

Annual Report 2006

including plans for 2007

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The Faculty of Life Sciences, Copenhagen University, Denmark
March 2007

Head of School Henning Høgh Jensen

Introducing SOAR

The Research School for Organic Agriculture and Food Systems (SOAR) is a national research school. SOAR was founded in June 2001 with funding from KVL, the Danish Research Centre for Organic Farming (DARCOF) and the Danish Research Training Council (FUR). After an external evaluation in 2005 KVL decided to support the continuation of SOAR, and the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (FIST, previously the Danish Research Agency) granted financial support for another 5 years' period 2006-10.

The objective of SOAR is to strengthen research training within organic agriculture and food systems, i.e. all aspects of organic food and farming, from primary production to consumption.

Since the start in 2001 SOAR has gathered almost all PhD students in Denmark within its scope. To ensure a high quality PhD education SOAR seeks a balance between breadth and depth in the study programme, so that PhD students become specialists within their fields, at the same time as placing their research in a wider context.

SOAR therefore aims at:

- attracting students and offering scholarships
- supplying students with the tools needed to work in an interdisciplinary and systemic way, and to place their research in a wider context
- strengthening the network between universities and research institutions
- encouraging personal development of students including a critical attitude to the principles and values on which organic agriculture is founded
- building competences and skills of supervisors
- encouraging international cooperation

SOAR provides a common platform for all PhD students and supervisors, for them to share aims, means and methodologies in organic food and farming research. Organic agriculture and food systems have evolved with its own values, principles and regulations, and these must be continuously debated by researchers and other stakeholders. SOAR as a research school has the obligation to encourage this debate among students and supervisors.

The PhD Projects

At the launch of SOAR in 2001 12 PhD students were enrolled, mainly funded by DARCOF. By the end of 2006 the number of PhD students enrolled in SOAR is 25. Research projects in SOAR are divided into three themes:

Theme 1: Organic crop production, nature quality and resource management with 13 projects

Theme 2: Organic livestock production and health with 7 projects

Theme 3: Organic agriculture, food production and society with 8 projects

Of the 25 students enrolled, 14 are women

3 students came from abroad.

22 of the students are enrolled at KVL, 2 at DTU, and 1 at AAU. The distribution at work places is as follows:

KVL 10	DMU 2	DJF Foulum 6
DTU 2	Risø 2	DJF Flakkebjerg 1
AAU 1		Udland 1

4 PhD students graduated in 2006

- 2 women, 2 men
- 2 from KVL and 2 from RUC
- 2 from theme 2 and 2 from theme 3
- 3 from DARCOF I funding and 1 FUR/DARCOF/KVL co-funded

The average completion-time from start to defence was 53.7 months. This included one maternal leave, one with extended sick-leave, and another with extended part-time employment. Average age was 37 years.

In total 13 SOAR PhD students have graduated between 2001 and 2006.

5 new PhD students started in 2006

- 2 women and 3 men
- All 5 at KVL
- 2 in theme 1, 1 in theme 2, 2 in theme 3
- 4 co-funded, and
- 1 funded from home country, and based there

The flow of PhD students in SOAR is shown in figure 1.

List of current and graduated PhD students in SOAR is available at www.soar.dk > PhD students.

The current flow of students is considered satisfactory to give a critical mass of students. Around 10 new PhDs are expected to start in 2007.

Master students

As a new activity SOAR started supporting Masters' students in 2006 with funding for field work / experiments with the aim of increasing the recruitment of master students in the field of organic agriculture and food systems. In 2006 three SOAR supervisors applied and received funding for their masters student. The grant is given on conditions of publishing results of the study through DARCOF news.

