INTRODUCTION
Karlstad University’s document Vision 2015 opens with a statement on the University’s core values:
Democratic principles, a commitment to equality, and respect for diversity are the cornerstones of our university. Openness, respect and a sense of community characterize our work environment.

Karlstad University is an inclusive community characterized by equal opportunities for all students irrespective of background and capacities. The inclusive university is defined by an attitude of respect for and embrace of every person. There is no room for discrimination and harassment at an inclusive university. Diversity is perceived as an advantage and human value is honored.

Karlstad University is a modern university. We dare to think in new ways, explore the unknown and challenge established knowledge before the students arrive, while they study and when they are leaving the university. Active equal treatment efforts are essential components in quality assurance. Forms of instruction and examination are based on the accessibility perspective. The opportunity to study at Karlstad University should be available to all irrespective of gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Benefits of equal treatment efforts
Active and effective efforts in the area of equal treatment provide better conditions for students to study and perform well and contribute to the quality of educational opportunities on equal terms regardless of background differences. There is a greater chance to achieve diverse sets of competencies and students’ various competencies and experiences are confirmed.

The present equality action plan deals with Karlstad University’s responsibility for promoting student equality and diversity. For information of the University’s commitment from the employer perspective, see Equality and Diversity Policy at Karlstad University, including Action Plan for 2010-2012.

THE DISCRIMINATION LAW
The new Discrimination Law (SFS 2008:567) is effective from 1 January 2009. Several laws pertaining to fair treatment and discrimination were subsumed into one comprehensive law, and the previous law on fair treatment of students was repealed.

The new law is effective in similar ways and higher education institutions are still obliged to avert discrimination and harassment. The new law, however, specifies more grounds for discrimination and currently these are: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, functional challenge, sexual orientation or age.

An educational institution must not discriminate against students who participate in or apply for study programs. If the university should disfavor a student or applicant without an acceptable reason and the disadvantage is related to the grounds for discrimination listed above, this action constitutes discrimination. The university will remain responsible for investigating such cases, which means that whenever the educational institution finds that a student or applicant has been harassed or sexually harassed in connection with university-related activities, an investigation must take place. Whenever necessary, appropriate action must be taken to avoid future cases of harassment.
As an educational institution, Karlstad University will work purposefully to promote equal rights and opportunities for students and applicants. The university is also obliged to take action to stop and prevent harassment related to sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, functional challenge, sexual orientation or age. In order to work with this systematically, the educational institution will create an annual plan, which delineates planned measures and specifies which measures will be launched or completed during the year for which the plan is valid. The annual plan will also include a report of activities and measures taken the year before.

**Harassment**
If an action harms the integrity of a student or applicant, and this action is related to one of the grounds for discrimination listed above, this constitutes harassment (SFS 2008:567 §4).
Harassment can be cold-shouldering, making someone feel invisible or hurtful comments. Both students and university employees can be guilty of harassment. An educational institution is obliged to take action whether a case of harassment is discovered between a university employee and a student or between students.

In legal terms, harassment is separate from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as “behavior of sexual nature which harms a person’s integrity” (SFS 2008:567 §4).
Sexual harassment includes among other things sexually charged touching, jokes and suggestions that are unwelcome and demeaning. The victim of such behavior decides whether or not it should be considered a violation.

**Direct and indirect discrimination**
The Discrimination Law distinguishes between direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination means that a student or applicant is at a disadvantage compared to other students and that the disadvantage is directly related to one or several of the grounds for discrimination. The disadvantage can be caused either by direct action or a failure to act, for instance through not adapting a building for a disabled student.

Indirect discrimination means that the university applies a policy or routine which seems neutral but which in fact discriminates against a student or applicant of a certain sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, functional challenge, sexual orientation or age. In cases of indirect discrimination, everyone receives equal treatment and this entails disadvantage for students or applicants, for instance if qualifications are required which are not necessary and which exclude someone. The Discrimination Law also includes a prohibition against instruction to discriminate.

University representatives (management, staff and others) must not discriminate when making decisions, interacting with students or applicants, or taking any other actions. There may be acceptable reasons for special treatment that is not discriminatory, and in these cases the university is responsible for proving that there is a valid reason.

**Grounds for discrimination**
The definitions of grounds for discrimination are based on the Discrimination Law but have in some cases been clarified and explained; for definition in legal terms, see SFS 2998:567 §5.

**Sex**
Sex as a ground for discrimination relates to the circumstance that somebody is a man or a woman. Transsexuals and future transsexual persons are included in this category see (see
Preventing Discrimination, DO).

