



Strategy for Gender Equality at the Swedish Research Council

Goals for Achieving Gender Equality at the Swedish Research Council

The Swedish Research Council promotes gender equality throughout its sphere of activities in compliance with the council's Instructions Ordinance. The strategy for achieving this objective is to strive for gender equality throughout the organisation. Hence, the Swedish Research Council has established the following operational objectives.

The Swedish Research Council should:

- 1) achieve and maintain an equal gender distribution in its evaluation panels,
- 2) ensure that the percentages of female and male applicants for grants from the Swedish Research Council correspond to the percentages of women and men among the potential research grant applicants,
- 3) ensure that women and men have the same success rates¹ and receive the same average grant amount, taking into account the nature of the research and the type of grant,²
- 4) include a gender equality perspective in each analysis and evaluation, where possible,
- 5) integrate a gender equality perspective in the council's external communication.

The Board has the responsibility for implementation of the Swedish Research Council's strategy. Achieving the objectives requires the involvement of the entire agency, including the Scientific Councils and the other councils and committees (SCCCs).³ Unless otherwise specified, the Director General is responsible for advancing the efforts towards achieving gender equality.

Introduction

This strategy applies to the Swedish Research Council as a research-funding organisation. A special equal opportunities plan addresses the efforts for achieving equality within the Swedish Research Council as a Government agency.

The primary objective of the Swedish Research Council is to allocate funding to research of the highest scientific quality and that best promotes renewal. Achieving this objective requires impartial assessment of grant applications. Impartial assessment implies gender neutrality; that the Swedish Research Council supports the best researchers, regardless of gender.

¹ Success rates for women and men refer to the percentage of applications approved among total applications received from women and men respectively.

² Attainment of the goal must be assessed in the context of a sufficiently large number of decisions.

³ These include the Scientific Council for Humanities and Social Sciences, the Scientific Council for Medicine and Health, the Scientific Council for Natural and Engineering Sciences, the Council for Research Infrastructures, the Educational Sciences Committee, the Committee for Artistic Research, the Committee for Development Research and the Committee for Clinical Treatment Research.

The Swedish Research Council assumes that research capacity exists to the same extent in both sexes. Moreover, the Swedish Research Council assumes that research is benefited when both genders participate and apply their expertise and experience.

Gender equality is also a matter of justice. Women and men should have equal opportunities to conduct research and develop professional careers as researchers.

Achieving gender equality throughout the Swedish Research Council's sphere of activity requires a persistent, long-term effort and continuous attention to assure that the ground gained towards equality is not lost. The agency must continually monitor and analyse its activities from an equality perspective and take necessary steps based on the results. The Swedish Research Council should also inform others about its actions in gender equality.

Moreover, the Swedish Research Council must consider how the results of gender research might contribute towards improving equality throughout the agency's sphere of activity.

Laws, Ordinances, and Appropriation Directions

Equality between women and men is addressed by a body of laws and regulations, e.g. the Instrument of Government Chapter 1 Section 2 (part of the Constitution), the Discrimination Act (2008:467), the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), and the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100).

The objective of the governmental gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives⁴. This overall objective has four interim objectives: (i) economic equality, (ii) equal division of power and influence, (iii) equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care, (iv) men's violence against women must stop. The operations and gender equality strategy of the Swedish Research Council relate primarily to the first two interim objectives.

According to the Swedish Research Council's Instructions Ordinance (2009:975) 1§ 14, the Swedish Research Council must promote equality between women and men within its sphere of activity. In accordance with the requirements established by its government directive, the goals achieved must be presented in the Annual Report of the Swedish Research Council.

Processes for Achieving Objectives

The Swedish Research Council must analyse its activities from a gender equality perspective and follow up on the extent to which the goals have been achieved. This should be done annually in conjunction with the presentation to the Board regarding the outcome of the year's general funding call and in conjunction with producing the Annual Report. Equality issues must be discussed by the Board and by other parts of the organisation, and necessary actions must be taken. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of gender equality must be conducted at the end of the Board's 3-year term of office. When a new Board takes office it must review the gender equality strategy and where necessary decide on changes to the strategy.

The following points describe how the operational objectives should be achieved.

⁴ Makt att forma samhället och sitt eget liv - nya mål i jämställdhetspolitiken (prop. 2005/06:155).

1. Equal gender distribution in Swedish Research Council evaluation panels

“The Swedish Research Council should achieve and maintain an equal gender distribution in its evaluation panels.” (Objective 1)

In this context, equal gender distribution is considered to exist in a group when neither of the sexes comprises less than 40% of the panel members.

Before appointing the evaluation panels, gender distribution should be considered as a whole and not least relating to the positions of chair. Efforts involving equality should take a long-term perspective. This means, e.g. that in certain areas where women or men are greatly underrepresented among teachers and researchers at higher education institutions, the Swedish Research Council must be observant not to over-utilise those few men or women.

