

## **Recommendations on parental leave**

The task force's recommendations on parental leave concern absence related to the arrival of a child (pregnancy/adoption). The recommendations have been developed through the exchange of insights into university practices and the incorporation of numerous effective local initiatives.

### **Recommendation on parental leave policy on an institutional level for all employees**

Significant measures regarding family policies have been taken in the most competitive private companies over the past decade. This includes the introduction of family packages, increased parental leave rights and compensation, increased flexibility, and a targeted effort to retain and promote talent and specialists of all genders. There is increased competition for the best employees, and a modern and proactive parental leave policy at the universities can enhance recruitment, retention, talent development, and well-being of employees.

As part of the effort to attract and retain talented employees of all genders, the task force recommends that each institution have an overarching parental leave policy. This signals that universities value young talents and recognize that a natural aspect of talent development is supporting individuals when they start a family. A comprehensive parental leave policy should also promote a positive culture surrounding parental leave and family.

The parental leave policy should assist managers and the institution of employment in effectively managing all practical aspects of parental leave, incorporating guidelines for planning and handling.

### **Recommendation for a standardized procedure to aligning expectations regarding parental leave**

The task force suggests creating processes to align expectations. For instance, conducting a pre-leave meeting with the supervisor or manager to discuss an initial alignment of expectations about returning to work and whether some form of contact between the workplace and the employee on parental leave is desired during parental leave. It should also be agreed what will happen to the employee's work during the period of absence (research, data, results, etc.), including the balance between not jeopardising important or time-sensitive research by putting it on hold or depriving the employee of important opportunities to further develop and communicate their own work.

For the various TAP-groups, the nature of work often differs, but for most, it will be relevant to align expectations regarding both return and contact with the workplace during parental leave. It may also be beneficial to agree on whether one can expect

to return to the exact same tasks, similar tasks, or an entirely new portfolio or job description after parental leave - and to document this agreement.

Shortly before or upon return from parental leave, there should be an agreement on how the workplace and the supervisor can assist the person on parental leave in transitioning back to their work and/or research after parental leave. The discussion can be based on previous agreements and an overview of the opportunities the institution offers, with references to parental leave and return from parental leave. These opportunities may include flexibility in teaching, the possibility of writing residencies, research assistants, and exemption from "academic housework" (non-promoting tasks) for a period depending on the length of the parental leave. A good handover and briefing on changes and progress in projects and other work are also important for both VIP and TAP.

#### **Recommendation on a model for financial compensation at the institutional level**

The task force recommends that a model for financial compensation for parental leave taken by externally funded VIP and TAP should be established at the institutional level, based on the principle that the cost of funding parental leave should be as far away from the hiring manager as possible.

If external funding bodies do not cover parental leave expenses, the individual research leader will have to use funds from their own research group, section, or institute budget. If an institute allocates a significant portion of its core funding to cover parental leave expenses this can cause a disadvantage to the whole research area. Younger researchers can end up in a disadvantaged situation, as there will be fewer funds for extensions, conferences, fieldwork opportunities, travel, and possibly less funds for a permanent position at the institute.

With the above in mind, financial compensation at the institutional level is appropriate. Compensation at the institutional level has several benefits, including:

- Ensuring that economic considerations regarding parental leave are separate from the managers who hire the employees.
- Ensuring that parental leave is not a financial disadvantage for specialized environments, departments, and research fields with many female employees.
- Minimizing the risk of scattered local savings funds being established to address the risk of expenses for parental leave periods.

#### **Recommendation on dialogue with external funding bodies**

The task force recommends that Universities Denmark continues the dialogue with external funding bodies in relation to the coverage of costs related to parental leave. This initiative is part of Universities Denmark's ongoing work on the financing of

project expenses and should also continue to be part of the dialogue with private and public foundations.

**Recommendation on overall discussion**

The task force recommends a debate in the Rectors' Conference on whether the universities want a joint approach or shared principles regarding parental leave, based on the best experiences from all 8 universities. The debate can involve examples of the universities' current parental leave initiatives, as compiled in the attached inspiration catalogue.

**Regarding implementation**

The task force recommends sector-wide exchange of experiences regarding the development of institutional parental leave policies, etc. This could take place, for example, in the GEAR network (network for the universities' gender equality officers).

