MEET JOHANNA OLSSON

Happy New Arctic Year
A theme for 2017

Pre-Brexit
British researchers are pondering over the consequences of leaving the EU

Tools for video
Filmed tuition used directly in the learning platform

A day at the Umeå School of Sport Sciences
Sporty collaborations under capacious umbrella

Educational path-finder
**Being the good dog**

IT’S RATHER IRONIC finding myself lying on the kitchen sofa at eleven o’clock at night trying to write this editorial to an Aktum that focuses on the problematic workload. My deadline was over a week ago, and here I am, thinking I was keeping up with the schedule. No one was supposed to stress. But getting a good overview, prioritise, and make the right thing in the right order is hard. Clearly.

When I discuss work-life relations with my wife, she sometimes boils my persona down to wanting to be a ‘good dog’. There’s some truth in it, she knows me just as well as she knows how dogs generally work. I find myself lost if I don’t now what to deliver. I thrive from being a part of a herd. I prefer an authoritarian boss than one who is unclear. And I’m most pleased about myself when I work hard.

In the mornings, I take the first bus and swipe my card in the door before half past six. Nights are too short, but I’m okay with that. Aktum is only issued so often. And my job is probably the most fun I could possibly imagine. Being allowed to print a magazine with thoroughly worked-out texts in this day in age is a luxury.

At the same time, I think back on the wise people we interviewed for the theme articles, who pressed on the importance of a healthy workplace culture and finding consensus on what is ‘good enough’. And how this culture is everyone’s responsibility, not just the manager’s. Setting your own bar slightly lower, could also be a way to show that you care about others. We’re all a part of the same workplace culture.

Before taking my seat at the desk, I pass the kitchenette, unpack the dishwasher and fill it with the remains on the sink. Not that I have a strong inner need for order, but it feels accomplishing to start with something physical and practical. It makes the good dog in me feel better. When the canine in me is alright, the rest is usually smooth sailing.

“Setting your own bar slightly lower, could also be a way to show that you care about others.”

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**Contents**

**THEME Workload**

8 Little time for teaching preparations, pressure of being granted research funding, and difficulties in assessing what is ‘good enough’. Aktum investigates how our workload can become more manageable.

4 An Arctic 2017 The Management wants to emphasise Arctic research

6 UmU Play Recording lectures made easier

7 Signed Heidi Hansson on gender mainstreaming

16 Profile Johanna Olsson

19 A day at work Umeå School of Sport Sciences secretariat

24 Outlook The Davis couple wonders what Brexit will have in store

26 Five questions Umeå University’s first doctor of Fine Arts

28 Finally... Erik Törnlund returns to the office after three years in Israel and Palestine

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**Aktum.**

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At Aktum online you can read Aktum, comment on it and present your own opinions.

**www.aurora.umu.se**
On the intranet Aurora, you will find the latest news for people working at Umeå University.
Spinal rescue

Bookbinding has been an important part of the University Library since its opening start in 1968, but the number of staff has dwindled over the years.

“WHEN I STARTED, there were about ten of us. At present there are three and soon to be fewer, so it’s in a way fortunate that binding magazines has decreased, which is hugely an effect of digitalisation,” says Anders Höber, supervisor with experience stretching back to 1973.

“At the beginning, we bound about 80 medical journals; now that figure is down to around 20. But journals are our prime product – that and mending, and rescuing books.”

Books are rarely sewn or stitched these days. That is particularly noticeable on course literature, which is more often glued nowadays - and hence wears out quickly, even if it has a hard cover.

“Not even the comprehensive Swedish language encyclopaedia, NE, is properly bound with a rigid spine, so it didn’t take long until we had to start mending those books as well,” says Anders Höber, and adds that their objective is for course literature and books with a queue to be ready the day after they were handed in.

One of their specialities is to restore older books, not least those that have been donated.

“We also want to prevent temporary mending using tape, which makes it so much harder to restore a book to its original condition.”

The bookbinders also make exhibition material and book supports, line maps and make real leather bands.

“It’s nice to make other things for a change. Recently, we made a special box with compartments for the different parts of the brain – a model, of course – to the Medical Library.”

IF TIME PERMITS, they also take jobs from external customers, but he and colleagues Janne Johannesson and Barbro Norman are usually kept busy anyway. Still, their future hangs in the balance.

“We’ve been told we won’t be completely shut down, but it’s uncertain how many of us will remain – one, one-and-a-half, or two?”

The decision on manning the Bookbindery will come before the end of the year. In case of a positive decision, there might just be a public appearance in the UB entrance this year as well, the so-called ‘live bookbindery’.

At the Bookbindery, course literature is mended from one day to another.

One of the specialities at the Bookbindery is mending old books.

Barbro Norman, book-binder at the Bookbindery at the Umeå University Library.

Michael Nordvall
Arctic theme shows our expertise and width

In 2017, Umeå University will focus particularly on Arctic research. The objective is to emphasise Umeå University’s profile as a leading Swedish university for the Arctic, and create conditions for even more important research projects.

“We want to place Umeå on the map when it comes to Arctic research,” says Vice-Chancellor Hans Adolfsson.

ARCTIC RESEARCH AT the University takes place in all its scientific fields: Medicine, the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Science and Technology. It covers areas such as for instance research on indigenous peoples, security, water resources, infections, sustainability and climate. The width and the vast number of researchers with arctic focus makes it sensible for Umeå University to take a clearer leading position, suggests Vice-Chancellor Hans Adolfsson:

“Our geographic location, the fact that we possess Sweden’s only arctic research centre that conducts arctic research spanning across all faculties makes us the right University to shoulder the burden of being the main source of information.

Not least the current climate crisis makes it particularly imminent that a wide university like ours with lots of arctic research show that Umeå University can and wants to participate in the global debate.”

“An important objective with such a thematic work is to raise the level of consciousness to politicians, research funding bodies and other parties that there are many important problems requiring a solution and that science can give an answer to,” says Hans Adolfsson.

PETER SKÖLD IS director of the Arctic Research Centre at Umeå University, Arcum. He uses an historic metaphor to explain why arctic research should be a common concern:

“In the 19th century, miners brought a canary down in the mine as an indication of how dangerous the air down there was. Now, the Arctic is the canary of the world. If the Arctic is suffocating - and the Arctic is - it’s high time for people around the world to get out of the mine, take a look around us and solve the problem. An important step in that process is to use our knowledge and facts to visualise the risks involved and the solutions science has to offer,” says Peter Sköld, professor in History focusing on Sami societal change and culture, and is also director of Arcum.

BIRGITTA EVENGÅRD WHO is professor at the Department of Clinical Microbiology suggests that the climate debate so far has mostly based upon the geoscientific perspective. But climate change doesn’t just affect the planet, it affects everything that is on it. Including humans:

“As a species, we are highly affected by climate changes in the Arctic and in other areas.”

TEXT Anna Lawrence and Jonas Lidström
**THE ARCTIC THEME** will make an imprint on a series of events organised or participated by the University during 2017. Pax Nordica, the Sami Week in Umeå and an international arctic conference in June are some of the events that so far are on the agenda.

“Kunskapsnoden in Stockholm on 8 February will be the first event with the Arctic theme that sets off the focal year. It takes place in an arena outside of Umeå where we invite various stakeholders who since before may not have seen the Arctic as one of the University’s important focus areas,” says Hans Adolfssson.

The initiative to the Arctic year comes from the University Management, but Hans Adolfssson would like to emphasise that whoever would like to contribute to casting attention to the Arctic over the next year, can contact the Planning Office and register your interest or inform about your plans. “The idea is to involve an even greater part of our researchers in the Arctic research field. Also, many of our students are committed and we have every reason to organise activities on campus over the course of the year.”

Read more about arctic research at Umeå University on www.umu.se/en/arctic.

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**Figuratively speaking**

Erik Domellöf

Oh! I’ve been appointed merited and excellent!

