

## What do academic leaders in Sweden need to achieve research excellence?

### National Junior Faculty Conference 2026

**Proposed dates:** Autumn 2026 (2 days, TBD)

**Host institution:** Karolinska Institutet (on behalf of the National Junior Faculty of Sweden)

**Format:** In-person at Karolinska Institutet (Aula Medica or Biomedicum).

**Expected participants:** ~200 junior faculty members and invited stakeholders from across Swedish universities.

**Purpose and Rationale:** While research institutions strive for research excellence, researchers across Sweden still face challenges in establishing independence, securing stable positions, and balancing research, teaching, and leadership roles. There is currently no clear consensus nor unified strategy across all relevant stakeholders to support research excellence in Sweden.

The Swedish National Junior Faculty (NJF) 2026 conference aims to develop an effective unified strategy through an NJF Declaration by bringing together early- and mid-career researchers from across Sweden with funders, policymakers, and university leadership. This conference will create a national platform for discussion, visibility, and policy influence, promoting sustainable, inclusive academic careers and highlighting the scientific excellence of early and mid-career researchers. The declaration will comprise sustainable academic careers, research quality, and structural conditions affecting the next generation of researchers.

#### Partners and Contributors (confirmed)

- National Junior Faculty of Sweden (NJF) – Lead organizer
- Karolinska Institutet (KI) – Host institution
- Local Junior Faculties from Swedish universities
- Funding and governmental agencies, higher education institution representatives, academic unions are being also contacted.

#### Expected Outcomes

- Creation of a structured national coordination network among Junior Faculty and institutional stakeholders, enabling continued collaboration on academic career development and research leadership beyond the conference.
- Establishment of formal dialogue mechanisms between early- and mid-career researchers and national stakeholders to ensure continued consultation on academic career policy beyond the conference.
- Consensus-based recommendations for reforming research assessment and academic career progression systems, aligned with responsible research evaluation and international best practices.
- Publication of the National Junior Faculty Declaration as a strategic policy document, outlining actionable reforms for sustainable academic careers, research assessment, and structural conditions for research excellence.

## Preliminary Two-Day Agenda

### Day 1 – National Research Policy and Career Structures affecting Scientific Excellence of Early Career Researchers

**10:00 – 10:30**

**Opening Ceremony Welcome:** Who is NJF and what do they do? (**Shireen Sindi, NJF Chair**)

**PART 1: Current status and challenges for early career researchers to produce quality research?** Session chairs: Nicole van der Burg (LU) and Sara Arroyo (KI)

**10:30 – 11:00**

**The Problem:** Introduction and status of Sweden's academic environment across universities (**Academic union - TBD**)

**11:00 – 11:30**

**Keynote:** National Strategies for Strengthening Early- and Mid-Career Research in Sweden (**Ministry of Education and Research representative -TBD**)

**11:30 - 12:30**

**Debate panel:** Career Structures and Evaluation of Early-Career Researchers. (**Representation from Ministry of Education and Research, Academic appointment Boards of different universities and NJF board - TBD**)

*12:30-13:30 Lunch & Networking*

**PART 2: How can we improve the Swedish academic career/system for early career researchers to produce quality research?** Session chairs: TBD

**13:30 -14:30**

**Panel:** Institutional support across Swedish universities. (**Career Offices - TBD**)

*14:30 - 15:00 Coffee Break*

**15:00 - 16:30**

**Moderated discussion:** Policy measures for sustainable academic careers and research excellence. (**Representatives from national funding, unions and university leadership - TBD**)

**16:30-17:00**

**Open panel:** Reflections of the day, what is the main barrier to producing quality research? What action can we take to improve the situation? (**NJF board members discussing with audience**).

*17:00 Networking Reception*

## Day 2 – Hints, tips and tricks to improve your quality research output / to stabilise your academic career in Sweden

### **PART 3: How to maximise your resources for your Swedish academic career**

Session chairs: TBD

**09:00 – 09:30**

**Icebreaker activity:** bond with your national early career researchers

**09:30 – 10:15**

**Keynote:** From Junior to Independent Researcher – Critical Transitions and System-Level Barriers. **(Union representative - TBD)**

*10:15 - 10:45 Coffee break*

**10:45 – 12:00**

**Rotating Workshops:** Tips and resources to improve your academic career in Sweden

- A. How to begin your leadership and project management skills early
- B. Networking, Visibility, and Academic Influence

**12:00 – 13:00** *Lunch and Networking*

**13:00 - 14:15**

**cont. Rotating Workshops:** Tips and resources to improve your academic career in Sweden

- C. Open Science, Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), Preprints, Research Impact, and Societal Engagement
- D. How to maximise your annual career developmental dialogue (utvecklingssamtal)

**14:15 – 15:00**

**Moderated Synthesis Session:** Key Messages from Workshops **(All participants)**

**15:00 - 15:30**

**Taking action / A solution:** Presentation of the National Junior Faculty Declaration **(NJF representatives - TBD)**