

A new disciplinary domain board has taken office. It started its work with a lunch-to-lunch conference where the University's new strategy documents and the disciplinary domain's operational plan were the main points of discussion. Prior to this meeting, the Senior Management Team held a similar conference where we had the pleasure of welcoming my new Deputy Vice-Chancellor colleague, Karin Helander, with whom I am looking forward to cooperating. This time of year, priority is given to finalising nominations for the Wallenberg Academy Fellows programme and project applications to the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation. Both are very important to the Faculty. This year, we were glad to see many strong external nominations for the Wallenberg Academy Fellows programme, as well as many female candidates. I would like to encourage everyone to continue working to find new strong candidates for next year, particularly female and external candidates. New for this year is that the Swedish Research Council has embraced the commitment letter trend so they require such letters to be included with applications to their professorship programme.

The Faculty management, together with the Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Director of Administration, will visit the Faculty's departments throughout the year to meet with their management teams. While I have many informal contacts with the heads of departments, these more structured meetings are important for our operations to run as smoothly as possible.

Before Christmas, we received two comprehensive, ill-conceived investigative tasks from Formas. Formas has requested a detailed report of our operations, divided into different areas, from all sources of income (various external financiers and faculty grants) for each year between 2008 and 2013. It is not possible to provide a quality-assured answer, and the request has been met with negative reactions from the universities. The Swedish Research Council has now delivered its proposal for a research evaluation system, which is likely to be sent to the universities for consultation at some point. It is an interesting but very comprehensive proposal where, in a six-year cycle, 250-400 experts distributed across 24 areas will each read about 50 articles that we have selected as being the best. Meanwhile, Vinnova is working on a separate model for evaluating collaboration, to which the disciplinary domain board was very sceptical last summer. UKÄ is currently preparing an extensive evaluation of third-cycle programmes. This is the least regulated and most individual training, and it has a thorough quality assurance system for the most important part – the thesis. However, this will not be reviewed at all in UKÄ's model. Even if most of these evaluations probably have good intentions, and some of them are well thought out, there is reason to consider the overall view. We are spending more and more time on evaluation and assessment, both as reviewers and in being reviewed – is this reasonable? Perhaps we should spend some of this time on teaching and research instead? The academic system has strong quality-raising factors, such as academic standing, the awarding of positions and major grants through open competition, the good reputation and appeal of courses and programmes. I think we should consider safeguarding and strengthening the existing quality-raising factors as an alternative to the numerous evaluations. When evaluations are required, it is important that they are well-made and well thought out. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Anders