

Study Guide for PhD Programme in Human Geography

1. INTRODUCTION

The PhD programme in Human Geography comprises 240 higher education credits and leads to the award of a doctoral degree. The programme consists of courses and independent research work presented in the form of a scholarly thesis. The course and thesis parts correspond to 75 and 165 higher education credits, respectively. This study guide for the PhD programme in human geography further specifies the General Syllabus for the PhD Programme in Human Geography (ref. no. GU 2019/2433) and governing documents for the doctoral programme available at the University of Gothenburg (Rules and regulations for third-cycle studies at the University of Gothenburg, Dnr V 2018/603).

2. THE AIM OF THE PROGRAMME

The aim of the programme is to provide the third-cycle student with the type of knowledge and skills he/she will need to be able to conduct research autonomously in the field of Human Geography and to contribute to knowledge development in the field through producing a doctoral thesis. The programme also aims to develop the student's ability to apply acquired scholarly knowledge and skills in future research work or some other qualified professional capacity. The programme shall furthermore develop the student's communicative and pedagogical skills as well as his/her ability to express him/herself in speech and writing in both academic and non-academic contexts. The student shall also acquire knowledge of the planning, management, and execution of research projects. Moreover, the programme shall facilitate international contacts in the form of, for example, participation in research conferences and/or extended visits to academic institutions abroad. The specific aims of the programme, which must be achieved for a student to be awarded a doctoral degree in Human Geography, are specified below.

Knowledge and understanding

For the PhD degree, the student shall:

- Demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field of Human Geography as well as advanced and up-to-date specialised knowledge in a limited area of this field.
- Demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and the methods used in the field of Human Geography in particular.

Competence and skills

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the student shall:

- Demonstrate the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis as well as for reviewing and assessing new and complex phenomena, issues, and situations in the field of Human Geography, both autonomously and critically.
- Demonstrate the ability, as regards the field of Human Geography, to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision, critically, autonomously, and creatively, to plan and use appropriate methods to undertake research and other qualified tasks within predetermined timeframes, and to review and evaluate such work.
- Demonstrate, through a thesis project, the ability to make significant contributions to the formation of knowledge in the selected area of research.
- Demonstrate, in both national and international contexts, the ability to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify needs for further knowledge in the field of Human Geography.
- Demonstrate the capacity to contribute to social development and to support the learning of others both through research and education and in some other qualified professional capacity.

Judgement and approach

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the student shall:

- Demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics.
- Demonstrate specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society, and people's responsibility for how it is used.

3. THE THESIS

The most central part of the programme is the authoring of a scholarly thesis. The topic of the thesis project shall be determined in consultation with the supervisors. The thesis must be based on autonomously conducted research and be of good international scholarly standard. It can be designed either as a monograph or as a compilation thesis. In the dissertation, the PhD student shall demonstrate the ability to address a scientific problem and independently carry out a major research project. The dissertation shall be defended in a public seminar in accordance with the rules specified in the Higher Education Ordinance for doctoral degrees.

Compulsory doctoral seminars

Each dissertation project is followed up and reviewed through a number of compulsory doctoral seminars, distributed over the doctoral period.

Planning seminar

At the end of year one (approximately), the thesis project shall be presented at a planning seminar. A written manuscript in the form of a planning report shall be made available one week prior to the seminar. A senior researcher from the unit is appointed to the seminar as a discussant and reviewer of the report. In addition, a doctoral student reviewer may be appointed. Comments and suggestions given at the seminar form an important basis for the ongoing work and should be given special attention in the ongoing supervision.

The planning report shall contain a description of the research problem, aim and research questions, theoretical departure points, as well as an introduction to the most important research within the field. The planning report shall also contain a description of the research design, choice of research methods and materials, and how data collection is to take place. The planning report shall also contain a publication plan, which states how and in what form the material is to be presented, as well as an overall work plan and timetable where the thesis project is schematically presented in parts.

Half-time seminar

At the end of year two (approximately), the thesis project shall be presented at a higher seminar. A half-time manuscript shall be made available two weeks prior to the seminar. A discussant with competence relevant to the research area is appointed. An internal reader is appointed from among the senior researchers at the unit (excluding supervisors). In a follow-up meeting, the research committee makes an assessment of the status of the project, and of whether it can be expected to result in a doctoral thesis within the study period. Main concerns and suggestions are summarised and communicated to the supervisor and doctoral student.

Final seminar

Well in advance (approximately six months) of the intended time of the public defence, the thesis project shall be presented in its entirety at a higher seminar. A manuscript shall be made available two weeks prior to the seminar. The research committee appoints an opponent (preferably external) with competence of relevance to the research topic of the thesis. The committee appoints two internal reviewers from among the senior researchers at the unit (excluding supervisors). One of the reviewers should preferably represent an area close to the topic of the thesis project and the other should represent a different area of research within the discipline. Internal reviewers are expected to make an overall assessment of the thesis project and follow the final phase of the thesis project.

