

Administrative organization: Input to the discussion

0. Group for administrative organization: Mandate and members

On 18 June, the steering committee for the merger established a group to prepare a proposal for organization of university's administrative operations. The group is to work in parallel and to coordinate its work with the group for the academic organizational structure.

The group has the following members:

- Dean Anne Kristine Børresen, NTNU (chair)
- University College Director Roar Tobro, Aalesund University College (HiÅ)
- University College Director Inge Øystein Moen, Gjøvik University College (HiG)
- Director of Academic and Student Affairs Gunnar Bendheim, Sør-Trøndelag University College (HiST)
- Vice-Dean Hans Marius Eikseth, HiST
- Senior Advisor Liv Alfild Unhjem, NTNU
- Head of Administration Hege Ertzaas Fosslund, NTNU
- Employee representative Gry Alterskjær, Forskerforbundet (the Norwegian Association of Researchers), NTNU
- Employee representative Gunnhild N. Furnes, Norwegian Association of Researchers, HiÅ
- Employee representative Iver Johnsen, NTL (Norsk Tjenestemannslag - Norwegian Civil Service Union), NTNU
- Employee representative Kjerstin Tobiassen, Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations (Akademikerne), HiST
- Student Ole-Jacob Oosterhof, HiG
- Student Marte Øien, HiST

The mandate states that the group's work is to be divided into three phases:

Deadline 1 Oct.:	Discussion document outlining principles, a target profile and quality requirements for the administrative organization of NTNU
Deadline 1 Feb.:	Proposal for alternative models for the administrative organization
Deadline 1 June:	Joint recommendation for the administrative organization and proposed implementation plan

An initial working paper is now being issued to the organizations and it will be revised in the light of suggestions and comments.

1. Introduction

The group for administrative organization has been assigned responsibility for proposing administrative solutions that provide good services to staff, students and leaders at all levels at the three campuses in the new NTNU. The proposal must also include IT services. According to the plan, the new administrative organizational structure will be implemented from 2017. The final proposal must be presented on 1 June 2016.

This document will lay the foundation for the organization models to be proposed for NTNU and will set the criteria for change management. The document is intended to provide direction for

administrative solutions that are characterized by close interaction between academic and administrative activities in working towards common goals.

On the way, the institutions, unions, student democracy, staff and students will be invited to provide their views and input on what constitutes good administrative services and how they should be organized. We would like to have an assessment of the current systems and to draw scenarios of a good administration for the future. We are also interested in the groups' expectations and the requirements they would specify for good administrative services.

The comments will be used to outline alternative models for the administrative organization. Models show the distribution of work and duties as well as the allocation of decision-making authority between the levels and campuses and in the organization chart. The group will specify guiding principles for description of cross-cutting administrative processes with allocation of responsibility. The group will also evaluate how existing skills can best be taken care of and developed.

2. The merger platform

The merger platform's section on administrative and technical services, Section 2.7 "good administrative and technical services" states:

"A well-functioning university requires skilled administrative and technical services that are closely integrated with the academic activity. Different processes demand teamwork between academic, administrative and technical staff in their work towards common goals. An important principle at NTNU will be that all employees know and respect each other's roles and responsibilities. NTNU aims for high quality in the administrative and technical services with effective use of resources. The administration and the technical services will have the capacity and skills to offer good support services that are available to students, staff and external partners. NTNU must be in the forefront in terms of user-friendly and effective support systems. The organization must use IT systems that best realize quality in education, research and administrative activities. NTNU's library services must help to ensure that NTNU can achieve its goals for high quality in education and research. The library is to have up-to-date, relevant information resources and good technological solutions for its users."

Expectations for the administrative organization and administrative services

NTNU aims for high quality in the administrative and technical services. The organization and resources must support our core activities. NTNU is to have a well-functioning administration, information systems and technical services that are closely integrated with the academic activities and that are tailored to the primary tasks and to students' learning. Different processes demand teamwork between academic, administrative and technical staff in their work towards common goals. NTNU must be in the forefront in terms of user-friendly and effective support systems. The organization must use IT systems that best realize quality in education, research and administrative activities.

