

The Swedish Higher Education System



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

GENERAL

Higher education institutions have great autonomy in the organisation of studies, use of resources and general administration. The Government may award the status of *universitet* to higher education institutions that meet certain criteria. Independent higher education providers may apply for recognition by the Government, obtain degree awarding powers and receive state funds. Qualifications from all higher education institutions that are recognized by the Government have equal official value. The same law governs all state higher education institutions. All Swedish degrees are issued in accordance with the same degree ordinances.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

All programmes and major subjects were evaluated by the National Agency for Higher Education between years 2001 and 2012. The Swedish Higher Education Authority is since 1 January 2013 responsible for the quality assurance system for higher education. Evaluation reports are public.

ACCESS AND ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education within all cycles has two strata of entry requirements: general and (additional) specific requirements. General eligibility to the first cycle is the same for all higher education.

General eligibility is attained either by completing an upper-secondary school programme, completed adult education at upper secondary school level or having the potential to benefit from the education, by virtue of other education, practical experience or other circumstances.

The specific requirements vary according to the field of higher education and are in general expressed in terms of upper-secondary school qualifications in specific subjects. Restricted admission (*numerus clausus*) is used for all study programmes and courses.

DEGREE-AWARDING POWERS

Universities have the general right to award first-, second- and third-cycle qualifications. A small number of university colleges have been awarded the general right to award first and second cycle qualifications, as well as the right to award third cycle qualifications in specific domain/s. Other state university colleges have the right to award first cycle qualifications and *magisterexamen* but must apply to the Swedish Higher Education Authority for the right to award *masterexamen* and third cycle qualifications.

University colleges that are self-governing and independent, as well as the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and the Swedish National Defence College, must apply to the Government for the entitlement to award all qualifications.

With regard to first- and second-cycle vocational or professional or qualifications in fine, applied and performing arts qualifications both state universities and university colleges must apply to the Swedish Higher Education Authority for degree awarding powers.

QUALIFICATIONS

All courses and study programmes are placed within one of three cycles: the first,

second or third cycle. All qualifications are placed within one of the three cycles. Higher education within the first and second cycles is provided in the form of courses. Courses may be grouped together into programmes with varying levels of individual choice. Students themselves are also able to combine different courses towards a degree. A course syllabus is required for each course within the first and second cycle and a programme syllabus for each study programme. Educational cycle, number of credits and intended learning outcomes has to be specified for each course. Sweden has a system of credits (*högskolepoäng*); a normal 40-week academic year corresponds to 60 credits. The system is compatible with ECTS credits.

In the qualification ordinances, the Government has laid down which qualifications may be awarded and the scope, the objectives as well as intended learning outcomes for these qualifications. In the Swedish higher education system there are generally no intermediate qualifications. All qualifications are regarded as final, even if there is a possibility to continue studying. There are three categories of qualifications: 1. general, 2. in fine, applied and performing arts and 3. professional qualifications. Translations into English of all titles of qualifications are regulated at the national level. An institution of higher education may decide to add a prefix to a qualification title e.g. *filosofie kandidatexamen* or *medicine doktorexamen* or/and add a major field of studies e.g. *civilingenjörsexamen i maskinteknik*.



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GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS

First cycle:

1. **Högskoleexamen** (Higher Education Diploma) requires 120 credits and a diploma project.
2. **Kandidatexamen** (Degree of Bachelor) requires 180 credits in a defined specialisation determined by each higher education institution itself. At least 90 credits, including an independent project of 15 credits, with in-depth studies have to be completed in the main field of study.

