

# The publication culture at the Faculty of Humanities, NTNU

A survey

September 17, 2019

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## Foreword

This report has emerged from an initiative from the Section for research at NTNU's Faculty of the Humanities. We agreed to undertake a survey of the publication culture at the Faculty, and the questionnaire was constructed during the fall of 2018. Kaja Borthen, Bjørn Kåre Myskja, Gro Lurås and Hanne Siri Sund contributed importantly to the questionnaire, which Gro Lurås translated into English. Thus, respondents could choose between a Norwegian and an English version.

The survey was conducted in January/February 2019 with the help of the heads of the departments at the Faculty. They also assisted with the three reminders that were distributed. We are very grateful for their contribution. We also thank Gro Lurås for her assistance with transferring data from one system to another.

Finally, we want to thank everybody who filled out the questionnaire.

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## 1. Background and methodology

This study was initiated from a concern that the publication output from NTNU's Faculty of Humanities dropped considerably from 2016 to 2017. The results from 2018 showed a clear positive trend again, but the concern remains when one compares publication statistics of humanities faculties across Norwegian universities. In 2018, NTNU's Faculty of Humanities gained 0,97 publication points per teaching and research position.<sup>1</sup> For NTNU as a whole, the number was 1,21. At the University of Oslo, the Faculty of Humanities produced 1,62 publication point per UFF position, and the same faculty at the University of Bergen reached 1,20. Also the Faculty of the Humanities and education at the University of Agder did better than NTNU with 1,18 publication points per UFF, while the Faculty of Education and humanities at the University of Stavanger reached 0,89 – slightly below NTNU.<sup>2</sup>

We should be careful not making too much out of such a benchmarking exercise because these faculties have different disciplinary profiles and may also be resourced differently. Anyway, it is interesting to study the publication culture – or perhaps rather cultures – of NTNU's Faculty of Humanities to see if there are features that could be addressed by the kind of policy measures that the faculty and department leadership have at their disposal. In this respect, we are thinking about fairly moderate initiatives to change the work situation and motivation of faculty, maybe also small changes in the allocation of resources.

The concept of 'publication culture' is not well established in the area of science studies. It is more common to use broader labels, like 'epistemic culture' and culture of research. The many studies of so-called research productivity, usually measured by publication output, tend not to engage with culture to explain differences.<sup>3</sup> Some use 'publication culture' to designate the choice of publication channels, such as a preference for conference proceedings.<sup>4</sup> Others employ the concept to discuss pressures, incentives and motives for academics to publish, concerned with possible detrimental effects of dominant publication cultures of particular disciplines or more broadly with respect to modern science and scholarly work. For example, the general, strong pressure to publish has been observed to have unintended effects like too many publications, lack of citations, neglect of policy issues, and mono-disciplinarity.<sup>5</sup> A study among Dutch biomedical researchers found that they were very critical of a publication culture that they found excessively concerned with impact factors, funding, and positive results, which intensified competition and led to a dominance of quantitative output over methodological quality.<sup>6</sup>

In this study, we are interested in publication cultures in a different way. The issue of publication pressure is of course relevant, but we are more broadly interested in what features of

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<sup>1</sup> In the Norwegian nomenclature, they are called UFF positions and include besides permanent faculty also researchers, post docs, and PhD candidates.

<sup>2</sup> The numbers are gathered from [https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/statistikk/kategori\\_publiceringer.action](https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/statistikk/kategori_publiceringer.action).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Nora Hangel and Diana Schmidt-Pfister. 2017. Why do you publish? On the tensions between generating scientific knowledge and publication pressure. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, 69(5): 529-544.

<sup>4</sup> Moshe Y Vardi. 2010. Revisiting the publication culture in computing research. *Communications of the ACM*, 53(3): 5-5.

<sup>5</sup> Hendrik P. van Dalen and Kène Henkens. 2012. Intended and unintended consequences of a publish-or-perish culture: A worldwide survey. *Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology*, 63(7): 1282-1293.

<sup>6</sup> JK Tjeldink et al. 2016. How do scientists perceive the current publication culture? A qualitative focus group interview study among Dutch biomedical researchers. *BMJ Open*, 6(2): e008681. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2015-008681>.

academic life that shapes publication practices. Clearly, this includes motives for academic publishing. Hangel and Schmidt-Pfister<sup>7</sup> usefully distinguish between pragmatic and epistemic motives. Pragmatic reasons for publishing includes career-related concerns and publication pressures while epistemic motives are more altruistic and related to a wish to contribute knowledge for a common good.

