

Sweden

Full Review

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Aim and purpose

- What is the stated aim and purpose of this stage of education, e.g. linked to entry to higher education, the world of work; a broad aim of personal and societal enrichment etc.?
- Are these aims and purposes influenced by an overarching national plan for education or do they reflect the influence of international organisations such as the OECD?

The Swedish education system is governed by the *Skollagen* (Education Act) (Swedish Parliament, 2010), which came into force on 1 July 2011. It brought with it a number of changes to the structure and curriculum of the education system, including upper secondary education.

The Act states that school education should encourage all students to become creative, competent and responsible individuals and citizens. It should also instill a lifelong desire to learn in all students, alongside promoting respect for human rights and fundamental democratic values. Students should

be encouraged to discover their own uniqueness as individuals and to participate in society with a sense of responsible freedom. With respect to upper secondary provision, the *Skollagen* states that it should build on the knowledge that students have acquired during their compulsory education, providing a solid foundation for professional life and further studies, and presenting students with opportunities for personal development and active participation in society.

The curriculum for upper secondary education (*Läroplan för gymnasieskola*), introduced in July 2011, states that

this phase of education is intended to create the preconditions for students to learn and further their knowledge, supporting them to become responsible individuals who actively participate in and contribute to society and professional contexts. Upper secondary schools are expected to work closely with schools providing the compulsory phase of education, as well as with universities and university colleges, and the 'outside world' (the world of work and society in general) to ensure that students receive a high-quality education, which prepares them for future study and employment.

The curriculum for upper secondary education includes a number of specific goals which schools at this level of education are expected to meet for their students. These include that they enable all students:

- enrolled in a national vocational programme (see the subheading 'Available pathways/programmes') to have the opportunity to complete a vocational diploma
- enrolled in a national higher education preparatory programme to have the opportunity to complete a diploma and prove their eligibility for higher education

- enrolled in an introductory programme (see the subheading 'Available pathways/ programmes') to leave the programme equipped for further education or to enter the labour market
- to gain the ability to use their knowledge as a tool to solve problems, to reflect on their experience and learning, and to develop their critical thinking skills
- to develop the capacity to work with others and be confident in their own ability
- to develop a knowledge and understanding of international cooperation, global relationships, democratic values, human rights and sustainable development
- to learn to respect the value and integrity of others, regardless of differences in history, religion, culture, language and living conditions, and to empathise with and understand others and their situation
- to learn to respect and care for the environment
- to take personal responsibility for their studies and their future plans (study pathway and future professional life)
- to understand the technological and societal developments taking place and how these will affect their future personal and professional development
- to develop their ability and will to contribute to a democratic society.

Although the aims and purposes of upper secondary education in Sweden do not appear to reflect any specific influence from international organisations such as the OECD, the introduction of the 2010 Education Act and the changes it introduced to the pathways / programmes on offer in upper secondary education were influenced by Sweden's performance in international surveys of attainment; the high numbers of students dropping out of upper secondary education; and high levels of youth unemployment. The changes introduced by the Act, which had the overarching aim of ensuring that students leaving upper secondary education are well-prepared for progression to work, further study or higher education, aim to:

- ensure that fewer students drop out of their selected upper secondary programme and are able to complete upper secondary education within three years. It did this by strengthening the entry requirements for some programmes
- improve programme quality and equity – with a view to ensuring that all programmes are of equally high quality and equally valued by students and their parents
- strengthen programmes of study and steering documents for teachers and make these documents clearer for students and parents.

National debate continues on raising the overall quality of education, influenced by Sweden's disappointing results in PISA 2012 and, following its improved results in PISA 2015, the debate focuses in particular on narrowing the gap in attainment between the highest and lowest performing students, between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students, and between immigrant and non-immigrant students.