**Transgender identity or expression**
The law uses the concept transgender identity or expression, but in this plan the concept gender identity or expression will henceforth be used. Gender identity or expression as a ground for discrimination applies to people who in different ways depart from normative gender identities and expressions, that is ways in which women and men are expected to behave and look. This ground for discrimination includes transvestites, persons who wear clothes and/or other attributes typically worn by the other sex (www.rfsl.se ). Intersexual persons, in other words persons who were born with an uncertain gender identity are included in this category, as well as inter- and transgender persons. Inter- and transgender persons are persons who define themselves outside traditional gender identities or outside gender (see Preventing Discrimination, DO).

**Ethnicity**
Ethnicity entails ”national or ethnic background, colour of skin or other similar condition” (SFS 2998:567 5§). A person may have several ethnic identities and each person has the right to define their ethnic identity.

**Functional challenge**
In the Discrimination Law, functional challenge is defined as ”permanent physical, mental or intellectual limitations which were present at birth, have arisen later or which may be expected to occur as a result of injury or illness” (SFS 2008:567 5§). A functional challenge can be for instance allergies, dyslexia, impaired vision or hearing. It can also be an injury or an illness that is expected to cause a future limitation, such as HIV, cancer and so on. The degree of functional challenge is irrelevant in the sense that a person is protected against discrimination regardless of it.

Instead of the term disability, this plan will use the term functional challenge. The concept functional challenge describes the functional ability of a person rather than a person’s identity. Limitations which may arise are related to the environment where a person functions and not only to her or his disability.

**Sexual orientation**
In the Discrimination Law, sexual orientation is defined as homosexuality, bisexuality or heterosexuality (SFS 2008:567 5§).

**Age**
Age is defined as how long a person has lived. Whether a person is young or old, she or he is protected against discrimination on this ground (SFS 2008:567 5§).

**Religion or other belief**
Religion or other belief as a ground for discrimination is not defined in the Discrimination Law. There are examples of beliefs included in the preparatory work and these are Buddhism, atheism and agnosticism. Political views, ethical or philosophical values are not included in this ground for discrimination (Government Prop. 2007/08:95, p.121)

**RISKS RELATED TO EQUAL TREATMENT EFFORTS**
The risk of ignorance about the Discrimination Law among students and staff

Equal treatment efforts are fruitless if students are unaware of their legal rights. In 2007, the National Swedish Union of Students (SFS) carried out a national inquiry using the student questionnaire called "Invisible rights". At the time of the study, almost half of the respondents did not know about the Law for Equal Treatment of Students. In the same study, it is also shown that almost four out of ten students do not think that they have received information from the educational institution. Since then, the law has been changed into a general Discrimination Law and hopefully more students know about it today. However, there is still a great risk that many students and staff at Karlstad University do not know about the Discrimination Law, since it is likely that the national numbers reflect the situation at this educational institution. It is therefore important to carry on a more active information campaign about the Discrimination Law directed towards students.

The risk of discrimination and the risk that cases of discrimination are not reported

At Karlstad University, only a few cases of discrimination have been reported in recent years. The fact that there are few reports can be seen as a positive thing, even though the goal should be to have no cases of discrimination reported at all. There is a risk, however, that there are other cases of discrimination which are not reported, either because a person chooses not to, or because she or he does not know how to, or because the staff member who finds out about a case of discrimination does not know how such reports are supposed to be handled. According to the SFS study "Invisible rights", seven out of ten students did not know where to turn if they were the victims of discrimination. In the same study, approximately one fifth of all students stated that they had felt badly treated at some point during their education. The study also shows that a person who violates certain norms is more likely to be badly treated; homosexuals and bisexuals are victims of discrimination more often than heterosexuals, students of non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds more often than ethnically Swedish students. Functionally challenged students are victims of discrimination more often than students without functional challenges, and women are badly treated more often than men.

If these cases of discrimination are not discovered and dealt with, there is a risk of a great number of unrecorded cases and students being exposed to hidden violations. In order to be able to work strategically with this issue, the situation at Karlstad University must be investigated and the extent of cases of discrimination assessed. To make staff members more aware of possible problems, information campaigns about the Discrimination Law and the procedure for reporting suspected cases of discrimination are required. Moreover, students need access to clear instructions where to turn if they feel badly treated or think that they have been the victims of harassment.

