



The Department of Educational Studies

# SELF-EVALUATION

Periodic Research Review

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## 1. Summary

The Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University is part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, structured into three disciplines: Educational Work, Sports Science, and Special Education. Leadership includes the Head of Department (HD), Deputy Head (DHD), and heads of subjects, who oversee research, education, and development. Heads of subjects lead respective disciplines, develop programs, and manage collegiums. Directors of studies coordinate teaching responsibilities and ensure pedagogical quality.

DES emphasizes collaborative leadership, with monthly Department Council meetings fostering strategic dialogue and weekly management meetings addressing operational needs. Formal and informal research groups provide multidisciplinary collaboration, supporting researchers to align with external funding strategies and international cooperation goals. DES offers Sweden's principal education program, combining research with leadership training.

Efforts to advance research focus on securing external funding, promoting inter- and intra-university collaborations, and fostering international partnerships. Initiatives include allocating resources transparently, supporting junior researchers, and hosting weekly seminars to encourage intellectual exchange and critique. Recruitment emphasizes teaching and research expertise, addressing gaps through development and strategic hires. Gender equity in resource allocation and leadership remains a priority.

DES integrates research with education through seminars and collaborative networks strengthening ties between academia and schools. While DES has achieved notable success in external funding and publication, enhancing impact through larger-scale projects and international collaboration remains a goal. Structured initiatives aim to bridge research and practice, fostering sustainable academic growth and societal contributions.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p><b>Experienced Staff:</b> Highly qualified researchers ensure quality outputs and mentorship for junior academics.</p> <p><b>Interdisciplinary Collaboration:</b> Partnerships with other departments and institutions foster innovation.</p> <p><b>High Success Rate:</b> Strong track record in securing external funding demonstrates competitiveness.</p> <p><b>Productivity:</b> High volume of publications and completed research projects.</p> <p><b>Practitioner Networks:</b> Practice-oriented research engages non-academic audiences effectively.</p> <p><b>Active Research Culture:</b> Weekly seminars and multidisciplinary groups promote collaboration.</p> <p><b>International Engagement:</b> Participation in global networks and conferences raises visibility.</p> <p><b>Support for Early Career Researchers:</b> Structured funding and mentorship programs for junior researchers.</p> <p><b>Integration of Research in Education:</b> Research-informed teaching enriches educational quality and enables empirical studies.</p>	<p><b>Resource Constraints:</b> Limited financial resources restrict the scale of research projects.</p> <p><b>Work Imbalance:</b> Heavy administrative and teaching responsibilities detract from research focus.</p> <p><b>Funding Dependency:</b> Reliance on external funding and individual-driven projects limits large-scale initiatives.</p> <p><b>Support Structures:</b> Insufficient administrative and funding support for researchers.</p> <p><b>Lack of Strategic Direction:</b> Absence of overarching research programs reduces coherence.</p> <p><b>Limited Research Impact:</b> Underrepresentation in high-ranking journals and limited global influence.</p> <p><b>Seminar Participation Issues:</b> Uneven engagement and tracking reduce effectiveness.</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p><b>International Collaboration:</b> Expanding global partnerships to boost visibility and impact.</p> <p><b>Strengthened Partnerships:</b> Enhanced collaboration with schools, municipalities, and organizations.</p> <p><b>Internationalisation:</b> Joint publications, visiting scholars, and global conferences to strengthen profile.</p> <p><b>Infrastructure Development:</b> Establishing dedicated research centres in growing fields.</p> <p><b>Capacity Building:</b> Encouraging better use of Karlstad University support and training resources.</p> <p><b>Long-term external Funding Focus:</b> Strategic approach to securing long-term funding.</p>	<p><b>Policy Changes:</b> Shifts in government or institutional priorities affecting research focus and condition.</p> <p><b>Competition:</b> Increasing competition for funding and high-impact journal publication.</p> <p><b>Talent Retention Issues:</b> Difficulty attracting and retaining top researchers due to external offers.</p> <p><b>Resource Constraints:</b> Insufficient internal funding to meet institutional goals.</p> <p><b>Funding Competition:</b> Intense competition for external grants strains researcher capacity.</p> <p><b>Fragmentation Risk:</b> Lack of cohesion in research activities due to solo work.</p> <p><b>Limited International Profile:</b> Challenges in attracting global researchers and funding.</p>

## 2. Organization and leadership

This section describes the formal organization and leadership structure for research. It also contains practices and strategic work for research development.

### 2.1 Formal organization and leadership structure

The Department is part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Karlstad University (Kau). The head of department (HD) holds the overarching responsibility for research, education, and cooperation at the department, and also for the work environment, staff and budget. The HD position encompasses goal attainment in accordance with the objectives and strategies of Kau. The department also has a deputy head (DHD) who acts as a full stand in for the HD. The head and deputy head have administrative support.

The department consists of three disciplines, *Educational Work*, *Sports Science* and *Special Education*. Each discipline is led by a head of subject appointed by the HD for a three-year term. The head of subject can best be described as *primus inter pares* and although appointed by the HD they are regarded as credible and legitimate by the collegium. The head of subject assist the HD in development of courses and programmes offered including doctoral programmes, research and cooperation, quality assurance, recruitment, strategic plans and subject specific evaluations. In addition, the head of subject leads the subject collegium. In the third-cycle subject area Educational Work, we also have an assigned director of third-cycle studies (DTCS) due to the number of doctoral students (around 40). Each discipline has at least one director of studies responsible for duty allocation and pedagogical quality, with one of the five directors of studies serving as head of directors of study. The university's strict delegation of authority, few formal decisions can be delegated from HD, necessitates ongoing dialogue between HD, heads of subjects and directors of studies. In addition to informal meetings the HD, DHD, head of subject, DTCS convene monthly at the Department Council, which addresses fundamental issues affecting the entire department. The Department Council serves as an advisory board and a forum for dialogue and support for decisions by the HD.

The departmental management team comprising the HD, DHD, administrative support for the head, representative for the professors' group, head director of study, and director for third-cycle studies meets weekly. The HR specialist, financial officer, and others are co-opted as needed. Heads of subject are not part of these weekly meetings in order to reduce their administrative burden, but can be co-opted if needed.

Furthermore, Karlstad University is one of seven higher education institutions in Sweden that have been commissioned to provide government executive training for principals. Principal education (RUT) at Karlstad University is located at the DES and includes Recruitment training courses for future principals, the main Principal training programme, and continuing professional development courses for principals. The education is led by the head of education who is also funding research related to the area of school development research.

The third-cycle subject area Educational work offers a multidisciplinary environment which includes supervisors from several disciplines at Kau. Supervisors meet regularly in the supervisor committee organized and led by the DES. There is also a multidisciplinary research faculty for all researchers. Moreover, each of the disciplines has a collegium where researchers in the respective disciplines meet. In this forum the researchers clarify goals, direction, develop research strategies and discuss current applications.

The research conducted in the department is not only organized in disciplines but also in research groups within the department and with other departments or research centres. Researchers in these groups or centres meet regularly to discuss published calls for research proposals, status and progress of ongoing projects, conferences and networking possibilities, as well as refining research strategies and goals. In general, staff participation or inclusion in the various groups and centres is self-selected based on individual research interest.

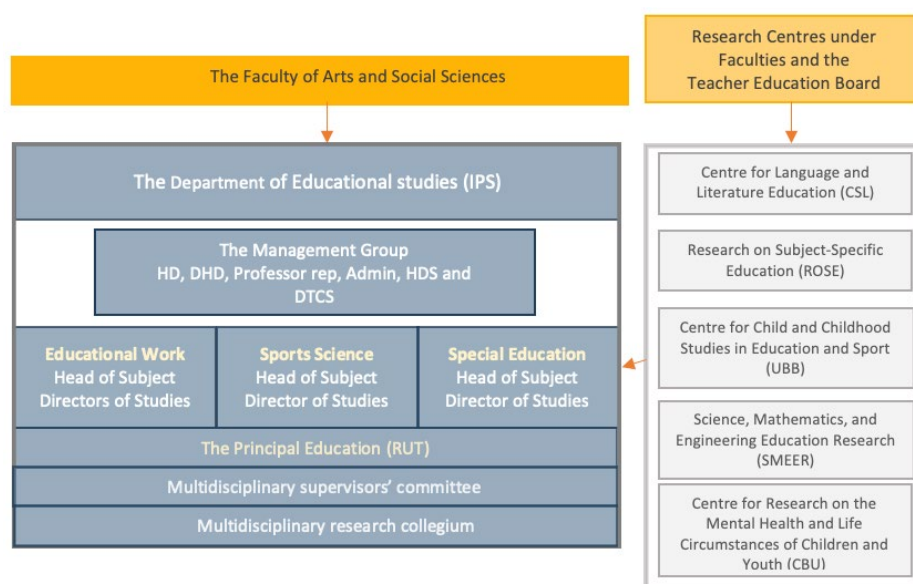


Figure 1. Overview of organization and research related to leadership and other research centres

## 2.2 Efforts to improve research development

Our efforts to improve research development is aligned to the strategic goal set by the Dean and stated as: *Research should be developed through increased external funding*<sup>1</sup>. This goal influences activities we do in terms of, for example, recruitment, allocation of research funding, skills development and promotion. The departmental long-term overall goals concerning research are:

- *Jointly*: Strengthening collaborative research, within DES, Kau, and other universities.
- *Attract*: Enhancing our capacity to attract long-term research funding and grants.
- *Partners*: Further strengthen research cooperation with partners outside academia.
- *Across borders*: Increasing international cooperation in research publications and funding.

Many of the researches at the department are affiliated with one or more research centres at Kau (see section 3.1). Nevertheless, a non-negligible proportion of our research carried out by researchers not committed to any centre. There are some risks connected to that, for example the risk negative solo work or individual failure. In order to manage this, we have identified the need for explicit but less formal research groups and research areas than the institutionalized research centra (see 3.2-3.4). Although the department lacks of a formal overall research programme these research groups and areas serve as soft research direction for both junior and senior researchers. Interaction within these groups is non-prestigious, focusing on creating a social and supportive context, where an important purpose is to create a sense of belonging. Leadership within these groups and areas are not always expressed or sometimes shared among senior staff.

The department's weekly research seminar in educational work (referred to as the "higher seminar") provides a space for collaboration between researchers from the three disciplines within the department. This seminar also serves as the platform where all doctoral students at the department present their thesis-in-progress on at least three occasions: the planning seminar (10% completion); the mid-term seminar (50% completion); and the final review (90% completion). Since several PhD students have supervisors from other departments, the seminar often involve participation by researchers from different disciplines, affording an ongoing healthy and productive reflection on scientific ideals and principles. The seminar is an important forum for both PhD students and researchers to receive a critical discussion and a qualified support of their ongoing research. The primary activity is critical scrutiny and discussion of theory, methodology, and analysis in ongoing work (in articles, book chapters, or applications), but the weekly research seminars of educational work also include presentations from invited guest researchers and thematic discussions related to

<sup>1</sup> Operational assignments from 2021, 2022, 2023

both research and education. The higher seminar is scheduled regularly every Wednesday from 1–3 PM. Other seminars within the department are described below (see 4.1).

A continuous ambition of the management team is to develop transparent and predictable principles for how the department allocates resources to enhance research opportunities. Since 2022, allocation of duties in the department is based on the same principles for all the three disciplines, defined in the document *Principles for allocation of duties and resources*. A major part of the document addresses the allocation of duties relating to undergraduate studies funding, but also details the allocation of research funding and administrative work. The document is grounded in the local working time agreement and aims to ensure an equal, fair and sustainable distribution of resources among departmental staff. Since 2016, all activities of staff are recorded in an IT-based workforce planning system, allowing easy access to information on how research funding and other tasks have been distributed over time, including by gender and age. This data is particularly important since as the department has a quantitatively unequal gender distribution. The majority of staff are women (76%), however, the higher up the hierarchy, the greater the proportion of men, reflecting both the broader pattern in the education professions as well as in academia. In our analysis of the distribution of research funds for 2023, women have received a slightly higher proportion than their overall representation by a few percentage points. Women have been more successful in attracting external research funding compared to men. In contrast, the situation was reversed in 2022. However, the distribution of internal research funding reflects the overall proportion of men and women. Yet, an apparent parity does not necessarily indicate gender equality. To prevent uneven workload distribution all directors of studies have planning discussions with all staff each semester. This provides an overview of planning, ensuring that allocation of resources and time does not occur ad hoc. Ad hoc solutions and measures risk maintaining or reinforcing gender disparities. The foundation for the planning discussions is the document described above.

To ensure time for research, professional development for senior lecturers is planned for 20 per cent of real working time. Senior lecturers promoted to readers normally have an extra 10 per cent of full-time employment for research. According to the working time agreement, professors should devote most of their working time to research, applying for external research funding and teaching and supervising at doctoral level. In addition to this research frame, there are opportunities for researchers to receive extra funding annually. This funding covers extra time for working on an application for external funding or for those who has received external funding extra time for starting up the new project. For early career researchers the department normally funds between 10-20% of full time the first two years after the defense of doctoral thesis. Extra research funding could also cover members of staff who are on the threshold of promotion to reader or professor, which is line with the department's ambition to increase the number of readers and professors in order to attract external funding on a program level.

Many of the department's researchers are engaged in international networks and international groups. However, it has been less common to co-publish with international researchers. Evidently, our focus on strengthening international collaboration is now starting to show also in joint publication (see Table 6.5). The department regularly receives international visiting researcher, in year 2023 we had more than 27 visiting scholars at the DES. They are engaged in our doctoral programs, partners in research projects, or engaged in staff/student-exchange and education.

