

# New world – new university

## FACTSHEET

The Ministry of Education,  
Research and Culture

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The Government's goal is for Sweden to be a leading knowledge nation characterised by high quality education and lifelong learning for growth and justice. In its bill *New world – new university*, the Government presents proposals aimed at making higher education in Sweden more international and more attractive. A clearer degree structure that facilitates international comparison is proposed to make it easier for students to obtain employment both in Sweden and abroad. Fairer, clearer and simpler admission rules will send a signal to aspiring students that learning pays and will open up education to more people.

## INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In a knowledge society characterised by international cooperation, a decline in the importance of national borders and increased competition, education becomes more and more important. It is vital for the development of our society that our universities and other higher education institutions function well and are of high quality.

One important reason for the internationalisation of higher education is that it contributes to educational quality. Undergraduates, doctoral students, researchers and teachers from other countries or with international experience are an asset for the development and quality of educational and research environments. Another important reason is that the internationalisation of higher education helps promote understanding and respect for other points of view, cultures and traditions, as well as fostering international solidarity.

### A national strategy for internationalisation of higher education

In order to bring about continuous and systematic work on internationalisation, the Government in this bill presents an overall strategy for the internationalisation of higher education. The following broad objectives are expounded in detail in the strategy:

1. Sweden must be an attractive country for foreign students to study in.
2. Higher education graduates must be attractive in the labour market in Sweden and internationally.
3. Universities and other higher education institutions must conduct active internationalisation efforts so as to enhance the quality of their education and promote understanding of other countries and of international conditions and relations.
4. Obstacles to internationalisation must be eliminated, in Sweden and internationally.
5. Follow-up of international activities in the higher education system must be developed and improved.

### Other measures to promote internationalisation

- The situation of exchange students will be reviewed with a view to strengthening their legal position.
- The National Agency for Higher Education should formulate the Diploma Supplement so as to describe more clearly national degrees awarded following joint educational programmes between two or more institutions.

- The Agency will be responsible for drawing up regulations on the contents of the Diploma Supplement that is being introduced for postgraduate education.
- The Agency should supply information about higher education and degrees in Sweden to both Swedish and foreign authorities and higher education institutions, so as to promote an accurate assessment of Swedish higher education.

## A NEW STRUCTURE FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES, COURSES AND DEGREES

As part of the process of internationalisation, the Government presents in its bill a policy that is intended to make Swedish higher education more competitive. Sweden must be an attractive country to study in, offering high-quality education developed along the lines intended in the Bologna Process. The changes that are now being proposed in the structure of higher education are also motivated by the belief that in themselves they will lead to higher quality and to more advanced and attractive education in a national perspective as well. It is the ambition of the Swedish Government that the changes concerning the structure of higher education and degrees will be implemented in the autumn of 2007.

### The Bologna Process

Together with 44 other European countries, Sweden is participating in a process of intergovernmental cooperation known as the Bologna Process, the aim of which is to promote mobility and employability and make Europe a more competitive continent for higher education. The overall objective is to establish a common European Higher Education Area by 2010. In order to reach this goal, the participating countries are cooperating to establish a common structure for higher education, while leaving scope for national requirements and needs. The Bologna Process division of higher education into three cycles is particularly important in establishing comparable educational structures.

### The present Swedish degree structure

At present, Swedish higher education is divided into two parts: *grundläggande högskoleutbildning* and *forskarutbildning*. The degree system is divided into general degrees and professional degrees. The general degrees are:

within *grundläggande högskoleutbildning*

- *högskoleexamen*, at least two years of full-time study
- *kandidatexamen*, at least three years of full-time study
- *magisterexamen*, at least four years of full-time study

within *forskarutbildning*

- *licentiatexamen*, normally two years of full-time study
- *doktorsexamen*, normally four years of full-time study

There are also 43 professional degrees. In addition, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences can award 14 different professional degrees.

### Division of higher education into three cycles

In order to make the Swedish higher education system more comparable and clearer both internationally and nationally and to avoid certain Swedish qualifications being undervalued in other countries, the Government proposes that higher education will be divided into three cycles. Degrees will be taken at first, second or third level.

