

General Study Plan for the PhD programme in the History of Religions¹

1. Decision

This General Study Plan for doctoral education in the History of Religions is approved by the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Humanities at Stockholm University on 2020-02-27.

The General Study Plan is in effect from 2020-02-27.

2. Subject Area Description

History of Religions comprises the historical-philological, ethnographic, behavioral-scientific, and comparative study of how religious traditions and phenomena shape and have been shaped by the culture and society of their time. Distinctive of the subject area are historical, comparative and critical perspectives on how humans construct worldviews, norms and rituals in their social, political, economic and natural environments.

3. Programme Objectives

PhD education in History of Religions can end in a licentiate degree or a doctoral degree. A PhD candidate in History of Religions can obtain a licentiate degree as a step in their PhD education. A licentiate degree is not obligatory for a doctoral degree.

3.1 Doctoral Degree

A doctoral degree is achieved upon completing 240 credits in a subject area at the PhD level.

Knowledge and Understanding

To obtain a doctoral degree, the doctoral candidate shall

demonstrate a broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field as well as an advanced and current specialized knowledge within a defined part of the field, and

demonstrate a familiarity with research methodology in general and the methods of the specific research area in particular.

Proficiency and Ability

¹ This document is a translation of the General Study Plan for doctoral education in the History of Religions at Stockholm University that came into effect on 2020-02-27. In the event of disputes, the Swedish original takes precedence.



To obtain a doctoral degree, the doctoral candidate shall demonstrate a capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis as well as independent critical review and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues, and situations,

demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively and with scholarly precision identify and formulate research questions, and to plan and conduct research and other qualified assignments with adequate methods and within given time frames, and to evaluate such work,

demonstrate through a dissertation an ability to make a significant contribution to the development of knowledge through independent research,

demonstrate an ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively and in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general,

demonstrate an ability to identify the need for further knowledge,

demonstrate a potential for contributing to social development and support the learning of others, both within research and education and in other qualified professional contexts.

Assessment ability and approach

To obtain a doctoral degree, the doctoral candidate shall demonstrate intellectual independence and scholarly integrity, as well as an ability to make ethical assessment relating to research, and

demonstrate deeper insight into the potential and limitations of science, its role in society and people's responsibility for how to use it

Scholarly dissertation (doctoral dissertation)

To receive a doctoral degree, the doctoral candidate must have had a scholarly dissertation (doctoral dissertation) of at least 120 credits approved.

Other

In the History of Religions a doctoral dissertation of 180 credits is required.

3.2 Licentiate Degree

A licentiate degree can be achieved either when the candidate has completed studies of at least 120 credits within a subject on the PhD level, or when the candidate has completed a part of an education that will be completed with a doctoral degree of at least 120 credits, if the higher education institution decides that such a degree can be granted.

Knowledge and Understanding

To obtain a licentiate degree, the licentiate candidate shall demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the research field, including a current specialized knowledge within a defined part of the field, as well as a deep understanding of research methodology in general, and the methods of the specific research field in particular.

Proficiency and Ability

To obtain a licentiate degree, the licentiate candidate shall demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively and with scholarly precision identify and formulate research questions, and to plan and conduct a limited research project and other qualified assignments with adequate methods, and within given time frames, and through this contribute to the development of knowledge and to evaluate research, demonstrate an ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings clearly in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general, and demonstrate the capacities necessary for participating independently in research and development work and for working independently in other qualified operations

Assessment ability and approach

To obtain a licentiate degree, the licentiate candidate shall demonstrate an ability to make ethical judgments in their own research, demonstrate insight into the potential and limitations of science, its role in society and people's responsibility for how to use it, and demonstrate an ability to identify one's need of further knowledge and take responsibility for one's own knowledge development

Scholarly dissertation (licentiate dissertation)

To receive a licentiate degree, the candidate must have had a scholarly dissertation (doctoral dissertation) of at least 60 credits approved.



Other

In the History of Religions a licentiate dissertation of at least 90 credits is required.

4. Prerequisites and Admission Criteria

To be eligible for the PhD program it is required that the applicant

1. Meets the general admission criteria and the special admission criteria that the higher education institution may have decided,
2. Is considered to possess such abilities that are necessary to benefit from the education (cf. Chapter 7, Section 35, Higher Education Ordinance).

The admission criteria shall be fulfilled when the application is submitted, e.g. on the day that the application closes at the latest.

