

Research strategy for the Plural research centre 2023–2027

Mission and Vision

The Plural research centre represents a network of researchers from the Languages Unit, which is a multilingual and multicultural community that is globally well-connected and open to interdisciplinary collaboration. Plural hosts research groups and researchers specialising in linguistics, translation studies, literary and cultural scholarship, fostering unique collaborations among neighbouring disciplines. The common thread among Plural's researchers is an interest in the role of language and culture in driving societal change. Plural's mission is to conduct both basic and cutting-edge applied research that contributes to developing equitable and sustainable societies. Plural summarises its research objectives as striving "for inclusive societies and livable futures". We aim to consolidate our position as a nationally leading research hub in societally grounded language, literature, and translation studies within the next five years. We also aspire to be an internationally attractive research environment with strong research groups in our focal areas of research.

Plural's research strategy focuses on four key goals that serve to achieve its mission in research while also aligning with the university's overall research strategy:

- *profiling impactful research;*
- *fostering dynamic dialogue and collaboration;*
- *investing in excellence; and*
- *supporting openness and inclusiveness.*

Through these goals, Plural aims to enhance the ambition and global impact of its research and to contribute to advancing science and addressing societal challenges.

Below, each of the goals is unpacked in a dedicated section with the concrete actions and expected outcomes associated with it.

1. Profiling impactful research: “For inclusive societies and livable futures”

Plural hosts research projects that address local and global concerns related to language use in multilingual and mobile societies, multimodal and discursive practices, accessibility in the digital era, as well as spatial, environmental, and geopolitical issues of contemporary and past societies. The centre's research focus on societal phenomena, applicability of science, and decolonisation of research aligns with Tampere University's general research mission of "unleashing human potential."

Plural's role as the unifying research centre of the Languages Unit with its multidisciplinary positioning within the Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences sets it apart from similar centres in Finland. The centre

strives to produce innovative, high-quality research that is both theoretically grounded and empirically informed, while also addressing pressing societal needs. Creating impactful research requires strong and innovative research culture. Although Plural unites and welcomes a wide variety of thematically diverse projects, its current profile centres on three main research areas. These three foci have gained national and international recognition, contributing to Tampere University's mission of promoting fair, democratic, and inclusive societies, as well as enhancing health and well-being.

- The **Multilingual practices and multimodality in interaction** focal area investigates a variety of interactional and communicative settings from multilingual and multimodal perspectives. Researchers working in this area analyse interactional, textual, and semiotic processes of human activity. The aim is to build more inclusive practices for language use, learning, and translation in societies shaped by human mobility and asymmetric resources for participation.
- The **Accessibility, usability, and well-being** focal area examines the future of health and well-being through the lens of language usage, learning, and communication, with a focus on accessible and easy language, as well as intermodal translation and interpreting. Drawing on a range of disciplines including linguistics, translation studies, engineering, social and medical sciences, this area contributes to digital and medical humanities, offering practical solutions to the challenges posed by linguistically and culturally diverse societies and integrating policy into language programmes.
- The **Spatial and mobile societies** focal area examines languages 'on the move' with language variation and change, as well as spatial, environmental, and geopolitical imaginaries. It explores the mobility of languages, texts, and narratives across diverse boundaries and the specific historical, sociocultural, and technological processes involved in those mobilities. The area's contribution to current societal debates supports the building of more democratic and heterogeneous societies.

