

The Swedish Higher Education Authority's Pandemic Assignment

Interim Report 1



The Swedish Higher Education Authority's Pandemic Assignment – Interim Report 1
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Summary

The coronavirus pandemic has severely tested staff and students at the country's higher education institutions (HEIs). According to an interim study for UKÄ's government assignment on the consequences of the pandemic, the decisions and recommendations with the greatest impact on HEIs during the coronavirus pandemic so far have been the recommendation to not take unnecessary trips, the transition to distance teaching, the ban on public gatherings, the holding of the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test and the increase in the number of available openings for students.

There have been significant consequences from these decisions, and the HEIs have taken many measures to address the challenges they present. By establishing local crisis organisations, the HEIs were able to quickly and effectively manage the acute situation. At the same time, the HEIs worked extensively to transition to online teaching, which required creative solutions to allow remote teaching, both theoretical aspects and practical aspects. One difficult challenge has also been to provide fair examinations.

The coronavirus pandemic has had major consequences for the economy, and the part of the labour market where young people often work has been particularly effected. The Government has attempted to address this by significantly expanding access to higher education. Together, this has led to an increase inflow of students to higher education. In the autumn semester 2020, there were 13 per cent more applicants without prior experience from higher education compared with the autumn semester 2019. At the same time, there was a 14-per cent increase in newly accepted students to higher education. There was a particularly large increase among 19-year-olds who graduated from upper-secondary school in the spring semester 2020. This group increased by 28 per cent compared with the previous year.

Not surprisingly, this resulted in an increase of new entrants to higher education in the autumn semester 2020 compared with the autumn semester 2019. The increase consisted of Swedish new entrants, which grew by 18 per cent, while incoming new entrants decreased by 49 per cent. In the autumn semester 2020, 19-year-olds made up 27 per cent of all new entrants, which is 3 percentage points more than in autumn semester 2019.

The outflow from higher education also seems to have been impacted by the pandemic: 9 per cent more students graduated from higher education

in academic year 2019/20 than the previous academic year. Other factors than the pandemic, however, may be behind this increase.

Labour market conditions may also effect some graduates during the pandemic. This depends, however, on the programme from which they graduated. For example, students with master's or bachelor's degrees in engineering have had much more difficulty finding work compared with graduates with nursing bachelor's degrees, which have had it easier finding work.

The pandemic has had a major impact on higher education since teaching has largely moved online and formats for examination have changed while the inflow of students has increased. It is reasonable to assume that this would have consequences, such as on completion rates in programmes. But there are no clear differences between immediate dropouts between programme new entrants who began in spring semester 2020 and spring semester 2019.

There is, however, a clear difference in *immediate* dropouts between new entrants from groups with different social backgrounds. The immediate dropouts among new entrants with parents having a low-level of education increased in the spring semester 2020 compared with the year before, while it decreased among new entrants with parents having a high level of education. Whether this is a consequence of the pandemic needs to be studied in more detail.

There were also not any major differences between student performance levels between spring semester 2019 and spring semester 2020. This applies both overall and for different student groups; there are no clear differences in *immediate* performance levels between students with different social and national backgrounds. The exception is that younger students seem to have increased their performance level, while it decreased among older students in spring semester 2020 compared with the previous year.

The number of disciplinary cases has increased significantly during the coronavirus pandemic. The number of students that faced a disciplinary measure increased 61 per cent between 2019 and 2020. The most common cause of students being subjected to disciplinary measures was plagiarism, but unauthorised collaboration also increased significantly. Most HEIs have determined that the increase in disciplinary cases is because of the pandemic, since it occurred in connection with the transition to distance teaching, online examinations and take-home examinations. Proposed reasons for the increase have included lack of effective monitoring during online examinations.

Many HEIs have conducted their own investigations to determine how staff and students feel that the pandemic has affected their work. UKÄ has requested and compiled this material, which shows that the transition to distance teaching has, on the whole, been seen as having worked well. One important cause of the quick and mainly successful transition is that the technical infrastructure was already in place when the pandemic first struck. But the transition has also involved challenges. For example, conducting online examinations has been associated with many difficulties and regular quality assurance and enhancement work has in many cases been suspended.

Staff have experienced increased workload and stress. There are also signs that the transition to distance teaching has had a negative impact on their health and wellbeing. For example, sitting still has increased and the ability to work in peace has been impacted negatively. At the same time, there are examples of where working from home has not impacted the work environment negatively. Most staff are satisfied with the support they have received with technology and the physical working environment.