### Changes in the Degree system

- A two-year Master's Degree (*masterexamen*) will be introduced at the second level.
- A special category of degrees for artistic fields should be introduced alongside the general and professional degrees.
- New descriptions based on the expected learning outcomes should be introduced for all degrees.
- The requirement of specialisation in the major subject studied for a degree of Bachelor (*kandidatexamen*) and for a degree of Master (*magisterexamen*) should be removed from the degree descriptions and replaced by requirements that express specialisation in qualitative terms.
- An independent project should be a requirement for all degrees at first and second level.
- The bill includes guiding principles indicating the criteria for a professional degree as opposed to a general academic degree. As a consequence of these guiding principles the following degrees should be abolished: the Diploma of Education in Aviation (*flyglärareexamen*), the four university diplomas in the arts (*konstnärliga högskoleexamina*), the Master of Fine Arts in Church Music (*organistexamen*), the Bachelor of Theology (*teologie kandidatexamen*), the Vocational University Diploma (*yrkeshögskoleexamen*) and the University Diploma in Applied Technology (*yrkesteknisk högskoleexamen*). The programmes that currently lead to such degrees may instead conclude with a general or an artistic degree.

### Education at first level

The first level of higher education is to build on knowledge acquired in upper secondary school.

#### Bachelor's Degree (*kandidatexamen*) and University Diploma (*högskoleexamen*)

There should be two general degrees at the first level: a Bachelor's Degree (three years of full-time study) and a University Diploma (two years of full-time study).

#### Artistic degrees

In the special category of degrees in artistic fields, the first level should include a Bachelor's Degree in the Arts (three years of full-time study) and a University Diploma in the Arts (two years of full-time studies).

### Professional degrees

When determining what level a professional degree should be assigned to, one criterion should be that degrees comprising less than four years of full time study belong to the first level. However, it is not only the duration of the programme that should determine the level a degree is assigned to. The amount of specialisation in the programme is also a factor. Consequently, assignment to a certain level is impossible until new degree descriptions have been drawn up.

#### Basic eligibility for education at first level

See the section "Admission to higher education".

### Education at second level

Education at the second level is to build on first level higher education and is to be characterised by specialisation.

#### Master's Degree (*masterexamen*)

A new general degree, the Master's Degree, should be introduced at the second level. It should consist of two years of full-time study. This degree is expected to make Swedish higher education more competitive, as it will be an advantage to Swedish students intending to study or work abroad and will attract foreign students to Swedish higher education. Master's programmes should have a close link to education at the third level and students going into doctoral programmes should be allowed some credit for such education.

#### Authority to award Master's Degrees (*masterexamen*)

Authorisation to award Master's Degrees should be given to state universities and other higher education institutions that are approved for research in one or more disciplinary domains, and to private education providers that are authorised to award doctorates and licentiates in a disciplinary domain. Other higher education institutions and private education providers should be authorised to award Master's Degrees following application, assessment of scientific standard and approval.

#### Degree of Master (*magisterexamen*)

Apart from the Master's Degree (*masterexamen*), there should be a general one-year degree at the second level, the degree of Master (*magisterexamen*). The present *magisterexamen* requires a total of at least four years of full-time study within *grundläggande högskoleutbildning*. The translation of degrees is yet to be decided.

### Artistic degrees

The special category of degrees in artistic fields should include a two-year Master's Degree and a one-year degree of Master.

### Professional degrees

When determining what level a professional degree should be assigned to, one criterion should be that degrees comprising four years of full-time study or more belong to the second level. However, it is not only the duration of the programme that should determine the level a degree is assigned to. The amount of specialisation in the programme and the level that this leads to is also a factor.

#### Basic eligibility for education at second level

A person who has a first level degree comprising at least three years of full-time study, or an equivalent foreign degree, should meet the basic eligibility requirement for a programme leading to a second level degree. Individuals who through Swedish or foreign education, practical experience or for some other reason are capable of profiting from second level education should also meet the basic eligibility requirement.

