

# The Swedish Higher Education System

(The following description is approved by the Swedish National Agency 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 be recognised by the Government, obtain the right to award degrees and receive state subsidies. Diplomas from all higher education institutions that are recognised 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 ordinance.

## Quality assurance

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education is responsible for quality evaluation.

All programmes and major subjects have been evaluated during the six-year period 2001–2007. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education has also completed two rounds of quality audits of higher education institutions. Evaluation reports are public.

## Access and admission to higher education

Higher education at all levels has two strata of eligibility: general/basic and (additional) specific requirements.

General eligibility to the first level is the same for all higher education. General eligibility is attained either by a) completing an upper-secondary school programme and obtaining a Pass grade or better in courses comprising at least 90 percent of the credits required for the programme, or b) having the potential to benefit from the education, by virtue of other education, practical experience or other circumstances. People who are at least 25 years old, who have been employed for four ye-

ars and have a command of English and Swedish corresponding to that obtained by completing a national upper-secondary programme are also considered to have general eligibility. The specific requirements vary according to the field of higher education and are expressed in terms of upper-secondary school qualifications in specific subjects. Restricted admission is used for all study programmes and courses.

## Entitlement to award degrees

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education decides which state institutions may grant permission to award degrees at the first and second level. All state higher education institutions may award general degrees at the first level and *magisterexamen*. General permission to grant *masterexamen* and degrees at the third level may be given to higher education institutions in the fields in which they are permitted to offer the third level degrees. Other institutions may be permitted to award *masterexamen* after appraisal and official recognition of their academic standards.

There are no general rules for permission to grant professional degrees. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education is responsible for giving permission to award professional degrees after reviewing applications to do so.

## Degrees

Higher education in Sweden is divided into three levels; the first, second and third. All degrees are awarded at one of these levels. Higher education at the first and second levels 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 at the first and second level and a curriculum for each degree pro-

gramme. Educational level and intended learning outcomes have to be specified for each course. Sweden has a system of higher education credits (*högskolepoäng*); a normal 40-week academic year corresponds to 60 higher education credits. The system is compatible with ECTS credits.

In the Degree Ordinance, the Government has laid down which degrees may be awarded and the objectives as well as intended learning outcomes for these degrees. In the Swedish higher education system there are generally no intermediate qualifications. All degrees are regarded as final qualifications, even if there is a possibility to continue studying. Degrees are divided into general degrees and professional degrees. Translations into English of all degree names are regulated at the national level. An institution of higher education may decide that a discipline precedes a degree name e.g. filosofie kandidatexamen or medicine doktorsexamen or/and add a major subject/field of studies e.g. civilingenjörsexamen i maskinteknik.

## General degrees

First level:

1. **Högskoleexamen** (University Diploma) requires 120 higher education credits and a diploma project. The corresponding degree in artistic disciplines is *konstnärlig högskoleexamen* (University Diploma in).
2. **Kandidatexamen** (Degree of Bachelor) requires 180 higher education credits with a defined main field of studies determined by each higher education institution itself. At least 90 higher education credits with increasingly in-depth studies including a diploma project of 15 higher education credits have to be completed in the main field of study. The corresponding degree in artistic disciplines is *konstnärlig kandidatexamen* (Degree of Bachelor of Arts in). ▶

Second level:

1. **Magisterexamen** (Master's Degree – One Year) requires 60 higher education credits with a defined main field of studies. At least 30 credits have to be completed in the main field of study including a thesis of 15 credits. In addition, normally the student must hold either a *kandidatexamen* or a professional degree of at least 180 higher education credits or an equivalent foreign degree. *Konstnärlig magisterexamen* (Degree of Master of Arts – One Year) is awarded in artistic disciplines.
2. **Masterexamen** (Degree of Master (Two Years)) requires 120 higher education credits with a defined main field of studies. At least 60 credits have to be completed in the main field of study including a thesis of 30 credits. In addition, in general, the student must hold either a *kandidatexamen* or a professional degree of at least 180 higher education credits or an equivalent foreign degree. *Konstnärlig masterexamen* (Degree of Master of Arts (Two Years)) is awarded in artistic disciplines. The most advanced courses for *Masterexamen* may be accepted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for a doctoral programme.

General admission requirements to general degrees or degrees in arts at the second level are: degree at the first level of at least 180 higher education credits or a corresponding foreign degree. 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.

### Professional degrees:

Professional degrees are awarded in the fields of engineering, health care, agriculture, law, education, etc. Professional degrees may be awarded at either the first or the second level. With a few exceptions, general entry requirements to professional degrees are the same as to the first level. There are about 40 professional degrees. Programmes leading to professional degrees vary in length depending on their character.

Third level:

The Faculty Board decides which subjects may be offered at the third level. For every subject, a general study plan should be drawn up and approved by the Faculty Board. The study plan must state the principal organisation of the studies, the specific admission requirements, the examinations required towards the degree and whether the study programme may end with the award of a *licentiatexamen*.

Two degrees are offered in the third level:

1. **Licentiatexamen** (Degree of Licentiate) requires at least 120 higher education credits including a thesis of at least 60 credits. The Faculty Board may also decide that a *licentiatexamen* can be awarded as an intermediate degree towards *doktorsexamen*.
2. **Doktorsexamen** (Degree of Doctor) requires 240 higher education credits including a thesis of at least 120 credits. The thesis has to be defended publicly.

Admission requirements to the third level are:

The applicant has to be deemed to have ability to benefit from the education.

And general requirements to the third level are:

1. a second level degree or

2. completed course requirements of at least 240 higher education credits of which 60 credits at the second level or
3. equivalent level of knowledge acquired in Sweden or abroad.

Transitional provisions:

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 requirements before 1 July 2007 were:

1. completed undergraduate programme of at least 120 credits (equivalent to 180 higher education credits) or
2. largely equivalent knowledge acquired in some other system in this country or abroad.

### Grading

The Higher Education Ordinance states that the following grades may be awarded: Pass with Distinction (*väl godkänd*), Pass (*godkänd*) or Fail (*underkänd*) unless the institution decides to grade on some other scale. A number of courses use only two grades: Pass or Fail. Others, for example in Law and Engineering, traditionally use scales with several levels – expressed as letters or numbers. No overall grade is given for a degree and students are not ranked.