What the...? I got “poor-spirited” and “elephant”!

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**HOURS** is the time given for papers to dry before Aktum is stapled and shipped to Umeå. Some readers experienced that the last issue had a troublesome smell. According to Tony Rörbrink at the printers Edita Bobergs, the drying time is amply sufficient and cannot be the root of the problem. However, sometimes chemical reactions between the paper and the ink used can result in pungent smells. For this issue, we have changed paper to a kind that limits the risk of stinky reading. Hopefully, that will solve the problem.
**Best way to a recorded lecture**

An entirely new video service for teaching has been launched at Umeå University. Teachers and students will in future easily be able to create and publish their own videos.

**The New Video** service is called UmU Play and will make life easier for teachers and students who want to film and publish digital video material.

“I’m looking forward to seeing how teachers and students will use this service,” says system manager Jonas Lindholm at the Centre for Educational Development (UPL), who at present is in charge of the e-learning services Cambro, Moodle, Urkund and Adobe Connect.

The explosion of videos on the Internet has been noticeable over the last few years. YouTube is constantly breaking records in the number of uploaded videos at the same time as Facebook wants more people to post videos. Newspapers and even radio channels have realised the extensive outreach videos can have.

Even within education, digital videos have become increasingly more in demand, something that this new UmU Play service can be an answer to.

“We can see that the use of videos is increasing and it’ll continue to grow. There’s already a distinct demand and many people have taken the leap,” says Jonas Lindholm.

**By using UmU Play**, teachers can easily record, upload and reuse films for educational purposes.

The service is linked directly to the University learning platforms Cambro and Moodle.

Creating lectures, demos or other video-based educational material should therefore be made easier for those who want to try it out. With the new tool, teachers can, by the touch of a button, start a recording from their own computer of what is seen on the screen and also add a self-recording with picture and sound. The idea is to make PowerPoint presentations or feedback to students more lifelike.

**There are also** more functions for those who are interested in exploring the tool further. You can for instance edit the recording and remove unwanted sequences. Another available function is for the teacher to pose questions in the video that the student could respond to.

Videos that are published with UmU Play can be used immediately in programmes and courses, which will probably be the most common usage. For that purpose, only those registered in the course can access the films, in the same way as other course material.

It is also possible to publish films and make them available to the entire world to see, UmU Play hence contains one part open to the public.

But recording with UmU Play is not limited to only teachers. Students can also use the service, for instance to hand in video-based examinations. UmU Play enables the use of videos in various learning platforms where students are active.

“It feels so rewarding to finally be able to offer a technical solution enabling educational development for teachers,” says Jonas Lindholm.

However, he still wants to emphasise that it is still too early to say whether the service will affect the educational methods at the University. That depends greatly on the teachers’ own commitment and initiatives.

“I hope the service will be used in ways that we haven’t thought of yet,” says Jonas Lindholm with an urge for many innovative thoughts and ideas on the new tool.

**The New Service** has been procured by Sunet, the common network for Swedish higher education institutions. Umeå is one of 27 higher education institutions in the country linked to the service, which is a strength, not least as it can form basis for future joint production projects.

“It works to our advantage; it means we can learn from other people’s experiences,” says Jonas Lindholm, who is looking forward to having many people try out the new video tool now that it has been made available.
RECENTLY, I PARTICIPATED in a seminar on higher education aimed at asylum seekers. One of the tasks was to answer how we wanted to describe the work with this new group of students. It was all summarised in a word cloud, where the most frequent answers had the largest font. All the while participants answered, the word ‘commitment’ grew larger and larger, and in the end completely dominated the picture. But my eyes fixed on the word “conventional”, which remained insignificant throughout the exercise. It’s not particularly positive, and not likely a word that inspires people, but conventional bureaucracy is necessary to enable change in a working culture.

We need to resurrect conventionalism. The linear model and structure that the term entails is the very condition for long-term efforts leading to long-lasting results.

COMMITMENT IS THE starting point of visions and progress, but the initial eagerness to create reforms risks burning itself out. That’s why conventionalism and bureaucracy together since 1994 have been the main strategy to implement Swedish equality opportunities policies. The political agenda has been carved out through commitment from activists, gender researchers and fellow human beings, and is clearly formulated: Women and men should have the same power to shape and change society, and their own lives. But the path to get there is a question of legislation, policy work and reported decisions.

During 2016–2019, all higher education institutions have been assigned by the Government to work with gender mainstreaming. According to the Council of Europe’s definition, this means “the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels at all stages, by the actors involved in policy-making.” Particularly pressing tasks to handle are unequal academic career paths and employments, counteracting gender-stereotypic choices of educations, and improve both female and male throughput.

THERE IS A NOTICEABLE tendency towards increased equality in academia with a more equal human sex ratio in an increasing number of groups of teachers, researchers and doctoral students. Umeå University had the highest proportion of female professors among the country’s higher education institutions in 2012–2015. Despite those numbers, the professor ratio here is still unequal, and women in general have fewer years than men as professors. That means they have shorter time to affect the culture within their fields and to act as role models.

We would like to improve the situation by securing wide-spanning notifications of all vacancies and assessments that are based on strict acquisition of qualifications.

Does it sound bureaucratic? Well, maybe. However, this kind of bureaucracy is what changes attitudes in the long run.

It’s not first and foremost an issue of fairness, but rather signifying of a conviction that an equal academy reaches higher quality.

HEIDI HANSSON
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR OF INTERNATIONALISATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

“Umeå University stands well among the competition.”

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Anders Fällström about the number of applicants per place to programmes and modules for spring term 2017

“The autonomy that higher education institutions enjoy at present, is to an increasing extent being tarnished, both by the government and by partners in trade and industry. I do welcome interest, thoughts and opinions on what operations we should pursue. At the same time, it is of great importance that we as a university can stand up for our fundamental values.”

Excerpt from Vice-Chancellor Hans Adolfsson’s inaugural speech at the 2016 Annual Celebration Ceremony

“\[Photo: Ulrika Bergfors\]

Signed Words from Deputy Vice-Chancellor Heidi Hansson

“\[Photo: Mattias Pettersson\]"
Moderate workload – a tough nut

All employees are not overloaded at all times. But a large enough amount are overworked to a sufficient extent for workload to be a challenge at Umeå University. The difficulty in uniting resources, assignments and ambitions is something that unites both teachers, researchers and other members of staff.

The most comprehensive view of how Umeå University members of staff experience their work environment and work situation is shown through the employee satisfaction survey that is conducted every three years. The survey, which at the University is often referred to as an NMI, was last carried out in autumn 2014 by an external party. Hence, the numbers are not the newest. On the other hand, departments and units have long worked with making changes and measures based upon the problems raised by the NMI. The next employee satisfaction survey, in 2017, may provide answers to what effects those measures have had.

In the survey company Quicksearch’s analysis of the latest employee satisfaction survey, five problematic areas were pinpointed for special measures. In the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Medicine, “Not enough time for work tasks” was one of five problematic issues that were raised. To the University at large, this issue did not stand out as strong.

However, 11 per cent of all employees who participated in the survey answered: “I do not agree at all” when asked if they had time for their work tasks. On
a six-graded scale, where 1 was “I do not agree at all” and 6 was “I fully agree”, a full 42 per cent answered between 1-3; that they to some extent did not have time for their work tasks.

Concerning the experienced workload, the employees at the Faculty of Arts were particularly prominent. A full 39 per cent of the respondents answered that the workload to some extent was not manageable. From these people, 79 per cent said that work too often encroached on spare time and 66 per cent of them did not have enough time for recovery. 42 per cent stated that they had to shorten or skip lunches to manage.

**IN THE OCCUPATIONAL** health care service Feelgood’s annual report on their work for Umeå University, the report has for several years mentioned female employees, particularly female doctoral students, as a significantly vulnerable group. Overall, the annual report for 2015 describes that stress-related issues constantly signify a large proportion of contacts with occupational health care services, and that high workload in particular is a dominating reason. A tendency that Feelgood took notice of in 2015 was that more individuals than before had sought help due to stress-related illness in conjunction with adjustment processes or reorganisations.

