

The Norwegian Institute in Rome (DNIR): Academic activities 2021-2025

Overview

This document describes the plans for the institute's academic activities for the period 2021-2025, within the framework of UiO's and the Faculty of Humanities' current strategy ([HF 2030 – Knowledge for the 21st century - Faculty of Humanities \(uio.no\)](#)). It touches on DNIR's profile and ambitions, day-to-day arrangements for the institute's academic life, teaching and research, and cooperation with domestic research environments and with networks in Rome.

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Introduction

The Norwegian Institute in Rome (DNIR) was founded on the conviction that knowledge about Mediterranean archaeology, art, and cultural traditions is a necessary cornerstone for humanistic education (*Bildung*), recognizing that access to Rome's monuments, archives, libraries, and research institutions is of vital importance for Norwegian scholars' participation in the international community of research (cf. H.P. L'Orange, «Roma og det norske Roma-instituttt,» *Samtiden* 71/7, 1962). Traditionally, DNIR's core academic fields have been classical archaeology and art history. Today the institute embraces an even wider scope, covering the humanities in general, with points of contact with social sciences, natural sciences, and technology. The focus of DNIR's academic activities at any point is conditioned by the academic staff present.

Since DNIR's founding in 1959, the conditions and expectations for research and higher education in the humanities have changed considerably. The understanding of education/ *Bildung* and the role of the humanities in society has changed, both in the researchers themselves and in society at large. Digital technology has provided global access to archives and libraries, also to many of the Roman ones. Climate crisis and pandemic make travel between Norway and Italy more difficult than before. Although these developments have consequences for the institute and its activities, they do not make research stays and study trips to Rome obsolete. Rome remains a crucial starting point for studies and research in a wide range of European cultural traditions. The unique way in which this city has accumulated traces of human cultural production through millennia provides a potential for insights and development of knowledge that digital humanities and online education can only partly but never fully replace. Furthermore, Rome's numerous national and international academic institutions make up

a vibrant and flourishing research network in the field of the humanities few cities can compete with. The city's exceptional deposit of historical material and unique international research environments still constitute DNIR's *raison d'être*, and the foundation for its academic activities.

Profile: Curation of the past cross shifting knowledge-regimes; movements and materiality

To maintain its wide scholarly scope, DNIR needs an academic guideline which allows for theorising across disciplines. During the last years the institute has put interdisciplinary spotlight on knowledge regimes and processes of change – understood as movements in time and space. This theme is continued, but further developed and renewed by connecting it to Rome's material sources. At DNIR *materiality* is given particular attention as a theoretic and analytical dimension in studies of historical change and transfers of knowledge. Materiality has been the object of important theorisation across the humanities and social sciences during the recent decades (“the material(ity) turn”), perhaps responding to the ever-increasing digitalization which seems to dematerialize our research objects. As a facilitator for research and teaching with historical materiality as the focal point, DNIR can and should contribute to stimulating the development of materiality theory, advancing the field, and increasing interdisciplinary relevance.

Shifting knowledge regimes, geographical movement, and materiality are dimensions that converge in a theme shared by the institute's current academic staff: how to assess and curate remnants of the past. The valuation of historical artefacts (cultural heritage) unites disparate research interests at DNIR: from assessments of past architecture in Antiquity and pre-modern understanding of holy places and relics to collectors and antiquarians in early modern Europe and the contemporary antiquities market, where trade of heritage often stimulates criminal networks. Despite the vast spanning material and approaches, *valuation of the materiality of the past* remains a thematic common denominator that opens for further development of theory, new knowledge, and insights and serves as the foundation for new projects initiated by DNIR.

Internationalisation, network cooperation, and sustainability

DNIR is a hub for internationalisation. Its main aim is to assist students and researchers from Norwegian institutions in establishing contacts in Rome's rich and entwined academic community. Guest researchers and students get access to the academic staff's large networks. Through DNIR's membership in *Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia Storia e Storia dell'Arte* the institute is part of an academic network of Roman research institutions that branches out into Italian and international academia. DNIR's running research seminar *Circolo Gianicolense* is also multi-institutional and international (see below). The institute's library collaborates and share catalogues with multiple research libraries in Rome (See below). The academic staff actively partakes in different forms of international research cooperation and research exchange. Through previous and current research projects, DNIR cooperates with various kinds of institutions in Rome: antiquarian authorities, academic heritage bodies for archaeological monuments, museums, the cities universities, and international NGO's like the cultural heritage organisation ICCROM, which has its headquarters in Rome. The academic staff has a responsibility to maintain and expand these networks in directions that are relevant for DNIR's ongoing research. Contacts in Italian academia should be further fostered and developed. The institute's post-doctoral fellows are given the opportunity to arrange international conferences or workshops in connection to their projects, and thereby expand their – and indirectly, the institute's – academic networks. They will subsequently edit the conference proceedings in cooperation with the Director of the institute for DNIR's peer-reviewed publication series ACTA, see below.

