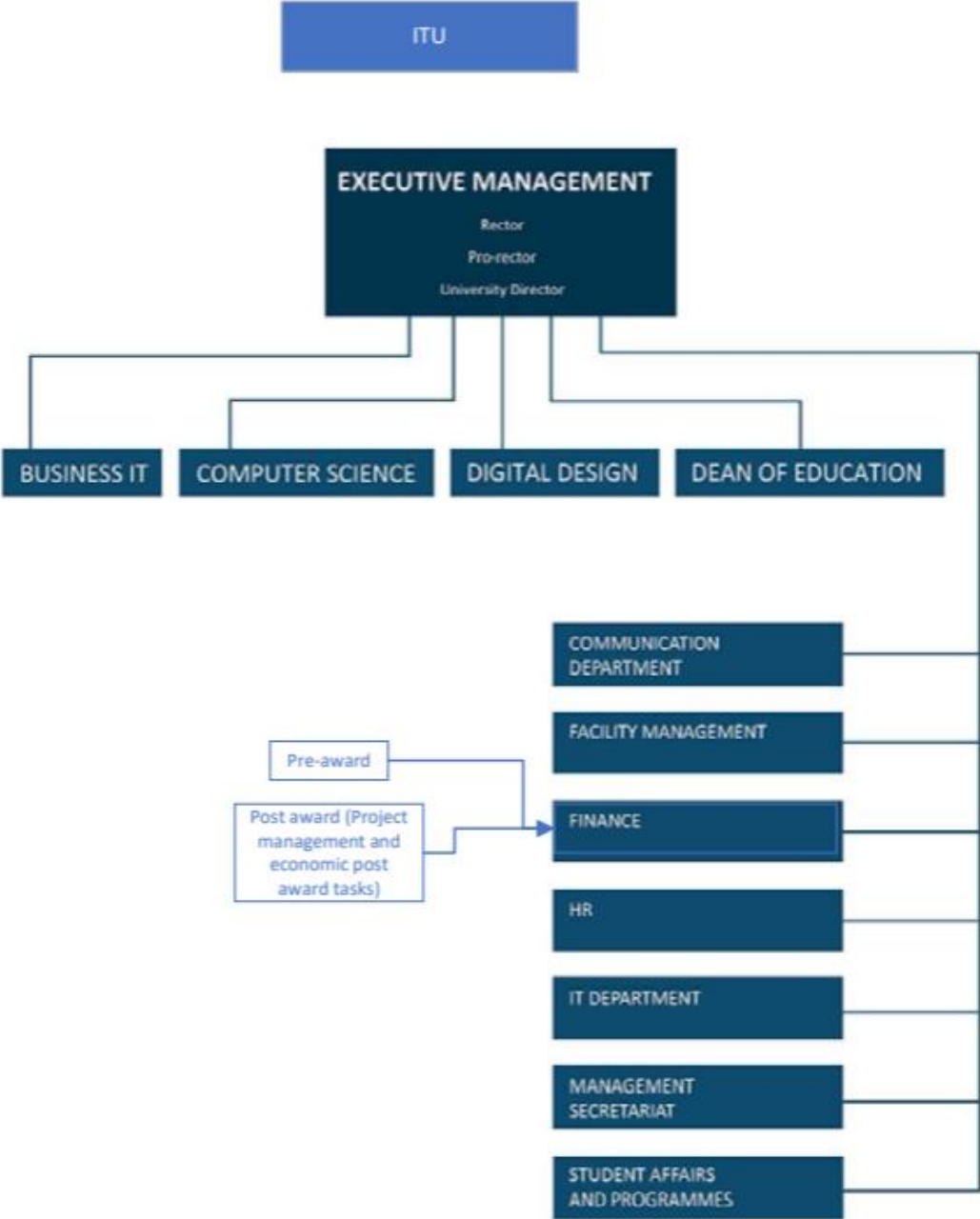
Research Support at the University of Copenhagen (UCPH)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

UCPH's RSO is mainly located at faculty and department level, where all national support for both public and private funding sources are handled.

Centrally, support for research policy, both national and international is provided by the division of Research and Information Security. Regarding EU's framework programmes, a central EU Unit is responsible for supporting (pre-award) and managing (post-award) EU coordinator projects, coordination of EU intelligence, and international funding applications, as well as provide specialised legal support.

UCPH's research support is thus characterised by a highly decentralised structure. Each faculty has its own support organisation, which handle e.g. grants like ERC and Marie Sklodowska Curie Doctoral Networks and COFUND, as well as larger applications to Danish public and private foundations, e.g. centre applications to the National Research Foundation and some application to Innovation Fund Denmark. At department level, most departments support applications to Marie Sklodowska Curie individual grants, National Research Councils, private funds etc. The central EU Team solely focus on EU funding and major international foundations, including NIH, Welcome Trust, and Gates Foundation. At all three levels, bespoken support is offered to the researcher based on specific needs and funding source / type of application.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective for all UCPH's RSOs is to enhance the efficiency of the application processes and increase success rate of funding applications, particularly for large-scale (both national and international) and high-impact projects (e.g., ERC, National Research Foundation, and some of the larger grants from private foundations). The RSOs also strive to provide comprehensive support to researchers in order to minimise the administrative burden , and allowing researchers to focus on scientific work. This involves not only assisting with the preparation and submission of grant applications, but also to ensure robust post-award management and compliance.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

The pre-award teams across UCPH are responsible for identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice, and assisting with the preparation and submission of grant applications. This includes conducting sparring sessions with researchers to develop project ideas, align them with suitable funding opportunities, and ensure compliance with funding requirements. The teams provide detailed guidance on proposal writing, including the development of e.g. impact sections, as well as make the needed compliance checks.

The pre-award teams support involves

- Preparing and coordinating the entire application process, from initial concept to final submission, including internal peer reviews and formal compliance checks.

- Offering specialised support for EU coordinator applications, National Research Foundation applications, Grand Challenge applications for the IFD etc., based on the individual teams' expertise on these complex proposals.

- Collaborating across the various research support units to ensure that researchers receive tailored support that aligns with their specific needs.

Post-Award Tasks

Post-award responsibilities at UCPH are handled by both the central EU Unit, the faculties, and the departments, depending on the funding source and type of project.

The post-award teams provide ongoing support to researchers, helping them navigate any issues that arise during the project execution phase. This involves close collaboration with local project managers and local project economists at the faculties, who manage day-to-day administration.

Strategic and Administrative Support

The EU Unit at UCPH also engages in strategic activities that go beyond pre-award and post-award support. This includes advocacy and policy influence at the EU level and supporting the university's leadership with research-related strategic initiatives. The unit

