



ERSTA
SKÖNDAL
BRÄCKE
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE



RESEARCH STRATEGY

2018–2022

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A research strategy for *The Individual in Welfare Society*

At Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College, research is conducted within a broad spectrum of subjects. Research focuses on the humanities, social sciences, nursing and health care, and church music. *The Individual in Welfare Society* is a field that is an important part of our research. This is our third-cycle PhD programme, as well as the field within which our researchers identify questions regarding the individual in today's welfare society. Research requires maintenance, as well as renewal and flexibility. Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College's research must be responsive to changes that affect professional practice within its field of study; it must pay attention to questions that require an academic contribution; and it must be generally and socially relevant by observing values that explicitly or implicitly play a role in the welfare debate.

This research strategy was drawn up by the Academic Faculty during the autumn term of 2017. It was discussed in workshops and at lunch meetings, in departmental and institute seminars and other meetings, as well as by the university college management team.

On behalf of the Academic Faculty

Gunilla Silfverberg
Chairperson

Research strategy for Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College 2018–2022

Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College has its roots in the diaconal movement, the socially oriented branch of the revivalist movement which in Sweden began with Ersta diakoni. This was the start of what would become the country's first nurse training course in 1851. Correspondingly, the current Stora Sköndal Foundation started as the Swedish diaconal society for training male lay welfare workers in 1898. This laid the foundation for what would become the university college's social work programme. Bräcke diakoni, which began in 1923, was founded as a reaction to adversity among the poorest. A shared ambition for both the university college and its owners is to put people in focus, especially those who for various reasons find themselves in difficult life situations.

Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College today is a higher education institution, providing degrees on all academic levels: first, second and third cycle. It organises first- and second-cycle education in nursing science and social work. We also provide education in theology, church music and psychotherapy. Third-cycle education is organised within the field of *The Individual in Welfare Society*, with currently two third-cycle subject areas, *Palliative Care* and *Social Welfare and Civil Society*. Palliative care and civil society studies also constitute strong research environments, with leading positions in Sweden. In parallel, research is also conducted in the main subject areas of social work and nursing science, as well as within ethics, welfare law research, theology, diaconal/church social work and church music.

The research strategy for the next five-year period is based on the Shareholder Directive and Strategic Plan 2017–2022, which emphasises the importance of research for the development of the university college. The research strategy contains overall targets for research and indicates ways of achieving these targets. The targets have been formulated against the background of the statement from UKÄ, the Swedish Higher Education Authority, in connection with Ersta Sköndal Bräcke's application for the accreditation to award degrees at third-cycle level.

SHAREHOLDER DIRECTIVE



STRATEGIC PLAN 2017–2022



RESEARCH STRATEGY



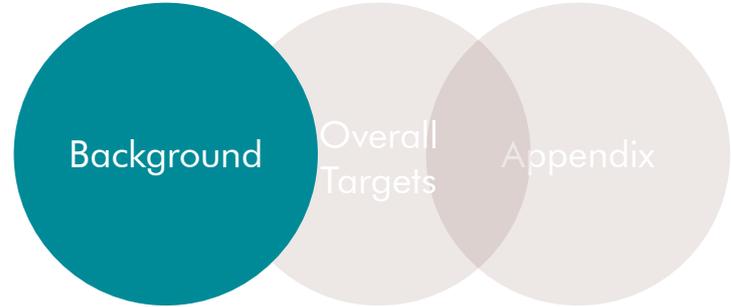
PROFILED
RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Regulatory documents for the university college and their reciprocal relationships.

Aim

The research strategy will form the basis for annual operational plans and aims to

- guide the university college's overall targets and priorities for research
- provide support for the formulation of profiled research programmes
- indicate guidelines for distribution of the university college's research resources
- promote the development of new multidisciplinary research areas based on the university college's subjects and disciplines



The Individual in Welfare Society

The Individual in Welfare Society is the name of the university college's third-cycle courses and PhD education programme. It is also the field within which the university college has excellent potential for making important academic contributions. This field deals with issues of Swedish and international social development that impose high demands on new research-based knowledge. It deals with welfare issues from both an individual perspective and from organisational and societal perspectives. Here, social trends and issues surrounding individuals' social and health conditions and vulnerabilities are studied from both a critical/analytical perspective and from a theoretical and methodological perspective.

