



General syllabus for third-cycle programmes in Social Work

Research area for doctoral studies: Politics, Economy and the Organisation of Society

Studies according to this general syllabus may lead to the following qualifications:

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work

Degree of Licentiate of Social Science in Social Work

Södertörn University stipulates the following under Chapter 6, Sections 26-27 of the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100).

1. Subject

Social Work is an interdisciplinary subject with substantial links to all subjects within the research area for doctoral studies that is Politics, Economy and the Organisation of Society at the School of Social Sciences. Social Work includes research orientations that deal with individuals and groups in vulnerable life situations, the social conditions that affect people's living conditions and the factors and strategies that prevent and counteract social marginalisation. Social Work also includes the study of social interventions and the public, private and non-profit organisations that manage them. Within the framework of such studies, potential interpretations and actions in professional practice are also highlighted. The subject's research activities often follow apparent broader themes in social science with clear links to sociology, political science, public health science and psychology, for example, but where the subject's (Social Work) more unique contribution is often a focus on social work practice, ranging from broader social policy interventions and their consequences to primary, secondary and tertiary preventive measures.

After the programme, the doctoral student must be able to conduct autonomous scientific research in social work and make qualified contributions to various areas of the profession, such as advanced investigation and the evaluation of social science research and interventions in social work.

Third-cycle courses and study programmes shall be based fundamentally on the knowledge acquired by students in first and second-cycle courses and study programmes, or its equivalent. In addition to the requirements for first and second-cycle courses and study programmes, third-cycle courses and study programmes shall develop the knowledge and

skills required to be able to undertake autonomous research (Higher Education Act, Chapter 1, Section 9a).

The aim of the programme is to deepen the doctoral students' general knowledge of Social Work with a particular focus on vulnerable individuals and groups, the social circumstances that impact people's living conditions and the factors and strategies that prevent and counteract social marginalisation. Social Work research at Södertörn University is interdisciplinary and focuses on vulnerable groups and places, social work in schools, social interventions and research related to the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe.

2. Qualitative targets

2.1. Degree of Doctor [Doktorsexamen]

Under the Higher Education Ordinance, a Degree of Doctor is achieved when the doctoral student has completed a programme of 240 credits within a subject that is offered at third cycle (doctoral) level; of these, at least 120 credits must be for a scholarly thesis of a pass level (doctoral thesis). In Social Work the thesis must cover 165 credits – see section 4.1.

On completing the programme, the doctoral student must have acquired the following knowledge and competence necessary for the Degree of Doctor, in accordance with the System of Qualifications in the Higher Education Ordinance:

Knowledge and understanding

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field 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 of the specific field of research in particular.

Competence and skills

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis, as well as to review and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations autonomously and critically
- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision critically, autonomously and creatively, and 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 the ability to make a significant contribution to the development of knowledge through their own research
- demonstrate the ability in both national and international contexts 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 the need for further knowledge

- demonstrate the capacity to contribute to social development and 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 the third-cycle student must

- 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 the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

Other specified requirements

- Research conducted at the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS) must be relevant to the Baltic Sea region and/or Eastern Europe. Similarly, research conducted at other graduate schools or in other research projects must be relevant to their current themes and fields of research.

For the Degree of Doctor the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate broad knowledge in the research area of Politics, Economy and the Organisation of Society
- be able to autonomously apply this knowledge in the analysis of an area that is relevant to the subject.

2.2. Degree of Licentiate [Licentiatexamen]

Under the Higher Education Ordinance, a Degree of Licentiate is achieved when the doctoral student has completed a programme of 120 credits within a subject that is offered at third cycle (doctoral) level; of these, at least 60 credits must be for a scholarly thesis of a pass level. In Social Work the thesis must cover 75 credits – see section 4.1.

On completing the programme, the doctoral student must have acquired the following knowledge and competence necessary for the Degree of Licentiate, in accordance with the System of Qualifications in the Higher Education Ordinance:

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Licentiate the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the field of research including current specialist knowledge in a limited area of this field as well as specialised knowledge of research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.

