

Operational Plan for the Swedish Higher Education Authority

2020



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Contents

The mission and goals of the Swedish Higher Education Authority.....	4
UKÄ's quality policy.....	5
Agency-wide development 2020	6
Digital transformation and innovation at UKÄ.....	7
Sustainable development.....	8
The provision of competence on the labour market	9
Ways of increasing benefit.....	11
Attractive workplace	12
Financial conditions.....	14
Budget and funding	14
Risk analysis.....	16
Risks 2020	17

The mission and goals of the Swedish Higher Education Authority

When planning its operations, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) must base them on various acts and ordinances and its own quality policy. These documents must govern the priorities and considerations stated in the operational plan, as well as the planning and implementation of operational activities.

The Swedish Government governs UKÄ via an instruction, the Ordinance with Instruction for the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2012:810). This describes our areas of responsibility, forms of management and UKÄ's main tasks: quality assurance, monitoring of efficiency, follow-up, supervision and managerial development, as well as hosting the Higher Education Appeals Board (ÖNH) and the Higher Education Expulsions Board (HAN). In accordance with the instruction, gender mainstreaming must also be integrated in UKÄ's operations.

Another important governing document is the annual public service agreement, in which the Government describes the targets, reporting requirements, mission and funding for UKÄ's operations. The Government also provides specific tasks throughout the year, called government assignments.

There are also other acts and ordinances that the management of UKÄ must consider when planning its operations. The Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance is the ordinance that applies to all administrative agencies under government control. For example, it states that a government agency's operations must be run efficiently and in accordance with the law. The aim of administrative policy is innovative and cooperative public administration that is efficient and legally certain, has a high level of quality, service and accessibility and thus contributes to Sweden's development and efficient EU work.

On the basis of this governing framework, UKÄ summarises its mission as legal supervision, monitoring of efficiency, evaluating the quality of higher education and monitoring higher education institutions' quality assurance in higher education and research, as well as the appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers. We have an overarching responsibility for statistics, and monitor and analyse issues relating to higher education. We also work to promote managerial development at higher education institutions.

UKÄ's quality policy

UKÄ's quality policy clarifies our role in the higher education sector.

UKÄ's vision is *Developmental Monitoring – Assuring Sweden's Status as a Knowledge Society*

To achieve this vision, we have four goals for our operations:

Goal	How we achieve it
To be the acknowledged source of information about higher education and research	We produce reliable knowledge about higher education and research, such as statistics, analysis, quality assurance, legal supervision and support for committees.
Create results that are beneficial for the development of the higher education and research sectors	We perform our tasks in dialogue with representatives of universities and university colleges, stakeholders, financiers of research, student unions, professional bodies, politicians and other decision makers. We are a user-friendly knowledge organisation and the results of our work are available through increasingly digitalised communication channels.
To be an attractive employer, where dedicated employees have the opportunity to develop	We work to create an attractive workplace where employees enjoy working and experience well-being, enjoy good conditions to perform well, participate and perceive their work as part of UKÄ's mission. Systematic efforts for a good work environment contribute to a sustainable working life. Employees' competences are taken advantage of and there are career opportunities as well as opportunities for skills development.
To work in a coordinated and resource efficient manner	Knowledge exchange, cooperation and collaboration between departments are natural methods of working at UKÄ. We perform activities with efficiency and economy as guiding principles. We have established routines for gradual improvement and innovation.

The vision and goals function as a cohesive theme for all operations and activities planned for 2020 at UKÄ.

Agency-wide development 2020

UKÄ's operations are divided into three specialised departments and one department for administration and IT. The specialised departments conduct our core operations in legal affairs, efficiency monitoring and the evaluation of higher education, and quality assurance at higher education institutions. UKÄ's responsibility for follow-up, external monitoring and analysis and official statistics in the higher education sector are other core operational areas. The supporting functions provide the conditions in which operations can be conducted with a high level of quality, as well as the right conditions for ongoing operational development. Core operations provide a stable foundation, laying the ground for UKÄ to be a source of beneficial knowledge for the sector as regards higher education and research. It is also in these core operations that renewal is carried out, so UKÄ will remain a relevant actor in a continually changing world.

To link the departments' operations with UKÄ's overarching goals, the director general has issued each head of department with a three-year mission. The purpose is to clarify expectations about quality and development, create a mandate for change, provide a basis on which to establish priorities within and between departments, as well as create a shared understanding of important challenges and efforts for cooperation and working methods.

