

# Strategy for recruiting academic staff 2021–2023

## Introduction

For the fulfilment of Karlstad University's vision for 2030 and strategic goals 2019–2023, a stable skills supply and the ability to attract staff are essential. Research and education of a high academic standard in combination with a good work environment strengthen the University. International perspectives and collaboration are key aspects of the organisation. The skills and dedication of our employees along with their contribution to the organisation's development are all crucial elements. The University's current expansion and development are to a large extent affected by societal shifts such as increased digitisation and the need for sustainable development. As resources for education and research increase, so do the University's recruitment needs. Maintaining efficiency and transparency in the recruitment process is challenging, but also vital to the University's fulfilment of its mandate.

The recruitment strategy and action plan<sup>1</sup> describe the long-term plan for the recruitment of academic staff and the activities scheduled for implementation over the next few years with the purpose of securing the University's ability to recruit the skills needed to address present and future challenges. The recruitment strategy serves as a guide and reference material for recruiting managers, recruitment teams, management teams, and service functions that in various ways work together to recruit and attract new employees to Karlstad University.

In addition to the recruitment strategy, there are other policies that specify goals and guidelines. These include the Leadership and Co-Workership Policy, the Appointments Procedure, the Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming, the Action Plan for Internationalisation, the Environmental Policy, and the Language Policy. These provide the framework for University leaders in the establishment of action plans for skills supply and in recruitment and continuing professional development.

## HR Excellence in Research Award

The University recently received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission. The award is a stamp of approval demonstrating that the University meets high standards in terms of recruitment, career development, and conditions for researchers. However, the award comes with certain obligations. In the next few years, the institution is required to enforce the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This recruitment strategy and action plan detail guidelines, goals, and activities intended to help the University comply with the requirements specified in the Charter and Code.

## Plans for securing skills supply

The organisation's plans for securing skills supply should serve as a guide and aid to managers and supervisors in the recruitment process and as the foundation for discussions, prioritisations, and initiatives that concern the University at large. The different parts of the University's organisation annually draw up skills supply plans that are based on organisational goals and include an analysis of short-term and long-term recruitment needs. The plans also include a description of how the department, discipline, or research team intends to attract, recruit, introduce, retain, develop, adjust, and phase out certain skills. The plans are monitored and updated annually.

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<sup>1</sup> Decided via Vice-Chancellor's Decision (Rb 18/21 reg.no. C2020/913)

## Goals and action plan

The focus for recruitment is described in the form of three strategic areas of development.

- Expertise
- Strong appeal
- Efficient recruitment process

To secure a stable skills supply, the University at large and all the parts of the organisation need to be successful in all three areas.

The areas are specified as goals. Centrally commissioned activities constitute the action plan. Where necessary, the operating plans of the departments and offices should include supplementary activities required to achieve the recruitment strategy goals. The action plan and activities are available as an appendix to the recruitment strategy.

There will be annual follow-ups of the recruitment strategy and action plan pursuant to the University's standard procedures for organisational monitoring.

## Expertise

Academic staff should have the required expertise in research or the arts as well as the necessary teaching skills to contribute to quality education and research, and organisational development. They actively participate in teaching and research, apply for and secure external funds, and partake in national and international collaborations. They are dedicated, present, and available to students and colleagues as well as active in internal and external cooperation. The requirements for specific skills and personal qualities vary depending on factors such as field of study and duties.

### Current status and challenges

The vision for 2030 and the University's strategic goals 2019–2023 include the University's intention to further prioritise excellent teaching and research to reinforce its academic mandate. Study programmes and courses of high quality; well-reputed, excellent academic environments; doctoral programmes that increase in quality and scope; and internationalised operations set a high standard for employee skills and the ability of Karlstad University to attract and retain qualified teachers. Whether or not a discipline will progress, research will be successful, quality review scores will be good, and educational standard will be high all depend on the skills of the employees, their conditions and potential for growth, and the academic environments that are created. Mobility between universities, societal sectors, and nations enhances the quality of research and education. The knowledge of staff contributes to the University's efforts to promote sustainable social, economic, and environmental development. More often than not, an appointment is a long-term commitment and growth potential can be just as important as how skilled the employees are when they are first recruited.

Finding qualified employees is a challenge for many higher education institutions in Sweden. In many disciplines, Karlstad University is vying for the same candidates as other higher education institutions. The proportion of PhDs among teaching staff has been relatively stable in recent years<sup>2</sup>, but there is an ongoing quest to increase the percentage. This is a challenge shared by many higher education institutions, partly because there has not been an increase in doctoral studies at a national level in recent

<sup>2</sup> 2015 59%, 2016 62%, 2017 65%, 2018 64%, 2019 63%, 2020 62%

years. One factor affecting the University in this respect is the high number of professional programmes where teachers are often required to possess professional expertise.

## Goals

Karlstad University should attract qualified employees from a diverse range of societal sectors and countries.

The proportion of PhDs among academic staff should increase.

Doctoral studies are a vital aspect of the skills supply and should thus be scaled up. To secure the longevity of a research connection to programmes and courses and a continuous stream from below to the research level, the number of doctoral students should be increased.

The number of career-development positions should be increased to enable recent PhD graduates to acquire qualifications and develop research autonomy.

The percentage of academic staff involved in international activity should increase.

In areas with uneven gender distribution, the underrepresented gender's representation should increase<sup>3</sup>.