Structure of the education system

- How is upper secondary provision for students structured, e.g two-year / three-year / varied approach; around subjects or broad areas of learning; broad/comprehensive or specialised / narrow in focus?
- When does compulsory education end?
- What is the age profile of students in this stage of education?
- How well does the structure of the system reflect the stated aim as outlined above

Upper secondary school provision (in the *gymnasieskola*) comprises the final three years of education:

Year	Age range	School Level
Preschool	Ages 1-6	Early childhood education and care
Preschool class	6-7	
Year 1	7-8	Single structure, nine-year all-through school
Year 2	8-9	
Year 3	9-10	
Year 4	10-11	
Year 5	11-12	
Year 6	12-13	
Year 7	13-14	
Year 8	14-15	
Year 9	15-16	
Year 10	16-17	Upper secondary school
Year 11	17-18	Upper secondary school
Year 12	18-19	Upper secondary school

Compulsory education runs from Year 1 through to Year 9, ages seven to 16 (although 90 per cent of children attend preschool and 95 per cent enrol in preschool class). There are 1253 upper secondary schools in Sweden and, in 2012, 95 per cent of all 17-year-olds were participating in upper secondary education (European Commission, 2017f).

Available pathways / programmes

- What pathways / programmes are available to students - academic / vocational / professional / flexible?
- At what stage are decisions about the student choice of pathway finalised and who has an input into these decisions?
- Where do these pathways lead - entry to higher education; accreditation for professional life; further training?
- What percentage of the overall cohort of students progress through each pathway?
- How many students progress to higher education / further education / workforce / apprenticeships?

Upper secondary schools in Sweden have different profiles and offer different programmes.

Before the *Skollagen* (Education Act 2010) came into force in 2011, the upper secondary pathways on offer to students comprised 17 national programmes and one individual programme. Following the passing of the *Skollagen*, which aimed to offer more equity in the quality of available programmes and more freedom of choice for students, the available pathways for upper secondary education were changed and students now choose an upper secondary programme from:

- 18 national programmes, which last three years and lead to an upper secondary diploma
 - 12 of these national programmes are vocational
 - the remaining six are preparatory programmes for higher education
- five introductory programmes, which last between one and three years, depending on the programme chosen. These cater for the needs of students not eligible for a national programme and allow students to progress to a national programme or on to work
- special programme variations of the national programmes, or apprenticeships, which have been approved as acceptable pathways for students.

The 12 vocational national programmes prepare students for employment or for further vocational education and are available in:

- children and recreation
- building and construction
- electricity and energy

- vehicles and transport
- business and administration
- handicrafts / crafts (e.g. for employment as hairdressers, florists or carpenters)
- hotels and tourism
- industrial technology
- heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) and property maintenance
- restaurant management and food
- natural resources (e.g. for employment in the horticultural sector)
- health and social care.

Students can also undertake an apprenticeship in upper secondary education. Apprenticeships were introduced as approved alternatives to national vocational programmes in the autumn of 2011. Courses are similar to the national vocational programmes, but require students to spend at least half their study time in at least one workplace.

Through choosing specific combinations of courses,

or through studying an expanded selection of courses, students enrolled in a vocational programme may also be eligible for higher education. The subheading 'Assessment and reporting' provides more information.

Students wishing to enrol in one of the 12 national vocational programmes need to have achieved 'pass' grades in Swedish or Swedish as a second language; English; mathematics; and five other school subjects at the end of compulsory phase education (age 16).

The six preparatory programmes for higher education are available in:

- arts
- humanities
- business management and economics
- social science
- natural science
- technology.

To enrol in a preparatory programme for higher education, students need to have achieved 'pass' grades in Swedish or Swedish as a second language; English; mathematics; and nine

other compulsory school subjects on completion of compulsory education. For the business management and economics preparatory programme, the humanities preparatory programme, and the social science preparatory programme, the school subject pass grades must include passes in geography, history, religious studies, and social studies; for the natural science preparatory programme and the technology preparatory programme, subject pass grades must include biology, physics and chemistry; and for the arts preparatory programme, successful applicants must pass an additional skills test.

The five introductory programmes available are:

- preparatory education
- programme-oriented individual options
- introduction to a vocation
- individual alternatives
- introduction to the Swedish language (the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' provides more information).

On successful completion

of an introductory programme, students can go on to further study through a national programme, or begin work.

Students can also follow a special variation of the national programmes offered by their school. These special programme variations must offer skills and knowledge identified by local or regional demand and be open to students nationally. In 2012, 49 special variants of national programmes were approved by the National Agency for Education and available for students.