Competence and skills

For a Degree of Licentiate the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision critically, autonomously and creatively, and to plan and use appropriate methods to

undertake a limited piece of research and other qualified tasks within predetermined time frames in order to contribute to the formation of knowledge as well as to evaluate this work

- demonstrate the ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general
- demonstrate the skills required to participate autonomously in research and development work and to work autonomously in some other qualified capacity.

Judgement and approach

For a Degree of Licentiate the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate the ability to make assessments of ethical aspects of their own research
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used
- demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for their ongoing learning.

Other specified requirements

- Research conducted at the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS) must be relevant to the Baltic Sea region and/or Eastern Europe. Similarly, research conducted at other graduate schools or in other research projects must be relevant to their current themes and fields of research.

For a Degree of Licentiate the third-cycle student must

- demonstrate broad knowledge in the research area of Politics, Economy and the Organisation of Society
- be able to autonomously apply this knowledge in the analysis of an area that is relevant to the subject.

3. Entry requirements and selection

3.1. General provisions

Under the Higher Education Ordinance, the requirements for admission to third-cycle courses and study programmes are that the applicant meets the general and specific entry requirements prescribed by the higher education institution. The applicant must also be assessed as otherwise possessing the necessary capability to assimilate the content of the degree.

The entry requirements must be fulfilled by the application deadline for the advertised doctoral studentship.

3.2. General entry requirements

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

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

The higher education institution may permit an exemption from the general entry requirements for an individual applicant, if there are special grounds.

Decisions on exemptions are made by the Faculty Board or the body to which the Faculty Board has delegated decision-making powers regarding admissions.

3.3. Specific entry requirements

Specific entry requirements for third-cycle education in Social Work are met by those who

1. have 90 credits in Social Work or a related social science subject, and
2. have successfully completed an independent project of at least 15 credits at second cycle level, or
3. have acquired substantially equivalent knowledge to that specified in items 1 and 2 in some other way in Sweden or abroad.

The ability to assimilate academic material in English and a command of the language necessary for work on the thesis are prerequisites for admission to the degree programme.

3.4. Selection

Under the Higher Education Ordinance, selection for third-cycle education is done after an assessment of the applicant's capacity to assimilate the programme content. Under university regulations, grounds for selection are the following: documented formal qualifications, demonstrated expertise at time of application in the form of essays and other independent written scholarly works and, where relevant, a proposed research plan. For the applicants who are assessed as most qualified, an interview and references will be used as grounds for selection.

Any grounds for assessment and other circumstances regarding the graduate school or research project must be stated in the text of the job advertisement for the doctoral studentship.

Eligible applicants (see Sections 3.1-3.3) must be ranked by their ability to assimilate third-cycle programmes, after which other circumstances are considered based on the ranking.

An applicant who is considered able to transfer credits from prior education or professional experience may not be given priority over other applicants.

Aspects of gender equality must always be considered. Where qualifications are equivalent, applicants from the underrepresented sex, in relation to the distribution among third-cycle students in the subject at the university, have priority.

Ground for assessment that are applied during selection:

- The applicant's formal qualifications: course/degree certificates, grades and diplomas.
- The applicant's expertise as regards
 - subject knowledge
 - knowledge of scholarly theory and method
 - analytical ability.
- The quality, feasibility and relevance of the proposed research for the research subject and area and, where relevant, the graduate school or research project. For applicants to doctoral positions affiliated with the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS), the research plan will also be assessed according to its links to and relevance for the graduate school.
- The ability to comply with given timeframes.

During assessment, the following circumstances are also considered:

- whether there are adequate supervisory resources
- whether the planned research is deemed feasible given the available financial resources
- whether the planned research is deemed feasible from the standpoint of research ethics.

4. Programme design and content

4.1. General information

Third-cycle education leads to a Degree of Doctor, but may lead to a Degree of Licentiate if this is stated in the doctoral student's admission decision or at the doctoral student's request.