Strategic plans

- foster a strong and innovative research culture
- transform the societal and disciplinary image of language, translation, and literature studies
- conduct research that addresses local and global concerns

Actions

- organise research seminars for the research centre members to foster research culture
- strengthen current research profile through publication activity crediting Plural
- foster collaboration not only between literature, linguistics, and translation studies but also beyond unit and faculty borders to facilitate interdisciplinarity and to identify emerging concentrations of research
- increase the level of ambition and global connectivity in research by forming international research partnerships

Expected outcomes

- increase in publications in high-profile international fora
- increase in co-authored publications in interdisciplinary fora
- increase in the number of research teams and projects
- increase in the interest from incoming researchers evident in docentship applications and personal grant applications
- new interdisciplinary research (sub)groups

2. Fostering dynamic dialogue and collaboration: Scientific and societal impact

Plural is dedicated to improving its scientific quality and increasing its overall impact. As such, Plural is committed to providing more support for scholarly dialogue, collaboration, external funding applications, and publishing. Additionally, Plural will enhance its profile and social media visibility to disseminate research findings more effectively on scientific and societal levels.

Given Plural's and the whole Unit's significant impact on society through research-based language education, the research centre encourages researchers to engage in dynamic dialogues, partnerships, and outreach activities with language education stakeholders and cultural institutions. This approach will foster solution-oriented research that emphasises the applicability of science and the importance of collaboration with language and culture industry stakeholders and businesses. Such dialogue also contributes to identifying science-based solutions to current societal challenges, highlighting the value of science in society.

To increase the number of publications in high-ranking venues, Plural will promote discussion on publication practices at both individual and research group levels. While Plural already has a strong international publishing profile, it will encourage further international networking through seminars and conferences, participating in established research networks, and forming joint projects to increase the number of internationally co-authored publications in high-ranking publication venues. Plural also seeks to maximise the potential of Open Access publishing and support PhD researchers by maintaining [its own publication series](#). Additionally, Plural will continue to support publishing in French, German, Russian, Finnish, and Swedish to promote the visibility of research in the specific language and culture areas of its members and to maintain the national languages as languages of science.

Strategic plans

- enhance the scientific impact of research, advance scientific knowledge and open science
- enhance the societal and cultural impact of research
- maintain research integrity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand existing partnerships and encourage new forms of collaboration
<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the number of high-quality publications • encourage all forms of international collaboration and allot funding for research seminars and visits • actively promote open access research and multilingual publishing • profile impactful research by disseminating research findings to various stakeholders • foster a writing community through social academic writing meetings and other events • foster a strong research culture through research-based teaching and strengthen research-based teaching • support teachers in allocating working time to research activities through utilising the four-period system, increasing joint teaching, and employing student assistants
<p>Expected outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in the number of higher-ranking JUFO publications • Increase in the number of Open Access publications • increase in the number of publications with international collaboration • quality and number of external partnerships • impact with stakeholders: influencing policy-making and professional practices

3. Investing in excellence: Research funding and infrastructure

Plural is committed to excellence, both in its scientific endeavour and its research environment, and to promoting academic integrity in research.

Plural's research is internally funded by the university budget and externally by national funding sources such as the Academy of Finland and private foundations; some funding has also been received from international funding agencies such as the EU research programmes. Plural intends to launch several actions to secure more external funding. This aim is supported by Plural's efforts to increase research collaboration within and beyond the Unit, which is vitally important to collaborative project applications for consortia and other multi-centre funding.

Despite the current lack of resource allocation, Plural continues to deliver excellent research. As a development goal, Plural aims to make its resourcing more stable by finding funding to engage a coordinator. This will help the centre to organise its activities, achieve its research objectives, and contribute to the development of fair and sustainable societies.

The ITC research infrastructure is available to the Plural members and facilitates research and fosters new innovations and excellence. The faculty's specialised

infrastructure for research and teaching consists of a language technology lab, an interpreting studio, a language studio, as well as a phonetics lab, which is being integrated with other faculty infrastructure for researching voice and sound (e.g. Ludus and Paidia). With its multidisciplinary set-up and extensive infrastructure, the faculty offers additional possibilities for collaboration in areas such as usability research, robotics, signal processing, virtual and augmented reality technologies, and digital learning environments.