Another visible trend was that administrative staff, as well as doctoral students, were overrepresented in the category of illness due to high workload and demands of high levels of accessibility.

Sickness absence for Umeå University employees are generally on a reasonable level. According to the statistics reporting system Fokus, it was 2.7 per cent in 2015, which is a low figure compared to the country at large. The difference is huge between the University’s male employees (1.6 per cent) and female employees (3.7 per cent).

However, in the occupational health care service’s annual reports, it has been pointed out that low sickness absence is not necessarily an evidence of healthy staff. Instead, they suggest that employees in the case of temporary illness sometimes choose to work from home instead of calling in sick, so-called sickness presence.

**THE NEXT EMPLOYEE** satisfaction survey is intended to be implemented during autumn 2017. Until then, a certain working team will evaluate and develop upon the questions asked for the survey to catch employees’ experiences in the best way possible. ●

For links to the results from the employee satisfaction survey, the statistics tool Fokus and other background facts, please see aktum.umu.se.
despite that a great deal of work is involved in applying. If this coincides with a period of intense tuition, you’ll be pressed for time. “

According to Therese Stenlund, good planning is one way to prevent those types of problems. The workforce management system that is currently used at Umeå University is an efficient tool for those who plan work at a unit or department.

“It provides good support in order to see over time when the workload peaks.”

However, it differs greatly how well this opportunity of surveying and structuring the work is made use of.

THERSE STENLUND IS particularly worried about the great difference in how much time teachers are given for similar work tasks:

“I hear from employees that it can vary between departments how much time is allocated to each course. At some departments it can be very clear in the planning how much time you get for preparation work, to implement the course, for final revisions and registering credits, and dealing with resits,” she says and continues:

“For others, the time set aside for preparation may be a lot shorter, or course co-ordinators are rather given a lump sum of hours to distribute as seen fit.”

One way to approach this problem would be to establish what is common for all teachers on an overall level,” says Therese Stenlund. For instance how much time is needed for preparations for lectures:

“In some way, the differences should not be too great throughout the University. A fair system can help promote good health.”

“Sure, there are many factors that provide each department with its own challenges. But to strive towards a common view on how much time is needed for preparations for lectures:

“In some way, the differences should not be too great throughout the University. A fair system can help promote good health.”

“One difficulty is to bring together the various work tasks – teaching, conducting research and contributing with knowledge to society.”

“To a certain extent, these parts stimulate each other, but it’s important to prioritise and dispose of one’s working time in a good way so that they don’t conflict,” says Therese Stenlund and exemplifies:

“A call for proposals may for instance be open for a relatively short period of time, comparable preparation is a question of justice CHIEF WORK ENVIRONMENT REPRESENTATIVE: Therese Stenlund is chief work environment representative for the Faculty of Medicine, but also has general experience of teachers’ work environment. The difficulty in achieving an even workload is partly due to the type of work, but the timeframes to conduct education also differ unreasonably between various departments. A fair system can help promote good health, she suggests.

TEXT Jonas Lidström PHOTO Mattias Pettersson

THERSE STENLUND IS chief work environment representative for the Faculty of Medicine, but thanks to her close collaborations with other chief work environment representatives, she has a good overview of the workload at the University at large:

“One difficulty is to bring together the various work tasks – teaching, conducting research and contributing with knowledge to society.”

“To a certain extent, these parts stimulate each other, but it’s important to prioritise and dispose of one’s working time in a good way so that they don’t conflict,” says Therese Stenlund and exemplifies:

“A call for proposals may for instance be open for a relatively short period of time, despite that a great deal of work is involved in applying. If this coincides with a period of intense tuition, you’ll be pressed for time.”

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“In some way, the differences should not be too great throughout the University. A fair system can help promote good health.”

“Sure, there are many factors that provide each department with its own challenges. But to strive towards a common view on how much time is needed for certain basic work tasks, seems reasonable. It’s awkward if departments differ too much from one another,” says Therese Stenlund.

A TREND THAT IS evident from a long-term perspective is that teachers have been given more administrative tasks. That, at the same time as demands from students slowly but steadily are increasing:

“At the moment, students are applying for courses and programmes in a whole new way. There was previously a time when one could count on the student to actually attend an accepted course. Now, more stu-
students change their minds, and at the same
time it’s more important than ever to fill
places. Concurrently with the students be-
coming more flexible, the demand increases
on teachers being equally flexible.”

“Many teachers go to the length of phon-
ing admitted students before the start of the
course to ask if they’re planning on taking
the course, in order to accept reserves.”

Therese Stenlund would also like to point
out that many teachers work alone, in a way
that heightens the pressure:

“If I was the sole responsible teacher for a
course and held all tuition, it would mean I
could never fall ill, for instance. Everything
would stand and fall by me and I might
come to work despite that I should be home
and get better.”

**ONE WAY OF GETTING** to the bottom of
that problem would be to set up teams of
teachers that cover for each other.

At the Physiotherapy Programme where
Therese Stenlund works as a teacher, they
have started with that setup for certain
courses:

“As far as I’ve heard, teachers like the
approach; it’s more fun working in a team,
it’s easier to share experiences, work
becomes more flexible and less vulnerable.
Consequently, it’s a palpable way to reduce
stress levels.”

**CARINA KESKITALO, THE PROFESSOR’S ASSOCIATION:**

**High level of external funds complicates planning**

Although it has been over ten years since she started at Umeå Univer-
sity – after eight years as a doctoral student and postdoc abroad – Carina
Keskitalo can still remember the surprise: the permanent position did not
include funding.

**“I HADN’T REALISED** that I had to apply
for all research funds myself, both for a
potential research team and for my own sal-
ary,” says Carina Keskitalo, who nowadays is
professor in political science at the Depart-
ment of Geography and Economic History.

In later years, Carina Keskitalo has led a
number of large research projects funded
by for instance Mistra and Formas, so it has
turned out well for her after all. Although,
she is still committed to the topic as active
member of the board of the local Umeå bod-
ies of the association for university teachers,
researchers and doctoral candidates, SULF,
and the association for professors, SPF,
and in the last year also as member of the
national SULF and SPF boards.

“It’s no good if operations at for instance
a department is dependent on uncertain,
external funds. Neither in the long run or for
the individual researcher. One could always
question what a research career leads to, if
all these insecure temporary employments
at best lead to an insecure permanent post
without any specific research allotment.”

**THE PROBLEM HAS** been paid attention to
previously. In the Royal Swedish Academy of
Science’s report Fostering breakthrough re-
search: A comparative study (2012) that was
initiated by former Umeå Professor Gunnar Öquist, it was stated that:

- Swedish universities have a low level of
core funding.
- Direct financing of Swedish research
is below 50 per cent, which is considerably
lower than in countries such as Denmark
(60%), the Netherlands (70%) and Switzer-
land (80%).
- Also well-reputed professors are
dependent on external fund-givers to con-
duct their research – often even to cover
their own salary.

Carina Keskitalo mentions the Faculty of

**FACTS:**

**Chief work environment representative**

Umeå University has one chief work
environment representative per faculty,
and one for the University Administration.
The chief work environment representative
coordinates and supports the work envi-
ronment representatives at departments
and offices, but they also collaborate
closely with each other as an institution-
wide group. All chief work environment
representatives are also members of the
work environment committee, which is led
by the University Director.

**PHOTO: MATIAS PETTERSSON**
“The pressure makes me appalled”

High workload for teachers at the Faculty of Arts has long since crossed the line. This according to Per-Olof Erixon, dean of the Faculty. What can be done to mitigate the problem is to use incentives and efficient structures.