Assessment of the final seminar manuscript: The research committee meets after the final seminar to discuss and assess what remains to be done for the manuscript to meet the scientific quality requirements for doctoral dissertations. The research committee's assessment is formulated in a written statement communicated to the supervisors and doctoral student.

The following scale is indicative of the assessment:

- Green light: The manuscript largely meets the quality requirements. There may be a limited number of shortcomings that need to be addressed. The path to an approved

product is relatively straightforward in terms of what the final product will look like. This includes how to address potential shortcomings. The research committee delegates to the supervisors and internal readers the joint decision as to when the manuscript can be registered for doctoral defence.

- **Yellow light:** The manuscript is lacking in quality and/or scope. Parts of the work are not written and/or require extensive revision in order to meet the quality requirements. The path ahead is relatively unclear in terms of what the final product will look like. A revised manuscript shall be presented to the research committee. The committee will present a new assessment of the revised manuscript in the form of a written statement.
- **Red light:** The manuscript is clearly lacking in quality and/or scope. Significant parts of the work are not written and/or require extensive revision to meet the quality requirements. The path to an approved product is very unclear. A substantially revised manuscript shall be presented at a new final seminar.

Public defence

The dissertation defence is public. The opponent and grading committee are appointed by the faculty board following a proposal from the department. The request for a dissertation defence must be made approximately two months in advance (see special rules for dissertations at the Department of Economics and Society).

Guidelines for a compilation thesis

The doctoral student may, in consultation with the main supervisor, choose to publish the thesis as a compilation or as a monograph. A compilation thesis for a doctoral degree shall consist of a minimum of three (3) scientific articles (including chapters of edited books) and a “kappa”. The number of articles required depends on the scope of the doctoral student’s contribution to each text and the degree of overlap between texts. At least one (1) article shall normally have already been accepted for publication in a scientific journal or edited book via a qualified referee assessment process. Other articles shall be assessed as publishable at the final seminar. Co-authorship is allowed. The kappa and a minimum of one article shall be single authored.

Articles with several authors must be accompanied by a certificate documenting the scope of the doctoral student’s contribution.

The scope of the kappa depends on the nature of the publications included in the thesis. The benchmark is 20–50 pages, excluding attachments. The kappa shall summarise the aim, theoretical points of departure, methods, data, and conclusions presented in the articles, so that the compilation thesis forms a coherent whole. If the compilation thesis contains published articles and the research field has undergone significant development since their publication, the kappa shall also contain an update.

4. COURSES

The programme consists of a course part corresponding to 75 higher education credits. This part is structured as follows:

Compulsory courses (33 higher education credits)

The following compulsory courses shall be taken by all doctoral students in human geography.

- Introduction to Human Geography (7.5 higher education credits)
- Introduction to Research Ethics and Good Research Practice (3 higher education credits)
- Research Design (7.5 higher education credits)
- Courses in qualitative and quantitative methods (15 higher education credits)

Electives (42 higher education credits)

Elective courses are determined in consultation with the supervisor and examiner. A list of elective courses is available at the department. At least two of the courses should be offered by the national programme for PhD education in Human Geography. Individually designed reading courses enabling the PhD student to specialise in a certain area may be included (maximum 15 higher education credits). The course Teaching and Learning in Higher Education may be included (maximum 5 higher education credits). If a student is given permission to transfer credits from previous education, this must be clearly stated in the individual study plan.

Available courses

Unit-level courses

- KGFU100: Introduction to Research Training in Human Geography (7.5 credits)
- KGFU102: Computer Programs for Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis – Introducing SPSS and NVivo
- KGFU103: Writing Scientific Articles in Human Geography (7.5 credits)
- KGFU104: Advanced Individual Course 1 in Human Geography (7.5 credits)
- KGFU105: Advanced Individual Course 2 in Human Geography (7.5 credits)

Department-level courses (biannual)

- ESFU310: Philosophy of Science for Economy and Society (3 credits)
- ESFU320: Research Design (3 credits)
- ESFU330: Academic Writing (3 credits)
- ESFU340: Writing Research Applications (3 credits)
- ESFU350: Research Seminar as Peer-review (3 credits)

Faculty-level course (annual)

- ESFE010: Introduction to Research Ethics and Good Research Practice (3 credits)

Courses within the national programme for PhD education in Human Geography

Courses given within the national programme vary from year to year. Information about these courses is presented at the end of the spring semester every year and is published on the programme's website.

