



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

# Doctoral Studies in Media and Communication Studies

(Studieplan för utbildning på forskarnivå i Medie- och  
kommunikationsvetenskap)

Decision	FN 19 March 2026	Reg. no.	HS 2026/423	Replaces	HS 2020/479
Effective from	19 March 2026	until	further notice	Officer	Monica Eriksson

## Syllabus approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences on 19 March 2026. The doctoral programme is offered to the extent permitted by available resources. General stipulations for doctoral programmes are provided in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance.

### 1. General information

Media and Communication Studies (MCS) explores the role of the media in society, their production conditions, content and audiences. MCS is an interdisciplinary subject area grounded in theories and methods from both the social sciences and the humanities.

MCS has been an established field of study in Karlstad since the early 1970s. In connection with the inauguration of Karlstad University in 1999, MCS received permanent research funding and was approved as a doctoral discipline in 2002. MCS at Karlstad University has two main research environments: Geomedia and NODE (The Ander Centre for Research on News and Opinion in the Digital Era). Through research seminars linked to the subject area and its research environments, doctoral students quickly become involved in scholarly discussions on contemporary issues in media and communication studies.

MCS also collaborates with other higher education institutions and disciplines both within and outside Karlstad University in terms of doctoral courses and supervision.

### 2. Programme 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 a 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 a **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 a **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.*

### **Subject-specific outcomes**

In accordance with the subject-specific outcomes for third-cycle studies in media and communication studies at Karlstad University, the doctoral student shall

- demonstrate a broad understanding of subject-specific research methodologies in both theory and practice
- demonstrate, based on their own research, the ability to plan, conduct, complete and publish research nationally and internationally
- demonstrate the ability to engage in applied research and investigative assignments within one or more application areas of Media and Communication Studies, and
- demonstrate insight into multidisciplinary approaches and experience in interacting across traditional disciplinary boundaries.

## **3. Entry requirements**

*The requirements for admission to third-cycle courses and study programmes are that the applicant meets the general and specific entry requirements and is considered in other respects to have the ability required to benefit from the course or study programme.*

### **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. 7)*

### **3.2 Specific entry requirements**

To meet the specific entry requirements, the applicant must have completed courses comprising at least 90 credits in Media and Communication Studies corresponding to the introductory, continuation, and specialisation level. 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 thesis proposal and 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. Consideration 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 doctoral programme can lead to a Degree of Doctor or a Degree of Licentiate. A doctoral degree requires four years of full-time study, equivalent to 240 credits, and a licentiate degree requires two years of full-time study, equivalent to 120 credits. The studies include coursework as well as an independent project (licentiate or doctoral thesis). To earn a doctoral degree, the candidate must complete 90 credits of coursework and a thesis comprising 150 credits. To earn a licentiate degree, the candidate is required to complete 45 credits of coursework and a thesis comprising 75 credits.

### **6.1 Courses**

The doctoral programme consists of mandatory subject-specific courses, mandatory research seminars and elective subject-specific courses.

#### **Mandatory subject-specific courses (basic courses)**

Mandatory subject-specific courses for a Degree of Doctor comprise 30 credits, and 22.5 credits for a Degree of Licentiate.

The courses are determined by specific guidelines issued by the discipline's professor(s). The mandatory courses must be specified in the doctoral student's individual study plan.

#### **Mandatory research seminars (7.5 credits)**

Doctoral students are expected to actively participate in the department's research seminars. Active participation is assessed through the compulsory course Higher seminar (7.5 cr), which is completed by the doctoral student by attending at least 20 of the department's research seminars and contributing actively on each occasion, for example, through questions or comments.

#### **Elective subject-specific courses (specialised courses)**

Elective subject-specific courses for a Degree of Doctor comprise 52.5 credits, and 15 credits for a Degree of Licentiate. The courses are organised based on the expertise of the subject's researchers and with consideration of the doctoral students' research interests. The courses are selected in consultation with the supervisor and examiner and may be chosen to support the thesis project and the specific expertise it requires. Doctoral students are also encouraged to participate in courses offered by other higher education institutions, both nationally and internationally.

#### **Transfer of credits**

Course credits from basic courses, research seminars and specialised courses may, subject to the approval of the examiner, be credited to the doctoral student upon completion of courses in Media and Communication Studies at Karlstad University or in other subjects and at other higher education institutions. The examiner determines if any of the courses can be replaced with an equivalent course for a Degree of Licentiate or Degree of Doctor.

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

Doctoral students are required to write a doctoral thesis (for a Degree of Doctor) or a

licentiate thesis (for a Degree of Licentiate), either as a monograph or as a compilation thesis. The requirements for each format are specified in a separate policy adopted by Media and Communication Studies at Karlstad University.

A doctoral thesis must be presented at a public thesis defence, and a licentiate thesis at a licentiate seminar.

Doctoral and licentiate theses are normally written in English or Swedish. The research 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. For more information, refer to the document *Regulations for Third-Cycle Studies at Karlstad University*.

### **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**

At the start of the studies, the doctoral student shall, in consultation with their supervisors, draw up an individual study plan (ISP). The study 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 regular review (at least once a year), with comments and any revisions made in writing.

### **6.5 Examination**

Doctoral students are assessed in accordance with the requirements of each course syllabus. Doctoral and licentiate theses are examined in accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance (Chap. 6, Sect. 33-55) and Karlstad University's regulations. The doctoral programme in MCS leads to a Degree of Doctor of Philosophy or a Degree of Licentiate of Philosophy.