Time flow for SOAR PhD projects

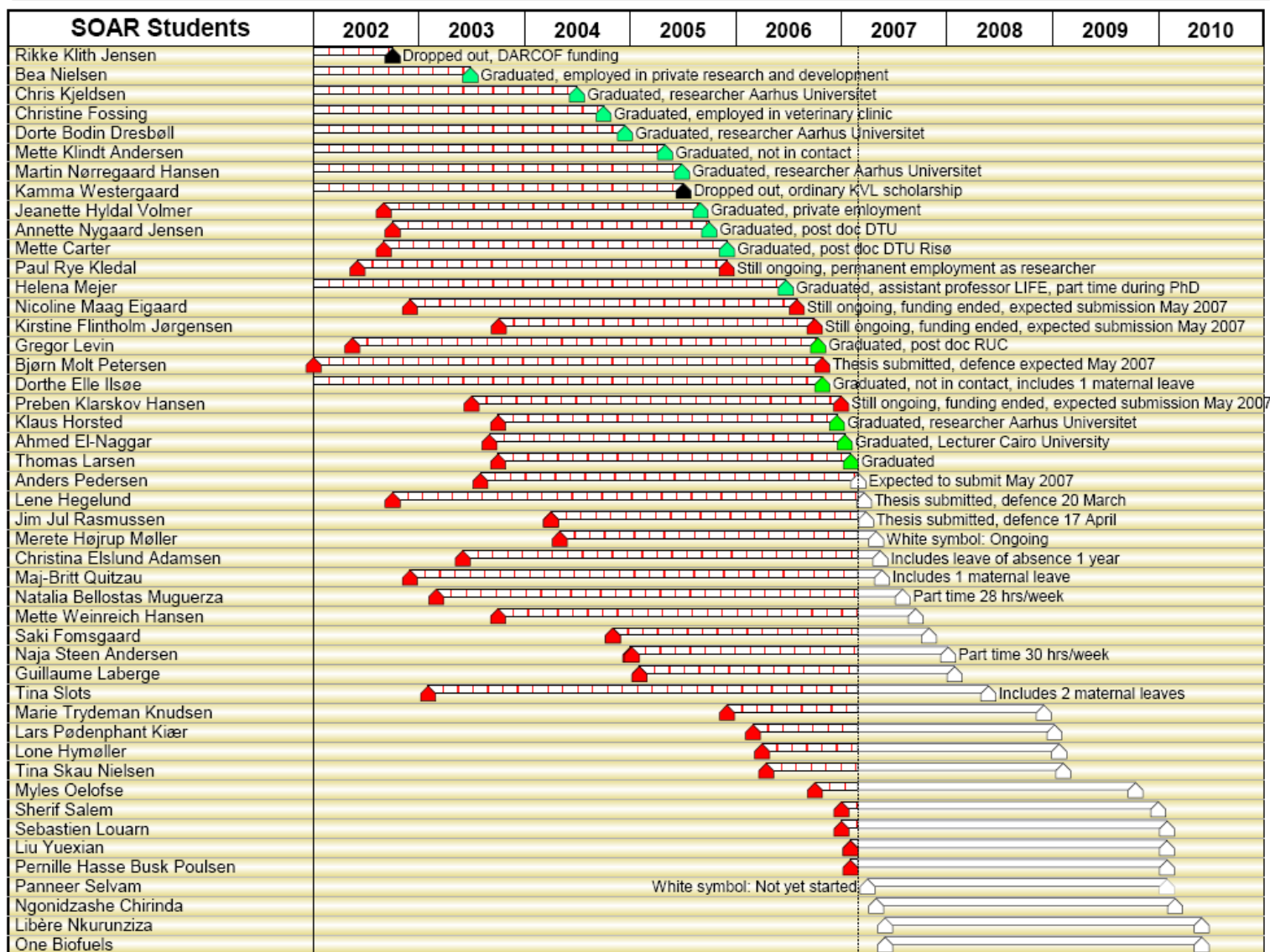


Fig 1. Time flow for SOAR PhD students. Starters: Red: started, white: not yet started. End points: Black: dropped out, green: graduated, red: funding or period ended, but not graduated yet, white: still ongoing.

Organizational structure of SOAR

Head of School is Associate Professor Henning Høgh Jensen. Management and decision making is conducted by the head of school in close collaboration with a Scientific Advisory Board (RVP). The Scientific Advisory Board is chaired by the Head of the School, and otherwise constituted of the director of DARCOF, 2 representatives from KVL, 2 from DARCOF institutions and a PhD student.

A secretariat (head of school and a part time academic assistant) takes care of daily management. The secretariat is located at KVL, at the Department of Agricultural Sciences, where Henning Høgh Jensen is employed. Henning Høgh Jensen has estimated that he spends 10 hrs per week on average on the research school, and the academic assistant is employed on a 30 hrs/week basis. The Head of the School receives partial compensation for his work with the Research School.

The SOAR academic assistant has entered the editing board of *ForskningsNytt*, a Nordic journal of research in organic agriculture, and attended one meeting in Sweden in 2006.

Henning Høgh Jensen has taken leave of absence from 1. Dec. 2006 to 26 February 2007, and during this period Associate professor Björn Forkman is acting head of school.