In the survey, we have in addition to motivation issues included questions about conditions for academic publishing, attitudes towards publishing and publication policies of the Faculty, and some measures of publication practices. This means this we employ a fairly broad concept of publication culture. In addition, we had an open-ended question at the end of the survey about suggestions to improve conditions for scholarly publishing. We present the responses in the concluding chapter.

The survey was carried out in February 2019, with three subsequent reminders. We received 171 responses, which represent a response rate of 40 per cent. This is not particularly high and some respondents did not answer all questions. However, there are some important differences between departments. This is evident from Table 1.1. Two departments stand out with low response rates, namely Department of Music and Department of Historical studies. With hindsight, we can see that the survey did not fit well with the publication culture at the Department of Music, where scholarly publishing is infrequent because the majority employees engage in performing music. With the Department of History, the low response rate may be attributed to the internal situation and other ongoing inquiries. Thus, the survey sample is fairly representative of the four remaining departments. Still, we have included the respondents from Music and Historical studies, but when we study differences between departments, these two departments are not included.

Table 1.1. Distribution of respondents and response rates according to department.

Department	Number of respondents	Per cent of sample	Response rate
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies	27	16	68
Department of Historical Studies	15	9	20
Department of Art and Media Studies	21	12	50
Department of Music	9	5	9
Department of Language and Literature	63	37	57
Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture	33	19	67
Department information not provided	3	2	-
Total		100	40

There were also differences in the response rate according to position. This is shown in Table 1.2. Here, we have also regrouped the respondents into three categories: junior, tenured and diverse. The tenured category is by far the largest. As we see, the response rate among the junior and diverse groups is much lower than for faculty, probably because they found the survey less relevant since they either have little time for research (lecturers) or most of their time is allocated to research anyway (juniors and researchers). Considering the low response rate of the departments of music and historical studies, the response rate from tenured faculty of the four other departments is good.

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<sup>7</sup> See note 3.

Table 1.2. Respondents and response rates according to position.

Position	Per cent of respondents	Number of respondents	Response rate
PhD candidates	16	27	33
Postdoctoral fellows	6	11	48
<b>Total "Junior"</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>
Full professor	31	53	50
Associate professor	35	59	61
<b>Total "Tenured"</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>55</b>
Researcher	4	7	37
Lecturer	6	10	12
Senior lecturer	1	2	29
Retired	1	2	n.a.
Adjunct professor	1	1	n.a.
<b>Total "Diverse"</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>n.a.</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>40</b>

Survey results have margins of error. Therefore, percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number. This means that total percentages sometimes become 101 or 99.

### 1.1. Other aspects of the survey sample

The gender distribution of the survey sample is shown in Table 1. It is about the same as for all faculty at HF.

Table 1.3. Survey sample according to gender. N=171.

Gender	Per cent
Woman	46
Man	44
Do not wish to respond	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>

Table 1.4. shows that a little less than 1/3 of the respondents have temporary jobs; most of these are either PhDs or postdoctoral fellows. According to Table 1.5., the great majority of the respondents have full-time or close to full-time employment.

Table 1.4. Permanent or temporary job?

Job	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
Temporary	29	50
Permanent	71	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>171</b>

Table 1.5. Percentage of full-time employment.

Own position as percentage of a full-time position	Percent of respondents	Number of respondents
< 20	1	2
20-49	2	4
50-79	5	6
80-100	93	157
Missing	1	2
Total	100	171

Finally, we asked respondents about the formal percentage of their position that was dedicated to research. The results are shown in Table 1.6. We see that the majority has the standard percentage of around 50%, while quite a few – mainly juniors – have most of their working time allocated to research.

Table 1.6. According to your employment agreement, what percentage of your position is dedicated to research?

Percentage of position dedicated to research	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
< 20	3	5
20-25	8	14
26-44	5	9
45-54	56	95
55-79	8	14
80-100	19	33
Missing	1	1
Total	100	171

We have no quantitative indications that the Department of Historical Studies has a markedly different publication culture from that of the four departments with a higher response rate. As noted, this is different for the Department of Music; however, there were few responses from that department. Thus, overall, we believe that the survey results are reasonably representative of the research active employees at HF.

In the next chapter, we will present results regarding time for research, motivation for research and publication practices. Chapter 3 presents results regarding assessments of and attitudes towards various aspect of publishing. Chapter 4 discusses differences according to department, type of position, and gender. Chapter 5 presents conclusions.

