



**Karolinska  
Institutet**

## **Operational plan**

**Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society  
(NVS)**

Karolinska Institutet

**The operational years 2024–2027**

## **Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society (NVS)**

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### **INNEHÅLL**

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## 1 OUR VISION AND OPERATIONS

### 1.1 Vision

NVS's vision is to significantly improve people's health through research and education.

### 1.2 Operations Description

The Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences, and Society (NVS) is one of Karolinska Institutet's (KI) largest departments and consists of a joint departmental management and seven divisions. NVS has over 500 employees and several hundred affiliated researchers.

#### *Economy*

NVS had a turnover of 530 million SEK in 2023, of which 42% belongs to the "Education at first and second cycles" sector and 58% to the "Research and Doctoral Education" sector. Of the revenues, amounting to 323 million SEK, from the "Research and Doctoral Education" sector, 24% comes from government grants and 68% from external financiers. Other revenues come from fees for commissioned executive and professional education, and internal revenues generated within KI. Of the revenues, amounting to 207 million SEK, from the "Education at first and second cycles" sector, 92% comes from government grants. Other revenues come from fees for commissioned executive and professional education, and internal revenues generated within KI.

At the end of 2023, the education sector had a deficit of 27.7 million SEK. This is mainly due to the compensation per full-time student remaining at the same level as in 2018, while costs for salaries, premises, etc., have increased exceptionally with inflation during 2022–2023. Recruitment difficulties have contributed to further wage drift. Additionally, a lower number of applicants to certain programs and lower completion rate lead to reduced compensation for the educational mission, while the organization needs to maintain its teaching resources.

### *Education at the Forefront*

NVS is responsible for education within several healthcare professions. The teaching covers nearly 1700 full-time equivalents within first and second cycle education programs, which corresponds to one-third of KI's educational activities. NVS thus has one of the largest educational assignments within KI with five undergraduate programs, 11 advanced level programs, course and module responsibility for the Study Programme in Medicine, one course each in the Study Programmes in Psychology, Radiography, and Biomedical Laboratory Science, about 30 freestanding courses, and several executive and professional education programs. The education is conducted in close collaboration with the county's inpatient care, outpatient care, and municipal care. The programs are highly ranked in Sweden and internationally, partly due to their strong foundation in current research.

The department's educational organization includes an education committee (UN) chaired by the Departmental Director of Education (GUA). The UN also includes the vice-chair/deputy GUA, four directors of study programmes, education officers, teacher representatives from NVS divisions and other KI departments, employer and student representatives. An education office gathers most of the educational administration.

### *Internationally Leading Research and Doctoral Education*

NVS conducts experimental, clinical, health care science, and epidemiological research, with a particular focus on aging, diseases of the elderly, and health care sciences. In the field of dementia, the research is internationally leading. Successful research is also conducted in other areas such as stroke, cancer, and rheumatology. The research is translational and includes studies at the cellular level, clinical level, and population studies. A large part of the research is conducted in close collaboration with healthcare, aiming for the results to quickly benefit patients and healthcare professionals. The responsibility for the Strategic Research Area Health Care Science (SFO-v) is within NVS.

NVS closely monitors the outcomes of bibliometric analyses and makes an annual compilation with the help of data from KIB. Here, one can see that research collaborations exist between all divisions, with all KI departments, and with a large number of national and international universities. NVS performs well compared to other KI departments and has a Cf above the average for KI.

The Director of Doctoral Education, together with the Deputy Director and Coordinator, is responsible for the processes involved in the admission of doctoral students, ongoing administration, and issues related to doctoral education at NVS and KI. The Director of Doctoral Education also leads the Committee for Doctoral Education, which serves as the department's admissions board. The department has around 140 registered doctoral students. Doctoral education is conducted in areas ranging from molecular genetics to end-of-life care. Each year, about 30 doctoral students defend their theses.