The development of the research will be characterised by the fundamental values expressed in the university college's strategic plan. It must therefore be responsive to national and global social changes that affect people's health and living conditions; it must contribute to a sustainable society, in financial, social and environmental respects; and it must have a clear equal opportunity perspective. It must contribute to supporting people in vulnerable living situations and ensuring that human rights are observed. The research must also promote the development of the university college's educational programmes on all levels. The Academic Faculty believes that these targets can be realised through the following vision for the university college's research.

Vision for the university college's research

Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College will promote research of the highest quality, driven by courage, curiosity and ethical awareness. The university college will offer a qualified academic environment and examine issues in which we are able to provide important and ground-breaking contributions. The research will examine accepted perceptions, raise critical and reorienting questions, and further develop research of significance for the challenges of society. It will have a strong connection to the third-cycle courses and PhD programme and to the university college's other programmes. The research will also promote the development of both professional and voluntary work with people in welfare institutions, and will develop knowledge surrounding central issues in civil society.



Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College will work towards the following targets

- 1 The university college will conduct research of the highest academic quality.
- 2 The university college's research will relate to challenges in tomorrow's society.
- 3 The university college's research will contribute to the development of *The Individual in Welfare Society*.
- 4 Research, education and third stream activities will enrich each other.
- 5 The university college's research communications will be developed.
- 6 The university college will develop research collaboration.
- 7 The university college will work for stable research funding.
- 8 The university college will further develop qualification programmes for its employees.

The university college's strategy for achieving this target is to:

- further develop quality criteria for the university college's research projects
- develop a quality assurance system for the third-cycle courses and PhD programme
- carefully follow and analyse research development in various subjects and assess the need for support, both in terms of funding and individual support
- promote research in the subject matters that formed the basis for the third-cycle courses and PhD programme, as well as those that correspond to the two major educational fields: social work including welfare law research, and health care sciences
- ensure ethical awareness in the third-cycle courses and PhD programme and in the planning of research projects, as well as knowledge of the process for research ethics
- develop and strengthen cooperation with other higher education institutions and research environments in Sweden, the Nordic region and internationally
- develop a database for all the university college's research projects for internal follow-up and evaluation of the research

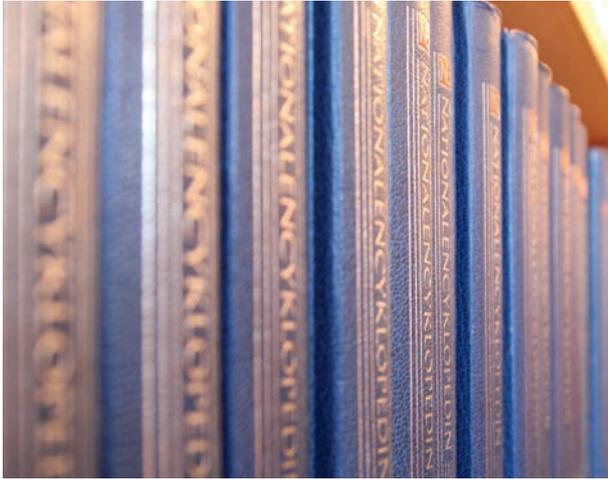
1 The university college will conduct research of the highest academic quality.

What is meant by the highest academic quality is based on different practices and traditions within distinct subject areas. The university college today has two strong areas of research – civil society studies and palliative care – within which researchers have successfully competed for research grants, and have been successful in attracting private research funding. There is a challenge in also maintaining and developing the quality of research in the future, and in securing funding for it. This challenge also applies to other research topics, especially those that have the potential to develop and enrich the third-cycle courses and PhD programme.

2 The university college's research will relate to challenges in tomorrow's society.

Urgent social issues for the near future are linked to several policy areas. The key issues are welfare's ideological foundation and its funding and distribution, as well as peoples' inclusion in or exclusion from society. The most important issues include the following:

- the increasing socioeconomic inequality
- a greater diversity in the population
- an increasing need for health and social care among the most elderly in the population
- equal access to and sharing of care and welfare initiatives
- the relationship between institution-based care and home-based health and social care



- various forms of IT support and use of technology within health and social care
- quality aspects related to different providers of welfare services
- changing relationships between citizens, the public sector, the business community and civil society organisations

The university college’s strategy for achieving this target is to:

