

The Division of Communication's Action Plan for 2023:

The Division of Communication aims to make the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (Høgskulen på Vestlandet, HVL) visible regionally, nationally, and internationally, and ensure good internal and external communication. The division works to highlight the connections between education, research, and the workforce. By showcasing students' roles in research and work placements, the aim is to make the educational programs attractive and relevant to society. The action plan is based on the principles of the Central Government's communication policy and is anchored in the university's overarching strategy and the Rector's mandate letter to the Pro-Rector for Regional Development. The initiatives and priorities are chosen with particular regard to the faculties' needs.

The Communication Division has three main areas of responsibility:

1. Student Recruitment
2. External Communication
3. Internal Communication

Focus Area 1: Student Recruitment

The work with student recruitment is a year-round and long-term effort. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences has experienced a slight but steady decline in the market share of first-choice applicants in the Coordinated Admission System since 2015. However, in the last three years, we have remained stable with a market share of 5.4 percent, while the number of applicants has decreased nationally. HVL faces challenging times ahead with increased competition, lower birth rates, high employment, and higher living costs. HVL recruits most of its students from Western Norway, mainly from the Vestland and Rogaland counties. HVL will continue to recruit well in our region, but the potential for increased market share also lies outside the region, hence the importance of specific measures to recruit more nationally.

The Division of Communication works systematically and targetedly with student recruitment across both academic groups, taking cues from the board's signals. In HVL's overarching strategy for 2023 to 2030, it is stated, among other things, that our education and research should be integrated and closely linked to the workforce. This should be evident in the branding and marketing of HVL. The Division of Communication will highlight the students' roles and influence in research and the workforce to show that we are an attractive and current educational institution.

Continuous work with insight and familiarity with the target groups is the foundation of the marketing work. HVL has many different target groups that we work to become more familiar with. Among other things, the division conducts recruitment surveys and other questionnaires, evaluations of events, and various analyses of visitors to hvl.no.

HVL offers a wide range of further education and flexible educational programs that can contribute to increased application numbers. Since all these programs have local admissions, we do not have an overview of the competitive situation as we do in the Coordinated Admission System. Nevertheless, we see that more and more educational institutions are

investing more in further education and flexible programs that can be combined with working life.

In response to increased competition, it becomes particularly important to elevate HVL's brand. HVL can position itself in the market as the only educational institution present throughout Western Norway, in both urban and rural areas. Branding is also crucial in the process of becoming a university.

Overarching goal for student recruitment at HVL:

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) will work targetedly with various measures to increase market share and ensure qualified applicants for undergraduate, master's, and further education programs at all campuses.

Sub-goal 1:

HVL aims to increase awareness of HVL outside the region.

Measures include:

- Conducting school visits and considering participation in fairs outside the region.
- Increasing the budget for national targeting of digital ads.
- Strategic selection of student ambassadors from outside the region to show that we have students from all over the country.
- National campaigns on various social media channels that reach out broadly nationally.
- Continuing our constructive collaboration with Utdanning.no.

Sub-goal 2:

HVL will continue to recruit students from the region around our five campuses.

Measures include:

- Prioritizing physical events in the local area and on campus.
- Maintaining close dialogue with advisors at secondary schools, folk high schools, and vocational schools in the local area.
- Continuing constrictive dialogue with Karriere Vestland.

Sub-goal 3:

HVL aims to strengthen work in digital marketing.

The Division of Communication currently operates HVL's official social media channels: Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, and TikTok. Being visible on social media provides multiple gateways to hvl.no and increases awareness of HVL over time. Hvl.no is the most important source of information about our study programs.

Measures include:

- The division will systematically work with study program pages in close collaboration with the academic environments. These pages will more closely follow a template and primarily have content tailored and focused on our target groups.
- In close cooperation with an external marketing agency, we develop a campaign plan for all paid ads in digital marketing. This campaign plan will be evaluated after each recruitment period.

- Continuously assessing new social media channels.
- We produce content for hvl.no that contributes to better search engine optimization (see sub-goal 4).
- Student ambassadors should contribute more content on social media.
- We will continue to focus on student-driven chat on hvl.no during the application period and the response period.
- We will produce content with good reach on social media, such as student stories and work-life stories.

Sub-goal 4:

HVL aims to increase traffic to hvl.no pages targeting potential students and rank better in Google search results. The division will enhance its work in search engine optimization of the website, especially pages targeting potential applicants like study program pages, student life pages, and other landing pages for digital campaigns. In 2022, 49.9 percent of all traffic to our study program pages came from Google searches.

- The division conducts keyword analysis and updates content based on analysis findings.
- Ensure texts on study program pages are easy to understand for target groups.
- Produce content for landing pages on hvl.no that answers what potential students search for on Google, like "What is an engineer?" and "What should I study?"

