



## DECISION

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## Direction for Gender Mainstreaming 2023–2025

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## Background

In 2016, the Swedish Government tasked all higher education institutions for which the Government is the accountable authority with developing their work with gender mainstreaming. Stockholm University prepared its first plan for gender mainstreaming in 2017. The third such plan has been developed during 2022 based on the measures implemented over recent years.

In its appropriation instructions for 2022, the Government formulates the task thus:

Higher education institutions shall continue their work with gender mainstreaming so that their organisations can contribute to achieving the gender equality policy goals (written communication 2016/17:10) on matters such as equal career opportunities, gendered study choices and student completion. Higher education institutions shall identify gender equality problems within core operations that they can contribute to solving. No later than 1 September 2022, higher education institutions shall submit an account of their strategy for ongoing work with gender mainstreaming for the period 2023–2025 to the Government Offices of Sweden (Ministry of Employment and Ministry of Education and Research). Higher education institutions shall also give an account of how they give due consideration to gender equality when allocating research funds. This assignment can advantageously be combined with other assignments.

The overarching goal of the Swedish Government's gender equality policy is that women and men should have equal power to shape society and their own lives. The points of departure for gender mainstreaming, which is a policy strategy, are the six gender equality policy sub-goals: 1. Equal division of power and influence 2. Economic gender equality 3. Equal education 4. Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care 5. Equal health 6. Men's violence against women must end.

To some extent, these goals overlap with the statutory requirement placed on education providers to take active measures to prevent discrimination in admission and recruitment procedures, teaching methods and the organisation of education, examinations and assessments of students' performance, the study environment, and possibilities to reconcile studies with parenthood. Stockholm University's overarching work with active measures takes place on the Work Environment and Equal Opportunities Council (RALV).

Gender equality and quality education for all are also two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, which seek to achieve gender

equality and empower all women and girls and ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The description of the gender equality goal states that political, economic and social equality between women and men contributes to all dimensions of sustainable development. The description of the quality education goal states that inclusive quality education that meets people's need for lifelong learning is one of the most important pillars of prosperity, health and gender equality in every society. Stockholm University can contribute to the SDGs in a variety of ways, including by increasing knowledge of gender and gender equality through research and education, by working to increase gender equality within our own organisation and by promoting gender equality in lifelong learning.

## Gender inequality in the higher education sector

On an overall level, much of the higher education sector's inequality problem can be attributed to the different career paths for women and men in academia, or as the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) summarised the situation in a report from 2016:

Despite the facts that, since 1977, a majority of those entering higher education are women, that women have a higher student completion rate and that more women graduate, fewer women than men go on to reach the highest rungs of the academic career ladder. While women are in the majority among lecturers, after many years of various attempts to come to grips with inequality, the number of female professors has increased to 25 per cent nationally (UKÄ report 2016:16 *Kvinnor och män i högskolan* [Women and Men in Higher Education]).

Depending how one looks at it, this 'leaking pipe' of a problem may be the result of women somehow vanishing along the academic career path or of the successive enrichment of men the higher up the hierarchy one progresses. The problem encompasses a number of factors, processes, behaviours and experiences related to sex, gender and gender awareness at an individual, organisational and societal level, both those that are established early in life and those that manifest later in academia. Inequality in academia is by now a well-explored theme and there are many studies and literature reviews on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

## Responsibilities and objectives

In line with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda, Stockholm University considers gender equality to be an important element of sustainability management. Education and research promote growth, economic equality and gender equality and are thus prerequisites for eradicating poverty, fostering a democratic society and strengthening the position of women.

In the document *Strategies for Stockholm University 2019–2022*, the objectives of the University’s work with sustainability are expressed as follows: “In a changing, globalised world, the University must *make a long-term contribution to a sustainable democratic society built on a solid and broad scientific foundation*. This foundation is continuously added to by research that seeks new knowledge and disseminates that knowledge through courses and programmes and in collaboration with the surrounding community” (p. 2).