also provides specialised training and workshops to enhance researchers' and support staff skills in grant writing and project management. At faculties, similar activities take place with relation to e.g., ERC applications, National Research Foundation, IFD etc., and the RSO also support strategic initiatives at faculty level.
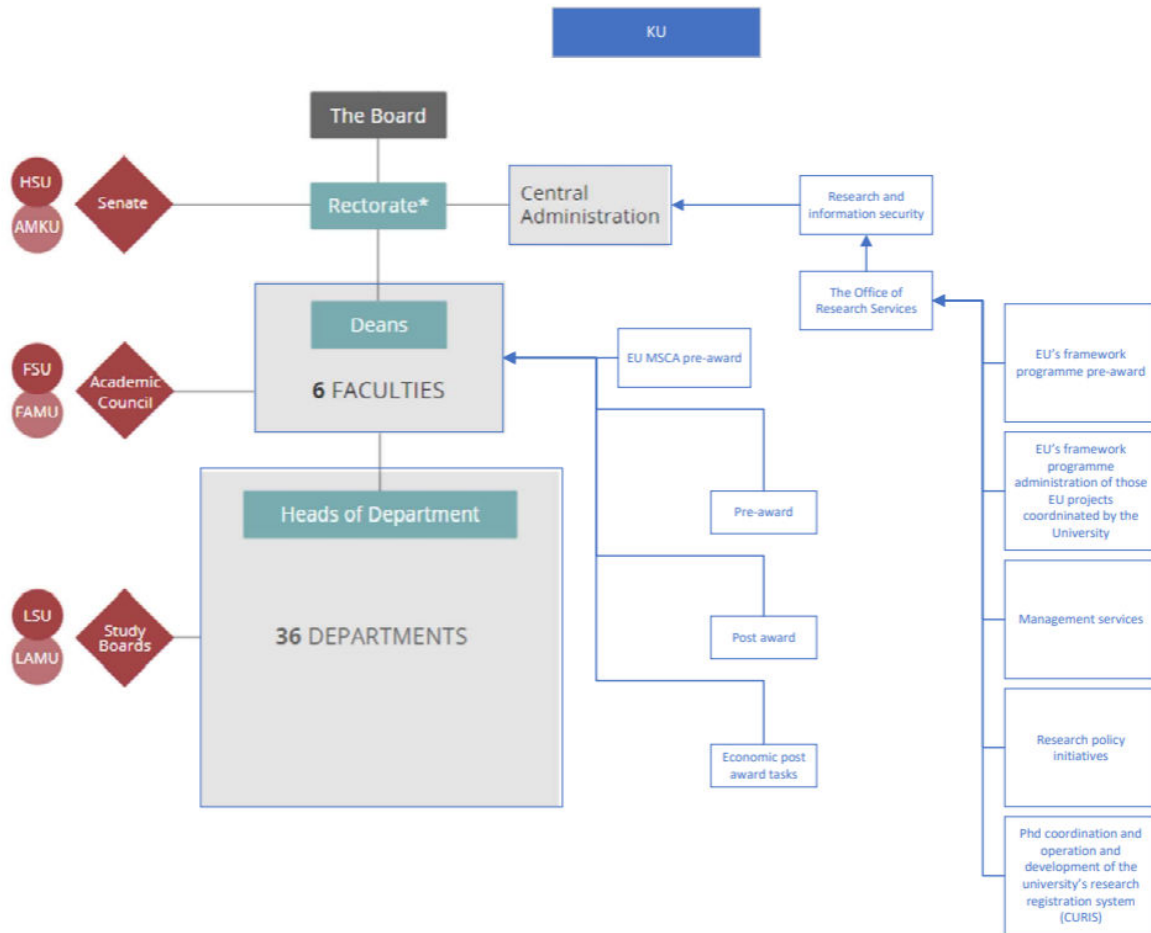
4. Challenges and Improvements

One of the main challenges faced by UCPH's various RSOs is balancing the workload among relatively small teams while supporting and managing an increasing number of complex funding applications.

To address these challenges, UCPH's RSOs continuously evaluate and improve processes and locally developed support tools. This includes developing standardised procedures and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens.

Another area for improvement is enhancing the integration of pre-award and post-award functions. By ensuring a smooth transition between these phases, the EU Unit can provide more consistent and comprehensive support throughout the entire project lifecycle. This involves close collaboration with financial and administrative units within UCPH to ensure that all aspects of project management are covered. Increasing the robustness of the support structure is also a priority.

UCPH is currently in the process of a major reorganisation of its administration, which means the above description must be seen as a snapshot of the current status.

5. Visualised Structure

KU

The Board

HSU
AMKU
Senate
Rectorate*
Central Administration
Research and information security

The Office of Research Services

FSU
FAMU
Academic Council
Deans
6 FACULTIES
EU MSCA pre-award
EU's framework programme pre-award

EU's framework programme administration of those EU projects coordninated by the University

Heads of Department

Pre-award

Management services

LSU
LAMU
Study Boards
36 DEPARTMENTS
Post award
Research policy initiatives

Economic post award tasks

Phd coordination and operation and development of the university's research registration system (CURIS)

Research Support at Region Hovedstaden (REGIONH)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The Research Support Office (RSO) at Region Hovedstaden operates as a central unit located at Rigshospitalet. This central RSO serves all researchers within the Capital Region of Denmark, encompassing a diverse range of hospitals and research institutes. The RSO is led by a head who oversees two distinct teams: the pre-award team and the post-award team.

The pre-award team, known as "Research Support and Funds," currently consists of three members, with plans to expand in the future. This team focuses on assisting researchers with the identification of funding opportunities and the preparation of grant applications. The post-award team, named "Project Economy," comprises five members who handle the financial reporting and administrative tasks for awarded projects, particularly those funded by the EU, Innovation Fund Denmark, and American institutions like the NIH. The total staff of the RSO is currently eight members.

One distinctive feature of Region Hovedstaden's RSO is the close integration of the pre-award and post-award functions within the same organisational unit. This integration allows for significant synergy between the two teams, enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the research support provided. Knowledge gained during the post-award phase is leveraged to improve pre-award support, ensuring a continuous feedback loop that benefits both researchers and the support staff.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of Region Hovedstaden's RSO is to facilitate the successful acquisition of research funding and to ensure efficient management and reporting of awarded projects. The office aims to provide comprehensive support throughout the entire research lifecycle, from the initial identification of funding opportunities to the final financial reporting of projects.

An essential goal is to enhance the quality and impact of research activities by offering tailored advice and support to researchers. This involves guiding researchers through the complexities of the funding landscape, helping them develop competitive proposals, and ensuring compliance with funding requirements. The RSO also seeks to foster a collaborative research environment by maintaining strong connections with various research units and administrative departments within the region.

Another critical objective is to optimize resource allocation and improve the overall efficiency of research support services. By balancing the workload between the central office and local units, the RSO aims to provide effective and timely assistance to all researchers. Continuous improvement of processes and systems is a key focus, ensuring that the RSO remains responsive to the evolving needs of the research community.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

The pre-award team at Region Hovedstaden is responsible for identifying suitable funding opportunities and providing strategic advice on proposal development. This includes one-on-one sparring sessions with researchers to discuss project ideas, funding strategies, and career development paths. The team assists with the preparation of grant applications, focusing on critical elements such as impact sections and compliance with funder requirements.

Researchers are encouraged to take the lead in the administrative submission of their applications, but the pre-award team provides guidance on completing complex forms and addressing specific requirements. This support ensures that proposals are well-aligned with the expectations of funding bodies and stand a higher chance of success.

Post-Award Tasks

The post-award team manages the financial reporting and administrative tasks for awarded projects. This includes tracking expenditures, preparing financial reports, and ensuring compliance with funding requirements. The team works closely with local project

economists at the institutes to handle day-to-day financial administration and budget management.

A significant part of the post-award support involves helping researchers understand and meet the financial and administrative obligations of their grants. This includes advising on eligible costs, maintaining proper documentation for audits, and managing the financial aspects of projects to ensure they are executed efficiently.

4. Challenges and Improvements

Region Hovedstaden's RSO faces several challenges, primarily related to resource constraints and the decentralised nature of research activities within the region. Balancing the workload and ensuring adequate support for all researchers can be challenging, particularly given the increasing number of funding applications and the diverse needs of different research projects.

Maintaining effective communication and coordination between the central office and local units is another ongoing challenge. The RSO strives to mitigate this by fostering close relationships with institute-based funding coordinators and maintaining regular dialogue with researchers.

To address these challenges, the RSO continuously evaluates its processes and seeks to implement improvements. This includes developing more standardized processes and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens. Enhancing the integration of pre-award and post-award functions is also a priority, ensuring smooth transitions and effective project management.

Another area for improvement is increasing the robustness of the support structure. The RSO recognizes the need for additional resources to handle the growing number of funding applications and to provide comprehensive support for all researchers. This includes hiring additional staff and providing ongoing training to ensure that the team can effectively support the diverse needs of the research community.

In summary, the Research Support Office leverages centralised expertise while maintaining strong connections with individual research units, ensuring high-quality support from the initial idea through to project completion. Through continuous evaluation and process improvement, the RSO aims to maximise the success and impact of research activities within the Capital Region of Denmark.

