



## ADVICE & TIPS – SWEDEN



Realistically, you are more likely to find a job in Sweden if you have a technical or vocational degree than if you have a social sciences or humanities degree.

- *Typical problems encountered:* overall there is increased competition for graduate jobs with around half the population of Sweden in higher education at some point in their lives. The majority of graduates are 20-25 years old and approximately 40,000 go into employment directly after graduation each year
- *How to improve your chances:* gaining employment in your home country and developing vocational or technical skills at graduate level for a few years will improve your chances of success. The best prospects are with international companies that have a base in the UK.
- *Language requirements:* although English is widely spoken, you will have difficulty finding employment if you are unable to speak and write in Swedish.

### The application letter

Speculative CV/covering letter applications are common. Large international employers increasingly use online applications via their website.

- The cover letter must be no longer than one page.
- If your Swedish language skills are insufficient, write in English (but not another language unless specifically requested in an advertisement).
- Try to make your letter simple and concise and avoid long, complicated sentences.
- While it is important to underline your experience, try also to show your personality through hobbies or interests. If you are applying for an IT job why not talk about a website you created or voluntary work that you did?
- Academic titles are not usually used in Swedish applications, except for jobs where this is relevant, such as a doctor or a university professor.

### The Curriculum Vitae

- Your CV should be no longer than two pages and should be written in Swedish when this is relevant to the needs of the employer.
- It can be set out in either chronological or reverse chronological order and in either the first or third person.
- The level of detail can be relatively comprehensive, but don't write long blocks of text - bullet points with a couple of lines of text are often the norm.
- Begin with your personal details, such as name and address. Your date of birth should be included and written YYMMDD with no spaces between the digits, e.g. 820716 for 16 July 1982. Your civil status (marital status) can be added at this point but is not obligatory. A small photo is becoming increasingly acceptable.
- You should then proceed with your education history, including your results.
- Then list details of your work experience and any jobs you had while you were a student.

- Copies/original documents of qualifications are not required unless requested. It is good practice to take these to interview.
- Headings are important throughout the CV, and dates should be precisely stated in the order and style described above.
- If you have a driving licence, say so, preferably in a section titled 'Additional Skills' or 'Further Details' which should also include details of any IT skills, languages spoken, etc.
- It is not obligatory to give the names of your referees. If you do wish to name them, you can do so either in your CV or in your covering letter. They should be individuals who know you from your recent educational/work experience. If you do not give referees' names, be prepared to take them with you to interview.

## **The application procedure**

It is not common practice in Sweden to receive an acceptance or rejection in written form. If there is no reply within 10-14 days, feel free to contact the company. It is not considered as too forward and may be positive in terms of showing interest and determination.

Assessment centres are common for graduate-level jobs. They include interviews, aptitude tests and job simulation tests that focus on teamwork and working under stress.

At interview, recruiters are keen to find out more about wider life experiences outside of the academic environment. Be prepared to talk about your interests and extracurricular activities and, if possible, positions of responsibility.

During interviews for jobs in the public sector, a trade union representative from within the organisation is usually present to ensure that everything goes according to the rules.

Be prepared to ask some questions at the end of the job interview.

The number of times you will be interviewed depends largely on the job you are applying for and the ethos of the company or organisation.

Application interviews are a standard element of the selection procedure for jobs at all skill levels in Sweden. A recruiter wants to have a full picture of the person he or she is going to select. Be prepared for questions about yourself, your hobbies, membership of associations or sporting clubs, and on your strong points and your weaknesses.

Bring copies of diplomas and testimonials to the interview, if you have not already sent them with your application letter. Assessment centres are becoming more popular, especially when applying for higher positions. They cover interviews, aptitude tests and job simulation tests, which focus on teamwork and working under stress.

During public sector interviews a trade union representative, working within that particular organisation, is usually present to ensure that everything goes according to the rules. Furthermore, be prepared to ask him/her some questions at the end of the job interview. The amount of times you will be interviewed depends largely on the function and the company or organisation.

On-line applications are nowadays common. In fact, a lot of job agencies, but also

employers who publish their vacancies on-line provide the opportunity to complete the job application form on-line.

### **Where can I work?**

- Major industries: services (information technology (IT), telecommunications, biotechnology), manufacturing (wood pulp and paper products), machinery and metal products (iron and steel), mining, electrical equipment, aircraft, the automotive industry.
- Recent growth areas: consulting, pharmaceutical manufacturing and retail.
- Industries in decline: the traditional industries of steel, paper and pulp have fallen behind IT and telecommunications.
- Shortage occupations: pre-school teachers (for pupils aged one to six), veterinarians, doctors, dentists, midwives, specialist nurses, auditors, specialist engineers and technical IT professionals, especially in systems and programming.
- Major companies: Astrazeneca, Castrol, Saab, Siemens, IKEA, Electrolux, Gambro, Scania, Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken.
- Major cities: Stockholm (capital), Gothenburg, Malmö and Uppsala.

### **What's it like working in Sweden?**

- Average working hours: the maximum legal working week is 40 hours.
- Holidays: 25 days paid holiday per year is the legal minimum.
- Average graduate starting salary: around SEK 24,000 per month (about £24,000 per annum) (SACO (Swedish Conference of Professional Association), 2007).
- Tax rates: Sweden is usually reckoned to have one of the highest rates of taxation in the world. EU students and graduates who are employed in Sweden and stay for less than six months can pay a special voluntary income tax of 25%. After six months, the tax-free allowance is SEK 328,600. Tax on income between SEK 328,600 and SEK 488,600 p.a. is 20%, and on income over SEK 488,600 the rate is 25% (2008 figures). However, taxes are also payable to municipal and county authorities and VAT stands at 25% on most goods apart from food, and at 12% on most services.
- Working practices and customs: trade unions are a well-established part of employment in Sweden and most workers belong to one. Conditions of employment are decided between employers and trade unions by collective agreement. With regard to etiquette, business meetings are formal and punctuality is expected.