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GUIDELINES

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Guidelines for Equal Rights

(1 appendix)

1. Introduction

The basis for the work for equal rights at the University of Skövde (University) is to promote equal rights and opportunity for all employees and students, regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or belief, impairment, sexual orientation, or age.

The work is based on democratic values and human rights. By using the talent, experience and resources of all people, we can lay the ground for a good atmosphere for work, studies and research. All areas at the University must be aware of, and implement, the view that similarities and diversity are an asset, and that a person's right to be different constitutes the basis for equal rights. The aim is to create an atmosphere where diversity is encouraged and enriches the entire organisation. We have a "zero vision" regarding discrimination and harassment.

The Discrimination Act

The work for equal rights has its basis in *The Discrimination Act (2008:567)*. The basis for the work for equal rights at the University of Skövde (University) is to promote equal rights and opportunity for all employees and students, regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or belief, impairment, sexual orientation, or age. The Act states that any organisation must actively take measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal rights, by

1. examining if there are any risks for discrimination or reprisals, or if there are other obstacles to a person's equal rights and opportunities in the organisation,
2. analyse causes for risks and obstacles that have been identified,
3. take preventative actions and promote measures that can reasonably be required, and
4. follow up and evaluate the work in items 1 - 3.

Furthermore, The Discrimination Act outlines what the active measures an employer or education provider must take, such as

Employer

1. working conditions
2. regulations and practice with regards to salaries and other employment conditions,

3. recruiting and promotions,
4. education and professional development, and
5. conditions for combining working life with parenthood.

Education provider

1. student acceptance and recruiting procedures,
2. teaching methods and organisation of the education,
3. exams and evaluations of student performance,
4. study environment, and,
5. conditions for combining student life with parenthood.

2. Definitions

This section defines the terminology used in reference to equal rights. The definitions are taken from *The Discrimination Act (2008:567)*, website for the *Equality Ombudsman*¹ and from the University of Skövde's Development Plan 2017-2022.

2.1 Discrimination

Discrimination means direct or indirect discrimination, inadequate accessibility, harassment, sexual harassment, and instructions to discriminate

Direct discrimination is when a person is disadvantaged by being treated, was treated or would have been treated, less favourably than another person in a comparable situation, if the disadvantage is related to sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or belief, impairment, sexual orientation, or age.

Indirect discrimination is when there is a rule or a procedure that appears to be neutral but in fact disadvantages people of a certain sex, a certain sexual identity or expression, a certain ethnic origin, a certain religion or belief, a certain disability, a certain sexual orientation or a certain age, unless the rule, criteria or procedure has a legitimate reason and the means applied are appropriate and necessary for achieving the objective.

Inadequate accessibility is when a person with a disability is disadvantaged through failure to take reasonable accessibility measures that would put that person in a comparable situation with others without the disability, and those measures are reasonable based on the requirements for accessibility in laws and regulations, and in regard to

- the financial and practical conditions,
- the duration and scope of the relationship and/or contact with the organisation and the individual, and
- other significant circumstances.

The basis for the work for equal rights at the University of Skövde (University) is to promote equal rights and opportunity for all employees and students, regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or belief, impairment, sexual orientation, or age.

Sexual harassment means behaviour of sexual nature that violates a person's dignity.

¹ <http://www.do.se/om-diskriminering/skyddade-diskrimineringsgrunder/> (retrieved from the internet 20 October 2017)

An ***instruction to discriminate*** is when someone gives an order or instruction to discriminate against another person (see above), and the person receiving the instruction is in any way subordinate to or dependent on the person giving the instruction, or the receiving person may have agreed to fulfil an assignment.

2.2 Grounds for discrimination

The grounds for discrimination are gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or belief, impairment, sexual orientation, or age.

The term ***sex*** means that a person is male or female. The prohibition of discrimination on the ground of sex also includes persons who have undergone, or who are planning to undergo, sex reassignment. There are additional perspectives on gender and identity that are protected under the grounds of transgender identity or expression.

Transgender identity or expression describes persons who do not define themselves as a woman or a man or, by their manner of dressing or in any other way, express that they belong to another sex. The term includes a person's mental or self-perceived gender image and how a person expresses what may be referred to as their social gender through, for example, clothing, body language, make-up or hairstyle. The term trans gender is often used when describing the grounds for discrimination. This is a generic description for persons who break the social norms for gender identity and gender expression. A person who identifies as transsexual but does not intend to change their sexual gender are covered by this discrimination ground and the protection against discrimination.

The term ***ethnicity*** refers to an individual's national or ethnic origin, skin colour or another similar characteristic. National origin means that people have the same national affinity, for example Finns, Poles or Swedes. Ethnic origin means that people have a relatively uniform culture. For example, a person may belong to one of the national minorities such as Sami and Roma. All people have one or more ethnic origins.

Religion refers to religious beliefs, such as Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam. ***Other beliefs*** include convictions which are based on or connected to a religious belief, such as Buddhism, atheism and agnosticism. Political convictions and ethical or philosophical values not related to religion are not covered by the Discrimination Act.

The term ***disability*** refers to lasting physical, mental, or intellectual limitations of a person's functional capacity that because of injury or illness existed at birth, has developed at a later stage. or can be expected to develop. Temporary limitations of a person's functional capacity are not a disability in the sense referred to in the Discrimination Act. Disability means a reduction of a person's physical, mental or intellectual capacity. This is therefore something that a person has, not something that defines a person. A disability may be more or less apparent in different situations, such as allergies, dyslexia, hearing impairment, visual impairment and so on.

