



SWEDEN

INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

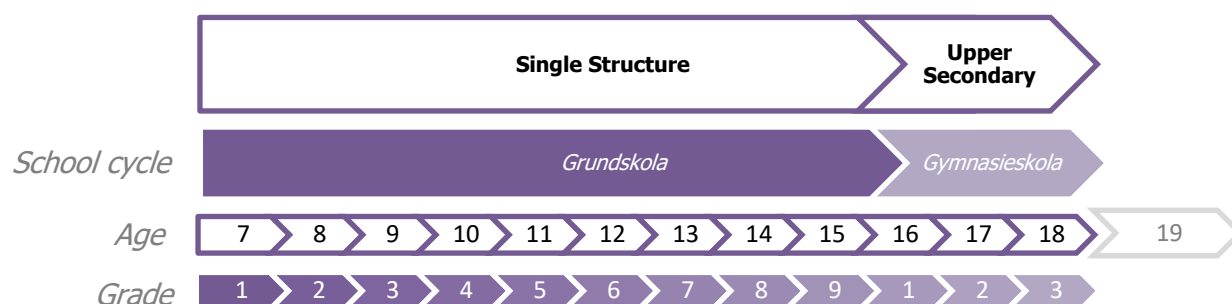
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The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly from the provider of the respective mobility programme.

¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



Education is compulsory until 16 years of age. Upper secondary education consists of 18 national programmes. Six of which are part of general secondary education and are preparatory for higher education (GE-programmes). Each programme includes foundation subjects which are the same for all pupils, subjects specific to the given programme, orientations, programme specialisation² and a certificate project, namely a project intended to be an examination of the total learning from the programme. Municipalities have a large degree of autonomy in organising and delivering education within the framework set up by the State.

Graduation and Certification

There is no final examination to mark the end of upper secondary school education. Each pupil receives the *Gymnasieexamen* (upper secondary school certificate) from their school, consisting of a summary of the courses studied and the marks received over the three years, including the certificate project. If pupils have taken more courses than their programme requires, these can also be included³.

The certificate provides access to higher education, and the marks received count towards the entry requirements for university.

For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu)

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM SWEDEN

Age and grade

Pupils can go on exchange from the age of 16, and most often travel in the second or third year of upper secondary school when they are 17/18 or 18/19 years old.

² More information on the structure of the national programmes can be found in Upper Secondary School 2011, Skolverket, p. 36, <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=2801>

³ Eurydice, National Education Systems, Sweden, Overview: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/sweden_en

Registration in the sending school

If you enrol in an exchange programme with a private agency or with *Ettarsprogrammen*⁴, you are considered to be on leave from school during the exchange programme, therefore you will not receive funding from the government for your education.

If you enrol in a mobility programme within a school-to-school partnership, you are entitled to continue receiving state funding for your education⁵. Your home school is responsible for ensuring that your obligations are fulfilled during the mobility, although this is difficult to achieve⁶.

Schools cannot prevent you from taking leave from school, and they must readmit you when you return from the exchange.⁷

Funding for the sending school

If you are considered to be on leave from school during the exchange programme, your school will not receive State funding for your education.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting up to a full school year. The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership⁸ (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool for programmes of any duration up to a full school year, although there is no evidence that it can be successful for the recognition of a full school year abroad.

Currently there are no mechanisms or guidelines for recognising learning periods abroad of up to one school year or for translating courses taken abroad into the courses – each giving points and marks– which are foreseen in the national curriculum, and which need to be completed to receive the school leaving certificate *Gymnasieexamen*⁹.

If you spend a period abroad in the framework of a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes from your mobility can potentially be recognised. If you enrol in an exchange programme outside of the school-to-school partnership framework, you will be regarded as on leave for the whole mobility and therefore your period abroad cannot be recognised¹⁰.

⁴ The government offers the possibility to spend a full school year abroad (*Ettarsprogrammen*) in Austria, France, Germany or Spain thanks to bilateral agreements with these countries.

⁵ E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

⁶ Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) on 6 September 2020.

⁷ School Act Chapter 5 § 16: pupils have the right to return to the same educational programme after spending a maximum one year abroad and to continue their course.

⁸ within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

⁹ Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) on 6 September 2020.

¹⁰ Information received from the Department of International Cooperation, Swedish Council for Higher Education, on 10 November 2020.

In any case, the school principal has the discretion to assess your particular situation and give you a passing mark (E) without requiring you to take exams¹¹: this is usually done for short periods abroad as the longer you are away, the more difficult it is to give you a mark. This option is not usually pursued as it would impact the final results in your certificate¹².

You always have the right to ask that your study period abroad be noted on your certificate¹³.

Possibility to take an exam on the whole curriculum to be admitted to the next school year

You can have any course and subject of your study plan validated and given a mark through an extended exam that will cover all the learning outcomes of the particular course. The teacher is responsible for the assessment and validation, and tools such as the Europass mobility certificate can be used to complement this process¹⁴. The longer the learning period abroad is, the more difficult it will be for you to take the extended marks as you will have to take exams in more subjects.

Most pupils – including those who have been on trimester exchanges – usually take exams to pass just some of the courses they took abroad (e.g. foreign languages) and they then repeat the school year.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN SWEDEN

Registration in the host school

Schools themselves decide on whether to admit pupils from abroad, as the framework set by the State does not include anything specific about temporary mobility. Since temporary residents in Sweden have the right to attend school, you hold the same right if you are living with a host family within an exchange programme. However, you can only access an introductory programme to study Swedish before becoming eligible to attend a national programme. Since this is difficult, schools only accept exchange pupils on an exceptional basis and place them in classes according to where there is a place available¹⁵.

Funding for the host school

Schools receive funding if they host exchange pupils.

Certification for hosted pupils

If you fulfil all the knowledge requirements for a course in a given subject during your mobility, you can be awarded marks for that course.

¹¹ School Ordinance Chapter 7 § 16.

¹² Briga, 2018.

¹³ Upper Secondary School Ordinance (SFS 2010:2039 chapter 8, 17-18§.).

¹⁴ Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) on 28 October 2020.

¹⁵ Data provided by Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) on 28 October 2020.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

You may receive the school leaving certificate only if you are admitted to a national programme and follow it for the full three years. However, in practice this is extremely rare considering most exchange pupils access Swedish schools as exceptional cases rather than going through the official requirement of taking an introductory programme to learn the language in order to access national programmes.

TESTIMONIAL

Hanna from Sweden: a full school year to France

"Your exchange year will be what you make of it."

I wanted to learn French and live an adventure, which is why I went on exchange. I encountered many difficulties, but I overcame them by being communicative and by learning to be vulnerable. Before leaving I practiced my French and did some research on the country and the region where I would live.

Another year at school after an unrecognised exchange

When I came back to Sweden, I had to repeat the year, so I had to do four years of upper secondary school, instead of three, but at least I ended up doing my last year with other students who had been abroad too.

After the exchange, I realised that the country and the language are only the backdrop of your experience, the incredible people you meet are what matters most. The culture shock can be intense but it only makes you stronger. That was the best and the worst year of my life: my family miles away and a new world to explore. My advice to future exchange students is not to overthink what you cannot control and to remember that your exchange year will be what you make of it.

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