

# Career Guidance

IN SWEDEN



Swedish Council for  
Higher Education



euro | guidance



Erasmus+



## Introduction

*Sweden has a long history of offering public guidance services. The underlying principle has always been that everyone is entitled to guidance, which should be free of charge and available to as many groups as possible.*

Educational and vocational guidance is offered through the entire educational system, as well as by the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES). The Swedish Education Act states that all school pupils should receive guidance before making choices about their future, and higher education institutions are legally obliged to offer students study and career guidance. Guidance is also part of the PES's mission, and is regulated in several ordinances; the PES must provide guidance to young people, recent immigrants and people outside the labour market.

Private sector guidance is quite limited in Sweden, but there are private job agencies and companies that specialise in career guidance and coaching.

There are several publicly funded websites that offer information about education and working life to Swedish citizens. These online services mainly provide information and advice, rather than eGuidance, but online career guidance tools are also available.

Career fairs are held regularly and are often organised by local employers and upper secondary schools, with the target group being pupils in year nine. The national SACO and Nolia fairs are organised annually and provide information about opportunities after upper secondary education.

# Arenas for guidance

## **DECENTRALISED ORGANISATION**

The provision of guidance is part of broader education and employment initiatives; it is not treated as a separate political area.

Sweden has a decentralised system for decision-making, so municipal authorities plan their career and educational guidance services to meet the needs of school curricula and their budget. To promote the uniform use of legislation within the school system, the Swedish National Agency for Education has

published general guidelines for career education and guidance, providing recommendations about how statutes (laws, ordinances, rules and regulations) can be applied.

Similarly, guidance that takes place in higher education is the responsibility of each institution, to comply with national goals and ordinances. Counselling services for jobseekers are mainly run by the local employment offices, in accordance with the guidelines from the PES' head office.



Financing for guidance services is part of total funding, so this is not directly allocated unless there are specific initiatives or investments from the two ministries involved – the Ministry for Education and Research and the Ministry of Employment.

Information and guidance services are usually provided at the schools or other educational institutions, but some municipalities offer guidance for schools through an external guidance centre. Guidance services for adults are also offered at local PES offices and in municipal guidance and information centres.

## **GUIDANCE IN THE SWEDISH SCHOOL SYSTEM (INCLUDING MUNICIPAL ADULT EDUCATION)**

In Swedish schools, career education and guidance is provided through teaching, various forms of guidance counselling and the provision of general information. It is the responsibility of all school staff. Students' knowledge of society and working life, as well as work experience, comes via their education. Guidance involves supporting the students in their efforts to investigate, identify and express their interests and potential, helping them to make well-founded decisions about their educational and vocational pathways.

Career guidance is given to pupils both individually and in groups. There are no compulsory lessons in career education, but counsellors occasionally have lessons/information sessions in both compulsory and secondary school.





This usually relates to choices for further education. For instance, most pupils in year nine meet a counsellor to talk about their plans and choice of programme in upper secondary school.

The Swedish National Agency for Education is the administrative authority for the Swedish public school system. It is subject to some guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Research, but it primarily works autonomously. However, Sweden's municipalities have the main responsibility for guidance in the Swedish school system. The education administration in each municipality

has great freedom to design its own information, guidance and counselling services.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate conducts regular supervision of all municipal and independent schools, from pre-school to adult education. The provision of guidance in schools is an area for inspection. Around 1,900 people are employed as guidance counsellors in the Swedish school system, with many of them sharing their time between several schools. One study conducted by the Swedish National Agency for Education showed

that an average guidance counsellor in the compulsory school system was responsible for approximately 522 pupils. The figure for upper secondary level was 479 pupils for every guidance practitioner. In municipal adult education there were approximately 323 students for each full-time guidance counsellor.

### **GUIDANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Sweden's higher education institutions (HEIs) primarily organise study guidance in two ways: either a central, comprehensive study guidance centre or a local guidance service at departmental level. Local guidance services are usually combined with a small central guidance office. At smaller HEIs there is usually only a central unit for study guidance. Many HEIs also offer career guidance services. Central guidance services are usually the first contact that prospective students have with an HEI. The most common issues are educational choices, changes to fields of study, studying abroad and choosing the right specialisation for the labour market. Normally there is both a drop-in service and a booking system.