Figure 1. UKÄ's operational logic



The operational plans that are specific to each department describe activities for the upcoming year based on the overarching mission, tasks and the departments' responsibilities within the framework of the agency-wide goals and priorities. Planning also considers the governing regulations, special government assignments, UKÄ's quality policy, and UKÄ's routines for gender mainstreaming. Selected indicators linked to operational outcomes provide support in the departments' work to help achieve UKÄ's goals.

Alongside core operations, there are also areas in which the development of specific operations in 2020 is urgent. See below.

Digital transformation and innovation at UKÄ

It is increasingly difficult to separate digital development from other development

Swedish National Digitalisation
Council, 2019

UKÄ's digitalisation of its operations has taken two important steps forward in the last two years, thanks to the introduction of the PM3 project portfolio management tool for all IT-related operations, and the switch to the Public 360 archiving, case and document management system.

Given the rapid pace of change towards increasingly digitalised public administration, UKÄ must move from digitalising its operations and the ongoing development of existing IT systems, to a digital transformation of its operations. This entails the development of existing digital solutions or acquiring new ones, but digital transformation also increasingly means the development of new operational methods in all areas at UKÄ.

For this to happen, the right conditions for innovative thinking and new working methods are needed in the long term. Therefore, this is an activity that will continue for several years and recur in UKÄ's one-year operational plans for the next three years. UKÄ's move to new premises in 2020 will be a driving force in the agency's digital transformation.

In **2020**, UKÄ will

- Produce a strategy for the digital transformation of operations at UKÄ with targets and action plans for a three-year period. Time plan: Production of strategy and action plan: January – April 2020.
- Establish a model for systematic work on operational development and innovation that interacts with portfolio management. Works on the basis of the strategy and action plan: starting in April 2020.

Facts: Digitalisation and innovation at public agencies

The digitalisation of public administration is governed by the goal of public administration policy, that of *innovative and cooperative public administration*.¹ In 2017, the Government presented a digitalisation strategy

¹ Bill. 2009/10:175, bet. 2009/10:FiU38, rskr. 2009/10:315.

for Sweden. The vision is a *sustainable digital transformation in Sweden*. The overarching objective is for *Sweden to become the world leader in harnessing the opportunities of digital transformation*. Public agencies must strive to be *world leaders in harnessing digitalisation to make life easier for individuals and businesses, build an effective, high-quality public sector, and more jobs and increased growth*.²

In 2015, the Government founded the National Innovation Council, which is a platform for high-level dialogue and cooperation. Its purpose is to develop Sweden as an innovation nation and generate new ideas and solutions for dealing with global societal challenges and for Sweden to keep up with a constantly changing world.

Vinnova, Sweden's innovation agency, is responsible for promoting innovation in public administration and runs a variety of investments in innovation at public agencies.

Sustainable development

One of the global goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is:

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

In practical terms, one element of this is that higher education must be accessible throughout Sweden. It must promote lifelong learning and contribute to sustainable development, growth and equality. Sweden will be a leading knowledge nation and one of the world's foremost research nations, and continue to work to strengthen international cooperation through research and higher education at Swedish higher education institutions. These priorities are reflected in the assignments given to public agencies, among other things.³

The report issued by the Agenda 2030-delegationen (an independent committee on the 2030 Agenda) highlights, with reference to the OECD, the importance of using the opportunities offered by digital technology in implementing the agenda. Conversely, one goal of Swedish digitalisation policy is that it will contribute to economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development.⁴

In **2020**, UKÄ will

- Investigate how UKÄ's operations can be more explicitly linked to the goals in the 2030 Agenda and the Government action plan

² För ett hållbart digitaliserat Sverige – en digitaliseringsstrategi. Government Offices. Reg. no. N2017/03643/D.

³ Handlingsplan Agenda 2030 – 2018-2020, pp. 15-17. Government Offices.

⁴ Agenda 2030 och Sverige: världens utmaning, världens möjlighet. SOU 2019:13, p. 107.

for the 2030 Agenda, thus contributing to the implementation of the agenda and the Government's priorities. Time plan: January – April 2020.

