

Feedback to finalists

Name of Centre:	JIMP - Journalism, Innovation, Media Law and Practice
Name of Institution:	Volda University College
<p>Aim and vision</p> <p>The proposed Centre for Excellence in Education in Journalism, Innovation, Media Law and Practice (JIMP) has the stated ambition <i>‘to educate journalists that are able to understand, convene and critically assess the developments in the media industry’s conditions at large’</i>. The Journalism Programme at Volda University College (VUC) is committed to educating journalists who have a deep, relevant and critical understanding of the different roles the media undertake in society, with the ability to engage in thorough ethical and legal reflections and with the goal of protecting and supporting democratic processes through truthful, balanced journalism. The aim of JIMP is to create the journalist of the future: journalists that are ready for tomorrow’s workforce. The students in the Centre will be conscious of being agents in shaping their own education and able to manage emerging ethical, judicial and socio-cultural challenges.</p>	
<p>Structure and organisation of the centre</p> <p>The Faculty of Media and Journalism (FMJ) at VUC offers one of Norway’s longest established programmes in media studies. FMJ has a demonstratable leading national position in journalism education in Norway, having <i>‘educated many important and influential journalists, editors and media scholars over the last 50 years’</i>. The study programmes at FMJ utilise the Volda model of experiential learning that are founded on the didactic philosophy of experiential learning with all students being afforded opportunities to work in a full-time ‘real life’ internal editorial setting and also participating in external internships in professional media organisations. Five “agreements of intention” have been established to support this application with the following partners: NRK, VG, Sunnmørsposten, the University of Bergen and the Fonn Group.</p> <p>As a Centre of Excellence for education, JIMP aims to improve journalism education by utilising three work packages (WPs) that develop particular areas of practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WP 1 will seek to mainstream existing excellence in experiential education throughout the entire programme and deepen the quality and relevance of research-based experiential education throughout the editorial workflow through the use of new technology, close mentoring and editorial guidance. This will integrate the use of storytelling and the use and testing of new technology in journalism, and in its associated workflows • WP 2 will focus on media law and ethical and legal questions associated with journalistic processes will be fully implemented in the BA at all levels in relevant subjects and work processes. • WP 3 will be an innovation strand that aims to strengthen innovative aspects of the current journalism programme through active student participation and research. <p>The proposed JIMP SFU centre leadership team will consist of a centre leader (the Vice Dean) and three project leaders (Associate Professors), with administrative support of a coordinator. An Advisory Board for the centre with representatives of partners, students, employees and centre leadership will be appointed and meet annually to evaluate the progress and mission of the centre. Staff from the</p>	

Institute of Journalism will participate with teaching and research on the activities in the centre, and staff and students from other FMJ programmes will participate in parts of the work packages.

Strengths and weaknesses

Using a combination of both the written application and the site visit, the panel noted the following strengths:

- A mission that is driven by a strong belief in the importance of professionally and ethically acting journalists who are equipped for dealing with the grand challenges in our societies as much as with the specific challenges for the journalist and media field
- Dedicated faculty and staff with lots of enthusiasm, who feel their ambitions are hampered by a considerable lack of time and other resources and see the Centre as an opportunity to scale up and stabilize current efforts.
- Students who really love their studies at Volda and who are proudly investing a great deal of their personal time into making use of the impressive infrastructure and equipment in order to become better at what they are doing
- Many interesting pilot activities and initiatives which demonstrate the creativity and motivation of teachers and students alike, many of which well deserving to be properly evaluated and researched and further developed.

In addition to the above, the panel would have liked to have seen the following:

- A clear idea of why a Centre, or Centre status, would be the primary route to achieving the various goals, and also what the Centre could be and become beyond a hub injecting much needed resources into the university.
- Detailed plans and targets that function as a roadmap towards what the Centre will have achieved 3, 5 or 10 years from now, including a sense of the quantitative and qualitative dimension of upscaling and how the Centre could in due time become an innovation hub instead of catching up with developments in the professional field
- Which measures of success and impact indicators would help the Centre to understand if it is successful and where it should go, including clear considerations of how the field and education in general would benefit from the Centre's activities, at the national as well as at the international level
- Clear and systematic plans for student involvement and how student would become fully-fledged partners and beneficiaries of the Centre's activities

In summary, the panel felt that JIMP represented a strong candidate for the award of SFU Centre status that is based on an already excellent existing journalism programme. The panel recognised the importance of the experiential learning offered to students at VUC and the benefits of this, both in terms of student feedback and employment opportunities available to them both during and after graduation, were evident. The application for SFU Centre status is based on strong foundations, and the outlined proposal is of significant relevance to journalism both within the Norwegian context and elsewhere. The strong partnership with students was seen as a considerable advantage.

Throughout the site visit, the panel questioned why an SFU centre was required for the further advancement of journalism education beyond what could be funded by the institution itself. It was clear that the Department was both housed in excellent accommodation and appeared to currently have all of the equipment necessary to provide journalism students with an excellent education. The panel appreciated the notion of being able to do 'more of the same', but were not necessarily

convinced that this would lead to a step-change in either student outcomes or other measurable metrics of a successful centre. Moreover, the panel felt that the plans to disseminate the findings obtained with either other journalism/media schools in Norway or internationally were comparatively weak. These would definitely need to be strengthened to ensure that the lessons learned from the centre could be of greater benefit to as wide an audience as possible.

If established, the Centre will need to instigate rigorous and objective measures to evaluate the outcomes of the initiatives they undertake. Knowing what works will need to be a vital thread to convincing others (students, other journalism schools, funding agencies, etc.) that the investment in the Centre is both appropriate and successful. A greater level of international benchmarking might assist the Centre to place its ambitions at an appropriate level.

Overall panel recommendation: Do not fund