

Action plan for the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual harassment at KI 2024–2026

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**Karolinska
Institutet**



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Introduction

As part of the National Research and Collaboration Programme on Gender-based Violence (Gender Programme) that KI established, together with KTH, Malmö University and the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, a questionnaire study was carried out that surveyed the incidence of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the Swedish higher education sector.

Given the results of the Gender Programme's survey, as well as the results of a KI staff survey and an equal opportunities questionnaire directed towards KI's undergraduate and postgraduate degree students, (dnr1-1106/2021), the President has decided that an action plan for the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual harassment should be developed (dnr 1-654/2022).

This work of preventing gender-based violence and sexual harassment is based on existing Swedish laws. It is also in line with KI's Strategy 2030 (dnr 1-928-/2017 and its Approach to gender mainstreaming at Karolinska Institutet 2023–2025 (dnr 1-791/2022).

Incidence of gender-based violence and sexual harassment at KI

Published in 2022, the Gender Programme's questionnaire study showed that KI's results are in line with those of the rest of the higher education sector in Sweden. Five percent of employees and students replied that, at some time over the past 12 months, they had been exposed to unwanted sexual attention at their place of work or study. Nine percent of those under the age of 30 claimed to have been exposed. This questionnaire included many different questions. More respondents stated that they had witnessed behaviour which could be classed as sexual harassment than those who said they had been exposed to unwanted sexual attention themselves.

Similar questions were posed in a separate equal opportunities questionnaire that was distributed in both Swedish and English to all programme students (from and including the second semester) at KI in 2022. Of the Swedish replies, 18 people (approximately three percent) stated that they had been exposed to sexual harassment while 88 people (14 percent) stated that they had experienced some form of undesirable sexual attention. Four women and two men stated that they had been exposed to sexual behaviour of a coercive nature. The proportion of those aged under 30, as well as of those who reported that they were members of a minority group defined by ethnicity, national identity and/or skin colour,

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who stated they had been exposed to sexual harassment was higher than for non-minority groups and those aged over 30.

In the 2022 KI staff survey the question was formulated as follows: "I experience my faculty/unit as a workplace free from discrimination regardless of ethnicity, disability, sex, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion or age. And free from sexual harassment." Responses were graded on a scale from 1–6, with 6 representing completely free from discrimination and sexual harassment. A total of 52 percent agreed that their place of work or study was completely free from discrimination and sexual harassment. This means, however, that 48 percent did not entirely agree with this statement about their workplace. Those who answered this question with a grade between 1–3 received a follow-up question asking them what type of behaviour they had been exposed to during the past 12 months. Twelve people (0.02 percent) responded to this follow-up question by stating that they had been exposed to sexual harassment.

How the results from these different studies can be understood in relation to each other has not been systematically examined. The work carried out in connection with the action plan identified a fear that internal KI investigations directed towards employees are not sufficiently anonymous. This may affect how respondents have answered and be an explanation for the lower participation levels in the staff survey.

There are also differences in the way the questions were constructed that has likely affected the answers. One difference is that the questions in the Gender Programme's survey are constructed as yes/no questions while those in the KI staff survey use a scale. Only those who answered between 1–3 qualified for the follow-up question on the type of discrimination or harassment. Even though the incidence of answers graded 4 or 5 suggests that some respondents felt their workplaces were not completely free of discrimination or harassment, they did not qualify for the follow-up question.

Another difference concerns question formulation. Previous research has noted that fewer people answer in the affirmative to a question about their own exposure to sexual harassment than to questions about concrete examples that can be categorised as sexual harassment.

Despite these differences, KI has determined that there is a need to deal with the problems surrounding gender-based violence and sexual harassment as identified by the Gender Programme survey.

Challenges and action points for KI

The work with the action plan has been carried out within the framework of the laws on workplace environment and discrimination. It has taken as its

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starting point a general inventory and analysis of the risks and challenges in the workplace to prevent gender-based violence and sexual harassment. It then moved on to identify the action points necessary to address these challenges. These challenges and action points are listed thematically and briefly summarised below. More information can be found in the document ["Risk assessment and analysis of gender-based violence and sexual harassment" \(dnr 1-1110/2023\)](#).

