

General syllabus for third-cycle programme in social work, 240 credits

This general syllabus was adopted by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences at the University of Gothenburg on 27 March 2007, and revised on 30/01/2008, 02/02/2010, 01/06/2010, 13/10/2011, 21/05/2012, 10/02/2014, 06/10/2016 (Registration number U2016/376) and 13/06/2019.

Programme objectives

The goal of the third cycle programme in social work is that the doctoral student will graduate with a Degree of Doctor or Degree of Licentiate.

The programme objectives are to develop the requisite knowledge and skills in the doctoral student so that they are able to independently conduct research in social work and to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field through the production of a scholarly thesis.

Another goal of the third-cycle programme in social work is to develop the doctoral student's ability to utilise their acquired scholarship skills and knowledge in future research projects or other qualified professional work. The doctoral student must also have acquired a sound knowledge of planning and carrying out research projects. The programme is also intended to develop the doctoral student's communication and teaching skills with regard to being able to express themselves well in speech and writing both within and outside academia. The programme is intended to provide international contacts, participation in international research conferences and possibly also a stay at a university abroad.

In order to be admitted to a degree at third-cycle level in Social Work, the requirements in the Higher Education Ordinance Annex 2 Qualifications Ordinance concerning degrees must be met, as well as the specific programme objectives set out below.

1.1 Knowledge and understanding

For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:

- Demonstrate broad knowledge in and a systematic understanding of the field of research as well as in-depth and up-to-date specialist knowledge within a defined area of the field of research, and
- Demonstrate familiarity with scientific method in general and with the specific methods used in the field of research in particular.

For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

- Demonstrate knowledge in and a systematic understanding of the field of research as well as up-to-date specialist knowledge within a defined area of the field of research, and
- Demonstrate familiarity with scientific method in general and with the specific methods used in the field of research in particular.

1.2 Competence and skills

For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:

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- Demonstrate an ability to scientifically analyse and synthesise and to independently and critically evaluate and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations
- Demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively and with scholarly thoroughness, identify and formulate research questions as well as to plan and conduct research and perform other qualified tasks using appropriate methods within specified time limits and to review and assess such work
- By means of a thesis, demonstrate their ability through their own research to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss with authority research and research findings, orally and in writing, in both national and international contexts, in dialogue with the scholarly community and society at large
- Demonstrate an ability to identify needs for additional knowledge, and
- Demonstrate the qualities required to contribute to the development of society, in the contexts of research and education as well as in other qualified professional contexts and to support the learning of others.

For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

- Demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively and with scholarly thoroughness, identify and formulate research questions as well as to plan and conduct research and perform other qualified tasks using appropriate methods within specified time limits and to review and assess such work
- With their licentiate thesis, demonstrate their ability to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge through their own research
- Demonstrate an ability to present and discuss clearly research and research findings, orally and in writing, in both national and international contexts, in dialogue with the scholarly community and society at large,
- Demonstrate an ability to identify their needs for additional knowledge and to take responsibility for their knowledge development, and
- Demonstrate the kinds of skills required to participate independently in research and development projects and to work independently in other qualified activities.

1.3 Judgement and approach

For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:

- Demonstrate intellectual independence and scientific probity as well as the ability to make research ethics judgements, and
- Demonstrate a deepened awareness of the possibilities and limitations of science and its role in society and human responsibility for how it is used.

For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

- Demonstrate the ability to make research ethics judgements, and
- Demonstrate an awareness of the possibilities and limitations of science and its role in society and human responsibility for how it is used.

2. Entry and admission requirements

In order to be admitted to the study programme, the applicant must fulfil the general entry requirements and specific entry requirements in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance.

2.1 General entry requirements

According to the Higher Education Ordinance Chapter 7 Section 39, a person meets the general entry requirements for third-cycle courses and study programmes if they:

- have been awarded a second-cycle qualification,
- have satisfied the requirements for courses comprising at least 240 credits of which at least 60 credits were awarded at second-cycle level, or
- have acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad.

2.2 Specific entry requirements

The specific entry requirements for admission to the third-cycle study programme in social work are:

- Degree of Bachelor of Science in Social Work, 210 credits, and
- At least 60 credits in social work at second-cycle level, 15 of which refer to a scholarly work, or
- Knowledge that corresponds to the above requirements acquired in some other way.

3. Admission and selection

Applications for admissions to the third-cycle programme in social work in general are received in response to specific advertising.

According to Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance, applicants are to be selected on the basis of whether or not they are deemed capable of completing the programme. This assessment is based on the thesis plan that is to accompany the student's application, previous academic papers and educational qualifications, which are used to evaluate the applicant's potential to benefit from studies at third-cycle level. The thesis plan should present the applicant's research interests or research task and focus on the planned thesis project. This plan, together with academic papers, previous theses, and other relevant publications, are evaluated in relation to the following quality criteria: a) ability to critically, independently, creatively and with scientific meticulousness identify and formulate research problems; b) ability to formulate questions that are anchored in previous research and theory; c) ability to choose appropriate methods for the collection and analysis of data; d) ability to present and discuss the findings from the investigation in relation to the previous research and theory; and e) that the thesis plan is realistic with regard to its feasibility within a third-cycle programme. The plan also provides the basis for assessing the Department's capacity to provide a supervisor with appropriate competence in the research area as defined in the thesis plan.