5. Visualised Structure
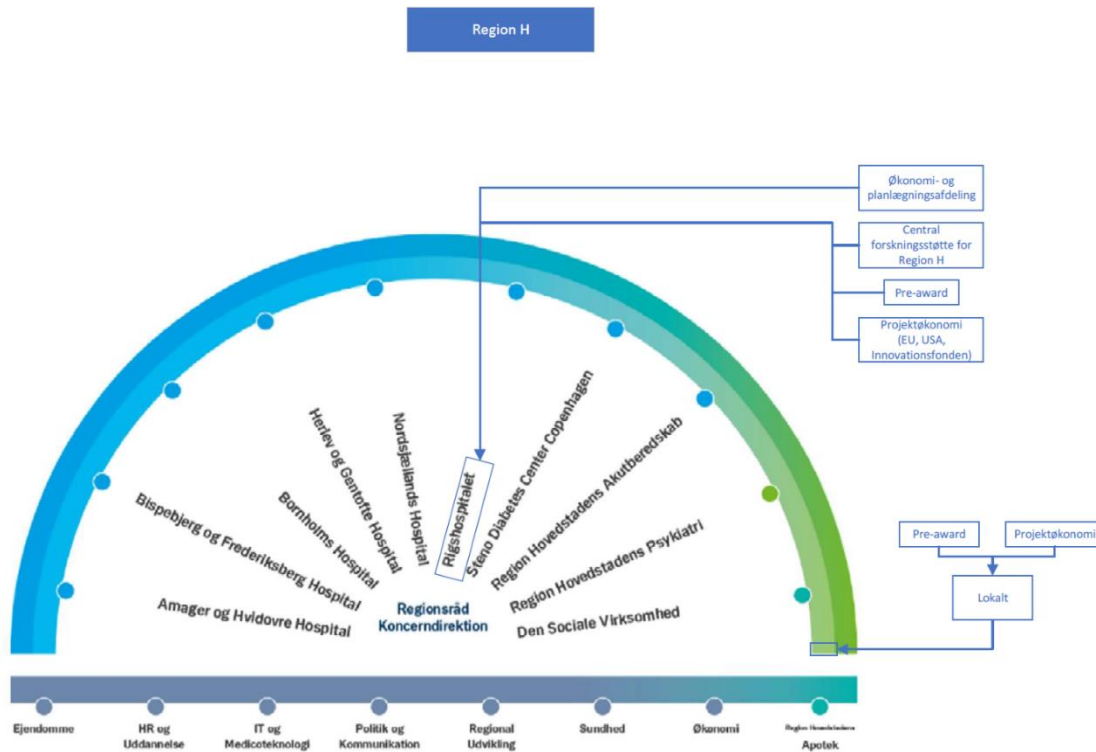
Research Support at Roskilde University (RUC)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The Research Support Office (RSO) at Roskilde University (RUC) is centrally located within the department of 'RUC Communication and Rector's Office'. This central positioning underscores its importance within the university's administrative framework. The RSO team at RUC consists of eight members, with approximately 2.8 full-time equivalents dedicated specifically to research funding support. The RSO's primary focus is on pre-award activities, providing comprehensive support for grant applications and strategic initiatives related to research funding.

In addition to the central RSO, RUC has decentralised research support units embedded within each of its four institutes. These units provide a blend of pre-award and post-award support, ensuring that researchers receive tailored assistance at both the local and central levels. Furthermore, the post-award financial management and administrative support for projects are handled by a specialised project team within the finance department. This team focuses exclusively on post-award tasks, including procurement and financial reporting.

RUC's organisational structure for research support is designed to leverage both centralised expertise and localized knowledge. This hybrid model allows the central RSO to provide strategic oversight and specialised support for large, complex funding applications, while the local research support units address specific research support needs of their respective institutes for relevant funding bodies.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of RUC's research support units is to enhance the efficiency and success rate of research funding applications and to provide strategic support that aligns with the university's broader research goals. The RSO aims to lift the administrative burden from researchers, allowing them to focus on their scientific work and innovation. This involves offering comprehensive pre-award support, including strategic advice, proposal development, and compliance checks.

A key goal is to increase the volume and quality of successful funding applications, particularly for large-scale and high-impact projects such as EU Horizon Europe grants. By centralizing the support for these complex applications, the RSO aims to build institutional expertise and ensure that researchers can submit competitive proposals.

Another critical objective is to foster strong collaborations between the central RSO and the decentralised research support units within the institutes. This involves maintaining open lines of communication, knowledge sharing and ensuring that the support provided is consistent and meets the specific needs of each research unit. Additionally, the RSO seeks to implement best practices in research support, leveraging data and feedback to continuously improve its services.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

Research support in general at RUC focuses on identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice, and assisting with the preparation and submission of grant applications. The RSO specializes in EU Horizon Europe applications, particularly Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 projects. Their expertise includes strategic initiatives across the organization and support for specific programs where a need is identified and is a strategic priority.

The RSO's pre-award support includes

- Conducting sparring sessions with researchers to develop project ideas and align them with suitable funding opportunities.

- Providing detailed guidance on proposal writing, including the development of impact sections and ensuring compliance with funding requirements.

- Coordinating the application process, from initial concept to final submission, including internal peer reviews and formal compliance checks.

- Offering specialised support for EU coordinator applications, leveraging the team's expertise to enhance the competitiveness of these complex proposals.

Post-Award Tasks

Although the central RSO at RUC focuses primarily on pre-award activities, the team facilitates transition from pre- to post-award. Post-award responsibilities are largely managed by the project team within the finance department. This team handles financial reporting, compliance monitoring, and overall project management. The project team ensures that awarded projects adhere to funding requirements and that all financial aspects are managed efficiently.

The post-award support involves close collaboration with local project economists at the institutes, who manage day-to-day financial administration and budget oversight. This ensures that projects are executed smoothly and comply with the financial and administrative regulations set by funding bodies.

Quality Assurance and Strategic Support

The RSO also engages in strategic activities that go beyond pre-award support. This includes advocacy and policy influence at the EU level and supporting the university's leadership with strategic research initiatives and analysis. Additionally, the RSO assists with PhD administration and other related tasks that contribute to the overall quality and impact of research at RUC.

4. Challenges and Improvements

One of the main challenges RUC's RSO faces is balancing the workload among a small team while managing an increasing volume of funding applications. The complexity of funding requirements and the need to stay updated on various funding opportunities and regulations add to this challenge. Ensuring robust support for all researchers, especially during peak times, requires careful resource allocation and prioritization.

Maintaining effective communication and coordination between the central RSO and the institute-based research support units is another ongoing challenge. The hybrid structure necessitates strong relationships and regular dialogue to ensure that support services are utilized effectively and that the needs of researchers are met.

To address these challenges, RUC's RSO is continuously evaluating and improving its processes. This includes developing standardized procedures and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens.

Another area for improvement is increasing the robustness of the support structure. The RO recognizes the need for additional resources to handle the growing number of funding applications and grants and to provide comprehensive support for all researchers. This includes hiring additional staff, developing a systemised approach to research support and providing ongoing training to ensure that the team can effectively support the diverse needs of RUC's research community.

In summary, the RSO at Roskilde combines centralised and decentralised knowledge and expertise to support continued growth of external research funding at RUC.

