

Sweden

This report describes the structure of the national higher education system in Sweden, focusing on the institutional types as defined by national categories. It builds on the Eurydice Report on the national higher education system but complements it with quantitative information on the role of higher education institution (HEI) types in national systems, based on data derived from the European Tertiary Education Register (<http://www.eter-project.eu>) for the period 2011-2020.

Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to Eurydice¹, higher education is provided at:

- Universities (*universitet*)
- University colleges (*högskolor*) and University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts (*konstnärliga högskolor*)
- other independent higher education providers (*enskilda utbildningsanordnare*)

These institutions offer higher education of different kinds. The majority of them are public authorities, subject to the same legislation and regulations as other public authorities, as well as the particular statutes, ordinances and regulations relevant to the higher education sector.

The main part of higher education and research is carried out at the Universities. However, first and second cycle education is given at an equivalent level at Universities and at the other higher education institutions. What traditionally has differentiated the types of institutions is that Universities have had degree awarding powers at first, second and third cycle level while the others have had degree awarding power at first and second cycle level. Since the early 2000s, some University colleges have additional degree awarding powers at third cycle level regarding a specific disciplinary domain.

In addition to the state Universities and state University colleges, there are independent institutions within higher education receiving state grants for first and second cycle education and research. Some of them also have the right to award qualifications at third cycle level. However, they are not considered private institutions since they are publicly funded but instead independent higher education providers (*enskilda utbildningsanordnare*). Independent higher education providers are only partly included in ETER.

¹<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/sweden/types-higher-education-institutions>

Main institutional characteristics. Legal status and the right to award a PhD

Table 1 below provides a quantitative overview of the main institutional characteristics by HEI type. Universities (*Universitet*) are mostly public institutions and all of them have the right to award PhDs. In total, about 46% of all Swedish HEIs included in ETER are Universities and equivalent institutions. While also almost all University colleges (*Högskola*) award PhDs within a specific disciplinary domain, only one of the University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts is PhD awarding.

Table 1. Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2020

Category		N	Public	Private government-dependent (independent higher education providers)	PhD awarding
University	Universitet	17	15	2	17
University college	Högskola	16	12	4	15
University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts	Konstnärliga Högskolor	4	4	0	1
Total		37	31	6	33

Note: Numbers reflect inclusion in ETER

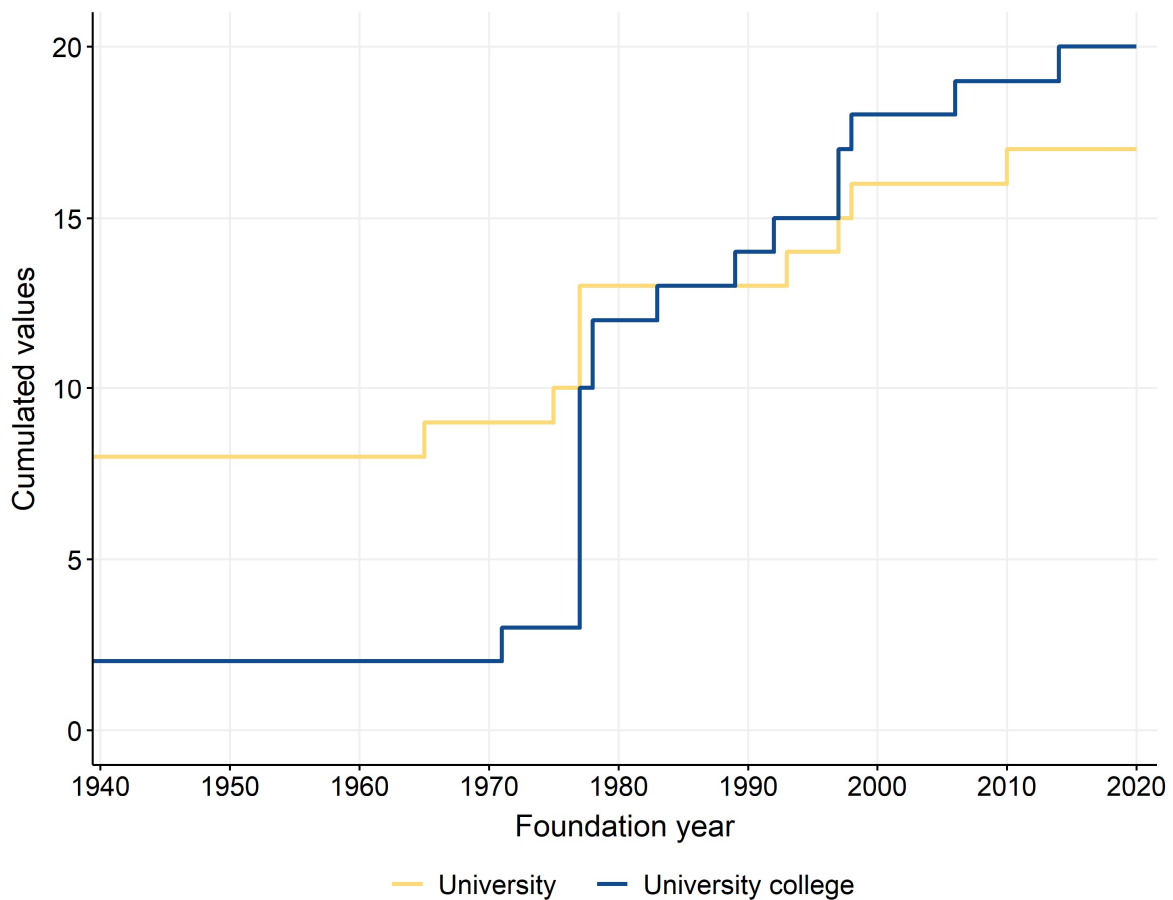
Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types

Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of Sweden's higher education and its evolution over time.

Figure 1 overleaf shows that, despite ancient historical roots, the expansion of the system in terms of the number of HEIs is relatively recent. While the Uppsala University, the oldest Swedish university, dates back to 1477, followed by Lund University founded in 1666, only seven HEIs were founded before the 20th century, including five Universities and two University colleges. Overall, however, Swedish HEIs are much younger; only ten of the HEIs were founded before 1965.

The figure shows distinct patterns of expansion. First, the number (and size) of Universities has increased steadily since the 1960s: half of the Swedish Universities were founded after 1960 with a peak of four foundations between 1975 and 1977 and a second period of expansion between 1993 and 1998 with another three University foundations. In parallel, the expansion of the number of University colleges started in 1971, with a peak in 1977/78 with the foundation of 9 of today's 20 University colleges within these two years. This expansion slowed down from 1999 onwards and the last foundation of an HEI displayed in 2014 in the figure was a merger and not a new establishment.

Figure 1. Foundation year of HEIs by type



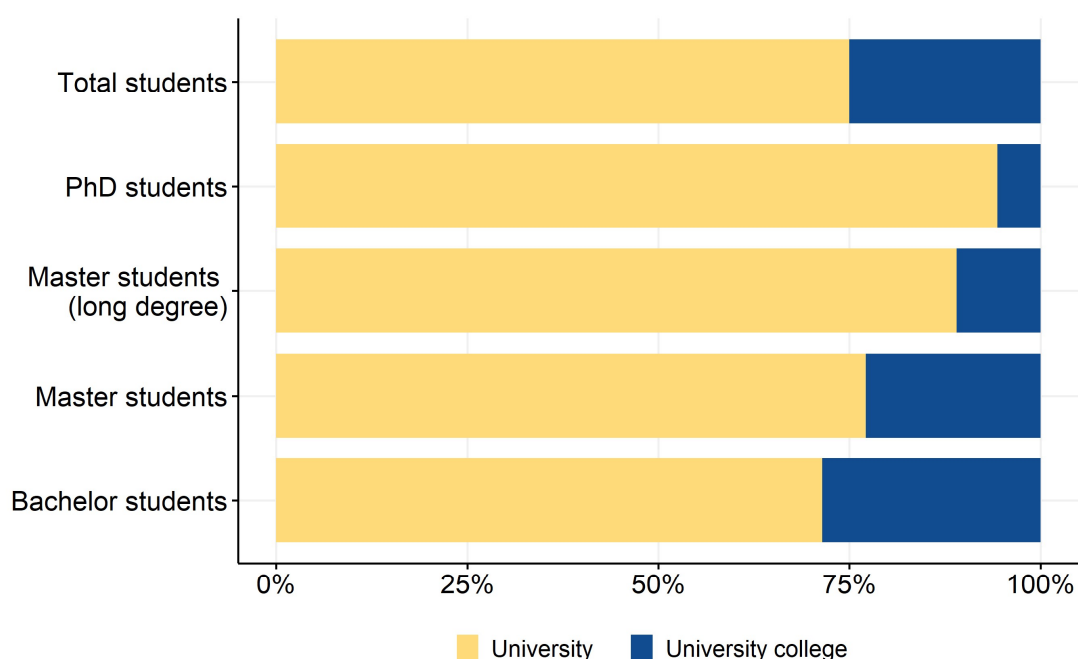
Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges

Students

In contrast to the number of institutions, in terms of the number of students enrolled, Universities still account for about 75% of all students and University colleges (*Högskola*) for only 25% (see Figure 2).

According to different institutional mandates, we also observe systematic differences between educational levels: University colleges account for around 29% of the bachelor students and 23% of the master students, while doctorates are within the remit of Universities.

Figure 2. Students by level and type of HEI, 2020



Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges

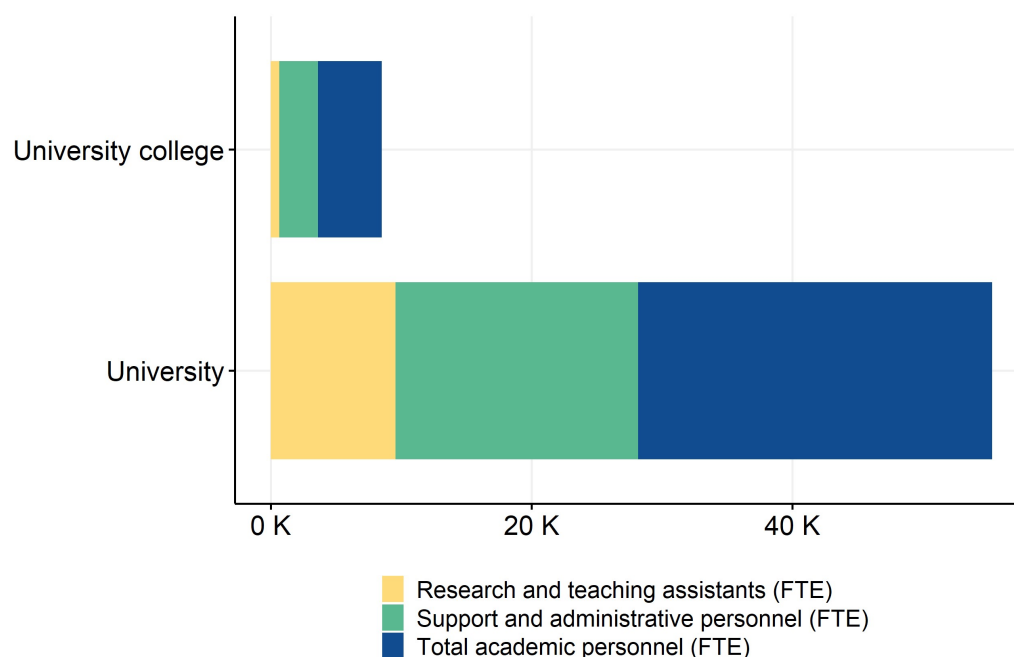
Personnel

People are a core resource for HEIs, as their competences are essential for teaching, undertaking research and producing scientific output. In that respect, ETER provides a rich set of data moving beyond the information available in EUROSTAT, which allows to analyze the composition of personnel by type of HEI and characteristics such as gender, nationality, educational field and, from 2020 onwards, levels of seniority.

As shown by Figure 3, there are major differences between HEIs in size, as measured by total personnel in full time equivalents (FTE), and in the personnel composition.

With about 55.000 FTEs, the 17 Universities account for about 87% of HEI personnel in Sweden, University colleges account for the remaining 13% (ca. 8.000 FTEs). As of the personnel composition, the share of support and administrative personnel is with about one similar for both HEI types, while there are large variations in the share of research and teaching assistants (RTAs). This category is mostly composed by PhD and master students supporting research and teaching activities; RTAs comprise 17% in Universities, but only 8% in University colleges, reflecting the different extent of research and the fact that some of the latter institutions cannot award PhDs.