In their surveys, many HEIs have focused on student health and the study environment. In their surveys, a majority of students have experienced a worse study environment after the transition to distance teaching. The social aspects of student life worsened the most. Students reduced their social contacts and contacts with classmates and teachers significantly. Maintaining motivation and focus on studies has been a challenge for many. Students also describe a sense of loneliness, isolation and a longing for a social student life.

Many feel a worsening sense of wellbeing and an increase in negative stress and anxiety after the transition. This was both about the effects of the pandemic on their own life and situation and society at large and about the changes in their learning situation and new ways of being assessed through online examinations. But the transition also has resulted in positive changes for some students, such as increased flexibility and opportunities to study more effectively, less travel and more teaching material online.

How has the pandemic impacted funding of research at the country's HEIs? Results so far point to the coronavirus pandemic not having impacted the ability of foundations and organisations to fund new research projects for the most part. The reductions in share dividends from Swedish companies in 2020 have not resulted in an equivalent decrease in research funding from the foundations. The Wallenberg Foundations and the Kempe Foundations, however, have temporarily significantly reduced their funding to new projects, which can have an

impact on the HEIs and researchers that receive funding from these foundations.

Additional studies of how research, education quality, the situation for undergraduate, master's and doctoral students, and other aspects of higher education have been impacted by the pandemic are necessary and are ongoing within the framework of the assignment. The results from these studies will be published as they become available during the assignment period.

Introduction

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) has been tasked by the Government to follow up the consequences to higher education of decisions and initiatives taken because of the novel coronavirus. The purpose is to be able to follow up the results of initiatives and gain lessons from the effects on higher education and research in the short and long term. The final report for the assignment will be submitted by 1 December 2022.

The assignment includes regular updates from UKÄ to the Ministry of Education and Research about the assignment's implementation and regular reports on the results of the the follow-up. UKÄ has decided to divide the assignment period into four interim reports:

- 16 March 2021 (interim report)
- 1 December 2021 (interim report)
- 15 March 2022 (interim report)
- 1 December 2022 (final report).

In connection with this first interim report, several new reports, statistical analyses and memorandums are being published as part of UKÄ's pandemic assignment. These can be downloaded on the assignment's website *Coronaviruset och högskolan* at uka.se. To provide as complete a picture as possible, the interim reports include statistics and analyses from UKÄ's regular operations that show, in some way, consequences from the pandemic on higher education to this point.

Follow-up of the consequences of the novel coronavirus for higher education, public service agreement 2 July 2020

"The Swedish Higher Education Authority is tasked with following up the consequences to higher education resulting from decisions and initiatives taken because of the novel coronavirus. The follow-up is to include the effects of the transition to distance teaching and the initiatives taken by the Government concerning, e.g., expansion of higher education. The purpose is to be able to follow up the results of initiatives and gain lessons from the effects on higher education and research in the short and long term. The follow-up is to consider such questions as quality, the fair and equal application of the legislation, regulations and rules, and educational offerings.

The assignment is to be conducted in dialogue with higher education institutions.

UKÄ is to regularly update the Government Office (Ministry of Education and Research) on the progress of the assignment, regularly report the results of the follow-up and submit a final report no later than 1 December 2022.”

Our approach

UKÄ works broadly with the assignment in eight areas:

1. Basic projects
2. Study and work environment
3. Quality of education
4. Research
5. Legal rights
6. Labour market
7. Finances and funding
8. Mobility and internationalisation.

Different subprojects have already begun within areas 1–6 while areas 7–8 will begin during 2021.

The results in the assignment are taken from UKÄ’s regular operations, from subprojects that were begun as part of the assignment in the various areas and from the HEIs and other public agencies. We have collected analyses and follow-ups conducted by the HEIs. For some subprojects, we utilise consultancies to support the project.

The assignment has its own website: *Coronaviruset och högskolan* at uka.se. The site is updated regularly with our own studies and with studies by others related to the pandemic and higher education.

An open dialogue with the sector is central for the assignment, particularly with the leadership of HEIs and contacts that were appointed for the assignment, but also with student organisations (SFS) and other agencies like the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR), the Swedish Research Council (VR), the National Board of Student Aid (CSN), the Swedish National Agency for Education, and the Swedish

National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (MYH). We also work with our Nordic equivalents, particularly the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) and the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) – an independent expert body under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

We arrange special seminars, such as a dialogue seminar on student rights related to online examinations during the pandemic, which took place on 27 January 2021. We are also planning to organise workshops and conferences in the future.

