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VIA University College

# We take Responsibility for the Future

Strategy 2026-30

# We take Responsibility for the Future

Society is at a turning point. The world around us is changing fast, and that is why society needs a strong, engaged VIA more than ever.

## Foreword

Global developments are shaped by geopolitical shifts and the climate agenda, calling for resolute and joint action. They leave their clear mark on Danish society, with more investment in defence, emergency contingency planning and the green transition.

Meanwhile, several of the sectors within which we provide study programmes are facing major reform. Over the coming years, the conditions governing such sectors as health care, care for the elderly and employment will be adapted to the demographic and economic development of society and due to education reform, our own sector faces exciting changes.

Finally, the rapid development of artificial intelligence is irresistibly transforming the way we work throughout society. The technology represents enormous potential for enhanced efficiency and innovation, but also poses considerable questions on how the role of humans will change over the next few years.

### VIA must take Responsibility for the Future

Change calls more than ever for skilled professionals, knowledge of use to society and innovative solutions. That's why VIA has to play a decisive role in

society over the next few years and take considerable responsibility for guiding development in a socially, financially and environmentally sustainable direction.

Fortunately, our ability to take on that role is better than ever. During the last strategy period, we enhanced the profile of our brand and strengthened our expertise, our collaborations and our work with sustainability. We stand now with an education reform that reflects the historically high political willingness to educate more graduates for the professions, to invest more in lifelong learning and applied research and to relieve us of some of the management requirements we have been subjected to, giving us greater freedom.

But we are still left with a number of key challenges to deal with to succeed. We need to attract more students throughout the region at a time of continued shortages of our target age group. We need to educate students with a wider range of educational criteria and prepare them for an even more demanding and variable future. And we need to take an even clearer position in the education and research landscape to better be able to show the value we create.

### The near future is a time of opportunity

This strategy sets out the guidelines for the next five years towards our vision for 2030 of *take action, push boundaries and learn together*. It is also the preliminary culmination of VIA's development and the hard work we have put in since 2008 to improve educational options throughout the region, with new study programmes and formats, build research capacity and open more and multidisciplinary campus environments. Through the work we have done, we have earned the right to more responsibility, trust and resources now awarded to us by society, to take on some of its most pressing tasks.

The near future is a time of opportunity. And it is our shared responsibility to grasp it, step onto the stage and realise our potential.

### Four strategic priorities

The way to success is via four strategic priorities, set out over the next few pages. Each of them contains a range of initiatives designed to ensure that we create *Education for lifelong competence development for all, Close collaboration with professions and industries, Strong engagement with society and An organisation committed to learning together*.



Chairman of the Board  
Per B. Christensen



Rector  
Gitte Sommer Harrits

# We take Responsibility for the Future

## Mission

We educate people with the skills, courage and will to make a difference in the professions and industry. We create valuable knowledge and new solutions in close consultation with ambitious partners, all for the sake of developing society and making a sustainable impression on the world.

## Vision

### Take action - Push boundaries - Learn together

We act in the interest of society with the purpose of shaping a sustainable future together. Based on a solid academic foundation we push the boundaries of creating, sharing and applying knowledge. In ambitious learning communities, we fail, learn and succeed together to make the strongest impact.

# Strategic priorities 2026-2030



## Education for lifelong competence development for all

- Pedagogical development that promotes differentiation
- Students' mastery of their professions
- New pathways to lifelong education
- Boosting the digital judgement of students



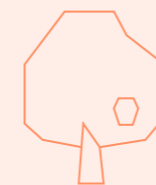
## Close collaboration with professions and industries

- Research environments close to practice
- Dynamic interfacing between theory and practice
- Stronger partnerships with our co-educators
- Profession-oriented teaching environments



## Strong engagement with society

- More VIA experts in the public debate
- Stronger culture for democratic participation
- Greater local engagement on our campuses
- VIA's innovation in action



## An organisation committed to learning together

- A stronger learning community at VIA
- A simpler road to collaboration and professional development
- Competence development of managers and employees

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

# Education for lifelong competence development for all

The most important key to success with the strategy and to fulfil our task for society is our students. The demands they will meet in the workplaces of the future will be much more variable. It is vital that our students attain strong skills and expertise, shape their personalities and abilities within sustainable development to give them a solid base from which to navigate.

## A wide range of students

We already enrol a wide field of students, with very different professional and educational criteria, a trend expected to grow. We must create the best possible conditions for each student to apply their resources, learn and attain the professional skills they need.