Given the broad range of Rome's international academic communities, DNIR has an important role to play in the internationalisation strategy of UiO and the Faculty of Humanities. This role should be further developed.

DNIR's activities are dependent on researchers and students traveling to Rome. In line with UiO's strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the institute wants to encourage and facilitate sustainable traveling and longer study and research stays both for students and researchers. We wish to offer our users quality-assured information about ways to travel to Rome that are both environmentally responsible and work-friendly. Furthermore, we wish to help establish a culture that foster working while traveling slowly.

Partner institutions

In addition to serving the Faculty of Humanities/UiO, DNIR also serves seven partner institutions. Their partnership entails co-funding of the institute. These are the following:

- UiO: Faculty of Theology (TF)
- UiB: Faculty of Humanities
- NTNU: Faculty of Humanities
- UiT: Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
- UiA: Faculty of Humanities and Education
- MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion, and Society
- Oslo School of Architecture and Design: Institute of Architecture

Researchers and students from these institutions dispose of DNIR working spaces, conference venues and classrooms. For targeted and efficient communication between DNIR and the partner institutions, a dedicated contact person has been appointed at every institution. Similar to the network of contact persons at each of the institutes of the Faculty of Humanities/UiO (see below), the partner institutions' Rome contacts are supposed to circulate information on DNIR's offers and activities to relevant individuals among students and lecturers. The partner institutions are also encouraged to initiate further cooperation, for example, by collaborating with DNIR in developing national summer schools or courses shared by multiple institutions. The existing course ANT2010, jointly taught by UiO and UiB is a possible model for new initiatives (see below).

Fellowships and guest researchers

DNIR announces scholarships for research stays in Rome twice a year (15. May and 15. October). Master students, graduate students (PhD) and young researchers can apply. Applicants from the Faculty of Humanities and DNIR's partner institutions are prioritised. Applicants that can document sustainable travel at least one way get a larger scholarship. Receivers of DNIR's scholarship ("visiting fellows") are expected to present their work at the Director's seminar (see below). The call for applications should be distributed widely to encourage competition for the scholarships. Sort criteria are the projects' quality and relevance to Rome. DNIR aims to develop into a "research hub" for students and younger researchers and secure recruitment to Rome-related studies at Norwegian institutions.

DNIR's working spaces are at disposal for researchers from Norwegian institutions that need shorter or longer research stays in Rome. Guest researchers who stay at the institute for longer than two weeks should also be expected to present their research at the Director's seminar, cf. the previous paragraph. Longer research stays are encouraged. Moreover, DNIR actively aims to affiliate researchers working

within fields aligning with the institute's academic profile (see above) for a full semester, a whole year or more. This is obtained by:

- 1) Stimulating prospective young researchers to apply for the MSCA-scholarship or other European research funding with DNIR as a host institution
- 2) Letting DNIR participate as a partner in project applications for external funding
- 3) Stimulating scholarly environments in Norway to include DNIR in the infrastructure of proposed research projects, as networking arena, conference venue, and workplace for graduate students (PhDs) and postdoctoral fellows.

The Director aims to supplement DNIR's academic staff and facilitate expansion of the institute's scholarly environment by these means.

Teaching collaboration with Faculty of Humanities (UiO)

The most important target group for the teaching at DNIR is the students from the Faculty of Humanities at UiO, even though the courses ANT2210 and ROMA2020 are open for students from partner institutions as well (ANT2210 is run in collaboration with UiB.) The academic staff takes an active part in the teaching at DNIR, which is organised in close collaboration, and partly organized the institutes at the Faculty of Humanities. Professors wishing to involve an excursion to Rome in their teaching plans can apply for funding for this end twice a year. It is a goal that more institutes at the Faculty of Humanities apply for this type of funding. A dedicated contact person has been appointed at each of the faculty's seven institute to secure targeted information flows and accommodate cooperation with DNIR. The most important task of the Rome-contacts is to provide information for students and researchers about the courses, scholarships, excursion funding, and guest lectures. Moreover, the Rome-contacts are also instrumental in the Director's ambitions to encourage Rome-related courses to be incorporated into existing study programmes and to facilitate arrangements that permit study stays for a whole semester with full study progression. Existing cooperation on EVU-offers is being developed further.