*Strategies for Stockholm University 2019–2022* also underlines the importance of gender equality alongside equal opportunities. It is emphasised that “the work and study environment shall safeguard the resources that staff and students from diverse backgrounds and life situations and with various skills bring to the university. Staff and students shall be treated equally and with respect” (p. 3).

Since 2020, responsibility for planning, implementing and following up Stockholm University’s gender mainstreaming work has resided with the President’s advisory body the Interdisciplinary Council, which is comprised of the Senior Management Team and student representatives. Gender mainstreaming is coordinated within the Office of the President.

The remit of the Interdisciplinary Council covers adjacent university-wide strategic issues, such as sustainable development and gender equality. The council also deals with the quality assurance of and governance documents related to education and research.

In the plan for the period 2017–2019, the objectives of gender mainstreaming were described in terms of a process to be initiated within the University that would eventually result in:

- gender equality becoming an integrated part of the University’s day-to-day activities, for example, in various kinds of management processes;
- transparent, unambiguous university-wide governance documents and preparatory and decision-making processes that lead to high-quality recruitment and gender equal study and career paths, as well as legal certainty for staff and students;
- managers and leaders with the ability to actively prevent gender inequality and discrimination, such as when recruiting staff and doctoral students, and create good everyday working conditions for teachers, researchers and technical and administrative staff; and

- employees adopting a gender-aware approach to improve the quality of education, research and administration in both form and content, and to actively prevent gender inequality and discrimination against both students/doctoral students and colleagues.

## Gender mainstreaming 2017–2021

### Activities

Since 2017, Stockholm University has been implementing measures and activities formulated in two action plans, one covering the period 2017–2019 and one 2020–2021. Work on gender mainstreaming has thus far covered the four areas that constitute the University's core operations (total activities, some overlapping between areas, in brackets).

- Organisation och management (13 activities)
- Preparatory and decision-making processes (7 activities)
- Education (9 activities)
- Research (3 activities)

Two things that all of the activities thus far implemented within the framework of the two earlier gender mainstreaming action plans have in common are a desire to increase the transparency of important preparatory and decision-making processes within the University and to increase gender awareness and understanding of the issue of gender inequality among staff and students alike.

### Target groups

Up to this point, the primary target groups for the University's efforts have been managers, supervisors and directors of studies. Teacher recruitment and promotion procedures have been the focus of several activities, not least surveys (sometimes conducted by external experts) and training initiatives, including a course on gender mainstreaming for managers, the development of a training programme for directors of studies and an inventory of decisions delegated to directors of studies.

Teachers and students have also been the target groups for several higher education pedagogy activities, including the introduction of course elements on gender and gender-related intended learning outcomes in third-cycle courses and programmes, VFU supervisor training, courses on teaching and learning in higher education and continuing professional development courses for study and career counsellors, but also through a review of the third-cycle admission process and an analysis of disciplinary cases from a gender perspective. The University has, however,

identified a need for more specific activities specifically focused on students/doctoral students.

## **Problem areas and planned activities 2023–2025**

During the period 2023–2025, Stockholm University will continue with the earlier approach to gender mainstreaming as an ongoing, long-term process. The planned activities are either a direct continuation of implemented activities in already identified problem areas or new activities in recently identified problem areas. Some activities are already known and have been prepared during the year, while others are still under discussion and will be added to the new gender mainstreaming action plan for the period 2023–2025. The identified problem areas to be addressed by the activities in the new action plan are described below.

### **Career paths and invisible power structures – background and problem formulation**

Just like any other Swedish higher education institution, Stockholm University has specific recruitment targets to increase the number of female professors.<sup>2</sup> That said, this problem cannot be solved at the highest level; we are leaking talented women earlier in their academic career and during their studies. Nor is this simply a matter of fixing the leak by increasing formal opportunities to carve a career, but very much about hidden and informal power structures that make it difficult for women to do so.

