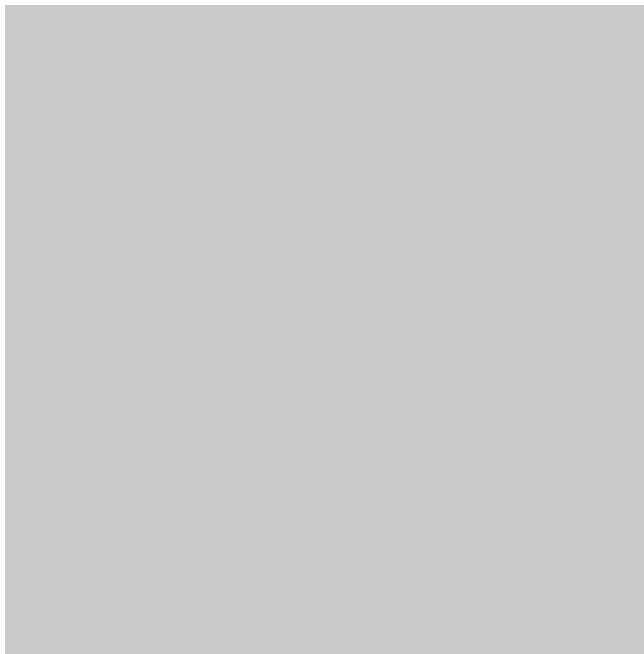


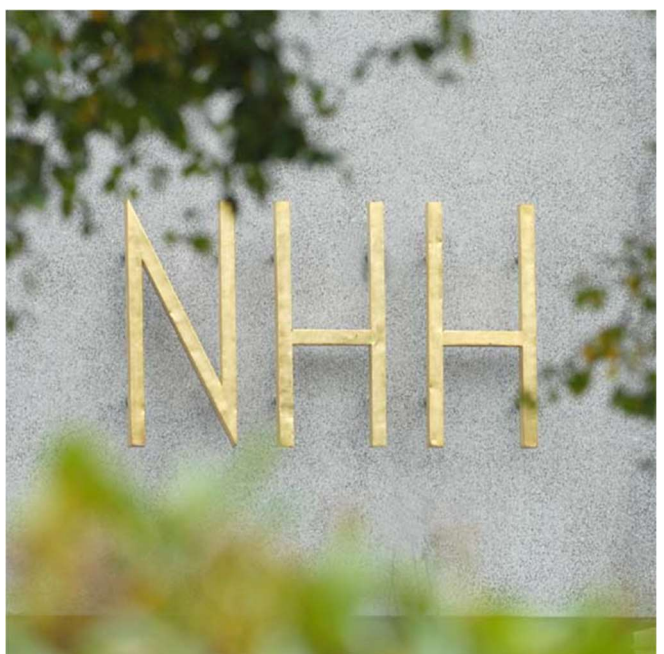
# ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVED GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIC POSITIONS



NHH



Adopted by the Board on 20 October 2022



## 1. BACKGROUND

According to the Equality and Discrimination Act, all institutions in the university, university college and institute sector must work actively, purposefully and systematically to promote equality and prevent discrimination. Work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and to prevent discrimination is essential to NHH's strategy 2022–2025: 'Together for sustainable value creation'.

The strategy emphasises that human resources must take centre stage. NHH will recruit, develop and retain highly qualified and motivated employees who possess sound and relevant expertise. NHH will promote diversity in all areas, with a particular emphasis on an improved gender balance in academic positions.

NHH will be an attractive workplace for highly qualified people. NHH will facilitate professional development for all members of staff and promote positive collegial cooperation. Systematic managerial development at all levels will enhance personnel, research and strategic management. NHH will recruit academic staff of a high international standard through conscious, targeted recruitment. NHH will pursue an active recruitment policy that facilitates a better gender balance in academic positions.

Of NHH's three strategic focus areas, two are particularly relevant to improving the gender balance:

1. Driving sustainable value creation

UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 concerns equality and strengthening the position of girls and women in society. The United Nations Association of Norway highlights that the proportion of women in politics and business is increasing, but that there are still far more men than women in positions of power. Many women are financially dependent on their partner, which leads to a skewed balance of power both at home and in society. Equality is about fair distribution of power, influence and resources. Political, economic and social equality between genders contributes to positive development at all levels. Equality and women's rights are a consistent theme in the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Commitment and cooperation in achieving common objectives

NHH's organisational culture and teaching and working environment must be engaging and inclusive, and the organisation must be characterised by a collective ability and willingness to work towards achieving common objectives. NHH will be a vital workplace characterised by commitment, diversity, inclusion and collegial cooperation. Systematic managerial development will foster leadership in all parts of the organisation.