Education for a Degree of Doctor in Social Work covers 240 credits, of which

- courses equivalent to 75 credits
- a scholarly thesis equivalent to 165 credits.

Education for a Degree of Licentiate covers 120 credits, of which

- courses equivalent to 75 credits
- a scholarly thesis equivalent to 45 credits.

The doctoral student conducts their research work in parallel to studying courses. Active participation in the research environment's seminar activities is also included in third-cycle programmes.

Teaching is primarily offered as courses and supervision. After agreement with the supervisor, the doctoral student may participate in teaching and knowledge testing at other academic schools or higher education institutions, as well as international conferences and courses. The doctoral student must be offered career planning support.

4.2. Supervision

Students in third-cycle education are entitled to supervision during the equivalent of four years of full-time study for a Degree of Doctor and two years for a Degree of Licentiate. At least two supervisors must be appointed for each doctoral student. One of these must be appointed as principal supervisor within two months of the programme starting. Supervisors are selected in consultation with the doctoral student. A doctoral student who so requests must be allowed to change supervisor.

The supervisor(s) and doctoral student must have regular contact regarding how studies are progressing and, every semester, they must check what has been achieved in relation to the individual study plan.

The process of appointing supervisors, formal requirements for supervisors and other issues relating to supervision must be managed in accordance with the applicable governing documents at Södertörn University.

4.3. Individual study plan

The principal supervisor and doctoral student must, together, draw up an individual study plan for the doctoral student's third-cycle studies that includes the university's and the doctoral student's commitments, and a schedule for the programme. The individual study plan is drawn up at the start of employment and is validated according to the school's delegation of authority and decision procedure, no later than five months after the doctoral student has started studying. Follow ups and revisions to the study plan must be performed once each year, when completed programme components and fulfilled outcomes are presented.

4.4. Courses

Courses are offered through teaching, at the university or externally, or as individual reading courses. All courses are examined by a specially appointed examiner, internal or external to the university.

The university's regulations state the awarded grades must be either pass or fail.

The elective and individually decided courses are chosen in consultation with the doctoral student's principal supervisor, based on how the courses

- contributes to fulfilling one or more qualitative targets, or
- provide advanced knowledge in selected specialist areas relevant to work on the thesis, or

- are part of individual career planning, such as a course in higher education pedagogy.

Courses for a Degree of Doctor

Obligatory courses common to the research area 37.5 credits

- Research Design, 7.5 credits
- Advanced Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences, 7.5 credits
- Advanced Quantitative Research Methods in Social Sciences, 7.5 credits
- Truth, Construction and Subjectivity: Contemporary Issues in the Theory of Scientific Knowledge, 7.5 credits
- Organizations and Institutions, 7.5 credits

Obligatory courses common to the subject 22.5 credits

- Introduction to Research in Social Work, 7.5 credits
- Subject-specific course, elective specialisation, 7.5 credits
- Methodology, elective specialisation, 7.5 credits

Obligatory course for doctoral students at BEEGS

- Contemporary Research into the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe, 7.5 credits

Obligatory courses for doctoral students at other graduate schools

- Courses at the graduate school are stated in the agreement between the higher education institutions.

Elective courses, 15 credits

Elective course for doctoral students affiliated with BEEGS, 7.5 credits

Elective courses for doctoral students affiliated with other graduate schools: the number of credits is decided by the course credits remaining after deducting obligatory courses in the area, subject and graduate school.

Courses for a Degree of Licentiate

The course requirement for a Degree of Licentiate is 45 credits.