3. Administrative responsibilities and services

Administrative responsibilities and services, as well as the concept of “administration”, can be interpreted in many ways. Below, we describe the administration’s duties based on requirements and expectations for management support, user support and the perspective of institutional administration.

Management support

The administration is to contribute analyses, assessments and preparation of decision support for management at all levels and for governing bodies. It must assist management in strategic work in both the development and the implementation phases. An important part of the task is to follow up the decisions of governing bodies. In addition, the administration must contribute to management’s initiatives in public relations, communication, branding and identity building.

User support

The administration at all levels must provide services for staff, students, businesses, government institutions / authorities and civil society. It must handle enquiries and take care of processes, systems and practices that address the administrative tasks that staff and students face. The administration must provide support close to the disciplines through close integration with the academic organization in the work toward common goals.

Public administration

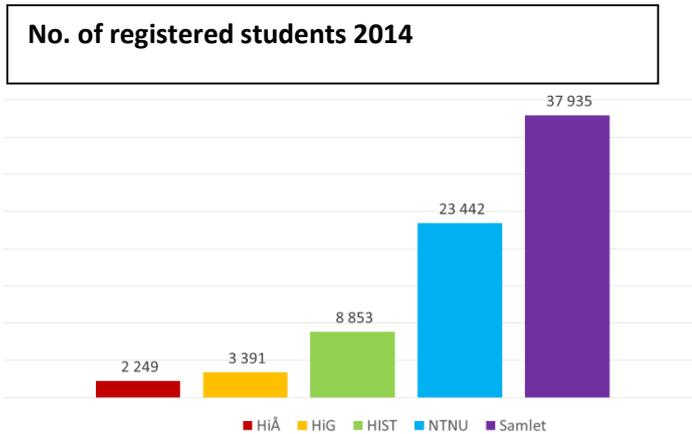
Universities and university colleges manage the community’s resources: finances, human resources and infrastructure. The resources must be used effectively and for the benefit of society. In line with good administrative practices, the accounting and reports must be correct. The same applies to staff records, document management and administration of students’ rights. The systems and handling of data must meet the requirements for computer security. This is based on both regulatory requirements and the needs of the institutions themselves.

4. Today's administration at our four institutions

A brief and general description of the four institutions’ current administrative organization appears below.

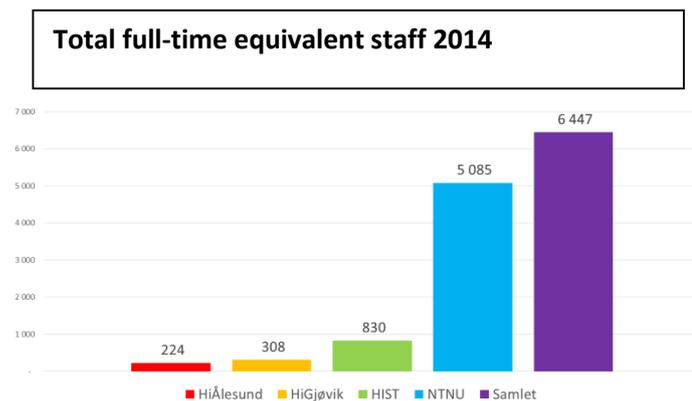
NTNU

NTNU has appointed unitary management at all levels. The institution is organized in 3 levels: the institutional level, the faculty level with 7 units and the NTNU University Museum, and the department level with about 50 units. Several departments are divided into subject groups. NTNU is research-intensive and offers teaching at bachelor's, master's and PhD level. The last two categories have the widest scope. The institution has a large university administration divided into staff and operative divisions/sections. The administration consists of about 20 departments and sections. In addition, the faculties have administrations that cover most functional areas. Departments also have the use of administrative resources. In total, the administration comprises 1158 full-time equivalent employees.