5. Visualised Structure
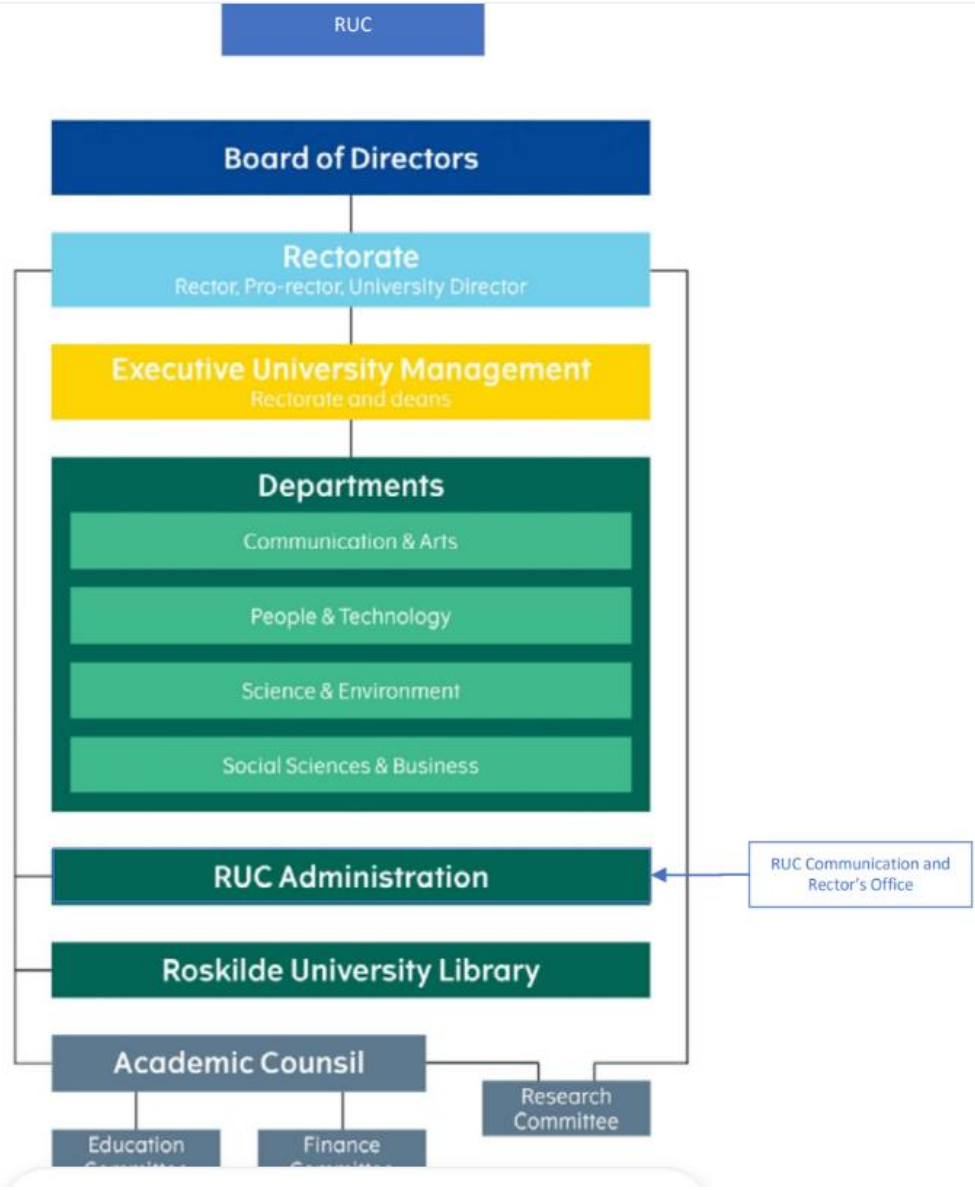
Research Support at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The classic research support at University of Southern Denmark (SDU) consists of six main offices, one for each faculty and a central office. The central RSO belongs to the unit known as SDU RIO (Research & Innovation Organisation). The unit is responsible for providing support services across the university's five faculties including technology transfer, legal services, student support and research support services. SDU RIO works closely with the decentralised research support units located within each faculty, to ensure a cohesive and collaborative approach to supporting researchers.

Whereas the faculty RSOs support the local strategy and leadership as well as all-round support for a wide range of funding instruments, the central RSO is tasked with providing specialised support tailored to the strategic needs of the university. By having both centralised and decentralised RSOs, SDU ensures that researchers receive extra support in selected funding areas, while still leveraging local expertise and relationships at the respective faculties.

The central RSO comprises approximately 20 staff members, organised according to the research funding value chain. The team includes policy and strategy specialists, pre-award officers responsible for grant writing, and a dedicated at-award function focused on resolving specific issues related to EU projects. Additionally, EU project managers are offered for large EU projects, a research ethics specialist, and a group of data scientists (6-7 members) who provide research development support tools such as apps and advanced data analyses incl. network activities. The pre- and post-award services in the central RSO are concentrated on funding instruments that are priorities for SDU overall (Horizon Europe and Danish private foundations).

2. Objectives and Goals

The overall objective of all SDU's RSO is to increase the intake of grants, to maximise the efficiency and success rate of research funding applications, and to support researchers throughout the entire research and project lifecycle. The SDU RIO RSO focus particularly on societal impact such as EU Horizon Europe and significant private Danish foundations, while applications for basic research is mostly supported locally.

A central goal for all RSOs is to enhance the quality and impact of research activities at SDU by ensuring that researchers have access to comprehensive support services. This involves not only helping with the preparation and submission of grant applications but also providing ongoing strategic advice and maintaining robust administrative processes to support project execution and compliance.

SDU's overall coordination in the research support seeks to foster a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. By maintaining strong connections across all RSOs and leveraging the expertise of specialised staff members, the RSO aims to create a supportive environment that encourages innovation and excellence in research.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

The pre-award teams at SDU's RSOs are responsible for identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice, and assisting with the preparation and submission of grant applications. This includes conducting sparring sessions with researchers to develop project ideas, aligning them with suitable funding opportunities, and ensuring compliance with funding requirements.

RSOs provides detailed guidance and sometimes co-writes proposals, including the development of impact and implementation sections, as well as compliance checks. The research support coordinates the entire application process, from initial contact with

researchers to final submission, including organizing internal peer reviews and providing detailed feedback.

The SDU RIO team overall coordinates the policy aspects of research support, working to enhance the overall capability of the university to secure funding. This involves engaging with private foundations and EU offices to influence policy decisions and establish strategic relationships that benefit SDU researchers.

Post-Award Tasks

Overall post-award economy tasks at SDU are governed mainly by the economy control team within the central finance department, which supports and, in some cases, handles financial reporting, compliance monitoring, and overall economic project management. The post-award teams locally at the departments ensure that awarded projects adhere to funding requirements, tracks expenditures, and prepares financial reports in close contact with the researchers.

When the RSOs support the scientific project owners as project managers, they work closely with the local project economists at the faculties, who manage day-to-day financial administration and budget oversight. By providing ongoing support and ensuring proper documentation for audits, the post-award team helps researchers navigate the complexities of project execution.

Data Science and Technology Support

SDU RIO RSO includes a group of data scientists who develop apps, conduct analyses, and support network activities across the university. This team leverages AI to provide data-driven insights to enhance the research support services provided, ensuring that research supporters and researchers have access to cutting-edge tools and methodologies.

4. Challenges and Improvements

SDU's RSOs all face several challenges, primarily related to balancing the workload among a relatively small team while managing an increasing number of funding applications. The complexity of funding requirements and the need to stay updated on various funding opportunities and regulations add to this challenge. Ensuring robust support for all researchers, especially during peak times, requires careful resource allocation and prioritization.

Maintaining effective communication and coordination between the central RS team and the faculty-based RSOs is another ongoing challenge. The hybrid structure necessitates strong relationships and regular dialogue to ensure that support services are utilized effectively and that the needs of researchers are met.

To address these challenges, SDU's RSO continuously evaluates and improves its processes. This includes developing standardized procedures and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens. For example, the use of specialised project management and documentation systems helps to track applications and manage projects efficiently.

Another area for improvement is enhancing the integration of pre-award and post-award functions. By ensuring a smooth transition between these phases, the RSO can provide more consistent and comprehensive support throughout the entire project lifecycle. This involves close collaboration with financial and administrative units within SDU to ensure that all aspects of project management are covered.

Increasing the robustness of the support structure is also a priority. The RSO recognizes the need for additional resources to handle the growing number of funding applications and to provide comprehensive support for all researchers. This includes hiring additional staff and providing ongoing training to ensure that the team can effectively support the diverse needs of SDU's research community.

In summary, the Research Support Office at the University of Southern Denmark works by a combination of both centralised and decentralised support to support the research funding success of SDU.

