SWEDEN'S ACADEMIC LANDSCAPE

Higher Education and Research Explained

UKÄ SWEDISH HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

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Sweden's Academic Landscape: Higher Education and Research Explained 2025

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Sweden's Academic Landscape

Higher Education and Research Explained

Foreword

Sweden's higher education and research system is characterised by openness, public responsibility, and a strong commitment to quality and academic freedom. With this publication, the Swedish Higher Education Authority aims to provide an accessible explanation of how the system is organised, governed, and financed, and to outline the principles that underpin its operation.

Higher education in Sweden is a large, publicly funded sector that plays an essential role in society's long-term development. Higher education institutions operate autonomously within a framework defined by national legislation and policy objectives, and they are accountable for maintaining high standards in both education and research. Teaching and research are closely connected, and the sector's structure is designed to ensure equality of access, academic integrity, and sustainable growth.

Sweden's Academic Landscape: Higher Education and Research Explained is aimed at an international audience seeking to understand Sweden's approach to higher education and research. It provides a comprehensive explanation of the main features and policies that shape the sector, showing how these elements fit together and highlights aspects that distinguish Sweden from many other countries.

We hope that this publication will serve as an informative reference for government agencies, higher education institutions, international networks, and other organisations interested in understanding Sweden's approach to higher education and research.

Martin Norsell
Director General
Swedish Higher Education Authority

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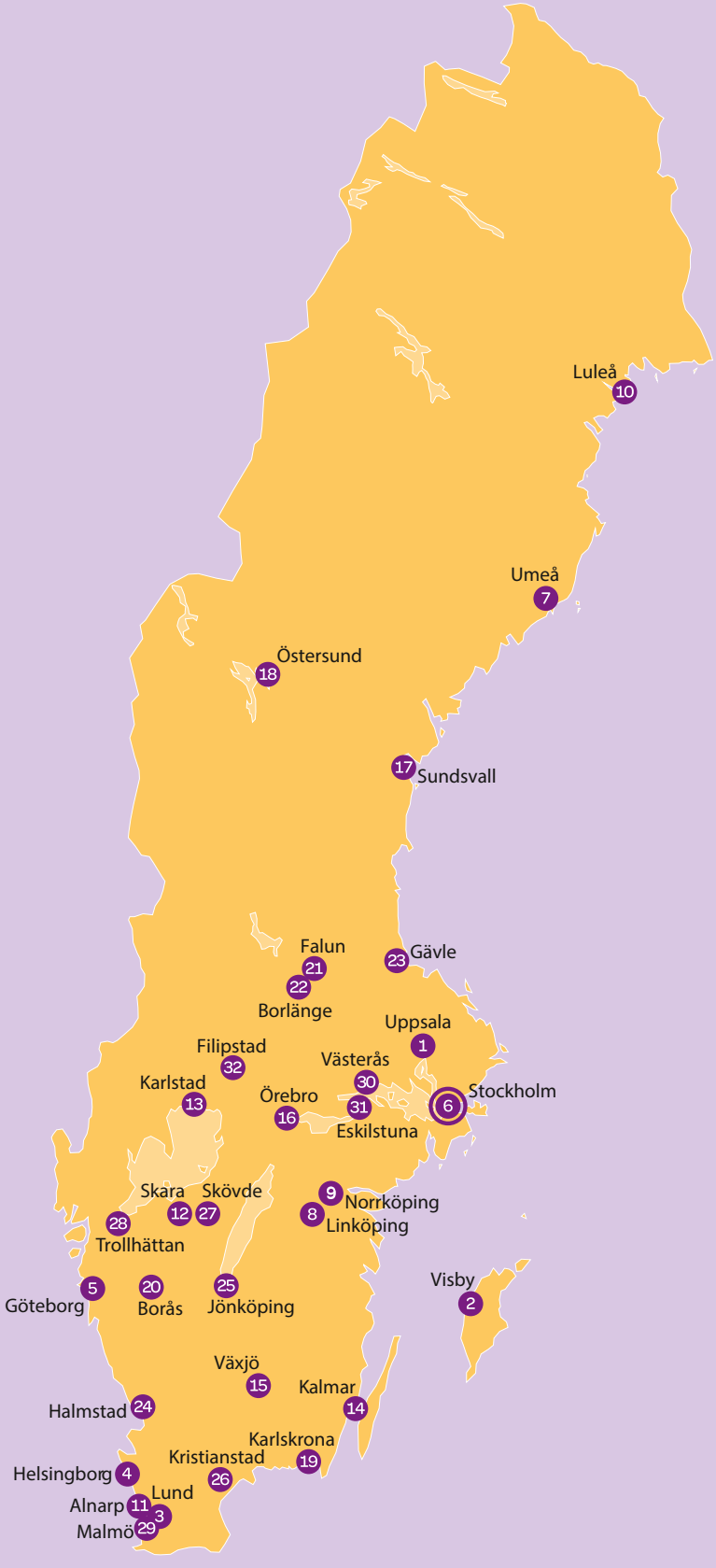
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The numbers refer to the locations on the map for each higher education institution. Some institutions also have smaller campuses not indicated on the map.

CHAPTER 1
The Structure of Higher Education and Research in Sweden

Sweden's higher education and research system is characterised by government responsibility for overall organisation, funding, and quality, combined with academic freedom and a strong link between education and research. This chapter outlines the main features of the system and the roles of the national authorities responsible for higher education and research. It describes how higher education is governed and quality assured, how institutions are funded and organised, and how qualifications and degrees are structured. It also covers admissions, grading, tuition, student finance, and the conditions under which research is conducted in Swedish higher education institutions.

Key characteristics of Swedish higher education

The core responsibilities of higher education institutions in Sweden are to provide education grounded in scholarship, artistic practice, and proven experience, and to conduct research and development. Institutions are also expected to engage with the surrounding community and ensure that the knowledge and expertise they generate benefit society.

Higher education in Sweden has a long tradition, with Uppsala University – the country's first university – founded in 1477. Today, higher education is provided by institutions categorised as universities, university colleges, and independent higher education providers. The vast majority of higher education is delivered by public-sector institutions. As of 2025, there are 50 higher education institutions in Sweden, of which 31 are public-sector: 18 universities (16 public), 12 university colleges (11 public), and 5 university colleges of the fine, applied, and performing arts (4 public). The remaining 15 are independent higher education providers.

Higher education in Sweden is free of charge for Swedish, EU/EEA, and Swiss citizens as well as for holders of permanent and most temporary Swedish residence permits. There are also a few other exemptions, but these apply to very small groups of students.

Compared with higher education systems in many other countries, the Swedish system is relatively flexible. It is largely based on individual modules, which allows students to take single modules without enrolling in a full programme. Most higher education institutions offer both campus-based and distance education.

Swedish higher education has long been open to people of all ages, not only to those entering directly after upper-secondary school. It plays an important role in lifelong learning

and remains accessible later in life, for example through modules designed for professional or personal development, without the need or intention to complete a full qualification.

Higher education institutions also provide third-cycle (doctoral) education and conduct the majority of publicly funded research in Sweden. In monetary terms, more than half of their activities consist of research and third-cycle education.

Swedish Higher Education Authority

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet, UKÄ) is an independent government agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. The Authority's activities are financed through government funding.

The Authority's main areas of responsibility are:

- Quality assurance of higher education and research, and appraisal of degree-awarding powers for both public-sector higher education institutions and independent higher education providers
- Legal supervision of higher education
- Monitoring efficiency, carrying out follow-ups, and analysing future trends in higher education
- Managing national statistics for the higher education sector
- Representing Sweden within the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Swedish Council for Higher Education

The Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet, UHR) is an independent government agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. The Council's activities are financed through government funding, commissions from higher education institutions, and support from bodies such as the European Commission and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

The Council's main areas of responsibility are:

- Coordinating the national admissions process to higher education
- Managing the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (SweSAT)
- Providing information on higher education in Sweden
- Evaluating foreign qualifications for study or employment
- Supporting international exchange and cooperation across all levels of education
- Developing digital services in collaboration with higher education institutions
- Contributing analyses and recommendations in education and skills provision
- Serving as Sweden's national agency for Erasmus+, ENIC-NARIC, and Eurydice.

Regulation of Swedish higher education

Higher education in Sweden refers to post-secondary education governed by higher education legislation. Although post-secondary education also includes for example vocational

and folk high school education, these constitute a separate system and are not covered in this publication.

Higher education is defined both by its level within the education system and by the requirement that it be based on scholarship or artistic practice as well as proven experience. It is the largest form of post-secondary education in Sweden in terms of volume.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for matters concerning higher education and research. The Government also defines which national qualifications may be offered and sets the requirements for them.

Governance of higher education in Sweden

All Swedish public-sector higher education institutions are governed by the same legislation. The Swedish Parliament and Government hold overall responsibility for higher education and research, primarily through the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and the Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100), both available in English via the Swedish Council for Higher Education (www.uhr.se).

The Act regulates the operations of public-sector higher education institutions. It outlines the characteristics of education at different levels, enshrines academic and research freedom, and sets organisational requirements such as the presence of a board of governors and a vice-chancellor. The Act also defines the duties of teachers, student influence, and institutional responsibilities for promoting equality, widened participation, lifelong learning, international engagement, and sustainable development.

The Ordinance mandates student influence and governs entry requirements, selection procedures, the appointment of teaching staff and third-cycle students, as well as course syllabuses, grading, and qualifications. The Government determines which qualifications may be awarded and their required scope and learning outcomes. These are specified in national qualification descriptors that apply across all higher education institutions, ensuring a common national standard while leaving institutions free to design the structure and content of their courses and programmes.

In addition to sector-specific legislation, public-sector higher education institutions are subject to the general framework governing all public agencies, including legislation on administrative procedures, budget management, public access to information, archiving, language use, discrimination, work environment, and employment conditions in the public sector. Government funding for first-, second-, and third-cycle education, as well as research, is determined in the national budget and specified in the institutions' annual public service agreements issued by the government.

Independent higher education providers are regulated by the Act Concerning Authority to Award Certain Qualifications (1993:792), also available in English at www.uhr.se. This legislation sets conditions for awarding specific qualifications and requires adherence to parts of the Higher Education Act. Independent higher education providers must participate in external evaluations and align with national quality assurance regulations. They are often also governed by government contracts that stipulate specific requirements.

Legal supervision of higher education institutions

The Swedish Higher Education Authority supervises higher education providers to ensure compliance with the legislation that applies to each category of institution. Public-sector higher education institutions are monitored for their adherence to the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, the Administrative Procedures Act (2017:900), and their internal regulations. Independent higher education providers are supervised in relation to the parts of the Higher Education Act and the qualification provisions of the Higher Education Ordinance that apply to their operations, as well as the Act Concerning Authority to Award Certain Qualifications.

Accreditation and degree-awarding powers

Sweden does not have an accreditation system of the kind found in many other countries. Instead, accreditation takes the form of granting degree-awarding powers. These powers are unlimited in time, provided that quality requirements are met and maintained.

Degree-awarding powers are granted either by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (for public-sector higher education institutions) or by the Government (for independent higher education providers). The Swedish Higher Education Authority monitors compliance through its quality assurance system, and powers may be withdrawn if standards are not upheld.

The Government also decides on the establishment of public-sector higher education institutions and determines whether an institution should be granted full university status. In Sweden, full university status refers to a general entitlement to award third-cycle qualifications across a wide range of subject areas. However, there is no formal legal definition of university status, and the term university is not legally protected. Consequently, some institutions with full third-cycle entitlement are not formally called universities, while some that use the title lack this entitlement. All higher education qualifications are, however, of equal academic status, regardless of the type of institution or its degree-awarding powers.

The distribution of degree-awarding powers in Sweden also differs from that in many other countries, where universities generally have comprehensive and permanent rights to award qualifications across all fields. In Sweden however:

- Some public-sector higher education institutions hold full university status and therefore have general third-cycle entitlement
- Other public-sector institutions do not have this entitlement but still have broader powers than independent higher education providers when awarding first- and second-cycle qualifications
- Institutions without full university status have limited powers to award third-cycle qualifications and somewhat restricted powers to award second-cycle qualifications
- Independent higher education providers must apply separately for each qualification they wish to award.

All higher education institutions – both public-sector and independent – must apply for the right to award professional qualifications and qualifications in the fine, applied, and performing arts.

The autonomy of Swedish higher education institutions

Public-sector higher education institutions in Sweden operate with considerable autonomy within a system of management by objectives. The Government sets overarching goals, but institutions decide independently how to meet them. While most higher education institutions are government agencies, ministerial interference is prohibited by law.

Higher education institutions are free to decide on organisational structure, internal resource allocation, course and programme content, student admissions, and research activities. Freedom of research is also guaranteed in the Instrument of Government, one of the four fundamental laws that make up the Swedish Constitution.

Staffing decisions are largely decentralised, though three academic positions – professor, senior lecturer, and associate senior lecturer – are regulated by law.

Swedish national quality assurance of higher education and research

According to the Higher Education Act, higher education institutions must ensure high standards in both education and research, and use their resources efficiently. Quality assurance is a shared responsibility between staff and students. The Swedish Higher Education Authority, as the national quality assurance agency, is responsible for the external quality assurance of both public and independent higher education institutions.

The national quality assurance system is based on the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, the Act on Responsibility for Good Research Practice and Review of Research Misconduct (2019:504), the Government Communication Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2015/16:76), and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). In addition, it is informed by national and international frameworks for research quality, including the European Charter for Researchers.

The objective of the national quality assurance system is to assess the quality of processes and outcomes in education and research, and to support higher education institutions in their continuous quality enhancement. The system consists of four main components:

- Institutional reviews of higher education institutions' internal quality assurance processes
- Programme evaluations
- Appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers
- Thematic evaluations.

Reviews and evaluations are carried out by independent panels appointed by the Swedish Higher Education Authority. Panels include academic experts, student representatives, and labour market representatives nominated by higher education institutions, students' unions, and other relevant organisations. In their reports, the panels assess whether the higher education institution meets the assessment criteria, highlight strengths and good practice, and identify areas for improvement. The Authority makes the final decisions based on these reports.

Sweden is also active in international cooperation on quality assurance within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Swedish Higher Education Authority is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Student influence in higher education is governed by law

Student influence at Swedish public-sector higher education institutions is regulated by the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, and the Ordinance on Students' Unions (2009:769). The regulations give students at these institutions the right to be represented in decision-making and preparatory processes that are significant for the situation of students and their studies.

Students are also entitled to representation on the board of governors at public-sector higher education institutions. Students, along with staff, must also be consulted in the appointment of a vice-chancellor, with the board deciding how this consultation is conducted.

All courses must include a course evaluation. Results must be made available to the students enrolled in the course, and institutions are required to report on any actions taken in response.

Although the Higher Education Act does not apply in full to independent higher education providers, these institutions are included in the national framework for quality assurance. Students' views on the quality of education at these providers must therefore be taken into account in quality reviews.

Funding of Swedish higher education and research

Swedish higher education institutions are primarily funded by the government. As higher education is largely free of charge for students, tuition fees account for only a small share (4 per cent in 2024) of institutional income. Funding is allocated separately for education and research.

Funding of first- and second-cycle education

Funding of first- and second-cycle education is performance-based. It is calculated using the number of enrolled students, measured as full-time equivalents, and completed higher education credits, measured as annual performance equivalents.

Each Swedish higher education institution is assigned a funding cap that specifies the maximum compensation the Government can provide for first- and second-cycle education delivered in a given year. To access their full recurrent funding for education, institutions must deliver a specified volume of education. Funding levels vary by disciplinary domains, with fields such as the fine, applied, and performing arts receiving the most resources and the fields of humanities, social sciences, theology, and law the least.

For more details on funding of first- and second-cycle education, see Chapter 7, Funding of Higher Education and Research in Sweden.

Funding of third-cycle education and research

Government support for third-cycle education and research is provided through recurrent research funding, which higher education institutions distribute across research areas at their own discretion. In addition, a significant share of research funding is awarded competitively through government-financed research councils and research-funding government agencies. Swedish higher education institutions also receive a relatively large share of their research funding from private foundations and non-profit organisations, as well as European Union programmes.

For more details on funding of third-cycle education and research, see Chapter 7, Funding of Higher Education and Research in Sweden.

Research at Swedish higher education institutions

Most publicly funded research in Sweden is conducted at higher education institutions, while research institutes play a more limited role. This sets Sweden's research landscape apart from that of many other countries. The scale of research activity differs across institutions; larger, broad-based, and specialised institutions conduct considerably more research than smaller or more recently established ones.

Information in English on research opportunities in Sweden is available at www.vr.se.

Under the Higher Education Act, researchers are free to choose research problems, develop methods, and publish results. The Act also emphasises academic credibility and good research practice, along with the responsibility of higher education institutions to safeguard and promote academic freedom.

For more details on the funding of and research at Swedish higher education institutions, see Chapter 7, Funding of Higher Education and Research in Sweden and Chapter 8, Research at Swedish Higher Education Institutions.

Swedish Research Council

The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, VR) is a government agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. It is Sweden's largest public funder of research, supporting high-quality research across all scientific fields through competitive grants. The Council plays a central role in strengthening the Swedish research system and promoting long-term knowledge development.

The Council's main areas of responsibility are:

- Awarding research grants through open, peer-reviewed calls
- Advising the Government on research policy and strategic priorities
- Monitoring and analysing developments in the Swedish and international research landscape
- Promoting open access to research results
- Supporting international research cooperation and infrastructure.

The Government research policy bill

Every four years, the Government presents a research policy bill that sets out the budget and strategic direction for research and research funding in Sweden. The current bill, covering the period 2025–2028, prioritises research excellence, internationalisation, and innovation.

Qualification and degree structure in Swedish higher education

Study programmes at Swedish higher education institutions are structured according to the three-cycle system used in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). All programmes follow the Bologna structure, which is now the sole system used across the sector.

The implementation of the Bologna process in Sweden

The Higher Education Ordinance was amended in 2007 to align with the Bologna Process. Sweden has fully implemented the three key commitments of the process: the three-cycle system of qualifications supported by Qualifications Frameworks and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS); recognition of qualifications based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention; and quality assurance aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

Although Sweden has fully adopted the three-cycle structure, it does not follow the standard 3+2+3 model in terms of duration, as programme lengths vary between qualifications and fields of study.

Swedish higher education qualifications are awarded at three levels:

- First cycle: Higher Education Diploma (120 ECTS) and Degree of Bachelor (180–240 ECTS)
- Second cycle: Degree of Master (60–120 ECTS)
- Third cycle: Degree of Licentiate (120 ECTS) and Degree of Doctor (240 ECTS).

A Higher Education Diploma is a shorter qualification that forms part of the first cycle. It is distinct from the short-cycle programmes recognised in some other countries.

A Degree of Master can be either one year or two years of full-time study.

A Degree of Licentiate is a shorter third-cycle qualification corresponding to two years of full-time study.

A Diploma Supplement in English is automatically issued with all Swedish higher education qualifications. The Swedish Council for Higher Education provides a standardised template for higher education institutions to use in the production of Diploma Supplements.

