

The Swedish Education System – Higher education

Tuition fees

Tuition at higher education institutions in Sweden is free of charge for Swedish students and students from the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA). In general, students who are citizens of countries outside the EU, EEA and Switzerland are required to pay application and tuition fees.

Entry requirements

Everyone studying at higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sweden must fulfill the general entry requirements. In effect, this means successful completion of upper secondary education in Sweden or abroad. For some courses and study programmes there are specific entry requirements. In effect, applicants must have achieved specific grades in specific subjects at upper secondary level.

Funding

In 2014 overall expenditure in this area (including student aid and the central agencies) amounted to just under SEK 75 billion, which means that the higher education sector accounts for 1,9 per cent of Sweden's GDP. 44 per cent of the operations of HEI:s comprise first and second cycle programmes and just over half consists of third cycle programmes and research.

85% of the funding for the operations of the higher education institutions comes from the public purse. The remainder comes from private funding agencies and financial revenues. The Government issues public service agreements on an annual basis detailing the obligations of the higher education institutions.

Funding for first and second cycle courses and programmes

The funding for first (undergraduate) and second cycle (masters) courses and study programmes is based on the number of full-time equivalent students and the annual performance equivalent. The amount of funding varies depending on the disciplinary domain. There is also a funding cap that limits the size of funding a HEI may receive.

Funding for third cycle programmes and research

Funding for third cycle programmes and research is specified in the public service agreements for higher education institutions. Part of the state funding comes via the government research funding body. In addition, many higher education institutions receive external funding from foundations, local governments, county councils and the private sector.

Sweden in international comparison

The economic investments of the OECD countries in tertiary education are measured both in terms of expenditure per student and as proportions of the GDP. Irrespective of which measure is used, the USA and Canada invest by far the largest amounts, although the Nordic countries are also among those that invest most.

Sweden is one of the countries with the highest expenditure per student and a relatively high educational level. The largest proportion of funding comes from public sources. In addition education is free of charge for all students except those that come from countries outside the EU/EEA and Switzerland.

