

Promoting gender equality and equal opportunities in academia

A benchmarking model



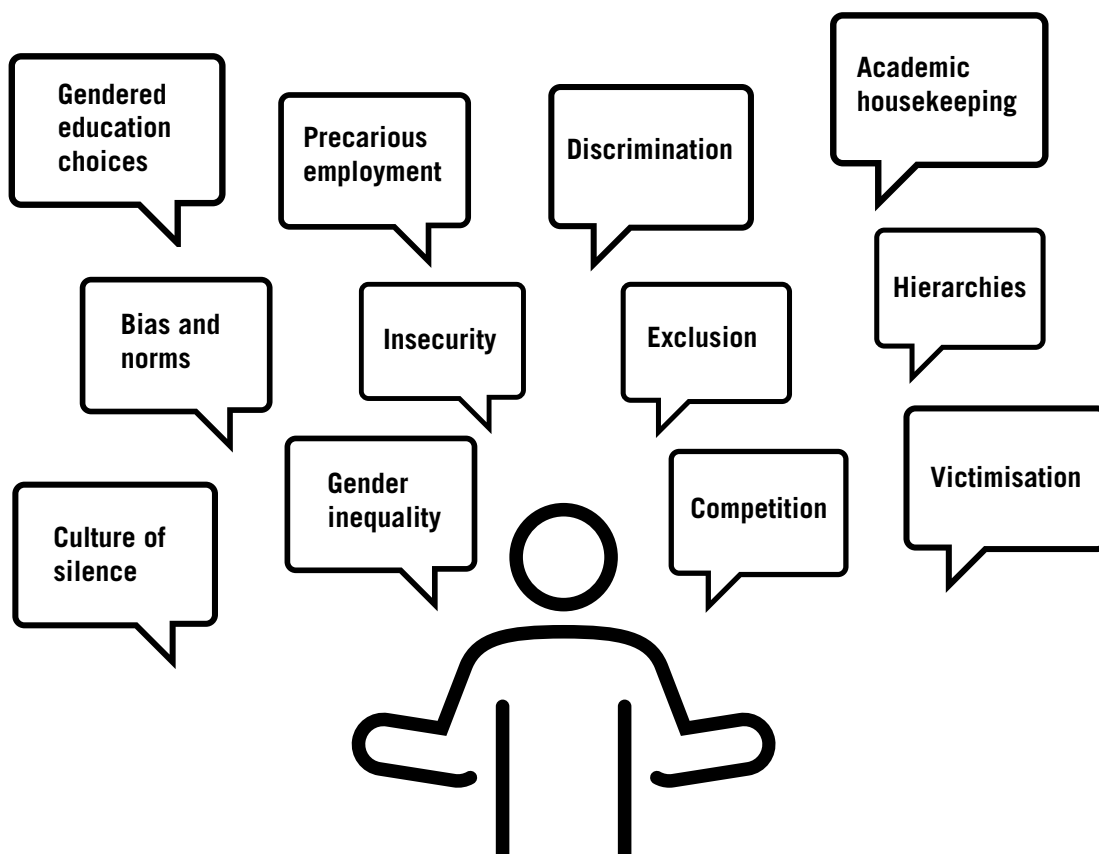
Model for promoting gender equality and equal opportunities

This material is intended to inspire higher education institutions to integrate gender equality and equal opportunities perspectives into various aspects of their operations, such as educational content; work and study environment management practices; and in efforts to recruit broadly to courses and study programmes. It proposes a model for systematic development of an organisation's gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities efforts. The concept is inspired by the benchmarking project *Model Municipalities* run by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and the equivalent approach used by the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. Listed below are some of the starting points that are central for the understanding of this material.

STARTING POINTS

What are the challenges within academia?

Equal opportunities and gender equality problems such as precarious employment, uneven allocation of responsibilities, and gendered education choices are prevalent within academia.



What does gender mainstreaming mean?

Gender mainstreaming is the Swedish government's principal strategy for achieving its gender equality policy objectives. This means that a gender equality perspective is to be incorporated into all aspects of policy and decision-making. Gender mainstreaming is always, but not exclusively, about gender. There must therefore be awareness that gender interacts with factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

What does equal opportunities mean?

Equal opportunities is the right to co-exist and be treated on equal terms regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. Consequently, these constitute the seven grounds of discrimination as laid down in the Swedish Discrimination Act.

BACKGROUND

A project was initiated at the School of Behavioural, Social and Legal Sciences at Örebro University in 2021–2022. Its purpose was to devise a model for gender mainstreaming that would allow a gender equality and equal opportunities perspective to be applied to the inequality challenges that are specific to academia. An internal benchmarking process for the exchange of experiences and mutual learning was initiated in which participants representing the divisions within the school could compare notes and develop their processes for gender equality and equal opportunities. School management, heads of division and specially appointed coordinators were involved in the process. The model prescribes a process-focused, participant-oriented approach that takes its departure from the specific needs of the school or department involved.

Examples of questions discussed:

- How do we raise the status of the work performed by the administrative team and how do we recognise the competence of this group?
- What does gender and power mean on your course?
- How do we attract more male applicants to our study programme?
- How do we enhance knowledge about gender equality and equal opportunities among students and staff?
- How can gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities efforts be systematised?

BENCHMARKING MODEL – THE PROCESS

Start-up phase for planning and execution

- Start-up meeting – project team and school management.
- School informed of the process and related activities in the upcoming year.
- Project team's meeting with coordinators, providing information about their role.
- Self-assessment and ideas for one or two improvement projects.
- Decision on desired outcome of the project.
- SWOT analysis.