The interim report

In this report, we compiled publications produced for the assignment. The publications vary in size from longer reports to shorter analyses and memorandums. We also present statistics and analyses from UKÄ's regular operations. The interim report consists of chapters with associated publications, statistics and analyses. We present the publications by briefly summarising their results. The full publications in Swedish are available for download from the assignment's website: *Coronaviruset och högskolan* at uka.se

The work and measures by HEIs during the coronavirus pandemic

This chapter summarised a study about how the HEIs have handled the coronavirus pandemic, which the consultancy Snowflake Education AB has conducted on assignment from UKÄ within the framework of the pandemic assignment.

Handling of the coronavirus pandemic by HEIs – challenges and measures resulting from decisions by the Government and authorities

The study surveys the measures that HEIs have taken to manage the challenges that have arisen from the coronavirus pandemic. The survey consists of interviews with a selection of HEIs and a compilation of the governmental and agency decisions and recommendations that have had the greatest impact on HEIs.

The study shows that the decisions with the greatest impact are as follows (in no particular order):

- recommendation to not take unnecessary trips;
- transition to distance teaching;
- ban on public gatherings (initially no more than 50 people and then no more than 8);
- the holding of the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test in autumn 2020;
- increase in the number of student openings.

The HEIs have taken many measures to address the challenges resulting from these decisions. One of the most important was establishing local crisis organisations which allowed for the quick and effective management of the immediate crisis.

At the same time, the HEIs worked extensively to transition to online teaching, which resulted in many creative solutions to allow teaching of both theory and practical aspects. The situation also required the HEIs to experiment with alternative formats for examinations, such as online hall examinations and take-home examinations. Beyond these, many other

measures were implemented, from adaptation of facilities to extensive communication efforts.

These measures had both positive and negative consequences. Among the more positive was an increased understanding on how digital tools can be integrated and create educational benefits in teaching. At the same time, both staff and students noted the challenges with remote work, both on leadership but also on the mental and physical work environments. HEIs have also observed an increase in disciplinary cases, which is likely a consequence of fairness challenges resulting from online examinations.

The HEIs also see a need for preparing for future crises, where they have determined that pro-active efforts and long-term planning are essential.

Source (in Swedish)

Lärosätenas hantering av coronapandemin. Utmaningar och åtgärder med anledning av beslut från regeringen och myndigheter. Snowflake Education AB, 11/3-2021.

Inflow of students to higher education during the coronavirus pandemic

This chapter presents statistics and analyses from UKÄ's regular operations that have been previously published but that show how the pandemic has impacted the inflow of students to higher education. This includes how the numbers of applicants and admitted students, new entrants to higher education, and incoming students have changed during the pandemic.

Number of applicants and admitted students increased significantly

In the autumn semester 2020, there were 16,000 or 13 per cent more applicants without prior experience from higher education compared with the autumn semester 2019. The number of newly accepted students to an academic programme increased by 7,700, which is a 14 per cent increase. Increases are seen in all age groups but particularly among 19-year-olds, i.e., those that graduated from upper-secondary school in the spring 2020. The number of 19-year-old applicants increased by 28 per cent compared with 2019.

The programmes with the largest increases were several of the teacher programmes, the nursing programme and the master's in engineering programme. This occurred at the same time as the Government's focused initiatives for programmes within education, the caring sciences and engineering and technology in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

This increase may be because a more uncertain labour market or an increase in concern in finding work in the future. This could be why we see a large increase among young people, in particular. The expansion of higher education has also led to HEIs accepting more students. Increased media exposure about the medical professions in particular can also have contributed to increased interest.

Source (in Swedish)

Official statistics on applicants and admitted students, www.uka.se.

Record number of students in higher education

During the spring and summer 2020, there was a significant slowdown in the Swedish economy and an increase in unemployment, particularly among younger people, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, the Government earmarked extra funding for HEIs to increase the number of openings so that more students could be enrolled.

The effects of this are seen in Swedish higher education during the autumn semester 2020. The number of Swedish new entrants and registered students increased dramatically. Preliminary data for autumn semester 2020 shows that there were a total of 375,400 students, an increase of 7 per cent compared with the autumn semester 2019. The number of Swedish students increased by 10 per cent, while the number of incoming students fell dramatically by 40 per cent.

