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Final version 20 September 2010

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***The Swedish  
Master Project:  
The introduction  
of the second  
cycle at three  
Swedish  
universities***

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**Acknowledgements**

The project leaders are deeply grateful for all the institutional support that the Swedish Master project have received, without this support it would not have been possible to successfully complete the project. Our heartfelt thanks go to the Steering Committee, Lennart Weibull, Ingela Elofsson, Eva Åkesson, Susanne Wallmark, Kerstin Sahlin and Åsa Kettis Lindblad who have provided the critical support and encouragement that made it possible to implement and run the project.

We owe a particular depth of gratitude to two groups of people, without whom there would have been no report. A special appreciation goes to Olof Nelsson who put all his creativity into solving the definition and comparison problems that we encountered. Many thanks to the data support people who helped out when the collection of key figures stalled: Katarina Borne, Karin Nordgren and Mats Olsson. We will also thank Marita Wigren for her comments on the Bologna process and the staff and students from the 13 programmes who very kindly provided very intelligent responses to our many questions on set up, content and practice within their very exciting new programmes.

Hanne Smidt, Ulf Dalnäs, Kristina Josefson and Maivor Sjölund

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## 1. Background

The very first two-year Swedish masters graduated in 2009 with a degree taken at the advanced level. For the first time graduates in Sweden have had the possibility to study at the second cycle as has been common practice in most of Europe. The introduction of the second cycle in 2007 presented great opportunities for the universities to create entirely new degrees and subject combinations often with a view to upgrade prior qualification. These are aspects that can be seen in the majority of the programmes looked at in this project, as can the ambition to create internationally competitive two-year master degrees.

The hallmark of Swedish higher education has been transparency and flexibility since the 1970s, when an ECTS-like system was introduced along with the introduction of a tradition of both pre-defined programmes and the possibility to select free-floating courses and thus “constructing” an individual programme. The point system created an unprecedented transparency for all stakeholders. Employers and graduates alike knew the value of the number of points and the progression of levels, and this created a tradition where the transcript of all courses was sufficient documentation for both the student and the employer, and for the non-vocational graduates it was not an absolutely essential to have the actual diploma. More often than not the students would collect more points than what was strictly necessary to obtain the diploma. From a lifelong learning perspective it was possible to keep adding points and to upgrade continuously, and the attitude among graduates is that they are expecting to be able to upgrade sooner or later. It would be possible to claim that it could have been a role-model for the Bologna Process in relation to transparency and flexibility in the degree system.

The traditional degree in Sweden was the magister, a four-year degree at undergraduate level that could be followed by a four-year doctoral programme. The latest reports (Trends reports) on the Bologna Process indicate that Sweden is one of very few countries that did not have the second cycle and had to prolong the length of study for the second cycle degree. The legal framework for the introduction of the Bologna reforms made it possible for Swedish universities to offer both a one-year and a two-year master in the second cycle. From the start the introduction of the two-year master was done with a view to becoming more competitive internationally. A great number of master programmes were created, about 680 programmes (HSV 2007-11-27 2007/9) in the first year and about 460 master programmes attracted sufficient a number of students to start in year 2007/2008 (HSV 2009-02-12 Analys nr 2009/1).

Swedish higher education is provided for free for all students (national and international), and have attracted a great number of international students, 61% in academic year 2007/2008 and 63% in 2008/2009 (HSV 2009-02-12 Analys nr 2009/1 and HSV 2009-12-01 Analys nr 2009/10) of all newly enrolled students in the second cycle at Swedish institutions.

### ***The Aim of the Project***

Three of the largest universities in Sweden: University of Gothenburg, Lund University and Uppsala University decided in the spring of 2009 to initiate a closer cooperation, and the first collaborative project was to make an early investigation into the implementation of the new two-year master degree. The main objectives of the project were:

- To make an early investigation into the implementation of the master level degrees at the three universities and the role of access, retention and employability in relation to a more diversified student population: different ways in and different ways out.

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- To identify possible key characteristics for different types of master degrees as they have been identified at the European level: research/continuation master, professional master, international master and LLL master
  - Reflect on the introduction and use of the Bologna tools
  - To discuss the international dimension of the Swedish master degree
  - To develop further cooperation between the participating universities
  - To reflect on the need for a national campaign and information about the new degree system.

The present report presents the main findings of the project that can be a source of information and inspiration for the leadership at both the programme and the institutional level.

## 2. Introduction and methodology

The Swedish Master project was conceived as an innovative project that would promote closer cooperation and collaboration between the three participating universities. The project has been governed by a Steering Committee consisting by the pro-rectors and directors for quality assurance, supported by a national co-ordination group with three institutional project leaders and a national project leader.

The project has benefited from the enhanced possibilities to exchange ideas and practices relating to the introduction of the advanced level at Swedish universities as decided by the parliament in a law from 2007 by following the introduction of the Bologna Process at several different levels from the university leadership to the master programmes themselves. The overall project itself has had a clear quality-enhancing aim with a benchmarking aspect. To enable both the analysis and the benchmarking, the project has defined and collected appropriate key figures related to the introduction of the two-year master and carried out site-visits to the three universities and interviewed both staff and students in separate interviews<sup>1</sup> to get as accurate a picture as possible from both the teachers and the students of the new master programmes. The project was devised in the spirit of student-centered learning and reaching the aims of the Bologna Process of quality, employability, accountability and mobility.

The project itself has had three phases. The first phase has been to identify key figures and to collect them at each institution on the two-year master programmes and their students. The second phase has been to carry out site-visits and to analyse the results of the two phases in order to identify achievements and potential problems with a view to benchmark the implementation of the two-year master. A third phase is to communicate the results to a wider academic audience as a quality enhancement project and to help raise the public awareness of the new graduates.

The methodology in the Swedish Master report is based on an analysis of the national text for the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance (2007), national statistics and the identification and collection of key figures on the two-year master programmes and site-visits at the three participating universities. The questions used in the site-visits were related directly to the implementation of the two-year master programmes and mirrored the ones used at the European level by the European University Association (EUA) for investigating the introduction the Bologna Process (Trends reports) and the EUA European master project. The questions related to the concept phase, access, content, retention and employability were used in interviews with the different groups of actors;

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<sup>1</sup> The questions asked are attached in Annex 2

students, professors, student counsellors and programme responsables in order to reach a more in-depth understanding of the different challenges for the introduction of the two-year master programmes.

The method allows both for a quantitative view of the implementation of the advanced level combined with a more qualitative perspective from the individual two-year master programmes. Preparing for the site-visits, each university identified 4 or 5 different programmes (in total 13 programmes) that could help to highlight the diversity of approach in the new two-year master programmes and reflected a description of different ways in and out that University of Gothenburg had developed for the adoption of a policy for the second cycle and the introduction of a study council for the advanced level.

### **3. The political intentions behind the new educational structure – first cycle, second cycle, and third cycle – from July 1, 2007**

In June 2005, the government submitted a bill titled New World – New Higher Education (2004/05:162) to Parliament proposing a new structure and system of degrees for higher education. The proposal involved the abolition of the dichotomy that existed between undergraduate and postgraduate education. Instead, a three-level structure was suggested: first cycle, second cycle, and third cycle. The government referred to the Bologna Process and the fact that the proposed structure exists in several European countries and was therefore well recognized internationally.

The aim of the following analysis is to investigate what intentions and arguments the government put forward in the bill proposing the new educational structure. This is especially applicable to the reasons that the government wanted to introduce the second cycle as an entirely new level in the Swedish system of higher education.

What the government put forward were mainly the arguments regarding the international currency of the education, and the familiar objectives from the Bologna Process, such as comparability and employability, along with greater mobility for students and teachers. The government also presented its intention to eliminate the sharp distinction between undergraduate and postgraduate education.

Instead, the government wished to create a flexible structure between the second cycle and the research level. Courses from the respective levels should be counted for credit. Students in the second cycle should be able to take certain courses from the third cycle, and the third cycle (doctoral level) should comprise components that could also be included in second-cycle degrees. The government maintained that such components should then be counted toward the doctoral degree.

This having been said, a discussion followed on how to address the relationship between the second cycle and the third cycle should be envisaged. The bill stated that for some doctoral candidates the third cycle could in practice be three years if it built on a two-year master degree, whereas for others, building on a one-year master degree, it would still be four years.

The government underlined further that it is “important not to establish a praxis whereby admission to the third cycle education normally occurs following a two-year master degree but without the period of study leading to a doctorate being shortened. Such a praxis would entail an unfortunate and unjustified extension of the period of studies for the doctorate.” Despite this caveat, there is no proposal to change the length of studies in the Higher Education Act or Ordinance. Formally, then, the four-year period of study is retained for the third cycle. The institutions themselves have thereby been able to arrange a more flexible transition between the second cycle and the third cycle.

The government states further that education in the second cycle must be characterized by greater depth and a higher degree of independence in relation to that of the first cycle.

To enhance the clarity of the description of what should characterize second-cycle education, the government proposes that the description must be introduced by the words: "Education in the second cycle must entail more in-depth knowledge, skills, and competences in relation to education in the first cycle....".

The point of departure for the government's characterization of the second cycle was the documents elaborated in the Bologna Process to create comparability in higher education in Europe, that is, the *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)*. In accordance with this, the government proposed that second-cycle education should be characterized by the student's capacity to independently integrate and apply knowledge being further developed. The education should likewise develop students' ability to deal with complex phenomena, issues, and situations and develop students' competence for occupations that place high demands on independence or for research and developmental work.