5. SUPERVISION AND INDIVIDUAL STUDY PLAN (ISP)

Supervision

Each doctoral student shall be assigned two supervisors (one main and one assistant supervisor). The main supervisor must be employed at the Unit for Human Geography at the University of Gothenburg. The main supervisor should preferably have reached docent level (reader) and shall have completed training in the supervision of doctoral students. The doctoral student has the right to request a change of supervisors.

Doctoral examiner

A doctoral examiner is appointed for each doctoral student. The doctoral examiner is appointed from among the professors and the director of postgraduate education at the unit, as well as the head and vice head of the department.

Individual study plan

An individual study plan shall be formulated and approved within two months of admission. The University of Gothenburg's internal system for individual study plans shall be utilised to this end. The individual study plan shall document the work completed by the student as well as plans for the remaining parts of the programme. The individual study plan shall be established and then reviewed and revised at least once a year, jointly by the student and his/her supervisors and examiner. It shall also be revised at the student's request and whenever relevant changes have occurred. The responsibility to make the individual study plan a useful and supportive instrument in the thesis work lies primarily with the student and his/her supervisors.

6. OTHER ACTIVITIES

The higher seminar

The student is expected to participate in seminar activities at the unit and, unless there are reasons for the contrary, contribute in other ways to the work and research environment of the unit.

Teaching and administration

Depending on current needs at the unit, the doctoral student has the opportunity to take part in teaching and administrative work. The level of participation may amount to a maximum of 20% of the total working hours for the four years of the programme; should the doctoral

programme be extended, the student's teaching and administration position can be extended correspondingly for a maximum of one year.

Participation in conferences

It is important for doctoral students to participate in and present their research at international scientific conferences. The doctoral student should therefore be encouraged to present his/her thesis project at an international conference on at least one occasion during the study period. This can be done in relation to the course KGFU103.

Financial support

Each doctoral student may receive financial support to a maximum of SEK 12,000 (for the entire doctoral programme) from the unit, for example, to pay for participation in a conference or external doctoral course.

The doctoral student is encouraged to apply for external funding for travel, conferences, and field trips (see, e.g., the faculty and SSAG websites).

7. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR THE LICENTIATE DEGREE

The licentiate degree in Human Geography comprises 120 higher education credits. The course and thesis parts correspond to 50 and 70 higher education credits, respectively. These guidelines further specify the General Syllabus for the Licentiate Programme in Human Geography.

Courses

The course part of the licentiate degree programme corresponds to 50 higher education credits, structured as follows:

Compulsory courses, licentiate degree (24 higher education credits)

- Introduction to Human Geography (7.5 higher education credits)
- Introduction to Research Ethics and Good Research Practice (3 higher education credits)
- Research Design (6 higher education credits)
- Courses in qualitative and quantitative methods (7.5 higher education credits)

Electives, licentiate degree (26 higher education credits)

Elective courses are determined in consultation with the supervisor and examiner. At least one of the courses should be offered by the national programme for PhD education in Human Geography. Individually designed reading courses enabling the licentiate student to specialise in a certain area may be included (maximum 7.5 higher education credits). The course Teaching and Learning in Higher Education may be included (maximum 5 higher education credits).

Compulsory seminars, licentiate degree

Each dissertation project is followed up and reviewed through a number of compulsory licentiate seminars, distributed over the study period. For the licentiate degree this includes a planning seminar (see specific guidelines for the planning seminar, above), a final licentiate seminar, and a public licentiate seminar.

Final licentiate seminar

Well in advance (approximately 3 months) of the intended time of the public licentiate seminar, the licentiate thesis shall be presented in its entirety at a higher seminar. A manuscript shall be made available two weeks prior to the seminar. The research committee appoints an opponent (preferably external) with competence of relevance to the research topic of the thesis. The committee appoints one internal reviewer from among the senior researchers at the unit (excluding supervisors). Internal reviewers are expected to make an overall assessment of the thesis project and follow the final phase of the thesis project.

The research committee meets after the final licentiate seminar to discuss and assess what remains to be done for the manuscript to meet the scientific quality requirements for licentiate dissertations. The research committee's assessment is formulated in a written statement communicated to the supervisors and doctoral student. The assessment follows the same indicative scale as used for the doctoral thesis (see above).

Public licentiate seminar

The licentiate thesis is presented at a public seminar. An external opponent is appointed by the research committee. The licentiate thesis is examined by the doctoral examiner in consultation with the main supervisor.

Specific guidelines for compilation thesis, licentiate

A compilation thesis for a licentiate degree shall consist of a minimum of two scientific articles (including chapters in edited books) and a kappa. The number of articles required depends on the scope of the licentiate student's contribution to each text and the degree of overlap between texts. The articles shall be assessed as publishable at the final seminar. Co-authorship is allowed. The kappa shall be single authored. Articles with several authors must be accompanied by a certificate documenting the scope of the doctoral student's contribution.