Higher education is for everyone

Many people in Sweden study at higher education institutions (HEIs), such as universities. Some start straight after finishing upper secondary school, while others work for a while and then study and gain new knowledge. Studying in Sweden is open to everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity or social background, disability or sexuality, so students at Swedish HEIs are very diverse. Many foreign students also choose to come to Sweden to study in higher education.

Choose a higher education institution and programme

There are around 50 HEIs in Sweden, spread from the north to the south of the country. Most are public-sector institutions, while a few are foundations. They can all issue degrees to students who complete their studies. The quality of higher education is supervised by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ).

Sweden’s HEIs include universities (universitet) and university colleges (högskolor). The difference between a university and a university college is that a university can always offer doctoral programmes, whereas university colleges can only do so in specific research areas.

The degree programme or HEI you should choose depends on what you think is most important. It is good to consider which programmes are offered, the size of the university, its location, and other
factors that you think are relevant. Some HEIs specialise in specific types of programmes, such as fine arts or technology, but most HEIs have programmes and courses in a wide range of subjects.

If you are finding it difficult to choose a programme or profession, inspiration is available at Studera.nu. However, this information is only in Swedish. You can also find information about jobs and career choices at Arbetsförmedlingen, the public employment service. This information is available in multiple languages.

www.studera.nu
www.arbetsformedlingen.se

Do I need to be a Swedish citizen?

You do not need to be a Swedish citizen or resident in Sweden to study in Swedish higher education, but to avoid paying application and tuition fees, you must:

- be a citizen of an EU/EEA member state or Switzerland
- have a permanent residence permit or a temporary residence permit (not on the basis of studies) for Sweden.

There are more exceptions; you can read about these on Antagning.se.

Other ways to study

Of course, there other ways than higher education to continue learning after upper secondary school. Higher vocational education (yrkeshögskolan) combines theoretical and practical studies in close cooperation with employers in a range of fields. More information is available at www.yrkeshogskolan.se. You can also study courses and programmes at a folk high school (folkhögskola). There are around 175 folk high schools in Sweden; they are independent adult education colleges that provide education in a variety of subjects.

Folk high schools can also prepare you for studying in higher education. More information is available at www.folkhogskola.nu.
Before studying

Courses and programmes

All higher education consists of courses. You can choose to study freestanding courses and then put courses together to make a degree, or you can choose to study a programme, where the HEI has decided which courses are included in your degree. All programmes lead to a degree, but if you choose freestanding courses you must put the various courses together yourself to make a degree. When you are admitted to a programme you have a place on all the courses that are part of that programme, but if you study freestanding courses you must apply for and be accepted on every course during the period of your studies.

Full-time, part-time or at a distance?

Most course and programmes are full-time, which means about 40 hours of study each week. But they could also have another rate of study; if you are not in full-time education, then the most common is half-time (50%). Some courses and programmes are also offered as distance studies, which means that you can study at home or at an education centre (lärcenter) in your municipality. Education centres have study and careers counsellors who can provide you with support and advice. For some distance courses you must attend a few classes at the HEI, whereas for others this is not necessary.

Grades and credits in higher education

All higher education courses give you credits. One semester of full-time study is worth 30 credits and an academic year is worth 60 credits. Bachelor’s programmes are often three years, 180 credits. If you study for another one or two years after this, it is called Master’s level; then you study for a further 60 or 120 credits.

Final examinations

An examination, or exam, is a test you do at the end of a course. It may be spoken or written. There may also be take-home exams, where you do the assignment at home. Sometimes you will have to submit assignments, group work and essays. Some courses also have laboratory work. If you are unable to complete the exam or if you do not pass it, you are entitled to resit it.

Degree

When you have completed your programme, you can ask to have a qualification awarded by the HEI where you studied. There are three different types of qualifications: general, fine arts and professional. There are two types of general qualifications at Bachelor’s level:

- Higher Education Diploma (two years)
- Degree of Bachelor (three years)

There are also two types of general degrees at Master’s level:

- Degree of Master (60 credits)
- Degree of Master (120 credits)
Programmes that educate people for a profession lead to a professional qualification. Qualifications to become a nurse, engineer or psychologist, for example, are this type of programme.