If the proposed composition of an evaluation panel and the gender balance of the chairs of these panels across the scientific council, council or committee in concern falls outside of the 40% to 60% range, this must be specified in the decision-making material. This material must also include justification for the deviation and describe the actions taken to achieve an equal gender distribution.

Gender equality aspects should also be considered when appointing participants to other groups and when making decisions concerning Swedish Research Council representation on external (national and international) bodies.

2. Grant applications by women and men

“The Swedish Research Council should ensure that the percentages of female and male applicants for grants from the Swedish Research Council correspond to the percentages of women and men among the potential research grant applicants.” (Objective 2)

Currently, women and men apply for research grants from the Swedish Research Council at rates corresponding to their proportion in the potential pool of research grant applicants. Should this situation change in the future, the Swedish Research Council would actively recruit more applications from the underrepresented gender.

3. Same success rates for women and men

“The Swedish Research Council should ensure that women and men have the same success rates⁵ and receive the same average grant amount, taking into account the nature of the research and the type of grant⁶.” (Objective 3)

Before the Swedish Research Council decides to introduce a new type of grant or to make a new research investment the effects on gender equality must be analysed and consideration be given to whether any special measures are necessary. The analysis should address gender equality at the total level and also be according to the different types of grants and subject areas.

⁵ See footnote 1.

⁶ See footnote 2.

The task of the Swedish Research Council to promote gender equality throughout its sphere of activities, and in addition gender equality as a factor for raising quality should be emphasized. The texts of funding calls, evaluation criteria and the review process should be considered from an equality perspective.

Members of the Scientific Councils and the other councils and committees and the members of evaluation panels must be informed about the gender equality strategy of the Swedish Research Council. The evaluation panels shall be instructed in gender equality issues during the information meetings prior to the evaluation work. Other experts involved must also be informed of the strategy (available in Swedish and English).

The Swedish Research Council's evaluation handbooks must include written instructions for the evaluation panels, giving attention to the following:

that all evaluation criteria must be clear and explicit. When the call is issued, the criteria and the instructions for applicants must be published on the Swedish Research Council's website,

that only "active research years" should be considered in evaluating the extent of scientific productivity, i.e. time off for parental leave, sick leave, or similar circumstances should be deducted.

Prior to each new round of evaluations, the staff of the Swedish Research Council must discuss the above instructions with the evaluations panels. Before an evaluation panel submits its proposal for allocating research grants, it must calculate the proposed success rates and average size of grants for women and men, respectively.

The secretaries general must present the evaluation panels' grant allocation proposals, from a gender equality perspective, to the respective Scientific Councils and the other councils and committees (SCCCs), commenting on possible gender disparities in success rates and average size of grants. These presentations must be delivered before the SCCCs make their decisions. The respective SCCCs must attach to their decision a collective assessment of the results in relation to the Swedish Research Council's gender equality strategy. These assessments should include comments by the SCCCs concerning possible disparities, as mentioned above, and a plan/strategy to rectify them. A written consensus opinion from each of the SCCCs must be forwarded to the Board.

In conjunction with the Director General's and the SCCCs' presentation to the Board regarding the outcome of the annual calls for proposals, the success rates for women and men must be presented for each of the SCCCs and each type of grant. The average grant amounts must also be reported by gender. A summary of the results shall be included in the Annual Report of the Swedish Research Council. Presentations by the SCCCs to the Board must include comments on possible disparities, as regards the matters mentioned above, and a plan to rectify any disparities.

4. Gender equality perspective in analyses and evaluations

”The Swedish Research Council should include a gender equality perspective in each analysis and evaluation, where possible.” (Objective 4)

A gender equality perspective should be included in every analysis and evaluation in so far as possible. This should also apply to memoranda, consultations (in response to white papers etc.), discussion and decision-making papers where relevant and possible. Direct and eventual indirect consequences for gender balance should be discussed in each analysis and evaluation. In those cases where a gender equality perspective has been deemed not possible or relevant a motivation should be given.

A gender balance should always be strived for in evaluation panels and where external authors and experts are engaged.

A statement of how the research council has fulfilled this objective should be provided annually to the Board.

5. A gender equality perspective in external communications

”The Swedish Research Council should integrate a gender equality perspective in the council’s external communication.” (Objective 5)

In the Research Council’s external communications a gender equality perspective shall be integrated in all communication channels, it should also be clear in relevant contexts that the Swedish Research Council works to attain gender equality. The external image conveyed by the Swedish Research Council should be gender-neutral and not reinforce gender stereotypes of, for example, researchers or subject areas.

A statement of how the research council has fulfilled this objective should be provided annually to the Board.