TEXT Jonas Lidström

A NOTICEABLY WORRIED Per-Olof Erixon, dean at the Faculty of Arts, is greeting us in his office in the Teacher Education Building. Teachers at his faculty are struggling to find time for their work tasks. Personally, he sees no point in trying to cover things up.

“I’m highly aware that our teachers are under tremendous pressure. And it makes me appalled on a regular basis. That’s only natural,” says Per-Olof Erixon.

“We get particularly worried when people have to drop down in time to cope with working as a teacher. That’s terrible. We crossed the line of what’s acceptable a long time ago."

HE SEEMS TO KNOW what the root of the problem is:

“We have a system that works unfavourably for the arts and humanities. Our teachers need to move quicker, hold a higher number of courses and teach more students. That’s the obvious explanation.”

The Faculty of Arts at Umeå University has also been struck by a number of redundancies over the last few years. That obviously makes things more difficult for the employees:

“During a period, we limited our courses and programmes offered to the so-called minimum – 24 per cent fewer study places compared to in 2010. Such a reduction evidently results in people being made redundant,” says Per-Olof Erixon.

“Redundancy also creates frustration and anxiety. Even those who don’t deem themselves in the risk of being made redundant are indirectly affected. It affects the entire workplace.”

THE INSECURITY CAN be related to the number of students at the Faculty courses and programmes, and the size of external research funding – two means of revenues with one thing in common; they can vary greatly from one year to another,” states Per-Olof Erixon:

“Courses that do well one year, can struggle the next. It takes years to build environments and competence, and demand can shift rapidly. Getting that balance right is difficult.”

When it comes to external research funding, researchers at the Faculty of Arts have kept in the loop, and funds have increased in recent years.

“That’s still a very uncertain market. You can be very successful one year and then scrim and scrape the next.”

PER-OLOF ERIXON states that his own room for manoeuvre is highly limited when it comes to establishing a secure and well-balanced work situation for faculty teachers and researchers.

“I can’t influence the resources we get. Neither can I influence how many tuition hours teachers get with students. My only means of making a difference is to set the requirements and structures.”

“Using applications for funds as an example, I’m able to create the incentives to affect workplace culture so that it becomes natural for everyone to apply for funds. When it comes to first-cycle courses and study programmes, I can create supportive structures for continuous improvement of programmes and courses, so that they meet the demand and people’s interest. It’s at that level I’m able to make a difference.”

LAST YEAR, THE Government initiated activities of increased funds for the humanities, social sciences, law and theology. The total sum was SEK 250 million per year.

“This temporary addition of funds has been entirely necessary on our part, which will be evident when it disappears. We haven’t got long to go until 2018. At the faculty, we are working intensely with preparing ourselves for the reduction of funds. It’s an
What has happened since 2014?
“The most common diagnoses of sick leaves are still stress, exhaustion and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). It’s with these types of illnesses that the occupational health care services can make the biggest difference through preventive measures. Since 2014, more departments have gone through adjustment processes during 2015 and 2016. To change and develop an operation, at the same time as you’re affected yourself at some level, is tough.”

How is this noticeable at Feelgood?
“Retrenchments and cut-downs are very noticeable. Many teachers describe that they have fewer hours to perform their work tasks. They experience that the time set aside for the work tasks is insufficient. The student groups may be bigger and the demands from students seem to have escalated, the same goes for the demands for availability and the content of the education. Naturally, employees want to continue doing a good job.”

Have you noticed other reasons why stress and exhaustion is increasing at the University?
“It’s a big question. Between 2001 and 2009, political decisions led to reduced sick leaves in Sweden, and the University followed in the same tracks. Since then it has increased again. But the numbers of sick leaves at the University is still low in comparison to other workplaces.”

The 2015 annual report at Feelgood suggests that you also supported more individuals in complex and deadlock conflicts. Is there a correlation between workload and conflicts at the workplace?
“Research shows that there is a link. I believe the problem lies in a high workload making us lose the ability to maintain a broad-minded, creative, listening and understanding approach. It often ignites conflicts.”

What can the employer do to reduce the risk of conflicts and stress at the workplace?
“Employers need to listen out for signals indicating stress and conflicts, and raise these questions in their systematic work environment undertakings. It’s important to act early on in adjustment processes. Prior to a transformation process, it’s important to be ready. You need to make extensive impact and risk assessments. This can be accomplished by raising these issues in conversations with employees, at workplace meetings and in the management team.”

Involving your boss early makes all the difference
When Aktum last wrote about workload in early 2014, stress and workload were the foremost reasons to seek help at the occupational health care service Feelgood. Catharina Eckeskog, head of Feelgood, says that the trend is steady. Although, she has also seen effects of cut-downs and retrenchments.

Per-Olof Erixon is not unreasonable in thinking that tougher times lie ahead. But the idea of the University on its own being able to fight off an exhaustion of the humanities by conducting some form of internal distribution of funds policy, he dismisses as unrealistic:
“There are only two money pots: one for education and one for research. There’s no other money to distribute. And I’m aware that the other faculties are struggling too. The Vice-Chancellor has his strategic funds, but they are only sufficient for highly temporary and limited investments.
Nobody expects that a Vice-Chancellor should be able to change this imbalance purely by redistributing funds.”
THEME Workload

In March 2016, the Swedish Work Environment Authority stiffened the regulations for the organisational and social work environment. Has it affected your role? “The new regulations elucidated an area that has been rather large and complex. To the employer, it’s been made easier to know what to focus on, and in that, workload is one of the most evident parts.”

What is Feelgood’s approach to involve the responsible manager when an employee is undergoing treatment for psychosocial problems? “We are actively working towards three-party conversations, for instance with basis in a compilation on psychiatric illness by the National Centre for Occupational Healthcare in 2015. We find it important to base our work on the latest and most reliable practices and scientific results.”

What is the difference between three-party conversations and simply treating the individual? “It makes all the difference in the world. Involving the manager as early as possible is one of the most important rehabilitation measures. After these guidelines were introduced, we changed the individual support to members of staff at the University. Previously, it was possible to come to us anonymously up to ten times without notifying the employer. But since this spring, the manager in charge steps in much earlier for three-party conversations. This is also a demand from the University.”

How has the change been greeted by those who seek help from you? “At Feelgood, we raised this question recently at one of our workplace meetings. Our impression is that the response from university employees generally has been very positive. People feel noticed and listened to; many express that the meetings have been greatly helpful in progressing and solving issues.”

Are employees not more exposed in that situation by involving the manager in such a sensitive conversation? There may even be a tense relationship or an open conflict? “In a few cases, people have chosen to end contact with us before any three-party conversations have been planned. In most of those cases, I’m pretty certain that would have been the decision regardless.”

There’s also an opportunity to invite further people if that would feel more comfortable. For instance an HR specialist.”

HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES:

Human resources need to be involved sooner

Strict economic requirements and increased competition for students heightens pressure on Swedish universities. Lars Nordlander, head of human resources at Umeå University, reckons we need to deal with this new reality in order to prevent illness among employees.

TEXT Mattias Grundström Mitz

“SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES have been given the room to grow for decades, and lack of resources has been solved by simply employing more staff. We’ve now come to a point where the limited financial framework restricts the number of students we get compensation for. This prevents us from balancing the reduced government funding for research with an increased number of students. Unfortunately, this means we need to learn to live with redundancies or rearrangements, which not least increases stress for our employees,” says Lars Nordlander.

According to him, there are at least ten ongoing redundancy and rearrangement processes at the University, which in itself is natural in a workplace with 4,300 employees. Although, the situation at the University stands out since the finances have always been affected by the number of students and by the allocation of funds for research. Despite the screws having been out on the finances, and that certain members of staff have chip in harder for the operations to function, Lars Nordlander still ascertains that the number of sick leaves are considerably lower than in society at large.

“This can probably be explained by many teachers working despite being ill. You go to work, hold your lecture - as no one else can cover for you - and then you march back home. Many may believe that sickness presence is positive for the employer, but it twists statistics in a way that makes it difficult to judge how the staff are actually doing,” says Lars Nordlander.

THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH care services on the other hand pays attention to those ill and struggling from bad health. Just like in the rest of society, psychiatric diagnoses are increasing. At the University, there is first and foremost symptoms of stress and being overloaded. Lars Nordlander points out that women over the age of 30 are overrepresented in the statistics, see the article overleaf. Other groups that stand out at Umeå University are doctoral students, people with insecure forms of employment and employees from non-Scandinavian countries.

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Lars Nordlander, head of human resources at Umeå University.

“When it comes to foreign-born employees, they sometimes have a harder time adapting to the Swedish system, and not least, the Swedish mentality. We are pleasant in our encounters, but we don’t to any large extent open up our homes for work colleagues, which can impact these individuals socially,” says Lars Nordlander.

ANOTHER WAY TO notice signs of stress and high workload is the employee satisfaction survey carried out at the University every three years, and which forms basis for long-term staff welfare.

“At present, we have a relatively good idea of the comfort and health of our employees, but in case of illness, we need to be able to act much earlier in the process. It’s so important. That’s why we are now assessing how we can improve collaborations with occupational health care services.

Also, the next employee satisfaction survey will be revised so it gives us better information to form basis for our actions,” says Lars Nordlander. 

Aktum • December • 2016
Supervisors need to be prepared

Sickness absence at Umeå University is low in comparison to Sweden at large at the same time as it has increased as of late and many employees experience a high workload. Sustainable developmental work and leadership can provide an organisation with the opportunities to reduce pressure, suggests Professor Lotta Dellve who has studied the field.

**RESEARCH HAS SHOWN** that sickness presence is high among teachers, just like in many other academic professions. Sickness presence is when a person is working despite illness, for instance because there is no replacement available to step in.

Lotta Dellve is professor in Work Science at the University of Gothenburg. She sees rather seriously upon high sickness presence as research has shown that it increases need for sick leaves. To solve the problem, the workplace culture is important.

“It’s necessary to get away from the hero culture present at many workplaces, where it’s seen as positive to work despite illness. Conveying a culture where it’s alright to stay at home when you’re ill and realise that we’re all vulnerable as people is important,” says Lotta Dellve.

“Responsibility for building a good workplace culture lies on the entire team. Many people suggest that the supervisor should be a role-model and go home at a reasonable time. But the manager isn’t the only role-model, colleagues are just as important.”

She continues to emphasise how sickness presence cannot simply be the individual’s responsibility, and how tough it can be for individuals to stay at home although he or she is ill. Employees need to be backed up.

“For teachers who are sick, the solution can be to use pre-recorded lectures, and find solutions where teachers cover for each other across subjects or departments. However, the leader is still an important role-model, and the person responsible for establishing a work environment policy.”

Lotta Dellve’s research calls attention to the term sustainable leadership as a key to the success of health promoting efforts at a workplace. Sustainable leadership means that the supervisor should support employees in finding a sustainable and healthy commitment to work. This requires knowledge on psychosocial risk factors and their effects, but also being able to put this knowledge into practice in relation to the operational targets and its demand for efficiency.

To the question of how a supervisor can contribute to creating a mutual picture of what is ‘good enough’, Lotta Dellve answers: “Dialogue, of course. It’s important to facilitate dialogue and consult with all parties regarding what qualitative targets are important to fulfil with the available resources. It means everyone is involved.”

**LAST SPRING,** the Swedish Work Environment Authority released new regulations about the organisational and social work environment. The new regulations put a clearer responsibility on the employer and the supervisor. Lotta Dellve says that it is not enough to simply increase awareness in supervisors of these issues. It is also necessary for supervisors to build up an action-based preparedness in order for them to act and handle problems and when they arise.

“We’ve tried various methods of improving the action-based preparedness and the best solution is when group leaders meet for a dialogue on these issues. In that way, the supervisor can see how others have solved similar problems and hence get suggestions and advice. Formulating these issues in front of others is also a good way to prepare yourself.”

**ON THE QUESTION** of what heads of department and other supervisors at Umeå University can do to improve their action-based preparedness, Lotta Dellve mentions some working materials that she has sketched out together with Andrea Eriksson. The material is in Swedish and is readily available on several web pages (e.g. suntliv.nu). It is intended to be used by for instance human resources managers and occupational health services. It can also be used by working groups in individual workplaces.

“What’s most important is to work and discuss things together in a group.”

Tangible steps for sustainably developing a university on an organisational level ought to take place in small steps and be based on the operations, rather than the highest managerial level,” says Lotta Dellve:

“With lacking resources, you still can’t take too large steps at a time. And there’s also other reasons to progress in small steps, for instance because people need to catch up with the development.”

It is particularly important to clarify and refine before you start thinking along new lines, suggests Lotta Dellve:

“You need to focus on the core business and issues, and remove everything that’s unnecessary. When working with development, course development for instance, you often add that to everything else. We hardly ever take time to remove things.”

**ON THE QUESTION** of how she thinks universities should be organised in order to create a sustainable work environment, in a perfect world, Lotta Dellve responds:

“I reckon top-to-bottom leadership should be reduced, and instead focus more on researchers’ creativity. It’s best made use of through an open climate that allows creative and in-depth reflections, and through stability in the operations with palpable forms of collegial influence.”

"The RESEARCHER:"
Brings education to a new dimension

Fearless, curious and restless are words that Johanna Olsson uses to describe herself. As a teacher and educational consultant, she wants to develop teachers’ educational, digital competence and contribute to improving the University’s distance educations.

TEXT Camilla Bergvall PHOTO Elin Berge

JOHANNA OLSSON HAS her office at the Department of Education in a somewhat hidden-away corridor between the Social Sciences Building and the Behavioural Sciences Building. Spending so much of her time in the borderland between two huge campus complexes feels rather symbolic. During all her working life, she has passed and moved borders of what is educationally and technically feasible in teaching distance education – an area into which she is often called in as an expert.

“The Department of Education took on new technology very early on. When we started the first full-time distance web-based educations in spring 2008, we were among the first in Sweden. Loads of students applied and were accepted, and the number exploded. But we had no one to learn from nor share experiences with.”

“I’ve never been a tech geek, but I’m nearly always prepared to try new stuff, and I enjoy it. A huge advantage is that I’ve been surrounded by a group of committed and positive individuals,” says Johanna Olsson.

She was born nearly forty years ago in Gothenburg and from time to time, her childhood Gothenburg accent makes itself heard. Although over 15 years on Northern soil has made its mark.

FOR AS LONG AS JOHANNA Olsson can remember, she has enjoyed attention, both on the football pitch and on stage.

“What I really wanted to become was an actress or dancer, but I’m tone-deaf, can’t sing and have always been rather stiff, so I suppose I wouldn’t have gotten that far,” she says with a smile.

She found her sense of security through her friends – nine girls who stuck together through thick and thin, and still keep in touch.

“I’ve realised how unusual it is for girls to stick together in such a large group. We also had a rather crude jargon. It makes you rough-skinned, and it helps you to fit in to all kinds of constellations.”

Her fearlessness, in combination with a certain restlessness, has followed Johanna Olsson throughout life. After graduating from upper-secondary school, she took off to the US on her own where she worked as an au-pair in a Swedish family outside of Washington DC. As a ‘young and rather foolhardy’ adult, she travelled
“I’ve never been a tech geek, but I’m nearly always prepared to try new stuff.”

Johanna Olsson

Reads: Detective stories, preferably by female authors. Also, books that take place in the Middle East or Africa.

Follows: American TV series like House of Cards and Homeland. Also keeps up with the Swedish Royal Family, particularly Victoria.

Visits: Museums, and art exhibitions on humour.

Listens to: Mostly radio shows on Radio Sweden channel P1, such as documentaries and series. Has an unhealthy relationship with classical hit songs – schlager, that is.