A survey conducted by the Central Doctoral Student Council in 2015 revealed a relative decrease in the percentage of female postdoctoral researchers (from approximately five years after graduating) compared to female doctoral students at three of the University's four faculties.<sup>3</sup> This trend was most pronounced in the Science Academic Area. This relative decline was largely associated with male-dominated departments, while in female-dominated and gender-balanced departments there was a slight increase in the percentage of women at postdoctoral level. The Doctoral Student Council's survey also revealed that the percentage of women continues to decline between doctoral/postdoctoral levels and appointment as a senior lecturer or professor. The report does however note that this decrease is more ambiguous given that the percentage of women with a PhD was lower in the generation that constitutes the recruitment pool for these positions, even if there is still a clear discrepancy within the faculties of science and social sciences. A further complication is that the present-day recruitment pool for senior lecturers and professors is very much international, particular in certain field of research and development, a factor that makes comparison more difficult.

The report also notes that women tend to drop out earlier in their careers in subjects in which women are in the minority and later in subjects in which women are in the majority. As the report's authors observe: "this statistic demonstrates that the point at which the academic career is terminated or stagnates is linked to the gender composition of the field of research and development" (2015, p. 6). The reports conclusion is that, while much work has been done with gender-equality when it comes to recruiting professors, it would be beneficial to intensify interventions at the lower levels of male-dominated subjects, i.e., among doctoral students and recently graduated PhDs.

A survey conducted at a department in the Science Academic Area at Stockholm University a few years ago confirms the hypothesis advanced by, among others, Jonas Lindahl in his doctoral thesis: that gender differences in scientific productivity begin during doctoral studies. Lindahl also demonstrates that the gender gap in productivity during third-cycle studies can be explained by opportunities to network and the extent to which the doctoral students co-author publications with their principal supervisors.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the latter may impact women and men differently when assessing independence in conjunction with applications for project grants. In regular gender equality observations of its grant application review panels, the Swedish Research Council has found that, in opinions recommending rejection, women are more likely to be assessed as lacking in independence than men.<sup>5</sup>

One measure proposed in the Doctoral Student Council's report is to investigate whether women who pursue an academic career after defending their doctoral thesis are more likely than their male colleagues to take on teaching and administrative duties and, if so, if this is subject-dependent (2015, p. 7). A survey of one of the departments in the Science Academic Area confirms that women awarded a PhD were indeed more likely to remain with their home department and to work with teaching or administrative tasks.

Out of necessity, several of the activities in earlier gender mainstreaming action plans have touched on this problem area. Earlier interventions will also generate new activities that will be detailed in the new action plan. The identified problem of a 'leaking pipe' can be expressed as follows:

**Gender inequality problem 1:** Women are in the minority in academia.

**Planned activities: purpose and scope 2025**

Activities within this problem area should be aimed at addressing identified – and, primarily, informal – power structures within the University, for example,

by investigating whether ‘academic housework’ is an issue at any departments and, where necessary, taking measures to counter any gender inequality that impedes career development. Other activities are intended to counteract gender bias within formal power structures, especially those that affect recruitment and promotion. These include placing gender observers on academic appointment boards and investigating how different mentor programmes for teachers and researchers work in practice and, where necessary, taking measures to strengthen gender equality.

**Long-term impact:**

Women and men have the same opportunities to have an academic career. The percentage of female professors continues to rise.

**Indicators:**

Professors (women/men)  
Professors recruited over the most recent five-year period (women/men)  
Promotions to professor (women/men) in relation to the recruitment pool

### **The study and work environment for doctoral students**

In 2012, the then Swedish National Agency for Higher Education investigated why doctoral students drop out of third-cycle studies.<sup>6</sup> The most common reason was social or other factors that might come under the private reasons<sup>7</sup> (35%), with study itself in second place (31%). Among female doctoral students, social factors were most common (43%), again followed by study itself (just under 31%). Among male doctoral students third-cycle study itself was the most common cause (just under 32%) and then social reasons (just under 28%).

If one examines the specific contributory causes related to third-cycle study in itself in more detail, an interesting gender difference emerges. Respondents were asked to choose one or more factors from a list of 34, 10 of which related to third-cycle study itself.<sup>8</sup>

Both women and men stated that study-related factors contributed to their decision to drop out. The most common factor among both women and men was inadequate support from supervisors. Among men, inadequate support and loss of motivation were equally common (just over and just under 38% respectively), followed by a deficient psychosocial work environment (19%). When women were asked, deficiencies in the psychosocial work environment were in second place. It was





significantly more common for women to drop out due to deficiencies in the psychosocial work environment than men (just over 38% compared to 19%).

