

Action plan for widening access and participation 2021-2023



**Karolinska
Institutet**



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Organisation and responsibility

The University Council and President have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring targeted equal opportunities work at KI.

The Vice-President has overall operational responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities at KI.

The Academic Vice-Presidents for the committee for research, the committee for doctoral studies, and the committee for education are responsible for ensuring that there are equal opportunities in each committee's operational area.

Heads of department, administrative managers, the University Director and the Chief Librarian are responsible for conducting targeted work to ensure equal opportunities on their respective departments, the university administration and the library.

The Faculty Office at the Central Administration has the function of coordinating work on equal opportunities in the form of a gender equality strategist and an equal opportunities coordinator.

Widening access and participation for equal opportunities at KI

Widening access and participation are issues that relate to quality and fairness for Karolinska Institutet (KI). When students have diverse backgrounds who can contribute several perspectives and experiences to the benefit of the education, quality is improved. In addition, taxpayer-funded education should be accessible to the population on equal terms. KI strives to have an open and inclusive approach towards both prospective and current students.

In Strategy 2030, KI takes a stand for the work of widening access and participation by stating that: “KI’s activities shall be characterised by a good physical, organisational, and social study and work environment that is free from discrimination, offensive behaviour, and harassment. Widening access, equal opportunities, and fair and equal treatment must be well established in the university. This is part of KI’s quality work, and there shall therefore be continuous, high-quality competence development in widening access, leadership, work environment, equality, diversity, and sustainable development. We must secure equal conditions and career paths for all employees, regardless of background. We must also ensure that our educational programmes provide the knowledge about gender, power, and equal opportunities that is fundamental to equity in healthcare” (Strategy 2030). KI shall thus be a welcoming and accessible university where the work with widening access and participation is integrated into KI's operations.

Legislation and assignments

The present action plan shall be in accordance with KI's Strategy 2030 (Ref. 1-928/2017) and related operational plan (Ref. 1-462/2019), KI's work with equal opportunities and gender equality, as well as current legislation and regulations. The following laws and regulations are relevant for the work of widening access and participation. The Higher Education Act (1992:1434, Chapter 1, section 5) states that higher education institutions shall actively promote and widen the recruitment to higher education. The Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567) requires higher education institutions to combat, promote and prevent discrimination, and that this shall be based on ensuring that everyone's equal rights and opportunities are met. One form of discrimination is a lack of accessibility where people that have a disability are disadvantaged because the measures that have been taken, are inadequate. The ordinance on the responsibility of government authorities for the implementation of the disability policy (SFS 2001:526) gives state authorities particular responsibility to make their activities accessible.

A uniform definition of the concepts of widening access and participation is lacking. The Swedish Council for Higher Education, UHR, recommends that the higher education institution defines the concepts based on an analysis of its own student population (see analysis below). Furthermore, UHR writes that the work to widen student access has come to include everything from recruitment efforts to employability. This means that issues concerning the study environment, completion rate and other activities linked to widening participation are often included in the concept of widening access.

UHR (2016) notes that social background, measured as the parents' level of education, is the most important factor as to whether a person starts higher education. In addition to social background, people with a disability undertake higher education to a lesser extent than average. They are also less satisfied with their studies, find it more difficult to manage their finances and feel as if they belong less when they compare themselves with other students (the Swedish Agency for Participation - MFD, UHR Eurostudent VI, 2018). UHR believes that it is also important to invest in both widening access and participation for LGBTQ people, adult refugees, and immigrants without a previous academic education, in addition, Sweden's national minorities need to be taken into account (UHR, 2016).

The present action plan defines widening access and participation to include the transition to higher education and the students' ability to complete their studies regardless of their background and circumstances. Two categories are given priority in the action plan: social background and disability. Social background in the form of parents' level of education is a priority as this has proven to be a decisive factor in the transition to higher education. People with a disability are prioritised because they are significantly less able to start and complete their studies than average. The action plan also highlights the grounds for discrimination, in addition to their disability these include: gender, transgender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion and age. It is more difficult to obtain statistics on how these categories affect transition to further studies at the university.

Analysis of the student population

Below is a description of the distribution of the Swedish population in terms of parents' level of education and students' disability, as well as the student population on KI's beginner programme and doctoral education in relation to parents' level of education.

