



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Doctoral studies in Comparative Literature

(Studieplan för utbildning på forskarnivå i Litteraturvetenskap)

Decision	FB 19 March 2026	Reg. no.	HS 2026/422	Replaces	HS 2015/331
Effective from	19 March 2026	until	further notice	Officer	Monica Eriksson

Syllabus approval

Approved by the Faculty Board of Arts and Education on 7 June 2007, revised on 7 April 2011, and revised by the Faculty Board of Arts and Social Sciences on 16 May 2013, 11 June 2015 and 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

At Karlstad University, the discipline has two main strands: comparative literature and literature education (subject-specific teaching and learning).

Comparative literature examines how literary works can be understood in terms of their aesthetics and form, as well as in relation to various historical, cultural and sociological contexts. It also adopts a broad understanding of text and includes forms of fiction and literary expression in other media, as well as various types of relationships between text, reader, author and context. Research is often conducted in collaboration with related disciplines within the humanities, the arts and the social sciences.

Literature education examines literature, reading and the teaching of literature from a range of different perspectives. This includes, for example, the relationship between teaching and subject knowledge, different teaching methods and perspectives on literature, pupils' and teachers' reading habits and interests, as well as forms of fiction in other media and various youth cultures. Common theoretical frameworks include reader response theory, the history of education and curriculum theory. Research is often carried out from ethnographic perspectives in practice-oriented studies.

In compliance with Karlstad University's gender equality policy, gender-related perspectives shall be considered in doctoral programmes. In accordance with Karlstad University's promotion of sustainability, this perspective is also included. Third-cycle students should also gain insight into multidisciplinary approaches and experience from interactions across traditional disciplinary borders.

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 90 credits.

- For a Degree of Doctor, the third-cycle student shall have been awarded a pass grade for a doctoral thesis of at least 180 credits.

Subject-specific outcomes

In addition to the outcomes specified above, third-cycle students in comparative literature shall, upon completion of their studies, demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the aesthetic distinctiveness of literature and its societal position across different historical periods, as well as a significantly deepened and expanded knowledge of literary works.

The aim of the programme is to prepare third-cycle students for professional careers within higher education institutions or other educational settings, as well as for other fields in which solid knowledge of literature and insight into humanities research are of considerable value. This may include analytical work within the public cultural sector, positions in publishing or the media, or roles in libraries and archives.

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 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. 6)

3.2 To meet the **specific entry requirements**, the applicant must hold a Degree of Master (60 credits) with Comparative Literature as the main field of study, or have acquired equivalent knowledge in some other way. Proficiency in Swedish and English is a requirement. Additional language expertise is considered a valuable qualification.

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 project plan, 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. Selection will also be based on the applicant's language proficiency, whether the applicant will be present and participate actively in the subject's research environment and whether the applicant's research specialisation corresponds to the expertise of available supervisors.

6. Programme curriculum and structure

The doctoral programme can lead to a Degree of Doctor or a Degree of Licentiate. The doctoral degree requires four years of study, the equivalent of 240 credits, and the licentiate degree two years or 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 60 credits of coursework. To earn a licentiate degree, the candidate is required to complete 30 credits of coursework.

6.1 Courses

The licentiate degree and doctoral degree require coursework of 30 and 60 credits respectively. The following mandatory components apply to both degrees:

- Literary theory and methods, 12 credits
- Seminars and research presentation, 3 credits
- Specialisation courses in literary history, 15 credits

For the doctoral degree, the third-cycle student must also complete 30 credits of elective courses, which should be subject-specific and/or thesis-focused, and are determined in consultation with the supervisor.

6.2 Doctoral/licentiate thesis

Third-cycle 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 available in Karlstad University's policy document *Regulations for Third-Cycle Studies*. The topic of the licentiate or doctoral thesis is chosen in consultation with the supervisor and the examiner.

The doctoral or licentiate thesis can be written in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian or English.

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 third-cycle student shall, in consultation with their supervisors, draw up an individual study plan. The study plan should include a realistic time plan for coursework, thesis work and supervision. The plan should also include an introduction to the proposed research field, the problem statement, the aim of the project, methodological and theoretical frames, and relevant ethical considerations. The individual study plan is subject to continual revision (at least once a year), with comments and any corrections in writing.

6.5 Assessment

Third-cycle 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.