## A huge contribution to improving the skills of society

The education reform places renewed focus on lifelong learning, with the promise of free advanced education and the introduction of new master's degree programmes for the professions. This means that we have to meet the growing demand for more flexible careers, where work and education are woven closer together. It also means that we will make a huge contribution to the range of skills available to society and to a robust, flexible labour market.

# Initiatives

## Pedagogical development that promotes differentiation

We must significantly accelerate our efforts within pedagogical development. It must be systematic, research-based and borne by experiments. We have to compile knowledge and methods for differentiated education by exploring the opportunities offered by the use of artificial intelligence and other digital technologies. This will enable us to create educational courses that set high standards and give the necessary support, giving all our students the opportunity to realise their potential.

## Students' mastery of their professions

We must offer students better conditions to be able to immerse themselves in their subjects and work with their professional profile in meaningful collaboration with their peers. The objective is to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and self-confidence, to enable them to meet the demands of their future workplaces and contribute to the development of their professions and industries.

## New pathways to lifelong education

We need to develop more flexible forms of education that support a change of career, and make it easier to combine work and education regardless of their circumstances in life – including via more merit and part-time programmes. We need to develop relevant and attractive professional master's degree programmes. And we need to work in a more structured manner to maintain the relationship our students have with VIA once they complete their study programmes, for example, by offering graduates fora for continuous sharing of the latest knowledge.

## Boosting the digital judgement of students

We need to improve our understanding of the importance of digital technologies to the professions and industries we collaborate with, including artificial intelligence. We need to develop a clear strategy for how we ensure that our students develop strong digital judgement, i.e. attain the necessary skills to be able to act professionally and ethically in the interplay between digital technologies, their profession, society and the public.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

# Close collaboration with professions and industries

As society changes at a furious pace with a range of far-reaching reforms, special attention is necessary to appraise the needs of society and our collaborators. It is essential that we enter into close and continuous interplay with the professions we collaborate with, create knowledge for and educate to.

## High ambitions for practice proximity across all of VIA

Getting as close to practice as possible is in our DNA and has always been one of our strengths, but as demands increase, it is essential that we raise the level of our ambition for working with practice consistently. We believe there is potential to increase that closeness in all subject and business areas throughout VIA. The education reform also demands that we strengthen internship periods for our students.

## A common space for development

We need to think out of the box about the way we teach, research and develop, to ensure we are in line with practice. We need to regard our partners even more as co-creators rather than employers, and create a mutually engaging common space for development, with clear divisions for roles and responsibilities in which we benefit from each others' expertise to boost the quality of our work.

# Initiatives

## Research environments close to practice

We need to build even stronger research and development environments with the professions and industry to strengthen the building blocks of knowledge for our study programmes and to increase the relevance and impact of research in society. We can do so by ensuring our research and development activities are driven by issues stemming directly from the professions and industry.

## Dynamic interfacing between theory and practice

We need to be better at helping our students when they have to link what they've learned in the class with applying professional skills in practice. We need to improve how we share knowledge between VIA and providers of practical experience, including through joint thematic meetings and skills development, helping us realise our ambition of students benefiting from practice-related theory and theory-related practice. Similarly, we need to enter into more engaging collaboration with future employers to help our graduates progress from student life to work life.

## Stronger partnerships with our co-educators

We need to specify and systematise the involvement of our partners as part of the education of the students, to be able to develop programme content and formats together. We need to enhance the connection our lecturers have to the professions and industry, for example, by improving ways for them to start an internship. And we need to experiment with new types of committed, profession-related joint schemes with our co-educators, including through mutual skills development.

## Profession-oriented teaching environments

We need to experiment with interior design and develop the physical teaching environment to make it more inviting for vibrant teaching and reflect professional reality by using, for example, more simulation labs and profession-themed teaching facilities. This will contribute to a more inspirational study environment, giving the students better opportunities to work in a profession-oriented context and to develop a 'professional self-identity'.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

# Strong engagement with society

Our ambition is to contribute even more to the development of society and to assume a clearer voice in the public debate. This requires us to open up more to the world around us, and to dare to be outgoing in taking on the role of one of Denmark's largest and most important educational research and development institutions.

## Potential to make a much bigger impression

Collectively, the thousands of students and employees at VIA comprise an enormous resource in a world where the need for professional insight and applicable practice is greater than ever. By engaging more in the discussions that will form the society of the future, we can help strengthen our democracy and make a bigger contribution to the development of society locally, nationally and internationally.

