



Háskóla Vestfirðinga
Suðurgötu 12
400 Ísafjörður
Sími: 450 3040
www.uw.is
info@uw.is

Harpa Grímsdóttir

Chairman of the Board



The University Centre of the Westfjords was founded in 2005 and is now celebrating its fifteenth birthday. The goal at the beginning was to raise the level of education in the Westfjords and to promote positive community development and a positive image of the region, both in Iceland and abroad.

The University Centre has worked towards these goals in various ways. Its operations have grown and it has become a well-established institution. It has supported students in the Westfjords who are taking university courses remotely, it has held summer courses in Icelandic for foreign university students, and it has taken on many other projects in the higher education arena.

One of the University Centre's early decisions was to set up a master's degree program in Coastal and Marine Management. This decision has turned out to be a very fortunate one. Plans were made with care from the beginning. A high-quality program has been built up, one which is grounded in the Westfjords' special characteristics. In 2019 another program called Coastal Communities and Regional Development was added. These programs are taught in short modules and have attracted very capable scholars and teachers, both from Iceland and abroad, to lead classes. Some of the instructors are among the world's foremost experts in their field, and many come year after year to teach the same course. The students have proved capable and close-knit, and only a few have dropped out. A total of 171 students have now completed a master's degree, and about 50 are still in the midst of their studies. Thus the University Centre has not only had a positive influence on the Westfjords community by attracting young and well-educated people. It has also added much to the entire university environment in Iceland, and to the academic fields that its staff and students are engaged in.

As a healthy institution becomes well established, its operations can start to grow like a rolling snowball. One example of how this has happened at the University Centre is the partnership with the School for International Training in Vermont. This partnership has resulted in new job positions in the Westfjords and yet more students in the region.

In the last few years the University Centre's research activity has grown quickly. Research projects have been funded, the number of peer-reviewed articles in the University Centre's name has shot up, and a new research director position has been created. This development fits with the University Centre's most recent strategic plan, which was created in January 2020 by the Centre's staff, board, and stakeholders. Its main conclusions are that the Centre should take good care of what it has already built, increase its visibility, strengthen research activities, strengthen its partnerships with research institutions in the area, and lead the research community in the Westfjords.

The University Centre of the Westfjords has a bright future, and it has been the Centre's good fortune to attract fine staff and talented students to work in a community where so many people, both in word and deed, have helped ensure its success.

Peter Weiss

Director



In its first years, the University Centre of the Westfjords grew very quickly. When looking at the last five years, one can clearly see continued gains, for example since 2015 the number of graduated students has gone from 69 to 171.

In 2016 an American partner school, SIT, began to offer semester-long programs at the University Centre, and in 2018 SIT developed its very first master's program in partnership with the Centre. The students in the program study climate change, and the content of the SIT program thus resonates well with one of the University Centre's master's programs. In 2018 a new and more extensive accreditation agreement with the University of Akureyri was signed, and in 2019 the new master's program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development was inaugurated. In the long run the plan is that this new program will double the number of students – and with that the magnitude of related activity, both economic and scientific.

After several years with very little staff turnover, there have been some changes in the key positions at the University Centre. New academic directors for the program in Coastal and Marine Management arrived in 2016 and 2020, new administrative directors started in 2018 and 2020, and a new academic director for the Coastal Communities and Regional Development program was hired in 2019. In 2020 the position of Research Manager was created. Staff recruitment has not been difficult and holders of doctorates now fill 45% of full-time equivalent positions. This is a high percentage for a small institution on the edge of the settled world. Admittedly, there are only seven permanent positions at the University Centre, but when outsourced employment, short-term instructors, and jobs with external funding are added, the number of full-time equivalent positions rises to almost eighteen. This level of activity, along with the fifty or so students at the Centre at any time, makes the University Centre a pleasant and lively place to work.

Quite a lot of work has been done on Vestrahús (the Centre's building) in 2019 and 2020, and although the Centre has not grown in terms of square footage, the building is now better adapted to its activities. For example, there is now much more office space for instructors and researchers.

The University Centre has for years been a small and rapidly growing institution. It has now turned the corner into a new era, where measures to optimize and anchor its achievements will take precedence. With the new program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development under way, internal administrative needs have been prioritized. In just one year a new student administration system, a new learning management system, and a new records management system have been introduced. These developments are not visible from the outside, but are a very important step in reinforcing the Centre's operations so that it can be of value to the Westfjords and a source of honor for the Icelandic university community.

Founding Members of the University Centre of the Westfjords

University of Iceland
Reykjavík University
University of Akureyri
Bifröst University
Agricultural University of Iceland
Hólar University
Icelandic University of the Arts
Marine and Freshwater Research Institute
Matís Icelandic Food and Biotech R&D
Icelandic Meteorology Office
Westfjords Iceland Nature Research Centre
Ísafjarðarbær Municipality

Bolungarvík Municipality
Vesturbyggð Municipality
Municipality Association of the Westfjords
Westfjords Office of District Magistrate
Westfjords Health Institution
Westfjords Regional Development Agency
Ministry of Social Affairs on behalf of Multicultural and Information Centre
Westfjords Life Long Learning Centre
Ísafjörður Music School
Hrafnseyrarnefnd
Atkonur

Snerpa ehf.
Hraðfrystihúsið Gunnvör hf.
Vestri ehf.
Fjarðanet ehf.
Vífilfell hf.
Skógur ehf.
Ísfang hf.
Skjólaskógar á Vestfjörðum
Skurðlæknirinn ehf.
Agar ehf.
Þóroddur ehf. / Oddi hf.

Board of Directors 2005-2020

Nominated by Ísafjörður Municipality

Halldór Halldórsson	2005-2015	Head of Board 2005-2015	substitute Lárus Valdimarsson 2005-2009 Rannveig B Þorvaldsdóttir 2009-2015
Harpa Grímsdóttir	2015-	Head of Board 2016-	substitute Halldór Halldórsson

Nominated by the Research Institutions

Jóhann Sigurjónsson	2005-2013		substitute Magnús Jónsson 2005-2009, Árni Snorrason 2009-2013
Árni Snorrason	2013-		substitute Jóhann Sigurjónsson 2013-2017 María Ásdís Stefánsdóttir 2017-2019 Hjalti Karlsson 2019-

Nominated by the Universities

Hjálmar H Ragnarsson	2005-2007		substitute Þorsteinn Gunnarsson
Þorsteinn Gunnarsson	2007-2009		substitute Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson
Skúli Skúlason	2009-2013		substitute Hjálmar H. Ragnarsson
Stefán B. Sigurðsson	2013-	Head of Board 2015-2016	substitute Erla B. Örnólfsdóttir

Nominated by the Labour Market Parties

Kristján G. Jóakimsson	2005-2019		substitute Laufey Jónsdóttir 2005-2007 Helgi Ólafsson 2007-2015 Ólafur Baldursson 2015-2019
Elías Jónatansson	2019-		substitute Bergvin Eyþórsson 2019-

Elected by Annual Meeting

Soffía Vagnsdóttir	2005-2009		substitute Guðrún Stella Gissurardóttir
Jóna Finnsdóttir	2009-2015		substitute Guðrún Stella Gissurardóttir
Elísabet Gunnarsdóttir	2015-		substitute Kristinn Hermannsson



The University Centre staff in June 2020. From left: Margrét Björk Arnardóttir, Administrative Director of Education and Teaching; Matthias Kokorsch, Program Director, Regional Development; Astrid Fehling, Project Manager (acting as Administrative Director of Education and Teaching from August 2020); Ingi Björn Guðnason, Marketing and Web Manager; Peter Weiss, Director; Þórdís Lilja Jensdóttir, Receptionist; Pernilla Rein, Project Manager/Library; Guðrún Sigríður Matthíasdóttir, Receptionist; Catherine Chambers, Research Manager. Not shown: Veronica Méndez Aragón, Program Director, Coastal Management (from October 2020).

Staff 2005-2020 overview

Peter Weiss	100%	Director	01.08.05 -
Haraldur Kristinsson	100%	Website and Technical Manager	01.10.05 - 30.09.07
Martha Lilja Marthensdóttir Olsen	100%	Administrative Director of Education and Teaching	01.01.06 - 31.08.11
Sigríður Ólöf Kristjánsdóttir	100%	Project Manager	01.12.06 - 31.12.07
Sigurður Arnfjörð Helgason	100%	Project Manager	01.09.07 - 30.11.09
Ingi Björn Guðnason	100%	Marketing and Web Manager	01.10.07 -
Sigríður G Ólafsdóttir	100%	Programme Director	01.01.08 - 31.12.09
Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir	100%	Project Manager	01.04.08 - 31.05.08
Pernilla Rein	40-100%	Project Manager	01.05.08 -
Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir	50%	Receptionist	01.08.08 - 31.08.09
Guðrún Sigríður Matthíasdóttir	100%	Receptionist	01.11.08 -
Margrét J Birkisdóttir	45%	Accountant	01.11.08 - 31.12.13
Urszula Barela	100%	Janitor	01.07.09 - 31.12.13
Árný Rós Gísladóttir	50%	Receptionist	24.09.09 - 31.08.10
Dagný Arnarsdóttir	100%	Programme Director	01.01.10 - 31.08.16
Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir	25-75%	Project Manager	01.01.10 - 30.06.14
Heiðrún Tryggvadóttir	50%	Project Manager	01.01.10 - 31.10.11
Lína Beck Þorvaldsdóttir	50%	Receptionist	01.09.10 - 15.12.11
Þórdís Lilja Jensdóttir	50%	Receptionist	01.01.12 -
Kristín Ósk Jónasdóttir	100%	Administrative Director of Education and Teaching	20.09.11 - 31.12.18
Birna Lárusdóttir	25%	Project Manager	01.11.14 - 31.12.17
Catherine Chambers	100%	Programme Director	01.09.16 - 31.07.20
Astrid Fehling	25-75%	Project Manager	01.01.18 - 31.07.20
Sigurður Halldór Árnason	50%	Project Manager	01.10.18 - 07.10.19
Margrét Björk Arnardóttir	100%	Administrative Director of Education and Teaching	01.01.18 - leave
Matthías Kokorsch	100%	Programme Director	15.08.19 -
Catherine Chambers	20%	Research Manager	01.06.20 -
Astrid Fehling	100%	Administrative Director of Education and Teaching	01.08.20 -
Verónica Méndez Aragón	100%	Programme Director	01.10.20 -



Students at Hesteyri in autumn 2020 – well spaced out, as required. Students learn much from each other and from being in this very special part of the world, the natural laboratory of the Westfjords.

If one looks only at the number of permanent employees, it can seem like there have been few changes in this aspect of the Centre’s operations over the last ten years. If outsourced employment, externally financed positions, and short-term teaching contracts are included, the picture looks completely different, as the chart here shows.

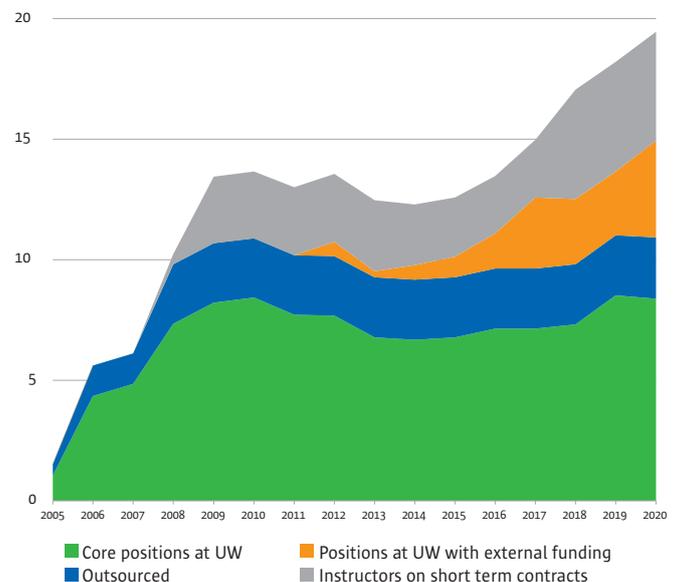
The graph shows employment over a 15-year period. The green area shows the number of employees who are on the Centre’s payroll. Here there was a large jump in the first years but few changes after that, despite there being more and more activity at the Centre. For a long time the Centre employed the equivalent of six full-time staff, but now at the end of 2020 they number seven.

Above the green area is a thick layer representing outsourced employment. These outsourced tasks include bookkeeping, cleaning, technology maintenance, web site, and examination proctoring. Many of these tasks have also at various times been handled by permanent staff and thus the distinction between outsourced and in-house employment is not always sharp.

The most growth in recent years has been in the layer just above that: in full-time positions which are financed from external sources. Judging from recent research grant applications, it looks likely that these will increase in number even more in the next years. They include two permanent employees who are hired by the Centre’s partner school in Vermont (USA) but located in Ísafjörður. New for 2020 were long-term positions funded by the Stefansson Arctic Institute in Akureyri, the Fulbright Program, and research grants. The data here include only positions lasting at least one year and filled by staff residing in the Westfjords. These academic employees would not be living in Ísafjörður without the University Centre and its initiative, and the Centre frequently covers some part of their costs, for example by giving them office space.

