Educating prison officers in Norway

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This article is a transcript of a presentation given at The Perrie Lectures in 2024. The Perrie Lectures is an annual event which has the purpose of stimulating dialogue between criminal justice organisations, the voluntary sector, and all those with an academic, legal, or practical interest in people in prison and their families. The theme of the 2024 event was 'Recruiting, training, and developing great prison officers'.

Earlier this year, a new book on prison officers and their work was released: Prison Officers: International Perspectives on Prison Work, edited by Helen Arnold, Matthew Maycock and Rosemary Ricciardelli.[1] Throughout 17 chapters, different authors describe and analyse the highly-skilled and complex work prison officers perform in different jurisdictions throughout the world. In the concluding chapter, the editors summarise this highly-skilled and complex work, and in doing so, they constantly refer to the 'prison officer role'. This is a common concept to use when referring to prison officer work and raises several questions: Could this term be described as reductive? Is it fair to consider this highly-skilled and complex work as 'just' a role? Could it be understood and contextualised in other ways, and if so — how? In this article, we will elaborate upon these questions by describing and discussing the education of prison officers in Norway and the principles that guide this education.

'In Norway, we do not train prison officers, we educate them'

There are no international standards in order to qualify as a prison officer, but according to the Guidelines regarding recruitment, selection, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff;

"Basic grade prison staff in daily contact with detainees should have entry educational equivalent to Level 4, of the European Qualification framework (EQF). In case they do not, they should have accomplished a (nationally recognised) apprenticeship or vocational equivalent, thus enabling them to apply for the training to become a prison officer."[2]

This falls below the level of higher education, with the learning outcomes being relatively basic, as seen in Table 1.[3]

Table 1. *Level 4 — learning outcomes*

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities

As for the qualification requirements for probation officers, however, the guidelines states that these should be at level 6, EQF, that is, on the level of higher education, where the learning outcomes are enhanced to an advanced and complex level, see Table 2.[4]

1. Arnold, H., Maycock, M., & Ricciardelli, R. (2024). *Prison Officers: International Perspectives on Prison Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Ministers' deputies, CM (2019) 111-add, 10 July 2019[1], 1356 meeting, 9 October 2019, 10.3.b European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), para. 3.1. https://www.cep-probation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Guidelines-regarding-recruitment-selection-education-training-and-professional-development-of-prison-and-probation-staff.pdf.
3. Europass, European Union: Description of the eight EQF levels. https://europass.europa.eu/en/description-eight-eqf-levels.
4. See footnote 3.

Table 2. *Level 6 — learning outcomes*

Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy
Advanced knowledge of a field or work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups

In most countries, qualification as a prison officer happens through in-service programs, as is in line with the guideline, that last for some months or weeks. Most often, this qualification is referred to as 'training' — mainly of skills — composed of elements considered to be vital for the job, such as 'Control and Restraint'. As the training does not lead to a grade in a formalised educational system, the value of the training outside the prison or correctional system is limited. It is the knowledge gained from the experience of working as a prison officer that is valued rather than the knowledge gained from the training. However, it is important to recognise that people becoming prison officers may have some kind of higher education from universities or university colleges before they enter the prison service.[5]

Since 2012, to qualify as a prison officer in Norway, a candidate has to complete a 120 ECTS program in Correctional Studies.[6] ECTS stands for European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, meaning that credits taken at one education institution can be included in studies at another education institution. The ECTS indicates the volume or workload, and 60 ECTS correspond to a full-time study for one year. The 120 ECTS program in Correctional Studies is a full-time study for two years and leads to the degree 'University College Graduate in Correctional Studies'. From this point on, we will refer to this study program as the UCG-program. In addition, a prison officer may take a 60 ECTS supplementary study program leading to the degree 'Bachelor in Correctional Studies' — hereafter the BA-program. The program was established in 2019 and is a part time study lasting for two years (30 ECTS per year). Some 15 ECTS courses in the program are also offered to students outside the program, including exchange students from partner institutions abroad.

