



---

AARHUS  
UNIVERSITY'S  
ACTION PLAN FOR  
MORE WOMEN IN  
RESEARCH  
2016-2020

---

Adopted on 15 March 2016

## AU's action plan for more women in research

Aarhus University as a whole has had difficulties attracting and retaining female researchers at top level and, thus, bringing all talents into play.

The gender mix among researchers at Aarhus University varies greatly with the career level – with an overall gender balance at the PhD level, while four out of five professors are men. Among assistant professors/researchers, associate professors/senior researchers and professors, Aarhus University's share of female researchers is below the EU average and well below the level in the other Nordic countries.

The senior management team acknowledges this challenge and wishes to meet it. Under the action plan, the organisation will be required to promote equal opportunities for everyone, which will improve the gender balance among researchers at all levels. The plan complements Aarhus University's overall staff policy and sub-policy for equality and diversity (<http://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/hr/policies/>).

The action plan contains five prioritised focus areas along with a number of recommendations and proposed actions. The identified actions seek to ensure equal opportunities for men and women in research and will remove or reduce structural and cultural barriers which, from experience, keep many talented women from choosing a research career. The plan does thus not suggest preferential treatment, but aims to ensure that all talents come into play so that Aarhus University will to a greater extent be able to attract and retain female research talents, thereby strengthening AU's research position.

The current situations at the departments/schools at Aarhus University are very different, for which reason the action plan has been set up as a catalogue of initiatives. Each department/school must identify and implement the initiatives that are most relevant to ensure a more equal gender balance. The departments/schools must establish binding targets for the period up to 2020, and there will be an annual follow-up on the implementation of the priority actions at all management levels in the organisation.

Focus area 1: MANAGERIAL FOCUS ON GENDER EQUALITY		
Recommendations	Background/issue	Action
<b>Policy for equality and diversity</b>	According to the Danish Act on Gender Equality ( <i>Lov om ligestilling af kvinder og mænd</i> ), government institutions must draft gender equality policies.	<b>AU level:</b> The senior management team's policy on equality and diversity applies to all Aarhus University's employees. The policy is included as a sub-policy in AU's staff policy.
<b>Action plans for more women in research 2015-2020</b>	AU's faculty action plans expired in 2014.  According to recommendations from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science (April 2015), all research institutions should set ambitious targets, draft concrete action plans and perform systematic, ongoing follow-up on the progress of gender equality initiatives.	<b>AU level:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systematic annual follow-up at senior management team, faculty and department/school level. The development of the gender balance of AU's staff is monitored, and statistics are published on a regular basis and at faculty/department/school/centre level.</li> </ul> <b>Faculty as well as department/school and centre level:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Both the faculties and the departments/schools/centres select which initiatives they wish to work with in order to address the gender equality challenges in the area in question.</li> <li>▪ The departments/schools must set targets</li> </ul>

		based on realistic assessments for filling academic positions at all levels and follow up on these targets.
--	--	---

**Focus area 2: RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

Recommendations	Background/issue	Action
<p><b>Clearer descriptions of required qualifications</b></p>	<p>Denmark is falling behind on gender equality in relation to the rest of the world. This is also true of academia. Clear descriptions of what qualifications are necessary in order to qualify for positions at the different levels of the academic career system will increase transparency and clarify career opportunities for all, regardless of age, background and life situation.</p>	<p><b>AU level:</b> Ensure that clear, transparent, and internationally valid descriptions of required qualifications for each job category are available at faculty or department/school level.</p> <p><b>Faculty and department/school level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Both job advertisements and assessments must ensure that research and teaching/knowledge exchange are considered important parameters in hiring permanent academic staff, along with other qualifications including leadership, research communication and student guidance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department/school/centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Caution is necessary in order to avoid cementing a pre-existing skewed gender balance when recruiting new staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Open recruitment and general job descriptions when advertising</b></p>	<p>According to a report from the Ministry's task force on more women in research, almost one-third of AU's professorships were filled without advertising in the period 2011-13. Open recruitment with advertising increases female applicants' chances of employment significantly. And competition for positions takes place in a transparent manner and on equal terms.</p> <p>Generally speaking, narrow job descriptions when advertising make it difficult to attract more qualified applicants, including women, whereas broad job descriptions contribute to ensuring a larger as well as a more qualified and diverse pool of applicants, and thus equal opportunities for all applicants. Experience has shown that there are highly qualified academic candidates who have a hard time seeing themselves in a unilaterally competitive and individualising profile.</p>	<p><b>Faculty level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development of guidelines and advisory assistance in connection with job advertisements to prevent gender bias.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department/school/centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use of search committees before advertising positions where it is deemed that it will ensure a better and more gender-balanced pool of applicants.</li> <li>▪ As a rule, all academic positions at assistant professor, associate professor and professor level must be advertised.</li> <li>▪ Use of broad advertising, including focus on choice of words in the formulation of qualification requirements in particular and job advertisements in general. Also, it must be clearly stated in the job advertisement that the applicant's activities will be assessed in relation to the actual research time, including that maternity/paternity leave, for example, is deducted from research time.</li> <li>▪ Focus on selecting and hiring the best qualified applicant in a broad perspective, which places</li> </ul>

