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National Qualifications Framework

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A European context

The Bologna Process

Since the late 1990s, the Bologna Process has offered an incentive for many European countries to reform their educational systems to make them more comparable and explicit. Today 46 European countries are involved in the process, including Sweden. The creation of a European area for higher education (EHEA) by 2010 is intended to strengthen Europe's competitiveness as an educational continent by enhancing mobility between the European educational systems and the labour market.

The overall aims of the Bologna Process have been broken down into a number of concrete goals. The most important of these are the following:

- Explicit and comparable qualifications. A joint qualifications framework has been created to increase the comparability of different countries' qualifications. Since 2005, all of the countries that signed the Bologna Declaration must also issue Diploma Supplements, an annex to a degree certificate that describes the programme and where it fits into the educational system. Diploma Supplements are issued automatically, free of charge for the student and in a large number of European languages.
- Three educational cycles that are based on and require each other.
- A comparable system of credits to facilitate student mobility.
- Greater mobility for students and staff, for instance through the mutual recognition of studies and professional activity. An important instrument in this context is the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, known as the **Lisbon Convention**.
- European cooperation in quality assurance, for instance through shared standards and guidelines for quality assurance.

Hitherto the Bologna Process has been monitored at regular meetings at ministerial level. The most recent meeting took place in Vienna and Budapest in March 2010. The next forum will be held in Bucharest in April 2012. You can find more details on the **Bologna Process** website.

A European qualifications framework

Within the framework of the Bologna Process, the European ministers of education have agreed that each country should develop its own framework for degrees and qualifications (qualifications framework).

An overall European framework for qualifications in the area of higher education (European Qualifications Framework – European Higher Education Area) has also been developed within the parameters of the Bologna Process.

This consists of a description of three cycles of education to which national qualifications frameworks must be related as well as proposals on how the national qualifications frameworks should be designed and what features they should contain to enable comparison with the qualification systems of other European countries.

The Swedish qualifications ordinance, with its qualification descriptors, could be described as forming the backbone of a national framework for qualifications in Sweden. Several other countries have produced their own national frameworks. These can be found on the [ENIC/NARIC](#) website.

Higher education in Sweden

Overall responsibility

In Sweden, overall responsibility for higher education and research rests with the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) and the government. They decide on the regulations that are applied in the higher-education area. They also determine objectives, guidelines and the allocation of resources for the area.

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for issues relating to schools, higher education institutions (HEIs), research, adult education, popular education and student aid. The public-sector HEIs are public agencies responsible to the Ministry of Education and Research. One exception is Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet (Swedish University of Agricultural Studies), which is accountable to the Ministry of Agriculture. Other agencies, such as Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education), Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) and Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish Research Council), are also accountable to the Ministry of Education and Research.

Higher education institutions

All higher education is offered by public-sector higher education institutions or by independent education providers that have been granted degree-awarding powers by the government. Third-cycle courses and programmes are offered by universities and university colleges that have been granted entitlement to award third-cycle qualifications. The decision to grant entitlement to award a third-cycle qualification is made by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education according to new regulations that apply from 2010 onwards.

There are 14 public-sector universities and 21 public-sector university colleges in Sweden. In addition there are three independent HEIs that are entitled to award third-cycle qualifications: Chalmers University of Technology, the Stockholm School of Economics and Jönköping University Foundation. There are also nine independent education providers entitled to award first-cycle, and in some cases second-cycle, qualifications as well as five course providers entitled to award qualifications in psychotherapy.

The Swedish Parliament decides which public-sector HEIs are to exist. The government can decide whether an HEI may use the title of university. A list of universities and university colleges and their addresses can be found on the Agency's website.

The missions of the higher education institutions

The mission of the higher education institutions is to offer education based on an academic or artistic footing and proven experience. They must also undertake development work, including research and artistic development. In addition, the HEIs must cooperate with their surrounding communities and provide information about their operations.

The central regulations that govern the way in which HEIs operate are contained in the Higher Education Ordinance, which is laid down by the government.

Within the framework of the regulations and parameters determined by the Swedish Parliament and the government, HEIs enjoy great freedom to decide how to organise their operations, use their resources and conduct their courses and programmes.

Allocation of resources to higher education institutions

The Swedish Parliament decides on funding for the HEIs. Resources are allocated to the institutions for first- and second-cycle courses and programmes on the basis of the number of students admitted to each cycle, expressed in terms of full-time equivalents (FTEs) and the number of credits attained (annual performance equivalents). Every year the government determines a ceiling figure for the institutions, which indicates the maximum amount that can be paid to each HEI.

The direct funding for research and third-cycle courses and programmes is based mainly on past allocations, but 10 per cent of the funding and new resources is allocated on the basis of two quality indicators from 2009. Those are citations and research funding from external sources.