In several places in the bill the government returns to the concept that the education must render students more employable, both nationally and internationally. In the national strategy for the internationalisation of higher education, objective 2 stated that graduates of higher education must be attractive on the labour market nationally and internationally. The manner in which this is to be achieved, according to the bill, is primarily by adapting Swedish higher education to an international structure that accords with the three levels of the Bologna Process – first cycle, second cycle, and third cycle.

Thus employability is to characterize degrees at all levels. The bill stresses that the bachelor (*kandidat*) degree should continue to be a degree leading into the labour market. The very key to employability appears to lie in internationalising the educational structure.

In the bill the government reiterates the importance of Swedish Education being comparable to other educations and being evaluated in an adequate way to promote mobility and employability. It is stated that the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education is responsible for information about Swedish higher education nationally and internationally. In the directives for the National Agency (Ordinance 2007:1293) from December 2007 it is declared that the agency is to stimulate interest in higher education. The agency is to be responsible for information about the aggregate offerings of universities and university colleges and promote a correct valuation of Swedish higher education and Swedish degrees. As will be seen later in this report, there is a need for information targeting the parties of the labour market such as employers' organizations and labour unions, as well as business organizations, including personnel officers working with recruitment of employees, in order to increase their awareness of what a two-year master degree is and how it relates to a bachelor or one-year master degree, and to the licentiate and doctoral degree as well.

A conclusion is that the arguments in the bill for the reform and the implementation of the three cycle system in Sweden have been narrowly focused on the higher education sector in itself. There were no references to investigations made to analyze the demand or need from the (Swedish) labour market for the second level and the new master degree. However, there were some analyses indicating that Swedish students with a magister degree (of minimum 240 ECTS credits, previously defined as a first cycle degree) had difficulties in competing on the international labour market due to the definition of the level of the degree. In the bill there were only few references to the possible benefits for the

doctoral level of having a second cycle. The government was more focused on arguing that the magister degree should remain the stepping stone to the PhD-level.

#### **Main findings:**

In summary it can be said that the government's proposal for a new educational structure with the introduction of the second cycle is characterized by the primary goals of highlighting the international aspect and of the second cycle being characterized by depth in relation to the first cycle. Regulation takes place mainly through the formulation of objectives (generic skills) in the degree system associated with the QF-EHEA of the Bologna Process. This is a regulatory framework characterized by leaving university colleges and universities the scope to shape programmes in accordance with their own norms and values.

## **4. The emergence of master programmes**

The three universities have had different strategies in their work with introducing the new two-year master programmes. Common to the institutions was the fact that this development was to be implemented at high speed and without any extra resources. A large number of two-year master programmes were established, but, despite attempts to coordinate them through national seminars and subject-area conferences, many different forms of master programmes were devised.

Implementing the Bologna Process entailed a common point of departure in aspects like internationalisation, mobility, and employability, but this has found different expressions in different programmes. There is great diversity among the programmes that have been instituted. There has been a great deal of interest in starting two-year master programmes. Quality assurance methods at the central level have been diverse at Lund, Uppsala, and Gothenburg universities. Lund and Uppsala quality-assured their programmes before their establishment and Gothenburg choose to leave this responsibility to the faculties.

Lund University was quick to send out clear signals that it would be profiling itself in the form of two-year international master programmes. University management asked all faculties to present background material for establishing two-year master programmes. There was great interest in developing master programmes. A validation process, which is now well incorporated into the university's regular quality assurance work, was introduced to examine the preconditions for each programme before it was instituted by the vice chancellor. Programme establishment is preceded by an analysis of the preconditions for the programme. The two cardinal aspects of this validation are connections to employers and to research. Validation included documentation, in accordance with a current operational regulation, of the foundations for the programme, its objectives and content, programme structure, teachers, resources, and follow-up and evaluation. The documentation was reviewed by three independent experts. The vice chancellor instituted all programmes.

Uppsala University also profiled itself with two-year master programmes, and offered master programmes only following special scrutiny. In establishing programmes the vice chancellor decides about programmes comprising a maximum of two years, and the university board decides about programmes longer than two years. Ahead of the establishment of programmes, a document had to be appended to account for a number of aspects, along with the faculty boards' proposals for programme curricula. This documentation covered aspects and preconditions such as: teacher competence, research perspectives, and transitional avenues between levels, internationalisation, resources, labour-market perspectives, and sizing.



University of Gothenburg did not investigate preconditions in the way that Lund and Uppsala did but initiated a process that had a more bottom-up perspective. By tradition, faculties have an independent role at Gothenburg, which entails that the university is more decentralized than at Lund and Uppsala. At Gothenburg, on the other hand, there was a need to ex-post find out what the faculties' priorities were, as well as their views on various models for second-cycle education. The unclear picture of the second cycle became apparent in the autumn of 2008 when a work group from EUA paid a site visit to the University of Gothenburg. The work group was focusing on issues such as recruitment, the relationship between one-year and two-year master programmes, the second cycle in relation to the research level and to the labour market, respectively, the relationship between courses and programmes, and the role of the second cycle in lifelong learning. This is the background to University of Gothenburg's decision to map and take inventory of the second cycle in order to forge a policy for it.

There are several ways to develop two-year master programmes. Among the thirteen master programmes that were interviewed in this project, a number of ways have been discerned. Programmes have emerged from:

- a course;
- a research field;
- a need for cooperation ("shell masters"), that is, the notion of creating a critical mass by coordinating minor subjects/major fields with few students;
- a demand in industries/companies/organizations close by;
- a merger of at least two previous subjects in order to double their competence, such as art and media developing into the multidisciplinary area of media art.

A regular feature of the early development of the two-year master programmes was the conflicting interests between profiling and comparability. The universities wanted to create a system that furthered mobility while at the same time carving out a profile. The conflict can be illustrated by comparing the different institutions' programme structures; at Lund the School of Economics and Management primarily focused on one-year master programmes, whereas the Gothenburg School of Business, Economics and Law chose two-year masters. Some faculties have committed to single-subject courses, others to programmes. Some two-year master programmes are homogeneous, while others comprise several different main subject areas and are characterized by a programme format being regarded rather as an umbrella or a shell for different specializations (e.g. humanities master, language master). Some programmes are clearly tied to research-level education, whereas others are more professional in their orientation. It can be concluded that the pressure of limited time led to a prioritisation of profiling over comparability – competition over transparency. The lack of transparency is not unique to Sweden; it reflects the situation in the rest of Europe (EUA: Survey of Master Degrees in Europe, 2009).

There was a consensus among interviewees that the so-called Bologna tools are useful. What we call Bologna tools here are the parts of the Bologna Process that support comparability; e.g. intended learning outcomes, ECTS credit system, the Diploma Supplement (DS). These tools reflect a need for greater transparency and flexibility and should be regarded in their totality in a perspective of quality enhancement. The Swedish system was transparent and flexible even before the Bologna Process, and Sweden has advanced furthest in formulating learning outcomes for each course, for example. However, of the tools mentioned, DS has been regarded by those interviewed in the project as cumbersome and not especially useful. Most teachers and programme coordinators had not even heard of DS and had generally not thought about what the diploma might look like or does look like for the two-year master. Nor did many students know what a DS was, and those who did know thought that the document could

be submitted with an application if they wanted to move to other countries but largely thought it was too much to submit one in a Swedish context.

In the interviews with representatives of the two-year master programmes, on the other hand, there was an awareness of the potential of the Bologna tools, and the programmes are constantly being developed with an eye to enhancing their comparability. For example, there is more module thinking now than previously in order to facilitate not only mobility and exchange, but also to accommodate lifelong learning students. In several master programmes reviews are already underway, for example in terms of the relationship between the learning objectives and examination. Even though the Bologna tools are considered by many to be important, it was pointed out that developmental work has only begun as yet and much remains to be done. In some programmes new examination forms are in use, but among the interviewees there was uncertainty regarding whether students ever read or are well versed in the curriculum and the use of learning outcomes. Students have not really grown accustomed to making use of the learning objectives, apart from the group of LLL students who were highly purposeful and prepared themselves to achieve the objectives of the course.

Despite differences, there are many similarities among the three institutions. If we compare the number of master programmes (programmes with registered students) among the three institutions, we find that Uppsala has roughly half as many as Gothenburg and Lund, but the number of registered students is nevertheless comparable (see Figure 1). Uppsala University offers more so-called “shell masters” than Gothenburg and Lund. This means that Gothenburg and Lund have more programmes with fewer students than Uppsala, where students from different subjects/main areas have been gathered into a smaller number of programmes. Therefore, it is not especially relevant to compare the number of master programmes among the different universities without also comparing the number of students registered (see Figure 1). To enable comparisons among the three universities, key figures have been gathered. They were largely retrieved from the national databases LADOK (national student registry) and NyA (Joint admissions database for higher education in Sweden). A key figure, as such, gives the impression of being precise and objective. There is a danger in this since measurability and comparability are dependent on the definition of the key figures. There are many considerations to be made when a key figure is created. It has to do with delineation, for instance, and the date when the data was gathered. Or it may be, for example, an apparently simple question about how many master programmes there are at a university, or to add further complication; how many of them are international? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to determine what should be counted as a programme.

