



Gender Equality Plan

Gender Mainstreaming of Mälardalen University 2023–2025

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Mälardalen University

Postal address: Mälardalen University, Box 883, 721 23 Västerås

Email: info@mdu.se

Telephone: 021-10 13 00

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Administrative Officer: Jonatan Mathiasson, Management Office, Mälardalen University

Decided 2022: Lena Gumaelius, acting Vice-Chancellor

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Preface

If Sweden's gender equality goals and the goals in Agenda 2030 are to be achieved, higher education must play a significant role. At a higher education institution, men and women must be given equal opportunities to study, work and pursue a career. Students need to be given tools to be able to manage gender equality issues both in their future professional roles and in their future workplaces.

Mälardalen University's vision expresses that we will be *A progressive and collaborative University where together we shape a sustainable future*. To achieve the goal, the University has formulated the strategy to integrate elements focusing on societal challenges into all our degree programmes. Here gender equality is an important aspect.

The University must lead by example and will actively work with gender equality when recruiting students, in the allocation of research funds, in career paths and preparing the decisions made by the University.

This gender mainstreaming plan for Mälardalen University describes how the work will be done and what is planned to be implemented up until the year 2025.

Lena Gumaelius, acting Vice-Chancellor 2022

1. Background

In 2016, Sweden's universities and university colleges were tasked by the Government to develop a plan for how higher education institutions intended 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 plans would include development needs, goals and activities that the universities intended to undertake 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 established the *Plan for gender mainstreaming at Mälardalen University (2017/1308)*. Since then, the plan has been revised and adapted to the University's development efforts to promote gender equality.

In this revised version for the years 2023–2025, the action plan will be developed further, it will consider new requirements and targets, link the work to Agenda 2030, the University's vision, goals and strategies, and provide better conditions for the University's management to systematically develop gender mainstreaming.

2. Gender mainstreaming at Mälardalen University

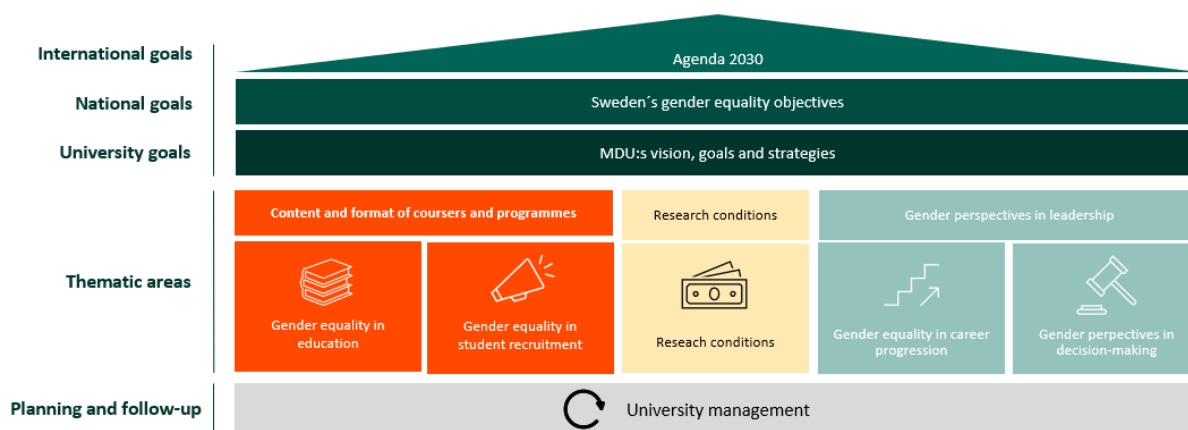


Figure 1. Overview of gender mainstreaming at Mälardalen University.

2.1. Goals

2.2.1 Agenda 2030

MDU's work on gender mainstreaming aims to contribute to goals at several levels. At an overall international level, gender equality efforts will contribute to the goals in Agenda 2030. Gender mainstreaming is linked in particular to Goal five on Gender Equality and to Goal four on Quality Education. However, gender equality aspects are important when working with all of the global goals and gender equality must therefore be integrated into other sustainability work at the University.



2.1.1. Sweden's gender equality objectives

At national level, gender mainstreaming at MDU aims to contribute to Sweden's gender equality policy goal that *“Women and men will have the same power to shape society and their own lives”*. To achieve this, gender mainstreaming needs to consider and help achieve all the gender equality policy sub-goals.