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences has a special budgeting and reporting system in which funding for research, courses and programmes is allocated for a three-year period together with the educational targets for the same period.

The regulations that govern higher education institutions

In Sweden, public-sector HEIs are agencies in their own right that report directly to the government. The operations of HEIs are regulated by the laws and statutes that apply to the area of higher education. As government agencies, the HEIs are also subject to administrative and labour-market legislation and the provisions of the Instrument of Government. Their operations are also governed by the parameters and funding decided by the Swedish Parliament and the government.

Higher education in Sweden is governed by the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance.

The Higher Education Act is enacted by the Swedish Parliament and contains regulations about the operations of HEIs. These are often supplemented by the provisions laid down in the Higher Education Ordinance. The Higher Education Act contains fundamental regulations about the courses and programmes offered by HEIs. For instance, it sets out what should characterise these courses and programmes in the different cycles and stipulates freedom of research. It provides a framework for the organisation and governance of the HEIs, and states that every HEI must have a board of governors and a vice-chancellor. It also has regulations about the duties of professors, senior lecturers and other teaching staff, and contains provisions about student influence.

The Higher Education Ordinance is laid down by the government and is linked to the provisions of the Higher Education Act. For instance, the Ordinance states that students must be able to influence their courses and programmes and that HEIs must foster equality of opportunity and broaden recruitment. It stipulates that courses and programmes at HEIs be offered free of charge to students. It contains regulations on entrance qualifications and selection to courses and programmes, as well as the appointment of teachers and doctoral students. It also includes regulations on syllabuses for courses and programmes, grades and qualifications.

Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance and the annexes to the Ordinances on the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Ordinance on the Swedish National Defence College are qualification ordinances that contain the descriptors for all qualifications.

Within these parameters, the HEIs have relatively wide freedom to decide on their own organisation, allocation of resources and course offerings. The system is based on the principle of management by objectives.

The government lays down the directives for operations at the HEIs in their public-service agreements. The Agency exercises supervision of the HEIs, which means ensuring their compliance with the statutes and regulations that apply to the higher-education area.

Degree-awarding powers

In order to be able to award a specific qualification, the institution organising a programme – whether it is accountable to the state or independent – is required to have degree-awarding powers, i.e. special permission to award this particular qualification.

Universities are entitled to award first-, second- and third-cycle general qualifications.

The public-sector university colleges have a general entitlement to award Higher Education Diplomas, Bachelor's degrees and one-year Master's degrees. Those granted entitlement to award third-cycle qualifications within a speci-

fied field according to the new regulations that apply from 2010 are also entitled to award two-year Master's degrees in the field specified.

In other cases the government or the Agency decides on entitlement to award general qualifications. In the case of first- and second-cycle professional qualifications and qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts in every cycle, both universities and university colleges have to apply to the Agency for degree-awarding powers.

Independent education providers have to apply to the government for degree-awarding powers. This is also the case for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the National Defence College.

The qualifications that may be awarded are listed in the National Qualifications Ordinance. You can find out which qualifications each HEI is entitled to award by searching the degree-awarding powers database on the Agency's website.

The structure of programmes and qualifications

The Swedish Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance have been amended in accordance with the agreements reached within the framework of the Bologna Process, including the European Qualifications Framework (QF-EHEA). These amendments apply to courses and programmes offered from 1 July 2007 as well as to qualifications awarded after that date. Courses and programmes that started earlier are subject to transitional provisions.

Cycles

All courses, programmes and qualifications are ascribed to three cycles: first, second and third. There is progression, i.e. each cycle is based on the former. The formal requirements that distinguish these cycles are specified in the Higher Education Act.

All first- and second-cycle educational offerings consist of courses. These courses can be combined to form programmes

Cycle	Entry requirements	Cycle descriptor
First cycle	Final school grades or corresponding knowledge	Develop the students': ability to make autonomous and critical appraisals ability to identify, formulate and solve problems autonomously and preparedness to cope with changes in professional practice. Within the field covered by their studies the students will, in addition to their knowledge and skills, develop the ability to: search for and evaluate knowledge at an academic level keep up to date with the development of knowledge discuss their knowledge, even with individuals who have no specialist insights in the field.
Second cycle	First-cycle programmes or corresponding knowledge	Acquire specialised knowledge, skills and capacities in relation to first-cycle programmes by: further developing the students' ability to integrate and apply knowledge autonomously developing the students' ability to deal with complex phenomena, issues and situations developing the students' potential for employment that demands great autonomy or for research and development work.
Third cycle	First- and second-cycle programmes or corresponding knowledge	Develop the knowledge and skills required to undertake autonomous research

Higher-education credits

An academic year that comprises 40 weeks of full-time study corresponds to 60 credits. The number of credits awarded for each course is determined by the amount of study normally required to attain its objectives.

