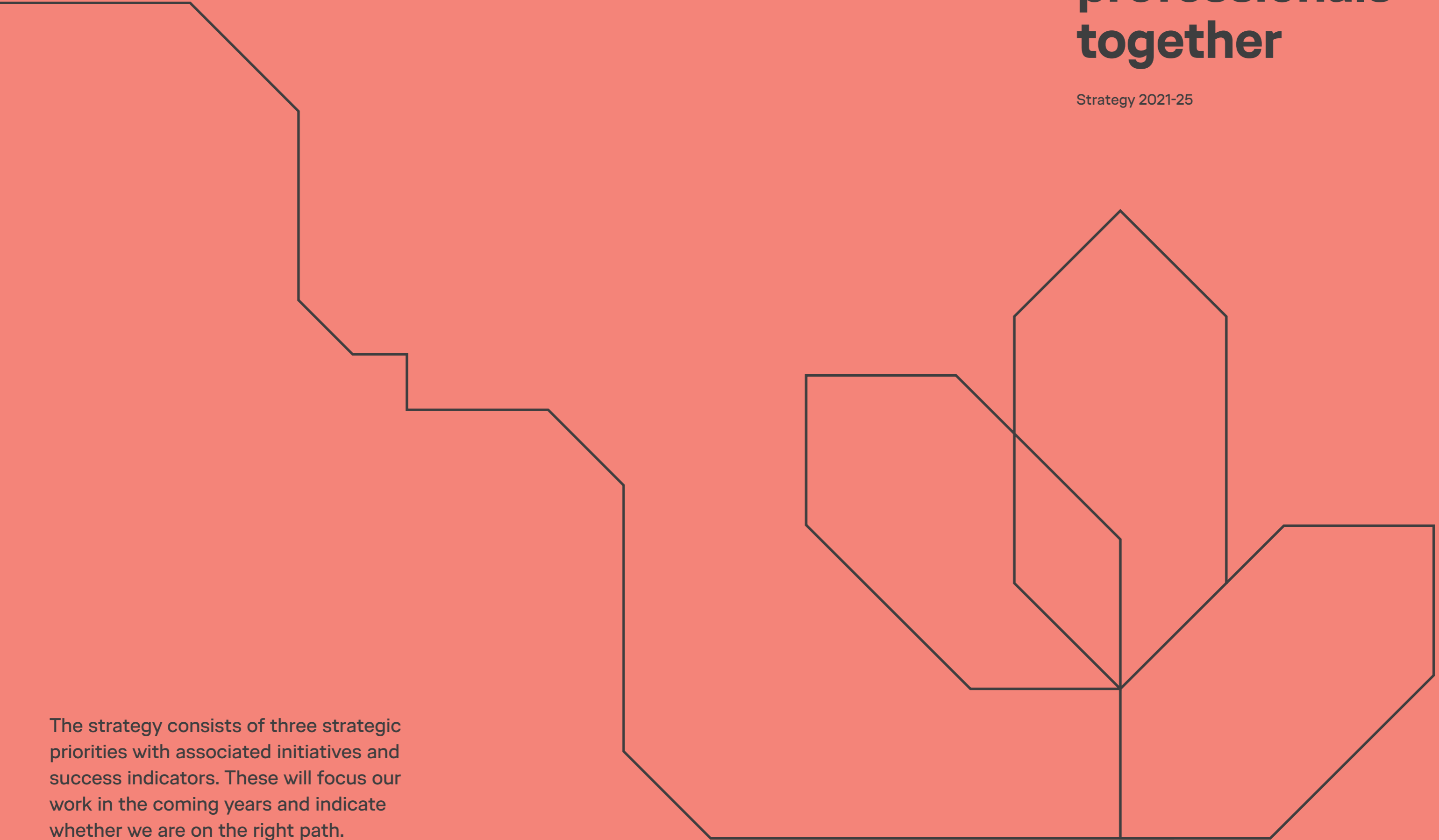


Bring ideas to life  
VIA University College

# Shaping future professionals together

Strategy 2021-25

The strategy consists of three strategic priorities with associated initiatives and success indicators. These will focus our work in the coming years and indicate whether we are on the right path.



# Foreword

After VIA was formed in 2008, we had a natural internal focus on establishing and integrating VIA as a unified educational institution for a number of years. In 2015, we developed a strategy in which we turned our gaze outwards, towards the world. It was time to bring our core skills into play. Time to leave a mark on the world.

