# TLU Gender Equality Plan 2022–2024

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#### Introduction

The purpose of the Gender Equality Plan for Tallinn University (hereinafter TLU) is to raise awareness of the subject of gender equality and take steps for the introduction of more effective rules and actions that ensure equal treatment in the university, taking into account both the possibility of the manifestations of structural bias as well as conflicts related to discrimination at the level of an individual.

The Gender Equality Plan follows the legislatively state regulated principles of <u>equal treatment</u> and <u>gender equality</u>, the aim of which is to protect people from discrimination, and to promote equal treatment and gender equality as human rights. Strategic targets set out in the forthcoming <u>Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030</u> also provide an important basis. The Plan has been designed on the basis of the <u>Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans</u>.

On the basis of the mission and vision formulated in the university's Development Plan, TLU is committed to ensure equal opportunities and a supportive and amicable operative environment for all employees and students regardless of their gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality and ethnic origin, race, religion and belief, disability, age, pregnancy and parenthood or marital status. We are convinced that only through equal treatment, equal opportunities and

positive attitude, we will achieve that all groups and individuals can give their best according to their abilities and wishes; therefore, we set an objective of introducing zero tolerance towards any kind of unequal treatment, discrimination and harassment.

We wish to create and develop an inclusive learning and working environment built on equal opportunities in our peculiar academic institution where, on the basis of data from the year 2021, 71% of employees are women and the student body is also predominantly female.

As an academic organisation, we are well informed of the results of research reflecting gender equality, conducted both in Estonia and internationally, which demonstrate that men and women do not always have equal positions in academic work.<sup>1</sup> Many gender imbalances have been highlighted; for instance, a disproportionately big number of women leave the academy at every stages of career,<sup>2</sup> women experience the so-called motherhood penalty and their burden of care labour is often bigger<sup>3</sup>. Previous studies conducted in Estonian higher education have shown that the management and employees of universities do often not acknowledge that it is important to pay attention to the gender aspect in science and universities, and thus usually do not see structural obstacles to the careers of female researchers.[1] In analysing and promoting the customs in Tallinn University, we consider it important to pay attention to all possible aspects of and reasons for unequal treatment based on gender, learning both from research literature as well as the experience of other universities.

At the university level, we have taken many important steps towards concluding and implementing good academic practice agreements. We have joined the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, approved the plan for the support system for the implementation of good academic practice in TLU in the Senate, and formulated the principles of good teaching, supervising and learning. The university supports the implementation of these principles by the centrally organised work of the Ethics Committee, Commissioner for Equal Treatment, research ethics advisors, psychologists and other specialists (see the <a href="webpage">webpage</a>). Although having more extensive coverage, these agreements and practices support, inter alia, the promotion of gender equality at the university.

For the preparation of the Gender Equality Plan, a working group was set up at the university, who carried out the initial comprehensive analysis of equal treatment and, on the basis of it, prepared a plan that was discussed in December 2021 at the Senate meeting and at the meetings of its committees.

## Gender equality as regards recruitment and remuneration

It is important to ensure equal opportunities to everyone in the process of selecting and recruiting employees, and on the career paths. Regulations governing employment relationships and remuneration in Tallinn University follow the principle of equal treatment (e.g. clause 2.2. of the

TLU Remuneration Regulation sets out that the principle of the equality of employees is adhered to in the process of remuneration) and determine clear criteria applicable to the human lifecycle (e.g. parental leave, conscription service), on the basis of which decisions concerning recruitment and remuneration are made.

The specificity of Tallinn University is the fact that the share of women is significantly higher than the share of men in the collective as a whole as well as among academic employees. Women made up 71% of all employees as at the year 2020, 61% of academic employees. It is evident that the reasons for this trend lie in the discipline-specific main foci and cultural space of the university: humanities, social sciences and education are deemed so-called soft domains that are more suitable for women, and these attitudes are reflected in the minds of both men and women. Important reasons deriving from the general background may also include the gender imbalance of Estonian higher education (i.e. significantly more women than men attain the level of higher education<sup>4</sup>) and insufficient funding for higher education that reproduces the structural inequality from the aspect of gender (teaching is a stereotypically feminine field of activity and therefore less financed in comparison with many other fields).<sup>5</sup>

Gender distribution by domains and positions has not yet been thoroughly analysed at the university. In order to get a better and comprehensive view in each point in time, data warehouse applications, which enable managers at different levels to get a detailed overview of the gender distribution of the employees, etc., but also to display up-to-date overviews on the university's webpage (see <u>The University in Numbers</u>) have been developed and employed during the last year. The initial overview of the gender distribution by groups of academic positions of Tallinn University (see Figure 1) and academic units indicates that the share of women is at least 50% in all groups. An example of the gender distribution of recruitment processes is that as at September 2021,  $\frac{2}{3}$  or 66% of employees elected to the position of a tenure track associate professor according to the new career model are women, whereas in aggregate, 57% of the university's professors are women.