The most common social factor behind drop out was simply not enjoying taking a doctorate. Almost one in three (31%) women gave this as a reason for dropping out of their studies compared to less than one in five men (19%). Women were also more likely than men to cite ill health as an obstacle to continued studies (12% compared to 4%). Family reasons were cited by roughly the same percentage of women and men.

In 2016, UKÄ conducted a survey of doctoral students' opinions about their studies.<sup>9</sup> The responses showed that feeling stressed to such an extent that it had negative consequence was more common among female doctoral students (59%) than male (50%). Sick leave for over 14 days was also more common among women than men (13% compared to 5%), as was working while sick (63% compared to 54%).

Several surveys of ill health among students and doctoral students have been conducted over recent years. Among others, Stockholm University decided to conduct a staff survey specifically for doctoral students when it became apparent that sick leave at the university was higher among women than men. When the material was analysed, female doctoral students stuck out among women as a group. A national prevalence study, the *Research and Collaboration Programme on Gender-based violence and Sexual Harassment in Academia*, is also underway covering students, doctoral students and staff at Swedish higher education institutions. An international pilot study in which Stockholm University is participating, the *World Mental Health International College Student Initiative*, is also worthy of mention. Although the initiative is targeted solely at new newly admitted to higher education, it is reasonable to assume that the results will have some bearing on the University's planned activities targeted at students (see below), especially as thus far it has corroborated previous findings that self-assessed mental health is worse among women than men.

The national prevalence study does not reveal any alarming gender inequality above the national average at Stockholm University. The University's results are roughly in line with the national average and figures are generally low, with only minor differences between groups. That said, there are signs of perceived gender inequality. The study's conclusion is that the behaviours investigated in the survey are generally experienced more often by women, and especially female doctoral students, compared to respondents as a whole.

For example, women at Stockholm University, especially female doctoral students, are slightly more likely to have been subjected to bullying during the previous year. Women, and once again female doctoral students in particular, were also more likely to report being asked intrusive questions, being stared or leered at and unwelcome touching than men. In terms of the psychosocial study and work environment, female doctoral students were more likely than other groups to have experienced offensive or disrespectful comments. Experiences of sexual innuendo are twice as common among women as men. Approximately 10 per cent of female employees, including doctoral students, have experienced unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing on at least one occasion. Women are also twice as likely to experience sexual innuendo as men. Female employees and doctoral students were twice as likely as respondents as a whole to have been targeted with anger outbursts or “temper tantrums” on at least one occasion during the past 12 months.

The identified problem for doctoral students can be expressed as follows:

**Gender inequality problem 2:** Ill health is more common among female doctoral students than male.

**Planned activities: purpose and scope 2025**

Activities within this problem area should be aimed at countering ill health, especially among female doctoral students. This may, for example, take the form of strengthening and developing existing third-cycle programmes in various ways to prevent ill health and improve the study and work environment for both women and men.

**Long-term impact:** Sick leave is at the same level among doctoral students as other academic staff at Stockholm University.

The percentage of doctoral students who complete their third-cycle programme increases.

**Indicators:** Sick leave among doctoral students (women/men

The number of doctoral students (women/men) who complete their third-cycle programme within eight years

## Student's gendered study choices – background and problem formulation

The University's assignment to widen recruitment is to some extent linked to gender mainstreaming. Sex and gender are perspectives that unite the two assignments. This also applies to the problem of gendered study choices.

In February 2022, UKÄ presented the results of a thematic evaluation of broader recruitment at Swedish higher education institutions. This included a number of recommendations that may have a bearing on our gender mainstreaming activities. Among other things, UKÄ recommended that universities should to a greater extent develop knowledge and compile statistics on the student population at programme level, so that they can be better at defining objectives and target groups.

