



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

General syllabus for third-cycle programme

in Social Work

(Studieplan för utbildning på forskarnivå i socialt arbete)

Decision:	HS FN 2025-05-08	Reg. no.:	HS 2025/886	Replaces:	HS 2024/1505
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Syllabus approval

Approved by the Faculty Board of Arts and Social Sciences on 28 August 2008, revised on 5 December 2019, 9 December 2021, 31 October 2024 and 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 discipline of social work focuses on the conditions and experiences of socially vulnerable people. We look at the causes and effects of social problems at individual, group and societal levels. Studies also include how different efforts can be organised, implemented and improved to prevent or remedy social problems. Researchers within the field of social work are active in multidisciplinary projects, research networks and research centres, both at Karlstad University and other higher education institutions.

There are continuous discussions with other departments of social work regarding doctoral studies and research issues as well as collaboration with other research environments at departmental, faculty and university levels in Sweden and abroad. The department also interacts with the research and development unit FoU Välfärd Värmland, Region Värmland and regional municipalities.

2. Learning 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, SFS 2006:1053).

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.

2.2 Subject-specific outcomes

The doctoral programme in social work prepares students for further national and international academic careers, and also for qualified professional work requiring expertise in social work. The objectives below apply both to the licentiate and doctor's degree. The objectives are related to the general objectives for a Degree of Licentiate and a Degree of Doctor, in order to clarify the level of each degree.

For a **Degree of Licentiate or Doctor** in Social Work at Karlstad University, the student must demonstrate:

- theoretical and methodological knowledge
- skills in theoretical analysis and practical research
- solid knowledge of central theories and perspectives in social work
- broad knowledge of central theories and the potential of research in social work.

3. Entry requirements

To be eligible for third-cycle studies, the applicant is required to meet the general and University-specific entry requirements and must be considered to have the ability required to benefit from the studies (Higher Education Ordinance, Chap. 7, Sect. 35).

3.1 General entry requirements

To meet the general entry requirements, the applicant must have been awarded a master level qualification; satisfied the requirements for courses comprising at least 240 credits of which at least 60 credits were at master level; or acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad. A higher education institution may permit an exemption from the general entry requirements for an individual applicant if there are special grounds. (Higher Education Ordinance, Chap. 7 Sect. 39)

3.2 Specific entry requirements

To meet the specific entry requirements, the applicant must have completed courses comprising at least 120 credits in social work or an adjacent subject, of which at least 30 credits were at the master's level and included an independent project (degree project) of at least 15 credits. An applicant can also be eligible after having acquired equivalent knowledge in some other way, 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

Candidates are selected based on their assessed capacity to successfully complete a programme at the doctoral level. The selection is based on the applicant's previous study results with an emphasis on the quality of independent written work of a scholarly and investigatory nature, particularly at the master's level. Weight is also given to the applicant's research specialisation and the capacity of available supervisors at the department, and the extent to which the applicant intends to be a physically present and active member of the research environment.

6. Curriculum and structure

The third-cycle programme can lead to a doctoral or licentiate degree. A Degree of Doctor requires four years of full-time study, the equivalent of 240 credits, and a Degree of Licentiate requires two years of full-time study, the equivalent of 120 credits.

The studies include coursework as well as an independent project (a licentiate or doctoral thesis). To earn a doctoral degree, the candidate must complete 75 credits of coursework and a thesis comprising 165 credits. To earn a licentiate degree, the candidate is required to complete 37.5 credits of coursework and a thesis comprising 82.5 credits.

6.1 Courses

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

General cross-faculty courses

General cross-faculty courses may be included, such as Research ethics (4.5 credits), Communicating science (4.5 credits).

Subject-specific courses

For a doctoral degree, the subject-specific courses must comprise 75 credits, including mandatory coursework of 45 credits. For a licentiate degree, the subject-specific courses must comprise 37.5 credits, including mandatory coursework of 20 credits.

Mandatory courses for a **Degree of Doctor**

- Research methodology (20 credits), including a minimum of 7.5 credits in qualitative method and 7.5 credits in quantitative method.
- Social science theory and social science research orientation (25 credits).

Mandatory courses for a **Degree of Licentiate**

- Research methodology (10 credits), including a minimum of 5 credits in qualitative method and 5 credits in quantitative method.
- Social science theory and social science research orientation (10 credits).

6.2 Doctoral and licentiate thesis

Doctoral students are required to write a thesis for a doctoral or a licentiate degree, either as a monograph or as a compilation thesis.

Candidates are required to defend their licentiate thesis at a seminar and their doctoral thesis at a public examination.

For more information, refer to the document regarding third-cycle education at Karlstad University. The topic of the licentiate or doctoral thesis is chosen in consultation with the supervisor and the examiner. If the thesis is produced in collaboration with others, the individual candidate's contribution must be clearly indicated.

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.

6.4 Individual study plan

Within six months of admission to the third-cycle programme, each doctoral student must draw up an individual study plan in consultation with their supervisor. The plan should include a realistic time plan for coursework, thesis work and supervision. The individual study plan is subject to continual revision (at least once a year), with potential written comments and corrections.

6.5 Examination

Third-cycle students are assessed in accordance with the requirements of each individual course syllabus. Doctoral or licentiate theses are assessed in accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance (Chap. 6, Sect. 33-34). Furthermore, doctoral and licentiate theses are also regulated by Karlstad University's policy documents.