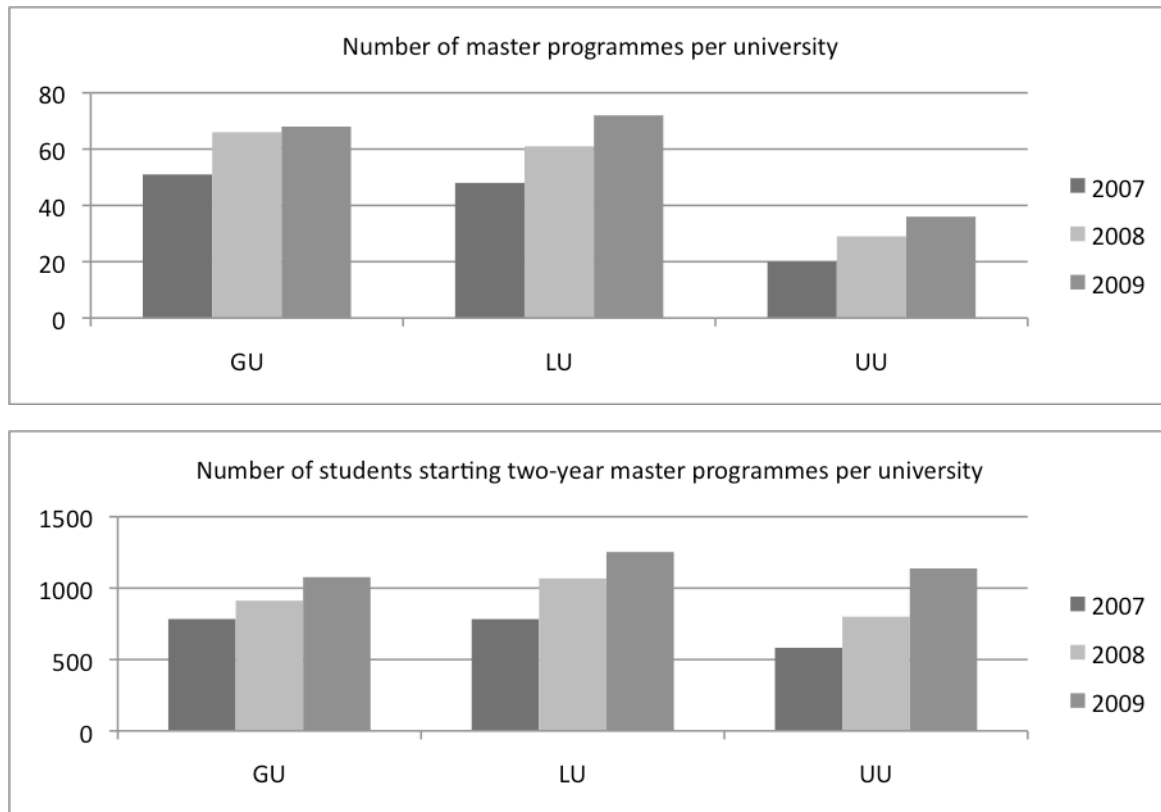
Programme structures are complex, which means that it is not simply a matter of counting programmes. In this study a programme is the same as a programme code, regardless of how many specializations the programme offers. What then constitutes an international programme?

- That the language of instruction is English?
- That there is course literature in foreign languages?
- That there are foreign students taking the programme?
- That teaching is done also by visiting teachers?
- That the curricula has an international dimension?

The definitions affect the outcome. Even though the three institutions retrieve their data from the same database, there are variations in praxis regarding when key figures are gathered. A major part of this project has therefore come to be about definitions of key figures. In comparing key figures among

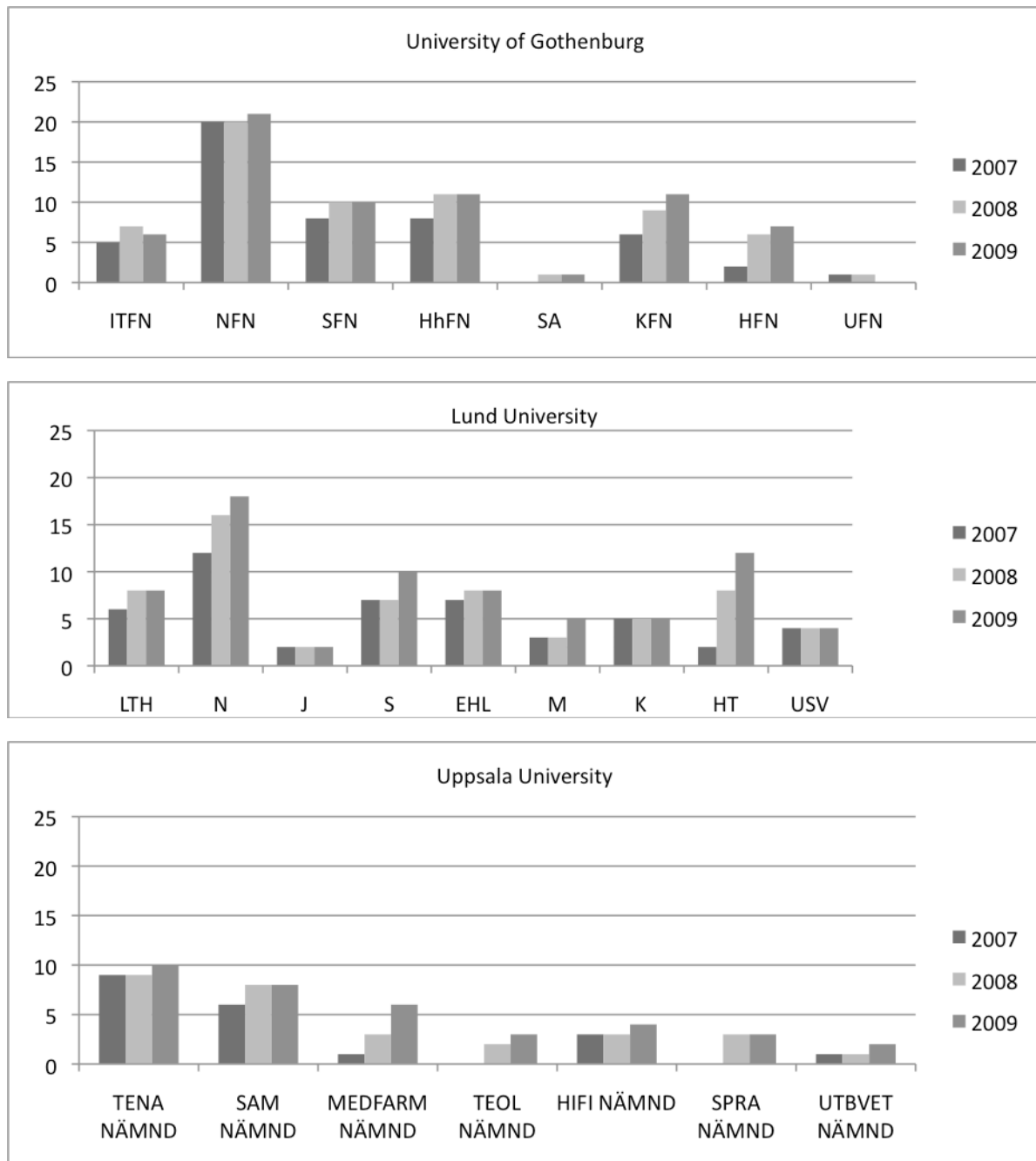
universities it must always be borne in mind that there are many pitfalls. The data presented in this report were preceded by comprehensive analyses and discussions and should be accurate.

**Figure 1. Number of master programmes per university**



There are also similarities among the three universities' distribution of programmes across faculties/domains. It is the science and engineering domains that offer the most programmes at the three universities. In 2009, at Lund, there were 8 programmes in the Faculty of Engineering (LTH), and 18 in the Faculty of Science. At Uppsala the Disciplinary Domain of Science and Engineering offered 10 programmes. At Gothenburg the Faculty of Science had 21 programmes.

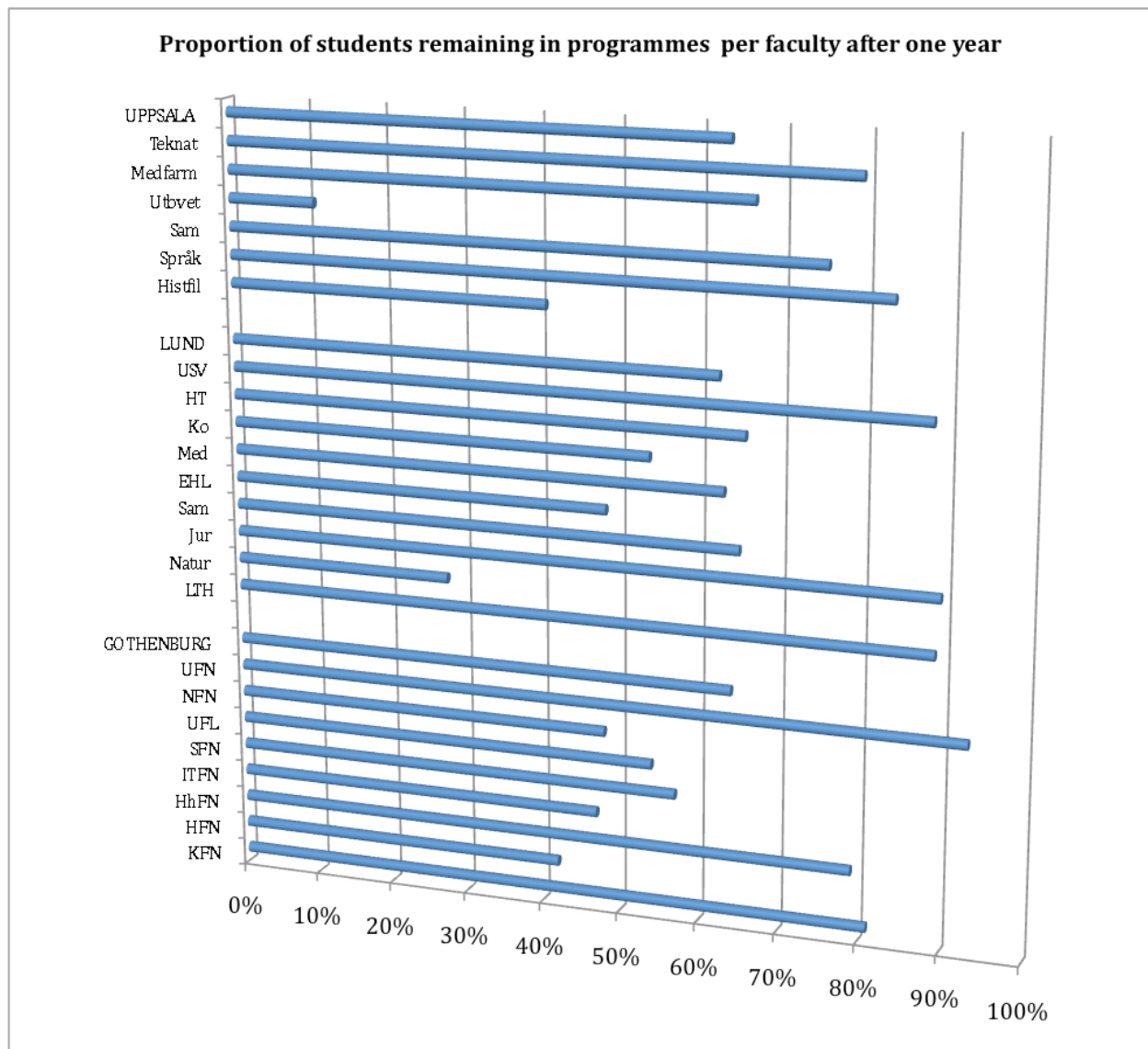
**Figure 2. Programmes by faculty at Gothenburg, Lund and Uppsala** (abbreviations explained in Annex 1)