The risk that students do not feel welcome at the educational institution

Today's group of students, both nationwide and in Karlstad, is heterogeneous and includes students with different backgrounds and possibilities. Both national studies and one local study indicate that many students suffer from psychological problems and a great deal of study-related stress. Many students think that they do not get support when they need it and have considered dropping out. Among students who have seriously considered dropping out, students with non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds, homosexuals, bisexuals, and functionally challenged students are overrepresented (“Fend for Yourself”, The National Swedish Union of Students, 2008).

In order to prevent students from feeling excluded, consideration and awareness are required in
every area ranging from information material, buildings, and course literature to forms of instruction and examination. Resources are required for supporting students who are in greater need of additional support. The working environment of students, and especially the psychosocial one, needs improvement. The environment in relation to which an individual is expected to function determines the way in which circumstances are allowed to affect her or his participation.

**General goals**

At Karlstad University, all students can get an education and apply for a study program without feeling badly treated in relation to the given grounds for discrimination.

At Karlstad University, both staff and students are familiar with the Discrimination Law and its rights and responsibilities.

At Karlstad University, both staff and students know how suspected cases of discrimination or harassment are handled and investigated.

**GOALS 2010**

**Goal 1**
Information about equal treatment of students, the Discrimination Law, and procedure in cases of discrimination and harassment will be clearly visible on both the intranet and the student web.

*Indicator 1:* This goal has been reached if the information given above is posted at the homepage.

*Responsible:* Head of Communications and the Head of the Student Centre

**Goal 2**
A study will be conducted among students by means of a questionnaire testing their awareness of the Discrimination Law, the occurrence of discrimination and accessibility at Karlstad University. The study will provide a foundation for future efforts in the area of equal treatment of students.

*Indicator 2:* This goal has been reached if a questionnaire study has been conducted.

*Responsible:* Prorector

**Goal 3**
The action plan for handling discrimination and harassment will be revised during this year.

*Indicator 3:* This goal has been reached if the action plan has been revised.

*Responsible:* Head of HRO and Head of the Student Centre

**Goal 4**
All members of staff will be informed of the Discrimination Law, the equal treatment plan and the action plan for handling discrimination.

*Indicator 4:* This goal has been reached if all members of staff have been informed. This will be assessed through asking a random selection of staff members what information they have received.

*Responsible:* Heads of Departments, the Library Director and Head of Administration

**Goal 5**
The equal treatment of students will be seen as a question of quality for the university and its staff. A long-term strategy for implementing, assessing and providing support within this area will be developed during this year.
Indicator 5: This goal is reached if a strategy for follow-up and support in this area is in place.
Responsible: Prorector

Goal 6
The student body is a heterogeneous group representing several different religious beliefs. During this year, a project will be launched to reduce the number of exams scheduled for major religious holidays celebrated by the world religions, in other words Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. During 2010, an investigation is also required to assess the need for other solutions for students who belong to another religion than those mentioned above.
Indicator 6: This goal is reached if the number of exams scheduled for religious holidays has decreased and the need for other solutions has been mapped for future implementation.
Responsible: Faculty Deans

Goal 7
Efforts in integrating equality and diversity issues in instruction and literature will be continued and developed. Good examples will be presented and there will be workshops on the subject during the year.
Indicator 7: This goal is reached if good examples have been located and presented on the intranet and there has been at least one workshop per faculty.
Responsible: Faculty Deans

Goal 8
During this year, there will be more information on the diagnosing of dyslexia, and information about support resources for dyslexia will be improved and expanded.
Indicator: This goal is reached if there is more and better information about dyslexia on the homepage, and if an information campaign aimed at students has taken place at the start of the semester.
Responsible: Head of Communications and the Head of the Student Centre

Goal 9
During this year, active teachers will be enabled to attend a lecture on dyslexia and neuropsychiatric functional challenges and what they mean in terms of university studies.
Indicator: The goal is reached if there has been a lecture on dyslexia and neuropsychiatric functional challenges.
Responsible: Head of the Student Centre

2007 EQUAL TREATMENT PLAN – FOLLOW-UP

This follow-up only includes those measures that concern students, for follow-up on staff-related actions Equality and Diversity Policy at Karlstad University 2010-2012. The job titles that were used in the 2007 equal treatment plan have been used for the follow-up as well. No changes have thus been made in terms of actions or responsible persons; these follow directly upon the previous plan.

Measure 1 Teaching members of staff are offered education focused on diversity and equal treatment in pedagogical situations.
Responsible: Vice Rectors/Heads of Department
Follow-up: The teaching program and the supervisor program include equal treatment elements. Postgraduate students and others who have not completed the teaching program are advised to do so, as are supervisors at the postgraduate level. Intercultural Communication is included as
part of the in-service training for individual members of staff. During ”Mångfaldsdagarna” (“The Diversity Days”, an event focused on diversity), all members of staff are offered the opportunity to participate in seminars and workshops on diversity and equal treatment. However, specific courses in diversity and equal treatment focused on pedagogical situations have not been held at any of the faculties.

