

Introduction & general principles

The Rector Team Vincent consists of Vincent Eijsink (KBM), rector candidate, Ingunn Burud (Realttek), candidate for pro-rector of education, and Thea Blystad Klem (VET), candidate for pro-rector of research. We are running because we all have great enthusiasm for NMBU. Our university is a fantastic place with an amazing campus, and we work on topics that matter to many. We see great opportunities for NMBU that can be utilized. We stand for an open leadership culture with strong leadership recruitment. We want to work on internal culture, remove barriers to collaboration, and develop the NMBU brand based on high-quality research and education.

Our team is running because we believe we can contribute to leadership with relevant experience, solid expertise, and values that promote the university's development. Our experience covers all areas important to NMBU. We are sharp, analytical, and goal-oriented, while also being focused on the working environment and the people behind everything that happens. We are confident in ourselves, robust, and, most importantly, approachable. We will be action-oriented, but our leadership will be perceived as collegial. We come from successful faculties that have undergone transformations and have succeeded greatly in many areas. We know how good collaboration and teamwork are created and understand that the key to good processes is broad participation and strong cooperation with employee representatives, especially in times of financial challenges and restructuring. All of this is necessary to address NMBU's major challenges, such as finances, an aging infrastructure, research funding, and maintaining the quality of education. We believe a key to this is good mental health, characterized by high motivation, job satisfaction, and positive future prospects for both students and employees.

NMBU is and must remain a research-intensive university with academically competent leaders who understand that a university is not, and should not be, a regular company. We are committed to quality at all levels, and we aim to "stretch the team" both in research and education to become the best university in the country. All elements of our activities should be valued: teaching, research, innovation, communication, and administration. Likewise, all academic fields we currently have should be valued, and the opportunities to combine them should be utilized rather than hindered by our organizational structure. High-quality research and education, carried out by highly competent and motivated academic communities with equally motivated students, form the foundation of it all. The administration should serve high-quality research and education, providing the basis for innovation and dissemination. It will be a privilege and a source of pride to be an employee or student at NMBU.

Governance, collaboration, leadership, and administration

We want to be a rectorate that listens and engages in dialogue. We will ensure sufficient participation in all processes, not because regulations require it, but because we want to utilize the experience and expertise of NMBU's employees and students when developing new plans, strategies, and decisions. We will be both informal and action-oriented, and our governance will be perceived as secure and collegial, even when unpopular decisions must be made.

It is crucial for NMBU to break down cultural and administrative barriers to collaboration between faculties and departments. We need a culture where all top leaders consider the entire NMBU when making decisions. We shall be one NMBU. To achieve this, faculties must align their practices more closely, choosing the best and most resource-efficient solutions available at NMBU today or adopting even better ones (e.g., through the use of AI).

Leadership recruitment is important. Deans should be strong academics with a good understanding of and significant experience in the university and research sector. If necessary, we as the rectorate will collaborate with deans to shape their faculties in line with NMBU's strategy and share thoughts on what the university should be and how we can succeed. When recruiting new associate professors and professors, in addition to teaching competence requirements, we will emphasize the ability to write research articles and secure successful project funding. This type of recruitment should place greater emphasis on leadership potential in research at both mid- and senior levels. Especially our professors should be independent and capable leaders, able to apply for and manage research projects with minimal assistance. Strong research groups should be led by experienced researchers with leadership skills.

We will establish an administrative culture based on trust and goodwill, aiming to facilitate the most and best possible research and education. We will review our procedures, particularly the interaction between local and central administrations, and simplify where possible. We will be responsible, yet pragmatic where feasible. NMBU should leverage the advantages of being a relatively small institution. A close-knit administration, where employees understand the university's operations and know the people they work with and for, is incredibly important. If reorganizations are considered for economic reasons, we must also weigh the financial value of job satisfaction for all involved.

Developing NMBU in times of financial challenges

The most important aspect of this process is creating an environment where everyone understands that changes are made solely to preserve and develop what is good about NMBU. We must foster a spirit of cooperation and build trust in NMBU's responsible use of resources. For example, no one wants a larger share of our research funding to cover facility rental costs or budget 1 payroll instead of hiring PhD candidates or postdocs. However, if all projects contribute slightly more and the funds are used for beneficial purposes, such as maintaining infrastructure, replacing retiring staff, or financing support measures for researchers in training, this can be a positive initiative. The key is ensuring NMBU allocates its resources wisely and that employees trust this process. This rectorate will work to earn that trust.

We will restore financial control through various measures while protecting research and education as much as possible. We must distinguish between short-term actions, which should not be permanent but are necessary to avoid external financial oversight (e.g., temporarily reducing the number of PhD candidates, postponing essential maintenance, or increasing cost allocations to research projects), and long-term financial stability. NMBU's strategic funds should support necessary transitions, even if it means delaying some initiatives. We must evaluate the value of non-essential activities that we (temporarily) may not afford and continuously seek more efficient and user-friendly administrative processes. Some efficiency improvements in teaching may be possible without compromising quality, for example, by increasing collaboration between faculties and offering fewer but larger courses, and there must be a general awareness raised about cost. In a collective effort, we must accept that not everything can remain unchanged. Our goal is to emerge as a strong and forward-looking NMBU that prioritizes quality over size and maintains its high research activity.