The number of new entrants to higher education in autumn semester 2020 was 72,200, which is just over 2 per cent more than autumn semester 2019. But just as with the total number of students, the number of Swedish new entrants increased dramatically while the number of incoming new entrants nearly fell by half. The number of Swedish new entrants increased by 18 per cent, while the number of incoming new entrants fell by 49 per cent.

Previously reported data showed that the number of eligible first-choice applicants increased to multiple teacher programmes and the nursing programme. The number of eligible first-choice applicants to the nursing programme increased by 28 per cent and the number of accepted applicants by 8 per cent in autumn semester 2020. However, according to the preliminary data, there are only 100 more new entrants than the previous autumn semester.

Source (in Swedish)

Rekordmånga studenter i högskolan höstterminen 2020 enligt preliminära uppgifter. Statistisk analys, 2020-11-17, UKÄ.

See also UKÄ's statistical database *Högskolan i siffror*.

Consequences for higher education during the coronavirus pandemic

In this chapter, we present publications from various subprojects in UKÄ's pandemic assignment and from UKÄ's regular operations. Two of these subprojects deal with student completion in higher education, where we present brief statistics on dropout rates from programmes and performance levels for different programmes during the coronavirus pandemic. The results are presented at the overall level and for different groups of students. Three publications are compilations of studies by HEIs – one discusses how HEIs handled the transition to distance teaching, another looks at student health and study environment during the pandemic and a third summarises the impacts of the pandemic on HEI staff. Two publications touch on legal issues dealing with disciplinary cases and fair examinations at HEIs.

Student completion in higher education during the coronavirus pandemic – immediate dropouts

The purpose is to investigate to what degree programme new entrants have chosen to drop out of their ongoing education during the pandemic. We have produced brief statistics on *immediate* dropouts from programmes, based on all programme new entrants on programmes leading to a professional qualification or general programmes spring semester 2020. Their course registrations are followed up during the following semester, that is to say, autumn semester 2020. We have studied student completion using immediate dropout at the overall level and for different groups of programme new entrants.

We do not see that the pandemic has impacted *immediate* dropouts to any great degree. The differences we see between spring semester 2020 and spring semester 2019 are generally not greater than the variations during the examined period 2010–2020. The only exception emerges when we compare new entrants with different social backgrounds. The immediate dropouts for new entrants with parents with a lower level of education increased spring semester 2020 and decreased for new entrants with parents with a higher level of education.

Source (in Swedish)

Genomströmningen i högskolan under coronapandemin – direkta avhopp. PM, 2021-03-09, UKÄ.

Student completion in higher education during the coronavirus pandemic – student performance levels

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in major changes for higher education. Since spring 2020, much of teaching takes place online, examination formats have changed and the labour market for young people has worsened. To study how these changes have impacted student performance level, we have produced brief statistics that we call immediate performance level.

At the overall level, the *immediate* performance level has fallen by 1 percentage point to 71.3 per cent during spring semester 2020 compared with the previous year. Potential consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and all the measures implemented to counteract the spread of the virus have had little effect on the immediate performance levels of students.

There is also no clear evidence that different groups of students were impacted in different ways by the coronavirus pandemic. Based on immediate performance levels, it appears that students with different social and national backgrounds have been effected similarly. The exception is that younger students seem to have increased their immediate performance level, while it decreased among older students in spring semester 2020 compared with the previous year.

Source (in Swedish)

Genomströmningen i högskolan under coronapandemin – studenternas prestationsgrad. PM, 2021-03-09, UKÄ.

The transition to distance teaching because of the coronavirus pandemic

The compilation of the HEI and students' union surveys on student and staff experiences shows that the transition to distance teaching has worked well in general. An important factor for the successful and quick transition is that the technical infrastructure was already in place.

But there have also been challenges in the transition. Some practical teaching situations could not be conducted online and contact among students and among students and teachers has decreased, which has had negative consequences for learning. Online examinations have also been associated with difficulties.

Several HEIs report that regular quality assurance and enhancement efforts have been suspended during the spring, including work with course evaluations and programme development.

The transition has also meant an increased focus on educational development. The question of what teaching needs to be campus-based and what teaching could just as easily or preferably be online is something being discussed by several HEIs.