The final layer is made up of independently contracted

Staff positions 2005-2020 (full-time equivalent)



instructors. Each of them is in the Westfjords only for a short time, but all together their employment amounts to the equivalent of four full-time positions. Most of them teach in the master’s degree programs. A growing number live in the Westfjords.

Employment at the University Centre has expanded far beyond the core positions formed when the Centre was founded in 2005.

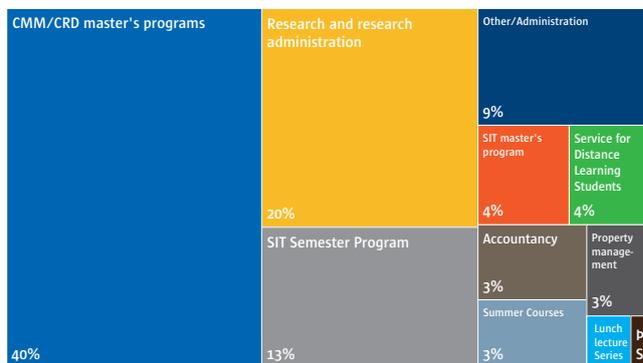
It is worth mentioning that a part of the Centre’s core operations

is also financed externally. This includes the work the Centre has done for many years for the Development Fund for Immigrant Affairs, but the largest contributor is the wide-ranging partnership with SIT (the School for International Training) in Vermont. Aside from hiring its own staff in Ísafjörður, SIT pays rent and purchases a considerable amount of services which the Centre's full-time employees perform.

The pie chart shows that the core staff positions on the University Centre's direct payroll form almost exactly a third of all the employment connected to the Centre (34%, or 6.1 full-time equivalents). About 5% of employment related to the Centre is on the Centre's payroll but financed through agreements with external institutions, including service to SIT, to Vestrahús (the building the Centre is housed in) for secretarial services, and to the Ministry of Social Affairs for work with the Development Fund for Immigrant Affairs. Outsourced services such as bookkeeping, cleaning, technology maintenance, web site management, and examination proctoring make up 12%. Some of this work has also been carried out by the Centre staff over the years, and it can be thought of as part of the Centre's core operations.

growth in the next years. Only included in this category are the 4.9 full-time equivalent positions that are held by individuals legally resident in the Westfjords.

Weight of field of activity including outsourced tasks, instructors on short-term contracts, externally funded positions • October 2020

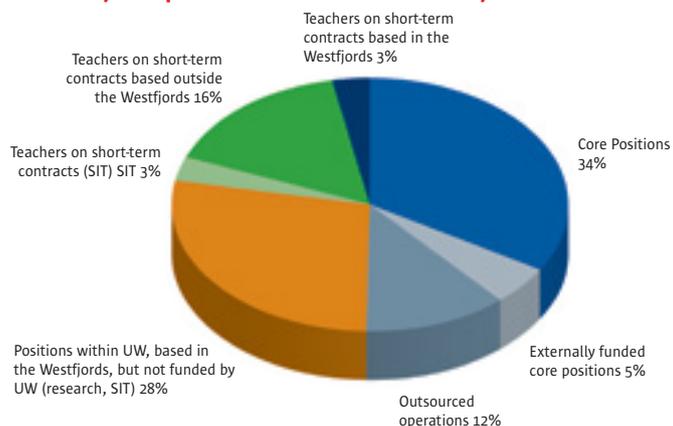


As explained before, the number of instructors on short-term contracts makes up 3.8 full-time equivalent positions. Of this amount, approximately half a position is filled by individuals living in the Westfjords, and about half a position is funded by SIT.

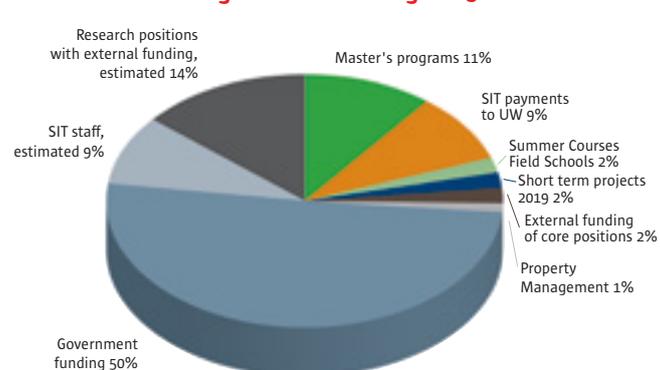
When we look at the total of 17.8 full-time equivalent positions and the tasks that they perform, one can clearly see how important the master's programs are. It is important to keep in mind that this figure of 17.8 positions includes short-term instructors, as well as the employees of the School for International Training and the research positions at the University Centre, which are staffed through long-term contracts with Westfjords residents. With these positions included, the important role of research also becomes clear, as does the role of SIT's operations.

Considerable activity has built up around the core mission of the University Centre and external financing has grown. According to the Centre's 2019 statement, funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture made up 66.9% of its financing, but when positions with external financing are taken into account, the Ministry's share falls to 50%.

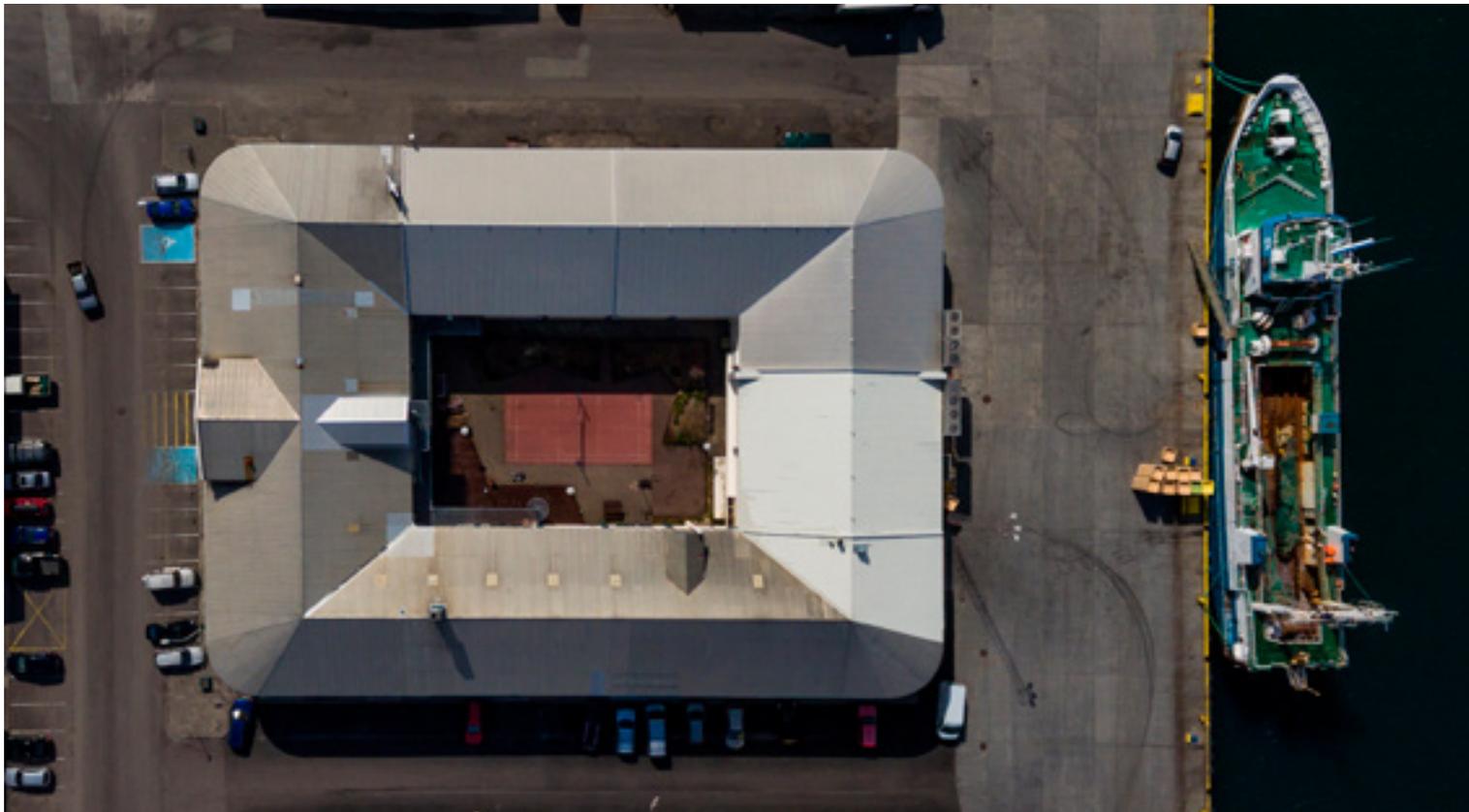
81% of job equivalents based in the Westfjords



Revenues including external funding 2019



About 28% of the employment shown in the chart does not normally form part of the Centre's payroll, but consists of positions that would not exist without the Centre's initiative. SIT's two full-time positions are the most prominent in this category, but research-related employment is also important. This slice of the employment pie has grown over the last year because of new research projects, and the outlook is for more



The University Centre is located right on the harbor in downtown Ísafjörður. It occupies a building called Vestrahús, which was originally built as a fish processing factory. Photo: Ágúst G. Atlason.

The Vestrahús Building and the Research Community

In Vestrahús (the building that houses the University Centre) and in the research community in the Westfjords there are a number of very capable organizations that have naturally become the University Centre's closest partners. These organizations' research fields and areas of concern harmonize well with the University Centre's focus on marine and coastal matters and on regional development. The staff of these organizations have served as teachers and advisers at the University Centre, which has been very valuable for students and for the Centre as a whole.

Collaboration within Vestrahús is very smooth even though there is no organizational structure for the building. Responsibility for operating the facility was at one point in the hands of the Westfjords Economic Development Association, then the University Centre itself from 2008 to 2016, and now the Westfjords Regional Development Office. But no facilities maintenance staff position has been created, despite the considerable size of the building (2600 square meters).

The Westfjords Continuing Education Centre and the University Centre have, over the years, developed their own strengths, and exist side by side as separate institutions which support each other in various ways. For example, the Continuing Education Centre and the University Centre have borrowed equipment and classrooms from each other when

Þórdís Lilja Jensdóttir is one of two receptionists for the University Centre. She has worked for the Centre, half-time, since January 2012. The receptionists are hired by the University Centre but work for all organizations in the building. Aside from reception duties, Þórdís has taken on more and more specialized tasks over the years, such as oversight of the Development Fund for Immigrant Affairs and data entry in the records management system. Þórdís also handles proofreading, applications for the Icelandic course, and examination proctoring. She studied applied media at the University of Iceland, and writing and the Icelandic language are among her interests. She also has a bachelor's degree in laboratory science and worked in laboratories for many years.



There is no question that when it comes to bicycling to work, Þórdís has covered more kilometers than any of the other University Centre employees. During the summer Þórdís uses every opportunity to travel around Iceland preferably using a bicycle.

needed. The ability for the two institutions to rent classroom space from the other at times of high demand, without anyone having to leave the building, is very valuable. The pandemic year of 2020, with its compartmentalization rules and limits on group size, put this partnership to the test.

The Westfjords Regional Development Office has very often assisted in matters involving local industry, and has worked together with the University Centre in many other ways, not surprisingly given that the Centre was from the beginning conceived of as an instrument for supporting regional development.

The University Centre has interacted in many kinds of ways with the Marine & Freshwater Research Institute and with the Icelandic weather service's Avalanche Centre.

The University Centre and the University of Iceland's Research Centre at Bolungarvík have also, over the years, developed their own strengths and an informal division of roles. The Research Centre focuses on research, while the University Centre has specialized in university-level teaching. Communication and participation between the two institutions has increased over time. The director of the Research Centre has taught classes in ecology, while the students at the University Centre have had access to a fine research laboratory during coursework and especially for master's thesis research. Several students at the University Centre have continued on to pursue a doctorate at the University of Iceland as advisees of the scientists at the Research Centre in Bolungarvík.

Bolungarvík is also home to the Westfjords Nature Research Centre, which carries out a diverse range of research projects connected to the ocean and to coastal areas, and thus supports resource management in the region. There is also a new initiative in Bolungarvík called Djúpið, an incubator for entrepreneurs, in which some students and alumni of the University Centre have been active.

The opening of the Dýrafjarðargöng tunnel between the northern and southern Westfjords creates opportunities for more collaboration with companies and institutions in the area.

The University Centre's extensive networks, as well as its specialization in teaching, mean that the Centre is an ideal connector for creating partnerships and coordination between the various research institutions in the Westfjords.

Even before the University Centre was founded, in the first studies about the feasibility of a university-level institution in the Westfjords, one notices an interest in expanding research in the region through increased collaboration. The idea was to achieve this goal by having as many institutions as possible under the same roof, in Vestrahús in Ísafjörður. The founding of the University Centre itself was also supposed to serve this aim. Stimulating such collaboration has been a continual theme in the University Centre's activities for the last fifteen years.