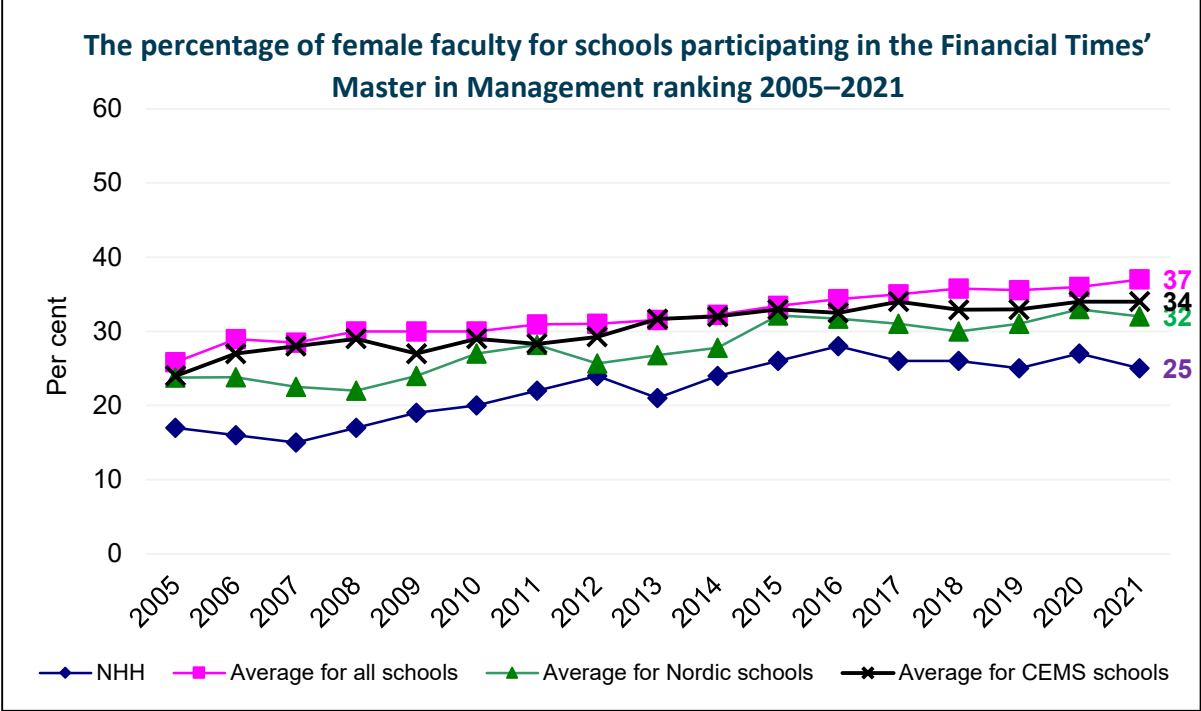
Equality in research is of paramount importance for academic institutions such as NHH, as research also forms the basis for the school's social mission. Equality in education depends on equality among the academic staff, with high-profile academic role models of both genders in teaching and academic supervision. Furthermore, equality in education depends on relevant gender dimensions in teaching and the curriculum, gender balance among students, and students receiving the same attention, rights and opportunities regardless of gender. The gender composition of graduate groups also has consequences for society and the labour market.

The European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy and the European Research Area's roadmap for Norway each identify separate targets for gender balance and gender dimensions in research, that are binding in Norwegian academia. From 2022, the EU and the Research Council of Norway strengthened three areas of work towards gender balance and gender equality:

1. A gender equality action plan is a requirement for the allocation of research funds.
  - The plan must meet four process-related requirements (known as 'building blocks'): (i) the action plan must be a public document, (ii) the institution must set aside dedicated resources for equality, (iii) the institution must carry out data collection and monitoring and (iv) the plans must include training and capacity building.
  - Furthermore, the plan should accommodate the EU's five recommended key areas (known as "cross-cutting priorities"): (i) organisational culture and work-life balance, (ii) gender balance in leadership and decision-making, (iii) gender equality in recruitment and career progression, (iv) integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching content, and (v) measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.
2. Integration of gender dimensions is a standard requirement in all the Horizon Europe programmes.
3. Gender balance among research teams is one of five criteria for being awarded research funds.