This credit system applies from 1 July 2007. When converting from the previous higher-education credit system, 1 credit in the old system corresponds to 1.5 credits in the current system.

The credits awarded in higher education in Sweden can be compared with European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits, where 60 ECTS credits are attained after one academic year of full-time study.

Categories of qualifications

There are three categories of qualifications:

1. general qualifications
2. qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts
3. professional qualifications.

Professional qualifications are awarded mainly in the regulated professions on the basis of the appropriate requirements.

Both general qualifications and qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts are assigned to the first, second or third cycle. Third-cycle qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts were introduced on 1 January 2010.

This is reflected in the National Qualifications Ordinance, as illustrated in the following table.

Cycle	General qualifications	Qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts	Professional qualifications
First cycle	Higher Education Diploma: 2 years, 120 credits Bachelor of Arts/ Science: 3 years, 180 credits	Higher Education Diploma: 2 years, 120 credits Bachelor of Fine Arts: 3 years, 180 credits	BSc in Occupational Therapy: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Audiology: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Biomedical Laboratory Science: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Fire Protection Engineering: 3.5 years, 210 credits BSc in Dietetics: 3 years, 180 credits Higher Education Diploma in Veterinary Nursing: 2 years, 120 credits Higher Education Certificate in Folk High School Education: 1 year, 60 credits Higher Education Diploma in Equine Science: 2 years, 120 credits BSc in Engineering: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Landscape Construction and Management: 3 years, 180 credits Higher Education Diploma in Agricultural and Rural Management: 2 years, 120 credits BA/BSc in Education: 3 years, 180 credits; 3.5 years, 210 credits BSc in Military Studies: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Optometry: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Prosthetics and Orthotics: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Pharmacy: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Diagnostic Radiology Nursing: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Physiotherapy: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Nursing: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Marine Engineering: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Nautical Science: 3 years, 180 credits BSc in Forest Management: 3 years, 180 credits Higher Education Diploma in Forest Management: 2 years, 120 credits BSc in Social Work: 3.5 years, 210 credits BA in Study and Career Guidance: 3 years, 180 credits Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene: 2 years, 120 credits BSc in Dental Technology: 3 years, 180 credits Higher Education Diploma in Horticultural Management: 2 years, 120 credits

Cycle	General qualifications	Qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts	Professional qualifications
Second cycle	Master of Arts/ Science: (1 year), 60 credits Master of Arts/ Science: (2 years), 120 credits	Master of Fine Arts: (1 year), 60 credits Master of Fine Arts: (2 years), 120 credits	MSc in Agriculture: 4.5 years, 270 credits MSc in Pharmacy: 5 years, 300 credits Master of Architecture: 5 years, 300 credits Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery: 1.5 years, 90 credits (requires a BSc in Nursing or professional status qualification) MSc in Business and Economics: 4 years, 240 credits MSc in Engineering: 5 years, 300 credits MSc in Horticulture: 5 years, 300 credits Master of Laws: 4.5 years, 270 credits MSc in Forestry: 5 years, 300 credits MSc in Landscape Architecture: 5 years, 300 credits MSc in Speech and Language Pathology: 4 years, 240 credits MSc in Medicine: 5.5 years, 330 credits MA/MSc in Education: 4 years, 240 credits; 4.5 years, 270 credits; 5 years, 300 credits; 5.5 years, 330 credits MSc in Psychology: 5 years, 300 credits Postgraduate Diploma in Psychotherapy: 1.5 years, 90 credits (requires a MSc in Psychology, Medicine, Social Work or the equivalent) MSc in Medical Physics: 5 years, 300 credits Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing: 1 year, 60 credits (requires a BSc in Nursing or professional status qualification) Postgraduate Diploma in Special Needs Training: 1.5 years, 90 credits (requires teaching qualification) Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs: 1.5 years, 90 credits (requires teaching qualification) MSc in Dental Surgery: 5 years, 300 credits MSc in Veterinary Medicine: 5.5 years, 330 credits
Third cycle	Licentiate: 2 years, 120 credits Doctor of Philosophy: 4 years, 240 credits	Licentiate in the fine, applied and performing arts: 120 credits Doctorate in the fine, applied and performing arts: 240 credits	

Teaching qualifications may be awarded in the second cycle as a Bachelor of Arts/Science in Education or in the third cycle as a Master of Arts/Science in Education, depending on the duration of studies. From July 2011 those degrees will be replaced by four new degrees in the field of Education.

