



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

# **General syllabus for third-cycle programme in Psychology**

**(Studieplan för utbildning på forskarnivå i  
psykologi)**

Decision:	HS FN 2025-05-08	Reg. no.:	HS 2025/885	Replaces:	HS 2018/796
Effective from:	8 May 2025	until:	Further notice	Officer:	Monica Eriksson

## Syllabus approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty Board of Arts and Social Sciences on 13 September 2018 and revised on 8 May 2025.

General stipulations for third-cycle education are provided in the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance. The doctoral programme is offered to the extent permitted by available funding.

## 1. General information

The purpose of psychology is to understand and explain why people think, feel, react and act as they do. The focus is on the individual and individual development situated in a specific environment. An important aspect is therefore to consider an individual's thinking, feeling and acting as part of a human-environment system.

Psychology research at Karlstad University is primarily conducted within two profile areas: clinical psychology and the psychology of everyday life.

The doctoral programme in psychology is linked to the two main research profiles but is also characterised by a diversity of subject choices. Doctoral and licentiate theses can deal with a wide range of fields such as health, transport, consumer and organisation psychology.

## 2. Programme outcomes

### 2.1 General outcomes

The general outcomes of licentiate or doctoral studies in terms of knowledge and understanding, competence and skills, and judgement and approach are specified as follows in the System of Qualifications (Higher Education Ordinance, Annex 2):

#### ***Knowledge and understanding***

*For a **Degree of Licentiate**, the third-cycle student shall*

- *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.*

*For the **Degree of Doctor**, the third-cycle student shall*

- *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, and*
- *demonstrate familiarity with 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 shall*

- *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, and*
- *demonstrate the skills required to participate autonomously in research and development work and to work autonomously in some other qualified capacity.*

*For the **Degree of Doctor**, the third-cycle student shall*

- *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 time frames and to review and evaluate such work*
- *demonstrate through a dissertation the ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through his or her 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 and*
- *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 a **Degree of Licentiate**, the third-cycle student shall*

- *demonstrate the ability to make assessments of ethical aspects of his or her 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, and*
- *demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning.*

*For the **Degree of Doctor**, the third-cycle student shall*

- *demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics, and*
- *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.*

### **Licentiate/doctoral thesis**

*For a **Degree of Licentiate**, the third-cycle student shall have been awarded a pass grade for a research thesis of at least 60 credits.*

*For a **Degree of Doctor**, the third-cycle student shall have been awarded a pass grade for a doctoral thesis of at least 120 credits. (Higher Education Ordinance, System of Qualifications)*

Please note: In psychology, students need to be awarded a pass grade for a licentiate thesis of at least 82.5 credits for a Degree of Licentiate. Likewise, a pass grade for a doctoral thesis of at least 165 credits is required for a Degree of Doctor (see Sect. 6.2 “Doctoral and licentiate theses” below).

## **3. Entry requirements**

*To be eligible for doctoral studies, the applicant is required to meet the general and specific*

*entry requirements and must be considered to have the ability required to benefit from the studies (Higher Education Ordinance, Chap. 6).*

### **3.1 General entry requirements**

*A person who has earned a master's degree of at least 240 credits of which at least 60 credits 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. The faculty board may permit an exemption from the general entry requirements for an individual applicant, if there are special grounds. (Higher Education Ordinance, Chap. 6)*

### **3.2 Specific entry requirements**

To meet the specific entry requirements for doctoral studies in psychology, the applicant must

- hold 120 credits with a progressive specialisation in the main field of psychology or
- hold a Degree of Master of Science in Psychology or Postgraduate Diploma in Psychotherapy, or
- in some other way have acquired substantially equivalent knowledge, in the country or abroad.

## **4. Admission**

Applications for admission to third-cycle programmes are processed in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Board of Karlstad University.

## **5. Selection**

Students will be selected on the basis of their assessed capacity to successfully complete a programme at the doctoral level. Considerable weight is given to the results of specialised courses in psychology, or equivalent, with particular emphasis on degree projects. The applicant's overall academic performance, the quality of independently conducted research-related work and relevant professional experience for doctoral studies in psychology are also considered. In the selection and admission of doctoral students in psychology at Karlstad University, consideration is also given to the proposed research area in relation to supervision capacity.