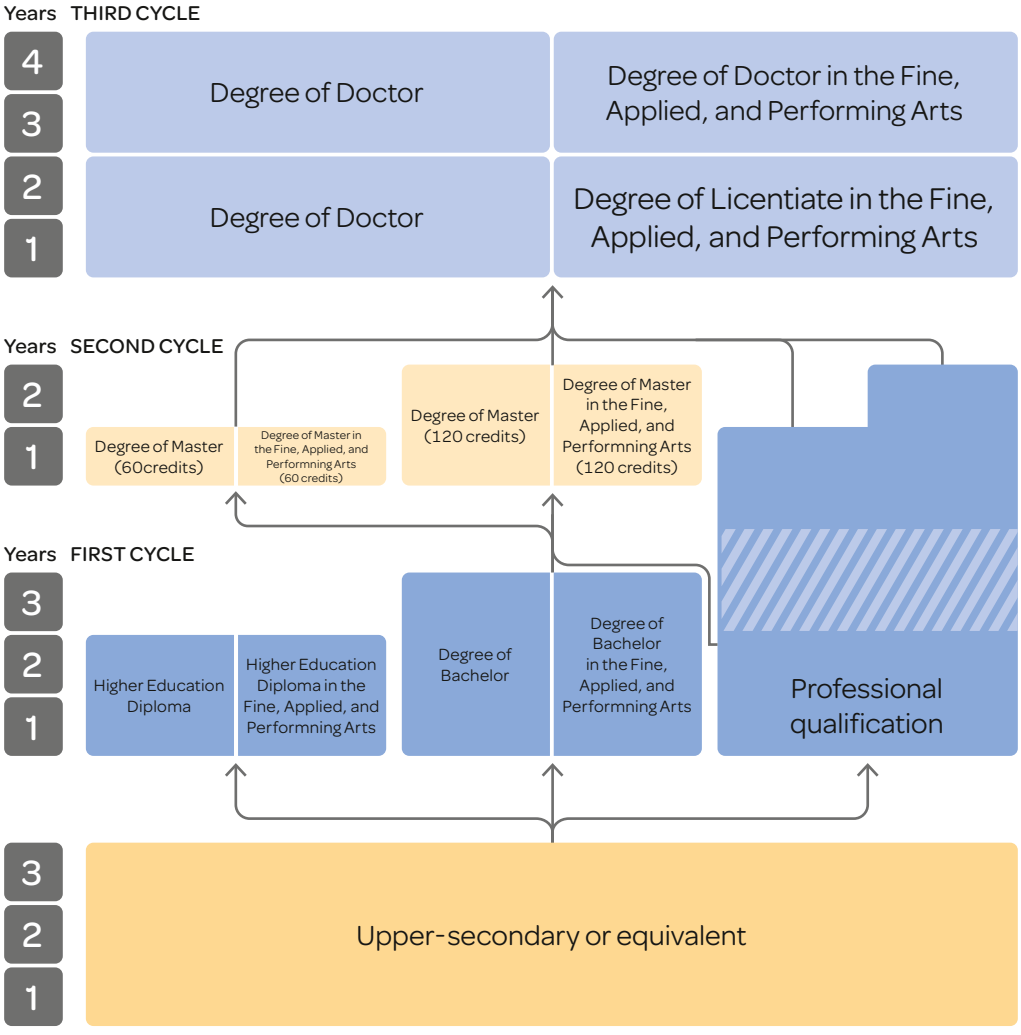
Three types of higher education qualifications are awarded

Higher education institutions award three categories of qualifications, all of equal academic status (figure 1.1):

- General qualifications
- Qualifications in the fine, applied, and performing arts
- Professional qualifications.

English translations of qualification titles are standardised at the government level, but higher education institutions may add a prefix and specify the main field of study.

Figure 1.1: Qualifications framework within Swedish higher education



General qualifications and qualifications in the fine, applied, and performing arts

Both general qualifications and qualifications in the fine, applied, and performing arts are awarded at the first-, second-, and third-cycle levels.

Professional qualifications

Approximately 50 programmes leading to a professional qualification are offered by Swedish higher education institutions, primarily for regulated professions. These qualifications are awarded at the first and second cycle.

Several professional qualifications are awarded at the second cycle, including the Master of

Laws (270 ECTS), the Master of Science in Engineering (300 ECTS), and the Master of Science in Medicine (360 ECTS). These long, integrated programmes lead directly to a second-cycle degree without the intermediate award of a first-cycle qualification. As such, they do not require a prior three-year first-cycle qualification, which is otherwise an entry requirement for most second-cycle programmes.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education maintains an English-language list of all Swedish professional qualifications at www.studera.nu.

Professional qualifications commonly lead to regulated occupations

Approximately 60 professions in Sweden are regulated by legislation, requiring specific qualifications, authorisation, or other formal recognition to practise. Many of the professional qualifications awarded by Swedish higher education institutions lead to these regulated professions.

Recognition of professional qualifications in Sweden is also governed by Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, which facilitates mutual recognition of professional qualifications across EU and EEA countries.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education provides an English-language list of regulated professions and the government agencies responsible for formal recognition at www.uhr.se.

Swedish qualifications frameworks for higher education

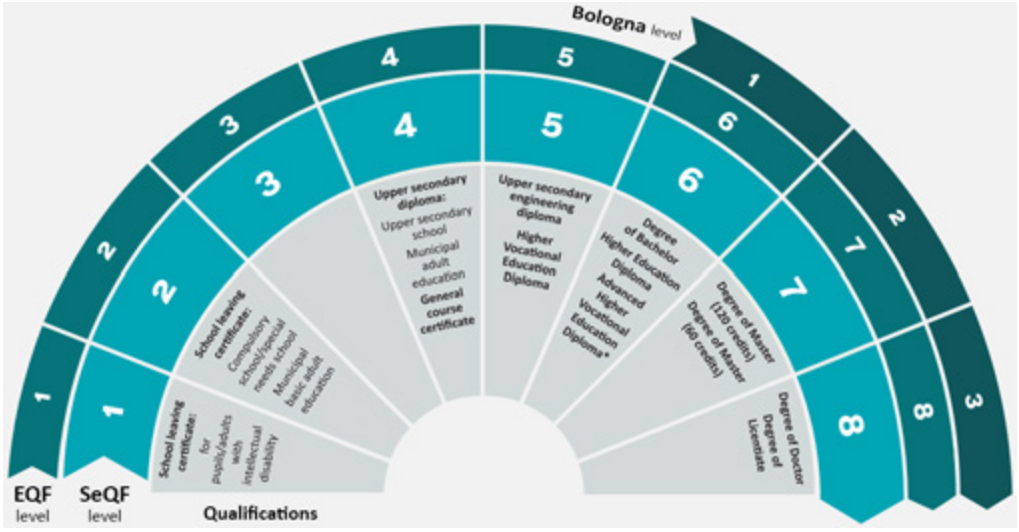
Sweden's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for higher education is referenced to the Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). These frameworks define what learners are expected to know, understand, and be able to do upon receiving a qualification, as well as how they may progress within the education system.

Most qualifications regulated by Swedish legislation are included in both the NQF and the Swedish National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (SeQF). The relationship between frameworks can be summarised as follows:

- The NQF covers higher education qualifications and is referenced to the QF-EHEA
- The SeQF provides a national structure for comparing learning outcomes and qualifications, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)
- The three cycles of Swedish higher education correspond to SeQF levels 6, 7 and 8.

The SeQF was established in 2015 through the Act Authorising the Issuance of Regulations on Validation and Fees for Applications Concerning Qualifications for Lifelong Learning (2015:478) and the Ordinance on the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2015:545). It includes qualifications from formal and non-formal education, as well as work-based training.

Figure 1.2: Qualification frameworks for Swedish qualifications and degrees, all levels of education



Please note that the Advanced Higher Vocational Education Diploma is included in EQF and SeQF level 6, but not in Bologna first-cycle qualifications.

Source: Swedish Council for Higher Education

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is responsible for managing the SeQF.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education's website contains detailed descriptions of all qualifications frameworks applicable to Swedish higher education: www.uhr.se.

Admissions and structure of studies in Swedish higher education

Processes related to application, admission, enrolment, and graduation in Sweden are shaped by a national framework designed to promote accessibility, transparency, and institutional autonomy. Centralised systems, clearly defined entry requirements, and flexible course structures support a broad range of educational paths.

Information in English on education offered at Swedish higher education institutions and about studying in Sweden is available at www.studera.nu and www.studyinsweden.se.

Prospective students wishing to apply to first- and second-cycle programmes or freestanding courses offered at a Swedish higher education institution will find all necessary information at www.universityadmissions.se.

Entry requirements and selection criteria for first- and second-cycle education

General national entry requirements for applicants to first-cycle education, are defined in the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance. Most applicants meet the general requirements by completing Swedish uppersecondary education, including vocational pathways. Applicants may qualify through municipal adult education or international qualifications as well.

The Act and the Ordinance also define general entry requirements for second-cycle education. The general requirement for programmes is a first-cycle qualification comprising at least 180 credits. Many programmes also require specific first-cycle qualifications or courses in defined subject areas.

Specific entry requirements vary by field of study. The Swedish Council for Higher Education issues regulations on subject-specific upper-secondary requirements for entry to certain programmes, in particular professional degree programmes.

As independent higher education providers are not covered in full by the Act and the Ordinance, their admissions procedures and entry requirements are determined locally, in accordance with the conditions laid down in their government authorisation.

Higher education institutions may also decide on certain entry requirements themselves. They may grant exemptions from the national requirements and, in some cases, impose higher requirements, subject to a statement by the Swedish Council for Higher Education.

Institutions may also, at their discretion, admit applicants without formal qualifications if prior learning or experience demonstrates the ability to benefit academically from the studies. Recognition of such informal or non-formal learning is assessed locally by each higher education institution.

International applicants must demonstrate qualifications equivalent to Swedish upper-secondary education. Applicants from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Norway who are eligible for higher education in their home country are automatically eligible in Sweden.

For courses and programmes taught in Swedish, all applicants whose native language is not Swedish, Danish, Faroese, Icelandic, or Norwegian must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in both Swedish and English. For courses and programmes taught in English, applicants need only demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English.

Meeting the entry requirements does not guarantee admission. At the first-cycle level, if the number of eligible applicants exceeds the numer of available places, selection is made as follows:

- At least one third are admitted based on upper-secondary grades
- At least one third through results from the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test (SweSAT)
- No more than one third through other locally determined criteria, such as interviews or work experience. The use of these criteria is at the discretion of the institution.

Taking the SweSAT is not a requirement for entry to higher education.

The credit, course, and programme structure in Swedish higher education

Swedish higher education credits correspond to ECTS credits.

Higher education institutions offer both courses and programmes. A course is a self-contained unit of study, typically – though not always – worth 7.5 or 15 credits, focusing on a specific subject. Courses may be part of a degree programme or offered as freestanding courses. Freestanding courses are individual modules open to anyone who meets the admission requirements.

A programme consists of a set of predetermined courses that together form a coherent route of study leading towards a qualification.

Courses are often studied one at a time, each lasting several weeks before the next begins, although the structure may differ between programmes and fields of study.

Upon successful completion of a programme, students may apply for a degree, or a qualification. Students may also earn a qualification by combining freestanding courses, provided they accumulate the required number of credits at the appropriate levels and in the relevant fields of study. For example, a Degree of Bachelor requires 180 ECTS credits in total, including at least 90 within a main field of study.

A centralised application system for first- and second-cycle education

Prospective students to first- and second-cycle education in Sweden apply through a centralised system that allows them to submit a single application to multiple higher education institutions and study programmes or courses. National application regulations are set out in the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, and in rules issued by the Swedish Council for Higher Education. Applicants rank their choices in order of preference. Once an applicant accepts an offer of admission, all lower-ranked choices are automatically deleted.

The application system is managed by the Swedish Council for Higher Education and is similar to those used in other Nordic countries and in some other international contexts. Although the system is centralised, each higher education institution makes its own admission decisions.

Application is free of charge for citizens of Sweden as well as holders of Swedish permanent and most temporary residence permits, as well as for citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland. There are also some other exemptions that apply to very small groups of students. Applicants from other countries must pay an application fee of SEK 900 (2025).

Entry requirements and selection criteria for third-cycle education

To meet the general entry requirements for third-cycle education, applicants must have been awarded a second-cycle qualification, have completed at least 240 credits of which 60 are at the second-cycle level, or have acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in another way.

They must also satisfy the specific entry requirements for the position, or in some cases, for the programme.

Unlike in many other countries, applicants to third-cycle education at Swedish public-sector higher education institutions often do not apply to a PhD programme as such. Instead, admission normally takes place through open calls for specific doctoral or licentiate positions.

Public-sector institutions are governed by the Higher Education Ordinance, which specifies that third-cycle education leading to a doctoral degree corresponds to four years of full-time study, or two years for a licentiate degree. Institutions must ensure that full financial support for the student is secured at the time of admission and that studies can normally be completed within the period of two or four years. This requirement applies regardless of the form of funding, whether through a doctoral studentship, scholarship, or external employment.

Independent higher education providers are not bound by the Ordinance but are regulated under the Act Concerning Authority to Award Certain Degrees and their own internal rules. Each provider determines its own policies on admission and funding. To maintain their degree-awarding powers, they must still meet the same overall standard – that third-cycle education leading to a doctoral or licentiate degree corresponds to four and two years of full-time study, respectively.

Distance education is common in Sweden

Distance education has a long tradition in Sweden, owing to its large geographic area and low population density. Advances in technology have further expanded opportunities for this mode of study. Higher education institutions offer a wide range of distance courses and programmes, some fully online and others blended with on-campus teaching. Some students also combine distance and on-campus study.

During the 2023/24 academic year, nearly one third of all enrolled students studied entirely by distance. This share has increased over time.

Qualifications earned through distance education are equivalent in status to those obtained through on-campus study and are subject to the same quality assurance frameworks.

The academic year is longer than in most countries

The Swedish academic year is divided into two semesters: the autumn semester typically begins in late August or early September and ends in mid-January, while the spring semester runs from mid-January to late May or early June. The academic year generally spans 40 weeks, with 20 weeks per semester. This means that Swedish semesters are longer than in many other European countries, where teaching periods often range from 12 to 15 weeks.

Higher education institutions determine the organisation of the academic year, including the scheduling of breaks and examinations. Many also offer additional courses during the summer.

A full-time study load is equivalent to 30 credits per semester

Full-time study corresponds to 30 credits per semester, with students expected to devote approximately 40 hours per week to their studies. It is possible to be enrolled in up to 45 credits per semester.

Many students study part-time. During the autumn semester of 2023, more than one third of all enrolled students were enrolled in fewer than 30 credits.

Many courses and programmes are taught in English

Swedish is the primary language of instruction at Swedish higher education institutions, although required readings may be in English. Some courses and programmes are taught entirely in English, and their number has steadily increased.

Courses and programmes in English are undertaken by both domestic and international students, although international students constitute the majority in many second-cycle programmes delivered in English.

During the autumn semester of 2024, Swedish higher education institutions offered approximately 650 programmes taught entirely in English. Of these, a little over 10 per cent were at the first cycle and nearly 90 per cent at the second.

No national grading system or ranking in Swedish higher education

Sweden does not have a national grading system. Each higher education institution determines which grading scale to apply, and several may be used within the same institution. Common systems include: A–F (from excellent to fail), pass with distinction/pass/fail, or pass/fail only.

No overall grade is awarded for qualifications, and students are not ranked at the national level. Grade Point Average (GPA) or similar ranking systems are not used nationally, although some higher education institutions may calculate average grades for internal purposes.

Flexible retake rights and course completion

While uncommon in an international context, Swedish higher education normally offers students several opportunities to pass failed course components. The Higher Education Ordinance does not stipulate any right to retake a failed examination, but it is common practice among higher education institutions to provide multiple attempts.

Each institution decides whether to limit the number of opportunities to retake examinations or other course components. If limits are introduced, students must be offered at least five examination opportunities, and at least two periods of work placement or equivalent where a course requires placement to achieve a pass. A student who has failed an examination twice is entitled to be assessed by another examiner, unless special reasons exist to the contrary.

There is no general time limit for completing courses. However, delays may affect eligibility

for student finance, and progression within a programme may be restricted if a failed course is required for continued study.

Degrees are not automatically awarded

Qualifications from Swedish higher education institutions are not automatically awarded. Students must apply for their qualification once all formal requirements have been fulfilled.

The proportion of students applying for their qualification varies between programmes. This is influenced by factors such as professional licensing; in fields where a licence is required – such as healthcare – students must present proof of a qualification to work in their profession. In other fields, such as information technology (IT), employment may not require formal documentation of graduation.

As of 2024, most qualifications are issued in digital format as e-stamped degree certificates, which students may download. The certificate can be accessed an unlimited number of times, and students may, for example, send it digitally to employers or other higher education institutions.

Certain decisions in higher education can be appealed

The Higher Education Appeals Board hears appeals against specific decisions made within the higher education sector. Its rulings are final and cannot be challenged. Applicants for study places, job applicants, and students have the right to appeal in certain cases, but not all decisions taken by higher education institutions can be appealed. The right of appeal covers, for example, employment decisions at public-sector higher education institutions (except appointments as third-cycle students), rejections based on entry requirements, credit transfer decisions, and refusals to grant deferral or re-entry following a study break.

Appeals must be submitted within three weeks of receiving the decision and sent directly to the higher education institution concerned. The institution may reconsider its decision, but the appeal is always forwarded to the Higher Education Appeals Board for a final ruling.

Disciplinary measures consist of warnings and suspensions

At public-sector higher education institutions, disciplinary measures are regulated by the Higher Education Ordinance. Independent higher education providers are not bound by these provisions but must maintain their own rules and procedures for handling disciplinary matters as a condition of their degree-awarding powers.

Disciplinary measures at public-sector institutions may be imposed on students who:

- Use prohibited aids or other methods to deceive during examinations or other assessments
- Disrupt or obstruct teaching or related activities
- Disrupt activities in the higher education institution's library or other designated facilities
- Subject students or staff to sexual or other forms of harassment.

Sanctions consist of warnings or suspensions. A suspension may be imposed for up to six months and may include restrictions on access to specific premises at the higher education institution.

Cases are handled by the institution's disciplinary board, which is chaired by the vice-chancellor. Students have the right to be represented on the board by two members. The student concerned must be given the opportunity to present their case. The vice-chancellor may decide to take no further action, issue a warning, or refer the case to the board. If a warning is issued, the student may request that the board review the decision.

The student has the right to address the board and to be present during hearings, unless special circumstances require otherwise. Unless otherwise stated in the decision, suspensions take effect immediately. Decisions on disciplinary measures may be appealed to the administrative court.

Student finance and tuition for domestic first- and second-cycle students

The Swedish system for financing higher education students is designed to reduce financial barriers and enable participation in higher education at different stages of life. It combines grants and loans and has gradually been adapted to reflect changing labour market demands. In recent years, new support schemes and tuition regulations have been introduced for both domestic and international students.

Tuition-free higher education with limited exceptions

Higher education in Sweden is free of charge for Swedish, EU/EEA and Swiss citizens as well as for holders of permanent and most temporary Swedish residence permits. There are also a few other exemptions applying to very small groups of students.

Since 2011, students who do not fall within these categories have been required to pay tuition fees for first- and second-cycle education. Exchange students participating in formal exchange programmes are exempt, regardless of nationality.

Higher education institutions must ensure that the tuition fees charged to international students cover the full cost of the education provided, including services such as academic counselling, health care, and other forms of student support. Full cost coverage also means that institutions may neither subsidise nor make a profit from such activities.

Government-funded student finance is available to domestic students

Swedish student finance is government-funded and administered by the Swedish Board of Student Finance. Most domestic students rely on this support to cover living expenses while studying. The system is comparable to those in Australia, Canada, and England.

Domestic students admitted to a higher education institution who meet basic criteria are eligible for student finance. Eligibility is independent of parental income and is not contingent on whether the student lives with their parents or independently. Continued support requires that students meet minimum academic performance requirements based on completed credits.

Student finance consists of grants and low-interest loans. For a full-time academic year, the grant totalled about SEK 40,000 in 2025. Students with children may receive more. The maximum loan available in 2025 was approximately SEK 94,000, although students may borrow less or decline the loan entirely. Larger loans are available to students studying abroad, adjusted by country. Students may work during their studies, but income above a set threshold results in reduced support.

Student finance is available for up to the equivalent of six academic years. The upper age limit is 60, with reduced borrowing permitted from the age of 51.

Loan repayment begins six months after the end of studies, regardless of the borrower's income. Repayments are based on the borrower's taxed income, unlike in some other countries where employers deduct payments directly from untaxed salary. The system follows an annuity model with fixed, non-income-based instalments, and loans are normally to be repaid within 25 years.

Special student finance available for labour market transition and retraining

Sweden has recently introduced a form of student finance aimed at individuals already active in the labour market. This scheme is separate from the regular student finance scheme. The objective is to support retraining and skills development to enhance long-term employability.