Pupils choose the programme they wish to follow in (post-compulsory) upper secondary education in Year 9, the final year of compulsory education (ages 15-16). School staff help them make this decision through the careers education and guidance they provide. Pupils are also given the opportunity to meet adult professionals and so learn about the world of work. Most schools also employ specially trained career and guidance counsellors, or offer guidance and counselling services through an external guidance centre to help Year 9 pupils make this decision.

Note: There are a number of exceptional alternatives to the upper secondary school. These include upper secondary schools for students with learning disabilities (see the subheading 'Inclusion' below); (private) international schools; three private boarding schools; and schools providing courses leading to the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

Of the 106,830 students who completed compulsory education in 2010/11, 98.4 per cent went straight into upper secondary education in 2011/12 (Skolverket, 2012a). This was the academic year in which the Education Act came into force and the changes to the curriculum and pathways in upper secondary education were implemented. The proportion of students going straight into upper secondary education has remained stable since then, at or above 98 per cent every year (from researcher email communication with Skolverket staff, 2017).

In 2011/12, 132,861 first-year students enrolled in upper secondary education. Of these, 50.9 per cent (67,582) enrolled in preparatory programmes for higher education; 31.4 per cent (41,725) enrolled in

vocational programmes; and 17.7 per cent (23,554) enrolled in introductory programmes (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2013, p.126).

Note: all students who have successfully completed compulsory education are entitled to enrol in upper secondary education. This right is only restricted by a student's age, and students can start a programme of study up to and including the first half of the calendar year in which they reach the age of 20. The first-year enrolment numbers for each programme therefore include students straight from compulsory education (at the age of 16) and others, who may have taken a break from their studies, or who may have entered a preparatory programme or vocational programme following successful completion of an introductory programme.

By 2013/14, the final year for students who had enrolled in upper secondary education in 2011/12 and who were on three-year courses, 105,159 students were enrolled as third-year students in upper secondary education (Skolverket, 2014). Of these, just over 60 per cent (63,237) were enrolled in preparatory programmes for higher education; 36

per cent (37,865) were enrolled in vocational programmes; and 3.9 per cent (4057) were enrolled in introductory programmes (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015a). Note: introductory programmes last between one and three years, so some students who entered upper secondary education in 2011/12 would have already completed their introductory programme by 2013/14.

The following table outlines the total numbers of first-year students enrolled in upper secondary education since 2011/12 and the percentage by type of programme. Sources:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Total number of first-year students	132,861	125,217	120,453	121,086	124,078	140,163
Introductory programmes	17.7%	18.2%	18.9%	19.9%	22.6%	29%
Preparatory programmes for higher education	50.9%	52.4%	52.5%	52.7%	51.7%	47.6%
Vocational programmes	31.4%	29.4%	28.6%	27.4%	25.6%	23.4%

Skolverket 2012b, 2013b, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2017f and 2017i.

Data collected from a survey sample of students who were in the third year of a national vocational programme in 2013/14 indicated that:

- 71 per cent successfully achieved a vocational diploma
- 13 per cent received a school-leaving certificate (and no vocational diploma)
- 16 per cent did not complete their studies.

In April 2015:

- 64 per cent of the survey participants identified 'work' as their main activity
- 70 per cent of survey participants who had received a vocational diploma listed 'work' as their main activity
- 11 per cent of participants identified 'training' as their main activity
- 17 per cent were unemployed (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2015b and 2015c).

In addition:

- 58 per cent of students in their third year of upper secondary education in 2013/14 planned to begin studying at university or college within the next three years
- 85 per cent of women in their third year of preparatory programmes for higher education and 38 per cent of women in vocational programmes planned to move on to higher education

- 77 per cent of men in their third year of preparatory programmes and 14 per cent of men in vocational programmes planned to move on to higher education (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2014a).
- 48 per cent of students who enrolled in introductory programmes in 2011/12 progressed on to a national programme within five years, whilst 52 per cent did not succeed in passing an introductory programme (Skolverket, 2017i).

