Guidelines for the Strategic Research Areas (SRA) at Karolinska Institutet

Karolinska Institutet

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Introduction

This governing document covers the six strategic research areas (SRAs) for which Karolinska Institutet (KI) is the principal. The document describes, among other things, the conditions for the activities and how SRA funds are to be managed at KI. The document is supplemented by detailed instructions (Appendix 1) decided by the chair of the Committee for Research.

The purpose of Strategic research areas (SRAs)

The purpose of an SRA is to develop and strengthen research within the research area and to serve as a unifying force for KI researchers in the relevant area. The SRAs were originally established because the government considered that "there is a need for long-term support for research in particularly strategic areas of importance to society and industry".

Organisation and responsibilities for the strategic research areas

Faculty Board

The government decides on the financial framework, but allocation to each SRA takes place through the Faculty Board's internal resource allocation. The funds are allocated to each individual SRA's steering group (see further below).

The Faculty Board or the President may decide that SRA funds can be used for instance for fees to organisations that fall within the area of the respective SRA and in which it is of interest for KI to participate.

Committee for Research

According to Faculty Board's decision-making and delegation rules, the Committee for Research appoints steering groups for the SRAs, ensures that the activities are carried out in accordance with decisions by the Faculty Board and the President, and reviews the activities and reports its observations annually to Faculty Board.

The Committee for Research decides on the responsibilities and assignments of the host departments and steering groups in addition to what is stated below.

The Committee for Research monitors the development of accumulated funds to ensure effective use of resources and therefore regularly requests analyses from the host departments on the development of these funds. This includes a report on planned use and estimated expenditure.

Host department

Each SRA must be affiliated with a host department. The Committee for Research appoints the host department after consultation with the relevant head of department and steering group. The department where the chair of the steering group is employed should be appointed as the host department. The SRA steering group must maintain ongoing contact with the head of the host department, which may mean, for example, that the head of the relevant host department, or a person appointed by that head, has the right to attend steering group meetings with the right to speak.

The Steering Group Assignment

Each SRA at KI must have a steering group. The steering groups shall develop and strengthen research, doctoral education and education at KI within the research area and serve as a unifying force for researchers within the subject area. The SRAs are cross-departmental, and the steering groups therefore have a cross-departmental assignment. The steering groups shall work together with KI's line organization, including departments and heads of department, to fulfil the purpose of the strategic research areas while also contributing to realizing KI's vision and overall strategies.

The steering group decides on the allocation of the funds distributed by the Faculty Board. The work of the steering group includes deciding, following proposals and preparation and arranging open, broad and inclusive calls for funds for, for example, projects, infrastructures and positions. The steering group shall also organize activities such as conferences, retreats and seminars for researchers in the area, preferably both nationally and internationally.

An important part of the steering groups' assignment is collaboration, such as contact with industry and society. The steering group shall therefore organize activities that are open to the public and collaborate with public authorities, healthcare services and industry where relevant. The steering groups may coordinate their activities to achieve greater impact.

The steering groups shall submit an annual scientific and financial report, the latter with support from the host department, in the manner decided by the Committee for Research.

Calls for applications and conflicts of interest

Calls for applications shall be transparent, and external review panels shall be used for all major calls, preferably with international reviewers who together have broad expertise in the area. The chair and vice chair shall not apply for funds from their own SRA. However, the chair and vice chair may, following a decision by the steering group, receive financial compensation; see below under "Remuneration for steering group". Otherwise, KI's guidelines on conflicts of interest apply to the work of the steering group.

Composition of the steering groups

A steering group shall consist of at least five members, including the chair and vice chair, also referred to as the "director" and "vice director". A steering group shall have an even gender distribution, broad representation from the research area and from several departments, and include at least one junior researcher. For the continued development of SRAs, it is important that the steering groups are renewed regularly.

The Committee for Research has decided[1] that members of SRA steering groups shall have terms of office of three years, with the possibility of extension for a further three years. The steering groups should be renewed gradually by replacing approximately half of the members every three years.

The following applies when appointing members to an SRA steering group:

- The Committee for Research decides on members of the steering groups in connection with a new term of office, following nominations from

KI's heads of department and existing steering groups. The nominations shall include a CV and justification.

- The Committee for Research always decides on the appointment of the chair and vice chair, both for new appointments and for redistribution of responsibilities within the steering group **during** the three-year term of office. The Committee's decision is made following nomination by the steering group and heads of department as specified in the point above.
- By-elections of members during the three-year term of office, except for the chair and vice chair, are delegated to the respective steering group. The steering group shall inform the Committee for Research of current changes.

A change of chair in a steering group may result in an SRA receiving a new host department.

Remuneration

In KI's regulations for remuneration for special assignments, the President has stated that KI encourages and expects teachers and researchers, within the framework of their employment, to undertake assignments and engage in the university's governing bodies without special remuneration being paid for this. However, remuneration is paid for certain particularly extensive assignments that may be considered to fall outside the employee's work duties.

Assignments as chair and vice chair of an SRA steering group are examples of the latter. The two assignments may therefore be remunerated *with up to a total of 20%* departmental compensation, which in that case is financed by SRA funds. Remuneration categories IK 4A or IK 3A, depending on the division between chair and vice chair, shall be used (instructions for remuneration here (*when decided*)). This means the following three options, depending on the size of the SRA:

Level IK4 = 10% (10–15%): IK4A = SEK 204,000 per year each to the chair and vice chair,
Level IK4 = 10% (10–15%): IK4A = SEK 204,000 per year to the chair
or
Level IK3 = 20% (15–30%): IK3A = SEK 408,000 per year to the chair.

No remuneration is paid for assignments as a member of a steering group. No personal fees or salary supplements may be paid to the chair, vice chair or other members.

Appendix

Host department for an SRA

Each SRA is affiliated to a host department, which is usually the department where the chair of the steering group is employed. When a new chair takes office, this may mean that the SRA receives a new host department.
The host department:

- requisitions funds from the respective central project at UL via controllers-planering-uppfoljning@ki.se and allocates funds once a decision on allocation has been made by the steering group,
- requests information on financial outcomes in the form of extracts from financial systems from co-applicant universities and sends them to controllers-planering-uppfoljning@ki.se,
- is responsible for providing supporting documentation to the SRA steering group for an annual financial report and analysis of the outcome, and
- shall, upon request, submit information to the Committee for Research.

Scientific reporting

Each SRA steering group shall, when requested by the Committee for Research submit a scientific report to the Committee for Research, which then forms the basis for Committee's reporting to the Faculty Board.
The following headings[2] may be included in the report:

- Summary
- Current activities, governance and follow-up
- Strategic initiatives
- Recruitment of researchers
- Calls for positions and funds
- Research infrastructures
- Education
- Collaboration, research relevance and interaction with society
- Collaboration partners
- Publication list
- "Scientific highlights"

The scientific report shall be accompanied by a financial report (see above, Host department for an SRA).

[1] Terms of office for the steering groups of the Strategic Research Areas at Karolinska Institutet, ref. no. 1-985/2021. Committee for Research, extract from the minutes, 2021:8, § 6.

[2] Decision by the Chair of the Committee for Research, 18 December 2019 (ref. no. 1–1066/2019).