

# Sweden

## Demographics for Sweden

Population:	9,001,774 (July 2005 est.)
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$255.4 billion
Currency (inc code):	Swedish Krona (SEK)
Language(s):	Swedish, small Sami- and Finnish-speaking minorities
Internet country code:	.se

## Primary and secondary education

Primary education is compulsory and consists of ten years of schooling, starting at age six. It is divided into a pre-school year, and three years each at lower, middle and higher level. Primary education is often preceded by several years in day care (nursery school). Secondary education is nominally voluntary and consists of three years in a “gymnasium” (high school). Students who do not have the formal requirements from primary education are given the opportunity to make up for missing grades.

Schools are either municipal or private. The latter must be accredited by a central government agency. Sweden has a voucher system, which allows students to attend a private school of their choice. Private schools are not allowed to charge tuition.

All schools, public and private, must follow curricula determined by the central government, with some limited variation, but are allowed to choose methods of teaching. The curriculum in primary education is uniform, whereas there are a fairly large number of college preparatory, vocational and other tracks in the “gymnasium”. The introduction of the voucher system has led to competitive differentiation among schools in terms of specialized tracks or teaching methods.

## **Higher education**

The structure of university education in Sweden will be changed to conform to the Bologna Charter by 2007. This means a three-year basic level, a two-year advanced level and four-year Doctoral level, where one year of course work at the advanced level can count as one year in the Doctoral program. The following information pertains to the present system of higher education and will to some extent become outdated in 2007.

Higher education is given by universities, colleges, professional schools, and vocational and technical institutions. Universities and colleges are public, with the exception of Chalmers (a technical university) in Göteborg, Jönköping University and Stockholm School of Economics.

Universities offer three-year Bachelor's, four-year Magister (Master's), Professional, and Doctoral degrees. Colleges offer three-year Bachelor's degrees. Some colleges are accredited to offer four-year Magister (Master's) degrees and some, through affiliation with a university, Doctoral degrees.

A Bachelor's degree requires three years of study, including an undergraduate thesis requiring (nominally) half a semester's work. Students choose a major for their degree, usually requiring three semesters work, including the thesis. Admission to Bachelor's programs is based on the grade average from the "gymnasium", or the score from a general higher education entrance test, and some minimum requirements in relevant subjects.

The Magister (Master's) degree requires a fourth year of study in the same subject area as the major of the Bachelor's degree, and includes a second undergraduate thesis. Admission to the Magister year requires a Bachelor's degree.

Professional schools are usually part of a university or a specialized university or college (e.g. technology, medicine, veterinary medicine or dentistry). The professional degree is a first degree, and admission is based on the grade average from the "gymnasium", or the score from the higher education entrance test, in some cases complemented with interviews or credits from previous university studies.

Graduate education consists of a four-year program for the Doctoral degree, normally consisting of two years of course work and two years of thesis work. Most students admitted to Doctoral programs have a Bachelor's or a Magister degree, with a major in the subject area of the program. Students with other backgrounds are sometimes admitted, and foreign students can be required to demonstrate proficiency in Swedish and/or English, depending on the program.

Charters to institutions of higher education are issued by the government and accreditation is carried out by the public national agency for higher education. Degrees, minimum requirements, and other aspects of higher education are regulated, and the agency for higher education sets and controls standards.

Institutions of higher learning that receive regular financing by the government cannot charge tuition. Students at such institutions are eligible for grants and loans sufficient to cover a minimum level of living expenses.

### **Management education**

Almost all management education is given by universities and colleges, and conforms to the general structure at those institutions. In other words, students can take a Bachelor's or Magister (Master's) degree, with a major in business administration. The former degree will include a minimum of three and the latter a minimum of four semesters of full-time studies in business administration.

Only a small part of non-degree management education is provided by public universities and colleges. Non-degree management education is also offered by some smaller private institutions.

Most students taking a Magister (Master's) degree choose to specialize by taking a number of courses and writing a thesis in a particular area. The amount of specialization can be considerable and comprise more than half of the total number of credits. This is particularly true for those students who are admitted directly to the four-year Magister program in business administration. Also, many students choose to take more than the required minimum of courses and credits for the degree. The four-year Magister program usually includes minimum requirements in subjects other than business administration, such as economics, statistics and law.

There is no officially defined and regulated MBA degree in Sweden. Several universities offer MBA and EMBA programs. Participants in these programs are given certificates, but not official degrees. Programs vary in length, with full-time programs usually requiring one academic year. Programs can be both general and specialized.

Some universities have formed Schools of Business or Schools of Economics, consisting of departments of business administration and other departments in, for example, economics, law, statistics. Other universities have maintained the more traditional structure, where the department of business administration is part of the faculty of social sciences. Business administration programs also exist at the technical universities. The private Stockholm School of Economics is specialized in business education, and offers both an undergraduate and a graduate program.

Graduate programs in business education, giving a PhD in business administration, are structured as graduate programs in general, with about two years of course work and two years of thesis work. These programs are usually small in size, with a small number of students accepted each year.

### *Faculty*

Most faculty members in Swedish business schools and departments are academics with an academic education in business administration. Practitioners are usually brought in as adjunct professors or as part-time teachers. When university education was rapidly expanded in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were very few potential teachers with a PhD in business administration or related disciplines. Consequently, a fairly large proportion of faculty members still do not have a PhD.

The starting level is either assistant or associate professor. Assistant professor is a tenure track position, with promotion to associate professor after four years. Associate professor is a tenured position. Associate professors can be promoted to full professors. Full professors are either promoted or holders of chairs, which they have obtained in open competition.

Hiring of faculty at all levels is done through application in an open process, where the recommendations of two or three outside experts are made public. Research and teaching merits count equally when hiring an associate professor, although research merits in practice tend to count more, while research merits are decisive when hiring a chaired professor.

### *Students*

Most students are Swedish. The number of business students in a given year is about 15,000, making business administration one of the largest subject areas in higher education.

Four-year business programs at universities are very popular and attract students with a high grade average. Some programs are among the most sought after in Swedish higher education.

### *Accreditation*

There are no private accreditation organisations in Sweden. Five institutions have received the EQUIS accreditation. One of these has also received the AACSB accreditation:

- Estimated number of institutions with undergraduate business degree programs: 29.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Master's degree programs: 29.
- Estimated number of institutions with business Doctoral degree programs: 15.

### **Issues facing business schools**

Recruitment of students has in recent years become a problem for some of the new colleges, which set up business programs fairly recently. The problem is due both to overproduction of students with a business degree and possibly

also to some extent to the perceived differences in quality of education between older and newer colleges. These last have had difficulties in recruiting qualified faculty; a majority of the faculty members do not have a PhD. Hiring qualified faculty is however a general problem. Relatively few PhDs are produced each year, and the composition of new PhDs does not correspond to the composition of demand.

Another challenge to business schools is to raise the quality of their educational programs. The rapid internationalization of higher education has imposed increased pressure also on business education. The streamlining of business education in Europe through the Bologna Charter will increase competition for good students, and probably also for good faculty. Increased international competition is already making itself felt in the MBA segment of the market, where Swedish students and Swedish corporations are increasingly turning to business schools outside Sweden. Raising the quality of education necessitates raising the quality of faculty. This requires a number of different measures, such as improving the quality of PhD programs, hiring internationally, and giving greater incentives to publishing. A key issue is remuneration. Salaries are too low to attract a sufficient number of PhD students, and to keep new PhDs and particularly younger faculty members.

Business education is almost totally financed by the government (as is all higher education). Budgets have been squeezed for many years and most institutions have faced financial difficulties in recent years.

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