The Scientific Advisory Board (RVP):

Associate Professor
Henning Høgh Jensen
(Head of School)
The Royal Veterinary and
Agricultural University

Research Professor
Bent T. Christensen
Danish Institute of Agricultural
Sciences
Research Center Foulum

Associate professor
Björn Forkman
The Royal Veterinary and
Agricultural University

Senior Scientist
Pia Frederiksen
National Environmental
Research Institute (DMU)

Chief Scientist
Erik Steen Kristensen
Danish Research Center for
Organic Food and Farming
DARCOF (FØJO)

Associate Professor
Åse Hansen
The Royal Veterinary and
Agricultural University

PhD student
Natalia Bellostas
The Royal Veterinary and
Agricultural University

The previous PhD students' representative, Paul Rye Kledal, has been replaced by Natalia Bellostas. Lars Pødenphant Kiær is substitute for Natalia Bellostas.

Summer Schools

Summer schools in SOAR should bring in breadth in the PhD education to supplement the more disciplinary research training that PhD students get in their disciplinary research environments. Because of the broad scope of SOAR, with organic agriculture and food systems being the common denominator, summer schools are aimed at broad themes, like research methodologies and philosophy of science, in relation to organic farming. The programs and course descriptions of previous and future summer schools are available at the web-site www.soar.dk.

Funding

SOAR has received funding from NOVA University Network for implementation of summer schools. The summer school 2006 entitled 'Potential for Organic Farming to contribute to Rural Development in Europe' was also funded by NOVA. In 2006 SOAR's Nordic network Agroasis applied for and was granted funding from NOVA for the summer school in 2007; 'Scales and cross-scales in ecosystem services in agriculture and organic farming'. The application included plans for summer schools up to 2009 as a series of courses. Agroasis also applied for NOVA funding to meet in 2007 and prepare applications to NOVA for the Summer School 2008 and a supervision course.

SOAR took part in a NOVA application to EU for funding under the Marie Curie programme again in 2006, as part of the NOVA Network in Agroecology, and together with other NOVA networks. The application included a summer school and a congress directly relevant for SOAR PhD students. This was based on earlier applications, but did still not qualify for funding.

Agroasis also applied for funding for summer schools through Nordforsk, however, this application was also declined (see Alliances and Partnerships).

Participation

Participation in SOAR Summer Schools has increased over the years, and in 2006 there were 27 participants. The number of foreign participants varies (see table 1 below), and in recent years the number of Baltic PhD students in the summer schools has increased substantially due to funding from Nordforsk and administrative help from BOVA office.

Year	Summer School title	participants in total	SOAR participants	participants from abroad
2001	Linking Ecology and Organic Farming	14	4	10
2002	Research Methodologies in relation to Principles and Practice of Organic Agr.	16	14	1
2003	Values, ideologies, science and organic farming	16	10	6
2004	Is Organic Farming the Key to Sustainability?	16	10	6
2005	Globalisation: Threat or Opportunity for Organic Farming?	21	7	13
2006	Potential for Organic Farming to contribute to Rural Development in Europe	27	9	17

Table 1. Participation in SOAR Summer Schools 2001-2006.

In 2006 participants came from nine different countries, and there were guest lecturers from UK, Germany and Italy. Furthermore, the biennial Organic Congress was included in the course, so that course participants spent two course days at the congress. This unique opportunity allowed for participants to build networks across countries and disciplines. The course received a very positive evaluation (www.soar.dk > Summer Schools).

Biannual seminars

SOAR conducts seminars for networking, lectures, complementary training and group-discussions on subjects relevant to the PhD study. The seminars are planned by SOAR secretariat in collaboration with the PhD students. PhD students are taking turns in hosting the seminars, thus visiting the different research institutions and working places of the PhD students. Through the seminars the PhDs gain exposure and new insights to the breadth of research in organic food and farming, and they debate objectives, methodologies, and values of organic farming research.

SOAR applied the PhD study Board (PSN) for accepting the SOAR seminars as credit giving PhD courses. The expectation is that 4 seminars will give 2 ECTS.

In 2006 two seminars were conducted; one in spring, in Aarhus, and one in autumn at DTU. The autumn seminar was conducted jointly with a supervision course for supervisors and PhD students.

9 PhD students participated in the spring seminar. There was a small course in writing press releases, conducted by Janne Hansen from DJF. Furthermore, the group visited Landscentret and was introduced to the activities there within organic farming by Erik Fog and Michael Tersbøl, and possibilities for collaboration were discussed.

The autumn seminar at DTU was broken into two parts: A supervision course on the first day and visiting DTU department of Innovation, Management and Production on the second day.