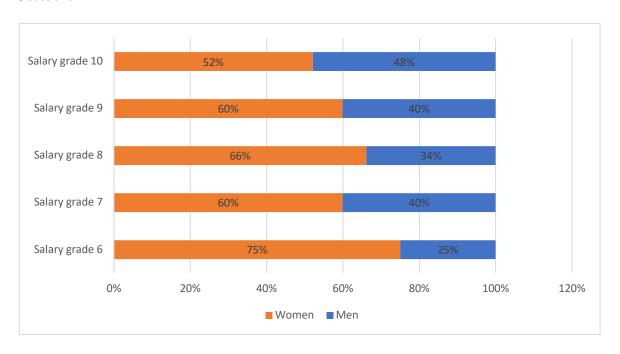
In 2020, gender pay gap in Estonia was 15,6% according to the data of Statistics Estonia (by the methodology of Eurostat, even 21,7% as at 2019), which is the largest among the member states of the European Union. We have collected data on the gender pay gap at the university for years and can consider that we have decreased the previously observed pay gap as regards some positions, and a significant pay gap in view of statistical averages does not currently occur in the university (see Figure 2).

Comparing the actual salary of men and women across all academic positions, the gender pay gap is about 4% in favour of men and it has narrowed in comparison with previous years (12% in 2016). By salary grades, differences between the actual salary of men and women generally remain within the range of +/- 10%. The group of teachers and junior research fellows stands out

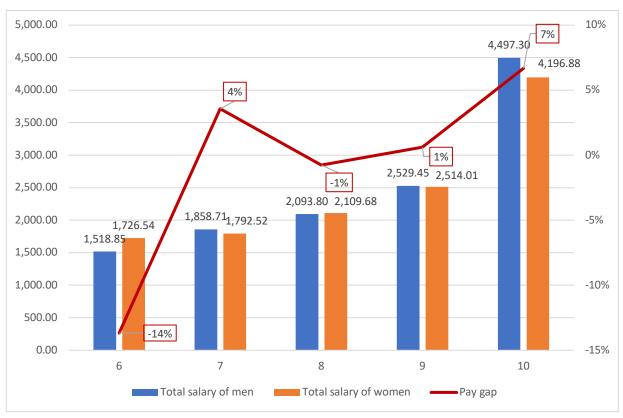
- the pay gap is in favour of women 14%. As the university transfers to the new career model and doctoral studies system (where the majority of doctoral students begin working as junior research fellows), it has set the objective to ensure that the remuneration of junior research fellows is at the level of at least average wages in Estonia, which is expected to lead to a reduction in the mentioned pay gap. At the highest salary grade, men's higher average is primarily linked to the specific positions in this group (the distinguished professor and the visiting professor), whereas at both career levels of the position of a professor according to the new career model, the pay gap is in favour of women with a slight majority.

Therefore, the university must take steps to weigh the options for increasing the motivation of men for taking up work in different positions at the university, bearing in mind, at the same time, that the structural inequality between men and women should not increase. It is also important that the university continues to make public even more detailed data than before to enable gender-based comparison (incl. salary statistics). This helps to spot the possible manifestations of unequal treatment immediately and gender issues can be discussed in the organisation on the basis of adequate information. Situations where the gender pay gap at the compared salary grade, taking into account the averages of people working in the same field, exceeds 10% need particular attention.

**Figure 1:** Share of women working in academic positions by salary grades\* in TLU as at 30.09.2021



**Figure 2.** The average actual salary of men and women working in academic positions in TLU and the gender pay gap by salary grades\* as at 30.09.2021.



