



Agreement on enhanced cooperation and an academic network between universities in Skåne, Blekinge, Halland, Kronoberg and Kalmar

An agreement on enhanced cooperation between Blekinge Institute of Technology, Halmstad University, Kristianstad University, Lund University, Malmö University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, referred to below as ‘the parties’, has been in place since 2009. The network is known as *Universities in South Sweden* (‘Lärosäten Syd’ in Swedish). Linnæus University recently joined the network.

Background

Universities in south Sweden have a long history of cooperating within several areas such as education, PhD programmes, research, administrative functions and external engagement. The collaboration initiatives have resulted in enhanced quality, improved resource utilisation and better contact with industry and society for students, universities and the surrounding community.

Societal developments place new demands on universities, and in order to meet these demands, universities in southern Sweden collaborate within the *Universities in South Sweden* network. The network allows us to join forces to address the higher demands, as well as to take greater social responsibility by educating for the future and approaching the challenges we face through research and innovation. In this way, the *Universities in South Sweden* makes a difference and promotes even better and stronger regions.

In total, the higher education institutions included in *Universities in South Sweden* have approximately 71 000 full-time students, around 15 000 employees and about SEK 18 billion in revenue (2019 figures). This corresponds to approximately 25% of the entire education sector within these three areas. Students and employees come from all over the world. Research is characterised by both extensive breadth and many specialisations, and encompasses major research facilities, a university hospital and several innovation clusters where new and established businesses can develop. Together the universities create a dynamic whole and a knowledge environment for higher education and research in southern Sweden.

The universities differ in terms of size, types of education and research, areas of expertise and the settings in which they operate. These differences constitute a strength which enhances the possibility of a complementary approach – what one university lacks, another one provides. The universities also have distinct profiles. This diversity is to be maintained, as the distinct profiles provide opportunities to complement the content of each university’s research and study programmes.

There are also many similarities; for example, several of the universities offer programmes in teacher training, engineering, medicine and health, and economics. Collaboration within these and other areas is longstanding, and *Universities in South Sweden* can help promote additional collaboration. The network develops the dynamic whole that the universities collectively create in southern Sweden, while each university also benefits individually.

Aim, objectives and remit

The aim of *Universities in South Sweden* is to cooperate on common issues within education, research and collaboration. *Universities in South Sweden* also serves as a partner to regions, municipalities and industry.

The main objective of *Universities in South Sweden* is to promote common issues in regional, national and international contexts where the universities can make a difference and promote even better and stronger regions.

The *Universities in South Sweden* collaborate by:

- providing synergies through the exchange of experiences, cooperation and greater collective planning within
 - education
 - PhD programmes
 - research
 - innovation and collaboration with industry and the surrounding community
 - administration and service
- enabling greater influence when approaching the Government, public authorities, regions, municipalities and funding bodies on common issues, as well as when working together with them as partners
- facilitating mobility between the universities for students, teaching staff and researchers
- promoting widening participation and recruitment to higher education together with civil society, municipalities and regions
- helping to highlight the importance and concept of education and lifelong learning
- influencing the long-term planning of housing, public transport and other infrastructure in close collaboration with regional and municipal stakeholders
- constituting an academic segment within regional collaboration bodies such as competence platforms and regional innovation organisations
- pursuing the network's common interests in an international context through a representation in Brussels.

Organisation and funding

The highest coordinating body for *Universities in South Sweden* is composed of the vice-chancellors from the network's universities. The vice-chancellor meetings are convened at least once a semester. In addition, university management at the various universities maintains ongoing contact with the other members. Members of university management with responsibility for education and university directors are organised in their own groups.

The Chair's term is one year, and it rotates among the members. An administrative coordinator resource is attached to *Universities in South Sweden*.

Based on decisions made by any of the groups above, committees, working groups and networks can be appointed on a permanent or ad hoc basis.

Student influence is ensured through participation in the meetings and process. Two student representatives, one of whom attends the university hosting the meeting, may attend the vice-chancellor meetings. One (1) student representative per university may participate in the meetings with

members of university management with responsibility for education (for first and second cycle education).

The parties have agreed to allocate the expenses for the administrative coordinator resource and the representation in Brussels as follows:

Lund University – 53%

Malmö University – 10%

Linnæus University – 12%

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences – 10%

Kristianstad University – 5%

Halmstad University – 5%

Blekinge Institute of Technology – 5%

Other agreements on projects and investments are determined on a project basis. The parties may also reach bilateral agreements.

The parties are entitled to terminate the agreement and withdraw from cooperation with a six (6) month notice period. Notice of termination must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the vice-chancellor group. The withdrawing party is responsible for a proportionate amount of the expenses incurred by the party for the administrative coordinator resource during the notice period.

With the exception of Linnæus University, the original agreement was signed by the parties for the first time in Malmö on 1 October 2009. The agreement has subsequently been revised in Alnarp on 24 May 2013, in Karlshamn on 20 May 2015 and in Malmö on 28 February 2018. The current agreement supersedes the most recently revised agreement.