Teaching at DNIR presupposes Rome's historical materiality. Hence, it ideally takes place *in situ* rather than digitally. At the same time, the recent years' pandemic experience has made us familiar with the possibilities of digital teaching, and DNIR recognises that this may work as a supplement to study stays in Rome, as preparation before a stay in Rome, and in following up after a stay in Rome.

Before the pandemic, an arrangement was established of sending DNIR's postdoctoral fellows to Oslo to teach on courses relevant for their competences and research interests. This arrangement is continued and further developed in dialogue with the Faculty's institutes, especially IFIKK and IAKH.

PhD courses

National and international courses for graduate students (PhD) is a separate focus area for DNIR. The institute has hosted courses under the auspices of graduate schools like DIAPAST (inter-Nordic, [Dialogues with the Past - Nordic Graduate School in Archaeology - Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History \(uio.no\)](#)) and ATTR (national, [Interdisciplinary Research School on Authoritative Texts - The Faculty of Theology \(uio.no\)](#)). Furthermore, DNIR's academic staff has initiated and arranged PhD courses in cooperation with colleagues in Oslo. The institute should continue to develop their own portfolio in this area in collaboration with graduate schools and the PhD programs. For such courses, DNIR should not only provide venue and infrastructure but also facilitate practical fieldwork in libraries, archives and at monuments and excavations, making use of Rome's unique materiality. In line with the ambitions for sustainable travel (see above), long-term programs

for graduate students should be encouraged, in which lectures, seminars, and fieldwork alternate with concentrated periods of writing.

Academic program: H.P. L'Orange Lecture and other guest lectures

The annual H.P. L'Orange Lecture is an important means to establish contact with highly profiled scholars both in Rome and internationally, in fields relevant to DNIR's academic staff. The lecture is well established and will continue to be an annual climax in the academic life of the institute. It will routinely be arranged as a hybrid event to allow students and academic communities around Norway or anywhere in the world to attend the lecture. In addition, it is desirable to supplement DNIR's academic program with a series of guest lectures, 2-3 per semester, preferably in connection with workshops or conferences taking place at the institute with relevance to DNIR's profile. Guest researchers can, in certain instances, also be invited to hold an open lecture with an ensuing dinner for invited guests.

Research dissemination

Digital streaming of the institute's lectures contributes to a completely new way to share knowledge publicly, something that both benefits academic communities and the interested public. DNIR also contributes to the sharing of research through social media posts and aims to encourage and assist the postdoctoral fellows in sharing their research through formats like blogs and podcasts. To a certain degree, sharing of research also takes place through popular excursions and lectures for visiting non-academic groups.

Working environment: Meeting points for DNIR's researchers and visiting fellows

DNIR is a small institution with few employees and a high number of visiting researchers and students on both short and long stays. The academic staff, which entails the Director, two to three post-doctorates, and two emeriti, work on related fields, but do not to any great extent share disciplines and research material. To facilitate a good and stimulating academic community under these conditions, fixed meeting points to maintain and strengthen collegiality are crucial. These aim to consolidate the staff socially, and at the same time include visiting fellows and guest researchers (see below about these).

The following arrangements are established and will be continued:

- **Common Monday coffee break:** A weekly, informal meeting point for information exchange. Staff and guest researchers meet for a short afternoon coffee every Monday to update each other about the week's activities and other relevant information.
- **Institute excursions:** To develop the work environment academically and socially, DNIR's staff arrange half- or full-day excursions to different monuments in Rome, either in connection to the academic staff's ongoing research or in connection with current exhibitions in the city. Occasionally longer excursions outside Rome will take place. Invited guest lecturers or guest researchers will often provide the opportunity for such institute excursions. They are arranged ad hoc but should take place about two times per semester.
- **Director's Seminar/Circolo Gianicolense:** The Director's seminar is held on a set afternoon every week, at which academic staff, guest researchers, and visiting fellows present their ongoing research (cf. above). The format of the presentations is equivalent to a normal conference paper, i.e. 20 minutes with ensuing questions and comments. The presentations

should preferably be given in English but can also be held in Norwegian or Italian. Approximately once a month, the Director's seminar alternates with *Circolo Gianicolense*, an ambulatory research seminar in cooperation with the Institutum Romanum Finlandiae (IRF), the American Academy in Rome (AAR), and American University of Rome (AUR), all of which are located in the neighbourhood. DNIR aims to foster a culture that encourages attendance at the weekly seminars for everyone at the institute.

