



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CIVIL SERVANT –

**A Brief Introduction For Umeå
University Employees**



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What does it mean that Umeå University is a public authority?

Umeå University is a national administrative authority. This means that you are a civil servant (government employee). Everyone who works for the state is covered by the basic values common for civil servants. These values constitute a fundamental starting point for your professional role and are based on democratic principles. Democracy is the overarching principle, and ultimately it is Sweden's citizens who are your employers. As a civil servant, you are obliged to apply and comply with the laws and regulations that apply to governmental operations.

As a national administrative authority, our activities are based, among other things, on principles of objectivity, pragmatism, and the equality of all people under the law. Principles that contribute to the openness and transparency of our activities, such as the principle of public access, are also fundamental.

The common basic values for civil servants can be summarised in these six fundamental principles:

Democracy. The people are the source of all public power. Through general elections, the people have appointed their representatives to the Swedish Parliament. The Swedish Parliament and government have instructed the state administration and civil servants to implement their decisions.

Legality. Public power is exercised under the law. As a civil servant, you apply and comply with the laws and regulations that apply to governmental operations.

Objectivity. The equality of all people under the law; objectivity and impartiality shall be observed. Equal cases shall be treated equally, and decisions shall be made following an objective administrative process. Bribery and conflicts of interest must not occur.

Free formation of opinion. Swedish democracy is based on the free formation of opinion, wherein openness and freedom of expression are central. As a civil servant, you possess freedom of expression and the freedom to disclose information. Your freedom to disclose information gives you the right to provide information to the media without any effort being made to trace its source (i.e., you). However, rules of confidentiality may impose restrictions on the freedom to disclose information.

Respect for the equal value, freedom and dignity of all people. Public power shall be exercised with respect for the equal value of all people and for the freedom and dignity of every individual. As a civil servant, you must always demonstrate respect for people's equal value. Any form of discrimination based, for example, on a person's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability is prohibited.

Efficiency and service. Efficiency and resource management shall be combined with service and availability. The public shall be provided with information, guidance and advice, and tasks shall be carried out in an efficient manner.



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Read more about the basic values for civil servants and [the role of civil servants](#) on the website of the Swedish Agency for Public Management.

Laws and regulations

Legislation is determined by the Swedish Parliament and government, as well as by central government authorities. The laws and regulations most important for the university include:

- The Instrument of Government (1974:152)
- The Freedom of the Press Act (1949:105)
- The Higher Education Act (1992:1434)
- The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100)
- The Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900)
- The Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400)
- The Fees and Charges Ordinance (1992:191)
- The Archives Act (1990:782)
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data, the free movement of such data, and the repealing of Directive 95/46/EG
- The Discrimination Act (2008:567)
- The Student Union Ordinance (2009:769)

Umeå University also has its own comprehensive regulatory framework. The university's own regulations include rules, administrative procedures, plans and policies. These are determined through decisions by the Vice-Chancellor or the University Board, for the purpose of managing the organisation's activities in a certain way. Keep in mind that for everything you do at work, there is most likely a rule that must be followed. You can find Umeå University's [regulations](#) on the web.

The control and quality of our activities are ensured in different ways:

- government authorities, e.g. the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ), the Swedish Data Protection Authority (DPA)
- the Ombudsman for Justice (JO), Chancellor of Justice (JK)
- The Swedish National Audit Office
- judicial review upon appeal
- the disciplinary and criminal liability of officials
- the public and the media

This purpose of this scrutiny is to uphold the law and democracy - we should not fear scrutiny. It is beneficial for a functioning rule of law, not to mention the quality of our activities.



As an employee, what can I do in the university's name?

The Vice-Chancellor is Umeå University's legal deputy, and makes decisions in the university's name. Through delegation, other employees may be granted the right to undertake actions that are legally binding for the university. The delegation of authority determines when this is permitted, and to what extent. For each decision-making level where further delegation occurs, such delegation must be documented in writing.

If you come to the conclusion that you have the right to make decisions on behalf of the university – then make sure that your decision is correct. You must have sufficient knowledge and verify that you are in compliance with the applicable rules. Keep in mind that as a general rule, favourable decisions may not be altered, even if the decision was incorrect (unless it relates to a manifest error resulting from clerical errors, calculation errors or any other similar oversight).

The Communication Office's pages for [Press Contacts](#) on Aurora provide guidelines and advice for Umeå University's contact with the press. The guidelines apply to those who express themselves as representatives of the university.