For the supervision course, Dr. Estelle Phillips lectured and facilitated the day. Dr. Phillips is co-author of the book 'How to get a PhD', and she facilitated discussions among PhD students and supervisors alike. 16 supervisors and 10 PhD students participated. Evaluation was positive, available at www.soar.life.ku.dk/Supervision/Supervision-courses.aspx

At the second day researchers from IPL presented their research, including PhD student Mette Weinreich Hansen. Only 6 PhD students participated on the second day, due to other obligations.

The relatively low number of PhD students attending the seminars this year is probably due to a large number of PhD students in their final stages of the PhD, where they are giving higher priority to their thesis work, and a lower number in 'younger' PhD students. With increasing number of new PhD students the coming years we expect this to improve.

Organic Agriculture and Development

SOAR arranged a seminar in Organic Agriculture in Development, in collaboration with DARCOF and NETARD (Danish Network for Agricultural Research for Development). Around 90 people attended the seminar, which included 9 guest lectures from different organisations and countries. The seminar resulted in a programme in Danmarks Radio Miljømagasinet of 45 minutes' duration.

(See <http://www.soar.life.ku.dk/Events/Organic-Agriculture-in-Development.aspx>)

Partnerships and alliances

Collaboration with DARCOF continues at a high level.

The Nordic collaboration through the NOVA Network of Agroecology, and the Nordic School of Ecological Agriculture, AGROASIS, continues (www.agroasis.org). SOAR academic assistant participated in 2 meetings in this forum in 2006.

The Agroasis Network also applied for funding from Nordforsk, and was granted 84.000 NOK for a workshop to formulate an application for a Network of Research Schools. The suggested network included the two research schools SOAR and SwOFF, and research environments from the Nordic and Baltic countries. Activities included summer schools, supervision course and mobility stipends. The suggested network included just around 100 PhD students within organic food and farming. The application was declined, but the workshop itself strengthened links among the research environments, and is likely to result in new applications to Nordforsk or Marie Curie.

Contacts to Industry through the Danish Agricultural Council and 'Økologisk Landsforening' have been continued, and resulted in co-funding of a PhD scholarship in bio-fuels in organic agriculture.

Concluding remarks

The flow of PhDs is satisfactory, and expected to continue.

The organizational structure of SOAR works well, but it should be emphasized that the work load of running a research school of this size and level of activities is demanding (secretariat: 10+30 hrs/week). The structure of an advisory panel is a good support for the head of school.

The summer schools are finding a format that works well for a varied group of participants with different scientific and cultural background. The support from NOVA and BOVA is very helpful, and hopefully this will continue.

Seminars are very intensive, fruitful and important activities in the research school.

Building alliances and partnerships is time consuming and easily given low priority in the daily routines, and time is the limiting factor in developing networks further. The consolidation of the Nordic and Baltic network in 2006 is very positive and is expected to pay off in 2007 with more common activities. There is still a need to put more effort into the European networks, while partnerships with private sector in Denmark steadily build up. All in all it has been a satisfactory year with new challenges emerging for the future.

Activities planned for 2007

PhD Stipends

Six more PhD students will enrol in SOAR at start of 2007, funded through the joint grants from the Danish Research Agency (1/3 stipendier), DARCOF III projects, and through co-funding from FØL and DARCOF project. These stipends have been announced internationally, through our networks: ISOFAR, IFOAM, DARCOF, ENOAS, AGROASIS and SOCRATES.

Contacts with Industry will be sustained and new sources of funding explored. In 2007 collaboration with FØL will be continued and deepened in order to optimize the use of research funds for applied purposes within organic food and farming.

It is expected that a number of stipends (another 8-10) will be announced through DARCOF (FØJO III), and many of these may apply for co-funding through SOAR, so we foresee another application to the Danish Research Agency in May 2007 through the Cluster of Research Schools for Natural Resources and the Faculty for Life Sciences. No internationalisation stipends will be announced in 2007.

Outcome requirements:

1-2 scholarships filled through university grants.
5 scholarships filled through internationally competitive process.
Application to the Danish Research Agency on 1st May for a number of co-funded stipends.
Continue collaboration with FØL for further funding.

Biannual seminars

The spring seminar will be hosted by DTU/Risø. Theme will be biases in research and publications. The autumn seminar should be held at one of the workplaces of the PhD students. Each seminar will include a mini-course with complementary training.

SOAR secretariat will follow up on the application to PSN for accepting the SOAR seminars as credit giving PhD courses.