- Themed evaluation on widening participation (see goal 4.3 of the 2030 Agenda). Time plan: 2020 – March 2021
- Improve UKÄ's environmental management system so the agency's operations become more environmentally sustainable. Time plan: January 2020 – December 2020

Facts: The 2030 Agenda – the Global Goals

At the UN summit in September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda and 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development, which focus on three areas: the economy, society and the environment. The nations of the world thereby agreed to combat poverty, take immediate action on climate change and promote peaceful, fair and inclusive societies through global partnership.⁵

Sweden has produced a national action plan for 2018 – 2020, which includes Sweden's contributions to the agenda's global implementation. The action plan has six focus areas, and describes government policy for contributing the 17 global goals.⁶

Since 2016, the Agenda 2030-delegationen has worked on the task it was given by the Government, to disseminate knowledge of, and gain support for, the 2030 agenda in Swedish society. Their task has also included proposing a way forward in the implementation of the agenda.⁷ UKÄ was one of the consultation bodies when the committee's report was sent out for consultation in the spring of 2019, and was positive to the idea of following up higher education institutions' development work on sustainability.⁸

The provision of competence on the labour market

UKÄ has recently become established as a key actor on issues related to competence provision on the Swedish labour market. As part of multiple tasks and projects at the agency, urgent questions about the relationship between education and the labour market will be dealt with in 2020.

⁵ *Att förändra vår värld: Agenda 2030 för hållbar utveckling*. Government Offices.

⁶ *Handlingsplan Agenda 2030 – 2018-2020*. Government Offices.

⁷ SOU 2019:13. *Agenda 2030 och Sverige: världens utmaning, världens möjlighet*.

⁸ UKÄ's statement on SOU 2019:13. *Agenda 2030 och Sverige: världens utmaning, världens möjlighet*. 4 June 2019. Reg.no. 131-237-19.

One reason for UKÄ's strengthened role in these issues is the new type of task that has been assigned to the agency over the last few years. The first one, together with the National Board of Health and Welfare, was to analyse and make suggestions for the long-term development of arenas for cooperation between actors with responsibility for competence provision in healthcare. Final reporting was conducted for this task on 31 August 2019, in *Framtidens vårdkompetens – Stärkt samverkan för att möta hälso- och sjukvårdens kompetensförsörjningsbehov* (Future competence in care – strengthening cooperation to meet the future need for competence provision in healthcare, Report 2019:16). The task also included ensuring improvement in the availability of statistics and forecasts of the need for competence in the healthcare sector. The National Board of Health and Welfare has now been directed to implement the proposals, and this work will be carried out in close cooperation with UKÄ.

In June 2019, UKÄ and the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth received a similar directive, to jointly analyse and propose how the provision of cutting-edge digital competence can be developed in both the short and long term. Work is to be conducted through dialogue and cooperation between relevant actors, focusing on activities relating to cutting-edge digital competence, with the aim of increasing access. In this task too, the agencies will, as far as possible, ensure improved access to statistics and forecasts of the supply and demand for cutting-edge digital competence (I2019/01963/D). This task stays in force until the end of 2022.

Alongside this new type of task, in 2020 UKÄ will continue working with another area in which competence provision is a current issue, schools. In one ongoing project, UKÄ is developing an overview of the collected knowledge and results of teacher education, to boost external knowledge about the field. When the analysis is presented, the project will conduct a dialogue with the higher education institutions and stakeholders in the sector to identify knowledge about what might be lacking, and suggestions for which questions should therefore be further investigated.

In the light of indicators that Sweden is entering an economic downturn, questions of student volumes in higher education and the need for competence provision have increased relevance.

In **2020**, UKÄ will

- Continue improving external knowledge about issues of competence provision relating to higher education. This is done through numerous analyses and factual documents, as part of a specific themed project in this area. Time plan: conclusions generated by this work will be summarised in December 2020.
- These analyses will highlight competence provision from the perspectives of society and of higher education institutions.

How, and to what degree, individuals use higher education as part of lifelong learning will also be highlighted, as will the higher education institutions' need for qualified staff. Time plan: The analyses will be published throughout 2020.

- Alongside the above government tasks with other agencies, we will advance with our task of following up how graduates become established on the labour market and highlight the labour market's future need for graduates. This work will be carried out in cooperation with the higher education institutions and other important actors. Time plan: Most of the development work will be completed in the first half of 2020.

