

Upper Secondary Education: The Higher Preparatory Examination (HF)

FOUR UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN DENMARK

There are four different upper secondary education programmes in Denmark: STX, HHX, HTX and HF, aimed at young people who are interested in knowledge, concentration, seeing things in perspective and abstraction. The common objective of the education programmes is to prepare young people for higher education, and in that connection ensure that they acquire general education, knowledge and competences by means of the subjects they study and in the interaction between them. STX, HHX and HTX take three years to complete and admit young people who have completed nine years of basic school. HF takes two years and admits persons who have completed 10 years of basic school.

The *STX* and *HF* programmes consist of a broad range of subjects in the fields of the humanities, natural science and social science.

The *HHX* programme focuses on business and socio-economic disciplines in combination with foreign languages and other general subjects.

The *HTX* programme has its focus on technological and scientific subjects in combination with general subjects.

There are 146 schools with STX and/or HF, 60 offering HHX and 38 with HTX. Together they admit around 46,000 pupils every year. This is more than 60 % of the young Danes who commence youth education after basic school.

CONTENT

Each of the education programmes has its specific range of compulsory subjects that are common for all pupils taking the programme. In STX, HHX and HTX, in addition, each school offers a number of different specialized studies packages (packages normally containing three subjects) and elective subjects for the pupils to choose between. In HF the pupils make their choices from among the electives offered by the school.

All the education programmes also contain multi-subject courses, among other things with the object of strengthening the pupils' preparedness for further study. This includes the ability to apply knowledge and methods from several subjects to illustrate interdisciplinary themes and problems and the ability to compare the subjects' knowledge and methods.

CURRICULA

The Ministry of Education draws up curricula for subjects and multi-subject courses.

All subjects are placed in system of levels, C, B and A, in relation to the subject's scope and depth. The levels system is as a general rule structured in such a way that C-level subjects are allotted 75 periods of 60 minutes, B-level subjects have 200 periods and subjects at A-level 325 hours. There are a number of exceptions, however, in the individual programmes, in particular as regards B and A levels.

MARKING, TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

Marks are awarded on a 7-point scale from -3 to 12. In STX, HHX and HTX each pupil regularly receives term marks in all subjects, and the teacher also gives final marks when a subject is completed. In addition the pupils all receive marks when they sit for an examination.

Certain examinations are compulsory for all pupils in the education programme. In addition, each year the Ministry of Education decides which subjects are to form part of the examination for the individual pupil. Towards the end of the education programme, all pupils must submit a major written assignment or project, which forms part of the examination.

The examinations can be written, oral, case and project tests or take

mixed forms. At most of the examinations, the pupils may utilise all types of aids, including IT, but they may normally not communicate with one another or with anyone in their surroundings.

The Ministry formulates all written examination questions and appoints external examiners for all examinations, both oral and written.

An examination certificate is issued when the pupil has achieved a minimum of 02 in weighted average of the concluding term marks and examination marks. When the examination average is being calculated, the marks are weighted differently depending on the level. The examination average is crucial to the pupil's future opportunities in the education system as it forms an important part of the basis for admission to higher education. The examination average is raised for pupils who have taken more subjects at A-level than the education programme requires.

ADMISSION

To be admitted to one of the three-year upper secondary education programmes (STX, HHX, HTX), a pupil must have completed nine years of Danish basic education or have received corresponding teaching, and have taken the compulsory final examination of the primary and lower secondary school.

To be admitted to HF, a pupil must have completed ten years of Danish basic education and have taken examinations in Danish, English, mathematics, a second foreign language (French or German) and physics/chemistry.

A pupil must take an admission test if he/she has not taken the examinations required for admission to STX/HHX/HTX or HF. A pupil may be required to take an admission test if the basic school has recommended this.

Pupils who have not attended a Danish school may be admitted following a concrete assessment of whether they have qualifications corresponding to the requirements that must be fulfilled by pupils who have attended a Danish school. They may be required to take an admission test.

LEGISLATION, SCHOOL SYSTEM AND MANAGEMENT

The Ministry of Education issues the rules according to which the schools work. The schools, which are spread out all over Denmark, are self-governing institutions with different histories and academic profiles. They finance the implementation of one or more of the upper secondary education programmes by means of grants from the Ministry of Education provided on the basis of pupil numbers. The head of the school answers to a board, the composition of which reflects the school's specific profile. The teachers and pupils of the school appoint representatives to the board. The school board appoints and dismisses the headteacher and has overall responsibility for the running of the school and its activity.