## **Recommendations regarding inclusive leadership**

### **Recommendation on a shared basic concept for training on inclusive management**

All Danish universities are engaged in planning and/or conducting training activities on unconscious biases. The task force recommends a sector-wide approach to these educational activities in the form of a shared basic concept for education *in inclusive management*.

The purpose of a shared basic concept of inclusive management training is:

- To create a common language, level of ambition, and theoretical foundation when selecting tools and initiatives at the institutions.
- Capacity building in relation to inclusive management in the processes/tasks carried out at all universities, e.g. in connection with recruitment, meetings, teaching, research management, research projects and applications, as well as the distribution of non-career-promoting tasks.
- To provide administrative and scientific managers with a solid foundation for interdisciplinary and cross -institutional co-operation.
- To create a foundation for the understanding of inclusive leadership by having perspectives from all 8 universities.

The target group for educational activities is heads of department, administrative managers, senior staff such as research managers, PhD school directors, directors of studies and project managers.

The basic concept should be developed based on relevant research and experiences. The task force also recommends that special attention is to be given to the connection between theory and local practices in developing the fundamental concept. The shared terminology and theoretical foundation must be used in relation to local issues. The format should "make room" for the local aspect didactically, so that theory and perspectives are applied in relation to leadership practices and specific processes and tasks, such as recruitment, student management, meeting management, etc.

### **Recommendation for clarifying interest in joint organisation of training-courses**

In connection with the development of a shared basic concept, we should find out how many universities are interested in organizing and participating in shared training activities and for which employees it would be relevant. The basic concept

may include a module-1 that can be offered as a shared basic training-course, and a module-2 that is organized locally.

### **Recommendation for shared experience exchange for top management**

The work on diversity and inclusive management takes place at several levels and across the organisation's recruitment, HR and other tasks. Therefore, top management plays an important role as an overall anchor.

The task force recommends establishing an annual forum for rectors and deans across disciplines to exchange experiences. Here, experiences can be shared between institutions, fostering an understanding of the role of top management in inclusive learning. Additionally, Danish, or international capacities in the field may be invited to contribute. This exchange of experience and dialogue should qualify local management practices.

### **Regarding Implementation**

The task force recommends the following first steps: Establish a group to identify the needs of universities in relation to the basic concept for educational activities on inclusive management, possibly inspired by AEU's course development of sector-wide courses. Following this, pilot modules can be developed to gain experience with formats and benefits of a sector-wide basic concept.

For inspiration in organizing knowledge sharing for top management, the task force suggests the following proposals for expert presentations from international experts:

- Ireland: Dr. Jennie Rothwell, Higher Education Authority (HEA), Ireland. Dr. Rothwell, originally from Maynooth University, which has recently won the first EU prize of its kind for their pioneering work and results in the field of gender equality.
- Austria: Experts from Bundesministerium Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, Dr.<sup>in</sup> Roberta SCHALLER-STEIDL, Raffaella EBERSTEINER, Gerald RAUCH
- Norway: Senior Advisor Heidi Holt Zachariassen from the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (KIF committee). The committee focuses on gender equality and diversity, and have published several resources, including a film series on GEPs.

## Recommendation regarding non-promotional tasks

In any workplace, there are tasks that are meritorious/career-promoting and tasks that are not (or only slightly) so. The latter are also referred to as 'non-promotional tasks' or 'academic housework' and are characterized by benefiting the organization but not the person performing them. These tasks typically do not directly contribute to the core business and have low visibility. There are several subcategories and nuances; for example, some tasks can be indirectly promotional (1).

Associate Professor Sara Kalm defines academic housekeeping tasks as those **not** related to research, teaching, or collaboration with the outside world, and states that they “*must be performed at an institution that requires someone but not everyone to perform them and is non-meritorious. Using a bit of public choice language, one could say that academic housekeeping is a kind of collective good that everyone benefits from but not everyone needs to perform.*” (2)

There is a gender imbalance in the expectations around non-promotional tasks. Professor Lise Vesterlund et al. found in an American study that women are more likely to volunteer, be asked to volunteer, and accept invitations to volunteer for non-promotional tasks (3). This can be a barrier to women's career progression.

**The task force recommends** a particular focus on the part of the leadership task that deals with non-promotional tasks.

