



## ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVED GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIC POSITIONS

---

### 1. Background<sup>1</sup>

Hiring, keeping and facilitating the career development of academic staff are of decisive importance to be able to maintain and further increase the high academic standard at the school. NHH's strategy for the period 2018–2021 states that: *'NHH shall recruit academic staff at a high international level through conscious, targeted international recruitment. The school shall pursue an active recruitment policy that helps to employ more women in academic positions.'*

Active, strategic efforts to promote diversity and gender equality and prevent discrimination are important and underpin NHH's mission statement: 'Together for sustainable value creation'. Gender equality shall be an integrated part of the school's core activities, i.e. research, teaching and dissemination.

NHH shall work to achieve gender equality at all levels of the organisation. This entails, among other things, having specific measures in place that can contribute to a better gender balance at NHH.

In the same way as at other comparable educational institutions both in Norway and abroad, the proportion of women in academic positions at NHH is consistently low, and the proportion is lower the higher up the job hierarchy you get. For example, the proportion of female professors was 28% at the national level in 2018, while it was 20% at NHH in 2019. Ensuring that NHH and the subject areas it represents are in a position to attract capable women is a main challenge. This includes taking steps to facilitate women qualifying for promotion to positions at the highest level.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Act relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act) sets a clear framework for NHH's duties as an employer. Discrimination on the basis of gender, pregnancy, leave in connection with childbirth or adoption, care responsibilities, ethnicity, religion, belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age or combinations of these factors is prohibited. Ethnicity includes national origin, descent, skin colour and language. The prohibition includes discrimination on the basis of actual, assumed, former or future factors specified in the first paragraph. The prohibition also applies if a person is discriminated against on the basis of his or her connection with another person, when such discrimination is based on factors specified in the first paragraph. Discrimination means direct or indirect differential treatment pursuant to Sections 7 and 8 that is not lawful pursuant to Sections 9, 10 or 11. The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges also addresses equality in Chapter 6 concerning appointments. Section 6-2 *Gender equality* clearly states that: 'Universities and university colleges must make active, targeted and systematic efforts to ensure gender equality in all categories of employment at the institution.' Section 6-3 also specifies that importance must be attached to gender equality considerations when appointments are made.

In the markets from which business schools recruit, there are relatively fewer female applicants for vacancies than at other educational institutions, and therefore great competition for the best female applicants. It will therefore take time for NHH to achieve the goal of gender equality and gender balance, but this renders it even more important to make systematic efforts to do so.

Despite great demand for female academics in the sector, research shows that discrimination can impede women's recruitment or consideration for promotion. Recent research shows an unconscious selection bias where language and cultural factors, among others, can lead potential employers to prefer men over women both in connection with appointments and applications for promotion. Several studies show that changing the applicant's name in an otherwise identical application clearly changes the employer's opinion about whether the candidate is eligible for hiring and about the proposed starting salary (e.g. Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). In addition, assumptions about abilities play an important role. For example, men are assumed to achieve success based on their own efforts, while women are assumed to have been assisted by a good support system (Pern, Kandola, 2014). In terms of language, men are often referred to as 'outstanding' and 'remarkable', while women are described as 'hard-working' (Skibba, 2016). Measures to combat this type of unconscious discrimination will be part of the active management of the school's equality strategy and form the basis for the measures in the action plan.

In 2019, NHH was awarded a three-year project under the Research Council of Norway's BALANSE programme. The project is called WomEN and is led by Professor Aline Bütikofer. The project is an integral part of the work to achieve NHH's strategic gender equality goal. The main focus of WomEN is to achieve a more even gender balance in academic positions through a 'bottom up' approach to help female researchers attain a high level of expertise.

Responsibility for NHH's equality and diversity work primarily rests with the school's management, but all staff and managers at all levels of the organisation share this responsibility.

The target figures for gender-balanced recruitment for research fellow, postdoctoral and adjunct positions and permanent positions as associate professor and professor are set out in the 'Status report for action plan for a better gender balance in academic positions 2019'.

## **2. Main objective**

Gender equality is both a goal and a process that entails:

- NHH making a conscious effort to promote an organisational culture and working environment that is inclusive and fair for both genders, and where all employees are ensured equal opportunities to develop their talent;
- pursuing an active recruitment policy to redress the imbalance in gender selection and prevent indirect discrimination;
- that the gender distribution in academic positions should at least reflect the gender distribution in the recruitment basis for positions at different levels;

- NHH keeping a continuous focus on gender equality at all levels of the organisation, including making endeavours to achieve a gender balance in areas where men are underrepresented.

### **3. Support and responsibility for the work to achieve improved gender equality in academic positions**

- Goals and measures for equality will be integrated into all work on both overarching and local strategies, plans, regulations, guidelines, budgets and reports.
- Implementation and evaluation will be integrated into procedures and processes for following up the school's overarching strategy, planning and reporting.
- The tasks and responsibility this entails will follow the school's organisation, and are a management responsibility at all levels. The heads of departments have a special responsibility for integrating this work with the department's work and ensuring support for it among academic staff, and for the goals being attained within their subject areas.
- Administrative resources will be allocated for support and advice in connection with NHH's work on equality.