Facts: UKÄ's analyses of education and the labour market

The relationship between education and the labour market is an important area for analysis and knowledge development. In 2019, multiple analyses were conducted in this area as part of a project on the theme of competence provision. Among other things, UKÄ has described pay conditions for graduates five years after graduating and, in a report, evaluated the public sector's competence requirements in 2035 in 15 deficit professions and the consequences of this for higher education and public sector activities.

UKÄ also has numerous government tasks in this area, of which two are part of the agency's instruction: to follow and describe the labour market's future need for competence in relation to educational offering, and to follow and describe how graduates become established on the labour market.

Two agency-wide projects, one about teacher education and one about third-cycle education, include the collection and presentation of knowledge and analyses of the relationship between degree programmes and the labour market. One important aim of both these projects is to disseminate the knowledge that exists and, in cooperation with stakeholders, to identify the need for additional knowledge to help push development.

UKÄ also, as described above, has several ongoing fixed-term projects in this area, and the scale of the principal's interest in issues of competence provision is expected to increase rather than decline.

Ways of increasing benefit

UKÄ's external relationships have progressed in recent years. Cooperation with other public agencies and stakeholders has deepened and will continue to increase in importance and frequency. The knowledge that UKÄ produces about higher education and research is in demand and is necessary in finding solutions to important societal

challenges. To strengthen UKÄ as a user-friendly knowledge organisation and achieve its aim of creating results that boost development in the higher education sector, investments in communications are necessary. Because a great deal of communication is digital, much of this work will be included in the three-year strategy for digital transformation that will be produced in early 2020, as described above.

Prioritising operations is also urgent, highlighting which activities are important for achieving our operational goals in the best way, those activities that create the optimum benefit from UKÄ's operations. This means harder priorities and a focus on doing the right thing in the right way. This benefits both our staff and our target audiences.

In 2020, UKÄ will

- Renew its communication policy. Time plan: 2020
- Build a new website that harmonises with a three-year strategy for digital transformation. Time plan: 2020 – 2021
- Produce routines for which types of analogue and digital meetings UKÄ will utilise. Time plan: January 2020 – June 2020
- The departments' operational planning must specifically work on prioritising issues to increase the benefit of the operations they conduct.

Facts: requirements in public administration

The Government Agencies and Institutes Ordinance (2007:515) states that a public agency's operations must be run efficiently and in accordance with the law. Its operations must also undergo continual development. Common to all authorities is that they must contribute to achieving the administrative policy objectives set by the Swedish Riksdag:

An innovative and cooperative public administration that is efficient and legally certain, has a high level of quality, service and accessibility and thus contributes to Sweden's development and efficient EU work.⁹

Attractive workplace

UKÄ must be an attractive workplace, where everyone – managers and staff – is given opportunities to participate and to contribute to achieving the shared goals, one where everyone's expertise is utilised and there are opportunities for development. To realise this ambition, UKÄ must keep up with developments in working life, as regards working methods, the potential of digitalisation, working conditions and competence provision.

⁹ Bill. 2009/10:175, bet. 2009/10FiU:38, rskr. 2009/10:315).

In 2020, UKÄ will move to new premises in a newbuild. Staff will work in an open-plan office space. This creates a need for new and more varied ways of working, which is a motivator for UKÄ to gradually improve its use of the potential offered by digitalisation. This also touches on investigating how UKÄ, as an employer, can allow greater flexibility for its staff, as regards both time and space for work.

Another important step in work to develop UKÄ as a workplace is to identify how we can recruit and retain the necessary expertise. This includes a deliberate strategy for recruitment and competence development, clarifying UKÄ's employer branding, providing adequate digital competence and creating sustainable working methods.

- Execute the project of moving the agency in accordance with the project plan. Time plan: 2020
- Produce a plan for competence provision. Time plan: 2020
- Work to establish and develop good collegiality and leadership. Time plan: 2020

Financial conditions

Budget and funding

Table 1. Budget summary (thousand SEK)

Department	Budget (thousand SEK)
Department of Higher Education Analysis	37,016
Department of Legal Affairs	16,777
Department of Quality Assurance	48,647
Department of Administration and IT (incl. Director General)	57,355
Total	159,795

Table 2. Funding (thousand SEK)

Source of funding	Amount (thousand SEK)
Administrative funding	156,376
Funding saved from 2019 (forecast)	4,621
Funding credit	4,691
Maximum loan	13,500

The funding framework for the Swedish Higher Education Authority in 2020 is SEK 156,376,000, according to the public service agreement for 2020. This is an increase of SEK 7,341,000 compared to 2019.