## 2. Time spent on and motivation for research and publishing

According to a time-budget survey undertaken by NIFU in 2016,<sup>8</sup> professors and associate professors spend on the average about 1/3 of their working hours on research. The similar figure for PhDs is 76 % and post docs 72 %, while for lecturers the proportion for research is much smaller – 15 %. The time reported to be spent on research was thus substantially less than what is formally allocated. This is shown in Table 2.1, which reports respondents' estimate of the working hours actually spent on research during the past three years (in percentages). However, most respondents do estimate that they have spent at least 30 per cent of their working hours in research and research-related activities. As expected, juniors spend the most time on research, while the tenured group shows quite varied responses.

Table 2.1. Over the past three years, what percentage of your working hours would you estimate have been spent on activities related to research and scientific publications (including writing applications and research administration) according to position?

Percentage of working time spent on research and publishing	Juniors	Tenured	Diverse	Total among respondents	Number of respondents
< 20	3	11	32	12	20
20-29	3	20	23	16	28
30-39	8	30	0	21	35
40-49	11	18	9	15	26
50 +	76	22	36	35	60
Total	101	101	100	100	171

On average, men respondents report spending more time on research than women. To some extent, this reflects that more women are employed in positions with little time formally allocated for research. There are also some differences between departments. Respondents from Department of Art and Media Studies and Department of Language and Literature report spending somewhat less time on research compared to others. This may at least partly be due to these departments having relatively fewer junior scholars, compared to the others.

Table 2.2. shows that most respondents would like to spend more time on research and academic publishing, particularly the tenured, 60 % of whom answered 'yes, to a great extent'. However, as much as 46 % of the juniors gave the same reply; this should be inquired into, because PhDs and post docs have a formal right to spend most of their time on research. Slightly more women than men want more time for research.

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<sup>8</sup> Hebe Gunnes. *Tidsbruksundersøkelse for universiteter og høyskoler. En kartlegging av tidsbruk blant vitenskapelig og faglig tilsatte I 2016*. Arbeidsnotat 2018: 2. Oslo: Nordisk institutt for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning (NIFU).

Table 2.2. Do you want to spend more of your working hours on research and scientific publications? N=171.

Response	Percent
Yes to a great extent	52
Yes to some extent	25
Yes to a small extent	6
No, I spend enough time on research	16
No reply	1
Total	100

Table 2.2. indicates a strong motivation for research. This is confirmed by Table 2.3., which shows that a large majority wants to increase their scholarly publication. The responses to this question show insubstantial differences with respect to position and gender.

Table 2.3. Do you want to publish more than you have done over the past three years? (N=171)

Response	Percent
Yes, to a great extent	52
Yes, to some extent	36
Yes, to a small extent	6
No	6
Total	100

The strong motivation for research is also evident from Table 2.4. Both the juniors and the tenured give high priority to research. The third group, "diverse", put more emphasis on teaching. Fewer women than men responded that they found research the most rewarding part of their work, but still 62 % of the women prioritised research.

Table 2.4. What do you find most rewarding in your work as a university employee? You may only choose one alternative. N=171.

Activity	Percent
Research	68
Teaching	17
Supervision	4
Administration	1
Dissemination of results	9
No response	1
Total	100

We asked about activities respondents wanted to spend less time on, in order to publish more than they had done in the previous three years. The results are shown in Table 2.5. It is probably not very surprising that administration and teaching administration top the list. Teaching is mentioned by fewer respondents, but still about a half of them want less teaching obligations. Table 2.1. showed that a large proportion of the respondents had less time for research than they formally should have. The NIFU study previously mentioned shows that on average, faculty members at Norwegian universities and colleges spend the largest share of their working time on teaching and supervision.<sup>9</sup>

Table 2.5. If you want to publish more than you have done in the past three years, which of the following activities would you wish to spend less time on? N=171.

	To a great or to some extent	To a small extent	No change	Not relevant/no response	Total (in per cent)
Administration	72	12	5	12	101
Teaching administration	65	11	4	20	100
Teaching and teaching preparation	48	26	11	15	100
Participation in other kind of committees (than academic assessment)	37	28	12	23	100
Academic assessment committees	33	26	16	25	100
Supervising bachelor students	23	21	15	40	101
Supervising master students	15	30	26	28	99
Contact with business, industry and the public sector	14	16	20	49	99
Communication and dissemination	13	30	42	14	99
Supervising PhD-candidates	4	17	37	42	100

There are some differences between the three groups of positions, but they are not very telling. However, there were particularly many in the tenured group that wanted to spend less time on administration and teaching administration. With respect to gender, more women than men tended to say they wanted to spend less time on nearly all the activities mentioned in Table 2.5. This may reflect that women do more of these activities than men.