To qualify, applicants must be aged 27 to 62 and have worked for at least eight of the past 14 years. The chosen studies must be considered relevant for improving the applicant's employability.

This financing also consists of a grant and an optional loan. The grant covers up to 80 per cent of the applicant's previous salary. A loan may be added to supplement the grant. The support is available for a total of 44 weeks of full-time study and can be adjusted for part-time study.

Loan repayments follow the same structure as for the regular government student finance scheme.

Scholarship financing is available for fee-paying international students

International students in Sweden must cover their own living expenses and, where applicable, tuition fees. Scholarships awarded on a competitive basis are available for full or partial tuition, and in some cases also for living costs.

The Swedish Institute manages two scholarship programmes for second-cycle students: the Global Professional Programme, for citizens of 33 primarily African and Asian countries with leadership experience, and the Pioneering Women in STEM Programme, targeting women from 10 countries in the same regions. Both scholarships cover full tuition, a monthly allowance, and a travel grant.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education allocates government funding to higher education institutions for scholarships aimed at attracting highly qualified international students. Institutions determine how these funds are distributed, which may include full or partial tuition support, often tied to specific study programmes.

Finance for third-cycle students

Successful applicants to third-cycle education at public-sector higher education institutions usually receive financing in the form of a salaried doctoral studentship. During the 2024 autumn semester, 71 per cent of enrolled third-cycle students in Sweden were financed through such studentships. Students holding a doctoral studentship are simultaneously both students and employees of the higher education institution where they undertake their studies. This entitles them to employment benefits such as annual leave, parental leave, sick leave, and pension rights.

Other students are financed through scholarships or other secured financial arrangements, such as medical posts or other external financing. Scholarships accounted for only 3 per cent of total financing in the 2024 autumn semester. Students admitted on scholarships are not eligible for employment-related benefits.

At public-sector higher education institutions, the Higher Education Ordinance requires that full financial support be secured at the time of admission and that studies can normally be completed within the period of full-time studies - two years for a licentiate degree and four years for a doctoral degree.

Independent higher education providers are not covered by the Ordinance and therefore have greater flexibility in how third-cycle students are financed. Some employ third-cycle students under conditions comparable to a doctoral studentship at a public-sector institution, while others rely primarily on scholarships. Extensions for scholarship students may be permitted in specific cases such as parental leave or illness. Regardless of financing model, independent higher education providers must demonstrate that their third-cycle education maintains standards equivalent to those at public-sector institutions.

Third-cycle students do not pay tuition fees, regardless of their nationality or the type of higher education provider.

Further information on Swedish higher education and research

Sweden.se provides general information on higher education and research in Sweden: www.sweden.se.

The Swedish Research Council provides information on research in Sweden: www.vr.se.

Eurydice offers comparative information on European education systems, including Sweden: www.eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu.

The OECD's annual report Education at a Glance presents data on the structure, funding, and performance of education systems across OECD countries, including Sweden: www.oecd.org.

CHAPTER 2
First- and Second-Cycle Education in Sweden

Student participation in Swedish higher education reflects both openness and structure. Broad access and flexible study options are combined with clear requirements for progression and completion. This chapter examines application patterns, enrolment trends, and the profile of new entrants, including age at entry and graduation. It then considers outcomes and retention, contrasting professional programmes with other qualifications and presenting key data on graduation by cycle, gender, and programme. Finally, the chapter explores equity and access, as well as national measures to widen participation and support students with disabilities.

Student participation and progression

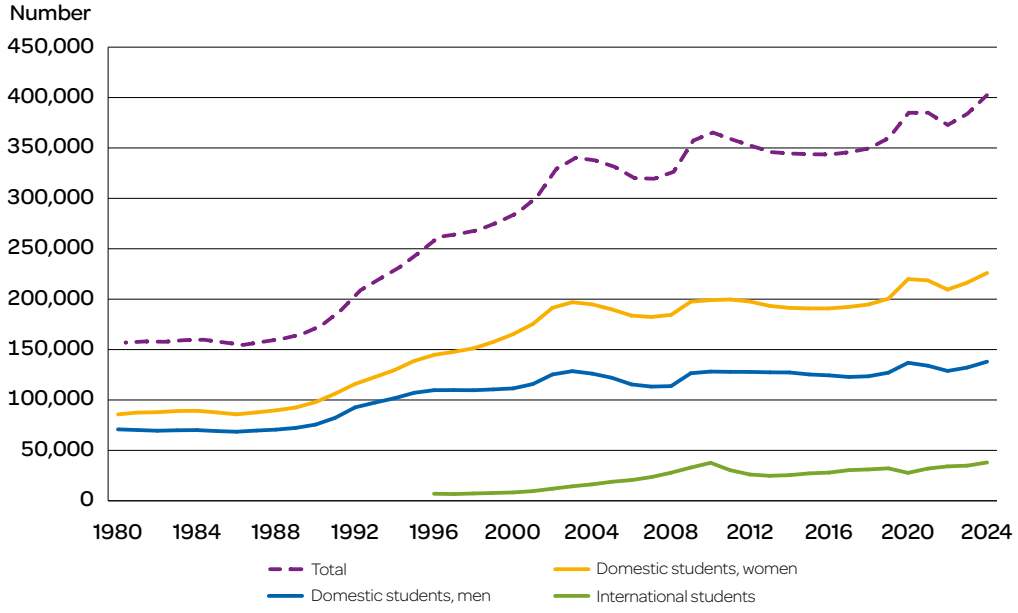
The Swedish higher education system is designed to ensure broad access, academic quality, and alignment with European frameworks. Since the 1970s, higher education has expanded significantly, both geographically and in terms of student participation. Structural features such as flexible course-based study, a unified qualifications framework, and formalised student representation are central to the way the system operates today.

Enrolment rates in higher education have risen over time

Figure 2.1 shows the total number of students enrolled at Swedish higher education institutions over the past 45 years, disaggregated by domestic students (broken down by women and men) and international students. While the Swedish population increased from 8.3 million in 1980 to 10.6 million in 2024, the figure still helps to illustrate the development of enrolment over time.

The number of students enrolled at Swedish higher education institutions in the autumn semester of 2024 reached a historic high. A total of 402,000 students were enrolled, of whom 61 per cent were women and 39 per cent were men. International students accounted for 9 per cent – 38,000 students – of all enrolled students.

Figure 2.1: Number of students enrolled in first- and second-cycle courses and programmes, total and by domestic students (women and men) and international students, autumn semesters 1980–2024



Professional programmes in psychology, medicine, and law are the most competitive

In the autumn semester of 2024, 186,300 applicants were qualified for their top-choice programme. Of these, more than half were admitted. Around half of all programme applicants applied to programmes leading to a professional qualification. The professional programmes with the highest numbers of qualified first-choice applicants were the Master of Science in Engineering, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and the Master of Laws.

The most competitive professional programmes, based on the number of qualified applicants per student admitted, were the Master of Science in Psychology (8.1), the Master of Science in Medicine (5.7), and the Master of Laws (5.1).

A following third of programme applicants applied to general programmes at the first-cycle level, 10 per cent to general programmes at the second-cycle level, and 2 per cent to programmes in the fine, applied, and performing arts. General programmes had an average of 1.7 applicants per admitted student, whereas programmes in the fine, applied and performing arts received around 5.

New entrants increasing in numbers and showing greater diversity

The number of new entrants – students enrolled for the first time in first- or second-cycle education in Sweden – has gradually increased over the past decade. In the 2023/24 academic year, close to 95,760 students began their studies as new entrants. Of these, almost 30 per cent

were international students. Women made up a clear majority of new entrants, 59 per cent, while 41 per cent were men.

Among domestic new entrants, most had completed an upper-secondary school programme. However, 15 per cent had combined upper-secondary studies with studies in municipal adult education, and 12 per cent had completed an upper-secondary education solely within municipal adult education.

Most domestic new entrants begin their studies in a professional programme. In the 2023/24 academic year, more than 40 per cent did so, while around a quarter entered higher education in a general programme. The remaining third started with freestanding courses.

Among international new entrants, only 2 per cent enrolled in a professional programme, while close to 40 per cent were enrolled in a general programme. The majority – 60 per cent – were enrolled in freestanding courses.

For more details on international students and their enrolment, see Chapter 5, Internationalisation and Mobility in Swedish Higher Education.

Professional programmes dominate student enrolment

In the 2023/24 academic year, a total of 459,100 individual students were enrolled at Swedish higher education institutions at some point during the year. Of these, just under three quarters were studying at the first-cycle level, while just over one quarter were enrolled in second-cycle education.

Of the 329,400 full-time equivalent students – measured in this way because not all students are enrolled full time throughout the academic year – nearly 75 per cent were enrolled in either a general or a professional programme. Students in professional programmes accounted for almost 60 per cent of all programme students. Two professional programmes were particularly prominent: the Master of Science in Engineering (20 per cent of all full-time equivalent students in professional programmes), the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (10 per cent). Together, these two programmes accounted for 18 per cent of all full-time equivalent programme students and 13 per cent of all enrolled full-time equivalent students.

More than a third of all students only enrolled in freestanding courses

Around a third of all 459,100 enrolled students in the 2023/24 academic year took only freestanding courses. Around 20 per cent of these students studied at the second-cycle level.

Women represented over 65 per cent of those enrolled in only freestanding courses, while men made up 35 per cent. Table 2.1 shows the distribution of students only enrolled in freestanding courses by subject area.

Table 2.1: Number of students enrolled in freestanding courses only, total and by women and men and subject area, academic year 2023/24

Subject area	Number		
	Total	Women	Men
Law and social sciences	72,700	49,000	23,600
Humanities and theology	59,900	38,700	21,200
Engineering and technology	29,200	13,900	15,300
Natural sciences	19,800	10,700	9,000
Other	9,100	6,200	2,900
Fine, applied and performing arts	8,200	5,700	2,500
Health and social care	7,200	6,200	900
Medicine and odontology	5,700	4,500	1,200
Unknown	500	300	200
Total	**163,200**	**105,300**	**57,900**

Students are comparatively older than in other countries

Relatively few domestic students start higher education immediately after completing upper-secondary school at the age of 19. Contributing factors include the widespread practice of taking one or several gap years to work, travel, or complete military service. In the most recent birth cohort for which data are available (individuals born in 2004), only 14 per cent had begun higher education studies as of the year they turned 19. The transition rate increases significantly when the follow-up period is extended by five years. Individuals born in 1999 constitute the most recent cohort that can be followed, and among them, close to half had entered higher education by the age of 24.

Transition rates from Swedish upper-secondary school to higher education differ by gender. Of those born in 2004, 16 per cent of women and 12 per cent of men had begun higher education studies as of the year they turned 19. At age 24, the gap widened further, with roughly half of women and one third of men having entered higher education.

In 2022, new entrants to first-cycle education in Sweden were the oldest among OECD countries, with an average age of 25 (table 2.2). Because of this later entry, graduates from Swedish higher education also complete their studies at a later age. The average age of graduation at the first cycle in Sweden is 28, compared with 25 in the EU25 and 26 in the OECD. At the second cycle, the average age of Swedish graduates is closer to international norms. This may reflect the high proportion of international students at Swedish higher education institutions at the second-cycle level, who tend to be younger and therefore lower the national average. Rather than domestic students graduating earlier, the figures reflect the composition of the student body.

Table 2.2: Students at first- and second-cycle in a selection of OECD countries, exchange students not included, average age of entry, average age of graduation, and gender distribution, year 2022

	First cycle				Second cycle			
Country	Average age at entry (years)	Average age at graduation (years)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Average age at entry (years)	Average age at graduation (years)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Sweden	25	28	61	39	27	29	58	42
Denmark	24	26	57	43	26	27	55	45
Finland	24	28	56	44	33	32	61	39
Norway	23	25	57	43	28	29	62	38
Estonia	22	26	56	44	27	30	61	39
France	20	..	57	43	24	..	55	45
Germany	23	26	48	52	24	27	53	47
Spain	20	24	57	43	27	28	59	41
South Korea	20	..	51	49	32	..	56	44
United Kingdom	22	23	56	44	27	27	58	42
EU25 - average	22	25	55	45	26	28	59	41
OECD - average	22	26	55	45	28	29	58	42

Source: OECD

Programme students show high performance rates

One way of measuring completion rates in Swedish higher education is the use of a performance indicator. This shows the proportion of credits that students had completed within four semesters since registration. Among all students registered during the academic year of 2022/23, the performance rate was 83 per cent. Programme students have a higher performance rate compared to those studying freestanding courses. Students enrolled in programmes within the fine, applied and performing arts as well as in programmes leading to a professional qualification had performance rates of 95 and 91 per cent respectively. The corresponding performance rates for students enrolled in freestanding courses was 59 per cent.

Retention and graduation rates vary between professional programmes

Two other ways of following up rates of completion in Swedish higher education, in particular professional programmes, is the use of retention rates and graduation rates. In general, the retention rate for programmes leading to a professional qualification is relatively high. For many of these programmes, over 70 per cent of those who began the programme in the 2022/23 academic year were still enrolled in the third semester. The retention rate was often higher among women than among men.

Almost all students who initially enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Military Studies were still enrolled in the third semester (97 per cent). The Master of Architecture and the Master of Science in Medicine programmes had the second and third highest retention rates, at 89 and 88 per cent respectively. These two programmes are also among the most competitive in terms of admission. Among the professional programmes with the lowest percentage of students enrolled in the third semester were the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene (51 per cent), the Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy (59 per cent), and the Bachelor of Science in Diagnostic Radiology Nursing (63 per cent).

Graduation rates also vary between different professional programmes. This indicator measures the proportion of new entrants who had completed the degree within the standard programme length plus three years. In the follow up academic year of 2022/23, programmes with the highest rates were found in healthcare: the Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery (89 per cent), the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing (86 per cent), and the Master of Science in Medicine (85 per cent). For most professional programmes the graduation rate was higher among women than among men.

General qualifications the most common

During the academic year of 2023/24, a total of 79,060 students graduated with first- or second-cycle qualifications.

Women accounted for two thirds of all graduates, with a slightly larger share at the first cycle than at the second. Roughly half of all graduates were between 25 and 34 years old, highlighting that Swedish students often complete their studies at an older age than in many other countries. General qualifications were the most common, awarded to 62 per cent of graduates, followed by professional qualifications (48 per cent) and qualifications in the fine, applied, and performing arts (2 per cent). For some programmes it is common for students to be awarded both a general and a professional qualification.

Engineering and nursing dominate among professional graduates

In the 2023/24 academic year, 37,920 students graduated from a Swedish higher education institution with a professional qualification (table 2.3). The three most common qualifications were the Master of Science in Engineering, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, and the Master of Arts/Science in Secondary /Upper-secondary Education.

The gender distribution was more uneven among those awarded a professional qualification compared with other categories of qualifications: 70 per cent were women and 30 per cent were men. The most common professional qualification among women was the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, whereas among men it was the Master of Science in Engineering.

Table 2.3: Number of graduates and gender distribution from the 15 largest professional programmes, academic year 2023/24

		Gender distribution	
Degree	Total	Women(%)	Men(%)
Professional degrees, total	37,920	70	30
Master of Science in Engineering	4,540	36	64
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	4,370	87	13
Master of Arts / Science in Secondary Education / Upper Secondary Education	3,340	59	41
Bachelor / Master of Arts in Primary Education	3,190	79	21
Bachelor of Arts in Pre - School Education	2,930	96	4
Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing	2,800	86	14
Bachelor of Science in Social Work	2,600	87	13
Bachelor of Science in Engineering	2,280	29	71
Master of Laws	1,640	66	34
Master of Science in Medicine	1,500	60	40
Master of Science in Business and Economics	910	51	49
Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Training	740	91	9
Master of Science in Psychology	650	69	31
Higher Education Diploma in Vocational Education	580	63	37
Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy	560	64	36

Equity and access in Swedish higher education

Swedish higher education policy places strong emphasis on equity and widening participation. Legal frameworks and national initiatives aim to ensure that all individuals, regardless of background, have the opportunity to access and complete higher education. Despite these efforts, participation rates continue to vary across demographic groups, including by gender, social background, and foreign or Swedish background.

Widening access and participation in Swedish higher education

According to the Higher Education Act, higher education institutions must promote gender equality and actively work to widen access and participation among underrepresented groups. These include students from migrant backgrounds, non-academic families, lower-income households, and certain Swedish geographic regions. Data on underrepresented groups are collected to monitor participation in higher education. However, data on race, ethnicity, religion, or disability are not collected, as this is prohibited under Swedish law.

Sweden's efforts to widen access and participation in higher education have deep roots. The 1977 higher education reform was particularly significant, as it expanded access by establishing regional higher education institutions. This had a marked effect on students from non-academic backgrounds, whose enrolment increased more in municipalities where new institutions were established. Despite long-standing efforts, however, challenges remain in ensuring equal representation across all demographic groups.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education supports higher education institutions in their work to widen access and participation by encouraging interest in higher education, promoting the validation of prior learning, and advancing the rights of national minorities and minority languages within the sector. The Council works in close collaboration with the institutions to achieve these goals.

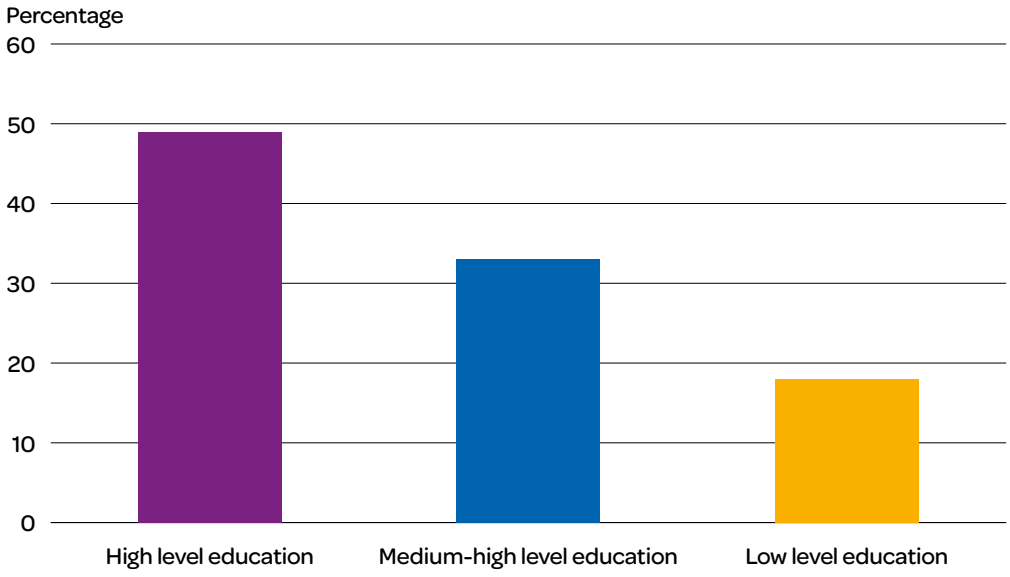
Women make up the majority of enrolled students in Sweden

Women constitute a clear majority in Swedish higher education. The proportion of women beginning studies at both the first and second cycles is larger than that of men. This pattern holds across all social groups.

The level of parents' education is a factor in higher education entry

The level of parents' education varies significantly among students entering higher education in Sweden. There is a considerably larger share of students with parents with a higher level of education compared to those with a lower level. Among new entrants in the 2023/24 academic year, nearly half had at least one highly educated parent, defined as having at least three years of post-secondary education (figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Proportion of new entrants to Swedish higher education with parents of high, medium-high, and low levels of education, academic year 2023/24



In 2023/24, the Master of Science in Medicine programme had the highest proportion of students with at least one highly educated parent (78 per cent), followed by the Master of Architecture (73 per cent). By contrast, the Higher Education Diploma in Vocational Education and the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene had the lowest proportions of students with at least one highly educated parent, 19 and 21 per cent respectively. These programmes also had the highest proportions of students whose parents had a low level of education, defined as a maximum of two years of upper-secondary schooling.

