



## General syllabus for third-cycle education in Social Work, 240 higher education credits

### Summary

This General Syllabus was approved by the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Gothenburg on 27 March 2007. Revised 2008-01-30, 2010-02-02, 2010-06-01, 2011-10-13, 2012 05-21, 2014-02-10, 2016-10-06 (dnr U2016/376), 2019-06-13 and 2025-06-13 (dnr GU 2025/1760).

### 1. Aims

Third-cycle education in Social Work aims to enable doctoral students to obtain either a Degree of Doctor or a Degree of Licentiate. The programme is intended to develop the knowledge and skills required to conduct independent research in Social Work and to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the discipline through the production of a scholarly thesis.

Third-cycle education in Social Work also aims to develop the doctoral student's ability to apply the scientific knowledge and research skills acquired during the programme in continued research or other advanced professional activities. Doctoral students shall also acquire sound knowledge of the planning and implementation of research projects.

The programme shall further develop doctoral students' communication and teaching skills, enabling them to communicate effectively in both speech and writing, within academia as well as in wider societal contexts.

Third-cycle education shall provide opportunities for international engagement through participation in international research conferences, the establishment of international research contacts and, where appropriate, periods of study or research at a higher education institution abroad.

To be awarded a degree in Third-cycle Education in Social Work, the requirements laid down in the Higher Education Ordinance, including the Qualifications Ordinance concerning third-cycle qualifications, shall be fulfilled, together with the programme-specific intended learning outcomes set out below.

## 1.1 Knowledge and Understanding

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

- broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field, together with deep and up-to-date specialist knowledge within a defined area of that field;
- familiarity with research methodology in general and with the methods of the specific research field in particular.

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

- knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field, together with current specialist knowledge within a defined area of that field;
- familiarity with research methodology in general and with the methods of the specific research field in particular.

## 1.2 Competence and Skills

### **For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student shall demonstrate the ability to:**

- analyse and synthesise research findings and critically, independently and systematically examine and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations;
- identify and formulate research questions critically, independently and creatively, and with scientific rigour, and to plan and conduct research and other advanced tasks using appropriate methods within specified time frames, as well as to review and evaluate such work;
- make a substantial contribution to the advancement of knowledge through independent research presented in a doctoral thesis;
- present and discuss research and research findings with authority, both orally and in writing, in national and international contexts, in dialogue with the research community and society at large;
- identify the need for further knowledge;
- contribute to societal development and support the learning of others in research, higher education and other advanced professional contexts.

### **For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall demonstrate the ability to:**

- identify and formulate research questions critically, independently and creatively, and with scientific rigour, and to plan and conduct research and other advanced tasks using appropriate methods within specified time frames, as well as to review and evaluate such work;
- contribute to the advancement of knowledge through independent research presented in a licentiate thesis;
- present and discuss research and research findings, both orally and in writing, in national and international contexts, in dialogue with the research community and society at large;
- identify the need for further knowledge and take responsibility for their own knowledge development;

- demonstrate the competence required to participate independently in research and development work and to undertake other advanced professional activities.

### 1.3 Judgement and Approach

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

- intellectual independence and scientific integrity, together with the ability to make ethical assessments in research;
- in-depth insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society, and the responsibility of individuals for how research is used.

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

- the ability to make ethical assessments in research;
- insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society, and the responsibility of individuals for how research is used.

## 2. Entry Requirements

Admission to third-cycle education requires that the applicant fulfils both the general entry requirements and the specific entry requirements in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100).

### 2.1 General Entry Requirements

In accordance with Chapter 7, Section 39 of the Higher Education Ordinance, a person meets the general entry requirements if they have:

- been awarded a second-cycle qualification;
- completed course requirements of at least 240 credits, of which at least 60 credits must have been awarded at second-cycle level; or
- acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way, either in Sweden or abroad.

### 2.2 Specific Entry Requirements

To be admitted to third-cycle education in Social Work, applicants shall have:

- a Degree of Bachelor of Science in Social Work, comprising 210 credits; and
- at least 60 credits in Social Work at second-cycle level, including an independent degree project comprising at least 15 credits;

or

- acquired knowledge in some other way that is deemed equivalent to both of the above requirements.

### **3. Admission and Selection**

Admission to third-cycle education in Social Work shall normally take place following a specific call for applications.

In accordance with Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance, selection among applicants shall be based on their ability to successfully complete the programme. The assessment shall be based on the research proposal submitted with the application, previous theses and academic qualifications, in order to evaluate the applicant's potential to benefit from third-cycle education.

In the research proposal, applicants shall present their research interest or proposed research topic, together with the intended focus of the planned doctoral project. The research proposal, together with previous theses, degree projects and other relevant written work, shall be assessed on the basis of the following quality criteria: (a) the ability to identify and formulate research problems critically, independently and creatively, and with scientific rigour; (b) the ability to formulate research questions that are grounded in previous research and theory; (c) the ability to select appropriate methods for the collection and analysis of data; (d) the ability to present and discuss research findings in relation to previous research and theory; and (e) the feasibility of completing the proposed doctoral project within the timeframe of the third-cycle programme. The research proposal shall also provide a basis for assessing whether the Department has the necessary supervisory expertise within the proposed research area.