We did not ask about the amount of scholarly publication during the last three years. Instead, we asked about what the respondents currently were working on with respect to publishing. The answers are shown in Table 2.6. An optimistic interpretation of the table is that nearly all respondents are engaged in publication activities. However, one may of course discuss the level of ambitions in terms of quantitative output. It is also notable that 77 % of the respondents say that they have 1 or more drafts that they are not sure they will be able to finish. As a background for interpreting the table, we may notice that in terms of publication points for the Faculty of Humanities in 2018, 60,6 % came from journal papers, 35,9 % from contributions to anthologies, and 3,4 % from monographs.

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<sup>9</sup> See note 8.

Table 2.6. What are you currently working on in terms of scientific publishing? N=171.

	0	1-2	3 or more	No reply/ not relevant	Total
Number of scientific publications currently being assessed by journals, editors or publishers	36	47	17	0	100
Number of scientific publications you are currently working on	8	55	47	1	101
Number of drafts that you have written but don't know when you will be able to finish	23	46	31	1	101
Number of scientific publications that you are planning on writing	4	36	59	1	100
Number of text books or contributions to text books that you are currently working on	74	24	0	1	99

There are differences between the groups of positions, but they are not very surprising. More respondents in the tenured group say they have publications being currently assessed and more drafts they are unsure they can finish. Men generally report somewhat larger publication activity than women. This is a bit surprising, since women produced about half of the publication points at HF in 2018, according to Cristin.

Table 2.7. shows the responses to a question about external funding. The majority of the respondents say they have not successfully applied for such funding during the past three years. In the tenured group, 46 % respond positively to the question. More men than women answered yes. There are marked differences between the departments. Only 10 % of the respondents from the Department of Art and Media Studies said they had successfully been part of an application for external funding, compared to 33 % from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, 42 % from the Department of Language and Literature, and 49 % from the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture.

Table 2.7. Have you, as a principal applicant or together with colleagues, during the last three years successfully applied for external funding from the Research Council of Norway, Horizon 2020 or other sources? N=171.

	Percent
Yes	36
No	60
No reply	4
Total	100

Finally, we asked a question about co-authorship. Publishing together with one or more colleagues is an increasing trend also in the humanities, and this may be a way of stimulating publication activity. The responses are shown in Table 2.8. We see that a majority answer that they already have experience with co-writing academic texts, and fairly few are sceptical to engage in such practice. There are small gender differences in the responses. There are more marked differences according to positions but they mainly reflect differences in experience. For example, respondents in

the tenured group have had much more time to write together with others and they presumably also have better access to co-writers.

Table 2.8. How do you feel about writing academic texts with others? Choose one.

Response	Percent
I have co-written academic texts several times	58
I have planned to write with others	19
I would like to write with others, but do not have any prospective co-authors	15
I am skeptical of co-authorship	8
Missing	1
Total	101

### 3. Attitudes and assessments

In the survey, we used a set of statements related to publishing. Respondents were asked to assess their importance. The statements covered the following aspects:

- Time
- Epistemological achievement
- Motivation and effort
- Resources and support.

We asked: when you compare periods where you have succeeded with scientific publishing with periods where you have not succeeded, what were the decisive factors in your success?

Unsurprisingly, time issues were considered most decisive. 88 % said that “I had sufficient continuous time for research” was very or fairly important, while 85 % rated “I had sufficient time for research” in the same way. The third most decisive feature was epistemological achievement. 70 % of the respondents considered “I had something important to say” as a very or fairly decisive feature of periods when they succeeded with scientific publishing.

Table 3.1. shows the scores for statements related to motivation and effort. We see that the respondents rank effort on top, with inspiration in second place. Expectations about publishing and a wish to be more visible as a researcher were also quite important features, while encouragement from colleagues and/or head of department was considered to have had a weaker but still noticeable effect. Overall, motivation and effort were seen as important for publishing.

Table 3.1. When you compare periods where you have succeeded with scientific publishing with periods where you have not succeeded, what were the decisive factors in your success? Motivation and effort. Per cent. N=171.

	Very or fairly important	Important	Slightly or not important	No reply	Total
I was doing an extraordinary effort	61	22	14	4	101
I was particularly inspired	52	30	17	2	101
I felt it was expected that I should publish	44	24	30	2	100
I wanted to be more visible as a researcher	43	32	23	1	99
I wanted to qualify for advancement or other academic positions	32	22	45	1	100
I was encouraged by colleagues and/or the Head of Department	31	22	46	2	101

Table 3.2. shows the scores for items indicating resources and support. Compared to the three other sets of features, resources and support are ranked lower but still considered relatively important. Collaboration with colleagues, internal or external, was generally considered relatively important.