QUALITY AND SUPERVISION

All schools offering one or more upper secondary education programmes must have and utilise a system for quality development and results assessment of each individual programme and of the teaching. Within the general requirements, the school itself decides the methodology for self-assessment and quality assessment it wishes to employ. The school must be in a position to document its quality system vis-à-vis the Ministry of Education, which supervises the school's implementation of the education programmes and its results.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Teachers must have completed a Master's programme at a university or – in certain cases – be able to

document a corresponding level. Teachers must also have completed a course in educational theory and practice before or subsequent to their appointment at the school.

PUPILS' INFLUENCE ON THE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Students have a right to form a student council at their school and they are represented on the school board. The school must ensure that the students are involved in the planning of teaching in their class. The national student organisations have the right to appoint two members to the council that advises the Minister of Education on the upper secondary education programmes.

STUDENT GUIDANCE

The schools are obliged to provide academic guidance for the students and to ensure that they are offered individual and collective guidance concerning completion of the education programme. The students can also receive guidance concerning higher education and careers.

THE STUDENTS' FINANCIAL SITUATION

Teaching is covered by the state and is free of charge. However, to a limited extent (max. DKK 2,500) the school can require the students to acquire some of the teaching materials themselves, typically dictionaries and pocket calculator. Pupils are eligible for Danish Education Support (SU) if they are active students, have reached the age of 18 and are Danish citizens. It is also possible in some cases to obtain SU if one is not a Danish citizen.

THE SCHOOL YEAR

The individual school decides when the school year is to start after the summer holiday, the number of school days and the placing of holidays and school days. The calendar and holiday schedule of a school can usually be found on the school's website.

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SPECIAL PROFILE

The emphasis in the HF programme is on both the theoretical and the practical. The education programme aims to develop the students' capacity for in-depth study and their understanding of the connections between the subjects and

to promote the individual student's responsibility for his or her own and joint results. The students are to attain analytical and critical skills and achieve insight into natural science, social science and humanistic contexts. They are also to develop their linguistic competences.

HF is a fulltime, two-year programme of study, and the subjects are also offered as single subjects and sometimes as packages of subjects at adult education centres, where an annual approximately 80,000 students complete one or more HF subjects.

NORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE TWO-YEAR FULLTIME HF STUDY PROGRAMME

2nd HF	Workshop	Examination project	Danish	English	Culture and social science group of subjects	Written assignment	Electives		
1st HF		Projects				Natural science group of subjects	Practical/musical subjects	Physical education	Mathematics

FACTS ABOUT THE HF PROGRAMME

Compulsory subjects and levels: As well as an introductory course, a workshop course and project periods, the programme consists of the following subjects: Danish A, English B, mathematics C, physical education C, practical/musical subject C, natural science group of subjects (which includes biology C, geography C and chemistry C), and the culture and social science group of subjects (history B, social science C and religion C).

As well as the compulsory subjects, the student must choose two-four electives, and each student must also complete a major written assignment during the second year within one to three subjects of their choice.

Electives: The students choose from among a number of electives at C, B or A level offered by the schools. The electives can be HF subjects within the practical/musical area or

electives common to the other upper secondary programmes for STX, HHX and HTX. The schools can also tone their HF range by offering electives as "packages" for the students to choose between. The number and specific content of the elective options vary from school to school.

Number of weekly periods: Each student completes a minimum of 1625 hours of 60 minutes each. There is, in addition, homework with written assignments, preparation of texts, research etc. as well as time for examinations.

Typical work methods: Various methods of working are employed, for instance classroom instruction, project work, individual and group based written work etc. Up to 20% of the teaching time can be spent on virtually organised teaching, where students and teacher are not necessarily in the same room.

Examination: All HF students take one or more written and/or oral examinations in all the compulsory subjects and in the subject groups within natural science and culture/social science. Examinations are also taken in the electives. An HF examination also includes an individual, major written assignment within one to three subjects and an examination project prepared individually or in groups and which covers two to three subjects. Term marks (end of year marks) are not given in the HF programme.

Type of school: The HF is typically offered by the general upper secondary schools, which as well as HF also offer STX, and by the adult education centres which, as well as HF, also offer other types of adult education.

Web reference: eng.uvm.dk