

Norwegian Centre for Human Rights: Institutional Strategy 2030

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Introduction

The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (NCHR or Centre) is a multidisciplinary Centre in the Faculty of Law of the University of Oslo (UiO). Its main activities include research, teaching, and applied human rights work in the form of thematic training and capacity building. Human rights education and research contributes to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and represents an important investment in efforts to achieve a just society in which all human rights of all persons are valued and respected. NCHR relates its work to the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education and aligns it with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Centre is an internationally recognised academic institution in the field of human rights. As part of its main research activities, the NCHR hosts two Faculty Research Groups and publishes the Nordic Journal of Human Rights, a flagship multidisciplinary publication. The NCHR's two-year Master programme in 'Theory and Practice of Human Rights' educates students from all over the world. The NCHR offers various courses and training on human rights and international humanitarian law for students, as well as for human rights professionals. The NCHR's International Department is responsible for the applied human rights work in cooperation with other academic institutions, civil society and NGOs.

This strategy builds on the [University of Oslo](#) and Faculty of Law strategies for the period 2021-2030. After providing the overall vision, it details four main areas, namely research, human rights education, professional training and capacity building activities of our International Department, and the working environment and organisational matters.

1. Overall vision for the Centre

NCHR shall remain a leading academic institution providing high-quality research, teaching, training and capacity building in the field of human rights in Norway and abroad. The Centre shall conduct cutting-edge research that helps in resolving domestic and global human rights challenges.

The purpose of the Centre is to conduct research, education, dissemination and programme activities on human rights. The Centre is multidisciplinary and promotes human rights as an academic field of work, emphasizing the inter-connection between research, education and programme activities.

The Centre goal for the strategy period is to position itself as the most important Norwegian academic hub for expertise on human rights. Through pursuing strategic national and international cooperation and partnerships, we shall continue to improve our research-based education and training.

Leading and early career scholars working on human rights will be encouraged to join the Centre in various capacities. The visiting researchers will be linked more strategically to NCHR's research, teaching, and programme activities.

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The Centre shall increase its research capacity on political and social sciences, ensure gender balance among its staff, and better disseminate its work to public and professional circles.

We will provide a good working environment and ensure that our institution is an attractive place of work and study. The employees of the Centre will be adequately involved in its management and properly informed of its activities. We shall strive to create and maintain a good and cooperative atmosphere that furthers an attitude of openness, cooperation, and collegiality.

Integrating research and teaching

1. NCHR will strengthen research-based teaching and learning, integrating research staff and students in the research and teaching environment.

Research and society – capacity building and dissemination

2. Research conducted at or supported by the NCHR shall address various societal problems, including specific human rights concerns, through assessment and collaborative studies.
3. NCHR will contribute with innovative ways to ensure that research-based human rights knowledge is used to meet societal challenges.
4. NCHR will work to strengthen multidisciplinary as a priority at UiO.

Human rights research and dissemination

Vision

The Centre shall carry out independent cutting-edge research and research dissemination at both the national and the international level.

The Faculty Research Groups hosted at the Centre conduct research on important issues including sustainable development and human rights in armed conflicts. By engaging in public debates and through various forms of dissemination, we shall bring to the fore new knowledge and perspectives.

Goals

1. NCHR shall strengthen its position as a research centre conducting high quality research on contemporary human rights issues.
2. NCHR shall build long-term research capacity on human rights and ensure a good interaction between the academic staff and the international department.
3. NCHR will carry out research in specific disciplines, especially law, political and social sciences, and philosophy, as well as research across academic disciplines.
4. Our research results shall be published in leading national and international publication channels, and the results shall be disseminated on relevant digital media.
5. Our staff shall strive to publish open access, so as to ensure wider dissemination of their research results and implement [Plan S](#) and the UiO related requirements.

Strategies

Institutional organisation and support

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1. Ensure adequate administrative research and dissemination/communication support at the Centre and the Faculty level.
2. Participate in, coordinate, and lead research activities through the Faculty Research Groups and other forms of cooperation at the University of Oslo, at the national level, and abroad.
3. Ensure Centre's involvement in research activities carried out by national Research Centres of Excellence funded by the Norwegian Research Council (RCN).

Dissemination and publishing

4. Ensure that the Centre remains a knowledge hub in human rights through the publication of the Nordic Journal of Human Rights.
5. Ensure that the Centre is a focal point for discussing human rights challenges by organising an annual or bi-annual University of Oslo Forum for Human Rights Research.
6. Participate in important public debates nationally and internationally through various mediums and dissemination channels.
7. Make best efforts to publish open access or through publication channels that are accessible to the broader public.
8. Ensure that research carried out at the Centre is published in renowned publication channels, including relevant Nordic and international journals.
9. Ensure that research results carried out at the Centre is advertised on the UiO web page and via other relevant media channels.
10. Encourage joint publications among our staff and support younger scholars in getting their research published.

