Centre for Military Studies

Project Manual

This project manual describes the principles for and processes connected with the research-based services for public authorities provided by the Centre for Military Studies (CMS). The manual anchors and codifies best practices and procedures at CMS with the aim of achieving the highest degree of quality in the individual project and ensuring efficient risk and project management. These factors thus create the basis for the best and clearest conditions for CMS' fulfilment of its goals in relation to the result-based contract with the Ministry of Defence and the achievement of its goals for the work at the centre pursuant to the strategy for the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Institute for Political Science at the University of Copenhagen. Finally, the project manual plays an important role in the introduction of new staff at CMS – military and civilian alike.

The project manual is based on the values that the centre is known for and on which the day-to-day work at the centre is founded: **interdisciplinarity, utility, innovation and reflection**. CMS has been deliberately structured in an interdisciplinary manner with a great variety of competences, and it is important that working processes bring these competences into play efficiently. Interdisciplinarity is not only central in relation to quality assuring CMS' products, it is also the foundation which ensures that the services CMS provides public authorities with are useful, innovative and reflective.

The following section provides a general account of the principles on which the quality assurance of the research-based services at CMS is based. The next section describes what the concept of research-based services for public authorities involves. The third section defines what a CMS project is and what the role of project managers is. Then there is a discussion of the principles and procedures for risk management. The final section describes the eight stages that a CMS project is divided into.

1. **Quality assurance principles at CMS**

Quality assurance of CMS' research-based services for public authorities is borne by three principles:

- The inclusion of external stakeholders.

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- Ongoing joint internal sparring.

- Scientific peer reviews.

It is essential that there is a demand for CMS' products, i.e. that the research-based services for public authorities create real added value for clients in the form of new, relevant knowledge. This is ensured by the **inclusion of external stakeholders**. The degree and character of this inclusion depends on the project in question. The case in general is that CMS' staff tries to draw on existing knowledge within the sphere of the Ministry of Defence or in other relevant areas in order to ensure they have an updated empirical basis on which they can proceed and in order to define the point of departure for and level of knowledge of the target group. Quality assurance initially takes the form of introductory discussions about the project and an orientation and commentaries on it during its final stages. This quality assurance can be supplemented as required with an ongoing verification of facts and the inclusion of sources, which combines considerations of the project's relevance with the arm's length principle. An open dialogue with the client (often in connection with the adoption of CMS' annual plan) and other relevant people is of great importance when dimensioning the project. The same applies to project finalisation where the presentation of its preliminary results for the group of stakeholders helps to strengthen the quality of the end product, to create a framework for debate and to create ownership of the project results.

A central principle for the quality assurance of all projects at CMS is joint internal sparring. Recurring joint discussions, sparring, concept development, criticism and trial on the part of centre staff function as quality assurance of all project stages – from problem formulation and dimensioning to the final test of the end product and project evaluation. Furthermore, internal sparring – formal as well as informal – ensures that staff possesses joint knowledge of their colleagues' work, the socialisation of new staff and a fruitful common working culture. Finally, internal sparring ensures the constant accumulation, discussion and development of best practices.

The final principle designed to ensure the quality of CMS' research-based services for public authorities is the **peer review**. Peer reviews are carried out in accordance with quality evaluation at CMS and the standards of the scientific world as such. Peer reviewing is the method used in the world of research to quality assure research production and involves (at least) one other recognised researcher endorsing the product before publication and writing an evaluation – often with demands or suggestions for improvements. The peer reviewer must be from outside the centre, and his or her evaluation is often anonymous. The use of peer reviews as a quality assurance model is the standard necessary to ensure that CMS' services for the public authorities are research-based. Peer reviews constitute a natural aspect of the elements of CMS' services that are published in traditional scientific publications (books, periodicals, etc.). In cases where the research-based services for public authorities result in comprehensive written products that are not automatically peer reviewed (e.g. reports), CMS initiates a process designed to ensure an external peer review of the product. Products that cannot be peer reviewed due to their nature (conferences, for example), are subsequently evaluated by the participants or the recipients of the product. The head of the

centre is responsible for peer reviews and evaluation. Over and above this, the client and CMS – cf. the framework agreement[1] – evaluate products and processes every six months.

2. Research-based services for public authorities at CMS

CMS was established in connection with the Danish Defence Agreement 2010-2014[2] which, among other things, states that:

> … the appropriation is to be used specifically to meet current defence and security policy research needs. Under this appropriation, the Parties to the Defence Agreement can request the implementation of analyses, etc.

This means that CMS performs strategic research into current defence and security policy subjects and, not least, provides research-based services for the parties to the Defence Agreement and the Ministry of Defence.