The research institutions in the Westfjords have gathered several times for a research symposium, most recently at Hólmavík in 2019. It is clear that the idea of large common research projects involving all the region's institutions is not realistic, as the only common denominator would be their Westfjords location. On the other hand, there are many types of projects on which the institutions are glad to

The research and development community in Vestrahús and across the Westfjords

- Marine & Freshwater Research Institute
- Avalanche Centre
- Matís (Icelandic Food & Biotech R&D)
- Icelandic Food & Veterinary Authority
- Directorate of Fisheries
- Directorate of Labour
- University Centre
- Westfjords District Sports Association
- Pixel
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Translation Centre
- Multicultural Information Centre
- Westfjords Regional Development Office
- Westfjords Continuing Education Centre
- Djúpið Entrepreneurial Centre, Bolungarvík
- Westfjords Nature Research Centre, Bolungarvík
- University of Iceland Research Centre at Bolungarvík
- University of Iceland Research Centre in Strandir
- The Blue Bank, Þingeyri
- The corporate landscape in both the northern and southern Westfjords

work together. In order to support this kind of collaboration a formal organization, called the Westfjords Research Community, was founded in 2017.

The extensive communication between institutions continues to grow, and clear role divisions have developed.

The Westfjords Research Community has made it a priority to keep its members aware of current projects in order to increase the likelihood of collaboration, when appropriate. Currently work is underway on a list of devices and tools owned by the region's institutions, in order to promote sharing when possible. As well, an effort has been made to publicize the diverse research activity carried out in the Westfjords, both within the region and outside it.

Two research symposiums have been held, one at Ísafjörður in 2017 and the other at Hólmavík in 2019. A similar event was planned for the southern Westfjords in autumn 2020, but was postponed due to the pandemic.

In the fall of 2019 the Research Community took part in the Ísafjörður upper secondary school's Science Days, presenting their activities in a way which was much appreciated. In 2019 the University Centre received a grant to support the Research Community. As one of the largest institutions in the community and one of the few with independent financing, it is natural for the University Centre to take on this role, regardless of whether it is directly funded or not, as long as the amount of work involved is manageable.



The Icelandic courses for exchange students are always supposed to be fun. In the mornings the teaching style is fairly traditional, but after noon the students can choose from an array of short activities, based on their own interests. Orienteering is on offer, as is a shopping spree where locals have been prepped to speak Icelandic with the students. A choir has always been among the options, as music is a great way to learn languages. Here students are singing for passersby at Silfurtorg, with Bjarney Ingibjörg Gunnlaugsdóttir directing.

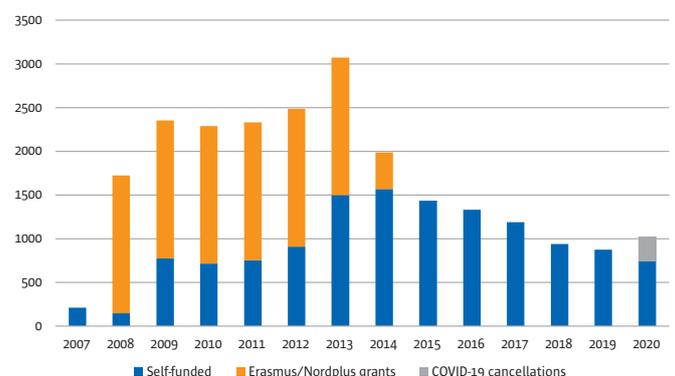
Field schools, summer courses, and the Icelandic Courses

Summer courses and field schools have been a part of the University Centre’s activities from the beginning. The first summer course was held at Hrafnseyri in 2006 in partnership with the caretaker there. Large-scale summer courses in Icelandic for exchange students have been held since 2007, with financial support from Erasmus and Nordplus from 2008 to 2013 (Nordplus to 2014). During those years the courses filled (in fact more than filled) the old Núpsskóli school building with university students for one month every year. Over fourteen years, a total of over 1300 students have taken these well-received courses. For the past six years the number of students has averaged about 75, as the courses are no longer subsidized. In 2020 the courses were held successfully despite cancellations due to the pandemic.

Summer courses in Icelandic for exchange students: More than 23,000 overnights and a turnover of 160 million ISK

Field schools have visited the Westfjords with the University Centre’s assistance since 2006 and continue to do so. Most conspicuous among these, since 2008, has been the School

Summer Courses for Exchange Students 2007-2020 (overnight stays)



for International Training in Vermont (USA). During the first years SIT ran a field school only during the summer, but starting in 2016 spring and fall programs were introduced, and from 2018 SIT began to offer a master’s program in partnership with the University Centre. SIT’s summer courses have been very popular and have received very good reviews – so much so that it would have been possible to double the number of bookings. The University Centre did not feel able to organize host families for so many students over the



The first cohort of the SIT master's program. Students spend one semester in the Westfjords. This is the fall 2018 group, accompanied by the director of the University Centre and by Richard Walz, the academic director of the SIT master's program in Climate Change and Global Sustainability.

summer months. Starting in summer 2020, SIT thus planned to move their summer course to Akureyri, but because of the pandemic these plans were postponed.

Summer courses and field schools have been a part of the University Centre's activities from the beginning.

The organization of summer courses was very important for the University Centre during its first years. As the Centre's operations have grown, summer courses have diminished in prominence. Managing them is a time-consuming task and it is not always simple for students to get university credit for such courses. Advertising single courses and attracting students also turned out to be costly. After the arrival of the master's programs, which offer a variety of regular short-term courses over a good part of the summer season, the Centre has concentrated on advertising these courses to independent students rather than putting energy into new summer courses.

SIT creates jobs in the Westfjords.

Now and then one hears the proposal that the University Centre should hold classes or workshops for companies in the Westfjords. Actually these proposals seldom come from the companies themselves, but they do reflect people's ideas of the role of a small, rural university institution. There have been discussions with the fish-farming companies in the region who can easily imagine various kinds of workshops and such. One must, however, keep in mind that courses at the University Centre have to be at university level and for this they must be accredited by a university either in Iceland or abroad. The domestic universities feel that they satisfy the needs and demands in this field well. The University Centre's board has, however, permitted holding unaccredited courses if they take place in close partnership with the Westfjords Continuing Education Centre.

Partnership with SIT

SIT (the School for International Training) is an accredited university-level institution in Vermont in the USA, which has specialized in offering study-abroad programs in partnership with foreign institutions. SIT has multiple locations in many countries and offers courses during the summer as well as the fall and spring semesters. SIT began to offer master's programs in 2018, and its very first offering was developed at and with the University Centre of the Westfjords.

SIT and the University Centre are both very international institutions. The University Centre makes an effort to attract people to the Westfjords, while SIT specializes in sending Americans to study all over the world. These two missions are very compatible.

The partnership began in 2008 and has grown and deepened ever since. SIT purchases a considerable variety of services from the University Centre and has, as well, its own employees in Ísafjörður whose office space is within the Centre.

SIT's summer courses, which had been held in Ísafjörður since the beginning of the partnership in 2008, have out of understandable reasons recently been moved to a new location, and will be missed. However, the full-semester programs, held in the spring and fall, as well as the master's program in Climate Change and Global Sustainability more than make up for the loss.

SIT began to offer master's programs in 2018, and its very first offering was developed at and with the University Centre of the Westfjords.



Hólmavík, in the Strandir region. The University Centre proctors examinations in three locations: Patreksfjörður, Ísafjörður, and Hólmavík.

A service center for distance learning for Westfjords residents

Services for distance learning students are an important part of the Centre's operations, and already in 2005 the Ministry of Education stressed their importance. In the University Centre's first years distance learning was quite a new phenomenon. The first group of distance learning students at the University of Akureyri had started seven years before, in 1998, in fact in the Westfjords. The number of distance students had grown quickly in those few years, not least because of a special effort to increase the number of certified teachers in elementary schools. Not counting that special program, the number of distance learning students in the Westfjords has held fairly steady through the years at about one hundred.

These days, video conferencing and classroom use are no longer the areas in which distance learning students need services. They rather need a place to read, working space, and facilities for taking examinations.

With increasingly flexible study programs, the difference between on-site and distance learning has become less clear. All universities have now moved their distance learning operations onto the net, and the old video conferencing equipment has been put in a closet to gather dust. Moving distance learning onto personal computers means that finally, the student can truly be located wherever he or she wishes – which means that the importance of centers for distance learning decreases.

Today, the role of the University Centre in supporting distance learning is primarily one of proctoring examinations and thus saving students innumerable trips to take exams at the university they attend. This also applies to students who are living in the Westfjords temporarily, for example during

Astrid Fehling is substituting as administrative director of education and teaching for Margrét Björk Arnardóttir, who is on a leave of absence. Astrid first came to the University Centre in spring of 2010 as an exchange student. She wrote her thesis in the Westfjords for her M.Sc. degree in environmental management at Kiel University in Germany.



Astrid has worked on many projects in the Westfjords over the years, for example for the Westfjords Nature Research Centre and for the School for International Training. Since 2011 she has taught a comprehensive course in geographic information systems at the University Centre and was hired part-time when the University Centre hosted an international GIS conference. Since August 2020 Astrid has been in the key position of administrative director, who oversees all the details of teaching and learning from application to graduation time, in close partnership with the University of Akureyri. The administrative director also handles distance learning and examinations, and in addition Astrid manages the Icelandic language course held each summer. Thus Astrid has experienced the University Centre as student, teacher, conference manager, and administrative director.

Astrid has the Centre's most comfortable chair and always has candies and caramels on offer for guests.



their winter vacation. Unlike other examination centers in Iceland, the University Centre decided not to charge domestic university students enrolled in distance learning courses, as this service is one of the most important ways in which the Centre serves Westfjords residents.

The University Centre and the Westfjords Continuing Education Centre have worked together for years in proctoring examinations at Hólmavík and Patreksfjörður.

The University Centre offers three examination locations: Patreksfjörður, Ísafjörður, and Hólmavík.

In 2019, about 300 examinations were proctored and each examination required about three hours of labor, for a total of 600 hours. There were at least 200 hours of administrative work on top of this, so service to distance learners amounts to no less than half a full-time equivalent position. 25% of examinations and 37% of proctoring took place in Hólmavík and Patreksfjörður. Since the University Centre has no staff in those areas (Strandir and the southern Westfjords), it contracted with the Westfjords Continuing Education Centre for proctoring services there, while retaining responsibility for the overall administration of the exams. In fall 2020 an agreement was made to outsource part of the administration of exams at Ísafjörður to the Westfjords Continuing Education Centre as well, in order to make use of both institutions' staff time in the most efficient way.

Examination procedures can, however, change, and the months of social distancing in 2020 have given a hint of this. The distance learning service centers in Iceland may have to go through another great transition. Although the Ministry of Education made distance learning a priority at the founding of the University Centre, and it is still an important part of the Centre's operations, the need for distance learning and exam administration has not grown

and will not foreseeably grow in the next years. The role of a service center for distance learning in the Westfjords is one of simply following along with decisions made by the universities, and does not offer the University Centre any development opportunities.

The university preparatory course

In a successful partnership with Reykjavík University, a course of study preparing students for university entrance was offered for seven years, from 2008 to 2015. In the beginning, the University Centre was in charge of delivering the course to residents of the Westfjords, employing a mixture of on-site and distance learning throughout the region. After two years it became apparent that local student numbers were dropping and that the demand for a university preparatory course of this type in the Westfjords was exhausted. In 2010, Reykjavík University and the Centre agreed that the Centre would deliver the first semester of the program to students all over Iceland using a distance-learning approach.

Distance teaching can be done from the countryside to the capital area.

In 2015, Reykjavík University thoroughly overhauled its university preparatory course. The changes resulted in a shorter course length and less need for teaching staff. Given the new circumstances, Reykjavík University and the University Centre amicably decided to end this part of their partnership for the time being.

The approach of having instructors and administration in the Westfjords, but students spread out all over the country (though mostly in the Reykjavík area) was an innovation, and showed that in Iceland knowledge and education need not always flow from the capital to the regions.

Student-teacher ratio and course choice options

The master's programs consists of 120 ECTS which are distributed over two years of study. In the first year, coursework is in the foreground, and students are busy completing 75 ECTS in classes that run from the end of August until the end of June of the following year. A 45 ECTS master's thesis follows in the second year.

The master's thesis is thus a very large part of the program, making up more than a third of the credits. Every student works with an advisor, and while working on the thesis students make their own decisions about whether they will live in the Westfjords, in their own home country, or in some other location (which might relate to the subject of their thesis).

Statistics on teaching and thesis advising are available for the years 2008 to 2020. These figures only cover the program in Coastal and Marine Management, as the first theses in Coastal Communities and Regional Development are not expected until 2021. Altogether, 1336 ECTS units have been taught over these twelve years. Taking into account that two master's degree programs have been offered since last year, the usual number of ECTS units taught per academic year in each degree program has been 102. Since 75 ECTS is the minimum number of classroom units that each student needs to complete, this shows that students have a considerable amount of choice. Choice makes a study program attractive and exciting, and adds to students' opportunities to specialize.

