



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## AFFILIATED COMPETENCE – A NEW MOBILITY CONCEPT TESTED AT LUND UNIVERSITY AND LULEÅ UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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## **ABSTRACT, UIIN CONFERENCE JUNE 2022.**

Theme: Initiative Good Practice Case Study.

Sub-theme: Mechanisms to Drive and Support External Engagement

Submission date 24 January.

## **AFFILIATED COMPETENCE – A NEW MOBILITY CONCEPT TESTED AT LUND UNIVERSITY AND LULEÅ UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

Maria Johansson, Jeffrey Armstrong, Birgitta Bergvall-Kåreborn, Sabine Mayer, Carin Nilsson, Annika Olsson & Lisa Thelin

### **SALES PITCH**

Please provide a short (1-2 line) summary of the case, written in an engaging style to grab the attention of the reader. (MAX 15 ord)

Individual competence development boosted industry-academia collaboration through a new form of mobility.

### **1. BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES (150 TO 300 WORDS)**

Describe the case in terms of the background and/or context including for example the strategies, motivations and primary objectives for undertaking the initiative/ program/ model you are presenting.

This *Initiative Good Practice Case Study* describes the development and implementation of a pilot study for a new concept of mobility from industry to higher education institutions. The concept is called affiliated competence. Affiliated competence constitutes a new form of mobility based on individual competence development as a basis for strengthened collaboration between higher education institutions and the business community. Affiliated competence is based on a fixed, formalized process with mutual values for both the individual and the organizations in focus. The concept was developed in collaboration between Lund University and Luleå University of Technology, who also performed the pilot study. The project was financially supported by Sweden's innovation agency Vinnova.

The first idea and need for the concept arose from the sudden large pool of key expert employees in industry being taken out of the work force due to the pandemic situation in 2020. The Swedish authority The Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation allocated support to companies who, due to lack of work, offered employees competence development during working hours. Lund University and Luleå University of Technology was highly motivated to show their support to Swedish industry during this situation and at the same time strengthen collaboration with industry for a common future development in a post-covid society. The concept may, besides describing a model for initiating, broadening and strengthening collaboration, contribute to lifelong learning.

### **2. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN (200 TO 300 WORDS)**

Please describe the case in terms of the key actions / activities undertaken in terms of developing and/or implementing the initiative/ program/ model you are presenting. Please use concrete examples where possible.

The development of the concept included two parts: mapping of conditions and implementing a pilot study (testing and evaluating the concept) at two sites. The first part of the project included mapping legal issues and aspects related to HR, communication, development of processes for recruitment of candidates, including application and match-making, and management. The second part of the project focused on conducting the pilot, including development of a process for follow-up.

Some examples of questions dealt with relating to the format are:

- Who could be an affiliated competence?  
*Processes for recruitment, application, selection and matchmaking were developed, supported by HR staff members.*
- What kind of activities could an affiliated competence be engaged in? Which activities must be excluded?  
*The affiliated competence was expected to be employed in a company, but should have the possibility to spend up to 20% of his working hours at the university as part of his employment in the company. An affiliated competence was not allowed to perform any work that normally should be performed by university staff. Issues related to insurances, laws and regulations were investigated by the legal department.*
- Does the new concept successfully enhance industry-academic collaboration at the same time as it increases the individual competence, and if yes, how?  
*A process to follow up the concept on an individual and institutional level was developed. Before starting the affiliation period, the affiliated competences wrote an individual development plan. The plan was written in dialogue with the appointed academic contact person and their boss at the company. Group meetings and individual interviews were conducted with all participants, including affiliated competences, their contact persons at the university, and their bosses in the companies, to gather expectations in the beginning and lessons learnt at the end, including follow-up on the competence development plan.*

### 3. OUTCOMES / IMPACT (200 TO 300 WORDS)

What are the key outcomes / deliverables that have come out of the case? Please try to be precise and specific. What sort of impact (benefits or disadvantages) has the initiative/ program/ model had on stakeholders, both direct and indirect? Where possible, please provide examples and separate short and long-term impacts.

Nine affiliated competences were included in the pilot during November 2020 to January 2021. The affiliation period varied from four weeks to five months. The affiliated were employed at seven different companies and were affiliated with six institutions at two universities.

Several outcomes were noted based on the affiliations. For the university and the academic contact person, the deepened conversations with the affiliated competence providing industrial perspectives to the research area were of great value. Other values include the development and implementation of a new joint Master degree project, initiation of joint research applications, and increased insights and understanding of methods and needs in industry, which in turn increased relevance and awareness in both research and education.

Several of the companies mentioned value-added from the concept, in particular, related to the possibility to offer employees skills development, not only providing an opportunity to retain an experienced employee but also the spill-over to other team-members. Some companies mentioned value-added related to increased knowledge of new research to be incorporated into the development of new services or products. Industrial access to laboratories has also been valuable during the pandemic.

Other added values emerged, unplanned or expected values that can be seen as synergies that have arisen despite the limited time. These values are expected to contribute to important future developments. Some examples: a company redistributed internal funds and initiated in collaboration with the university a joint doctoral project; a company, without any previous collaboration with the university, initiated and began a joint Master degree project; the in-depth literature studies by the affiliated together with discussions between the affiliated, his university contact person and a doctoral student led to that the doctoral student was able to further develop a course in a way that would not otherwise be possible, thus providing added value to the doctoral student's subject area.

#### 4. LESSONS LEARNED (200 TO 300 WORDS)

What were the primary challenges encountered? How did you overcome these? What were the main factors leading to the success of the case?

There are few programs and tools that enable mobility to the university for employees in business in a formalized but simple way. The described concept is a new opportunity to accelerate collaboration between business and academia using a smooth rapid process for handling. The pilot study clearly showed that expectations of the participants were met and that value was demonstrated in academia and industry.

One success factor was the efforts and resources allocated in match-making. It should be emphasised that the concept should be looked upon as a strategic tool to be used with quality rather than quantity in focus. Each affiliation must be hand-picked, and time must be invested to create and support the relationship. Time should also be allocated to manage expectations.

Another success factor was the process for follow-up on the individual affiliations. The follow-up was greatly appreciated, and a lesson learnt is that such a process can be valuable also in other forms of mobility exchanges e.g. adjunct positions.

The universities also learnt that a successful affiliation is independent of educational level. Persons with professional business skills, with or without an academic degree, can contribute with important business perspectives in an academic context. However, it is of utmost importance that the practical skills are valued by the receiving part and that the dialogue is conducted on equal terms.

Based on outcome and lessons learnt we conclude that the concept can be used as a strategic tool to initiate, broaden or strengthen collaboration between university and industry. The concept should preferably be used in environments that are mature with respect to collaboration. Quality in relationship is a keyword. The concept is exclusive - it does not intend to be a model that fits all or include many people – however, wisely, used unique results can be obtained and highlighted.

#### 5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK (100 TO 150 WORDS)

Provide a short summary to conclude your case study, and next steps for your initiative/ program/ model.

The results obtained from the pilot study show with great clarity that the concept has contributed to creating lessons and value for both the affiliated participants, their contact persons at the universities and for their managers in industry. Despite the limited scope of the pilot study, the results confirm the potential significance of the concept as a strategic mobility tool and part of a future national mobility initiative. The need for a mobility tool from business to academia is judged to be large and the interest shown in the concept has been very large from other universities and societal actors.

A future outlook shows that the concept will now be tested further at Lund University. Broadening the scope to other disciplines also means that the concept will be further developed to meet the needs of other types of organizations, e.g. national authorities, municipalities and other societal actors.