Source (in Swedish)

Omställningen till distansundervisning som följd av coronapandemin. En sammanställning av lärosätenas och studentkårernas egna kartläggningar och analyser. Rapport, 2021:5, UKÄ.

The study environment and student health after the transition to distance education

The material that the HEIs submitted to UKÄ on the study environment and student health after the transition to distance education has been compiled. This was done to gain a better understanding of how the transition to distance education has impacted the study environment and student health and to contribute to developing and improving these, both in the short term and long term.

It is clear that most students have experienced worsening of their study environment after the transition. The social aspects of student life worsened the most. Students significantly reduced their social contacts and contacts with classmates and teachers. Maintaining motivation and focus on studies became a challenge for many. Students also describe a sense of loneliness, isolation and a longing for a social student life.

But the transition has also resulted in positive changes for some, such as increased flexibility and opportunities to study more effectively, less travel and access to more teaching material online.

Many feel a diminishing sense of wellbeing and an increase in negative stress and anxiety after the transition. This resulted both from the effects of the pandemic on their own life and situation and society at large, and

the changes in their academic situation and new ways of being assessed through online examinations.

The way HEIs treated students who experienced difficulties has either increased or reduced their stress. Students in medical and nursing programmes report reduced anxiety when they received instruction about COVID-19 and infectious disease control prior to their clinical training.

A few HEIs have asked questions about the physical health of students. The primary things students experienced as problematic were ergonomic issues with their study environment, more sitting still, and effects on the body from long lectures without breaks. For some, the time savings of not having to travel to campus provided more time for exercise, sleep and better eating habits.

Source (in Swedish)

Studenternas studiemiljö och hälsa efter omställningen till distansutbildning vårterminen 2020. PM, 2021-03-15, UKÄ.

The work environment during the coronavirus pandemic – observations from some higher education institutions

This subproject is intended to provide an overview of staff physical and psychosocial work environment during the coronavirus pandemic based on the submitted surveys by the HEIs. The review of the survey responses shows an increase in workload and stress among staff. There are also signs that the transition to distance teaching has had a negative impact on staff health and wellbeing.

Most staff seem satisfied with the technical and physical working environment support they have received. The transition to distance teaching has resulted in more sitting and problems with being able to work in peace. At the same time, examples exist where working from home has not impacted the work environment negatively.

Source (in Swedish)

Personalens arbetsmiljö under coronapandemin – observationer från några lärosäten. PM, 2021-03-05, UKÄ.

Large increase in disciplinary incidents

For many years, UKÄ has collected data and reported statistics and reflections on the disciplinary cases that HEIs have made decisions on. In 2019 and 2020, UKÄ also asked HEIs to report whether they have seen an increase in the number of disciplinary cases because of the coronavirus pandemic, possible causes of any increase and what measures they feel are most important in counteracting the increase.

In 2020, 2,466 students were subject to disciplinary measures (2,034 were suspended and 432 received a warning). This is an increase of about 61 per cent from 2019, when there were 1,528 (1,208 suspensions and 320 warnings).

Plagiarism has been the most common reason students have faced disciplinary measures over the years that UKÄ has collected data. This was the situation in 1,330 cases in 2020 (54 per cent of all cases, a decrease from 2019, when 68 per cent of cases were for plagiarism). Unauthorised collaboration, however, increased significantly during 2020 compared with 2019 (763 cases compared with 144, an increase from 9 to 31 per cent).

Twenty-five per cent of HEIs report seeing an increase in disciplinary cases, which they attribute to the pandemic, since the increase occurred in connection with the transition to distance teaching, online examinations and take-home examinations. Eight HEIs have determined that no increase has occurred or have explained that it is difficult to see the number of cases has increased because of the pandemic.

Since the transition occurred on short notice, the HEIs feel it has been difficult to quickly adapt traditional hall examinations to online examinations and take-home examinations. A contributing cause to the increase in disciplinary cases is unclear information and communication on the applicable rules for online examinations since there was not enough time to prepare these during the quick transition during the spring 2020. Another reason is the lack of effective monitoring during online examinations.

The most important measures to counteract the increase in disciplinary cases caused by the coronavirus pandemic is, according to the HEIs, to

- adapt examinations to be more appropriate for online use and take-home examinations;
- improve and clarify information to students and examiners on rules and conditions during remote examinations;
- develop effective tools for computer-based examinations and new, more optimally adapted systems for monitoring online examinations.