Matthias Kokorsch is the academic director of the program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development. He has a doctorate in geography from the University of Iceland and wrote a thesis about the tenacity of Icelandic coastal villages (*Mapping Resilience: Icelandic Coastal Communities*). He has a teaching credential from the University of Duisburg-Essen in social science and geography, where he also worked on Icelandic themes. After his doctoral studies at the University of Iceland he worked on research projects at the Thünen Institute for Rural Studies in Braunschweig. Matthias took up his position at the Centre in August 2019, just before the first students arrived to start the master's program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development.



Matthias is our ambassador from the Regional Studies Association. His favorite thing is to visit far-off countries – for example, he traveled around Belarus a few years ago. Recent plans to visit Archangelsk in northwestern Russia had to be put on ice because of the pandemic.

UW Draft course Schedule 2021/2022 SUBJECT TO CHANGE updated Nov 2020

AUTUMN TERM			SPRING TERM			SUMMER TERM				
18 - 20 Aug	Orientation		3 Jan - 19 Apr	CMM51 Spring Seminar: Teaching Experience		2 - 13 May	CMM16 Adaptation Planning	CRD 24 Tools for Community Development	CRD08 From Extraction to Attraction: Coastal Communities in an Era of Leisure and Tourism	4
1 Sep - 10 Dec	CMM50 Fall Seminar					16 - 27 May	CMM52 Navigation, Shipping and Offshore Activities in the Arctic	CMM 09 Conflict Resolution	CRD16 Coastal Food Systems	4
23-27 Aug	CMM28 Icelandic Society and Environment		03-21 Jan	CMM24 Applied Methodology		30 May - 10 Jun	CMM04 Coastal and Marine Management: Practical Applications and Challenges		CRD13 Regional Policy Evaluation	4
30 Aug - 17 Sep	CMM03 Coastal and Marine Ecology		24 Jan - 11 Feb	CMM21 Geographical Information Systems (incl. community-based mapping)	CRD 23 Talking Science	13 Jun - 24 Jun	LIF641M Studying Marine Mammals in the Wild (University of Iceland, Húsavík) 6 ECTS		CRD20 Sustainable Waste Management in Coastal Communities	4
20 Sep - 1 Oct	CMM01 Coastal and Marine Management: Theory and Tools		14 Feb - 25 Feb	CMM22 Marine Protected Area Management	CRD14 Outlook to the Future: Coastal Arctic Scenarios					
4 - 15 Oct	CMM47 Arctic Ocean Governance (mandatory Arctic Circle participation)		28 Feb - 11 Mar	CMM 53 Fisheries Management and Technology	CMM14 Pollution in the Coastal Arctic					
18 Oct - 5 Nov	CMM31 Oceanography		14 Mar - 25 Mar	CMM41 Marine Spatial Planning	CRD19 Coping with Disasters					
8 - 19 Nov	CMM05 Environmental Economics		28 Mar - 8 Apr	CMM12 Sustainable Aquaculture	CRD09 Innovation and Entrepreneurship					
22 Nov - 3 Dec	CMM02 Physical Processes of Coastal Environments		9 - 17 Apr	Spring Break						
6 - 10 Dec	CMM19 Environmental Impact Assessment	last day of teaching: December 10th	18 Apr - 29 Apr	CMM36 Marine Renewable Energy	CRD21 Business Incubator					
11 Dec - 3 Jan	Winter Break									

Total credits offered for autumn term: 33

Total credits offered for spring term: 33

Total credits offered for the summer term: 16
Total credits offered for the 2021-22 school year: 82

Important dates

- Thesis research letter of intent: April 15
- Research proposal final deadline: June 15

4th Term (July 2022 to January 16, 2023):

- Data collection/survey, writing: June - December
- First full draft handed in for advisor: December 15
- First full draft due back from advisor: January 5
- Revised full draft handed in for examination: January 15

5th Term (January 16 to end of February / May 2023):

- Evaluation reports, specific comments and grade back from advisor and external reader
- Revised final copy for print handed in for confirmation of it being satisfactory as a 45 ECTS thesis
- Final copy submitted to printer and Skemman database

CMM Core Courses
CRD Core Courses
CMM & CRD Common Core Courses
CMM & CRD Common Electives

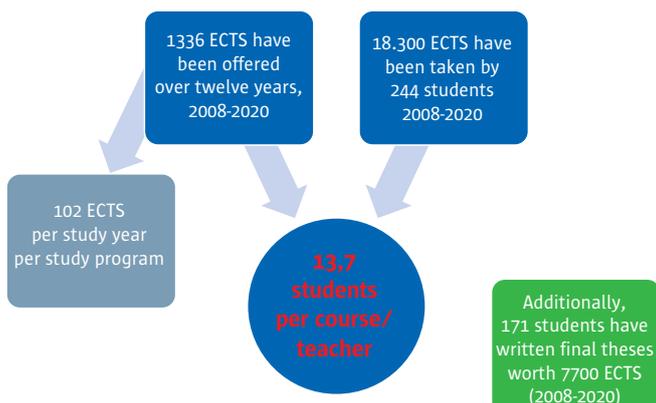
Marine Innovation

At the beginning of 2014 a new master's degree program was inaugurated in partnership with the University of Akureyri and the Innovation Center Iceland. Called Marine Innovation, the program is individually tailored to the needs of each student and thus no more than a few students at a time have been expected.

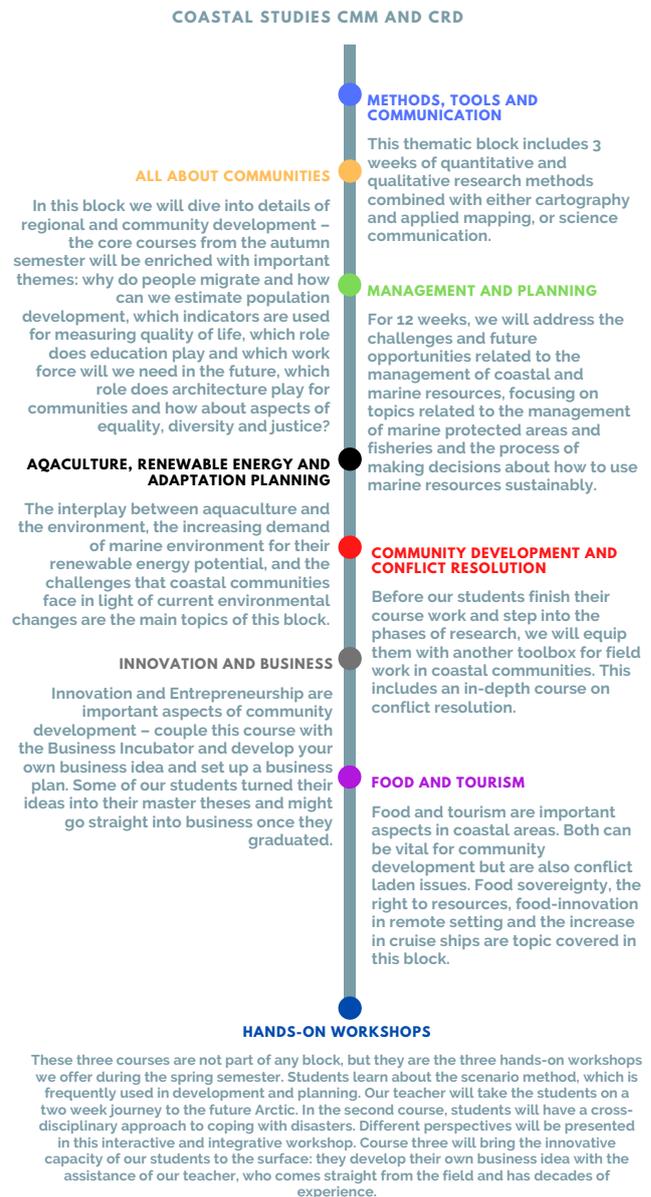
The design of the program anticipates that no classes will be taught specifically for these students, and that they will take existing courses from the University Centre's offerings and from those offered elsewhere in the network of Iceland's public universities. This innovative and somewhat daring approach is probably unique in the country.

The program's footing has recently been somewhat insecure. Distance-taught courses at the master's level have become much fewer in number, and thus the program has not been advertised over the last years. As well, it is now clear that the Innovation Center Iceland will close at the beginning of 2021. On the other hand, the University Centre's course offerings have increased considerably with the introduction of the master's program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development, as well as various courses in innovation and entrepreneurship. Very few students have registered for the Marine Innovation program, which is in any case especially directed at Westfjords residents. One student has graduated from the program. The design of the program means that it can tolerate low student numbers and other uncertainties, especially since the program imposes no extra costs on the Centre. In the long term, though, this state of affairs is anomalous and the program is being reviewed.

These statistics also show that students have easy access to their instructors. The number of enrolled students during this period was 244 (this figure is the total of all enrolled students in the 2008-2020 cohorts, including the few who did not complete the program). Assuming the minimum coursework requirement of 75 ECTS, these 244 students completed 18300 ECTS of instruction. As 1336 ECTS were offered during these years, there were on average 13.7 students per class and per teacher.



THEMATIC BLOCKS



Elective courses give students the chance to specialize, and the thesis counts for a third of the study program's credits.

This data does not take into account that students occasionally take a course at another institution, or that students from other institutions (or not enrolled in any degree program) sometimes take courses at the University Centre.

It has become more common for students at the University Centre to take occasional courses elsewhere, especially in cases where the course is connected to a students' final thesis. Since the beginning of the program a number of students have taken single courses or entire semesters at the University Centre, not least of all during the summer when most other universities have little coursework on offer.



In 2020 fewer students than usual attended graduation ceremonies, as restrictions on travel and social events were in place for most of the year. But there is lots of space in the open air at Hrafnseyri, and as can be seen, it was possible to make distributing caps while keeping two meters apart into something fun. Four of seventeen graduating students can be seen in the photo along with the director, Peter Weiss. The rector of the University of Akureyri, Eyjólfur Guðmundsson, had already “handed” them their diplomas, of course without contact. The caps are knitted in Ísafjörður and the graduation year is engraved on the tassel’s collar. Though the caps were not designed to fly, they do so fairly well. The photo was taken by Gísli Halldór Halldórsson, a former student in the Coastal and Marine Management program. Alumni from the program enjoy coming to Hrafnseyri, with their own caps, for the ceremonies.

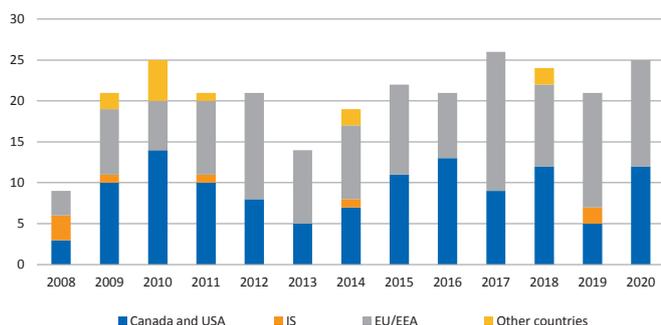
Students come for high-quality programs

All university education with a catchment area of less than 5000 people is dependent on students from outside that area. For this reason the University Centre, from the beginning, planned master’s degree programs which had unique characteristics and were taught in English.

Students who come to the University Centre are looking for an interesting and good-quality study program. They come to the Westfjords because the program is here, but they do not come despite its being here.

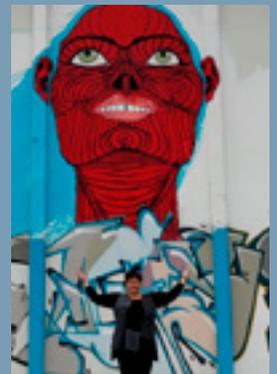
60% of all students are female. About half of the students come from North America and the other half from European countries. The number of Icelandic students has always been low.

Student cohorts according to country of origin



Guðrún Sigríður Matthíasdóttir

is better known under the name Gunna Sigga, and also as the students’ surrogate mother. Among the University Centre’s employees she has the very longest tenure, as even before its founding she worked for the Westfjords Regional Development Centre. Gunna Sigga is one of the Centre’s receptionists and manages a huge variety of tasks. In recent years the University Centre has assumed responsibility for more and more of the receptionists’ salaries from the other organizations in Vestrahús, and also shifted more specialized work to them. Gunna Sigga oversees all of the Centre’s complex flight bookings, as well as examination proctoring and accommodations for the instructors who come to the Centre, and she is now the Centre’s contact person for the host families of SIT students. She is also the in-house technical expert, who one consults first when a piece of equipment is not working as it should, and she is the contact person for the Centre’s outsourced technical maintenance service.



Gunna Sigga also manages the chocolate supplies and sometimes bakes chocolate cakes, just to make students and staff happy.