<sup>\*</sup> Distribution of academic positions by salary grades:

salary grade 6 – junior research fellow without the status of a teacher and of a doctoral student salary grade 7 – junior research fellow with the status of a doctoral student, employees without a doctoral degree in the position of a lecturer and research fellow (at the first career level in the new career model, accordingly)

salary grade 8 – employees with a doctoral degree in the position of a lecturer and research fellow (at the second career level in the new career model, accordingly)

salary grade 9 – teaching track associate professor, research track associate professor, tenure track associate professor, visiting professor

salary grade 10 – professor, tenure track professor, research professor, distinguished professor

## Reconciliation of work and family life on the career path

In a study where the situation of gender equality in Estonian research in the year 2020 was analysed<sup>6</sup> statistics has been brought out stating that although the number of men and women among academic employees is practically equal, noticeable differences occur by positions –

women reach higher positions (professors and chief scientists) less often than men. It follows that women are less likely to receive research grants than men, which is one of the causes for the gender pay gap at universities.

A possible reason for this trend is considered to be the assumption that the academic career is uninterrupted due to the research world being requirements-based, system of research funding, etc. However, research shows that women's teaching-related workload at the university and family-related burden of care labour is bigger. Causes for such consequences may also be rooted in the work culture of the organisation, salary level, and in general attitudes and stereotypes.

Although the data presented above indicate that at Tallinn University, the share of women is equal to that of men or even higher even in higher academic positions (see Figure 1), it is still clear that the share of women in higher positions decreases in comparison with lower and more teaching-related positions. The set of problems of equal treatment in remuneration is thus more extensive than the gender perspective described in the previous section in statistical terms enables to grasp. Following the recommendations of institutional accreditation, problems at the university rather concern the transparency of the salary agreements and of the development of workloads in general. As a solution, we are creating a unified information system into which the workload agreements will be fixed in a way that these will no longer remain known exclusively to the head of unit and the employee, but could be analysed from different angles, incl. by comparing loads by gender.

In TLU regulations that govern employment relationships, time spent on pregnancy and maternity leave, parental leave, conscription service or alternative service has been taken into account. By the abovementioned time periods, the time limits for, e.g. completing a career level, period of assessing previous work results, evaluation period, period of using the sabbatical leave, etc. are extended. In the context of the previous career model of the university, some cases have been brought out where in the announcement of a higher position, it was preferred to choose the field where a male person worked, even though in adjacent fields many female employees worked in an equal position and with equal or better results; with the new career model, criteria for moving upward over the course of the working life have been made significantly more transparent and less dependent on the subjective decisions of one's superior. The evaluation criteria are clearly detailed in the Employment Relations Rules and uniform for all. Also, a step forward has been taken in equally valuing and taking into account the effectiveness of teaching and contribution to the society besides the productivity of research work. As the regulations emphasising equal treatment might not completely ensure that unequal treatment following historically developed attitudes and stereotypes will not occur in practice, it is important to monitor the processes related to the movement on the career path and to intervene, where necessary.

An important challenge for the university is to raise the discussion on whether and on which conditions it is justified to increase flexibility in the forms of employment even more or, for instance, in the mobility possibilities, and to introduce additional particularities as regards the

requirements for the movement on the career path, etc., on the basis of the load of family-related obligations of the person. Here, it is important to keep in mind also the need for shaping and strengthening the attitudes deriving from the values agreed in the Academic Charter and the Development Plan of the university.

## Equal gender representation in management and decision-making processes

Setting up decision-making bodies and filling the positions of managers of different levels is governed by the Tallinn University Statutes, statutes of academic units and the Employment Relations Rules. These processes are democratic, i.e. elections are applied more often than usual, and looking at the TLU management structure by gender representation, it appears that the representation of women corresponds to the gender structure of the university staff (see Table 1). This means that in the decision-making bodies and positions of managers, the share of women is predominantly higher, whereas the only exception is the university Council which deals with the economic matters and approves the university's Development Plan.

**Table 1.** Composition of the institutional and academic governing bodies by gender

Decision-making body/ management level	Men	Women	Total	Share of women
Council of the university	9	2	11	18%
Senate of the university	15	29	44	66%
Rectorate	3	6	9	67%
Heads of academic units and the institution	4	4	8	50%
Heads of support units	3	15	18	83%
Ethics Committee	1	7	8	88%
Councils of academic units	46	68	114	60%

Out of the 11 members of the Council, five are appointed by the university and six are appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research. Although members offered by the university are appointed after a secret ballot in the Senate by way of public elections accessible to all university

members, only one out of the five Council members appointed by the university is a woman at the moment. It can be assumed that the preference for men in proposing Council member candidates and in voting for candidates primarily results from the historically developed attitudes and inclination to perceive men as more competent as regards economic issues as women. At the same time, this problem has not been analysed in the context of Tallinn University and for achieving changes, it is important to explore the TLU employees' attitudes towards gender issues at first.