In local guidance services, a student counsellor for a specific department offers advice relating to the field of study, as well as information about job opportunities.

Careers centres offer individual counselling about career choices and support for job applications. They also provide continuous information about job vacancies, summer jobs, internships and companies that are willing to help

students with their degree projects. Their goal is to support graduating students as they prepare to enter the labour market.

Higher education has two national agencies, both of which are subject to instructions issued by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The responsibilities of the Swedish Council for Higher Education span across the education sector. The agency is tasked with providing objective and relevant information about higher education and the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test. The agency's responsibilities include encouraging interest in higher education and promoting widening participation. It is also contracted by Swedish HEIs to manage admissions and provide support for student administration. Additionally, the agency works to prevent discrimination and to promote equal rights at HEIs.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority evaluates the quality of higher education, grants degree-awarding powers, ensures that HEIs comply with relevant legislation and regulations, monitors the efficiency of HEIs, is responsible for official statistics for higher education, monitors trends and developments and encourages the professional development of staff at HEIs. However, HEIs enjoy a great deal of freedom within the framework of regulations and parameters laid down by the government. They are bound by law to provide study and vocational guidance for their students, but the

institutions themselves decide how to plan their operations, utilise their resources and organise guidance and counselling.

There are 34 state HEIs in Sweden, as well as a number of independent ones. Around 700 people work with providing guidance services at Swedish HEIs.

### **GUIDANCE WITHIN NON-FORMAL ADULT EDUCATION**

Folk high schools offer a wide range of courses at different levels and with differing aims, and many of them are boarding schools. Each school also offers courses that provide eligibility for higher education. Every folk high school is unique and develops its own content and working methods, so educational and vocational guidance is designed very differently at the schools, in terms of both content and organisation.

Of the 151 folk high schools, over 100 are run by popular movements, NGOs or non-profit bodies. Around 40 are the responsibility of county councils and regions, and one is under municipal management.

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education is a non-profit association that distributes government grants to folk high schools, and follows up and evaluates the schools' activities. The Information Service of the Swedish Folk High Schools (FIN) is responsible for general information about all folk high schools and supports the development of a common framework for guidance

and counselling services within the folk high schools.

### **GUIDANCE PROVISION AT THE SWEDISH PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICE**

Guidance for jobseekers at the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) is provided through three channels: PES' website, customer service (telephone) and local PES offices around the country. Information about different professions, studies and career choices is available through PES' website and questions about this information can be asked via customer service.

As part of the basic service, the offices should meet jobseekers' needs for guidance when looking for work. This means that a sufficient number of guidance counsellors should have the knowledge necessary to ensure reasonable access to the "Guidance to Work" service. Local PES offices decide on appropriate services/activities for each jobseeker. PES officers with a counselling role need to be able to review the situation to make decisions about complex issues. Based on each individual's resources, the counsellor has to identify potential jobs and training opportunities and then motivate the jobseeker to make the appropriate decisions, as well as introducing internet-based tools and ensuring that the jobseeker is capable of using them. The guidance counsellor offers group and/or individual counselling. Some services are only available to registered jobseekers.



The PES' head office draws up regulations regarding work in the employment offices in accordance with guidelines issued by the Ministry of Employment. There are about 320 local employment offices in Sweden. About 11,000 employees have direct contact with jobseekers and employers and, of these, around 340 work as guidance specialists and offer career counselling.

### **NATIONAL WEBSITES**

Career guidance and information services are also offered via publicly funded web services. The main websites are:

***utbildningsinfo.se*** (Education info)  
Hosted by the Swedish National Agency for Education, *www.utbildningsinfo.se* is for pupils, parents and professionals in the field of education. The website has a search tool for different areas of education in Sweden, a web-based career guidance programme and a description of the Swedish school system.