Specified curriculum within pathways

- How is the curriculum within these pathways organised? Is it broad / comprehensive / specialised / narrow?
- Are there core subjects that are central to the curriculum?
- What degree of choice is afforded to students within each pathway?
- Is the curriculum presented in subject specifications / syllabi / learning outcomes?
- Is there differentiation of learning outcomes in terms of stage and / or ability?
- What degree of autonomy do teachers / schools have in shaping and implementing the curriculum?
- What is the place of wellbeing / social, personal and health education (SPHE) / citizenship education within the curriculum?
- What competences / key skills are promoted in the curriculum?
- To what extent are skills and competences central to the curriculum structure? How do they feature i.e. are they embedded in learning outcomes?

For students following one of the 18 national programmes, the curriculum for upper secondary education is determined by:

- the (overarching) curriculum for the upper secondary school (*Läroplan för gymnasieskola*), which describes the overall aims, fundamental values, tasks, goals and guidelines for this phase of education
- the 'diploma goals' for the specific upper secondary national programme in which a student has chosen to enrol. These provide the foundation for teaching and learning in each programme and the Government sets the diploma goals for each programme based on proposals from Skolverket (the National Agency for Education)
- subject syllabuses, which describe the courses included in each subject. The Government sets these for each 'core' subject in the national programmes, whilst Skolverket sets these for additional subjects.

The diploma goals for each individual national programme outline the aims of each programme and the subject choices available. They provide the foundation for planning the education and teaching hours a student will receive. The diploma goals for all national programmes emphasise the importance of entrepreneurship skills to varying degrees, including running a company, taking initiative, seeing opportunities, being creative and

solving problems. In addition, the diploma goals for each national programme emphasise language / literacy development (Swedish and English).

All national programmes share the same eight core compulsory subjects (also known as 'foundation subjects'):

- physical education and health
- Swedish (or Swedish as a second language)
- English
- history
- social studies
- religious studies
- mathematics
- science.

Students study the core subjects to varying degrees depending on the specific national programme on which they are enrolled, i.e. students enrolled on different programmes study a different number of courses within each subject. In addition, students study:

- programme-specific subjects, which are common to all students enrolled in the same programme
- 'orientations', which generally begin in the second or third year of a programme and allow students to specialise
- programme specialisations, which complement and are more in-depth than programme-specific subjects
- an individual option
- a diploma project.

Each subject comprises one or more courses. The Government decides on the syllabuses for each of the eight core subjects, while the *Skolverket* determines the syllabuses for all other subjects. The syllabus for each subject includes:

- the aim of the subject as a whole and the aim of individual courses within it, including their scope

- the subject goals (up to a maximum of ten), which describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and ability students will develop through studying a subject
- the core content of each course, determined by the subject goals; teachers may teach additional content on top of the core content, depending on their students' needs and interests
- the knowledge requirements for three different ability levels within each course (A, C and E, where A is the highest grade and F represents a fail).

For example, the syllabus for English is outlined as follows:

- The teaching of English is aimed at helping students develop their knowledge of the language so that they have the ability, desire and confidence to use it for different purposes in different situations; students should be given the opportunity to develop communication skills, including the ability to solve communication problems when their language skills are inadequate.
- Students should be given opportunities to develop: an understanding of spoken and written English; an ability to express themselves through English speech and writing; an ability to use different language strategies in different contexts; an ability to adapt their language to different situations, recipients and purposes; an ability to discuss and reflect on cultural and social issues in English-speaking parts of the world.
- The 'English 5' course covers the following content: vocabulary related to education, society, current issues, thoughts and feelings, fiction, living conditions, the spread of English globally; listening skills including differences in spoken language and features of different dialects, media and texts aimed at different audiences, conversations of different forms (e.g. interviews), and strategies for listening and reading in different ways and for different purposes; speaking skills including formal English and adapting speech to different circumstances, narrating and arguing skills, contributing to discussions related to societal and working life, and adapting communication methods to suit the conversational context.
- A grade E in the 'English 5' course is described as 'students understanding the main content and basic details of English, acting on a message with acceptable results and discussing issues in basic terms'; a grade C in the 'English 5' course is described as 'students understanding the main content and essential details of English, acting on a message with satisfactory results and discussing issues in detail'; a grade A in the 'English 5' course is described as 'students understanding both the details and overall content of English, acting on a message with good results and discussing issues in a detailed and balanced way'.