The three universities have an average of about 65% of their students remaining on the master programmes after one year (see Figure 3). The average covers major differences among the institutions and among faculties within the universities. Nevertheless, it is important not to interpret too much from the retention statistics. There are various reasons why they look the way they do. At the School of Economics and Management in Lund, for instance, many students are satisfied with a one-year master

degree after half of the master programme. It may also be that some students enter the programme with a one-year master degree and therefore are taking only the second year, which also affects the retention figures. In other programmes that are given as part time studies, the comparison also becomes flawed. This means that the statistics cannot be used to elucidate questions of failed studies. The data below should thus be seen only in this comparative context.

**Figure 3. Students who started their two-year master programme in 2007**



An example of how misleading retention statistics can be is found at the School of Economics and Management (EHL) at Lund. At EHL it has been established that one-year masters are more viable than two-year masters. This means that they have the most master programmes at the faculty. But they also offer two-year master programmes. Many students, enrolled in the two-year master, are satisfied with a one-year master degree – they might have found employment, or been admitted to research-level education or simply seen the one-year master degree as a way station that they can later build on for a two-year master degree. It is too early to predict. It could be said that EHL's decision to primarily offer one-year master programmes is sensible in view of the way students choose to set up their studies.

Retention statistics are also misleading in that drop-outs from a programme with few students have a greater impact on the statistics than from a programme with many students, as what is illustrated is a percentage share. Despite this, the statistics seem to even out. The general picture at one university is comparable and similar to the other universities.

### **Main findings**

- The three universities have actively worked with quality assurance of master programmes, albeit with differing approaches, but the results have nevertheless been very similar.
- Master programmes have been developed on different initiatives deriving from a research area or a doctoral programme, from an existing bachelor programme or in consultation with outside stakeholders (enterprises or local/regional government).
- The number of master programmes is growing, as well as the number of registered students as can be seen from statistics both from the project and the national statistics published by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education.
- The Bologna tools are regarded as useful, with the exception of the diploma supplement that had little or no take-up from neither students nor staff.

## **5. The experience of introducing international two-year master programmes**

One particular focus has been on the introduction of the international two-year master programmes that all Swedish higher education institutions immediately took on board, as mentioned in the introduction. During the project this focus has grown with the introduction of tuition fees from 2011.

However, it was not a simple matter to identify what it meant for a programme to be internationally competitive and, by extension as envisaged in the proposal for the higher education ordinance, for its graduates to be employable, as was revealed in the site visits with the 13 programmes interviewed. It also proved difficult to identify at the university level which degrees were international two-year masters by only looking at the list of two-year masters. This indicates that the intention from the outset was to create programmes with more or less the same profile (internationally competitive, with employable graduates).

The definition of international programmes differs among and within the institutions and also internationally. Some categorize them as synonymous with programmes offered in the medium of English, others by the fact that the majority of graduates work outside the national borders, regardless of the language of the programme and the origin of the students. It is also possible to claim that the graduation requirements of a master programme ensures that all programmes are international on the basis of the objective that students must be able to work in international contexts. The intent of the bill to create an internationally viable education has been central to all three universities in the development of two-year master programmes, but the international perspective has been interpreted differently by the universities.

The flexible interpretation of the international perspective is also apparent in the thirteen master programmes that were interviewed. How they deal with the international perspective can be divided into two broad categories; on the one hand, programmes devised for a national target group but

nevertheless with clear international components or international viability and, on the other hand, those that turn to an international target group. Among the interviewed programmes, a majority (8 of 13) were directed to a national target group. The programmes were not chosen because of their representativeness, but rather to reflect as many different concepts for the master as possible.

### **5.1 Recruitment**

It should be pointed out first of all that it has been very complicated to assemble statistics in general regarding the number of applicants and registered students, but especially when it comes to their original degree countries both in the present and over time. It has not been possible to gather applications statistics that can be compared among the three universities, owing to multiple application dates and a combination of various forms for admitting students that have been developed or phased in and out in the last three years. The comparison of key figures was problematic for various reasons as pointed out previously; not only has it been difficult to identify comparable data, but the data systems also differ in structure at the respective universities. Two of the universities now have comparable data base systems, which may facilitate future comparisons. It should be possible to define and manage the strategic data better both nationally and at the institutional level, and this in itself is an important finding of this project. Problems in the data collection have rendered it impossible to follow developments in international applicants over time from the introduction of the two-year master in 2007. From a quality assurance perspective at the university level, the data presently is only available at programme level. The first year where comparable data at the institutional level could be identified was 2009.

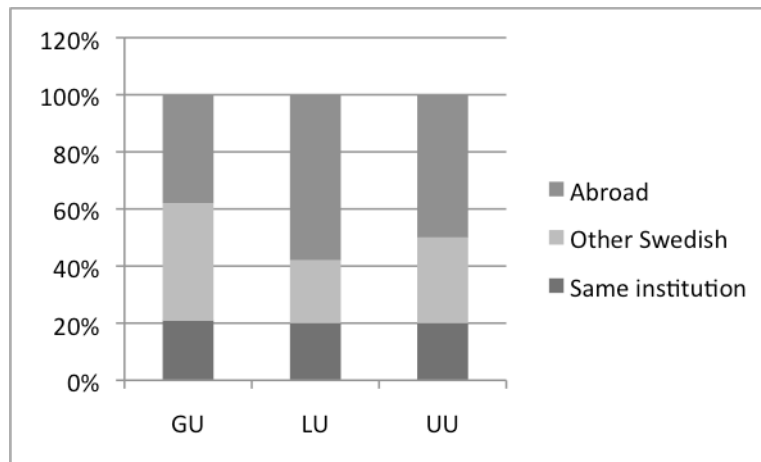
The programme coordinators interviewed who ran programmes with many international applicants stressed the extreme workload associated with the admissions process, and a variety of different methods had been in place, but the majority had decided to use the national system as of 2010. Many underlined the importance of the actual selection of potential students in a quality assurance aspect; by selecting the best-qualified students they also secured the overall quality of the programme. The estimated time devoted to the selection students was at least two months of full-time work. Many pointed out that the response time for the international students was too long; by then the best students had already been accepted somewhere else. Some pointed to problems with the fact that for international students (often European students) who wanted to apply by the April 15 application deadline, the on-line support was only available in Swedish. The responsibility to help potential students fell on the programme coordinators, who personally had to guide the applicants through the process. These findings indicate weaknesses in the national coordination of recruitment and admission of international applicants. From the applicants' point of view, the admissions process is excessively long, with an admission date as early as January 15 for studies starting in September.

It has only been possible to gather comparable statistics for registered students from 2009, and the results of these statistics show that international students outside the EEA are in the majority among registered master students at the three universities. However, the introduction of tuition fees for non-EU students are expected to impact international master programmes as it is expected that fewer students will apply if they have to pay a tuition fee, even with the introduction of a scholarship programme. One assumption is that fewer programmes will be able to get underway, and the cultural diversity within the programmes will decline. The three universities are actively working to manage this risk.

An interesting comparison between the three universities can be made concerning the statistical base for registered students in 2009. The three universities attract similar numbers of students from their own institution (20%) but differ markedly in the categories *international students* and *students from*

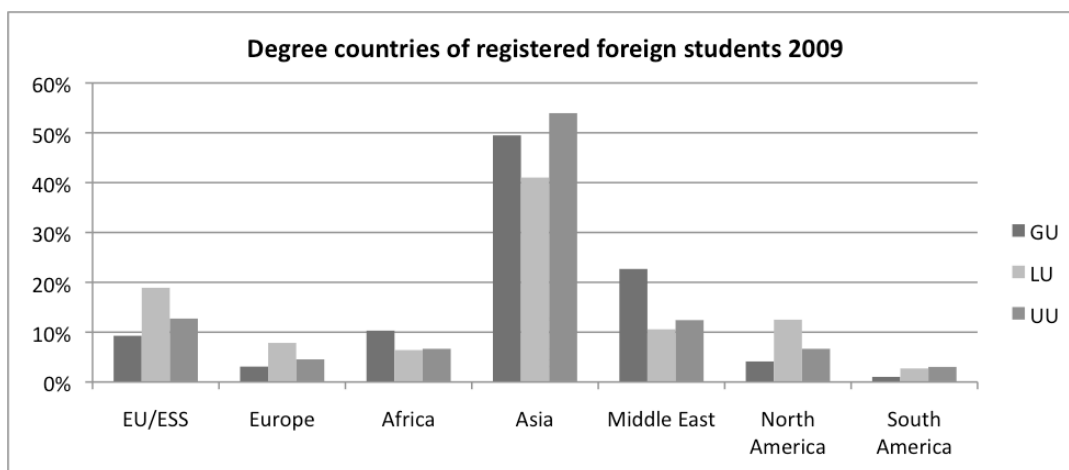
*other national institutions*. Gothenburg recruits 40% from other Swedish institutions (Lund 22%, Uppsala 31%) and Lund recruits 58% from international institutions (Gothenburg 38% and Uppsala 50%).