As with other comparable educational institutions, both in Norway and abroad, the proportion of women in academic positions at NHH is generally low, and lower the higher up the job hierarchy. For example, the proportion of women in top academic posts (senior lecturers and professors) in Norway was 35% in 2021, while it was 20% in the professor group at NHH. Professors and academic directors are important agenda setters for academic profiles and resource management. In light of this, the low proportion of women in professorships is challenging, both in itself and because it provides a poor basis for recruiting more women to leading academic positions.

In an international context, NHH looks to institutions with which it is natural to compare itself. The figure below shows that NHH has a low proportion of women among its academic staff compared to other institutions.



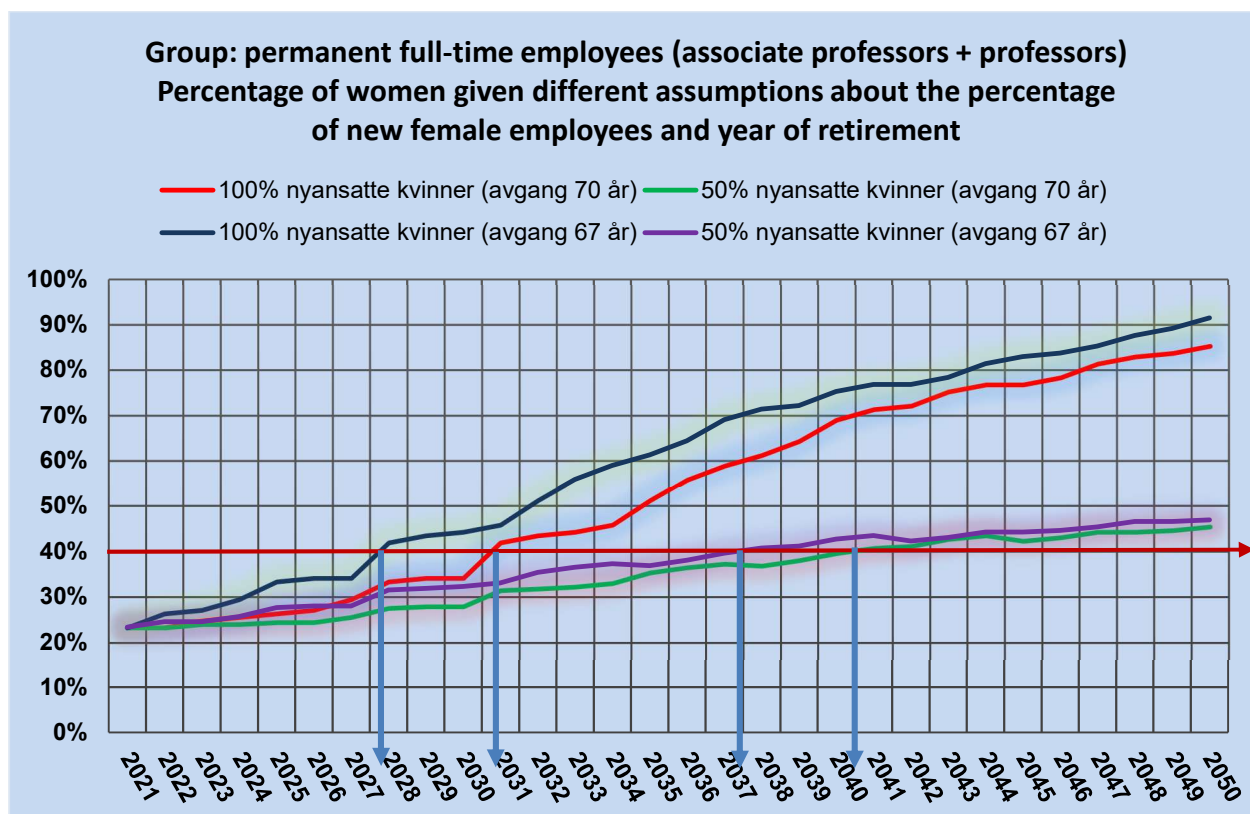
Source: Financial Times, NHH

The overview shows the development in the proportion of female academic staff members from 2005 to 2021 for:

- NHH
- Average for all schools in the FT MiM ranking
- Average for all CEMS schools in the FT MiM ranking
- Average for all Nordic schools in the FT MiM ranking

The leeway available for appointments at NHH is central to the work on achieving a better gender balance in academic positions. Below is a simple projection of employee data at NHH, which assumes that all employees remain in their position until the age of 67 or 70, respectively, i.e. no staff turnover along the way. New positions (growth) have also not been included.