Four doctoral schools are based at NVS: the Doctoral School in Health Sciences (FiH), the Mälardalen Area Doctoral School in Care Sciences (MoF-v; a partnership between Karolinska Institutet, Uppsala University, Mälardalen University, and Sophiahemmet University), the Doctoral School in General Medicine and Primary Care, and the Doctoral School in Molecular Medicine for Clinicians. These doctoral schools have many important functions and contribute significantly to creating creative doctoral education environments, especially for KI's clinical doctoral students. NVS is also the host department for the Doctoral Programme in Health Care Science (PUF-V), which is responsible for offering doctoral courses in this field.

#### *Future University Healthcare*

NVS's mission includes developing academic competence primarily in general medicine, geriatrics, and rehabilitation, in close collaboration with Region Stockholm and private actors in the continued expansion of university healthcare. The department actively works to create combined clinical positions between KI and the Region to strengthen collaboration around research and education. NVS is represented in the following regional program areas (RPO): Lifestyle, Lung and Allergy Diseases, Rehabilitation, Habilitation, Insurance Medicine, and Elderly Health.

### **1.3 Management Structure**

The executive management consists of the Head of Department, two Deputy Heads of Department, Head of Administration (AC), Head of Finances, Head of HR, Departmental Director of Education (GUA), Director of Doctoral Education, and Department Coordinator, and meet every other week. The executive management group serves as an advisory body to the Head of Department and acts as a communication channel between the various operations. The main

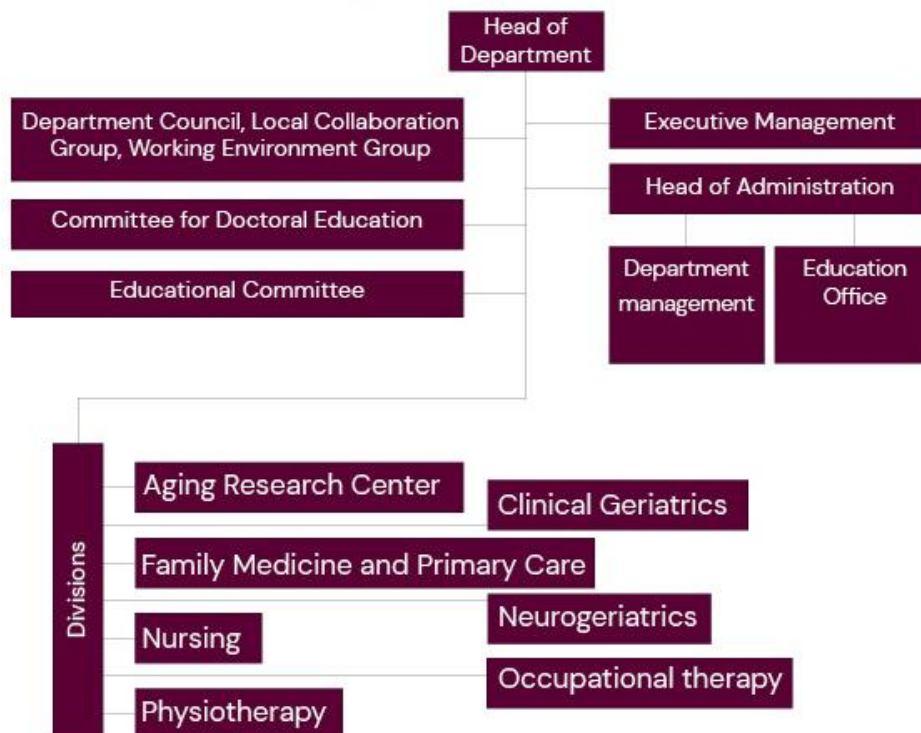
tasks of the executive management are to develop the operational plan and initiate the activity plans. It also serves as one of the forums for discussions on future visions and strategies regarding the various parts of the operation. Furthermore, overarching policy issues, economy, and staffing are addressed. The department-wide administration is led by the Head of Administration (AC) in close collaboration with the divisional management teams.