Limited impact of foreign background on overall participation

Whether a person has a foreign or Swedish background has limited impact on participation in higher education in Sweden. Foreign background refers to individuals born abroad or born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents, while Swedish background refers to those born in Sweden with at least one Swedish-born parent. Among individuals who turned 25 in 2023, just over half of those born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents had entered higher education. Similar rates were observed among those who migrated to Sweden before the age of seven (48 per cent) and those with a Swedish background (47 per cent). In contrast, only 26 per cent of those who migrated between the ages of seven and eighteen had entered higher education by the same age. The rate of transition to higher education is higher for women than for men in all groups.

However, representation by foreign background varies significantly between programmes. The highest shares of students with a foreign background were found in the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene (85 per cent), the Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy (82 per cent), and the Master of Science in Dental Surgery (78 per cent).

By comparison, programmes with the highest proportions of students with a Swedish background were the Bachelor of Science in Military Studies (96 per cent), agricultural and forestry programmes (91 per cent), and the Master of Architecture (88 per cent).

Support for students with disabilities in Swedish higher education

The Discrimination Act (2008:567) requires Swedish higher education institutions to work proactively and inclusively to ensure that no student is disadvantaged in their studies due to a disability.

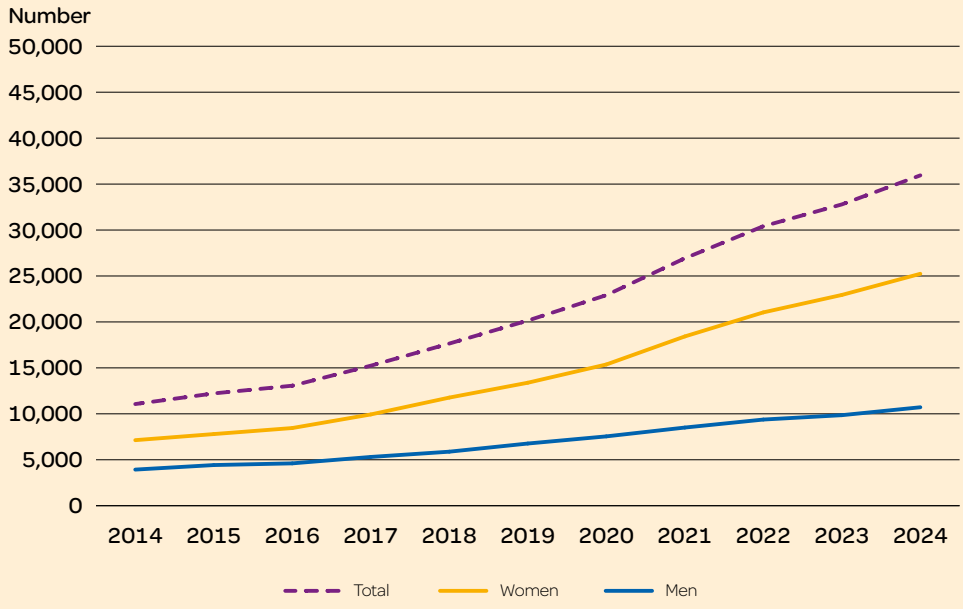
Students with permanent disabilities – generally defined by higher education institutions as lasting, or expected to last, at least six months – can apply for study support at their institution. The type of support provided varies but may include adapted examinations, accessible course literature, note-taking assistance, and interpretation in sign language or deafblind interpretation. Support may also relate to teaching methods, course organisation, and assessment procedures.

In 2024, just under 8 per cent of all students were granted access to support resources for disabilities. The number of students granted support has increased significantly, from 11,060 students in 2014 to 35,950 in 2024 – an increase of over 200 per cent. During the same period, the overall number of students only increased by approximately 17 per cent (figure 2.3).

This rise is largely due to substantial growth in support for reading and writing difficulties, including dyslexia, as well as neurodevelopmental disorders. Support related to mental health issues has also increased. In 2024 it was most common to be granted support for neurodevelopmental disorders (41 per cent), followed closely by dyslexia or other specific reading and writing difficulties (39 per cent).

Of all students offered support in 2024, 70 per cent were women and 30 per cent men.

Figure 2.3: Number of students with disabilities granted access to support resources in higher education, total and by women and men, years 2014–2024



CHAPTER 3
Third-Cycle Education in Sweden

Third-cycle education represents the most advanced level of higher education in Sweden and plays a key role in developing new knowledge and qualified researchers. This chapter outlines transition from first- and second-cycle education, the composition and funding of third-cycle students, and the large and stable share of international entrants. It also addresses differences in access by background and field of research and development, and presents data on degrees and completion patterns.

Transition to third-cycle education in Sweden

Of those who completed a qualification at first- and second-cycle between the 2015/16 and 2018/19 academic years, a total of 3.2 per cent had begun third-cycle education by the 2023/24 academic year.

A higher share of graduates with general qualifications continue to third-cycle education compared with those with professional qualifications or qualifications in the fine, applied, and performing arts. Differences are also evident between fields of study for graduates with general qualifications, with the highest transition rates in the natural sciences, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT). The lowest rates are found in the social sciences, law and business administration. More men than women go on to third-cycle education, partly because men more often study first- and second-cycle programmes that lead to further studies.

Admission to third-cycle education in Sweden

Admission to third-cycle education is regulated by the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100). To be admitted, applicants must meet both the general entry requirements and any specific entry requirements determined by the higher education institution.

The general entry requirements may be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- The applicant has been awarded a second-cycle degree
- The applicant has completed course requirements of at least 240 credits, including at least 60 credits from the second cycle
- The applicant has acquired essentially equivalent knowledge in some other way, in Sweden or abroad.

Specific entry requirements may also apply and may relate to knowledge from higher education or equivalent education, relevant professional experience, required language skills, or other conditions necessary for the doctoral programme.

Meeting the entry requirements does not guarantee admission.

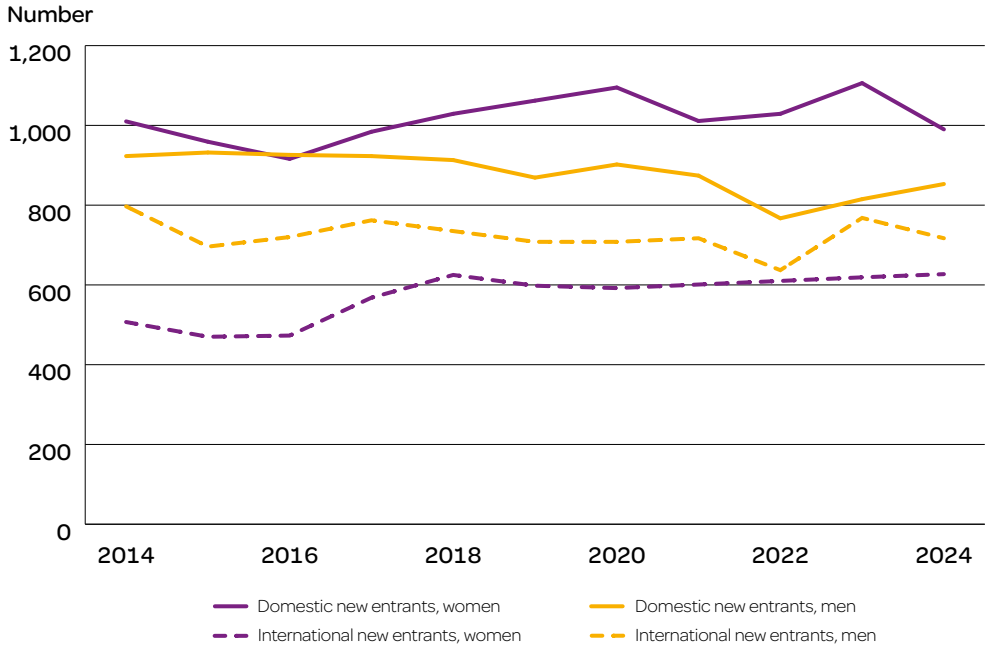
New entrants to third-cycle education in Sweden

In 2024, a total of 3,190 new entrants began third-cycle education. The number of entrants varies considerably between fields of research and development, largely reflecting the scale of research activity in each area. The field accounting for the largest scope of research – defined here by the volume of research funding and publication output – medical and health sciences, also accounted for the largest share of new entrants, with 1,110 individuals, or 35 per cent. By contrast, only 65 individuals, or 2 per cent of all new entrants, enrolled in agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, making it the smallest field.

Consistently large share of international new entrants

In 2024, 1,340 international third-cycle students began studies in Sweden, accounting for 42 per cent of all new entrants. This share has remained stable at around 40 to 42 per cent over the past decade (figure 3.1). Most came from Asia (41 per cent) and Europe (38 per cent).

Figure 3.1: Number of new entrants to third-cycle education, domestic and international, in total and by women and men, years 2014–2024



Domestic and international new entrants are partly concentrated in different fields of research and development. In 2024, the largest share of international new entrants was in the natural sciences and in engineering and technology, where they made up 61 per cent of new entrants. The lowest was in the medical and health sciences, at 24 per cent.

Varying gender balance within different groups of new entrants

Gender distribution among all new entrants is generally balanced. Exceptions include agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, where women formed the majority, and engineering and technology, where men predominated.

Among domestic new entrants, women have outnumbered men nearly every year of the past decade; in 2024 the shares were 54 per cent women and 46 per cent men. Among international new entrants, however, men have consistently been in the majority, although the gap has narrowed over time, from 61 per cent men in 2014 to 53 per cent in 2024.

Differences in access to third-cycle education

In the 2023/24 academic year, almost two thirds of domestic new entrants to third-cycle education had parents with a high level of education – that is, at least three years of post-secondary education. A further 28 per cent had parents with a medium level of education – upper-secondary education of three years or post-secondary education of less than three years. The remaining 13 per cent had parents with a low level of education, defined as lower-secondary education or upper-secondary education of up to two years.

A slightly higher proportion of individuals with a Swedish background – that is, individuals born in Sweden to at least one Swedish-born parent – begin third-cycle education compared with those with a foreign background – individuals born abroad or born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents – but the differences are small.

Characteristics of students in Swedish third-cycle education

Third-cycle students in Sweden differ in their study pace, funding, and field of research and development. Their composition also reflects broader patterns in participation across the higher education system.

Women outnumber men in third-cycle education

In the 2024 autumn semester, 17,800 students were enrolled in third-cycle education at Swedish higher education institutions. Because of reporting delays, the actual number is likely to be somewhat higher.

Over the past twenty years, the gender distribution has been relatively balanced, with men and women each representing between 40 and 60 per cent. This marks a significant shift compared with 40 years ago, when women accounted for 29 per cent and men 71 per cent. Since 2021, women have outnumbered men.

The majority of third-cycle students are in full-time studies

In the 2024 autumn semester, 57 per cent of third-cycle students were enrolled in full-time studies. A greater share of men than women studied full-time, 60 per cent compared with 53 per cent. Some students combine their studies with other work – for example, students in medical and health sciences may continue working in their healthcare professions.

Sweden has one of the largest shares of STEM third-cycle students in the OECD

In 2022, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) was the most common field of education among third-cycle students in the EU25 and OECD countries (table 3.1). Sweden's share was 41 per cent, mirroring the EU25 and OECD averages.

Sweden, together with Denmark, had comparatively high proportions of third-cycle students in health and welfare, both at 36 per cent. This was by far the largest share among the countries compared, while the averages were 17 per cent in the EU25 and 16 per cent in the OECD.

At the other end of the scale, Sweden had the lowest share of students in the arts and humanities, at 6 per cent, compared with averages of 13 per cent in the EU25 countries and 12 per cent in the OECD.

Table 3.1: Proportion of third-cycle students by field of education (ISCED-F) in a selection of OECD countries, year 2022

Country	STEM	Health and welfare	Arts and humanities	Social sciences, journalism, information, Business, administration and law	Education	Other
Australia	43	20	11	18	5	3
Canada	47	10	10	24	5	4
Denmark	40	36	9	11	0	4
Estonia	48	10	16	15	4	6
Finland	37	18	16	20	6	3
France	49	6	19	23	2	1
Germany	40	26	12	16	2	3
Ireland	43	17	14	19	6	3
Norway	39	29	8	18	5	2
South korea	40	13	15	19	7	7
Spain	34	19	15	22	5	4
Sweden	41	36	6	11	4	2
United Kingdom	42	15	14	22	5	1
EU25 - average	41	17	13	20	4	5
OECD - average	41	16	12	21	6	4

STEM: Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
Source: OECD

Doctoral studies usually last four years but may be extended

While the Higher Education Ordinance defines the scope of third-cycle studies in terms of full-time equivalents across semesters, it does not set a formal limit on the total calendar time for completion. At public-sector higher education institutions, third-cycle students may normally undertake up to 20 per cent departmental duties (teaching and/or administration), which extends the study period proportionally. Independent higher education providers set their own rules on departmental duties.

In practice, most higher education institutions apply the principle that a doctoral degree corresponds to four years of effective full-time study (240 credits), and a licentiate degree to two years (120 credits). Part-time study is permitted, and the study period is extended proportionally. A student admitted at 50 per cent may therefore take up to eight calendar years to complete the equivalent of four years of full-time study. Additional extensions may be granted for parental leave or illness, but the total duration normally does not exceed about eight years.

Most third-cycle students are financed through doctoral studentships

In the 2024 autumn semester, the majority of third-cycle students were financed through salaried doctoral studentships. In total, 71 per cent of all third-cycle students were financed in this way (table 3.2).

Another 20 per cent combined third-cycle studies with employment outside the higher education sector. This group includes, for example, physicians and other healthcare professionals holding medical posts. In the medical and health sciences, as many as 46 per cent of students were financed through employment outside higher education.

Scholarships accounted for only 3 per cent of total financing, but were more common in the social sciences, where 8 per cent of students received this form of support.

For more details on the financing of third-cycle students, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Higher Education and Research in Sweden.

Table 3.2: Sources of funding for third-cycle students by field of research and development, autumn semester 2024 (per cent, full-time equivalents; – indicates zero)

	Total (%)	Natural sciences (%)	Engineering and technology (%)	Medical and health sciences (%)	Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine (%)	Social sciences (%)	Arts and humanities (%)
Doctoral studentship	71	88	81	46	83	77	83
Medical post	12	–	–	38	0	0	–
Externally employed doctoral student	5	6	11	2	6	3	1
Other post outside a higher education institution	3	1	2	6	4	4	1
Scholarships	3	1	2	3	0	8	5
Other higher education post	3	3	2	3	5	4	2
Other sources of funding	2	1	2	2	1	3	9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Degrees awarded in third-cycle education in Sweden

Sweden offers two types of degrees within third-cycle education, each with a different scope. The Degree of Doctor is the highest academic qualification and requires four years of full-time study. The Degree of Licentiate requires two years of full-time study.

Third-cycle degree-awarding powers vary between higher education institutions

A total of 18 Swedish higher education institutions are authorised to award general licentiate and doctoral degrees across a wide range of fields of research and development. Another 18 institutions have the right to award third-cycle degrees in one or more specific fields. Five institutions are authorised to award licentiate and doctoral degrees in the fine, applied, and performing arts.

For more information on degree-awarding powers, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Higher Education in Sweden.

In 2024, a total of 2,790 doctoral degrees were awarded. The gender distribution was exactly equal, with women and men each accounting for 50 per cent.

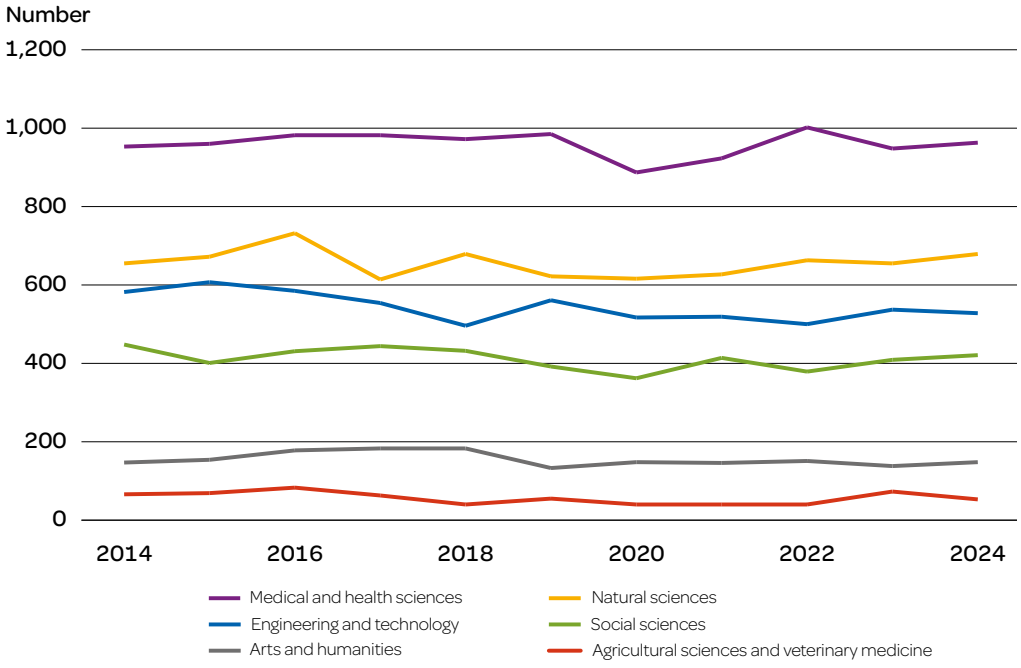
The number of licentiate degrees has declined sharply over the past decade, from 840 in 2014 to 410 in 2024. Men have outnumbered women among licentiate graduates every year, largely because these degrees are concentrated in engineering and technology and in the natural sciences, where men form the majority. In 2024, nearly all licentiate degrees were awarded in these two fields.

In 2024, 61 per cent of doctoral degrees were awarded to domestic students and 39 per cent to international students.

Most doctoral degrees awarded in the medical and health sciences

The largest number of doctoral degrees in 2024 were awarded in the medical and health sciences (figure 3.2). Many were also awarded in the natural sciences as well as in engineering and technology.

Figure 3.2: Number of doctoral degrees awarded by field of research and development, years 2014-2024



Most doctoral students graduate within eight years

While a doctoral degree formally corresponds to four years of full-time study, many students combine their research activity with up to 20 per cent teaching or administrative duties at their departments. This makes five years a more realistic timeframe for graduation. Among those who began third-cycle education in 2016, 47 per cent had completed their degree within five years, 64 per cent within six years, and 79 per cent within eight years (table 3.3).

Graduation rates also differ between fields of research and development. In the natural sciences, 60 per cent of students graduated within five years, while only 33 per cent in the arts and humanities did so.

Table 3.3: Proportion of third-cycle new entrants in year 2016 completing the intended degree within 5, 6 and 8 years, by field of research and development

	Percentage of graduates (%) within		
Field of research	5 years	6 years	8 years
Total	**47**	**64**	**79**
Natural sciences	60	76	85
Engineering and technology	48	67	77
Medical and health sciences	44	62	79
Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine	54	70	89
Social sciences	34	51	72
Humanities and arts	33	52	72

Graduation rates have increased over time for both women and men. For example, among those who started their third-cycle education in 1990, only 22 per cent had completed a doctoral degree within five years. One contributing factor is the 1998 reform of third-cycle education, which introduced the requirement that students be admitted only if guaranteed full funding for the entire study period.

CHAPTER 4
Staff at Swedish Higher Education Institutions

Staff at Swedish higher education institutions form a diverse group whose roles, backgrounds, and career paths shape both education and research. This chapter highlights how staff are distributed across categories and fields of research and development, and how patterns of gender and background vary. It also examines salaries and employment conditions, as well as career opportunities and challenges for those pursuing an academic path. Finally, it looks at staff with duties outside teaching and research, showing how their composition has shifted over time.

Staff composition at Swedish higher education institutions

In 2024, higher education institutions in Sweden employed approximately 70,190 individuals, corresponding to 55,970 full-time equivalents. Staff were divided into two main categories: research and teaching staff (59 per cent) and staff with duties other than teaching and research (41 per cent).

