



Folk High Schools in Sweden

A fact sheet about the Swedish Folk High School - an alternate form of adult education, spread throughout Sweden since 1868. The schools have a long tradition to provide general civic education, always emphasizing active participation by the students.

The Swedish Folk High School is an alternate form of adult education. The first Folk High Schools were established in 1868 and today there are 148 Folk High Schools spread throughout the country. About one third of those are operated by county councils or regions and two thirds are run by various popular movements and non-governmental organisations.

The overall objective of the Swedish Folk High School is to provide general civic education. Integral to this aim is to provide not only knowledge and skills, thus raising educational standards, but also to provide experiences and social awareness leading to a broader and deeper democratic participation. Folk High Schools offer a unique opportunity to enhance each individual's human resources.

The traditional independence of the Folk High School has led to extensive educational innovation, including problem orientated pedagogy and theme work in small groups, in which active participation by the students is emphasized and this is why Folk High Schools continue to be a necessity within the Swedish society. A certain level of interest has also been directed towards groups with special educational needs, e.g. people with short basic education, people with various disabilities and immigrants.

The Folk High Schools are monitored and evaluated in accordance with the provisions of a special ordinance for non-formal adult education. This is done by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, a non-profit association with certain authoritative tasks, delegated by the government and the parliament. The Council also distribute the state grants to the Folk High Schools.

General courses – a way to qualify for Higher Education

All Folk High Schools hold general courses, suitable for those who have not completed their secondary education, since they can provide equivalent knowledge. The subjects studied here closely resemble those in comprehensive schools or upper secondary schools; however, a different approach may be adopted. There is no centrally established curriculum, as each school determines its own programme. At the same time, the content of the course will cover a wide spectrum of subjects and a variety of optional subjects is usually offered. The participants study from one to three years depending on their previous educational background and the lowest age of admission is normally 18 years.

The general courses at the Folk High Schools have been ascribed a specific level of qualification by the government and the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education. These courses may be equated with the upper secondary school, which means that participants may qualify for higher education and university studies through a certificate verifying the participants' knowledge – Certificate: Eligibility for Higher Education. For more information about the requirements regarding the qualification and the certificate, see overleaf.

Special courses – a way to deepen your interest

Folk High Schools also offer a wide range of courses with a special emphasis. Students may choose from e.g. aesthetic subjects, music, theatre, art and design, athletics, environmental studies or subjects relating to developing countries. A few courses are vocational, such as journalist training and youth recreation leader programmes. The special courses can be studied at various levels, some of which are equivalent to university/college level.

For details; see overleaf.

Explanation of Certificate: Eligibility for Higher Education

- The Swedish National Council of Adult Education: www.folkbildning.se
- Swedish National Agency for Higher Education: www.hsv.se

Basic Eligibility for Higher Education attained at Folk High School

A person who has completed a one- to three-year course of studies at the Folk High School and who has achieved results corresponding to Pass in the core subject courses at upper secondary school shall be deemed to have 'basic eligibility' for higher education. The length of the studies required depends on the extent of the student's previous studies and work experience. Each academic year at the Folk High School comprises at least 30 weeks of full-time study.

Basic eligibility can be achieved by:

- three years of study at Folk High School; *or*
- two years of study at Folk High School as a supplement to at least one year of study at upper secondary school level, or compulsory school and at least one year's work experience; *or*
- one year study at Folk High school as a supplement to at least two years of study at upper secondary school level.

The core subjects taught at upper secondary school are:

- Swedish A+B alt. Swedish as a 2nd language A+B
- English A
- Mathematics A
- Civics A
- Science studies A
- Religion A

Study assessment achieved at Folk High School

Students who so wish may be given an overall assessment of their aptitude for studies. This assessment is an appraisal of the student's scholastic capabilities as a whole and is based on the assessments of all teaching staff. Scholastic aptitude assessments are given for those study courses that the school considers to be relevant.

The following grades are used:

- Excellent study aptitude (4)
- Very good study aptitude (3)
- Good study aptitude (2)
- Poor study aptitude (1)

The following factors are taken into account when making the assessment:

- Knowledge and skills and development of these
- Capacity for analysis, processing and overview
- Ambition, endurance and capacity to organise studies
- Social skills

To assist the determination of the assessment the Swedish National Council of Adult Education has approved special guidelines. The guidelines specify the criteria applicable for the assessment 'Excellent study aptitude'. The average of the study assessments set by the school during an academic year shall lie within the interval 2.7 plus/minus 5%. The average is computed on the basis of the numerical values stated above for the respective steps in the scale.