

# General syllabus for the Third-Cycle Programme in Social Sciences Specialising in Educational Sciences, 240 credits

Decision maker	Faculty board of Social Sciences
Responsible unit	Faculty of Social Sciences
Date of decision	2025-06-12

Summary	<i>The general syllabus was established by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences at the University of Gothenburg on January 30, 2008, and revised by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences on December 2020 (dnr: GU 2020/1345).</i>
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## Programme objectives

The goal of the third-cycle programme in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences 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 can independently conduct research in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences and to contribute to the development of knowledge in the subject area through the production of a scholarly thesis.

As a subject area for doctoral education, Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences covers the social, economic, institutional, political and organisational conditions of the education system, learning, knowledge creation and knowledge utilisation, as well as diversity in education and teaching. Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences also covers both contemporary and historical perspectives. Within the subject area, knowledge is produced about fundamental problems concerning the human condition, experiences and actions in social interaction and during various social, cultural, political, economic and social processes relevant to the teaching profession, teacher education or other pedagogical activities.

Another goal of the third-cycle programme in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences 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. Furthermore, the goal of the studies is to develop the doctoral student's communication and teaching skills regarding expressing themselves well in speech and writing both within and outside of academia. The doctoral student is also to have acquired a knowledge of the planning, management and implementation of research projects on completion of the programme.

The programme is intended to give the student international contacts through for example participation in international research conferences and a possible stay at a higher education institution abroad.

The specific objectives of the study programme, which must be met to obtain a Degree of Doctor or Degree of Licentiate in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences, are set out below. In all other respects, the requirements specified in Sweden's Higher Education Ordinance and the Degree Ordinance regarding third-cycle degrees apply.

### 1.1 Knowledge and understanding

**For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:**

- Demonstrate broad knowledge within and a systematic understanding of the research domain Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences and in-depth and up-to-date specialist knowledge within a specific area chosen for the thesis.
- Demonstrate familiarity with scientific method in general and with the specific methods used in the research domain in particular.

**For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:**

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

### 1.2 Competence and skills

**For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall:**

- 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
- Demonstrate the qualities required to contribute to the development of society, in the contexts of both 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 independently 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 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 scholarly probity as well as the ability to make research ethics judgements
- 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
- 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 admissions requirements

To be admitted to the study programme, the applicant must fulfil the general and specific entry requirements according to that which is stated in the Sweden's Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 7.

### 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 Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences are:**

- that the applicant has satisfied the requirements four courses comprising at least 90 credits in a social sciences subject area,
- a Master of Arts in Education and a degree project comprising at least 15 credits at second-cycle level, or
- that the applicant has acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad.

## 3. Admission and selection

Applications for admission to the third-cycle programme in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences in general are received in response to a specific call.

According to Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance, applicants are to be selected based on if they are deemed capable of completing the programme. The applicant must attach the following as grounds for this selection:

- CV, course grades and other certificates that the applicant wishes to cite. Good references and qualifications in areas relevant to research in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences will be considered in this assessment.
- Academic papers and thesis projects which will be assessed according to the usual scholarly quality criteria. The applicant's capacity to formulate problems, adherence to theory, awareness of methodology, analytical ability and art of presentation are weighed together.

A project outline in which the applicant specifies their research interest. The outline is to contain the following: A description of the selected problem area and an account of the applicant's personal and scholarly motivations for studying this area. The problem area's connection to the subject area and the relevance of the problem area to professional teaching and learning and teacher education must be stated. An outline of the implementation of the research project must be presented.

Applications are assessed and prioritised at the Faculty of Social Sciences. A final selection is then made by the scientific advisory council of the Centre for Educational Sciences and Teacher Research (CUL). The final decision to admit a doctoral student is made by the Head of Department.

## 4. Content and structure of the programme

The third-cycle programme in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences comprises 240 credits and ends with a Degree of Doctor. 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.