**Continued efforts:** The Faculty of Arts has courses planned and the Diversity Days will take place 2010 as well. Moreover, all members of staff will receive information on the Discrimination Law, the equal treatment plan and the action plan for handling discrimination in accordance with Goal 4.

**Measure 2** The university will appoint a group of specialists to handle cases of harassment and maltreatment.

*Responsible:* Head of HRO

*Follow-up:* Since the previous plan, a group of specialists has been formed but is now out of date because of changes in the work situation of group members.

*Continued efforts:* In accordance with Goal 3, the action plan for handling discrimination and harassment will be revised this year, and thus the group of specialists will change as well. *(Also followed up in Equality and Diversity Policy 2010-2012)*

**Measure 3** A “Diversity Week” will be arranged during the spring.

*Responsible:* The Students’ Union and the Prorector

*Follow-up:* The event Diversity Week which is now called the Diversity Days has been arranged every year since 2005 in cooperation between, among others, the Students’ Union and the university. The Diversity Days event focuses on various grounds for discrimination and aims at promoting knowledge and understanding among students and staff alike.

*Continued efforts:* The Diversity Days will be arranged in 2010 as well. However, the future participation of the Students’ Union is uncertain due to the fact that membership is no longer mandatory for all students.

**Measure 4** The effort to produce educational and informative material on equal treatment issues aimed at staff and students continues and will be completed in 2007.

*Responsible:* Head of HRO

*Follow-up:* Students have been informed about for instance the Discrimination Law through an information leaflet produced by the Students’ Union. This leaflet has been distributed primarily to students but also to members of staff. *(Also followed up in Equality and Diversity Policy 2010-2012)*

*Continued efforts:* This work continues primarily through improving and clarifying the information on the university homepage (see Goal 1). Members of staff will also receive more information (see Goal 4).

**Measure 5** Equal treatment issues are part of the action plans for faculties, departments and units.

*Responsible:* Heads

*Follow-up:* Equal treatment issues take up various amounts of space in different action plans but are often treated very briefly or not at all. It is a problem that different terms are used and that there is often a lack of knowledge in relation to these issues.

*Continued efforts:* These questions will hopefully be granted more space as work continues in the area of organizing equal treatment issues in accordance with Goal 5. *(Also followed up in Equality and Diversity Policy 2010-2012)*

**Measure 6** Members of staff will be informed of rules and routines related to equal treatment and harassment through taking part in information meetings arranged by the Human Resources
Follow-up: Administrators at the Faculty of Social Sciences have completed a special course which includes equal treatment issues. Apart from this, no information meetings have taken place. Staff members have received information through a leaflet about student rights, including information about the Discrimination Law. This leaflet has been produced by the Students’ Union with assistance from the university. *(Also followed up in Equality and Diversity Policy 2010-2012)*

**Continued efforts:** First of all, the information on the intranet will be improved and the action plan for handling discrimination and harassment will be revised. In accordance with Goal 4, all members of staff will also be informed about the Discrimination Law, the equal treatment plan and the action plan for handling discrimination during this year.

**Measure 7** At the fair which is arranged at the beginning of each semester, information on the equal treatment law will be distributed.

**Responsible:** Head of the Students Centre

**Follow-up:** Information about the equal treatment law has not been distributed during the welcome fairs.

**Continued efforts:** It is crucial that students know about the Discrimination Law but the fairs at the beginning of each semester are not seen as the most important information opportunity. Instead it is important that the information is easily available at the university homepage and that a study is conducted among students to assess what they know today and what problems there are. See Goals 1 and 2.

**Measure 8** A welcoming letter with useful information is distributed to all new students before the beginning of each semester. It will be investigated if this document could be supplemented with information about the equal treatment law.

**Responsible:** The Head of the Student Centre

**Follow-up:** Information about the equal treatment law has not been distributed to new students in the welcoming letter.

**Continued efforts:** Including information about the equal treatment law in the welcoming letter is not of current interest. Instead it is important that the information is inclusionary and that further information can be found at the university homepage in accordance with Goal 1.

**Measure 9** In the yearly sponsor program, there will be a continued emphasis on the fact that new students must not be maltreated on the grounds of sex, ethnic and religious identity, sexuality or functional challenge. The program includes both theory and practice.

