



## General syllabus for third-cycle study programmes in Psychology, 240 higher education credits

The programme was approved by the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gothenburg on 27 March 2007 (revised 2015-12-14 (DNR U2015/862), 2016-12-15 (DNR U2016/658), 2018-09-20 (DNR U 2018/327), and 2026-05-13 (DNR U 2026/1117)).

### 1. Aims

A general aim of the programme is for the doctoral student to acquire the knowledge and proficiency fundamental to the conductance of independent research in psychology and to contribute to the development of expertise within the discipline through the presentation of a scholarly thesis.

Another aim of the third-cycle programme in psychology is to develop the doctoral student's ability to apply such proficiency and skills in post-doctoral research or in other professional work. The programme shall develop also the doctoral student's communicative and pedagogical abilities with respect to oral and written communication both within and outside academic contexts. The programme comprises 240 higher education credits, including 5 credits in teaching and learning in higher education. The doctoral student shall also acquire knowledge regarding planning and implementation of research projects.

Moreover, the third-cycle programme in psychology shall promote to establish international contacts, for example in the form of participation in research conferences and possible visits to foreign higher education institutions.

The specific goals of the programme, which doctoral students must accomplish in order to obtain a third-cycle degree in psychology, are indicated below. The requirements specified in the system of qualifications concerning third-cycle degrees provided in the Higher Education Ordinance also apply.

### 1.1 Knowledge and understanding

For a doctoral degree, the doctoral student is required to

- demonstrate a sufficient breadth of knowledge within and systematic understanding of the knowledge base in psychology, along with a depth of specialist, current knowledge within the research field, and also
- demonstrate thorough knowledge of scholarly methodology within the general knowledge base in the field of psychology and in particular of the specific research field's methods.

## 1.2 Competence and skills

For a doctoral degree, the doctoral student is required to

- demonstrate the ability to conduct scholarly analysis and synthesis, and to critically review and evaluate complex new issues independently within the field of psychology,
- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues critically, independently, creatively and with scholarly precision, and to plan and pursue psychology research and other advanced tasks using commensurate methods within given time parameters, as well as to review and appraise such research work,
- demonstrate the ability to verbally and/or in writing present and discuss research and research findings in both national and international contexts in dialogue with the academic community within psychology and society in general,
- demonstrate the ability to identify a need for further research within the candidate's own research field in psychology,
- demonstrate the ability within both psychology research and education, and in other advanced contexts, to contribute to the development of the knowledge base and to support others in their teaching of psychology, and also
- demonstrate the ability through personal research to make a contribution to development of knowledge within the chosen research field by means of a thesis.

## 1.3 Judgement and approach

For a doctoral degree, the doctoral student must

- demonstrate intellectual independence and an analytical approach to knowledge formation within psychology,
- demonstrate the ability to appraise weaknesses and strengths in the candidate's own scholarly thesis,
- demonstrate scholarly probity and the ability to make such ethical judgements relating to research that are pertinent in psychology research, and
- demonstrate profound insight into the possibilities and limitations of academic psychology, its role in society and the researcher's responsibility for how it is applied.

## 2. Entry requirements

Applicants must meet both general 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, Sec. 39, an applicant shall be considered to meet the general entry requirements if he/she has obtained

- a degree at second-cycle level,
- at least 240 higher education credits, of which at least 60 must be at second-cycle level, or
- largely equivalent knowledge in other ways in Sweden or abroad.

## 2.2 Specific entry requirements

In order to be admitted to a third-cycle programme in psychology, the following requirements must be fulfilled:

- completed courses worth at least 90 higher education credits in psychology at first-cycle level, as well as
- at least 60 credits in psychology at second-cycle level, comprising courses of at least 15 higher education credits in scientific method and an academic paper worth at least 15 higher education credits, or
- has, in some other way, acquired documented knowledge equivalent to the above requirements.

## 3. Selection among qualified applicants

Admission to doctoral education in psychology normally takes place through a specific call for applications.

Selection among applicants shall, in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance, be based on their ability to successfully complete the programme. Examples of materials used for this assessment include a research proposal, previous theses and academic qualifications, as well as an interview to assess the applicant's capacity to benefit from the study programme.

The decision on admission is made by the Head of Department.

A doctoral student may be granted credit for prior higher education if an individual application for credit transfer is approved. The decision is 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 doctoral education. Credit transfer entails a decision to shorten the period of study by a corresponding number of higher education credits. This shall be documented in the individual study plan together with the number of credits awarded. However, a doctoral student may not be granted credit exceeding the equivalent of two years of full-time study.

## 4. Programme disposition and content

Doctoral education in psychology comprises 240 higher education credits and ends in the award of a doctoral degree. The dissertation component comprises 180 higher education credits, and the course component comprises 60 higher education credits.

Doctoral education consists partly of courses, which are examined on an ongoing basis, and partly of independent research work leading to a scientific dissertation. Doctoral students are also expected, as part of their education, to contribute to the department's joint activities.

### 4.1 Courses

The programme includes a course component comprising 60 higher education credits. Of these 60 credits, 37.5 shall consist of methodology courses, of which 15 higher education credits shall be the department's compulsory methodology course (2.5 higher education credits in research ethics are compulsory and included in the methodology course). In addition, 5 higher education credits in basic higher education pedagogy, and at least. The remaining courses are determined in consultation with the supervisor.

## 4.2 Thesis and defence

The core element of the programme is the writing of a scientific dissertation, through which the doctoral student is expected to advance knowledge within the research field. The doctoral student is expected to report on the progress of the dissertation work at the department's seminars.

In accordance with the provisions of the Higher Education Ordinance for the doctoral degree, the dissertation shall be defended at a public doctoral defence. The doctoral dissertation and its defence are assessed by an examining committee and awarded one of the grades pass or fail.

## 5. Supervision

Two or more supervisors are to be appointed by the Head of Department no later than one month after the doctoral student has been admitted, and this shall be stated in the individual study plan. One of them shall be appointed as main supervisor, and the others shall be designated as assistant supervisors. The main supervisor should be employed at the University of Gothenburg. The main supervisor must have the qualifications required for appointment as a docent/reader. A doctoral examiner must also be appointed for each doctoral student. The doctoral examiner must be a professor and employed at the University of Gothenburg. The doctoral student is entitled to supervision in accordance with the provisions set out in the *Implementation Decision for Doctoral Education at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Gothenburg*, as specified in the individual study plan. Doctoral students are entitled to change supervisor upon request.

## 6. Individual study plan

An individual study plan shall be established for each doctoral student in connection with admission. The individual study plan shall include a timetable and an accompanying financing plan covering the entire period of study up to the planned date of the public defence of the doctoral thesis. It shall ensure continuous progression throughout the period of study, and that the parties fulfil their respective commitments. The doctoral student, the supervisors, the doctoral examiner, and the Head of Department shall certify their agreement with the content of the plan and with any subsequent revisions. The study plan is formally approved by the Head of Department following consultation with the doctoral student, the supervisors, and the doctoral examiner. The main supervisor is responsible for actively working with the doctoral student on the individual study plan throughout the entire period of study. The follow-up process shall clearly demonstrate the progression of the doctoral education.

## 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 Psychology.