Third-cycle study programmes include coursework, with each course being examined as it is completed, and the doctoral student's own research project, which leads to a scholarly thesis. The doctoral student is also expected to participate in relevant seminar activities within the University as part of their study programme.

The doctoral student may be eligible to transfer credits from previous higher education to get advanced standing (a deduction in credits required to complete the study programme). A decision on credit transfer and its associated advanced standing is made after an individual application from the doctoral student by the Head of Department in connection with the preparation of the student's individual study plan, but no later than 6 months after the plan is drawn up. A credit transfer must be linked to a decision on a deduction in the funding period that corresponds in time to the credit transfer. The deduction must be documented in the individual study plan. At most, two years of credit transfer and associated advanced standing may be granted.

## 4.1. Courses

**The third-cycle study programme in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences with the goal of Degree of Doctor comprises a coursework part of 75 credits, of which:**

- at least 22,5 credits must be in scientific method
- at least 5 credits must be in teaching and learning in higher education
- 30 credits must be within the scope of the Centre for Educational Sciences and Teacher Research (CUL) at the University of Gothenburg.

**The third-cycle study programme in Social Sciences specialising in Educational Sciences with the goal of Degree of Licentiate comprises a coursework part of a total of 37,5 credits, of which:**

- at least 15 credits are to be in scientific method
- at least 15 credits are to be within the scope of the Centre for Educational Sciences and Teacher Research (CUL) at the University of Gothenburg.

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

**A central component of the programme is authoring a scholarly thesis where the doctoral student is to advance the knowledge in the research area. The doctoral student is expected to report on their thesis work regularly via seminars. This is done primarily through the writing of a doctoral thesis, and text from this thesis must be presented at least at three seminars:**

- Thesis Plan (PM) Seminar: At the latest three months after admission (thesis plan)
- Mid-way Seminar: after completion of half the study period (thesis manuscript)
- Final Seminar: 3-6 months before the estimated time of the public defence of the thesis (thesis manuscript in full).

For the doctoral student who intends to graduate with a Degree of Licentiate, the text must be presented to at least one seminar in addition to the Final Licentiate Seminar.

The doctoral/licentiate thesis must be based on independent research and be of good international scholarly standard. The thesis can be constructed either as a coherent work (monograph thesis) or in the form of a summary of scholarly papers (compilation thesis).

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.

## 5. Supervision

For each doctoral student, two supervisors are to be appointed, one of which shall be the principal supervisor and the other shall be the assistant supervisor. At least one of the supervisors must have the qualifications required for appointment as a docent/reader and at least one of the supervisors must have completed a course in doctoral supervision. The principal supervisor is to be located at the department where the doctoral student is pursuing their doctoral education. For each doctoral student, a doctoral examiner shall also be appointed. The doctoral examiner is to have at least the qualifications required for appointment as a docent/reader and be an employee of the University of Gothenburg.

The doctoral student has the right to supervision in accordance with that which is stated in the document *Tillämpningsbeslut för utbildning på forskarnivå vid Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten* (Decision applicable to third-cycle programmes at the Faculty of Social Sciences). A doctoral student has the right to change supervisor upon request.

## 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. Completed parts of the programme must be reported in the ISP and upcoming activities must be documented. The ISP is meant to function as a study guide for the entire programme and provides an efficient means of ensuring that the programme is completed and progress is monitored. The ISP is to be established by the Head of Department after consultation with the doctoral student, supervisors and the doctoral examiner. The Head of Department is responsible for the ISP being revised and followed up at least once a year. This follow-up is to clearly state how the doctoral student is progressing within the programme. The doctoral student, supervisor, doctoral examiner and Head of Department are to certify in writing that they have read the ISP and any changes made to it.

### 6.1 Timetable and funding plan

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

## 7. Other matters

For all other matters, please refer to the current legislation, guidelines at the University of Gothenburg and at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and local regulations at the Graduate School in Educational Sciences at the University of Gothenburg.

Information about current regulations is available on the University's website.