The law defines ***sexual orientation*** as homosexual, heterosexual and bisexual orientation. The law protects against discrimination based on all three sexual orientations

The Discrimination Act covers situations and conditions that are closely related to a person's sexual orientation, such as sexual intercourse, or living together with a person of the same sex or the other sex.

Age means the length of life reached. All people, regardless of age, are protected by the Discrimination Act.

3. Organisation, responsibilities and follow-up

The responsibility for the work for equal rights follows the University's general division of responsibilities, as defined in *Rules of Procedure for the University of Skövde* and the related documents on organisation and delegation. The Board of Governors and the Vice-Chancellor are responsible for the University's activities. Under them, the Faculty Board has an overall responsibility for the quality of the education and research. The Heads of Schools and the University Director are responsible for the schools and the support functions on a strategic and overall level. The operative responsibility for the activities lies, including matters concerning equal rights, mainly with the Heads of Schools. All levels must conduct a focused work for equal rights.

There are dedicated functions within the University that serve as a support for the work on equal rights, and they take active measures as set forth in the Discrimination Act. For matters involving employees, this function is carried out by an HR specialist for equal rights and for matters involving students there is an equal rights coordinator. These functions carry out follow up as well as proactive work and they are part of the coordinating group for equal rights. Other functions involved may be called in as temporary members to the coordinating group.

The follow-up on the work for equal rights is a continuous process and can be performed in various ways, see above regarding division of responsibilities. An annual follow-up is conducted in connection with the University's annual report. The separate action plans in relation to equal rights (see section 4.4) are also followed up annually and when new action plans are written. The coordination group for equal rights is the responsible for coordinating the follow-up.

4. Relationship to other guidelines and activities

As the work for equal rights must be present in all University activities, these guidelines are related to a number of other policies and much of the work in education, research and support.

4.1 The University's Development Plan 2017-2022

The Development Plan states that the University will actively work to prevent discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities for all students and employees.

The work for equal rights is also clearly connected to one of the three guiding principles highlighted in the Development Plan, namely *care for others*. The activities at the University should be guided by care for others, which means responsibility and care for students, employees, and the community. The care is manifested in a culture where employees and students take care of each other and show concern. The culture originates from the government's set of values.

4.2 Quality management and quality systems for education and research

The work for equal rights is clearly integrated in the University's collected system for quality management². The integration affects all parts of the quality management – the processes for strategic guidance for the University's activities (in which the separate school's activity plans are a central part) as well as the quality management systems for education and research.

The local and national evaluations of education include review of recruiting and admission of students, education environment, infrastructure (including student support) and the organisation, execution and examination of the education. This includes many of the areas mentioned in the Discrimination Act in relation to the University's role as an education provider. Nationally (in the Swedish Higher Education Authority's system for quality assurance of higher education³) as well as locally (in the University's education quality system⁴), regular reviews are conducted that include aspects of equal rights. Equal rights integration is reviewed with special attention (mainly in relation to the discrimination ground *sex*), within the national as well as the local quality systems.

Aspects concerning equal rights are part of the international framework guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG⁵). The following is stated:

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

Aspects of equal rights are integrated in the quality assurance work and the work aimed at developing research. One example is the University's goal stating that norm awareness must be part of allocating staff resources, in the process of handling research applications, and when allocating funding for research⁶.

4.3 Employment, professional development, salary, and work environment

The Development Plan for 2017–2022 states that "the University strives to be an attractive employer attracting potential employees, and where current staff have appropriate conditions in place for their development." It is essential to work actively for equal rights in order to be an attractive employer. Aspects on equal rights must be taken into consideration regarding all activities concerning the University's employees. Such areas are employment, professional development, salary, and work environment. The above is also stated clearly in the description of employer responsibility in the Discrimination Act.

² This system is described in the Quality Policy for the University of Skövde

³ National quality management system for higher education, report from the Swedish Higher Education Authority 2016:15)

⁴ Quality management for education, registration number HS 2017/128

⁵ Translation of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), adopted at the minister conference in i Jerevan, May 2015

⁶ Goal in the Action Plan for equal rights integration at the University of Skövde 2017-2019, registration number HS 2017/250

The work for equal rights is highlighted in several policies concerning the University's employees, for example the Employment Provision, Guidelines for Salary, The Template for Staff Appraisal, and The Overall Policy for Systematic Work Environment Efforts.

4.4 Separate policies concerning equal rights

In addition to these guidelines, separate policies must be in place for certain areas and parts of the work on equal rights:

- Action Plan for Equal Rights 2018-2019 (registration number HS 2018/194)
- Action Plan for Equal Rights Integration at the University of Skövde 2017-2019 (registration number HS 2017/250)
- Action Plan for discrimination and harassment/sexual harassment at the University of Skövde 2017/2018 (registration number HS 2018/75)
- Administration procedures for discrimination, harassment and offence (HS 2018/193)
- Action Plan for Accessibility Efforts 2018-2019 (registration number HS 2014/127)
- Guidelines for university studies and disability
- Instructions for sign language interpretation for deaf and hearing-impaired students at the University of Skövde (registration number 2009/421-50)

5. Effective date

These guidelines take effect 7 May 7 2018 and together with the Administration procedures for discrimination, harassment and offence (HS 2018/193), they replace the following documents:

- Guidelines for the Administration of Matters concerning Equal Rights for Students at the University of Skövde (registration number HS 2015/857)
- Guidelines for Support Persons for Students 2018-2019 (registration number HS 2012/186-112)
- Action Programme for Sexual Harassment and Harassment (registration number HS 2010/204-111)
- Action Programme for Discriminating Actions (registration number HS 2010/203-111)