HiST

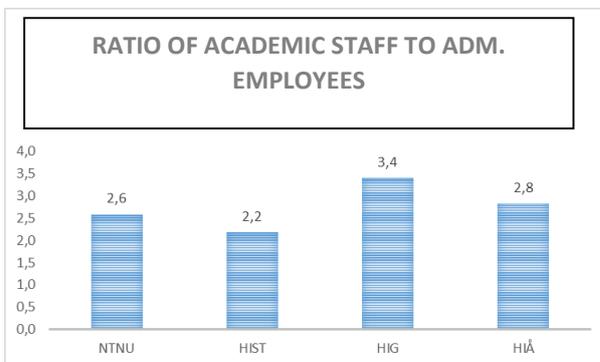
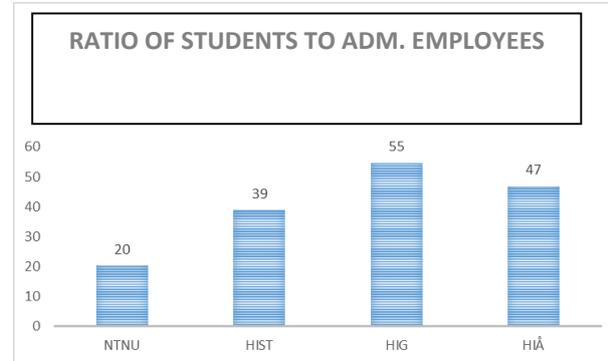
Sør-Trøndelag University College has appointed unitary management at all levels. The institution is organized in 3 levels: the institutional level, the faculty level with 4 units (from 1 August 2015) and the department level with 13 units. HiST offers teaching at bachelor's, master's and PhD level with the main field of education at bachelor's level. HiST has an administration at level 1 named the University College Administration (HA). HA is divided into staff and 4 administrative sections. The 4 faculties at HiST each have administrative staffs of 15-30 full-time equivalents. Departments at the Faculty of Technology have the use of some dedicated engineering support, and the Department of Computer Science and E-learning has a small department staff. The administration at HiST has 283 full-time equivalent staff in total.



HiG

Gjøvik University College has appointed unitary management at all levels. The institution is organized in 3 levels: the institutional level, the department (faculty) level with 4 departments, and a third level consisting of sections/laboratories or centres. The sections in the Faculty of Technology, Economics and Management are organized in subject groups (level 4). The university college offers education programmes at bachelor's, master's and PhD level.

The administration is largely centralized at institutional level (common administration), divided into the operative sections of academic affairs/research, finance, human resources, IT, library, and the staff of the director of the university college. Administrative staff in the departments report to the Dean, but they are associated with operative sections in relevant subject areas. In total, the administration comprises 62 full-time equivalent employees.



HiÅ

Aalesund University College has dual leadership with an appointed director and an elected rector, who is also Chair of the Board. The institution is mainly organized in two levels: the institutional level and the department (faculty) level with 5 departments. The university college offers programmes of study at bachelor's and

master's level, and close collaboration in research and innovation with the business community. Most of the departments are divided into sections by subject area, but only 2 departments have appointed heads of sections. The largest part of the administration belongs to level 1 (central administration) with human resources and organization, finance and operations, student and academic affairs, R&D, IT, and the library. The five academic departments have some administrative resources that cover the most common administrative areas: salaries, HR, finance, as well as student and academic affairs. The administration includes a total of 64 full-time equivalents, but of these, 15.6 full-time equivalents are in reality project managers who are used in connection with teaching and research. The tables above are corrected for this source of error.

5. Trends and requirements

In addition to the university's own objectives, external trends and requirements set criteria for administrative work.

Trends in society¹

Demographic changes and tighter economy. Two factors are placing the Norwegian economy under pressure. Labour force participation will fall from 65% to 50% in 2025, and pension commitments will increase sharply. In addition, a breakpoint in the National Budget is expected in 2025 given the continuation of the negative relationship between expenses and income. The two

¹ Source, http://www.ntnu.no/styret/saker_prot/28.01.15web/S-1.15%20SAKS.pdf among others

trends point to budget cuts in the public sector, for universities and university colleges among others. This leads to two probable responses: cuts in the institutional budgets and measures to increase external revenue. Both responses will influence the priorities and approach of the administration.

