
Operational Policy

The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, Mistra, invests in research of strategic importance for a good living environment and sustainable development. We also use our asset management to influence the business sector and financial markets in a sustainable direction.

We see our operational policy as a sustainability policy. This perspective permeates all aspects of our activities. We use the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a direction and a comprehensive context for our work.

Awareness of environmental and other sustainability aspects is assimilated into decision-making. We continuously review measures to reduce our use of natural resources and environmental impact from emissions caused directly or indirectly by our operations. We pave the way for our partners' ability to act as sustainably as possible.

Our operational policy specifically addresses issues of conflict of interest, staff and diversity, meetings and travel, purchasing, entertainment, gifts and quality. We have integrated sustainability aspects into each of these areas.

Mistra's operational policy applies to the Board, the Secretariat and the Committee for Asset Management. Our aim is for employees to be well informed about the content of this policy.

Conflict of interest

All handling of matters and all decision-making at Mistra must be objective and impartial, with the purpose of generating confidence that judgements and decisions are based on fair grounds. This includes the assessment of research applications carried out by expert groups associated with Mistra. An important aspect for assessing whether a conflict of interest is present is how the situation may be perceived by others.

A conflict of interest is deemed to exist when:

- The matter concerns the person handling or deciding in the matter, or anyone closely related or otherwise closely connected to this person, or the outcome of the matter may be expected to entail particular benefit or harm to the person handling or deciding in the matter or anyone closely related or connected to him or her.

- The person handling or deciding in the matter or anyone closely related or connected to this person is a legal representative of or proxy for, or works at, the same institution or company as the one concerned in the matter, such as an application for research funds, or a legal representative of any other party that may derive exceptional benefit or harm from the outcome of the matter.
- The person handling or deciding on the matter has planned, is currently engaged in or has recently concluded close cooperation with the person(s) concerned, such as an applicant.
- There is any other particular circumstance, such as friendship, enmity or financial dependence, that may affect confidence in the impartiality of the person handling or deciding in the matter.

Those who handle or decide on such matters are obliged to consider conflict of interest and, on their own initiative, disclose the existence of any circumstances that may conceivably constitute conflicts of interest.

A person with a conflict of interest is not allowed to handle the matter. If a question of conflict of interest arises at a meeting of the Board or other decision-making body, the person concerned must leave the premises when the matter in question is dealt with. The review of whether there is a conflict of interest must be documented. In assessment groups convened by Mistra, the person with a conflict of interest must entirely refrain from participating.

A member of Mistra's Board or Committee for Asset Management who joins in applying for funds from Mistra has a conflict of interest in the matter. Mistra's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Secretariat staff may never take part in an application for funds from Mistra. Nor may evaluators and assessment groups participate if they are dealing with the matter.

Staff and diversity

Mistra is characterised by openness, integrity and diversity. Issues about the environment and sustainable development are multidimensional in nature, as are the solutions. Diversity in terms of background, skills and gender, and an inclusive environment where collaboration and innovation are stimulated, are therefore required at all operational levels.

- Activities must be based on advanced expertise, integrity and service-mindedness.
- Responsibilities and powers are to be clearly allocated, while all staff are expected to help maintain high quality and efficient implementation of operations.
- Communication must be open, direct and respectful.
- Staff performance reviews, to be held annually, must contribute to the employees' and Mistra's development.
- Salary policy will foster good work performance and enable Mistra to recruit skilled staff.
- Salary rates must be individual and set according to objective criteria in special discussions.
- All activities, including positions in the Secretariat and appointment of assessment groups, working groups and programme boards, are to be characterised by diversity in terms of background, skills and gender.
- Sexual harassment and other discrimination will be prevented and avoided.

Meetings and travel

Meetings and visits are important tools for initiating and maintaining contacts, and making worthwhile global monitoring possible. When we hold our own meetings or attend those of others, we try to minimise travel by using video or telephone conferencing where feasible and appropriate. In cases where we or people working on our mission need to travel, it must take place as responsibly and sustainably as possible.

- Meetings and work-related travel must be planned and implemented to achieve the intended purpose at a reasonable cost and with minimal negative environmental impact.
- Forms of meeting and travel patterns are followed up as part of our efforts to reduce Mistra's total negative environmental impact.
- Video or telephone conferencing must be considered in preference to travel.
- For short-distance travel, rail is the primary choice.
- The standard of Mistra's travel must be reasonable in relation to the purpose of the journey and time on board a train or aircraft.
- Any flight or other bonus, free tickets, benefits, etc. that Mistra's staff receive in connection with work may not be used privately, but only for work travel or activities.
- We require our travel operator to understand and make recommendations in accordance with this policy.

