Curriculum, Subjects and Number of Hours

The Government (regeringen [1]) lays down the curriculum after a proposal by the The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket [2]). Prior to this the proposal has been circulated for official comment to a large number of stakeholders. The Curriculum for the upper secondary school (Läroplan, examensmål och gymnasiegemensamma ämnen för gymnasieskola 2011 [3]) steers the upper secondary school in addition to the Education Act (Skollagen [4]) and the Upper Secondary School Ordinance (Gymnasieförordningen, SFS 2010:2039 [5]).

The tasks of the school and the values on which the teaching should be based are laid down in the curriculum, which also sets out ‘the goals to strive towards’ and ‘the goals to attain’. These goals steer the quality work in schools and describe what pupils should have attained by the time they complete their schooling. It is the responsibility of the school and principal organiser to ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to attain these goals.

Education in upper secondary school (gymnasieskolan [6]) is organised in eighteen national programmes of which six are higher education preparatory programmes and twelve are vocational programmes. There are also specially designed programmes and individual programmes. All national and specially designed programmes include the same eight compulsory upper secondary foundation subjects (gymnasiegemensamma ämnen [6]): physical education and health, Swedish or Swedish as a second language, English, history, social studies, religion, mathematics and science studies. In addition, pupils study programme specific subjects (programgemensamma ämnen [7]) and submit a diploma project (gymnasiearbete [6]).

Pupils in higher education preparatory programmes have the right to at least 2,180 teaching hours of 60 minutes and pupils in vocational programmes have the right to at least 2,430 teacher led lessons of 60 minutes. Subjects are taught in courses and the education is completed when a pupil has obtained and been graded in courses corresponding to the total number of upper secondary school credits required for one programme. The normal period of study is three years, but in the system of courses and credits, pupils can complete upper secondary schooling over a shorter or longer period of time.

All subjects consist of one or more courses. The courses cover 50, 100, 150 or 200 upper secondary school credits. Upper secondary school credits indicate the scope of the course and work expected and correlates to the number of teaching hours per subject for the three years of education. The syllabus for each course states how many upper secondary school credits the course comprises. The Education Act (Skollagen [4]) states how many credits a completed upper secondary education should comprise and how these are allocated between programme specific subjects (programgemensamma ämnen [7]) and individual options.
The table below is a translation of the subject credits as allocated in the Education Act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational programmes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish/ Swedish as a Second Language</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education Preparatory Programmes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish or Swedish as a second language</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>100/200/300 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>50/100/200 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>100/200 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Studies</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>100 ****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjects through which the programme gets its character</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational programmes</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Preparatory Programmes</td>
<td>950/1,050/1,100 *****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual choice</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma project</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total secondary school points</strong></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Arts and humanities programmes 100, economics and social sciences programmes 200 as well as science and technology programmes 300.

**The Technology programme 50, Economics, Social Science and Natural Sciences programmes 100 as well as aesthetic and humanities programmes 200.

***Economics programme 200, other programmes 100.

****The Natural Sciences programme replaces Science with the programme specific subjects Biology, Physics and Chemistry and the Technology programme replaces it with character subjects Physics and Chemistry.

*****The Economics Programme 950, the Technology programme 1100, and the Aesthetic, Humanities, Social Science and Natural Sciences programmes 1,050.
Each programme is characterised by subjects specific to the programme (programgemensamma ämnen \([6]\)). The Government determines which subjects should be specific to a programme. Examples of programme specific subjects are child study, cultural and recreational activities, construction methods, energy technology, arts orientation, vehicle technology, food science, business economics, media production, working life, physics, chemistry, biology, philosophy, geography and modern languages.

As individual options pupils can choose courses from the national programmes that are provided in the municipality. Mother tongue tuition and Swedish as a second language can also be chosen as individual options.