Propensity to study and candidates. A greater propensity to study is expected, in addition to an increase in the cohorts of young people from about 800,000 (2014) to 850,000 in 2025. Graduates from higher education are in demand, and they get jobs quickly. The need for more graduates is growing, including PhD graduates. Today, 1500 PhD candidates are educated annually. The proportion of international PhD candidates is now 30%, and the proportion is rising.

Continued urbanization and fewer education applicants at the same time? The shift toward the cities is continuing, and the age group 20–29 is the most mobile. Urbanization suggests that NTNU will still operate most of its education activities on its three urban campuses. After 2025, the cohorts of young people will probably be reduced. If the propensity to study does not increase, the annual level of applications for education will fall. It would be possible to maintain student numbers at the educational institutions in the large cities by taking advantage of a continued trend towards urbanization.

Development in the government sector: stability and change

Exercise of legislation and regulations: legal certainty, reputation, control and responsibility. Regulations govern rights and obligations for students and staff, and for institutions in the role of educational institution and employer. Legal certainty, equal treatment, equal opportunity, personal and material safety and security are fundamental principles in the regulations. This provides important guiding principles for the purpose of the administrations and their latitude for action. In addition, universities and university colleges must practice good management of finances and real property. Here, risk assessments and internal control have become integrated elements of administrative work.

Self-regulation and institutional autonomy. The State's role as governing player has been changing during the past 15-20 years. State governance has been influenced by New Public Management (NPM). This involves measures such as increased competition and marketization, privatization, separation of purchaser/provider roles, decentralization, delegation, and management by objectives and results. State governance currently takes place through performance measurement, incentive-based funding systems, indicator reporting, and evaluation based on national quality standards. The governance principle is freedom with responsibility, as stated inter alia in the Quality Reform in Norwegian Higher Education (2001).

Priorities in Norwegian higher education

During the past 15-20 years, Norwegian higher education has been strongly influenced by reforms in European higher education. This has given us an international degree structure, closer student follow-up, results-based financing, a national quality and accreditation agency (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT) and new forms of governance and management. The political priorities have led to the need for development of new administrative skills. In the light of the last 4-5 years' development, it is natural to highlight 4 priority areas:

Internationalization. International mobility in higher education and research is increasing, is politically desired, and is an important benefit for students and staff. Norwegian educational institutions will be exposed to stronger international competition for students, academic staff

and research funding. Last year, the Ministry of Education and Research fronted the need for greater Norwegian dividends from the EU's research programmes.

Closer interaction education and research. An overarching goal in Norwegian knowledge policy is closer integration between education and research (Report to the Storting 18 (2012-2013: Lange linjer – kunnskap gir muligheter [Long perspectives – knowledge creates opportunities]). The report emphasizes that students at all degree levels should be able to participate in research and innovation activities during their course of study.

NOKUT and student satisfaction. NOKUT's annual Student Barometer, together with attention from the mass media, could contribute to more intense national competition for education applicants. Applicants will quickly be able to find information about students' satisfaction before they send their applications to the Norwegian Universities and Colleges Admission Service. In addition, NOKUT will work together with the Norwegian Council for Higher Education (UHR) to evaluate research and education.

Funding model, budget cuts for improved productivity and reduced bureaucracy. In the National Budget for 2015, the higher education sector was subjected to a joint budget cut for improved productivity and reduced bureaucracy totalling NOK 180 million distributed pro rata annually for 4 years. This entails a total cut of NOK 131 million for the merged NTNU for the years 2015-2018. At the same time, the funding model for the higher education sector is being restructured.

Technology and digitization

Our choices and solutions are controlled to a great extent by technology and systems. This means that we must be proactive and meet the requirements for flexibility and capability needed to handle the changes.

This development makes it necessary for NTNU to consider information security, information management, transparency and openness in new contexts. If we aim to lead the field in the sector's exploitation of technology, we must create an active culture of change that dares to try, make mistakes, and scale up where we see major benefits.