The UCG-program is paid, which means that students in the program are employed and receive a salary of 370.000 NOK (about £26,500) each year. The salary covers general living costs, such as accommodation, which the students have to arrange themselves. They are hired on probation for the two-year education period and have a formal status as trainees. If students do not pass their exams (in two attempts at each exam) or are found unsuitable during education, they are fired and cannot continue the education. After the education period, they must complete a mandatory in-service placement year before they can apply for jobs, preferably as prison officers. The placement year must be completed before they can apply for the BA-program.

As the UCG-program was accredited as a higher educational program in 2012, there are prison officers in the Correctional Service who have not completed the UCG-program. However, it is also possible for them to become BA-students, after a competence assessment.

It is the University College of Norwegian Correctional Service, KRUS, that educates prison officers in Norway, meaning that the education is an in-service training. However, the Act relating to universities and university colleges (2024),[7] with some exceptions,[8] is also valid for the education of prison officers. At KRUS the education is organised by the Department of Correctional studies, led by the head of department and the heads of the UCG- and BA-programs. The remaining number of employees in the department, approximately 30 persons, are scientific personnel — assistant professors, associate professors and professors — and prison officers. Besides teaching, the personnel also do research and development work (RandD). This means that the education of prison officers has to meet the standards for higher education

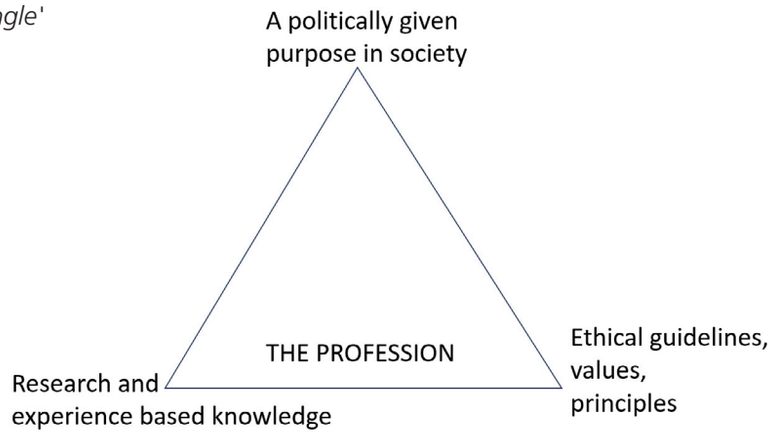
5. See, e.g., Akoensi, T. (2024). "Prison Officers Should be Treated Fairly". Perceptions and Experiences of Fairness Among Prison Officers in Ghana', pp. 271–297; Bruhn & Nylander (2024) 'Fairwell to Exceptionalism: An Analyses of Swedish Prison Officers' Attitudes Towards Prison Policy, Organisation, and Their Occupational Role in 2009 and 2019', pp.325–348; Herzog-Evans, M. & Thomas, J. (2024) 'French Prison Officers' legal Socialisation: "The Law, yes, Prisoners' Rights, No X: pp.83-109. In H. Arnold, M. Maycock & R. Ricciardelli (Eds.) *Prison Officers: International Perspectives on Prison Work*. Palgrave Macmillan.
6. We use the term "Correction" to emphasise that prison and probation is one service in Norway.
7. Act relating to universities and university colleges, LOV-2005-04-01-15, cf. LOV-2024-03-08-9 Norwegian Codes (2024).
8. Forskrift om delvis innlemming av Kriminalomsorgens høgskole og utdanningssenter (KRUS) under lov 1. april 2005 nr. 15 om universiteter og høyskoler, FOR-2012-10-26-993 Norwegian regulations of the law.

in Norway and Europe, which implies that, albeit short, prison officers are educated to a profession, not a role.