**Access to higher education**

To be able to study at an HEI, you must fulfil the general and specific entry requirements for the course or programme you have applied for. This means that you have the prior knowledge that is necessary for the course or programme.

**General entry requirements**

All courses and programmes have some basic requirements for admission. If you have a university entrance qualification from a Swedish upper secondary school or from municipal adult education, you have fulfilled the general entry requirements for higher education in Sweden. You can also apply for higher education if you have an upper secondary vocational diploma from a Swedish upper secondary school or adult education, but you must have pass grades in Swedish or Swedish as a second language 2 + 3 and English 6. Do you have upper secondary qualifications from another country that would allow you to study in higher education? If so, it is quite likely that you can study in Sweden if you fulfil the requirements for Swedish, English and Mathematics.

**Specific entry requirements**

Most courses and programmes also have specific entry requirements. In most cases, you must have studied specific courses in upper secondary school, but there may also be requirements for professional experience, a portfolio or higher education courses. For example, if you apply for a degree programme in mathematics, you often need to have studied more mathematics than is part of the general entry requirements.

**Additional qualifications to fulfil entry requirements**

If you do not fulfil the entry requirements, you can study for additional qualifications to allow you to access higher education. More information is available at upper secondary schools, municipal adult education and folk high schools. A study guidance counsellor can also provide help.

**Do you have other skills?**

If you have prior learning (reell kompetens), you may be considered eligible even though you do not fulfil the formal entry requirements. For example, this could be skills and experience from your working life, positions with clubs or associations, long periods spent abroad or from courses you have studied. In principle, by stating your overall level of learning, you could fulfil both general and specific entry requirements without having studied at upper secondary school. However, you must apply to have your prior learning validated via Antagning.se. Please note that you must also follow the HEI’s instructions when applying. This could mean, for example, that you must submit a copy of your application or that they require extra documentation. Instructions are available on the HEI’s website.

**The Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test**

If you fulfil the entry requirements, you can improve your chances of getting a place by sitting the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test.

There are no rules about citizenship, residency or age to sit the test, but you must always be able to document your identity. The test is only available in Swedish.
The test is divided into eight sections and has 160 questions. All the questions, except for the English reading comprehension, are in Swedish, so it is beneficial if you have good Swedish. The test includes sections in which you must demonstrate logical thinking in mathematical problems, English reading comprehension, Swedish reading comprehension, and Swedish vocabulary. The test is offered twice a year. Information in English is available at www.studera.nu.

Applying for higher education

The Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR) and Swedish HEIs are jointly responsible for information about courses and programmes and how to apply for them. You can apply, create a user account and register for all courses and programmes which are taught in Swedish via antagning.se. If you prefer to be taught in English, choose and apply for courses and programmes via www.universityadmissions.se.

If you have a protected identity, personal information that must remain secret or cannot apply online for other reasons, please contact UHR for help.

More information about this is available on www.studera.nu and www.antagning.se.

Application periods

If you wish to apply for courses or programmes that are taught in Swedish and English:

- applications open on 15 March and the application deadline for the autumn semester is usually 15 April.
- applications open on 15 September and the application deadline for the spring semester is 15 October.

HEIs have some short courses for people who want to study during the summer. Applications for summer courses close on 15 March.

Important dates and information about applications and admissions are on Antagning.se, which is also where you apply. Information here is only in Swedish.

If you would like to apply in an international admissions round for courses and programmes that are only offered in English:

- applications open on 17 October and the application deadline for the autumn semester is 15 January.
- applications open on 1 June and the application deadline for the spring semester is 15 August.

Apply via www.universityadmissions.se. Information here is only in English.

Study guidance

Talking to a study guidance counsellor can be a good way of getting answers to your questions about higher education. If you are studying at a Swedish upper secondary school, you can contact the school’s study guidance counsellor. The same applies if you are studying at a folk high school or in municipal adult education. All HEIs offer their students study guidance.
Merits and selection

Your merits are what determine whether you will be admitted to a higher education course or programme. These could be grades from upper secondary school, results from the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test or an assessment from a folk high school.