Purchasing

In purchasing, various options are considered to enable environmental impact and resource use to be kept low and make socially responsible choices possible. Assessment is made with a life-cycle perspective to reflect environmental impact associated with waste management, as well as production and use. The service life of products and scope for buying a service rather than a product are considered where appropriate.

In purchasing:

- At an initial stage, the actual need for purchasing is verified.
- Sustainability aspects (social, environmental and economic) must be sought and options found where this is considered necessary. To Mistra, environmental aspects are particularly important.
- Price and sustainability aspects, and other relevant criteria, must be balanced against each other in each specific case before a decision is made.
- Assessment must be based on a life-cycle perspective, with reference to products' service life. Scope for buying services instead of products must be considered where appropriate.

Mistra complies with the provisions of the Swedish Public Procurement Act and Mistra's procurement guidelines.

Entertainment

Entertainment and hospitality must always be justifiable in terms of Mistra's Statutes, strategy, operational plan or other steering documents. In entertainment, other sustainability aspects must also be taken into consideration and moderation is a self-evident starting point.

Entertainment with external participants:

- The purpose of Mistra's external entertainment is to create and maintain relevant contacts.
- Entertainment must be part of the Foundation's mission fulfilment. In general, its costs must be reasonable and adapted to the purpose of each occasion.
- Entertainment must be characterised by moderation. Wine and beer are allowable in moderate amounts.
- In restaurant or catering choices, as in purchasing, sustainability aspects should be taken into consideration.

Entertainment and planning conferences with internal participants:

- Decisions on internal entertainment, planning conferences and other in-house arrangements are made by the CEO.
- When possible, internal planning conferences must be held in Mistra's premises (or another option free of charge). Simple meals may be provided.
- For planning conferences held externally, an overall assessment must guide selection of reasonably priced options that are advantageous in terms of sustainability. Conferences involving overnight stays must be considered. At conferences, internal entertainment with provision of meals, beer and wine may take place on a reasonable scale.
- Working lunches and in-house entertainment in other contexts may take place only in exceptional cases. Exceptions may be annual staff celebrations, Christmas parties and celebrations of 50th and 60th birthdays and retirement, and when an employee leaves.

Gifts

It is important for all Mistra staff to note that gifts may be classified as bribes, which are illegal to receive and give. The legislation is not entirely clear on where the line is drawn between an acceptable and an improper benefit, and no specific financial limit exists. Any benefit may be considered improper if it may be suspected of undue influence. Gifts may be exchanged only if there is no suspicion of corruption or other improper circumstance.

Examples of unwarranted benefits:

- Bonus arrangements of various kinds connected, for example, with purchases of goods, air or rail travel or hotel stays if the benefit accrues to the employee and not the employer.
- Fully or partially subsidised recreational and holiday travel.

Examples of benefits not considered to affect work performance:

- Occasional, justifiable working meals of an everyday nature.
- Small product samples or simple ornaments and memorabilia.
- Simple payment of respects on public holidays or in the event of a person's illness.

If there is uncertainty about whether a benefit is improper or not, the question must be discussed with the CEO.

Regarding trade-fair visits, travel, etc., the Swedish Anti-Corruption Institute (IMM) states that the activity may be warranted if it is considered justified and is a serious programme that does not contain too many additional events in the nature of entertainment. The Institute recommends that participants' employers defray travel and living expenses.

Quality

Quality and a professional approach must distinguish Mistra. We are a learning organisation that is constantly developing by responding to global influences, with ongoing skills development and through a collegial, self-reflective way of working.

Creativity, expertise and personal responsibility on the part of every employee are the foundation of quality. Quality thinking must ensure that services and documentation are appropriate, accurate and delivered in a timely manner. Quality work is characterised by constant improvement based on the new knowledge and experience we gain in our everyday work.

Mistra seeks to conduct operations in which we

- Deliver with relevance and high quality, meeting interested parties' expectations.
- Make efficient use of available staff and financial resources.
- Are transparent, trustworthy and reliable in our communication and way of working.
- Strive for continuous development and improvement.

Mistra achieves this by

- Continuously monitoring global developments in policy, the corporate sector and other key areas.
- Conducting our operations within an organisation that is fit for purpose and suitably configured at all times; efficiently meets our operational objectives; and manages the risks that pose threats to Mistra.
- Actively participating in national and international networks relevant to our activities.
- Ensuring that the staff are competent and understand that every effort has a bearing on ultimate quality.
- Ensuring that the employees receive in-service training in Mistra's area of expertise on a continuous basis.
- Providing a stimulating work environment with a heavy emphasis on making use of individuals' experience and knowledge.
- Engaging in ongoing evaluation of operations.

Adopted by Mistra's Board on 12 December 2017.

This operational policy is revised annually and adopted by the Board at the December meeting.