There is no clear definition of research-based services for public authorities. The Danish Universities' White Paper on research-based services for public authorities (*Danske Universiteters Hvidbog om forskningsbaseret myndighedsbetjening*)[3] outlines the phenomenon as comprising partly 'sector-related research' and partly 'expert advice, etc., based on this research'. The purpose is to ensure a 'well-informed basis with knowledge of the latest technical information and research results' in the administration and among decision-makers. Furthermore, research-based services for public authorities contribute to 'new thinking and innovation in the public administration'. The framework agreement[4] between the Ministry of Defence and the University of Copenhagen regarding CMS places research-based services for public authorities within the framework of this definition as, according to the framework agreement, the tasks:

> can, for instance, comprise performing concrete analyses within the sphere of the Ministry of Defence, research-related teaching in the Armed Forces and facilitating seminars and conferences on behalf of the Ministry of Defence or the Armed Forces.[5]

The University of Copenhagen and the Ministry of Defence negotiate the themes for CMS' research-based services for public authorities and set out a general five-year production plan. A one-year production agreement, which describes the concrete projects that CMS must perform for the Ministry of Defence, is then entered into with the point of departure in the themes contained in the production plan.

The research-based services for public authorities at CMS can therefore involve many different projects of shorter or longer duration which support the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence and

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[1] In accordance with the biannual planning and status meetings established in the Framework Agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the University of Copenhagen on strategic research and research-based services for public authorities (*Rammeaftale mellem Forsvarsministeriet og Københavns Universitet om strategisk forskning og forskningsbaseret myndighedsbetjening 2010-2014*), page 4.

[2] http://www.fmn.dk/videnom/Documents/Forligstekst%20inkl%20bilag.pdf

[3] http://www.life.ku.dk/Maalgruppe/medarbejdere/life_internt/nyhedsbrev/nyt_forskning/2009/~/media/MEDARB/kom/eLIFE/Dokumenter_2009/hvidbog_dk_uni.ashx

[4] Framework Agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the University of Copenhagen on strategic research and research-based services for public authorities (*Rammeaftale mellem Forsvarsministeriet og Københavns Universitet om strategisk forskning og forskningsbaseret myndighedsbetjening 2010-2014*).

[5] CMS' translation.

the parties to the Defence Agreement. It is important for these tasks to be founded on the centre's research-related competences so that strategic research and research-based services for public authorities support each other. This ensures that the services are of the highest possible quality.

A useful service for public authorities provides the client with a product that ultimately can provide inspiration or constitute the basis for a qualified decision. Research-based services for public authorities must be demonstrable at the same time as they must contribute new knowledge and new opportunities. This makes a demand for innovation and creativity on the part of CMS and the ability to discover and describe new opportunities on the basis of research and research results. It also makes a demand on CMS' ability to reflect. The centre staff must be able to point out relevant problem complexes, but also to reflect about what research can actually contribute with in each specific case.

3.   What is a CMS project and who is responsible for it?

Rather than involving a certain type of activity, a CMS project is more likely to involve a certain way of approaching activities – a joint working method. A CMS project could be a limited sequence of events such as arranging a round table discussion or a seminar, but it could also be a multiannual analysis or research project with the participation of several staff members as well as external partners. When we talk about projects at CMS we do so, among other things, in order to create a common language regarding the way in which CMS should approach its activities. Furthermore, it is a method by which both staff and managers can handle procedures and working processes. Finally, this project form ensures that the quality assurance mechanisms described above are applied so that CMS can live up to its own and the client's expectations on CMS' research-based services for public authorities.

Every CMS project has a project manager who is responsible for arranging it and for handing over its end products. The project manager will sometimes be the head of a project team, and sometimes a project team will only comprise a project manager. Over and above general responsibility, the project manager is also responsible for ensuring the performance of a number of processes:

- In coordination with the centre administrator, the project manager must draw up a **project plan** that describes project milestones, deadlines, resource consumption, etc.

- The project manager is responsible for informing the head of the centre of the degree to which **established milestones and deadlines are met** and can be met on an ongoing basis. The head of the centre updates CMS' planning basis for the company as a whole based on input from the project manager.

- The project manager must inform all relevant CMS staff members of common milestones, deadlines and activities via **Outlook a**t as early a stage as possible.

- The project manager must prepare a **synopsis** for the project at an early stage of the process.

- The project manager must perform a **stakeholder analysis** and a **risk analysis** – primarily in connection with extensive projects – in collaboration with colleagues and the head of the centre.

- The project manager must make sure that the central **quality assurance mechanisms** are applied – not least in connection with the inclusion of stakeholders and joint sparring. The project manager must make sure that a c**ommunication plan** for publishing the results of the project is drawn up in **accordance with the University of Copenhagen'**s communication policy. The communication plan must be approved by the head of the centre.