## Education at third level

Education at doctoral level is to build on knowledge acquired through second level education. Education at the third level must develop the knowledge and skills needed in order to conduct independent research.

### Doctorates

As is the case at present, a doctorate should be made up of four years of full-time study. However, a student admitted to third level education after taking a Master's Degree (*masterexamen*) should be entitled to credit at the third level for parts of the Master's programme, thereby shortening the time remaining until completion of the doctorate.

### Basic eligibility for education at third level

The basic eligibility requirement for third level study should be met by anyone who has taken a second level degree, has completed course requirements for at least four years of full-time studies, including at least one year at the second level, or has acquired equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad.

### Course objectives

Universities and other higher education institutions should specify objectives for all courses at first and second level, describing the student's expected learning outcomes at the conclusion of the course. Formulating objectives for every course clarifies the knowledge each student is expected to possess at the end of the course in order to pass the course.

### A new system of credits

The use of a credit point system is mandatory throughout the Swedish higher education system today. The student's workload is expressed in points where one week of full-time study equals one credit point (one year = forty credit points) and a degree is based upon an accumulation of credits. A new credit system should be introduced to indicate the scope of higher education. This system should be compatible with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This means that one academic year should be equivalent to 60 higher education credits.

## BROADER RECRUITMENT

The more valuable education and knowledge become, the more important it is for the sake of equality to promote educational opportunities for all people. One high-priority objective of the Government's education policy is to achieve greater equality in recruitment to higher education. The knowledge society must be open to everyone, regardless of social background, ethnic origin, place of residence, gender, sexual orientation or disability. According to a Parliament decision in December 2001, higher education institutions must work actively to broaden student recruitment. The institutions are urged to draw up local action plans with measurable objectives for how this work is to be pursued. The work so far has been successful: the number of students with working class backgrounds has doubled in ten years and the proportion of students with foreign backgrounds now equals that of students with Swedish backgrounds. In this bill, the Government presents a number of measures for further work towards broader recruitment.

## National support scheme for recruitment efforts by higher education institutions

Higher education institutions have a great responsibility for prioritising work on broader recruitment, but these efforts need continued support at national level as well. The Government therefore considers that the mandate of the Swedish Net University Agency, which today consists of supporting and promoting web-based learning, should be broadened to include matters related to support for broader recruitment. The Agency should also be given national responsibility for support in teaching issues, particularly associated with broader recruitment, and support for higher education institutions as they work to introduce the new educational and degree structure. New resources will follow the widened mandate of the Agency.

### Recruitment measures for longer programmes

There are still considerable differences in social composition between different subject areas and programmes. Additional action is needed to get at the social bias in recruitment to the longer higher education programmes where recruitment is most skewed. In future appropriation directions, the Government therefore intends to include special instructions to the higher education institutions concerning action to encourage a higher proportion of new higher education students from working class backgrounds in these programmes.

### Follow-up of recruitment efforts

Effective efforts to reduce socially skewed recruitment to higher education require making action to broaden recruitment an integral part of overall activities at higher education institutions. The Government intends to direct the National Agency for Higher Education to follow up and evaluate the work of higher education institutions on broader recruitment.

### Cooperation with schools

Social background has far too great an influence on the study choices made by boys and girls. Consequently it is important to take action to awaken an interest in further study among upper secondary pupils who for reasons of family tradition are doubtful about continuing to study after upper secondary school. Higher education institutions should work more extensively with upper secondary schools from which a low percentage of pupils go on to higher education. Cooperation should also include nearby compulsory (age 6-16) schools.

### Recruitment to third level education

People with working class backgrounds are more seriously underrepresented in doctoral training than in programmes at lower levels. Action is needed at universities to encourage more students from working class families to go on to research. It should be possible to refine the selection and assessment criteria for doctoral programmes and to make the admissions process clearer than is now the case.

## ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The main task of the admission rules is to ensure that people who start a higher education programme have the potential to complete it. If there are more eligible candidates than places in the programme, those with the best potential to complete the programme are to be admitted. Applicants with good prior knowledge are more likely to be able to complete a higher

education programme. It is important to give upper secondary pupils clear information about which study choices will best prepare them for higher education.