6. Future scenarios of a good administration

Several user-focused scenarios are outlined below as tentative examples of good administration at the time when the NTNU merger takes effect. The scenarios are intended as input to a discussion on ambitions and expectations of the level and form of administrative services.

Based on the trends and requirements we have described, a variety of expectations for the administration can be derived. The list in the following is not exhaustive and the expectations may contradict each other.

What do students expect?

A future NTNU consists of three campuses where students find that their needs are met quickly, easily and conveniently. Accessibility and availability will be an overarching principle, in the form of digital support services and campus-based physical services. Much of the communication between students and the administration takes place using approved Web-based platforms. Students have a clear perception that they are treated equally in questions such as the progress of their studies, assessments and appeals, regardless of their subject area, year of study and place of study.

Examples of future scenarios:

- NTNU has a first line in which students find answers to about 90% of all questions digitally.
- NTNU has a staffed first line that is centrally available in all three cities. The first line has high service quality, and it can easily help students solve problems, even those that rarely occur.
- NTNU has standardized and largely digitized all administrative processes
- Students have equal rights irrespective of their course of study, faculty, and campus affiliation.

What do the academic environments and academic staff expect?

Research and innovation

In tomorrow's NTNU, researchers have a flexible and professional research administration with expertise in important requirements, competition terms and conditions, and factors relevant to national and international competitive arenas. Researchers receive process-oriented professional support focused on the research project as a whole.

In the years ahead, it is expected that NTNU will have a well-established and cross-cutting system for innovation. On well-functioning websites, students and academic communities find all the information they need about how to get help for further development of ideas and research results. Assessment, support and further development of ideas and research results are backed by a good and professional administration.

Examples of future scenarios:

- New calls for proposals on research programmes/projects are announced through up-to-date Web pages. These provide further information regarding the university's integrated support for research and development, such as advice, application processes, research equipment, purchasing, communication/public relations, language editing, etc.
- NTNU's research administration has an integrated approach and creates a setting in which NTNU's researchers can focus on their primary responsibilities and minimally on purely administrative tasks.
- It is easy and efficient for a researcher to gain an overview of the stages in which research results are assessed commercially by the university's support service. The service responds quickly to enquiries.

Education

In a few years, NTNU will have an administration that creates a foundation in the context of teaching and learning for offering a wide range of education opportunities with campus-based education, lifelong learning, e-learning and increased student exchange. The administration paves the way to physical and virtual mobility for staff and students between NTNU's three centres of study. NTNU has a well updated infrastructure that provides access to alternative forms of teaching and assessment, experiments, practice of skills and creative activities for everyone in teaching posts.

Examples of future scenarios:

- Digital examinations will have replaced ordinary examinations in most programmes of study to the greatest extent possible. In other respects, there will be extensive use of varied forms of examination adapted to the learning approach for the course and the learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve.

- Courses of study will be structured and organized based on digitized support services.

What do managers expect?

Managers receive easily accessible information and good administrative support systems that create greater room for manoeuvre for strategic priorities at all levels. Clearer requirements will be set for reports, analyses and impact assessments as a basis for strategic decisions at all levels.

The integrated NTNU administration must have the skills to be proactive and initiate the right strategic discussions, at the right time and at the right level for managers. When there is a need to supplement administrative procedures from other units, flexibility and changes in priorities in terms of time and staff are required.

Examples:

- NTNU has implemented digital tools that provide instant access to key figures about its activities. The tool generates standard reports that provide support for management decisions at all levels.
- NTNU has introduced a system for rapidly assembling interdisciplinary teams with the skills needed for the job, regardless of level or location.

What do government agencies and collaborative partners expect?

In the years ahead, the goal is a reduced volume of reporting from public authorities, but requirements for relevant digital documentation will be more stringent. The authorities set demanding requirements for correct and timely reporting on critical areas of activity. Management by objectives is continued and developed, and large discrepancies between goals and results may lead to reductions in the next year's appropriation. The authorities expect NTNU to fulfil its social responsibility, in addition to its primary tasks, in line with national goals and policies in areas such as the environment, universal design, preparedness and emergency response capacity, 24/7 government.