- **End of term gathering:** Towards the end of every semester, the staff and guest researcher are invited to lunch or dinner together.

For such a small institution as DNIR it rarely makes sense to differentiate between academic and administrative staff. Therefore, all the arrangements mentioned above naturally include the administrative employees, to the extent they wish and find time to take part.

New measures: DNIR Alumni and H.P. L'Orange Fellowship

DNIR Alumni: All the academic positions at DNIR are for fixed terms. To maintain and develop the valuable research networks the DNIR researchers provide in their own capacity as well as through their wider contacts, the institute wish to formalise continued exchange with its researchers beyond their assigned term by developing an alumni scheme. This entails privileged access to DNIR's infrastructure for conferences and research stays, invitation to H.P. L'Orange Lectures and other events, reception of a newsletter, and presentation of an Alumni page on DNIR's website. On certain conditions, DNIR Alumni are entitled to apply for seed grants announced by the Institute. They are occasionally invited to sit on assessment committees for positions connected to DNIR and the Faculty of Humanities, and to serve as relevant peer reviewers for ACTA.

H. P. L'Orange Fellowship: To stimulate DNIR's research activity, it is also desirable to develop a fellowship that is announced annually or biennially. The idea is to invite an eminent international scholar for a one- or two-month research stay at the institute, after nominations from the institutes at the Faculty of Humanities, UiO, and the partner institutions. H. P. L' Orange fellows are expected to give an open guest lecture and give a "masterclass" for younger researchers in relevant fields. Together with the annual H.P. L'Orange Lecture, such a fellowship will contribute to making the institute more visible in the academic landscape in Rome, in Norway, and internationally. The institute's former sponsors are encouraged to help funding this arrangement.

The Library, Collections, and ACTA

DNIR's library concentrates on the research fields of the founder H.P. L'Orange and his students: the material and visual culture of Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages in Rome, Italy, and the Mediterranean region. To maintain its character as an up-to-date research library, acquisitions are particularly, but not exclusively, connected to these fields. To accommodate requests from the library's users, DNIR also aims, in agreement with the librarian, to expand the library's holdings systematically into two other fields:

- Classical works from Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early Modern period in Norwegian translation – required by students from Norway
- Updated research on medieval Norway and Scandinavia – required by Roman users

DNIR seeks to get its archives of drawing and photographs digitalised and accessible online. These collections contain documentation of the material researched by H.P. L'Orange, Hjalmar Torp,

Rasmus Brandt, Siri Sande, and other scholars affiliated to DNIR throughout the years. This is an urgent task, especially because the institute experiences a certain interest for these materials from Roman and international researchers. Parts of L'Orange's photo archives are already digitalised but not yet made available. DNIR has initiated a digitalisation project in cooperation with the National Library of Norway.

DNIR has previously received interns from the training in library science in Oslo, now in the portfolio of Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet). To contribute to the development of the library we see it beneficial to re-establish this arrangement.

ACTA ad archaeologiam et atrium historiam pertinentia is the institute's peer-reviewed journal, published by Scienze e lettere. From 2018 onwards, the journal is accessible online as well as in print. ACTA's editorial board is presently the members of DNIR's council.

The journal is ranked at level 1 in the NSD's inventory of academic publishing channels, and in the process of being ranked in ANVUR, the Italian equivalent.

Where will DNIR be in 2025?

The institute aims to have reached the following goals by the end of the current Director's fixed-term contract (May 2025):

- DNIR has contributed to new theoretical and empirical insight into historical knowledge regimes, processes of change, and valuation of the past's materiality
- DNIR fosters an inspiring and productive academic environment with high a level of activity.
- DNIR has digitalised its photo collection and archives and made them accessible on adequate platforms
- DNIR has established stable, durable, and well-functioning means for cooperation and information flow between itself, the institutes at the Faculty of Humanities (UiO), and DNIR's partner institutions.
- DNIR attracts students and researchers from a wider field of studies than those who has traditionally used the institute.
- The number of students and researchers applying for courses and research stays is higher than it was before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The relevant academic environments at Norwegian institutions are recruiting candidates to positions at DNIR who are competitive on an international level.

Some means to reach these goals have been presented in this document.