We do not want to burden employees with parking fees, even if it generates revenue, as many employees have long and challenging commutes with inadequate public transportation options.

We value open discussions about finances rather than avoiding difficult topics. Various measures must be weighed against each other in an inclusive process. We must recognize the big picture, respect the uniqueness of different disciplines (and their cost structures), and

acknowledge that optimal solutions may vary by field. Just some questions for reflection: Should we reduce the number of PhD candidates, or should we have fewer associate professors and professors? Should we increase the revenue for budget 1 payroll, or should we reduce spending on research infrastructure? Should we dismiss employees, or should we rather take other unpopular measures (e.g., renting out facilities, increasing revenue) that can strengthen NMBU's economy

NMBU should be a workplace where people enjoy their jobs and support one another for collective success. In challenging economic times, a strong sense of community becomes even more important, and shared goals must take precedence over individual preferences. We aim to cultivate a culture of cooperation and trust to help us prioritize and achieve financial balance. Ensuring broad participation is a key part of this.

Research and research education

Research at NMBU should be of world-class quality, and we provide research-based education. NMBU should allocate funds for research, for example, to maintain an adequate research infrastructure and to keep facility costs for non-commercial research low.

Research projects should primarily be led by permanent academic staff who also teach. We must be conscious of the number and types of project applications we submit. Externally funded researchers can be employed on temporary contracts, such as PhD and postdoctoral positions. We aim to limit the use of "permanent researchers" on external projects, as this creates an A- and B-team at the faculties between baseline funded academic staff and externally funded permanent researchers. These positions sometimes transition into baseline funded positions, making workforce planning unpredictable. Such "backdoor recruitment," which happens randomly and without standard recruitment procedures and criteria, is detrimental to NMBU and highly unfair to the many young researchers striving to one day become associate professors or professors at a university. NMBU must have a predictable, fair, and strict recruitment policy.

Research education is one of the most important things we do. PhD students, postdocs, and project-funded researchers should be part of robust research groups with secure conditions, good infrastructure, and competent supervisors. Conditions should be in place to allow those in research education to develop necessary skills (e.g., teaching, grant writing) where NMBU's financial situation and the project's scope allow for it. There should be funding available to support the most talented individuals during their time at NMBU.

With the possible exception of the next two years, during which significant savings are necessary, NMBU should allocate the funds previously designated as "Ministry of Education funded PhD scholarships" to research. This strategic research funding should be used wisely, in line with recent recommendations from the international committee evaluating all bioscience research in Norway. A large part of these funds should continue to finance PhD positions. We will continue to support prestigious projects, our top research talents, and independent basic research. These funds should primarily be managed by staff who teach, ensuring that our education remains sufficiently research based.

NMBU as a workplace

We are committed to creating good working conditions for everyone at NMBU. We will take the necessary steps to further develop NMBU in challenging times. A key change will be greater inclusion of academic staff's expertise and engagement in NMBU's decisions. We aim to break

down barriers between faculties and departments. The infrastructure rental model should be developed into a useful tool rather than a hindrance to research and collaboration. Administrative processes should be simplified where possible, and NMBU must have a predictable and fair recruitment policy. We must be one NMBU.

It should be noted that everyone will feel the impact of NMBU's reduced budget. For most of us, this is the first time in our lives that prosperity and offerings are declining rather than steadily increasing. We will do everything we can to create a good workplace, but we also expect everyone to contribute to adapting to changing circumstances, for example, by accepting that not everything can remain the same and that financial constraints exist.

We believe that holding a permanent position as an associate professor or professor at a Norwegian university is a significant privilege, and we expect individuals to give back for the privileges they enjoy. Our associate professors and professors should drive NMBU forward; they should be self-motivated without being anarchists and have a highly conscious approach to resource use. They should take good care of students and all those in research education.

The key to NMBU's success lies in motivation, job satisfaction, and strong future prospects for employees.

NMBU as a place of study

We aim to have the country's most satisfied students who receive a solid education. Students should experience an ambitious and quality-focused educational policy while also having their everyday challenges acknowledged. Teaching should provide competencies essential for addressing societal needs now and in the future and should adapt to the opportunities and challenges presented by the AI revolution and other technological advancements. We will work towards a vibrant campus and facilitate the optimal development of a strong academic and social student community. Alongside being supportive, we will also set expectations. A two-way clarification of expectations is essential, especially in difficult economic times. We need to raise awareness of educational costs and recognize that financial limitations exist. We must fill our study places, particularly in disciplines where NMBU plays a unique role in the Norwegian educational landscape. In these turbulent times, we will pay special attention to how we can help our students maintain high motivation, job satisfaction, and strong future prospects.