5. Visualised Structure
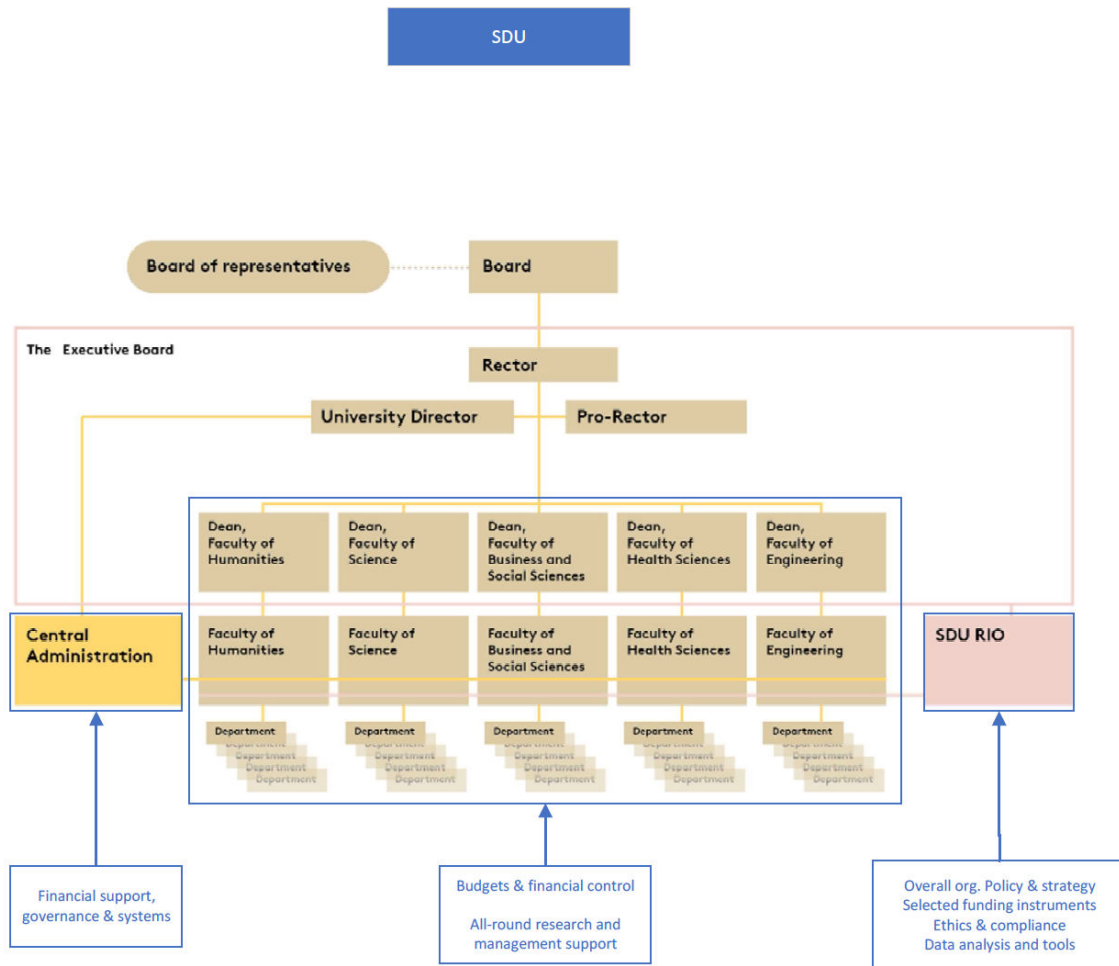
Research Support at VIA University College

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

At VIA University College, the Research Support Office (RSO) is a central entity within the institution, directly under the Directorate for Research and Development. This directorate encompasses various administrative and support functions, including the central library, project development and research analysis. The RSO has undergone a recent reorganisation, transitioning from a focus solely on project support to a broader mandate that includes comprehensive research support and quality assurance across the institution.

The RSO is structured into three teams: the Fundraising and Advocacy team, the post-award team, and the Research Analysis and Quality team. The Fundraising and Advocacy team, consisting of six staff members, is responsible for pre-award activities and strategic initiatives aimed at influencing policy and securing funding. The post-award team, with approximately 16-18 staff members, handles all aspects of project management and financial administration once funding has been secured. The Research Analysis and Quality team, newly established with three members, focuses on data-driven decision-making and quality assurance in research practices.

The centralization of the RSO at VIA ensures that all research support activities are coordinated from a single point, enhancing efficiency and consistency. This structure allows the RSO to provide tailored support to researchers while maintaining a high level of strategic oversight.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objective of VIA's RSO is to enhance the capacity and quality of research activities across the institution. This involves supporting researchers in securing external funding, managing awarded projects efficiently, and ensuring high standards of research

quality and ethics. The RSO aims to facilitate strategic decision-making by providing data-driven insights and fostering a culture of responsible research practices.

Another key goal is to improve the overall effectiveness of research support services by streamlining processes and enhancing collaboration between different teams and departments. By centralizing research support functions, the RSO aims to reduce administrative burdens on researchers and enable them to focus more on their scientific work.

The RSO also seeks to expand its scope to include broader aspects of research support, such as capacity building, competence development, and the promotion of open science and open data practices. This strategic shift reflects a commitment to fostering a dynamic and sustainable research environment that aligns with VIA's educational and research missions.

3. Main Tasks

The main tasks of VIA's RSO are divided into pre-award, post-award, and quality assurance activities.

Pre-Award Tasks

The Fundraising and Advocacy team handles all pre-award activities, including identifying funding opportunities, providing strategic advice, and assisting with the preparation of grant applications. This team is also involved in pre-pre-award tasks such as influencing policy decisions and establishing relationships with private foundations and EU offices.

Pre-award support involves detailed guidance on proposal development, budget preparation, and compliance with funding requirements. The team provides strategic input on project design and ensures that proposals align with both the criteria of the funding bodies and VIA's strategic objectives. Researchers are encouraged to work closely with the Fundraising and Advocacy team to enhance the competitiveness of their applications.

Post-Award Tasks

The post-award team manages the financial and administrative aspects of awarded projects. This includes tracking expenditures, preparing financial reports, and ensuring compliance with funding requirements. The team provides ongoing support to researchers, helping them navigate any issues that arise during project execution.

Post-award support also involves coordination with other administrative units, such as finance and HR, to ensure smooth project implementation. The team assists with the operationalization of project budgets, establishment of steering groups, and management of project-related communication and documentation.

Quality Assurance and Research Analysis

The Research Analysis and Quality team focuses on enhancing the quality and impact of research at VIA. This involves conducting various analyses to inform strategic decisions, implementing quality assurance systems, and promoting best practices in research ethics and responsible research conduct.

This team also supports the development of standardized processes and workflows to ensure consistency and transparency in research activities. By providing data-driven insights and facilitating strategic planning, the Research Analysis and Quality team helps to align research initiatives with institutional priorities and goals.

4. Challenges and Improvements

VIA's RSO faces several challenges, primarily related to balancing the workload among a relatively small team while managing an increasing number of funding applications. The complexity of funding requirements and the need to stay updated on various funding opportunities and regulations add to this challenge.

Maintaining effective communication and coordination between the central RSO and the various research units within VIA is another ongoing challenge. The centralization of research support functions requires strong relationships and regular dialogue with

researchers to ensure that their needs are met and that support services are utilized effectively.

To address these challenges, the RSO continuously evaluates and improves its processes. This includes developing standardized procedures and systems to streamline operations and reduce administrative burdens. For example, the use of specialised project management and documentation systems helps to track applications and manage projects efficiently.

Another area for improvement is enhancing the integration of pre-award and post-award functions. By ensuring a smooth transition between these phases, the RSO can provide more consistent and comprehensive support throughout the entire project lifecycle. This involves close collaboration with financial and administrative units within VIA to ensure that all aspects of project management are covered.

Increasing the robustness of the support structure is also a priority. The RSO recognizes the need for additional resources to handle the growing number of funding applications and to provide comprehensive support for all researchers. This includes hiring additional staff and providing ongoing training to ensure that the team can effectively support the diverse needs of VIA's research community.

In summary, the Research Support Office at VIA University College supports funding success through a combination of centralised expertise and structured processes. This structure aligns with VIA's strategic goals and fosters a supportive research environment across the institution.