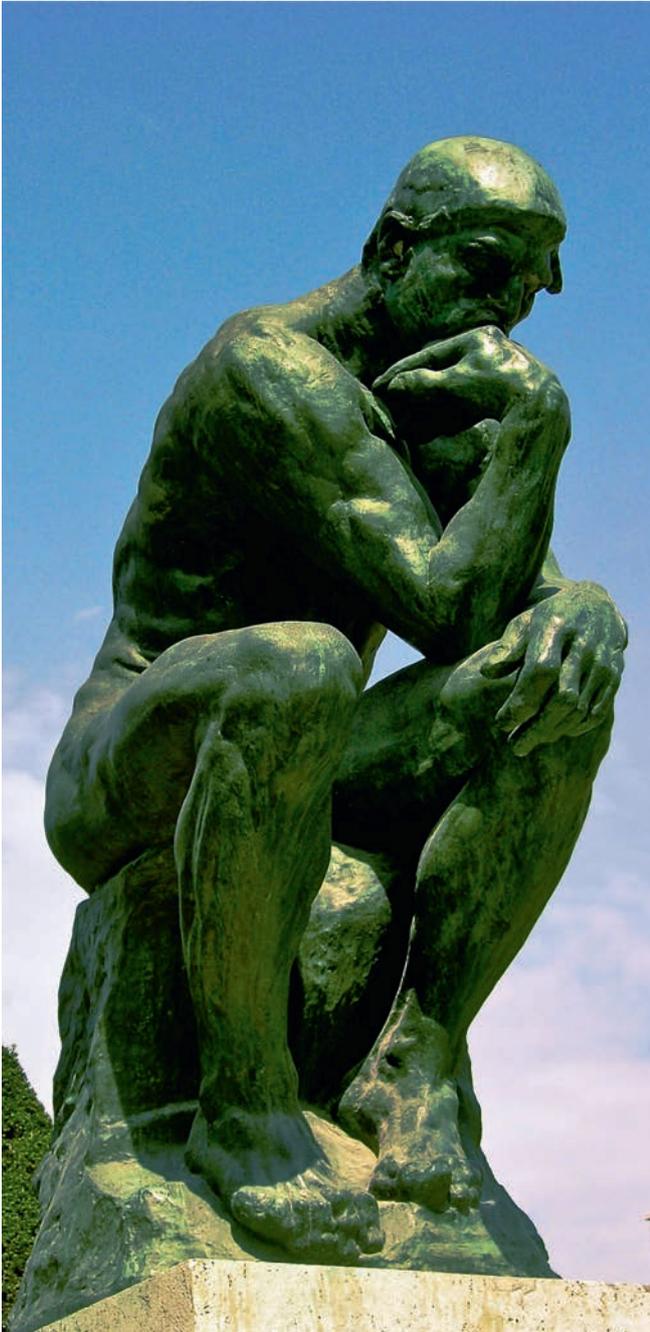
- work with business intelligence in various forms
- create conditions for research in which empirically-focused studies interact with theoretical analysis
- develop cooperation with various players within the welfare society, including civil society, in order to promote knowledge development in social welfare and healthcare activities and for the inventory of relevant research issues
- make use of the opportunities offered by the university college’s owner’s activities
- research values and ideology in Swedish welfare debates and analyse the development of the modern welfare society and civil society
- study and analyse ethical values and perspectives of welfare law in the welfare society

3 The university college’s research will contribute to the development of The Individual in Welfare Society.

The university college faces a particular challenge: further developing the field of *The Individual in Welfare Society* against the background of differing knowledge traditions represented by *Palliative Care* and *Social Welfare and Civil Society*. Both subjects encompass a multitude of research subjects and disciplines. Cooperation today takes place primarily within these two research environments rather than across subject boundaries. In connection with the testing of examination status, the Swedish Higher Education Authority’s (UKÄ) assessors emphasise the importance of cooperation between third-cycle education subjects. Identifying and developing projects that are held together by shared research problems or issues is a demanding task. These must be located at the interface between research fields, and it must be possible to use different perspectives and methods from different disciplines, while at the same time also basing the work on disciplinary traditions.

The university college’s strategy for achieving this target is to:

- promote multidisciplinary research environments/ research projects that are based on disciplinary depth
- promote and facilitate cooperation between researchers from different disciplines and departments/institutes within the university college
- benefit from subjects that can serve as bridges between different research fields, for example, ethics, welfare law and music
- pay attention to the potential of artistic research in order to contribute new perspectives
- create places and occasions for creative meetings across subject and departmental borders
- hold recurring Academic Faculty meetings for dialogue with heads of department or the equivalent about departments’/institutes’ research, and thereby particularly note and discuss cooperation between subjects, disciplines and projects



4 Research, education and third stream activities will enrich each other.

Today's higher education sector is based on research, education and third stream activities being inseparable tasks. This requires a high degree of commitment and responsibility within all parts of the university college's activities. Distribution of national research resources will increasingly depend not only on academic production, but also on the degree of cooperation.

