



Karlstad University
Faculty of Social and Life Sciences

Curriculum for Doctoral Studies in

Public Health Sciences

Curriculum Approval

The curriculum was approved by the Faculty Board of Social and Life Sciences on 14 June 2007, and is valid from 1 July 2007.

Revised on and valid from 24 Oct 2011 (DEK 74/2011).

General stipulations for PhD programmes are provided in the *Higher Education Act* and in the *Higher Education Ordinance*. The PhD programme is offered to the extent permitted by available funding.

1. General Information

Public Health Sciences was introduced as a discipline at Karlstad University in 1999 and was approved as one of its doctoral disciplines in 2002. The values of public health sciences rest on the WHO's Health 21 proclamation which emphasises health as a basic human right, the need for health equality and inter and intra-national solidarity and responsibility for individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and communities to create a healthy development. This means that it would be possible to create sustainable health development through cooperative participation and responsibility and also to protect natural resources.

Health and public health can be seen as dynamic states under continual influence of external and internal conditions and determining factors. At the level of society, this influence is so complex and unpredictable that control in an absolute sense is unattainable. However, different types of intervention can affect health and thus have a positive effect on the population. Public health science is multi- and interdisciplinary studies of health and its distribution and relation to lifestyles, environments and social structures. Public health sciences generate, systematize and analyse knowledge of health and risk factors and develop methods and theories in the field. With the help of existing theories and theories of other disciplines, individual and structural relationships are explained and understood. The knowledge is used to suggest measures aimed at preventing injury and illness, protect and improve health/safety and to promote equality in the health/safety area.

In accordance with Karlstad University's equal opportunities policy, gender issues must be taken in consideration throughout doctoral studies in public health science. Doctoral students are also introduced to multi-disciplinary approaches and involved in interdisciplinary experiences.

2. Aims and Objectives

The general objectives of licentiate or doctoral studies in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and judgement and approach are specified as follows in the *Higher Education Ordinance, attachment 2, SFS 2006:1053*):

Knowledge and understanding

For a degree of *Licentiate research* students must

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the field of research, including current specialist knowledge in a defined part of the field and a deeper knowledge of scientific methods in general and of methods in the specific field of research in particular.

For a degree of *Doctor research* students must

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

Skills and abilities

For a degree of *Licentiate research* students must

- demonstrate an ability to identify and formulate issues, critically, independently and creatively, and proceeding with scientific precision; to plan a limited research project and

- other advanced tasks and to carry them out using appropriate methods within specified time limits, so as to contribute to the development of knowledge; and to evaluate this work;
- demonstrate an ability to clearly present and discuss research and research results in dialogue with the scholarly community and society in general, orally and in writing, in both national and international contexts; and
 - demonstrate the skills required to independently participate in research and development work and to work independently in other advanced contexts.

For a degree of *Doctor research* students must

- demonstrate an ability to engage in scholarly analysis and synthesis and in independent, critical examination and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues and situations;
- demonstrate an ability to identify and formulate issues, critically, independently and creatively, and proceeding with scientific precision, and to plan and, using appropriate methods, conduct research and other advanced tasks within specified time limits, and to scrutinise and evaluate such work;
- demonstrate, in a dissertation, their ability to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge by their own research;
- demonstrate an ability to present and discuss research and research results with authority, in dialogue with the scholarly community and society in general, orally and in writing, in both national and international contexts;
- demonstrate an ability to identify their need of further knowledge; and
- demonstrate a potential to contribute to the development of society and support other people's learning, both in the field of research and education and in other advanced professional contexts.

Judgement and approach

For a degree of *Licentiate research* students must

- demonstrate an ability to make ethical assessments in their own research;
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of science, its role in society and people's responsibility for how it is used; and
- demonstrate an ability to identify their need of further knowledge and to take responsibility for developing their knowledge.