- The project manager must make sure that an **evaluation** is carried out a**fter the project** has been completed. The final evaluation of the project must be carried out jointly by the centre's staff, partly to provide input for the project and partly to make use of the opportunity for a joint discussion and institutionalisation of future best practice.

- The project manager **continues as anchor** on the project after the final product handover in accordance with the project plan and is responsible for identifying and coordinating the need for further following up on the project (e.g. follow-up seminars and subsequent presentations of the project results).

- It is the project manager's responsibility to choose a **sparring partner** from among CMS' experienced staff who, particularly during the introductory stages of the project, can provide the project manager with support in the form of tips and experience in relation to the project processes and procedures.

It is the responsibility of the head of the centre to distribute projects among the individual project managers. This includes facilitating the necessary dialogue and coordination between clients and project managers. The head of the centre communicates his or her directives for and aims with a given project at the outset of that project, and the project manager carries out further work on the basis of these.

4. Risk tolerance and risk management

Risk tolerance and risk management play an important role in connection with research and research-based services for public authorities. The development of new knowledge – new thinking and innovation – involves running a risk. It is in the nature of knowledge production that the results are not known in advance, so risks are not always something that should be minimised. On the contrary, there is qualitative and creative value in risking something when working with knowledge. This applies to the development of abstract scientific knowledge as well as to use-oriented knowledge that is relevant for policy. Two types of risk, which must be managed in connection with a CMS project, can therefore be identified:

- **Process risks:** ordinary risks connected with performing projects – failure to meet deadlines, excess consumption of resources, etc.

- **Knowledge risks:** specific risks connected with seeking new knowledge and new solutions – uncertainty in relation to results, preconditions that must be tested, the accessibility of empirical knowledge and data, etc.

An attempt must be made to minimise process risks from the beginning of a project, partly by closely following the procedure established in the eight stages that a CMS project must pass through, and partly by identifying and managing relevant process risks as early as possible.

Knowledge risks, on the other hand, must be managed with the help of major risk tolerance, particularly at the beginning of a project, and by applying the principles established for quality assurance: the inclusion of external stakeholders, joint sparring and peer reviews. As also stated in the Framework Agreement, this makes it important for both CMS and the client to be aware, within the framework laid down for the individual project, that a certain degree of risk tolerance is a basic condition for the quality of research-based services for public authorities.

Due to this requirement for risk tolerance in relation to knowledge production, it is important at an early stage of project planning to consider risk management in relation to the concrete, practical and procedural risks as well as to the knowledge risks that a project could be confronted with. Risk management and risk handling are important aspects of the project manager's role, particularly in connection with extensive long-term projects, and two central elements of risk management are receptiveness and communication. Receptiveness, internally at CMS and with regard to external stakeholders, is an important part of risk management, especially where knowledge risks are concerned.

There are three steps in identifying and managing risks at CMS, and many aspects of risk management can be performed to advantage jointly with all of the centre's staff. **The first step** is brainstorming, during which potential risks connected with project performance are identified. The **second step** is to put the various risks into a matrix in relation to whether the risk identified will have major or minor consequences for project performance and whether there is more or less probability that there will be a risk. The risks identified can then be categorised as red risks, which would have major consequences and which are highly probable; green risks, which would have minor consequences and which are not very probable, and the rest as yellow risks. The **third step** establishes and describes the measures necessary to handle or minimise risks with a person given responsibility for each measure. In this connection, the first and foremost priority must be the red risks, i.e. the risks that are most probable and most serious.

5. The eight stages of a CMS project

A project at CMS can be divided into eight stages. The importance and extent of the various stages naturally depends on the extent of the project. A minor project will not always require a comprehensive project plan to be drawn up with formalised measurement points, deliveries and milestones and a formalised risk analysis. However, as the working methods in a project are central to the way in which we realise CMS' values, these stages will always be included in the considerations connected with a project. Even with minor projects, many of the elements included in the eight stages will be worthy of some thought – and informal discussion – both in the project team and with colleagues.

The eight stages – their contents, the most important milestones, products and procedures for quality assurance – are reviewed in the following sections. The case in general is that external quality assurance will primarily take place at the beginning and end of a project, while internal CMS quality assurance takes place throughout the entire project and often several times during the same stage in relation to the same milestone. The project plan is dimensioned in relation to a comprehensive written product, but the elements can naturally be applied in connection with other major projects such as concept development projects, holding conferences with many participants, etc.

Stage 1: *Instructions from the client*

Individual projects in CMS' research-based services for public authorities are negotiated between the University of Copenhagen and the Ministry of Defence, and there will be a brief description of the project in the production agreement. The production agreement can be regarded as a question that the project team must find an answer to. Where research-based services for public authorities are concerned, it is the client who defines the question, but not the sources, methods or context that the answer is based on.

