

A nationally and internationally leading university for
decisive moments.

Swedish Defence University's vision and strategy
2026–2030

A vision and strategy for growth and development in a changing and uncertain world

The Swedish Defence University's vision is to be a leading university, nationally and internationally, in the fields of defence, crisis management, and security. We are a unique civil-military meeting place that deals with uncertainty in the world by producing the knowledge required for the decisive moments in Sweden's security and total defence. Through a strategy of growth and development, the Swedish Defence University is to take a leading role in competence provision and the development of knowledge across the defence and security sector.

The security environment

The current security policy environment is complex and includes both antagonistic and non-antagonistic threats to national and international security. Fundamental conditions such as the rules-based world order and the status of international organisations are being questioned, as are fundamental freedoms and rights. All of this is occurring in a world marked by rapid technological development.

Thus, the security environment is characterised by uncertainty and continuous change affecting society, security policy, the needs of total defence, the characteristics of warfare, and the role of higher education institutions. Requirements for strengthened total defence and defence capabilities come from Sweden, the EU, and NATO. Extensive growth and development across all that constitutes total defence create significant demands for the provision of competence, the development of knowledge development, and innovation within the University's areas of expertise.

The role and strengths of the Swedish Defence University

As global security developments impose greater demands, the University will play a crucial role by contributing internationally recognised education, research, and leadership in cooperation with the society that surrounds us. This role and these activities are equally important during serious crises and in wartime.

The University will prepare both students and the rest of society to act during uncertainty—to create the knowledge required for individuals and organisations to make the correct decisions with limited information, often under time pressure, at decisive moments on the battlefield, during crises, or in closed negotiation rooms.

Therefore, the University will provide officer education of the highest international standard. Through a strong foundation of research, the University will contribute to the quality of the officer corps and the Swedish Armed Forces' warfighting capability and capability development. It will also provide highly sought-after higher education programmes for civilians in defence, crisis management, and security.

Our programmes will contribute to our society's competence through professional education for officers, civilian leaders, and experts. Our education will rest on academic foundations—based on long-term, internationally leading research, and on proven experience from those professions represented at the University. Thus, we will create and disseminate new knowledge, which will

strengthen the warfighting capability of the Swedish Armed Forces and Sweden's allies, and the resilience of our civil defence. The University and our alumni will also contribute to our society's capabilities in crisis management, and the promotion of peace, security, and a democratic and sustainable society.

One of the University's greatest strengths is its role as a civil-military meeting place where theory and practice meet, creating synergies and fostering creative knowledge development. National and international perspectives converge here, alongside insights from civil society and the public and private sectors. The University is the hub for academic knowledge and the driving force in the development of Sweden's total defence.

Through the Campus Total Defence collaboration platform, the University will exercise national leadership in coordinating and advancing the higher education sector's work in the provision competence and the development of knowledge for total defence. The University will also contribute to similar developments within NATO and the EU, not least by fostering academic development in other military institutions.

This meeting place, the diversity of perspectives and experiences, and the University's mandate to promote democratic values go hand in hand with our ongoing efforts to be an attractive, open, and inclusive university. Consequently professionalism, good leadership, and an ethical approach based on the principles of the rule of law permeate all our activities.

CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Developments in the world around us and the considerable demand for the University's research and education create a need for both growth and adaptability. This requires a development-oriented, dynamic higher education institution capable of meeting society's needs. Increased financial resources are a fundamental prerequisite for continued growth and development.

The University must maintain the confidence of society, its employees, and its students. It must maintain a robust quality assurance system for research and education, a learning organisational culture, and clear principles of trust, equal treatment, and mutual respect. Thus, the University will be an attractive workplace with a substantial capacity for development.

SUB-GOALS

Recruitment and competence development

Growth and adaptation require recruitment, retention, and recognition of individuals who are conducting leading research, who possess considerable professional knowledge or experience, and show strong commitment to education and development. Everyone should have opportunities for continuous professional, pedagogical, and scientific development. Recruitment and promotion processes will be made more effective.

In the coming years, the University will implement targeted competence development efforts, particularly related to NATO and the consequences of technological developments for the University. Efforts to increase the number of officers with doctoral degrees are to continue and the University will contribute to creating career pathways for officers with doctoral degrees, both internally and within the Swedish Armed Forces.