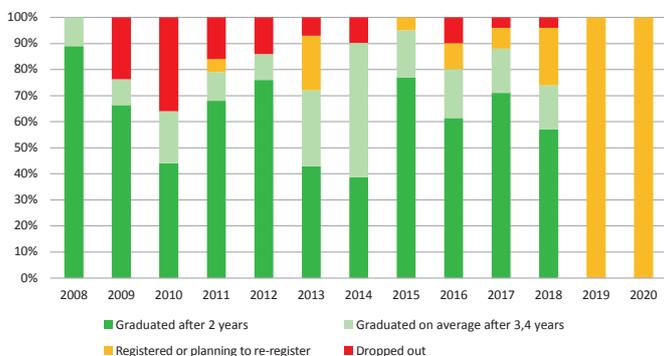


Students do not come to the Westfjords just to sit in a classroom. Instructors try to use the natural laboratory around them as much as possible, and with the new master's program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development a social laboratory is coming into focus as well. Many phenomena are more clearly visible in a small community than in a large and complex one. Here are the students in the Coastal Communities and Regional Development program with the academic director, instructors, and Þóroddur Bjarnason, professor at the University of Akureyri, on a field trip to the fishing village of Suðureyri to learn about their marketing methods. Photo: Ásgeir Helgi Þrastarson.

A comparison of the cohorts from 2008 to 2018 shows that more than 80% of enrolled students have finished their degrees. The number who graduate in two years, the minimum time needed, is just under 64%. The 16% who have taken longer have needed, on average, an extra year and a half. Most commonly they graduate in three years, while a few students have taken time off from their studies for a longer period.

80% have finished their studies. 14% are enrolled in a PhD program or have finished it.

Retention Rate, Coastal and Marine Management, 2008-2020



About 7% of the students are still registered at the Centre, or have re-registered. In most cases these are students who have taken a planned absence from the program, but students have also accepted job offers before finishing their master's theses, given up their studies, but then returned after a few years. Recently the rules about returning have been tightened, and in many cases students must now

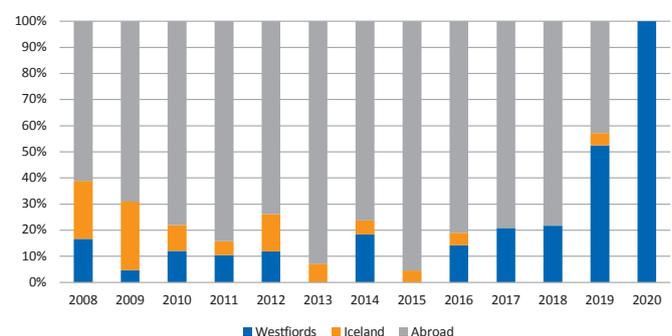
apply to the master's program committee for permission to return. About 13% of students have left the program entirely without a degree.

After graduation, 12% of students live for at least two years in the Westfjords, and 8% elsewhere in Iceland. This data covers the 2008-2018 cohorts, as the 2019 and 2020 cohorts have not yet graduated. Considering that 3% of students are Icelanders, the number who put down roots in Iceland and join the labor market is considerable. In concrete terms, on average there are more than three such individuals per year, which makes a difference in a community as thinly populated as the Westfjords.

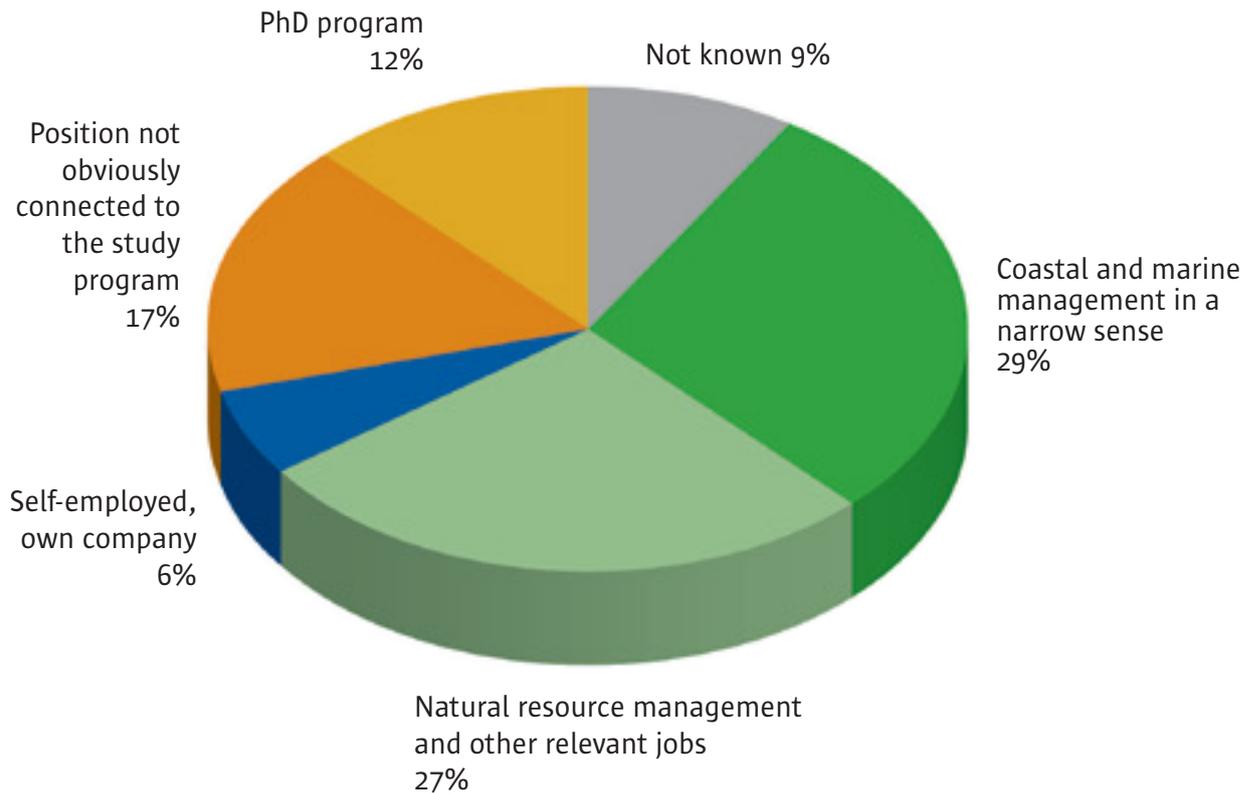
Students come and go – yet some put down roots here.

The University Centre has the good fortune to be in good contact with most of its alumni. The data here are based on information about all students since the Centre's beginning. No information is available on the current occupation of 9% of alumni. About 14% of alumni are in doctoral programs or have finished them.

Students' current place of residence (by cohort)



Students' employment after graduation (cohorts 2008-2017)



56% of alumni work either in marine and coastal management in the strict sense, or more generally in natural resource management and other fields connected to the degree program in one way or another. Some alumni occupations, such as mayor and attorney, do not relate directly to the degree but illustrate the diverse ways that the program has been of value. 17% of students are in other

jobs which do not have a direct link to the degree, or are temporary. This is naturally most common among recent graduates, who are just entering the labor market. Data about alumni occupations is based on all students from the 2008-2017 cohorts, including those who did not complete a degree.

Recruitment

Of what use is a good degree program that no one knows about? The University Centre of the Westfjords offers high-quality, specialized programs of study in a remote community that has not historically been thought of as a university town. It is a real feat to publicize these programs and draw in qualified applicants year after year – and to do so as efficiently as possible.

The University Centre's success in meeting this challenge has attracted attention, for example within the University of the Arctic and among partner schools. After all, attracting good students over and over again is not something to be taken for granted. Behind this success is a lot of time and hard work, which goes on mostly behind the scenes. This part of the Centre's operations is crucial, as there can be no on-site instruction without students.

With only five thousand people in the University Centre's catchment area, it has to attract students from further away. The Centre has succeeded in recruiting capable foreign students, while increasing the number of students from Iceland remains a challenge.

Ingi Björn Guðnason is in charge of marketing and the University Centre's web site. Social media and the web site are important ways to disseminate information about the Centre and to reach prospective, current, and former students. An important part of these efforts is the recruitment of well-qualified students for the master's programs, as there is no question that a large part of the Centre's operations are fully dependent on students coming to study in the Westfjords. Ingi Björn has worked at the Centre since the fall of 2007. He has a master's degree in literature and also takes on occasional tasks at the Centre which involve literature and culture. Copywriting and translations of various types are his responsibility, as well as posting to social media and keeping the Centre's profiles up to date.



Ingi Björn is also on the board of Edinborgarhús, Ísafjörður's cultural centre, and of the local basketball club.



Instructors

The Centre's teaching staff is as diverse as it is numerous – and numerous it truly is, as 201 instructors have been involved in teaching and advising in the Centre's two master's programs over the last twelve years. One thing that all these instructors have in common is that none is permanently employed as a teacher at the Centre. It seems that no other university or university department in Iceland depends solely on temporary teaching staff. This unusual approach allows the University Centre to engage respected and very specialized instructors.

In the fall of 2008, when the Centre's first master's program in Coastal and Marine Management started, the big question was whether the Centre would be able to attract teachers and students. Based on the amount of teaching involved in a single master's program, it could have hired two almost full-time instructors, who would then have needed to teach all the classes in a multidisciplinary program. Given the breadth of the field, it would have been very difficult, perhaps impossible, to find two individuals who could have covered the program's entire academic spectrum.

Thus the Centre, from the beginning, bet on its ability to attract specialized instructors for short periods of time, usually two or three weeks.

Through this approach, students get to know instructors who are not just specialized professionals, but are also diverse in their origins and backgrounds, and enmeshed in a variety of networks all over the world. This diversity enriches the Centre's programs and lends them a complex and colorful texture.

To manage this troupe of teachers, who come to the Centre with their own customs and habits, usually from respected universities, clear rules have to be set. In doing so, the Bologna framework greatly assists a new and small university institution like the Centre. More is needed, though, and the Centre's teaching handbook, which forms part of its contract with instructors, has a reputation for being detailed and clear. Over the years, the program administrators have made an effort to ensure that rules and guidelines for instructors cover most matters that they may encounter. Program quality is measurable, and comparable from course to course, and it is easier to find a simple way of dealing with any issues that do arise. This is an achievement that involved much work, which was often almost invisible, but paid off very well.

During the twelve-year period from 2008 to 2020, ninety-nine of the 201 master's program instructors have served only in the role of master's thesis advisor. Students often choose their classroom teachers as thesis advisors, but almost half of thesis advisors serve in no other role at the Centre, and indeed in every case a search is made for a specialist in the relevant subject.

That more than two hundred individuals have been involved in instruction clearly shows the importance of the University Centre's network of contacts. Given that the teaching load for one master's program could be covered with two or three

Verónica Méndez Aragón is the newly hired academic director of the master's program in Coastal and Marine Management. She started in this position in fall 2020, and had previously worked for the University of Iceland Research Centre at Laugarvatn. Verónica has a doctorate in community ecology from the University of East Anglia in Britain, a



master's degree in biological diversity from the University of Plymouth, and a bachelor's degree in marine biology from Barcelona. She has done scientific work in both Britain and Iceland and has specialized in research on birds. Before Verónica was hired as academic director she had advised master's theses at the Centre, and in that way already had a sense of the director's role, which among its many duties requires being able to suggest teachers and advisors and to oversee the student thesis-writing process. Verónica is a member of the British Ornithologists' Union and of the International Wader Study Group.

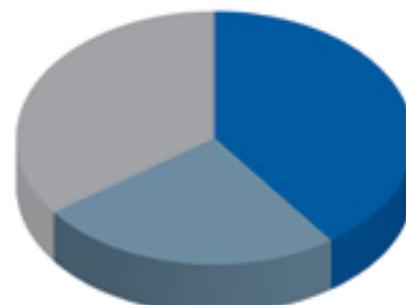
Verónica is easily distracted by oystercatchers. She finds it very interesting that they spend the winter here, so she refers to them as the penguins of the north!

permanent instructors, a network of more than two hundred people is very large. It is obvious that administering the flow of staff is a substantial task. This task is in the hands of the master's program directors, who are completely in charge of finding teachers and advisors, orienting them, and staying in touch.

The instructor count, though, does not tell the full story. When instructors are sorted by the number of courses taught, it turns out that the ten teachers who have taught most have covered 40% of the teaching load (measured in ECTS units), and the 25 most active have covered 65%. These instructors have also advised 32% of master's theses. These statistics show that despite the great number of

Teachers: continuity and flexibility

The remaining 77 teachers covered **35%** of the teaching load.



15 additional teachers taught **25%** of classes.

The ten most active teachers taught **40%** of classes during the period.



Many instructors come to the University Centre year after year, and some have returned for as much as twelve years in a row. Jamie Alley, in the center of the picture along with director Peter Weiss and academic director Catherine Chambers, started teaching at the Centre in 2011, and here, on his final visit, was thanked for his loyalty. Jamie Alley has not only taught at the University Centre – almost every year he has inspired students from his home institution in British Columbia to enroll in the Centre’s programs. Most of these students have returned home, and the University Centre now has a fine corps of ambassadors in western Canada.

teachers and advisors who have been involved with the master’s programs, there is also a stable core. In this way the University Centre enjoys both the flexibility of being able to operate study programs with short-term staff contracts, and the stability that a regular teaching team undeniably brings.