Table 3.2. When you compare periods where you have succeeded with scientific publishing with periods where you have not succeeded, what were the decisive factors in your success? Resources and support. Per cent. N=171.

	Very or fairly important	Important	Slightly or not important	No reply	Total
I got useful assistance and feedback in the writing process that helped me along	53	23	22	2	100
I had productive collaboration with other researchers outside my department	52	21	26	2	101
I had found a suitable and interesting publication channel (journal, publisher, collection of articles)	43	27	28	3	101
I had productive collaboration with other researchers in my department	41	19	37	3	100
I had external funding/financial support from the Faculty or Department	38	17	42	3	100
I was teaching a course closely related to my own research	28	20	50	3	101

Surprisingly, 42 % of the respondents considered external funding to be of slight or no importance. This may reflect the fact that most respondents do not report success in obtaining funding (see Table 2.7). The role of teaching a course closely related to one's own research as helpful with respect to publications was ranked lowest. Still, nearly half of the sample considered such teaching as important. This suggests that it may be interesting to have more discussion about the relationship between teaching and research.

We used a somewhat similar set of statements to get assessments of what would be needed to increase the number of publications. Again, statements related to time issues were ranked at the top. 84 % responded that "I need more continuous time for research" was very or fairly important, while 79 % answered similarly about the statement "I need more time for research". The rest of the statements can be placed in three groups:

- Resources
- Motivation
- Skills.

Overall, as is evident from Tables 3.3 – 3.4, resources are assessed as most important.

Table 3.3. What would it take for you to publish more? Resources. Per cent. N=171.

	Very or fairly important	Important	Slightly or not important	No reply	Total
I need to collaborate more closely with other researchers outside my department	42	33	22	3	100
I need a place to get inspiration and feedback in the writing process to help me along	41	22	35	2	100
I need more external funding and/or financial support from the Faculty or Department	35	26	38	2	101
I need to collaborate more closely with other researchers in my department	32	33	32	2	100
I need more PhD-candidates to supervise and to collaborate with	28	21	49	2	100
I need research assistance (Research Assistant)	21	21	55	3	100
I need more/better technical equipment to complete my research so I will have something to publish	11	5	82	2	100

With respect to resources, we see from Table 3.3. that external and internal collaboration is given considerable importance. External funding and access to PhD candidates is also ranked as quite important, but a substantial proportion of the respondents did not see this as important. Very few say they need more or better technical equipment. Regarding skills, 45 % responds that it would be important to improve academic writing skills, while 39 % thinks they need to improve their proficiency in English.

Table 3.4. What would it take for you to publish more? Motivation. Per cent. N=171.

	Very or fairly important	Important	Slightly or not important	No reply	Total
I need encouragement from colleagues and/or the Head of Department	34	22	42	2	100
I need to be motivated for extraordinary effort	23	19	55	2	99
I need stronger motivation to qualify for advancement or to apply for academic positions elsewhere	15	17	66	2	100
I need to be better motivated for publishing	14	16	67	4	101
I need more pressure from the Head of Department and/or the Faculty	5	12	81	3	101

Table 3.1. showed that motivation was deemed as of considerable importance to previous success with publications. Table 3.4. suggests that need for motivational support is significant but not great. Most important is encouragement from colleagues and their head of department. However, pressure from the head of the department or from the Faculty was generally considered unimportant. This probably reflects that encouragement is seen as positive, while pressure is considered a negative measure.

To map the publication culture in a different way, we presented the respondents with a set of statements and asked them whether they agreed with these statements or not. The issues raised in the statements could be split into four groups:

- Time-related issues
- Work environment issues
- Issues related to self-confidence and self-reliance.

Table 3.5. show the results regarding time-related issues. Of greatest concern is that 60 % of the respondents strongly agree or agree that they find it difficult to find time to keep professionally up-dated. Also, like we have seen earlier, teaching and in particular teaching administration is seen as limiting engagement with research. Writing grant applications is also seen as stealing time away from research by quite a few, which seems a paradox. Still, there is little doubt that such application work may be quite time consuming.

Table 3.5. Assessment of statements regarding time-related issues. Per cent. N=171.

