

# Gender equality plan at Mälardalen University 2022–2023



**MÄLARDALENS HÖGSKOLA  
ESKILSTUNA VÄSTERÅS**

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## Background

In 2016, Sweden's universities and colleges were tasked by the Government to develop a plan for how higher education institutions intend to further develop efforts regarding gender mainstreaming. The objective was that the organisations would contribute to reaching the goals of the gender equality policies, for instance in issues relating to equal opportunities in career progression, gender-based study choices and student completion rates. The plan would include development needs, goals and activities that the university intended to take and implement during 2017–2019. Furthermore, the plan would describe how gender equality should be integrated and become part of the higher education institution's regular operations, for example in the university's governance processes.

In 2017, Mälardalen University (MDU) established the *Plan for gender mainstreaming at Mälardalen University (2017/1308)*. The plan was extended and revised for the period 2020-2021.

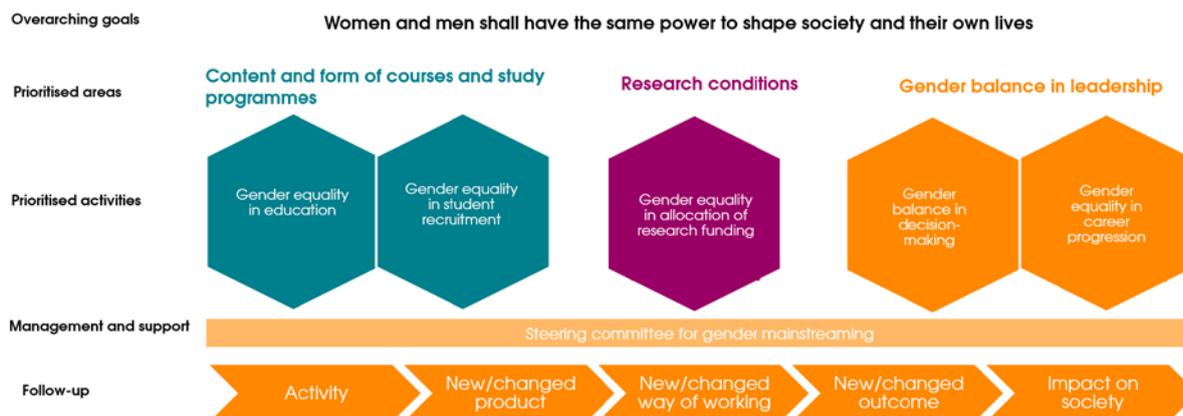
In this revised version for 2022-2023 the action plan has been developed according to MDU's experiences, maturity of the work and new requirements and objectives.

## Resources

Resources for the implementation of the action plan are includes ordinary organisation and in separate Vice-Chancellor decisions.

## Gender mainstreaming at Mälardalen University

Work on gender mainstreaming is headed by a steering committee where the University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor is the Chair. The steering committee develops an action plan that is decided on by the Vice-Chancellor.



## Skills

Skills-enhancing measures are ongoing. Material, web-based courses, checklists and reports on gender equality are available to all employees on the University's internal portal. Gender equality is included as a component in the compulsory higher education courses. Gender mainstreaming arranges conferences and workshops for higher education purposes on areas where development needs are identified.

## Follow-up

The indicators that show that gender mainstreaming is working are followed up primarily in the University's annual report. The activities carried out in the action plan are also followed up by the gender mainstreaming steering committee. The follow-up by the steering committee takes place according to a chain of results where activities (workshops, courses, etc.) lead to new products (procedures, processes, templates, etc.). These strive to lead to new ways of working, which in turn lead to more equal outcomes. In the long term, the University's efforts are expected to be part of the national and international initiatives that are being carried out to promote gender equality.

## The Action Plan

Mälardalen University has identified three focus areas for the efforts to promote gender mainstreaming. *The content and form of courses and study programmes, the conditions for research and gender balance in leadership.* All the areas work towards Sweden's overall gender equality policy goals, *that men and women should have the same power and opportunity to shape society and their own lives.* In some respects, these efforts may also strive towards other gender equality policies or the Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

### Content and form of courses and study programmes

Women and men should have the same opportunities and conditions in terms of education, study choices and personal development. Mälardalen University therefore wants to work in an integrated and systematic way to counteract inequality in the form and content of the courses and study programmes. The goal is to ensure that our students have a good study time and that in their future professional roles they have the knowledge necessary to deal with the consequences of inequality in their professional practice and society in general. In order to achieve this goal, the University needs to integrate knowledge about gender and gender equality both in the content of the degree programmes and in our own didactic professionalism.

Another challenge for the University is to counteract the lop-sided gender imbalance that exists in several of our degree programmes and third-cycle subject areas. The background to the gender-based study choices is complex, but in order to counteract the norms about

male and female influence on the choice of study, we need to work strategically, long-term and in collaboration with primary and lower-secondary schools and working life.

## **Research conditions**

Reports show that at a structural level, it is more difficult for women to have a career progression at higher education institutions. Women experience more stress, are more exposed to harassment than men, and account for a greater withdrawal of parental benefits and have higher sick leave rates<sup>1</sup>. Overall, this means that women do not have the same opportunities as men to advance in the academic community and it takes on average more time for women than for men to have a reasonable career progression<sup>2</sup>. The conditions differ between research specialisations and it is therefore important that the University works systematically to improve the opportunities for both men and women to pursue a career based on the individual research specialisation's prerequisites.