Figure 3. Personnel (FTE) by category and type of HEI, 2020

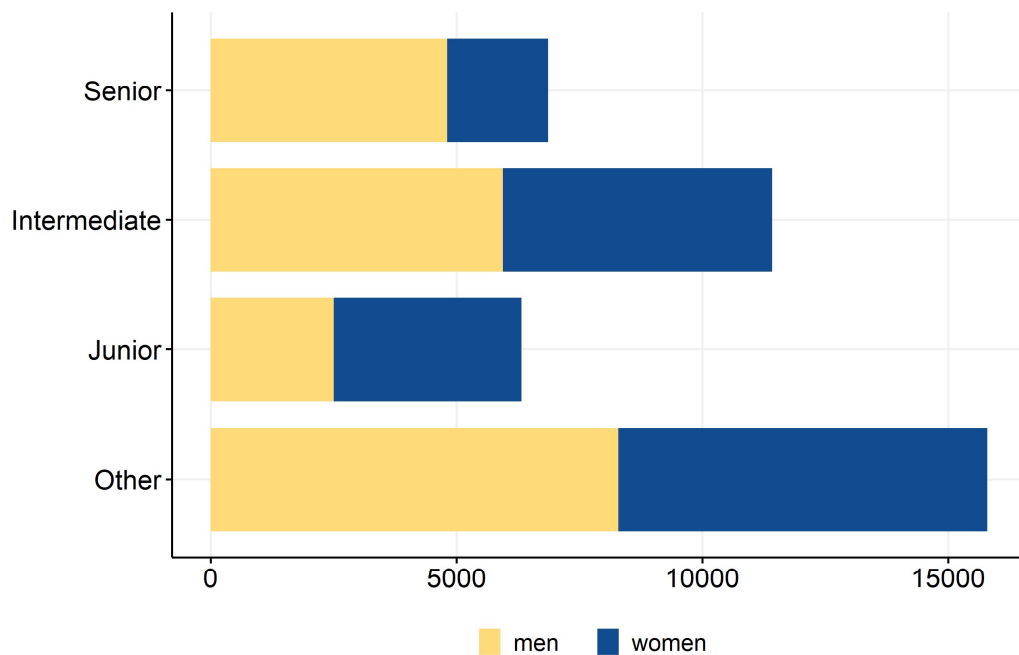


Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges

Since the data collection 2020, ETER also includes information on academic staff seniority level based on a classification jointly developed by OECD and EUROSTAT². Combined with information on gender, this information allows measuring two critical issues, i.e. career prospects of academic staff and the so-called leaky pipeline, i.e. the fact that the share of female academic staff decreases systematically with seniority levels.

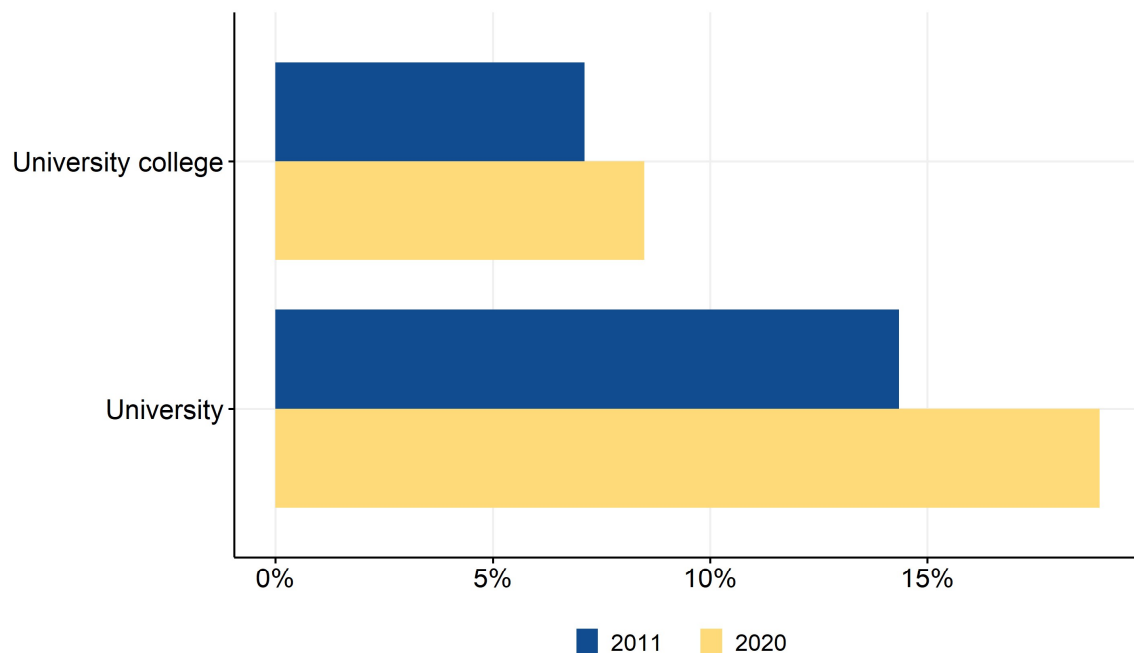
As of Sweden, data show a relatively flat hierarchy, with 16% of academic personnel at the junior level and only 17% at the senior level (see Figure 4). However, about 40% of the academic personnel is classified as “other”. A reasonable gender balance has been achieved for junior (60% females) and intermediate (48%) personnel, but only 30% of senior-level academic personnel are female (see Figure 4).

