

June 11, 2024

Dear MEB Executive Group,

We, doctoral students at MEB, write to the department to relay our concerns about unequal pay between the PhD students without a medical or dental degree, those with a medical or dental degree, and those with a medical license to practice in Sweden or a dental degree and two years of experience.

The ultimate goal of Karolinska Institutet is advancing medical research. Nowadays, medical research is interdisciplinary and requires diverse expertise where all contributors, regardless of their background, play a crucial role in achieving a common research goal.

MEB is a part of KI where research in Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Public Health, Genomics and Artificial Intelligence is conducted. This type of research requires very solid quantitative skills acquired with, for example, degrees in Epidemiology, Statistics or Computer Science. These skills, besides being extremely valuable in the private labour market, are as integral to medical research and the medical field as any other kind of pre-clinical and clinical work.

KI has a collective agreement with SACO-S, which states that the minimum salary of PhD students is predefined. We understand that KI, as a medical university, values licensed medical doctors for their clinical skills. However, dividing the salary ladder between those with and without a medical or dental degree, according to this KI-wide agreement, does not align with MEB's spirit and ambitions. On the contrary, it signifies that the department values certain skills more than others. This could potentially endanger the future recruitment of top candidates and end up hurting KI's position as a top medical university in general, and MEB in particular.

We want to bring the example of equality from another comparable university in Stockholm, namely KTH. KTH is an engineering university where most of the departments have a strong focus on quantitative methods like MEB. However, they have only one salary ladder for each student, engineer or not.

With these facts in mind, we propose a revision of the current salary policy to eliminate the disparity among students within our department by raising the salary of PhD students, both with and without a medical degree, to the level of PhD students with a medical doctor license. By addressing this pay inequality, we aim to foster a collaborative and equitable environment that encourages talent from diverse disciplines, enhancing the overall quality and impact of MEB research.

We are eager to discuss this matter at your earliest convenience and collaborate on a dialogue with the KI leadership. We look forward to your support in making MEB a leading example of fairness and equality in academic and research compensation.

Yours sincerely,

MEB PhD Students