Work-based learning is also a core component of national vocational programmes; students must undertake some of their learning in at least one workplace throughout the course of their studies and this learning must take place for a minimum of 15 weeks.

For apprentices, a minimum of half of their study time should be spent in at least one workplace.

For students following one of the five introductory programmes, the curriculum is determined by the aims of the introductory programme and by each student's individual learning plan, which is based on the programme aims and tailored to their individual needs and interests. Learning plans can be revised where necessary, in consultation with the student and, in some cases, with their guardian.

The aims of the introductory programmes and their associated courses are:

- Preparatory education – this one-year programme is for students wishing to enrol in a higher education preparatory programme, but who lack the required grades. Individual learning plans focus on those subjects from compulsory phase education in which students need to achieve pass marks.
- Programme-oriented individual options - this programme is for students wishing to enrol in a national vocational programme, but who lack the required grades. Individual learning plans focus on those subjects from compulsory education in which students need to achieve pass marks. Students on these programmes are also required to study courses from a national vocational programme; this includes some work-based learning. Decisions about which vocational programme courses are available to students are made at a local level. Courses vary in length (from one to three years) depending on individual need.
- Introduction to a vocation - this programme is for students wishing to enter employment or enrol in a national vocational programme for which they lack the required grades. Individual learning plans usually focus on those subjects from compulsory phase education in which students need to achieve pass marks, and include some courses from a national vocational programme, some work-based learning or an internship, and other activities to ensure skills development. Courses vary in length (from one to three years) depending on individual need.
- Individual alternatives - this programme is for students wishing to undertake the 'Introduction to a vocation' introductory programme, or to go on to employment or further studies. Individual learning plans usually include those subjects from compulsory phase education in which students need to achieve pass marks; courses from national programmes; and activities to ensure skills development. Courses vary in length (from one to three years) depending on individual need.
- Introduction to the Swedish language - this programme is for students who have recently arrived in Sweden. Individual learning plans include courses to ensure the development of the Swedish language, alongside teaching in subjects from compulsory phase education. Courses vary in length (from one to three years) depending on individual need.

Depending on student need and the local situation in each municipality, introductory programmes may be delivered either in upper secondary schools specialising in introductory programme provision, or in 'regular' upper secondary schools.

Inclusion

- How is inclusion addressed?
- How are the learning needs of all students catered for, including students who have completed a reduced curriculum at lower secondary school, students with challenging behaviour patterns who find it difficult to function in larger classes, international learners for whom the language of instruction is not their first language, students with special educational needs?
- Where reform is taking place, how is the reform being prepared / what is happening now to prepare the ground for this reform?

The Education Act (2010) states that the education system is designed to take into account the needs of all students, supporting each of them to achieve their individual potential, and ensuring that, where there are differences in student ability, all efforts are made to ensure that every student can benefit from their education.

The upper secondary curriculum framework document (*Läroplan för gymnasieskola*), which describes the overall aims, fundamental values, tasks, goals and guidelines for this phase of education, also states that all those working in upper secondary education should:

- support all students to develop to their full potential
- be aware of and support all students in need of special or additional support
- develop all students' sense of belonging, solidarity and responsibility towards individuals who are outside of their immediate group
- promote equality of individuals and groups
- promote solidarity between disadvantaged groups from within and outside Sweden
- counteract and prevent discrimination, degrading treatment and harassment.

Specialist support staff, available at all levels of education (including upper secondary), are responsible for safeguarding the health of pupils and students through the provision of psychological, medical and psychosocial support, and for providing support for students with special educational needs.

