

The Swedish higher education system

According to legislation after 1 January 2007.

The following description is approved by the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

The Swedish higher education system is based on the Swedish Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434) and the 1 January 2007 amendments to the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100). The following description is a short summary based on the legislation regulating the Swedish higher education system.

Qualifications from all higher education institutions (universities, university colleges and independent higher education providers) that are recognized by the Government are of equal official value. The same legislation governs all state higher education institutions. All Swedish degrees are issued in accordance with the same degree ordinances.

Quality assurance

The Swedish Higher Education Authority has been responsible for the quality assurance system for all higher education since 1 January 2013. For more information, please visit www.uka.se. Evaluation reports are available to the public.

National Qualification Frameworks

The Swedish Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance have been amended in accordance with the agreements reached as part of the Bologna Process, including the Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). Legislation for a three-cycle structure of higher education started to apply in July 2007, and is now the only one in use in all Swedish higher education. Transitional provisions apply to courses and programmes that started prior to this. For more information, please visit www.uhr.se/en or enic-naric.net.

In 2015, the Swedish Government decided on a national qualifications framework (SeQF), based on the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The SeQF has eight levels that are in accordance with the EQF

levels. Higher education qualifications are at levels six to eight. For more information, please visit www.seqf.se.

Credit system

Sweden has a system of credits (högskolepoäng); a normal 40-week academic year corresponds to 60 credits. The system is compatible with ECTS credits.

Grading system

There is no national grading system in Sweden. Higher education institutions may determine which grading system is to be used. No overall grade is awarded for a degree and students are not ranked. For example, Grade Point Average (GPA) and other ranking systems are not used in Sweden.

Access and admission

There are general and specific entry requirements for access to higher education within all cycles. The specific entry requirements vary according to the field of higher education and/or should be essential for students to be able to benefit from the course or study programme. The number of places is limited on all study programmes and courses.

The general entry requirements for first-cycle studies are the same for all higher education. General entry requirements can be attained by completing an upper-secondary school programme, via adult education at upper-secondary school level or the applicants achieving a comparable level of learning outcomes through other education, practical experience or other circumstances.

The general entry requirements for second-cycle studies are a first-cycle qualification of at least 180 credits, or a corresponding foreign qualification. An applicant may also be accepted on the basis of a comparable level of learning outcomes obtained through other education, practical experience or other circumstances. →

The general entry requirements for third-cycle studies are a second-cycle qualification, or completed courses worth at least 240 credits (of which 60 credits are at second-cycle level) or the equivalent level of knowledge acquired in Sweden or abroad. Furthermore, for entry to third-cycle studies, the applicant must be deemed able to benefit from the education.

Qualifications

All courses, study programmes and qualifications are on one of three levels: first-, second- or third-cycle. In the Higher Education Ordinance, the Government has determined which qualifications may be awarded, as well as their scope, requirements and intended learning outcomes. There are three categories of qualifications: general; the fine, applied and performing arts; and professional qualifications. For some more information, please see below.

General qualifications

First-cycle (SeQF/EQF 6)

Högskoleexamen (Higher Education Diploma) requires 120 credits and an independent project (degree project).

Kandidatexamen (Degree of Bachelor) requires 180 credits. At least 90 credits must be completed in the main field of study, including an independent project (degree project) worth 15 credits.

Second-cycle (SeQF/EQF 7)

Magisterexamen (Degree of Master (60 credits)) requires 60 credits. At least 30 credits must be completed in the main field of study, including an independent project (degree project) worth 15 credits. In addition, the student must normally hold a kandidatexamen, or a professional degree of at least 180 credits, or an equivalent foreign degree.

Masterexamen (Degree of Master (120 credits)) requires 120 credits. At least 60 credits must be completed in the main field of study, including an independent project (degree project) worth at least 30 credits. In addition, the student must normally hold a kandidatexamen, or a professional degree of at least 180 credits or an equivalent foreign degree.

Third-cycle (SeQF/EQF 8)

Licentiatexamen (Degree of Licentiate) requires at least 120 credits, including a research thesis worth at least 60 credits. A higher education institution may decide that a licentiatexamen can be awarded as a separate qualification or as a step on the way to doktorsexamen (see below).

Doktorsexamen (Degree of Doctor) requires 240 credits, including a research thesis (doctoral thesis) worth at least 120 credits. The thesis must be presented at a public defence.

Qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts

Qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts are awarded at all three cycles and corresponding SeQF levels. At first-cycle level: konstnärlig högskoleexamen (Higher Education Diploma) and konstnärlig kandidatexamen (Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts). At second-cycle level: konstnärlig magisterexamen (Degree of Master of Fine Arts (60 credits)) and konstnärlig masterexamen (Degree of Master of Fine Arts (120 credits)). Two third-cycle qualifications are awarded: konstnärlig licentiatexamen (Degree of Licentiate) and konstnärlig doktorsexamen (Degree of Doctor).

Professional qualifications

Professional qualifications are offered at either first- or second-cycle level and corresponding SeQF levels. These qualifications may stretch over two cycles and are awarded in areas that include engineering, health care, agriculture, law, and education. Professional qualifications are regulated by national legislation and are considered regulated education subject to the Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC.

Titles of qualifications

Translations into English of all titles of qualifications are regulated at the national level. Higher education institutions may decide to add a prefix to a qualification title e.g. filosofie kandidatexamen or medicine doktorsexamen or/and add a major field of studies e.g. civilingenjörsexamen i maskinteknik.