The challenge for the university college is to further develop the critical research that is conducted as practical and practice-based, professionally-focused studies in social work, in palliative care, in the field of social and health care generally and in church/diaconal social work, as well as in cooperation with civil society organisations. This research has significant relevance for the university college's various education programmes, as well as for professional and operational development and other cooperation with the local community. The third-cycle courses and PhD programme are naturally based on the mutual dependence between research and education.

The university college's strategy for achieving this target is to:

- create good conditions for employees (teaching staff and doctoral students) to be able to combine research and teaching
- strengthen the research affiliation of education at all levels
- support cooperation initiated by researchers, teaching staff and doctoral students with various practice areas
- identify research fields within which the university college is particularly able to make ground-breaking inroads based on cooperation with the local community
- look at the university college's owner's various fields of activity and the academic issues that are realised in this as an important resource in the third-cycle courses and PhD programme



- support researchers' opportunities to take part in academic networks with other research environments in Sweden and internationally in order to develop activities at the university college
- cooperate strategically with other higher education institutions in Sweden and internationally in order to strengthen the university college's ability to provide top-quality third-cycle education and to support the doctoral students' contact network

5 The university college's research communications will be developed.

Researchers at the university college work within separate research traditions and today publish within the forums and in the usual formats in their respective fields. The third stream activities require specific forms of reporting, while at the same time both research funders and state authorities have tended to assess research quality according to frequency of publication and citations. This represents a considerable challenge for the strategic work of the university college.

The results of the university college's research must thus be made available in both national and international research contexts and also, for example, to decision-makers and the general public. The focus of the university college needs to be expressed in an independent assessment of how and in what way we wish to develop our publishing.

The university college's strategy for achieving this target is to:

- examine, assess and develop the university college's publication traditions
- develop the university college's structures for communication of research results
- make use of the university college library's electronic resources, literature, assist with information and search

- competence, as well as administrative support in academic publication
- through the university college's unique combination of subjects, try out innovative ways of creating and communicating research
- organise conferences/public outreach seminars in order to introduce and discuss the university college's research with a wider audience

6 The university college will develop research collaboration.

International cooperation is a central element in today's academic environment. For smaller higher education institutions, this involves a particular challenge in developing and establishing networks and cooperation with the universities and university colleges that can support the development of both the research fields in which Ersta Sköndal Bräcke is strong, and the fields of research and subjects that are growing in strength.

The university college has research collaborations at national and international level that require further development. This applies to higher education institutions in Sweden, the rest of Scandinavia and several other European countries, as well as Japan, Australia, Canada and the USA. These collaborative efforts have, among other things, taken the form of joint research projects, international conferences and the appointment of visiting lecturers.

The university college's strategy for achieving this target is to:

- work to ensure that research with an intercultural perspective contributes to the university college's fields of research
- highlight existing networks by means of presentations on websites and through systematic reporting of international contacts in seminars and guest lectures



- take the initiative both in terms of research and generally with regard to new research networks
- initiate conferences in fields of central importance to the university college's research areas
- develop a visiting researcher programme that can function collectively and right across the university college
- produce a plan for how the third-cycle courses and PhD programme can be developed by building on international cooperation

7 The university college will work for stable research funding.

In comparison with other higher education institutions of similar size, the university college has done well in the competition for research funding from the research councils. The university college's employees have also been successful in their attempts to mobilise resources from the civil society and private funders. There is a challenge associated with

being able to guarantee long-term research funding from the state and other sources of funding, and thus stability in research and third-cycle education.

In order to achieve this target, the university college will:

- work to obtain increased state support
- work to interest private donors and organisations to invest resources in our research
- by means of work groups, seminars and mentors, support and promote initiatives for research applications

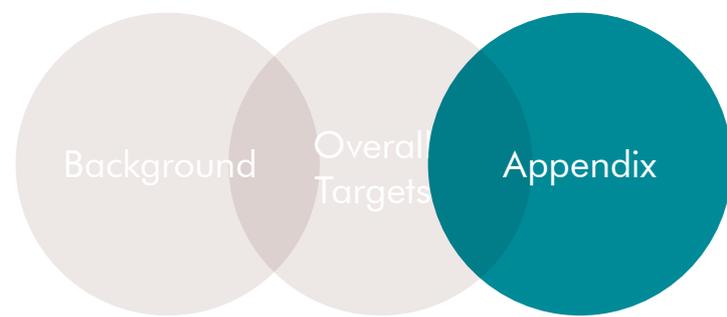
8 The university college will further develop qualification programmes for its employees.