The range of programmes available in upper secondary education in Sweden aims to enable students to follow a pathway that will meet and respond to their individual needs. Introductory programmes, for example, are tailored to each individual's requirements through an individual development plan (see the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' above). Schools can also work with individual students with particular

study needs to draw up special support programmes. In general, it is intended that these programmes should satisfy the requirements to enable students to achieve an upper secondary diploma, and that they are related to a national programme, but they may deviate from these requirements through changes to some of the courses of study. Special support programmes can include:

- allowing students to repeat a course
- individually tailored programmes
- special or remedial classes
- providing support in a student's mother tongue if this is not Swedish. (One of the five introductory programmes, 'Introduction to the Swedish language', is specifically aimed at students who have recently arrived in Sweden; see the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' above)
- extended programmes, for able students who take on courses beyond the required minimum
- reduced programmes, for students who face difficulties with their studies and are granted exemption from some of their courses. Reduced programmes are only offered to students who face difficulties with their studies as a whole, and which cannot be overcome in any other way. The school headteacher / principal must agree to the reduced programme and there is no limit on how many courses may be reduced for the student. Students undertaking reduced programmes are not, however, able to achieve an upper secondary diploma.

To allow students to succeed in an upper secondary national programme, programme participation may be extended for some students to a period of more than three years, with the approval of the local education board of the local municipality.

As a general rule, students who are eligible for a national programme should not enrol in an introductory programme. However, in cases where a student

enrolled in a national programme is considering dropping out of their studies (despite additional support from the school), they may transfer to an introductory programme.

Staff responsible for providing careers guidance in schools receive training during their initial education in the skills required to deal with students and groups who are at risk of dropping out of school early. In addition, headteachers, teachers,

education and careers counsellors, psychologists, social workers and speech and language specialists are legally required to cooperate to support students who may be at risk of leaving education early.

There are also *Folkhögskolesatsningen* (folk high schools), which are aimed at students aged 18 and above who have not completed secondary education. The courses on offer include three-month courses aimed

at preparing students to begin or return to upper secondary education, and courses qualifying students for higher education. *Folkhögskolesatsningen* are classed as adult education.

Most pupils with special educational needs participate in mainstream upper secondary education. The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (*Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten*) is responsible for ensuring that students, regardless of their functional ability, are given the opportunity to achieve the expected learning outcomes of the education programme they are participating in. Special educational

needs support, accessible teaching materials, education in special needs schools and government funding are therefore all available for students requiring such intervention. For example, grants known as ‘Special Interventions in Schools’ are available to develop accessible learning environments for students with disabilities, and students with severe physical disabilities may be given extensions to the time they have to complete their education, or may be exempted from studying part of a course without this affecting their awarded course credits (see the subheading ‘Assessment and reporting’ below for more information on upper secondary course credits).

Students who have severe impaired hearing or physical disabilities may attend special (separate) upper secondary schools, although this is not common. Such separate education includes: *gymnasiesärskolan* – upper secondary schools for students with severe intellectual impairments, which offer ten different four-year programmes that are mostly vocational in nature; *riksgymnasiet för döva och hörselskadade*, the only upper secondary school of its type in Sweden, for students with impaired hearing; and *riksgymnasium för svårt rörelsehindrade*, of which there are four, for students with severe physical difficulties.

Assessment and reporting

- How is the curriculum assessed?
- What variety of assessment modes and methods are in evidence? For example, external assessment / internal assessment / online assessment / portfolios / formative / summative / synoptic etc.?
- How does the system recognise varied learning / skills / competences?
- How does assessment link to certification / qualifications / a qualifications framework / selection for further and higher education?
- How is vocational / technical education assessed and accredited?
- How is achievement reported? What is reported?

Assessment in upper secondary education is linked to student achievement in their chosen programme of study.

Students enrolled in national programmes in upper secondary education are required to take compulsory national tests in English, mathematics, and Swedish or Swedish as a second language. These are developed by *Skolverket* (the National Agency for Education) working with higher education institutions. The number of compulsory national tests any one student takes varies depending on the specific programme he or she is following and the number of courses he / she is studying for each subject. The national tests

are administered once every semester and are marked by a student's teacher. Results are combined, by the teacher, with the student's results from continuous teacher assessment throughout the course to produce an overall assessment of a student's knowledge, and to determine individual student grades for each course. *Skolverket* also has a bank of tests in different subjects and courses beyond the compulsory national tests, which teachers can use as part of their ongoing student assessment.