This includes:

- Identifying tasks that are important to be solved but are not, or to a low extent, career-promoting.
- Ensuring a transparent and fair distribution of these tasks.

Note that the recommendation is not aimed at discussing **whether** tasks should be made meritorious or career-promoting if they are identified as important for the organization.

Sources for information:

1. <https://hbr.org/2022/04/are-you-taking-on-too-many-non-promotable-tasks>
2. Om akademiskt hushållsarbete och dess fördelning (2022) [FULLTEXT01.pdf \(diva-portal.org\)](#)
3. Gender Differences in Accepting and Receiving Requests for Tasks with Low Promotability<sup>†</sup> (2017), <https://pubs.ae-web.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1257/aer.20141734>

## **Recommendation regarding expert lists**

The universities promote their researchers in various ways. Some universities have compiled expert lists used by journalists and the media. In the Danish media, three male experts are contacted for every female expert, while there is no gender difference in the proportion of experts that agree to participate once asked<sup>1</sup>. Surveys conducted by the Danish trade union magazine *Akademikerbladet* reveal that 47 out of the 50 most cited experts in 2022 are men.<sup>2</sup>

### **Recommendation on diversity and transparent criteria**

The task force recommends that universities with expert lists pay attention to diversity among the researchers on the list. The purpose is to promote the representation of multiple perspectives and to address the skewed gender balance among expert sources in the media. The recommendation also aims to highlight different role models. It is valuable for young people of different genders, cultural and social backgrounds, to be able to see themselves reflected in the experts exposed in the media.

In cases where the university's expert list is based on a selection process, the task force recommends that the individual institution be attentive to gender diversity, as well as diversity in terms of nationality, academic paradigms, and different career stages.

The task force also recommends implementing a transparent selection process for inclusion on expert lists. An example of transparency is Aarhus University's brief description, which can be seen here: [Expert Lists \(au.dk\)](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Lektor Hanne Jørndrup, der har forsket i mediernes kildebrug, i *Akademikerbladet*: Medier foretrækker mandlige eksperter ([akademikerbladet.dk](#))

<sup>2</sup> Camilla er ekspertkilde: "Der er en del, jeg har forsømt" ([akademikerbladet.dk](#))

## Recommendation regarding inclusive language

The task force recommends the use of inclusive language that reflects the universities' view of talent as independent of gender. Language not only reflects but also influences attitudes, behaviour, and perceptions. Therefore, universities should avoid endorsing the use of gendered terms in the job market and the education system. Instead, they should lead with inclusive language to support everyone's ability to choose education and careers based on talent and interest.

For comparison, the European Parliament encourages the use of gender-neutral language to avoid disadvantaging any gender and perpetuating biases against a particular gender. This commitment aligns with the Parliament's dedication to working towards gender equality and non-discrimination based on gender. The use of gender-conscious language is one of the methods outlined in their guidelines ([gender-neutral-guidelines\\_da.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)). Additionally, in Danish legislative proposals, the use of "he" or "she" is avoided, as gender-specific terms in a legal context are considered a linguistic error ([Folketingets handbook Section 6.2 / Folketinget \(ft.dk\)](#)).

### The task force recommends that:

- The universities use gender-neutral language such as 'forperson,' 'næstforperson' and 'forpersonerne' (instead of 'formand,' 'næstformand' and 'formandskabet'.)
- The universities collectively identify gendered terms and alternatives, such as 'forsker' (instead of 'videnskabsmand') and 'tillidsrepræsentant' (instead of 'tillidsmand'), as part of a broader discussion on inclusive language. Based on this discussion, sector-wide guidelines for inclusive language use in written communication are developed.
- The universities allocate resources to replace words and terms on websites and other written materials.
- Texts that cannot be administratively changed (e.g., statutes) are updated to inclusive language use in connection with ongoing revisions at the institutional level and national regulations, laws, etc.

### Regarding implementation

- The task force recommends that the implementation begins with written communication at the universities. In this context, the administration can quickly replace words. Establishing a culture of inclusive spoken language will take more time but should also be a goal.



- To further facilitate the discussion of inclusive language, the universities can organize a joint conference featuring expert presentations.