**Figure 4. Registered students, graduated from abroad, other Swedish institution or same institution**



The global region where the international students graduated also differs among the universities; the main target groups are Asia and the EU. Uppsala stands out as having more students from Asia than the others, and Gothenburg has the largest proportion of students from the Middle East and Africa. Further, Lund has a greater share from the EU/EEA and North America. Otherwise, the student origins are rather evenly distributed from around the globe.

**Figure 5. Where the International Students graduated**



The number of foreign applicants is greatest at Lund University, followed by Uppsala, then Gothenburg, which correlates with the number of student exchanges at the institutions. A plausible reason for this correlation is that a greater number of exchange students leads to more free movers, since the word spreads through the exchange students' networks. Thus, increasing international mobility at the institutions can be a marketing measure.

## 5.2 Language and culture

The language issue is always part and parcel of international programmes. During the site visits it was found that the problems surround the use of English varied, with Swedish students sometimes having



difficulty and sometimes Asians, etc. It has also proven to be difficult to develop skills on site despite attempts to alleviate the problem, as many students unfortunately choose not to attend language-support classes.

It is hard to draw any conclusions about this, the language and culture issue was not uniformly regarded as problematic; at one of the programmes the coordinators felt that the cultural variation among students on the same programme was a problem; the quality suffered, as they saw it. But when we interviewed students from that same programme, it was precisely the cultural variations that were seen as the greatest asset. Their experience was that the programme leaders had succeeded in exploiting their cultural diversity to enhance quality. As intercultural competence is highly valued by e.g. the business community,<sup>2</sup> this stands out as an important aspect of the Swedish master. The introduction of programmes in English increases international competence, as several nationalities study together. To be sure, the fear that quality will be negatively impacted is a real one, but the value added by increasing the cultural diversity partially mitigates it. All programmes that turned to an entirely international target group confirmed these tendencies. More discerning language tests and stricter requirements have partially alleviated earlier problems, but it was reported that there were widespread problems with cheating on tests and that it would be desirable to require higher scores. Programmes with a large number of applicants seem to have had less trouble with language skills than those with little application pressure.

### ***5.3 The challenges of teaching international students***

International (but also Swedish) students taking international programmes expressed a need for counselling regarding international studies and careers. Few programmes offered this as a regular service, however, many programme coordinators did fulfil this function. A number of staff and students pointed out that they considered it problematic that the service to short-term mobility students was far better than to the full-degree students.

Many students pointed out that they were uncertain where to turn for help in careers counselling, and often expressed a wish to get a better grasp of how their degree would render them useful or employable on the labour market. Of course, it is a major challenge to deal with global career counselling within the framework of a department – and all occupational fields throughout the entire university – but it is nonetheless important to individual students.

Systematic alumni activities that track the international footprints of graduates are part of a trend towards more professional international student counselling and careers guidance, but they also offer a way for the programmes to measure their quality. Most programme coordinators were eager to develop these aspects further, but at the time of the interviews, there were yet too few students, who had finished the programmes, to perform such a survey. These problems have also been identified by the National Agency for Higher Education in its subject evaluation of the study and career counselling programme (report 2010:6 R). In a future that involves fee-paying students, this problem needs to be addressed.

The first Swedish graduates with a master degree are in a unique situation as they are few which can be an advantage on the labour market. But at the same time, they will have to demonstrate how they are different from a graduate from the old system where the first cycle had both a three-year degree (kandidatexamen) and a four-year degree (magisterexamen) and the scope of the degree could either

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<sup>2</sup> Although, on the other hand, it is a major problem when highly educated immigrants cannot put their abilities to use.

be broad or deep subject wise, but remained at the first cycle level. The employers and other stakeholders have had little formal information about the new second cycle and the two new degrees (one year and two year master). No public campaign has been launched to support the students as they have entered the job market.

### **Main Findings**

- There are different ways to define the concept of “international” in two-year master programmes; broadly speaking it can involve international target groups or international recognition
- Data collection has been a major problem
- The process of admitting students is complicated and takes too much time and effort
- International recruitment differs among the three institutions, both in number and most common parts of the world
- Language issues are a problem for master programmes given in English, but also an asset in that intercultural competence is enhanced
- International student counselling and careers guidance are often deficient.

## **6. The two-year master programmes close-up**

The 13 site-visits made it possible to collect more detailed information on how the programmes were conceived and started and what the challenges were for the introduction of a new (international) degree level. They also highlighted that the programmes visited, essentially followed and built on the traditional flexibility and transparency of the Swedish higher education.

A great span was identified between the second-cycle programmes that were perceived as a two-year master programme with very clearly defined course content and those that had a sliding transition between the first (magister) year and the second (master) year and where there was often great possibilities for the students to define their own areas of interest or custom-tailor a degree. Each approach to the creation of programmes had advantages and disadvantages seen both from the students’ and programme coordinators’ points of view. As could be seen in part 2 some faculties/programmes favoured creating framework or shell programmes, while other programmes chose to be very content-specific with a particular job market in mind.

For the programmes with the sliding transition between the first and the second year it was clearly considered attractive by the Swedish students (EHL in Lund) that they could leave with a degree after one year if they found employment and equally positive that they could continue and improve their qualifications. The latter was perceived by the students as a stepping stone to upgrade their chance of being accepted for a doctoral degree. On the other hand, some students expressed that they failed to see how they improved their qualifications if they continued for the second year in the programmes where there was a relative free choice to select courses – especially as 25% of the courses in a two-year master could theoretically be taken at the bachelor level. For the international students it was clear that their expectation was that a master degree is a two-year degree – and that is what will make them

internationally competitive either for a career in research or on the job market. By tracking the students closely, it will be possible to see how this evolves and who will be most competitive on the job-market.

The participants in the site-visits were asked how they defined or perceived the difference between the one- and the two-year master, and the most common answers were related to the theoretical content and the length of the master thesis of the two-year master in relation to the one-year master rather than to the structural form. Between the 13 programmes in the project there was a surprising divergence between the duration of the thesis ranging from 15 to 45 ECTS points. The programmes that had a clear two-year identity from the outset, with closely defined courses, employability aspects and a longer thesis, felt that the one-year master was a way out if the student was not sufficiently qualified to pass the master.

The programmes that have been developed in cooperation or consultation with partners from outside academia seemed to attract their student base more easily (not least because in consultations with potential employers the knowledge of the two-year master spread) than the ones that have been conceptualized solely within academia. However, the financial crisis has changed the needs of the labour market both nationally and internationally and in some cases the demand in the labour market had disappeared in 2009. Another consideration raised was the possible saturation of a specific market for graduates from programmes targeting very specific qualifications, and the balance between specific and generic skills was discussed.

In the programmes with a clear two-year identity, the students were very aware of the more advanced level of education in the two-year master, but the Swedish students were worried that the employers in Sweden did not (yet) appreciate the new advanced level of qualifications that the students have acquired. For the international students there were no doubts that the two-year master was what they perceived as what the international universities and employers were looking for.

The hallmark of the Swedish master is the flexibility that has been central to the conception of the two-year master, but it would be possible to question the transparency of this to stakeholders, especially when the introduction has not been supported by a common information campaign, as was mentioned in part 1.

### **Main findings**

- The flexibility of the “old” Swedish higher education has been maintained almost to the extent that the transparency (a great variety of concepts and choices) has become clouded to the traditional student and difficult to grasp. This has been especially clouded for international students who had generally not understood or appreciated the flexibility or the difference between the one-year and the two-year master. The flexibility has great advantages for the lifelong learning students, and a number of the programmes visited were very clear about this aspect
- The difference between the one-year and two-year master was defined as is the FQ-EHEA with an increasing amount of independent and complex theoretical knowledge and the ability to communicate this knowledge through the 30 ECTS thesis
- Employability and research-based education were hallmarks for the majority of programmes.

### ***6.1 The continuation (research) master and the inter-disciplinary (applied) master***

A great sense of innovation was found in the creation of the Swedish two-year masters, and depending on whether the focus was structure, as above, or content, different sets of distinguishing factors were found. Two main distinctions to describe the content of the programmes could be to classify them as the

difference between basic research and applied research; other terms could also be a continuation master and an inter-disciplinary master. The continuation master represented one set of programmes that were based on continuing in the same subject area as the bachelor degree and where the students had great freedom to assemble the courses according to their area of interest (framework master). The inter-disciplinary or applied master represented a set of programmes with a clearly applied concept (even if the students often wished to continue at the doctoral level) often established in connection with external stakeholders, local employers, or local and regional authorities. These programmes were often also the ones with a clear two-year master profile. This distinction does not reflect whether one has a more distinct international or employability profile, and neither qualitatively or quantitatively was there a difference. There was a tendency for inter-disciplinary programmes in the sample to want to create a “feeding base” bachelor degree within the same area – thus potentially losing the multi-disciplinary approach and returning to more of a pipeline approach.