Of the professional qualifications awarded in the second cycle, the Postgraduate Diplomas in Midwifery, Specialist Nursing, Psychotherapy, Special Needs Teaching and Special Educational Needs require a previous qualification. Other programmes that lead to the award of a professional qualification in the second cycle are undivided, i.e. are not split between the cycles. The Swedish system differs from many others in this respect. In addition to the programmes that lead to the award of qualifications, higher education in Sweden offers a wide range of freestanding courses.

Qualification descriptors

The Qualifications Ordinance contains descriptors for all the qualifications. These state the following.

- Scope: the exact number of credits required for the qualification.
- Outcomes: the knowledge and understanding, competence and skills, and judgement and approach that students are required to demonstrate for the award of the qualification.
- Independent project: the requirements that apply to the independent project.¹
- Miscellaneous: in addition to the above specifications, specific requirements are laid down by the HEIs for the qualifications awarded within the parameters of the qualification descriptors.

Independent projects are required for all first- and second-cycle qualifications. For licentiates and doctorates, a scholarly thesis or a research thesis is required. Special regulations apply for doctorates in the fine, applied and performing arts.

The titles of qualifications awarded in the first and second cycles comprise the title laid down in the Higher Education Ordinance or the Ordinances on the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish National Defence College, together with a designation determined by the HEI indicating the field of specialisation.

The titles of qualifications listed in the Qualifications Ordinance can be found on the **Lagrummet** website.

Translation of qualification titles

The Agency issues regulations and general advice on the translation of Swedish qualification titles to English.

Course syllabuses

Every first- or second-cycle course must have a course syllabus. This states which cycle the course belongs to and its learning outcomes, among other things.

1. The degree project or independent project required for first- and second-cycle qualifications, thesis for a licentiate degree or doctoral thesis required for a doctorate (although not for a doctorate in the fine, applied and performing arts).

Programme syllabuses

Every programme must have a programme syllabus. This must state, for instance, which courses the programme consists of, how the programme is organised and what general and specific entry requirements apply.

Transitional provisions

Students who began their studies before 1 July 2007 leading to a qualification according to the earlier provisions of Annex 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the Degree Ordinance or the Annex to the Ordinance on the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences are entitled to complete their studies for the award of a qualification according to the earlier provisions. This applies until the end of June 2015.

Admission to higher education

Sweden has a more uniform system of admission to higher education than many other countries. National admission regulations are laid down in the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance and the regulations issued by the Agency. The detailed national regulations apply mainly to the admission of university entrants to courses and programmes. There are also regulations on admission to second- and third-cycle courses and programmes, but these are less comprehensive.

Specific prior knowledge is required for admission to higher education. Those who have the required knowledge qualify for entry. Entry requirements can be either general or specific. The general entry requirements apply to all courses and programmes in higher education; specific (additional) entry requirements are also demanded by many courses and programmes.

All first-cycle courses and programmes, apart from those that lead to the award of a qualification in the fine, applied and performing arts, use more or less the same selection criteria. Selection is based mainly on grades or results from the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test. More information is available on the Agency's website.

The Higher Education Ordinance stipulates the general entry requirements that apply for all courses and programmes, as well as listing any selection criteria that may be invoked. It also contains regulations on the evaluation of final school grades.

The government has decided that the Agency should issue regulations in a number of areas. These regulations supplement and clarify the provisions of the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance.

Matters relating to admission are decided by the HEIs. They must have an admission procedure that sets out their regulations. An appeal may be made against an HEI's admission decision via the Higher Education Appeals Board.

The vast majority of admissions are pooled. Verket för Högskoleservice (The National Agency for Services to Universities and University Colleges (VHS)) is responsible for pooled admissions on behalf of the HEIs.

Admission to first-cycle courses and programmes

General entry requirements

Those with final school grades from a complete programme in a Swedish upper-secondary school or adult education at upper-secondary level with at least a pass grade in courses worth 2,250 upper-secondary credits and at least a pass grade in the core subjects of Swedish, English and mathematics meet the general entry requirements for first-cycle courses and programmes.

Applicants who met the general entry requirements before 1 January 2010 will continue to do so in the future. There is even a transitional provision dealing with what was known as the 25:4 rule. Those born before the end of 1983 and who before 1 July 2008 had the required knowledge in the core subjects of Swedish and English and at least four years of vocational experience will meet the general entry requirements until 31 December 2011.

Secondary education outside Sweden that offers qualifications for higher education in the country in which it was pursued can also enable fulfilment of the general entry requirements. Those who have undergone education of this kind need to verify their knowledge of Swedish, English and mathematics. It is also possible to fulfil the general entry requirements by studying at a folk high school or through 'prior learning'.

