



Expert Panel Guidelines for Karolinska Institutet Research Assessment 2025 (KIRA 2025)

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Background

As part of systematic quality and improvement efforts, all Swedish universities are required to carry out periodical research assessments. Starting in 2025, Karolinska Institutet (KI) will implement KI Research Assessment (KIRA), a university-wide research assessment conducted every 6–8 years. Responsible for developing the model for evaluation at KI is the Committee for Research.

KIRA 2025 – Purpose, Scope and Implementation

The focus of KIRA 2025 is on the processes and conditions that enable high-quality research, with the aim of strengthening research environments and supporting the university's long-term development. KIRA 2025 takes a forward-looking perspective. While the departments are the primary units of evaluation, the scope extends to the entire university, guided by the overarching question: How can KI, as an institution, further strengthen the conditions and processes that promote high-quality research?

KIRA 2025 will be implemented in two rounds. The first round (2025–2026) will cover two of KI's three groups of departments, comprising 13 of the 21 departments. The second round (2026–2027) will include the remaining 8 departments. The overall implementation of KIRA 2025 is overseen by the Vice President.

KIRA 2025 in five steps

The KIRA 2025 process consists of five steps:

1. Departmental self-assessments – All departments within a campus area conduct their self-assessments simultaneously.
2. Campus Seminar – The results of the self-assessments are discussed among colleagues within the campus, focusing on challenges, best practices, and lessons learned. Departments also present a draft of a short action plan (max 2 pages) based on their self-assessment. Participants in the seminar at campus level include dean, department heads, and those responsible for the self-assessment process. The seminar aims to be as inclusive as possible. After the seminar there is an opportunity to revise the action plans.

3. External Panel Review – Self-assessments and action plans are submitted to an external panel of experts with extensive experience in academic leadership. During a site visit, the panel engages in discussions with departments about their evaluations and proposed actions.
4. Finalising the Action Plan – Based on feedback from the campus seminar and the external panel, departments finalise their action plans. These plans are reviewed annually as part of the Vice President’s KIRA Quality Seminar.
5. Vice President’s KIRA Quality Seminar – Lessons learned from the process are shared. Department representatives present progress on their action plans. Management presents its conclusions. Participants in the seminar include the Vice-President, Vice-Rector for Research, deans, department heads, and other relevant stakeholders.

Self-assessment and Action plan

The departmental self-assessment is the primary basis for development in KIRA 2025. To support this process, departments receive a template for the self-assessment from KI's central administration. The self-assessments provide departments with an opportunity to involve staff broadly in identifying and articulating their strengths and challenges as well as opportunities and priorities.

- The self-assessment document should be concise, not more than 20 pages.
- Its purpose is not only to highlight critical areas for improvement—both at departmental and institutional levels—but also to stimulate planning and discussion on how to address them.

Each department will also prepare a short action plan (maximum 2 pages) to be submitted together with the self-assessment. Action plans should:

- Propose concrete measures to address key challenges and make use of identified opportunities.
- Be owned by the department, ensuring commitment and accountability.

- Where relevant, outline actions requiring support from KI beyond the department.

The External panel – Roles and Responsibilities

Composition

The external panel will consist of experts with international experience in developing and leading high-quality research environments. It will be led by a Chair and a Vice Chair. In the first round of KIRA 2025, eight panel members in total will cover both participating groups of departments.

Aim and Role

The panel provides constructive, forward-looking feedback to strengthen research quality at both departmental and university levels. The basis for the panel's assessment consists of the departments' self-evaluations and action plans.

- Main aim: To advise on and support the development of processes and conditions that promote high-quality research at KI.
- Assess credibility and alignment between each department's self-assessment and action plan.
- Check whether:
 - strengths, weaknesses, and challenges are well articulated.
 - action plans are coherent, based on conclusions in self-assessment.
- Suggest additional ways to strengthen departmental research environments.
- Highlight possible actions KI as a whole could take to support departments.
- Approach:
 - Provide feedback during the site visit through dialogue with departments, clarifying and refining action plans.
 - Deliver a short written panel report of main findings, rather than a traditional evaluation report.

Panel report

The panel's conclusions will be documented in a written report: approx. 2–3 page per department, plus a 2–4 pages overall summary addressed to KI management. The coordination team at KI will provide support to the panel throughout the visit and in compiling the final conclusions.

The conclusions presented will represent the joint assessment of the entire panel, except in cases of potential conflicts of interest at the departmental level. In such cases, the concerned panel member will be recused from the discussion to ensure impartiality.

Chair and Vice Chair

The chair, with support from the vice chair (and the coordination team), will:

- Lead the panel's preparatory meeting ahead of the site visit and present suggestions on feedback for the two departments for which they share responsibility.
- Guide discussions among panel members on the appropriate level and type of feedback to provide.
- Lead group discussions between interviews during the site visit.
- Present the panel's summarising feedback to KI management at the conclusion of the site visit.
- Summarise the overall conclusions on 2–4 pages addressed to KI's management.

The Site Visit

The two-day site visit will be central to the evaluation process. During this time, the panel will split into smaller groups to meet with each department for 90-minute discussions of their self-assessment and action plans.

Department representatives will take notes during these discussions for possible revisions of their action plans. At each session a member of the coordination team will also take part and take notes. Time will be reserved for common discussions within the panel on overall conclusions at the end of the site visit.

The Coordination Team

The coordination team provides support at every stage of the process, including:

- Attending meetings and taking notes.
- Supplying the panel with relevant information.
- Assisting in compiling draft and final reports.
- Facilitating communication and logistics.