Third-cycle students contribute significantly to research and teaching at Swedish higher education institutions. However, they are primarily considered students and are therefore not included in the category of research and teaching staff. Just under 11,000 third-cycle students were employed by higher education institutions in 2024, either through a doctoral studentship or another form of employment.

The overall gender distribution was relatively balanced, with women accounting for 55 per cent and men for 45 per cent of all staff. Men were in the majority among research and teaching staff, while women predominated among staff with duties other than teaching and research.

Research and teaching staff at Swedish higher education institutions

Research and teaching staff are divided into six employment categories:

- Professors
- Senior lecturers
- Career-development positions
- Lecturers
- Other research and teaching staff with a third-cycle qualification
- Other research and teaching staff without a third-cycle qualification

Professors and senior lecturers, as well as associate senior lecturers (included in career-development positions), are regulated in the Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434). Higher education institutions determine which staff categories to include beyond those set out in the Act and how to structure academic and research career paths.

For a position of lecturer, a third-cycle qualification is generally not required. The exact requirements are determined by each higher education institution.

Career-development positions following a third-cycle qualification

A common first step in Sweden for graduates with a third-cycle qualification is a career-development position. These fixed-term positions are designed to help individuals qualify further, both academically or artistically and in teaching, for a continued career in academia. The category includes postdoctoral researchers, associate senior lecturers, and research associates. Associate senior lecturers have the right to apply for and be considered for promotion to senior lecturer.

In 2024, a total of 4,640 individuals held career-development positions. Most were employed as postdoctoral researchers (77 per cent) or associate senior lecturers (22 per cent). This distribution was similar for both women and men.

Competition for career-development positions is high, as more third-cycle graduates complete their studies than there are positions available.

Staff composition differs across fields of research and development

The distribution of staff across employment categories varies by field of research and development. These differences are influenced by the balance between teaching and research in each field, as well as by the availability of external research funding.

Career-development positions are most common in the natural sciences, engineering and technology, and the medical and health sciences. Together, these three fields accounted for 80 per cent of all career-development positions. They also have a large share of other types of research staff, reflecting the strong emphasis on research in these areas.

Senior lecturers accounted for the largest share of staff in the social sciences, and in the arts and humanities – 46 and 43 per cent respectively. These fields also had the highest proportions of lecturers, at around 20 per cent in both, and are generally characterised by a stronger focus on teaching.

Professor appointments are rare within twelve years of graduation

The highest academic position in Sweden is professor. Fewer than 3 per cent of those who obtained a third-cycle qualification in 2012 had been appointed professor within twelve years. Although the number of newly appointed professors has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, the number of researchers and senior lecturers has grown significantly.

Each year over the past decade, a larger share of men than women have been appointed professor within twelve years – just over 3 per cent of men and just over 2 per cent of women in the 2012 cohort. Although women remain underrepresented among professors, those who reach this level tend, on average, to be appointed slightly earlier than men.

Fixed-term appointments are a distinct feature of academic careers

Fixed-term employment plays a central role in Swedish academic career paths and is more common in higher education than in the labour market as a whole. This is partly because certain fixed-term positions are specific to the sector. These include career-development positions, staff employed part-time alongside a main occupation outside the higher education institution, and visiting professors – roles that either form part of structured academic career systems or reflect the higher education institution's engagement with external stakeholders.

Fixed-term appointments are particularly prevalent at the beginning of an academic career. In 2024, 78 per cent of staff under the age of 35 held such a position. Career-development positions are by definition fixed-term, and they accounted for 56 per cent of all fixed-term appointments. Among other employment categories, fixed-term employment was most common among research and teaching staff without a third-cycle qualification. More than a third in this category held such a position.

A follow-up of individuals who obtained a third-cycle qualification in 2016 found that the majority of those working at a Swedish higher education institution in the year after graduation held a fixed-term position. Four years later, however, most of those still employed in the sector held a permanent contract.

Balanced gender distribution is rare across fields of research and development

The proportion of women has increased in all fields of research and development in the past decade, but gender distribution still varies between fields. In 2024, women accounted for 60 per cent of staff in the medical and health sciences – the largest share – compared with 30 per cent in engineering and technology.

Gender distribution also differs across categories of research and teaching staff within each field. A balanced distribution is defined as 40 to 60 per cent women and men. In 2024, only the arts and humanities met this criterion across all staff categories. In engineering and technology, women accounted for less than 40 per cent in every category. In the medical and health sciences, the share of women ranged from 56 to 81 per cent, except among professors, where it was 40 per cent.

Professors remain the least gender-balanced staff category

While the gender distribution across most staff categories was relatively balanced, professors were the exception, with only one third women, and two thirds men. The number of female professors has, however, increased over the past decade.

Since senior lecturers form the main recruitment base for professors, disparities at that level affect the future gender balance amongst professors. The largest gender gap between professors and senior lecturers is found in the medical and health sciences, where in 2024 the share of women was 27 percentage points higher among senior lecturers.

To promote gender equality, recruitment targets for newly appointed professors have been in place since 1997. For 2025–2028, institution-specific targets stipulate that women should account for between about one third and just over one half of new professors. In the 2021–2023 period, however, only three out of 33 institutions reached these targets.

Foreign background less common among research and teaching staff

In 2024, the majority of staff in most employment categories had a Swedish background, ranging from 22 to 81 per cent depending on staff category. A Swedish background refers to individuals born in Sweden with at least one parent also born in Sweden.

The second most common group comprised individuals born abroad to two foreign-born parents. Their share ranged from 16 to 76 per cent across staff categories and was highest among individuals in career-development positions.

Only 1 to 3 per cent of staff in any category were born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents. By contrast, this group is more strongly represented among students and third-cycle students, and they also have the highest transition rate from upper-secondary to higher education.

Salaries vary by employment category, field, and gender

Salaries for research and teaching staff vary both by employment category and by field of research and development. Professors generally have the highest salaries, while other research and teaching staff without a third-cycle qualification have the lowest. Salary levels also differ between fields, with higher pay for senior lecturers and professors in the medical and health sciences and engineering and technology, and lower levels in the arts and humanities.

Gender pay gaps persist in most employment categories. Men generally earn more than women, even when comparing staff within the same employment category and research field. The gap is particularly marked among senior lecturers.

Staff with duties other than teaching and research

Higher education institutions also employ staff with duties outside teaching and research – commonly referred to as technical and administrative staff. This group is divided into four categories: administrative staff, technical staff, library staff, and temporary staff on hourly or daily wages. In 2024, technical and administrative staff accounted for 41 per cent of all personnel at Swedish higher education institutions.

The largest category was administrative staff, who made up 64 per cent of staff with duties other than teaching and research. They include for example administrators, financial officers, communications officers, study and career guidance counsellors, research project coordinators, and central management personnel.

Technical staff constituted 30 per cent and include project managers, research engineers, and staff working in information technology (IT), facilities management, and cleaning services.

The remaining 6 per cent constituted of library staff and temporary staff.

In 2024, women made up two thirds of staff with duties other than teaching and research, while men accounted for one third. This is in contrast to the more balanced gender distribution observed among research and teaching staff.

Gender distribution in leadership roles at Swedish higher education institutions

In 2025, gender distribution at Swedish higher education institutions was balanced in two out of six leadership roles – vice-chancellors and deans or faculty heads – with women and men each accounting for between 40 and 60 per cent. Among vice-chancellors, women represented exactly 40 per cent.

Women made up more than 60 per cent of chief librarians, heads of administration, and deputy vice-chancellors. The share of women has increased significantly in the latter two roles over time, while women have consistently been in the majority among chief librarians.

The largest shares of men were found among vice-chancellors and deputy vice-chancellors, at 60 and 62 per cent respectively.

Shifts in the composition of technical and administrative staff

Between 2014 and 2024, the number of staff with duties other than teaching and research increased by 7 per cent. This growth was considerably smaller than the 14 per cent increase in research and teaching staff during the same period. The number of administrative staff rose, while the number of technical staff and library staff declined. These developments reflect a gradual shift in the composition of staff at Sweden's higher education institutions over time.

CHAPTER 5
Internationalisation and Mobility in Swedish Higher Education

Internationalisation is an integral part of higher education and research in Sweden. It shapes cooperation across borders, brings global perspectives into classrooms, and connects students and staff to international networks of knowledge and innovation. This chapter examines how internationalisation is pursued both abroad and at home and how global developments and international initiatives influence mobility. It also explores patterns of student and staff mobility, examining both outgoing and incoming flows and highlighting how opportunities and challenges differ across programmes, cycles, and subject areas.

The internationalisation of higher education and research in Sweden

Students and staff at Swedish higher education institutions take part in a wide range of international activities, including international mobility for students and staff as well as other forms of international cooperation and collaboration. According to the Swedish Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434), international activities at Swedish higher education institutions must enhance the quality of research and education and contribute to sustainable development both nationally and globally.

Internationalisation at home is also an important component. It targets all students, aiming to provide them with global perspectives and to strengthen their cultural understanding and competence, regardless of whether they study abroad.

Global events affect international mobility and collaboration

International mobility in higher education and research is often shaped by global events. During the COVID-19 pandemic, overall academic mobility dropped sharply due to travel restrictions – for example, the number of exchange students participating in the EU-funded Erasmus+ programme in Sweden was cut in half. Today, international student numbers in Sweden exceed pre-pandemic levels, and outgoing mobility is steadily recovering.

Internationalisation in research and education is crucial for advancing knowledge and innovation. At the same time, shifting global politics have increased the need to balance openness and academic freedom with protecting national interests, knowledge, and technology. As a result, Sweden – like many other countries – has become increasingly aware of the importance of responsible internationalisation when establishing, maintaining, and

evaluating international relationships in higher education. The concept *responsible internationalisation* is referred to in different ways around the world, including *trusted research* in United Kingdom, *principled cooperation* in the United States, and *foreign interference* in the EU institutions.

In 2023, the Swedish Government tasked several government agencies with developing guidelines to promote responsible internationalisation in higher education, research, and innovation. The aim is to support Swedish higher education institutions in engaging internationally in a secure and responsible manner.

Swedish participation in the European Universities Initiative

The European Universities Initiative, launched by the European Commission in 2019, aims to strengthen strategic collaboration and mobility among European higher education institutions. The initiative seeks to build transnational alliances – known as European Universities – bringing together higher education institutions from different EU member states. The long-term goal is to create inter-university campuses where students, teachers, researchers, and other staff can move seamlessly.

As of January 2025, there are 65 European University alliances, involving more than 570 higher education institutions across 35 countries. Of Sweden's approximately 50 higher education institutions, 24 take part in a European University alliance.

No national funding for participation in the European Universities Initiative

The funding model for participation in the European Universities Initiative varies between countries. For Swedish higher education institutions, participation is primarily funded through EU resources, mainly the Erasmus+ programme. There are no government funds earmarked for Swedish institutions' participation in the initiative. Any potential co-funding must therefore come from the institution itself or from other external sources, such as Horizon Europe, national or international project funding, or regional development funds.

This model contrasts with practices in some other countries, where higher education institutions may rely more heavily on government funding or on private-sector partnerships to support their participation in the initiative.

Swedish students participate in internationalisation at home

Swedish higher education institutions actively promote internationalisation at home to reach students and staff who cannot, or choose not to, take part in physical exchanges. Offering entire courses in English allows domestic students to study alongside international peers. Internationally recruited lecturers and researchers, guest lecturers, and required readings in English also provide access to global perspectives and knowledge not otherwise available.

In the 2024 spring semester, 86 per cent of first- and second-cycle students were assigned at

least some required reading in English. The extent varied by discipline: one third of students in the natural sciences, mathematics, and computing had required readings only in English, while nearly one fifth of those in certain healthcare programmes had none at all.

Nearly half of all students received some instruction in English, although this also varied by field of study. Among students in the Master of Science in Engineering programme, 83 per cent had part or all of their teaching in English, compared with less than 20 per cent in teacher training programmes.

EU's 2030 goal for student mobility not yet met in Sweden

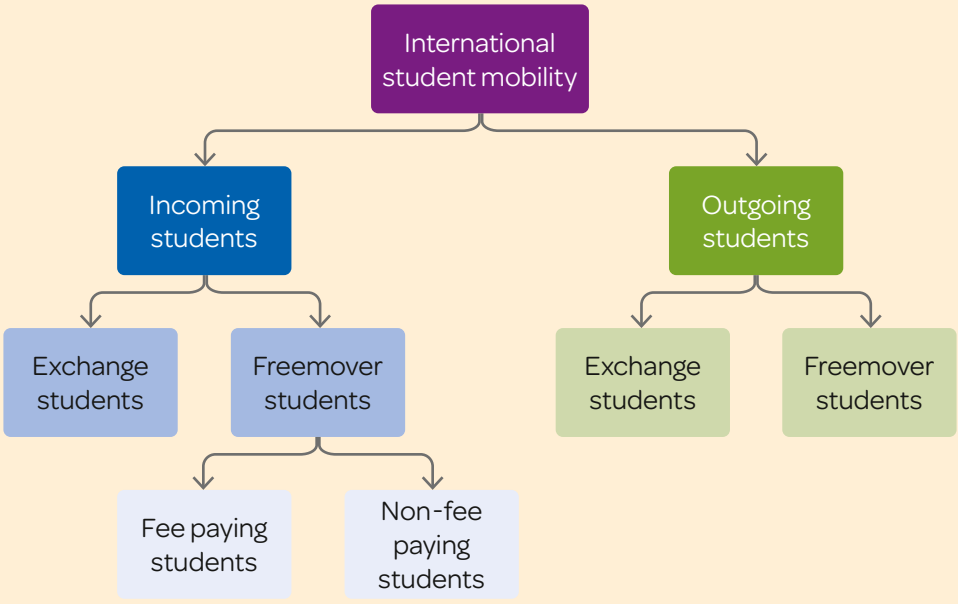
In 2024, the European Commission recommended that by 2030 at least 23 per cent of all graduates from higher education institutions in the EU should have completed either a physical or blended mobility period of at least 15 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) or lasting a minimum of three months, or a shorter physical or blended mobility period of at least 3 ECTS and lasting less than three months. This goal applies to all three levels of higher education. Among first- and second-cycle first-time graduates from Swedish higher education institutions in the 2023/24 academic year, 11 per cent had studied abroad during the preceding 12 semesters.

Sweden, like most EU member states, has no national targets for student mobility. No Swedish higher education institution requires all students to study abroad in order to graduate. However, some programmes include mobility as a graduation requirement.

Student mobility: Definitions used in Sweden

Internationally mobile students at the first- and second-cycle levels are divided into five groups (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Swedish classification of internationally mobile students



Incoming students are students who come to Sweden to pursue studies.

Outgoing students are students who leave Sweden to study abroad.

Exchange students participate in exchange programmes arranged through collaboration between Swedish higher education institutions and institutions abroad. Incoming exchange students are usually enrolled at a Swedish higher education institution, generally for one semester or one academic year, after which they return to their home institution. Outgoing exchange students study at a higher education institution abroad in the same manner. Exchange students do not pay tuition fees at the receiving institution.

Freemover students, whether incoming to or outgoing from Sweden, organise their studies independently of existing exchange programmes. They may study abroad for any period of time and, if applicable, pay tuition fees at the host institution. Freemover students coming to Sweden from countries outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland have been required to pay tuition fees in Sweden since 2011. Freemover students are therefore divided into two subgroups: fee-paying and non-fee-paying students.

International mobility programmes at Swedish higher education institutions

Swedish higher education institutions participate in several international exchange programmes. In the 2023/24 academic year, over half of the 7,430 outgoing exchange students – 4,360 in total – went abroad through EU programmes, most commonly Erasmus+. Erasmus+ allows students at all three levels, as well as staff, to study or complete a work placement in all EU countries as well as six other European nations. Outgoing students receive monthly grants through the programme, ranging from 400 to 510 euros (2025), depending on the destination.

The Nordplus programme enables first- and second-cycle students, to take part in exchanges with the Nordic and Baltic countries. In the 2023/24 academic year, 30 domestic students participated in the programme. Outgoing students receive monthly grants through the programme, of up to 250 euros (2025), in addition to a travel allowance.

Sweden also participates in the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, an exchange initiative between European and Asian countries that supports reciprocal student exchanges undertaken in pairs at the first and second cycle. For the 2025/26 academic year, DUO-Sweden selected 13 domestic students for exchange. Participants receive a grant through the programme of between 3,000 and 3,500 euros (2025), depending on the destination.

In addition, most higher education institutions have bilateral agreements with partner institutions abroad. Through these agreements, more than 3,000 students from Swedish higher education institutions took part in exchanges in the 2023/24 academic year. Students participating in exchanges based on bilateral agreements generally do not receive grants as a matter of course, although some higher education institutions may provide grants or competitive scholarships.

Outside of exchange programmes, students may participate in the Minor Field Studies programme, which is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Through this programme, students conduct field studies in a low- or middle-income country as part of their first- or second-cycle thesis project. Participants receive a grant through the programme of SEK 35,000 (2025).

Incoming international students at the first- and second-cycles

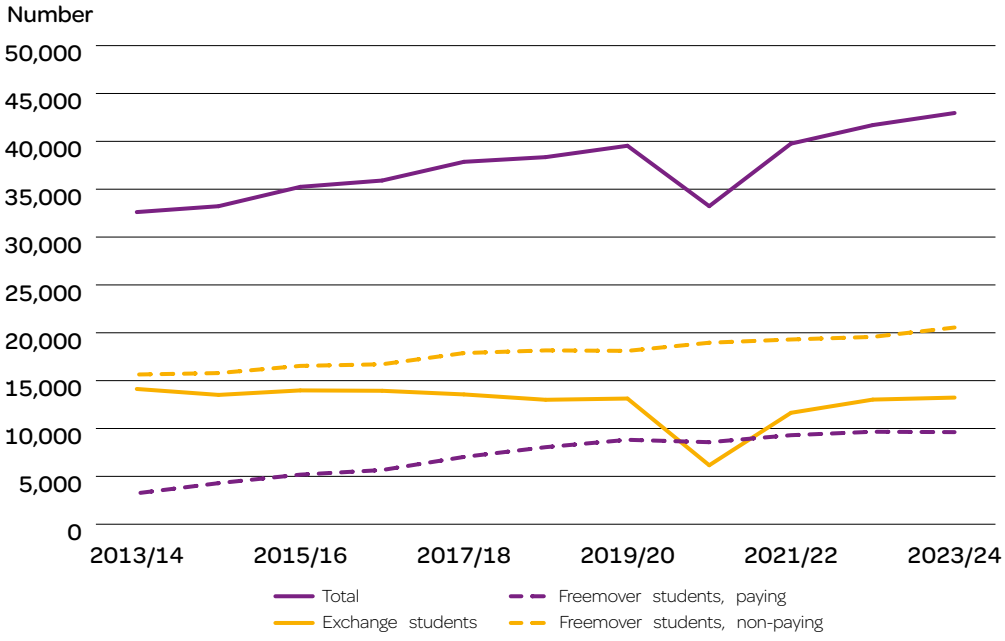
During the 2023/24 academic year, a total of 42,960 international students studied in Sweden (figure 5.2). This represents an increase of more than 30 per cent over the past decade.

While the number of incoming exchange students has fallen by 6 per cent during the same period, the total number of freemover students – that is, both fee-paying and non-fee paying – has risen by almost 60 per cent.

In 2023/24, non-fee-paying freemover students formed the largest group of incoming students at the first and second cycle, accounting for nearly half of all international students. Exchange students made up 30 per cent, and fee-paying freemover students the remaining 22 per cent.

Over the past decade, the gender distribution among incoming students has shifted, with the share of women increasing across all three groups from 52 per cent in 2013/14 to 56 per cent ten years later, while the share of men has fallen from 48 to 44 per cent.