The authorities expect us to have significantly increased revenue from contract work. Based on the institution's national and regional responsibilities, this requires us to have contracts with regional, national and international organizations. We have the ability and skills to handle complex and wide-ranging agreements. Businesses expect a rapid response to their enquiries and they expect the organization to make quick decisions. We can develop new education programmes quickly based on the needs of industry and the world of work.

Many of our graduates are educated for professions in teaching, welfare and health. They are mainly employed in the public sector in municipalities, county administrations and health trusts. At all levels, NTNU works in close cooperation with employer representatives on the content of programmes of study, learning outcomes, and the need for new educational initiatives.

Examples of future scenarios:

- NTNU has predefined standard reports that are automatically generated when the results for the year are input, and that satisfy government reporting requirements. The reporting workload has been considerably reduced at NTNU in the past 10 years.
- NTNU has a well-functioning service centre, where businesses and government agencies can make enquiries digitally or in person in connection with projects. The service centre quickly routes the enquiries to the correct academic environment and researcher.

- NTNU has established predictable and standardized processes for cooperation that provide external enterprises with a fast response from enquiry to contract entry, implementation, deliverables and completion.

What do NTNU staff expect from NTNU as an employer and organization?

For realizing its strategies, NTNU depends on standing out as an attractive workplace in competition with other employers for the best and most skilled administrative staff.

Examples of future scenarios:

- NTNU offers competitive pay and working conditions, and in this way obtains the most talented administrative staff.
- The administrative work is characterized by good and clear leadership, strategic thinking and good opportunities for skills development, academic development and career paths.
- The work takes place in a culture of learning, based on exchange of experience and discussions in professional teams and networks.
- The level of administrative services is consistent throughout NTNU, so that users of the services experience the same quality wherever they are.
- Closeness to managers, short decision paths and scope for creativity
- An organizational structure that provides scope for development-focused project activities as well as ongoing operational tasks.

7. Which requirements should be emphasized in the administrative organizational structure?

Based on NTNU's goals, trends and requirements, the group has identified key requirements for administrative responsibilities and services. These are:

- Quality and closeness to subject areas
- Strategic capability
- Productivity improvements
- Technology and digitization
- Flexibility

Quality and closeness to subject areas

In the future, NTNU's own ambitions combined with goals and priorities in Norwegian knowledge policy will require higher quality and productivity in administrative academic support for the primary tasks of research, education, innovation, dissemination and outreach. NTNU has clear ambitions to contribute to the development of international science-based knowledge in selected areas and to communicate this knowledge to students and to society. High quality in administrative work must be a hallmark of student and educational tasks, research-related tasks, and the management of human resources, finances and property. Quality of administrative work must have a strong focus on students, tasks in education, and the research communities.

Strategic capability

The management support that the administration represents at all levels is expected to provide increased capability to take action and better quality in strategic decision-making processes. Unlocking academic synergies is a condition for the merger. An overarching requirement for the administrative organization will therefore be its ability to smooth the path and contribute to this.

As part of its support to management, the administration must contribute to translating new societal requirements and policies into internal strategies, priorities and actions. In facilitation for management, this will impose significant requirements for independence and analytical skills on employees. In the interests of both manager and staff, the span of control must not grow too large.

The organization of the administrative activities must take into account the geographical distance between the institutions, the strengths of the institutions and their need for autonomy adequate to fulfil their particular mission to their regions. The administration must cope with varying sizes and probably other differences between the campuses. Task distribution and work processes are designed to help create a common identity and encourage cooperation across the levels and between the campuses.

Productivity improvements through standardization, common procedures and processes

Administrative tasks are expected to build on cross-cutting organizational processes that ensure an integrated and cohesive workflow. Standardization provides increased predictability for users, reduces the need for customization and at the same time demands good quality assurance. End-users should therefore have a clear voice in the design of the enterprise processes and the support systems.

