

Adult education

Adult education in Sweden is extensive and has a long tradition. Adult education exists in many different forms and is organized by many different operators, from national and municipal adult education, to labour market training, in-service training and skills enhancement in the workplace.

The public school system for adults includes municipal adult education (Komvux), education for adults with learning disabilities (Särvux) and Swedish for immigrants (SFI).

Municipal Adult Education

Municipal adult education (Komvux) includes basic- and upper secondary education, as well as continuing education programs. Komvux was established in 1968 to offer education to adults who lacked the equivalent of compulsory school or upper secondary school. A new curriculum for municipal adult education was introduced 1 July 1994.

Basic education for adults

Basic education for adults corresponds to the regular 9-year compulsory school. The education shall give adult students the basic skills necessary to live and work in the community, and prepares them for further study. The level at which studies begin is determined by the prerequisites of each participant. Studies are considered complete when the objectives of the individual program have been reached. Participants may choose the rate of study themselves, enabling them to combine studies with work or practical work experience.

Basic adult education studies can lead to a level corresponding to the 9-year compulsory education. *Compulsory school equivalence* for adults is a final grade (leaving certificate) with a passing grade in the four core subjects: Swedish (or Swedish as a Second Language), English, Mathematics and Social Studies. Grades for other courses may also be included in the leaving certificate. The municipality has an obligation to provide basic education for adults lacking compulsory school equivalence.

Upper secondary education for adults

Adult upper secondary education and the regular upper secondary school for youths share the same syllabi and, from 1 July 1994, also the same curriculum. The education for adults is comparable to the education given in the regular upper secondary school, though not identical. Municipal education for adults is course-based, with courses in the different subjects building on one another. The skills and knowledge of adult students shall be augmented such that they achieve the same level of education as youths in regular upper secondary. The emphasis, content and scope of courses can, however, differ from that of regular upper secondary school courses.

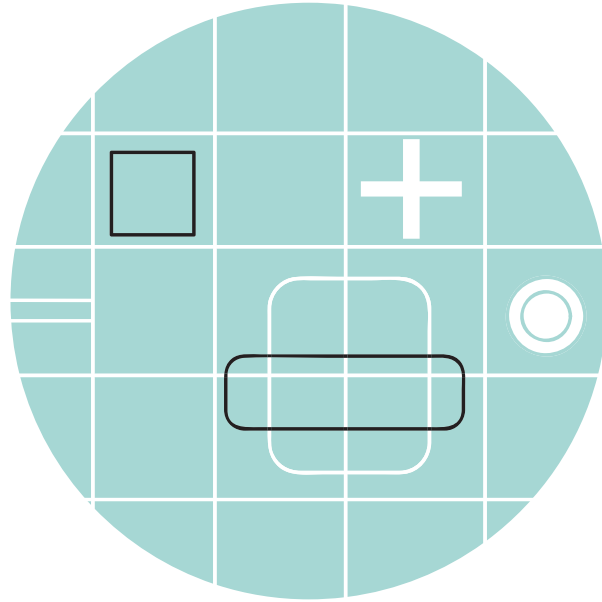
The rate of study and number of subjects studied, as well as how these are combined, is determined by the adults themselves. Many study only individual courses. Participants who have completed all of the core subjects and other courses totalling a minimum of 1 750 upper secondary credits are entitled to receive a final grade from adult upper secondary education (learning certificate).

Continuing education

Continuing education is a form of education of its own that can provide continued education in a occupation, or lead to a completely new occupation. Most programs are 6 months to a year long, and specialize in areas such as economics, computer processing or tourism.

Advanced vocational training

On 1 October 2001, the new Agency for Advanced Vocational Education began activities in Hässleholm. In spring 2001, Parliament took a decision to the effect that advanced vocational training would, starting in 2002, constitute a regular post-secondary form of education in the Swedish education system. Advanced vocational training is designed to lead to employment and carried out in cooperation with the workplace. The program is an alternative to other post-secondary education and falls under national jurisdiction with respect to supervision. One third of the training period, which can vary from 1-3 years, is carried out in the workplace. Advanced vocational programs are run by municipalities, training companies and post-secondary institutions in cooperation with the workplace.



Education for adults with learning disabilities

Education for adults with learning disabilities (Särvux) is a form of education of its own that is geared to adults with learning disabilities. Särvux follows the same curriculum as municipal upper secondary for adults and regular upper secondary school, but uses specially-adapted syllabi and timetables. The education is meant to augment the education of adults with learning disabilities based on the individual student's prior training, experience or other prerequisites. The programs offered can therefore lead to skills in individual subjects, as well as equivalence to compulsory school- or upper secondary vocational training for adults with learning disabilities.

Swedish for immigrants

Swedish for immigrants (SFI) shall provide knowledge of the Swedish language and Swedish society. Municipalities have an obligation to offer SFI to newly arrived adult immigrants. Programs may be organized differently from municipality to municipality.

The Swedish Agency for Flexible Learning (CFL)

Sweden's Agency for Flexible Learning was established 1 January 2002, when the national schools for adults and parts of the Swedish Agency for Distance Education (Distum) amalgamated. The task of the Agency is to support municipalities, adult colleges (folk high schools) and education associations and other adult education organizers, to develop more flexible courses and forms of education.

The Agency's head office and General Director and staff are located in Hässeholm, with operative units located in Härnösand and Norrköping.

Adult colleges (folk high schools) and education associations

The courses offered by adult colleges and the study circles and cultural activities of education associations are for all groups of society and cover a variety of subjects. The responsibility for allocation of government grants and evaluation of these types of education belongs to the National Council of Adult Education.

Universities and institutes of higher education

Most universities and post-secondary institutions in Sweden are state-run. Located in over 20 towns and cities across the country, they offer a host of independent courses and more comprehensive programs.

Labour market training

Labour market training is a labour market policy tool that targets the unemployed. The purpose of labour market training is to provide unemployed persons basic or supplementary vocational training. In following with parliamentary decisions, the National Labour Market Board is allocated funding which is in turn distributed to county labour boards and employment offices. The local institutions then purchase various training programs from different education organizers.

In-service training and professional development

Many workplaces provide comprehensive in-service training for personnel at all levels of the organization. This type of training can involve everything from practical vocational skills to extensive theoretical study. The training can be carried out in cooperation with universities and institutions of higher education, commissioned municipal education, or other training companies.