ACTION PLAN FOR WIDENING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

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The Action Plan for Widening Access and Participation is a University-wide steering document describing measures and organisation for the work on widening access and participation and inclusive studies.
ACTION PLAN, ORGANISATION AND MEASURES TO WIDEN ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

The overall measures specified in the Policy for Widening Access and Participation are concretised in this Action Plan. The work to widen access and participation is to firstly focus on recruitment, which means evening out differences relating to gender, social recruitment bias¹ and/or foreign background, and to also delimit this to the immediate area: Gothenburg and Region Västra Götaland. The report Breddad rekrytering och inkluderande lärande: Nulägesbeskrivning av arbetet vid Göteborgs universitet [Widening participation and inclusive teaching: Description of the current work at the University of Gothenburg] constitutes a point of departure for this Action Plan. This work is part of the University’s work on gender equality, equal treatment and accessibility and similarly the University’s quality work.²

Overall objective: An inclusive, open and accessible university

The University of Gothenburg is to be open and accessible for everyone, regardless of background. Education, research and third-stream activities have the potential to bridge social gaps and create common places in a divided city. The University is to create inclusive standards and values in its activities and promote the quality of its education by attributing a value to and drawing on different experiences, perspectives and knowledge.

The University of Gothenburg is to increase the proportion of students from underrepresented groups up to 2020. Underrepresented student groups include: male students; students from non-academic family backgrounds; students with a foreign background; and students from areas outside metropolitan municipalities. The University is to actively work to ensure that all students have an opportunity to pursue and manage their studies.

Widening access and participation are to be integrated into the University’s activities, with all departments and other education providers as well as relevant support functions assuming responsibility for taking measures that are relevant to their own department, course or study programme. This means that the prevailing criteria and conditions for each activity must be considered in respect of, for example, how underrepresentation is reflected in courses and study programmes and what measures can be taken.

Educational Affairs and Communication are primarily responsible within Central University Administration.

The Action Plan focuses on three sub-processes: recruitment, admission and inclusive studies.

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¹ ‘Social recruitment bias’ means that access to higher education varies on the basis of social factors such as the level of education of a student’s parents and socioeconomic factors, including access to financial resources, geographic domicile and access to work.

² See www.medarbetarportalen.gu.se/likabehandling/styrdokument/
Organisational preconditions

There are few knowledge-based general recommendations in Sweden on how to successfully pursue the work to widen participation within higher education. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education provided the following three guidelines in its follow-up of the higher education institutions’ work to widen participation between 2006 and 2008:

- The work should focus on widening participation and not just widening recruitment
- Outreach recruitment work is crucial to reach underrepresented groups
- Long-term work represents a precondition for achieving the targets. The work must have clear targets and be consistent and performed on a long-term basis as well as provide scope for long-term results (10 to 15 years).

The Swedish Council for Higher Education has issued the following recommendations to the Government relating to the work of higher education institutions to widen participation: the Government should demand strategies and objectives; measures are to be preceded by the acquisition of knowledge about, among other things, catchment areas; widening recruitment and participation must take place in cooperation with, for example, compulsory and upper secondary schools and the work and activities of societies and associations; the work should also include forms of support for students during their education; a clear labour market link for courses and study programmes is an important aspect; and the higher education institutions must demonstrate how they use assessment of prior learning and alternative selection to widen participation.3

For the University of Gothenburg, strategic work based on these recommendations means that:

- Clear and university-wide objectives and strategies need to be drawn up.
- The University must clarify which underrepresented groups are meant and which initiatives are suitable for the purpose.
- The University must coordinate its activities.
- Collaboration with the rest of the public sector, trade and industry, school managers and teachers, popular movements and not-for-profit activities is crucial for the work to be successful in the long term.

A general issue can also be added to this concerning the building up of knowledge, evaluation and research. As the University is a ‘knowledge organisation’, research should be conducted on its own activities and be based on scientific grounds. The work to widen recruitment and participation should therefore be continually evaluated and facilitate the prospects of ongoing evaluations to ensure that the measures taken also have the effect sought.

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3 Report, Swedish Council for Higher Education, 2016, Kan excellens uppnås i homogena studentgrupper? [Can excellence be achieved in homogenous student groups?]
Recruitment

Objective
The University’s work to recruit students is to focus on correcting the recruitment bias and unequal access to education.

Measures
Those responsible for recruitment processes are the departments, programme committees or others responsible for providing education within the University of Gothenburg and also the Division of Academic Support at Central University Administration.

Heads of department
are responsible for recruitment initiatives specific to courses and study programmes. This responsibility includes:

• Creating opportunities for meetings with prospective students and study advisers and teachers at compulsory and upper secondary schools about courses and programmes offered and career opportunities.
  ▪ To the extent that courses and study programmes indicate a recruitment bias, taking active recruitment measures focussing on specific target groups to bring about change.
  ▪ Aiming for courses and study programmes to be presented in such a way that underrepresented target groups are reached.
  ▪ Clearly linking courses and study programmes to possible professions and working life in information provided about courses and study programmes.