## **Gender balance in leadership**

Gender mainstreaming is a long-term change management process where both knowledge and clear leadership is required. Clear integration in the governance process through goals and follow-up is necessary to drive development. This involves, for example, reviewing which of the University's procedures and decision-making processes require analysis and reorganisation to ensure equal consequences, and to ensure that the administrative support systems are consequence neutral from an equal opportunities and gender perspective. This integration needs to be supported by skills enhancement at all levels.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, to get a research overview please see: Bondestam, F & Grip, L. (2015). *Fördelning eller förfördelning? - en forskningsöversikt*. Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research. University of Gothenburg.

<sup>2</sup> The Swedish Research Council (2021) *Is there gender equality at the university? (Hur jämställt är det i högskolan?) Women's and men's prerequisites to conduct research (Kvinnors och mäns förutsättningar att bedriva forskning)* (2021).

## Content and form of courses and study programmes

Overarching problems	Local problems	Goals	Activities 2022-2023	Responsibility/assignments	Follow-up and indications
<p>The content and form of courses and study programmes may contribute to creating and recreating inequality in society.</p>	<p>The work carried out to counteract inequality in the content and form of the courses and study programmes is not done in a sufficiently systematic way.</p>	<p>MDH's employees and students have the knowledge and methods for evaluating and dealing with inequality.</p> <p>Gender equality and gender perspective is integrated in the courses and study programmes' content and implementation and also in the educational and planning process.</p>	<p>The experience gained from the 11 degree programmes that were revised during 2020-2021 must be utilised. Based on the experiences, a concrete template for gender equality assurance will be developed that can be implemented at the University, for all programmes.</p> <p>A method for how gender equality can be systematically followed up in the courses and study programmes will be established. It should be possible to combine the method with follow-up of sustainable development and collaboration for example.</p>	<p>The Faculty Board is tasked with continuing to integrate gender equality into the quality assurance efforts.</p> <p>Lärum and the coordinators of gender mainstreaming are tasked to develop and provide support regarding the template for ensuring gender equality in the programmes.</p> <p>The Schools are responsible for integrating gender equality into the courses and study programmes.</p>	<p>Gender equality is followed up in the systematic quality assurance system.</p>

<p>Gender-based study and professional choices may contribute to creating and recreating inequality in society.</p>	<p>Lop-sided gender imbalance in several degree programmes and third-cycle subject areas.</p>	<p>MDH works systematically in the area of student recruitment to counteract lop-sided gender imbalance.</p>	<p>In conjunction with operations linked to student recruitment, strategies are formulated and activities are carried out to counteract lop-sided gender imbalance. The effectiveness of the activities will be evaluated.</p>	<p>The student recruitment steering group is responsible for the efforts.</p>	<p>The steering group reports and evaluates the achievements that have been made to counteract gender-based educational choices in its annual evaluation.</p>
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<b>Research conditions</b>					
<b>Overarching problems</b>	<b>Local problems</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Activities 2022-2023</b>	<b>Responsibility/assignments</b>	<b>Follow-up and indications</b>
The allocation of research funding may create and recreate unequal conditions for research.	There is a lack of clear equal opportunities and gender equality perspectives in the University's allocation of research funding.	MDH allocates its research resources so that women and men can be guaranteed a level playing field for conducting research.	Gender equality is taken into account in the allocation of research resources at all levels and both the distribution model and outcomes must be reported back from a gender equality perspective in the activity report, MDH's annual report and to MDH's Board of Directors.	<p>The Schools are tasked with developing action plans for how to counteract the gender equality challenges in each research specialisation.</p> <p>The Finance and HR Division are tasked with assisting the Schools with supporting documents.</p>	Each research specialisation follows up on the action plans that are implemented and presents the work efforts in the activity report.

## Gender balance in leadership

Overarching problems	Local problems	Goals	Activities 2022-2023	Responsibility/assignments	Follow-up and indications
Women's and men's prerequisites to pursue an academic career may create and recreate unequal conditions for research, education and support activities.	MDH does not work systematically enough to achieve equal conditions for women's and men's, employment, acquisition of qualifications and working conditions.	<p>MDH provides women and men with a level playing field for employment and acquisition of qualifications.</p> <p>MDH provides women and men with a level playing field for the implementation, content and organisation of the work.</p>	<p>Gender and gender equality perspectives will continue to be integrated into the University's recruitment process from advertising to terms of employment and in the organisation of work.</p> <p>Work systematically in developing skills enhancing activities for employees and heads of units.</p>	The HR Division works with leadership and collegiality.	<p>The HR Division's assignments are carried out in the permanent organisation.</p> <p>At least 42% of newly hired professors annually must be women. Follow-up takes place in conjunction with the annual report.</p>
The School's management format for governing and managing may create and recreate inequality.	The School's management at MDH is unable to sufficiently translate the goals of gender equality into a concrete and long-term change management process.	Decisions made by the Board of Directors, Vice-Chancellor, Faculty Board and Deans of Schools have taken gender equality perspectives into account.	Conditions and support will continue to be developed so that those who prepare drafts for a decision can include gender equality perspectives in the preparation process.	The gender mainstreaming coordinators will continue to support the preparation processes in order to enable more decisions to take gender equality into account.	When relevant, the decision-making basis for the Vice-Chancellor and Dean of School's decisions must show how gender equality has been taken into account in the preparation phase.