Previous to the site visits, one perception was that the two-year master was international and the one-year master Swedish. The site visits confirmed this to a certain extent insofar as a two-year degree at the advanced level is far more internationally competitive than the one-year master. The two-year master has attracted international students, as the key figures indicate (see HSV 2009-12-01 Analys nr 2009/10), and it would be possible to argue that the two-year master so far has been more attractive to international students than Swedish students. Given the new law on tuition fees for non-European students it will be a challenge to communicate to Swedish students the possible increased national and international competitiveness of the two-year master.

### **Main findings**

Great variety was found among programmes when it came to the definition of student target groups/audience. Generally it was clear that there was a relation between a narrowly defined programme (often with an applied or inter-disciplinary content) and a more narrowly defined target group, be it an international audience or specific types of students, e.g. LLL with specific prior experience.

- Two-year programmes that are narrowly defined are often innovative, interdisciplinary or more skills/employability-oriented, and are more likely to have certain tracks defined: directly towards the job-market- or research-oriented, but with few possibilities to make individual course choices
- Two-year general programmes with a relatively weak programme identity and where the students are relatively free to select their own courses as they wish to enhance their individual profile.
- Mixed student groups were perceived favourably by students, even though there were built-in tensions. The advantages clearly outweighed the disadvantages, and the differences in background and experiences helped to bring different perspectives into the classroom that were highly appreciated.
- There were programmes which were developed as inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary and/or in cooperation with potential employers where the one-year master has largely disappeared, and these programmes often selected potential students from a broad spectrum/background.
- There seems to be a tendency for inter-disciplinary programmes to want to create a “feeding base” bachelor degree within the same area – thus potentially losing the multi-disciplinary approach and returning to a more pipeline or continuation approach.

- The programmes that have been developed in cooperation or consultation with partners from outside academia seem to attract their student base more easily (not least because consulting with potential employers entailed that knowledge of the education was spread) than the ones that have been conceptualised solely within academia.

## ***6.2 Attracting, retaining and tracking master students***

The site visits also raised the question of how to reach potential target groups, and the students were asked how they found the programme. The major source of information was the Internet, and especially international students relied on peer recommendations (social networks) and published rankings when making their choice. The information available on the university home page is essential, and it was clear that there is an alignment in interest between the university and the individual programmes, when it comes to providing information for potential master students. Students are looking for the university brand along with the programme content and possible information on the quality of the programme – in some cases made visible by indicating where alumni find jobs. Some programmes had procedures in place for tracking students and perceived that as an important part of their internal quality assurance. Two programmes used the information to attract new students and had included this information at their website.

There were programmes that were developed as inter-disciplinary or in cooperation with potential employers where the one-year master largely has disappeared, and these programmes often selected potential students from a broad academic/national background. In a couple of cases this caused difficulties in relation to the faculty they belonged to, which had very specific eligibility rules for access to the more general masters. The inter-disciplinary set up of the programmes caused formal problems regarding access regulations.

In the programmes where different types of students were mixed (young students and LLL students or Swedish and international students), the mix was perceived favourable by students, even though there were built-in tensions. The advantages clearly outweighed the disadvantages, and the differences in background and experience helped to bring different perspectives into the classroom that were highly appreciated, as was seen in part 3.

In the programmes visited, the retention rate was generally very high and was not a cause for concern or particular reflection, except in the programmes that had LLL students as a major target group or if the programme was given as a part-time programme. In fact there was little reflection on retention as such, the issue was mainly related to identifying students who did not have the right kind of qualifications to succeed (theoretical or language), and they were offered specific help.

The programmes that had very narrowly defined content and courses seemed to have a higher throughput/retention rate for their students than the shell programmes where the students made individual choices in combining or selecting courses, or in the programmes where the borders between the one- or two-year master were fluid. International students applied in general for the two-year masters with a clearly defined profile and programme content.

## **Main findings**

- Programmes that had been able to identify a target group and had established and created information with this target group in mind from the outset had introduced applications procedures with an eye both to attracting high quality students and having competitive selection procedures were generally happy with their students and had a high retention rate
- A few of the programmes had established early tracking of their students and had started to use this information as part of the information to attract potential students, thus creating a virtuous circle, but also addressing one of the issues that all interviewed students raised as a key issue in the interview employability and combining practical and theoretical knowledge.
- Early tracking was only used by a few programmes, but the issue along with closer alumni contact was discussed in many programmes, and was of course more of an issue in the programmes that have already had graduated. In the programmes that had many part-time students it was not relevant to consider the question.

### 6.3 Student counselling

The introduction of the second cycle has produced a variety of possibilities for potential students whether they are local, regional, national or international both when it comes to access to the second cycle and to find possible employment, as is illustrated by the Gothenburg table. This becomes particularly evident in a system that has traditionally been characterized by flexibility and where the knowledge has been passed on from one generation of students to another. The project found that in the transition or the introduction phase, this knowledge was not present.

Figure 6. Ways in and out of the Second Cycle



The high level of flexibility has increased the demand for student counselling before and during studies and also for career guidance on the way out. Student counselling and career guidance were two areas

that proved to be very important in the discussions with the foreign students, irrespective of their origin, and where they felt that the service was not always clear to them or not available. It should be especially underlined that the international students felt that the career service was not adapted to international students. However, nearly all students expressed that they felt they could go to the programme coordinator for help. Another source that was often mentioned was fellow students who shared their experiences and thus offered a form of student guidance, but also a measure of internal quality assurance in recommending courses to other students.

### **Main findings**

- Along with employability, the importance of both student counselling and especially career guidance were underlined by the students. The students were generally happy with the counselling provided by the programme coordinator, but felt that career guidance was lacking.
- There was a clearly articulated need for better and more targeted student counselling and master students were more focused on employability, either within or outside academia. The task was often shouldered by the programme coordinators to provide career and student counselling on top of their other tasks, but when it comes to career guidance they are not always the obvious choice.
- The site visits indicated that there is a great need for career guidance, especially at the programme level – and to highlight this aspect more in the information when students have started to graduate and find employment.

### ***6.4 Graduates from the two-year master and the relationship with the doctoral degree***

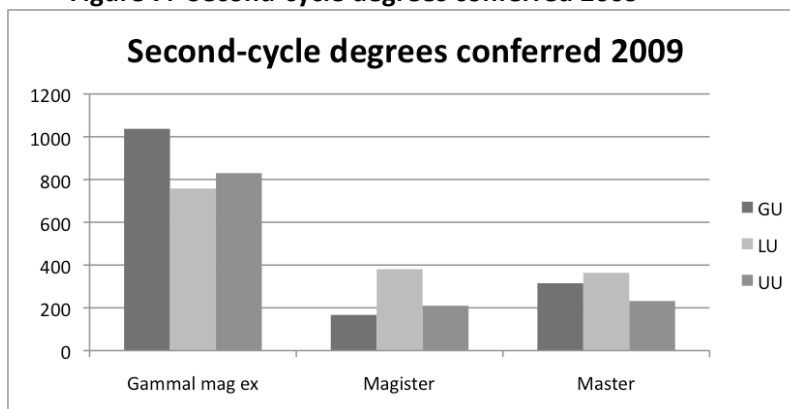
The question of the relationship between the second cycle and the third cycle was central to a lot of the students and staff during the site-visits and more specifically the discussion whether the one-year or the two-year master is or will be the qualifying degree, a question that has already been highlighted in part 1.

Other discussions centred on the possibility to develop a new research area through the establishment of a master programme<sup>3</sup> or the creation of de facto graduate schools where both second and third cycle students have access to doctoral-level courses. It is still too early to tell whether these students will choose to use the credits twice, first for their master degree and then for their doctoral degree and thus in practice retain the 4 (3 +1) + 4 or whether it will be 5 + 3 – the third possibility would be that they choose to take the 3 + 2 and then the traditional 4-year doctoral degree, thus prolonging the whole sequence.

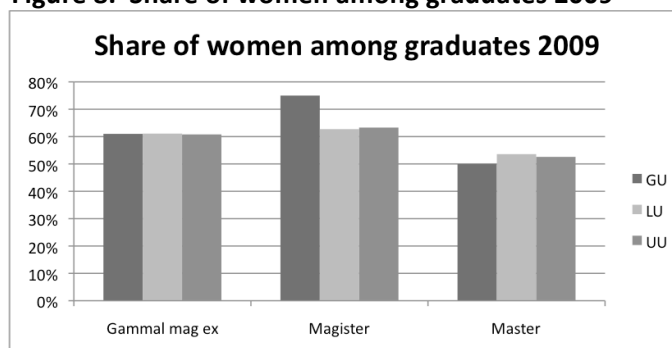
In the large majority of programmes interviewed it was generally expected that the two-year master de facto will be the qualifying degree, as many students either find that it qualifies them better or use it as a stepping stone while waiting to be able to apply for a doctoral student position. It will be interesting to follow the development in two-year master degrees in the coming years. The first results from 2009, where the first two-year master students had graduated, indicate that the two-year master has already overtaken the one-year master, except at Lund University where the decision by the School of Economics to retain the one-year master is visible in the slightly higher number of one-year master graduates as opposed to two-year master diplomas.