The department's management group, consisting of the executive management and division heads, as well as two representatives with management assignments appointed to represent KI within relevant areas at Karolinska University Hospital (so-called Theme Heads). The department's management group meets once a month and holds a management conference once per semester. At NVS, the Departmental Council addresses issues of principal importance or department-wide nature. The function of the council is to serve as a forum for dialogue where the Head of Department can receive advice and anchor decisions. The Departmental Council also plays a central role in the recruiting process for appointing a new Head of Department. Each personnel category appoints its representatives to the council. The council meets two to three times per semester.

The NVS work environment group deals with local work environment issues. The work environment group is a resource for the Head of Department and is composed of representatives from various operational areas, both employees and employers, as well as safety representatives/student safety representatives, equal opportunities representatives, and environmental and sustainability representatives. The tasks of the work environment group include initiating and following up on safety rounds, acting as a link between the department and the Work Environment Committee, between the department and Occupational Health Services, and between the department and Student Health Services.

The collaboration group at NVS handles issues that concern multiple groups/units/departments. The group consists of representatives from the employer, the trade unions, and safety representatives and serves as support for managers and employees. The parties appoint their own representatives.

## Organizational plan NVS



## 2. OVERALL GOALS

- NVS drives future research and education from cell to society.
- NVS is an attractive, creative, sustainable, and equal workplace.

## 3. STRATEGIC AREAS for the period 2024–2027

### 1 COLLABORATION

Goal: Create arenas for communication, collaboration and relationship building. Promote good external relations. Develop collaboration with Professional Services (PS)

### 2 COMPETENCE PROVISION

Goal: Attract, retain and develop employees with the right competence.

### 3 NVS SPIRIT- VALUES AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Goal: A good work environment for all employees.

### 3.1 Collaboration

Goal: Create arenas for communication, collaboration and relationship building. Promote good external relations. Develop collaboration with Professional Services (PS)

At NVS, teaching and research are conducted from cell to society. Together, the staff possess broad methodological knowledge, are leaders in their respective research fields, and are at the forefront of higher education pedagogy. Many projects are conducted interdisciplinarily, and collaborations exist both internally between research groups and divisions, and with other departments, universities, and industry; nationally and internationally. Active research is the foundation of research-based education where students, for example, are trained in evidence-based care. We build on these conditions and now want to develop opportunities for collaboration by creating arenas for new meetings. Activities such as joint research seminars, workshops for common research areas (e.g., geriatrics, prevention, primary care, and rehabilitation), workshops to share generic competence in teaching, and new initiatives for interprofessional activities for students can take place here.

Collaboration with healthcare is a core issue for our department, as well as for the entire KI. Our clinical research is extensive and successful but can be developed and improved significantly through closer collaboration with various healthcare providers within Region Stockholm and with private actors. Our teaching is based on a close and functional cooperation with healthcare providers, where we must ensure mutual understanding of the conditions for education placed in healthcare. Here, our two Theme Heads (Theme Inflammation & Aging and Theme Women's Health & Health Professions) and employees with combined positions are important resources, as well as employees with assignments in RPO, NPO, FoUU committees, and FoUU groups.

Within the operational support, NVS has established a joint education office as well as a professional network for coordinators and administrators in HR and finance over the past few years. Here, people get to know each other, share experiences and knowledge, and work together on mission statements and processes. NVS also has active collaboration within the KI South network for AC, HR, finance, doctoral education, international projects, educational officers, and communicators. This collaboration will now increase as the role of Dean is strengthened and the KI South departments will interact even more. At the same time, NVS aims to improve cooperation with the central Professional Services



(PS) and ensure that the range of available services from various support functions is driven by operational needs (i.e. research and education).

### **3.2 Competence Provision**

Goal: Attract, remain and develop employees with the right competence

NVS should be an attractive workplace that promotes competence development, where our employees are given the best conditions to conduct research, education, and provide effective operational support. The department needs to continuously recruit the most competent and motivated employees we can find, while striving to retain those who currently contribute to our successful operations. Our employees should feel involved and take responsibility in the operations. They should experience clear and good leadership, be proud of their workplace and what they do, show appreciation to others, and feel appreciated themselves.