When there are more applicants than available places, there is a selection process to decide who will be admitted. Your merits decide which selection group(s) you are placed in. If you have several different types of merits, such as grades and results from the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test, you may be placed in several selection groups at the same time. Being placed in several groups gives you a greater chance of being admitted to the course or programme you want.
While studying

Your finances as a student
Higher Education in Sweden is free for citizens of an EU/EEA member state or Switzerland, as well as for people with residence permits in Sweden. Doctoral studies are also free for everyone. As a student you will still need money for food, housing and books. The most common way of managing financially while studying is to apply for student finance from Centrala studiestödsnämnden, CSN. This consists of a grant, which you do not need to repay, and an optional loan that you must start to repay after finishing your studies.

Your right to student finance is not affected by how much money you have in the bank or how much your family earns, but there is a limit to how much money you can earn over half a calendar year while studying. You do not need any type of security for your student loan, but you must pass a set number of credits each semester to continue receiving student finance. There are special rules if you are not a Swedish citizen. More information about this is available via csn.se.

Scholarships
A scholarship is a grant where the money comes from donations or specific funding. Where are scholarships available?
You apply for scholarships at the awarding body. For example, this could be an HEI, an association, a foundation, a bank, a legal firm or a private individual. Information about scholarships is available at HEIs, parishes, schools, municipalities and county councils. Libraries often have scholarship books.

Some scholarships are open to applications from everyone, but most are only available to people who fulfil specific conditions or requirements.

Students who must pay tuition fees in Sweden can also apply for scholarships through the Swedish Institute and through HEIs. More information is available at studyinsweden.se.

Working while studying
Studying full-time often requires as many hours as full-time work, i.e. 40 hours per week. Some students work part-time while they study, but if you do not go to lectures you need to use a lot of your time for private study or studying with others on your course.

Student accommodation
There are several options for student housing. You can choose to live at home if your HEI is close enough, otherwise you can rent a student apartment or a room in student halls. If you live in halls you will have your own room, but share a kitchen with other students. The amount of student accommodation varies from place to place. It is easy to find information on the HEI’s website. You can also get information about student housing from the students’ union or private housing companies.

It can be difficult to find somewhere to live while studying, so it is very important that you start looking in time, particularly if you will be studying in a city. Contact information for all Swedish HEIs, and information about accommodation, can be found via Studera.nu.
Student life
Many places have lots of clubs and associations, and many activities are organised and offered alongside studying. This could be anything from arts, culture and entertainment to student politics and sport. Activities are often arranged by the students’ unions. A students’ union is an independent body that works for the students’ best interests. Membership is voluntary.

Support while studying
All HEIs offer some form of support during your studies. You can get help with everything from developing your study skills, how to write academic texts to public speaking. These services are free of charge and are available whatever your course or programme. Everyone is welcome!

Study abroad
Most Swedish HEIs have agreements with foreign HEIs as part of study abroad programmes. The period you study abroad could be part of your Swedish programme and the credits you earn abroad are transferred when you return to Sweden.

In order to take part in an exchange programme you must have been admitted to a Swedish HEI. Often, you must have earned a certain number of credits in Sweden before going abroad to study. You can also organise and manage your studies abroad independently, as a free-mover student.

You can receive student finance, i.e. grants and loans, for studying abroad. You can also apply for scholarships. Contact the international coordinator at your HEI for more information. Information about studying abroad is also available at www.studera.nu.

Erasmus+
The biggest programme for exchange students is called Erasmus+ and is the European Union’s programme for studying in Europe. Erasmus+ gives you the opportunity to study abroad for 3-13 months. As an Erasmus+ student, you can study at Bachelor’s, Master’s or doctoral levels. You can read more about the Erasmus+ programme at www.studera.nu.
After studying

Work after studying
Arbetsförmedlingen is a good route to information about jobs and career choices. Their website, www.arbetsformedlingen.se, has lots of information if you are looking for work.

If you have a qualification from a country other than Sweden, you can have it evaluated and compared with the Swedish education system. You can then use this if you want to continue studying in Sweden or show it to a potential employer when looking for work. More information is available at www.uhr.se.