And we have left many important marks. We have educated and improved the skills of thousands of talented graduates for important jobs in society. We have changed our organisation towards being a simpler and more coherent VIA. We have been named Denmark's most entrepreneurial educational institution several times.

Our previous strategy, "Co-creating better societies", has also left such a strong mark on VIA that the strategy's focus areas, such as internationalisation, digitalisation and entrepreneurship, have become part of our DNA. So, when we embark on a new strategy, we base it on our DNA and continue the work that

has proven to make us better than ever before at educating, developing and creating knowledge.

With that in mind, there is now a need to direct our strategic efforts towards the essence of what we do: our professional core competences and our community. Not to say that we have lost sight of this over the past six years, but we are currently seeing a number of trends that place increased demands on our professional core competences and on the way in which we educate, work and study together:

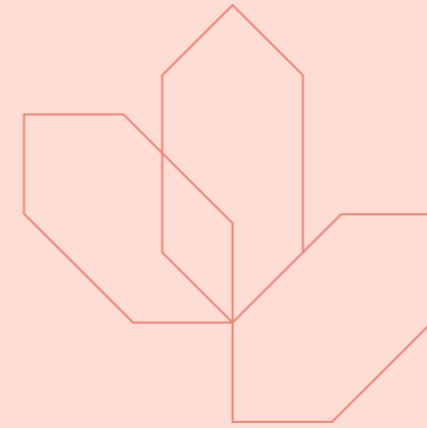
- We are educating professionals for a rapidly changing society. The responsibilities and tasks of a graduate in the workplace are becoming more and more complex both in the field of welfare and in companies. This means that society is in need of more skilled, more ambitious and more professional graduates.
- The need for sustainable solutions in society is increasing, and it is time to translate great ambitions into concrete goals and visible efforts both within and outside of VIA.

— The competition for young people will be tougher, because there will be fewer of them in the coming years and because many attribute lower status to professional degree programmes, than they do to other educational pathways.

— There is an increasing number of vulnerable students, who have greater need for support, also on a personal level, in order to complete their education.

— We experience clear political expectations to strengthen the educational opportunities outside the big cities.

As an ambitious education and research institution, we are a natural part of the solution to these challenges, and we view the trends as an opportunity to contribute even more to developing our society in a sustainable direction. At the same time, our vision inspires us to take our core tasks to new heights. To take action, to push boundaries and to learn together.



## Shaping future professionals together

The first prerequisite for succeeding with our ambitions is for us to strengthen our study programmes. We must ensure that we train professionals who are equipped to meet the demands and expectations of the outside world, both now and in the future. We want to be an education and research institution of the highest quality – also in an international perspective. This demands that we make a significant effort to increase our professional core competences throughout VIA by 2025.

This great task can only be undertaken jointly with stakeholders and through internal partnerships across study programmes, continuing education, the research and development area, the digitisation area and the common administrative area.

VIA's greatest strengths lie precisely in our diverse communities and disciplines. We must cultivate those communities, provide better conditions and make much more use of them in the coming years. We need to push the boundaries of what we can do together.

Therefore, the headline of the strategic direction we will follow towards 2025 is: Shaping future professionals together. The strategy consists of three strategic priorities with associated initiatives and success indicators. These will focus our work in the coming years and indicate whether we are on the right path.



**Chairperson**  
Peter Sørensen

**Rector**  
Harald Mikkelsen

**Student Council Chairperson**  
Emilie Chun Grzona

Strategic priority:  
**Professional degree  
programmes we are  
proud of**



1



## Strategic priority: Professional degree programmes we are proud of

### Fewer young people for vital jobs in the future

In the coming years, it will be increasingly difficult to recruit students for our study programmes. There will be fewer young people, they do not know us well enough, and they do not know the opportunities that a professional degree programme offers them. We educate people for some of the most important functions in both the public and private sectors, but the social status of the study programmes does not reflect their societal significance. Therefore, we see a need to give both our study programmes and the professions for which we educate a status boost, in order to lead to an increasing number of applicants for our study programmes.

When workplaces experience new graduates from VIA needing to leave their first job, it is an unequivocal signal that we, together with our stakeholders, must improve the transition from studying to employment. Our clear ambition, on behalf of the study programmes and professions, is for all our graduates to be experienced as skilled and professional and equipped to carry out society's most vital jobs in the future from day one.