Operational support

Effective, flexible operational support that focuses on our core functions is essential for the University to grow and achieve its objectives. Our guiding principles are to prioritise, simplify, coordinate, and to communicate. Support functions should act in unison and maintain a continuous, active dialogue with the rest of the organisation.

Quality system

The University's quality assurance system is the foundation for maintaining and developing the quality of our activities even during growth. Clear internal processes will create the conditions for efficient, coordinated work. The need to develop our activities, rapid changes in the external environment that may require a dynamic approach, combined with the University's increased maturity, mean that quality development and control should increasingly be carried out close to where the expertise is greatest.

Increased security and preparedness

Our work on security and preparedness work must be a strength and a model within the sector. Planning and preparation are required for the University to make its best contribution during crises, heightened readiness, and war. Strategic efforts will be made to intensify work on effective security protection, and continuity and preparedness planning for how the university will conduct education, research, and cooperation during both crisis and war, and be able to intensify activity in priority areas.

Increased internationalisation

NATO membership and our ambitions for high quality in research, education, and cooperation require increased internationalisation at the University. Internationalisation will contribute to higher quality in research and education, for the benefit of staff, students, and international partners alike. Programmes need to be adapted to enable staff and student mobility and to promote understanding of the international arena where those who study with us will operate.

EDUCATION

OVERARCHING GOAL

The Swedish Defence University's foremost educational objective in the coming years is growth, in order to meet, in the following order of priority, the requirements for competence and expertise in the Swedish Armed Forces, the civilian elements of total defence, the wider public sector, and the private sector. High quality and relevance of our education are essential, as the University's alumni will serve in key professions and positions both nationally and internationally. The University will be the first choice for large areas of total defence in terms of competence provision and lifelong learning. There must be flexibility to adapt our education to ensure continued growth, quality, and relevance, even in times of security policy transformation and rapid technological development.

STRATEGY

In order to meet the competence needs of the Swedish Armed Forces and, more broadly, total defence, officer education will initially be prioritised and developed further. Then, our range of other courses and programmes will be expanded and developed. Additionally, it is essential to continue developing synergies between military and civilian education.

The Swedish Defence University will combine high academic quality with applied, profession-based educational methods, knowledge, and skills. Our education will largely be profession-oriented, based on a combination of research and proven experience, and will always be conducted in close cooperation with wider society to ensure relevance and to exploit knowledge. Internationalisation, strong student influence, and dialogue with alumni are also important elements of the University's strategy to continuously develop and improve our programmes.

SUB-GOALS

Continued growth

We will continue to develop the Officers' Programme so that both the number of graduate officers and their competence live up to the needs of the Swedish Armed Forces. This will require both growth and adjustments to the Programme. The University will be a driving force in the development of the Swedish Armed Forces by educating a forward-looking, innovative officer profession that is ready to face both the challenges of today and of tomorrow. The civilian programmes will also expand and develop to meet the competence and lifelong learning requirements within total defence.

Commitment to pedagogical development and excellence

The Swedish Defence University will strive for pedagogical excellence and innovation, and the necessary conditions will be created through pedagogical leadership, competence development, and an infrastructure that provides high-quality physical and virtual learning environments. There will be further strengthening of methods for applied pedagogy, such as games and exercises, and methods and platforms for flexible modes of study.

Increased internationalisation

Where relevant, the language and content of programmes will be adapted so that graduates – not least officers – feel confident operating internationally. The aim of internationalisation is also to increase quality through more international students, more opportunities for staff and student exchanges, and greater international recruitment of teaching staff.

Strengthened civil-military meeting place

All programmes will exploit the opportunities for civil-military interaction and exchanges of experience. The objective of being a meeting place will be further strengthened by providing scope for choice, enabling students to access different parts of the University, its courses and programmes.

Development of lifelong learning

To promote opportunities for lifelong learning, the proportion of stand-alone courses and distance courses will increase. A new, substantial range of shorter, competence development courses for professionals will be developed. These may be delivered either through state funding or as commissioned courses.

RESEARCH

OVERARCHING GOAL

The Swedish Defence University's research environments will lead both nationally and internationally, producing wide-ranging research of the highest quality and relevance within the fields of defence, crisis management, and security. The University's research will generate and disseminate new knowledge within both the academic and total defence communities. Our research will contribute to capability development within the Swedish Armed Forces and other actors within Sweden's total defence, to the research base of the University's educational programmes, and to the development of the international research front.