Based on the above, there is no reason to implement strict measures for increasing the representation of women in positions of power in Tallinn University such as the introduction of quotas, etc. First and foremost, it is necessary to gradually change the attitudes of both men and women (incl. those who fulfil the role of institutional and academic leaders), which reproduce the inclination to associate women and men with different fields of competence, to support the development of competences that are essential for fulfilling the role of a leader, and to raise awareness of the importance of equal representation in the development of different aspects of the university life.

## Organisational culture and conflicts

On the basis of the international agreement <u>Magna Charta Universitatum</u>, the <u>TLU Academic Charter</u> sets academic freedom as the cornerstone of the university's values and formulates the basic values: openness, quality, professionalism and unity. Unity is expressed, inter alia, in friendly relationships, built on mutual respect and equal treatment, between the university members.

We have taken important steps at university level to support the development of the organisational culture towards the abovementioned vision. We have joined the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity agreement, jointly prepared and approved in the Senate the plan for the support system for the implementation of good academic practice in TLU, recognising the trouble spots, and begun to implement it. Thus, we have already formulated the principles of good teaching, supervising and learning. The university has started to support the implementation of these principles by the centrally organised work of the Ethics Committee, the Commissioner for Equal Treatment, research ethics advisors, psychologists and other specialists (see the webpage). The next important step is to start a discussion on the topic of the practice of good management and integrate gender equality into this discussion.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that with these steps, a basis for ensuring equal treatment, incl. gender equality, has been created, but the development of attitudes and customs is a long-term process that requires committed and constant attention and work. Studies conducted in recent years demonstrate<sup>7</sup> that although academic work is generally viewed as gender-neutral, women often experience gender stereotypical attitudes in their academic careers, which impede their self-confidence and hinder their work. It also appears that sexual and gender-based harassment is a

problem that continuously requires preventive measures, awareness-raising, more efficient victim support and psychological help, etc. The process of finding solutions to conflicts related to gender issues at the university implies that we must take additional steps in order to ensure a transparent system for the submission of complaints to an independent and impartial party, fair and thorough proceedings of the complaints and avoidance of victim blaming (incl. training the participants in the process of the proceedings). For better supporting the students, their level of awareness of the knowledge of gender-based and sexual harassment must be examined, and as a result, the need for interventions must be identified. As the experience of many universities has shown, intimate and business relationships between the supervisee and the supervisor is one of the sources of conflicts of interests which influence the supervising relationship and environment, and may influence equal treatment of third parties, the university recommends to avoid such double relationships (the solution may be, for example, appointing a new supervisor, etc.).

Based on the above, we set the objective of mapping the most important trouble spots concerning gender-based or sexual discrimination in Tallinn University on the initiative of the Commissioner for Equal Treatment and involving the competence of the TLU gender studies research group and, consequently, of planning and carrying out development activities in two main directions:

- preventive measures (incl. awareness-raising activities, guidance materials on the subject, trainings, campaigns, discussions, etc.) aimed at both the students as well as at the staff and management;
- transparent, easily comprehensible process that ensures equal and fair treatment of the parties for settling disputes and handling complaints.

## Integrating the gender perspective into research, and teaching and learning

TLU has researchers and research groups conducting high-level research in the field of gender studies. A NGO The Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre has operated in the rooms of TLU for more than 20 years, and all students and lecturers of the university can use its library. Gender studies researchers and scientists and doctoral students from all over the university, who are interested in gender studies, work together in the gender studies research group, the development of which has been supported from the university's Research Fund. The research group is a member of the International Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies RINGS. On the initiative of different research groups, high-level research has been carried out and projects organised in cooperation with international partners with the aim of in-depth research into the factors behind gender inequality and offering solutions to avoid them.

From the angle of research administration, it is important to keep in mind that on the basis of research conducted both internationally and within Estonia, women are less likely to receive research funding.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the university is morally obliged to monitor assessment processes

and draw the attention of sponsors to possible cases where financing decisions are made in disregard of gender equality. Also, the university could pay increased attention to supporting female researchers in the preparation of project applications. Additionally, wider promotion of gender equality in the university helps to pay more attention to the gender perspective in the division of labour and responsibility between the research project promoters, for example, and to treat the content of the projects in a gender-sensitive manner, where possible.

Analysis of the gender aspect in the context of teaching and learning is important as international research literature reveals that women's research is underrepresented in educational materials<sup>9</sup>, assessment of teaching is biased against women<sup>10</sup> etc. The study organised by the Estonian Research Council states that the problem of gender stereotypes is acute and often starts from the general education system, which in turn indicates the need to pay special attention to the subject of gender in the study programmes of teacher education. Therefore, it is important to offer possibilities to lecturers to raise their awareness of gender equality and organise workshops, etc. in order to support better harmonisation of teaching with the principles of equal treatment.

As the framework of teaching and learning in the university is formed primarily by the Study Regulations, good practice of teaching and supervising, good practice of learning and study programmes, the analysis and improvement of these documents is important from the perspective of gender equality. Under the Welfare Development Plan 2030, an objective of integrating the principle of gender equality and relevant knowledge into the study programmes and materials at all levels is set. The initial overview of the working group confirms that different schools offer some courses to students which are based on gender studies or take these into account. Over the next two years, it is important to find out the lecturers' attitudes towards gender studies and their readiness to integrate gender perspective into the study programmes.

The next step is the university's aim to find resources and develop a plan for a more thorough analysis by which to map the possible manifestations of gender-based unequal treatment in teaching and learning. The additional aim of the study must be finding solutions to the identified problems, integrating gender-related topics into teaching and learning, and supporting lecturers' professional development in view of the gender equality perspective.

#### **Summary**

Based on the analysis and recommendations set in this document, the TLU Gender Equality Plan for the years 2022–2024 sets the following targets:

• We plan and implement activities which support the development of attitudes deriving from the values agreed in the Academic Charter and Development Plan of the university, incl. awareness of and compliance with the main principles of gender equality, and help to change historically established attitudes which reproduce the inclination to associate women and men with different fields of competence. At the same time, we pay particular attention to those who fulfil the roles of institutional and academic leaders at the university. *The initiator and leader of activities:* Commissioner for Equal Treatment

• In the development of the regulations, operational processes and measures of Tallinn University, we also have regard to the principles and risky areas of gender equality, and are aware of the importance of equal representation in the development of different aspects of the university life.

The initiators and leaders of activities: all Rectorate members in accordance with their areas of responsibility

• We complement publicly available comprehensive data (incl. salary statistics) to enable gender-based comparison and create a unified information system for calculating the workloads of academic employees, enabling the comparative analysis of loads (incl. by gender and position).

The initiator and leader of activities: Strategy Manager

• We keep track of important trends in the university life systematically in a gender-based comparison and plan concrete steps for reducing gender inequality (incl. in situations where the gender pay gap at the compared salary grade and taking into account the averages of people working in the same field exceeds 10%).

The initiators and leaders of activities: managers of all levels

• We monitor the processes related to the implementation of the new career model and movement on the career path, and intervene where unequal treatment occurs. We find opportunities to increase men's motivation to work at the university in different positions.

The initiator and leader of activities: Human Resources Manager

- We raise a discussion for finding possibilities for greater flexibility in working arrangements, etc., in order to support better reconciliation of work and family life.

  The initiator and leader of activities: Human Resources Manager
- We map the most important trouble spots concerning gender-based or sexual discrimination in the university, and plan and carry out preventive measures (incl. awareness-raising activities, guidance materials on the subject, trainings, campaigns, discussions, etc.).

The initiator and leader of activities: Commissioner for Equal Treatment

• We structure a transparent, easily comprehensible process that ensures equal and fair treatment

of the parties for settling disputes and handling cases of discrimination and complaints, and prepare relevant guidance materials.

The initiator and leader of activities: Commissioner for Equal Treatment

• We pay attention to supporting female researchers in the preparation of project applications and monitor assessment processes related to applying for research funding, drawing the attention of sponsors to possible cases where financing decisions are made in disregard of gender equality.

The initiator and leader of activities: head of the Research Administration Office

• We offer possibilities to lecturers to raise their awareness of gender equality and organise workshops, etc. in order to support better harmonisation of teaching with the principles of equal treatment.

The initiator and leader of activities: Commissioner for Equal Treatment

• We develop a plan for an analysis by which to map the possible manifestations of genderbased unequal treatment in teaching and learning, and offer solutions for the problems which have come up.

The initiator and leader of activities: Commissioner for Equal Treatment

The targets set above create a framework for planning and carrying out specific activities. For the sake of completeness, the Vice-Rector for Research brings together the activities planned as of the year 2023 into an annual activity plan and an overview of the implementation of the activity plan will be provided in the university's annual report.

The responsibility of being aware and follow the fundamental values of the university and the principles of equal treatment lies with all university members. The university members shall ensure that their external partners and visitors understand and respect the good practices and principles of equal treatment agreed in the university. The main responsibility as regards the implementation of this gender equality plan falls on the Rectorate members, supported by the Commissioner for Equal Treatment, Ethics Committee, research ethics advisors and all support units. For promoting gender equality in the university, a network covering different units of the university will be developed under the guidance of the Commissioner for Equal Treatment. The heads of units and members of the network to be created ensure that the unit staff and students are aware of this plan, and motivate them to take action in following the principles and aspirations referred to in the plan in their daily work and studies.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Urmann, H., *et al.* 2020. Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse hetkeolukord ja parandamise viisid Eesti teaduses. Tartu: Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS). <sup>2</sup> See, for example, Winslow, S., and S. N. Davis. 2016. "Gender inequality across the academic life course." *Sociology Compass* 10 (5): 404-416; Rivera, L. A. 2017. "When two bodies are (not) a problem: Gender and relationship status discrimination in academic hiring." *American Sociological Review* 82 (6): 1111-1138; Diezmann, C., and S. Grieshaber. 2019. Women Professors: Who Makes it and How? Springer; European Commission. 2019. She Figures 2018. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <sup>3</sup> See, for example, Petersen, T., A. M. Penner, and G. Høgsnes. 2014. "From motherhood penalties to husband premia: The new challenge for gender equality and family policy, lessons from Norway." *American Journal of Sociology* 119 (5): 1434-1472; Williams, J., K. W. Phillips, and E. V. Hall. 2014. Double jeopardy?: Gender bias against women of color in science. Hastings College of the Law. <sup>4</sup> OECD. 2021. *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en.

- <sup>5</sup> Urmann, H., *et al.* 2020. Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse hetkeolukord ja parandamise viisid Eesti teaduses. Tartu: Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS).
- <sup>6</sup> Urmann, H., *et al.* 2020. Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse hetkeolukord ja parandamise viisid Eesti teaduses. Tartu: Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS).
- <sup>7</sup> Aavik, K. (ed.) 2016. Teadlase karjäärimudeli arendamine naiste karjääriteede toetamiseks (ENEKE uuringuraport). Tallinn.; Järv, E. *et al.* 2020. Sooline ja seksuaalne ahistamine kõrghariduses. <sup>8</sup> See, for example, Steinsthórsdóttir, F. S., *et al.* 2020. Gendered inequalities in competitive grant funding: An overlooked dimension of gendered power relations in academia. *Higher Education Research and Development* 39 (2), 362–375. See also: Wijnen, M. N., Massen, J. J. M., and Kret, M. E. 2021. Gender bias in the allocation of student grants. *Scientometrics* 126: 5477–5488.
- <sup>9</sup> See, for example, Dion, M., Sumner, J., and Mitchell, S. 2018. Gendered Citation Patterns across Political Science and Social Science Methodology Fields. *Political Analysis* 26 (3): 312-327; King, M. M., *et al.* 2017. "Men Set Their Own Cites High: Gender and Self-Citation across Fields and over Time." *Socius* 3: 1–22; Gudrun Østby, *et al.* 2013. "Gender Gap or Gender Bias in Peace Research? Publication Patterns and Citation Rates for Journal of Peace Research, 1983–2008." *International Studies Perspectives* 14 (4): 493–506.
- <sup>10</sup> Mengel, F., Sauermann, J. and Ulf Zölitz. 2019. "Gender bias in teaching evaluations." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 17 (2): 535-566; Heffernan, T. 2021. Sexism, racism, prejudice, and bias: a literature review and synthesis of research surrounding student evaluations of courses and teaching, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education; Boring, A., Ottoboni, K., and P. Stark. 2016. "Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness." *Science Open Research*. doi:10.14293/s2199-1006.1; MacNell, L., Driscoll, A., and Andrea N. Hunt. 2015 "What's in a name: Exposing gender bias in student ratings of teaching." *Innovative Higher Education* 40 (4): 291-303.