***studera.nu*** (Study) and ***antagning.se*** (Admissions)  
*www.studera.nu* offers Swedish residents information and inspiration regarding higher education. It is possible to search and compare the education choices offered by higher education institutions, learn more about them and find forecasts for the future labour market. Students can apply for programmes and courses that interest them on *www.antagning.se*, which is the national site for admissions to higher education institutions. Both sites are hosted by the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

***studyinsweden.se*** and ***universityadmissions.se***  
*www.studyinsweden.se* is hosted by the Swedish Institute and provides information about higher education in Sweden, focusing on prospective students from outside of Sweden. The site has a database of English-language programmes, an overview of the Swedish higher education system, practical information about residence permits and accommodation, scholarships, application procedures and pointers for learning Swedish as a foreign language.

At *www.universityadmissions.se*, foreign students can learn more about the Swedish admission process and apply online to Swedish higher education. The website is run by the Swedish Council for Higher Education in cooperation with Swedish higher education institutions.

***arbetsförmedlingen.se***  
(Employment service)  
The Public Employment Service offers a range of tools on their website, *www.arbetsformedlingen.se*, with information about the labour market. The "Att välja yrke" (choose a profession)

tool covers the future labour market and encourages the user to think through a number of different areas related to a future job and offers an interest test. "Yrkeskompassen" (career compass) provides information about opportunities in different sectors and provides forecasts of job availability. Short films give insight into different occupations through interviews with the people working in them. "Yrken A-Ö" (Occupations A-Ö) contains 1200 job descriptions.



# Qualifications for guidance counsellors in Sweden

*Most guidance counsellors within the school system, and many in municipal adult education, hold a Bachelor of Arts in Study and Career Guidance.*

Guidance staff in higher education sometimes have this degree, but study counsellors in departments often have a degree in the subject taught at that department. Many HEIs organise in-service training for their guidance staff in the theories and methods of study and career counselling.

The situation is the same at employment offices – PES officers with a counselling role sometimes have a degree in career guidance, but more often they have completed PES' in-service training.

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS IN STUDY AND CAREER GUIDANCE**

The Swedish Bachelor of Arts in Study and Career Guidance is a three-year full-time university programme (180 ECTS credits). It is offered by three higher education institutions, Malmö University, Stockholm University and Umeå University, as well as being available via distance learning.

The focus of the degree is the theory and practice of career counselling. It also includes:

- Social sciences. Knowledge of how society, working life and education are organised and function.
- Behavioural sciences. Knowledge of psychology, education and sociology.
- Placements, mainly in schools and colleges, but also in other fields.

On completing the course, students will have the skills required to provide young people and adults with guidance and information on issues pertaining to their choice of studies and/or occupation.

## **MASTER OF EDUCATION IN CAREER COUNSELLING**

A Master's in Career Development and Career Counselling (120 ECTS credits) is offered by Stockholm University. It aims to provide deeper knowledge of how individuals construct their careers, both from individual and societal perspectives. Special attention is given to developing the ability to independently integrate and use the acquired knowledge in the

field of career management and the scientific analysis of this process.

## **RESEARCH**

Research is conducted the three HEIs that offer a degree in Career Counselling: Malmö University, Stockholm University and Umeå University.

There is a network in career development and guidance (Forskarnätverket

Karriärutveckling och vägledning) to provide an arena for exchange between neighbouring fields of research and for researchers in the areas of career development, transitions between school and work, and career counselling from primary school to working life.





## National guidance forum and interest organisations

The Forum for National Cooperation on Educational and Vocational Guidance/ Career Counselling and Collaboration between School and Working Life was established as an arena for discussions between Swedish stakeholders in the area of guidance, as well as being a reference group for Swedish participation in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, ELGPN. Forum members are representatives from national agencies that work with education and employment, as well as career guidance education.

The Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors (SAGC) organises around 1,200 Swedish guidance professionals from all sectors, including schools, adult education, higher education and employment offices. SAGC is actively engaged in the development of educational and vocational guidance. The goal is to increase professionalism in guidance practice. It holds an annual conference for Swedish guidance counsellors and publishes a quarterly journal, *Guidance in Education and Working life* (Vägledaren i utbildning och arbetsliv). SAGC has also formulated and ratified a Declaration of Ethics for educational and vocational guidance.

