

Subject grade reform in upper secondary education



Timeline



ID number 38584

Background

Swedish upper secondary education, including IVET, consists of courses and after each course learners receive a grade that contributes to their overall grade. Grades achieved in higher level courses in a subject that builds on progression from lower level courses do not replace, the previous lower grade obtained in the subject. Consequently, low grades from earlier courses are stated in the final diploma, although the learner progresses and achieves more advanced skills in later courses. Learners and others have felt that the system is counterproductive to skills development since the incentive may be stronger to study easier courses in new subjects instead of more advanced and/or difficult courses in a subject that has been previously studied. The system has also been criticised for increasing stress.

Objectives

To set up a grading system that increases incentives for learners to study more advanced courses in a subject and to reduce stress.

Description

A national commission of enquiry was set up in 2018 with a mission to propose a grading system that would increase incentives for learners to study more advanced courses in a subject and to reduce stress by replacing the current course-based grading system with a subject-grading system in which the grade for the last and highest-level module in a subject would be used for calculating the average grade. In the new system, a grade will be given for a subject as a whole not for each course in the subject.

2018 Design
2019 Design In 2019, the national commission of enquiry continued its work on a proposal for a new grading system.

2020 Design

In August 2020, the commission of enquiry submitted its proposals to the Ministry of Education. In November, the National Agency for Education received a government mandate to develop a new upper secondary education grading system based on the proposals. While some subject syllabuses included in the curriculum ordinance are decided by the government, all VET subjects are decided by the National Agency for Education. As a consequence, the agency has the authority to propose changes to the content and the diploma goals of the VET programmes. Additionally, the mission aimed to incorporate modules in Swedish and English in all VET programmes to provide learners a realistic opportunity to become eligible for tertiary education admission.

In 2020, the National Agency for Education is reviewing syllabuses in 325 subjects in upper secondary education and an additional 75 subjects in upper secondary education for learners with learning disabilities. There are 1 086 courses in the 325 subjects, of which 785 are VET courses. Some new subject syllabuses will be developed, others may be discontinued or changed in the process. The syllabuses and courses are shared by IVET in upper secondary education for young people and by IVET/CVET at upper secondary level in municipal adult education.

2021 Design

In 2021, the National Agency for Education was commissioned to prepare for the new grading system.

2022 Approved/Agreed

The new grading system based on subject grades was approved by the Parliament in February 2022. It is intended to be implemented in upper secondary education level in autumn 2025.

2023 Approved/Agreed

In 2023, the Agency of Education is working on the reform new grading system in upper secondary school and adult education based on subject grades. Over 600 subjects need a new curricula and decision.

2024 Approved/Agreed

In 2024, the Agency of Education continued its effort to implement the new grading system in upper secondary education and adult education, which is based on subject-specific grades.

2025 Completed

Since 1st July 2025, the reform of the new grading system based on subject grades in upper secondary and adult education has been in effect.

Bodies responsible

- National Agency for Education
- Ministry of Education and Research

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Acquiring key competences

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Building, assessing, grading - grades that better correspond to the students' knowledge](#)

[Missions of the National Agency for Education in the budgetary year 2020](#)

[Information and support about the reform Subject grades](#)

Related policy developments

2023 Completed

Facilitating permeability from secondary VET to tertiary education

The National Agency for Education received a government mission in 2020 to support secondary VET providers in including subjects and courses in all VET programmes that learners need to complete to become eligible for admission to tertiary education.

 SWEDEN

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Partial qualifications: vocational packages for adults

In October 2016, the government commissioned the National Agency for Education to recommend vocational packages for adults. These packages are clusters of courses agreed with industry as entry points into the labour market.

 SWEDEN

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Subject grade reform in upper secondary education: Sweden. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/38584>