In order to promote employees' career development, the university college has a docent programme that includes supervisor training and mentoring. There is a particular challenge associated with creating equal opportunities for qualifications. The third-cycle courses and PhD programme must also be organised so that the doctoral students have the opportunity to be employed in academia and other sectors of society.

In order to achieve this target

- the docent programme will be further developed and evaluated
- a professors' programme will be developed
- the third-cycle courses and PhD programme will be analysed in relation to employability
- forms of mentor support will be developed

There will be annual follow-up of the research strategy. A prioritised action plan will be included in the operational plan from 2019 onwards.



The university college's research subjects

Civil Society Studies

This research studies the role, function and significance of the civil society for the organisation of welfare, social citizenship and civic engagement.

Church Social Work/Diaconal Research

This research analyses social activities of churches and church organisations, as well as the relationship between professionalism and idealism; it also studies religion as a new element in the political landscape.

Musical Research

Specific surveys of areas of church music and adjacent sections of the cultural environment that are valuable for some of the understanding of the significance of music and art in life and society.

Organisational and Worklife Ethics

This subject runs a research programme called "Care and the meaning of life", consisting of four different areas of study. Ethical analysis of state investigations, ethics and leadership within the welfare sector and ethics in the business world are currently being planned.

Palliative Care

This research studies complex situations in the care of patients with life-limiting illnesses, as well as support for relatives during the period of care for the ill person, their death and afterwards, covering the entire human life cycle.

Social Work

This subject researches conditions, forms and outcomes of social work, opportunities and limits of the profession, and user perspectives and the role of relatives in social work.

Health Care Ethics with Studies in Views of Life

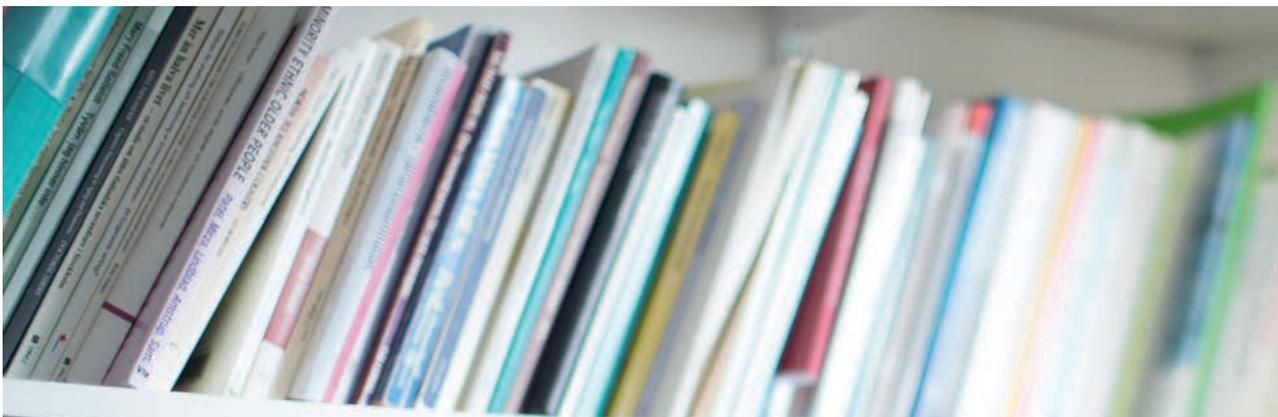
This subject studies ethical and view of life aspects of practical problems in health and social care. It makes particular note of current phenomena, such as the ethical motives for new and unconventional treatment methods.

Nursing Science

Nursing science research focuses on people's experiences in connection with ill health, disease and suffering, both in connection with restoring, maintaining and promoting health, and in relation to the biological body and sociocultural structures.

Welfare Law Research

Welfare law is a general research subject at Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College. It analyses the significance of law for creating and maintaining a welfare society with respect for fundamental values: legal rights, non-discrimination and integrity of the individual. Also studied are legal practices and the interaction between civil, political and social human rights in national and international law.



Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College's research strategy for the period 2018–2022 is based on its Shareholder Directive and Strategic Plan 2017–2022, which emphasises the importance of research for the development of the university college. The research strategy contains eight overall targets for research and indicates ways of achieving these targets. The targets have been formulated against the background of the statement from UKÄ, the Swedish Higher Education Authority, in connection with the university college's application for the entitlement to award degrees at third-cycle level.

Detailed descriptions are given in each subject's research programme
www.esh.se/research