	Strongly agree/ agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Not relevant/ No reply	Total
I find it difficult to find time to keep up-to-date in my professional field	60	25	15	1	101
I spend so much time on teaching administration that there is little time left for research	44	23	16	18	100
I find that reorganizations and the merger with the colleges contribute to me having less time for scientific publishing	27	24	28	21	100
I find that I have too little time for research and scientific publishing due to unstable employment conditions	28	8	22	43	101
After teaching preparations, there is still enough time for scientific publishing	21	16	47	16	100
I spend so much time writing applications and carrying out externally funded research projects that there is little time left for scientific publishing	20	17	32	31	100
I have prioritized developing teaching material, like for instance writing text books, over scientific publishing	15	14	45	26	100

Table 3.6. shows the assessment of a series of statements about working conditions relevant to publishing, including the local focus on such activities. The results should give cause for some concern. Above all, it is worrisome that only half of the respondents agree that they have adequate opportunities for feedback on their drafts, and there was no difference between the juniors and the

tenured group (see table 4.1.). The table also suggests that there may be too little focus on publishing, even if some think there is too much emphasis on it and fairly few say they are motivated by such focus.

Table 3.6. Assessment of statements about working conditions. Per cent. N=171.

	Strongly agree/ agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Not relevant/ No reply	Total
I have adequate opportunities to get feedback from colleagues on drafts of scientific publications	50	22	25	3	100
In my department there is a lot of focus on scientific publishing	46	29	21	4	100
I think there is too much emphasis on scientific publishing	31	29	36	4	100
My work plan at the department is a useful tool for my academic priorities	20	20	44	16	100
When there is a lot of focus on time for research and on scientific publishing, I get motivated to do more of an effort to publish	18	31	43	8	100

Table 3.7. provides some indications about issues related to academic self-confidence and self-reliance. The results are ambiguous. It may seem satisfactory that 59 % of the respondents agree that they have a strong academic self-confidence and 25 % agree that they find it easy to be accepted in high-quality journals. However, about a third finds it challenging to work on scientific publications on their own, and only 63 % think that it is easy to find suitable journals for publishing.

Table 3.7. Assessment of a series of statements about self-confidence and self-reliance. Per cent. N=171.

	Strongly agree/ agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Not relevant/ No reply	Total
I think it is easy to find suitable journals for publishing	63	20	16	1	100
I have a strong academic self-confidence	59	26	14	1	100
I find it challenging to work on scientific publications on my own	36	28	33	3	100
I do not think it is embarrassing that I am unable to publish more	36	21	32	11	100
I find it easy to be accepted in high-quality journals	25	38	28	9	100

## 4. Impacts of department and position

We have chosen to focus on whether there are differences in the responses between the departments and according to position. It is of course possible also to study other effects, but that would take more resources and the data set also limits the possibility. Originally, we had planned also to analyse possible effects of gender, but that would have required a different approach due to the large gender imbalance in the 'diverse' position categories.

When analysing such potential differences, we have to be careful because of correlations between the variables. The distribution of positions varies across departments. Ideally, we could have controlled for this through multi-variate analysis. However, the survey sample is too small for such an analysis to be reliable. Instead, we have exercised discretion in our analysis. We focus only on differences that seem robust, given the mentioned correlations.

### 4.1. Differences between departments

Due to the low response rates, we have excluded the departments of music and of historical studies from further analysis. This leaves us with the departments of philosophy and religious studies (IFR), art and media studies (IKM), language and literature (ISL), and interdisciplinary studies of culture (KULT). There are indications that these four departments differ with respect to some responses to the survey questions, which adds up to some distinctive features but no striking differences.

These features are not surprising to those who have some knowledge of the four departments. KULT stands out with a larger share of juniors and researchers, more external funding and a more collaboration-oriented culture than the other three. Respondents from KULT have more experience with co-writing, emphasise collegial support with respect to writing but still wish for even more such support and co-writing with colleagues. They also to a larger degree report a need to strengthen academic writing skills and that there is a lot of focus on publishing at the department.

IFR also have a fairly large share of juniors. Compared to the other departments, respondents from IFR put somewhat less emphasis on collegial collaboration and encouragement within the department and they report less need for external funding. Still, 48 % report co-authoring on several occasions.

Relatively few ISL respondents were juniors. With respect to collegial collaboration and support/encouragement, ISL respondents placed themselves between IFR and KULT. About 1/3 said they would need more external funding to publish more, compared to 15 % at IFR and 28 % at KULT. Compared to the other departments, ISL respondents more frequently reported that they also would need research assistance to increase publishing.

There were also relatively few junior respondents from IKM. IKM respondents report a relatively low level of collegial collaboration and support/encouragement but also that they want more of this. 43 % answered that they would need more external funding to publish more. Compared to the other three departments, IKM respondents reported more frequently that teaching and supervision hindered publishing.

