

New interdisciplinary strategic research programs at CAS

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Call for expressions of interest

Following the research evaluation process (2023-2024), the school management at CAS has decided to initiate a process for establishing new, 3-year interdisciplinary, strategic research programs that will span across departments and research environments.

Aim: The interdisciplinary strategic research programs are established as supplements to existing research activities, projects, centres and units at CAS. The programs have three purposes: a) to strengthen interdisciplinary research by supporting groups and individuals working across departments to explore new, perspective-rich research questions and fields, or to develop concrete research projects; b) to strengthen CAS' outward-looking collaborative relations and increase external visibility within these research areas; c) to strengthen talent development and the integration of junior researchers into interdisciplinary research contexts.

The programs will run for a three-year period (June 2026 – May 2029) as an initial pilot to explore ways in which CAS can support and foster interdisciplinary research activities. An evaluation will be conducted prior to the conclusion of the three-year period to inform and refine subsequent initiatives aimed at promoting and strengthening interdisciplinary research collaboration at the school.

Themes: The school will establish 4–6 cross-cutting research programs that may be situated within but not limited to the following thematic areas:

- Sustainability
- Health
- Cultural Heritage
- Democratic societies in a changing world order

The thematic areas listed above have been highlighted because they represent research areas that attract the interest of researchers across a large range of disciplines at CAS and because they reflect strategic interests at CAS, the Faculty of Arts and Aarhus University as a whole. However, research programs in these fields are dependent on sufficient – and sufficiently qualified – expressions of interest from CAS researchers, and suggestions for research programs on other themes are also welcomed.

All programs are expected to engage external partners. External partners are understood in the broadest sense as actors outside ARTS – including other faculties, universities, or sectors.

Organisation:

Program directors: To ensure the interdisciplinary foundations of the programs, they are to be led by two academic staff members (at least one of which is an associate professor, senior researcher or full professor) who are based in two different departments *and* represent two different disciplines.

Workload allocation: The directors of the cross-disciplinary programs are compensated in accordance with the current agreement on time compensation and supplements for research program leaders at The Faculty of Arts. As the cross-disciplinary programs are each led by two directors, the time allocation and the supplements must be shared between the two.

Other resources: The programs are collectively allocated a pool of approximately DKK 0.5 million per year in total. These funds are divided equally between the programs and must cover seminars, travel and other activities.

Selection process:

The establishment of the programs will take place in three stages:

- Expressions of interest phase (deadline 15 January, 2026)
- Program development phase (February – March, 2026)
- Final applications (deadline 14 April, 2026)

Expressions of interest phase

The development of the new programs is based on expressions of interest no longer than 3 pages that should be submitted to Deputy Head of School for Research, Karen Gram-Skjoldager, no later than 12:00 on 15 January, 2026.

The expression of interests must suggest the name of at least one program director and can suggest the names of both program directors. In case only one program director is named, the expression must indicate the profile of the imagined other programme director.

A template for the expression of interest, which contains further information on requirements, is included below. The expressions of interest *should not* include CVs, letters of support, publication lists or any other appendices.

Program development phase

After receiving the expressions of interest, the school management (*institutedelsen*) will review the proposals and invite a number of researchers to proceed with a final application. In this process, school management will map possible connections between the submitted expressions of interest and, if relevant, invite some of the applicants to join forces, explore shared interests and propose a joint, cross-cutting research program. Where relevant, the School will offer to organise meetings or workshops to facilitate this process. At this stage of the process, school management may also refer applicants to other researchers from the school who can help qualify and further develop the submitted expressions of interest towards the final application.

Final application phase:

The final application – an expanded version of the expression of interest, no longer than 6 pages plus appendices – must be submitted by 14 April, 2026. Guidelines for the full application will be shared with applicants selected for phase two.

The new research programs will commence on 1 June 2026 and will be established for a three-year period, running until 31 May 2029.

APPLICATION TEMPLATE – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Title of the proposed research program:

Expression of interest submitted by:

Proposed program directors:

Which overall theme does this proposal relate to:

- Sustainability
- Health
- Cultural Heritage
- Democratic societies in a changing world order
- Other themes (please indicate which):

Pitch – Program Proposal (max 2400 characters)

In the pitch, please address the following questions:

- Which research questions will the proposed program aim to explore, develop, or answer?
- Which emerging or pressing thematic field of research does the proposal position itself within?
- Which research fields, disciplines, and traditions will it draw upon, seek to innovate, or advance?
- Which established research environments at CAS will the program be relevant for and collaborate with?

Be specific and concise. Focus on the originality, relevance, and potential impact of the proposed program.

Please note that the school management may suggest combining proposed programs in stage two of the application phase and following the expressions of interest.

Short presentation of program leadership (max 2400 characters)

Briefly present the proposed program leadership. In the final application this must consist of two researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds and from different departments. If the co-director has not been identified by the time of the expression of interest, please describe the disciplinary background and profile needed.

Motivate the disciplines and profiles involved and explain how the disciplinary backgrounds of the program directors will complement one another in relation to the thematic focus of the program. What is their main motivation and reason to apply for this role?

At the time of the final application deadline, proposed program directors must have secured employment at the school for the full three-year program period (permanent employment is not a requirement) and at least one of the proposed program directors must be an associate professor, senior researcher or a full professor.

Activities and partnerships (max 2400 characters)

- Briefly describe how the program will be run and organized. How will it engage researchers from different disciplines to participate? Which core formats and activities will form the backbone of the program? And how will these relate to the outline of the program pitch above?
- It is expected that the activities in the programs are planned and organized in a way that makes them welcoming and attractive to the school's junior researchers. Describe how the program intends to do so.
- Outline planned collaborations* with
 - Research environments outside CAS at AU
 - Research environments at other universities or academic research institutions
 - Partners outside academia
- Briefly outline the intended outcomes of the programme. We encourage applicants to think of outcomes broadly – i.e. it might be anything from network-building and forging of new external partnerships to joint publications, applications or societal interventions. Ideally, the outcomes should suggest, if not fully define, success criteria for the three-year period.

All research program initiatives must actively engage external partners. External partners are understood in the broadest sense as actors outside ARTS – including other faculties, universities, or sectors.