- Gender balance regarding power and influence. Women and men must have the same rights and opportunities to be active members of society and to shape the conditions for decision-making in all sectors of society.
- Financial equality. Women and men should have the same opportunities and conditions in terms of paid work that provides financial independence for life.
- Gender equality in education. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same opportunities and conditions in terms of education, study choices and personal development.
- Equal distribution of unpaid household and care work. Women and men must take the same responsibility for household chores and be able to provide and receive care on equal terms.
- Equal health. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same conditions for good health and be offered nursing and healthcare on equal terms.
- Men's violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same rights and opportunities for bodily integrity.

2.1.2. MDU's vision, goals and strategy

At the University level, gender mainstreaming is expected to contribute to MDU's vision of being: *“[...] A progressive and collaborative higher education institution where together we shape a sustainable future”* (2020/2782).

That the University considers this as a quality aspect is stated in MDU's quality policy (2021/2491):

In the development and implementation of education, third-cycle education, research, and organisational support the following viewpoints for quality must apply: [...] The organisation will promote a democratic, equal and social, ecologic and economically sustainable society [...] (2021/2491).

It is just as important that the University's own processes and activities take gender equality into account, which is linked to the University's goals: *“We promote a sustainable future and practise what we preach”* (HSST5 21-12-20 Appendix 8.2).

2.1.3 Stakeholders

MDU's work with gender mainstreaming must consider requirements from collaborative partners such as the Student Union, employee organisations, research funding bodies and other stakeholders. For example, in order to be able to apply for research funding through Horizon Europe, the higher education institution must have an action plan in place for gender equality. The plan must: 1) be public and accessible on the University's website, 2) have funding intended for working on the plan, 3) show how the University annually follows data and indicators, 4) increase the awareness and skills in gender equality in the organisation.

MDU is also certified for the work environment through ISO:45001 and the environment through ISO:14001. The certifications place high demands on systematic work efforts where gender equality has a clear connection to both work environment management and sustainable development.

3. Specialisations

MDU's gender equality plan focuses on three areas that are considered particularly important to work with in order to contribute to the goals. They comprise the following:

- **Content and format of courses and study programmes**, with the sub areas *gender equality in education* and *gender equality in student recruitment*.
- **Research conditions**
- **Gender perspectives in leadership**, with the sub areas *gender equality in career progression* and *gender perspectives in decision-making*.

3.1. Content and format of courses and study programmes

3.1.1. Gender equality in education

Higher education will play an significant role in order to achieve the goals in Agenda 2030 and Sweden's gender equality objectives. The University must provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to promote gender equality in society. It may relate to knowledge that students need in their future profession and knowledge that contributes to equal opportunities in workplaces and in the labour market. Gender equality is also a question of quality. Without a gender equal viewpoint in the content of the education, students risk missing out on important tools and in their future professional practice.

At MDU work is progressing to integrate gender equality into all the University's degree programmes at first cycle and second cycle level. The goal is that all students who graduate from MDU will have relevant tools to consider and promote gender equality in their future professions and working life. The programmes and the scholarly subjects will determine how gender equality is included in the students' education, which gender equality challenges the students should be given the ability to deal with and how this is linked to the gender equality objectives.

For the work to integrate gender equality into the courses and study programmes to be successful, the University has identified three aspects that must be further developed in the organisation.

- Skills related to gender equality must increase at the University
- Support for the implementation of gender equality in programmes must be developed
- Follow up and review of gender equality aspects in the quality assurance processes must be strengthened.

Activities which will reinforce these areas are formulated in the action plan.

In order to support the work of integrating gender equality into the degree programmes, a special model has been developed and evaluated in ten programmes. The model comprises a step-by-step analysis of which gender equality challenges are relevant to work with in a particular degree programme and how the elements of gender equality in the programme can be developed. During the period 2023–2025, the model will be completed and implemented through the entire University. When the model is implemented, it will be possible to assess whether the gender equality measures can be considered sufficient or whether new University-wide goals must be set.

3.1.2. Gender equality in student recruitment

A difficult challenge for the higher education institution is to counteract the lop-sided gender balance that exists among the students in the University's degree programmes and third-cycle subject areas. The unequal gender distribution poses economic and democratic challenges as they help to reproduce the gender-based structures and norms in society in the long term.

The reason study choices are gender-based is complex and it is difficult to change patterns in study choices through individual activities. In order to counteract the fact that study choices are influenced by norms about gender roles, MDU must work long-term and in collaboration with primary and lower-secondary schools and employers. The goal is for student recruitment to help challenge norms and attitudes and male and female coded professions through conscious

3.2. Research conditions

For research and the results of the research to contribute to an equal society, it is important that women and men are given equal opportunities to conduct research activities. At the structural level, conditions seem to be different. Women experience more stress and are more vulnerable to a greater extent than men, account for a higher withdrawal of parental benefit and have higher rates of sick leave¹. Overall, this contributes to the fact that the opportunities for women to conduct research are worse than those for men. Furthermore, there is a risk that research funding is not allocated in an equal way when norms in the scientific subjects look different.