## We need to be more attractive

To succeed with our ambitions within education and research and development respectively, it is also vital that we are able to attract engaged students, increase our share of research funding, continue to develop new relationships with our partners and to be a place of work able to attract the best managers and employees. To succeed, we must be much better at visualising the value we create, to make us an attractive academic institution towards all our target groups.

# Initiatives

## More VIA experts in the public debate

VIA's knowledge and its experts must feature much higher in the public debate at the level of education policy and within the heart of our subject areas. We need to make ourselves accessible to the media much more, bring our research knowledge into play and contribute to qualifying the debate in society at every opportunity.

## Stronger culture for democratic participation

We need to strengthen our democratic culture and opportunities for participation for our students and staff. We need to further develop student democracy and their opportunities to take part in voluntary activities to strengthen their democratic formation. And we need to make it easier for staff throughout VIA to engage in development and decision-making processes.

## Greater local engagement on our campuses

Our campuses must play a greater role as hubs for local development in their respective areas. We need to strengthen the framework of our local engagement, for example, by making it easier for the campuses to enter into meaningful communities with key partners in the area. And we need to develop local initiatives throughout Central Denmark Region that will help open up our campuses to strengthen their profile and importance to local communities.

## VIA's innovation in action

Our work within innovation harbours considerable potential to create even more value for society than we currently do at this time. We need to focus on bringing the innovation skills and the new, sustainable solutions we develop more into play with our partners – including once the projects are completed.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

# An organisation committed to learning together

Our strategy is ambitious. Society expects a lot of us, just as the staff and management of VIA have high expectations of themselves. To fulfil those expectations, we need to close ranks even more as an organisation. Many of the answers, ideas and solutions we need already exist within VIA. We have considerable potential to work closer together and to learn from each other.

## The need to further develop our large community

VIA is still a relatively young organisation, and it is only natural that we still need to develop our organisational community and culture to bring us even closer to each other. In our last strategy, we focused on rethinking our campuses and developing our close working communities. We intend to continue with those priorities, moving forward, will also put a lot more focus on strengthening common learning and cohesion throughout the organisation.

## Cutting back on bureaucracy

The education reform aims to relax some of the bureaucratic requirements we have previously been subject to and give us more room to act independently. We need to exploit this to boost our ability to act and collaborate more seamlessly across units, teams and colleagues.

# Initiatives

## A stronger learning community at VIA

We need to find new ways to strengthen knowledge-sharing to make it easier to inspire each other and to identify relevant collaboration opportunities elsewhere in the organisation. We also need to develop more communal activities and traditions through which we can get to know each other and enhance our common culture within local working communities, and across units and campuses.

## A simpler way to collaboration and professional development

We have high ambitions for collaboration, but find that internal barriers sometimes get in the way. We need to simplify our core administrative processes, to work to release resources for going deeper into subjects, specialist development and management focusing on core tasks. And we need to generally simplify working procedures throughout VIA, to make it easier to collaborate seamlessly between the different departments and units at VIA, between study programmes, research and with external stakeholders.

## Competence development of managers and employees

The education reform and major changes in society increase the need for competence development throughout the organisation. We need to strengthen the strategic and professional management skills of our managers, while developing relevant, subject-specific skills amongst the staff. Finally, we need to create clearer career paths in the organisation and to strengthen talent development for managers and staff.

## The realisation process

Strategy 2030 "We take responsibility for the Future" was adopted by VIA's board on 11 December 2025 as the successor to earlier strategies and development. It was compiled in 2025 through open discussions in which staff, the Student Council, the education committees and other partners had chance to contribute.

The discussions posed questions such as: *In which areas should VIA accelerate development if we want to remain attractive as an academic and research institution in the future? What could we add or enhance to make the strategy seem even more ambitious and durable?*

Over 500 people took part in the process, to create a shared strategy.

## How we bring the strategy to life at VIA

At VIA, we define strategy as something we prioritise over a given period.

Our strategy contains general formulations, to apply to the whole VIA, which therefore requires translation for it to make a difference. The management in particular bears the responsibility of converting the strategy into local focus plans, which are formulated as part of a Strategic Development Plan (or SDP) for each area.

SDP is a management tool, engaging staff, students and the education committee in their development when it makes sense locally. SDPs support the interplay between VIA's strategic and quality management work, and ensure a meaningful link between common direction and local development.

We follow up on the strategy based on the SDPs and through regular discussions within the existing organisation and fora. We follow up within the management team and across the organisation. That allows us to adjust priorities and adapt the strategy to developments within VIA and in society.

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