The funding saved from 2019 will be used in investments in operational development.

In 2020, the Swedish Higher Education Authority has a maximum available loan from the National Debt Office of SEK 13,500,000 for investments in fixed assets for administrative purposes. For 2020, this limit is expected to need an increase of SEK 6,000,000 due to the move to new premises in the autumn of 2020.

Table 3. External funding (thousand SEK)

Task	Budget (thousand SEK)
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Cooperation on the provision of cutting-edge digital competence	1,719
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In 2019, the Swedish Higher Education Authority was directed to cooperate on the provision of cutting-edge digital competence. The deadline for the final report on this task is 31 October 2022. To complete this task, in 2020 agency may requisition SEK 2,000,000 from the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency. The Swedish Higher Education Authority will inform the Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency by 30 June 2020 if it intends to request funding to complete the task.

When calculating the cost of completion, direct costs and indirect costs (overheads) are included.

Risk analysis

The management group's risk analysis is presented below, with risks that may entail that specifics in the operational plan for 2020 cannot be implemented in the intended manner.

Each identified risk must be assessed. The risk assessment is based on an evaluation, partly of the likelihood of a particular risk occurring, and partly an evaluation of the consequences if it does. A risk value is thus produced as the total of the multiplied factors of likelihood and consequence. The lowest risk value is 1 and the highest is 16.

Facts: risk analyses

Evaluation of likelihood is on a scale from 1 – 4.

- Very low
- Low
- High
- Very high

Consequences are evaluated on a scale from 1 – 4.

- Very low
- Low
- High
- Very high

The risk value is likelihood multiplied by consequence.

Potential risk values and how they can be managed are presented in this figure:

Possible risk values				
4	4	8	12	16
3	3	6	9	12
2	2	4	6	8
1	1	2	3	4
	1	2	3	4

Risk value 1 – 2	No response necessary
Risk value 3 – 6	Monitored
Risk value 8 – 12	Response taken
Risk value 16	Prioritised

The risk evaluation visualises which risks need particular attention. Depending on the risk value, a response should be considered or prioritised. Sometimes monitoring a risk is adequate. Sometimes no action is taken.

Risks 2020

Risk	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk value (L x C)	Response (briefly describe what should be done, how, and which resources e.g. time/money are necessary)
Digital transformation: Risk that the agency does not conduct the activities and achieve the goals stated in the upcoming plan for digital transformation.	3	4	12	The plan for digital transformation will influence the new plan for competence provision. Procurement of services in digitalisation and other areas of operation to boost the agency's capacity.
Inadequate provision of competence	3	3	9	Production of a new plan for competence provision. Procurement of services – investigator and officer to legal affairs. Continued work with attractive workplace (roles and collegiality), work on <i>Medarbetarresan</i> (staff development) as part of Kickstart. Analysis of exit meetings. Examine potential for using a digital staffing tool.
Move	3	3	9	See the completed risk analysis for the move. Follow the risk analysis that has been made.
Risk that the agency cannot implement the planned developments in communication.	3	3	9	The plan for digital transformation will influence the development of the communications unit and communication policy. New recruitment of staff to

				the communications unit. Procurement of services in web/digitalisation.
Risk that the agency will go over budget for continuing work on digital transformation post-Kickstart. Unclear budgetary conditions at present.	2	4	8	Thorough consideration when we have an overall picture for the budget. Careful work on the budget.

The risk analysis is an important foundation for preventive work in risk management and for prioritising resources in relation to the various areas of development described in the operational plan.

Risk management is normally conducted by the line managers, who have a special responsibility for considering operational risk. Some risks are managed in specific projects or activities at the agency as a whole or in particular units. The table shows how each risk will be managed.

The risk analysis must be followed up in association with tertial reporting as part of following up the operational plan, and in association with operational planning for the coming year. The management group has particular responsibility for this.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) contributes to strengthening Swedish higher education and Sweden as a knowledge society. We evaluate the quality of higher education, we analyse and follow up developments in higher education and monitor compliance with laws and regulations on behalf of students.

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