University-wide level
is responsible for providing the departments with support in terms of:

• Information relating to applications, course and study programmes offered, admissions criteria, credit transfer, student aid and career/labour market links.

The University-wide level implements:

• Coordinated and general recruitment initiatives through campaigns, fairs and other information activities.
  Responsibility: Communication together with Educational Affairs.
• Overall and general study guidance.
  Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
• Coordination of collaboration with municipal and independent education (pre-schools, compulsory and upper secondary schools).
  o Responsibility: To be investigated. Investigative assignments are allocated by the Vice-Chancellor.
• Coordinating support function for long-term mentor activities. The University should investigate the most appropriate way in which to formulate a support function for mentor activities and also investigate the opportunities to give participating mentors higher education credits for their assignment as well as teacher-led guidance in mentorship.
  o Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
• Coordination of contacts with other stakeholders within public, private and the not-for-profit sectors, and initiatives to strengthen the collaboration platforms already available.
  o Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
**Special development initiatives**

- A project is to be formulated concerning special initiatives at compulsory and upper secondary schools in order to raise awareness and curiosity about higher education. The content of the project may involve education efforts in the form of lessons, homework assistance from students, student ambassadors, lectures by emeritus professors and alumni now working in professions. This work is to start in 2017.
  - Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
- The University is to investigate the preconditions for developing a recruitment project with the City of Gothenburg like the cooperation that exists in, for example, Uppsala, Malmö and Örebro. One possible pilot project may be for the University to offer a summer course in university preparatory studies. A request is to be made to the City of Gothenburg about whether the City would consider taking part in the initiative as a supplement to municipal summer jobs.
  - Responsibility: Educational Affairs.

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4 Possible initiatives may include, for example, proceeding on the basis of tried and tested working methods such as the Nightingale Programme in Malmö, Linje 14 in Örebro and experiences from the University’s faculties and departments.
Admission

Objectives
The University’s admission processes are to promote the admission of underrepresented groups.

Measures
Strategies and measures for admission should be adapted to the needs and preconditions of individual courses and study programmes.

Admission strategies for individual courses and study programmes must relate to applicants per place, the financial resources available and the forms of alternative selection that may apply. The University should work to a greater extent on the strategy issue on the basis of a pedagogic perspective, where the quality of courses and study programmes also involve promoting the heterogeneity of the knowledge and experiences that the students bring with them when starting a course or study programme.

The University of Gothenburg is to endeavour to achieve a greater application of assessment within the category alternative selection and also assessment of prior learning.

Heads of department
are responsible for:

- Testing the opportunities for alternative selection for courses and study programmes with an objective to fill a third of places on courses and study programmes in this way. Alternative selection is to be formulated in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Higher Education Ordinance on the objective circumstances required to benefit from the course or study programme.
- Regularly reviewing entry requirements for courses and study programmes to broaden access qualifications and thereby increasing the opportunities for, among others, underrepresented groups (competence in language, work experience, credit transfer for previous studies, etc.).

University-wide level
is responsible through Educational Affairs for:

- Developing opportunities for applicants to be considered in respect of prior learning and also validation of previous experiences and education. In order to be able to use prior learning in a systematic and thorough way, the University needs to actively advocate that prospective applicants make use of this opportunity and also that resources are set aside to guide applicants through a consideration as well as a possible Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (SweSAT) and selection. Validation of previous experiences means that an assessment of the experiences that an applicant brings with them must be conducted in an adequate way and that the University, together with the supervisory authority and other higher education institutions, needs to develop common methods and knowledge for this process.

Special development initiatives

- Develop proposed models and working methods for formulating alternative selection. Models and working methods are to be based on research and proven experience and also formulated in dialogue with the University’s departments and faculties.
  - Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
Inclusive studies

Inclusive studies involve promoting a high level of student completion of courses and study programmes by offering good pedagogical methods and resources in order to create a level playing field for all students. Students are to be afforded an opportunity to participate in and complete their studies on equal terms. The University’s Pedagogical Ideas Programme constitutes support.

Objectives

The University of Gothenburg is to offer a good and inclusive study environment that provides all students with the preconditions for goal-oriented studies and establishment in the workplace.

Measures

The University is to systematically develop its operation so that the content of courses and study programmes and the different forms of pedagogical methods promote a high level of student completion for everyone. The operation is to take measures to ensure equivalent preconditions for all students.

Heads of department

are responsible for:

- Providing good opportunities for students to contact the student and career counsellor.
- Ensuring that teachers and students are informed about the resources available for study techniques, information and literature searches, and academic writing, and how these can be used in close collaboration with ordinary teaching.
- Ensuring the follow-up of students’ study performance.
- Ensuring that good information is provided on courses and study programmes regarding labour market links.