The present rules for admission to higher education were introduced in the autumn of 1997. The rules were adjusted to the new upper secondary school and grading system. The rules for admission to higher education consist of basic eligibility, special eligibility, selection criteria and merit rating. In March 2003, the Government decided that a special inquiry should review and propose amendments to the regulations governing entrance to higher education. The startingpoints for the review should be to increase the direct transition of students from upper secondary school to higher education, stimulate student performance in upper secondary school, reduce incentives to retake grades later on and broaden recruitment to higher education. In this bill the Government presents a number of changes in the rules for admission following the general principles proposed by the special inquiry. Higher education admission rules must be simple, fair and consistent.

### **Basic eligibility for higher education**

The basic eligibility requirements indicate the knowledge required to be able to benefit from higher education and constitute the broad link between upper secondary school and higher education. For the sake of greater clarity for applicants from upper secondary school, the requirements for an upper secondary school certificate must be the same as the basic eligibility requirements. In order to receive an upper secondary school certificate, the pupil should have achieved a pass grade in at least 2250 of the credits required for a completed course of studies (2500 credits), including a pass grade for the upper secondary certificate project. The upper secondary school certificate will be introduced in the autumn of 2007.

### **Special eligibility**

In addition to the basic eligibility requirements the higher education institutions can also apply special eligibility requirements. Special eligibility criteria must indicate the specific requirements needed to complete a certain programme of higher education. The current system of standard eligibilities will be eliminated, as the system is not appropriate for the interdisciplinary and internationally oriented programmes offered by higher education institutions. Requirements for special eligibility for programmes intended for first year students and leading to a professional degree will be set by the National Agency for Higher

Education, as at present. This is because the requirements for essentially similar programmes must be the same, wherever they are provided. When it comes to other programmes (not leading to a professional degree) intended for first year students, it is proposed that higher education institutions will be allowed to decide what will be required, within certain limits determined by the National Agency for Higher Education.

### **Selection criteria decided by the institution**

The Government proposes to increase the percentage of places for which higher education institutions can decide on the grounds of selection to a maximum of 20 per cent of the places in programmes intended for first year students. The purpose of this is to draw on qualifications and experience that are particularly relevant to the programme other than grades and the national university aptitude test. Within the framework of the selection criteria that the higher education institution has decided on, the institution should be able to use special tests other than the national university aptitude test, such as interviews or samples of work. In addition, it should be possible to take into account knowledge, work experience or other experience that is particularly valuable for the programme chosen by the applicant. With a view to increasing the number of students going straight from school to higher education, the combination of national university aptitude test and work experience will no longer be an admissions selection category.

### **Choosing between equally well qualified applicants**

At present many applicants with top grade averages (20.0) are eliminated by lottery when students are selected for attractive programmes. The number eliminated by lottery rises with every round of admissions. In order to choose between applicants before resorting to a lottery, the Government considers that higher education institutions should be free to use tests or interviews before making a selection based on gender and lots.

### **Subjects giving extra credit**

The course-based system of upper secondary education that was introduced in the early 1990s, with the greater freedom of choice it allows, has led many upper secondary students to avoid advanced courses in mathematics and languages, so as to obtain a better grade average for admission to higher education. In order to encourage upper secondary pupils to take advanced courses in mathematics and modern languages other than English, the Government considers that these courses should be given extra credit when rating merits for admission to higher education.

Read more about it in the Government Bill "New world – new university" (2004/05:162). The Bill can be ordered from: Printing Works of the Riksdag, tel. +46 8 786 58 10, fax +46 8 786 61 76. Additional copies of the fact sheet can be ordered from the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, fax: +46 8-723 11 92, email: [info.order@educult.ministry.se](mailto:info.order@educult.ministry.se) The bill and the fact sheet are also available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture at: [www.regeringen.se/nyhogskola](http://www.regeringen.se/nyhogskola) Please address questions about the information in this fact sheet to Karin Röding, tel. +46 8 405 18 69 or Kerstin Jacobsson, tel. +46 8 405 18 36



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