In grading students, teachers do not compare a student's performance to that of their peers. Instead they assess how well each student has met the course

goals. Each subject has a number of specific goals (up to a maximum of ten) which are outlined in the subject syllabus. These make clear which parts of a subject are to be graded and each course within a subject is linked to one or more of the specific goals for that subject. The goals are determined in four different forms: 'the ability to', 'knowledge of', 'understanding of', and 'skills in', and knowledge requirements, which are based on these subject goals, are included for three grades of differing ability - A, C and E (where A is the highest grade, and F is a fail). These are used by teachers to assess the extent to which each goal has been achieved, and what grade a student should be awarded for a

particular course. See the subheading 'Specified curriculum within pathways' for an example from the syllabus for English.

Each course is assigned a certain number of credits, according to the scope of the work and number of teaching hours involved across the three years of upper secondary education. Students enrolled in higher education preparatory programmes and in national vocational programmes must study

courses amounting to 2500 credits in total. In order to achieve a diploma providing basic eligibility for higher education or a vocational diploma, students must achieve 'pass' grades in courses amounting to 2250 credits. A pass grade is an 'E' or above on a results scale which runs from A to F (with 'F' being a fail). The number of credits associated with each grade is:

A = 20

B = 17.5

C = 15

D = 12.5

E = 10

F = 0.

The tables below summarise the credits required to successfully complete a higher education preparatory programme and a vocational programme. In addition, students

Higher education preparatory programmes

Subject	Credits required	Notes
Swedish (or Swedish as a second language)	300	Early childhood education and care
English	200	
Mathematics	100/200/300	For students enrolled in the arts or humanities programmes – 100 credits are required; for those on economics / business or social sciences programmes – 200 are required; for those on natural science or technology programmes, the requirement is 300
Physical education	100	
History	50/100/200	For students enrolled in the technology programme - 50; economics, social sciences or natural sciences programmes - 100; arts or humanities programmes - 200
Social science	100/200	For students enrolled in most programmes – 100; for students enrolled in the economics programme - 200
Religious studies	50	
Natural sciences	100	
Programme-specific subjects, orientations and programme specialisations	950/1050/1100	For students enrolled in the economics programme - 950; those enrolled in arts, humanities, social sciences or natural sciences programmes - 1050; the technology programme – 1100
Individual option	200	
Diploma project	100	

wishing to obtain a diploma providing eligibility for higher education must achieve, as a minimum, pass grades in specific subject courses. These courses are Swedish 1, 2 and 3 (or Swedish as a second language 1, 2 and 3); English 5 and 6; mathematics 1; and the diploma project.

Vocational programmes

Subject	Credits required
Swedish (or Swedish as a second language)	100
English	100
Mathematics	100
Physical education	100
History	50
Social science	50
Religious studies	50
Natural sciences	50
Programme-specific subjects, orientations and programme specialisations	1600
Individual option	200
Diploma project	100

Students wishing to obtain a vocational diploma must achieve, as a minimum, pass grades in the subject courses: Swedish 1 (or Swedish as a second language 1); English 5; mathematics 1; and the diploma project. Students also need to achieve pass grades in programme-specific subjects amounting to 400 credits.

All students enrolled in vocational programmes are also entitled to follow courses which grant basic eligibility for higher education. To achieve this,

in addition to achieving a vocational diploma, they also need to achieve a pass grade in the courses Swedish 2 and 3 (or Swedish as a second language 2 and 3), and English 6. Some vocational programmes include these courses automatically; in other cases, students need to take additional courses to gain this eligibility (these are known as 'expanded programmes').

In addition to meeting the basic upper secondary diploma eligibility requirements for higher

education (HE) outlined above, students successfully completing higher education preparatory programmes or national vocational programmes and wishing to go on to HE must also meet any specific conditions required by the higher education institution they are applying to. Each HE institution determines the number of student places available for each of its courses, based on available government funding, and offers are made to students dependent on the demand for places and their upper

secondary results.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education handles the applications process for most higher education institutions. Through its national grades database – known as BEDA – it collects student results from upper secondary schools and forwards these on to the admissions system for higher education (known as NyA). Admissions officers at the Swedish Council for Higher Education and in higher education institutions register, review and evaluate applicants' qualifications and NyA is used to evaluate eligibility for tertiary level courses through the assignment of a 'merit rating' for each student. This merit rating, which is calculated based on the course work and grades achieved by a student in all the courses in which they achieved a pass mark in upper secondary school, ranks students who have applied for the same course in order of achievement.