We also highly support staff participation in international research conferences. Researchers and PhD students with an accepted paper receive funding from DES for at least one conference abroad a year which has resulted in approx. 145 conference contributions over the last three years. However, in our field full paper conference publications are not conventional which is displayed with in table 5.1 in Background data.

## 2.2 Recruitment, promotion and succession

At the department continuous efforts are made to ensure expertise in teaching and research in all three disciplines. A recruitment plan is annually updated and approved in which a five-year perspective on recruitment is analysed. This includes expertise gaps or the risk of gaps and age structures as well as the expertise and gender distribution among staff in each subject. The recruitment plan includes suggestions for activities in the coming year and the plan is presented to the faculty and Vice

Chancellor. The recruitment plan indicates two ways of ensuring research expertise among academic staff: through professional development of existing staff and through recruitment of new staff with the required research skills and expertise.

Over the last years we handled more than 30 recruitments and promotions, all based on competence-based recruitment (CBR). CBR is university required method which facilitates recruitments in line with the operational needs expressed in the recruitment plan. It ensures that the right considerations are made regarding selection, assessment of qualifications and appointment decisions, and that these are based on the expertise and qualities requested in the recruitment profile. However, the majority of the recruited are not active researches but lecturers with professional merits. This has been a required measure to ensure university teachers for our substantial student volume the last four years. Those 11 people with at PhD are mostly from within the university and individuals who have received faculty funding for their third cycle studies (see table 1.4 in Background data). We have also had recruitment processes where we have had no candidates with the right profile and therefor cancelled the process.

Ideally there should be consensus among head of subjects, professors, research leaders, director of studies and HD in the specific needs of the department in terms of what academic profiles of persons sought. That is however not always the case and we therefor consider requests and good arguments before HD finally decides. It is not a simple process but of significance in the academic culture and values. In the same way the HD have for three years requested funds from the Vice Chancellor for strategic recruitments in two of the disciplines at the department without success. However, this year the Vice Chancellor approved and we have been able to recruit one professor, two tenure positions and two doctoral students in Special education.

Our candidates are mostly from Sweden since language skills in Swedish normally is required. This is due to the substantial need for teaching at undergraduate level in the teacher educations. The department is thus one of the most non-international departments staff wise at Kau. The situation is not ideal, but we try to compensate that by encouraging invites to visiting scholars, Erasmus exchange and participation in international networks and conferences. Next year the department arranges an international conference on Gifted Education with around 2000 participants from all over the world.

Academic promotion enables advancement to senior lecturer, to reader and to professor for staff at Kau. But as mentioned above also involves to encourage non-PhD lecturers to study towards a doctorate. All employees at the department are invited to a development dialogue and a performance review with the HD at least one time each year. Alongside these meetings the heads of subject and the professors have promotion dialogues when asked for. Such individual dialogues contain strategic considerations and pre-evaluation of merits.

### 2.3 Competence development and career support

The University's Grant and Innovation Office (GIO) offers targeted competence and career development for individual researchers, PhD students and research environments. The starting point is to provide support adapted to the different phases of a research career, from early career researchers to senior researchers. In addition, researchers are given the opportunity to develop the competencies required to be a dynamic research leader and research environments are offered support in their strategic work and development. For PhD-students GIO offers PhD courses on Impact and Utilisation of Research and Data Stewardship. PhD-students and early career researchers are encouraged to take part in the seminar series CTRIVE – Competence Development Tool for Research: Intellectual Value Enhancement. The University also provides leadership development for researchers. The aim is to strengthen researchers in their leadership roles and contribute to sustainable and successful research environments. Leadership development is offered at three different levels and only a few participants are selected from the University as a whole. Participation is coordinated by the department head, who nominates to the deans. The last three years four researchers from the department have been accepted.

Within the department we support as described through extra funding, yearly development dialogue, specific career seminar for PhD students and one of the professors have also initiated seminars with focus on the step from senior lecturer to reader. In addition, our academic culture (see section 4) aims, among other things, to support and spur towards individual and collective competence development.



### 3. Scientific results and academic impact

This section describes and analyses scientific results in relation to the current staff profile, financial resources, and research infrastructure. Specifically, we explain in what way research at the department contributes to international development of research in education, special education, and sports science. Impact and international visibility in the scientific community is emphasized.

#### 3.1 Research disciplines at DES

Research at the department is carried out within the domains of three separate but partially integrated disciplines: *educational work*, *special education*, and *sports science*. Research is also organized through research centres and research groups such as School Development, Organization, and Leadership, and Centre for Studies of Children and Youth in Sports. Moreover, staff at the department collaborate with researchers at other departments within university-based research centres such as UBB, CSL, SMEER, CBU and ROSE (see Figure 1). There is no tangible line between the research (results, publications, and impact) conducted within the realms of a research centre and the research carried out in a research discipline. Rather, the research conducted is part of both at the same time. However, to simplify reporting, the description and analysis of scientific results in the following section is organized according to the three research disciplines at the department.

#### 3.2 Educational work

Research in educational work concentrates on the work done by school-based professionals such as teachers, preschool teachers, and school leaders. Research related to the teacher programmes is also included. In addition to focusing on professionals, the field target matters of learning and socialization of students and children, primarily within school or preschool. Research in educational work is to a large extent practice-based, and applied, meaning that the research conducted often depart from issues of high relevance to professionals themselves, relating to professional development, enhancing learning, and ensuring children's wellbeing. The specific research topics covered are manifold. However, four areas of particular and current importance to the DES are classroom-based research on teaching and learning, early childhood education research, school development and leadership research, and vocational studies research.

Classroom-based research on teaching and learning highlight issues relating to teaching quality and teaching development, interactional patterns of classroom talk, subject-specific analyses of content and its teaching, digitalization of teaching and learning, measurement of teachers' and students' knowledge and attitudes, as well as methods for supporting professional development. Findings show a restricted use of more direct instructional scaffolding in today's Swedish and Nordic classrooms. Interventions to support more teacher scaffolding indicate positive results, especially for struggling learners, and long-term teacher-researcher collaboration suggest positive effects on teaching quality. A rapid shift to partly digitally-based teaching produce new challenges for both teachers and learners. Findings from this research illustrate how use of new technology relocates learner roles in terms of autonomy, creativity, and responsibility. Classroom-based research results from the department are noted, read and utilized by teachers themselves, communities, and government agencies, and cited in international research publications.

Early childhood education research examines how the teaching profession is shaped in education and practice, and how policy is enacted in practice. Results show negative effects of a congested curriculum and of demands in teacher education. Increased demands and reduced resources create stress and anxiety among the preschool staff. Moreover, policy enactments fit into already existing teaching activities. These research results have contributed to discussions on revised steering documents; results are referred to in both Swedish and international current early childhood education research publications.

School development research at the department examines issues related to changes in policy and practice in organization and leadership of schools and seeks to understand how the organizational cultures of schools encourage and support professional development. Ethical perspectives on leadership and school development are also included. Critical results in the recent past include an



increased understanding of school's improvement capacity, as well as of their ability to motivate students and support their taking charge for democracy. Research findings in this area are vital to education within the school leadership programme, and to national school development initiatives in which Karlstad University plays an active role.

Vocational studies research includes both studies of teacher and learner narratives and identities and professional development research in which teachers and researchers collaborate to develop new practice. Results from the research suggest that teaching in vocational programs and courses is often related to immediate problems, and that it is individually-based. Professional development of vocational teachers and teaching is a mixed process in which identities tied to both vocation and teaching interact with each other. Applying theory-based methodologies for developing teaching, such as Learning Study, and for studying classroom interaction, such as Conversation Analysis, has proven fruitful, and has led to new theory development, intensified collaboration with productive researchers around the world, and recruitment of extended external funding. Findings from this strand of research also contribute to adaptation of teaching to shifting learner needs, and to more effective study plans.

### 3.3 Special education

Research within the field of special education, special needs and inclusive education is focused on examining conditions for pupils' participation and learning based on societal, organizational, group and individual perspectives. Prior and current research at the DES has investigated a diverse array of questions within the field of special education, including areas related to diversity, education for children and pupils with intellectual disabilities (ID) Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) and gifted children.

Research projects on teaching and learning in Compulsory School for Pupils with Intellectual Disabilities (CSID) highlighted the influence of pedagogical culture and teacher beliefs on students' opportunities for self-determination and co-determination, particularly within the context of arts education and democratization. These findings have informed national professional development programs led by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Complementary studies have investigated the conditions necessary for student participation in decision-making, while ongoing doctoral research focuses on enhancing social participation and fostering digital citizenship among pupils with intellectual disabilities. Current research projects are analysing assessment processes and documentation on students' special educational needs. In different projects, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) pedagogical assessments of students' potential enrolment in CSID or referral to special groups are examined, focusing on how the students are represented in official documentation.

The field of gifted education is a multidisciplinary area of research, introduced at Karlstad University only a few years ago. Relevant research questions include the inclusion of gifted children, early literacy development, and strength-based assessment. Within the GiftED doctoral program, six doctoral candidates are conducting research, focusing on identification, differentiation, curriculum studies, leadership, and the mental health of gifted students, including those who are twice-exceptional.

Digitalization, equity, and inclusive education have been central themes in Nordic joint research projects, including an exploratory workshop that addressed the role of digital technology in classrooms concerning equity and student diversity. Additionally, an ongoing collaboration between researchers and special education teachers focuses on how students requiring support for reading and writing navigate digitally enriched classroom environments.

Other examples of research within the realm of special needs education include studies examining gender perspectives on neurodiverse pupils, the viewpoints of teachers and parents regarding children's special educational needs, and investigations into inclusive learning environments in classrooms. Beyond publications in scientific and professional journals, several research outcomes have been disseminated on the websites of the Swedish National Agency for Education and the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, contributing to their web-based training programs for educators.

### 3.4 Sports science

Research in sports science at Karlstad University encompasses the following key areas: youth psychosocial development, health, stress, and burnout, and the role of sports in social integration. A significant focus is also placed on promoting physical activity, particularly among inactive children. Other topics include social factors such as parental influence and the commercialization of youth sports, with the aim of developing strategies to enhance long-term participation and reduce dropout rates in sports. The results indicate that sports can serve as a developmental arena, fostering personal growth, and reducing dropout rates and burnout if the activities are properly organized and structured, and if leadership is characterized by an autonomy-supportive motivational climate. However, other findings suggest that organized sports may not suit everyone—especially inactive children, who are more inclined toward activities focused on play and non-competitive movement.

Building on this knowledge, ongoing collaboration with municipalities, district sports federations, and the Swedish Sports Confederation ensures that these insights are effectively translated into practice. This collaboration has also resulted in jointly funded doctoral projects and the annual placement of students within the federation for internships. Furthermore, the discipline engages in regular meetings (4–5 times per year) with Karlstad Municipality's leisure administration. In addition to generating various smaller research projects, this collaboration has contributed to the development of Karlstad Municipality's strategic plans and programs related to sports.

The research is in large interdisciplinary and conducted in collaboration with both national and international universities, regional stakeholders, and the private sector. It includes both local projects focused on Värmland and international collaborations, with funding from sources such as the Swedish Centre for Sport Research, Karlstad Municipality, and the Swedish Sports Confederation. An expanded collaboration with leading sports researchers at international institutions has not only increased the number of publications but also enhanced their quality, with several studies published in high-ranking journals.

The discipline of sport science has been successful in publishing in highly ranked journals. Despite this success, there remain challenges in securing substantial external research funding to delve deeper into the specific area of children's and youth sports. For this reason, initiatives have been undertaken to establish a research center dedicated to children's and youth sports. This center will provide a platform for in-depth research and innovation in the field, addressing current gaps in knowledge. Its ambition is to advance knowledge at the highest level, nationally and internationally, and position itself as a key partner in youth sports research. Given that one of the center's ambitions is to secure funding from businesses and other non-academic organizations, such a center would also further strengthen research collaborations with key partners outside the academic sector.

### 3.5 Financial resources and research infrastructure at the department

The turnover for the department regarding research is on average for 2021-2023 around SEK 23 million a year (see table 3.1 in Background data). This is approx. 24 % of the total turnover of SEK 90-100 million. The share of external funding has on an average been 34 % during the period. The 23 million cover the average of 20,5 FTE at different academic levels (see Figure 1.1 and table 1.2). In reality we do not have sufficient funding to cover the collective agreement stated research time of 20% research for lecturers resp 50% for professors. The department has approx. 125 employees at various academic levels and we have so far been able to balance the deficiency of research funding by transferring efficiency gains from education to research. One explanation for this shortage is the high cost for our third cycle programme, where the majority of our PhD students are employed lecturers with sometimes the double salary compared to PhD student employment. This is a measure we have been forced to take due to the substantial lack of senior lecturers in our field.

As seen in table 4.1 in the appendix Background data, DES researchers are rather active in applying for external funding, with an average of 22 grant applications a year. The average success rate in later years is remarkable (24%), since the approval rate from our main funders has an average approval rate between 10-12% within our fields. The high success rate is of course gratifying but also reflects hard individual work and not seldom described as a constant hunt for funding. Applying for grants is not only problematic since researchers sharpen ideas and designs, and reviewing other researchers' applications provides useful insights within a specific research area. In an ideal situation,

however, grant-related work should not be one of the main work tasks. Our overall goal of jointly seeking long-term grants is one way of tackling this. Since the internal distribution of faculty research funding is mainly based on the number of professors and readers in the department our strategy is also to increase the number of professors and readers (as described in 2.2).

In sum, our faculty funding is low, but we are successful in attracting shorter external individual-based research projects and our next step is to encourage researchers to gather around a large-scale joint application. This is advantageously done together with international researchers and partners outside academia.