Keep in mind that contact with journalists often demands swift action, but you can always ask to get back to them a little later, in order to give you time to ascertain the facts or consult with your immediate superior or public information officer, for example.

Purchasing and ordering goods and services

The head of each office is responsible for determining an ordering procedure that specifies which employees should be allowed to make purchases, and in what amounts. The right to make purchases may be limited to certain goods or services, to certain monetary limits, or to certain projects.

The university has a fixed routine for the purchasing of goods and services. In the first instance, the university's internal support functions, such as the University Service and the IT Office (among others) shall be used. Otherwise, purchases must be made via the university's contracted suppliers. If a contract exists, purchases must be made through the contracted supplier. The reason for this is that the Public Procurement Act (LOU) applies to the university's activities. Direct procurement may only occur in exceptional cases, in consultation with Procurement and Purchasing.

Read more about this on Aurora's pages about [Purchasing Goods and Services](#).

Research - laws and ethics

Anyone who conducts research, and especially the person responsible for a research project, has a great responsibility to ensure that research is carried out in accordance with laws and regulations, such as, e.g. the Ethical Review Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as well as that the research is conducted in accordance with good research practice. Ethical considerations



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and guidelines play an important role in the quality and implementation of research, as well as how the results of research can be responsibly used.

Read more about good research practice in the Swedish Research Council's book [Good Research Practice](#), which is published on the website of the Swedish Research Council.

Read more about ethical review on the website of [the Swedish Ethical Review Authority](#).

Personal data processing (GDPR)

The activities of Umeå University (education, research and collaboration) involve the processing of a large amount of personal data. It is important that the public have confidence in our activities, and therefore it is important that we process personal data properly.

Umeå University is the personal data controller for all personal data processing conducted within the context of the university's activities. This ranges from the project reports of individual students to the university's major administrative systems and research projects.

For the person responsible for the processing of personal data, such as researchers or system operators, it is necessary to know the requirements of the law regarding the permitted grounds for processing, the obligation to provide information, processing principles, the requirement to record the processing, security requirements, etc. It is important that those who work only within one system and use personal data (such as a study administrator) possess knowledge about what applies to them, but this information need not entail the same degree of detail.

Read more about [personal data](#) and personal data processing on Aurora's pages about legal matters, and on the website of the [Swedish Data Protection Authority](#)

Information security

Information is one of the university's most important assets and a prerequisite for the operation of its activities. Keep the following in mind:

- Take care of your computer and phone passwords and lock your door.
- Be vigilant about performing backups, virus protection, and updates to computers and mobile devices. Old software versions may contain vulnerabilities.
- Be aware of where you are and who is around when you process information – such as when making telephone calls and printing – and of what is visible on your screen.
- Only use IT services that you can obtain via the IT Department. These meet the requirements for both information security and personal data processing. Learn more about storage services, etc. on the IT Department's [pages](#) on Aurora.
- Watch out for attempts to trick you into disclosing personal data via fake e-mails or online forms (so-called 'phishing'). The university's IT staff will never ask for your password via e-mail.
- Exercise sound judgment when surfing the web. It may only take one visit to a specific webpage for your computer or mobile devices to become infected with malware. Report incidents to abuse@umu.se - they also provide advice and support.



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Read more on Aurora's pages about [security](#) and [information security](#).

If you conduct research, there is a great deal you need to consider when it comes to security and storage services. If your research demands that you store sensitive personal data or confidential information, it is particularly important that you use storage platforms that are secure and meet the requirements of the law.

E-mail management

The regulation [E-mail service at Umeå University](#) specifies rules regarding e-mail access and management.

In Aurora's [FAQ](#) section, the pages for legal matters and personal data processing also provide information about e-mail management. Among other things, it is stated that:

- Sensitive personal data may not be transmitted via e-mail.
- Confidential information may not be transmitted via e-mail.
- Information covered by the Protective Security Act (2018:585) may not be transmitted via e-mail.
- Privacy-sensitive data or information particularly worthy of protection should not be transmitted via e-mail.

In the case of personal identity numbers, you should always be restrictive when it comes to their processing. You should strike a balance of interests between the need, for example, to send them via e-mail and the privacy risks this entails. Personal identity numbers are considered to be a form of personal data that is especially worthy of protection, and one should disclose personal identity numbers as little as possible.

You should not use your e-mail at UmU for private e-mails, nor for e-mails you transmit within the context of any other role you might have, such as union representative.