Admitted students are expected to be present and actively involved in the daily departmental activities and research environment, circumstances permitting.

## **6. Programme curriculum and structure**

The doctoral programme can lead to a Degree of Doctor or a Degree of Licentiate. A Degree of Doctor requires four years of study, the equivalent of 240 credits, and a Degree of Licentiate requires two years of the study, the equivalent of 120 credits.

The studies include course work as well as an independent project (licentiate or doctoral thesis). To be awarded a Degree of Doctor, the candidate must complete 75 credits of course work and a thesis comprising 165 credits. To be awarded a Degree of Licentiate, the candidate must complete 37.5 credits of course work and a thesis comprising 82.5 credits.

### **6.1 Courses**

#### ***Subject-specific courses***

The doctoral programme in psychology comprises the following mandatory courses for a **Degree of Licentiate**

- Non-parametric statistics, 7.5 credits
- Parametric statistics, 7.5 credits
- Qualitative methods, 7.5 credits
- Research ethics, 4.5 credits

### **Degree of Doctor**

- Non-parametric statistics, 7.5 credits
- Parametric statistics, 7.5 credits
- Qualitative methods, 7.5 credits
- Gender perspectives in psychology, 3 credits
- Research ethics, 4.5 credits

The examiner decides if any of the university-wide mandatory courses or subject-specific courses can be replaced by equivalent courses for the licentiate and doctoral degrees. The relevant optional courses are chosen in consultation with the supervisor and the examiner.

Doctoral seminars are organised continuously, providing the opportunity for students to present their thesis plan, articles to be submitted and plan for the introductory chapter of a compilation thesis. Students are required to give presentations and serve as external reviewers on several occasions and to participate actively in seminar discussions throughout the doctoral programme.

### **6.2 Doctoral and licentiate theses**

Doctoral students are required to write a doctoral thesis (165 credits) for a doctoral degree or a licentiate thesis (82.5 credits) for a licentiate degree. Theses may either be a monograph or a compilation thesis comprising previously published academic papers with an introductory chapter. Licentiate theses must be defended at a licentiate seminar. Doctoral theses are defended at a public defence. Further information is provided in the policy documents “Regulations for Doctoral Theses and Public Defence Procedures” and “Regulations for the Licentiate Theses”.

The thesis, normally written in English or Swedish, must demonstrate the student’s ability to independently and academically address a problem within the field. The doctoral thesis is expected to meet requirements for publication in reputable international academic journals or monograph series. The licentiate thesis is expected to display high academic quality and may form part of a doctoral thesis.

### **6.3 Supervision**

Students admitted to a third-cycle programme are entitled to supervision in accordance with the principles stated in the current policy document at Karlstad University.

Upon admission, a principal supervisor and assistant supervisor are appointed in consultation with the doctoral student. The supervisors advise the student in the choice of research area and thesis topic and give support throughout the process. The student must maintain regular contact with the supervisors, keep them informed of the progress and consult them on the continued planning of the thesis project.

The supervisors’ function is to discuss, read and critically examine the student’s thesis work continuously before it is submitted for public examination.

The supervisor is expected to organise groups of students who are working on similar research issues. The supervisor should also encourage students to organise their own

meetings to share experiences.

#### **6.4 Individual study plan**

Within six months of admission to the doctoral programme, each student must draw up an individual study plan in consultation with the supervisors. The plan should include a realistic estimate of time for coursework, research, teaching, other departmental duties and supervision. The plan should further include the problem, aim and methodological and theoretical frames of the project.

The individual study plan is subject to continual revision (at least once a year), with potential written comments and corrections.

#### **6.5 Examination**

Doctoral students are assessed in accordance with the requirements of each individual course syllabus. Doctoral and licentiate theses are examined in accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance (Chap. 6, Sect. 33-35) and Karlstad University's current regulations.