STRATEGY

Research at the University will be expanded further, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to achieve even greater national and international impact. Stronger links with professional practice will be achieved through new multidisciplinary research environments for applied research, and more officers with doctoral degrees.

A central part of this strategy is to attract and retain the most highly qualified researchers and teachers in the fields of defence, crisis management, and security, and to provide them with the conditions required to build strong research environments. Therefore, as a rule, recruitment to academic posts will involve international competition. All subjects, institutes, and research centres will operate in international research environments.

Nationally, the University will play a leading role within Campus Total Defence to promote the higher education sector's collective research efforts in support of total defence requirements.

The ability to build strong environments capable of attracting external research funding will be a focus of strategic efforts. The University's researchers will be encouraged to apply for external research funding for long-term research projects, including both grants and commissioned research. Through close dialogue, commissioned research financed by the Swedish Armed Forces is to meet knowledge requirements that strengthen Armed Forces' capability development.

SUB-GOALS

Stronger research

The Swedish Defence University will continue to increase the number of publications, particularly in the highest-ranked journals and publishing houses relevant to the fields of defence, crisis management, and security.

Departments are to determine how they can contribute to achieving the University-wide goals of increased publication volume, higher quality, and increased external research funding.

Stronger research environments

Cross-disciplinary research areas and research centres will be strengthened through strategic resources in the form of special initiatives and seed funding.

The University's external research applications are to be more competitive through internal and external collaboration in strong research groups, and a more systematic approach to the application process.

The Institute for Warfare is to contribute to an internationally leading, multidisciplinary environment for research into the practice of the military profession. To this end, officers will take greater responsibility for research environments and research direction. With this environment in mind, an international doctoral school for officers will be developed, which will serve as an international hub for the academic and professional development of the military profession.

The Swedish Defence University will also establish an institute for research into the resilience of democratic society. This institute will form an internationally leading, multidisciplinary environment for practice-oriented research into the civil elements of total defence and various aspects of crisis management.

COOPERATION & INNOVATION

OVERARCHING GOAL

The Swedish Defence University's role as a meeting place provides a unique opportunity for cooperation and support to innovation processes. The aim of cooperation and partnerships is to increase the quality and relevance of research and education, while offering external partners access to research-based knowledge. Thus, the University will be a knowledge hub that will make decisive contributions to competence provision and knowledge development, through research and education sought after by actors within total defence, the wider security sector, and the commercial sector.

Experts from the Swedish Defence University will continue to participate regularly in the media and other external arenas, thereby playing an important role in educating the public about the University's areas of expertise.

STRATEGY

Research and education will largely be conducted in cooperation with wider society. The University will exercise leadership within both the educational sector and the total defence sector to create the conditions required for competence provision and knowledge development among actors and organisations in need of increased expertise in defence, crisis management, and security.

The Swedish Defence University will be further strengthened as a meeting place and knowledge hub, where there is an emphasis on the practical application of research and education and the promotion of innovation processes.

SUB-GOALS

Increased cooperation and clear leadership

One objective in the coming years is to further develop the University's cooperation with actors within total defence: the commercial sector, government agencies, and civil society. This includes continued development of the partner programme, the Institute for Warfare, the Institute for the Resilience of Democratic Society, other research centres, and the Centre for Societal Security (CTSS). There will be particular focus on the fields of intelligence and security protection, where the University has specific government tasks.

The Swedish Defence University will take a leading role in making knowledge contributed by Swedish higher education institutions available to total defence. This will be done by creating meeting places between higher education and total defence, and by driving and further developing the Campus Total Defence initiative. A next step is for the initiative also to become pioneering in a Nordic and European context.

Increased integration of commissioned education

Commissioned education will be strengthened and made more effective through increased integration between research and education. This will mean, among other things, greater coordination of commissioned education and the administrative support required.

Commissioned education will be more clearly linked to higher education programmes within our field, and will also meet the emerging needs of total defence.

Strengthened innovation support capability

The University will also strengthen its ability to promote innovation processes within total defence through research and education, and serve as a meeting place for its actors. Within the University's cooperation-oriented institutes and centres, there will be further development of opportunities to contribute to learning through wargaming and various types of exercises shall be further developed.