

Guidelines for steering documents

Ref. No 1-306/2019

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NOTE: This is a translation of the Swedish version (*Riktlinjer för styrdokument*) In the event of any discrepancy between the versions, the Swedish version constitutes the official decision and the Swedish wording will prevail.



**Karolinska
Institutet**

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Introduction

Karolinska Institutet (KI) is a government authority subject to the laws and ordinances governing public administration in Sweden, such as the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), the Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900) and the Government Agency Ordinance (2007:515). There are, in addition to the above, certain regulatory requirements (e.g. from the National Archives and the Swedish National Financial Management Authority) and a number of internal policy documents that also pertain to KI.

Purpose

This document contains guidelines for the writing of steering documents. It aims to ensure that such documents are written in a way that is comprehensible, clear and accessible and that they have the desired effect.

The guidelines allow a certain degree of individual variation in the composition of a steering document, but also contain a number of compulsory directions.

Steering documents at an organisational unit

A head of department or departmental administrative manager may decide on internal steering documents. Such documents must not, however, contradict general steering documents issued centrally at KI.

Types of document

The type of document (i.e. its classification) expresses the degree of control that KI seeks to achieve. Steering documents can describe both approaches and clear rules or contain instructions for a particular process.

General steering documents at KI break down into six types: **rules, guidelines, policies, strategies, action plans** and **instructions**.

| LEVEL | NORMATIVE | ACTIVATING |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Global | Policy | Strategy |
| General | Guidelines | Action plan |
| Detailed | Rules | Instructions |

Rules

Rules are binding and describe in concrete and often detailed terms how a certain area or issue is to be handled. Rules remain in effect unless otherwise decided.

Guidelines

Guidelines describe the goals to work towards and the values to be taken into consideration, and reflect the views and values of the management on different issues. Guidelines are recommendations etc. that do not exclude other approaches. They can be presented with rules within the same area and supplemented with instructions. Guidelines remain in effect unless otherwise decided.

Policy

A policy expresses the management's overall intentions. A policy should either be complemented with other steering documents or form part of an action plan or a set of guidelines. A policy is not formally binding but establishes the framework for certain conduct and constitutes a strong recommendation on how to act.

Strategy

A strategy is an overall plan for achieving an established goal. Implementation of a strategy document generally requires one or more decisions stating what has to be done in more practical terms.

Action plans

Action plans state concrete goals or measures that are to be achieved within a certain area and are strategic in nature. Action plans are to be given a limited term of validity and must be followed up.

Instructions

Instructions describe a certain way of dealing with a specific matter, activity or process. In some cases there are established demands on documented procedures (e.g. management systems or ISO standards). Instructions can supplement guidelines and rules. Instructions remain in effect unless otherwise decided.

Language

Steering documents at KI are to be written in Swedish and translated into English when necessary unless otherwise decided. In the event of a discrepancy the Swedish versions shall prevail.

Decision on steering documents

The identity of the person(s) authorised to make decisions on overarching steering documents is provided in the prevailing decision-making procedures and procedural rules for the KI board (konsistoriet) and in the decision-making procedures and delegation rules for KI.

In the university administration, heads of office may decide on instructions for their specific area in accordance with the prevailing rules of procedure for the university administration.

Production of steering documents

University-wide steering documents are administrated by the office, unit, function or equivalent in the university administration with responsibility for the issues that each specific document concerns. When the work of several offices (etc.) is affected by one and the same steering document, the office (etc.) responsible shall coordinate the preparation work.

When a new steering document is produced or revised, the following questions should be borne in mind:

- Is further control or clarification needed in a certain area in addition to the prevailing laws and ordinances?
- Is a new steering document the best way of achieving this end?

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- What type of document is it – rules, guidelines, policy, strategy, action plan or instructions?
 - Is coordination with other existing steering documents or other control instruments (e.g. financial) needed?
 - Which offices, functions, decision-making and preparatory bodies, student unions and union representatives are to take part in the production of a new steering document or the revision of an existing one?
 - Is support needed for the implementation of the steering document (e.g. information and training)? How will implementation be achieved?
 - How will the implementation of the steering document be followed up?

Composition

Steering documents must be easy to understand and apply, and be laid out and revised in accordance with KI's templates.

The information box, which is placed under the contents list, is to state what revisions, if any, have been made to previous versions, or which steering documents have been nullified by the decision. It shall also state whether the steering document is to apply until further notice or is temporary, if and when it is to be followed up, and what office or unit of the university administration has responsibility for administrating it.

It shall also be made clear which steering documents are linked to each other (e.g. if a rule is followed by an instruction).

The document type is also to be explained, such as that rules are binding and concrete and often state in detail what applies in a certain area or issue.

The steering document shall make clear its purpose and its target group in an early paragraph.

Classification

Overarching steering documents at KI shall be classified as belonging to one of the following categories: **rules, guidelines, policy, strategy, action plan** and **instructions**. For ease of searchability, the document type should be included in the document title (e.g. email guidelines, instructions for student influence).

Some steering documents contain the word “procedures” in accordance with, for example, the Higher Education Ordinance’s provisions regarding rules of procedure, employment procedures and admission procedures.

The name of the steering document shall give its connection (if any) to an established management system (e.g. “environmental management system” or “management system for data security”).

Joint preparation

A steering document can affect more than one area. The head of the organisational section responsible for such a document is required to ensure that it is prepared jointly with the other affected parts of the organisation. The preparation is to begin as soon as is practicable.

It is normally not difficult to determine which other parts of the organisation can be affected by a certain matter and with whom it is to be prepared. Any uncertainties in this respect should be discussed to see if there is any interest in joint preparation.

Joint preparation shall take place early enough before a decision for there to be ample time for people to voice their opinions. How this is to be done (i.e. in writing or orally) is to be decided from case to case.

Sharing

As part of the joint preparation, the draft steering document is to be shared ahead of a decision on certain types of steering document (i.e. rules, policy, strategy or guidelines). Action plans and instructions can also be shared. Sharing involves passing a draft of the steering document to the relevant party(ies) for comment within a certain timeframe.

The sharing process allows the participants of a joint preparation process and certain other members of staff to examine and comment on a steering document before the decision is made.

The sharing time (i.e. the time the recipients have to submit their comments) shall normally be ten (10) weekdays, starting from the day of issue. Shorter times might be warranted depending on the circumstances.

The sharing procedure must make clear when and to whom opinions are to be submitted.

The head of the Legal Office has responsibility for the final wording and layout of rules and guidelines.

Handling opinions

If opinions submitted during a joint preparation or sharing process are not to be taken into account, the submitters must be informed of the reason by the steering document administrator. How this is to be done (i.e. in writing or orally) is to be decided from case to case.

The basic premise is that the administrator and the person(s) submitting the comments must try to agree. The person charged with deciding on the steering document has the final say.

Implementation

The steering document administrator is to ensure that the document is forwarded to all parties affected and published on the KI intranet at the earliest opportunity after the decision has been made. In some cases additional informative measures might be deemed appropriate (e.g. via different networks and newsletters).

Steering documents shall be published only once per language version on the KI intranet.

To avoid the circulation of older versions, the emailing of a document shall be effected via a link on the KI intranet. As soon as a new steering document is published, older version(s) shall be removed from the website.

Registration and archiving

All steering documents are to be registered. English translations shall carry the same reference number as the original Swedish version.

The steering document administrators are required to send approved documents to the registrar for registration and archiving.