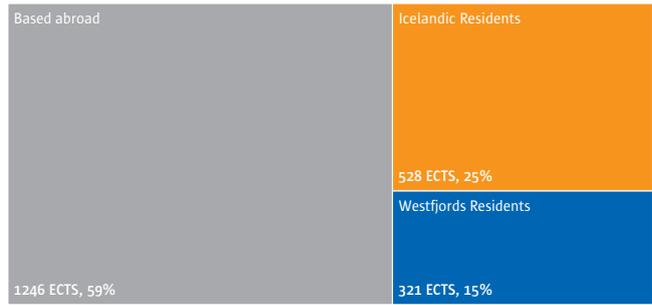
Two thirds of teachers and 80% of advisors have a doctoral degree.

It is interesting to look at where the Centre’s instructors come from. The aim is to find teaching staff with specialized knowledge, but naturally the Centre’s choice of instructors is in some ways limited, due to the salary level and the cost of travel. As well, one of the goals of the University Centre is to create employment in the Westfjords and to liaise with local knowledge and research institutions. Perhaps most surprising is that over the entire period (2008 to 2020), it has been possible to staff 15% of taught and advised ECTS units with Westfjords residents, and that this percentage is rising. For the most recent period (2015-2020), the figure is up to 21%. Many of these locally sourced staff work for the region’s research institutions, and have taken on teaching and especially thesis advising. These include instructors who work for the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute branch at Ísafjörður and for the University of Iceland’s research center at Bolungarvík. As well, the academic program directors have always taken on some teaching duties.

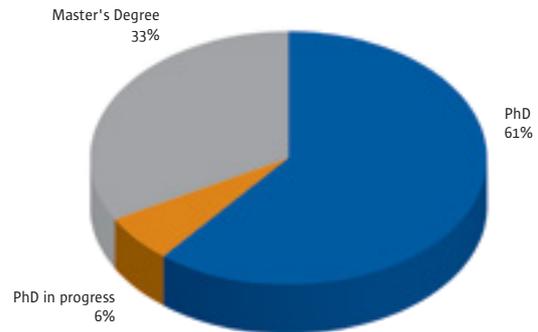
The percentage of female teachers is rising.

In applied, cross-disciplinary fields such as coastal management or regional development studies, the most skilled instructors, and those who have the most experience of communicating their knowledge to students, sometimes come from outside academia. For this reason, the University Centre seeks a good balance between instructors from inside and outside the academic world. When it comes to writing a final thesis, it is considered important that the advisor or the evaluator have a doctoral degree.

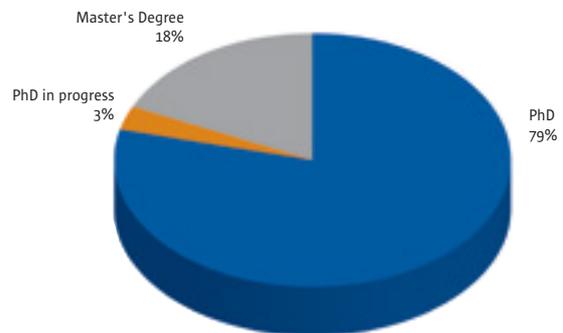
Country of residence According to number of ECTS taught, 2008-2020



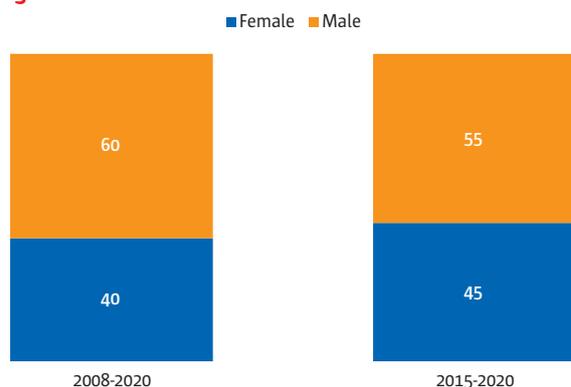
Teachers’ educational background (1336 ECTS taught 2008-2020)



Supervisors’ educational background (7590 ECTS 2008-2020)



Female/male teachers according to number of ECTS taught



Instructors who taught most during the period 2008-2020 and 2015-2020

NAME	ECTS TAUGHT 2008-2020	ECTS TAUGHT 2015-2020	
Gabriela Sabau	80	34	PhD, Professor of Economics/Environmental Studies, Memorial University, Grenfell Campus, Newfoundland
Bradley W. Barr	74	36	PhD, Affiliate Professor, University of New Hampshire
Einar Hreinsson	72	36	MSc, Researcher at the Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Ísafjörður
Astrid Fehling	53	42	MSc, Project manager at University Centre of the Westfjords
Peter Krost	48	38	PhD, Coastal Research and Management (CRM) Executive Partner, Kiel
Mike Philips	44	16	PhD, Professor at University of Wales and College of the North Atlantic, Qatar
Patricia Manuel	42	20	PhD, Associate Professor at School of Planning, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Jamie Alley	40	20	MRM, Natural Resource And Environmental Management Specialist, Victoria, British Columbia
Guðbjörg Ásta Ólafsdóttir	36	24	PhD, Director of University of Iceland's Research Centre in Bolungarvík/Westfjords
John Colton	36	28	PhD, Professor and Head, Department of Community Development, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia
Michael Honeth	34	34	MMM, Consultant in marine and coastal resource management, Aruba
Pernilla Carlsson	31	28	PhD, Researcher, Department of Environmental Chemistry and Technology, Norwegian Institute for Water Research, Tromsø
Marc L. Miller	26	0	PhD, Professor emeritus, College of the environment (School of Marine Affairs), University of Washington
Jónas Páll Jónasson	24	18	PhD, Senior scientist at the Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Hafnarfjörður
Gunnar Páll Eydal	24	20	MRM, Resource and Environmental Manager at Verkís hf., Ísafjörður
Angelika Renner	24	20	PhD, Research Scientist, Institute of Marine Research, Tromsø
Dagný Arnarsdóttir	23,5	11	MSc, Specialist at the Icelandic Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources
Rodrigo Menafra	22	0	MMM, Research Manager at the Offshore Energy Research Association of Nova Scotia (OERA)
Lawrence (Larry) Hildebrand	22	0	PhD, World Maritime University Adjunct Professor, Malmö
Áslaug Ásgeirsdóttir	20	12	PhD, Professor of Politics, Associate Dean of the Faculty at Bates College, Maine
Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir	20	0	PhD, Researcher at Icelandic Tourism Research Centre, Akureyri
Albertína F. Elíasdóttir	20	9	MSc, Icelandic Parliament
Pétur Dam Leifsson	20	10	LLM, Assistant Professor of Law at University of Iceland
Guðni Elísson	18	8	PhD, Professor at University of Iceland
Catherine Chambers	17	17	PhD, Program Director at University Centre of the Westfjords
Albína Hulda Pálsdóttir	16	8	MA, Research Specialist at Iceland's Agricultural College and at Íslenskar Fornleifarannsóknir ehf.
Zoi I. Konstantinou	12	12	PhD, University of Porto and University of Thessaloniki
Anne Mette	12	12	MA, Consultant at Kolleg für Management und Gestaltung nachhaltiger Entwicklung, Berlin
Dan Govoni	12	12	PhD candidate, Academic Director for SIT Semester Program, Ísafjörður
James Kennedy	12	12	PhD, Icelandic Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, Skagaströnd and Ísafjörður



Students' formal enrollment is through the University of Akureyri and they graduate with a degree from there. Each year, on June 17th, the University Centre holds a celebration for its graduating master's students. The event takes place at Hrafnseyri, usually in the open air. In 2020 fewer students than usual attended, due to the pandemic. The picture also shows several former students who live in the Westfjords. The event is perhaps less formal than some similar ones, but no less enjoyable. The University of Akureyri rector has traveled to Hrafnseyri each year to take part, making the celebration into a real graduation ceremony.

Partnership with the University of Akureyri

The University Centre of the Westfjords is an independent university-level institution, but it is not a university, so it makes agreements with universities to accredit the study programs that it offers. This accreditation ensures that the Centre's programs are recognized both in Iceland and abroad. The University of Akureyri accredited the master's program in Coastal and Marine Management in 2008, and the program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development in 2018.

A well-developed and mutually trusting partnership

Responsibility for program development, course scheduling, course descriptions, creating expectations for learning outcomes, and negotiating agreements with universities is in the hands of the University Centre. After an accreditation agreement is in place, all advertising, student registration, teacher hiring, proposals for modifications, and student and program administration is also in the Centre's hands, along with financial responsibility.

However, the agreement specifies that the University of Akureyri is responsible for quality control. The study programs at the Centre are included when the ministry evaluates the University of Akureyri and thus it is important for both parties that they fulfill the strictest quality requirements.

When the partnership agreement was renewed in 2018, and the new program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development was added, the two institutions decided that the University of Akureyri website should display information on the Centre's programs more prominently. Up until then the links to the programs on the Akureyri website were not easy to find. Now, all of the key information about them has been included on the website along with the university's other courses of study. At the same time, the two institutions agreed that the Centre could access two educational and learning management systems (Ugla and Canvas) through the University of Akureyri. Independent access to these systems for a small institution like the University Centre would have been prohibitively expensive.

The introduction of new systems like these is barely visible from the outside, but represents a great step forward and involves much work. This step has been taken in order to serve the growing number of students and instructors at the Centre.

Since the University Centre is not an independent university, it cannot make Erasmus or Nordplus agreements on its own. On the other hand, it can make comparable agreements through the North to North program of the University of the Arctic, and bilateral agreements like the one between it and Memorial University of Newfoundland. A successful collaboration has developed with the University of Akureyri's



At Hrafnseyri, it isn't only the Centre's graduating students who are honored. Local students studying remotely at other universities come as well, as well as already-graduated students at the Centre who want to receive their caps. Alumni attend too, and with every passing year more and more caps can be seen in the audience. In this picture the rector of the University of Akureyri is at center, as well as the president of Iceland, Guðni Th. Jóhannesson. Many people like to come to Hrafnseyri on the seventeenth of June because of its historical connection to Icelandic independence.

international office, which has concluded several Erasmus and Nordplus partnership agreements on behalf of the Centre. Such agreements apply both to the University of Akureyri and the University Centre, and benefit both institutions, which share a focus on marine matters and on regional development.

The University Centre's partnership with the University of Akureyri has been smooth and effective, and based on mutual understanding and trust. Collaboration of this kind is rare, and at least in Iceland, unique. The University Centre is an independent institution which acts like a university, without claiming to actually be one, and it ensures the quality of its programs through partnerships and through quality control by a respected university. Naturally it has sometimes been difficult to explain this arrangement to the Centre's domestic and international partners. Those involved only with master's-level education sometimes think the Centre is a department of the University of Akureyri, and it can indeed appear so from that perspective. On the other hand, the master's programs make up only 40% of the Centre's activities today.



The library

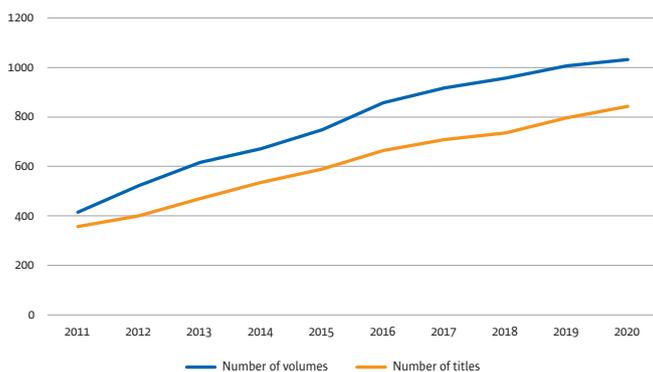
During the University Centre's first years its book collections were scattered around the building, but in the fall of 2016 space was set aside for a real library, which made this collection more accessible and visible. In the fall of 2020 a new library facility with reading carrels was created in a central location in the building. This new and elegant setup has made the library into the heart of the Centre.

The library's collections now number almost 850 titles, including books and other media. Most of the holdings

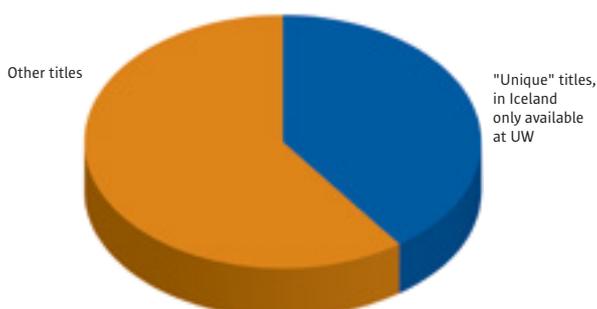
are scholarly works and textbooks, forming a specialized collection focused on marine, environmental, and regional studies. The library also holds educational videos, nautical charts, reference books, maps, Westfjords-related material, and other miscellaneous items.