**Responsible:** The Manager of Student Services

**Follow-up:** In the sponsor program which is arranged before each semester in cooperation with the Students’ Union, involvement is emphasized in different ways. Lectures on inclusionary behavior are held and inclusionary games are taught. The sponsor program also includes evaluation exercises, which raise equal treatment issues and the question of different people’s chances to participate in the welcoming of new students.

**Continued efforts:** The sponsor program will be structured in a similar way also in the spring 2010. It is likely, however, that the university will have to take on greater responsibility for this activity when membership in the Students’ Union is no longer mandatory for all students. This is under consideration in the report on the abolishment of mandatory Students’ Union membership.

**Measure 10** In the student magazine Citrus, published by the Students’ Union in Karlstad, the law of equal treatment of students will be highlighted in advertisements and/or articles.

**Responsible:** Head of Student Centre

**Follow-up:** Articles on the equal treatment of students have been published on several occasions in
the student magazine Citrus – now Karlstad Student Magazine. During the Diversity Days event, the magazine has sometimes made equal treatment the theme of a series of texts. 

Continued efforts: The chief editor, who is paid by the Students’ Union, is responsible for the editorial content of the student magazine. Therefore the university cannot ask Karlstad Student Magazine to publish a particular type of articles. It is highly likely, however, that the Discrimination Law will continue to be highlighted in the student magazine because it is such important information for students. Due to the abolishment of mandatory Students’ Union membership, the future of the student magazine is uncertain.

Measure 11 At the Student Services homepage and the student web there will be posted references to university policy documents and action plans on equality, diversity and discriminatory special treatment, as well as the homepages of the ombudsman.

Responsible: The Manager of Student Services

Follow-up: Neither information on policy documents and action plans nor references to the Ombudsman of Discrimination can be found on the student web or the Student Centre homepage.

Continued efforts: The information on equal treatment and discrimination needs improvement at the student web, the intranet and the external web in accordance with Goal 1.

Measure 12 A number of activities will be arranged to create places where international and Swedish students can interact.

Responsible: The Manager of Student Services

Follow-up: All exchange students and international Master’s students are invited to an introductory week. During this week, they are offered both useful information about student life in Karlstad and social events. The international students get sponsors who arrange different gatherings during the semester. An international students’ organization, ISAK, has been founded at the university.

Continued efforts: The welcoming of international students will continue in a similar way during 2010.

Measure 13 At the undergraduate level, equality and diversity issues will be integrated in courses and course literature as far as possible.

Responsible: Vicerector/Head of Department

Follow-up: Equality and diversity issues are integrated in courses and course literature at various degrees. At the teaching program, a study on the diversity perspective has been conducted and also within the program the results vary. It would be beneficial to conduct similar studies for other programs (subjects) since it would help raise awareness and find good examples.

Continued efforts: Good examples of ways in which this issue can be handled will be found and workshops will be arranged in accordance with Goal 7.

Measure 14 The diversity perspective will be illuminated through special lectures.

Responsible: Vicerector/Head of Department

Follow-up: During the Diversity Days the students are offered the opportunity to attend lectures on the topic of diversity.

Continued efforts: The Diversity Days will be arranged in 2010 as well.

Measure 15 An action plan for the teaching program with an emphasis on diversity, gender and equality will be developed.

Responsible: Senior Administrator of the Teacher Education Programmes

Follow-up: No action plan has been drafted, but the diversity perspective of the teaching program has been mapped out in a study, which can serve as the basis for improvements.
Measure 16 A policy for the use of university bulletin boards will be developed. The purpose is to prevent messages that can be seen as offensive or racist.
Responsible: The Manager of Communications and Relations Services
Follow-up: No policy has been developed and there are no plans for developing one.

Current legislation on equal treatment issues

The UN Declaration (1948)
The European Convention (1950)
The EG-treaty (1957)

The Constitution (RF)
The Discrimination Law (2008:567)
The Law on Discrimination Ombudsman (2008:568)
The Penal Code (1962:700)
Higher Education Law (1992:1434)
Environmental Law (1977:1160)
Ordinance on Public Agencies’ Obligation to Implement Integration Policies (1986:865)
Ordinance on Public Agencies’ Obligation to Implement Disability Policies (2001:526)
Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100)

Local regulations, plans and policies on equal treatment issues

Accessibility Action Plan (Dnr2008/586)
Action Programme against Discrimination, Harassment and Victimization (Dnr C2007/40)
Regulations for First and Second Level Education at Karlstad University (Dnr C2007/368)