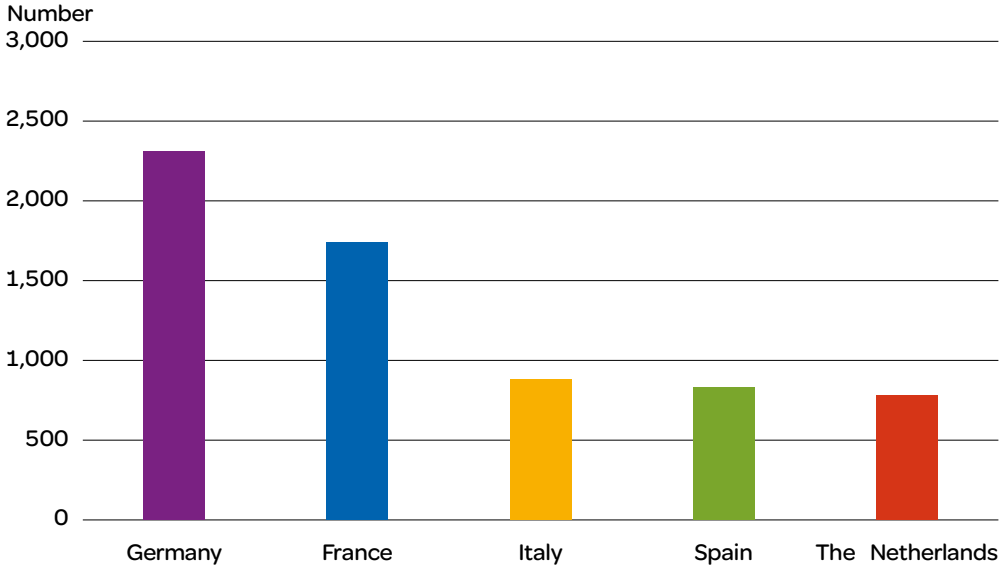
Figure 5.2: Number of incoming students, in total and by exchange students, fee-paing freemover students, and non-fee-paying freemover students, academic years 2013/14–2023/24



Most exchange students come from Europe

Sweden welcomed 13,230 exchange students from 69 countries during the 2023/24 academic year. The majority of incoming exchange students came from Europe. The five most common countries accounted for nearly half of all exchange students, with Germany at the top of the list, contributing 2,310 students (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Number of incoming exchange students from the five most common countries, academic year 2023/24



Freemover students form large share of second-cycle programme students

In most OECD countries, the proportion of freemover students increases with each cycle of education, and Sweden is no exception. In 2022, freemover students accounted for 3 per cent of those enrolled in first-cycle courses and programmes, below the OECD average of 5 per cent. At the second cycle, the figure was 12 per cent in Sweden, compared to the OECD average of 15 per cent. However, at the third cycle, incoming students represented 36 per cent of all enrolled students, significantly higher than the OECD average of 25 per cent.

Freemover students at the first- and second-cycle level at Swedish higher education institutions generally enrol in programmes rather than freestanding courses. In the 2023/24 academic year, 78 per cent were enrolled in a programme, while 22 per cent took courses.

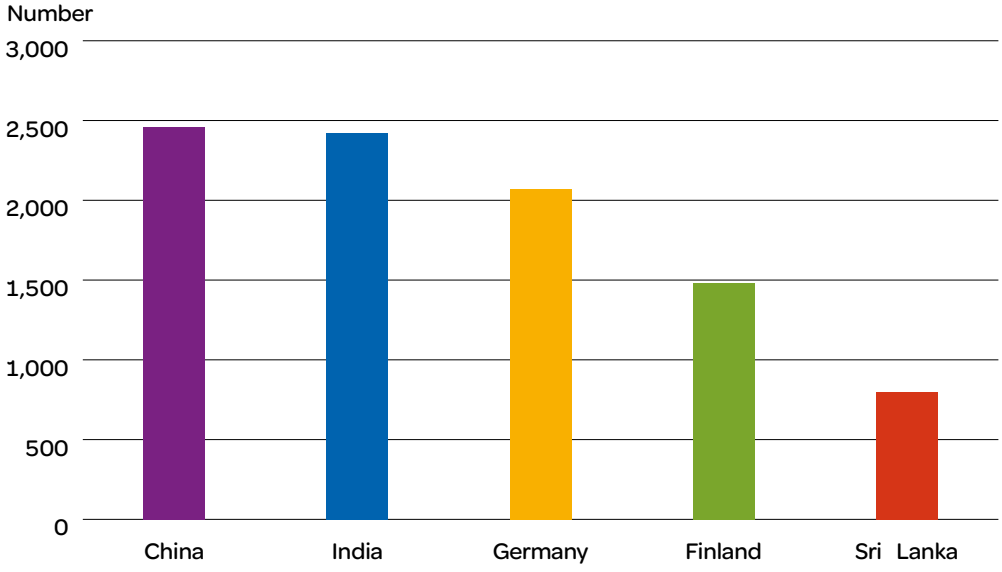
Freemover students also accounted for a significant proportion of all students in second-cycle programmes: 43 per cent of those in two-year programmes and 34 per cent of those in one-year programmes.

Incoming students generally study in English. In the 2024 autumn semester, Swedish higher education institutions offered a total of 651 programmes taught entirely in English – 84 at the first cycle and 567 at the second cycle.

Most freemover students come from Asia

Just under 30,000 freemover students from 120 countries studied in Sweden during the 2023/24 academic year. China and India were the two largest countries, with 2,460 and 2,420 students respectively (figure 5.4). Germany is the only country that ranks among the five most common countries for both incoming exchange students and freemover students.

Figure 5.4: Number of incoming freemover students from the five most common countries, academic year 2023/24



International students can apply for scholarships

International students in Sweden must cover their living expenses and, where applicable, pay tuition fees. However, scholarships awarded on a competitive basis are available to cover full or partial tuition fees and, in some cases, living costs.

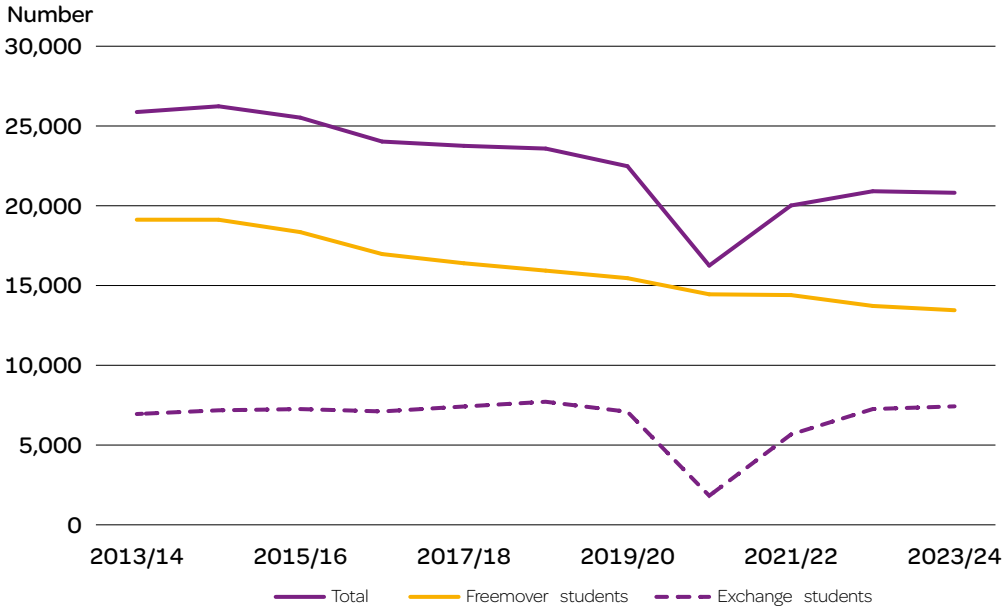
For more details on scholarship funding, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Higher Education and Research in Sweden.

Outgoing domestic first- and second-cycle students

In the 2023/24 academic year, 7,430 domestic students studied abroad as exchange students and 13,450 as freemover students (figure 5.5). Of all outgoing students, 59 per cent were women and 41 per cent men. The gender distribution was the same among both exchange and freemover students.

While the number of outgoing exchange students has remained relatively stable over the past ten years, the number of outgoing freemover students has fallen by almost 30 per cent over the same period.

Figure 5.5: Number of outgoing students, in total and by exchange students and freemover students, academic years 2013/14–2023/24



Outgoing students study mainly in Europe

Of all outgoing students, 70 per cent studied in European countries. However, exchange students and freemover students tend to choose different destinations. In the 2023/24 academic year, France and Italy were the most popular choices for exchange students, while the United States and the United Kingdom were by far the most common destinations for freemover students.

Government student finance available for studies abroad

Domestic students studying abroad, whether as exchange students or freemover students, can apply for government student finance from the Swedish Board of Student Finance.

Students studying abroad receive the same grant and loan amounts as those studying in Sweden. In addition, they may apply for a country-specific loan to cover travel expenses to and higher living costs in the country of study. A separate additional loan is available to cover tuition fees where applicable.

For more details on student financing, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Higher Education and Research in Sweden.

International mobility varies widely by programme

Opportunities for international mobility vary by study programme. Students at a number of programmes leading to professional qualifications, such as the Bachelor and the Master of Arts in Education or the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, rarely study abroad. Among graduates of these programmes in the 2023/24 academic year, only 1–2 per cent had studied abroad during the preceding 12 semesters.

By contrast, studying abroad was more common among graduates of the Master of Science in Business and Economics (38 per cent), the Master of Laws (31 per cent), and the Master of Science in Engineering (26 per cent) programmes in the same period.

Efforts to widen participation in international student mobility

Widening participation in outgoing international mobility has been a topic of discussion in the Swedish higher education sector in recent years. Particular emphasis has been placed on increasing participation among students with fewer opportunities. The European Commission has set a specific objective: by 2030, these students should make up at least 20 per cent of all participants in international mobility activities.

Students with fewer opportunities are defined as those disadvantaged compared to their peers due to one or more exclusion factors. These include being accompanied by children while studying abroad; having a disability or long-term health condition; experiencing discrimination or structural barriers in the education system; or being affected by cultural or linguistic background, social or economic conditions, or geographical location.

For more details on widening participation, see Chapter 2, First- and Second-Cycle Education in Sweden.

Outgoing domestic third-cycle students

Third-cycle students have the opportunity to go abroad through mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ or through initiatives offered by organisations such as the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education. Many also arrange their stays independently, outside formal mobility programmes or agreements, or participate in international conferences.

Third-cycle students take part in international mobility activities to a greater extent than first- and second-cycle students. Of the 2,750 third-cycle graduates in 2023, 30 per cent had spent part of their studies abroad. Overall, women and men were equally likely to have undertaken international study periods.

Third-cycle students mainly travelled to countries in Europe, although the single most common destination in 2023 was the United States. Students may have travelled to several countries during their studies, but the statistics refer to the country in which they spent their longest continuous period abroad.

Research and teaching staff travelling abroad

In 2023, nearly 30 per cent of research and teaching staff at Swedish higher education institutions reported travelling abroad for work. Staff often use the same mobility programmes available to third-cycle students. International travel includes both short trips of less than a week and longer stays of more than a week, with the vast majority taking part in shorter trips. Many travel as part of research projects involving time abroad or to attend conferences.

Research and teaching staff in the natural sciences were the most likely to travel abroad for work in 2023. In this field, 35 per cent had spent time abroad. Overall, men travelled to a greater extent than women – 31 per cent of men compared with 28 per cent of women. However, differences appear between fields of research and development.

CHAPTER 6
Skills Provision and Lifelong Learning in Sweden

Sweden faces growing pressure to secure the skills needed for a changing labour market. Higher education is at the centre of this challenge, expected both to expand provision in key fields and to provide opportunities for continual reskilling. This chapter explores how higher education institutions respond to projected shortages, how graduates fare in the labour market, and how flexible learning pathways open doors for lifelong learning. It also considers the contribution of international freemover students to Sweden's skills supply.

Expected skills shortages and educational planning in Sweden

Higher education institutions in Sweden are responsible for adjusting the range of study programmes they offer to meet both student demand and labour market needs. The labour market is changing, partly due to demographic shifts such as an ageing population, and partly as a result of new technology and digitalisation. In many occupations that previously required shorter or lower-level education, skill requirements are now rising, increasing the overall demand for qualified individuals. Higher education plays a central role in meeting these needs.

Government strategies to align education with labour market needs

Most first- and second-cycle education in Sweden is funded through recurrent funding to higher education institutions, and the institutions have considerable autonomy in how this funding is used. In recent years, however, the government has increasingly steered study programme provision through targeted initiatives and performance-based mandates aimed at meeting labour market needs.

From the mid-2010s, funding caps for selected higher education institutions were raised, accompanied by targets for the number of new entrants in the fields of engineering and technology, healthcare, and teacher training. These initiatives were later incorporated into the government's broader efforts to meet skills needs, and were also under way when a national strategy for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) was launched in 2025.

The STEM strategy aims to address skills shortages in areas considered crucial for Sweden's competitiveness, digitalisation, and green transition. It includes measures such as expanding the Master of Science in Engineering and foundation-year programmes, increasing funding for science and technical fields, and attracting more women to STEM education in order to meet future skills needs.

Expected skills shortages in engineering professions

Despite the Master of Science in Engineering being the largest professional degree programme at Swedish higher education institutions, Sweden currently faces a shortage of qualified engineers. Statistics Sweden projects that this shortage will ease in most fields by 2040, but risks remain in areas such as energy engineering, electrical engineering, and computer engineering. To meet projected demand, the number of students beginning a Master of Science in Engineering in these specialisations must increase by about 70 percent (5,800 students) annually, compared with 2023/24 levels.

Engineering programmes also have relatively low graduation rates compared with other professional degree programmes. In the 2022/23 academic year, about half of those who began a Master of Science in Engineering in 2015/16 had completed their degree within the standard duration plus three years (see table 6.1). Among those who did not graduate, many lacked most of the required credits, while others had nearly completed the programme and were missing only the equivalent of up to two semesters. As engineering is not a licensed profession in Sweden, some of these students may already have entered the labour market.

Table 6.1 Proportion of new entrants to engineering programmes completing the intended degree within the standard duration plus three years, follow-up academic year 2022/23, by women and men

	Year of Entry	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Master of Science of Engineering	2015/16	56	64	52
Bachelor of Science in Engineering	2017/18	49	59	45

Expected skills shortages in healthcare professions

Statistics Sweden forecasts that the current shortage of trained healthcare professionals will persist or increase by 2040, particularly in fields such as midwifery, radiography, occupational therapy, general nursing, district nursing and specialist nursing within psychiatric care. Overall, around 9,800 students per academic year in total would need to begin key healthcare programmes to prevent the overall shortage from worsening. This corresponds to about 20 per cent more new entrants to these key programmes than in the 2023/24 academic year.

The largest healthcare programme in Sweden is the Bachelor of Science in Nursing. However, its graduation rate is lower than in other key programmes, such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery and the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing (table 6.2). One reason is that the latter two are second-cycle programmes for already licensed nurses, and specialist training programmes tend to have higher completion rates.

Table 6.2 Proportion of new entrants to selected healthcare programmes completing the intended degree within the standard duration plus three years, follow-up academic year 2022/23, by women and men for programmes with at least 30 new entrants of each gender (..indicates data not presented)

	Year of Entry	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery	2018/19	89	..	..
Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing	2018/19	86	87	86
Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy	2017/18	73	76	69
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	2017/18	73	75	60
Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Laboratory Science	2017/18	52	56	40

The programmes included in table 6.2 have been selected based on both labour shortages and the existence of targets for the number of degrees awarded.

Despite increased application rates and targeted government funding, Swedish higher education institutions face challenges in expanding healthcare programmes. Two key obstacles are the shortage of teaching staff with a third-cycle qualification – particularly senior lecturers and professors – and the limited number of clinical placements available through healthcare providers.

Expected skills shortages in teaching professions

Despite declining birth rates, there is expected to be a continued lack of graduates from teacher training programmes in the future. The Swedish National Agency for Education estimates that, up to 2038, there is a risk of shortages in some categories of qualified teachers, from preschool to upper-secondary school, while surpluses may occur in others. To meet demand, nearly 15,000 new entrants are needed each year, an increase of just over 20 per cent compared with 2023/24 academic year levels. Current graduation rates among teacher training students range from 49 to 76 per cent, depending on specialisation, which directly affects the overall supply of qualified teachers (table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Proportion of new entrants to teacher and pre-school teacher training programmes completing the intended degree within the standard duration plus three years, follow-up academic year 2022/23, by women and men

	Year of Entry	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs	2018/19	76	77	67
Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Training	2018/19	74	75	63
Bachelor of Arts in Pre-School Education	2016/17	71	73	43
Higher Education Diploma in Vocational Education	2018/19	71	74	66
Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education	2016/17	61	64	53
Master of Arts/Science in Secondary/Upper-Secondary Education	2014/15	49	55	44

There is also a significant need for further education among teachers who hold a teacher certification but are not qualified to teach the age group or subject in which they are currently employed. Teachers and educators corresponding to nearly 25,000 full-time positions would

need additional training to obtain the necessary subject- or level-specific qualifications. In addition, Statistics Sweden reports that 11 per cent of certified teachers were working outside the school system in 2025. Encouraging them to return to the profession would also help reduce shortages.

To address these challenges, Sweden has introduced a set of fast-track programmes aimed at widening the recruitment base for teacher training. One option is the Supplementary Teacher Education Programme, a shorter programme for individuals with subject expertise but without teacher certification. The programme has received temporary government funding to expand and is particularly important for increasing the supply of science and technology teachers. Another pathway, the Further Teacher Education Programme, targets teachers and educators already employed in schools but lacking a teaching qualification, enabling them to complete the training required for certification. In addition, the Bridging Programme for Teachers Educated Abroad enables teachers with foreign qualifications to either pursue a Swedish teacher-training degree or complement their existing credentials with courses on the Swedish school system.

First- and second-cycle graduates in the labour market

Most first- and second-cycle graduates have a strong position in the labour market. Of all first- and second-cycle graduates in the 2021/22 academic year, 86 percent were established in the labour market within 1-1.5 years after graduation. The rate was the same for women and men.

Statistical measures of labour market establishment in Sweden

To be considered established in the Swedish labour market, an individual must meet the following criteria during the follow-up year:

- The individual is employed in November, according to the definition used by Statistics Sweden in its employment register
- Total earned income during the year must exceed SEK 279,900 (2023)
- The individual must not have experienced periods of unemployment (full-time or part-time) or participated in labour market policy measures.

This statistical measure is relatively strict and indicates strong labour market integration. However, individuals are not required to be employed in an occupation that matches their education in order to be considered established.

Labour market outcomes among graduates varied by qualification type (table 6.4). Among those awarded a professional qualification, 91 per cent were established within 1-1.5 years, compared with 79 per cent of those with a general qualification. The lowest establishment rate – 41 per cent – was found among graduates with a qualification in the fine, applied, or performing arts. One contributing factor is that many in this group support themselves through tax-free grants, which are not classified as earned income in the statistics.

Table 6.4 Proportion of graduates established in the labour market 1–1.5 years after graduation, by type of qualification and by women and men, follow-up academic year 2021/22

	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Professional degrees	91	90	92
General degrees	79	79	80
Fine, applied, or performing arts degrees	41	41	41

Professional degrees such as the Degree of Master of Science in Engineering and the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing are among the most common awarded by Swedish higher education institutions, and graduates from these programmes had particularly high establishment rates – 95 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively.

There were also differences by migration background. Among graduates with a Swedish background – that is, individuals born in Sweden to at least one Swedish-born parent – the establishment rate was 88 per cent. Among graduates with a foreign background – that is, individuals born abroad or born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents – the rate was 83 per cent. International students are not included in the category of graduates with a foreign background.

Labour market outcomes depend on gender and field of study

Gendered study choices are reflected in subsequent employment patterns. Among first- and second- graduates from the 2021/22 academic year who were established in the labour market 1–1.5 years later, most men were employed in the private sector. This reflects men's overrepresentation in fields such engineering, manufacturing and construction, which often lead to employment in private companies.