Outcome requirements:

Two seminars conducted, one in March/April and one in September/October.
75% of PhDs participating
More than 80% express satisfaction with the seminars
SOAR seminars accepted as credit giving PhD course.

Supervision

The homepage will be expanded with a page about supervision; inspirational papers for supervision meetings, for clarifying expectations, and with literature recommendations. SOAR will register participation in supervision courses, and encourage supervisors to participate in some supervision course within 2007-8.

The need for development of a counselling system for PhD students will be explored and suggestions made to the PhD Study Board if concrete ideas materialize. SOAR web-page on supervision should include guidance on contacts and procedures in case of conflicts between PhD and supervisors.

Outcome requirements:

Page about supervision in place.

Master projects

A call to supervisors will be repeated for start money for MSc projects in organic food and farming (10.000 DKK per project). SOAR will evaluate this arrangement in 2007. The funding should lead to articles in DARCOF e-news.

Outcome requirements:

Recruitment of MSc students

Summer schools

The summer school 2007 will be conducted by SwOFF. John Porter from SOAR is in the teachers' group, Lennart Salomonsson is responsible. The title is "Scales and cross-scales in ecosystem services in agriculture and organic farming".

A new application to NOVA will be submitted by Agroasis for the summer school 2008 on research methodologies in organic agriculture research.

Outcome requirements:

One summer school held in May/June 2007: 20-25 participants, 50% international (non-Danish), and a Minority of Master level students, 80% express satisfaction with the course. Application to NOVA submitted for summer school 2008.

Alliances and partnerships

SOAR will be part of the Natural Resources Cluster of Research Schools (CRS), which also including RSHS, REFLONA and AECON. SOAR will contribute actively to the new secretariat. The secretariat will be established in 2007, and SOAR's contributions and benefits will be established in collaboration with the partners. It is anticipated that the CRS NR secretariat could arrange training courses for PhD students, e.g. in writing project applications, communicating research etc.

After the Universities' mergings and SOAR involvement in the CRS Natural Resources there is a need to revise SOAR statutes.

Possibilities for a Marie Curie application to EU under the 7th framework will be explored further. Such applications need to be very focused on specific scientific questions, and possibly a number of MC applications could be submitted by SOAR if supervisors / researchers in SOAR will engage in this.

Possibilities for new interdisciplinary projects with a food chain perspective will be explored with the aim of supporting 'less favoured' research environments in SOAR through new PhD projects. Start money for EU applications (Marie Curie) or Kvalitetsfremmemidler (FIST) could be considered for this activity.

Outcome requirements:

SOAR secretariat integrated in CRS Natural Resources
SOAR statutes revised.

At least one application for Marie Curie under the 7th framework developed / submitted.
Workshop or seminars exploring new alliances on food chains conducted.

Publicity

PhD students should make their findings available to the organic community in Denmark
Information about SOAR should be distributed to any relevant organisations and individuals
Publicity made in connection with each graduating PhD in collaboration with DARCOF.

Outcome requirements:

Folders and flyers distributed to relevant stakeholders
All PhD defences and abstracts of dissertations are communicated to DARCOF stakeholders
News announcements of the findings from PhD projects

Fundraising - summary

FIST kvalitetsfremme and samfinansieringsstipendier
NOVA Summer School 2008 and supervision course 2008
EU Marie Curie explore possibilities
FØL explore further

Financial overview

Initial sources of funding

The total initial budget for SOAR scholarships and operational costs was DKK 10,705,000 over a 5 years' period. From the outset in June 2001 a budget was made to cover operational costs and SOAR's contribution to the stipends. In addition to these grants DARCOF has directly (fully or partly) funded 10 PhD students enrolled in SOAR, amounting to a contribution of 7,209,000 DKK, under 'FØJO I'.

Additional sources of funding

The grants from DARCOF, KVL and FUR have enabled the research school to enrol 13 PhD students through co-funding from research institutes. Four PhD students with KVL scholarships enrolled in SOAR. Furthermore SOAR was granted 2 stipends from FUR for international PhD students, and in 2004 SOAR was granted one additional 1/3 scholarship from the Research Council, co-funded by KVL and a research institution. In 2005 SOAR was granted 2.119.000 DKK for research school activities and 1.500.000 DKK for co-funding of PhD scholarships from the Danish Research Agency (FIST). Furthermore 3 co-funded scholarships were granted from FIST in 2006 (total 1.530.000), and co-funding from Fonden for Økologisk Landbrug (FØL) for another scholarship (459.000).