<p>Strategic plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secure more external funding • make efficient and versatile use of the existing infrastructure
<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop the RC level five-year road map for increasing the amount of external funding, e.g. AoF Flagship and Consortium funding • coordinate the calls to attract individual grant applicants and match them with Plural supervisors, e.g. the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Postdoctoral Fellowships, AoF Research Fellowships • utilise Tampere University pre-/postaward teams' services for project success • support research funding applications through organising career coaching events • encourage staff members to develop individual research funding plans • encourage staff to participate in international mobility programmes and invite researchers from abroad for short- and long-term visits • increase Plural-internal research collaboration and coherence via seminars to create research teams • organise tours of the lab facilities and infrastructure available in the faculty
<p>Expected outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in engaging with competitive funding calls • increase in external funding received • improved resourcing of the research centre through the engagement of a coordinator or assistant and the acquisition of funding to support research activities

4. **Supporting openness and inclusiveness: Research careers and postgraduate training**

Plural aims at creating an open and inclusive research community, where the contributions of individual researchers are valued as much as those of research groups. Plural cherishes academic freedom: the current profile has been developed bottom-up, and institutional support has been given to all project applications. This

support also extends to research currently not funded by outside resources, as all teaching staff can allocate time for research. High-profile research is thus also conducted outside the current focal areas, which is a considerable strength in terms of publication output and, more significantly, in fostering innovative ideas.

Research centre activities aim at creating an attractive research environment, as well as creating more internal cohesion within and critical mass for Plural's research. The centre will continue to support research by organising joint writing sessions and retreats, thematic seminars, conferences, career coaching workshops, and other events which attract both junior and senior researchers. It continues to have a key role in not only mentoring younger researchers and providing them with relevant research, academic, and transferable skills, but also offering a platform for scientific exchange and multidisciplinary collaboration for all the staff. As a research centre, Plural's role is to enhance the Languages Unit research profile, to promote interdisciplinarity and teamwork in research, and to create a more inclusive and dynamic research environment.

Plural invests in researcher training through mentoring, co-publishing, forming research projects, organising summer schools, and allotting funding for research seminars and visits. Plural researchers also contribute to the events organised by the Unit's Doctoral Programme in Language Studies: the Programme organises an interdisciplinary PhD seminar with specific session topics geared towards gaining such transferable research skills that support career development. The Programme will make use of the recently expanded supervisor pool in both recruiting new PhD researchers and supervising them. PhD researchers are encouraged to become active members of Plural, which decreases their isolation from the academic staff, increases the motivation to complete their studies, and facilitates wider community-building and the formation of new research projects. Plural will further cultivate and deepen postgraduate training collaboration between national and international partners: with Langnet, a Finnish network for doctoral programmes in language studies, and with the network of the programme of the International Doctorate in Translation Studies. Plural also aims to engage undergraduate students in research groups and diverse research activities.

Plural's research strategy aims to aid the Languages Unit in its recruitment strategy. The Unit uses a transparent recruitment process based on peer-review with external experts in its recruitment process. During the recruitment process, Plural's research profile is an important source of reference for the applicants to gain an informed view of the network they will be joining at the Unit. Recruitment continues to be embraced as an opportunity to both strengthen and renew the existing profile.

Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• create an attractive research environment nationally and internationally• foster academic freedom and innovation in research• foster development of early career researchers
Actions

- improve and systematise researcher training via the Doctoral Programme
- support PhD / early career researchers through mentoring, co-publishing, forming research projects, and organising summer schools
- involve PhD researchers in the Plural steering board activities
- attract PhD applicants with good research potential via a wide supervision pool and strong profile areas
- stimulate research, innovation, and international collaboration through recruitments
- increase coherence between Plural and Tampere University focal areas
- organise inclusive research events and 'Pluminar' seminars

Expected outcomes

- quality in PhD applications
- a greater integration of PhD researchers in the research centre activities
- well-rounded CVs of PhD graduates including research management activities
- successfully concluded PhD degrees
- recruitments of international postdocs with personal grants
- increase in new research teams and research visits