5. Visualised Structure
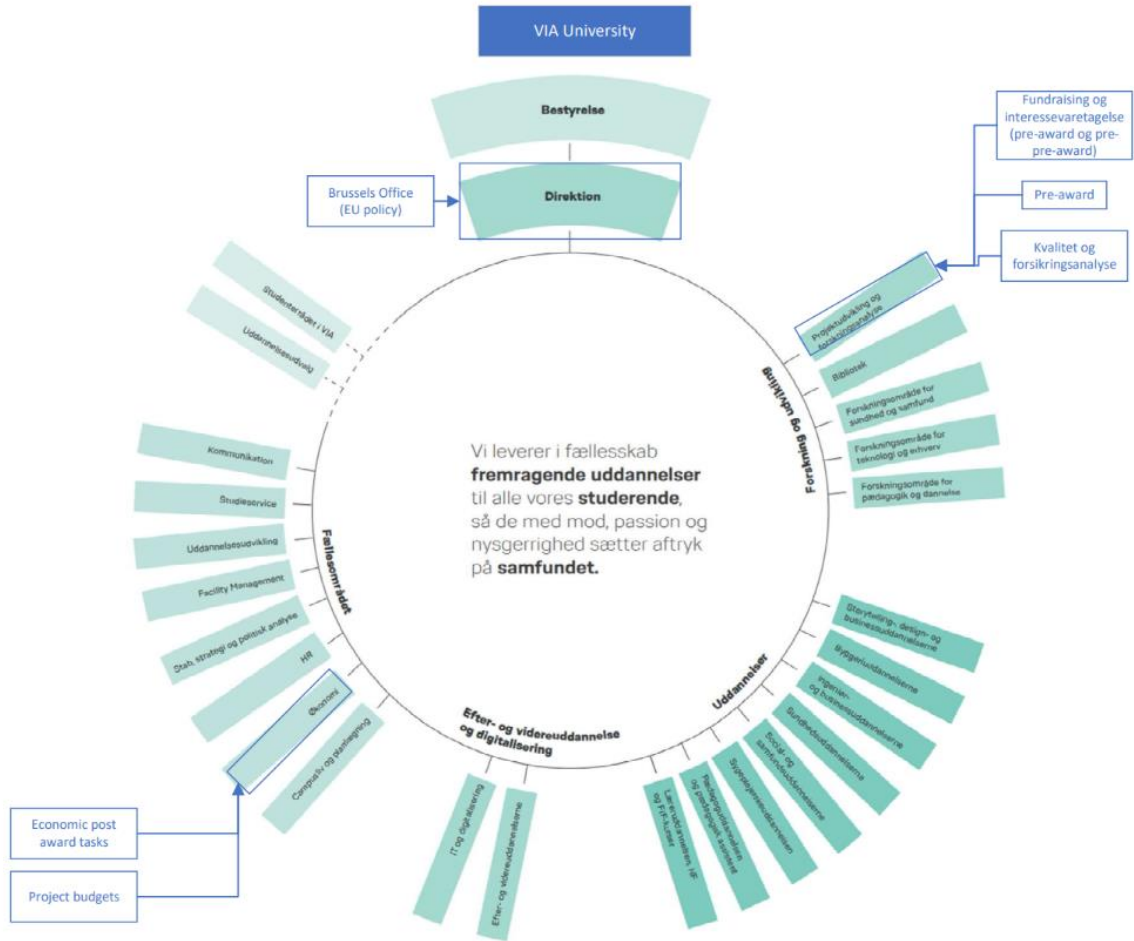
Research Support at Aalborg University (AAU)

1. Organisational Structure of Research Support

The Research Support Office (RSO) at Aalborg University (AAU) operates under the broader Research Services unit, which encompasses several administrative functions including contracts, GDPR, ethics, PhD administration, and process development. The RSO itself is structured into two main segments: pre-award and post-award teams. This dual structure is designed to provide comprehensive support across the entire research project lifecycle.

The central office at AAU is located across three campuses: Aalborg, Copenhagen, and Esbjerg. Research support at AAU is a mix of centralised and decentralised elements. The centralised unit handles large-scale and complex funding applications, such as EU Horizon Europe applications, while local fundraisers and pre-award staff at the departmental level provide day-to-day support to researchers. This hybrid model allows the RSO to offer specialised expertise centrally while maintaining close, responsive support locally.

In 2019, AAU restructured its research support services, implementing a new strategy that delineated specific roles and responsibilities for both central and local units. This included the creation of a "positive list" that specifies which types of applications and funding sources are managed centrally. For example, large EU coordinator applications are handled by the central office, while other applications may be managed at the department level.

The central office includes nearly 15 full-time equivalents, with around 8,5 staff members dedicated to pre-award activities and 5 to post-award activities and one part-time secretary and one head of the RSO. Local fundraisers at the department act as the first point of contact for researchers, providing initial support and then collaborating with the central office for more complex tasks.

2. Objectives and Goals

The primary objectives of the Research Support Office at AAU are to increase the success rate of research funding applications and to enhance the quality and impact of research activities. By providing specialised support and fostering collaboration across the university, the office aims to align research activities with AAU's strategic goals. The central office focuses on high-priority funding opportunities and works closely with researchers to ensure coordinated and effective support throughout the research project lifecycle. Efficient resource allocation is also a key goal, with a focus on balancing central and local support to provide effective, tailored assistance to researchers.

3. Main Tasks

Pre-Award Tasks

The pre-award team at AAU focuses on several key areas to support researchers in preparing and submitting successful grant applications. This includes identifying funding opportunities in close collaboration with the local fundraisers, developing project ideas, and ensuring compliance with the requirements of the funding source. This involves reviewing and providing feedback on draft proposals to improve their quality.

Providing strategic advice is another crucial pre-award task. Researchers receive guidance on aligning their applications with institutional priorities and funding source criteria. The central office has specialised teams that focus on specific funding instruments, such as EU Horizon Europe, Innovation Fund Denmark, and major private foundations like Novo Nordisk Foundation and Lundbeck. Process planning is also an important aspect of pre-award support. The team creates detailed process plans for each application, outlining key milestones and deadlines to ensure timely and high-quality submissions. This involves initial meetings to assess application feasibility and ongoing support throughout the application process.

Post-Award Tasks

The post-award team at AAU is responsible for managing the administrative and financial aspects of awarded projects. This includes amendments, monitoring milestones, managing deliverables, and maintaining regular communication with granting bodies and project partners. The team ensures that projects are executed efficiently and comply with all funding requirements. Financial reporting is another critical post-award task. The team prepares and submits financial reports, checks expenditures, and ensures that project budgets are adhered to. This involves close collaboration with local project economists at the organisations/ departments who handle day-to-day financial administration.

Grant agreement preparation is handled by the central office for all large EU projects. This ensures that contracts are properly negotiated and compliant with funding regulations. Throughout the project lifecycle, the post-award team provides ongoing administrative support, helping researchers with any issues that arise and ensuring smooth project execution.

4. Challenges and Improvements

Despite the comprehensive support structure, AAU's RSO faces several challenges. Balancing the workload and ensuring adequate support for all researchers can be challenging, particularly with the varying demands of different funding programs. Ensuring seamless coordination and communication between the central office and local fundraisers is critical but can be complex and resource intensive. While specialization in specific funding instruments enhances expertise, it can also spread resources thinly, necessitating a careful balance between focused expertise and general support.

AAU is continuously evaluating its research support setup to identify areas for improvement. This includes optimizing the collaboration between central and local units and exploring ways to enhance strategic alignment with institutional priorities. The ongoing efforts aim to further strengthen the research support framework, ensuring that researchers receive the highest level of assistance in securing funding and managing projects effectively.

In summary, the Research Support at Aalborg University supports research funding success through a combination of centralised expertise and decentralised support.

5. Visualised Structure
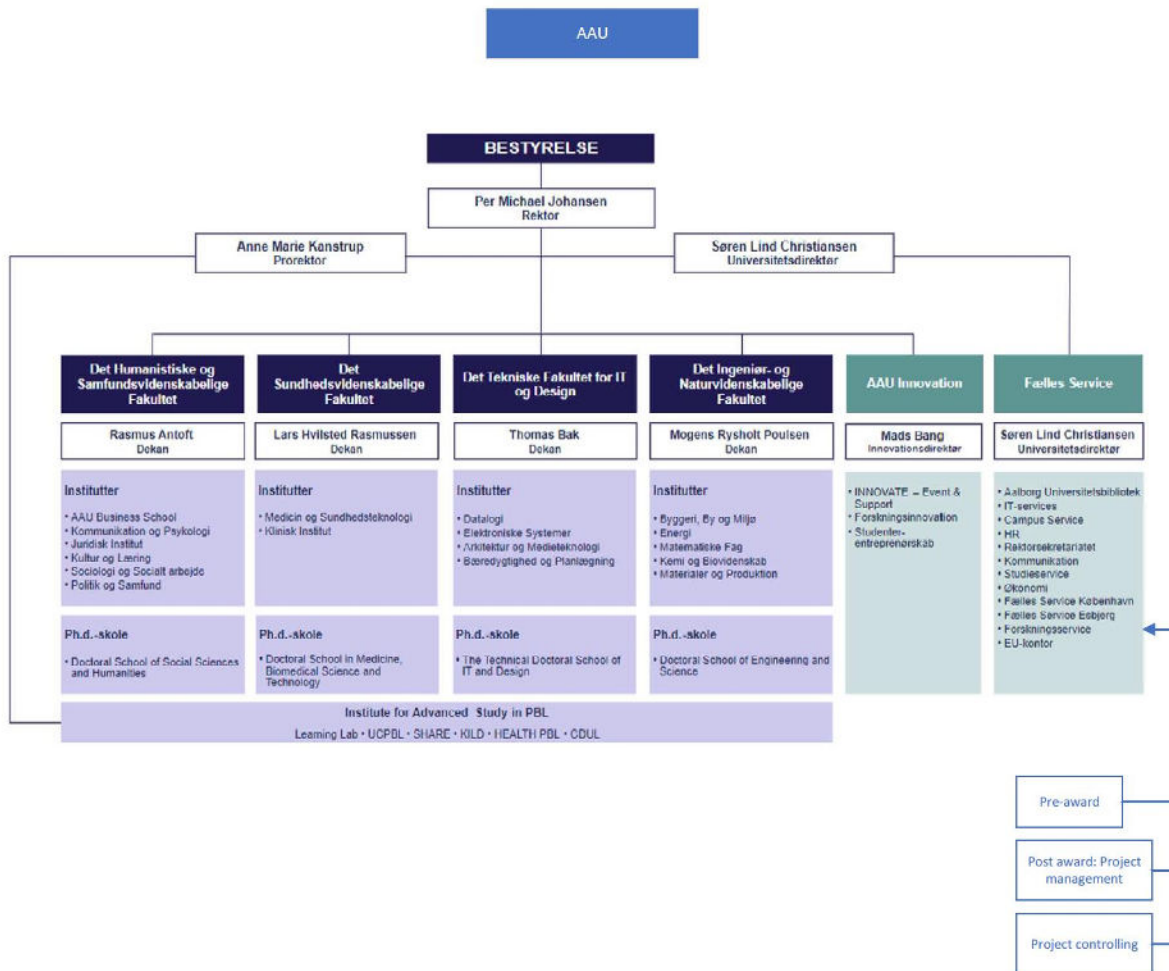
6 Conclusion

The findings highlight significant differences in how Danish universities organise and deliver research and funding support services, particularly between larger and smaller institutions. Larger universities tend to have both central and local RSOs, with central offices managing complex and high-stakes grants, while local RSOs focus on more tailored, faculty-specific needs. In contrast, smaller institutions often consolidate pre- and post-award services within a single central RSO, resulting in a broader distribution of responsibilities among fewer staff. This difference in scale also impacts specialisation, as larger RSOs can afford to assign staff to specific funding bodies or tasks, whereas smaller RSOs require staff to handle a wider variety of funding sources and processes. Additionally, larger institutions are more likely to have advanced data management systems and to explore cutting-edge tools like artificial intelligence, while smaller institutions may rely more on manual processes or simpler software.

Despite these structural differences, several key communalities emerge across institutions. All RSOs share the overarching objective of increasing external research funding and supporting researchers throughout the grant application process. They also face similar challenges, such as the growing number of grant applications, the need to streamline workflows, and the importance of maintaining up-to-date knowledge of funding landscapes. Furthermore, collaboration with other university departments, particularly legal, finance, and HR, is a common practice across institutions, ensuring that both pre- and post-award tasks are managed efficiently. While institutions differ in their internal setups, their commitment to providing high-quality, strategic research and funding support remains a common goal.

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AI has been used to draft the Executive Summary and Conclusions sections, based on the Main Findings.

8 Appendix: External research funding for the 8 Danish universities - descriptive statistics

The 8 Danish universities differ in size and in how much external research funding they secure. This appendix illustrates some of the differences between the universities and serve as background information for the research support profiles presented in this report

(Section 4). Please note, comparable statistics for VIA and REGIONH are not openly

available and thus not presented in this appendix.

Research spending in 2023 covered by Danish public and private funding sources, European Commission and other international funding bodies – university shares
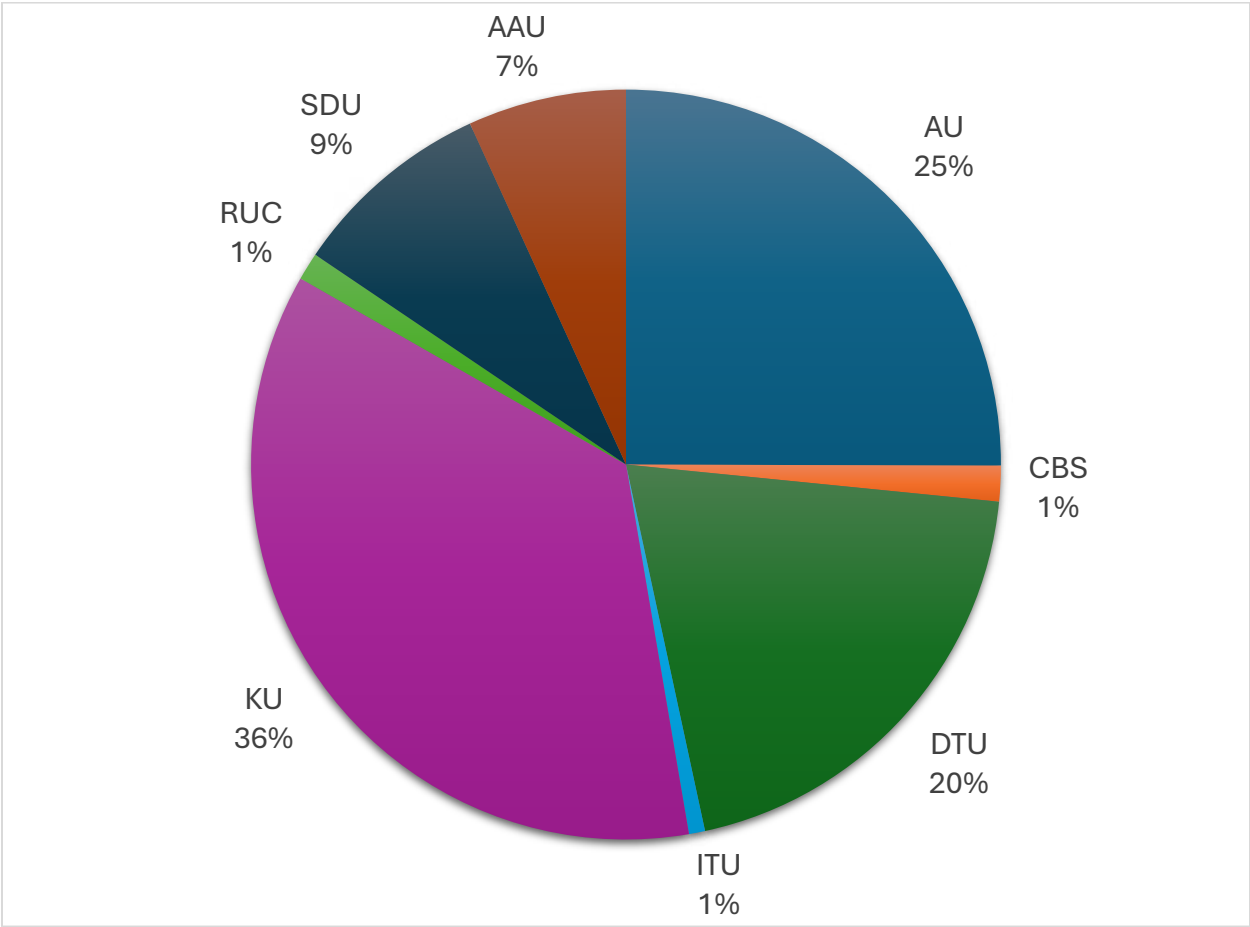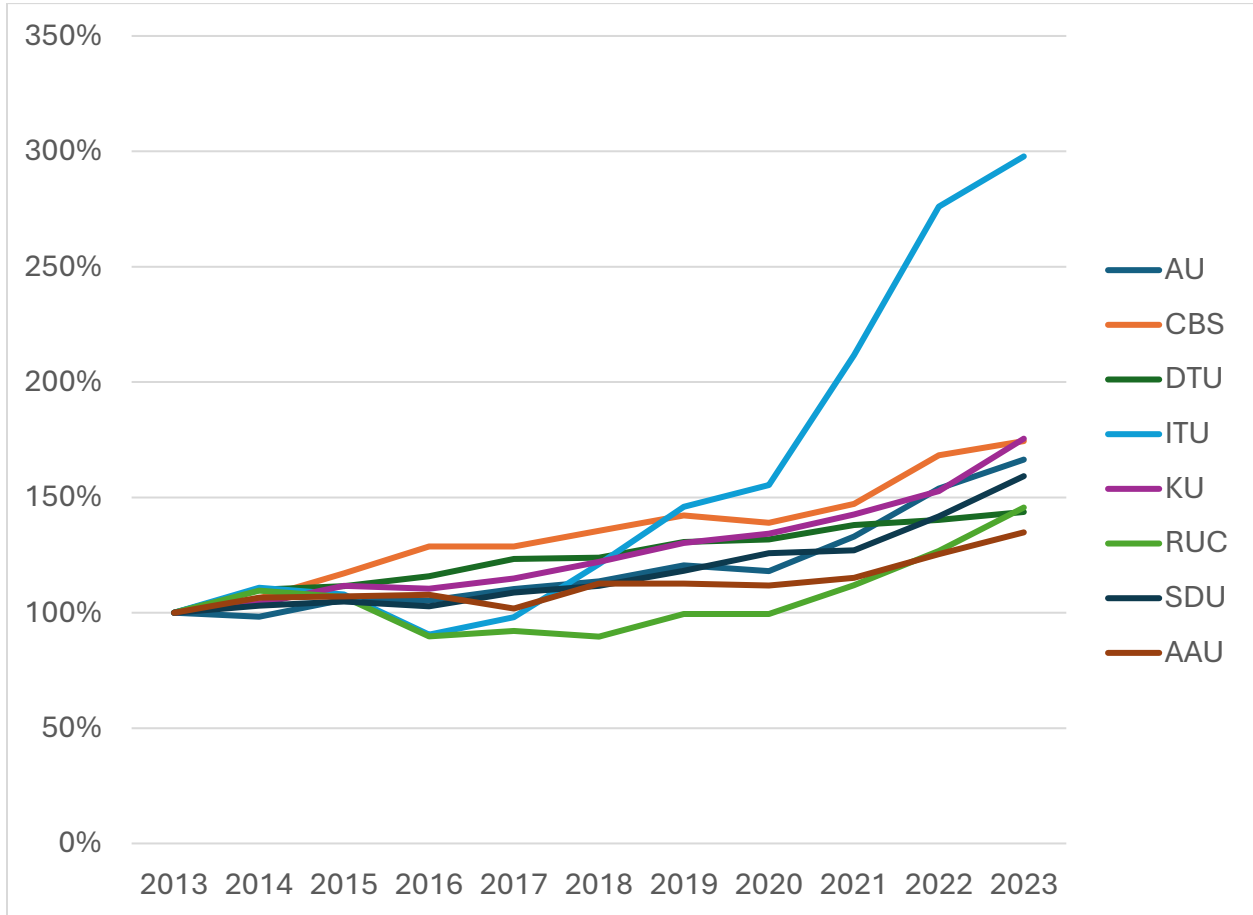

Source: Danske Universiteters statistiske beredskab (https://dkuni.dk/det-statistiske-beredskab/), Tabel A – Indtægter, 2.1 Tilskudsfinansieret forskningsvirksomhed (Opgjort i løbende priser)

Research spending (nominal value) per research FTE covered by Danish public and private funding bodies, European Commission and other international funding sources
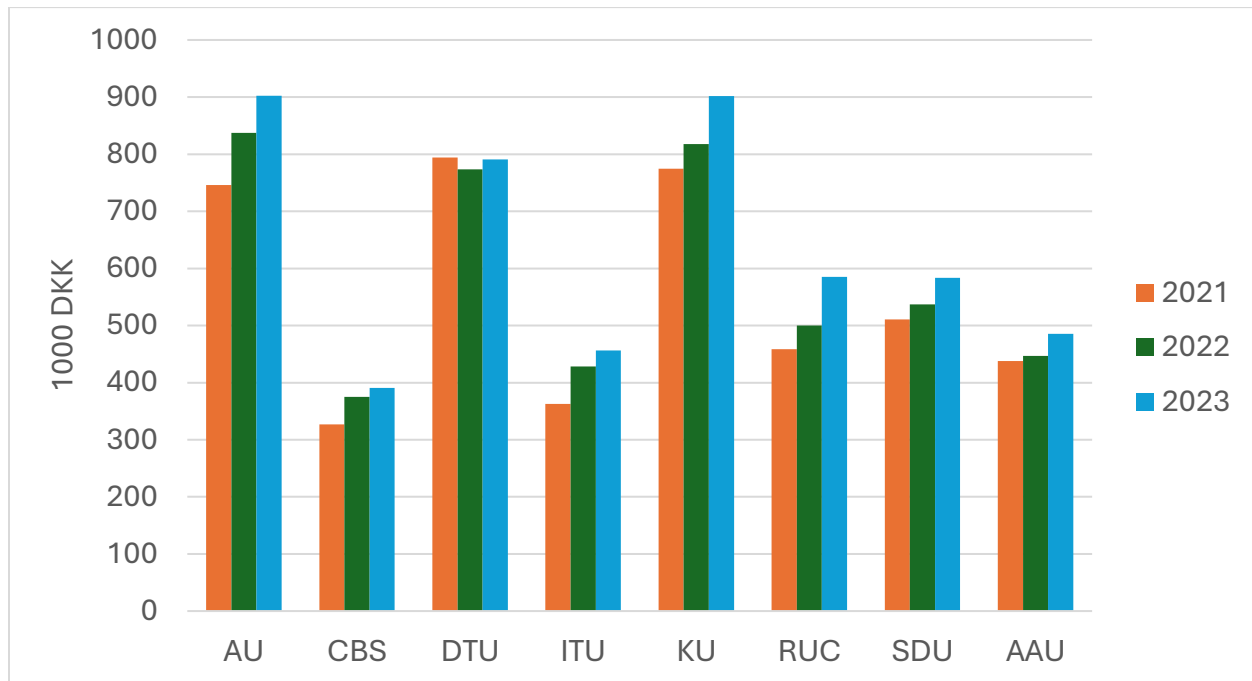
Source: Danske Universiteters statistiske beredskab (https://dkuni.dk/det-statistiske-beredskab/), Tabel A – Indtægter, 2.1 Tilskudsfinansieret forskningsvirksomhed (Opgjort i løbende priser); Tabel C – Personale, 1.2 Forskning og udvikling

Relative development 2013-2023 in research spending (nominal value) covered by Danish public and private funding bodies, European Commission and other international funding sources

Source: Danske Universiteters statistiske beredskab (https://dkuni.dk/det-statistiske-beredskab/), Tabel A – Indtægter, 2.1 Tilskudsfinansieret forskningsvirksomhed (Opgjort i løbende priser)