



Office of the President

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Preamble to Stockholm University application for HR Excellence in Research Award

Background

This document serves as an introductory guide to Stockholm University's application for the HR Excellence in Research Award. Its purpose is to support readers in navigating the application by providing essential contextual information about the University, its organisational structure, and the national framework within which Swedish higher education institutions operate. As the application refers to university-wide governance arrangements, decision-making processes, and the roles of various organisational units, this preamble offers an overview to help situate these elements and facilitate a clearer understanding of the Gap Analysis and Action Plan.

Because Stockholm University operates within a national legal framework specific to Swedish public-sector higher education institutions, the document also briefly outlines key aspects of Swedish legislation relevant to research and employment. This includes the constitutional foundations of Swedish governance, national labour laws governing academic employment, and the role of collective agreements in shaping working conditions for researchers and staff. These contextual elements are crucial for understanding how the University interprets and implements the principles of the European Charter for Researchers.

Where is Stockholm University?

Sweden has a diverse higher education landscape, consisting of both comprehensive universities and more specialised institutions distributed across the country. Figure 1 displays the geographical spread of higher education institutions in Sweden.

The core principle of Swedish higher education policy has historically been that all Swedish higher education institutions should conduct both research and education, and that these two should feed each other. The research institutes are relative to the universities small in number and size, which differ from many other European countries.

Stockholm University is located in Sweden's capital, Stockholm. The city is in the country's largest urban area, with an estimated 1.75 million inhabitants in 2026. As a major metropolitan region, Stockholm hosts several higher education institutions that vary in disciplinary focus, size, and mission.

Among these, Stockholm University, Karolinska Institutet, and the Royal Institute of Technology together constitute the three largest research universities in the city. Each institution has a distinct academic profile: Karolinska Institutet is profiled towards medicine, the Royal Institute of Technology is profiled towards engineering, and Stockholm University is a broad, comprehensive research university with strong disciplinary coverage across the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and law. The three universities collaborate through the University Alliance *Stockholm Trio*, a strategic partnership established to strengthen interdisciplinary research, education, and joint action at regional, national, and international levels. Figure 2 illustrates the geographical location of the three Stockholm Trio universities, Stockholm University, Karolinska Institutet, and the Royal Institute of Technology, situated in the northern inner parts of Stockholm.



Figure 1: The location of Higher Education Institutions in Sweden in 2025. *Source:* Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2025.



Figure 2: The location of Stockholm University and the two other large universities in Stockholm. *Source:* Stockholm University, 2025.

Organisation

Stockholm University offers a broad range of educational programmes closely integrated with research. With more than 30,000 full-time equivalent students, around 1,300 doctoral candidates, and 5,400 employees, the university conducts education and research in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and law.

To help understand some of the texts in the Gap Analysis and Action Plan, the organisation chart of the university is shown below.

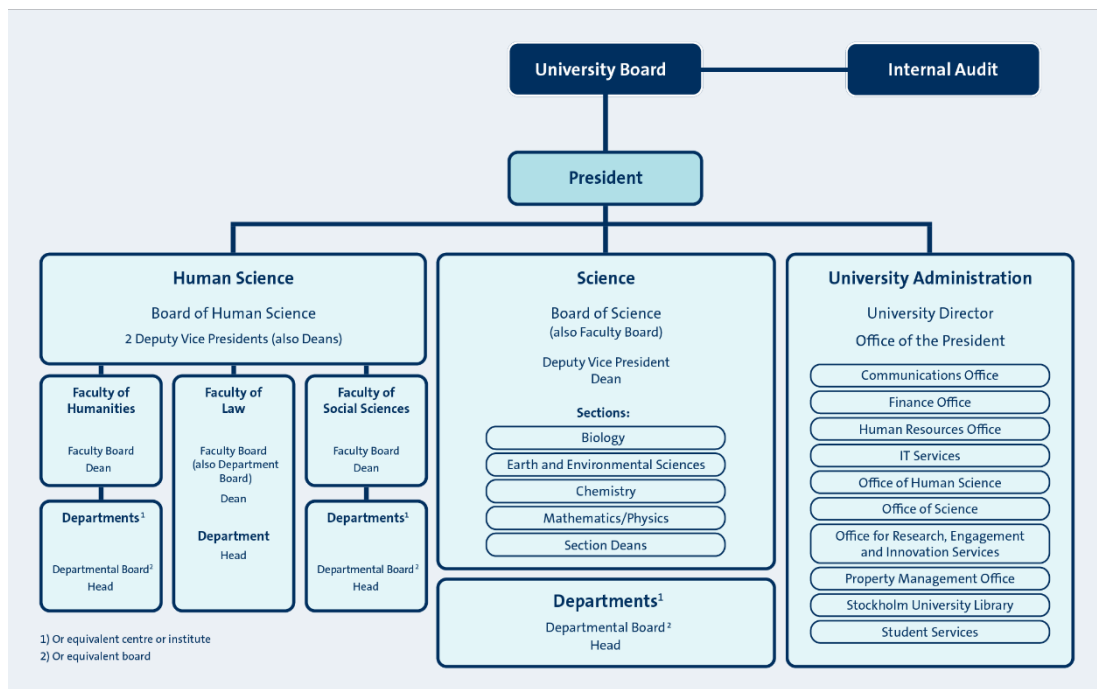


Figure 3: The organisation of Stockholm University.