Admission and selection shall take place with due regard to the Department's supervisory resources within the doctoral student's proposed field of research. The assessment and ranking of applicants shall be carried out by a committee appointed from within the Department's body of supervisors for third-cycle education. As part of the selection process, applicants who, following the initial assessment, are shortlisted shall be invited to an interview. The final decision on admission shall be made by the Head of Department.

A doctoral student may apply for the recognition of prior higher education studies through an individual application for the transfer of credits. The decision shall be made by the Head of Department in connection with the establishment of the Individual Study Plan, but no later than six months after admission to third-cycle education. Recognition of prior studies entails a corresponding reduction in the period of study by the number of credits recognised. The decision shall be documented in the Individual Study Plan together with the number of credits transferred. However, a doctoral student may not be granted recognition of prior studies corresponding to more than two years of full-time study. Nor shall the possibility of recognising prior higher education studies be used as a selection criterion for admission to third-cycle education.

### **4. Programme Structure and Content**

Third-cycle education in Social Work comprises 240 credits and leads to the award of the Degree of Doctor. The doctoral thesis comprises 175 credits, while the coursework component comprises 65 credits. It is also possible to obtain a Degree of Licentiate after the completion of 120 credits, provided that the requirements for the Degree of Licentiate specified in the Qualifications Ordinance to the Higher Education Ordinance have been fulfilled. The licentiate thesis comprises 90 credits, while the coursework component comprises 30 credits.

Third-cycle education consists of coursework, which is examined continuously throughout the programme, and independent research culminating in a doctoral thesis or a licentiate thesis. As part of the programme, doctoral students shall also participate in departmental seminars and, unless special circumstances apply, contribute to the Department's joint academic activities.

## 4.1 Courses

The programme includes a course component comprising of 65 higher education credits, of which 50 credits are compulsory with regard to the programme's academic orientation.

**The compulsory coursework shall cover the following areas:**

- Introduction to Research in Social Work, Philosophy of Science and Research Ethics (15 credits)
- Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods (15 credits)
- Social Science Theory (15 credits)
- Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (5 credits)

In addition, doctoral students shall complete elective courses comprising 15 credits.

The elective courses shall consist of advanced courses relevant to the doctoral thesis within the student's research field or additional courses within one or more of the compulsory subject areas listed above. The elective courses shall be determined in consultation with the principal supervisor and the examiner responsible for third-cycle education.

For students pursuing the Degree of Licentiate, the coursework component comprises 30 credits, including at least 7.5 credits in Social Science Theory and at least 7.5 credits in Research Methods. The remaining courses shall be determined in consultation with the supervisor.

## 4.2 Thesis and Public Defence

The central component of the programme is the preparation of a scholarly thesis through which the doctoral student shall contribute to the advancement of knowledge within the research field.

Doctoral students shall report on the progress of their thesis work at departmental seminars on **at least three occasions**: a Planning Seminar (at which a completed research proposal is presented), an Interim Seminar (at which parts of the thesis manuscript are presented) and a Final Seminar (at which the complete thesis manuscript is presented).

An external opponent shall be appointed for the Final Seminar. For the Mid-term Seminar, either an external or an internal opponent shall be appointed.

In accordance with the provisions of the Higher Education Ordinance governing the Degree of Doctor and the Degree of Licentiate respectively, the doctoral thesis or licentiate thesis shall be defended at a public defence or presented at a final licentiate seminar.

The doctoral thesis or licentiate thesis, together with its defence, shall be assessed by an Examination Committee and awarded one of the grades Pass or Fail.

## **5. Supervision**

Two supervisors shall be appointed by the Head of Department no later than the commencement of the doctoral studies. The appointments shall be recorded in the Individual Study Plan (ISP). One supervisor shall be appointed as principal supervisor and the other as assistant supervisor.

The supervisors shall be employed by the University or formally affiliated with the University through a contractual agreement. Unless special circumstances apply, for example with regard to the form of funding, the principal supervisor shall be employed by the Department of Social Work at the University of Gothenburg and shall hold at least the academic qualification of Docent. Both supervisors shall have completed supervisor training.

Doctoral students are entitled to supervision in accordance with the Implementation Regulations for Third-cycle Education at the Faculty of Social Sciences. Doctoral students are entitled to change supervisor upon request.

## **6. Individual Study Plan**

An Individual Study Plan (ISP) shall be established for each doctoral student in connection with admission to the programme.

The Individual Study Plan shall be approved by the Head of Department following consultation with the doctoral student, the supervisors and the examiner responsible for third-cycle education.

The Individual Study Plan shall be reviewed at least once each year.

The annual review shall clearly indicate the progress of the doctoral student's education.

The doctoral student, the supervisors, the examiner responsible for third-cycle education and the Head of Department shall confirm in writing their agreement with the contents of the Individual Study Plan.

### **6.1 Timetable and Funding Plan**

The Individual Study Plan shall include a timetable and an associated funding plan covering the entire period of study up to the planned date of the public defence.

## **7. Additional information**

In other respects, reference is made to applicable legislation, governing documents at the University of Gothenburg and at the Faculty of Social Sciences, as well as local regulations at the Department of Social Work.

Information on the regulations currently in force is available on the University's website.