University-wide level

is responsible for:

- The coordination of, and competence development for, the departments’ study and career counsellors. The University is to investigate opportunities for a web portal/equivalent for study and career counselling and also issues concerning labour market links for individual courses and study programmes.
  - Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
- Working to further develop mentor activities, such as student-möter student [student meets student], for example in cooperation with the student unions, and also offering competence development for participants, both employees (study counsellors and teachers) and students.
  - Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
- An increased scope in the range of language support for all faculties and to increase the scope of opportunities for pedagogical consultations, seminars and the like for teachers who feel a need for support in their work with students in terms of academic language.
  - Responsibility: Unit for Academic Language (ASK).
- Developing methods and tools together with teachers responsible for courses who want to follow up students’ individual study performance.
  - Responsibility: Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL) and Educational Affairs.
- Generating a greater awareness of widening access and participation within university-wide courses and study programmes in teaching and learning in higher education for teachers.
  - Responsibility: Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL).
• Investigating the possibility of providing, through university-wide resources, an introduction to higher education at the start of study programmes as a way of developing a uniform and equivalent introduction for all programme students.
  o Responsibility: Investigative assignments are allocated by the Vice-Chancellor.
• Using experience from the subject teacher study programme to find new ways of linking teaching to practice.
  o Responsibility: Investigative assignments are allocated by the Vice-Chancellor.

**Special development initiatives**

• To start an attempt with a structured transition from upper secondary school to university, through cooperation with selected upper secondary schools for university-preparatory courses during School Year Three, followed by a summer course under the auspices of the University and then social activities during the first term of university education.
  o Responsibility: Educational Affairs.
Organisation and responsibility

**University Board:** Responsible for the University completing its assignment in accordance with regulations and public service agreements, among other things, widening participation in accordance with Chapter 1, Section 5 of the Higher Education Act.

**Vice-Chancellor:** Decisions on direction, priorities and monitoring of the area.

Guidance through Vision 2020, action and operational plans, steering documents within disciplinary domains (admission regulations, Pedagogical Ideas Programme), Policy and Action Plan for Gender Equality and Equal Treatment.

**The University Management Council:** Continuous debriefing and follow-up of direction, priorities and organisation within the area.

**University Board of Education:** Responsible for quality development within, among other things, teaching and learning in higher education through assignments to Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL) and also through the operational assignment that the Board gives the Unit for Academic Language (ASK).

**Deans:** The Faculties have, by virtue of their assignment to evaluate quality and allocate resources, a key role to increase the visibility of the results of the work to widen participation and social inclusion.

**University Director:** Responsible for formulating support for the operation. Educational Affairs has a special responsibility to support the operation on issues concerning widening participation, particularly for coordination of the work, exchange of experience, development of tools and methods for recruitment, admission and student services/support. Educational Affairs is to coordinate both internal and external work in relation to collaborating partners in the public, not-for-profit and private sector. Educational Affairs is to regularly follow up the composition of the student population from the perspective of widening participation. Supporting information is to be obtained from Statistics Sweden in the course of follow-up and consideration should be taken to segregation trends and social patterns in the Gothenburg area. Communication is to pursue an objective to widen recruitment and participation within all communication activities targeting prospective students. This assignment includes developing methods and tools for inclusive general recruitment strategies and also initiatives adapted to target groups as well as support for departments and the like.

**Heads of department/equivalent:** Responsible for widening participation in the courses and study programmes offered by the department. The work on widening participation is to be included in the department’s action and operational plan. The department’s objectives and measures are to be realistic, sustainable in the long-term and rooted in the operation’s own needs.

**Manager of the Pedagogical Development and Interactive Learning (PIL):** Responsible for norm-critical perspectives in courses and study programmes in teaching and learning in higher education and also for supporting the departments’ education coordinators when developing inclusive aspects of teaching.

**Manager of the Unit for Academic Language (ASK):** Responsible for offering language support and also for developing resources with regard to academic language and documents targeting the departments and education providers.
Evaluation and follow-up

The work is to be evaluated and followed up within the University’s normal follow-up system and feedback provided within the overall annual follow-up. Departments are to include the work on widening participation in their action and operational plans. In addition, widening participation must be included in normal quality assurance work for courses and study programmes. The students’ socioeconomic preconditions are not to affect study performance and the level of student completion. The University’s quality work should therefore also follow up study performance in relation to the students’ socio-economic preconditions to ensure equivalent education for all students. Managers/Heads of department are responsible for follow-up within each unit or department. The University’s Vice-Chancellor has the university-wide responsibility for following up the area. The Central University Administration coordinates the university-wide follow-up within the area. The support function within Central University Administration is to conduct a statistical survey of the student population every three years from the perspective of widening recruitment and participation.