



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

# **General syllabus for doctoral programme in political science**

(Studieplan för utbildning på forskarnivå i statsvetenskap)

|                |              |          |                |          |                 |
|----------------|--------------|----------|----------------|----------|-----------------|
| Decision       | HS 86/26     | Reg. no. | HS2026/957     | Replaces | HS2025/687      |
| Effective from | 22 June 2026 | until    | further notice | Officer  | Monica Eriksson |

## **Syllabus approval**

Revised by the Faculty Board of Arts and Social Sciences on 22 June 2026. The syllabus replaces the previous version from 20 March 2025.

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

### **1. General information**

The doctoral programme in political science can lead to a Degree of Licentiate or a Degree of Doctor. The doctoral programme in political science prepares students for national/international academic careers, as well as for qualified professional work requiring political science expertise.

### **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.

## **2.2 Subject-specific outcomes**

The doctoral programme in political science prepares students for national/international academic careers, as well as for qualified professional work requiring political science expertise. The outcomes specified below apply both to a Degree of Licentiate and a Degree of Doctor. The outcomes are related to the general outcomes for a Degree of Licentiate and a Degree of Doctor in order to clarify the level of each degree.

For a **Degree of Licentiate** and a **Degree of Doctor** in political science at Karlstad University, the third-cycle student shall:

- demonstrate broad and deep knowledge of political science as an international discipline and research tradition
- demonstrate specialist knowledge in a research area of political science or in an application area
- demonstrate the ability to autonomously conduct research in political science and qualified investigatory work in political science application areas
- demonstrate the ability to analyse current social issues and political problems using an academic approach
- demonstrate the ability to discuss social and political issues in writing in public debate and present research results in a written, accessible form
- demonstrate insight into multidisciplinary approaches and experience from interactions across traditional disciplinary borders.

### **3. Qualification 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, Chap. 7, Sect. 35).

#### **3.1 General entry requirements**

To meet the general entry requirements, the applicant must have been awarded a master's level qualification; satisfied the requirements for courses comprising at least 240 credits of which at least 60 credits were at master's level; or acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad. 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. 7 Sect. 39)

#### **3.2 Specific entry requirements**

To meet the specific entry requirements for doctoral studies in political science, the applicant must have completed courses in political science totalling at least 120 credits, of which 30 credits were awarded at master's level and include a degree project of at least 15 credits. Courses in political science taken as part of degree programmes such as public administration or teacher training also give eligibility.

An applicant can also meet the specific entry requirements by in some other way having acquired equivalent prerequisite knowledge, in the Sweden 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. The selection is also based on how well the submitted research plan relates to the subject's research profiles, and the extent to which the applicant intends to be a physically present and active member of the subject's research environment.

## **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 52.5 credits of course work and a thesis comprising 67.5 credits.

### *Mandatory seminar presentations for a Degree of Licentiate in political science*

The third-cycle student presents their work on at least three occasions:

- Presentation of thesis idea (within three months)
- One-year seminar (within a year after admission)
- Final review

### *Mandatory seminar presentations for a Degree of Doctor in political science*

The third-cycle student presents their work on at least four occasions:

- Presentation of thesis idea (within three months)
- One-year seminar (within a year after admission)
- Midway review
- Final review

## **6.1 Courses**

### *Mandatory cross-faculty courses*

For a **Degree of Doctor**

- Communicating science, 4.5 credits

### *Subject-specific courses for a Degree of Licentiate*

Subject-specific courses for a Degree of Licentiate must total 30 credits, of which 15 credits are for methodology courses, 15 credits for theory and analysis courses that demonstrate the range of the discipline. Mandatory courses include Research traditions in Political Science (7.5 credits) and Analytical approaches in political science (7.5 credits). Courses in both qualitative and quantitative method are normally included. Credits can be awarded for similar courses at other universities, in Sweden or abroad.

### *Specialisation courses for a Degree of Licentiate*

Specialisation courses for a Degree of Licentiate must total 15 credits. The third-cycle student chooses relevant specialisation courses in relation to the thesis, in consultation with the supervisor and/or examiner. Specialisation can be achieved within the discipline, at other disciplines or through

multidisciplinary courses. Courses offered by other departments are also valid.

### ***Subject-specific courses for a Degree of Doctor***

Subject-specific courses for a Degree of Doctor must total 45 credits, of which 15 credits are for methodology courses, 25.5 credits for theory and analysis courses that demonstrate the range of the discipline. Mandatory courses include Research traditions in Political Science (7.5 credits) and Analytical approaches in political science (7.5 credits). Courses in both qualitative and quantitative method should be included. Credits can be awarded for similar courses at other universities, in Sweden or abroad.

### ***Specialisation courses for a Degree of Doctor***

Specialisation courses for Degree of Doctor must total 30 credits. The third-cycle student chooses relevant specialisation courses in relation to the thesis, in consultation with the supervisor and/or examiner. Specialisation can be achieved within the discipline, at other disciplines or through multidisciplinary courses. Courses offered by other departments are also valid.

## **6.2 Licentiate and doctoral theses**

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.

Further information is provided by the policy documents “Regulations for Third-Cycle Studies at Karlstad University” and “Guidelines for a Compilation Thesis in Political Science”.

The topic of the licentiate or doctoral thesis is chosen in consultation with the supervisor and the examiner.

## **6.3 Supervision**

Students admitted to the doctoral programme are entitled to supervision in accordance with the principles stated in the current policy document at Karlstad University. (Higher Education Ordinance Chap. 6, Sect. 28).

## **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. It should also include 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), with potential written comments and corrections.

## **6.5 Examination**

Doctoral 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. 33-35). Furthermore, doctoral and licentiate theses are also regulated by Karlstad University’s policy documents.