Dreams of: Going to the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iran.
through the US with Greyhound buses, but also had time to study and explore Sociology and Psychology. The new interest for behavioural science made her move back to Sweden in 1998 – this time a tip from a friend inspired her to move to Örnsköldsvik, a town 110 km south of Umeå, for an entirely new education.

“It took some time getting used to the change. I felt rather urbane, and probably wasn’t the most humble person in town.”

THE PROGRAMME IN BEHAVIOURAL Analysis of IT-Environments turned out the perfect match. After the education, she was hired by the department as a university lecturer. From one day to another her teachers became her colleagues.

“I didn’t ponder over it too much, I had no plan, but instead I devoted myself to teaching. When new things have popped up, I’ve usually tried them out. Of course, it means that you need to be daring, but it’s also quite convenient not to have to lay out the direction in advance.”

Since then, she has taken an interest in topics of education, and has moved the borders of how technology can be used in supporting methods for learning and education. Since the previously mentioned web-based educations became so incredibly popular, the department had some breathing-space and the opportunity to develop the model, often with Johanna Olsson walking at the head of things. In periods, she has come across some rather reluctant teaching-staff.

“After all, the resistance is based on how the role of the teacher is perceived. Some are teachers because they like being at the centre of attention. And fine, often it’s only the voice that is heard online, but the role of the teacher is still just as important, although somewhat different. You need to be able to create a good climate and be educational in the digital classroom as well.”

TO BEGIN WITH, many teachers – Johanna Olsson included – were afraid that students would be too anonymous online. But it is not necessarily true, according to her. In web-based educations, just like regular ones, there are some students who are heard and seen, and some who are more reserved.

The challenge, however, is to establish contact between students when many of them study at very irregular times.

“As teachers, we need to be flexible, but just because students study nights and weekend, we don’t have to fall into the same pattern. Instead, make sure that course literature is available online, and schedule deadlines on Sundays rather than Fridays.”

“It’s now possible to hold seminars using Adobe Connect or Skype, and most student groups take own initiatives to start Facebook groups where they can interact.”

A wrongful common view is that all recorded educational material has to be perfect.

“You’re not expected to achieve a professional TV production - we are all human. It doesn’t really matter if you cough or the phone rings.”

JOHANNA OLSSON HAS had several leading positions over the years, for instance as deputy Head of Depart-ment responsible for IT and collaboration. She has also been appointed both as a merited and excellent teacher.

“Having a common system for the entire University is great. As a teacher, you just have to get used to expressing your best qualities in writing, and then be assessed, just like researchers are.”

It is not overly common to have leading roles at the University without having a doctoral degree, though. Johanna Olsson has tried the research track, but it did not quite suit her.

“I reckon it’s the mode of working - I’m too restless. Nevertheless, I still find that I’m contributing. There’s a great need for varying qualities to complement each other,” she says and hopes to continue acting as a role model to others who want to go all in on education.

DESPITE THAT JOHANNA Olsson has always enjoyed going to work, she has had to take it easier over the last year-and-a-half. In winter 2015, she was knocked down on the ski slope resulting in a serious concussion. Her brain still suffers from fatigue – with symptoms similar to those of a burnout – so she can only work half-time. To a restless and active person it can be a particularly hard blow to be forced to slow down and choose your activities well, both at work and on your spare time.

“I walk a lot, do bodyjam, go to museums and listen to the radio. Not overexerting myself is the challenge.”

It has now been years since Johanna Olsson taught students. Instead, she holds professional development courses for teachers and is involved in working groups for the Police Education. A few years ago, when the Medical Programme was to be regionalised, she was hired as an educational consultant to offer the education in a new learning platform. But the experience grew to something greater.

“When teachers from various parts of the education had a chance to meet, they started discussing all kinds of teaching methods. It was incredibly instructive.”

Particularly rewarding was when someone came up with the idea to make all material for the entire education available on the learning platform. This means that medical students now can repeat previous terms and also study in advance. And demand is huge. Although over 300 films are available, students just want more.

In recent years, Johanna Olsson has been the driving force in making the term pedagogical digital competence a part of the University e-learning policy, a much longed-for strategy document that was finally decided upon six months ago.

“Finally, things are beginning to fall into place. The Faculty of Medicine has for instance in its operational planning included that teachers should increase their educational digital competence, and increase digital elements in their educations.”

Johanna Olsson continues by emphasising how important good leadership is in the digital part of teaching.

“There must be an articulated strategy if you want to achieve change on a larger scale, teachers can’t solve the problem on their own. Despite progress, I still think that it’s odd that the University hasn’t taken a clear standpoint regarding how we look at openness, and how we support students that aren’t on campus. Hopefully, the new policy can speed things up further.”●
In constant collaboration

The umbrella organisation Umeå School of Sport Sciences (USSS) is rather complicated, but a continuous theme is that most of its operations take place in collaboration with the sports movement. It is evident not least at the USSS secretariat, which recently moved in together with the Unit of Sports Medicine and the Sport Sciences Lab at Iksu sports centre.

TEXT Jonas Lidström PHOTO Mattias Pettersson

Students Diana Nilsson and Lena Törnquist are two students in the fifth term of the Physical Trainer Programme. They are in the Sport Sciences Lab practising to examine joints.
A day at the USSS

UMEÅ SCHOOL of Sport Sciences, that’s the one opposite the climbing wall at the university sports centre Iksu, right? At least, that’s what I thought but soon realised I was misinformed. First of all, the crew that once occupied those premises recently moved, to the far end of Iksu Sport. Second of all, that is only the USSS secretariat. The secretariat conducts no sports education of its own, only a small part of the sports research. Still, the secretariat feels like the most reasonable starting-point for an article to cover a day at the Umeå School of Sport Sciences.

PERNILLA ERIKSSON, assistant director of USSS greets me in the new premises of the secretariat. I sit down in the visitor’s chair and get a detailed description of the USSS organisation and what areas of the operations fall under the USSS competence centre.

“Umeå University is one of Sweden’s first national sports universities since autumn 2015, and we have the broadest research in Sweden, since we have sports researchers in all faculties. At present, there are about 60 sports researchers and doctoral students in sports in the research network of the USSS. When it comes to certain parts, we’re already leading in Sweden, but we keep aiming higher.”

“We have the highest number of sports students in the country, both those who study sports and those who choose to combine an elite sports investment with studies regardless of choice of education,” says Pernilla Eriksson and flicks to the next slide.

“I work with education, among other things. Not least, we have an important job in supporting and stimulating collaboration, both internally between programmes and externally with the sports movement.”

The umbrella organisation USSS is organised under the Faculty of Social Sciences, but spreads across all the research, education and collaboration at Umeå University that contains sports elements.

“Each faculty decides what educations should be placed underneath the umbrella. That makes it rather complex,” says Pernilla Eriksson.

WHEN AKTUM VISITS USSS it is still October. The entrance is rather chaotic after the move, but we can see that the carpenters must have worked fast to get most elements in place.

Pär Norén is on his way out with ski boots and a helmet. He is project leader at the Orienteering Develop-

“Ski orienteering sportspersons want to be as prepared as possible. Their ski season starts somewhat later than for cross-country skiers because skiing in terrain requires a thicker layer of snow. The orienteering part is quite simple. The challenge is rather to choose the right path, than to find the control points,” says Pär Norén.

“I work half time, so only a small portion of my working day is spent exercising with students.”
ment Centre and it is time for a training session for the students that are affiliated to the development centre.

He attaches the characteristic map holder around his chest and snaps the boots onto a pair of roller skis.

“All seven students who practise ski orienteering are in the national team. They’re a part of the world elite,” says Pär Norén.

**THE BACKS OF THE** roller skiers soon disappear behind the trees and we enter the building for the next crash course in the USSS organisational setup, namely the steering committee for the athletics achievements centre, Friidrottens prestationscentrum, in the Iksu complex.