The group for educational and vocational guidance counsellors within the National Union of Teachers organises around 2,000 Swedish career guidance counsellors. It has written an occupational description for career guidance counsellors and responds to government green papers in the area of guidance. Some guidance counsellors are members of the other trade union for teachers, the Teachers' Union (Läraryrket).





# Ethical guidelines and the Council of Ethics

The Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors has developed a Declaration of Ethics to provide support for people who provide guidance, as well as for those who need guidance. It states that a professional guidance counsellor should be familiar with knowledge of human encounters and relationships, and should strive to help others achieve their goals and needs. However, conflicts between diverging interests can arise and different needs and obligations have to be balanced, so the guidelines are meant to aid ethical consideration of such dilemmas in guidance work.

The Declaration of Ethics is based on the ethical values found in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the EU resolution on guidance 9286/04 and the ILO convention on professional guidance, no. 142.

The association has also appointed a Council of Ethics, the task of which is to consider issues in the ethics of guidance counselling. It can also assist in resolving dilemmas and offer support when decisions are particularly difficult.



## EU AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Sweden is a member of several international networks that deal with information, advice and guidance across the education, training and employment sectors. Sweden belongs to the following networks:

- Euroguidance, Europass, Eurydice/ Eurypedia, ENIC/NARIC (national contact points at the Swedish Council for Higher Education, [www.uhr.se](http://www.uhr.se))
- Eurodesk (hosted by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, [www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se](http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se))
- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (national contact point at the Swedish National Agency for Education, [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se))
- EURES and WAPES (contact point at the Swedish Public Employment Service, [www.arbetsformedling.se](http://www.arbetsformedling.se))
- EQF (coordination point at the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education, [www.myh.se](http://www.myh.se))

Sweden is also a member of the following guidance related networks:

- The International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance, IAEVG, through the Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors, [iaevg.net/iaevg.org](http://iaevg.net/iaevg.org)
- The Nordic Guidance Network, which is part of the Nordic Network of Adult Learning: [www.nordvux.net/content/id/627/nordiskt-vagledarnatverk](http://www.nordvux.net/content/id/627/nordiskt-vagledarnatverk)
- The NICE network, The Network for Innovation in Career Guidance & Counselling in Europe, that supports cooperation among HEIs and research institutions regarding education in career guidance and counselling: [www.nice-network.eu/](http://www.nice-network.eu/)

# Overview over the Swedish guidance system

TYPE OF GUIDANCE SERVICE	ACTIVITIES	CLIENTS/TARGET GROUPS	RESPONSIBILITY & ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL
Guidance in compulsory school, upper secondary school and adult education	Helping individuals with awareness of their own capacity and potential, creating personal goals, support in choosing the next level of education	Pupils in compulsory and secondary school, students in municipal adult education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education and Research</li> <li>• Swedish National Agency for Education</li> <li>• Swedish School Inspectorate</li> </ul>
Municipal guidance and information centres	Guidance about studies as well working life, Swedish for immigrants	Adults	- Municipal authorities
Academic guidance services at higher education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guidance at a central level</li> <li>- Guidance at the departments</li> <li>- Career centres</li> </ul>	Students and prospective students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Education and Research</li> <li>- Swedish Higher Education Authority</li> </ul>
Guidance from the Public Employment Service, 418 employment offices in Sweden	Guidance to increase the client's self-awareness and knowledge of the labour market	Jobseekers, clients in transition. Special focus on vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministry of Employment</li> <li>- Public Employment Service, head office</li> </ul>
Information through nationally funded web services	Information on education and working life, tools for self guidance	The public	<a href="http://www.utbildningsinfo.se">www.utbildningsinfo.se</a> <a href="http://www.studera.nu">www.studera.nu</a> <a href="http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se">www.arbetsformedlingen.se</a>

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