For a degree of *Doctor research* students must

- demonstrate intellectual independence and scholarly integrity and an ability to make ethical assessments relating to research; and
- demonstrate deeper insight into the potential and limitations of scholarship, its role in society and people's responsibility for how it is used.

Licentiate dissertation/doctoral dissertation

For a degree of *Licentiate* the research students must have received a pass grade on a scholarly dissertation of at least 60 ECTS credits.

For a degree of *Doctor* the research students must have received a pass grade on a doctoral dissertation of at least 120 ECTS credits.

2.2 Subject Specific Objectives

Knowledge and understanding

For a degree of *Licentiate* in Public Health Science at Karlstad University students must be able to

- demonstrate understanding of basic concepts and theories of public health sciences,
- identify external and internal determining health and risk factors,
- demonstrate deep understanding of the dissertation topic and its relation to other research findings,
- demonstrate familiarity with qualitative and quantitative methods

For a degree of *Doctor in Public Health Science* at Karlstad University students must be able to

- demonstrate understanding of basic concepts and theories of public health sciences,
- identify external and internal determining health and risk factors,
- assess public health issues nationally and internationally,
- demonstrate understanding of the depth, breadth and complexity of the dissertation topic in relation to their own and other research findings,
- demonstrate familiarity with different scientific methods
- place the dissertation in a public health perspective

Skills and abilities

For a degree of *Licentiate* in Public Health Science at Karlstad University students must be able to

- organise and compile results and theories from other research,
- define the dissertation problem,
- collect and analyse empirical data,
- discuss and relate the results to other research

For a degree of *Doctor* in Public Health Science at Karlstad University students must be able to

- analyse empirical data using statistical calculation and/or qualitative methods,
- demonstrate good grasp of the field and be able to refer to other theories and research,
- contribute to new and trustworthy knowledge of public health sciences through the dissertation,
- demonstrate that the results of the dissertation in some way can improve public health

Judgement and approach

For a degree of *Licentiate* in Public Health Science at Karlstad University students must be able to

- demonstrate understanding of research ethics in collecting, analysing and publishing the dissertation,
- demonstrate a critical approach to their own research and that of others.

For a degree of *Doctor* in Public Health Science at Karlstad University students must be able to

- demonstrate understanding of research ethics in collecting, analysing and publishing the dissertation,
- assess validity and reliability in their own research and that of others.

Doctoral studies in public health science prepares for an academic research career as well as providing professional qualifications for employment outside of the academia. Public health science is the basis of the practical public health efforts made by the county council, the municipal, private firms and national and international organisations. Successful students will have many options for qualified employment in the private, public and international sectors.

3. Admission Requirements

Applicants to doctoral studies must meet the general admission requirements as well as the specific admission requirements and be judged to have the ability otherwise required to pursue the programme successfully (*Higher Education Ordinance, Ch.7, § 35*).

3.1 General eligibility

A person who has earned a master's degree of at least 240 ECTS credits of which at least 60 ECTS are studies at master's level, or who in some other way in the country or abroad has acquired largely equivalent knowledge has general eligibility for admission. If there are special reasons for doing so, the higher education institution may grant an individual applicant exemption from the general eligibility (*Higher Education Ordinance, Ch.7, § 39*).

3.2. Special eligibility

A person who has completed a One Year Master's Degree with a major in public health science, or has equivalent qualification, has special eligibility for admission to doctoral studies in public health science.

3.3. Transitional Provisions

Students who met the general admission requirements for admission to doctoral studies before 1 July 2007 shall be considered generally eligible for admission to the doctoral level until 30 June 2015 (SFS 2006:1053).

4. Admission Procedure

Applications for admission to doctoral studies are processed in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Board of Karlstad University.

5. Selection

Candidates will be selected on the basis of their assessed capacity to successfully complete a programme at the doctoral level. In the ranking and selection of the candidates, special attention will be paid to previous study records, the quality of previously performed research or development work, especially at Master's level, language skills, the relevance of the proposed research area to the departmental research programme and supervision capacity and to the candidates' intention to be present and participate in the research environment.