Specific entry requirements

For admission to many courses and programmes, the general entry requirements are supplemented by additional specific entry requirements. Specific entry requirements generally comprise knowledge from one or more courses in secondary school or the equivalent, and must be totally necessary to enable students to benefit from the courses and programmes they are applying for.

The specific entry requirements for university entrants are organised by field in Högskoleverkets föreskrifter (HSVFS 2007: 8). More information can be found via www.hsv.se/highereducationinsweden/studyingattheis/newentrantstohighereducation.4.28afa2dc11bdc557480002489.html

Prior learning

An applicant may be considered qualified even though he or she does not meet the formal entry requirements. This may be the case if the applicant's acquired knowledge and experience enables the university or university college to consider that he or she has the potential to cope with the course or programme. The HEI can then decide that the applicant meets the entry requirements through prior learning.

Selection

When there are more applicants for a course or programme than places, a selection is made. The applicants are ranked by calculating their grade tariff. This tariff is based on their final school grades or the results of the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test. At least one third of the places have to be allocated on the basis of final school grades and another third on the results of the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test. There are four categories, including one for applicants with grades awarded outside Sweden.

It is also possible for an HEI to decide on its own selection criteria for no more than one third of the places. An HEI may, with the permission of the Agency, use these selection criteria for a larger proportion of the places. The selection criteria that may be invoked in such a situation are:

1. specific tests other than the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test
2. knowledge, vocational experience or other experience that is of particular value for the course or programme applied for
3. other objective circumstances relating to the course or programme.

Alternative selection procedures may be used for all of the places in courses and programmes leading to the award of qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts.

Admission to second-cycle courses and programmes

General entry requirements

For entry to second-cycle programmes leading to a general qualification or one in the fine, applied and performing arts, a first-level qualification comprising at least 180 credits or a corresponding qualification from abroad is required.

Some second-cycle programmes that lead to the award of a professional qualification require possession of a specific qualification or professional status qualification.

Completion of first-cycle studies is required for admission to second-cycle courses.

Specific entry requirements

Again, the HEI may lay down its own specific entry requirements. These must be totally necessary for the students to benefit from their studies, and may include:

- knowledge from one or several courses and programmes in higher education
- other conditions that the programme entails or that are important for the professional area for which the programme offers preparation.

Prior learning

Applicants may also be qualified through another educational programme in Sweden or abroad, practical experience or some other circumstance. For this to be the case, they must be considered to have acquired the potential to benefit from their studies.

The HEIs decide whether applicants meet entry requirements on the grounds of prior learning.

Selection

Selection is based on each applicant's merits. The criteria may be grades, the results from the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test, earlier courses and programmes, specific tests other than the Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test, knowledge, vocational or other experience that is particularly valuable for the

studies applied for or other objective circumstances relating to these studies. The HEIs may decide which selection criteria are to be used and how places are to be allocated.

Admission to third-cycle courses and programmes

For admission to third-cycle courses and programmes, applicants must meet the general entry requirements and any specific entry requirements stipulated by a faculty board and also be considered capable of benefiting from their studies. An HEI that intends to admit doctoral students must advertise or provide equivalent information about these admissions.

General entry requirements

Applicants who have completed the courses required for 240 higher-education credits – of which at least 60 must have been awarded in the second cycle – meet the general entry requirements, as do those who have acquired substantially similar knowledge in Sweden or elsewhere.

Specific entry requirements

Specific entry requirements must be totally necessary to enable students to benefit from their studies and may involve:

- knowledge from studies in higher education or corresponding studies
- specific vocational experience
- requisite foreign-language skills
- other conditions entailed by the course of study.

Transitional provisions

For those who were qualified for admission on 30 June 2007, the earlier regulations will apply until 30 June 2015.

Selection

If there are more applicants than places, an HEI must make a selection. The faculty board at the HEI determines which selection criteria will apply to the assessment of applicants' capacity to benefit from studies. Information about third-cycle courses and programmes can be found in the Handbook for Postgraduate Students on the Agency's website www.hsv.se/highereducationinsweden/studyingatheis/newentrantstohighereducation.4.28afa2dc11bdcdc557480002489.html.

Quality assurance and inspection

Different actors involved in quality assurance

The existence of a quality-assurance process is important in establishing and maintaining confidence in the educational system.

The Swedish quality-assurance system is based on the quality procedures of the universities and university colleges themselves. Within the framework of the regulations laid down by the Swedish Parliament and the government, they have a relatively large amount of freedom to organise their own quality assurance. However, each institution must determine targets that can be monitored, and then report to the government about the quality-assurance measures to which it assigns priority and how these measures contribute to raising standards.

National responsibility for evaluating and monitoring higher education in Sweden rests with the Agency. The overall aim of the Agency's evaluation procedures is to ensure the fundamental quality of courses and programmes. Its evaluations also contribute to the development work of the HEIs. An additional aim is to inform students and others about the areas of education offered in Sweden: for example where they can be found, what profiles they have adopted, and their resources and infrastructure.