Technology and digitization

It will be necessary to introduce new, intelligent technology as well as improved coordination and exploitation of the IT systems, and it will be necessary to simplify processes and remove duplication of effort in the workflow.

Flexibility

The work tasks will require greater interdisciplinary competence and collaborative solutions. Management at all levels must open the way for development of new ways of working to meet increased demands for flexibility and mobility.

The organization of the administrative activities must take into account the geographical distance between the institutions, the strengths of the institutions and their need for autonomy adequate to fulfil their tasks in their regions.

8. Principles and dilemmas

NTNU has no strong tradition of deciding on principles for what characterizes good administration, and how administrative tasks are to be organized and performed. However, there are examples. Unitary appointed management at all levels is one such principle. The possibility of adopting a principle that the university should be organized as a pure line organization could also be considered. Another example could be a general principle that authority should be assigned to 3 levels (and not 4, for example). A third example that could in turn result from this is whether administrative tasks should mainly be assigned to one or two of the levels (central – faculty – department).

If such principles are to be specified, the University Board will be able to do this through its statutory authority to make decisions on the organization of the university. More active discussion and determination of “best practices” for administration might also be relevant. This could be done by the Rector, in consultation with leaders and with the unions and student

bodies. We can also follow the current practice at NTNU, which gives the faculties and departments strong autonomy to organize their administrative responsibilities.

A point of departure for consideration of possible common principles and best practice is to discuss the specific balance inherent in a number of dilemmas that the group has identified.

Key questions and dilemmas in organization of the administration

At this stage, we present some key questions for discussion as well as some dilemmas that must be weighed up when the administrative activities are to be organized.

- What is the best way to organize the administration to achieve the institution's goals?
- What is expected of a good administration - which future scenarios should form its basis?
- How should NTNU balance the relationship between centralization and autonomy?
- Which functions and responsibilities should be fulfilled at central, faculty, or departmental level?
- To what extent should the principle of standardization apply and what scope should there be for local adaptation?
- How can we achieve close integration with the academic activities while taking care of administrative tasks and meeting the needs of other users?
- Which functions must be close to users and performed at the faculty or department?
- Which functions and tasks could usefully be assigned to the central institutional level?
- In which areas could digitization and introduction of modern technology offer positive potential?
- What kind of leadership is needed to realize the goal of an effective organization?
- How can one open the way for user-friendliness without this requiring "customization"?
- Where is the balance point between flexibility and adaptability on the one hand and predictability, stability and safeguarding and taking care of management needs on the other?

In summary, the essence is to find a balance in these dilemmas:

- Standardization versus flexibility
- Centralization versus closeness to users
- Unitary management versus academic administrative management
- Line versus matrix organization
- Generalists versus specialists
- Human – machine in a knowledge organization
- IT: Common solutions versus local systems

9. Administrative consequences of the academic organizational structure

A proposal on the academic organization of the university will be presented for discussion and comment shortly. Two models form the basis for the work: Model 1 is a structure with a small number of relatively large faculties. Model 2 entails more faculties and correspondingly smaller units at level 2.

The two alternatives may have different administrative consequences. The group for administrative organization will assess the consequences in greater detail as part of the hearing regarding the academic organization. Nevertheless, it would be natural even at this stage to ask some questions about possible effects of the size and number of faculties when the group is to discuss principles for and the design of the administration.

Such questions are: Which consequences could the two models have with regard to:

- The faculties' autonomy?
- The distribution of administrative tasks between the levels?
- The need for administrative units at all levels/at all campuses?
- The size and skills of the common university administration?
- The size and skills of the faculty administrations?
- The size and skills of the administrations at the campuses in Gjøvik and Ålesund?
- The size and skills of the department administrations?
- The total resource requirements for fulfilling the university's administrative tasks?

An important consideration is to evaluate what a good administration entails regardless of the faculty and departmental structure, and what the appropriate administrative solutions involve based on the academic organizational structure that the new university will have.