Stockholm University is a national public authority governed by laws, ordinances, and decisions issued by the Swedish Parliament and Government.

The University Board is the highest decision-making body, responsible for the overall direction of the University, including its budget, organisational structure, and annual report. The University Board is also supported by an independent Internal Audit function that reports directly to the Board and reviews the University's internal governance and controls in accordance with national regulations.

The University is led by the President, who serves as the head of the institution, together with the Vice President, three Deputy Vice Presidents, and the University Director. In addition to the formal organisational chart, the President is supported by a number of advisory bodies not depicted above, which prepare decision-making across research, education and general operations.

Education and research are organised within internal organisations, known as *academic areas*. They consist of the *Human Science academic area* and the *The Science academic area*. Although the academic areas are very different by nature, they are both governed by a domain board. Furthermore, the Human Science Domain comprises three faculties (Humanities, Law, and Social Sciences), while the Science Domain functions as both a domain and a faculty.

In total, research and education are conducted across 51 departments, centres, and institutes led by Heads of Departments (or directors in the case of centres and institutes).

Administrative support is provided by the University Administration, comprising 11 divisions under the leadership of the University Director, ensuring the University can effectively deliver its core missions of education, research, and societal engagement.

University strategies

[Stockholm University's Strategies 2023–2026](#) set out the University's overarching vision, core values, and long-term priorities. The strategies articulate the University's fundamental academic values: autonomy, academic freedom, knowledge, enlightenment, and the pursuit of truth. They also describe how these principles guide research, education, and collaboration across the institution. Within this framework, the University has identified four strategic areas that shape its direction for the coming years: internationally leading research; broad, high-quality research-based education; a well-functioning organisation with strong academic environments and strategic skills provision; and a clear societal role that contributes to democracy and sustainable development. The strategies also encompass 16 profile areas representing strong research and educational environments that characterise the University's academic breadth. Implementation of the strategies is embedded in the University's layered leadership model, in which departments, faculties, and senior management share responsibility for translating the strategic direction into operational practice through trust-based governance and collegial dialogue. Altogether, the strategies provide the structural and conceptual framework within which Stockholm University develops its activities and aligns them with national, European, and global expectations for high-quality research and education.

As the current strategies enter their final year of validity, a revision is being prepared through an internal dialogue involving a wide range of groups and representatives across the University, to adopt a new set of strategies for the 2027–2030 period.

Swedish legislation

A distinction is made between fundamental laws and other laws. The fundamental laws contain basic rules as to how the country is to be governed and take precedence over all other laws. The Government can also make decisions about the rules that are to apply in Sweden. These rules are known as ordinances. All new laws and ordinances are published in the Swedish Code of Statutes (SFS).

The Constitution

Like most other democracies, Sweden has a written Constitution that sets out the rules for how society shall be governed. The Constitution consists of four fundamental laws.

- The Instrument of Government
- The Act of Succession
- The Freedom of the Press Act
- The Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression
 - The Riksdag Act

Riksdag Act is not a fundamental law but falls between a fundamental law and an ordinary law.

The fundamental laws take precedence over all other laws. This means that other laws may never conflict with the provisions of the fundamental laws.

Swedish labour law

The Swedish labour legislation generally applies to all sectors in the Swedish labour market. The legislation assures employees' fundamental rights, such as employment security, vacation, and regulated working hours.

In addition, some laws apply only to the government sector, for example, regarding the appointment procedure and disciplinary sanctions. Most Swedish universities and institutes of higher education are under governmental authority and as a result, more than 90% of academic staff are employed within the state sector.

Government employees are also guaranteed special rights under the Swedish Constitution, for example, a broad right to criticise their employer.

Compared with many other European countries, Swedish labour legislation is not particularly extensive or detailed. It is mainly to be seen as protective legislation that guarantees employees basic protections. Instead, employees' terms of employment are governed mainly by collective agreements. The Swedish labour market is characterised by a high degree of organisation and a low level of organisational fragmentation.

Collective agreements

Collective agreements complement the labour law. There are both central and local collective agreements. The central collective agreements apply either within the entire government sector or part of it, for instance, the higher education sector.

In the government sector, there are central collective agreements that regulate pensions, holiday pay during leave, and compensation for personal injury. There are also central collective agreements that allow specific grounds for temporary employment.

At higher education institutions, the parties may negotiate local collective agreements. What can be regulated by local collective agreements is determined by law and the central collective agreements. Among the issues more closely regulated by local collective agreements is the distribution of working hours. Sweden has chosen to legally regulate that the terms of collective agreements in the government sector also apply to non-unionised employees. This means that the collective agreement's regulations still cover an individual who is not unionised.

In a personal employment contract, the parties may more closely regulate the conditions of employment, provided that this does not conflict with other laws or collective agreements. It is common for the parties to an individual employment contract to specify the conditions for the initial basic salary and where the work is to be performed.