Internal research funding at MDU is allocated in different ways in the University's research specialisations and the specialisations have a varying proportion of women and men. Together, this creates issues in identifying possible gender equality problems at University-wide level and implementing the relevant efforts. Each research specialisation therefore is tasked with identifying and counteracting risks for gender gaps in their organisation. Support units such as the Division of Finance, Human Resources and the Management Office can contribute with statistics and other material to support the efforts in the research specialisations.

3.3. Gender balance in leadership

3.3.1. Gender equality in career progression

The opportunity to pursue an academic career is at risk of being different for women and men. For example, the fact that from a national perspective it takes longer for women than men to succeed in their careers and become a professor, indicates that there may be obstacles for women in their career paths. The difference in the conditions for pursuing a career is partly linked to women and men pursuing careers in different scientific fields, but there are also other explanations in areas such as access to networks, publishing practices and the opportunity to combine the job with parenthood.²

Therefore, it is important to actively work to make career opportunities open and transparent and to remove obstacles to allow women and men to pursue a career on equal terms. In addition to good recruitment processes, MDU's managers and employees must work systematically, by means of gender equality inspections and performance reviews, to identify and counteract risks of gender gaps in career paths.

3.3.2. Gender perspectives in decision-making

In an organisation with gender segregation, both between professional categories and scientific areas, there may be a risk that development efforts, decisions, initiatives and priorities will affect women and men differently.

Therefore, it is important that decisions made at MDU clearly take gender equality into account. For this to be possible, it is important that administrative officials and decision-makers have sufficient expertise in gender equality, that decision-makers address gender equality in decisions and that the higher education institution enables relevant documentation in the drafting phase to be produced. The aim is for administrative officials to always determine in their drafting documents whether gender equality aspects are relevant and to take gender equality into account when required.

4. Planning and follow-up

Planning and follow-up of gender mainstreaming will be done through the annual *Management review* for gender mainstreaming. The review will provide the Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group with a follow-up of the work done on the action plan, follow-up of indicators and goals, changes in stakeholder requirements and media monitoring. During the

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

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

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review, the Vice-Chancellor will prioritise efforts and set the direction for continued work. Based on the follow-up, gender equality will be an important part of regular organisational planning.

The Student Union and employee organisations are important in these efforts and their participation is guaranteed in the development, implementation and follow-up of gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming activities will be monitored through a chain of results. The chain of results will monitor if completed *activities* (workshops, courses, etc.) have generated *new products* (procedures, processes, templates, etc.) and whether these products have led to *new ways of working* and a more *gender equal outcome*. The follow-up also raises the question if the efforts are believed to contribute to the impact on society, even though this is difficult to measure.



Figure 2. Chain of results for monitoring activities

5. Resources

Implementation of the action plan will be done within the framework of the regular allocation of funding and resources in the annual initiatives.

6. Training

A prerequisite to enable gender equality efforts to progress is that employees and managers continuously develop their gender equality competences. Material, online training courses, checklists, the action plan and reports on gender equality are therefore available on MDU's internal portal for all employees. Gender equality is included as a component in the compulsory higher education teaching and learning courses. The gender mainstreaming plan will arrange University-wide continuing professional development conferences and workshops in areas where skills enhancement needs are identified. All managers will do an online course about gender equality and discrimination.

7. Action plan for gender mainstreaming

Specialisation: Content and format of courses and study programmes					
Overall problems	Local problems	Goals	Activities 2023–2025	Responsibility/tasks 2023–2025	Indicators and follow-up
<p>The content and format of courses and study programmes may contribute to creating and recreating inequality in society.</p> <p>We are not making use of the potential to give students the knowledge and skills to promote gender equality.</p>	<p>The work conducted to promote gender equality through the content and format of the courses and study programmes is not done in a proper, systematic way.</p>	<p>All students who are graduates from MDU will have relevant knowledge and skills to promote gender equality in their professions and working lives.</p>	<p>(1/3) Skills enhancement regarding gender equality.</p>	<p>Lärum (MDU's Centre for Teaching and Learning) will ensure that gender equality is a component in relevant higher education teaching and learning courses.</p> <p>The Management Office and Coordinator for gender mainstreaming will ensure that training material is available and up to date on MDU's internal portal and that thematic educational activities are implemented.</p>	<p>Indicators: all degree programmes at first and second cycle level must have gender mainstreaming content by December 2025.</p> <p>Follow-up: takes place annually through the Management review.</p>
			<p>(2/3) Support for the implementation of gender equality in programmes.</p>	<p>The Management Office together with Lärum will continue to develop support for the established model for assuring gender equality in degree programmes.</p> <p>Lärum will develop educational activities to enable gender equality to be integrated into courses, through the higher education teaching and</p>	