Uneven recruitment to the university

During the 2017/18 academic year, 39 per cent of university beginners in Sweden had parents with a long education, i.e. parents with at least three years of tertiary education. At the same time, 24 per cent of university beginners had parents with a short education, i.e. parents with a maximum of two years of upper secondary education. If recruitment to higher education were to correspond to the distribution in the population, just over one in four beginners (25%) would have parents with tertiary education and almost one in three, parents with an upper secondary education (the Swedish University Chancellor's Office, UKÄ, 2018).

UKÄ has shown that there are differences in the transition to higher education even when different social groups perform equally well at upper secondary school. So, there are many homes where students are unaccustomed to studying and who have good grades from upper secondary school, but who do not start studying at the university (UKÄ, 2018).

For doctoral students in medicine and health, the differences are significant. Beginners in doctoral studies during the years 2014/15–2018/19 (excluding foreign doctoral students) who have parents with a lower secondary education make up 5 per cent; beginners who have parents with a 3-year upper secondary

education 8 per cent, while the corresponding figure for children of parents who have completed postgraduate education is 12 per cent. Among those with parents who have a long education, but who do not have a postgraduate education, the figure is 44 per cent (UKÄ and Statistics Sweden 2020).

For people with a disability, of those who are between 30-64 years of age having a tertiary education, the figure is 33 per cent. This compares to 47 per cent for the rest of the population (MFD). There are no figures on the transition to postgraduate education for people with a disability.

According to UHR's report on how students with a disability experience their studies, more of these students, compared to the average, take a roundabout route via a municipal adult education scheme or a folk high-school. There are also fewer (10 per cent) of the participants in exchange studies compared to others (12 per cent). Of the students with disabilities and/or long-term illness, 25 per cent had been in contact with the coordinator for students with disabilities, and 21 per cent were not aware that there was a coordinator (UHR Eurostudent VI 2018). In 2019, 706 students and 4 doctoral students at KI received special support measures due to their needs. There is no knowledge as to whether a lack of accessibility plays a part in the support provided. Potentially, there are more people who would need a more accessible study environment in order to study in a way comparable to those people who do not have disabilities.

Transition to KI's beginner programme

UKÄ provides statistics for KI's vocational programmes, below is an account of the years 2017/18 with regard to the level of parents' educations.

Parents with a long education

The following programmes have an over-representation of students with parents who have a long education (compared to Sweden's population, i.e. about 25%): Occupational therapist (36.8%), Audiologist (32.1%), Midwifery (55.1%), Biomedical analyst (46.2%), Physiotherapist (45.3%), Medicine 64.9%), Psychology (54.1%), Psychotherapist (43.8%), Dentistry (52.9%).

For the bachelor's programme in biomedicine, there are no corresponding data from UKÄ, therefore the figures available here are from KI's beginners' survey. The beginners' survey has some methodological limitations, and the figures may be regarded as approximate. The proportion of students in biomedicine who come from homes where both parents have an academic degree is 54%. The proportion of students who come from homes where at least one parent has an academic degree is 90% (Exquiro, 2019).

Relatively even distribution

The following programmes have a student group that roughly corresponds to the population for parents with a long education: Speech therapist (26.5%), Optician (30.9%), Diagnostic radiology nurse (29.1%), Specialist nursing (30.3%), Dental hygienist (27.8%).

Parents with a short education

As the statistics show, KI has a large over-representation of students with parents who have a long education. Students with parents with a short education

are underrepresented.

Transition to KI's doctoral education

From a national perspective regarding doctoral level education at KI, the largest proportion of beginners have parents (excluding foreign doctoral students) with a long education. In this group at KI, the distribution in the years 2014/15–2018/19 is as follows: 17 per cent of beginners have parents with a postgraduate education, 49 per cent have parents with tertiary education longer than three years.

This compares with 3 per cent of beginners having parents with a lower secondary education, 7 per cent having parents with a 3-year upper secondary education (UKÄ and SCB 2020)

KI's goals and strategies for widening access

KI works actively to reach underrepresented groups through its work to widening access. At the central level, the work within the university administration takes place at the Unit for Education and Doctoral Education Support (UFS).

Goals and strategy

The goal of the work with widening access is that everyone who comes into contact with KI's recruitment and marketing materials, regardless of background, is able to see studies at KI as a possibility.

The strategy to achieve this goal is that all marketing materials and marketing activities offer both *inspiration* and *information*. The marketing materials and activities that aim to inspire shall be presented in such a way that they reflect the diversity of the student population through the use of text and images so as to create recognition among the target group. The materials shall provide an honest picture of the studies and clearly link the education to possible professions and working life after the study period. The information shall be accessible, easily understood and inclusive in its appeal.

