

# Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

## Summary of Gender Equality Work at Karlstad University

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## Introduction

This document constitutes Karlstad University’s Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in accordance with the requirements of Horizon Europe. The University has conducted systematic and long-term gender equality work since the early 1980s. The first gender equality plan was adopted in 1984, after which the work has been organised through dedicated groups, functions, and governance structures. As with other Swedish higher education institutions, the University has, since 2016, been mandated by the Government to implement gender mainstreaming in order to contribute to the national gender equality policy objectives.

Responsibility for coordinating gender mainstreaming has over time been placed within the Human Resources Department and the Vice-Chancellor’s Office. The Executive Management Council has served as a steering group, providing guidance for the continued work. Today, gender mainstreaming is integrated into the University’s governance, quality assurance processes, and follow-up activities. Since 1 January 2022, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, requires organisations applying for research funding to have an established Gender Equality Plan (GEP). Karlstad University fulfils these requirements through its established and ongoing gender equality efforts. The purpose of this document is to

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clarify how the University's work corresponds to the Horizon Europe requirements. The document is adopted by the Vice-Chancellor and is publicly available on the University's website. It is revised as needed to reflect organisational developments, governance changes, and external requirements, but at least every three years.

During the period 2023–2025, the University has worked specifically with the Government's gender mainstreaming mandate, with a focus on four areas: conditions for education, conditions for research, leadership and support processes, and regulation and governance. Activities have included coaching programmes for managers, workshops, internal audits, and faculty-level follow-ups. Taken together, the mandate has contributed to increased systematisation, strengthened leadership, and deeper awareness of gender equality, gender perspectives, and inclusion across the organisation.

## Process for Developing and Updating the Document

The assignment to develop the University's Gender Equality Plan was given to the Human Resources Department in 2021. The work was carried out by an HR strategist responsible for work environment and equal opportunities, in collaboration with the Deputy University Director and gender studies expertise. Draft versions were reviewed by the relevant HR and gender mainstreaming functions before the document was adopted and signed by the Vice-Chancellor. The document will be updated in 2026 to reflect current organisational structures, governance processes, and working methods.

## Dedicated Resources and Organisational Responsibility

Since 2025, the coordination of gender mainstreaming at the University is handled by the Human Resources Department. Gender studies expertise has been engaged to support implementation, analysis, and development initiatives. The work is reported to the HR Director and the University's senior management.

Within Student Health Services, two staff members work with equal-opportunities issues related to students, corresponding to a total of 40 percent of full-time employment. The Vice-Chancellor holds the overall responsibility for the work environment, including the study environment. The Delegation of Authority outlines responsibilities and decision-making powers—such as responsibility for gender mainstreaming within faculties and central support functions—which are delegated to Deans and the University Director, who in turn delegate responsibilities in writing to Heads of Department and Unit Managers. Delegation is contingent on the receiving manager having sufficient competence to conduct effective work environment and gender equality work.

## Data Collection, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Since 2020, gender mainstreaming has been integrated into the University's operational governance. Gender equality is also a parameter in the evaluation of study programmes, where the requirement is that gender perspectives must be ensured and integrated in programme design and implementation.

The University reports and follows up results and analyses in its annual report, as well as through routine operational follow-ups and management dialogues. Follow-up is based on gender-disaggregated data regarding staff, students, recruitment, career development, and educational outcomes. These data serve as the basis for further analysis, prioritisation, and development measures.

## Training for Staff and Decision-Makers

Training and awareness-raising initiatives in gender equality target both employees and decision-makers. Decision-makers include managers, members of management bodies, and individuals with strategic responsibilities. The University aims to ensure that both groups have access to training and competence-development activities related to gender equality and gender perspectives. Information on training provided by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency is disseminated within the organisation. Managers are offered training on discrimination and gender equality as part of their induction. The intranet hosts a dedicated resource page with support materials for integrating gender and gender perspectives into teaching, including an in-house podcast series and links to relevant trainings.

Between 2023 and 2025, coaching programmes for managers have been offered with a focus on concrete gender equality challenges in the organisation. The programme has been complemented by group-level workshops and targeted training on gender-based vulnerability and sexual harassment for both managers and employees.