An obvious question to raise is whether any of these departmental cultures are more productive than the others. Can they be ranked in terms of output? Current data suggest not when we look at more than one year, because the rank based on publication points per teaching and research staff shifts from year to year. Given that publication practices vary between disciplines, care should be exercised when comparing publication output. If efforts should be made to increase publication output

from faculty, it seems that the departments have more or less the same challenges. However, there may be disciplinary differences within the departments that should be taken into consideration.

**4.2. Differences between position categories**

In this section, we focus only on the junior and tenured categories. The diverse category is, well, too diverse to be analysed in this fashion. Overall, the differences between the junior and tenured categories are as one would expect, given that most juniors mainly engage in research while tenured faculty have substantial teaching and supervision tasks. Thus, the latter group are more concerned about how these tasks interfere with research and publishing than the juniors. However, the difference is somewhat smaller than we expected.

The tenured group has more experience, which is notable with respect to some of the questions. On the other hand, experience is acquired throughout one’s whole career, and not all in the tenured group have been in academic positions for a long time.

Table 4.1. compares the responses to the set of questions we asked about working conditions between juniors and the tenured group, to see if juniors were less satisfied than the tenured respondents. However, as we see, there were no clear differences.

Table 4.1. Per cent that strongly agree or agree with statements about working conditions, according to position – junior or tenured,

	Junior	Tenured
I have adequate opportunities to get feedback from colleagues on drafts of scientific publications	49	51
In my department there is a lot of focus on scientific publishing	40	46
I think there is too much emphasis on scientific publishing	35	28
My work plan at the department is a useful tool for my academic priorities	21	25
When there is a lot of focus on time for research and on scientific publishing, I get motivated to do more of an effort to publish	21	19

## 5. Conclusions and suggestions

Is there a distinct publication culture at HF? To begin with, the survey shows that there is a clear interest in publishing and a widespread wish to publish more than what has been done during the last three years. Most respondents are engaged in and/or have plans for scholarly writing. At the same time, the survey shows considerable frustration regarding the conditions for publishing. However, with respect to concrete issues, responses were diverse. Thus, the publication culture appears to be heterogeneous. Some of the diversity may be attributed to differences between the departments and between positions, but individual variations were more pronounced in our study.

Still, we observe some important communalities. Unsurprisingly, they may be linked to time pressure and scheduling. Many complained that there was not enough time to publish more. This time squeeze was linked to administration, in particular teaching administration. The open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire produced many complaints about unnecessary time-consuming administrative tasks related to teaching, such as writing reports. Quite a few also lamented that the time norms for teaching were unrealistically low.

In addition, there were issues with the scheduling of teaching. Many responded that they wanted unbroken periods for research but found this difficult to achieve. The long semesters were seen as a problem in this context, but there were many other issues. The suggestions from the open-ended questions invited more creativity with regard to the way teaching was scheduled. For example, could there be more block-organised teaching or a couple of weeks in mid semester when students were given assignments and no teaching?

Another important issue was collaboration and practical collegial support. These are important resources for scholarly writing. Collegial support includes not only encouragement but feedback and exchange of ideas. Many of the suggestions from the open-ended question focused on improved professional exchanges through research groups, seminars, writing groups, collective writing events (such as “skrivepress”) and similar activities. Noticeably, the survey shows that more than half of the respondents considered collaboration with scholars outside their own department as an important stimulus to publishing.

Many mentioned a lack of funding as a barrier to increase publication. Collaboration was considered even more important as a stimulus to write as was access to a place for inspiration and feedback. Some mentioned that it would be helpful to be offered an isolated office as a place to write or the possibility to go away for a week.

Motivation had been important when respondents had been successful with publication activity. A great majority responded that they had made an extraordinary effort to achieve such outcome, and they had been particularly inspired. A wish to be more visible as a researcher was also an important motive. Qualifying for promotion or other academic positions was another central reason to publish.

The feeling that one was expected to publish was also a strong motive. Overall, pressure to publish was recognised, although not by everybody. The effect varied. In particular in the open question, quite a few respondents voiced very negative sentiments about such pressure. Criticism was above all directed at the Faculty where the leadership was considered to be too distanced and too concerned with quantity rather than quality. It was suggested that it might be more fruitful with dialogue to discuss publication efforts and how to change or improve them. A related complaint was that there was no clear priority of all the goals one is supposed to pursue.

We may draw different conclusions from these results; there may be too much, too little or too variable pressure about publishing. However, there is little doubt that such pressure is felt.