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<sup>3</sup> See part 2 on the establishment of programmes

**Figure 7. Second-cycle degrees conferred 2009**

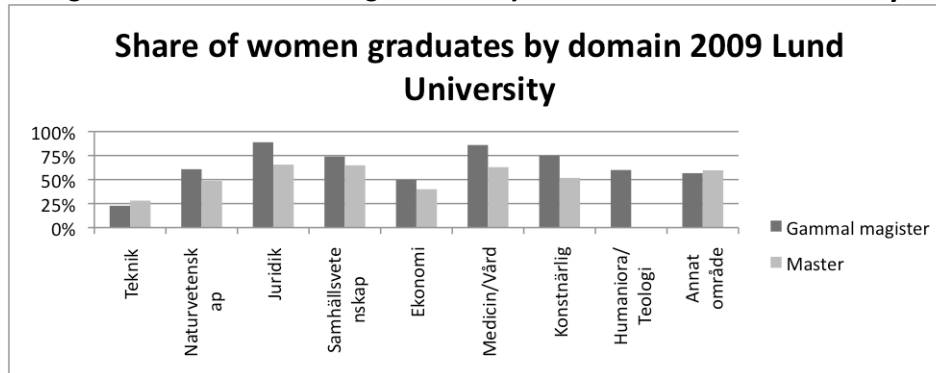
The project has also had focus on the relationship between genders, and as with age, it has transpired that there is basically no difference between the universities. More than 50% of the registered students were women, and the average age of all students was 27 years old.

**Figure 8. Share of women among graduates 2009**

It is too early to predict whether the European trend of male dominance in doctoral degree students can be reflected in the attainment of the two-year master degree. In 2009 more women than men chose the one-year master, but not until next year will the key figures show if they have continued with the second year of the master and have only been more conscientious about obtaining their diplomas.



Figure 9. Share of women graduates by domain 2009 Lund University



The table above shows an example, from Lund University, of the share of women taking degrees under the old degree system and how that relates to the new second-cycle system.

### Main findings

- The move towards the two-year master as providing the best qualifications for a potential doctoral student to apply for a doctoral programme is one area where changes have crystallized very quickly according to the interviews made during the site-visits. It is too early to see this in the key figures, but this is another area to follow in the coming years.

### 6.5 Quality assurance and employability aspect in the two-year master programmes

At Lund and Uppsala universities an ex ante quality assurance was introduced in the form of a validation of the master programme proposals as mentioned in section 2, while at University of Gothenburg the quality assurance had a more ex post character and was not centrally governed. The question of internal quality assurance of the current programmes was raised in all the programmes, and the focus was perceived as generally positive by both staff and students. There were very different models at the faculty level for collecting and acting on the student evaluation forms that constituted the central part of quality assurance in all the programmes visited.

Many programmes relied on the student evaluation forms and more or less formal or informal discussions with students on how they viewed the programme and the courses. Many programme coordinators used the feedback to adjust the structure and content of the programme, and thus the quality assurance had a cyclic nature. In this context the students often brought up the questions of employability and generic skills again, and attempts were being made to accommodate the students in this aspect.

The question of tracking and creating alumni groups was raised with a view to follow the success of the students and use this knowledge both in view of developing or revising the programmes and to use the information on where the students found jobs to enhance the profile of the programme in attracting potential students. Only a couple of the programmes had considered this as a quality enhancing tool and only one in connection with attracting students by being able to show where the alumni got jobs. Having said that, a number of the programmes were part-time and one had not finished the first two-year cycle.

In order to stress the aspect of employability in the validation process of the master programmes at Lund and Uppsala universities, the programme boards are asked to declare e.g. the opportunities for work placement in the programme at hand. They also had to describe the connection to a future labour market.

In general, the intentions in the two-year programmes was to integrate theory, practise and work placement in order to support the focus of embedding employability into the programmes. The programmes generally considered employability as integrated in the subject area study. Very few of the visited programmes had introduced work placements, and thus it was difficult to discuss the experience. But where it had been introduced there was a follow up on what the students had learned from a supervised placement. The students had to reflect on their own contribution and what they had gained and experienced from the work placement, and it was often an integral part of the programme.

The perception at all three universities was that higher education can be seen as *related to the labour market*. In general, universities regard the demand of employability and high academic standards as fully compatible. There are many strategies to achieve employability into the curriculum; work-based learning, work-related learning (e.g. PBL or case methods), visiting lectures from companies and authorities, representatives from companies and authorities as members of the boards or committees for a faculty area or programme influencing the curriculum and supporting opportunities for placements and there are business mentoring relationships.

### **Main findings**

- Quality assurance is an integral part of the two-year master programmes and it is used to continually develop the new programmes. Students are actively involved and have had great focus on the employability aspects of the degree.
- Employability is sometimes interpreted as detailed and direct adaptation to the demands of the labour market, at the cost of more lax requirements regarding academic knowledge and skills. In general, universities regard the demands of employability and high academic standards as fully compatible.
- Employability can be promoted at the same time as the university complies with the Higher Education Act and does not compromise its objectives regarding learning and academic rigour. In some programmes both staff and students agreed on a high level of focus on employability and in others there was a clear discrepancy between the points of view of students and staff. All students had very clear expectations on the aspects of employability in the two-year master programmes and were highly appreciative where the programmes were able to bring this into the programme in an integrated fashion.

## **7. Conclusion**

The introduction of the second cycle in 2007 presented great opportunities for the universities to create entirely new degrees and subject combinations often with a view to upgrade prior qualification. These are aspects that can be seen in the majority of the programmes looked at in this project, as can the ambition to create internationally competitive two-year master degrees. The introduction of the two-year master degree has enhanced the international profile of the three universities, and the introduction of a tuition fee for non-EU/ESS students from 2011 has spurred the process of

internationalization on. Much of the focus in the internationalization process has been on trying to find the balance between being internationally competitive and retaining the Swedish academic tradition. The project has thus been able to complete the very first internal and external quality assurance of the new degree level, while at the same time identifying a number of key characteristics.

The key characteristics are;

- **The two-year master programmes have largely been developed in two directions content-wise; classic or educational innovation**

The format for the two-year master programmes varies greatly, but they tend to be either international or national, either a shell to be filled by the student or a very closely defined programme with educational innovation aspects. The other hallmark of Swedish higher education, the flexibility that has traditionally made it possible for students to have different paths in and out of higher education and to combine credits from across different faculties, has been something that is essential for the three universities to retain. This has been reflected in the participating programmes where “the ways in” are to either to have a relative narrow subject recruitment base where the students continue within the same general subject area, but with a possibility to create their own master within a framework or an umbrella (shell master), or as in other programmes visited where there was a broader recruitment base with a more multi-disciplinary or lifelong learning recruitment approach.

With such a varied recruitment base the question of how to define or ensure “the right level” becomes essential, and the project found that each programme had found different ways to ensure that the students are all able to benefit from the education without losing the quality.

- **The programmes have had focus on quality and employability**

The programmes have not yet found their final form, and several of them pointed out that the programmes might change their focus under the influence, expectations, and drive of the students and employers. The site visits indicated that even the programmes that initially had a clearly defined identity might have to change their focus under the influence of the expectations and will of the students – to this end the use of early tracking was discussed. The discussions also highlighted the fact that for the very targeted or specialised programmes, the job-market might be easily saturated and the programmes therefore might have a shorter life-span than the more general programmes.

- **Need for close cooperation between the university level and the programme level**

It quickly transpired that a new axis needs to be formed between the university (as a brand) and the individual programmes, when it comes to being an internationally attractive university for potential students. The programmes need central support: support for recruitment and admission, the provision of targeted student services (housing, welcome services, student counselling and career guidance). On the other hand the universities need strong competitive research-based programmes that are internationally visible to further enhance the competitiveness of the institutions.

- **Problem: the introduction of an advanced level between the bachelor and the doctoral degree has gone largely un-noticed by employers and other stakeholders in Sweden, and in a Swedish context no prior evaluation of the needs of master graduates on the Swedish labour market has taken place.**

Little has been done to take on board employers and other stakeholders at the national level and informing them of the changes and the new degree level, where graduates have gained on the one hand further knowledge and on the other hand greater academic independence. The responsibility to define employability was left up to the universities themselves. The universities have made little use externally of the axis of the definition of learning outcomes, diploma supplement and the qualification framework. Judging by the response to questions about the diploma supplement, this has yet to be understood by staff and students.

- **The benefits of collaborating with other universities on an early investigation of a new concept from a quality enhancing point of view**

The third and last phase of the project has been the communication phase which included an evaluation seminar with all participating partners; the leadership of the three universities, the national and institutional coordinators and the interviewed staff and students from the 13 programmes. The seminar validated the conclusions of the report and there was clear consensus that the methodology of the project was useful for making an early investigation into the new master degrees. The findings and the conclusions were perceived as to the point, both when seen from the level of the leadership and from the staff and students at programme level. It became clear that staff and students did not necessarily perceive the difficulties for the introduction of the two-year master programme to be the same. There was, however, common consensus that **recruitment of students** and **the provision of student services** were two areas of common concern. Staff found that admission procedures could be further developed with the help of the central level of the university or a national system, and students felt that aspects of **employability** should have more focus in the two-year master degrees. The introduction of the Bologna tools, educational innovation and quality assurance was considered as generally very positive by all.

A number of positive effects of participation were identified by the programmes:

- key figures collected at the programme level and the institutional level can be used for the strategic development, especially figures on retention and graduation rates. These figures have gained importance now that the programmes have to be internationally competitive;
- commonly defined key figures make it possible to benchmark with other programmes and with other universities;
- a number of good practices were identified through the project and the seminar – a need for the programme coordinators to discuss with peers both at the institutional level and the national level;
- tracking of students can facilitate the inclusion of employability aspects and be used in recruitment of potential students – this aspect had not previously been clear to the programmes;
- the timing was good, the first two years would have been too chaotic to discuss results
- the process has been interesting and it has in itself been useful to be asked to explain concepts and practices, but it would have had been an added benefit to get more direct feedback from the site-visits;
- The two-year master programmes and especially the internationally competitive programmes have a specific need for the university brand and the central services for students.