The HEIs' responses indicate that work with adapting to online examinations is ongoing.

Source (in Swedish)

Disciplinärenden 2019 och 2020 vid universitet och högskolor. Rapport, 2021:8, UKÄ.

The dialogue seminar on student rights related to online examinations during the pandemic

UKÄ was made aware that the increasing transition to online examinations is a particularly problematic area for the HEIs. On 27 January 2021, UKÄ held a dialogue seminar on student rights related to online examinations during the pandemic. The seminar was particularly aimed at invited representatives from HEIs and the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS). About 80 participants attended.

UKÄ invited several speakers to hold presentations during the seminar. Umeå University described the university's discussions on the use of digital meeting systems during its examinations. Swednet discussed teaching and learning in higher education and thoughts on fair online examinations. An assignment on online examinations from the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) was also presented. The programme included discussions where participants were divided into groups to discuss different questions related to the theme of the seminar. The group discussions were then presented to the larger group and time for a broader discussion was also provided. UKÄ had sent suggestions for the group discussions to the participants prior to the seminar.

The discussions revealed differences in how HEIs use online examinations. Several HEIs lacked guidelines for monitoring and existing guidelines vary between HEIs. Several HEIs called for national guidelines and coordination of how online examinations are administered.

The student participants argued that they have many different views of what is best and that the students' unions therefore may have difficulty in providing a single opinion on how online examinations should be designed.

The seminar concluded with the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection (IMY) giving a presentation on GDPR in education. The presentation discussed what to consider when teaching and providing examinations online. IMY noted that they can be contacted for advice prior to processing personal data. There was a discussion during the presentation on whether there is a need for additional legal support if personal data is processed during remote examinations.

The HEIs will explore this question in more detail. UKÄ is prepared to provide support if needed within the framework of its supervisory role.

Source (in Swedish)

UKÄ:s dialogseminarium den 27 januari 2021 - Rättssäkerhetsfrågor i samband med digitala examinationer under pandemin. PM, 2021-03-16, UKÄ.

Consequences of the outflow of students from higher education

This chapter includes two publications. The first looks at the number of graduates from HEIs in academic year 2019/20. The second describes the labour market for those who graduated from higher education during the pandemic.

Increase in the number of graduates

Nine per cent more students graduated in academic year 2019/20 than the previous academic year. Over 71,900 students received first- and second-cycle degrees.

There seems to be several explanations for this increase. The coronavirus pandemic and the changes in the labour market seem to have led to an increased interest in applying for the award of a qualification, even for studies that were completed a few or many years earlier. Another explanation is the improved efficiencies resulting from introduction of a new study documentation system by several HEIs, which has allowed students to receive their degree certificates more quickly. Some degree administration officers also note that they have had more working hours to issue degree certificates during the pandemic.

It also seems to be more common that employers use recruitment agencies during hiring processes. More formalised employment processes have stricter requirements for issuance of degree certificates. UKÄ plans to more closely follow up explanations to the increase.

Source (in Swedish)

Official statistics on students and graduates, www.uka.se.

The coronavirus pandemic and the labour market for recent graduates from higher education

UKÄ has produced brief statistics to study how the coronavirus pandemic may have impacted opportunities for making a living on the

labour market for recent graduates at the bachelor's and master's levels. We examine approximate salary levels six months after graduation.

The results show that the percentage of spring semester 2020 graduates with salaries over SEK 20,000 a month has fallen compared to graduates from spring semester 2019. The decrease was somewhat larger for men than for women.

The programme from which the student graduated had significant importance. For example, students with a bachelor's or a master's in engineering have had a much more difficult time finding work compared with graduates with bachelor's degrees in nursing, which have found it easier to find work.

Source (in Swedish)

Hur påverkar coronapandemin arbetsmarknaden för nytexaminerade studenter? Statistik analys, 2021-03-05, UKÄ.

Consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on research

This chapter includes two publications. The first comes from a subproject in the pandemic assignment and deals with research funding. The second comes from UKÄ's regular operations and shows scholarly production during the pandemic.

The coronavirus's effects on research funding with a focus on private research funding foundations

The purpose is to investigate the consequences of the novel coronavirus pandemic for research funding awarded by different foundations and non-profit organisations to HEIs. The data consists of material from interviews with 15 of the largest funding organisations.