## **4. Measures**

### *4.1.1 Overarching measures to achieve improved gender equality in academic positions*

- The Board will allocate annual funding for central measures and funding to encourage locally-initiated measures, for example network initiatives. Part of this funding is earmarked for grants for the academic communities to apply for, for example in the form of seed funds.
- Women are important role models in research, teaching and dissemination. This entails the following:
  - that students shall have both female and male lecturers in all programmes and at all levels, including guest lecturers. In this context, the heads of departments have a special responsibility for conscious use of lecturers and guest lecturers of both genders in different courses and programmes.
  - that experts of both genders shall be used as sources in the media and other dissemination in strategically important areas. The Office of Communications and Marketing has a special responsibility for ensuring this.
- The composition of boards, councils and committees shall ensure that men and women have equal influence on key decision-making processes.
  - This is a managerial responsibility at all levels. All managers at NHH must also be aware of the risk of the underrepresented gender being overloaded by work on councils and committees subject to a gender representation requirement.
  - It is important to be aware that female employees in leading roles, both at NHH and on national councils and committees, also serve as important role models. NHH shall therefore strive for gender equality in senior positions, and also draw attention to such contributions.

- Under the auspices of the WomEN project, annual presentations are held for small groups of female academic staff and female job market candidates.
- An annual equality seminar is organised for NHH's academic staff.
- The action plan for improved gender equality in academic positions shall be one of the main topics of the regular dialogue between the rector's team and the heads of department.
- NHH shall at all times endeavour to offer employees kindergarten services that are flexible and of good quality. New members of the academic staff who relocate to Bergen shall be given priority.

#### *4.2 Measures for the recruitment of women to academic positions*

- In connection with appointments to academic positions (including adjunct positions and research fellowships), a special explanation must be provided if the group of applicants does not include qualified applicants of both genders.
- Heads of department shall ensure that members of NHH's recruitment committees receive information about the possible consequences of unconscious discrimination at an early stage of the recruitment process to be able to counteract this type of selection. This can for example be done by the members of the committee taking [implicit association tests \(IAT\)](#).
- All job advertisements to include a phrase about how NHH aims for and gives high priority to achieving a good gender balance.
- Procedures are drawn up to ensure transparency in recruitment processes at NHH (e.g. publishing lists of applicants without prior notice and, if applicable, criteria for tenure track evaluation etc.).
- Ensuring the best possible flow of information and good access to information about all relevant incentives and support schemes for academic staff at NHH.
- Unadvertised appointments may be used as a means of recruiting women.
- NHH shall pursue an active family policy by, among other things, helping spouses to qualify for the Norwegian labour market, offering assistance for Norwegian language tuition and facilitating an as seamless as possible transition to the Norwegian school and kindergarten system.
- The school's pay policy must be used actively to achieve the targets for recruiting women.
- When appointing women to adjunct professor positions, half the cost of the salary for the first two years will be covered by central gender equality funds. This measure applies to departments in which the proportion of women in academic positions is lower than 40%.
- Endeavours shall be made to ensure that new appointments to adjunct positions contribute to achieving a proportion of at least 40% women in such positions in each department.

#### *4.3 Measures to retain and further qualify women for academic positions*

- The meetings organised by the Service Centre in connection with new employees starting their employment will be expanded to include an item on the NHH culture, gender equality and gender balance. This is intended to help new teachers to tackle the teaching situation and interaction with students at NHH.

- The heads of department shall make arrangements to facilitate women's qualification and promotion, including implementing measures to improve publication prospects. Heads of department have a special responsibility for ensuring that female associate professors are considered for promotion. All female associate professors shall be offered such an assessment within five years of taking up the position at the latest. Furthermore, the process towards qualification and promotion shall be a topic during performance appraisal interviews between heads of department and female associate professors. Women approaching professorial qualifications can also ask their head of department for such an assessment.
- NHH's management shall look into how a mentor scheme for women in academic positions could be established, and whether such a scheme should be introduced.
- Women in associate professor positions will earn the first two years of research leave in half the normal time. The departments will qualify for a refund of NOK 80,000 per semester for each semester of research leave taken under this scheme.
- Female post-doctoral researchers and associate professors are awarded an annual stipend of NOK 25,000 for further qualification for up to three years. It is possible to apply to transfer funds to the following year if justified by prospects of qualification. After three years, women working towards qualification may submit an application for a stipend for additional years. The application must explain how the funds previously received have contributed and how new funds will contribute towards qualification.
- Measures aimed at facilitating improved gender equality with regard to qualification are also integrated in the Funds Regulations. For example, an annual amount of NOK 40,000 is currently earmarked for grants for women to attend conferences.

## **5. Period of application**

The action plan applies from 1 April 2020.