The Agency is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA).

There are a number of other organisations and networks that work with quality assurance at national and international levels in Europe and the rest of the world. A European Register of Quality-assurance Organisations (EQAR) was established in 2008.

The Agency's quality-assurance system

During 2010, a new system for the quality assurance of higher education will be introduced. This will comprise two components: programme evaluation and appraisal of degree-awarding powers.

Programme evaluation

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education has been assigned by the Government to develop a system for quality assurance for education in the first and second cycle. In the new system there will be a greater emphasis on the results of the education. From 2011 the Agency will start evaluating the first- and second-cycle education according to the new system.

Appraisal of degree-awarding powers

Appraisal of degree-awarding powers is an important component of the quality-assurance system. The HEIs that seek entitlement to award certain qualifications are evaluated by the Agency. The descriptors in the Qualifications Ordinance provide the guidelines for this process. General criteria on which to base these appraisals have been determined. They include teachers' qualifications, the educational setting, the organisation of courses, and programmes and outcomes. The concrete criteria that apply for each specific appraisal are drawn up by the external panel of assessors.

Supervision

The Agency has been given the task of supervising the HEIs – in other words, ensuring their compliance with the statutes and regulations that apply to higher education. This is undertaken by dealing with cases (initiated as the result of complaints or by the Agency itself), evaluation visits and projects. Most complaints come from students and may concern breaches by HEIs of the regulations that apply, for instance, to admissions, examinations, student influence or procedural delays. It is not unusual for student unions to make similar complaints.

The Agency cannot invoke sanctions but may express varying degrees of criticism. The Agency also makes visits to the HEIs subject to its supervision: three HEIs are inspected each year, with the results presented in a report.

International recognition of higher education

Recognition of foreign courses and programmes in Sweden

Recognition is a term that is often used in relation to the evaluation of qualifications so that they can be used in Sweden. There are two types of recognition:

- professional recognition for use in the labour market
- academic recognition to enable accreditation for the award of qualifications or admission to further studies and the transfer of credits from earlier studies.

Professional recognition

The professions that require a professional status qualification or the equivalent in Sweden are called the regulated professions. A list of the programmes that lead to the award of qualifications in these professions can be found on the Agency's website.

For each of these programmes there is a 'competent authority' that has legal responsibility for the assessment of programmes outside Sweden. The Agency is the competent authority for the teaching profession and therefore carries out these assessments and issues qualified teacher status certificates to those with teaching qualifications from abroad. A list of all the competent authorities can be found on the Agency's website. The Agency has also been appointed Swedish Contact Point for EU Directive 2005/36/EC.

In order to facilitate entry into the Swedish labour market for those whose professions are not regulated, the Agency evaluates higher-education programmes outside Sweden that have lasted for at least two years and have concluded with the award of a qualification. The foreign HEI that awarded the qualification must be recognised by the educational authorities of the appropriate country or a corresponding organisation. More information about how these evaluations are made can be found on the Agency's website.

Academic recognition

Responsibility for the assessment of courses and programmes to enable credits to be transferred for the award of a qualification or for admission to further studies rests with the HEI offering the programme. The Agency acts as an expert body for the academic recognition of qualifications from higher education outside Sweden.

International cooperation

Information offices in every country

National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARICs) have been established in all EU member states to facilitate mutual recognition of programmes of study and qualifications in the various countries. These offices provide information about both professional and academic recognition and also publish and exchange information on educational systems in Europe and elsewhere. They can be consulted by anyone who has completed higher education in Sweden and wants to work abroad, as well as by those who have studied in Sweden and want to continue their studies abroad. The NARICs can provide information about how courses and programmes in Sweden are evaluated and can identify the competent authorities in the countries in question. NARICs also belong to a larger network, the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC). ENIC extends beyond the EU and the European Economic Area and its role is similar to that of the NARICs. More information can be found on the joint ENIC/NARIC website.

The Agency's Department for Qualifications Recognition is the Swedish ENIC/NARIC office. The department also works to enhance international recognition of Swedish courses and programmes. The recognition offices in the Nordic countries have also set up a network, the Nordic National Recognition Information Centres (NORRIC).

Diploma supplements to facilitate mobility

HEIs are also required to issue a Diploma Supplement with a student's degree certificate. This supplement describes the Swedish qualification, where it fits into the educational system and higher education in Sweden, and is intended to make it easier for those with academic qualifications to study or work in other countries. Since 2003 HEIs are, according to the Swedish HE ordinance, required to issue Diploma Supplement. Since 1 July 2007 they have also been issued with all qualifications, including third-cycle degrees.