Pernilla Eriksson runs the meeting and does the minutes, at the same time as she waves for us to come in. Project leader Jan Bäck reports to the steering committee where the Swedish Athletics Association is represented both on a national and regional level.

Tor Söderström, professor and director of USSS, represents Umeå University. He joined the operations from the educational side, but has been drawn to sports research at different points, which in the end permanently landed him in the USSS organisation.

“Sports science is essentially interdisciplinary. This is an organisation that flows across faculty borders. That makes us a rather odd part of the University operations. At the same time, we are incredible at collaboration – with sports associations, the Swedish Sports Confederation, with companies, and municipalities ... I’ve never experienced anything like it.”

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**Elbert Karlsson** is project leader of the Elite Ski Centre (ESC). Before the morning training session, he gathers the group of skiing students who have elite athlete contracts. There is no snow at the moment, so the group will instead go for a run towards Gammlia. Elbert Karlsson will supervise the exercise by bike.

**Frida Sandberg** is a student at Umeå University and is one of the top ski orientation athletes in Sweden.

The steering committee of the athletics achievements centre, Friidrottens prestationscentrum, is meeting in the conference room Wallenberg in the basement of the university sports centre Iksu.

“It’s a shame the municipality wasn’t represented today. They are a very large part of this collaboration,” Tor Söderström emphasises.
WE FIND SOME STUDENTS studying in a room with windows overlooking the corridor. We capture a few photos of their cramming whilst a voice echoes from an office down the hall wondering what we are doing.

The voice belongs to Britt-Marie Eliasson, education coordinator of the Physical Trainer Programme, to whom the students in the next door room belong.

This part of the building houses the Unit of Sports Medicine, explains Britt-Marie Eliasson:

“There are about seventeen of us here.”

“But you still belong to USSS,” I precariously ask whilst at the same time trying to visualise Pernilla Eriksson’s PowerPoint from before.

“We are a part of the Department of Community Medicine and Rehabilitation,” says Britt-Marie Eliasson and continues:

“USSS as an umbrella organisation ties together the University’s various educations related to sports. It facilitates collaborations, arranges seminars that are of interest to various students. But to be completely strict, we are organised under the Faculty of Medicine.”

At the end of the corridor, we find the door to the most distinctive of Umeå University’s environments for sports-related research and education - the Sport Sciences Lab. A group of students from the Unit of Sports Medicine is doing an experiment supervised by lecturer Lars Göran Fjellborg. The students are taking their fifth term of the Physical Trainer Programme.

THE WIDE TREADMILL is on and used for testing. A young lad on roller skis with an oxygen mask is double poling. Every few minutes he stops. Lennart Burlin, biomedical scientist at the Sport Sciences Lab, quickly and skilfully takes a blood sample, and then off the skier goes again. In front of a screen we find research engineer Mikael Therell. The skier is a pupil at the Lycksele upper-secondary school with specialisation in cross-country skiing. His teacher and another few fellow pupils are positioned along the wall awaiting their turn.

“By becoming a national sports university, it shows that we’re already leading in Sweden, but we keep aiming higher.”

Britt-Marie Eliasson.

Grim Jernudd, Amanda Mattsson and Oskar Svels study at the Physical Trainer Programme.

A day at the USSS
A PUPIL AT THE LYCKSELE  Ski upper-secondary school has come to the Sport Sciences Lab for a test measuring pulse, absorption of oxygen and lactate. Teacher Lars Gőran Fjellborg is teaching a group of students in the room at the same time. He points out a cord attached to the skier that runs through a system in the ceiling.

“He’ll ski until exhaustion, that’s why the cord is there. When he can’t go any further, his body will collapse and the treadmill stops,” says Lars Gőran Fjellborg.

Lars Gőran Fjellborg mentions that the incline increases with every interval. Soon it starts to equal a really tough uphill slope. The skier’s pulse is about to hit the roof and lactic acid is filling his muscles. ‘Keep going!’ and ‘Come on!’ shout the other ski pupils who until now had sat waiting on a bench behind. The skier keeps struggling for another fifteen seconds until he finds himself hanging limply from the cord in the ceiling and the treadmill stops.

THE USSS SECRETARIAT has twelve employees. Apart from coordinators and administrators, there are members of staff who are employed at certain research and development centres, where Umeå University together with a sports association collaborate when it comes to double careers, sports research and education. In the photo: Ellert Karlsson, Jan Båck, Ulrika Wikström, Tor Sőderström, Emma Isaksson, Pår Norén, Taru Tervo, Jonas Lorentzon and Pernilla Eriksson.

TARU TERVO is project leader of the Swedish Floorball Research and Development Centre, and also research coordinator of the USSS. One part of my work is to aid and motivate researchers to apply for the research grants provided by the USSS. We organise get-togethers, seminars and workshops in the realms of the research network. This spring, we will also organise the event ‘the Umeå School of Sport Sciences Day’ with popular science lectures,” says Taru Tervo.

The network comprises of about 50 researchers and 14 doctoral students spread across 14 departments. “The network get-togethers are intended for researchers to find each other. Sometimes, I help researchers establish contacts and tip colleagues on other departments about relevant research projects. My role to do so is quite important,” says Taru Tervo.

“The Ski Upper-Secondary in Lycksele is one of the oldest clients to the Sport Sciences Lab. I helped them set these tests up in 1989, and have been a part of them ever since,” says Lennart Burlin.

VISITING THE SPORT SCIENCES Lab somehow feels like being at the bustling centre of the usss. However, in the organisation, Lennart Burlin and his colleagues belong to the Department of Surgical and Perioperative Sciences at the Faculty of Medicine. But their everyday operations in the usss still seem to make up the natural cohesive entity.

“The sports lab has been located in these premises for a long time. Those who work here haven’t really been affected by the move of the secretariat,” says Lennart Burlin.

“But we appreciate being gathered under one roof. Especially seeing that we collaborate a great deal.”

We pop in to Pår Norén to say goodbye on our way out. He has returned from his training session on roller skis.

Now, he is instead dressed in jeans and a t-shirt whilst enjoying a cup of coffee and a conversation with Clas Fries, chairperson of the Västerbotten Orienteering Club.

Albeit simple, it is still a form of collaboration.●
Out in the cold

At the same time as the message from the authorities still suggests it is ‘business as usual’, there are apparent uncertainties about future university collaborations between the UK and the EU after Brexit. Negotiations this spring are expected to be tough.

THE BRITISH referendum on the future membership in the EU that was carried out in June 2016 resulted in the Brexit side, wanting to leave the EU, winning with a total of 51.9 per cent. As a consequence of the referendum, a great deal of questions are left unanswered, both in the UK and around Europe, about what consequences this will have on certain parts of society that have close collaborations with other countries, not least in research and education.

THIS SUMMER, Louise and Paul Davis brought their family to Umeå from Newcastle upon Tyne, England, to work as senior lecturers at the Department of Psychology. Just like in many other parts of society, Louise sees some evident consequences of Brexit to both research and education.

“Of course, Brexit will impact higher education; what that will look like at this stage remains unclear as nothing has been finalised yet. Judging by speculations and statements from authorities in both the UK and EU, ongoing collaborative projects between higher education institutions will continue until granted funds have run out. That said, it remains highly uncertain what will happen with projects that request extensions, or new projects in the pipeline,” says Louise Davis.

Louise Davis’s husband, Paul, grew up in Canada but completed postgraduate studies in the UK; his doctoral studies in particular were funded by an EU grant. In his mind, the divorce between the UK and the EU could have dire effects that diminish the perception of higher education in the UK.

“The unease within the British educational system is palpable at the moment. A direct effect of Brexit is that it’ll be more difficult for British students (and staff) to travel to other EU member states to study, and at the same time, students from the EU could experience challenges with attempts to study in the UK. Since an increasing percentage of the British educational system is funded by tuition fees from international students, there’s a great risk this will have grave financial implications for many universities,” says Paul Davis.

