



# **Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming at the University of Skövde 2023–2025**

The aim of this document is to describe the direction of gender equality work at the University of Skövde from 2023 to 2025.

This document was ratified by the Vice-Chancellor on 23 August, 2022, and is effective from 1 January, 2023.

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Appendix: Remit of the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.

# 1 Background

According to national public service agreements, all Swedish public authorities, including the University of Skövde, have been commissioned to work with gender mainstreaming since 2017. From 2017 to 2019, work on gender mainstreaming was governed by the Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming at the University of Skövde 2017–2019 (registration number HS 2017/250). This work has continued and was further developed in the Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming at the University of Skövde 2020–2022 (registration number HS 2020/931).

The Action Plan for 2023–2025 focuses on furthering the practical details of measures already taken by developing three out of five previously identified impact goals:

- The University will offer norm-critical education and a gender-neutral study environment with fewer gendered educational choices.
- Norm awareness will characterize the allocation of human resources related to research, the process of research applications and the allocation of research funding.
- The University will offer current as well as future members of staff a place of work characterised by norm awareness where the working environment, recruitment, career paths and continuing professional development are not influenced by gender or concepts of gender.

Moreover, there is a more explicit focus on the decentralisation of gender equality matters in the Action Plan for 2023–2025. This means that gender equality matters will be mainstreamed into the operations at the level of Divisions and Schools. Gender equality work is already a part of the remits for Research Group Leaders, Programme Coordinators, Subject Coordinators and Examiners.

# 2 Introduction

According to Chapter 1 Section 5 in the Swedish Higher Education Act, equality between men and women shall always be taken into account and promoted in university operations. The point of departure for this Action Plan is the Swedish Government's policy on gender equality. The overarching goal in the Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men should have equal power to shape society and their own lives. There are six sub-goals: *Equal division of power and influence, Economic gender equality, Equal education, Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care, Equal health and Men's violence against women must stop.*

Gender equality work is in focus at the University, and gender mainstreaming is regarded as part of the quality-enhancing activities. The purpose is to increase and deepen the awareness and knowledge of gender equality matters throughout the whole organisation. Gender equality is a concern for

everybody, and the perspectives of gender equality are to be present in the daily activities within education and research at the University as well as in University-wide areas. In the Strategic Plan for the University of Skövde 2017–2022, there are specific goals related to gender equality.

In preparation for the next overall Strategic Plan of the University, staff members met one day in March 2022 to discuss various focus areas, one of them being gender equality; all staff members had thus the opportunity to express their views and priority needs within the area of gender equality based on their own roles in the organisation.

Here are some needs brought up at the meeting:

- a need to specifically deepen the efforts to reduce gendered choices of studies
- a need to improve the conditions for women and men to pursue academic careers based on equal opportunities
- a need of gender-equal research support and funding
- a need to take both structural and cultural aspects into account within gender equality work

## **3 The organisation of work on gender equality**

### **3.1 The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming**

The Vice-Chancellor is ultimately responsible for the work on gender mainstreaming. The Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor's Management Council have thus the overall responsibility for the planning, execution and follow-up of the work on gender mainstreaming. For the area of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, a special Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming has been set up. The responsibility of this group is to constitute a node in the work on gender mainstreaming and to promote relevant activities and the exchange of experience. The responsibilities and composition of this coordination group are described in more detail in its remit, see the Appendix.

### **3.2 Gender Equality Coordinators**

The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming works in close cooperation with the Gender Equality Coordinator at each School. Apart from being a contact and a bridge between the Coordination Group and the School and its Divisions, these Gender Equality Coordinators are to be well informed of the overall work on gender equality at the University.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Coordinator at each School is to promote the attainment of the School's own goals for gender equality, for example, by raising gender equality questions in relevant bodies and by promoting gender

mainstreaming within both education and research at the School in question in cooperation with the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.

In order to identify and draw attention to needs within areas such as gender equality, plans for competence provision are being developed at the level of Schools and Divisions.

### **3.3 The Human Resources Office**

The convenor of the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming is the Deputy Director of Human Resources, who is also the coordinator of gender mainstreaming in relation to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. The Human Resources Office can offer support on gender issues and norm-critical thinking and can also procure contact details for consultants on gender equality and relevant external course providers. Resources for competence provision on gender equality will be allocated in the University's budget each year.