### We will revitalise professional education together

Our ambitions demand that we revitalise our professional degree programmes and research with renewed strength. We must further develop VIA as a research and education institution that creates new knowledge, and, thereby, drives the development of the study programmes and practices. We must increase the students' skills and their pride of being a part of VIA and the professions for which we educate. And we must be the natural first choice for more young people.

During the most recent strategy period, we worked with didactic development, with new teaching formats and with

developing the students' digital skills. We will continue to do so. But up until 2025, we will give special priority to the following strategic initiatives:

### Strengthen our professional study programmes and research and their profile

We want to strengthen our professional core competences by creating new and ground-breaking knowledge and linking it to practical experience and the students' personal skills. We will improve the transitions to internships and jobs in a stronger partnership with stakeholders. Each study programme is to ask itself how it can elevate the professional skills and competencies of its students, find local answers and act accordingly. Digitalisation is to be an integral part of the work of raising our professional standard.

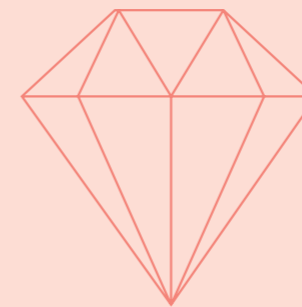
### Strengthen the knowledge flow across study programmes, continuing and further education, research and stakeholders

We want to ensure that knowledge from several practice-oriented research and development activities enriches our teaching and is translated into relevant student skills. We will translate new knowledge into new solutions to society's needs in close collaboration with our stakeholders

regionally, nationally and internationally. Our continuing education programmes are to strengthen the knowledge cycle between the outside world and the study programmes via the unique relationship between them.

### Strategically develop competencies in all staff groups

An important prerequisite for succeeding with the above-mentioned initiatives is that all staff groups implement strategic skill development. The strategy calls for a joint effort, and, therefore, we must develop the professional core competencies of the study programmes, of the research and development area and of the common administrative area.



## Success indicators

- More professionally ambitious and practice-ready graduates
- Strengthened recruitment and intake
- More practice-oriented research and development projects translated into teaching and practice
- Strengthened and strategically motivated skill sets

Strategic priority:  
**Communities bringing  
out the best in  
everyone**

2



## Strategic priority: **Communities bringing out the best in everyone**

### **Need for stronger and more lively communities**

Fulfilling the great academic ambitions we have on behalf of each other requires bringing out the best in everyone – students and staff alike – more than anything else. It places demands on the physical and digital study and work environment in which we live, learn and work on a daily basis.

We see an increasing number of vulnerable young people in society and also experience students at VIA who are not thriving. As an educational institution, we are jointly responsible for giving them a community, where they can unfold academically, professionally, socially and personally.

Many long for a more inspiring study and work environment. Despite the beauty of our campus buildings, they are in many instances perceived as unvaried and institutional.

### **We want to develop VIA as a place of learning and living**

Good initiatives have been taken to develop the learning environments in VIA in a positive direction, but more is needed. Staff and students must create stronger communities together, and we must build them on something familiar – our educational tradition from the Danish folk high schools – as well as on something new, such as what our strong international study environments and partnerships enrich us with. VIA must succeed in becoming one great learning community, consisting of diverse, smaller communities, where everyone thrives and develops both professionally and personally.

Therefore, we will prioritise the following strategic efforts towards 2025:

### **Rethink campuses as diverse, inspiring and inviting**

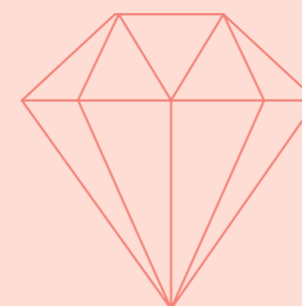
We must make room for each individual study programme to make its own mark on our campuses and create a study environment characterised by committed students and a living student democracy. VIA's walls must exude desire for action and the professions and research environments that reside here. And we must simultaneously further develop the campuses as both social and professional meeting places between students, staff and partners. We need to welcome partners and make it easy for them to host significantly more activities on campus.