Operative phase: Improvement project initiated within the respective units

- Objectives and problem specification for the units.
- Head of division and coordinator meet to select which improvement project to focus on.
- School management team discusses improvement project results and what, according to the self-assessment and SWOT analysis outcomes, is required to remedy inequalities.

In-depth phase

- More in-depth work on how we create synergies between mandates given and how to accommodate all the perspectives we are obliged to consider, for instance widening participation and prevention and promotion measures aimed at combatting discrimination.
- Management team focuses on the structure and overall system for the work undertaken.
- Divisions present their ideas in relation to the desired outcome of the project and the SWOT results.

Concluding phase: work and outcome is presented and disseminated

- Work, learning and dissemination.
- All participants meet to plan how the results will be presented and how the work is to continue at the school.
- Results seminars for those interested at the school and university.

KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS:

- Change processes require resources and the management offering support, knowledge and practical methods.
- Participating divisions select one area for improvement.
- A project team is appointed to lead the work, consisting of representatives from management and staff as well as from professional services, such as gender equality and equal opportunities advisor and HR strategist.
- Coordinators – members of staff from each participating division – are appointed and allocated hours as part of their role to support the process.

What could your school, department or office do to integrate an equal opportunities and gender equality perspective?

Conducting self-assessments will help you get started. It will help you to identify strengths and weaknesses in your organisation's gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities efforts.

The checklist below aims at visualising how far your unit has come in your efforts with gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities. It will encourage discussion on development potential, and it allows you to compare your progress over time.


To assess how far you have come in the areas represented by the questions below, indicate to what degree each statement is true for your organisation.

Green = TRUE

Yellow = PARTLY TRUE (PT)

Red = FALSE

Gender mainstreaming – general self-assessment questions			
STATEMENT	TRUE	PT	FALSE
The head of division and members of staff possess adequate knowledge of what gender mainstreaming is.			
The head of division and members of staff are given opportunities for skills enhancement and learning about gender mainstreaming.			
Gender mainstreaming leads to concrete and sustainable change.			
Content and execution of courses and study programmes			
STATEMENT	TRUE	PT	FALSE
Divisional management has discussed gender mainstreaming in relation to the content and execution of courses and study programmes.			
Teaching staff have carried out gender mainstreaming activities in relation to the content and execution of courses and study programmes.			
School management requests information about gender mainstreaming in relation to the content and execution of courses and study programmes.			
Gender or gender equality perspectives are included on one or several of our courses and study programmes.			

The checklist continues on the next page. 

Management and support processes			
STATEMENT	TRUE	PT	FALSE
The head of division and members of staff are aware of the management and support processes that are available in terms of gender mainstreaming.			
The head of division and members of staff have requested and been given the support of some of the management and support processes that are available in terms of gender mainstreaming.			
The support that was offered could be applied in the organisation and has led to improvement.			
The head of division and members of staff have attended lectures organised by the Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Committee on one or more occasions.			
Work environment and measures to prevent discrimination and promote equal right and opportunities			
STATEMENT	TRUE	PT	FALSE
Support in the event of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation is available and students and staff know where to turn for this support.			
The head of division schedules regular team meetings and performance reviews where work environment matters are discussed.			
The school management enables the head of division to undertake prevention and promotion measures aimed at combatting discrimination (investigating risks, analysing causes, taking measures, monitoring and evaluating measures).			
The head of division facilitates competence development for members of staff on equal opportunities and prevention and promotion measures aimed at combatting discrimination.			
The head of division reports on the work with prevention and promotion measures aimed at combatting discrimination as part of the systematic work environment efforts.			
The head of division has carried out activities linked to prevention and promotion measures aimed at combatting discrimination.			
The work with prevention and promotion measures aimed at combatting discrimination leads to concrete changes from a study and work environment perspective.			

WHAT DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE?

Work environment/study environment and equal opportunities

What effect do your work environment efforts have, in terms of the occurrence of victimisation and discrimination, culture and norms in the workplace?

What do your surveys say? Consider these questions from a gender equality and equal opportunities perspective.

Notes about your improvement project (max. 2,600 characters):

WHAT DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE?

HR/recruitment and widening participation

What is the gender balance among the staff at your school? Would you say gendered educational choices are being made among the students? Is there a need of broadening the courses and study programmes from an equal opportunities perspective? Reflect on any patterns there may be among applicants based on, for example, gender, age, and parents' educational background.

Notes about your improvement project (max. 2,600 characters):

WHAT DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE?

Gender and gender equality perspectives in the content and format of courses and study programmes

What are our current efforts in terms of gender and gender equality perspectives on courses and study programmes as well as in our other activities linked to education? How can we as colleagues work together to integrate these perspectives (including sustainable development) in our operations?

Notes about your improvement project (max. 2,600 characters):

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page features several paper airplanes. Four are green and one is yellow. They are arranged in a circular pattern, with dotted lines suggesting their flight paths. The airplanes are 3D-rendered with shadows, giving them a sense of depth and movement.

**PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES IN ACADEMIA
A benchmarking model**

Project team:

Anna-Karin Larsson, Anne-Charlott Callerstig,
Elin Weiss och Felicia Garcia.

Would you like to learn more about this model?

Contact:

Anna-Karin Larsson, vice dean for gender equality
and education at the Faculty of Humanities and Social
Sciences: anna-karin.larsson@oru.se

Elin Weiss, advisor, equal opportunities and gender
equality: elin.weiss@oru.se

This material was published by
Örebro University in June 2023.