### 5.1. What to do?

NTNU as well as the Faculty of Humanities have approved publication policies.<sup>10</sup> However, these documents are abstract, goal focused, and thus not particularly helpful when one wants to address the concrete issues and concerns that have been raised in this report. Mostly, they leave it to the departments, research groups and individuals to find ways to reach the quantitative goals of more and more influential publications.

From the perspective of the policy documents, the publication culture at HF should be developed further. How one assesses the publication culture as it is described in this report, is of course debateable and there are several strategic options. The easy choice is of course to assume that positive changes will happen anyway, for example because one may think that younger faculty are more eager to publish than the older generation or because the pressure to publish will nudge increased publication efforts. More pro-active choices should start from the assumption that cultures change slowly. Thus, an ambitious publication strategy requires priority and concerted action. It may be difficult to find resources and determination to develop and implement such strategy, given the comprehensive goals that HF is expected to pursue.

In addition, the findings presented in this report may be interpreted to suggest that it would be better to go for partial strategies that may be pursued in turn over a longer period and/or by one or two departments. Such a partial approach could address the following issues. Surely, there are other aspects that could be addressed, but these are some of the main ideas coming out of our study.

- *More time for research.* The survey shows consistent complaints about administrative tasks, in particular related to teaching. HF could look critically at, for example, reporting requirements to see if they could be reduced or asked for only every second or third year. This would also reduce the work load of the administrative staff, opening up the possibility that they could do some of the administrative tasks now done by faculty. The survey unfortunately did not ask about time spent on research administration, but this is also an issue that should be addressed.
- *Rescheduling of teaching.* The open-ended question produced suggestions like two weeks teaching break with other student assignments and bulk teaching. HF could encourage experiments with such practices to see if they provide more periods of continuous research efforts.
- *Writing groups.* Too many respondents seemed to lack access to collegial feedback and support. Establishing writing groups of 3-6 people is a possible response. Such groups may not require a lot of effort, only short meetings to push, encourage and comment upon the writing of the participants.
- *Other forms of coaching/mentoring.* In general, there are few possibilities to be coached or mentored to improve academic achievements. Such initiatives do not have to be one-on-one; they may also be group based. NTNU's consultant for equal opportunities has considerable experience in organising mentoring for women faculty – she might be asked to share her experiences. Another option is to offer supervisors training in coaching PhD students.
- *Spaces for writing.* There seems to be available office space at Dragvoll that allows a system of “hiding for writing” – offices that may be used for a limited time for writing to avoid the kind of everyday disturbances that otherwise interrupt writing. A different kind of writing

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ntnu.no/publiseringspolitik>,  
<https://www.ntnu.no/documents/10234/5415882/Publiseringsstrategi+HF+2014-2020.pdf/454ac822-e6ae-47f8-a2e1-3dd1806e5090>

space is a shared room where a group of people sit and write. Some PhD students have tried this and claim that such arrangement make them more focused and more productive.

- *Backlogs.* Many respondents claim to have drafts that they find it difficult to finish. Departments and/or research groups could pursue this issue to find ways to help people get rid of such backlogs.
- *Motivation.* This is a tricky issue. On the one hand, motivation for scholarly writing is important and needed. On the other hand, our study shows that many respond negatively to what they consider to be unfair and excessive pressure to publish. Perhaps there should be more attention to scholarly gains from publishing, including visibility, rather than quantitative goals and worries about too few publication points.
- *Money.* Probably, it would be beneficial with more financial support for travel to conferences and workshops as well as for going away to write. Given the present economic situation, it may be difficult to improve such arrangements. However, one might think about such expenditures as investments.

Finally, there is the issue of whom to address. The data from Cristin clearly indicate that there are more differences between HF's departments than we have addressed in this study, such as the prevalence of artistic work. This suggests that one should avoid strategies that assume that "one size fits all". Thus, the partial strategies described above should be used in a way that is sensitive to the differences. Some of them may fit some departments better than others. The data from Cristin also show considerable individual variation among faculty. Occasionally, there is focus on the substantial group of people that publishes little or not at all. Supposedly, the main way to increase overall publication output is to address this group to make them more productive. An alternative would be to focus on the faculty that publish regularly, to see if they may be encouraged to increase their output.

Arguably, these two groups should be addressed differently. They may share time related issues, but they clearly do not navigate academic work in the same fashion. This survey does not tell much about these differences; that would need a different approach. When we look at publication output at NTNU overall, we see that there is a small group of people who consistently publishes very much. HF has very few such people and may not want to develop "super academics". Still, it may be easier to help and encourage those who publish to increase their efforts a little than to change the practices of those who do not.