In cases where there are more eligible applicants than places available for a particular HE course or programme, the following selection procedures apply:

- a minimum of one third of applicants are admitted based on the merit rating
- a minimum of one third of applicants are admitted based on the results of the Swedish Aptitude Test. This is a standardised test used specifically for admission to Swedish higher education institutions, and tests literacy (in both Swedish and English) and numeracy. The test is optional, and not all students take it
- a maximum of one third of applicants are admitted on other criteria which are determined by the individual HEI.

Note: the grades and transcripts for all courses studied in upper secondary education are also delivered by BEDA to Statistics Sweden for processing, after which reports are compiled for *Skolverket*.

All students completing upper secondary education, regardless of their grades, receive a school-leaving certificate. This is signed by the school headteacher

/ principal and details the subjects studied and grades achieved.

Students enrolled in national programmes who have satisfied the requirements for successfully completing the national programme receive an upper secondary diploma. There are two types: one provides basic eligibility for higher education; the other is a vocational programme diploma. Students who complete their upper secondary national programme with the required pass grades and credits for eligibility for HE receive the upper secondary diploma with basic eligibility for HE. Students on national vocational programmes who successfully complete the programme, but who do not achieve the pass grades in those subjects required for eligibility for HE, receive the vocational programme diploma. Students who do not achieve the required number of pass grades / credits receive a school-leaving certificate only.

Flexibility and transfer options

- What flexibility is inherent in the system for movement between or within pathways?
- What are the student transfer options?
- Can students combine study across schools / institutions?
- Can credits / certification be transferred?

Although national programmes are the norm in upper secondary education in Sweden, a certain degree of flexibility is inherent in a system in which:

- students successfully completing an introductory programme can progress to a national programme
- students enrolled in a national vocational programme can follow courses which enable them to achieve basic eligibility for higher education
- students enrolled in national programmes who are struggling with their work may study a 'reduced programme' or an individually tailored programme with a view to enabling them to complete upper secondary education
- where students on a national programme are at risk of dropping out, they may transfer to an introductory programme.

In addition, for students following one of the five introductory programmes, the curriculum is determined by each student's individual learning plan, which is tailored to their needs and interests. These learning plans can be revised where necessary.

Students who have successfully completed compulsory education are also entitled to enter a programme of upper secondary education up to and including the first half of the calendar year in which they reach the age of 20, i.e. they do not need to progress immediately to a programme of upper secondary education having completed their compulsory education at age 16.

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

BEDA		The Swedish Council for Higher Education's national database of student results from upper secondary education
Folkhögskolesatsningen	Folk high school	Schools aimed at students aged 18 and above who have not completed secondary education. They are classed as adult education
Gymnasieskola	Upper secondary school	Non-compulsory, upper secondary school for students between the ages of 16 and 19 (Years 10-12 of education)
Gymnasiesärskolan	Upper secondary school for students with severe intellectual impairments	
Läroplan för gymnasieskola	Curriculum for upper secondary school	
NyA	The admissions system for higher education	This system is used to evaluate student eligibility for university courses through the assignment of a merit rating to each student.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	
Riksgymnasiet för döva och hörselskadade	Upper secondary school for students with impaired hearing	
Riksgymnasium för svårt rörelsehindrade	Upper secondary school for students with severe physical disabilities	
Skollagen, 2010:800	Education Act 2010	Act governing the whole of the education system in Sweden. Introduced a number of educational reforms, including reforms to the curriculum and pathways on offer in upper secondary education, with a view to better preparing students for working life and enabling more students to complete upper secondary education
Skolverket	Swedish National Agency for Education	
Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten	National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools	
Statistiska Centralbyrån	Statistics Sweden	