Milestones: handing over the text to the project manager (and the project team) and introductory joint CMS discussion.

Stage 2: *Concept and problem formulation*

After the client has decided to implement the project, the next stage is CMS' own project dimensioning. The project is further developed with the point of departure in the wording of the production agreement. Themes, concepts, methods and practical matters are clarified and established by the project team, and the problem formulation, synopsis and project plan (including stakeholder and risk analysis and communication plan) are prepared. All three elements are presented to CMS' staff – often several times – for criticism and comments. The project manager prepares a project plan in collaboration with the centre administrator in order to draw up a resource allocation plan which forms part of the overall planning basis at the centre. When the project plan, synopsis and problem formulation become available in a consolidated form and have been approved by the head of the centre, the project moves to stage 3. It is important to use CMS' formal and informal networks during this stage as a source of inspiration and sparring.

Milestones: project plan, synopsis and problem formulation. These are consolidated and approved by the head of the centre.

Stage 3: *Research*

Information retrieval begins in stage 3 with the point of departure in the problem formulation, the assumptions in the synopsis and the descriptions of methods. At the beginning of this stage, the synopsis can be discussed to advantage with the relevant people in order to identify useful sources,

significant problem complexes, etc. It is important to check whether the initial assumptions still hold true: is the project asking the right questions, are the project's preconditions and assumptions valid, and are the necessary empirical knowledge and data accessible? Taking the point of departure in these questions, it becomes possible to re-evaluate the problem formulation and the synopsis. An enlarged and/or re-evaluated disposition must be presented to colleagues during stage 3, and an internal pre-draft seminar should be held with the presentation of a preliminary draft.

Milestones: consolidated disposition and holding an internal pre-draft seminar.

Stage 4: *Knowledge consolidation*

The activities in stages 3 and 4 may overlap, and the project manager must pay particular attention to the transition between stages 3 and 4. After the stage 3 milestones have been reached, the knowledge generated in stage 4 must be systematised and integrated into a unified product. Stage 4 largely comprises the preparation of a written product, and the milestones at this stage will comprise a number of presentations of increasingly well worked out drafts to colleagues. The stage concludes with a final draft.

Milestone: holding an internal draft seminar.

Stage 5: *Peer review*

When a final draft becomes available, it is peer reviewed. The result of the peer review is discussed at an internal seminar, after which any mistakes or shortcomings are remedied and the comments in the peer review are incorporated into the draft. The end product must be approved by the head of the centre.

Milestone: final peer-reviewed product.

Stage 6: *Preliminary presentation*

Once there is an end product, the publication of the project results begins in stage 6. Interviewees and other stakeholders, including the client, are informed of the project results before publication, which serves as a final quality check of the almost finished product. The communication plan for the project is also reviewed and finally approved by the head of the centre. In addition, any briefings or media appearances are now prepared and tested by CMS' staff if necessary. Finally, the product is proofread and layout is performed. The stage ends when the finished product has been approved by the head of the centre and is ready to be handed over.

Milestones: stakeholder briefing, review of communication plan, preparation of briefings and media appearances (if applicable), proofreading, layout and handing over the final approved product.

Stage 7: *Handover*

An important point to remember is that a project is not completed when the finished product is published. Handover is therefore an independent stage where a good deal of work can be expected in connection with communicating the project results. Furthermore, it is important to note that publication is not the same as handover. The project results must often be communicated to the various stakeholders in a number of contexts using different methods. Therefore, this stage is important for the overall success of the project.

Milestones: the handovers identified in the project plan.

Stage 8: *Evaluation and follow-up*

After the conclusion of the project, i.e. after the handover stage has been completed, the project as a whole is evaluated. The results will often have been communicated to the various stakeholders in different ways. A joint internal evaluation of the project handover at CMS is therefore performed as an important milestone and a good point of departure for the overall evaluation. Evaluation at CMS is always performed jointly in order to ensure a broad utilisation of the experience gained and a general dialogue about the project. Joint CMS evaluation should be supplemented with an internal evaluation in the project team. The client must be included in the evaluations on an ongoing basis in accordance with the framework agreement.

Milestones: project team evaluation, CMS evaluation and evaluation with the client.

A graphic overview of the overall project cycle is included as an appendix.

This project manual describes a typical project process. The individual staff member is responsible for ensuring that his or her approach to the project follows the precepts in the manual and for ensuring that the processes and stages described are concretised and targeted in relation to the project in question.

The most important thing is that the project manual establishes a common language in connection with performing a project and the values, procedures and quality assurance mechanisms that constitute the foundation for project work at CMS.

Correspondingly, the aim is that performing the eight project stages will ensure a common language concerning CMS' research-based services for public authorities. This optimises the conditions for coordination, knowledge sharing and cooperation between CMS' staff.