

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Swedish society is very much pro-science oriented and the trust in science is very high. According to a study conducted in 2004, 85% of Swedes consider that scientific and technological development makes life better for ordinary people. This has gone up from a figure of 65% 25 years ago.

Most basic research in Sweden takes place at the universities and university colleges which make up the Swedish higher education system. Basic resources are allocated to these institutions from the State, but there are also many public sources in the form of foundations, some of them created by private donations.

The Swedish Research Council is an independent agency of the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science. The main Research Council integrates several different research councils (covering different research sectors). Researcher representatives elected by the research community hold a majority of seats in the councils. This researcher-controlled system is of fundamental significance to the quality assurance in the councils. The rationale behind this organization is, that only researchers have the expertise to determine whether research maintains good scientific quality. One obvious aspect of this is that programme officers at the Research Councils work as a secretariat for committees, but they have very few possibilities themselves to initiate new research programmes.

Among the public bodies that fund research there are a number of research foundations (for example the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research). These research foundations were established by the Swedish government in the 90s. The foundations finance research to a sum of about SEK 1,5 billion annually. Approximately 50% of the research performed at Swedish universities and university colleges is paid by the universities from the regular budget, the other half is financed with external funds.

Scientists compete on a national basis for research grants from the Research Council. The Council ranks and finances basic research of the highest quality in all scientific disciplines. The aim is to ensure that Sweden maintains its leading position as a nation engaged in research. Every year, the applications for projects, equipment, research positions etc. are received in May, and then the evaluation is done during summer and early autumn before the decisions are taken in November and December. Contracts are typically granted for 3 years.

The research equipment is usually not supported by universities from its regular budget, but from special research infrastructure projects (national or international), by project money (indirect costs are usually around 50%), and by research foundations like the Wallenberg foundation. (The Wallenberg foundation is a private organization, which grants are made primarily to fund very expensive research equipment.)

RESEARCH CAREER (ACADEMIC)

The research career for a your researcher can proceed in several ways. In general, typical path of a physics graduate can move along the following steps:

a) Postdoc

Typically after PhD exam one is looking for a postdoc position offered in the different research group than the one leading to the doctorate degree, and often abroad (international experience is seen as an important advantage for the further career).

In the majority of cases the postdoc positions are paid by external grants allocated specifically for these positions.

b) "Forskarassistent"/"biträdande lektor"

The so-called "Forskarassistent" (corresponding to the assistant professor position existing at American

universities) is a 4-5 year-long university position for which compete(???) PhD graduates with earlier postdoc experience. The name "forskarassistent" - research assistant, is misleading, because during this period the scientist should become fully independent. Two other activities which should be pursued besides the research, are tutoring and teaching, since these are the prerequisites for achieving the qualification of "docent" which is the only way to formally become the main supervisor for a PhD students. Similar to "forskarassistent" is a position of "biträdande lektor"- assistant teacher. The only difference being that the "biträdande lektor" position is tenure track towards a tenure position as a "lektor" (teacher), while the forskarassistent is not tenure track.

c) "lektor"

"Lektor" (lecturer) is a tenure position which always involves teaching duties, but it can also include a large content of research depending on the holder's success in receiving external money. The lecturer position can be promoted to a professor position if the holder is very successful in research, production of PhD exams as well as teaching.

d) Professor chair.

This position can not be obtained by promotion, but only by applications.

All academic positions are open for international applicants. It is common that non Swedish researchers are appointed to the different positions.