Agreements on professional recognition

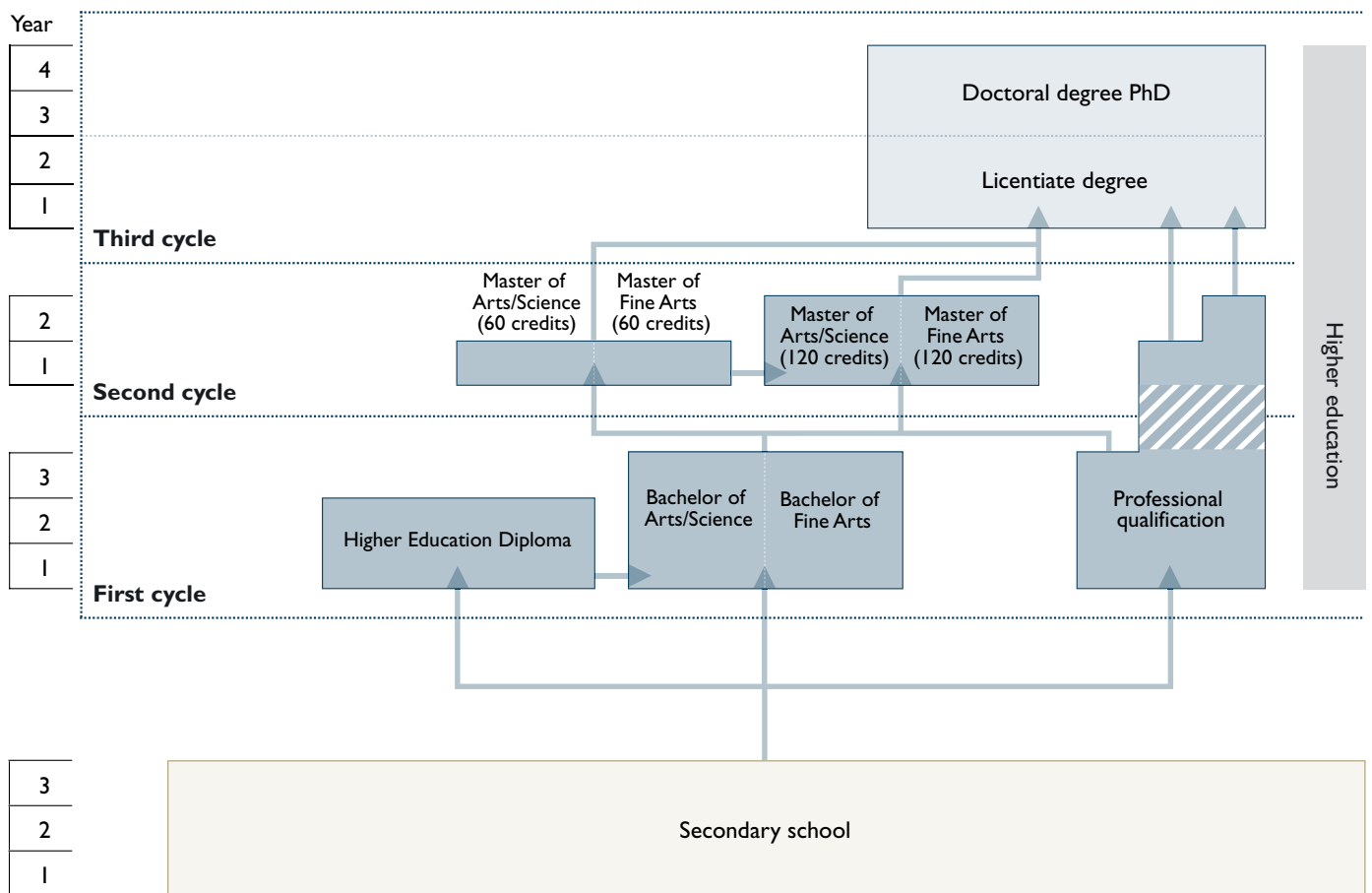
Like the EU's other member states, together with Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, Sweden is subject to an EC Directive about the recognition of educational and professional status qualifications. The aim of the directive is to make it easier for those who want to pursue a regulated profession in a member state.

Agreements on academic recognition

Since November 2001, the Lisbon Recognition Convention has been incorporated in the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance. This convention contains regulations on mutual academic recognition, i.e. admission to higher education, accreditation of periods of study and admission to further studies. There

are also rules about entitlement to specific academic titles. In ratifying the convention, Sweden has bound itself to comply with it. The Lisbon Convention is based on the principle of mutual recognition of all higher education. Only if there are substantial differences between courses and programmes in different countries can member states refuse to recognise them, either wholly or in part.