Research-related fundraising at the Centre

11. Encourage and adequately support staff efforts to raise external funding from various funding sources, especially the Research Council of Norway and the European Research Council.
12. Explore possibilities for raising funding from other funding sources, including ministries and relevant public agencies and private actors.
13. Use the two research groups hosted by the Centre as sounding boards and vehicles for exploring and implementing research ideas and for developing research projects.
14. Apply to the RCN for a national Centre of Excellence by 2030.

National and international collaboration

15. Continue to develop and increase our portfolio of PhD courses and trainings through relevant programs and projects.
16. Continue to develop professional qualification or life-long learning courses in cooperation with other relevant actors.
17. Use our institutional membership in the Association of Human Rights Institutes network (AHRI) for increasing international cooperation in the fields of research and teaching.
18. Strengthen our cooperation with leading national research institutions (PRIO and NUPI), as well as Nordic sister institutions.

2. Teaching and human rights education

Vision

The NCHR will provide high-quality human rights education and teaching materials. This will be done through our two-year Master's programme, specific courses aimed at PhD candidates or human rights professionals, a summer course which is part of the University of Oslo International Summer School, an intensive human rights course for professionals, and other educational activities.

Goals

1. Our Master programme in 'The Theory and Practice of Human Rights' shall educate international and Norwegian students to see their learning in a broader social and multi-disciplinary perspective, which provides a more holistic way to address contemporary human rights challenges.
2. Bring education and the learning environment closer to research and in cultivating active researchers, through research-based teaching and stimulating students as active researchers.
3. Strengthen the practical focus in our Master's programme to provide better experiential learning opportunities to both complement didactic teaching and to develop student transferable skills and attractiveness to employers.
4. Strengthen its international cooperation in the field of education through student and staff exchanges and joint projects with key partner institutions. Within its resources and capacity, the Centre will reach out globally in new ways (utilizing UTFORSK; NORPART; and other programmes).
5. Organise human rights courses and trainings across national borders and in various human rights areas.
6. Continue to develop teaching and learning methods that stimulate ethical reflection, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving, through active learning.
7. Develop students' social responsibility and awareness of values and choices through our study programmes.
8. Make students a part of an academic and social community where they are a resource in the development of teaching, learning and research.
9. Make the Centre's experience and expertise available beyond the Master level also to younger entry-level cohorts of undergraduate students.
10. Integrate the digitalization of teaching in learning processes and disciplines.
11. Lay the foundation for lifelong learning by enabling human rights professionals to return for academic updating. The Centre will respond to society's need for continuing- and further education in disciplines where we have a particular advantage and knowledge to share.

Strategies

1. Continue to develop and renew the curricula for the Master's programme and courses for PhD students and respond to society's need for multi- and interdisciplinary knowledge.
2. Establish a one-year study programme on human rights at the bachelor level, and explore establishing a full bachelor programme on human rights (in cooperation with other sister

institutions within the UiO), which provides a solid basic introduction to human rights in a multidisciplinary perspective.

3. Promote exploratory and innovative modes of learning that motivate students, develop skills, and help them become a resource to each other and the Centre, through cooperation with the Educational Centre of Excellence at the Faculty (Centre for Experiential Legal Learning) and other relevant actors.
4. Further develop student-led activities in human rights experiential learning, including:
 - Student Advocacy Seminars in partnership with Scholars at Risk;
 - Expanding internship opportunities with leading domestic and international institutions (such as the Norwegian National Institution for Human Rights and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights); and
 - Moot Court competitions.
5. Provide research-based and flexible continuing education (life-long learning courses).
6. Ensure and foster academic freedom in the Centre's own educational activities, as well as other educational programmes where it is involved.
7. Cooperate with Scholars at Risk and Students at Risk Networks, together with the University of Oslo and other relevant stakeholders, to help safeguard academic freedom.
8. Continue to develop and renew the Human Rights course part of the UiO Summer School.

3. Human rights capacity building and training by the International Department

Vision

Professional groups possess applicable knowledge about human rights that is used in daily work by different professions.

Goals:

1. Equipping professional groups with knowledge, attitudes and skills that allow them to claim and respect their and others' rights in their daily work.
2. To contribute to innovative ways in which research-based human rights knowledge comes into practical application to meet societal challenges.

The International Department structures its work around six main themes; democracy, governance and the rule of law, inclusive societies and development: equality and non-discrimination, freedom of religion or belief, international and regional human rights mechanisms; business and human rights; general human rights education. We contribute research expertise to our training projects and combine it with practical applicable knowledge. An added value is the academic basis that allows us to work with human rights in countries and areas where other actors have limited access.

Strategies

1. Contribute to further strengthening educational institutions capacity to address the knowledge gap and educating in theory, methodology and practice for human rights.
2. Contribute to local actors promoting human rights, strengthening their role as agents of change and being able to influence legislation and institutionalisation of rights.
3. Contribute to ensuring that actors promoting human rights are able to use the international mechanisms and processes to promote the national implementation of rights.

4. Contribute to state actors increasing their knowledge of the protection of human rights in international economic activities in the country.
5. Contribute to developing better ways for the wide spreading of human rights education.

Guidelines for our partnerships

1. Mutual trust, openness, respect for each other's autonomy, integrity and organizational identity.
2. Be an adaptive and transparent partner that also seeks to equalise the inequality that donor funds and unequal access to resources can bring.
3. Basing partnerships on an active dialogue with and due respect for partners' agenda and their context, as well as adequate clarification of mutual expectations.
4. Show understanding and flexibility in our ways of working together with a variety of different partners.
5. Contribute to the partnerships as necessary in the form of academic expertise, relevant research or methodology for human rights education, while over time empowering partners to carry out relevant human rights activities themselves.
6. Contribute to and draw upon an international network of academic human rights institutions, international independent experts in the field of human rights, as well as multilateral institutions and offer relevant academic expertise into our projects.

Work methodology

1. Base projects on relevant research and contributions from researchers.
2. Use a scientifically based teaching methodology.
3. Stimulate meeting places with decision-makers, where research can contribute with knowledge about applicable human rights practices.
4. Be a leading player in contributions to international human rights education and training in a Norwegian context.
5. Gather human rights education organised by NCHR for international actors in a "Human Rights Academy".
6. Emphasize contextual knowledge in projects. Projects that are replicable in several countries must be adapted to context.
7. Aim that projects are able to grow and become self-sustainable.
8. Apply a gender balance perspective as a cross-cutting element in the projects, and ensure that partners respect guidelines against harassment in the workplace.
9. Base projects on an explicit risk assessment, also in relation to the safety and environment of partners.

4. Working environment and organisational matters

Vision

The NCHR is a stimulating and supportive environment, based on academic values such as collegiality, critical reflection, academic freedom and ethical insight. Creating a good working and studying environment is crucial for achieving the Centre's ambitious aims.

Our staff (employees and emeriti), students, and guest researchers are our most important resource. Everyone shall be included in a stimulating academic environment and contribute to an

engaging, positive and safe working and learning environment. This involves an active equal opportunity policy and recruitment practice that creates diversity and ensures equal rights.

Within a framework of a free and critical academic community, the permanent and temporary staff shall show respect for each other, avoid abusive and stigmatizing language and utterances, and act together in a spirit of mutual respect and professional behaviour.

Work at the Centre will be characterized by collegial participation, creative interaction, social inclusion, good management and administrative support.

The Centre will secure resources and organisational capacity to fulfil the Centre's academic ambitions and lay the ground for a good working environment for all employees.

The Centre shall secure a good gender balance – both in recruiting processes and in the day-to-day processes.

Goals

1. Work systematically to create a safe and positive working and learning environment, greater diversity and an inclusive culture for our students and staff.
2. Have an active recruitment policy and attract highly competent and motivated candidates for every position at the Centre.
3. Have a clear and active policy on inclusiveness and equality both in our day-to-day activities, and when recruiting new candidates.
4. Adopt innovative organizational forms, and innovative work and learning methods with efficient use of digital resources.
5. Strive to give our staff and students better opportunities for professional and academic development, and better skills to face changes in technology, society and working life.
6. Reduce our climate footprint and enable staff and students to make environmentally conscious choices.
7. Take good care of our staff, students, and of guest researchers who stay with us for a limited time-period, as an essential condition for us to succeed in our social mission.
8. Make best efforts at creating a good studying environment for our students, and we shall cooperate closely with the faculty and university centrally to achieve this.
9. Secure the organisational resources and funding that is necessary to achieve the Centre's ambitions.

Strategies

1. The head of the Centre is overall responsible to secure a good working environment. Together with the head of administration they will cooperate with the employee Safety Representative who shall safeguard the interests of staff in matters relating to the working environment and ensure that the Working Environment Act is observed.
2. Cultivate an organizational structure and culture enabling a good and mutually beneficial interaction between staff, students, and guest researchers.
3. Develop new competencies, skills and ethical awareness that are important for our ability to implement and tackle changes in working methods and modes of cooperation (both academically and administratively), developments in academic disciplines and changes in methodology.

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4. Achieve better gender balance through good recruitment processes and human resources strategies, increase the number of employees at the Centre, and improve chances of temporary staff to gain good career opportunities.
5. Work systematically to become a sustainable institution and actively enable students and staff to make climate-friendly choices.
6. Secure a good balance between administrative capacity, financial resources, and growth ambitions in the Centre's activities.