Case management

Challenges:

- Lack of clarity regarding how the case should be handled – the process
- Deficiencies in the results of the case management – the outcome

Action points:

- Address and rectify the challenges identified in case management, both in terms of a lack of clarity in how a case should be managed and in the outcome, in the form of few or unclear measures.

Knowledge and communication

Challenges:

- A deficiency in the information given to different target groups
- Uncertainty. A significant need for support for those who feel exposed, for those involved in the case and those who will investigate the case and are responsible for taking appropriate actions.

Action points:

- Clarified and improved information for the roles and procedures involved in managing the different target groups in the case: those who feel exposed to gender-based violence and sexual harassment and those who must deal with it or are otherwise affected by it.
- Information to new students and employees, including doctoral students.

Institutional trust and follow-up

Challenges:

- A lack of trust in the ability of the employer and educational authorities to manage cases in this area; a lack of trust in the time and resources allocated to case management.
- Uncertainty and fear of reprisals and that sensitive personal information will spread to others outside those investigating the case. Worry that participation in the staff survey and other surveys,

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where personal details and information about workplace and position are included, will not be sufficiently anonymous.

Action points:

Actions to remedy this identified lack of trust have been judged as not limited to a particular area of activity. Rather they are seen as the collective result of the efforts to develop the case management process, increase knowledge and improve communication, and to develop systems for taking action and managing follow-up.

KI's "Code of Conduct"

The responsibility to investigate if there is a need to clarify KI's Code of Conduct and its value statements for employees and students, and the implementation of these, is part of the action plan's remit.

Actions

The following table outlines actions to be taken by the different areas of activity

Area of activity	Timeframe	Department /unit involved	Estimated resources
Case management			
Establish a working group with the responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and clarify case management processes, routines and division of responsibility across the stages of reporting, investigating, documenting, taking action, providing 	2024–2025 March–March	Collaboration between HRA, UFS and FIR	Ten percent project management, 5 percent per participating department/unit. Average workload weighting.

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<p>feedback and follow-up for students and employees, including use of the web-based case management system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and clarify the information given and support provided to those who report incidents as well as those who investigate them. • Develop and clarify the processes and routines involved in the investigation of anonymous reports and the actions taken. • Clarify the routines around the experience of reporting reprisals. 			
<p>Knowledge and communication</p>	<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>Department /unit involved</p>	<p>Resources</p>
<p>Equal opportunities (including sexual harassment and gender-based violence) included as part of the induction programme for new employees, including doctoral students.</p>	<p>Spring 2024</p>	<p>HRA, in partnership with FIR</p>	<p>Part of the project's pre-onboarding</p>
<p>Equal opportunities (including sexual harassment and gender-based violence) included as part of the induction programme for new students.</p>	<p>2024</p>	<p>UFS in partnership with FIR</p>	
<p>Compile a report on KI's results in the Gender Programme.</p>	<p>2024</p>	<p>FIR</p>	
<p>Systems, actions and follow-up</p>	<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>Department /unit involved</p>	<p>Resources</p>

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Develop and introduce a process to compile the statistics on cases reported, anonymously or otherwise, in the areas of discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse.	2024–2025 March–March	Collaboration between HRA, UFS and FIR	Included in the working group's remit as the first step in this action plan.
Investigate the possibility of developing questions on sexual harassment and gender-based violence for KI's staff survey and other relevant surveys, to establish a clearer understanding of the risk of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.	2025	Collaboration between HRA, UFS and FIR	Mostly within the routine work of the staff survey
Develop the coordination of a follow-up activity within the Systematic Work Environment Management (SAM) regarding actions which, according to discrimination law, include sexual harassment.	2024–2025	HRA, UFS, and FIR in dialogue with the Work Environment Committee.	Included in the working group's remit as the first step in this action plan.
KI's Code of Conduct and value statements	Timeframe	Department /unit involved	Resources
Investigate if there is a need to clarify KI's Code of Conduct and its value statements for employees and students, and implement any changes.	2024–2025 October – April	Collaboration between HRA, UFS and FIR–HULV. Appoint coordinator/project manager	Five percent for coordinator/project manager