The three universities are at the initial stages of using the collection of key figures strategically at the institutional level and at the programme level with a view to monitor and assess the progress in a quality context. In one of the three universities, the key figures are already being used internally in the preparation for the introduction of tuition fees and in discussions with the faculties in their work on quality assurance of the programmes. In the other two universities the project has sparked off new studies that will evaluate all master programmes using a similar methodology, thus expanding the range of quality assurance methods. In the project both the advantages and the limitations of using key figures outside a context became clear.

The overall increased dialogue and exchange of experiences between the three universities in this project has also sparked a wave of evaluations of the educations offered at the three universities in the coming year of varying levels of ambitions. It has also pinpointed a number of issues that, while they were already under consideration, were not yet high on the agenda like the importance of highlighting aspects of employability, working with alumni in an international context and further developments of student counselling and career guidance.

The leadership also pointed out the importance of having a European perspective together with the local and institutional on the Swedish Master. Thus the Swedish Master project has been a catalyst for a number of new projects and developments and has established a network that will continue its cooperation after the end of the project.

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## Annex 1 Abbreviations

### University of Gothenburg, list of faculties

ITFN – IT-fakultetens/IT Faculty

NFN – Naturvetenskapliga fakulteten/Faculty of Science

SFN – Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten/Faculty of Social Sciences

HhFN – Handelshögskolan/School of Business, Economics and Law

KFN – Konstnärliga fakulteten/Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts

HFN – Humanistiska fakulteten/Faculty of Arts

UFN – Utbildningsvetenskapliga fakulteten/Faculty of Education

UFL – Utbildnings och forskningsnämnden för lärarutbildningen/Teacher Training at the University of Gothenburg

SA – Sahlgrenska akademien/Sahlgrenska Academy (Medicine, Odontology and Health and Care Sciences)

### Lund University, list of faculties

LTH – Lunds tekniska högskola/ Faculty of Engineering

N – Naturvetenskapliga fakulteten/ Faculty of Science

J – Juridiska fakulteten/ Faculty of Law

S – Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten/ Faculty of Social Sciences

EHL – Ekonomihögskolan/ School of Economics and Management

M – Medicinska fakulteten/Faculty of Medicine

K – Konstnärliga fakulteten/ Faculty of Art, Music and Theatre

HT – Området för humaniora och teologi/ Faculties of Humanities and Theology

USV – Universitetets särskilda verksamheter

### Uppsala University, list of faculties

TENA – Teknisk-naturvetenskapliga vetenskapsområdet/ Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology

SAM – Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten/Faculty of Social Sciences

MEDFARM – Medicinska och farmaceutiska vetenskapsområdet/ Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy

TEOL – Teologiska fakulteten/Faculty of Theology

HIFI – Historisk-filosofiska fakulteten/Faculty of Arts

SPRA – Språkvetenskapliga fakulteten/Faculty of Languages

UTBVET – Utbildningsvetenskapliga fakulteten/Faculty of Educational Sciences

## Annex 2 Swedish Master Project SWOT Analysis

The Swedish Master Project is a project designed to ensure the competitiveness of the new two-year master programmes at Gothenburg, Lund and Uppsala universities. The ideas and concepts behind the project is inspired by the European Universities Association (EUA) project: “Survey of Master degree in Europe” and a number of quality culture enhancing projects that EUA have run at a European level in the past decade.

### Overall objectives for the Swedish master project:

- To provide the very best support to the first graduates by creating national and institutional platforms that will raise the level of information about the two-year master degree.
- To “evaluate” the implementation of the master level degrees, the relationship that the degrees have both to the bachelor level and the doctorate level (access, retention and employability). To map out the different routes into a master (recognition of prior learning), different ways in and different ways out (employability/preparation for research career).
- To assess the impact of the new master degree on employability – by trying to follow the new graduates earlier than commonly practiced in alumni surveys. The intent is to become internationally competitive.
- Reflect on how to use to Diploma Supplement and how to create links between learning outcomes (LO), ECTS or högskolepoint, examination methods, Diploma Supplement (DS) and the NQF. Can the DS be seen as a quality assurance tool both nationally and internationally? Can it be used for better information to employers.
- To investigate if there are key characteristics for the master: relationship between theory and practice – what is the added-value of the two-year master? Transparency = quality/accountability
- To improve the future competitiveness of the Swedish master degree.
- To develop further cooperation between the participating universities.
- To support the institutional preparation work on the new HSV quality evaluations – though this project will not look at the academic quality of the master, but rather the supporting framework the master has created for the academic success (Collection of key figures, student-centred learning, definition of learning outcomes and examination goals, reflections on new teaching methods, etc.)

### Project aims concerning the selected master programmes:

- To assist in the development of the advanced level by providing clear and targeted information about the profiling and differentiation of the Swedish master degree; both the master provided in English and in Swedish
- To assess how the Bologna tools are utilized and work as quality assurance mechanisms.
- The project will do that by making an early “investigation” into the introduction of student-centered learning that will also be one of the cornerstones in the future HSV programme evaluations with the three main indicators in mind; relevance of the degree, employability and international outlook.

The project also takes into consideration the European Standards and Guidelines, especially regarding:

- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students



- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information.

### **1. Methodology:**

The methodology is meant to be a “light-touch” follow-up to the introduction of the advanced level at GU, LU and UU and not an in-depth quality assurance of the academic content of the new master degrees. It is based on a set of questions that can be used for a SWOT analysis, which will be addressed during the site-visit in conversation with the different actors; students, professors, student counselors (if applicable) and the programme responsables.

The questions were posed as they were deemed relevant.

### **2. Outcome**

The information collected during the discussions with the participating programmes will be collected in a report to be presented at a seminar 7 -8 June 2010 and more broadly after the seminar at a national or European level.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **1. What is the target group for the programme?**

#### **1.1 Recruitment base**

- Did you have a particular target group in mind? Yes, no?
- if yes, how did you define that from the outset?
- how does it fit the group of students that you have?
- were they Swedish or international students?
- part time/full-time?
- did you consider “breddad rekrytering”/widening participation?
- if no, why was that not important at the planning stage?
- Did the programme provide targeted information to potential students, if so how? How did you “advertise” the master programme, nationally and internationally, please reflect on the methodology? Did the university provide you with support for recruiting students?
- Did the university provide you with support for advertising?

#### **1.2 Entry requirements**

- How were the entry requirements defined? How did you ensure that the students have the requirements?
- Who defined the requirements and who selects the students? What are the requirements?
- Who is responsible for information to potential students, on the programme, on student services, on possible employment?
- Have you reached the target group that you envisaged with the defined entry requirements?
- Did you consider recognition of prior learning?

#### **1.3 Admission requirements:**

- How well did the admission/selection work? What were the main obstacles? Could you have avoided the problems?
- Do the students accepted correspond to the envisaged target group? If not why?

## **2. Programme content – fitness for purpose**

### **2.1 Objectives and aims**

- Why and how did you decide on the content/profile of the programme? Who were involved, staff, students, employers, other stakeholders? What is the envisaged labour market? What is the envisaged progression to the doctoral degree?

### **2.2 Subjects and topics (content), profile**

- How is the programme different from the one-year magister, which programme is the more competitive in relation to the doctoral degree, to employability?
- How would you describe the profile of the master programme? Does it fit into any of the three types mentioned below?
- research master;
- taught master;
- professional/LLL master
- How did you define the overall skills (generic skills, academic skills) to be obtained? Did you consider new teaching methods? Was it easy to use the Bologna tools: Learning Outcome, ECTS, Diploma Supplement in this context?
- What were the reflections on teaching methods?
- Language – what made you decide to choose between English and Swedish?
- Did you consider the master in connection with lifelong learning?
- Has the structure of the programme produced the envisaged competences, and how did/do you communicate learning outcomes to the students? How did they receive the new concept?
- Did the student assessment envisaged work?
- Research base/connection – closely related to a research area?

### **3. Quality Assurance:**

- What processes do you have in place to ensure the quality of the output (student qualifications) that you envisaged?
- Working with which indicators? Key figures (retention and graduation rates), student feed back, student evaluation, alumni (even though it is early days)?
- Have you had any special reflection on the requirements for providing education in an increasing international context?
- Have you provided targeted guidance and counseling for potential students and graduates? If so with retention in mind?
- Are you providing students with career guidance?
- How do you ensure that the programme achieve the stated learning outcomes?
- Is an internal evaluation planned to follow up any of the indicators?

### **4. Information/Dissemination:**

- Have you considered it necessary to try to inform the potential employers about the new programme and the skills of the graduates?

- Have you created an alumni tracking system, organization or survey?

### **5. Use of Bologna package**

- How does the Curricula, Learning Outcomes, ECTS – workload – interrelationship with Diploma Supplement and the National Qualifications Framework work in your opinion? Benefits, risks?
- Did you introduce new didactics, methodology, learning and teaching methods? If so how did they work? How did you relate learning outcomes to examination forms? How do you ensure that the approach is successful?
- Have the Bologna tools increased transparency and flexibility?
- Can the Diploma Supplement be used as an information tool?

### **6. Employability/doctoral education**

- Did you have cooperation and/or contact with stakeholders and employers before, during and after the completion of the first master programme
- Did you have any employer involvement/contact during the design of the curricula? If not how did you assess the potential job market for the graduates?
- Can students get credit transfer from the master to the doctoral level? If so, will the doctoral degree be shorter with a master degree?

### **Key issues that might not be sufficiently clear**

- evaluation or follow up at faculty level
- the relationship between the one-year and two-year master in connection with the doctoral degree
- how to ensure international competitiveness