### **3.4 Collaboration with external actors**

The University participates in relevant meetings arranged by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, for example network meetings. The University also takes part in the gender equality network for a gender-equal Region Västergötland at various levels. Furthermore, the University collaborates with several other Swedish universities on issues such as Human Resources, financing and governance processes. During the preparation of this Action Plan, the University has exchanged experience with the University of Borås.

## **4 Gender equality in education**

Gender equality is an important quality factor in the University's courses and study programmes. Work on gender equality is complex and requires long-term investment in order to reveal factors that may influence how the University's education is organised and run. Quality management at the University is led by the Faculty Board, who takes into account the perspective of gender equality in programme and course syllabi. By extension, this work has an effect on the recruitment of students.

### **4.1 Goals concerning gender equality in education**

*Impact goal 1: The University offers norm-critical education and a gender-neutral study environment with fewer gendered educational choices.*

During the period of 2023 to 2025, the work focuses specifically on furthering the work on gendered educational choices with the addition of *proper treatment* as regards interaction between students as well as between staff members and students. This impact goal supports the gender equality policy

sub-goal *Equal education*, and indirectly the sub-goals *Equal division of power and influence* and *Economic gender equality*.

Challenges:

- The educational choices of students at three of the five Schools of the University are to a great extent characterised by gender segregation, and despite efforts, it is a challenge to be successful in changing these patterns. This is confirmed in the report *Val efter eget kön*\*, showing that gender differences in educational choices are still prevalent within major parts of the formal educational system.

\*The Swedish Gender Equality Agency, Report 2022:4. *Val efter kön, en kunskapssammanställning om könsskillnader i utbildningsval* [Choices Based on One's Own Sex: A Compilation of Knowledge about Gender Differences in Educational Choices].

- There is a risk that gender-stereotyped expressions are unconsciously reproduced in the study environment. Results from the Student Barometer show that the ways students treat each other, in particular during group work, are experienced as challenging from the perspective of gender equality and gendered vulnerability.
- There is zero tolerance as to discrimination and harassment. The University's own investigations as well as the University's own results in the national research study *Sexuella trakasserier och genusbaserad utsatthet i akademien* [Sexual Harassment and Gendered Vulnerability in Academia]\* show that students experience discrimination at the University albeit to a small extent.

\*This prevalence study on gender-based vulnerability at Swedish universities is conducted at the medical university Karolinska Institutet, Malmö University and the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg.

Measures:

- Measures are being taken to make structural obstacles and restraining attitudes visible and to attend to these. The aim is that all courses and study programmes should attract both women and men, irrespective of gender and background.
  - 2023 – Cooperation between the University's Schools will be initiated with the purpose of tackling the question on how to attain a more even sex-distribution in study programmes both internally and in collaboration with external parties.  
Parties responsible: The Gender Equality Coordinators and other parties concerned at the School of Informatics, the School of Engineering and the School of Health Sciences; the Marketing and Communications Office.
  - 2023–2024: Alumni of the underrepresented sex will be asked to engage in the marketing of study programmes.  
Parties responsible: The Gender Equality Coordinators and other parties concerned at the School of Informatics, the School of

Engineering and the School of Health Sciences; the Marketing and Communications Office.

- Efforts will be made to counteract sex-specific differences as to student retention.
  - 2024: There will be systematic follow-ups of student retention from the perspective of gender equality.  
Parties responsible: Subject Coordinators at all Schools in consultation with the relevant Programme Coordinators.
  - 2025: In case of verified undue deviations as to drop-outs, the reasons are to be investigated. Efforts will be made to increase knowledge about why students drop out and what measures may be required to counteract this.  
Parties responsible: Subject Coordinators at all Schools in consultation with the relevant Programme Coordinators.
- The study environment is to be free from harassment and discrimination related to gender and gender identity. There is to be continuous mapping of students' perspectives and experiences of the work on gender equality (including the work against harassment and discrimination related to gender and gender identity).
  - 2023: The Student Barometer shows that there is a need to increase students' knowledge about discrimination and harassment as well as about how students can seek support if they need to. Efforts to increase such knowledge will be made.  
Parties responsible: The Academic Affairs and Student Support Office; the Student Union.
  - 2023: The applicable administrative procedures and processes in cases of discrimination and harassment are to be made more visible, and students' awareness and knowledge about these matters should increase. Students may thereby in a clearer way expect equal opportunities and gender equality and also notice and report shortcomings.  
Parties responsible: Course Coordinators; Programme Coordinators; the Academic Affairs and Student Support Office; the Human Resources Office.
  - 2023: Students' knowledge about *netiquette* (behaviour on the Internet from the perspective of equal opportunities and vulnerability) should increase.  
Parties responsible: The Academic Affairs and Student Support Office together with Course Coordinators and Programme Coordinators.
  - 2024: Efforts should be made to keep *The University is free from discrimination* as an area of strength in the Student Barometer.  
Party responsible: The Academic Affairs and Student Support Office.