Sub-goal 5:

HVL aims to strengthen work in lifelong learning.

Measures include:

- The division conducts keyword analysis and updates text on study program pages (see sub-goal 4).
- Develop an annual calendar for recruitment work for further education and our flexible educational programs.
- In collaboration with the faculties and Department for Community Engagement, Work Life, and Lifelong Learning, gather more knowledge about the different target groups.
- Develop surveys that faculties can actively send out to their students.
- Annually revise the recruitment survey for our further education students and work to increase the response rate.
- Test different campaign formats and channels to promote HVL as a major provider of continuing education, further education, and flexible education programs.

Sub-goal 6:

HVL aims to strengthen work in international marketing.

Measures include:

- In close collaboration with the Division for Research, Internationalisation, and Innovation, the Unit for Admissions, and the faculties, we will adapt to new rules for international students outside the EU/EEA and gain more knowledge about the different target groups for HVL's international programs.
- In collaboration with the faculties, update the content on study program pages, mainly full-degree programs for international students.

- In close collaboration with an external marketing agency, we will work on branding HVL as an international provider.

Sub-goal 7:

We aim to be visible to potential students through physical events.

Measures include:

- Planning and conducting "Open Day" at campuses in close cooperation with the faculties and schools.
- Further developing the "Open Evening" concept in close cooperation with the faculties.
- Campus tours are an offer for second-year students at secondary schools, guided by our student ambassadors. This low-threshold offer will be further developed and implemented at each campus.
- Being proactive towards secondary schools, vocational schools, and folk high schools, inviting ourselves to visit.
- Continuously assessing the utility and possible participation in various educational fairs.

Focus Area 2: External Communication

The University and College Act (Universitets- og høyskulelova) mandates that universities and colleges should contribute to the dissemination of results from research and academic and artistic developmental work. Research communication is a core activity for our institution. In HVL's overarching strategy for 2023 to 2030, one of our three strategic ambitions is to be an ambitious social actor. We aim to set the agenda and disseminate knowledge about and from our disciplines and make visible the knowledge we create by participating in public discourse.

To succeed in communication, it is crucial that HVL has a culture where general research communication is a valued part of the workday. This occurs in leadership, among colleagues, and through the support provided by the communications division and other parts of HVL.

Sub-goal 1:

The Division of Communication focuses on how visible the college is in the media and public debate and aims to provide better frameworks for more researchers to share their knowledge with society.

Measures include:

- Providing communication-related advice to employees, including on op-ed writing and sharpening cases for media pitches.
- Offering courses in research communication and media training to make HVL researchers better communicators.
- Further developing the expert list on hvl.no to make it relevant and help more researchers become expert sources.
- Providing communication-related advice for strategically important research applications.
- Weekly tipping editors about relevant research and researchers.
- Encouraging researchers to contribute to Store norske leksikon with good information.

- Submitting articles to Forskning.no in Norwegian and English, aiming for at least twelve articles a year.
- Highlighting socially relevant issues and current research through events like Research Days and Contemporary Days.

Sub-goal 2:

HVL aims to have a clearer research profile.

Measures:

- Continuously develop hvl.no and systematically review hvl.no/research at HVL in both Norwegian and English twice a year.
- Produce research articles for hvl.no in both Norwegian and English, with a goal of at least one English article per month.
- Create research communication tailored for social media.

Sub-goal 3:

HVL aims for leaders who are active in public debate.

Measures:

- Provide communication support to leaders to strengthen them in media interactions and enable them to use social media for expression.
- Offer communication advice for writing op-eds or responses to media.
- Provide the rector with good and predictable communication services.

Sub-goal 4:

HVL aims for a cohesive profile.

Measures:

- Build a core narrative that reflects our profile as a university.
- Revise the visual profile in connection with the transition to university status.
- Inform employees about the visual profile and available templates.

Focus Area 3: Internal Communication

HVL, being a large and complex organization, requires successful information flow and accessibility to achieve its goals. HVL's internal communication targets employees to enhance inclusion and trust within the organization. Clear priorities in internal communication will improve understanding of its role and help establish a stronger, unified culture.

Sub-goal 1:

All HVL employees should use Vestibyen as a common information channel.

Measures:

- Further develop Vestibyen as the common communication channel for all employees.
- Improve Vestibyen's search function.
- Update and make visible the editorial guidelines for Vestibyen, so employees know what information to expect.

- Systematically measure and analyze Vestiblen's usage to improve internal communication.

Sub-goal 2:

HVL should have leaders who understand their communication responsibility and contribute to a safe and effective communication culture.

Measures:

- Enhance leaders' communication skills through training new leaders and providing effective communication tools.
- Clarify the role and function of various channels used for internal communication.
- Provide special strategic communication support to deans and their leadership teams through faculty contacts.