Obligatory courses common to the research area 22.5 credits. The course requirement is achieved through any combination of the following courses common to the research area:

- Research Design, 7.5 credits
- Advanced Qualitative Methods in the Social Sciences, 7.5 credits
- Advanced Quantitative Research Methods in Social Sciences, 7.5 credits
- Truth, Construction and Subjectivity: Contemporary Issues in the Theory of Scientific Knowledge, 7.5 credits
- Organizations and Institutions, 7.5 credits

Obligatory course common to the subject 7.5 credits

- Introduction to Research in Social Work, 7.5 credits

Obligatory course for doctoral students at BEEGS

- Contemporary Research into the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe, 7.5 credits

Obligatory courses for doctoral students at other graduate schools

- Courses at the graduate school are stated in the agreement between the higher education institutions.

Elective courses, 15 credits

Elective course for doctoral students affiliated with BEEGS, 7.5 credits

Elective courses for doctoral students affiliated with other graduate schools: the number of credits is decided by the course credits remaining after deducting obligatory courses in the area, subject and graduate school.

4.5. Doctoral thesis

The thesis must be based on autonomous research work and be of importance for research within the chosen third cycle subject area. It must be either a unified and continuous piece of academic work (monograph thesis) or a compilation of academic articles that the doctoral student has written alone or with co-authors, to which a summarising discussion has been added (compilation thesis).

Articles must be of a quality equal to that for publication in recognised scientific journals. Normally, a compilation thesis includes four articles and an introductory and summarising chapter "kappa". At least two of the four scientific articles must be accepted for publication in recognised scientific journals. The majority should be first-authored and, in the case of co-authored articles, there must be an author declaration. As with monograph theses, it is the overall assessment of the scientific quality of the compilation thesis that is the decisive criterion.

If all or parts of the thesis are jointly authored, individual contributions must be clearly differentiated during the examination process.

In Social Work, doctoral students must present their thesis work in three compulsory stages before its defence:

- planning seminar within one year of admission to the doctoral programme.
- midway seminar, and
- final review seminar.

The seminars must be carried out in the specified order (passing the planning seminar is a prerequisite for the midway seminar, and so on).

The thesis must be well-written and precise. The doctoral student must plan and undertake work on their thesis in accordance with good research practice and keep up to date with current regulations on research ethics.

The doctoral thesis must be reviewed by an external reviewer at a public defence. It is assessed by a specially appointed examining committee in accordance with the provisions of the Higher Education Ordinance and the university's regulations. During grading, consideration must be paid to both the content of the thesis and its public defence. The thesis can be given one of the following grades: Pass or Fail.

4.6. Licentiate thesis

The thesis must be based on autonomous research work and be of importance for research within the chosen third cycle subject area. It must be either a unified and continuous piece of academic work or a compilation of academic articles that the doctoral student has written alone or with co-authors, to which a summarising discussion has been added.

For the licentiate degree, the doctoral student must write a thesis that covers 75 credits. The thesis must be based on an autonomous research.

A compilation thesis in the subject of Social Work must have at least two articles. Of these, at least one article must be written autonomously. For further information on quality requirements, see the subject's instructions for compilation theses.

If all or parts of the thesis are jointly authored, individual contributions must be clearly differentiated during the examination process.

Information on the collegial review process is provided in the subject guidelines.

The Licentiate thesis must be reviewed and publicly defended. The process for presenting a Licentiate thesis is stated in university guidelines and in routines specific to the area or subject. The thesis can be given one of the following grades: Pass or Fail.

5. Other information

Additional information about education at third-cycle level, as well as governing documents, are available on the university's external and internal websites. Further information about third-cycle education per subject can be provided by the director of doctoral studies.

6. Entry into effect and transitional provisions

This general syllabus enters into effect on 19 September 2023. The previous syllabus ceases to apply for doctoral students admitted after this date.

Doctoral students who have been admitted to third-cycle education under a previous general syllabus are entitled to complete their programme under that syllabus or to request to transfer to the new general syllabus. The decision to transfer to a new syllabus is made by the Steering Committee for Politics, Economy and the Organisation of Society after a

collegial process within the third-cycle subject area, and in consultation with the doctoral student's principal supervisor and the director of doctoral studies. The transfer must be noted in the individual study plan.