If the present staff work until the age of 67 and 100% of new employees are women, the target of 40% women will be achieved in 2028. If the present staff work until the age of 70 and 50% of new employees are women, the target of 40% women will be achieved in 2040.



Source: Data from the HR department, autumn 2021.

In the markets from which business schools recruit, there are relatively fewer female applicants for vacancies compared with other educational institutions, and therefore strong 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.

Research shows that the following measures are effective:

- Mentoring and networking ([Blau et al., 2010](#)).
- Objective and transparent criteria, e.g. associated with appointment, promotion to professorship and qualification in tenure-track positions ([Hospido et al., 2019](#)).
- Knowledge about unconscious bias.

Recent research shows that unconscious selection bias, where such factors as language and cultural factors can lead employers preferring men over women, occurs when it comes to both new appointments and applications for promotion. Several studies show that changing an applicant's name on an otherwise identical application distinctly changes the likelihood the candidate will be employed, and the proposed starting salary ([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](#)).

Research also shows that the following measures are ineffective:

- Female representation in evaluation committees, promotion cases etc. As well as not working as intended, such measures lead to an extra heavy workload for women, and thus less time for qualifying work ([Bagues et al., 2017](#)) ([Card et al., 2020](#)).
- Various forms of gender-neutral tenure clock stopping, e.g. schemes for extending contracts based on length of leave. So-called objective, gender-neutral measures have been shown to have unintended effects ([Antecol et al., 2018](#)).

The action plan emphasises the importance of effective measures that are balanced, based on science and seen in conjunction with the strategy.

Ensuring that NHH and the disciplines it represents are capable of attracting capable women is one of the main challenges, as well as taking steps to facilitate women qualifying for promotion to positions at the highest level.

Equality between the genders is not only about gender balance and the fair distribution of opportunities and resources, but also that both gender dimensions are reflected in core activities. Gender equality must be an integral part of the school’s core activities, i.e. research, teaching and dissemination.

Continuous, systematic and targeted work that is aligned with the Board, NHH’s central management and the organisation as a whole will ensure that NHH achieves its goals on gender equality and gender balance.

## **2. MAIN OBJECTIVE**

The overall aim of the action plan is institutional and cultural change to achieve a more balanced gender composition in academic positions, and to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment for all. Equality is both a goal and a process that will contribute to a better working environment that promotes job satisfaction, motivation and quality, and that will help NHH attract and retain talent by:

- consciously promoting an organisational culture and a working environment that is inclusive and fair,
- research, teaching and dissemination being designed to be attractive and stimulating, and giving all employees equal opportunities to develop their talents,
- having an active recruitment policy that promotes inclusion and prevents all forms of discrimination,

- the gender distribution in academic positions reflecting at least the gender distribution in the recruitment base to positions at various levels.

Each year, the overall target figures for gender-balanced recruitment for research fellow, postdoctoral and adjunct posts, as well as permanent posts as associate professor and professor, are set out in the ‘Status report for Action Plan for Improved Gender Equality in Academic Positions’. The school’s ambition is for each gender to be represented by at least 40% in all categories of academic positions and in each department.

### 3. ALIGNMENT, RESOURCES AND WORK ORGANISATION

Gender equality is the responsibility of managers at all levels and is aligned with the Board through the school’s strategy. The responsibility concerns, among other things, recruitment, personnel follow-up, the working environment, and organisational culture.