To remain successful, NVS needs to strengthen strategic competence provision by planning and anticipating future competence needs. We can achieve this through the education and development of existing staff, i.e., strengthening the competence of current employees, as well as identifying internal talents and recruiting the right competence. For employees within operational support, this could involve stimulating specialist/generalist competence in specific areas and clarifying responsibilities within the role, as well as continuing to encourage closer collaboration between different parts of the operational support.

A prerequisite for researchers and teachers to develop in their roles, plan their careers, and work towards clearly set goals is knowledge of KI's career paths. During the period 2020–2024, NVS has organized several meetings where, among others, lectures, assistant senior lecturers, postdoctoral researchers, and assistant professors have participated. The concept has been successful, and the department will continue to organize writing workshops with support on how to write a qualifications portfolio, and arrange meetings where KI's career paths are described and discussed. NVS has developed a document on role descriptions and development opportunities for teachers, which will continue to be implemented.

KI's current career structure within research and the requirements for positions as senior lecturer and professor are, in some cases, problematic for the department's work with competence development and employee recruitment. Some examples are: 1) the job title research specialist/senior research specialist,

which is not internationally viable; 2) the high thresholds for primarily a position as senior lecturer, which makes it difficult for us to recruit employees in certain subject areas, and that we lose employees who leave KI for higher positions at other universities; 3) the possibility of promotion from senior lecturer to professor exists at all Swedish universities except KI. NVS will continue to raise these issues centrally and push for change.

### 3.3 The NVS Spirit; Values & Work Environment

#### Goal: A good work environment for all employees

By the NVS spirit, we mean our departmental culture, which should be characterized by joy at work, belonging, and participation. NVS strives to create a good and stimulating work environment for all employees. It is important that all employees take responsibility for and feel involved in issues concerning both the physical and psychosocial work environment. The department actively works to ensure that all employees live by the values, and by signing the 'Code of Conduct' all employees and affiliated co-workers promise to treat each other equally and with respect.

KI's value statements consist of three parts:

- Magna Charta Universitatum <http://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum>
- The Ethical Foundations of the State (only in Swedish)  
<https://www.statskontoret.se/publicerat/publikationer/publikationer/den-statliga-vardegrunden--gemensamma-principer-for-en-god-forvaltning/>
- Karolinska Institutet's core values:  
(**Creativity**: We create groundbreaking results through creative thinking, perseverance, collaboration, and encouragement of originality,, **Passion** – We have a passion for science and knowledge transfer and their power to change the world, **Responsibility** – Our activities are characterized by high quality and an ethical approach, as well as by respect, empathy, and critical reflection)

In Strategy 2030 and our shared values lies the foundation for creating the future KI together. This work should be carried out through everyone's commitment to build and maintain trust, enhance joy at work and collaborations, increase learning, and promote good results.

The department has well-structured rules for delegation where Heads of Divisions and research group leaders are responsible for finances, personnel, and

work environment at various levels. NVS aims to provide conditions for developing leadership for managers at all levels, for example through courses, leadership coaches, and open discussions within management groups. The department also works to develop employee engagement and to stimulate health-promoting factors with the goal of reducing sick leave, and actively works with equal opportunities, environment and sustainability, as well as participation and transparency.

NVS has developed guidelines regarding the students' work environment (Dnr 1–936/2023) to clarify which tasks related to work environment efforts are linked to each role within the educational organization at first and second cycles. The purpose is to create clarity and a safe work environment for our teachers and students and to create the best conditions for our students to succeed in their studies. These guidelines need to continue to be implemented in the operations.

Activity Areas: To achieve the goal of creating a sustainable, safe, creative, and equal work environment where competence is recognized and utilized, the following activity areas have been identified:

### **3.3.1 Develop Leadership at NVS**

Leaders at NVS apply KI's leadership strategy while KI's "Code of Conduct" guides how we act and treat each other. This means that as a leader, one works to create trust, participation, and joy at work. To be well-prepared for a leadership role at NVS, all new managers with personnel responsibility must undergo leadership training and work environment training within the first six months of their assignment. This way, we strengthen the level of leadership throughout the department. HR at NVS conducts introductions for all new managers.