Recruitment and selection take into account the Department's supervision resources in the doctoral student's area of research focus. Applicants are assessed and ranked by a group of individuals appointed for the purpose from among the Department's supervisor pool for third-cycle programmes. The assessment process may include interviews with those applicants who have been short-listed after initial assessment. Decisions to admit doctoral students are made by the Head of Department.

The doctoral student may be granted advanced standing based on previous university studies if an individual application for crediting of these studies is approved. Decisions on advanced standing are made by the Head of Department in connection with drawing up the individual study plan, but no later than six months after admission to a third-cycle programme.

Granting advanced standing means a decision that the period of study may be reduced by the number of credits that have been credited to the student. This should be documented in the student's individual study plan along with the number of credits that have been credited. However, a doctoral student cannot be granted advanced standing corresponding to more than the equivalent of two years of full-time studies.

The possibility of being granted advanced standing on the basis of previous higher education studies must not be used as a selection criterion for admission to third-cycle education.

4. Content and structure of the programme

The third-cycle programme in social work comprises 240 credits and ends with a Degree of Doctor. The thesis comprises 175 credits and the coursework part of the programme comprise 65 credits. There is an option to graduate with a Degree of Licentiate after 120 credits provided that the requirements in the Higher Education Ordinance Annex 2 Qualifications Ordinance concerning the Degree of Licentiate are met. The licentiate thesis comprises 90 credits and the coursework part comprises 30 credits.

Third-cycle programmes consist of courses, which are examined as they are completed, and the doctoral student's own research project leading to a doctoral thesis/licentiate thesis. As part of the programme, the doctoral student is also required to participate in seminars arranged by the Department and, unless there are special reasons to the contrary, to contribute to the Department's joint activities.

4.2 Courses

The programme includes a coursework part comprising 65 credits of which 45 credits are compulsory for the specialisation. All doctoral students must also complete a course equivalent to 5 credits in the fundamentals of teaching and learning in higher education. Other courses are determined in consultation with the supervisor and the examiner.

The courses are to cover the following areas:

- Introduction to research in social work, theory of knowledge and research ethics (15 credits)
- Quantitative and qualitative research methods (15 credits)
- Social science theory (15 credits)
- Second-cycle courses in the area of research for the thesis or within the above categories (15 credits)
- Teaching and learning in higher education (5 credits)

Third-cycle programmes in social work with the objective of Degree of Licentiate comprise a coursework part of 30 credits including courses of at least 7.5 credits in social science theory and at least 7.5 credits in research methods. Other courses are determined in consultation with the supervisor. In addition to what is outlined above, 5 credits in teaching and learning in higher education may be included in the Degree of Licentiate.

4.2 Thesis and defence of doctoral thesis

Central to the programme is authoring a scholarly thesis where the doctoral student is to advance the knowledge in the field of research. The doctoral student is to report on how their thesis work is progressing at the Department's seminars. Progress reports are made on least three occasions:

The Thesis Plan Seminar (when the thesis plan has been completed), Interim Seminar (when parts of the thesis have been completed), and Final Seminar (when the thesis as a whole has been completed).

In accordance with the rules set out in the Higher Education Ordinance for the Degree of Doctor and the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral thesis/licentiate thesis is to be presented and defended orally in public or for the Degree of Licentiate at a final licentiate seminar. The doctoral thesis/licentiate thesis and its defence are assessed with the grade pass or fail by a grading committee.

5. Supervision

Two supervisors are to be appointed by the Head of Department at the latest at the start of studies and they are to be named in the individual's study plan. One of them must be appointed as the principal supervisor and the other as the assistant supervisor. The supervisors are to be employees of, or via contract attached to, the University. Unless there are special reasons to the contrary such as the form of funding, the principal supervisor is to be an employee of the Department of Social Work, University of Gothenburg and have at least the qualifications required for appointment as a docent. Both supervisors must have completed a course in doctoral supervision. The doctoral student has the right to supervision in accordance with that which is stated in Tillämpningsbeslut för utbildning på forskarnivå vid Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten (Decision applicable to third-cycle programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences). A doctoral student who so requests is to be permitted to change supervisor.

6. Individual study plan

An individual study plan (ISP) is to be drawn up for each doctoral student in conjunction with admission to the programme. The study plan is to be adopted by the Head of Department after consultation with the doctoral student, supervisors and the examiner. The individual study plan is to be reviewed at least once each year. This follow-up is to clearly state how the doctoral student is progressing within the programme.

The doctoral student, supervisors, examiner and Head of Department are to certify in writing that they agree on its content.

6.1 Timetable and funding plan

The individual study plan is to include a timetable with an associated funding plan for the entire programme period up to the planned date for the defence of the thesis.

7. Other matters

For all other matters, refer to the current legislation, governing documents at the University of Gothenburg and at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and local regulations at the Department of Social Work.

Information about the current regulatory framework is available via the University's website.