A profession — criteria and basis of knowledge

In order to fulfil the criteria for a profession, three requirements need to be fulfilled: There has to be 1) a purpose in society that is politically given, 2) a moral codex, i.e., the ethics of the profession, and 3) a source of knowledge that is based on research (in a broad sense) and taught at a level of higher education (university or university college), see Figure 1.[9]

Figure 1: Hallmarks of a profession: 'The profession triangle'



For prison officers, the politically given purpose is stated in The Execution of Sentences Act paragraph 2: 'A sentence shall be executed in a manner that takes into account the purpose of the sentence, that serves to prevent the commission of new criminal acts, that reassures society, and that, within this framework, ensures satisfactory conditions for the inmates'.[10] According to Nymo (2021), this purpose delegates authority to the prison officers and trusts them to perform their profession in line with the purpose and in accordance to the given values and principles. A central document in this regard is the *Ethical guidelines for the Public Service, with comments on the activities in the Correctional Service.*[11]

Concerning the purpose of the sentence, it is the utilitarian or relative theories that serve as the official purpose of imposing a punishment to someone in Norway.[12] The focus is progressive — what is to be achieved by the punishment — which is crime prevention through general deterrence or individual deterrence. General deterrence is to punish someone to prevent others from committing crimes, while individual deterrence is to prevent the person who has committed the crime, from committing new crimes. Here, we see that the first two parts of the politically given purpose — to take into account the purpose of the sentence and to prevent the commission of criminal acts — blur into one another. However, retribution and the retributive theories of revenge and punishment, as deserved for the crime that has been committed, also play a role. This is first and foremost expressed in what kind of sentence is passed — e.g., imprisonment or community sentence, and the 'amount' of punishment — e.g., years in prison or number of hours of community sentence.

While in prison, a prison officer is central in facilitating and helping a prisoner in the process of desisting from crime. At the same time, a prison officer must ensure that a prisoner does not commit new crimes or escape during the serving of the sentence. Besides reassuring society, this is important for general deterrence by demonstrating that the punishment is carried out. It is also important for the upholding of law and order in society by, for example, showing people that justice is done in order to prevent people from taking action against a practice they feel is unjust and start punishing each other.[13] A prison officer, especially when serving as a contact or personal officer, will also

9. Nymo, K. (2021). 'Profesjonsforståelse og profesjonell identitet (Understanding Professions and Professional Identity)'. In. M. I. Snetingdal & K. Nymo (Eds.) J*eg skal bli fengselsbetjent (I'm Going to be a Prison Officer).* Fagbokforlaget, pp. 55–68. Cf.: Halvorsen, L. R. (2017) 'Profesjonsutøvelse og profesjonsetikk (Professional Practice and Professional Ethics)'. Vernepleier, kort fagartikkel, 9. mai, https://vernepleier.no/2017/05/profesjonsutovelse-og-profesjonsetikk/; Hennum, B. A. & Østrem, S. (2016) *Barnehagelæreren som profesjonsutøver (The Kinderkarden Teacher as an Performer of a Profession).* Abstrakt forlag.
10. Act relation to the execution of sentences etc. (The Execution of Sentences Act) LOV-2001-05-18-21 Norwegian Codes (2001).
11. Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development & Norwegian Correctional Service (2020) E*tiske retningslinjer for statstjenestemenn. Med tillegg og kommentarer knyttet til kriminalomsorgens virksomhet.*
12. Andenæs, J. (1994). S*traffen som problem (The Problem of Punishment).* Exil; Hauge, R. (1996) Straffens begrunnelser (The Reasons of Punishment). Universitetsforlaget; Ot.prp. nr. 90 (2003–2004) *Om lov om straff (straffeloven) (The Penal Code – Law Proposition).* p. 77.
13. Storvik, B. (2022). S*traffegjennomføring (The Code of Corrections).* Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 4th ed.

be involved in decisions about a prisoner where assessments of justice in the sense of public opinion have an impact. This could include decisions regarding prison leave, transfer to open prisons or halfway houses, or release on parole.

In the above-mentioned prison officer work of balancing crime-preventive work and safety/security, it is important to bear in mind what punishment is. In Norway, punishment is defined as an evil — or pain — that is supposed to be experienced as an evil/pain.[14] The evil in punishment in prison is the loss of liberty, and a person is sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment. This is an important principle for guiding the last part of the purpose: to ensure satisfactory conditions for the prisoners. There are many factors that prison officers do not control in this regard, including the design of the prisons — like toilets in the cell, size of the yard, the economic situation of the prison, and so on. However, in the everyday life in the prison, where all parts of the purpose merge into the operation of the prison with its logistics, routines and state of readiness, there is a lot a prison officer can do by, for example, establishing rapport, building relations, meeting the prisoners' needs and making sure that the prisoners, the officers themselves and society itself are safe.