### 3.6 Research impact and international visibility

According to the vision and strategy profile of Karlstad University (Vision and strategy 2030)<sup>2</sup>, research should maintain high academic standard and contribute new knowledge of great significance for society. The strategy document also declares that international perspectives and collaboration are promoted, and that our research profile takes on both an international and national scope. A central theme of the university vision document is that the quality of research is closely connected to, or even reinforced by, cooperation with surrounding society, especially local and regional organizations and businesses. Although “[n]ot all activities have direct practical application in society”, the document declares, “cooperation is a strategy for promoting quality.”

These ideals rhyme well with the concrete research strategies at the DES. Customary funding principles in the field of education generally makes it difficult for researchers to engage in signed financial cooperation with non-academic partners. Similarly, non-academic partners rarely have field-specific interests in engaging in scientific publications. However, when seen in the light of the number of organizations with which we collaborate in research-and-development projects, it is fair to say that initiation of new research, empirical examination, and application in context of new practice-based knowledge is mutually beneficiary to researchers and stakeholders. In the group of non-academic partners we list more than 60 private and public organizations and more than 30 municipalities with whom we have ongoing cooperation.<sup>3</sup> Such cooperation normally entails dissemination of results by our researchers either through written reports or oral presentations. However, the infrastructure for long-term collaboration between researchers and stakeholders could be better. The economic powers of intermediary networks or organizations are quite limited.

As for the department’s impact on research society, we fare quite well in sports psychology and practice-based educational studies. Practice-based studies in the field of education, in cooperation with preschool teachers, teachers, and principals, have engendered several research grants, a large number of publications, international collaboration, and expert assignments for our researchers.

Over the last three-year cycle, researchers at the department have produced 95 peer-reviewed articles per year on average, most of them Open access. As the DES has grown considerably over the past ten years, numerical comparison with prior periods might be misleading. Our five top-cited articles appear in between 300–500 citations. One of our professors is among the ten most cited researchers at the university and significant in his subfield, but few others have publications with any major international impact. A conclusion might be that our research environment is productive, but that its fingerprint on ongoing research is generally minor. Few of our publications appear in high-ranking journals, which should be considered an area of future development. One explanation for this pattern is that Swedish researchers in education, have only recently reoriented their main focus toward article publication. As shown in Table 6.3, a considerable number of publications are still non-peer-reviewed book chapters. In addition, a fair share of PhD students still writes monographs in Swedish. However, publishing in Swedish in a way accessible to teachers and other school personnel, is still highly prioritized. Another explanation might be that a majority of studies at our department are small-scaled, locally concerned, low-budget, and thus perhaps less apt for the top-ranked journals, which normally admit thoroughly planned and rigorously conducted larger-scale studies of interest to the global readership. Whether capacity for local and national impact impedes high-rank publication is not certain, but a better understanding of how to achieve both is an area of future development.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kau.se/en/about-us/about-karlstad-university/about-university/vision-and-strategy-2030>

<sup>3</sup> See Table 5.2 in Background data.



## 4. Academic culture

Although we describe our academic culture below, it is important to note that the concept and phenomenon are disputable. As a management concept, it tends to describe a desirable code of conduct rather than the variety of cultures created by researchers themselves. Yet, one way of assessing academic culture from a HR-perspective<sup>4</sup> is done in our biennial Leadership and Employee Surveys, where the department's strengths are the work climate, job satisfaction, engagement, and leadership<sup>5</sup>. Since research is quite a competitive and, at stages, solitary endeavour, it can create pressures, fuel anxiety and even drive destructive behaviours. The academic culture at the department therefore emphasizes trust and collaboration, aiming for an inclusive, supportive and generous atmosphere, where feedback is valued. Our seminars are crucial to creating such an atmosphere.

### 4.1 Internal meetings

There are several academic seminar series, open to staff at the department and on occasion to external researchers, co-workers, students and other groups, interested in ongoing educational research. Scope and participation of some of these seminars:

- The Higher Seminar, with weekly meetings, has a broad focus within the field of pedagogical work. The target group is all staff at the DES, and occasionally also students, external participants, etc. Frequently, doctoral students present their ongoing work, and on other occasions, internal and external senior researchers discuss planned and current projects and disseminate their findings.
- The Seminar for Narrative Studies hosts eight annual meetings to promote interdisciplinary perspectives in narrative research. It is a forum for doctoral students in (life) narrative research from Karlstad University and other Swedish universities. Meetings take place once a month via Zoom. During the seminars, participants discuss publications in the narrative research field.
- The Research Seminar for Vocational Education and Vocational Teacher Education connects researchers, doctoral students, and practitioners to discuss vocational training research, with topics ranging from professional skills to digital technology in education. Vocational didactics researchers at Linköping University and the University of Gothenburg participate in the seminars. There is a blog connected to the seminar, presenting news within the field of vocational education.
- The Special Education Seminar holds 4–6 meetings annually, presenting both international research and current staff research.
- The Philosophical Seminar, is held once a month via Zoom and participants consist chiefly of doctoral students and PhDs, but sometimes also lecturers from Karlstad University. During the seminars, philosophical publications written by well-known philosophers are discussed.
- SOL (School Development, Organization & Leadership) is an interdisciplinary environment where researchers with a shared interest in various activities of schools gather. SOL hosts research 6-8 seminars a year, external guests and students are frequent participants.

The seminars not only work as occasional meetings but as continuous networks with specific forums for communication, collaboration and information via different digital platforms, for example the Seminar for Vocational Education have their own blog for information and communication among participants. The culture of informal collaboration fosters constructive criticism, mutual support, and knowledge sharing in a non-hierarchical environment. However, some challenges concern participation in seminars which are not systematically tracked, leaving gaps in assessing their impact on research quality. In sum, there seem to be uncertainties among staff about the existing seminar series and networks, and about who is invited to participate. Specifically, strategies for collegial development and assessment of applications for research funding need to be improved. In addition, seminars should increasingly encourage the involvement of both lecturers and students to foster

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<sup>4</sup> Karlstad University has received the HR Excellens in Research Award by the European Commission.

<sup>5</sup> The areas for improvement primarily concern lack of recovery and evenly spread among researchers and non-PhD teachers. This is also academic culture.

inclusivity and broader engagement. Efforts in these areas of improvement would have the potential to ensure the sustainability and continued renewal of research quality.

#### 4.2 Promoting good research practices

Each researcher at the department is responsible for following good research practice in their research and everybody at the University is obliged to stay informed about and follow applicable rules and guidelines within the research integrity and ethics area. Head of department has an overall responsibility for ensuring that research at the department is carried out in accordance with good research practice. For instance, making sure that everybody is offered information, training, advice and support in matters concerning good research practice, and rectifying potential organizational deficiencies which may lead to insufficient compliance. This is managed through yearly dialogues, departmental meetings, emails and whenever questions arise. Senior researchers, supervisors and mentors offer guidance and training to properly develop, design and structure their research activity and to foster a culture of research integrity. This is conducted at seminars, in supervision, and by individuals.

At the University, all research projects, including PhD projects, should undergo a review process of ethical considerations. Research ethics is highly prioritized in the department. In different meetings and seminars, supervisors, researchers and PhD students are briefed on routines and new regulations and to discuss ethical dilemmas. To maintain and develop competence in the field, a doctoral course in research ethics is mandatory for all doctoral students. Staff at the department have for a long time been and are currently represented as chairpersons and members in ethical committees, boards and authorities at national and local levels.

Some of the initiatives taken to promote and develop good research practices include arranging workshops and seminars to discuss planned applications for research funding and to disseminate findings in current research. Since the processes of acquiring external research funding are arduous and slow, and the majority of the applications are rejected, our ambition is to provide support over time. The authors of applications that are rejected are invited to participate in collaborative collegial analyses in seminars, aimed at improving and enhancing the quality of the application for the next call.

Doctoral students frequently present their planned and ongoing research in seminars in discussions with senior researchers. The seminars generally offer low-barrier opportunities for staff to engage in discussions on various research topics. Article-writing sessions are arranged to encourage co-writing and peer review, enhancing publication output and providing material to incorporate into teaching. Additionally, “mini-research” projects based on practical questions relevant to teacher educators, create research collaboration for lecturers and foster integration between research and education. In biweekly newsletters, staff are kept informed about ongoing projects and publications, colleagues’ visits at national and international conferences, universities, research centres etc.

#### 4.3 Collaborations and networks

Supervisors for PhD students form a network that gathers in meetings 2-4 a year, to discuss policies and practice in supervision, share experiences, discuss dilemmas and plan for further development of doctoral studies. A multidisciplinary research group meets regularly to discuss calls for research proposals, ongoing projects, networking possibilities, and research strategies and goals. Apart from these internal networks connected to the research groups and seminar series, many researchers are also members of other networks, seminars and research groups, within Karlstad University and other universities. Moreover, informal groups and networks take place both nationally and across borders.

## 5. Collaboration with the surrounding community

The DES engages in extensive collaboration with various external organizations, including schools, municipal administration, national agencies, private enterprises, and non-governmental organizations (see Background data 5.2) These partnerships play a significant role in both the department's educational programs and research.

### 5.1 International collaborative initiatives

DES researchers are involved in several international collaborative research and development projects. For example: *Quality in Nordic Teaching* (QUINT), a Nordic centre of excellence, funded by NordForsk; *Nordic basic schools as past, present and future sites for knowledge and inclusion*, funded by Future Challenges in the Nordics; and *Equal access to knowledge in technology-rich education* (EQUITÉ), a Nordic collaborative exploratory workshop funded by The Swedish Research Council. Moreover, *The Nordic Network for Gifted Education* (NNGE), a Nordic collaboration initiated by DES, connects researchers in gifted education with schools and private organizations across the Nordic countries. These projects are examples of collaborative initiatives where researchers and educational institutions unite to address contemporary societal challenges. By integrating multidisciplinary approaches, Nordic cooperation, and practical applications, these projects have the potential to contribute both high-quality research and development of concrete solutions that can be implemented and widely distributed across various educational contexts.

### 5.2 National and regional collaborative initiatives

Researchers at DES engage in multiple regional and national initiatives designed to enhance professional development and research dissemination in education. Researchers collaborate with schools at all educational levels, including preschools, elementary schools, upper secondary schools, folk high schools, and cultural schools. This collaboration occurs through various channels such as teacher education programs, student internships, practice schools, research seminars, and ongoing professional development initiatives.

An important centre located at Karlstad University is **Regional Development Centre (RUC)**. Over the past twenty years, RUC, in collaboration with municipalities in the region and other universities, has undertaken numerous professional development initiatives for teachers and preschool teachers involving researchers from DES. A model for collegial learning, stretched over 18 months, has been developed mixing seminar days at Karlstad University with periods of application in practice. The initiative emphasize collegial learning based on solid research evidence also involving teacher students at their fieldwork. Led by a scientific leader from DES, RUC provides an array of activities that foster research-based school development and practice-based research.

Karlstad University has played a significant role, nationally and regionally, in the development of the ULF initiative<sup>6</sup>, a national project funded by the Swedish government, for testing and developing sustainable collaboration between schools and academia concerning practice-based research, professional development, and teacher education. Researchers at DES are deeply involved both in the management and the conduct of research and collaboration within ULF.

Researchers from DES regularly disseminate school relevant research findings through Pedagog Värmland, a regional digital platform for professionals across all educational levels. Furthermore, conferences are regularly organized by DES, inviting both researchers and representatives from relevant sectors. For instance, the biennial Sports and Diversity Conference is co-hosted by the Sport Science group in collaboration with RF/SISU Värmland, Karlstad kommun, the Swedish Sports Confederation, and Region Värmland. Conference participants include athletes, sports coaches, board members, and federation employees, engaged as both attendees and speakers. DES researchers also co-organize the annual conference Framtidens lärande (Learning for the Future), a national forum for knowledge exchange and collaboration among practitioners, researchers, and government agencies focused on digital support in education<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Utbildning Forskning Lärande (ULF), <https://www.ulfavtal.se/w/ul/en>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www2.diu.se/framlar/framtidens-larande-vast-karlstad/2023>



DES researchers also partner with private enterprises and non-governmental organizations to support educational innovation and practice. For example, *Co-operation for the Best School Possible (CBS)*, a national school improvement initiative for schools with low knowledge outcomes or high dropout rates. The initiative has a strong emphasis on co-operation between national and local levels. Another important collaboration is ***National School Development Program***, offering leadership training for prospective school principals, and professional development for in-service principals, in collaboration with The National Agency for Education. In addition, the project *The Ultimate Sports Club* in collaboration with RF/SISU Uppland, aims to reduce dropout rates among children and adolescents in sports. Using research evidence to guide implementation of new methods or processes, the project is designed to strengthen and develop sports clubs in the region, and to generate new insights for further research. These projects promote collaboration between the DES and external societal actors, and enable development and improvement of practices at national and regional levels. By integrating research and practice, the projects contribute to advancing research. Research-based methods are implemented in schools and sports clubs to address current societal needs, while the reciprocal input from practical settings generate new research questions.

### 5.3 Professional networks

DSE is involved in several professional networks and research dissemination initiatives that facilitate exchange of ideas and practices between researchers and educators. For example: *National Research Network on School Governance, Organization, and Leadership (NSOL)*, a research network focused on school governance and leadership; *Special Needs Education Association*, a collaborative network in special education across municipalities in and around Värmland; and SOL i Värmland, a regional network of teacher coaches, with which researchers at DES frequently cooperate in research and development projects. These networks have significant potential to impact society by direct translation of research into practice. Through partnerships, workshops, and other dissemination activities, the findings contribute to shaping educational policies and influence the daily work of teachers and administrators. By fostering active collaboration between academia and society, these networks enable implementation of research outcomes, thereby leading to improved educational practices to the benefit of society.