With regard to gendered study choices, UKÄ notes that Swedish higher education institutions tend to focus much more on recruiting women to male-dominated programmes than vice versa. This is particularly true of teacher training for preschool and primary school.

In addition to this survey, UKÄ's institutional reviews of higher education institutions' quality assurance processes are also relevant. Results of a review of Stockholm University were published in December 2021. One of the assessment areas was gender equality, an area in which the University was rated "satisfactory". UKÄ highlights strengths and recommends areas for improvement in the field of gender equality. For example, the review showed that one of our strengths is the inclusion of gender equality as a criterion when establishing new study programmes at the University and in reviews conducted to enhance the quality of our courses and programmes. The commitment of management to gender equality was also underlined as a strength, as was the systematic inclusion of gender equality aspects in recruitment and promotion processes.

The following areas for improvement were highlighted:

- The higher education institutions should problematise and discuss the term *gender equality* in order to increase awareness that it is more than a matter of the percentage of women and men in any given category.
- The higher education institutions should adopt more education-focused instruments for mapping, risk-assessing, analysing and planning measures when following up perceived gender equality with both students and doctoral students.

- The higher education institutions should follow up and obtain feedback to ensure that proposed measures are actually implemented.

The areas for improvement highlighted in both the institutional review and the thematic review of widened recruitment will be interwoven with our ongoing gender mainstreaming work. The work will also include qualitative targets related to demonstrating knowledge about men's violence against women and domestic violence.

The identified problem for students for can be expressed as follows:

**Gender inequality problem 3:** It is difficult to recruit and retain men in certain female-dominated vocational programmes.

#### **Planned activities: purpose and scope 2025**

Activities within this problem area should be aimed at increasing gender awareness among both teachers and students concerning the problems that primarily affect men in female-dominated vocational programmes, and preparing students for the gender inequality issues they may come across in their future occupations, such as violence and harassment. One long-term objective of these activities is to be able to influence recruitment to these vocational programmes by targeting measures at young men in particular.

**Long-term impact:** More men choose female-dominated vocational programmes.

More men graduate from female-dominated vocational programmes, thus reducing the gender imbalance in the profession.

#### **Indicators:**

The number/percentage of men enrolling in each vocational programme

The number/percentage of men graduating from each vocational programme

## **End notes**

<sup>1</sup> One early study of the state of academia from a gender perspective is the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into Measures to Promote Gender Research (U 1995:01), *Viljan att veta och viljan att förstå – Kön, makt och den kvinnovetenskapliga utmaningen i högre utbildning* [The Will to Know and the Will to Understand: Sex, Power and the Challenge of

Women's Studies in Higher Education] (SOU 1995:110), which notes that “many are the inquiries and reports that time and time again analyse the situation and establish that gender discrimination in universities is structural” (p.8). The report also observes that central government had repeatedly earmarked funds to address the gender inequality identified over the previous 20 years, including funds set aside in Government Bill 1992/93:169, Higher Education for Greater Skills, to “correct students’ previous wrong choices”, i.e., women’s choices not to study engineering and science.

Commissioned by the Delegation for Gender Equality in Higher Education, Drude Dahlerup’s *Jämställdhet i akademien – en forskningsöversikt* [Gender Equality in Academia: A Research Overview] (2010) was published 15 years later. The Delegation’s final report to the Swedish Government, *Svart på vitt – om jämställdhet i akademien* [Black and White: On Gender Equality in Academia] (SOU 2011:1), was published in 2011. The Swedish Council for Higher Education was subsequently tasked with compiling and analysing the projects supported by the Delegation. In 2014, almost 20 years after the publication of SOU 1995:110, this resulted in the report *Jämställdhet i högskolan – ska den nu ordnas en gång för alla?* [Equality in Higher Education: Once and For All?].