The library's holdings are listed in Gegnir, the Icelandic union catalog, so they are visible to all and can be searched on the website www.leitir.is.

Library collection growth 2011-2020



Specialized library with many „unique“ titles



Pernilla Rein grew up in Gothenburg in Sweden, works part-time for the University Centre, and has been with the institution since the spring of 2008. She holds a degree in library and information science, with a specialization in information management, from Högskolan i Borås/ Bibliotekshögskolan in Sweden. The job of building up a library collection for the University Centre has been in her hands, and she also oversees records management. Over the years Pernilla has handled other tasks, such as hosting field schools and administering the Development Fund for Immigrant Affairs. Pernilla is also employed by the public library in Ísafjörður.



Pernilla takes pleasure in the outdoors: hiking, mountain climbing, and skiing. In the summer she works as a park ranger, recharging her batteries in the Hornstrandir nature reserve. She is also a member of the Ísafjörður Women's Choir and on the board of Gígja, the association of Icelandic women's choirs.

Research

Research activities at the University Centre have been steadily growing over the last 15 years, to the point that a new research manager position was created in 2020. The research manager oversees matters such as visiting researchers, opportunities for student research, grant writing, and the research activities of the program directors.

Students always conduct research for their thesis projects. Beyond that, growth in research activities among the students falls under two categories: research grants and publications.

Students are increasingly applying for grants and other funding support for their thesis research, which increases the visibility of the research done at the University Centre and gives external validation to the quality of the research topics and their importance for the wider research community. Students have received funding from Icelandic institutions such as Byggðastofnun, Vestfjarðastofa, Umhverfisstofnun, and Nyskopunarsjóður Námsmanna (Rannís), and have also received financial support from the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (Hafró) and from fishing companies. Students also receive support from international organizations; for example, one student was awarded money for the purchase of a drone that was then donated to the University Centre. The buildup of research equipment represents another area of growth for the University Centre, as students can borrow equipment needed for their research.

Research is the aspect of the Centre's activity that has grown most quickly and is likely to grow most in the coming years.

The second area of growth is in publications. Students are increasingly publishing their thesis research in international peer-reviewed journals such as *Coastal Management*, *Scientific Reports*, *Marine Pollution*, *Regional Studies Association*, *Environment Space Place*, *Tourism Geographies*, and *Maritime Studies*. Each publication increases the University Centre's visibility in the academic world and creates momentum as future advisors and teachers see what the University Centre is producing. Often, students choose University Centre teachers to serve as their thesis advisors, and if these theses are published the advisors frequently list the University Centre as an affiliation.

Aside from student and instructor research, the academic staff (program directors and the research manager) are also involved in research in their own fields of expertise. Currently, in 2020, the University Centre is the lead of a large Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) project, and the academic staff are co-PIs on 2 NordForsk projects, 1 NCM project, 1 NSF project (US National Science Foundation), 1 OFI project (Ocean Frontiers Institute Canada), 1 Rannís project, and 2 UArctic education projects. Furthermore,

Catherine Chambers first joined the University Centre in 2016 as the academic director of the master's program in Coastal and Marine Management. Previously she had both taught in the program and advised master's theses. During summer 2020 she accepted a position with a large research project at the Stefansson Arctic Institute, and at the same time



moved into a new position as the University Centre's research manager. This part-time position reflects the growing importance of research at the University Centre. Catherine has a doctoral degree in fisheries science from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, a master's degree in zoology from Southern Illinois University, and a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Drake University. She first came to Iceland as an employee of the aquaculture and fish biology department at Hólar University, and then worked with coastal culture issues at the Knowledge Centre in Blönduós for a few years before she came west to Ísafjörður. The research director oversees the Centre's growing number of research projects, informs students about funding opportunities, and assists when possible with grant applications, as well as working to strengthen the Westfjords research community. Catherine sits on various committees, including the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group, the International Arctic Science Consortium's Social and Human Working Group (as the Icelandic representative), and the UArctic Thematic Network on Ocean Food Systems (vice-chair). She is also involved in marine litter planning, and is a project partner in a research coordination network called "Migration in Harmony: A Resilient, Just, and Sustainable Arctic in Motion."

Catherine, much to the displeasure of her colleagues, keeps marine debris in her office and calls it „research data.“

the staff provide academic service within the University Centre as thesis advisors for the Centre's students, and also serve as Ph.D. thesis advisors and external readers for other Icelandic universities. Finally, the academic staff serve as peer reviewers for journals in their field, and they publish their own research. From 2017-2020, the University Centre academic staff have published four journal articles and four book chapters using the the University Centre affiliation. Three of these publications were co-authored with University Centre students.

The University Centre often writes letters of support for specific projects, which bring in short-term researchers or students from other universities. Just since 2017, the University Centre has hosted 3 doctoral students, 2 Fulbright researchers, and 2 professors on sabbatical from other universities.





2005-2020 Conferences

The University Centre of the Westfjords has, from its beginning, held conferences and symposiums, usually in partnership with research institutes in the Westfjords or in connection with the master's degree subjects. The list shows all the conferences that have been held. The largest conference in the last years was without doubt the international CoastGIS 2018 conference, with about 100 participants. The Centre's GIS instructor, Astrid Fehling, was engaged as conference planner. At such a conference, the host institution always brings its own networks into play (aside from the core group of CoastGIS conference participants themselves), and the conference's planning committee was pleasantly surprised at how active and energetic the network of a small institution like the University Centre of the Westfjords was. Coincidentally, the next CoastGIS conference will be held in 2021 at the Centre's partner school in Finland, Yrkeshögskola Novia in Ekenäs.

Selection of conferences

- Conference on Icelandic Society 2020 (postponed to 2021)
- Reading the Creative Force of the Westfjords 2020 (postponed to 2021)
- CoastGIS 2018
- Reading the Creative Force of the Westfjords 2018
- Cruise Ship Conference 2017
- Conference on Icelandic Society 2015
- Regional Development 2014: Coastal villages on the rise
- The Future of Coastal Communities 2012
- The Periphery and its host economy: Symbiosis, exploitation or burden? PeMaBo 2012
- Economic Impacts of Education in Remote Regions 2011
- Conference on Icelandic Society 2011
- Cod Aquaculture Symposium 2011
- Coastal Zone Management and Spatial Marine Planning 2009
- Sustainable Uses of Icelandic Coastal Zones 2008
- Immigration and Integration in Rural Areas 2007

Harpa Grímsdóttir

Vestfirsk rúletta eða hraðsluáróður? Viðhorf til áhættu og nýlegt hættumat fyrir vegina milli Súðavíkur og Bolungarvíkur.

Guðrún Nordal

Dróttkvæði á nýrri öld. Fjallað um rafræna útgáfu dróttkvæða

Skúli S. Ólafsson

Agaleg þjóð eða agalaus? Íslensk kirkja og samfélag á 17. og 18. öld Þorleifur Ágústsson Hversvegna eru rannsóknir mikilvægur þáttur í fiskeldi?

Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir “Vísindaperlan Vestfirðir”

Einar Hreinsson

Veidbættararannsóknir

Andrea Harðardóttir

Miðaldaverkefnið Vestfirðir á miðöldum

Alan Roland

Sálgreining í ólíkum menningarheimum: Persónulegt ferðalag (Psychoanalysis across civilizations: A personal journey)

Guðrún Nordal (ásamt Vestfjarðaakademíu)
Áheyrendur Njálu á fjórátúdu öld

Ester Rut Unnsteinsdóttir (ásamt Vestfjarðaakademíu)
Stofnvistfræði hagamála

Joane Roland (ásamt Vestfjarðaakademíu)
Ísrael — margklofið ríki (Israel: a Divided State)

Ólína Þorvarðardóttir
Galdur eða þjóðleg iðja? Inntak og hlutverk hins Íslenska galdurs

Sæmundur Runólfsson
Kynning á UMFÍ og þeim verkefnum sem hreyfingin stendur fyrir

Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir
Hlutverk Evróvísis

Ólafur Arnar Ingólfsson
Stærðarval og lífslíkur við botnvörpuveiðar

Jón Gunnar Schram
Fiskeldi á heimsvísu, eldisaðferðir, eldistegundir og fiskveiðar

Jóna Símonía Bjarnadóttir
Frá ofsóknum til fjöldamorða

Guðrún Björg Bragadóttir
Samstarf Norðurlandanna í skattamálum

Baldur Hafstað
Íslensk ævintýri í skugga Grimmsævintýra

Hermann Nielsson
Ágrip af sögu glímunnar

Steinþór Bragason
Samgöngumál á Vestfirðum

Jón Björnsson
Erum við hætt að treysta náttúrunni?

Johnson Mubasen Guriab og Devenand Bolaky
Kynning á heimalöndum nema í Sjávarútvegsskóla Sameinuðu þjóðanna

Peter Weiss
Fyrsti des, 60 ár frá endurstofnun lýðveldisins

Hildur Sigurðardóttir, Tinna Björk Sigmundsdóttir og Þorgerður Tómasdóttir
Nýting jarðhita til orkuvinnslu á Ísafirði

Salome Elín Ingólfssdóttir
Mataræði út frá ráðleggingum Lýðheilsustöðvar

Sigríður Ólöf Kristjánsdóttir
Samstarfsfleti milli Vestfjarða og Austur-Grænlands

Magni Örvar Guðmundsson
Skelrækt 2007

Örvar Ólafsson
Lyfjaeftirlit hjá Íslenskum íþróttamönnum

Sigurður Pétursson
Rauði bærinn Ísafjörður

Elfar Logi Hannesson
Act Alone

Benedikt Bjarnason
Sjávarþorpið á Suðureyri
Grimur Atlason
Meðferðarfrumskógurinn - samantekt á úrræðum og leiðum. Er innlögð alltaf besti kosturinn?

Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir
Að meta forvarnir. Árangursmat á norðanverðum Vestfirðum

Torfi Tulínus

Hin pólitíska þýðing Fróðrundra í Eyrbyggja sögu

Dóra Lubecki
Norðurslóðaverkefni – aukin tækifæri?

Kendra Wilson

Frá Satan til Sataníu. Sögur af ónófum

Böðvar Þórisson
Fuglaskoðunarsvæði á Vestfirðum

Kristín Hálfðansdóttir

Landflutningar eða strandflutningar?

Kristinn Hermannsson
Áhrif háskólastarfssemi á byggðapróun

Kjartan Már Másson og Valgeir Elíasson
Er grundvöllur fyrir fiskvinnsluskóla á Vestfirðum?

Ian Watson
Longyearbyen á Svalbarða: Námuvinnsla hverfur, ferðamennska og háskólasamfélag taka við

Andrés Vollmer
Jarteinir Þorláks helga

Jóhanna Rósa Arnardóttir

Forvarnir, vímuefnaneysla og aðgengi að fíkniefnum

Guðmundur M. Kristjánsson
Ísafjarðarhöfn í fortíð og framtíð

Guðfinna M. Hreiðarsdóttir
Krossahæðin - Kyrrlát andstaða trúarbrar þjóðar

Arnheiður Jóhannsdóttir
Upplysingasetur um hugverkaréttindi

Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir
Vinsæðir Arnalds áhyggjuefni?

William Short
Vopnaburður í Vísindaporti

Jon Moddy
Kosningarnar í Bandaríkjunum

Þorleifur Ágústsson
Kynning á þorskeldisrannsóknum Matís á Ísafirði

Bryndís Friðgeisdóttir
Sálrænn stuðningur

Lunch Lectures

The University Centre’s Lunch Lectures, which are open to the public, have been a consistent feature of its operations since March 2006. Lecture topics are as varied as the backgrounds of the speakers, who include instructors in the master’s program, other scholars and scientists, and representatives of the companies and associations in the region. The lecture series has also been an arena for former students at the Centre to show off the work that they have done since graduation. And not least of all, the lectures serve as a forum for local residents to present about their work or studies. The number of talks given since the beginning of the series now totals more than three hundred.

Einar Sveinbjörnsson
Veðurfarsbreytingar og hafið

Alfgeir Logi Kristjánsson, ásamt Svövu Gröfheldt
Hagir og liðan ungs fólks á Vestfirðum

Harpa Guðmundsdóttir
Hvað gerir iðjubjálfi?

Bryndís Friðgeirsdóttir
Rauði krossinn – útbreiddasta mannúðarhreyfing heims

Ralf Trylla
Náttúrutengd ferðabjónusta

Matthildur Helgadóttir
Óbeisluð feegurð

Gunnar Páll Eydal
Umhverfiskerfi: Grænþvottur fyrirtækja eða leið að sjálfbærni?

Björn Hafberg
Náms- og starfsráðgjöf á vinnustöðum

Ingi Björn Guðnason
Veðrið var blitt og hreint en ekki sá til sólar

Sigurður Arnfjörð Helgason
Save 500 Versus Fortune 500: Öryggi í stað stærðar

Harpa Grímsdóttir
Sniðfólðasprengingar

Sigríður Ó. Kristjánsdóttir
Kynning á starfssemi Impru

Jón Snorri Snorason
Hvað er MBA nám?