6. Content and Outline

The doctoral programme can lead to a doctoral or licentiate degree. The licentiate degree can be seen as a step towards the doctor's degree and be included in it. The doctoral degree requires four years of study, the equivalent of 240 ECTS credits, and the licentiate degree two years or 120 ECTS credits.

The studies include course work as well as independent thesis work. To earn a doctoral degree, the candidate must complete 60 ECTS credits of course work plus 180 ECTS credits of thesis work. To earn a licentiate degree, the candidate is required to complete 30 ECTS credits of course work and 90 of thesis work.

6.1 Courses

Mandatory courses for all doctoral students at Karlstad University must be included in the programme to the extent required by local regulations.

General mandatory course

For the *Licentiate* degree:

The History and Philosophy of Science, 7.5 ECTS credits

For the *Doctor's* degree:

The History and Philosophy of Science, 7.5 ECTS credits, and
Communicating Science, 4.5 ECTS credits

Subject Specific Courses

Subject specific courses for the degree of Licentiate must total 7.5 ECTS cr and for the degree of Doctor 15 ECTS cr. Methodology courses for the Licentiate degree must total 7.5 ECTS cr and for the Doctor's degree 15 ECTS cr. Subject specific courses can, for example, include the following courses:

For the *Licentiate* degree:

- Theories in Public Health Sciences 7.5 ECTS cr,
- Problem Identification and Analysis in Public Health Sciences 7.5 ECTS cr.
- Epidemiology and Biostatistics or Qualitative Scientific Methodology 7.5 ECTS cr.

For the *Doctor's* degree:

- Theories in Public Health Sciences 7.5 ECTS cr,
- Problem Identification and Analysis in Public Health Science 7.5 ECTS cr.
- Epidemiology and Biostatistics 7.5 ECTS cr.
- Qualitative Scientific Methodology 7.5 ECTS cr.

The examiner decides if any of the general or subject-specific mandatory courses can be replaced by equivalent qualifications. Candidates choose relevant courses in consultation with the advisor and the examiner.

Doctoral seminars, at which candidates present their dissertation plans and articles, are continuously arranged. The candidate is required to make presentations and to be an opponent on several occasions at actively participates in seminars throughout the doctoral studies.

6.2 Doctoral and Licentiate Dissertations

Doctoral students are required to write a dissertation for a doctoral or a licentiate degree, either as a monograph or as a unified collection of previously published papers. The department recommends the latter. Candidates are required to defend their licentiate dissertation at a seminar and their doctoral dissertation at a public examination. Further information is provided by the policy documents "Doctoral Dissertation Requirements" and "Licentiate Dissertation Requirements". The courses should be approved before disputation.

The dissertation topic is chosen by the candidate in consultation with the advisor and the examiner. It is to be recommended that the topic chosen relate to a public health science profile area at Karlstad University. The unifying frame can be written in a Scandinavian language or in English. The articles should be written in English for dissemination.

6.4 Supervision

Doctoral students are entitled to advisors in accordance with the principles stated in the current policy document at Karlstad University.

6.5 Individual Study Plan

Each doctoral student must draw up an individual study plan within six months in conjunction with the advisors. The plan should include a realistic estimate of time for course work, thesis work and supervision as well as an introduction to the proposed research field, problem, aim, methodological and theoretical frames, and relevant ethical considerations.

The individual study plan is subject to continual revision (at least once a year). At the time of revision, the advisor and the examiner also assess when the candidate has reached the level of 50% and 80% respectively of completing the dissertation.

6.6 Examination

Doctoral students are examined in accordance with the requirements of each individual course syllabus. Doctoral or licentiate dissertations are examined in accordance with the *Higher Education Ordinance* (Ch.6, §§ 33-34) and Karlstad University's current policy document.