### **Develop the physical and digital learning environments**

We will develop our learning environments so they bring out the best in everyone, regardless of background, geographical location or other prerequisites for learning. Every student is to be a co-creator of a study culture that is both ambitious and inclusive. It should help them leave VIA as strong professionals able to make a mark on their profession and society.

### **Build a culture that promotes creativity and innovation throughout VIA**

We are to be an education and research institution where all staff and students are part of learning communities giving them the opportunity to bring their good ideas to life. This means working purposefully to remove unnecessary barriers so that creativity can flow more freely and the path from thought to action becomes shorter.

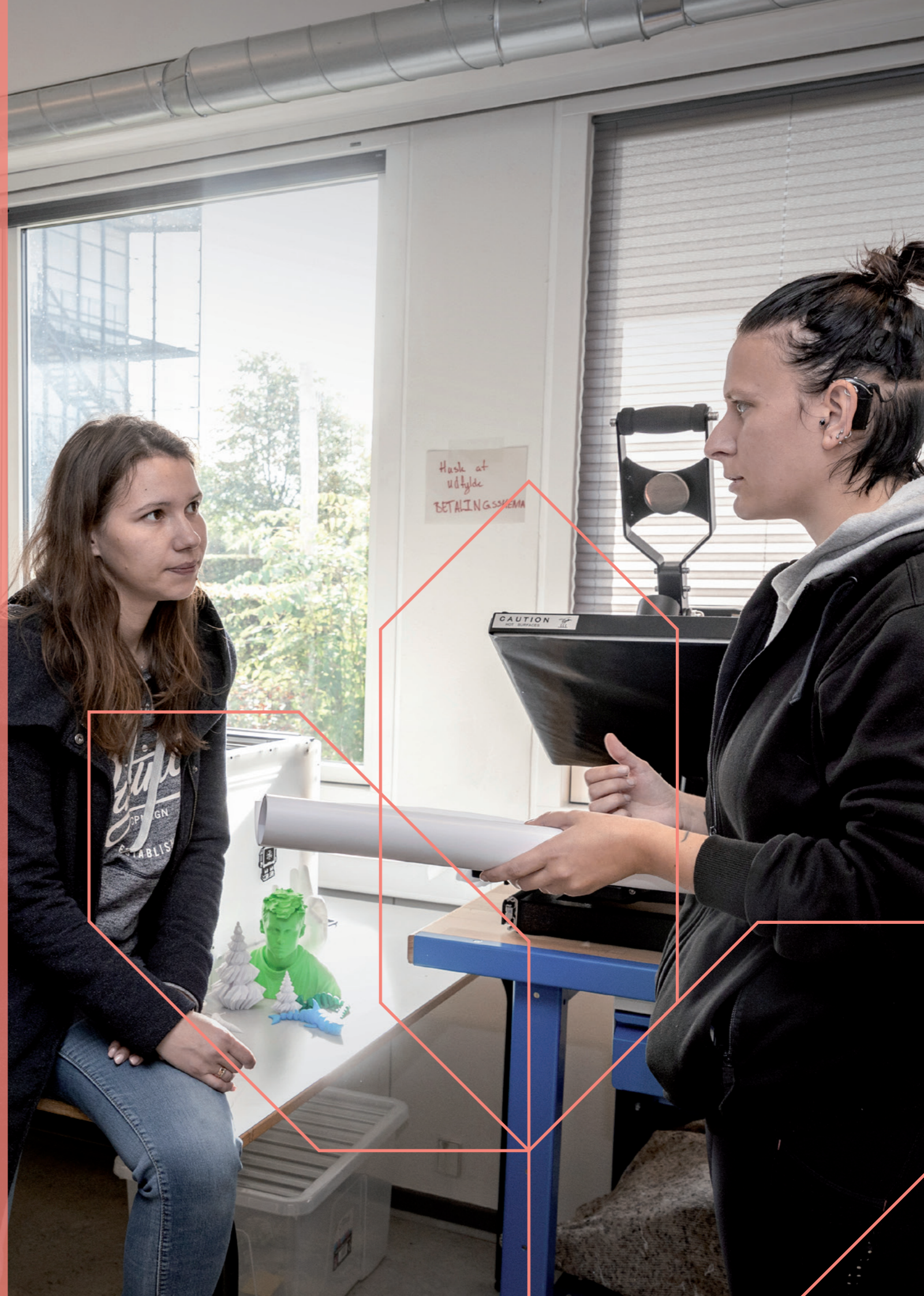


## Success indicators

- Vivid campuses
- A study and work life where everyone thrives and learns
- A brave and experimental organisation

