

Department of Human Geography

Work Environment Policy for the Department of Human Geography

According to the regulations AFS 2001:1 Systematic Work Environment Management and AFS 2015:4 Organisational and Social Work Environment there should be a work environment policy in all work places, that describes how ill-health and accidents are prevented and how a good working environment is attained.

Goals of the Work Environment Policy

The Department is heavily dependent on a thriving working environment to encourage the personal as well as collective development of its staff to fulfil the Department's ambition to provide high quality research, education and administration and balance between these.

Particularly in the research area, this often leads to exposure to competitive pressure from the academic environment in general which can be at odds with other conditions that are essential to nurture high quality research. General productivity demands from academia may contribute to additional burdens for researchers, where short term output may be prioritized against long term gains. Moreover, the boundaries between leisure and research may not be entirely clear, and the work-life balance can be tricky to maintain especially for those who view their work as researchers as a calling as much as a profession. Teaching and administration tasks pose other work environment related challenges – here work load may be cyclical, varying over the academic year. Being exposed to students' personal or stress-related problems can be taxing, especially for student councillors, directors of study and course convenors. Staff in managerial positions may be caught between the requirements and demands of the staff at the Department and policies and measures formulated at central and Faculty level. All of these challenges in different ways affect the well-being of staff and increase the risk for stress-related psychosocial illnesses. An increasingly international staff composition can add additional strains as an increasing share of employees may be living far away from social networks and family members.

The overarching goal of the work environment policy is to ensure a thriving work environment at the Department. This is attained on the one hand through preventative measures to address negative stress and burn-out, but also through encouraging an atmosphere based on mutual respect. Being able to freely express opinions and listening to the opinions of others is essential to encourage creativity as well as professionalism, combatting victimization and ensuring a respectful

dialogue between employees, employees and management and between employees and students.

Work Environment Responsibilities

The head of department is responsible for managing the working environment on a day-to-day basis, as well as integrating these aspects into the planning and implementation of all activities at the Department. The head of department is responsible for ensuring that work at the Department is conducted in compliance with the intentions of the Work Environment Act and the Discrimination Act, with the aim of ensuring that no employee or student is injured or hurt in the workplace or study environment, whether physically or mentally.

Students and staff at the department are responsible for following instructions, regulations and procedures that regulate the work environment and should report risks, whether at the individual or collective level. Risks can be identified at the personal level or may concern other members of staff or the broader work environment. Risks can be reported either directly to the head of department, the health and safety officer, the student representatives, student councillors or a member of the working group on Gender Equalities, Equal Opportunities and Diversity (JLM), for further reporting to the head of department. While all of these functions have an important operational role in ensuring a healthy work environment, the legal responsibility for the work environment rests with the head of department.

Systematically addressing the work environment – risk assessment, measures and follow-up

Risks related to the working environment – physical as well as psychosocial are investigated and addressed in a systematic manner.

Examples of risks that affect the working environment negatively include high and uneven workloads, the inability to focus on either teaching or research over extended periods of time, poor employment security (especially for early career staff), conflicts, victimisations, harassment or threats. Risks are assessed through daily contact with employees, staff appraisals, staff meetings, staff retreats, surveys, and health and safety inspections. The head of department is responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out. Risk assessments are always to be documented and should result in proposals for measures to eliminate or minimise the risks. Active rehabilitation work and occupational injury management are to be implemented if an injury has occurred.

Before decisions on reorganisation, savings, cuts, new investments, construction or conversion of premises, or other changes to the department's activities are taken, work environment aspects should be considered, risks investigated and consequences assessed. Measures are to be taken to prevent, as far as possible, any negative effect and to minimise risks for the organisation going forward. The systematic management of the work environment is followed up annually in consultation with the University's principal health and safety representative and the Faculties Planning office, according to the cycle for consultation established by the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Procedures and measures to ensure a good working environment

The cornerstones for creating and fostering a healthy work environment are procedures that ensure continuity with respect to capacity building among staff, dissemination of information, assessment and monitoring of risks and providing preventative actions against stress-related illnesses are.

Capacity building

- Annual staff appraisal talks
- All doctoral supervisors should have completed research supervision training
- All staff in managerial positions should undergo leadership training or course of relevance to their particular position
- All staff are to undergo general fire safety training or a refresher course ever five years.
- The department encourages first aid training of staff, and is to have at least 3 trained members of staff, with at least one member per floor.
- Annual evacuation drills are to be carried out and followed up

Dissemination of information

- All information relevant to the work environment should be available either in English or in both English and Swedish
- Policies and information on fire safety, the working environment and gender equalities, equal opportunities, discrimination and victimization should be easily accessible and up-to-date.
- Findings from the gender equality and equal opportunities are disseminated at staff meetings
- New employees are to be given information about the workplace and the work environment, including fire safety regulations
- Official documentation concerning the work environment, for instance fire safety minutes, should be available to staff.
- Employees should be informed and encouraged to use their health promotion benefits

Assessment and monitoring of risks

- Annual staff appraisal talks provide grounds for assessing risks at the individual level. Risks are monitored through contacts with staff throughout the year.
- Long-term absence due to illness is to be monitored and, if possible, reduced
- Rehabilitation appraisal is to be conducted with each employee who is on long-term sick leave; a rehabilitation analysis is to be carried out.

- Annual health and safety inspections and fire safety inspection to be conducted and followed up as part of systematic work environment assessment.
- Ergonomic inspection with the physiotherapist from Occupational Health Services is carried out every three years
- Risks involved in field work and visits to high risk environments should be assessed together with LU Security

Preventative measures

- Occupational Health Services assess whether workplace adaptation is necessary.
- Reimbursement of Health Promotion expenses
- Staff can use one (paid) hour per week for exercise or other types of health promotion
- Fruit delivered twice a week
- Staff retreats provide opportunities for team activities, dissemination of information and capacity building.
- Informal meetings, for instance seminars organized by doctoral students and coffee breaks provide possibilities for interaction between different groups of staff
- Defibrillators are found on the first and fourth floors of the building.
- Fire blankets are found next to the kitchen areas on the first and fifth floors.
- A first aid kit is found in the student area on the first floor.