Although the private sector was also the largest employer of women, it was not as dominant. A larger share of female graduates worked for municipal or regional authorities, reflecting women's majority presence in teacher training and many healthcare programmes – fields that typically lead to employment in municipal schools or regional health services.

Third-cycle graduates in the labour market

The majority of third-cycle graduates are well established in the Swedish labour market. Among those who completed their degrees between 2013 and 2018, 84 per cent were established three years after graduation, with no significant difference between women and men.

Labour market outcomes vary by field of research and development. Graduates in the medical and health sciences had the highest establishment rate (87 percent), followed by engineering and technology (86 percent) and the social sciences (85 percent). The lowest rates were observed among graduates in the humanities and arts, at 74 percent.

A significant share of third-cycle graduates pursue careers outside academia. Three years after graduation, more than half of those established in the labour market were employed outside the higher education sector. Men transitioned to employment outside academia to a greater extent than women. At the same time, nearly one third remained at the higher education institution where they completed their third-cycle education, and a further 15 per cent were employed at a different institution.

Lifelong learning and flexible study paths in Sweden

The Swedish education system is designed to support broad access to learning opportuties throughout life. Individuals should be able to enter a new field of study, resume interrupted studies, or build on existing knowledge and skills at any stage. Lifelong learning is a guiding principle in Swedish education policy, and in higher education it is reflected in opportunities both for young people entering directly after upper-secondary school and for adults returning later in life.

The structure of Swedish higher education is based on shorter modules, or courses, focused on specific subjects. These can be studied independently of a full programme, allowing individuals to take one or more courses to deepen or update their knowledge in a particular area.

For more details on courses, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Swedish Higher Education and Research.

Swedish higher education well placed to deliver micro-credentials

Micro-credentials are short, skills-focused learning modules designed to develop specific competences within a defined subject area. The modular, course-based structure of Swedish higher education makes the system particularly well suited to offering micro-credentials. Since they are provided by higher education institutions, this kind of micro-credentials are also automatically subject to quality assurance.

Micro-credentials may target professionals seeking to enhance their expertise, individuals aiming to upskill or reskill, or anyone wishing to acquire knowledge in a specific area. They can help bridge the gap between the skills sought by employers and those held by job seekers.

Swedish higher education institutions independently determine the mode of instruction and course length. This makes it possible to design flexible micro-credentials – for example, a 1.5 credit course delivered entirely online over several weeks rather than concentrated into one week of full-time study. As a result, quality-assured micro-credentials can be provided across a wide range of subjects, which is not always possible in systems with more rigid course structures.

In 2022, the European Union adopted a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability. EU member states were encouraged to integrate micro-credentials into their national qualifications frameworks

and to express them using ECTS credits to ensure transparency and comparability. In the 2022/23 academic year, Sweden was one of only eight European education systems to fulfil both recommendations.

New student finance scheme supports transition and retraining

As part of a broader package of labour market reforms, Sweden introduced a specific form of student finance in 2022 aimed at individuals already in employment. The purpose is to promote retraining and strengthen long-term adaptability, flexibility, and job security in the labour market. The reform is based on a proposal developed jointly by Swedish trade unions and employer organisations, representing the two sides of the labour market.

The student finance for transition and retraining scheme is separate from the general government-funded student finance scheme. To be eligible, applicants must show that their planned studies are likely to improve their overall employability.

Despite being newly introduced, the scheme has attracted considerable interest. In its first year, 60,000 applications were submitted – several times more than expected. Most students who have begun higher education under the scheme have enrolled in areas such as healthcare, social work, or education.

Based on the current approval rate, the scheme is expected to support around 20,000 students per academic year once fully implemented. By comparison, about 90,000 new entrants enrol in higher education in Sweden annually, meaning this new group will represent a substantial share of total new entrants. Since higher education institutions are expected to adapt their provision to student demand, the study choices of this group may also influence opportunities available to others.

For more details on the student finance for transition and retraining scheme, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Swedish Higher Education and Research.

Freemover students contribute significantly to Sweden's skills supply

Most international students at Swedish higher education institutions are freemover students – those who arrange their studies abroad independently of formal exchange programmes. Freemover students are further divided into fee-paying and non-fee paying students. In the 2023/24 academic year, they accounted for 70 per cent of all international students.

Freemover students are concentrated at the second-cycle level. Just over half were enrolled in second-cycle programmes in 2023/24, while about 12 per cent studied at the first-cycle level. The rest were enrolled only in freestanding courses. Their presence is notable in second-cycle programmes, where freemovers made up 43 per cent of all students in two-year programmes and 34 per cent in one-year programmes.

Freemover graduates, especially at the second-cycle level, represent an important resource for Sweden's skills supply, as many obtain degrees in technology and the natural sciences – fields with strong labour market demand for qualified professionals.

Freemover graduates well established in the Swedish labour market

Freemover students who remain in Sweden after completing second-cycle programmes show a relatively high level of labour market establishment. Of the nearly 12,500 such students who graduated between the 2012/13 and 2017/18 academic years, more than one third were still in Sweden three years after graduation. Labour market establishment was particularly high among fee-paying students: 83 per cent were established in the labour market, compared with 78 per cent of non-fee paying freemover students. The majority of these graduates were employed in the private sector.

Establishment rates vary by field of study. Graduates with degrees in engineering, manufacturing and construction had the highest rate, at 88 per cent. Those with degrees in the humanities and art had the lowest, at 67 per cent.

Freemover graduates play a key role in third-cycle recruitment

Freemover students who complete second-cycle degrees at Swedish higher education institutions form an important recruitment base for third-cycle education. The student group's contribution is particularly significant in certain fields. In engineering, manufacturing, and construction, freemover graduates accounted for nearly half of all students admitted to third-cycle education. Freemover graduates are also an important recruitment base for third-cycle education after completing a degree in the fields of health and welfare and the natural sciences.

CHAPTER 7
Funding of Higher Education and Research in Sweden

Government funding dominates the financing of Swedish higher education, providing recurrent funding for both education and research. For education, this is by far the main source of revenue, complemented only by smaller streams such as tuition fees and contract education. Research, in contrast, relies on a broader mix: recurrent funding form the base, but external funding from government agencies, foundations, and international sources accounts for a growing share. Together, these mechanisms shape the balance between education and research and the scope for institutions to develop their activities.

Financing of Swedish higher education and research

Funding to Swedish higher education institutions represents a notable share of public spending. In 2024, government funding to higher education institutions accounted for 3.8 per cent of the total government budget.

In the same year, the total expenditure of higher education institutions amounted to SEK 93.6 billion, corresponding to 1.5 per cent of Sweden's gross domestic product (GDP). Of this total, SEK 37.8 billion was allocated to first- and second-cycle education, and SEK 55.1 billion to research and third-cycle education.

The total revenue of higher education institutions in 2024 was SEK 93.4 billion. Of this total, SEK 37.6 billion was attributable to first- and second-cycle education, and SEK 55.2 billion to research and third-cycle education. The remaining SEK 0.6 billion consisted of expenditure for environmental monitoring and assessment carried out at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Government funding accounted for 76 per cent of higher education institutions' total revenue. This includes direct government funding in the form of recurrent funding for education and research as well as other government contributions.

Separate grants for education and research shape the funding structure

Government funding is decided by Parliament, following proposals from the Government in the annual budget bill. Higher education institutions receive separate recurrent funding for first- and second-cycle education, and for research and third-cycle education. Although recurrent funding for education finances most educational activities, the corresponding funding for research constitutes a smaller share of total research funding. Additional research funding is provided by research councils and other government agencies, and by a wide range of public and private organisations, both in Sweden and abroad.

The balance of research and education varies between institutions

The distribution of funding for education and research varies considerably between higher education institutions.

Most research and third-cycle education is conducted at universities, where research funding accounts for nearly two thirds of total revenue. This concentration has historical roots: until the mid-1990s, only universities and specialised institutions had permanent research funding in the form of recurrent research funding.

University colleges were largely dependent on external funding and therefore had more limited opportunities to conduct research, with a stronger focus on education. Subsequent legislative changes and increased investment in research have enabled more higher education institutions, including university colleges, to expand their research activities.

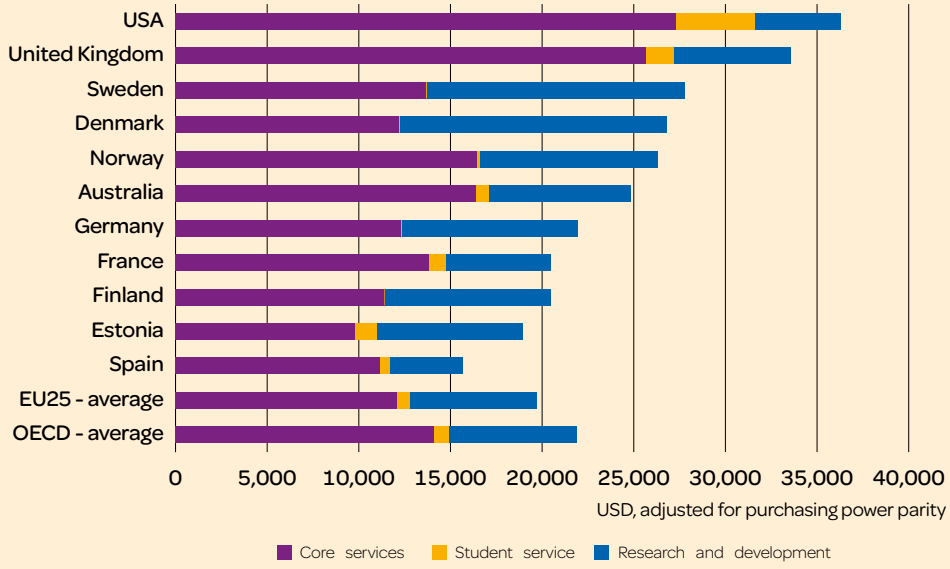
Education is more evenly distributed across the higher education sector and a larger share is provided by university colleges. As a result, research constitutes a smaller proportion of their activities – on average about one quarter.

For more details on university status among Swedish higher education institutions, see Chapter 1, The Structure of Swedish Higher Education and Research.

International comparison of expenditure per student

In 2021, higher education institutions in OECD countries spent an average of USD 21,904 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student (figure 7.1). This amount covers core services, student services, and research and development carried out by the institutions.

Figure 7.1: Total expenditure by higher education institutions per full-time equivalent student in higher education (ISCED 5–8), by type of activity, selected OECD countries, year 2021



Source: OECD

In Sweden, the corresponding figure was USD 27,765, notably above the OECD average. A key reason is that Swedish higher education institutions combine education and research within the same organisational and financial structure. As a result, research and development expenditure – more than half of the total cost per student – is included in the figures. This integrated model contrasts with countries such as Germany and France, where research is largely conducted in separate institutes and therefore not reflected in higher education expenditure.

The relatively high share of research and development within Swedish higher education also reflects the historically small research institute sector, which has meant that most publicly funded research is carried out by higher education institutions.

The highest expenditure per student, including both education and research, was recorded in the United States and the United Kingdom, where it exceeded USD 30,000. In most countries, however, education accounts for the majority of total expenditure. In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain, more than 70 per cent of total expenditure per student related to education alone.

Funding of first- and second-cycle education

In 2024, the total revenue for Swedish first- and second-cycle education was SEK 37.6 billion. The largest share – 78 per cent – came from recurrent funding for education. In addition, higher education institutions receive revenue from, among other sources, fee-paying students and contract education.

Performance-based funding shapes institutional finances

A performance-based system allocates recurrent funding for first- and second-cycle education at most Swedish public higher education institutions, as well as at some independent higher education providers. To access their full recurrent funding for education, institutions must deliver a specified volume of first- and second-cycle education. The system was introduced in 1993 as part of a major reform that decentralised responsibility for educational planning to the institutions. The educational provision is to be based on student demand and labour market needs.

Government funding is determined by the number of students and their performance, measured as full-time equivalent students and completed higher education credits expressed as annual performance equivalents. Each institution is assigned a funding cap that specifies the maximum compensation the Government can provide for the education delivered in a given year. In this way, the Government sets the overall national scale of education, while detailed planning is decentralised to the institutions.

Institutions may draw on recurrent funding only up to the volume of education actually delivered. Because the model is not a reimbursement of actual costs, an institution may meet performance requirements yet incur higher expenses than the government funding covers, resulting in a deficit. Conversely, if costs are kept down while requirements are met, the institution may operate with a surplus.

The model allows flexibility across fiscal years: both unused recurrent funding and the value of education delivered above the funding cap can be carried over. Underperformance in one year can be offset by higher delivery in subsequent years, while overperformance can be credited and used later, provided there is room under the cap. This mechanism helps institutions manage fluctuations in student demand and balance funding over time.

Funding levels differ substantially across disciplinary domains

Government funding levels vary across disciplinary domains. In 2025, the lowest levels, about SEK 61,600 per full-time equivalent student and annual performance equivalent, applied to the humanities, social sciences, theology, and law. The highest levels were in the fine, applied, and performing arts, with funding for a media student at SEK 647,700 – more than ten times higher than in the lowest-funded domains.

Using funding to strengthen skills supply in key professions

Swedish higher education institutions are relatively free to determine the scope of the programmes they offer within their respective funding caps and degree-awarding powers. However, the Government can influence provision by allocating earmarked funding to specific programmes or subjects, for example, programmes leading to qualifications for professions in particularly high demand.

One example is the Master of Science in Engineering programme and other second-cycle technical programmes, which have been permanently expanded to strengthen Sweden's position in the engineering field. This expansion also includes funding for preparatory and bridging programmes, enabling more students to pursue technical studies.

For more details on targeted government-funded initiatives, see Chapter 6, Skills Provision and Lifelong Learning in Sweden.

Tuition fees play a minor role in higher education financing

Education at Swedish higher education institutions is generally tuition-free. However, with a few exceptions, citizens from outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland who pursue first- or second-cycle education outside of exchange programmes are required to pay tuition fees.

Revenue from fee-paying students has increased annually since the introduction of tuition fees in 2011. However, it still represents a small share of total education revenue – 4 per cent in 2024. The share is significantly higher at some higher education institutions, particularly technical institutions.

Contract education as a growing source of revenue

Swedish higher education institutions provide contract education commissioned by public-sector agencies as well as private organisations. This form of education is fully funded through fees paid by the commissioning party, which is also responsible for admissions. Large-scale examples include the Police Training Programme and the Master of Science in Military Studies.

The scope of contract education has expanded over time, both in terms of student numbers and institutional revenue. In 2024, revenue from contract education totalled nearly SEK 2.3 billion. While most of this activity is commissioned by the public sector, a smaller share consists of continuing professional development for private sector clients.

Funding of third-cycle education and research

Research at Swedish higher education institutions is financed separately from education. Compared with education, recurrent funding constitutes a smaller share of total research funding – less than half. The remainder consists of external funding from both government and non-governmental sources.

Research bills guide funding and priorities

The Government's strategic direction for research funding is established every four years in a research policy bill. The current bill covers the period 2025–2028. It sets out the budget and strategic priorities for the national research system and is preceded by extensive consultations with higher education institutions, public-sector agencies, and other stakeholders. Most of the funding finances research at higher education institutions, but the research bill also allocates resources to research institutes and innovation initiatives.

Government funding makes up two thirds of research revenue

In 2024, total revenue for research and third-cycle education at Swedish higher education institutions amounted to SEK 55.2 billion (table 7.1). About two thirds of this revenue came from government sources, either as recurrent funding for research and third-cycle education or as external funding from other government agencies.

Table 7.1: Swedish higher education institutions' revenue for research and third-cycle education by type of funding source, SEK million (current prices), year 2024

	SEK million
Total	**55,194**
Government sources	**36,836**
Recurrent funding	22,614
External government funding	14,221
Private sources in Sweden	**9,370**
Non - profit organisations	8,011
Companies	1,359
International sources	**4,664**
EU	2,919
Other international sources	1,745
Other public sources	**2,632**
Municipalities and regions[1]	1,483
Public - sector research foundations	1,150
Other	**465**
Financial income	**1,227**

[1] Swedish local and regional authorities responsible for, among other things, healthcare, regional development, and certain education services.

Recurrent funding provides the basis of research revenue

Recurrent funding for research and third-cycle education totalled SEK 22.6 billion in 2024. The largest part – SEK 20.2 billion, or 89 per cent – was government funding which higher education institutions can allocate at their own discretion. The remaining share mainly consisted of earmarked funding for clinical research provided to the institutions that run medical training programmes.

Competitive grants drive most external research funding

Of total revenue for research and third-cycle education at higher education institutions in 2024, 42 per cent consisted of direct government funding, while external funding accounted for 58 per cent. Research grants make up the majority of external funding – around 86 per cent – and are awarded competitively by a wide range of public and private organisations.

The majority of public-sector research funding is distributed through three government-funded research councils. The Swedish Research Council is the largest, supporting research across all fields. The Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development funds research in the areas of environment, rural industries and the built environment, while the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare supports research in health, working life and welfare. Sweden's Innovation Agency and the Swedish Energy Agency are the largest of the non-council government agencies that fund research at higher education institutions.

Swedish higher education institutions receive a relatively large share of their research funding from private foundations and non-profit organisations, with the Wallenberg Foundations alone providing almost one third of all private research funding in 2024. Contributions from the business sector were comparatively small.

Of all international research funding received, more than 60 per cent came from the EU. Most of this funding was channelled through the EU Framework Programmes and the European Research Council (ERC).

Contract research and infrastructure as sources of income

Swedish higher education institutions also receive income from contract research. This research is generally commissioned by public-sector agencies and private companies. In 2024, contract research accounted for SEK 1.9 billion of the institutions' total revenue. Other fee-based income, such as charges for the use of research infrastructure, made up SEK 2.7 billion of total revenue.

CHAPTER 8
Research at Swedish Higher Education Institutions

Research at higher education institutions forms a central part of the Swedish research and innovation landscape, and the institutions conduct research in close interaction with education, industry, and the wider society. This chapter describes the funding and organisation of research at higher education institutions, patterns of researcher mobility, and differences in research activity across fields. It also examines the share of international recruitment, the amount of time devoted to research, and trends in research publication.

Research funding at Swedish higher education institutions

Research at Swedish higher education institutions is financed through both recurrent funding and external funding from various public and private research funders and organisations. In 2023, total revenue for research and third-cycle education at higher education institutions amounted to SEK 52.4 billion (table 8.1).

Table 8.1: Revenue for research and third-cycle education as a share of total revenue at higher education institutions (per cent), excluding financial income, year 2023

	Revenue (SEK million)			
Field of research and development	Total revenue	Direct government funding	External funding	External funding (%)
Total	**52,405**	**21,981**	**29,289**	**57**
Natural sciences	13,212	5,321	7,641	59
Engineering and technology	7,973	2,996	4,849	62
Medical and health sciences	17,273	6,649	10,139	60
Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine	3,108	1,278	1,761	58
Social sciences	7,655	3,785	3,728	50
Arts and humanities	3,184	1,952	1,172	38

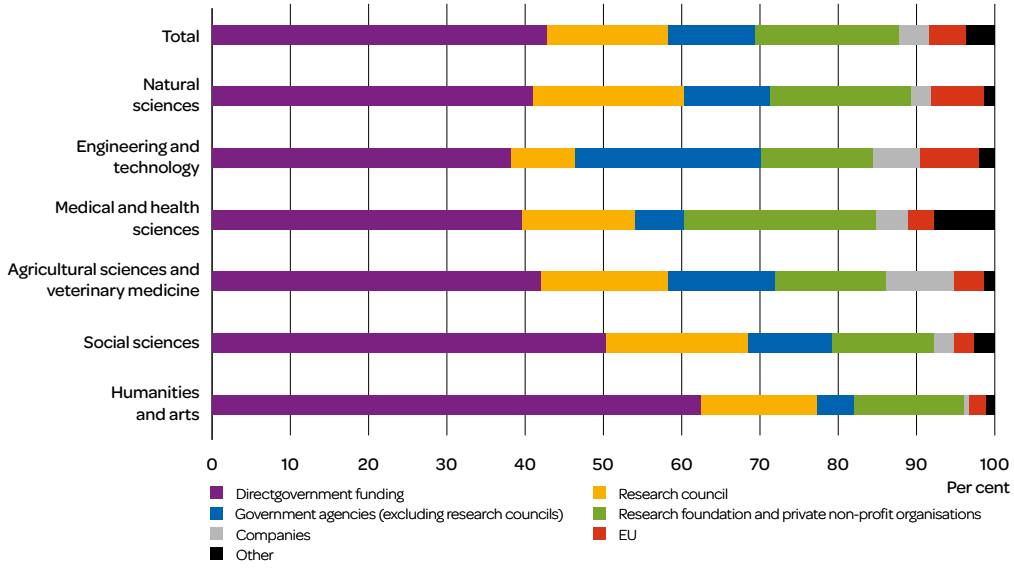
Source: Statistics Sweden

Almost half of all external funding comes from the Swedish government through various government agencies. The main sources are the three government research councils: the Swedish Research Council, the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare, and the Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development. A large proportion also comes from Sweden's Innovation Agency and the Swedish Energy Agency.