SOAR also received funding from the NOVA University Network to conduct summer schools in 2003 to 2007. Furthermore support was received from NorFA (now Nordforsk) for the participation of Baltic students in the Summer Schools 2003-06.

With the estimated value of the additional funding (co-funding of scholarships) and KVL scholarships, the total portfolio of SOAR PhD students and Research School activities adds up to 53.981.384 DKK (Figure 2).

SOAR Funding

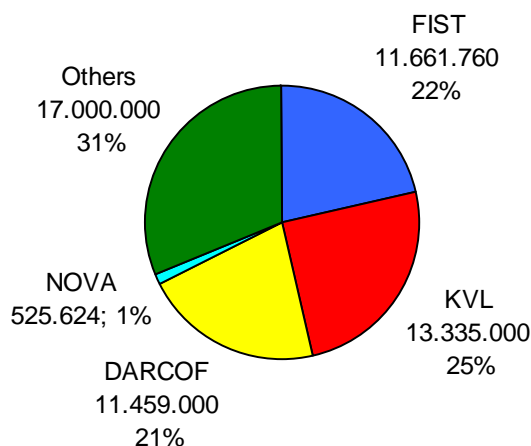


Figure 2. Distribution of funding by sources. Part of the funding 'Others' stems from DARCOF projects.

Accounting 2006

The accounting below shows the amounts that are debited to the SOAR account at KVL. Grants for stipends from KVL, DARCOF and other co-funders are paid directly to user, and are not included in this accounting.

2006	Income	Budget	Expenditure	Transfer
Transfer from 2005	1.712.000			
FIST 2005 grant	712.000			
FIST 2005 grant ¹	250.000			
FIST 2006 grant	300.000			
NOVA Summer school 05	152.856			
NOVA Summer school 06	176.330			
Head of SOAR		80.000	124.656 ²	-44.656
Academic assistant		332.000	329.777	2.223
Operational costs		55.000	25.445	29.554
Seminars ³		60.000	57.977	2.023
Summer school		140.000	156.317	-16.317
Supervision course		50.000	5.259	44.741
Master projects		50.000	29.847	20.153
Overhead		211.000	211.000	0
Scholarships		947.916	1.318.910 ⁴	-370.995
Total	3.303.186	1.925.088	2.259.189	1.043.997

¹ Delayed transfer from 2005

² 40.757 are 'feriepenge' and these will be reimbursed in 2007

³ Includes 2 PhD seminars, supervision course and OADevelopment seminar

⁴ Due to change in time schedules and in methods of transfer between departments

Budget for 2007

Budget item	Income	Budget	Transfer
Transfer from 2006	1.044.000		
FIST2005	1.210.800		
FIST2006	510.000		
Head of SOAR		70.000	
Academic assistant		342.000	
Operational costs		30.000	
2 seminars		40.000	
Summer school/courses		20.000	
M.Sc. Projects		30.000	
Supervision course		0	
Overhead		286.800	
Scholarships		427.416	
Total	2.764.800	1.246.216	1.518.584

Budget 2007-10

2007	Income	Budget
Transfer from 2006	1.044.000	
FIST2005	1.210.800	
FIST2006	510.000	
Head of SOAR		70.000
Academic assistant		342.000
Operational costs		30.000
2 seminars		40.000
Summer school/courses		20.000
M.Sc. Projects		30.000
Supervision course		0
Overhead		286.800
Scholarships		427.416
Total	2.764.800	1.246.216
2008		
Transfer from 2007	1.519.000	
FIST2005	823.600	
FIST2006	510.000	
FØL	459.000	
Head of SOAR		70.000
Academic assistant		352.000
Operational costs		30.000
2 seminars		50.000
Summer school		120.000
Supervision course		60.000
Overhead		222.267
Scholarships		2.256.916
Total	3.311.600	3.161.183

2009		
Transfer from 2008	150.000	
FIST2005	442.800	
FIST2006	210.000	
Head of SOAR		70.000
Academic assistant		179.000
Operational costs		20.000
2 seminars		30.000
Summer school		70.000
Supervision course		0
Overhead		108.800
Scholarships		318.750
Total	802.800	796.550
2010		
Transfer form 2009	6.000	
FIST2005	180.000	
Head of SOAR		30.000
Academic assistant		100.000
Operational costs		10.000
1 seminar		10.000
Summer school		0
Supervision course		0
Overhead		30.000
Scholarships		0
Total	186.000	180.000