The ambition is for the University's academic staff to possess

- knowledge about sustainable development, equality, and gender aspects in relation to the courses and programmes they are active in.
- proficiency in Swedish and English, with regard to the period of employment.
- a strong ability to work and foster close relationships with partners from the community at large and a strong ability to integrate collaboration into research and education.
- the pedagogical knowledge, skills, and approaches required to develop and use flexible forms of teaching and examination.

## Strong appeal

The University appeals to qualified employees by offering a good working environment, interesting research and education work, development opportunities, and attractive terms of employment. International recruits are offered help to make the transition to Sweden and Värmland smoother. The employer brand is clear – both internally and externally.

## Current status and challenges

A strong employer brand is vital for gaining a competitive edge in the search for qualified candidates. Attractive terms, great development opportunities, secure employment, and a good working environment are key to making the University appeal to new employees. The University's employees are proud and dedicated and enjoy stable employment conditions. A survey conducted in 2019 shows that a very large percentage of employees would gladly recommend the University as an employer<sup>4</sup>. The relatively low

<sup>3</sup> To be considered even, gender distribution should be in the range of 40–60%. "Areas" refers to positions and disciplinary environments

<sup>4</sup> Employee Net Promoter Score® is a metric used to indicate internal or external willingness to recommend an organisation. The metric is based on how willing a person is to recommend their place of work to friends and acquaintances. Karlstad University has conducted the survey alongside several other higher education institutions. The comparison showed Karlstad University to score the highest.

percentage of fixed-term contracts<sup>5</sup> is a result of a dedicated effort to the creation of secure employment conditions through permanent positions.

There are many advantages to working at Karlstad University. Karlstad University is a dynamic, intermediate-sized university with two campuses that inspire connections and rewarding cooperation in everyday interactions. In addition to a sense of community among students and colleagues, the University has established a strong relationship with the private and public sector, which creates excellent opportunities for collaboration in programmes and courses and in research. The University values the mobility of academic staff. Karlstad University can offer excellent opportunities to combine teaching and research. A streamlined decision-making protocol enables the organisation to employ different commitments and initiatives to effect change at various levels. Ambitious and highly skilled employees have every opportunity to grow with the help of the University's career-development system.

Potential employees should be able to easily identify opportunities for employment and how the institution works in terms of recruitment, professional development, and career paths. The websites of the University and disciplines often function as a gateway and source of information and inspiration for candidates who are interested. Although networks are becoming increasingly significant in recruitment, it is still important to reach potential candidates with ads that appeal to and pique the interest of the target group.

Employee induction affects the entire period of employment, both in terms of how long the person chooses to stay and how willing they are to recommend it as a place to work. For that reason, every new employee should receive a good, thoroughly planned induction. Ensuring a proper welcome and introduction of new employees is the responsibility of the departments, disciplines, and the immediate colleagues. For instance, newly employed teachers should be offered a peer mentor to help them find their feet. All new employees are expected to attend the centrally planned Welcome Day, aimed to help them understand the University's organisation, mandate, and operations, among other things.

## Goals

In a recruitment, it is clear what Karlstad University can offer and what the University expects from its employees. Employment terms can be adjusted individually based on the University's need for skills or the applicant's requests, and to pave the way for a healthy work-life balance.

All new employees receive a proper introduction to the University, the disciplinary environment, and their new duties.

## Efficient recruitment process

Karlstad University's recruitment model is consistent, efficient, and of a high standard. It thus contributes to attracting and retaining applicants throughout the process, and to a selection and assessment of applications based on the employment profile. In order not to compromise on quality requirements, the University pays special focus to external recruitment and far-reaching, international announcements of vacancies.

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<sup>5</sup> Statistics from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ)

## **Current status and challenges**

Recruitment should always be based on a distinct need for certain skills. The recruitment process should be transparent and easy to follow and understand. To attract qualified applicants from a range of backgrounds, it is wise not to specify duties and qualifications beyond what is necessary for the position in question.

The recruitment processes at Karlstad University and other higher education institutions are still lengthy. Internal procedures can always be made more efficient. Regulations, quality requirements, and traditions may be hard to change, but they are factors that affect the process. However, there are opportunities to adjust the provisions laid down by the University. Every institution can exercise discretion in decisions about which person or team should prepare appointments and how they should do it. Karlstad University has two appointment and promotion committees (ABU) that are mandated to assure the quality of recruitments.

Successful recruitment requires proactive leaders at every level and in every part of the University. It is particularly important that managers and leaders are personally involved in all the steps of the recruitment process and that HR provides professional support.

Every University representative's interaction with an applicant should be characterised by professionalism and respect throughout the recruitment process. A person who is interested in working at Karlstad University should be able to easily understand what steps to take. The institution also needs to adjust recruitment processes according to societal changes, such as digitisation. Traditional advertisement is no longer the most resource-efficient or successful way to reach potential employees. Therefore, advertisements need to be supplemented by the active use of national and international digital and social media, personal networks, and outreach activity.

## **Goals**

Recruitment processes should be characterised by effectiveness, consistency, fairness, transparency, efficiency, and gender equality.

Any person who is involved in and has influence over an employment process is required to be properly trained in recruitment and selection. The recruitment team should include representatives that are highly familiar with and well versed in the organisation's operations.

Applicants for vacancies should be treated with respect in all interactions with University representatives and receive continuous and speedy information about the various parts of the recruitment process. All applicants, whether they are offered the position or not, should come away from the process with a positive image of the University.

The applicant should be given a clear and accurate idea of the organisation, the institution, and the academic environment during the recruitment process.