**National Programmes**

The national programmes, covering 2,500 upper secondary credits, are structured in a way so that pupils have the opportunity to choose various subjects. The eight compulsory core subjects are included in all national programmes. Some programmes allow specialisation in the second and third years in the form of national orientations. Municipalities can also set up a local orientation i.e. a course of study geared towards local settings and educational requirements. The pupils can achieve specialisation by choosing different optional courses within all programmes. These options provide an all-round selection of courses, which broaden or deepen the pupils' knowledge. The number of courses to be provided is decided by the principal organiser. In all programmes, pupils can use 200 credits for individual options.

All national programmes provide a basis for further studies and basic eligibility for higher education. A course-based upper secondary school provides opportunities to ensure that education is relevant. The pupils have the possibility to alter the choice of courses so that the programmes consist of flexible education routes with individual choices.

**Vocational Programmes**

Of the 18 national programmes, 12 are vocational programmes:

The Child Care and Recreation Programme (Barn- och fritidsprogrammet \([8]\))

The Construction and Installation Programme (Bygg- och anläggningsprogrammet \([9]\))

The Electrical and Energy Programme (El- och energiprogrammet \([10]\))

The Vehicle and Transport Programme (Fordons- och transportprogrammet \([11]\))

The Business and Administration Programme (Handels- och administrationsprogrammet \([12]\))

The Handicraft Programme (Hantverksprogrammet \([13]\))

The Hotel and Tourism Programme (Hotell- och turismprogrammet \([14]\))

The Industry Engineering Programme (Industritekniska programmet \([15]\))

The HVAC and Property Maintenance Programme (VVS- och fastighetsprogrammet \([16]\))

The Restaurant and Food Programme (Restaurang- och livsmedelsprogrammet \([17]\))

The Natural Resources Programme (Naturbruksprogrammet \([18]\))
The Care and Treatment programme ([Vård- och Omsorgsprogrammet](19))

**Higher Education Preparatory Programmes**

Of the 18 national programmes, 6 are higher education preparatory programmes:

The Art, Music and Drama Programme ([Estetiska programmet](20))

The Humanities Programme ([Humanistiska programmet](21))

The Business Management and Economics Programme ([Ekonomiprogrammet](22))

The Social Science Programme ([Samhällsvetenskapsprogrammet](23))

The Natural Science Programme ([Naturvetenskapsprogrammet](24))

The Technology Programme ([Teknikprogrammet](25))

Schools are allowed to deviate from a national programme by seeking to operate special variations of national programmes. A school can also obtain permission for national recruitment if there is a national demand for the skills it provides. To pursue a particular variation of a national programme several requirements set by the government have to be met. Among other things, there must be a local or regional demand for the skills and knowledge that education provides. In 2012, 49 variations of national programmes or programmes with national recruitment were approved.

Schools can also differentiate their programmes within the 18 national programmes. There are 60 national specialisations in schools. In addition, schools may freely offer 200 points within the pupils’ “individual choice”. But above all, schools can influence the programmes through all the courses that the National Agency for Education has approved for programme orientations.

A specially designed programme can be put together for an individual pupil with special study needs. The school and the pupil together draw up an individual study programme for the whole of the education period. There are several options to support students, including:

- Repeating a course
- Individually tailored programmes
- Reduced programme
- Extended programme
- Special classes
- Study support in the mother tongue

There are introductory programmes which are individually adapted to the pupils. For students who are not eligible for a national programme, there are five introductory programmes. None of the introductory programmes provides an upper secondary diploma, but the idea is that they should lead either to a national programme or work.

**Language Teaching**

English has long enjoyed a special position among foreign languages in education and society. A pass grade in English from the compulsory school ([grundskola](16)) is a requirement for entering a national or specially designed programme in the upper secondary school. In the upper secondary school
English is one of the compulsory core subjects, which means that all pupils study English extensively irrespective of their study programme. Some Swedish speaking pupils study the entire upper secondary programmes in English. Providing a full upper secondary education in a language other than Swedish normally requires the consent of the Government.