It is in this daily work the ethical guidelines come into force. The basis for the guidelines is general ethical values and norms such as fairness, loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, and truthfulness. In meetings with other people, the prison officer shall behave correctly and in a respectful manner. Simply put, it is to 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. The basic principles in the European Prison Rules and the European Probation rules are also incorporated in the guidelines, such as respecting human rights and proportionality in the restrictions imposed and in the use of power. The purpose of the guideline is to ensure that prisoners are not exposed to arbitrary or unacceptable treatment. A high ethical quality in the service and the exercise of authority are also a prerequisite for citizens' trust in the Correctional Service.

The guidelines underline the personal responsibility prison officers have in learning to know and keep themselves updated on decisions and instructions in force and to follow them. At the same time, prison officers shall prevent the violation of fundamental rights, which requires them to have a critical stance and speak up as is protected by the Constitution.[15] The basis for their service is professional knowledge and discretion, and the principle of professional independence implies a right and a duty to raise well-grounded arguments or objections against political or administrative viewpoints, or against established practice when necessary.

This brings us to the third hallmark of the profession, which is knowledge. Both research-based and experience-based knowledge are fundamental for the prison officer profession. Additionally, there is a recognition that theoretical knowledge is important for professional practice. A characteristic of professions is that their knowledge base is composed of expertise from different subjects and fields. The subjects and fields composing the knowledge base for the education of prison officers in Norway is listed in the outer circle of figure 2. The inner circle illustrates how these subjects and fields constitute three pillars — safety and security, crime prevention, and profession, law and ethics — which are reflected in the subjects and curriculums in the UCG and BA-programs.

Figure 2: The basis of knowledge

14. Andenæs, J. (1976). S*tatsforfatningen i Norge, 4. utg. (The Condition of the State in Norway, 4th ed.).* Tanum-Norli; Rt, 1977: 1207, Supreme Court sentence; Christie, N. (1982) Pinens begrensning (The Limitation of Pain). Universitetsforlaget.
15. The Constitution of Norway, LOV-1814-05-17 Norwegian Codes § 100 (1814).

Most studies of prison officers are carried out within the field of criminology.[16] Such studies are important for the understanding of prison officer work, and they are essential contributions in the knowledge base for the programs. However, we need to develop and expand the knowledge base, with studies entrenched in other subjects, fields or a mixture of these. Studies entrenched in the field of, for example professional studies, yield new knowledge and enrich our understanding of prison officer work. This is an important task for KRUS, and especially for the staff at the Department for Correctional Studies. It is of utmost importance that this group is composed of staff with education and expertise within different subjects and fields relevant for the programs, such as law, sociology, criminology, philosophy, security, social work, pedagogy and so on. The group also consists of people educated as prison officers, who represent the practical knowledge. All staff need to develop their expertise, and in the last year, two members of staff who were educated as prison officers and have long experience from this work finished their PhD on safety and security work in prisons.[17]

The education programs need such staff with 'pracademic status' (practitioners and academics).[18] They are in a unique role that combines the theoretical and practical knowledge in their field of study, like safety and security in the context of prisons, which is of vital importance for the development of the prison officer profession. As one of the pillars of the education, this traditionally practice-led field needs theoretical and academic knowledge. This contrasts with the other two pillars, which are composed of subjects and fields with longer academic traditions, and thereby also have a certain status and recognition of being complex work that needs a certain level of qualification. Even so, these fields of study, for example social work, still need to be contextualised and theorised within a prison setting.

Both the studies of Midtlyng (2024) and Sørensen (2023) prove that operational safety and security work is highly-skilled and complex. Midtlyng's study of the embodied performance of operational work in a high-security prison shows the meaning of the tacit knowledge that Hay and Sparks in an earlier article in this journal presented as follows:

> *[P]rison officers have special abilities, but we can't quite say what they are, nor teach them — they are simply learned in a long process of initiation and experience (like becoming a member of the magic circle) (p. 3).*[19]

We disagree with Hay and Sparks and believe the so-called 'special abilities' of prison officers are necessary to study. By identifying, deconstructing and conceptualising them, we can produce knowledge that somewhat demystifies the 'magic circle'. Further, we can use this knowledge in the education of future officers to better prepare them for the job they will do.