Magnús B. Jónsson
Menntunarframboð og viðhald byggðar

Dóra Hlín Gísladóttir
Koltvísýringur sem eldsneytishráefni

Sigríður Ingvarsdóttir
Stuðnings- og styrkjaumhverfi frumkvöðla og viðskiptasérleifyi

Eiríkur Gíslason
Líkanreikningar á Snjóflóðasetri

Guðbjörg Ásta Ólafsdóttir
Líffræðilegur breytileiki og myndun nýrra tegunda

Anna Lüðviksdóttir og Arnheiður Ingjaldsdóttir
Kynning á Evrópumíðstöð í Vísindaporti

Magnús Erlingsson
Maríuöspjall og staða kvenna í fornirkirkjuni

William Short
Íslendingar á víkingaöld

Matt Willen og Ágúst Atlason
Vestfirðir í fókus

Ester Rut Unnsteinsdóttir
Melrakkí, lágfóta og fleiri tófur

Elfar Logi Hannesson
Vestfirska leikárið

Smári Haraldsson
Fræðslumíðstöð Vestfjarða tíu ára

Ingi Björn Guðnason
Halldró og Þórbergur í sveitsögubrúleik Jóns Kalmans

Sigurlaug Gunnlaugsdóttir
Farandverkafélk og hagsveifla á áttunda áratug síðustu aldar

Jacob Kasper
Breytingar á stofnum ónýtttra fisktegunda á Íslandi 1985-2009

Ari Klængur Jónsson
Viðhorf og staða innflytjenda á Íslandi

Alan Deverell
Áfrþeyningarstarfsemi á sviði köfunar við Ísafjarðardjúp

Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir
Frá orðum til athafna: Tengsl femínísmis og stöðu kvenna á stríðssvæðum

Ignacio López Moreno
Íslensk sækstrímáli

Kaffihúsið Veröld
Athafnavika

Steingrímur Jónsson
Haffræði íslenskra fjarða

Salome Elín Ingólfssdóttir
Hvað eru transfítusýrur?

Gunnar Páll Eydal
Allir vinna (saman) - Aðalskipulag Ísafjarðarbæjar 2008 - 2020

Benóný Ágísson
Sólarlitir dagar

Guðrún Pálsdóttir
Slow Food og matur úr héraði

Georg Haney
Mat á sjónrænum áhrifum smárra náma á Íslandi

Anna Guðrún Edvardsdóttir
Háskólamenntun og byggðapróun

Dr. Miaojia Liu
Hagnýting siglingaleiðarinnar um Norðurheimskaut

Mohammed Nazer og Nael Rajabi
Sjálfbóðaliðar Rauða hálmánans

Gústaf Gústafsson
Er viðhorf það sama og hegðun?

Sigríður Ólöf Kristjánsdóttir
Kynning á FAB LAB

Sigríður Ólafsdóttir
Samevrópska verkefnið EcoFishMan

Auður Ólafsdóttir og Arnheiður Jónsdóttir
Aðgengismál fatlaðra á Vestfirðum

Dóra Hlín Gísladóttir
Nýsköpun á Vestfirðum: Kerecis

Anna Lind Ragnarsdóttir og Jóna Benediktsdóttir
Foreldrafærni í anda Uppbyggingar sjálfsaga

Sigurður Pétursson
Vindur í seglum

Hjalti Karlsson
Ljós í myrkri

Harpa Grímsdóttir og Magni Hreinn Jónsson
Sniðfólðaspár fyrir Súðavíkurhlúð og fleiri vegi – samnorræna verkefnið SNAPs

Guðrún Svava Guðmundsdóttir
Birtingarmynd náttúrunnar í fjölskyldulíðsmyndum

Arna Lára Jónsdóttir
Græna hagkerfið

Dagný Sveinbjósdóttir
Vísindavefur HI

Finnbogi Hermannsson
Vestfirskar konur og Vesturvirkíð

Peter Örebech
Makrildileian frá sjónarhorni norsks hafrettarfræðings

Sigríður Kristjánsdóttir
Ísland - allt árið

Sigríður Guðfinna Ásgeirsdóttir
Eitt sjónarhorn fréttamennskunnar – störf á vettvangi hörmunga

Betty Gallucci
Er persónuleg læknismeðferð möguleiki í okkar framtíð?

Guðbjörg Ásta Ólafsdóttir
Áhrif hitastigs á þorskeiði

Kristrún Helga Ólafsdóttir
„Eg þori að vera til“ - Upplifun þolenda kynferðisofbeldis af þjónustu Sólstafa, sjálfshjálparsamtaka á Ísafirði

Ragnar Edvardsson
Neðansjávarminjar við Ísland

Chiara Giulia Bertulli
Hvalaskoðun sem tækifæri til vísindalegrar gagnaöflunar

Garðar Stefánsson
Saltverk Reykjanes - frá hugmynd að raunverulegri upplifun

Kristín Ósk Jónasdóttir
Hverji veljast í starf framkvæmdastjóra sveitarfélaga?

Vincent Gallucci
Veist þú hvernig hákartlar fjölga sér?

Albertína Friðbjörg Elíasdóttir
Staðartengsl og staðarvitund í samhengi við búsetuval

Guðlaug Jónsdóttir og Karl Kristján Ásgeirsson
Boðið vestur - veisluflug úr náttúru Vestfjarða

Strategic planning 2005-2020

Strategic plan for 2020-2025

Before the University Centre was founded, the Icelandic Institute for Regional Research, at the request of the Ministry of Education, carried out a needs assessment and examination of the feasibility of a university study center in the Westfjords. A working group sponsored by the Ministry also published a report about university education and research in the Westfjords. The Ministry stressed distance learning and intermediary roles, while residents tenaciously called for locally delivered university-level education.

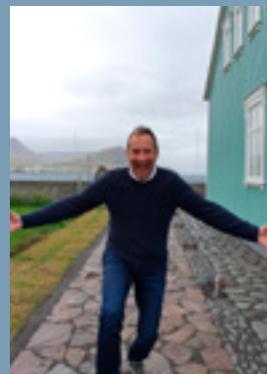
Thus at the founding of the University Centre, it was necessary to plan what it would do and who its target group would consist of. It was clear that the Westfjords were not a large enough catchment area to support on-site study programs, and that the Centre would have to attract students living elsewhere to the region.

At the end of April 2006, the Centre's board and director, along with a specialist in strategic planning, met to develop a formal mission statement. The result was rather loosely defined, as the Centre was still less than a year old. The key points in this strategic plan were, first, that the Centre should link Westfjords residents to universities, among other things by being a service center for distance learning. Second, the Centre should link university institutions to the Westfjords and Westfjords residents, for example by offering services to researchers, field schools, and summer courses. Third, the Centre should strengthen local research institutions by playing a service role, and fourth, it should be an arena for innovation and development, especially involving local industry and the labor market.

The University Centre's 2007 strategic plan was considerably more detailed, and many copies were printed, both in Icelandic and English, which perhaps reflects the grand thinking common in Iceland at that moment. This plan contained a more or less accurate picture of the Centre's operations as they would become: service to distance learning students, a university preparatory program, field schools, summer courses, continuing education, and then, most importantly, a "University of the Sea" offering master's degree courses. Increasing numbers of students were expected, and though they have risen more slowly than forecast, these expectations have shaped the Centre's work ever since. The Centre created a realistic plan in 2007 and has held to it. Developing the Westfjords and maintaining the region's image has always been kept in the forefront.

In May 2008, a committee report proposing the creation of an Icelandic Innovation University in Ísafjörður was issued at the request of the Ministry of Education. The report envisioned that the University Centre would be merged into the Innovation University starting in 2009. A university preparatory program was to be an important feature. The report anticipated a beautiful new building and a budget of 500 million ISK per year. Nothing came of these plans, as Iceland's banking collapse was just around the corner.

Peter Weiss has been the director of the University Centre from its founding and was for a time its only employee. He previously worked at the University of Iceland. Most facets of the Centre's operations were at one point or another his job until another employee was hired to take over. Peter has a doctorate from the University of Greifswald, and wrote a dissertation about the history of ideas and the development of linguistic thinking in Sweden in the 17th and 18th centuries. He has a master's degree in Nordic studies from the University of Kiel, and a bachelor's degree in Icelandic as a second language from the University of Iceland. He first came to the University of Iceland in 1987 on a government-supported scholarship.



Peter grew up in the countryside and quickly tires of the urban atmosphere in Ísafjörður. That's why he has settled in rural Öundurarfjörður, the next fjord over. Even so, he enjoys being involved in opera and is on the board of the Ísafjörður Music School. He is a member of Iceland's Association for Eighteenth-Century Studies, as the Age of Enlightenment is "his sheep and cows," as one says in Icelandic.

In January 2009, the staff of the University Centre met at Holt in Öundurarfjörður to discuss where the Centre's growth opportunities lay – keeping the interests of the Westfjords as a whole in mind. The conclusions from the meeting were that the existing strategic plan was sound and that other ideas were either too complicated to execute or would bring too little benefit for the Westfjords.

The staff and board of directors met in March 2010 at Sigurðarbúð in Ísafjörður to settle on the content of the Centre's second degree program. Community studies scored highest, and the decision was made to work towards a program in that field, although it was clear that this could take some time given the government's financial condition at the moment.

In 2014, the decision from the Sigurðarbúð meeting was reaffirmed and the board of directors confirmed its approval for planning a second degree program. For the first time, an operational plan was made in connection with the strategic plan in effect. This operational plan was revised and adjusted several times, but its aims remained the same.

With the inauguration of the degree program in Coastal Communities and Regional Development, and the admission

Environmental Sustainability Plan

On students' initiative, the University Centre started work on an environmental sustainability plan in 2020. The students, teachers, and staff of the University Centre are generally very conscious of the environment, but a formal sustainability plan can sharpen one's awareness. Creating such a plan is also a learning experience of its own. The University Centre manages a building which houses twelve independent institutions, and so it has to consult with them when appropriate. It is important to create a realistic plan which will be followed steadfastly, and a process is now underway where the University Centre's board, staff, and students are working together toward such a result.

of the first student cohort in fall 2019, the Centre has actually managed to reach the numerical targets which were set in 2007. One can also say that the Centre has continually followed the plan and goals that were first laid out in 2005 and then agreed on and put in print in 2007.

With these goals achieved, it is also the right time to ask what will come next.

In January 2020, the board of directors, staff, student representative, and stakeholder representatives met to discuss a strategic plan for the next years.

After almost 15 years of growth and expansion, securing and strengthening operations is now in the foreground. The University Centre has turned the corner into a new era. A critical mass of human resources has formed over the past years and the time has come to strengthen the Centre's structure, building on the strong foundations that have been laid. The Centre's management approach needs to follow along with these developments. The first goals in the revised strategic plan from January 2020 bear witness to this. Two additional goals concern research, which is the branch of activities that is growing the fastest at the moment. Other goals need more reflection and expansion. It is also important to maintain the University Centre's role as a link between institutions in the region, and a link to the wider world and the international research environment. The 2020 strategic plan does not set out a course of development as triumphant as that of the last fifteen years, but nonetheless its vision is one of progress and continued strength.

Do more with what exists already

- Don't try to do too much, and do it well.
- Optimize what already exists. For example: Strengthen the existing study programs and summer courses and continue to develop the summer courses. Lengthen student stays and make them more valuable. Foster employees' well-being and help them to thrive in their work.
- Cooperation with the local community and industry in the Westfjords. Strengthen connections with industry, encourage entrepreneurship, strengthen cooperation, and connect research with entrepreneurship.

Strengthen internally

- Strengthen internal structures. Continue to develop a strategic plan, working procedures, and internal organization.
- Don't worry about the informality of the image, which is part of what makes the University Centre special.

Increase visibility

- Strengthen the sense of pride and solidarity among students, staff, researchers, and guests. For example: Create traditions around student participation in the community.
- Domestic marketing. For example: Advertise the Westfjords lifestyle, and increase enrollment in single courses.
- Marketing to key decision-makers and funding authorities.
- Publicize the unique aspects of the study programs more widely and explain why they are special.
- Spread the word about work well done, in a targeted way.

Strengthen research capacity

- Expand research as long as it doesn't impact the Centre's other strengths.
- Look for ways to enable staff to support their own research.
- Increase the number of applications for research grants.
- Aim at increasing the number of positions which allow staff members to specialize.
- Develop research projects in partnership with local companies.
- A research center for Icelandic regional and community studies.

Lead the Westfjords research community

- Act as a driving force in the Westfjords research community, and a link between researchers and institutions.
- Support each other in grant applications, administration, and so on.
- Publicize and advocate for research work externally.

Other proposals

- Sustainable Westfjords – leaders in development. Image creation on a scientific foundation. Environmental policy.
- Career Centre: A service for helping students develop their career.
- New study programs or courses which build on the region's special characteristics.