- The Board annually allocates funds for central and local gender equality work. On top of this come any external funds, e.g. through projects with funding from the Research Council’s *BALANSE* programme on gender balance in senior positions and research management.
- Work and responsibility follow NHH’s organisation, and are the responsibility of management at all levels . It concerns raising awareness and knowledge in the organisation about structural and cultural obstructions to gender equality, and implementing measures to achieve the school’s objectives.
- The heads of department have a special responsibility for integrating and aligning this work with the academic staff in their department and for ensuring the goals are attained within their disciplines. The responsibility involves:
  - actively promoting an understanding of the importance of NHH achieving its goals for equality,
  - actively working to achieve target figures set for gender balance in academic positions,
  - actively participating and contributing to NHH’s overall, coordinated work towards equality,
  - assisting annually in the preparation of the ‘Status report for Action Plan for Improved Gender Equality in Academic Positions’, including submitting equality accounts that show to what extent considerations for equality have been taken into account when prioritising research resources, and the extent to which equality funding has been used in accordance with the action plan’s objectives.
- The heads of department are responsible for equality in their department and make up the equality team at NHH, together with NHH’s central gender equality adviser and vice-rector for academic resources.

- The equality team must be a driving force and an inspiration by contributing to strategic discussions and objectives, as well as coordinating the work towards equality at NHH. The team must keep abreast of best practice in the higher education sector in general, and at NHH in particular, and has overall responsibility for implementing the action plan, with special responsibility for the annual equality seminars, for management training and training of new employees, the design of equality support and information about equality. The team annually reviews the budget and accounts for equality funds.
- NHH's gender equality adviser coordinates the work towards equality and, in consultation with the equality team and the management at NHH, is responsible for the follow-up and evaluation of the 'Action Plan for Improved Gender Equality in Academic Positions'. The gender equality adviser is the secretary of the equality team.
- 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.

## 4. MEASURES

The measures in the action plan govern the school's work towards gender equality, with particular focus on recruiting, developing and retaining highly qualified and motivated women in academic positions. The measures are aimed at both the institutional and individual level, and there are measures with a limited duration as well as long-term structural measures.

### 4.1 Overarching measures to achieve improved gender equality in academic positions

- Women are important role models in teaching, research and dissemination. This entails, among other things, that:
  - Students shall have both female and male lecturers on all programmes and at all levels, including guest lecturers. Heads of department have a special responsibility for how they use teaching staff, including student assistants, and guest lecturers of both genders in different courses and programmes.
  - Male and female experts shall be used in the media and other dissemination as sources in areas of strategic importance. Media training courses are a useful tool.
- The composition of Boards, councils and committees shall ensure that men and women have equal influence in key decision-making processes.
  - All managers at NHH must be aware of the risk of the under-represented gender being overloaded with council and committee work that confers no merit.



- It is important to realise that female employees in leadership roles, both at NHH and on national councils and committees, serve as important role models. NHH will therefore strive for gender equality in leadership positions and draw attention to such contributions.
- A gender dimension will be integrated into research and teaching content, which is also a requirement for the allocation of research funds from the EU and the Research Council.
- The Board will allocate annual funding for central equality measures and to encourage the initiation of local measures. Part of this funding is earmarked as grants for which academic communities can apply in the form of e.g. seed funding for network and mentoring measures.
- Courses in presentation techniques will be organised for female academic staff and job market candidates, with the support of NHH's two *BALANSE* projects (the Research Council's programme for gender balance in senior positions and research management): *WomEN* and *Challenge*.
- An annual gender equality seminar will be organised for the NHH community, ideally in connection with International Women's Day on 8 March.
- Perspectives on gender equality will be addressed at the time managers are recruited, and will be included in the school's management training and in Everyday Management, a programme that boosts managerial expertise.
- It is important to be aware of unconscious bias based on gender, both in recruitment and in assessments for promotion. In order to counteract this type of bias and selection, the school will arrange for relevant parties to take an [implicit association test](#) (IAT) to increase their awareness of this type of bias.
- The action plan for improved gender equality in academic positions will be one of the main topics in the regular dialogue between the rector's team and the heads of department.
- The Board will consider an annual status report on improved gender equality in academic positions. The report will meet NHH's reporting obligation under the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act with regard to gender equality and the EU's reporting requirements.
- Arrangements will be made for a good work-life balance, e.g. adaptation of duties and working hours. NHH will endeavour to offer employees kindergarten services that are flexible and of good quality.
- Employees shall have a working environment free of sexual harassment or any form, cf. the school's Action Plan on Sexual Harassment.

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

- NHH will pursue an active recruitment policy that contributes to more women in academic positions. An improved gender balance is an overarching objective in all

future recruitment. When appointing new employees, a special report must be made if the applicant pool does not include both qualified men and women.