…to qualify as a prison officer in Norway, a candidate has to complete a 120 ECTS program in Correctional Studies.

Recruitment and structure of the programmes

Compared to the rest of Europe, we have sufficient candidates and more than several other countries. Tables 3 and 4 show application and admission numbers from 2021 to 2023.[20] However, we do not have sufficient knowledge to claim that we recruit well enough, for example in terms of diversity. Therefore, our recruitment policy and admission system are currently under review.

16. See, e.g., Arnold et.al. (2024); Liebling, A., Price, D. & Shefer, G. (2011). *The Prison Officer.* Willan Publishing; Bennett, J., Crewe, B. & Wahidin, A. (2008). *Understanding Prison Staff.* Willan Publishing; Crawley, E. (2004) *Doing Prison Work: The Public and Private Lives of Prison Officers.* Willan Publishing.
17. Midtlyng, G. (2024). *Between chaos and control: Embodied performance of operational work in a high-security prison.* PhD dissertation, Oslo Metropolitan University, Centre for the Study of Professions; Sørensen, K. M. (2023) *"Hvem i helvete kommer nå?" Kriminalomsorgsarbeid i en ekstraordinær kritisk situasjon (Who the hell is coming now? Correctional work in an extraordinary critical situation).* PhD dissertation, University of Oslo, Faculty of Law, Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law.
18. Macduff, N., & Netting, F. E. (2008). 'Pracademic: A cultural anomaly'. *Vrijwillige Inzet Onderzocht, 50(*1), pp. 37–44.
19. Hay, W. & Sparks, R. (1991). 'What is a Prison Officer?' *Prison Service Journal, summer* 1991, pp. 2–7.
20. University College of Norwegian Service (2023) Kvalitetsrapport fra studiene ved KRUS (2023) (*Quality Report from the Studies at KRUS).*

Table 3. *Number of applicants, University College Graduate program, 2021-2023*

YEAR	2021			2022			2023		
	Total	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**	**W**	**M**	**Total**	**W**	**M**
Number of applicants	914	473	431	967	466	501	833	444	389
Qualified applicants	477	260	217	603	343	346	617		
Summoned to entrance tests	477	260	217	451	218	233	377		
Number of students	175	87	88	175	84	91	180	92	88
Number of places	180			180			180		
Qualified appl. pr place	2,65			3,35			3,52		

Table 4. *Number of applicants, Bachelor program, 2021-2023*

YEAR	2021	2022	2024
Number of applicants	205	165	210
Qualified applicants	176	146	191
Admitted students	34	35	32
Number of places	30	30	30
Qualified appl. pr place	5,87	4,87	6,37

All students at the UCG-level undergo the same programme. There is no specialisation, as Norway educates prison officers as generalists — they are able to work in all sorts of prisons (extra high, high, low security and halfway houses), with different kinds of prisoners (men, women, young people, sentenced persons, persons in pre-sentence custody, etc.), and different units (security oriented, crime-preventive oriented, etc.). Prison officers also work together with probation officers in electronic monitoring teams, and some even work as probation officers.

The first semester for the UCG students is a theoretical semester at campus. In the second and third semester, the students are in practice working in prisons where they have mentors while they work on the landings. They also complete theoretical courses in these semesters. The fourth and last semester is theoretical on campus. The dark grey areas in figure 3 give a more detailed description of the structure of the UCG programme.

The BA-programme opens for specialisation, as the students in the third semester have elective courses (see light grey area for the design of the programme, and the text after the star for a description of the elective courses). All courses in the BA-programme are theoretical and the teaching is session-based, with 3-4 sessions at each course. The teaching is hybrid, which means that the students can choose to be present at campus or follow the teaching online.

Bachelor Correctional Studies

Organisation	Semester	Courses		
Supplementary course of study (2 yrs. part-time)	8	KRUS 3900 Bachelor Thesis (15 credits)		
	7	Elective course (15 credits)*		
	6	KRUS 3100 Crime Prevention in the Correctional Service (15 credits)		
	5	KRUS 3000 The organisation of the Norwegian Correctional Service (15 credits)		
In-service placement year				
University College Graduate (2 yrs. full time)	4 Campus	KRUS 2200 Safety, Security and Risk Management II (7,5 credits)	KRUS 2300 Community Reintegration and Social Work II (15 credits)	KRUS 2400 Professional Knowledge and Ethics (7,5 credits)
	2 & 3 In prison	KRUS 1400 Assessment and Documentation (10 credits)	KRUS 2000 Safety, Security and Risk Management I (30 credits)	KRUS 2100 Community Reintegration and Social Work I (20 credits)
	1 Campus	KRUS 1000 Introduction to the Prison Officer Role and the Norwegian Correctional Service (10 credits)	KRUS 1100 The Code of Corrections and Other Legal Topics (10 credits	KRUS 1200 Crime and Punishment (10 credits)

* Isolation; Children and Young Adults in Correctional Care; Human Rights in the Serving of Sentences; Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the Correctional Service; Crime Prevention in Correctional Care; Tutoring in the Correctional Service; The Norwegian Penal System: Comparative, Practical Studies; Prisoners and Convicted with Mental Illness.

Figure 3: The study programs

Ambitions and realities

KRUS aims to be an accredited, practice-oriented, and unique university college with a research and study environment that promotes and develops competence in the field of corrections. According to our strategy, prison officers should have a bachelor's degree as foundational education. Our ambition is also to develop a master's programme in corrections. There are several prison officers who take their master's at other universities and university colleges, but we are convinced that offering a higher-level education at KRUS will have positive spin-off effects in the correctional service. It will, for example, make higher education more available for officers, raise their career opportunities, contribute to more research-based practice, and raise the status of the education even further.

Professionalisation of prison officer education is not a new idea. Aims and ambitions for a longer, research-based education have been long lasting. Forty years ago, in a report to the Ministry of Justice, a Public Committee argued that '*the work of a prison officer is no less demanding than the work of many other professions which today require a three-year college education'* (p. 52) (our translation).[21] As examples, the Committee mentioned nurses and social educators, who also work in institution-based settings. The arguments of why prison officers needed the same length of their foundational education were rather principal:

> *The most important resource in prisons is the people who work there, but the unique environment in prisons also affects the staff, making it difficult to be a humane counterbalance to some of the negative effects of imprisonment. The staff are under constant pressure and often feel after a few years that they have no energy left to give. Education helps to build a foundation and provides better opportunities for maintaining and renewing oneself in the job, so that one always has something to offer the prisoners.*[22] (our translation)

Throughout 40 years these arguments have been repeated. Other arguments, such as the need to raise competence and professionalism to meet crime challenges, have been added.[23] However, the recommendations have been met with political reluctancy and little will to change education for prison officers. The changes from a two-year programme with no credits to a UCG-program in 2012 and the establishment of a BA-programme in 2019 have been strongly supported by stakeholders, such as the Directorate of the Correctional Service and the prison officers' unions, but the main actor has been the staff at KRUS.[24] The premise to establish a BA-programme was no extra costs, but by the effort of KRUS-staff it became possible to launch it. Costs have been a central political argument for not expanding the studies beyond two years. A condition of establishing a three-year compulsory bachelor programme has been to cut the salary during education, and politicians have been anxious that recruitment then will be problematic due to the low status of the job. In our opinion, the robust application to the BA-program (see table 4) has proven this wrong.

Both research-based and experience-based knowledge are fundamental for the prison officer profession.

