



General syllabus for third-cycle programmes in Environmental Science

Research area for doctoral studies: Environmental Studies

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

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Science

Degree of Licentiate of Philosophy in Environmental Science

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

1. Subject

Environmental Science at Södertörn University is a multidisciplinary field that integrates social and natural sciences for the study of environmental and sustainability topics, using varied perspectives. Research seeks to enhance the understanding of complex interactions between societies and environments within and across the global North and South (with a specific focus on the Baltic Sea Region), as well as to advance knowledge about sustainable practices and the mitigation of environmental problems. Topics include environmental change, ecosystem functions, biodiversity, ecological and biological processes, climate change, natural resources management, social and ecological justice, spatial planning and urban governance, and sustainability transformations.

Completion of a doctoral degree in Environmental Science provides a foundation for a diverse range of professions in areas such as academia, private and public research institutions, government and regional agencies, municipalities, non-profit organisations, or the private sector. Graduates may pursue work as an environmental and sustainability consultant, sustainability policy analyst, research scientist, scientific communicator, or in international cooperation.

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 Environmental Science the thesis must cover 180 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.

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 Environmental Science the thesis must cover 90 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.

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

The specific entry requirements are fulfilled by a student who has passed courses worth at least 90 credits, including a degree project worth at least 15 credits at second-cycle level, within Environmental Science or a related subject that is of central importance to the research area, or who by some other way has in Sweden or abroad acquired essentially equivalent knowledge.

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.

The application will also be assessed on the following subject-specific criteria:

- autonomy and originality in the formulation of problems, analysis and presentation of previous work.
- theoretical and methodological stringency in previous work and, where relevant, in the research plan or equivalent.

- research experience or relevant professional activity in the field of environmental science.
- good skills in the English language and any other languages that important for work on the thesis.
- a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary background relevant to Environmental Science.
- communication and cooperation skills.

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 Environmental Science covers 240 credits, of which

- courses equivalent to 60 credits
- a scholarly thesis equivalent to 180 credits.

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

- courses equivalent to 30 credits
- a scholarly thesis equivalent to 90 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 principal supervisor must be a researcher with at least docent-level expertise. The other supervisors must be researchers with a doctoral degree. The supervisors must have completed a course in third-cycle supervision.

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.

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.

The individual study plan should clarify all parties' commitments, including specific goals for the doctoral student and the scope of supervision. Instructions and follow-up of individual study plans are described in the subject's guidelines.

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 subject 15 credits

- Research Design and Methodology in Environmental Studies, 7.5 credits
- Thesis Essay in Environmental Science, 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, 45 credits

Elective courses doctoral students at BEEGS, 37.5 credits

Elective courses for doctoral students at 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.

The Steering Committee provides a list of elective courses.

Courses for a Degree of Licentiate

Obligatory courses common to the subject 7.5 credits

- Research Design and Methodology in Environmental Studies, 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, 22.5 credits

Elective courses doctoral students at BEEGS, 15 credits

Elective courses for doctoral students at 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.

The Steering Committee provides a list of elective courses.

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 compilation of a summarising discussion and academic articles that the doctoral student has written alone or with co-authors (compilation thesis) or a unified and continuous piece of academic work (monograph thesis). Quality requirements for the thesis are described in the subject's guidelines.

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

Information about collegial review is provided in the subject's instructions.

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. Quality requirements for the thesis are described in the subject's guidelines.

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

Information about collegial review is provided in the subject's instructions.

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 17 October 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 Environmental Studies 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.