NVS works to ensure equal opportunities, a fundamental issue that managers and employer representatives have an overall responsibility to prioritize. Leadership should have a clear content, where work environment, equality, and equal opportunity are included as knowledge and conscious actions. NVS should also actively work to improve the managers' own work environment.

As part of creating clarity around the leadership role at NVS, uniform and common processes for leadership recruitment and clear leadership profiles for different assignments should be applied. Coordination with the immediate supervisor of the recruiting manager should always be done when filling leadership roles.

### **3.3.2 Develop Employeeeeship at NVS**

Working at NVS should be developing and stimulating regardless of the role we hold. All employees should feel appreciated and involved in the operations. This means having great freedom within the framework of their tasks, but also a responsibility to follow laws and guidelines and to contribute to goal fulfillment, where the content of the "Code of Conduct" is the starting point for everyone's actions. As a step in developing employeeeeship, NVS should work to ensure that employees feel secure in their professional roles.

As an additional step in creating clarity around employeeeeship, we should work on attitudes towards each other, getting to know each other and each other's work, strategically recognizing each other's work, showing appreciation, and creating participation. We can do this by learning more about our operations, for example through "speed reports," open houses, "walk-and-talk" sessions, increased collaborations between divisions, and more social activities where we meet

### **3.3.2 Stimulate Health Factors and a Good Work Environment**

NVS places great emphasis on employee well-being and follows OSA (the Swedish Work Environment Authority's regulation on organizational and social work environment). This means that we strive to counteract negative stress and seek balance in work. We aim to achieve this through good collaborations, effective methods and tools, by eliminating unnecessary tasks, and through good and trusting leadership and employeeeeship with clear responsibilities and expectations, proper conditions, and good communication and dialogue.

NVS applies zero tolerance towards bullying, harassment, domineering behaviors, and discrimination. The department actively works with work environment factors and supports activities that contribute to both physical and mental well-being, reducing employee sickness absence. The department encourages the use of wellness hours, gym facilities, health activities, and participation in sports events, etc.

NVS applies systematic work environment management and strives for a good safety organization for both employees and managers.

#### 4. Future Opportunities & Challenges Including Risks

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#### The Following risks have been identified:

##### 1) Funding for Education and Research

- Lower quality of research and education as government grants do not keep up with cost developments, resulting in a lack of teaching resources, and external research grants increasingly being used to finance rents, university-wide initiatives, and other ancillary costs.
- Students with needs that require more financial resources, placing a higher burden on teachers.
- Lower applicants per place and completion rate in educational programs.
- Lack of financial resources affecting the work environment and thereby the health of employees.

2) Competence provision

- High thresholds for teaching positions make it difficult to find qualified individuals for divisions with heavy teaching loads.
- Insufficient competence supply, competence development, and competence transition lead to reduced research based education.
- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining junior researchers and teachers.

3) Career Paths

- Lack of opportunity to convert from senior lecturer to professor and very high requirements for conversion from assistant lecturer to senior lecturer.
- The titles "research specialist" and "senior research specialist" make it difficult for researchers to compete internationally in job placements and grant applications.

4) Collaboration

- minskningen av forskarutbildade chefer inom regionen påverkar till exempel diskussioner kring forskningsetik, forskningsstudier och vikten av forskningsanknuten utbildning
- risk för minskad och/eller bristande klinisk forskning p g a ökat produktionsfokus, ökade vårdkostnader, minskande utrymme för forskning i vården, fler regler och krav på avtal mellan KI och vårdgivare

5) Sustainability

- The department's change efforts are negatively affected by insufficient collaboration with PS, such as the Property and facilities office, Purchase and public procurement.

6) Operational support

- Lack of understanding of the core activities creates operational support that does not meet the needs.

- Increased administration, partly caused by fear of making mistakes, takes time and resources away from the core business.
- Fewer research collaborations due to insufficient support for contract management.

7) Security

- IT attacks, illegal knowledge acquisition, threats and violence negatively affect operations.
- Increased costs for data storage and data management negatively impact the economy.
- A society with increasing conspiratorial and anti-knowledge elements that discredit the university for political/opinion reasons.