UKÄ and its predecessor the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education have monitored gender equality in higher education, both in specific areas such as third-cycle studies and more generally. In 2005, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education published the report *Dold diskriminering på akademiska arenor – osynligt, synligt, subtilt* [Hidden Discrimination in Academic Arenas: Invisible, Visible, Subtle] (Liisa Husu, rapport 2005:41). In 2016, UKÄ published the report *Kvinnor och män i högskolan* [Women and Men in Higher Education] (Report 2016:16), containing statistics on gender equality in higher education and working life between 2004/05 and 2014/15. In 2022, UKÄ published the report *Karriärvägar och meriteringsystem i högskolan: Redovisning av ett regeringsuppdrag 2022* [Career Paths and Qualification Systems in Higher Education: Report on a Government Assignment 2022] (Report 2022:6), which includes several sections on gender equality.

The Swedish Research Council monitors gender equality, among other things through regular gender equality observations of its own grant application review panels since 2012. In 2021, the Swedish Research Council published the report *Hur jämställt är det i högskolan? Kvinnors och mäns förutsättningar att bedriva research* [How Gender Equal is Higher Education? The Conditions for Women and Men to Conduct Research] (VR 2106).

Trade unions also monitor gender equality in academia. For example, in 2020, SACO published the report *Lönar sig högre utbildning? Livslönerapport 2020* [Does Higher Education Pay: Life Earnings Report 2020]. In 2022, the Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers (SULF) published the report *Spotlight on Gender Equality: When*

*Insecurity Overshadows Everything*, examining deficiencies in gender equality within academia with the focus on the work environment and women's and men's conditions for having a career in good health.

<sup>2</sup> Stockholm University's target is that 48 per cent of newly recruited professors should be women. The average for the past three years is 40 per cent. In 2021, women accounted for 35 per cent of professors at the University (Annual Report 2021). The gender balance of professors varies greatly between faculties (figures for 2020): Faculty of Science, 74 per cent men; Faculty of Social Sciences, 73 per cent men; Faculty of Law, 65 per cent men; and Faculty of Humanities, 46 per cent men. There are also deviations within each faculty at departmental level.

<sup>3</sup> *Postdoktoral karriär vid Stockholms universitet ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv* [A Gender Equality Perspective on Postdoctoral Careers at Stockholm University] (Central Doctoral Student Council, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> *In search of future excellence: Bibliometric indicators, gender differences, and predicting research performance in the early career* (Umeå University, Department of Sociology, doctoral thesis, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Among reports that comment on divergent assessments of independence are *Jämställdhet i Vetenskapsrådets forskningsstöd 2011–2012* [Gender Equality in the Swedish Research Council's Research Grants 2011–2012] (Swedish Research Council, 2014) and *A Gender-Neutral Process: Gender Equality Observations on the Swedish Research Council's Review Panels 2016* (Swedish Research Council report 1619, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> *Orsaker till att doktorander lämnar forskarutbildningen utan examen – en uppföljning av nybörjarna på forskarnivå läsåren 1999/2000 och 2000/01* [Reasons Why Doctoral Students Leave Third-cycle Studies Without a Degree: A Follow-up of New Entrants to Third-cycle Studies in the Academic Years 1999/2000 and 2000/01] (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education Report 2012:1 R).

<sup>7</sup> The social factors were: not enjoying taking a doctorate, the difficulty of combining studies with family life, illness, parental leave, moving within Sweden, moving abroad, military service, and other.

<sup>8</sup> The factors related to third-cycle study itself were: inadequate support from supervisors, lost motivation, deficiencies in the psychosocial work environment, the conditions were not as promised, wrong specialisation, deficiencies in the physical work environment, the programme was too difficult, being discriminated against, being sexually harassed, and other.



<sup>9</sup> *Doktorandspegeln. En enkät om doktorandernas studiesituation* [The Doctoral Mirror: A Survey of Doctoral Students' Opinions About Their Studies] (UKÄ 2016:18).

This decision has been reached by President Astrid Söderbergh Widding in the presence of Vice President Professor Clas Hättestrand and head of planning Karin Lindén Fürstenbach. Representatives of the student body have been informed and offered the opportunity to comment. Also present was Ulf Nyman, Office of the President (minutes taker). The matter was presented by Malin Cederth Wahlström of the Management Secretariat.