		an equal emphasis on education, knowledge exchange and research competencies, and which also meets the department's/school's need for employees who are willing to cooperate and contribute to the community. In connection with appointments in which there is no clear difference in the qualifications of the best-qualified applicants, the desire to achieve gender balance at the department/school should be included as a significant evaluation criterion in the final decision.
<b>Diversity in the composition of assessment and appointment committees, as well as other councils, boards and committees</b>	Scientific studies show that assessors evaluate applicants with a profile similar to their own ('mirror image') as being more qualified. Thus, a diverse assessment and employment committee increases the likelihood of a more objective assessment and objective choice of applicant. A better gender balance and higher degree of diversity on boards, councils and committees will contribute to the quality and legitimacy of decision-making.	<p><b>Faculty level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As far as possible and with due consideration for academic considerations, both sexes should be represented on all assessment and employment committees as well as boards, councils and committees at faculty level. Ensuring that both sexes are represented may also be achieved by having external members represent the under-represented gender. To be included in faculty guidelines.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department/school/centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As far as possible and with due consideration for academic considerations, both sexes should be represented on all assessment and employment committees as well as boards, councils and committees at department/school/centre level. However, the current gender balance within the field of study must be taken into account. Ensuring that both sexes are represented may also be achieved by having external members represent the under-represented gender in assessment and employment committees.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment of actual research time (exclusive of any leave of absence)</b>	In the early stages of a research career, there are often differences between men and women's total research production due to longer maternity leave for women as well as periods of compassionate leave. For this reason, achieving the transition from fixed-term junior positions to the first permanent position within the prescribed timeframe can be a challenge for some younger junior female researchers.	<p><b>Faculty as well as department/school and centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematically compensating for maternity/paternity leave and other forms of compassionate leave in the calculation of time spent, productivity and impact when assessing applicants to permanent positions.</li> <li>Encourage applicants to clearly document any periods of leave during which they have not been research active.</li> </ul>

<b>Focus area 3: TALENT DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Background/issue</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Systematic talent and career</b>	Retaining talented researchers at all levels is	<b>AU level:</b>

<b>development</b>	crucial for the continued development of Aarhus University to work systematically with talent development, in order to strengthen the diversity of the research environments, which in turn will make them more robust. The absence of a systematic model for how talent is evaluated can constitute a barrier to junior researchers' career choices and career development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong managerial focus on the importance of diversity to strong research environments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Faculty level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased use of tenure track models as an instrument to create greater transparency regarding career paths.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department/school/centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased focus on talent development as an important managerial and advisory competency, including the ability to identify, acknowledge, advise and motivate research talents.</li> <li>▪ Competency development for managers and supervisors.</li> </ul>
<b>Development of career and development plans</b>	According to the Psychological WPA 2012, several researchers at AU call for clearer objectives, feedbacks and guidance in their academic and personal career development.	<p><b>Department/school/centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Systematic development of career and development plans for individual researchers, for example in connection with SDDs (staff development dialogues), including regular feedback and follow-up on the plan.</li> <li>▪ Availability of mentorship schemes – encourage both established and junior researchers to participate in mentorships, for example AU's mentorship scheme for academic staff, 'Empower Talent'.</li> </ul>
<b>Visible role models</b>	Visible role models, for example top female researchers or managers, increase awareness of career opportunities and promote gender equality and diversity.	<p><b>AU and faculty level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Articles and recognition of female role models, including their diversity, in relevant internal and external media.</li> <li>▪ Increased awareness of gender balance in connection with allocation of AU's internal research funding.</li> </ul> <p><b>Department/school and centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage female role models to act as mentors for junior researchers.</li> <li>▪ Increased focus on nominating qualified female researchers for appointments, prizes, grants etc.</li> </ul>