## Work–Life Balance and Organisational Culture

The University applies two working-time agreements, as well as the option of trust-based working hours: annualised working hours for teachers and doctoral students, and flexitime for administrative and technical staff. Both agreements enable a balance between work and private life. For all staff, guidelines for remote work apply, allowing for up to two days of home-working per week when compatible with operational needs. Information regarding parental leave, pregnancy benefits, and other family-related conditions is available on the intranet. The collective agreement for government employees regulates entitlement to parental benefit supplements, which the University fully applies.

## Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

The University strives for gender balance in leadership and decision-making roles. Gender equality is integrated in leadership development, competence supply, work environment efforts, and administrative support. Gender equality and norm-critical perspectives form part of the leadership development programme and the higher-education pedagogical training.

Progress regarding gender balance in leadership and decision-making is monitored through gender-disaggregated statistics and analyses within regular operational follow-up, recruitment processes, and management dialogues.

## Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Development

Recruitment processes are characterised by a clear gender equality perspective, supported by policies, handbooks, and guidelines. Recruitment groups should include individuals of different genders whenever possible. When appointing external experts, the Higher Education Ordinance requirements on gender balance are applied unless specific reasons exist. All recruitment is based on the principles of merit and competence and is conducted according to a competency-based methodology. The recruitment process is clearly described in the University's recruitment handbook and supported by training, digital tools, and specific materials for gender-equal recruitment.

Employees are offered competence development and career support, including mentoring, collegial supervision, and courses. For researchers, specialised support is provided through the Grants and Innovation Office (GIO), which offers assistance with funding applications, competence development, and innovation and impact activities. Outcomes of gender-equal recruitment and career development are monitored through gender-disaggregated statistics, recruitment outcome analyses, and regular operational governance.

## Integration of the Gender Dimension in Research and Education

The University integrates gender and gender-equality perspectives, including the gender dimension where relevant, into education through its quality system and associated processes for follow-up, evaluation, and management dialogues.

Within the Treklövern joint evaluation system, gender equality constitutes one of the established assessment criteria, meaning that gender perspectives must be considered in the design and implementation of study programmes. Assessments are based on documentation used in evaluations, such as self-evaluations, educational statistics, theses or other examination tasks, and interviews with students and staff. In self-evaluations, programmes must describe how they systematically work with quality development, including the integration of gender perspectives. Assessments are conducted by internal and external experts, and gender balance is sought in the composition of evaluation panels.

Third-cycle education is subject to equivalent quality-assurance processes. Research is conducted under academic freedom; however, research-ethical guidelines and principles of good research practice require that the gender dimension be considered and integrated when relevant to research questions, methods, or analyses. This contributes to ensuring ethical and scientific quality in research.

## Measures Against Gender-Based Violence, Including Sexual Harassment

The University has clear procedures for preventing and managing discrimination, harassment, and other forms of abusive conduct. A dedicated action programme is available on the intranet

and the University's external website. The aim is for all employees and students to know the action programme or easily locate it when needed.

The Human Resources Department and Student Health Services provide support to managers, staff, and students in matters related to these issues. The internal work-environment handbook compiles guidelines and support for systematic work-environment management.

Newly employed staff receive information on the University's zero tolerance toward discrimination and harassment. As part of the systematic work-environment efforts, the employee performance review includes a question about knowledge of the University's procedures for managing discrimination, harassment, threats, and violence, as well as where to turn in such situations. Managers are offered training each term on responsibilities, preventive work, and case handling. Workshops on gender-based vulnerability and sexual harassment have been conducted since 2023 and are gradually being extended to individuals in leadership functions without managerial responsibility. These efforts are planned to continue and develop beyond 2026.

## Summary of How Karlstad University's GEP Meets Horizon Europe Requirements

Karlstad University's Gender Equality Plan fulfils all mandatory process requirements of Horizon Europe:

- **Public GEP and leadership commitment:** The GEP is a formal document, adopted by the Vice-Chancellor and publicly available on the University's website.
- **Dedicated resources:** The University has allocated staff resources and gender-equality expertise for implementation, follow-up, and development.
- **Data collection and reporting:** Gender-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data are collected and used in monitoring and analysis. Reporting takes place at least every two years.
- **Training and awareness-raising:** Continuous training is provided for both employees and decision-makers.

In addition, the GEP includes measures within all thematic areas recommended by the European Commission.

## Conclusion

Karlstad University continues to develop and monitor its gender equality work as an integrated part of operational governance. The Gender Equality Plan is revised at least every three years to reflect changing conditions and new requirements.

# Signature page

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