Personally, he has not noticed the effects of Brexit yet, other than the drop of the pound, which both affects the domestic economy and funding for the research projects he continues to be involved with in Newcastle.

Paul Davis also wants to emphasise that the decision to leave the EU affects many parts of society, and the effects vary in different parts of the UK.

“The infrastructure and cultural aspects of Wales and Scotland have benefited greatly from the EU membership, which naturally led to Brexit causing huge dissatisfaction in Scotland as it largely voted remain in the EU. North of Hadrian’s wall, a renewed chorus for another referendum on leaving the UK can be heard again, with the aim of being able to stay in the EU,” says Paul Davis.

Due to growing unrest among British researchers about the risk of defaulted research funding and cancelled international collaborations, there is currently a petition underway demanding that the country should
negotiate with the EU making it possible to continue to carry out European collaborations even after Brexit. They also want guarantees regarding continued possibilities for unhindered cross-border EU collaborations.

The current British debate to a great extent also deals with the risk that researchers from other European countries choose not to work in the UK if it becomes too cumbersome. British media has already reported how the international interest for research jobs in the UK has dwindled.

**According to Wasif Ali,** international coordinator at the International Office at Umeå University, the European Commission as well as the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) have expressed that it is ‘business as usual’ until further notice. When Brexit has become reality, some hope to find other solutions to enable the UK to continue to participate in the Erasmus+ collaboration, and in various research collaborations for instance.

“We currently have ten students registered, as exchange students, and approximately twenty as full programme students. Although the overall impression is that of uncertainty, the authorities have still been clear and suggest that we should continue to treat Britain as we always have, especially since the country is still a full EU member state and it takes part in the research programme Horizon 2020 on the same terms as all EU members,” says Wasif Ali.

He also mentions that the UK is the second largest collaborative partner to Sweden when it comes to research within Horizon 2020. The country that comes first is Germany. Germany has a federal election next year and it is, according to Wasif Ali, likely to be crucial for German politicians to be rigid in Brexit negotiations. They will therefore not be willing to concede anything in advance, which in turn risks having damaging effects on the UK.

Much indicates that negotiations between the UK and the EU will be tough in all areas. Even if Umeå University really wants to have continued and extensive exchanges when it comes to research and education, decisions that obstruct collaborations can come from politicians, and this adds to the uncertainties.

“We can, however, assure our students, current and prospective, and other actors from the UK that we welcome them all and we’ll still offer the same service as before, until a new directive states otherwise. Our partners in the UK echo the sentiment,” concludes Wasif Ali.

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**Brexit no later than 2019**

**British Prime Minister** Theresa May has announced that she is planning to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty by the end of March 2017. That means the country needs to leave the EU within two years.

Theresa May has also stated that the UK is not planning on applying for an EEA agreement or a deal similar to the one Switzerland has regarding free movement of persons and goods. The UK will instead apply for a deal with the EU on free trade and other similarly important subjects.
You have been an artist for 25 years. Are your works of art from your dissertation typical for you, or has the research brought you in a new direction?

“The difference from ordinary projects is first and foremost the time available to dig deeper and let the original questions lead to follow-up questions. In another project, I wouldn’t have had the time and space to question my own perceptions so much. To me, artistic research is about asking yourself: ‘how?’ To investigate and develop methods underlying the creative process.”

The title of your dissertation is “How do you become a successful beggar in Sweden?” The question feels provocative — how have you motivated this formulation to yourself?

“Through my dissertation, I talk about begging as a plot of a story. The plot is dramatized with beggars and givers and played on our streets. Striving for success is highly relevant for us Swedes, that’s how we learn to think. And for those who come here to beg, it is self-understood to reflect on how to best act when begging. But we don’t want to put the question that way – that would be provocative, and it also made me ask myself ‘why’.”

Through such difficult and uncomfortable questions, you have also turned the artistic attention towards yourself. What have you learnt from the project, as an artist and as a human being?

“What I have learnt? You’d have to read the entire dissertation to get to that. To me, art fundamentally deals with ethical concerns and how ethics relate to aesthetics. The dissertation contains parts in italics that cover my deliberations with myself. In the digital version of the dissertation, those parts of the text are animated to show how I battle with those questions that arise. I can relate to the givers and I struggle with my own powerlessness. But I still have faith in the spirit of community.”

In traditional research, much regards increasing utilisation and translating research findings into actions. Have you reasoned regarding how your dissertation can raise discussions also on other arenas?

“Definitely, I think art is really important thanks to its ability to ask questions in a different way. One of the works of art in the project is a musical choral work where givers and beggars created a chorus together over the course of three days. All participants were financially compensated with the equivalence of my doctoral student salary, they had the same training and they all ate together. I’d like to claim that they were all doing pretty good - so good indeed that they were able to create together; a chorus in dialogue. It might sound arrogant, but I do believe that this can show what power lies in equality and collaboration.”

What is your next move?

“I’ve been granted support from the fund-giver Kulturbryggan in order to depict a Stockholm location that opened my eyes whilst working on the begging project. This will be done in collaboration with filmmakers, dancers and architects. The place is one where many groups of migrants spend the night in utter misery. Such places haven’t been around in Sweden for a hundred years. And these people are invisible.”
Perpetual Uncertainty brings together artists from Japan, the USA, Australia and Europe to investigate experiences of nuclear power and radioactive waste.

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Perpetual Uncertainty is produced by Bildmuseet and curated by Ele Carpenter, Goldsmiths University of London.
Homecoming, bookshelves and occupation

I'M BACK. LUGGING boxes with binders up from storage into my fourth floor office. I take a seat at an unused keyboard in an echoing empty room. My leave of absence has come to an end. Three years in Jerusalem, Israel and Palestine. Three years of studying and being a freelance journalist in the occupied West Bank.

More boxes. I unpack thirty of them into our apartment. Books, boxes full of books, that will soon fill the shelves again. One of the books I pick up covers the conflict, it was purchased back as a student at the end of the 80s. It's the fourth edition, from 1984. The sixth edition from 2012 went with me to Jerusalem. Two editions of Sune Persson's *The Palestine Conflict*. A proof that it still hasn't been resolved.

In the 1984 edition, I find a leaflet that I had left there at some point. The leaflet was written by Umeå Student Union and seems to derive from 1988, the year after the First Intifada. The text suggests that student unions at Umeå University and the Palestine Bir Zeit University (bzu) had an ongoing friendship treaty and exchanged information during this period. (Nowadays that collaboration has ceased.)

It says that BZU, just north of Ramallah, was one of many universities that was shut down by the occupying force during the Intifada. About 20,000 students were affected, and the chairman of the union at BZU was deported to Jordan.

IT WAS AT BZU among others that I studied. Studying at a Palestinian university on occupied territory is different, both then and now. I swear. Fine, news coverage from the area may mostly concern violence and occupation. In my role as freelance journalist, I contributed to that image. I confess. I've been exposed to tear gas, witnessed excessive violence and assault, found myself in the line of fire, been humiliated by Israeli military at checkpoints, and so on. Occupation is not a cup of tea, never has been and never will be.

At the same time, BZU, just like the West Bank, is a place of unexpected and positive interactions, where humour and laughter is shared, and where people try their best to live a next to ordinary life. I've been laughing heartily when people have mistaken me for a foreign professor, been surprised when curious female students have asked about my marital status, and grateful when two students frenetically helped me find the right lecture hall at the buzzing BZU campus on that first day. They must’ve missed their lectures - but I got there in time for mine.

I'M BACK NOW. I'm scratching my head and choose to take down all bookshelves in the office apart from one single shelf. From now on, I intend to make do with only one running metre of shelves. I make my selection. Everything else goes into the recycling bin. One metre and ready to meet the paperless society. It feels very much like a New Year resolution to eat healthier and train more.

Let's see how long it lasts. □ ERIK TÖRNLUND