

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters



Left: The Norwegian Academy's presidium in 2014. From left: President Nils Chr. Stenseth, Vice President Kirsti Strøm Bull and Secretary General Øivind Andersen.
Photo: Eirik Furu Baardsen

Right: The mansion which now houses the Academy was built in 1886-87 by a wealthy tradesman and politician, Hans Rasmus Astrup (1831-1898) and designed by Herman Major Backer (1856-1932), one of the prominent architects in Norway at the time. Photographer: Eirik Furu Baardsen

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters was founded in 1857. It is a non-governmental, nationwide body that embraces all scientific disciplines.

The Academy's main objective is to advance science in Norway by initiating and supporting research, sponsoring meetings and conferences, publishing scientific and scholarly works, awarding scientific prizes, contributing to science policy, and by acting in the interest of science in relation to political authorities and the general public.

The Academy represents Norwegian science vis-à-vis foreign academies and international organizations by participating in and nominating representatives to various national and international scientific bodies.

The Academy is led by the presidium which consists of the President, the Secretary General and the Vice President. H.M. King Harald is Honorary President of the Academy.

Academy Members

On 1 January 2014 the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters had altogether 474 Norwegian and 390 foreign members. The members are divided into two sections; Mathematics and Natural Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences. Each section is divided into eight groups. Each of the two sections has its own board which together with the presidium constitutes the board of the Academy.

A seat becomes vacant on the death of the holder or when a member has reached the age of 70. Members over 70 years of age keep all their rights and are still full members. Only members of the Academy are entitled to propose candidates for membership, which is based solely on the candidates' scientific achievements.

The Academy's prizes

Internationally the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters is perhaps best known for awarding the Abel Prize in mathematics and the Kavli Prize in astrophysics, nanoscience and neuroscience. The establishment of these important science prizes has increased the Academy's significance and visibility both nationally and internationally.

The Abel Prize has been awarded annually since 2003 and carries a cash award of NOK 6 million (about € 750,000). The choice of laureate is based on the recommendation from an international committee of prominent mathematicians. The Abel Prize was established by the Norwegian government to recognize outstanding achievements in mathematics. Prominent mathematicians from all over the world are involved in the award and in the annual Abel symposium. The prize shall also contribute towards raising the status of mathematics in society and stimulating the interest of children and young people in mathematics.

For more information consult the Abel Prize website: <http://www.abelprize.no/>



The 2014 Abel Prize Winner Yakov G. Sinai receives the prize from H.R.H. Crown Prince Haakon in the University Aula in Oslo. Photo: NTB Scanpix

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has also been given the responsibility for the Kavli Prize – three prizes for groundbreaking work in the fields of astrophysics, nanoscience and neuroscience. In order to select the winners, the Academy has set up international prize committees based on nominations from leading academic bodies worldwide. The board of the Academy selects the Kavli Prize Laureates on the basis of recommendations from these committees.

The Kavli Prize amounts to USD 1 million (about € 800,000) in each field and is awarded every two years. It was awarded for the first time in 2008. The Kavli Prize is a partnership between the Kavli Foundation in the US, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. The Kavli Prize will be awarded next time in 2016.

For more information consult the Kavli Prize website: <http://www.kavliprize.org/>



The nine Kavli Prize Laureates on stage in Oslo Concert Hall after receiving their gold medal and diploma from H.M. King Harald. From left: Sir John B. Pendry, Stefan W. Hell and Thomas W. Ebbesen in nanoscience, Alexei A. Starobinsky, Andrei D. Linde and Alan H. Guth in astrophysics and John O'Keefe, Brenda Milner and Marcus E. Raichle in neuroscience. Photo: Håkon Mosvold Larsen/NTB Scanpix



The Kavli Prize banquet takes place in Oslo City Hall. Photo: Thomas B. Eckhoff

International co-operation

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters is involved in international activities also far beyond what happens in relation to the Abel Prize and the Kavli Prize. The Academy represents Norwegian research internationally in a number of scientific organizations; the most prominent being Union Académique Internationale (UAI), International Council for Science (ICSU), including its many sub-organizations, International Social Science Council (ISSC), European Academies' Science Advisory Council (EASAC) and All European Academies (ALLEA).

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has a mutual agreement with the Royal Society of Edinburgh to foster international cooperation.

The Centre for Advanced Study

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters does not own any institutes, but is taking active part in several research foundations through representation on their boards. This includes the Centre for

Advanced Study (CAS) that is located in the Academy building where it hosts three parallel international research groups each year within the natural sciences, social sciences/law, and the humanities. The Centre for Advanced Study is mainly funded by the Norwegian government but also receives contributions from the Norwegian Academy and Science and Letters. For more information consult the webpage www.cas.uio.no.

An exceptional partnership

VISTA is a research program established in 1985 by the Norwegian oil company Statoil and the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. The clearly stated purpose, which has been the guideline ever since, was to provide support and help develop Norwegian basic research in fields that are significant for the development of the oil and gas industry.

Scientists at Norwegian universities and research institutions can apply for project sponsorship for their PhD programs and post-doctoral students. VISTA's ambition is to fund approximately 25 projects each year. In addition the program supports VISTA professorships. For more information consult the webpage www.vista.no (in English).

The Academy's house

The Academy address has since 1911 been Drammensveien 78, located in one of the noblest residential areas in the western part of Oslo and near to the city centre. The mansion was built in 1886-87 by a wealthy tradesman and politician, Hans Rasmus Astrup (1831-1898) and designed by Herman Major Backer (1856-1932), one of the prominent architects in Norway. The house is built in a German influenced neo-renaissance style.

Economy

The Academy receives an annual grant from the Norwegian government and additional funding through co-operation agreements with Norwegian industry and by revenue from various endowments.

The Academy has a staff of ten people, including the Executive Director.