² OECD (2022), Education at a Glance, Paris, pp. 412-413.

Figure 4. Academic personnel by seniority level and gender (HC), 2020

A final important dimension is internationality since it is generally considered as beneficial for the quality of research and education. In ETER, this is measured by the share of academic personnel not having the citizenship of the country ('foreigners'). As shown by Figure 5, the Swedish higher education is characterized by a moderate level of internationalization. In Universities, almost 20% of academic personnel are foreigners, while this share drops to under 10% for University colleges. Internationality is therefore strongly associated with research orientation of HEIs. An increase over the last ten years can also be observed.

Figure 5. Share of foreign academic personnel (HC) by type of HEI, 2011 and 2020

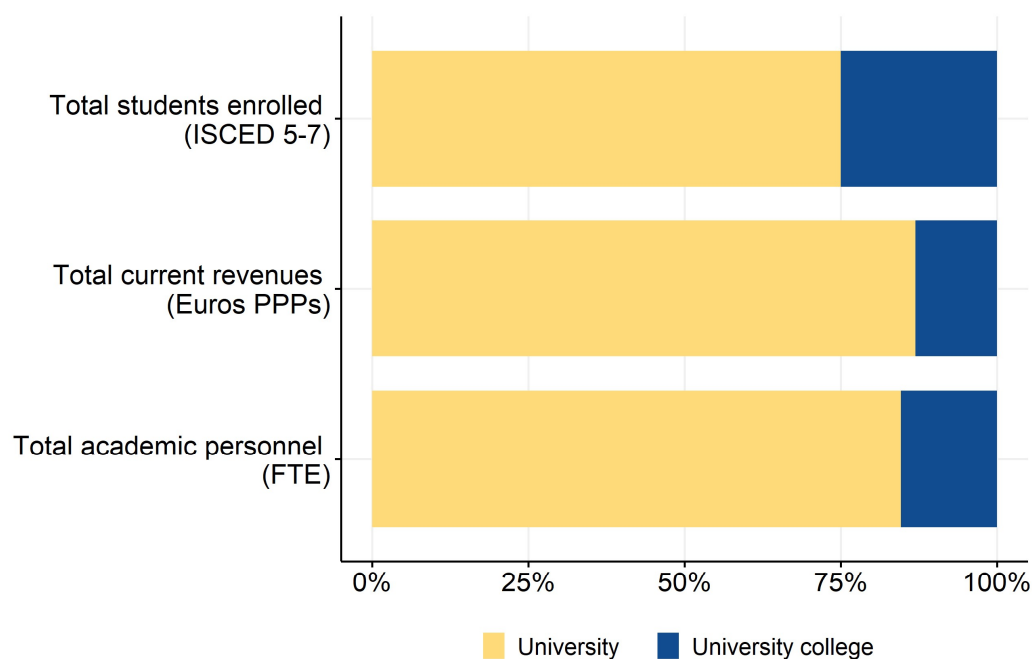


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Financial resources

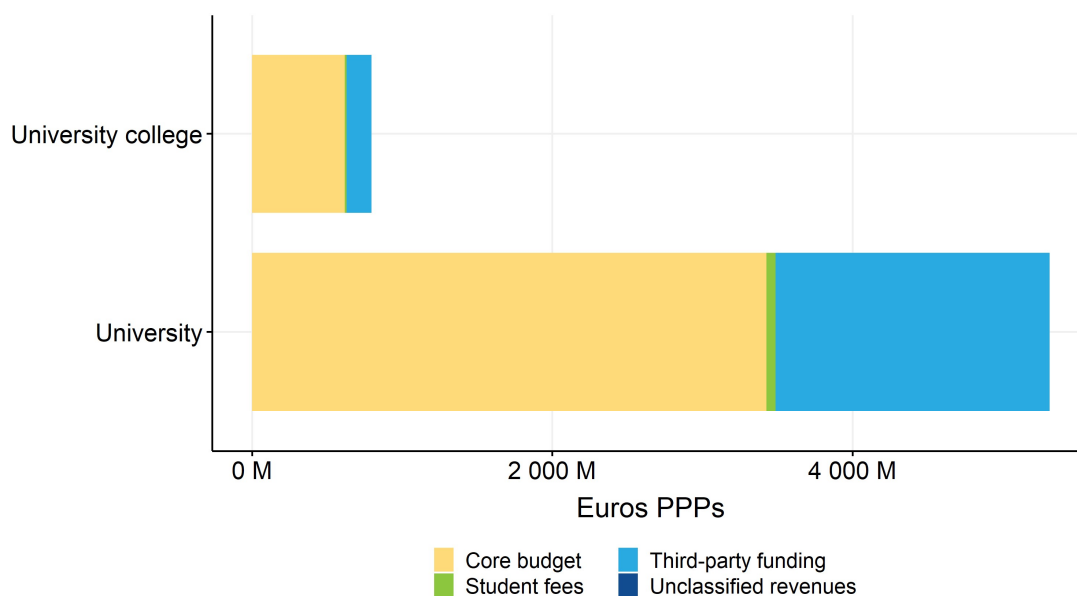
As illustrated in Figure 6, in the year 2020, Universities account for about 85% of financial revenues and academic personnel of the whole HEI system, i.e., substantially more than their share of students. This broadly corresponds to the fact that Universities also have an important research function, and that the majority of the publicly funded R&D in Sweden takes place within HEIs. This difference is also reflected in the composition of revenues, where Universities receive a considerable proportion of revenues from (research-related) third-party funds. Overall, state allocation remains important for both institutional types in Sweden, while student fees play a minor role as only students from countries outside EEA have to pay such fees.

Figure 6. Resources, academic personnel and total students enrolled by type of HEI, 2020



Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges

Figure 7. Composition of resources. Universities (Universitet) and University colleges (Högskola)