Another argument against a compulsory bachelor programme for prison officers is that they will become too well educated for the job. Rather than working in prisons, they will find jobs elsewhere than in the Correctional Service. It is especially the unions that put forward this argument, but there are also arguments that making prison officer education more attractive will enhance the status of the job.[25] At the same time, we also think that other kinds of qualifications, such as

21. Ministry of Justice and Police (1984) *Utdanning for arbeid i kriminalomsorgen (Education for Work in the Correctional Services)* [Norwegian Public Report, NOU 1984:2].
22. See footnote 21 p. 52.
23. Kriminalomsorgens sentrale forvaltning (2004). *Delinnstilling 2, Utdanning for fengselsbetjenter (Education for Prison Officers).* Ministry of Justice and police; Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2021) *Kriminalomsorgsmeldingen – fremtidens kriminalomsorg og straffegjennomføring (White Paper on Corrections – Corrections for the future)* [White paper, Meld. St. 39 (2020 –2021].
24. Brun, A., Nylander, P. Å., & Johnsen, B. (2017). From Prison Guards to … What? Occupational Development of Prison Officers in Sweden and Norway. J*ournal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention, 18*(1), 68–83.
25. For such correlation in the Norwegian police: Pedersen, C & Damen; M.L. (2021). 'Politielever og politistudenter gjennom hundre år (Police Cadets and Police Students Over One Hundred Years)'. In: B. Ellefsen, V. Sørli & M. Egge: *Kunnskap for et tryggere samfunn? Norsk politiutdanning 1920-2020 (Knowledge for a Safer Society? Norwegian Police Education 1920-2020).* Cappelen Damm Akademisk, pp. 252–258.

social workers and social educators, could qualify for a job along with the prison officers at the landings. This is for example the case in some preventive detention units,[26] where prison officers, social workers, social educators and child welfare officers work together. They all wear the same uniform, and the prisoners cannot see the difference between them. This will strengthen the crime-preventive work in the prisons, and KRUS could provide special courses in safety and security (with credits) for those not educated as prison officers.

Despite adequate recruitment for our study programs, many prison officers leave the job within a few years, and right now Norwegian prisons lack staff. Additionally, a significant proportion of those who stay exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mental strain.[27] This research indicates that Norwegian prison officers have issues like those warned about in NOU 1984:2. As in many other countries, most prisoners in Norway have severe mental health problems.[28] Budgets cuts over an eight-year period with a conservative government (2013—2021) have also deteriorated the prison conditions. All these factors are leading to Norwegian prisons being further from exceptional today than they were 10—20 years ago.

Closure

One may wonder why the qualification requirements are different between prison and probation officers. Is this based on tradition, that probation officers traditionally have been qualified social workers, while prison officers have not? Is the work of a probation officer more complex than a prison officer, or is social or crime-preventive work in a correctional setting considered to be more 'intellectual' than work that involves both crime-prevention, safety and security, including the use of physical strength? It may be that the traditional hierarchical division between culture (the intellect) and nature (the body) tacitly has an impact on how these professions are regarded. In a country where the purpose and ethical foundation for the work is the same, there should be no reasons, whether based on tradition or 'intellect', to separate between the qualifications needed for prison and probation work. Crime prevention constitutes an important part of prison officer work in Norway, and this work starts from day one of imprisonment.

Besides, the safety and security work of prison officers requires academic recognition. The use of, for example, dynamic security — the humane factor in safety and security work — is complicated and sensitive work and needs to be explored and discussed in the education of prison officers. Moreover, there is a complex body of laws and regulations that regulate the work of prison officers, which is becoming increasingly complicated due to the impact of Human Rights. To read and understand this legislation and accordingly regulate the practice requires competence and skills that can be provided through education.[29] We perceive the UCG-program as inadequate in order to provide the necessary competence and skills in this regard.

We align ourselves with previous reports and policy documents and recognise the claim that the work of a prison officer is as complex as the work of probation officers, social workers, social educators and the like. Therefore, a mandatory bachelor education for the qualification of becoming a prison officer is long overdue.

26. Preventive detention is an informal life sentence.
27. Rambøll Management Consulting (2023). Kartlegging av psykiske belastninger blant ansatte i kriminalomsorgen (Mapping of Mental Strains among Staff in the Correctional Service.
28. Penal Reform International and Thailand Institute of Justice (2024). *Global Prison Trends 2024.* https://www.penalreform.org/global-prison-trends-2024/; Bukten A, Virtanen S, Hesse M, et al. (2024) 'The Prevalence and Comorbidity of Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders in Scandinavian Prisons 2010–2019: A Multi-national Register Study'. BMC Psychiatry 24,95.
29. See also Hertzog-Evans & Thomas (2024).