A large part of the marketing and recruitment activities include both inspiration and information. They aim to increase awareness of KI and the educational programmes provided.

The widening access follows the same principles as all recruitment and can be visualised through the students' engagement journey. See picture.

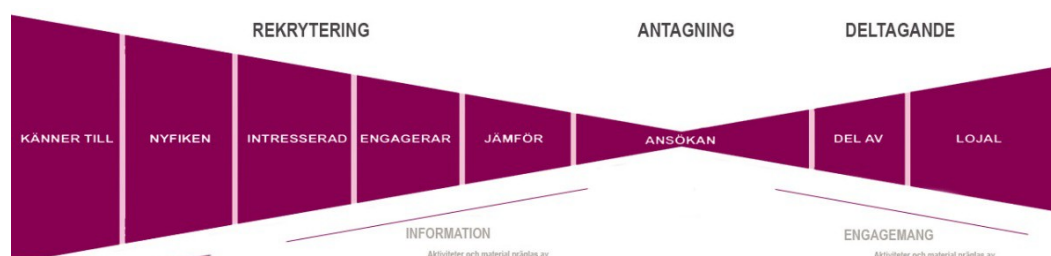


Figure 1 - Students' engagement journey. Recruitment (inspiration and information), Admission, Participation (engagement)

Activities and materials

A number of activities are carried out and materials are produced to promote widening access. Operations are evaluated continuously, during and after each recruitment year. The recruitment is continuously streamlined to achieve its goals. KI's recruitment is largely based on content marketing by existing students telling others about their life as a student at KI via digital and face-to-face meetings. The digital meetings take place, among other things, via blogs and podcasts on ki.se, as well as through KI's official social media channels. The personal meetings take place through educational fairs, Open House, as well as study and school visits.

The students that represent KI are recruited to form an ambassador group which reflects the diversity of the student population. The student ambassadors are trained to meet the target group of prospective students in an inclusive way and how to present their education correctly and in a way that is easy to understand.

KI also participates in various activities arranged by external organisations aimed at widening access such as Järvaveckan, My Life's Choice, Stockholm Pride, etc.

KI also develops information and communication about the education in both printed and digital form. In all production, KI strives to have an inclusive and representative selection in written form and via images.

Activities and materials also aim to inform prospective students about the support functions offered at KI such as General Study Guidance, Student Health Centre, and the Academic Writing Support.

Developments 2021-2023

KI needs to continue the work of widening access to increase the diversity of students' backgrounds. The educational programmes are different in terms of their student population, KI therefore needs to investigate how to provide central support for the various educational programmes in terms of the communication materials provided, and from a central level, prioritise recruitment efforts for the various programmes.

KI's work to widening access needs to be disseminated within the organisation so that prospective students perceive KI as welcoming, inclusive and open in its external communication. This means that images, films and texts should convey diversity, as well as accessibility.

With regard to widening access for doctoral educations, KI has started work to more clearly inform students at KI about the opportunities for research. The brochure "Doctoral education at Karolinska Institutet" will be updated. The prerequisites to start "Shadow a Doctoral Student" will be examined. The general study guidance counsellors' mandate will be revised to include support/advice to existing students who are interested in starting a doctoral education.

KI should also investigate whether researchers' interaction with the surrounding society can be directed more clearly towards prospective students and doctoral students.

KI's goals and strategies to widening participation

KI works actively to ensure that all students are given the prerequisites to complete their studies. The work carried out centrally takes place within the university administration at the Unit for Education and Doctoral Education Support (UFS), Student Health Centre, the University Library, and the Unit for Teaching and Learning (UoL).

Goals and strategy

The goal of the work with widening participation is that all students are given the prerequisites to complete their studies, and that the students perceive their study environment as stimulating, safe, accessible, and inclusive. KI shall be free from discrimination, victimisations, and harassment.

The strategy to achieve the goal is to offer needs-appropriate support for existing students, as well as to work for an inclusive study environment that gives all students the opportunity to complete their studies.

KI offers a wide range of support measures. Surveys of how students experience their study environment and support needs are carried out continuously.