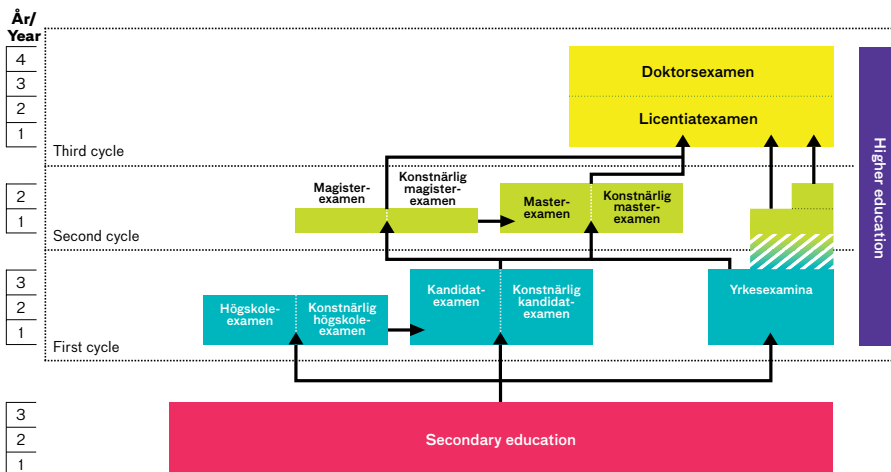
Second cycle:

1. **Magisterexamen** (Degree of Master (60 credits)) requires a defined specialisation determined by each higher education institution itself. At least 30 credits have to be completed in the main field of study including an independent project of 15 credits. In addition, normally the student must hold either a *kandidatexamen* or a professional degree of at least 180 credits or an equivalent foreign degree.
2. **Masterexamen** (Degree of Master (120 credits)) requires a defined specialisation determined by each higher education institution itself. At least 60 credits have to be completed in the main field of study including an independent project of at least 30 credits. In addition, in general, the student must hold either a *kandidatexamen* or a professional degree of at least 180 credits or an equivalent foreign degree.

General admission requirements to second-cycle studies are: qualification within the first cycle of at least 180 credits or a corresponding foreign qualification. In addition, admission may be granted to an applicant who has the potential to benefit from the education, by virtue of other educational achievements, practical experience or other circumstances.

Qualifications in fine, applied and performing arts

Qualifications in fine, applied and performing arts are awarded within all three cycles. Within the first cycle: *konstnärlig högskoleexamen* (Higher Education Diploma) and *konstnärlig kandidatexamen* (Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts), within the second cycle: *konstnärlig magisterexamen* (Degree of Master of Fine Arts (60 credits)) and *konstnärlig masterexamen* (Degree of Master



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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 awarded in the fields of engineering, health care, agriculture, law, education, etc. Professional qualifications may be offered within either the first or the second cycle. With a few exceptions, general entry requirements to professional degrees are the same as to general first-cycle qualification. Programmes leading to professional qualifications may vary in length depending on their content and may stretch over two cycles.

Third cycle:

The higher education institutions decide which subjects may be offered within the third cycle. For every subject, a general study plan should be drawn up. The study plan must state the principal organisation of the studies, the specific admission requirements and other necessary regulations.

Two qualifications are offered within the third cycle:

1. **Licentiatexamen** (Degree of Licentiate) requires at least 120 credits including a thesis of at least 60 credits. A higher education institution may also decide that a licentiatexamen can be awarded as an intermediate degree towards doktorsexamen.

2. **Doktorsexamen** (Degree of Doctor) requires 240 credits including a thesis of at least 120 credits. The thesis has to be defended publicly.

For admission to the third cycle the applicant has to be deemed to have ability to benefit from the education and meet the general requirements to the third cycle:

1. a second cycle qualification
2. completed course requirements of at least 240 credits of which 60 credits within the second cycle or
3. equivalent level of knowledge acquired in Sweden or abroad, as well as specific requirements at the institutional level.

Transitional provisions:

Rules for admission to the third cycle were changed from 1 July 2007. A person who met general requirements for admission before 1 July 2007 should be considered as eligible for admission until 30 June 2015. The general entry requirements before 1 July 2007 were a completed undergraduate programme of at least 120 credits (equivalent to 180 current higher education credits) or largely equivalent knowledge acquired in some other system in this country or abroad.

Grading

There is no national grading system in Sweden. The higher education institutions may determine which grading system is to be used. No overall grade is given for a degree and students are not ranked. ■