- The visibility of the work on gender equality is to increase from the students' perspective.
  - 2024: There will be efforts to disseminate information and increase the dialogue on gender equality matters.  
Parties responsible: The Marketing and Communications Office; the Student Union.
  - 2025, spring semester: There will be a follow-up of impact goal 1 and, if necessary, renewed efforts.  
Party responsible: The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.

## 5 Gender equality within research

Gender equality in research is a prioritised goal. This concerns conditions for pursuing a career, conducting research and receiving research funding.

Research Groups, the Faculty Board and others work actively to apply the perspective of gender equality to research. This work includes all parts of the development, implementation and follow-up of research. This work will continue and deepen during the period of 2023–2025.

### 5.1 Goals relating to gender equality within research

*Impact goal 2: Norm awareness will characterize the allocation of human resources related to research, the process of research applications and the allocation of research funding.*

During the period of 2023–2025, there will be deepened and tangible work particularly on *the opportunities for women to become professors*. Furthermore, there will be a focus on raised awareness of *gender-equal allocation of assignments meritorious for research*. This impact goal supports the gender equality policy sub-goal *Equal division of power and influence* and, indirectly, the sub-goal *Economic gender equality*.

Challenges:

- University-internal investigations show that, within technical subjects, there is a relatively large proportion of students who are women: about a third. Nevertheless, the proportion of professors who are women within these subjects has not increased; instead, it has decreased to fewer than 10 per cent.
- The report *Spotlight on Gender Equality: When Insecurity Overshadows Everything\** shows that women, more often than men, generally assume or are assigned tasks that are not meritorious for the promotion to professor (so called academic housework). The report also shows that it generally takes longer for women than men to earn academic merits.

\*SULF (The Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers), Report 2022.



- It is not known which researchers are actually offered administrative support when they apply for research funding. This has to be investigated from the perspective of gender equality.

Measures:

- The Schools are to work on career planning for staff members of the underrepresented sex.
  - 2023: The systematic work on career planning for staff members of the underrepresented sex is to be clarified at all Schools.  
Parties responsible: The Human Resources Office; relevant Heads at the Schools together with the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.
  - 2024: Career planning for staff members of the underrepresented sex will start. This work will be synchronised with the work on HR Excellence in Research at the Human Resources Office.  
Parties responsible: Heads of Schools and Divisions, based on initiatives from the Gender Equality Coordinators at the Schools; the Human Resources Office.
  - 2025: The career planning for staff members of the underrepresented sex will be evaluated.  
Parties responsible: The Human Resources Office; The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming
- The proportion as well as the number of women should generally increase among staff members conducting research so that an even division is reached for the whole University on average.
  - 2024: Recruitment goals will be set for different types of research positions within various subjects.  
Parties responsible: Staff members responsible for recruitment and promotion; the Human Resources Office.
  - 2025: The work on the recruitment goal will be evaluated.  
Parties responsible: The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming; the Vice-Chancellor's Council for Line Management.
- Within each research environment, the sex-division among professors should become more even. Processes related to the allocation of assignments, including head positions, within research will be more transparent as well as free of discrimination. Processes related to the applications for research funding will be more transparent as well as free of discrimination.
  - 2023–2025: There will be regular follow-ups of statistics on staff and processes.

Parties responsible: The Human Resources Office will follow up the results and present them to the Managing Group of each School.

- Support efforts as to research and the distribution of both internal and external research funding should be evenly divided between the sexes.
  - 2023: The Office for Research Support, Collaboration and Innovation will be commissioned, from the perspective of gender, to follow up on which individuals are selected as recipients of research support. Parties responsible: The Vice-Chancellor through the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.
  - 2024–2025: There will be regular follow-ups of these efforts and, if necessary, a change of efforts. Party responsible: The Office for Research Support, Collaboration and Innovation.
  - 2023: The Finance Office will be commissioned to follow up on the allocation of internal research funding from a gender perspective. Parties responsible: The Vice-Chancellor through the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.
  - 2024–2025: There will be regular follow-ups of these efforts and, if necessary, a change of measures. Parties responsible: The Finance Office; the Vice-Chancellor’s Office (the Operations Controller).
  - 2025, spring semester: There will be a follow-up of impact goal 2 and, if necessary, renewed efforts. Party responsible: The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.