### 5.6 Other forms of knowledge dissemination

Dissemination of research-based knowledge also occurs through less formalized channels. One example is regular breakfast meetings with representatives of the regional federation RF/SISU Värmland and Karlstad Municipality, where topics related to the development of sports activities in Karlstad are addressed. DES researchers actively share research to the public through media interviews and debate forums, social media platforms, and podcasts. Although researchers are on social media, this may not be a prioritized task, but rather one based on individual researcher's initiative or by invitations from others. The absence of a social media strategy may lead to a preference for traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio), thereby perhaps missing important target audiences.

Active alumni networks are an additional strength of the department. The YRK network gather approximately 500 active teachers and researchers bi-annually for knowledge sharing and professional development. Moreover, DES hosts research dissemination events, including half-day seminars for researchers, teachers, students, and other stakeholders in education, such as children's rights organizations. These activities enable an active sharing of research and innovations beyond academia, thereby strengthening both the societal impact and the department's external network relations.

While the department's network-based collaborations are generally successful, there is a recognition that more strategic initiatives for collaboration and influence would be beneficial. Collaboration often occurs informally or organically, and there is a desire to establish more structured and intentional pathways for connecting research with educational practice.

## 6. Interaction between research and education

According to the vision and strategy profile of Karlstad University, high quality research should provide a solid knowledge base for, and be integrated with, our undergraduate programs. At the department, all researchers, from professors to PhD students, are involved as teachers in programs and courses at undergraduate level. As far as possible, areas of teaching in courses are connected to staff's research interests and expertise, is influenced by research interests and research results developed at the department.

Integrating research and education, however, is not a list of measures and actions already taken at a specific department or an institute. Rather, it is an idea, and an ideal, that researchers and teachers continually strive to develop, one that is of immanent importance to the quality of both education and research. At the department, education is provided in a number of sectors, into which many of the staff are divided. Sectors include courses in the early child education program; the elementary teacher program; sports science; special education, complementary teacher education; and principal education. Within these different domains, the idea and organization through which research and education are integrated may vary somewhat, but the overarching ideal is shared. In the following, we describe, analyse and discuss both actions and ideals of integrating research and education on a department level, bearing in mind that some sector variation exists.

### 6.1 Links between research and education

Over the past years, several initiatives have been undertaken to integrate research and education systematically. In program and course planning, there are several strategies for integrating research. In regular meetings, research-active teachers share updates from ongoing research projects, and suggest integration of relevant findings into course curricula. Literature selected for courses incorporates a gradually growing portion of contemporary research, in the form of both book chapters and original research articles. In addition, methods, theories, and results from research at the department are presented to students in regular lectures and seminars, as a way of introducing them, not primarily to the particular results in a given study, but rather to the general conduct of doing research, and to familiarize them with the conditions under which scientific knowledge is produced.

Moreover, in seminars and other meetings, researchers and teaching staff review and discuss research articles that may potentially be used in teaching, ensuring that research is systematically embedded in course content, and that students have access to up-to-date knowledge.

A recent area of development in terms of integrating research and education is an initiative to systematic examination of our own teaching and its outcomes. In a number of small-scaled studies, senior researchers and lecturers have cooperated to investigate for instance teacher students' ability to locate and discuss their own professional development; how to provide teacher students with apt tools for making professional development visible to themselves, and effects of practicing micro teaching in content area development. Not only do these studies highlight critical areas of development in the course, but they also invite non-PhD-lecturers to apply scientific methods as a way to spawn their own professional development. This is a definite upside. A downside might be that although these mini projects are time consuming for staff, they rarely yield time enough for collecting enough data, do a thorough analysis, and produce a rigorously designed study that can be published in a high-ranking peer-reviewed journal. This way, integration of research and education may on the one side provide new interesting routes to double-positive professional development, while on the other side demonstrating the dilemma of having at least partly incompatible ambitions in academia.

### 6.2 Involvement of researchers in teaching

With the ambition to introduce students to ongoing research in their specific field of study, researchers at the department are regularly engaged to give lectures based on their work. This involves courses at all levels, but occur somewhat more frequently on courses and programs at advanced or master level. Similarly, visiting researchers are invited to present their projects and findings in different teacher programs. A senior researcher at the department may, for example, invite teacher students to analyse applied teaching strategies in ongoing classroom instruction captured on video, or ask them to locate traces of critical learning conditions in a transcript from an interview with

a student. Such initiatives are sometimes time consuming, and often requires supplying students with both the empirical context and some theoretical tools to be able to make productive use of the opportunity. From our evaluation of the outcome, however, letting students learn something about the circumstances and conditions under which scientific knowledge develops is a valuable lesson for their future relationship to science in their own field of practice.

Furthermore, students on advanced and master level are on occasions invited to participate in research seminars at the department. When possible, separate courses or programs include opportunities for students to participate and/or assist in research projects, with the aim of fostering hands-on experience in scholarly work. This may include tasks such as collecting data, setting up databases, doing basic statistical analyses, or transcribing interviews.

### 6.3 Integration to the benefit of both research and education

In education, special education, and sports science alike, the development of new theories requires empirical testing. To research conducted at the DES, empirical testing normally means application in the very context for which the new knowledge is intended, for instance in classrooms, in kindergarten groups etc. As clarified above, our research is often practice-based and includes data collection in educational settings of various kinds. This necessitates relationships of trust between schools and academia. Often these relationships are built gradually over time by researchers and their research participants in the field of practice.

However, Karlstad University also offers a comprehensive collaborative framework (Värmlandsmodellen [The Värmland Model]) aimed at fostering synergy between schools and teacher education programs. The key objective of Värmlandsmodellen is to enhance cooperation between the school system and teacher education, and thereby strengthen the quality of both education in schools, teacher training, and educational research. A systematized exchange of roles between teachers, researchers and students (teachers participating in the teacher training, researchers teaching in schools, and students engaging in both fieldwork and practice-based research) is meant to provide a deepened, reciprocal understanding and commitment to the benefit of both schools and university. Fully developed, this model would provide researchers and teachers with ample opportunities to meet, learn from each other, and develop collaborative projects on combined research development. As noted above, researchers in education are in dire need of building networks in the empirical setting they purport to study, and teacher students have a lot to gain from closer ties between the university-based and the field-based parts of their education. While promising in theory, Värmlandsmodellen has still a bit to go before being fully developed. Some areas of improvement that have been identified so far are:

- While researchers participate in teaching, there is a lack of a systematic standardized process to decide who is involved and how.
- The role of the examiner in ensuring research integration varies across courses and needs a clearer definition.
- Opportunities for all students to engage in research projects should be expanded, ensuring broader student participation.
- Increasing the number of open seminars for students could further enhance research exposure.

The integration of research and education offers significant benefits, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning while preparing students for real-world challenges. Efforts such as the Värmlandsmodellen demonstrate the potential of collaborative frameworks to bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, more systematic planning and inclusive opportunities can strengthen these connections even further.





body puts Baby in a corner

HUVUDENTRÉ

Department of Educational Studies

# BACKGROUND DATA

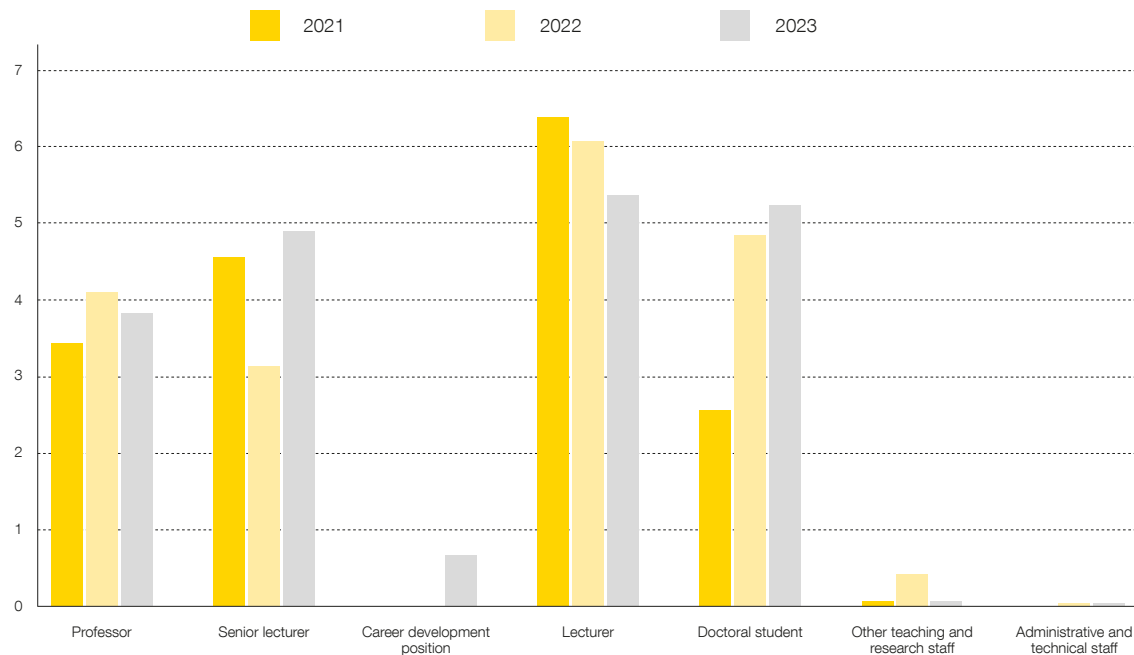
Periodic Research Review

## INTRODUCTION

Background data covers a three-year period (2021-2023) and contains information about staff, third-cycle education, financial resources and research outputs. Data is collected from the university administrative systems to provide an overview and illustrate preconditions for research at the evaluation unit.

## 1. STAFF

**Figure 1.1** Workforce by staff category



The graph shows the workforce, full-time equivalents\*, registered for research activity at the evaluation unit over a three-year period. Staff categories are professor, senior lecturer, career development position, lecturer, doctoral student, other teaching and research staff, and administrative and technical staff. See table 1.2 for individuals in each category.

Source: Primula

\* Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a unit of measurement to illustrate the number of full-time hours spent on research for all employees at the evaluation unit. Research includes recorded time covered by internal funding, external research funding and commissioned research funding.

**Table 1.2** Staff at the evaluation unit

Staff, based on position, engaged in research at the evaluation unit during 2023.

Position	Subject
<b>Professor</b>	
Enochsson, Ann-Britt	Educational Work
Gustafsson, Henrik	Sports Science
Göransson, Kerstin	Special Education
Hjalmarsson, Maria	Educational Work
Löfdahl Hultman, Annica	Educational Work
Margrain, Valerie	Educational Work
Pérez Prieto, Héctor	Educational Work
Tengberg, Michael	Educational Work

**Senior lecturer**

Andersén, Annelie	Educational Work
Asghari, Hamid	Educational Work
Asplund, Stig-Börje	Educational Work
Blom, Thomas	Educational Work
Carlman, Peter	Educational Work
Duek, Susanne	Educational Work
Eliasson, Björn	Educational Work
Forssten Seiser, Anette	Educational Work
Fredholm, Kent	Educational Work
Gårlin, Stina	Educational Work
Hansson, Susanne	Educational Work
Holmdahl, Gudrun	Educational Work
Högman, Johan	Sports Science
Kilbrink, Nina	Educational Work
Lindholm, Anna	Educational Work
Ljung Egeland, Birgitta*	Swedish Language
Nilsberth, Marie	Educational Work
Olsson, Åsa	Educational Work
Portfelt, Ingela	Educational Work
Raivio, Magdalena	Educational Work
Ribaeus, Katarina	Educational Work
Skånfors, Lovisa	Educational Work
Ungerberg, Kristin	Educational work
Wagnsson, Stefan	Sports Science
Öhman, Anna	Educational Work
Öjjen, Lena	Educational Work

**Career development position**

Isenström, Lisa	Educational Work
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**Lecturer**

Arvidsson, Minna	Educational Work
Axelsson, Jan	Educational Work
Brink, Helen	Educational Work
Fredholm, Kent	Educational Work
Guseva, Alexandra	Educational Work
Hallquist, Claes	Educational Work
Hansson Cooper, Ami	Educational Work
Hedelin, Zara	Educational Work
Hildén, Ebba	Educational Work
Johansson, Anders	Educational Work
Johansson, Emelie	Educational Work
Karlsson, Lennart	Educational Work
Mellerskog, Susanne	Educational Work
Mogren, Anna	Educational Work
Nilsson, Emma-Sofia	Educational Work
Nyberg, Claes	Sports Science
Rudström-Fernqvist, Sophie	Educational Work
Räftegård, Hanna	Educational Work
Sjöqvist, Anna	Educational Work
Söderlind, Linda	Educational Work
Tahiri-Berg, Jehona	Educational Work
Tarander, Eva*	Swedish Language



Wall, Peter	Educational Work
Wejrum, Marie*	Swedish Language
Wiker, Anneli	Educational Work
Ådefors, Annica	Educational Work
<b>Doctoral student</b>	
Augustsson, Felicia	Educational Work
Brolinson, Ulrika	Educational Work
Ekelund, Tove	Educational Work
Huchthausen, Nadine	Educational Work
Isaksson, Line	Educational Work
Lennartsdotter, Maria	Educational Work
Lindvall, Charlotta	Educational Work
Nissen, Anna	Educational Work
Thorsager, Lilyana	Educational Work
<b>Other academic staff</b>	
Appelgren, Caroline	Educational Work
Hillring, Petra	Educational Work
Wendell, Joakim	Educational Work
Yousefi, Leyla	Educational Work
Åblad Lindqvist, Julia	Educational Work
<b>Administrative staff</b>	
Andersson Busch, Cathrine	

Source: Primula

\* Employed at another department, participating in joint research projects.

**Table 1.3 Recruitment**

Number of recruited staff, total/women during 2021-2023. Year of employment certificate.

	2021	2022	2023
Recruitments with doctoral degree from another Swedish university	0	2	0
Recruitments with a doctoral degree from outside Sweden	0	0	0
Recruitment with doctoral degree from Karlstad University	5	2	0
International guest researchers	0	0	1
Adjungations - fellowship	1	0	0
Shared positions	0	0	0

Source: Varbi/evaluation unit

**Table 1.4 Promotion**

Number of promoted staff, total/women, during 2021-2023. Year of employment certificate.

	2021	2022	2023
Docent promotions	1/1	1	1/1
Professor promotions	1	1	1/1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Varbi/evaluation unit

## 2. THIRD CYCLE STUDIES

**Table 2.1** Doctoral students

Doctoral students by discipline, year of admission and degree of activity during 2023.

Industry/collaborative/external doctoral students are marked with (I).

Name	Admission subject	Year of admission	Degree of activity 2023	Industry/external/collaboration (I)
Peter Wall	Educational Work	2013	15	(I)
Lena Karlberg	Educational Work	2015	70	(I)
Lennart Karlsson	Educational Work	2015	3	
Ulrika Brolinson	Educational Work	2015	66	
Anna Sjöqvist	Educational Work	2016	3	
Sara Blanck	Educational Work	2017	26	(I)
Anna Sundkvist	Educational Work	2017	50	(I)
Linda Söderlind	Educational Work	2017	47	
Zara Hedelin	Educational Work	2017	25	
Marie Wejrum	Educational Work	2019	79	
Maria Lennartsdotter	Educational Work	2019	80	
Martina Svensson Jordan	Educational Work	2019	75	
Anna Nissen	Educational Work	2019	80	
Jan Axelsson	Educational Work	2019	42	
Jeanni Flognman	Educational Work	2020	45	
Emelie Johansson	Educational Work	2020	76	
Annelie Johansson	Educational Work	2020	79	
Ludvig Sjunnesson	Educational Work	2020	66	(I)
Maria Mollstedt	Educational Work	2020	80	(I)
Minna Arvidsson	Educational Work	2020	80	
Niclas Modig	Educational Work	2020	30	
Pernilla Olsson	Educational Work	2020	50	
Victoria Williamsson	Educational Work	2021	68	
Emil Mörk	Educational Work	2021	50	
Alexandra Guseva	Educational Work	2021	30	
Line Isaksson	Educational Work	2021	77	
Andreas Borg	Educational Work	2022	49	(I)
Sofie Nilsson	Educational Work	2022	50	(I)
Charlotta Lindvall	Educational Work	2022	77	
Nadine Huchthausen	Educational Work	2022	6	
Tove Ekelund	Educational Work	2022	98	
Helen Brink	Educational Work	2022	50	
Felicia Augustsson	Educational Work	2022	80	
Annika Byström	Educational Work	2022	80	
Ann-Kristin Hamberg	Educational Work	2022	50	(I)
Michael Walkert	Educational Work	2022	50	
Annika Pettersson	Educational Work	2023	39	(I)
Claes Nyberg	Educational Work	2023	50	
Lilyana Thorsager	Educational Work	2023	24	

Source: Ladok

**Table 2.2** Completed a Degree of Licentiate or Doctor

Number of students that have completed a Degree of Licentiate and Doctor over the past three years.

Name	Subject	Degree	2021	2022	2023
Andreas Borg	Educational Work	Licentiate	1		
Ann-Kristin Hamberg	Educational Work	Licentiate		1	
Helen Brink	Educational Work	Licentiate	1		
Jan Axelsson	Educational Work	Licentiate			1
Lorena Solvang	Educational Work	Licentiate		1	
Sofie Nilsson	Educational Work	Licentiate		1	
Anna Sjöqvist	Educational Work	Doctor			1
Ebba Hildén	Educational Work	Doctor	1		
Håkan Eilard	Educational Work	Doctor		1	
Johan Högman	Educational Work	Doctor	1		
Kent Fredholm	Educational Work	Doctor	1		
Mattias Björklund	Educational Work	Doctor	1		
Niclas Modig	Educational Work	Doctor			1
Sara Blanck	Educational Work	Doctor			1
Stina Gårlin	Educational Work	Doctor	1		
Thomas Blom	Educational Work	Doctor		1	
<b>Total sum</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>

Source: Ladok

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES

**Table 3.1** Research Funding

Research funds spent at the evaluation unit for the period of 2021-2023. Amounts in SEK 1 000.

Department of Educational Studies	2021	2022	2023
Faculty funding (governmental funding)	15 002	13 785	16 653
External funding <sup>1</sup>	6 204	7 997	9 269
Internal income <sup>2</sup>			
<b>Total</b>	<b>21 206</b>	<b>21 782</b>	<b>25 922</b>
Percentage external funding	29 %	37 %	36 %

Source: Kuli/Raindance

<sup>1</sup> External funding: Includes revenue from fees, other reimbursements and funding. Funding which can include grants from councils, other public research funding agencies, municipalities, regions and research foundations.

<sup>2</sup> Internal income includes, for example, grants and/or compensations from other parts of the university.

**Table 3.2** External research funding

Distribution of external research funds spent during the period of 2021-2023. Amounts in SEK 1000.

Funding source	2021	2022	2023
EU and Foreign organisations	4	67	438
Swedish research councils <sup>1</sup>	4 032	6 079	7 215
Other Swedish government funders <sup>2</sup>	1 931	1 799	1 788
County councils and municipalities	6	-	62
Private funders, industry, company etc.	232	52	114
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 204</b>	<b>7 997</b>	<b>9 269</b>

Source: Kuli/Raindance

<sup>1</sup> Research Councils include the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte), the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (Formas) and the Swedish Institute for Educational Research (Skolforskningsinstitutet).

<sup>2</sup> Other Swedish government foundations include The Knowledge Foundation, Vinnova, The Swedish Energy Agency etc.

**Table 3.3** External research funding statistics

Number of grant applications submitted to external funding bodies, number of granted applications, amount applied for and granted refers to Karlstad University's share. Amounts in SEK 1000.

	2021	2022	2023
Number of grant applications	23	19	24
Number of granted applications	6	4	6
Amount applied	87 684	44 369	52 951
Amount granted	49 622	7 960	7 108
Success rate <sup>1</sup>	26 %	21 %	25 %

Source: Raindance

<sup>1</sup> Success rate is calculated on the number of granted applications in relation to those submitted.

## 5. EXTERNAL COLLABORATION AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

**Table 5.1** Engagement in the scientific community. The table shows the number of individual peer-review assignments within the evaluation unit during 2023.

Assignment	Total numbers
Plenary or keynote talk at international conferences	9
Assignment as expert evaluator in research councils and foundations	6
Assignment as expert evaluator for position of professor, associate professor (docent) and/or senior lecturer	6
Assignment as opponent for PhD thesis	2
Assignment as member of examination board for PhD thesis	4
Assignment as editor or member of editorial board for journal	16
Assignment as reviewer for international journal	71
Member of national scientific councils	6
Member of international scientific councils	2

Source: Evaluation unit



**Table 5.2** Collaborative partners

Collaborative partners, reported by the name of organization, for the period 2021-2023. Research collaborations given here are limited to those with joint research grants and/or joint publications with the evaluation unit.

### **Academic partners**

#### **National:**

- NSOL (National Network for School Leadership, Organization, and Management)
- SWERA (Swedish Educational Research Association)
- Skand-AF (Scandinavian Network for Action Research)
- PEP (Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis Network)
- Nordicom (International Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research)
- Mimer (Network for Research on Popular Education)

#### **Universities:**

University of Gothenburg, University of Borås, Dalarna University, Halmstad University, Jönköping University, Linköping University, Linnaeus University, Luleå University of Technology, Lund University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalens University, Stockholm University, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Södertörn University, Umeå University, Uppsala University, Örebro University

#### **International:**

##### **Norway**

Arctic University of Norway, University West, Molde University, NTNU Trondheim, OsloMet, University of Oslo, University of Stavanger, University of Agder, Nord University, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

- **Finland**  
Helsinki University, University of Eastern Finland, University of Oulu, Åbo Akademi University
- **Denmark**  
Aalborg University, Aarhus University, University of Southern Denmark, UCL University College
- **Iceland:**  
University of Iceland, University of Akureyri
- **Germany**  
Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Humboldt University, German Youth Institute, Technical University Berlin
- **Poland**  
Adam Mickiewicz University Poznan, Gdansk University, Pedagogical University of Krakow, University of Lower Silesia Wrocław
- **Netherlands**  
Hogeschool Utrecht, Maastricht University
- **France**  
University of Grenoble Alpes, University of Lyon
- **Spain**  
Extremadura University, University of Granada, University of Extremadura
- **Italy**  
Chieti-Pescara University, Università degli Studi d'Annunzio
- **UK**  
Brunel University, John Moores University, University of Bath, University College London, University of Portsmouth
- **Ireland**  
University College Dublin
- **Switzerland**  
PH Zürich, University of Basel, University of Geneva
- **Turkey**  
Akdeniz University, Bursa Uludag University

- **USA**  
California State University, Duquesne University, Michigan State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- **Canada**  
Acadia University, Université de Montréal
- **South Africa**  
University of Zululand, University of the Western Cape
- **Australia**  
Australian Catholic University, Charles Sturt University, University of Wollongong
- **New Zealand**  
Massey University
- **Japan**  
Yamaguchi University
- **Chile**  
Universidad Arturo Prat Puerto Montt

## **Industry partners**

### **National:**

- The Uniting Church in Sweden
- RF/SISU Värmland
- The Fritidsbanken
- SCRIIN
- SPARKS Generation
- PrataMera Sport
- Sticky Beat
- The Future of Learning
- Strömsholm Riding School AB / Flyinge AB
- Swedish Floorball Federation

### **International:**

- English Schools Foundation, Hong Kong

## **Public Sector partners**

### **Regional:**

- 16 municipalities of Värmland
- Värmland Sports Federation
- Region Västra Götaland
- Region Skåne
- Regional Development Center Örebro

### **National:**

- Several Swedish municipalities (ca. 30, mostly in-kind)
- Swedish Arts Schools Council
- Swedish Resuscitation Council
- SISU/RF Uppland, Småland
- Swedish Schools Inspectorate
- Swedish National Agency for Education
- National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM)
- Swedish Council for Higher Education
- Swedish Horse Industry Foundation

## Other partners

### National:

- Swedish Teachers' Union
- National Association of Language Teachers
- Swedish Equestrian Association
- Swedish Ski Federation
- Swedish National Sports Federation
- Association of Publicly Owned Folk High Schools (OFI)
- Association of Movement Folk High Schools (RIO)
- Association for Teaching Developmental Subject Didactics
- ResearchUNICEF
- Cetis (Technology Didactics Network)

### International:

- Centro Cultural Sefarad, Argentina
- Equestrian Educational Network
- The European Society for Research on Equestrian Cultures (ESREC)
- The International Group for Equestrian Qualifications (IGEQ)
- TEPE (Teacher Education Policy Network)
- PATT-network (Pupils Attitudes Towards Technology)

Source: Evaluation unit

## 6. SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION

The research activity at Karlstad University is expressed, among other things, in scientific publications. This report aims to map the publishing activity and its development over time for the evaluation unit. The report also shows the proportion of internationally co-authored publications where at least one of the authors is affiliated with a university outside Sweden as well as the proportion of publications that are open access, i.e. freely available online.

## METHOD

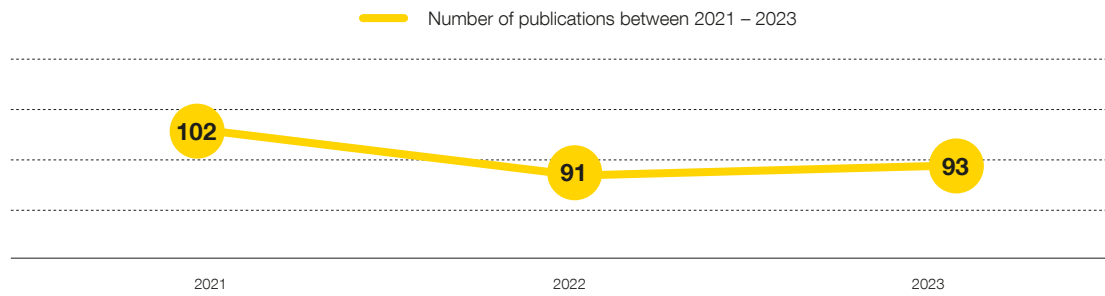
To get a complete coverage of what is published within the unit, the following tables are based on registered publications in DiVA (Academic Archive Online) an electronic publishing system for research publications and student theses. Publication extraction for the years 2021-2023 has been based on the researchers individual identification code which links them with their respective publications. The list of researchers that are included in the analyses was provided by the HR department and includes also researchers that were employed during 2021-2023.

The analysis includes all publications where at least one of the authors is affiliated with Karlstad University. The publication types included in the report consist of journal articles, article reviews, books, book reviews, chapters in books, conference papers, collections (editor), proceedings (editor), and reports. The publication subcategories presentation, posters, abstracts and "other" have been omitted from the analysis since the researchers register these entries to a very varying extent. Doctoral dissertations and licentiate theses are reported in detail in other parts of the evaluation and have therefore also been omitted here.

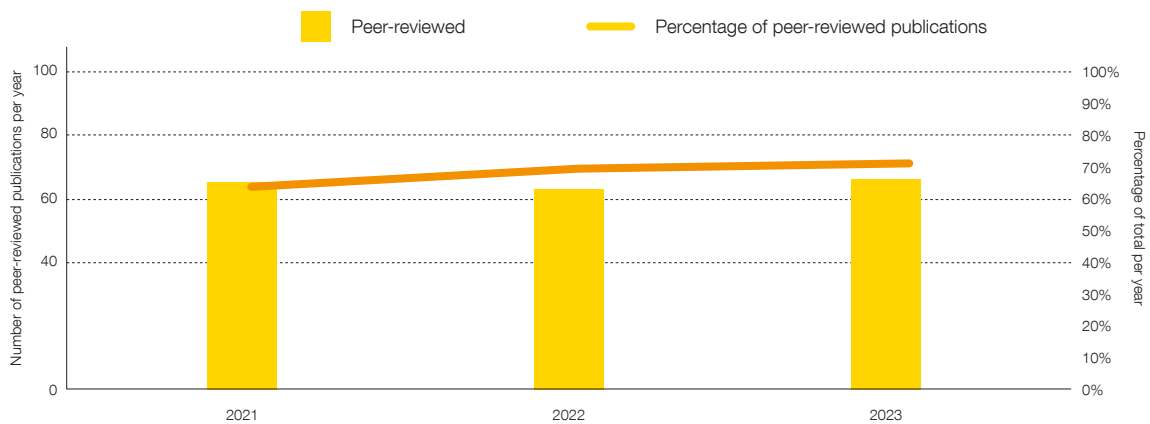
## PUBLISHING OUTPUT

Counting the total number of publications is the simplest bibliometric measure for reporting publications over a period of time for a research-producing unit. During 2021-2023, 97 individuals from the evaluation unit published 286 publications.

**Figure 6.1** The annual total number of publications during 2021-2023.



**Figure 6.2** Number of peer-reviewed publications per year for the unit (bars). Percentage of peer-reviewed publications of the total annual number of publications (line).



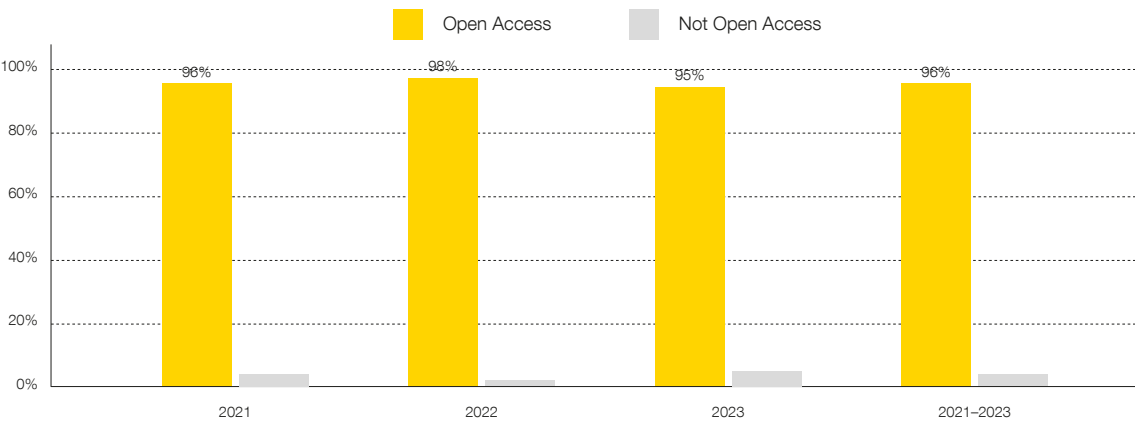
**Table 6.3** The unit's publications sorted by publication and content type for the years 2021-2023.

	Peer-reviewed	Scientific but not peer-reviewed	Other (popular scientific, debate)
Article in journal	145	13	5
Article, review/survey	1		
Article, book review	1	4	
Book	1	7	1
Chapter in book	22	49	4
Conference paper*	15		
Proceedings (Editor)	1		
Report	4	4	1
Collection (Editor)	4	4	

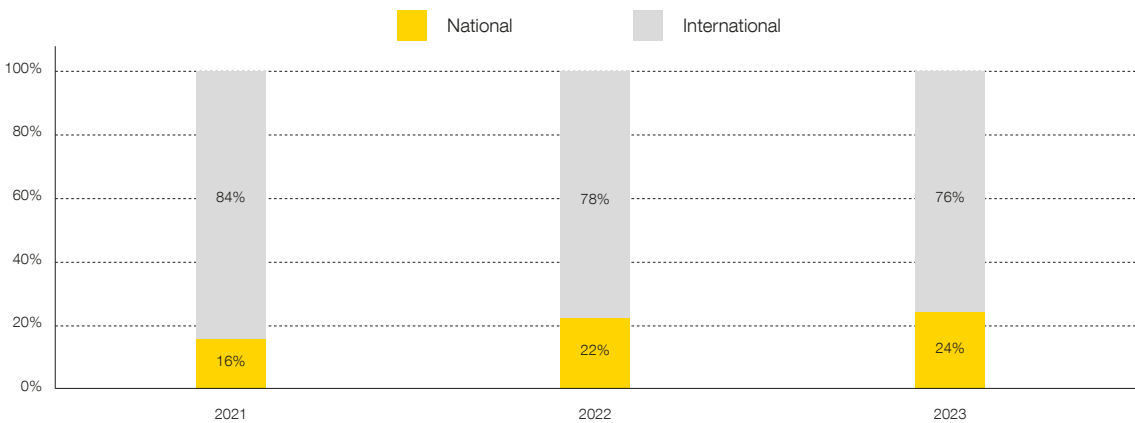
\* Only published peer-reviewed conference papers are presented. See 'Method' for information on publication types included in this evaluation.



**Figure 6.4** Comparison of the percentage of peer-reviewed articles that are Open access and the percentage that are not.



**Figure 6.5** Proportion of the unit's publications with an international profile and publications where all authors were affiliated with Swedish organizations.



## 7. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

If applicable, specify the most significant research infrastructure available.

Access to the following research databases:

- Video database (shared by Nordic researchers in the Nordic Centre of Excellence Quality in Nordic Teaching, QUINT)
- Locally hosted databases Linking Instruction and Student Achievement, LISA and Connected classrooms.



# Evaluation report

13.3.2025

The Department of Education Studies at Karlstad University

Professor Lena Boström, Professor Heidi Harju-Luukkainen and Professor Rita Elisabeth

Hvistendahl

## Summary of the Evaluation Report

*The Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University (KAU) plays a significant role in research across three core disciplines: Educational Work, Special Education, and Sports Science. The department's research is characterized by interdisciplinary collaboration, strong community engagement, and efforts to integrate research with education. Despite these strengths, fragmented research efforts, limited international co-publications, and challenges in securing high-impact publications hinder further progress. Financial constraints and a reliance on external funding have led to an unstructured research culture, making it difficult to sustain long-term research initiatives. Key challenges identified in the evaluation include the absence of a formal research strategy, which results in inconsistent collaboration and a lack of research coherence. The heavy administrative workload on faculty, combined with limited institutional support for securing external funding, further limits researchers' ability to focus on high-quality research. Additionally, early-career researchers are not systematically integrated into mentorship structures and strategic research planning, which impacts long-term academic development. Despite these obstacles, DES maintains strong local and national partnerships with schools, municipalities, and government agencies, significantly impacting educational practices, teacher training, and leadership development. However, societal impact in Special Education remains less visible, suggesting the need for better documentation and communication of research outcomes. At the international level, while the department participates in several collaborative research projects, its involvement in high-profile international academic networks and co-publications remains limited. Expanding strategic global partnerships beyond Erasmus+ and increasing joint research initiatives would help strengthen DES's international research presence. The integration of research and teaching at DES is well-established, with researchers actively contributing to course development and pedagogical innovation. However, further steps should be taken to institutionalize structured interactions between research projects and curricula, ensuring that all students benefit from research-informed teaching. Strengthening interdisciplinary research initiatives that directly support teacher education and applied educational sciences will further enhance the connection between research and practice. To enhance research quality and sustainability, DES should focus on developing a clear research strategy, improving funding mechanisms, fostering structured international partnerships, and strengthening research impact through targeted initiatives. Addressing administrative challenges and promoting a more collaborative research environment will be critical in ensuring the department's long-term success as a research-intensive academic institution.*



# Introduction

This evaluation report assesses the research performance and development prospects of the Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University (KAU) as part of the periodic research review process. The review aims to ensure continuous quality improvement in research, aligning with Karlstad University's strategic vision for 2030 and national higher education policies.

Sweden's higher education and research system is characterized by a decentralized structure where universities have significant autonomy while operating within a framework of national quality assurance led by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ). Karlstad University, a relatively young institution, has established a systematic quality assurance system to evaluate its research and foster long-term academic development. The periodic review process is a central mechanism for monitoring progress, identifying strengths and challenges, and guiding future improvements.

The Department of Educational Studies (DES) is part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and is structured around three main research disciplines: Educational Work, Special Education, and Sports Science. It plays a critical role in teacher education and educational research, contributing to both academic knowledge production and professional practice. The department has a strong tradition of interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating research and education to address contemporary educational challenges.

The Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University (KAU) operates within three key research disciplines: Educational Work, Special Education, and Sports Science. The department's research strategy emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration, international engagement, and the integration of research with education. Despite facing financial constraints and an over-reliance on external funding, DES has demonstrated continuous stable productivity in scientific outputs, research collaborations, and contributions to educational practices. Next, we will describe the different disciplines at DES.

Research within educational work focuses on teacher education, pedagogical practices, and school leadership. A major strand involves classroom-based research on teaching and learning, where findings have influenced instructional scaffolding and digital learning environments. Research in early childhood education examines the effects of curriculum demands and policy

implementation on educators. Another significant focus is school development, particularly leadership and organizational culture, with direct applications in Sweden's national school development initiatives. Studies in vocational education highlight the challenges of individual-based instruction and the need for structured professional development for vocational teachers. Special Education has developed relatively strong expertise in special education, particularly in inclusive education, neurodevelopmental disorders, and gifted education. Research on compulsory schooling for students with intellectual disabilities (CSID) has shaped pedagogical practices and contributed to national professional development programs. The department has also initiated the GiftED doctoral program, which explores identification, curriculum design, and mental health aspects of gifted students. Moreover, studies on digitalization in special education investigate how technology can support students with reading and writing difficulties. Research results have been widely disseminated through collaborations with the Swedish National Agency for Education. Sports science explores psychosocial development, health and burnout in youth sports, and the role of sports in social integration. Collaborations with municipalities and the Swedish Sports Confederation have led to applied research projects, particularly on promoting physical activity among inactive children. The department aims to establish a research centre for youth sports, positioning itself as a national and international leader in the field.

This evaluation report is based on a comprehensive self-evaluation by the department, supplemented by background data from 2021-2023 and insights from a digital site visit. The assessment focuses on research quality, organizational effectiveness, academic culture, collaboration with societal stakeholders, and the integration of research and education. It highlights the department's achievements while also identifying areas for strategic development to enhance its research impact and sustainability.

## Evaluation of Scientific Results

According to the self-evaluation document and interviews, DES researchers have been active in publishing peer-reviewed articles and securing some external funding. The department produces an average of 95 articles annually, though challenges remain in publishing in high-ranking international journals. Efforts to increase international collaborations have resulted in

joint research projects and a growing network of institutional partnerships. However, limited resources and fragmented research activities have hindered the ability to sustain large-scale initiatives. The department maintains ties with over 60 universities worldwide and actively participates in national and international research networks. However, engagement in co-publications with international researchers remains an area for development. The department also organizes and participates in numerous academic conferences, contributing to knowledge dissemination and policy discussions.

With this said, DES faces several challenges, including financial constraints, a heavy administrative burden on researchers, and a lack of overarching strategic direction. Thus, in the interview, the department acknowledges the need for a more structured research funding strategy, increased administrative support, and better integration of research programs. Efforts are being made as we write this report, to enhance internal funding mechanisms, encourage joint grant applications, and create structured research groups to mitigate the risks of individual-driven projects. Next we will analyse closer both the discussion with the personnel as well as the

In the discussions with the personnel, there were several topics pinpointed as important. Firstly, the research environment at the Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University (KAU) is shaped by *several structural and cultural factors* that impact the ability of researchers to produce high-quality outputs, secure funding, and collaborate effectively. One of the key observations from the discussion was the emphasis on maintaining a strong quality culture, which is considered essential for research success. Quality work is encouraged to be systematic, with action plans formulated at the subject level. However, despite these ambitions, there was no clearly articulated research strategy at the department, which has resulted in a somewhat fragmented approach to research. Many researchers work on individual projects without a coordinated agenda, which affects the overall coherence of the research environment.

The department currently employs 121 staff members, including seven professors and seven docents, and has 41 PhD candidates. Despite this substantial academic workforce, the research output remains relatively low, with less than one publication per person per year. Furthermore, the engagement with other universities is seen as somewhat limited, with recorded contact with around 60 institutions, averaging less than 0.5 per researcher. However, the research culture at DES can be described as relatively open-ended, where scholars have the freedom to explore their own topics of interest without strict strategic direction. This flexibility has both positive

and negative consequences. While it allows for intellectual autonomy, it also leads to a lack of prioritization, making it difficult to build strong research profiles in specific areas. Special education has recently received increased funding, and it is expected to be prioritized further in the future. This indicates that, despite the absence of a formalized research strategy, certain areas receive focused attention based on funding availability.

One of the most pressing challenges identified in discussions with the personnel was *research funding*. Research activities currently constitute only 16 percent of the department's overall operations, and securing external funding remains a significant obstacle. While there is broad recognition of the need for a stronger research-funding strategy, little was identified in both interviews and documents to coordinate efforts in this area. Some researchers lack knowledge about funding application processes, and there is an evident need for training on how to apply for external grants. Large-scale projects might struggle with coordination, making it difficult to attract substantial further funding. A clearer prioritization of funding efforts could help address this issue, but at present, as far as we have understood, discussions have not been formalized. The administrative burden on researchers is another major challenge, as many faculty members find it difficult to allocate time for research due to overwhelming administrative and teaching responsibilities.

*Collaboration within the research environment* at DES remains somewhat unstructured. While research seminars are available, participation seems to be inconsistent, and many researchers are unsure which events are most important to attend. There is a general sense or consensus that research collaboration happens informally and is largely driven by personal networks rather than institutional support. There are currently no structured mechanisms to encourage co-publication or data-sharing, which further limits the potential for collaborative research but also the development of younger scholars. Although there is some level of international engagement, it is primarily linked to Erasmus+ initiatives, which do not provide direct research funding. Expanding international partnerships with research-focused funding opportunities could strengthen the department's global research profile.

The *research culture* is an important factor in research production. It seems to be further constrained by a lack of administrative support. Currently, only one person is responsible for research administration, which seems to be inadequate given the number of researchers in the department. However, there was an indication that more support administration can be found outside of the department. PhD supervision is also a fragmented process, as not all doctoral

candidates are formally affiliated with the department. As a result, faculty members often seek help from colleagues at other institutions for supervision support (however, this is not necessarily negative). There is also a perceived inequality in research participation, with some researchers feeling excluded from collaborative opportunities. To address this, structured initiatives are needed to integrate younger researchers into established projects. Some mini-projects linked to teacher education have successfully resulted in conference presentations and publications, demonstrating the potential for structured collaboration. However, such efforts remain sporadic rather than systematically integrated into the research environment.

Another critical aspect of research development at DES is the *link between research and teaching*. Many efforts have been made to integrate research into teaching, with student projects allowing learners to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world settings. For instance, video-based analysis has been used as a teaching tool, enabling students to engage with research concepts more practically. However, beyond these efforts, there remains significant potential for further innovation in connecting research and teaching. Encouraging more structured student involvement in research projects could provide additional benefits, both for student learning and for strengthening the research culture.

*Career development* for early-career researchers is another area that requires attention. Young researchers have not been actively involved in writing the self-evaluation report, which limits their engagement with institutional research strategies. Further, while research ethics information is available for younger scholars, it is not always systematically embedded in daily research practices. Postdoctoral researchers and early-career academics also face funding uncertainties, making career progression unpredictable. Additionally, PhD supervision structures are not well-defined, leading to imbalances in supervision loads, where some faculty members take on many doctoral students while others do not supervise at all. These disparities highlight the need for a more structured approach to mentoring and career development as well.

Institutionally, the research leadership structure could benefit from greater *strategic coordination*. While research centres provide financial stability, it was identified in the interviews that they can also act as barriers to the formation of new research ideas. There is no clear institutional strategy for prioritizing the development of research environments, making it difficult for emerging groups to gain traction. Senior researchers often mentor young academics informally, but structured career development pathways remain inconsistent. Balancing research and teaching responsibilities continues to be a challenge, with research



often relegated to free time rather than being integrated into regular work schedules. Without clear institutional policies to protect research time, faculty members struggle to maintain research productivity.

## Evaluation of Organization and Leadership

The leadership of DES is structured to balance educational and research responsibilities. The department is headed by a Head of Department (HD), supported by a Deputy Head (DHD), heads of subjects, and directors of studies. This leadership framework is designed to foster collaboration and ensure alignment with the university's broader goals. Research at DES is organized at multiple levels, including didactic centres, research groups, and interdisciplinary collaborations, which provide an environment for academic exchange and knowledge production. The department also participates in national and international research networks, further enhancing its academic reach and impact. In this section of the report, we will especially focus on organisation of research, management of research, research strategy and the administrative support for research. All important aspects of an academic environment, connected with organisation and leadership of DES.

### Organization of Research at DES

Research at DES is structured across multiple levels. The department's research activities are primarily organized within four didactic centres, three of which are located within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Additionally, DES researchers participate in a centre affiliated with the Faculty of Health, Science, and Technology in collaboration with a regional research centre. A prominent research group within DES aspires to attain the status of an "Excellent Research Group," comprising researchers from DES and other departments at Karlstad University.

Beyond these formal structures, DES maintains several less formally organized research groups, and many faculty members conduct independent research. Researchers across these centres and groups engage in regular seminars, fostering intellectual exchange and

collaboration. To an external observer, the research organization at DES may appear complex, particularly given the interchangeable use of terms such as research centre, research group, and research community. However, internal perspectives suggest that researchers at DES are generally comfortable with this structure.

## Management of Research at DES

The Head of Department holds ultimate responsibility for research, with leadership responsibilities further distributed among the heads of the three disciplines. These individuals support the department head in overseeing research development, research collaboration, quality enhancement, recruitment, strategic planning, and related initiatives. While academic programs within DES are managed by a designated Head of Study, the department lacks a corresponding leadership position for research.

The centres are led by a director and supported by an advisory committee, while the prominent research group operates under a steering committee. Other research groups function with a more decentralized structure, often without clearly defined leadership roles or with leadership shared among senior researchers. These groups primarily serve a social and collegial function, fostering a sense of belonging among researchers who are not affiliated with the centres or the prominent research group. Additionally, they provide valuable academic environments for senior and junior researchers, as well as doctoral candidates, while supporting high-quality research dissemination and collaboration. However, to fully realize their potential in strengthening research activities and external funding applications, these groups would benefit from clearer leadership structures and a more formalized organizational framework.

Communication between the department leadership and centre directors is maintained through regular meetings, while researchers within each discipline convene periodically to discuss research objectives and funding applications. The research management model at DES can be characterized as distributed, emphasizing shared responsibility for research-related activities and staff participation in research governance. While this approach fosters inclusivity, it also presents challenges. Researchers in less formally structured groups may not perceive the same level of accountability or engagement as those affiliated with research centres, potentially leading to disparities in involvement.

To ensure the effectiveness of this model, regular researcher engagement is essential. While the department organizes multiple research seminars, participation levels are inconsistent, making it difficult to assess their impact on research collaboration and engagement. Nevertheless, these seminars serve an important coordinating function within the department.

## Research Strategy

The research centres and the prominent research group each maintain independent research programs that define overarching objectives and research trajectories, reinforcing both their autonomy and influence. However, at the departmental level, there is no overarching research program or strategic plan, which has been identified as a barrier to achieving greater internal coherence in research activities.

The self-evaluation report and discussions with department leadership indicate that the absence of a formal research strategy limits the potential for coordinated national and international collaboration, as well as external funding opportunities. Establishing a structured research strategy with clearly defined ambitions, priorities, goals, and action plans would provide greater direction for research activities within the department.

However, for a research strategy to function as an effective management tool, it must be embedded within the departmental culture and supported by faculty members. Engaging researchers in a collaborative process to develop this strategy could foster a shared understanding of its significance and generate broader institutional support. Additionally, this process could serve as an opportunity to strengthen research cohesion across the department.

## Administrative Support for Research

Although many researchers at DES have limited research allocations, typically ranging between 10–20% of their total workload, faculty members did not explicitly express concerns regarding an excessive emphasis on teaching and administrative duties. However, senior researchers articulated a pronounced need for administrative support in preparing research grant applications and managing funded projects.

Given the significance of external funding for advancing research at DES, we recommend conducting a systematic assessment of the department's research administrative support needs. This would help identify specific areas where additional support could enhance research productivity, facilitate the development of competitive grant proposals, and streamline the implementation of research projects.

## Evaluation of Academic Culture

A healthy academic working culture is essential for fostering research excellence, innovation, and professional well-being in higher education institutions. Research on academic environments, leadership suggests that a strong academic culture is built upon several key principles, including collegiality, inclusivity, transparency, collaboration, and a balance between autonomy and institutional support. When these elements are effectively embedded within university structures, they contribute to higher research productivity, stronger interdisciplinary collaboration, and greater job satisfaction among faculty members. With this said, we will in this section take a closer look at the academic culture of DES.

The academic culture at the Department of Educational Studies (DES) is built on a foundation of collegiality, inclusivity, and interdisciplinary collaboration, providing a dynamic environment for researchers at various stages of their careers. The department fosters a shared sense of intellectual community through regular seminars, research discussions, and mentorship initiatives, creating spaces for knowledge exchange and scholarly engagement. Among the key academic forums are the Higher Seminar, the Special Education Seminar, and the Research Seminar for Vocational Education, which offer platforms for critical discussions, presentation of ongoing research, and constructive feedback among faculty members and doctoral candidates. While these seminars play a crucial role in strengthening the research culture and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, participation remains unevenly distributed, limiting their potential impact. This inconsistency reflects broader structural challenges affecting the culture within the department, particularly in ensuring that all researchers have clearly defined academic affiliations and opportunities for engagement.

The internal meeting structure at DES is designed to facilitate communication, collaboration, and strategic planning, yet its organization has been described as fragmented and unclear. The

self-evaluation report highlights a sense of uncertainty among faculty members regarding who organizes meetings, who is invited to participate, and what the intended outcomes of various gatherings are. Discussions during the evaluation process confirmed that while many staff members are invited to research-related meetings, participation fluctuates, and employees do not always have clarity on which meetings or groups they should engage with. This lack of coherence presents an opportunity for DES to develop a more structured and transparent meeting strategy, ensuring that researchers can navigate departmental activities more effectively. A well-defined academic meeting structure would not only help faculty members align their research interests with departmental priorities but also strengthen institutional cohesion and academic identity. Moreover, integrating assistant professors more actively into these meetings could enhance the connection between research and education, fostering a more integrated academic culture.

The research culture at DES is shaped by both collective academic initiatives and a strong tradition of independent research. Faculty members report significant variation in research practices across disciplines, with some scholars working collaboratively within research centres and groups, while others conduct individual research projects. The formalized research centres and the strong research group facilitate large-scale interdisciplinary collaborations, yet not all researchers are directly involved in these initiatives. Meanwhile, less formal research groups primarily serve a social and professional networking function, offering a sense of academic belonging but lacking the structural support to consistently drive large-scale research projects. While the weekly interdisciplinary research seminars have contributed to fostering a shared academic community, variability in participation rates suggests the need for a more systematic approach to strengthening research collaboration across all levels of the department.

The prevalence of independent research within DES must also be understood within the broader academic landscape of the department. Given the relatively low number of professors and readers/docents, many researchers are primarily focused on career advancement and promotion, which often translates into individual research efforts rather than collective projects. Furthermore, the department continues to see a significant number of Ph.D. candidates producing monographs based on individual research projects, a format that, while valuable in certain academic traditions, limits opportunities for co-publication and collaborative research outputs. Recognizing this, there is an explicit departmental goal to reduce the proportion of



individual research and increase applications for larger-scale, externally funded research projects.

Strengthening the internal research community at DES requires a multi-faceted approach that encourages greater collaboration, structured research group engagement, and strategic funding applications. One critical step in fostering a more cohesive research culture is increasing co-publication efforts among DES researchers. Expanding joint authorship within the department, both among faculty members and between Ph.D. candidates and senior researchers, would not only enhance research visibility and impact but also reinforce the collaborative ethos of the department. A key mechanism for achieving this is a gradual shift toward article-based Ph.D. dissertations, in which doctoral candidates engage in co-authored research publications alongside senior faculty members. This transition would align DES more closely with international publishing norms, increase research productivity, and foster mentorship-driven academic development.

In addition to strengthening collaborative publishing, the department could further enhance its academic culture by reinforcing the structure and leadership of research groups. Establishing more clear expectations for research groups, particularly regarding funding applications, interdisciplinary collaboration, and research dissemination, would ensure that these groups evolve beyond informal academic communities into productive and goal-oriented research collectives. This will likely necessitate a reorganization of internal research groups, including stronger leadership, clearly defined research objectives, and increased institutional support for joint funding initiatives. Encouraging faculty members to actively participate in funding applications as a collective effort would not only strengthen the department's financial sustainability but also elevate the impact of its research outputs on both national and international scales.

## Evaluation of Collaboration and Societal Impact of Research

The Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University actively engages in collaborative partnerships at regional, national, and international levels, fostering practice-

oriented and impactful research that contributes to educational innovation and professional development. Through sustained engagement with schools, municipalities, national agencies, and research institutions, DES has developed an extensive network that enhances the societal relevance of its research. The department has worked with over 30 Swedish municipalities and maintains partnerships with multiple national and international universities, strengthening its role in knowledge exchange and evidence-based educational practice. Among its most significant contributions are initiatives for instance in school leadership training and special education research, which both have had tangible impacts on professional development in education.

Despite these achievements, the coordination and visibility of DES's collaborative initiatives remain areas for further development. While the department actively participates in diverse research partnerships, a more systematic approach to tracking and evaluating societal impact would enhance strategic positioning and ensure that the breadth of these collaborations is effectively communicated and utilized. Currently, impact assessment mechanisms for documenting long-term outcomes remain underdeveloped, which presents an opportunity to refine how research results are disseminated and integrated into practice.

At the international level, DES researchers engage in numerous research and development projects aimed at addressing educational challenges across different contexts. Notable examples include the "Equal Access to Knowledge in Technology-Rich Education" (EQUITÉ) project and the "Nordic Network for Gifted Education" (NNGE), both of which connect academic researchers with schools, private organizations, and policymakers to explore key issues in gifted education and equitable access to learning in digital environments. These projects highlight DES's commitment to research-based solutions in education, particularly within the Nordic region, where educational collaboration is deeply valued. However, while these projects demonstrate strong academic engagement, the evaluation process did not identify clear international partnerships with measurable societal impacts. This suggests a potential strategic development area, ensuring that global research collaborations also lead to practical, real-world applications that are explicitly documented and communicated. Furthermore, while the self-evaluation highlights extensive engagement in Educational Work and Sports Science, similar collaborative efforts in Special Education appear less visible. The absence of specific examples in this area during discussions with faculty suggests a need to further clarify and articulate the role of Special Education research in DES's external partnerships.

At the national and regional levels, DES is deeply involved in multiple professional development initiatives that bridge research and practice in education. A key institutional structure supporting this engagement is the Regional Development Centre (RUC) at Karlstad University, which has been instrumental in organizing professional development programs for educators. Notable initiatives such as Värmlandsmodellen, Pedagog Värmland, and collaborations with the National Sports Confederation and SISU exemplify how DES researchers contribute to educational policy, teacher training, and leadership development. The department's interdisciplinary approach is particularly noteworthy, as it facilitates cross-sectoral engagement and strengthens applied research efforts. Faculty discussions confirmed that participation in these professional networks is highly valued among researchers, yet there is also a risk that these activities demand more time and resources than anticipated. Given their engaging and rewarding nature, ensuring a structured balance between research, teaching, and outreach is crucial to maintaining academic productivity.

One of the most significant national initiatives involving DES researchers is the ULF (Teaching Learning Research) program, a previously experimental but now permanent government-supported initiative that fosters practical school research across Sweden. The self-evaluation report indicates that Karlstad University has played a major role in shaping the ULF framework, both regionally and nationally. However, this claim was not explicitly supported by the documentation or interviews conducted during the evaluation process. A clearer specification of DES's contributions to ULF, including specific projects, documented outcomes, and leadership roles within the initiative, would strengthen the department's position as a key actor in educational research and school development. Additionally, discussions revealed that DES has limited direct control over the allocation of ULF funding, as financial management decisions are made at the faculty level. Addressing internal distribution mechanisms and ensuring transparency in fund allocation could provide greater clarity on how DES researchers benefit from ULF resources and how the outcomes of these collaborations are assessed within the department.

Further illustrating DES's external engagement, the self-evaluation references the department's collaboration with private enterprises and non-governmental organizations to support educational innovation and research translation into practice. One such example is the "Co-operation for the Best School Possible" (CBS) initiative, which plays an important role in fostering school development and research-based educational improvement. However, a

review of CBS's organizational structure clarifies that it is not a private or non-governmental entity, though independent schools are part of the initiative. This distinction suggests that the description of CBS in the self-evaluation may require revision. Despite this minor inconsistency, discussions with faculty confirmed that CBS is a valuable collaborative project with potential for expanded research involvement. Notably, there is a doctoral project, and a network connected to CBS, which presents an opportunity to strengthen DES's research presence within the initiative and further document its social impact.

Another key initiative, the National School Development Program (NSDP), plays a pivotal role in school leadership training and professional development for in-service principals. While the self-evaluation briefly references NSDP, it is surprising that its societal impact has not been discussed in greater depth. Given that NSDP is a major platform for leadership training in Swedish schools, further elaboration on DES's contributions to this initiative, including research integration, program outcomes, and long-term educational impact, would enhance the department's visibility in school leadership development.

Beyond these formal partnerships, DES researchers actively contribute to national and international research networks that facilitate the exchange of ideas, policy recommendations, and pedagogical innovations. Notable academic networks include the National Research Network on School Governance, Organization, and Leadership (NSOL) and the Special Needs Education Association, both of which help shape educational policies and classroom practices. Faculty members also disseminate research findings through informal channels, such as breakfast meetings with regional stakeholders, media interviews, social media engagement, and academic podcasts. These dissemination strategies enhance public engagement and strengthen DES's role as an influential voice in education. The department's active alumni networks and research dissemination events further contribute to its broad societal outreach and long-term academic impact.

In summary, DES maintains a comprehensive and successful portfolio of regional, national, and Nordic collaborations, demonstrating its commitment to applied research and professional engagement. The self-evaluation rightly emphasizes the importance of participation in global networks and academic conferences as a means of enhancing DES's international visibility. However, while the department's collaborations in Educational Work and Sports Science are well-documented, partnerships within Special Education appear less clearly articulated. Additionally, given the breadth and variety of collaborative projects and networks, the overall

picture may appear fragmented, mirroring concerns raised in the self-evaluation regarding the risk of fragmentation due to solo work. By further clarifying the scope and structure of its partnerships, DES could better leverage its collaborations to strengthen strategic research initiatives and maximize societal impact.

## Evaluation of the Relationship Between Education and Research

The Department of Educational Studies (DES) at Karlstad University (KaU) demonstrates a strong commitment to integrating high-quality research with undergraduate and graduate education, ensuring that teaching and research remain closely interconnected. Faculty members at all levels, from professors to Ph.D. candidates, actively engage in teaching, which allows for a dynamic transfer of contemporary research into the learning environment. This integration enhances the academic quality of courses, supports research-informed teaching, and contributes to the continuous development of educational programs.

Several systematic initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen the connection between research and education at DES. According to self-evaluation reports and faculty interviews, researchers regularly update students on ongoing projects and recent developments in their respective fields. Course literature increasingly includes contemporary research findings, ensuring that students are exposed to the latest advancements in educational theory and practice. Additionally, research methodologies and empirical findings from departmental projects are frequently presented in lectures, seminars, and workshops, providing students with direct insight into scientific knowledge production and the research process.

A key aspect of this integration is the active participation of researchers in teaching activities, particularly at the master's and advanced levels, where faculty members deliver lectures based on their research findings. Visiting scholars and external experts also contribute to broadening students' academic perspectives. Moreover, students are occasionally invited to participate in research seminars and collaborative projects, offering them valuable hands-on research experience. One notable initiative is the Värmland Model, which facilitates collaboration



between schools and teacher education programs, fostering mutual understanding, knowledge exchange, and joint projects between educators and researchers. While this initiative has proven successful, systematic planning and more inclusive participation opportunities would further enhance these collaborative efforts.

Discussions with faculty revealed that the process of integrating research into teaching varies across different academic programs. While several effective strategies for research transfer have been identified, staff members acknowledged that this integration is more seamless in master's programs compared to discipline-specific teacher education programs. One key challenge stems from the fact that teacher training programs are administratively housed within their own faculty, which can make it more difficult to establish direct links between specific programs and research-driven teaching. The rector's training program, however, was identified as a model where research and teaching are particularly well-aligned, highlighting organizational differences in research-teaching integration across various programs.

To ensure that DES's educational programs consistently benefit from the latest research, there is a need for continued efforts to strengthen the formal integration of research within curricula. Faculty members serving as examiners play a critical role in this process, as they are well-positioned to ensure that course content reflects current research developments. Conducting a systematic review of research integration across different programs would help to ensure that this type of quality assurance is applied consistently and that all students have access to research-informed learning experiences.

Overall, DES has successfully embedded research into its teaching practices, with faculty members actively contributing to teacher education and professional development through their research expertise. Initiatives such as research-informed teaching, doctoral student involvement in pedagogy, and faculty-led research dissemination support this ongoing integration. However, further steps can be taken to institutionalize structured interactions between research projects and teaching curricula, ensuring that academic programs remain at the forefront of educational research and innovation. By strengthening mechanisms for research-teaching collaboration, DES can continue to enhance the educational experience for students while reinforcing its position as a leading centre for pedagogical research and teacher education.

## Final Recommendations for Further Development

In this final section, we present the key recommendations that emerge from our evaluation of the Department of Educational Studies (DES). These recommendations are designed to address critical areas of development, ensuring that the department strengthens its research environment, enhances academic collaboration, and maximizes its societal impact. The recommendations build on insights gathered from self-evaluation reports, faculty discussions, and institutional data, providing hopefully a roadmap for strategic improvements for the future.

### Develop a Shared Research Strategy

A fundamental step toward strengthening DES's research environment is the development of a shared research strategy that is anchored among faculty members. Establishing overarching research themes will provide clear direction and improve coherence across different research initiatives. A well-defined strategy will help ensure that individual and collective research efforts align with both institutional priorities and broader academic and societal needs. To achieve this, researchers should be actively involved in shaping the strategy, fostering a sense of ownership and engagement. Additionally, the department should align its research agenda with global educational challenges and national policy frameworks to enhance its relevance and ability to secure competitive funding.

### Strengthen Research Funding Strategies

A more structured approach to funding applications is necessary to enhance DES's ability to secure large-scale grants and external financial support. This requires a shift away from reliance on individual-driven initiatives toward coordinated, collaborative funding efforts. Organizing workshops on grant writing and funding applications will equip faculty with the necessary skills to secure external research funding. Additionally, expanding administrative support for grant applications and project management will help reduce the bureaucratic workload on researchers, allowing them to focus more on academic work. Developing internal funding mechanisms that strategically align with institutional research priorities will further ensure long-term financial sustainability for the department's research activities.

## Improve Internal Research Collaboration and Structure

Strengthening collaboration within DES requires a more formalized structure for research groups. While some groups are already well-established, many remain loosely organized and operate on an informal basis. Formalizing these groups and ensuring they align with the department's broader research strategy will create stronger, more cohesive research teams. Encouraging co-publication through structured incentives and facilitating systematic data-sharing among researchers will further enhance internal collaboration. Additionally, the department should consider establishing dedicated research centres to provide long-term stability, institutional backing, and enhanced funding opportunities for large-scale research initiatives.

## Strengthen International Research Collaboration

Expanding DES's international research partnerships is crucial for enhancing its global visibility and impact. While existing collaborations through Erasmus+ and Nordic networks are valuable, the department should actively seek opportunities to participate in research-specific funding programs beyond mobility exchanges. Strengthening international collaboration will require increasing joint publications with international partners and attracting visiting scholars whose research aligns with DES's key areas of focus. Furthermore, a more strategic approach to participation in global academic networks and international conferences will help DES raise its profile and establish itself as a globally connected research hub.

## Improve Research Impact and Dissemination

Enhancing the impact of DES's research requires targeted efforts to ensure that faculty members publish in high-ranking academic journals and engage in scholarly dissemination at an international level. Providing structured support for impactful publishing and guiding researchers toward journals with high visibility and relevance will help increase DES's

academic influence. Additionally, systematically documenting and showcasing research contributions to policymakers, educators, and the broader public will strengthen DES's societal impact. A more structured approach to tracking and evaluating research impact will help position the department as a key player in educational research and policy development.

## Optimize Administrative Structures and Research Support

To support a productive research environment, DES must address administrative challenges that hinder faculty members' ability to focus on research. Mapping out the specific administrative support needs within the department and expanding research assistance services will alleviate the burden of bureaucratic tasks. Reducing administrative workloads for faculty will allow them to dedicate more time to securing funding, conducting research, and publishing their findings. Strengthening internal research support structures, including mentorship programs for early-career researchers, will also play a critical role in fostering an inclusive and well-supported academic environment.

## Institutionalize the Integration of Research and Teaching

The integration of research into teaching should be institutionalized to ensure that educational programs consistently reflect the latest advancements in research. Establishing structured interactions between research projects and curricula will enable students to actively engage with faculty-led research. Interdisciplinary research initiatives that directly inform teaching will further strengthen the connection between academic scholarship and student learning experiences. By systematically incorporating research findings into course content, DES can create a dynamic learning environment where students benefit from cutting-edge research throughout their academic journey.

## Develop a Strategic Approach to Local and Regional Collaboration

A more strategic approach to local and regional collaboration will help guide faculty engagement with key partners and ensure that partnerships align with the department's long-term goals. While DES is already involved in numerous collaborations with schools, municipalities, and national agencies, a clearer framework for these engagements will prevent fragmentation and ensure that efforts are directed toward sustained, meaningful partnerships. Developing a structured strategy for regional and local collaboration will provide faculty members with clearer guidelines on how to engage with external partners while maintaining a balanced research workload.

## Increase Participation in Research Seminars and Academic Discussions

Research seminars and academic discussions play a crucial role in fostering a vibrant academic environment, yet participation in these activities has been inconsistent. Implementing structured tracking mechanisms and providing incentives for faculty engagement in research seminars will help ensure that academic discussions are a central and well-attended component of the department's research culture. Encouraging cross-disciplinary dialogue through regular academic events, workshops, and research exchanges will further enrich the intellectual environment at DES and support the development of collaborative research initiatives.

## Concluding remarks

As we conclude this evaluation, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Department of Educational Studies (DES) for the opportunity to conduct this external assessment. It has been an insightful and enriching process, allowing us to engage deeply with the department's research environment, strategic priorities, and institutional vision. Through this evaluation, we have gained a comprehensive understanding of the department's strengths, challenges, and opportunities, all of which contribute to shaping its future development.

A special note of appreciation goes to the faculty members and staff who generously shared their perspectives, experiences, and reflections with us. The discussions we had were



invaluable, offering us first-hand insights into the department's academic culture, research engagement, and strategic direction. These conversations played a pivotal role in shaping the findings and recommendations outlined in this report.

That being said, we acknowledge that interpreting institutional dynamics, faculty experiences, and strategic priorities is a complex task. While we have aimed to present an accurate and thoughtful evaluation, we recognize that our understanding is based on the information provided and the discussions we engaged in. We hope that our interpretations faithfully reflect the department's realities and aspirations.