### References for orientation

- **European Parliament's guidelines.** Guidelines for a gender-neutral language in the European parliament as well as the Danish  
Link: [Hjem | Kontoret i København | Europa-Parlamentet](#)
- **Municipality of Copenhagen guidelines.** Link to the municipality of Copenhagen's guidelines regarding gender-inclusive language  
[Kommunikationsvejledning: Kønsinkluderende sprogbrug \(kk.dk\)](#)
- **Assessment of the use of gender-neutral terms in relation to legislation, prepared by HR, DTU (Technical University of Denmark).** In relation to university law, it can be argued that the term 'formand' defines a function with an associated mandate as the top authority for the relevant body and with specific responsibilities, more than a specific title. On this basis, it can be argued that similar terms like 'forkvinde' or the gender-neutral 'forperson' have a defining character, thus maintaining the function and mandate. The gender of the individual as a marker is not relevant to the function, but respect for the individual's title preference should be shown. The appointment body established by the university, based on recommendations from the nominating body, is tasked with selecting the candidate deemed to have the best qualifications for the position of board chairman. In appointing new members, the appointment body is to consider a balanced composition of women and men on the board, which further argues that the term 'formand' defines the function itself. A linguistic curiosity more than a legal matter: According to the Danish Language Council, the term 'forperson' was introduced in 1977 as a gender-neutral alternative to 'formand' and 'forkvinde.' Furthermore, in the University Law (Consolidation Act No. 778 of August 7, 2019), 'board chairman' is written in lowercase, supporting that it is not a defined title but a mandate designation.

## **Recommendation regarding committees**

### **Recommendation to ensure time for research and teaching for members in internal and external committees**

Universities Denmark handle various appointments, where either the Rectors' Conference or Universities Denmark are asked to nominate or recommend candidates for various forums (e.g., expert groups, councils, boards). The Danish Gender Equality Act stipulates that public committees, commissions, and the like should have an equal representation of women and men. In many cases, Universities Denmark must recommend both a male and a female candidate. Similarly, the universities strive for representation of multiple genders in internal committees, such as appointment committees.

If a field has a skewed gender distribution, internal and external committee work can occupy a disproportionately large part of the time for employees of underrepresented genders. This can create unequal conditions for research in an academic career.

The task force recommends that universities be aware of whether employees of underrepresented genders have a disproportionately large amount of committee work, etc. If this is the case, the task force recommends protecting the time of these employees for research and teaching. This can be achieved, for example, by:

- Exempting individuals from non-promotional tasks when serving on an internal or external committee.
- Simplifying internal committee work and reducing the workload for the specific employee, for example, by having others perform the initial sorting of applications and handle the administrative tasks related to committee work.

Another approach is to merit committee work, etc., on par with research and teaching. However, the question of whether and how much committee work is and should be meritorious has a longer time perspective.

### **Recommendation on the composition of committees in Universities Denmark**

Committees in Universities Denmark are typically composed based on function, with each university providing a member fulfilling a specific role, such as the head of a particular area. Thus, it is not currently possible to directly influence the gender distribution in these committees.

The task force recommends initiating a discussion on whether it would be appropriate to review procedures for committees and working groups within Universities Denmark, with the aim of promoting gender balance. For instance, universities

could consider nominating candidates of multiple genders for all or some committees.

## **Recommendations regarding data**

The task force assesses that there is already sufficient data indicating challenges related to gender differences in VIP career paths, retention, and recruitment. Therefore, it is more appropriate to focus on solving these problems than on expanding the database.

The task force does not propose new analyses or data collections but assesses that there is a need for a better overview and accessibility of existing data.

### **Recommendation on overview and accessibility of data**

The task force recommends that the universities create a shared overview of existing data that sheds light on gender, career progression, and salary, as well as other data sources relevant to the study or working environment.

The shared overview and accessibility of existing data sources must make data FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable), while taking into account the GDPR. 'Accessible,' does not mean full public disclosure of data but that the universities make data mutually available to researchers, management, and employees across the sector. The work should include data regarding VIP, TAP, and students.

### **Regarding implementation**

The task force recommends assigning this task to a working group with in-depth knowledge of universities' gender equality work, data sources, and analysis options across studies and institutions – e.g., the GEAR network (network for universities' gender equality staff) in collaboration with the study statistics network.