Public documents

The principle of public access means, among other things, that the public has a right to view or obtain a copy of the public documents that the university holds, unless the document is covered by confidentiality. If you receive a request for the disclosure of a public document, it is important that you be aware that the request must be handled promptly, and that if following a confidentiality assessment, the disclosure of the document is deemed acceptable, as a general rule it should only be disclosed in a hard copy. In practice this means that a hard copy of the document must be disclosed immediately for requests made in person, and within two days for requests made by telephone, letter, e-mail, etc.

The university will charge a fee in accordance with the Fees Ordinance (1992:191) for copies of public documents requested. For paper copies, the first nine pages are normally free, but if the request is for ten pages or more, a fee is charged per page.



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Learn more about [public access and confidentiality](#) on Aurora's pages about legal matters.

Umeå University's document management plans control which documents shall be registered and which ones shall be kept organised. The document management plans also control which documents may be culled. Public documents may not be culled without explicit permission.

The person who leads a research project is responsible for the proper archiving of the documents generated by the project. Most of the documents arising from research are public documents and must be preserved.

Learn more about registration and archiving on the pages for [the registration of public documents and archiving](#) on Aurora.

Disqualification, secondary employment and the taking and giving of bribes

Regulations exist in which the principle of objectivity is expressed quite clearly. These rules aim to prevent conflicts of interest which might lead the objectivity of the public authority's representatives to be called into question.

Disqualification

A disqualification is a circumstance that undermines confidence in the impartiality of a particular decision-maker, administrator or expert in the handling/assessment of a case. A personal affiliation is one of the usual grounds for disqualification – i.e. that you or any related party is a party in the case in question, or may otherwise be assumed to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent. Another basis for disqualification is called a disqualification for reasons of discretion and delicacy – in such instances, some circumstance exists that may cause your impartiality in the case to be called into question. In view of the general design of the rule, it is not possible to exhaustively specify which matters may fall under it. However, they may, for example, pertain to financial dependence, close friendship, or animosity.

The person at whom the objection is directed is referred to as 'disqualified'. *A disqualified person may not participate in the handling of a case.* The rules apply in all cases handled by a public authority. For a disqualification to exist, it is not necessary that the person to be biased, but merely that the situation be such that there might typically be reason to suspect bias. Please note that even the mere *risk of suspicion* of a disqualification means that a disqualification exists.

Anyone who is aware of a circumstance which may be assumed to cause him or her to be disqualified must immediately notify the public authority. You will thus avoid becoming involved in conflicts of interest.

A person who carries out purely expeditionary tasks, such as copying and mailing, is not subject to the disqualification rules, even if said person would be affected by the case.

The guidance of the University Chancellor's Office (UKÄ), [The Handling of Employment Cases Within the University](#), provides information about disqualification in employment cases, among other matters.



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Secondary employment

Employees may sometimes have employment or run businesses that are ancillary to their employment at the university – so-called 'secondary employment'. Secondary employment can be authorised or unauthorised.

Certain secondary employment are not authorised. These include secondary employment that may undermine public confidence, interfere with work, or entail competition. In each case, an individual assessment is conducted of whether the secondary occupation is authorised or unauthorised.

If you are a member of the teaching staff or are covered by the management agreement, you must submit a report about your secondary employment, regardless of whether or not you actually have any secondary employment. This report must be submitted by 31 March every year, or when your secondary employment are altered from what you stated in your last report. Other employees are obliged to declare their secondary employment upon request.

Read more about [secondary employment](#) on Aurora's pages about legal matters.

The taking and giving of bribes

It is a criminal offence to receive or request compensation for actions performed within the context of your job. The public and the country's citizens must be able to trust that as a civil servant, you act objectively and impartially. You must therefore be aware of the conflicts of interest that may arise. There are many different types of benefits. The type or nature of a benefit does not determine whether or not a benefit is undue. Rather, this is determined by the benefit's value to the beneficiary and whether it is likely to affect the beneficiary (and thus her/his conduct in the context of her/his job).

The general rule is that one must turn down benefits in all dubious cases. Any gift which cannot be declined for reasons of courtesy shall be submitted to a competent superior as soon as possible for a decision regarding how the public authority should handle it.

No person exists within the university who can, with release from further liability, allow an employee to accept a benefit that objectively constitutes a bribe. Criminal liability always rests solely with the person who has received the bribe.

The university is obliged to report the taking and giving of bribes to the authorities for prosecution.

You can read more in [Umeå University's policy on the taking and giving of bribes](#), which is available on the regulations web.