In the upper secondary school, German, French and Spanish are offered in addition to English. If at least five pupils in a municipality wish to study a different language, this should be provided. As part of efforts to increase Swedish competitiveness the Swedish National Agency for Education was in 2012 commissioned to develop new courses and syllabuses for Chinese. The new course and subject plans took effect in the academic year 2014/15, but there is no obligation to offer Chinese as a choice for modern languages.

‘Swedish as a second language’ is a subject in its own right at all levels of school. Instead of studying the topic ‘Swedish’, pupils with immigrant background have the right to study Swedish as a second language. All pupils in the upper secondary school that have a mother tongue other than Swedish and this language is the daily means of communication in the family are entitled to receive mother tongue tuition (modersmålsundervisning [26]). The pupil also has to have good knowledge in the mother tongue to receive mother tongue tuition. Municipalities, however, are not obliged to arrange mother tongue tuition if suitable teachers are unavailable, or if there are less than five pupils in the municipality wishing to participate. However, for the recognised national minority languages (Finnish, Sami, Torne Valley Finnish (Meänkieli), Romani and Yiddish), there is no requirement that the language has to be used as a daily means of communication in the home, and the municipality is obliged to provide this tuition even if the number of pupils/students wishing to receive this is less than five.

Pupils that study mathematics and languages on a certain level, and to a greater extent than what is required for eligibility to a certain university programme, are given extra points in the admission process. (For more information about university studies, see 7 - Higher Education) [27].

**Teaching Methods and Materials**

Teaching is divided into subjects but interdisciplinary teaching is encouraged by the Government, e.g. by adapting compulsory core subjects – common to all pupils at upper secondary national programmes – to the pupil’s own study programme. Working methods that lead to collaboration, independence and critical thinking are encouraged in the curriculum. Governed by the curriculum guidelines the teacher decides which working methods should be used in order for pupils to attain the goals of the education. There are schools that employ specific teaching methods, for example 8 Waldorf/Steiner grant-aided independent schools provided upper secondary education in 2016/17.

There are no national guidelines regarding homework. Teaching material is purchased by the school from various publishers and producers and distributed to pupils free of charge.

Information and communication technology is used as a tool for teaching other subjects and taught as a subject in its own right. Methods and tools for teaching are not regulated in the Swedish school system, thus the ways in which ICT is used as a tool differs between different schools and teachers.

The apprenticeship training (gymnasial lärlingsutbildning [6]) is an eligible alternative in upper secondary school vocational programmes. Apprenticeship training has the same jurisdiction and examination goals as similar school-based programmes. But the student should spend at least half the study time in one or several workplaces. Apprenticeship training uses the same syllabi as school-
Based training and can start the first, second or third school year. Even a student who is enrolled in an apprenticeship programme has the right to obtain the basic eligibility for higher education. An apprenticeship training contract shall be agreed for each student and workplace within the secondary apprenticeship training.

Representatives of trades and employers take part in local apprentice councils. These councils cooperate participates in the planning and implementation of the education in cooperation with the school. The aim of apprenticeship training is to provide competence needed in the labour market and involve industry in the content and implementation of education. Apprenticeship training gives pupils the opportunity to carry out a larger part of their education within a national programme at a workplace.

Source URL:

Links
[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/institutions-47_en#Regeringen
[8] https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/gymnasieprogrammen/program?url=1530314731%2Fsyllabuscw%2Fjsp%2Fprogram.htm%3FprogramCode%3DBF001%26tos%3Dgy%26p%3Dp%26sv.url=12.5dfee44715d35a5cdafa9295
[9] https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/gymnasieprogrammen/program?url=1530314731%2Fsyllabuscw%2Fjsp%2Fprogram.htm%3FprogramCode%3DBA001%26tos%3Dgy%26p%3Dp%26sv.url=12.5dfee44715d35a5cdafa9295
[10] https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/gymnasieprogrammen/program?url=1530314731%2Fsyllabuscw%2Fjsp%2Fprogram.htm%3FprogramCode%3DEE001%26tos%3Dgy%26p%3Dp%26sv.url=12.5dfee44715d35a5cdafa9295
[11]
[26] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-70_en#M
[27] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/higher-education-80_en