Activities and support functions

KI strives to ensure that existing students receive easily accessible information via the appropriate channels. Communication to the students is being developed to adapt centralised information and channels to the target group. Regarding student communication, lectures and webinars in study techniques are offered as well as collaboration with companies and organisations to prepare students for working life after their studies are over, both outside and within academia. It is important that KI's website, which is aimed at students, is accessible and easy to use in order for students to find relevant information about the various support functions available. The goal is that the website follows the students' path through their education with appropriate information about, among other things, an introduction to university studies, becoming an exchange student, examinations, special educational activities for students who have a disability, students' rights, and the guidelines and rules relating to their education.

To promote students' physical and mental health, the Student Health Centre offers interventions for individuals and groups, as well as at the organisational level. This can be done both digitally and through physical meetings. The Student Health Centre also offers guidance to the educational organisation.

Existing students can turn to KI's university library where Språkverkstaden (the Academic Writing Support) offers students and doctoral students personal consultation in academic writing, presentation and study technique. Support is available in Swedish and English. The goal is to help students to write texts of the best quality possible on their own. The Academic Writing Support also provides lectures on KI's training programme dealing with structure, style, and language in academic texts. Tailored workshops based on the students' needs are developed at the request of the educational programmes.

Within the Unit for Education and Doctoral Education Support (UFS), students with permanent disabilities are offered and recommended special pedagogical

support. An example of this is the mentoring activities started on a trial basis in the autumn 2020. The purpose of the mentoring support is to support the student in developing their abilities to create good study habits, plan their studies and acquire a good study technique. Mentor support will be evaluated in the spring 2021. A campus licence for speech synthesis was purchased in the autumn 2020. Speech synthesis is in support of students in need of visual and reading aid, but it can be used by all students as a support in their learning.

Within the framework of the teacher support offered by UoL, accessibility is included as a perspective in the university's teaching courses. The accessibility perspective recurs later in the instructions and production of media for learning. Course templates based on the concept of universal design have been developed. There are also guidelines for accessibility for the teaching.

Support is given to teachers and administrators on how more accessibility in digital teaching can be created. The opportunity for the exchange of experience is provided via the digital pedagogical network for employees who teach at KI.

Developments 2021-2023

KI needs to continue to develop support functions for students so they may complete their studies and get the support they need.

Systematic work with organisational and social study environments will be developed. All offices and departments shall carry out work environment work in accordance with laws and internal governance documents.

An important prerequisite for students to be able to complete their studies is that they perceive their study environment as welcoming, inclusive, and open. This will be dealt with in the action plan for the integration of equal opportunities in KI's education 2021-2022 (ref. 1-1040/2020).

KI needs to develop ways to examine how students who deviate from norms experience their study environment. This has become even more relevant because teaching has changed as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, especially with regard to disability and language. The focus of the investigation should be broad and include experiences of whether the study environment is characterised by norms that make it more difficult for students in terms of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin colour, origin (including national minorities), religion, age and disability.

KI should also investigate whether there are differences as to which students participate in exchange studies, especially in terms of their social background and disability. The information provided regarding exchange studies needs to be clarified and adapted in terms of accessibility to show that exchange studies are a possibility for all students, regardless of background or needs.

KI should investigate the possibilities for improving the follow-up of students' completion rate, for example via "Bak- och framgrund" (a statistical system that retrieves data from several different registers at Statistics Sweden).

There is currently insufficient data on accessibility and support that can be linked to disability for doctoral educations. This is a development area where statistics are a prerequisite for the future development of possible measures. KI needs to investigate existing doctoral students' needs in terms of accessibility and support in order to gain knowledge of whether further measures are needed.

Other activities

Include – a national network for widening access

In 2008, KI, together with Linköping University, Södertörn University and Uppsala University, initiated a national network for widening access called Include. Since its establishment, KI has been active in the network. KI's former coordinator for widening access and equal opportunities has been a board member since its foundation and KI has contributed to network meetings and conferences.

Supplementary educational programmes for certification

Together with a number of higher education institutions, KI, is tasked with organising supplementary educational programmes for people with degrees from outside the EU/EEA. The supplementary educational programmes at KI are provided for doctors, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists, and midwives.

Alternative selection

Working with alternative selection means providing more ways to gain access to KI's education. Statistics however indicate that the efforts so far made to even out the unequal recruitment to KI from a social background perspective have not made a significant impact. Alternative selection, however, contributes to prospective students having more paths to higher education and opens up opportunities for those who did not perform optimally during their upper secondary school educations, but who still have the potential to succeed in higher education.

Follow-up

The follow-up of goals, strategies and activities takes place within the framework of each area of activity in accordance with KI's cohesive quality system.