The study shows that the coronavirus pandemic has not impacted the foundations' ability to fund new projects for the most part. No research has been forced to be cancelled because of retracted funding. The reductions in share dividends from Swedish companies in 2020 have not resulted in an equivalent decrease in research funding from the foundations.

Two important exceptions emerge in the study. The Wallenberg Foundations and the Kempe Foundations report that they have reduced their funding to new projects by SEK 700 million. This is a significant reduction that reduces funding opportunities for researchers and research groups at the universities that are primary recipients from these foundations' programmes and grant calls.

It also emerged that funding from public research foundations will likely decrease over the coming years, but as a result of other reasons than the coronavirus pandemic.

UKÄ estimates that the effects of the pandemic to this point will be limited to a temporary reduction in research funding. Several of the interviewed foundations pointed to uncertainty in how the economy will develop in the wake of the pandemic.

Source (in Swedish)

Coronapandemins effekter på den privata forskningsfinansieringen. Rapport 2121:11, UKÄ.

Scholarly production during the coronavirus pandemic

Scholarly production at Swedish HEIs during the period 2012–2019 was at 65,000–70,000 publications (we only count those classified as published). In 2020, the number of publications in Swepub compared to the previous year decreased by 10,700 publications. The change should be interpreted with care since the sources of information (researchers and HEIs) at the time of collecting the statistics (31 January 2021) still had not reported in or reviewed publications that were de facto published in 2020.

UKÄ will monitor reported publications during the year. Against this background, it is too early to draw any conclusions on how the coronavirus pandemic impacted scholarly production in the form of publications in 2020. UKÄ will follow this up during the autumn 2020 and spring 2021.

In this context, it should be noted that the number of peer reviewed articles in scholarly journals did not decrease significantly during the time of the data collection. At the time of writing this report, there are a large number of preprints in Swepub, which could indicate that the number of peer-reviewed articles in scholarly journals will be higher in 2020 than in 2019. A comparison of data from the annual reports from HEIs (from 2019 and 2020) points to a similar conclusion, even if data is missing from several large HEIs.

Currently available statistics on publications are available from the Statistical Database: Higher Education in Numbers. The statistical product is under development. Additional publications will occur in 2021.

Source (in Swedish)

Official statistics on research publications, www.uka.se/w

Appendix – Ongoing and planned studies

UKÄ works with the pandemic assignment in eight areas: Basic projects; Study- and work environment; Quality of education; Research; Student rights; Labour market; Finances and funding; and Mobility and internationalisation. The following list is of ongoing and planned studies within these different areas.

Basic projects

Activity on campus before, during and after the pandemic. Preliminary publication date is autumn 2022.

Study and work environment

Survey study of student experiences during the pandemic. Preliminary publication date is autumn 2021.

The experiences of doctoral students during the pandemic. Preliminary publication date is autumn 2021.

Non-research and non-teaching staff and how they have been impacted by the pandemic. Preliminary publication date is spring 2022.

Quality of education

Transition to distance teaching and effects on teaching and examinations. Preliminary publication date is autumn 2021.

The pandemic and consequences of clinical training (VFU) in the nursing programme and other health science programmes. Preliminary publication date is autumn 2021.

Impacts of the pandemic on research education. Preliminary publication date is autumn 2021.

The effects of the pandemic on programmes that include practical teaching situations. Preliminary publication date is spring 2022.

The effects of transition to distance teaching – educational and technical challenges. Preliminary publication date is spring 2021.

Research

Consequences of the novel coronavirus for some of Sweden's national research infrastructures. The preliminary time period for publication is summer 2021.

Researchers on research – consequences of the pandemic on research in higher education Preliminary publication date is spring 2021.

Consequences of the coronavirus pandemic on recruitment of doctoral students and employees with career development positions. The preliminary time period for publication is summer 2021.

Legal rights

Number of appealed acceptance cases to the Higher Education Appeals Board during the pandemic. Preliminary publication date is spring 2021.

Finance and research funding

Based on the HEIs' annual reports, UKÄ conducts a general follow-up of the size of bachelor's and master's programmes (including the Government's special initiatives in response to the pandemic). UKÄ also conducts a financial follow-up based on data from the HEIs' profit/loss statements and balance sheets. Preliminary publication date is March 2021.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet – UKÄ) is to contribute to strengthening Swedish higher education and Sweden as a knowledge society. We review the quality of higher education programmes; we analyse and follow-up trends within higher education and we monitor the rights of students.

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