				learning course in course design.	
			(3/3) Follow-up and review of the quality assurance efforts.	<p>The Management Office will work together with the Faculty Board to develop a method for evaluating and reviewing gender equality in programme evaluations and in other parts of the quality assurance system.</p> <p>The Deans of the Schools will guarantee that the degree programmes assure gender equality.</p>	
<p>Gender-based study and professional choices may contribute to creating and recreating a gender gap in society.</p> <p>Social norms and norms concerning education may limit students in their educational choices.</p>	<p>MDU has a lop-sided gender balance in several degree programmes and third-cycle subject areas.</p>	<p>MDU will work systematically through student recruitment to promote a gender balance.</p>	<p>In connection with the organisations linked to student recruitment, strategies are formulated and activities are conducted to promote a gender balance in degree programmes.</p> <p>The impact of the activities will be evaluated.</p>	<p>The student recruitment steering group will be responsible for the efforts to promote gender balance.</p>	<p>Follow-up: The steering group for student recruitment will report and evaluate the achievements that have been made to promote gender balance in its annual evaluation.</p> <p>Follow-up: The steering groups' efforts will be reported annually through the Management review.</p>

Specialisation: Research conditions					
Overall problems	Local problems	Goals	Activities 2023–2025	Responsibility/tasks 2023–2025	Indicators and follow-up
The allocation of research funding may create and recreate unequal conditions for research.	There is a lack of transparent gender equality and equal opportunities viewpoints in the University's allocation of research funding.	MDU will allocate its research resources so that women and men can be guaranteed equal conditions for conducting research.	(1/2) The Schools will be able to present strategies for the research specialisations to discover and counteract unequal allocation of research funding.	<p>The Schools will develop strategies for how they will detect and counteract unequal allocation of research funding in the research specialisations.</p> <p>The Finance and HR Division are tasked with assisting the Schools with supporting documents.</p>	<p>Indicators: All the research specialisations must be able to report on strategies to counteract the unequal allocation of research funding.</p> <p>Follow-up takes place annually through the Management review.</p>
			(2/2) The review of the University's model for the allocation of internal research funding will take gender equality into account.	The Coordinator for gender mainstreaming will gather good practice and propose methods to consider gender equality at the overall level of allocation.	Follow-up takes place annually through the Management review.

Specialisation: Gender perspectives in leadership					
Overall problems	Local problems	Goals	Activities 2023–2025	Responsibility/tasks	Indicators and follow-up
Women's and men's prerequisites to pursue an academic career may create and recreate unequal conditions for research, education and support activities.	MDU does not work systematically enough to achieve equal conditions for women and men in terms of employment, acquisition of qualifications and working conditions.	MDU will provide women and men with equal conditions for employment and the acquisition of qualifications.	Gender perspectives and gender equality viewpoints will continue to be integrated into the University's recruitment process from advertising to terms of employment and in the organisation of work.	The Head of HR will ensure that the recruitment processes take gender equality into account.	Indicators: at least 42% of newly hired professors annually must be women. The perception that men have better working conditions and career opportunities must be changed. Follow-up: takes place annually through the Management review.
	MDU's 2021 employee survey shows that 19.8% of employees believe that men have better working conditions and career opportunities than women.	MDU will provide women and men with equal conditions for the implementation, content and organisation of work.	The University will actively work with identifying risks of gender gaps in career paths.	All managers with employee responsibility will examine risks of gender gaps in the career paths in the annual equality inspection.	
The School's management format for governing and managing may create and recreate inequality.	The School's management at MDU is unable to sufficiently translate the goals of gender equality into a concrete and long-term change management process.	All decisions at all levels of the organisation must consider gender equality when being drafted.	Conditions and support will improve so that those who prepare drafts for a decision can include gender equality perspectives in the drafting process.	The Management Office is tasked with supporting administrative officials to consider gender equality in preparation processes and to actively work to increase the proportion of decisions that consider gender equality.	Indicators: the proportion of Vice-Chancellor's decisions that succeed in reporting how they consider gender equality will increase. Follow-up: takes place annually through the Management review.

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