Strategic priority:  
**A knowledge  
institution driving  
sustainable  
development**

3



## Strategic priority: A knowledge institution driving sustainable development

### The future demands sustainable actions

The next decade calls for action to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. As a knowledge and education institution, VIA has a special regional responsibility for Goal No. 4, which is about ensuring equal access to quality education for all and promoting everyone's opportunities for education throughout life. We want to strengthen the educational opportunities in the region. We want to be the ones giving our students resourcefulness and the courage to co-develop the professions, they enter into, in a sustainable direction. We want to be the ones developing new knowledge for – and with – actors in our surrounding environment, so they can act sustainably. And we want to be the ones giving both students and staff a responsible and sustainable place to study and work.

We are already doing many good things. We have achieved becoming a UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals School. We run our campuses energy-efficiently. Our students are recognised for their sustainable skills and ideas. Every day, good ideas sprout throughout VIA, but we need a clearer strategic course and concrete goals for our efforts.

### We will work holistically and goal-oriented

At VIA, we will work with a broad understanding of what sustainable development is: i.e., we will commit ourselves to developing sustainably in an environmental, social and organisational sense. Therefore, it is vital that the many ideas and initiatives constantly popping up throughout VIA continue to sprout.

To target our work, we will prioritise the following strategic efforts towards 2025:

### Integrate sustainable development in all study programmes and research areas

We will integrate sustainable development in all study programmes and research and development areas, so we develop knowledge and professions that push society in a sustainable direction.

### Develop sustainable lifelong learning models

We must meet citizens' needs for skill development by developing sustainable models for lifelong learning. The boundaries between basic and continuing education must be eliminated, so that retraining and developing professionally become easy and accessible. We will do this by, e.g., strengthening initiatives targeted at our former students and by developing new continuing education formats.

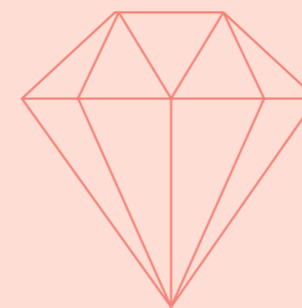
### Strengthen educational opportunities throughout the region

We must live up to the need for skilled labour throughout the Central Denmark Region by strengthening our education programmes offered outside of Aarhus. We will do this by increasing the number of applicants with professional and financial

sustainability as prerequisites. And we will also do this by, for example, offering new programmes with accreditation of prior learning, new digital and hybrid educational offerings and by creating completely new and sustainable educational opportunities in close partnership with municipalities, the region and companies.

### Define concrete goals and initiatives to make VIA a sustainable organisation

We will commit to concrete goals and report on our development. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals are our overall framework, and to that end, we will set goals and create clear, measurable results on green transformation as well as on social responsibility, working environment and management.

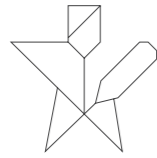


## Success indicators

- Graduates with resourcefulness to push the professions and society in a sustainable direction
- New lifelong learning models
- Strengthened range of study programmes throughout the entire region
- Noticeable results on our sustainable development as an organisation

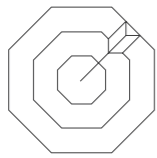


## Mission



VIA's mission is to develop and offer professional educational programmes and profession-centered knowledge in learning and educational environments of high quality. We do this to meet and challenge the needs of society – regionally and globally – for educational opportunities, knowledge development and knowledge dissemination.

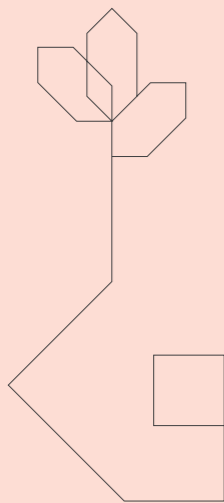
## Vision



**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 direction



# Shaping future professionals together

Strategic priority:  
**Professional degree programmes we are proud of**

- Strengthen our professional study programmes and research and their profile
- Strengthen the knowledge flow across study programmes, continuing and further education, research and stakeholders
- Strategically develop competencies in all staff groups

Success indicators

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- Develop the physical and digital learning environments
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