<b>Focus area 4: INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY AND RESEARCH ABROAD</b>		
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Background/issue</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Financial support to cover extra expenses</b>	Research abroad is often associated with major financial costs. This is particularly the case for researchers with small children or whose accompanying spouses lack job	<p><b>AU and faculty level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initiatives to enable research abroad, including for researchers who have families.</li> </ul>

	opportunities during a stay abroad.	
<b>Flexibility in relation to research abroad</b>	<p>Research abroad is important to the careers of junior researchers, but often coincide with the period in life where many start families. Requirements regarding international research mobility (as a criterion for advancement) may present a barrier to junior researchers in general and female researchers in particular.</p> <p>There is a need for an increased effort to make it possible for talented researchers to conduct research at recognised universities abroad without compromising family life.</p>	<p><b>Faculty as well as department/school and centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Flexible research abroad. For example, the option of counting several shorter stays as one long stay.</li> <li>▪ Increased focus on guidance and assistance in relation to job opportunities for researchers' spouses/partners ('dual career programmes') and childcare abroad.</li> </ul>

<b>Focus area 5: AN ATTRACTIVE CULTURE</b>		
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Background/issue</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Create and advertise attractive working conditions</b>	<p>Many parts of the world of research are characterised by a work culture of tough competition for results, publications and funding. A university career and the international competition for research positions demand that researchers have both the ability and the desire to contribute an extraordinary effort. Female research talents have both the ability and the desire, but are often hindered by structural and cultural barriers. It is possible to change the gender balance by changing cultures and structures. An important aspect of AU's goal of being a diverse and inclusive workplace is creating the necessary flexibility and space to accommodate both male and female researchers.</p> <p>Female researchers' publication frequency typically falls during periods of maternity leave, and this 'lag' can place them at an unfair advantage that continues to affect them throughout their careers, unless structures are put in place to compensate for this inequality.</p>	<p><b>AU level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adopting a more flexible career structure, i.e. that maternity/paternity leave is compensated when measuring time spent, productivity and impact, so that female researchers in particular can advance to higher research positions within a more flexible time frame.</li> </ul> <p><b>AU, faculty as well as department/school and centre level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recognise and highlight women's contribution to research environments as academic workplaces.</li> <li>▪ Ensure an attractive work environment, including values and an atmosphere which experience has shown attract and retain both men and women.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that it is possible to balance work and family life, particular in those periods in which the individual's need for flexibility is greatest.</li> <li>▪ Exploit Denmark's reputation as a 'family-friendly country' to promote AU internationally.</li> </ul>
<b>Establishment of maternity/paternity leave funds</b>	<p>Maternity/paternity leave often constitutes an extra expense for the employer, and in relation to external grants, there may not be sufficient financial resources to enable leave. As women often take the longest periods of maternity/paternity leave, this constitutes a structural barrier for female applicants.</p>	<p><b>Faculty level:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish maternity/paternity leave funds at faculty and department/school level to ensure that departments/schools/centres and grant recipients are compensated for additional costs associated with researchers' maternity/paternity leave.</li> <li>▪ Establish a scheme to ensure that researchers (regardless of gender) get off to a good start</li> </ul>

		<p>when returning from leave. For example, this might include assistance in 'maintaining' a research project during leave, reduced teaching commitments for a period of time, hiring assistants for a research project etc.</p>
--	--	---

AU's action plan for more women in research was drafted on the basis of:

- Input from all faculty and administrative management teams, among other sources from the Committee for Diversity's round of visits in 2013
- Local action plans from each faculty/main academic area in the period 2009-2014
- Consideration in the Committee for Research and External Cooperation in early 2015
- *Recommendations from the Taskforce for More Women in Research*, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science
- Discussions in the faculty management teams in the autumn of 2015
- Broad consultation of forums at department/school level and in academic councils in early 2016
- Final adoption by the senior management team on 15 March 2016