Annex I: Diagrammatic presentation of qualifications structure



Annex 2: Qualification descriptors: Bachelor's and one-year and two-year Master's degrees

The tables that follow present the differences between Bachelor's degrees and one- and two-year Master's degrees. This annex offers an example of the progression that takes place within general qualifications. Corresponding documents exist for qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts and professional qualifications.

All of the Higher Education Ordinance's qualification descriptors can be found on the Lagrummet website.

Total credits and required specialisati

Bachelor's degree	Master's degree (60 credits)	Master's degree (120 credits)
<p>A Bachelor's degree is awarded after the student has completed the courses required to gain 180 credits in a defined specialisation determined by each HEI, of which 90 credits are for progressively specialised study in the principal field (main field of study) of the programme. Completion by the student of an independent project (degree project) for at least 15 credits in the main field of study is a requirement for the award of a Bachelor's degree.</p>	<p>A Master of Arts/Science (60 credits) is awarded after the student has completed the courses required to gain 60 credits in a defined specialisation determined by each HEI, of which at least 30 credits are for specialised study in the principal field (main field of study) of the study programme. In addition the prior award of a Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree in fine arts, professional or vocational qualification of at least 180 credits or a corresponding qualification from abroad is required.</p> <p>Completion by the student of an independent project (degree project) for at least 15 credits in the main field of study is a requirement for the award of a Master of Arts/Science degree (60 credits).</p>	<p>A Master of Arts/Science (120 credits) is awarded after the student has completed the courses required to gain 120 credits in a defined specialisation determined by each HEI, of which at least 60 credits are for specialised study in the principal field (main field of study) of the study programme. In addition the prior award of a Bachelor's degree, Bachelor's degree in fine arts, professional or vocational qualification of at least 180 credits or a corresponding qualification from abroad is required.</p> <p>Completion by the student of an independent project (degree project) for at least 30 credits in the main field of study is a requirement for the award of a Master of Arts/Science (120 credits). The degree project may comprise less than 30 credits, but no less than 15 credits, if the student has already completed an independent project in the second cycle for at least 15 credits in the main field of study or the equivalent from a programme of study outside Sweden.</p>

Outcomes

Bachelor's degree	Master's degree (60 credits)	Master's degree (120 credits)
<p>The student shall have:</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including knowledge of the disciplinary foundation of the field, understanding of applicable methodologies in the field, specialised study in some aspect of the field as well as awareness of current research issues. <p>Competence and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated the ability to search for, gather, evaluate and critically interpret the relevant information for a formulated problem and also discuss phenomena, issues and situations critically - demonstrated the ability to identify, formulate and solve problems autonomously and to complete tasks within predetermined time frames - demonstrated the ability to present and discuss information, problems and solutions in speech and writing and in dialogue with different audiences, and - demonstrated the skills required to work autonomously in the main field of study. <p>Judgement and approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues - demonstrated insight into the role of knowledge in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and - demonstrated the ability to identify the need for further knowledge and ongoing learning. 	<p>The student shall have:</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including both an overview of the field and specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field as well as insight into current research and development work, and - demonstrated specialised methodological knowledge in the main field of study. <p>Competence and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated the ability to integrate knowledge and analyse, assess and deal with complex phenomena, issues and situations even with limited information - demonstrated the ability to identify and formulate issues autonomously as well as to plan and, using appropriate methods, undertake advanced tasks within predetermined time frames - demonstrated the ability in speech and writing to report clearly and discuss his or her conclusions and the knowledge and arguments on which they are based in dialogue with different audiences, and - demonstrated the skills required for participation in research and development work or employment in some other qualified capacity. <p>Judgement and approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues and also to demonstrate awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work - demonstrated insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and - demonstrated the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning. 	<p>The student shall have:</p> <p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including both broad knowledge of the field and a considerable degree of specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field as well as insight into current research and development work, and - demonstrated specialised methodological knowledge in the main field of study. <p>Competence and skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated the ability to critically and systematically integrate knowledge and analyse, assess and deal with complex phenomena, issues and situations even with limited information - demonstrated the ability to identify and formulate issues critically, autonomously and creatively as well as to plan and, using appropriate methods, undertake advanced tasks within predetermined time frames and so contribute to the formation of knowledge as well as the ability to evaluate this work - demonstrated the ability in speech and writing both nationally and internationally to report clearly and discuss his or her conclusions and the knowledge and arguments on which they are based in dialogue with different audiences, and - demonstrated the skills required for participation in research and development work or autonomous employment in some other qualified capacity. <p>Judgement and approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - demonstrated the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues and also to demonstrate awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work - demonstrated insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and - demonstrated the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning.