



UARctic

DECLARATION

8th UArctic Rectors' Forum Akureyri, Iceland on University Education in the Arctic Regions- Flexibility, Gender Equality and Health

UARctic was created through an initiative of the Arctic Council (Iqaluit Declaration 1998) and was officially launched in 2001. UArctic is a cooperative network of universities, colleges, research institutes and other organizations concerned with education and research in and about the North. UArctic builds and strengthens collective resources and collaborative infrastructure, thereby enabling member institutions to better serve their constituents and their regions. Cooperation in education, research, outreach and engagement enhances human capacity in the North, promotes viable communities and sustainable economies, and engages partners from outside the region.

As leaders of higher education institutions, we, the delegates of the 8th UArctic Rectors' Forum assembled in Akureyri, from the 29th to 30th May 2014, declare and express our views on the following.

We declare that research and education will be the fundamental means to ensure healthy and sustainable communities, in a rapidly changing north. This will be achieved by:

1. Taking into account and identifying concerns, we seek to secure equality and diversity of opportunity for all within our institutions.
2. Promoting the identity of northern cultures, traditions and ways of life, we commit to supporting their place in research and education.
3. Providing opportunities for youth and others in remote northern communities, to access and participate in quality education and research through modern technologies.
4. Collaborating to share expertise and resources between institutions and across borders, we aim to provide opportunities for faculty and student exchanges.

Rectors' Forum Key Findings

On University Education in the Arctic Regions - Flexibility, Gender Equality and Health

1. In our universities we all aim for high quality teaching and learning. To reach that goal we have to work towards a better understanding of the ways in which decisions taken at the three different levels, the macro level (e.g. governmental authorities), the meso level (the university institution), and the micro level (the university staff and students) affect the learning-teaching environment.
2. Through collaborations and partnerships, together we will strive to set priorities supporting good education practices, such as a reward system for teaching, supporting enthusiastic and innovative educators, and promoting best practices.
3. Understanding equality in the broadest sense, we want to care for the individual student and northern communities to ensure access to education through distance education – and have to find new ways to make this possible, a way we would call the northern approach.
4. We aim through the University of the Arctic to strengthen the sense of mutual responsibility for the North and respect within and between cultures of the North.
5. We recognize the importance of improving access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet connections across the circumpolar Arctic, as online learning provides equality of access and opportunity not available through traditional education. Through our obligations as educators, we need to increase the overall ability of the region to join the rest of the world's growing digital-based economy. These advances are particularly important to support the younger generation of Northern communities to stay and reside in the North.
6. To place needed emphasis on health service in Arctic areas, we support the enhancement of efforts to improve capabilities for monitoring, risk mapping, and information sharing in the health sector through the increased collaborations between our institutions and northern communities.
7. Gender equality should be taken into account when organising higher education and planning curriculum of Arctic institutions.

On Arctic Research Cooperation

8. We appreciate the close cooperation among the University of the Arctic (UARctic), the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), and the International Arctic Social Science Association (IASSA) as leading organisation to promote Arctic scientific cooperation.
9. We regard the assessments of the Arctic Council as essential contribution to Arctic knowledge and encourage the Arctic Council to ensure that their reports are made available as open access tools for all.

10. Knowing that Arctic is a home place for hundreds of indigenous peoples who possess valuable traditional knowledge about the Arctic; we will work to ensure that indigenous peoples are involved in Arctic research as equal partners and not as research objects.
11. We encourage our experts in the more than 30 UArctic Thematic Networks and UArctic institutes to work closely with relevant Arctic Council Working Groups and Expert Groups.
12. We look forward to the outcome of the 3rd International Conference on Arctic Research Planning ([ICARP III](#)), and will seek ways for each of our institutions to contribute to the community consultations on Arctic Research Planning.
13. We welcome with enthusiasm the Scientific Research Cooperation initiatives of the ministers of the Arctic Council (ref. [Kiruna Ministerial Declaration May 2013](#))¹ and look forward to seeing inter-government collaborations to remove barriers to international cooperation, including barriers to the movement of researchers and students, research equipment, and access to research locations and infrastructure.

On Mobility

13. We encourages all members of UArctic to take positions when and where they can to support mobility development via north2north+ initiative, which will in turn create more ambitious, concrete and powerful requests for support from external partners.
14. We encourage all Arctic members of UArctic to, by words and actions; engage the governments of the eight Arctic states as well as other interested parties to work with UArctic to find sustainable solutions in support of the north2north+ initiative as a structural circumpolar mobility programme.

As Rectors and Leaders of Change

15. We recognise that the Arctic faces rapid change and we believe solid independent knowledge provides essential guidance for wise decisions. Together, we need to examine methods with which we can develop practical solutions.
16. As heads of higher education institutions we, in light of such challenges, agree to take initiatives toward supporting independent fact based reports on key issues relevant to development of the north, and are inspired by the reporting initiative of Rector Tine Pars, of the University of Greenland, to collaborate on similar fact based efforts.
17. We believe topics of focus could include, but are not limited to;
 - Adaptation to climate change, in governance, infrastructure, food production, and health
 - Well-being of indigenous peoples and their culture
 - The benefits and challenges by extraction of natural resources, renewable as well as non-renewable
 - Minimize vulnerability of communities to extreme natural events

- Global change in higher education and implications for the north, including access to higher education by traditional and non-traditional place-bound students in remote, sparsely populated regions
- Social and health challenges specific to the north
- Northern innovation, so that modern knowledge creation in a distributed mode in the sparsely populated north can compete with the world's densely populated areas

On UArctic

18. We welcome the [UArctic Strategic Plan 2020](#) and look forward to drive its implementation.
19. We are encouraged by the increased focus of UArctic to promote its members, and are committed to promote our relevant northern education programs through the UArctic Catalogue.
20. We are excited by the planned UArctic Congress 2016 hosted by the St. Petersburg State University, a meeting place for educators, scientists, and university leaders.
21. We enthusiastically welcome the declaration made by the 2014 UArctic Student Forum participants, and advise the Board and Council of UArctic to review and give full consideration to these recommendations (Annex 1).

Chaired by Stefán B. Sigurðsson, the Rector of the University of Akureyri.

This declaration was adopted by the delegates of the
8th UArctic Rectors' Forum

On May 30th, 2014,
Akureyri, Iceland

ⁱ Arctic Council – 8th Ministerial Meeting – Kiruna Declaration – statement on Protecting the Arctic Environment: *The Arctic Council Agree that cooperation in scientific research across the circumpolar Arctic is of great importance to the work of the Arctic Council, and establish a Task Force to work towards an arrangement on improved scientific research cooperation among the eight Arctic States.*