- All job advertisements must include a passage about NHH giving high priority to achieving a good gender balance. The school will use moderate gender quotas where two candidates are more or less equally qualified.
- The departments are encouraged to use recruitment committees (search-and-find committees) to ensure gender balance and diversity in the applicant pool. The departments must ensure that members of such committees receive information about the possible effects of unconscious bias in the recruitment process.
- Procedures will be drawn up that ensure good transparency in recruitment processes, e.g. making the public list of applicants available without request, and drawing up written guidelines with objective criteria for assessing competence for promotion (tenure-track positions, professor promotion, etc.).
- Unadvertised appointment should be considered as a measure for recruiting women, both to associate professorships and professorships, if the proportion of women in academic positions at the department is below 40%.
- When appointing women as adjunct associate professors and adjunct professors, 50% of the salary for the first two years will be covered by central gender equality funds. The salary subsidy only applies to first-time employment in departments where the proportion of women in permanent, academic positions is below 40%, and only for internally funded positions .
- NHH will ensure good access to information about all applicable incentives and support schemes for academic staff at NHH.
- NHH will pursue an active family policy, e.g. by assisting spouses to qualify for the Norwegian labour market, offering assistance with Norwegian language education, and arranging for children of employees recruited internationally to have a good transition to Norwegian schools and kindergartens.
- The school's wage policy shall be used actively to achieve the targets for recruiting women.

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

- The heads of department must have particular focus on facilitating measures for qualification and promotion for women, including facilitating publication.
- The school regards the performance appraisal interview as an important development and management tool. Performance appraisal interviews will include points of professional and personal development. For employees in recruitment positions, this will include planning the transition to a permanent internal or external position, and for permanent employees, the focus will be the path towards promotion to professorship and/or merited lecturer. In the interviews, participation in work that confers merit will be an important topic.

- The welcome programme offered to new employees (the onboarding programme) will be expanded with a feature on the NHH culture, gender equality and gender balance. The induction will help new lecturers acclimatise to the teaching setting and interactions with students at NHH. New employees are appointed a teaching mentor as part of the school's programme in educational theory and practice for new employees.
- NHH will strengthen its academic leadership and take steps to facilitate the organisation of research in creative and productive research environments that are attractive to both women and men. Professional development is best achieved in good research groups with active contributors. An official mentoring programme for women in academic positions will not be reintroduced, but heads of department have special responsibility to ensure that academic staff are included in active research groups and meriting networks with good role models. The two *BALANSE* projects at the school actively contribute to women participating in such arenas.
- Women in associate professor posts will earn the first two years of research leave in half the normal amount of time.
- Female postdoctoral fellows and associate professors are awarded an annual stipend of NOK 25,000 for further qualification for up to three years. The transfer of unused funds to the following year may be granted by way of an application stating the grounds. An annual stipend may be awarded beyond three years following an application stating the grounds from women actively working towards qualification. The application must emphasise how previously received funds have contributed, and new funds will contribute, to qualification.
- Measures aimed at facilitating improved gender equality with regard to qualification are also integrated in the Funds Regulations. Currently, the annual limit for conference travel grants from the school's internal fund is set at NOK 40,000 for women, while the limit for men is NOK 30,000.
- When appointing women to permanent posts such as associate professor or professor, a quarter of the salary for the first four years is covered by central equality funds. For women employed on a fixed-term basis in a seven-year postdoctoral post (tenure-track assistant professor), the same reimbursement will be given to the department for the last three years of the employment period as a postdoctoral fellow, and the first year as an associate professor, if she qualifies for a permanent position. For women employed on a fixed-term contract in a seven-year associate professor post (tenure-track associate professor), the same reimbursement will be given to the department for the last three years of the employment period as an associate professor, and the first year as professor, if she qualifies for a permanent position. The initiative only applies to first-time employment in departments where the proportion of women in permanent academic positions is below 40%, and only for internally funded positions. The primary purpose of the initiative is to compensate departments to enable female employees in the initial phase of their careers to have a reduced teaching load in order to free up time for research that confers merit, including half the earning time for women in an associate professor post for the first two years on research leave. Freed

up funds may for example be used to employ a person in an adjunct position to cover the loss of teaching capacity.

## **5. PERIOD OF APPLICATION**

The action plan applies from 1 January 2023.