Besides government funding, a significant part of external resources also comes from research foundations and non-profit organisations, which together accounted for more than one quarter of all external funding in 2023.

Funding patterns vary across fields of research and development. In 2023, the largest shares of external funding were found in the medical and health sciences, and in engineering and technology. Revenue was highest in the medical and health sciences, exceeding SEK 17 billion and accounting for just over one third of total research funding. In this field, funding from research foundations and private non-profit organisations was more common than in others, whereas in engineering and technology, research funding from government agencies was more prevalent (figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Revenue for research and third-cycle education at Swedish higher education institutions by field of research and development, SEK million, year 2023



Source: Statistics Sweden

For more details on research funding, see Chapter 7, Funding of Higher Education and Research in Sweden.

EU funding concentrated in the natural sciences and engineering

In 2023, Swedish higher education institutions received SEK 2.4 billion in revenue from the European Union for research and third-cycle education. More than 60 per cent of this amount went to the natural sciences and engineering and technology, while the medical and health sciences also received a substantial share.

The importance of EU funding, however, varies by field. In engineering and technology and the natural sciences, EU funding represented 8 and 7 per cent of total revenue for research and third-cycle education, respectively, whereas in the social sciences and in the arts and humanities it accounted for only 2 per cent.

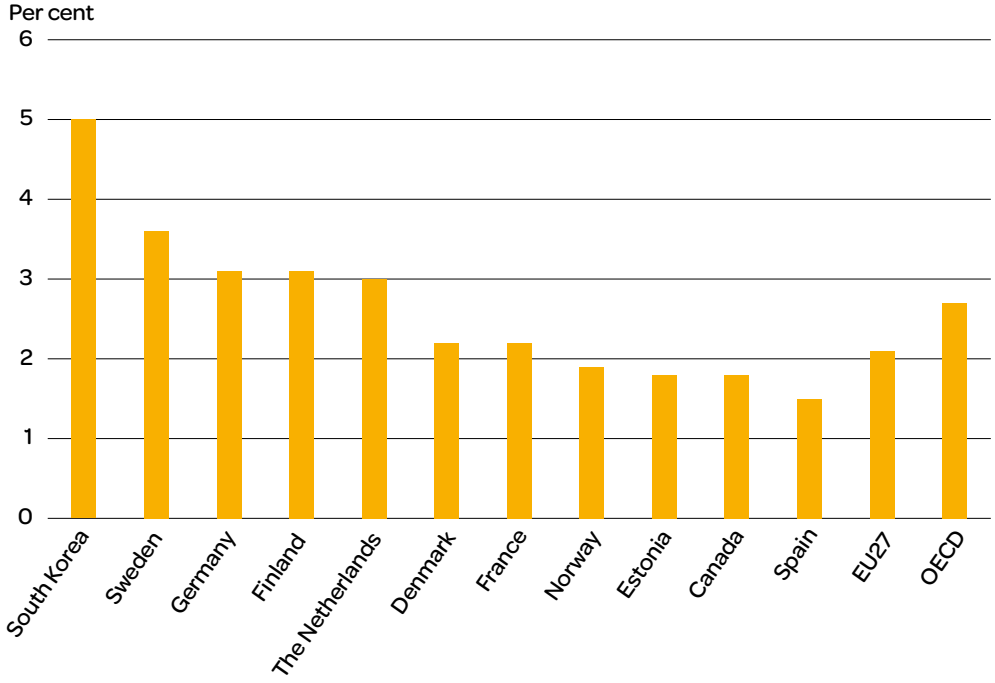
The Framework Programme is the main source of EU funding

Most EU funding was channelled through the EU Framework Programme (including the European Research Council), which made up 89 per cent of all EU-related revenue to Swedish higher education institutions in 2023. However, there were clear differences between types of institutions. At university colleges, only 39 per cent of EU revenue came from the Framework Programme compared with 91 per cent at universities.

High research and development spending in Sweden

In 2023, total research and development expenditure in Sweden amounted to 3.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), placing Sweden above the European Union's target of 3 per cent (figure 8.2). The European Union as a whole reported research and development expenditure corresponding to 2.1 per cent of GDP in the same year.

Figure 8.2: Total research and development spending as a share of GDP in selected OECD countries, year 2023



Some figures are preliminary or estimated.
Source: OECD

Sweden is among the countries with the highest research and development investment relative to GDP in both the EU27 and OECD countries. Higher education institutions accounted for about one fifth of research and development activity in Sweden, while the business sector contributed the largest share.

Among OECD countries, South Korea had the highest level of research and development investment in 2023 – 5.0 per cent of GDP.

Researchers at Swedish higher education institutions

Research at higher education institutions forms part of a wider national and international research landscape, and researchers frequently move between research environments throughout their careers. However, international mobility can only be measured through recruitment from abroad to Swedish higher education institutions; movements from Sweden to other countries cannot be captured in the available data. National mobility – movements between institutions in Sweden or between academia and other sectors – can be tracked more easily.

Distinguishing researchers from other staff categories

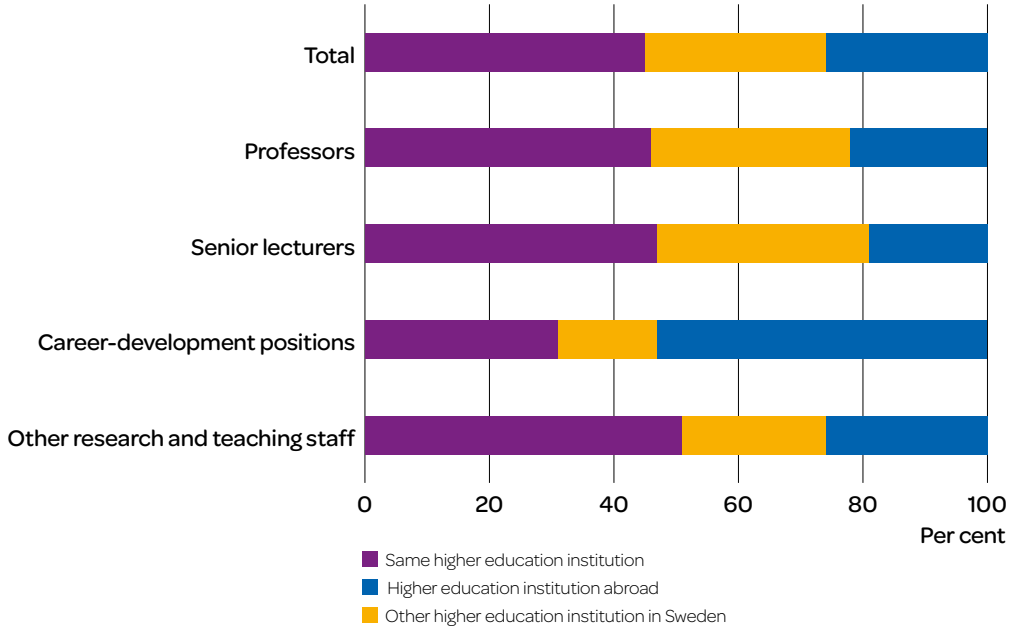
For statistical purposes, researchers are defined as staff employed at a Swedish higher education institution as professors, senior lecturers, or in career-development positions. The definition also includes other research and teaching staff with a third-cycle qualification. For more details on staff categories, see Chapter 4, Staff at Swedish Higher Education Institutions.

Professors, senior lecturers, and staff in career-development positions are assumed to hold a third-cycle qualification, as this is generally required for such appointments. This contrasts with the broader category of research and teaching staff, which also includes lecturers and other staff without a third-cycle qualification. In 2024, Swedish higher education institutions employed approximately 40,800 research and teaching staff in total, of whom 28,300, or close to 70 per cent, were categorised as researchers.

Researchers often work where they earned their third-cycle qualification

In 2024, close to one in two researchers were employed at the same Swedish higher education institution where they had completed their third-cycle qualification (figure 8.3). The pattern was evident among professors and senior lecturers, and particularly marked among other research and teaching staff with such a qualification, of whom more than half had obtained it at their current institution. By contrast, staff in career-development positions were most likely to have earned their qualification abroad.

Figure 8.3: Proportion of researchers with a third-cycle qualification from the same higher education institution where they are employed, from another Swedish higher education institution, or from an institution abroad, in total and by staff category, year 2024



Across most fields of research and development – except the natural sciences – researchers most commonly held a third-cycle qualification from the same higher education institution where they were employed. This pattern was particularly pronounced in the medical and health sciences. In contrast, the share of researchers with a third-cycle qualification from another Swedish higher education institution was highest in the social sciences and in the arts and humanities (38 per cent). In the natural sciences, qualifications obtained abroad were the most common.

Most externally employed researchers in medicine and engineering

In 2024, researchers with part-time appointments and external primary employment – that is, those employed at a higher education institution while holding their main position elsewhere – made up around 4 per cent of all researchers. This proportion has remained stable over the past decade. Such researchers are primarily found at large broad-based or specialised institutions. They are most common in the medical and health sciences and in engineering and technology, where they accounted for 9 and 7 per cent respectively. In other fields, they are relatively rare.

Part-time appointments and external primary employment are most common among professors, but are also fairly common among senior lecturers. In 2024, the proportion was nearly equal among women and men, at around 4 per cent in both groups.

International recruitment of researchers in Swedish higher education

International recruitment to Swedish higher education institutions has risen steadily. In 2014, 16 per cent of all researchers had been recruited internationally, and by 2024 the figure was close to one quarter. A researcher is considered internationally recruited if they hold only foreign qualifications.

In 2024, the share of internationally recruited researchers was highest among staff in career-development positions, at 51 per cent, and lowest among senior lecturers, at 15 per cent.

Men dominate among internationally recruited researchers

The share of internationally recruited researchers varies across fields of research and development. In 2024, the highest proportion was in the natural sciences, at 39 per cent, and the lowest in the social sciences, at 13 per cent (table 8.2).

Men made up the majority of internationally recruited researchers – 61 per cent compared with 39 per cent women. This is partly explained by the fact that international recruitment is more common in fields where men are overrepresented, such as the natural sciences and engineering and technology.

Table 8.2: Total number of researchers (excluding researchers in the arts) and the proportion internationally recruited, in total and by field of research and development and by women and men, year 2024

	Total number of researchers	of which internationally recruited (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Total	**27,630**	**24**	**39**	**61**
Natural sciences	6,390	39	32	68
Engineering and technology	4,020	28	29	71
Agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine	830	25	40	60
Medical and health sciences	7,200	21	49	51
Arts and humanities	2,440	18	51	49
Social sciences	6,840	13	51	49

Time spent on research by Swedish higher education staff

In 2023, staff at higher education institutions engaged in research and development devoted an average of 47 per cent of their working hours to research. However, there were significant differences between staff categories.

Staff in career-development positions spent the largest share of their working hours on research – around 75 per cent. Within this group, postdoctoral researchers spent the most time on research, at 82 per cent, compared with 58 per cent among associate senior lecturers and research associates. These differences reflect the purpose of the positions: postdoctoral

researchers focus primarily on research, whereas the position of associate senior lecturer is intended to provide both scientific and teaching qualifications.

Time spent applying for research funding was included in the reported research time. Professors, staff in career-development positions, and other research and teaching staff with a third-cycle qualification devoted the most time to applications – 8 to 9 per cent of their working hours. Among staff in career-development positions, associate senior lecturers and research associates devoted the largest share, at 13 per cent. Again, this reflects the purpose of the career-development positions.

Men and women in most staff categories spent roughly the same amount of time on research.

Research publications in Swedish higher education institutions

Researchers disseminate their findings in various ways. Most often, research is published as articles in scientific journals, but it can also be communicated through books, conference papers, and other forms.

Research publications emphasise journal articles

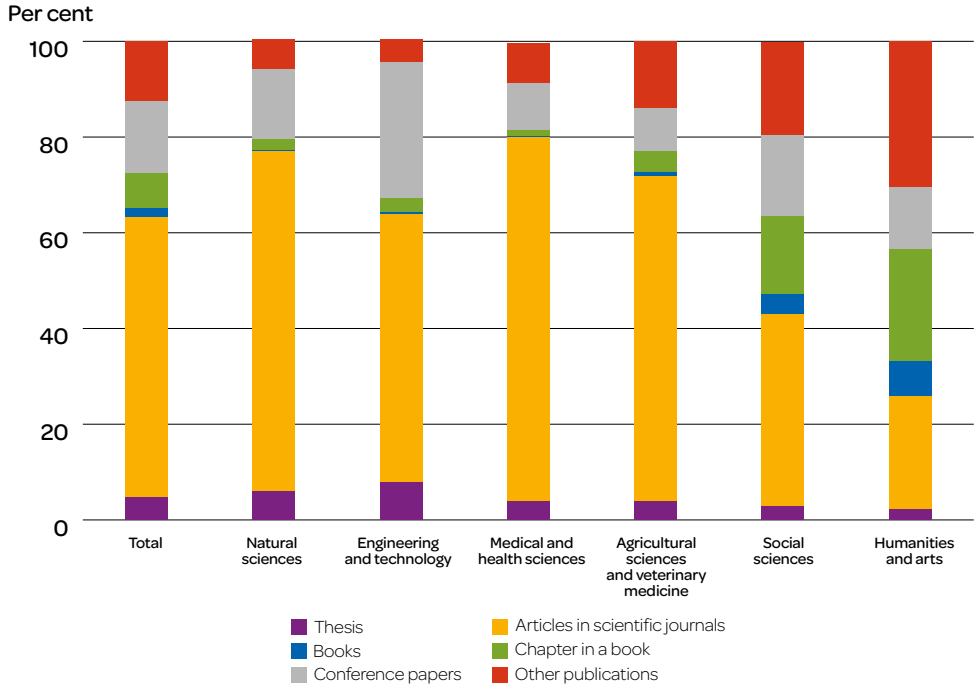
In 2023, just over 66,000 research publications were produced at Swedish higher education institutions. Over the past decade, journal articles have become increasingly dominant. Between 2013 and 2023, their number grew by 25 per cent, rising from 46 to 58 per cent of all research publications, while other types of publication declined.

Publication patterns vary by field of research and development

Publication patterns vary across fields of research and development (figure 8.4). Articles in scientific journals are the most common publication type in all fields except the arts and humanities, where other forms are more prevalent. Journal articles are especially dominant in the natural sciences and in medical and health sciences.

In the arts and humanities, as well as in the social sciences, books and chapters in books are more frequently published than in other fields. Conference papers, meanwhile, are particularly common in engineering and technology.

Figure 8.4: Distribution of research publications by publication type and field of research and development, year 2023



A publication is assigned to all fields of research and development recorded in Swepub and may therefore be presented in multiple categories. Swepub is a national database of publication metadata from Swedish higher education institutions and government agencies.

Source: Swepub

Most research published in English

The language of publication varies by type of publication. Nearly all scientific journal articles published by researchers at Swedish higher education institutions are written in English. By contrast, only about half of all academic books published in 2023 were in English. English is also less common in publications such as reports, non-peer-reviewed journal articles, and articles in non-academic journals.

The share of English-language publications has risen in all fields of research and development over the past decade, although differences remain between fields. In the medical and health sciences, engineering and technology, and the natural sciences, almost all publications are in English. In the social sciences, and in the arts and humanities, Swedish is more frequently used. In 2023, 75 per cent of publications in the social sciences were in English, and 59 per cent in the arts and humanities.

Annex 1
Government Agencies in the Swedish Higher Education Sector

Higher Education Appeals Board (Överklagandenämnden för högskolan), www.onh.se, reviews appeals against decisions made by higher education institutions concerning admissions, qualifications, and employment. It ensures legal certainty and fairness in higher education.

Swedish Board of Student Finance (Centrala studiestödsnämnden), www.csn.se, administers financial aid for students to support access to education. It also manages the repayment of student loans.

Swedish Council for Higher Education (Universitets- och högskolerådet), www.uhr.se, facilitates access to higher education and promotes lifelong learning by providing information on higher education studies, managing admissions, and evaluating foreign qualifications. The Council manages the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test and coordinates the national admissions process to higher education. It serves as the Swedish national agency for Erasmus+, the national ENIC-NARIC office, and the national Eurydice office.

Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet), www.uka.se, ensures the quality of higher education and research by evaluating higher education institutions and their quality assurance systems. It monitors compliance with laws and regulations, and provides analyses of the higher education sector as well as official statistics.

Sweden's Innovation Agency (Vinnova), www.vinnova.se, strengthens Sweden's innovation capacity by funding research and innovation projects that contribute to sustainable growth. It fosters collaboration across sectors to address societal challenges.

Swedish Institute (Svenska institutet), www.si.se, promotes interest and trust in Sweden internationally by sharing information about the country and facilitating international exchanges and partnerships. It aims to build relationships that enhance Sweden's global presence.

Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), www.vr.se, is the largest public funder of research in Sweden, supporting high-quality research across all scientific disciplines. It advises the Government on research policy and promotes the societal benefits of research.

Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte), www.forte.se, funds and promotes research in health, working life, and welfare to address societal challenges and improve well-being. It also evaluates research needs and communicates findings to ensure societal benefit.

Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development (Formas), www.formas.se, supports research and innovation for sustainable development in the environment, agricultural sciences, and spatial planning. It conducts analyses and evaluations to inform policy and practice, and promotes the use of research-based knowledge in society.

Annex 2
Glossary

English	Swedish
Associate senior lecturer	Biträdande lektor
Bridging Programme for Teachers Educated Abroad	Utlandsutbildade lärares vidareutbildning (ULV)
Career - development position	Meriteringsanställning
Completion rates	Genomströmning
(Direct) Government funding	Direkta statsanslag
Doctoral degree	Doktorsexamen
Doctoral studentship	Doktorandanställning
Field of research and development	Forskningsämnesområde
First - and second - cycle education	Utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå
Freestanding course	Fristående kurs
Further Teacher Education Programme	Vidareutbildning av lärare (VAL)
General qualification	Generell examen
Government agency	Myndighet
Graduation rate	Examensfrekvens
Higher Education Act	Högskolelagen
Higher education diploma	Högskoleexamen
Higher education institution	Lärosäte
Higher Education Ordinance	Högskoleförordningen
Independent higher edication provider	Enskild utbildningsanordnare
Lecturer	Adjunkt
Licentiate degree	Licentiatexamen
Performance indicator	Prestationsgrad
Professional qualification	Yrkesexamen
Public service agreement	Regleringsbrev
Qualification in the fine, applied, and performing arts	Konstnärlig examen
Recurrent funding for education	Utbildningsanslag
Recurrent funding for research	Forskningsanslag
Research assistant	Forskningsassistent
Retention rates	Kvarvaro
Senior lecturer	Lektor
Supplementary Teacher Education Programme	Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning (KPU)
The Swedish Parliament	Sveriges Riksdag
Third - cycle education	Utbildning på forskarnivå
University	Universitet
University college of fine, applied and performing arts	Konstnärlig högskola
University college	Högskola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