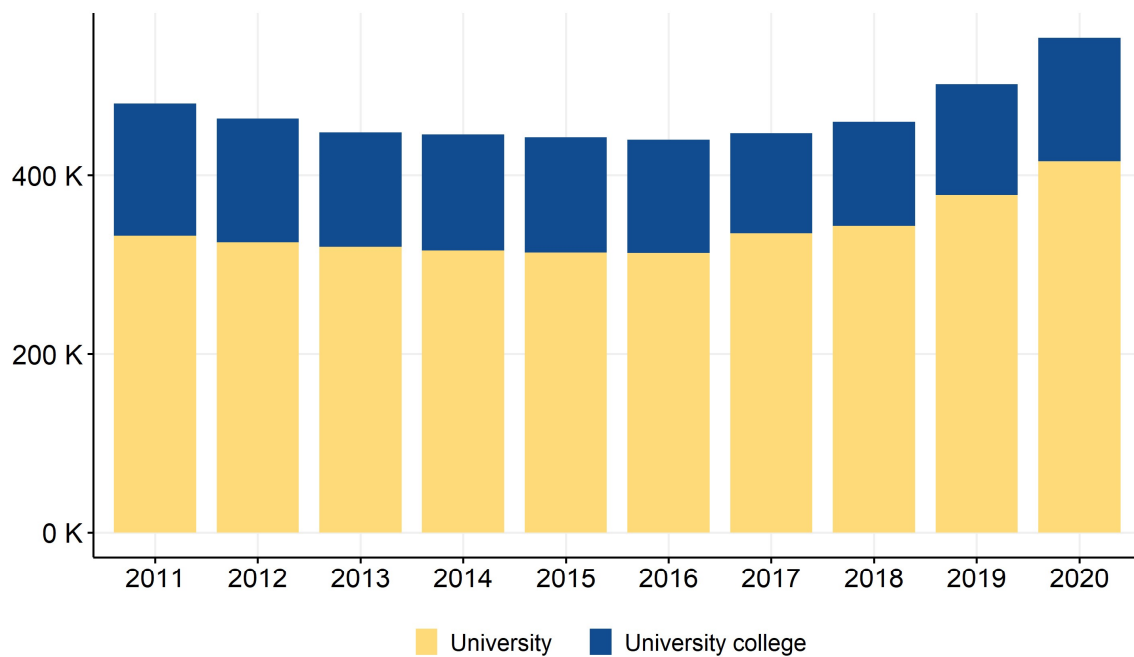


Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges

Changing roles over time

When observed through the lens of the number of students, the data show a rather stable pattern over the observed time period. A slight decrease of total students from 2011 until 2013, was followed by stable numbers of students from 2013 until 2016 and by an increase since 2016. While Universities accounted for 69% of all students already in 2011, this share further increased to 75% in 2020.

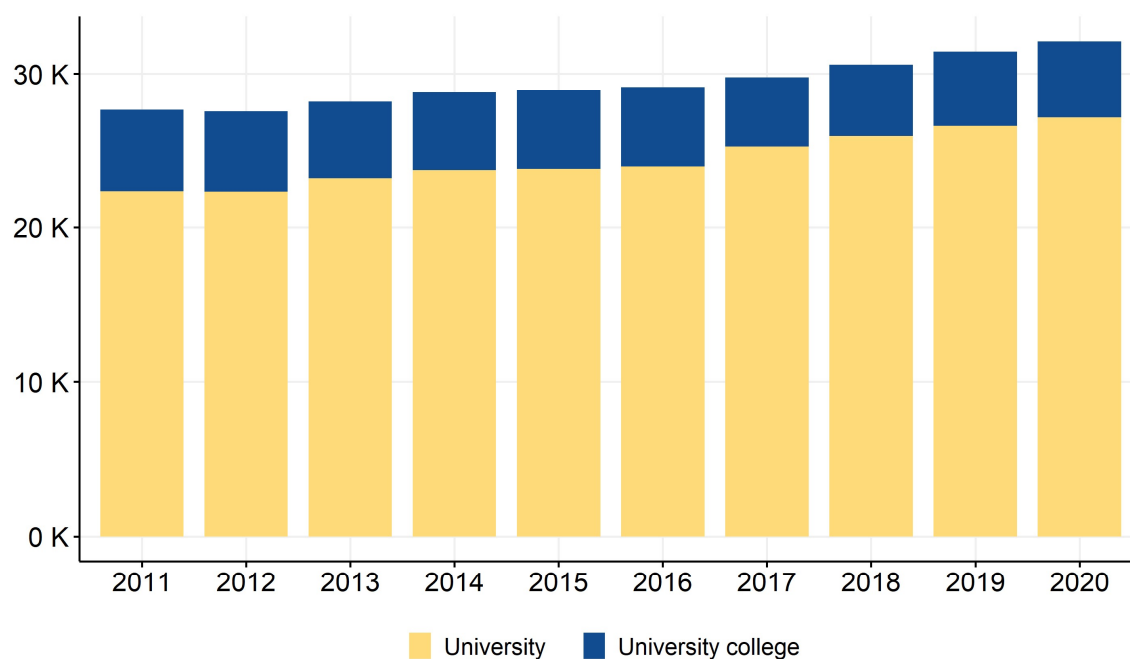
Figure 8. Share of students enrolled by institutional type



Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges

As shown by Figure 6, with a steady increase of in total 16% from 2011 to 2020, the number of academic personnel (FTE) in Sweden's HEIs kept pace with the increase in the number of students. Like for students, the increase of academic personnel took place at Universities (+28%), while the personnel at University colleges only started to increase in most recent years and is still below the level of 2011.

Figure 6. Academic personnel (FTE) by HEI type, 2011-2020



Note: University colleges of fine, applied and performing arts are included in University colleges



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