

1. Seminar 6, Equal opportunities

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2. Introduction

The purpose of Seminar 6 is to raise awareness about gender inequality and equality, and the overall code of conduct at liu regarding this subject.

3. Key Findings

Why?

Gender refers to the social and cultural concepts of being a woman or a man. This includes the societal notions of femininity and masculinity. It arises from the interactions of biological sex with social and cultural environments. This is not constant but can change over time. Gender equality focuses on ensuring men and women have equal opportunities in society and their own lives.

According to Swedish law it is prohibited to mistreat, give disadvantage, or make offense based on specific grounds. Such grounds can be sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, disability, and age. Swedish authorities are required to promote equality, with a focus on gender equality. In higher education equality is considered a KPI, making gender equality a critical consideration in quality assurance (Robin Moberg, UKÄ).

Why specific focus on gender equality?

Social categories are interconnected, some combinations face higher risks of victimization, mistreatment, or discrimination. Gender is just one of many factors. Gender inequality affects nearly everyone, including students, even in countries that are ranked high when it comes to equality, e.g. Sweden. There are still issues, including entrenched values and stereotypes. Women have some systematic disadvantages, and does on average earning lower salaries despite having higher education and better grades.

Laws and other directives from the government mandate efforts shall be taken against discrimination and harassment. Many programs lack gender balance, and have historically been favored by one gender. Studies have shown that diversity improve outcomes. In addition a skewed gender distribution have a risk of alienating minorities, thus increase the student loss due to feeling that they "Don't belong".

What should we do?

Liu has done a lot to promote equality in most areas of the workforce and related areas. But it has shown to be hard to influence student equality, but there are ongoing initiatives. Like this seminar. Engineering and the natural sciences are often considered objective, including gender. However, these fields have historically been male-dominated. This raises questions about how such a gender imbalances impact the educational

experience. Men are often treated as the default, where the lecturers refer to professionals as "him" rather than "her" or "they." This highlights a gender bias in language and representation.

Studies at LiTH reveal that male students are given more time for questions, receive different answers based on who asks, and have their exams valued differently. There is also a stereotypical distribution of work and roles among students. Key points as a student one can watch out for include the distribution of questions and answers in seminars, whether oral exams involve multiple teachers, and if written exams are anonymous. In labs and project work, it's important to rotate tasks and roles and consider how groups are formed.

As a student one should foster equality, be humble, listen actively, and observe how people treat each other. Pay attention to communication patterns, as men often receive more "space" than women. In computer labs and group work, avoid stereotypical roles, rotate tasks, and create group contracts to clarify responsibilities. Mix groups, challenge comfort zones, and be explicit about group formation purposes. Be observant of question distribution and speaking time, encourage quieter individuals to share, and embrace diverse experiences. Address issues by communicating openly with peers and teachers if something feels wrong.

If a student experience mistreatment, discrimination, or disadvantages, speak up and report it. Contact the course examiner or director of studies if it occurs within a course, or report to the student union through an online form or to the work environment and study-social responsible. You can also reach out to the equal opportunities coordinator at LiU.

4. Conclusion

Gender is a social and cultural construct that evolves over time, and gender equality ensures equal opportunities for all individuals. Despite legal protections in Sweden, gender inequality remains in education, where women still face disadvantages. Efforts are ongoing to address these imbalances, particularly in male-dominated fields like engineering and natural sciences. Students can contribute by being mindful of communication, rotating tasks in group work, and fostering inclusivity. If mistreatment or discrimination occurs, it is important to report it and seek support if needed.