## **6 Gender equality within University-wide areas**

There is to be a perspective of gender equality within all University-wide areas.

### **6.1 Goals related to gender equality within University-wide areas**

*Impact goal 3: The University will offer current as well as future members of staff a place of work characterised by norm awareness and where the working environment, recruitment, career paths and continuing professional development are not influenced by gender or concepts of gender.*

During the period of 2023–2025, there is a specific focus on furthering the practical details concerning *aspects of gender equality as to proper treatment, career paths and structures in academia*, factors that may lead to inequality and that could consequently constitute perspectives of power that might lead

to superordination/subordination. This impact goal supports the gender equality policy sub-goals *Equal division of power and influence*, *Economic gender equality*, *Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care* and *Equal health*.

#### Challenges:

- The research study on sexual harassment and gendered vulnerability in academia mentioned above shows that, from a national perspective, staff members who are women experience vulnerability related to gender to a greater extent than staff members who are men; this may concern bullying and various forms of harassment. The University's own investigations provide the same result, and even if the prevalence is low, the University has a zero-tolerance level in this regard.
- The report *Spotlight on Gender Equality: When Insecurity Overshadows Everything* shows that it is a challenge that researchers who are women, to a greater extent than researchers who are men, are assigned tasks that are not meritorious for their careers.
- There is a risk of unconscious reproduction of gender coding and stereotyping for individual staff members. This may lead to non-neutral treatment between staff members and students as well as between staff members and between students.
- The working environment and satisfaction of staff members are usually regarded as more positive in an environment where there are both men and women. In certain environments, it is difficult to recruit staff members of the underrepresented sex.
- Statistics show that there are sex-specific work-related differences as to sick leave rates and attendance ("frisktal": the proportion of staff members having no more than five days of sick leave per year). Women have more frequent and longer absences due to illness than men.
- There is a risk that a specific group, the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming, is regarded as the only body working for activities and efforts for gender mainstreaming. In the long run, the ambition should be to further integrate gender equality work into the operations of Schools and Divisions as well as into various staff roles at the University.

#### Measures:

- 2023–2025: There will be regular follow-ups of statistics within these areas and, if necessary, specific efforts.  
Parties responsible: The Human Resources Office will follow up the results and present them to the Managing Group of each School.
- 2023: Efforts will be made to increase knowledge and visibility of the gender equality work at the University. The purpose is to increase

knowledge about gender equality and, at the same time, increase the visibility of the work being done. Work culture and treatment of one's co-workers are to be characterised by gender neutrality, and members of staff are to gain knowledge about the existing risk of adopting gender stereotypes and gender labelling.

Parties responsible: The Human Resources Office; the Marketing and Communications Office.

- 2024: Gender equality will be even clearly integrated into regular roles, Management Groups and processes with the purpose of phasing out the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.

Parties responsible: The Vice-Chancellor's Management Council; Heads of Schools and Offices; The Human Resources Office.

- All members of staff should have knowledge about guidelines and administrative procedures for cases of discrimination and harassment.
  - 2023: The visibility of guidelines and administrative procedures for cases of discrimination and harassment is to increase through various efforts.  
Parties responsible: The Human Resources Office; staff members responsible for the recruitment of new staff.
  - 2025, spring semester: There will be a follow-up of impact goal 3 and, if necessary, renewed efforts.  
Party responsible: The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming.

## 7 The follow-up of gender equality work

The University's work related to gender mainstreaming is followed up within the University's regular quality work and in connection with reports to the Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor's Management Council. Apart from that, there are follow-ups on gender equality work in the annual reports, in the analysis of the results from staff member surveys and within the area of equal opportunities. Moreover, new Actions Plans are ratified annually at the Schools and the Support Services, and gender mainstreaming is included in these.

The Faculty Board follows up the area of gender equality when establishing and following up subjects, programmes and research environments.

Apart from what has been described above, the Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming is responsible for following up this Action Plan. The Coordination Group for Gender Mainstreaming is also responsible for reports about the work on gender mainstreaming, both internally and externally.

## **8 This document is effective**

This document is effective from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025 and replaces the Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming 2020–2022 (registration number HS 2020/931).