4.1 General Admission Criteria

The general admission criteria for the PhD program are met by those who have

1. Completed an advanced level/Master's degree,
2. Completed courses equivalent to at least 240 Swedish higher education credits, of which at least 60 credits obtained at the advanced level,
3. Or acquired equivalent knowledge in another way, in Sweden or elsewhere.

The higher education institution may grant an individual exception from the general admission criteria, if there are special reasons. Decision about an exception is made by the Faculty Board of the Humanities after request from the Department Board.

4.2 Special Admission Criteria

To attain the special admissions criteria for eligibility to doctoral education in the history of religions the candidate must have successfully completed at least 30 credits worth of courses on the MA level within the area of history of religions / religious studies, including an MA thesis of at least 15 credits.

It is required that the candidate is proficient in English. Moreover, it is expected that the candidate is sufficiently proficient in any other relevant language (e.g. source languages) deemed necessary to begin the proposed research project.

The special admission criteria can also be obtained by those who have acquired equivalent competence in another way, whether in Sweden or abroad. Equivalent competence will be assessed by the committee that prepares the admission decision and final decision is made by the Department Board.



5. Announcement and Admissions

Available doctoral positions at the Faculty of Humanities can be announced twice a year on the Stockholm University website, with final application day on April 15 or October 15. Positions in the History of Religions are usually announced in the spring. Information about the application's form is given in the announcement. The applicant is responsible for making sure that the application is complete and that it is received by the University no later than the final day of application.

Decision about admission to the doctoral education in the History of Religions is taken by the Department Board at the Department for Ethnology, History of Religions, and Gender Studies. The Department Board cannot delegate decision about admission. The Department Board may only admit applicants that it employs as doctorands. Decision about admission to the doctoral education with other financing than employment as doctorand is taken by the Faculty Board of the Humanities. Decision about admission cannot be appealed.

5.1 Assessment Process and Selection Criteria

The basis for selection among the candidates that fulfill the admission criteria is the capacity to benefit from the education. Selection is made by a committee consisting of faculty members/supervisors that are part of the subject's collegium of supervisors, under the leadership of the director of studies for doctoral education in the history of religions. The number of committee members shall be at least three and the majority of members must have at least docent competence.

In the selection process, the following faculty wide criteria will be used:

1. Previous education in general. Assessment is made with regards to the depth as well as breadth of previous education.
2. Previous academic output. The applicant's capacity to benefit from the education is assessed on the basis of exam work from the BA and MA levels as well as other written academic work. Timeliness is also assessed; i.e. to what extent the applicant has demonstrated an ability to complete their academic assignments within a given timeframe. In addition, an assessment is made of the applicant's academic development, based on a comparison of the academic outputs. The academic work is assessed in terms of critical and analytic abilities, independence, and creativity.
3. Research plan. The applicant must give a brief account of their suggested research topic. The account should include research questions and a sketch of how the research is to be completed. The plan is assessed with regards to its relevance, originality, and feasibility within the allotted timeframe (i.e. a period corresponding to four years' full-time study).
4. The availability of suitable supervisors.



5. The ability to collaborate. The applicant's ability to collaborate is assessed on the basis of, e.g., references, letters of recommendation, or interviews.

The written recommendation for admission

In the written recommendation for admission, which the committee sends to the Department Board, the following should be made clear:

- The composition of the committee
- Complete list of applicants
- Who have been deemed eligible and ineligible
- Who, on the basis of the above-mentioned criteria, have been placed on the shortlist
- Who on the shortlist is given priority and why.

Further ranking within the shortlist can be made.

The recommendation for admission shall be accompanied by a suggestion of supervisors. This recommendation is submitted by the chair (*ämnesföreträdare*) and the director of studies for doctoral education in the history of religions.

6. Programme Content and Structure

Education leading to a doctoral degree comprises four years of full-time studies, corresponding to 240 credits; for a licentiate degree, two years of full-time studies corresponding to 120 credits. 30 credits correspond to one semester of full-time study. Education leading to a doctoral degree in the history of religions consists in coursework (60 credits) and a doctoral dissertation (180 credits); education leading to a licentiate degree consists of coursework (30 credits) and a licentiate thesis (90 credits).

The education requires four years full-time study for doctorands studying towards a doctoral degree, and two years full-time for those studying towards a licentiate degree, under the assumption that they devote themselves completely to the studies and make effective use of the teaching and supervision. If a PhD candidate requests it, the employment can be part-time, but must be at least 50 percent of full-time, i.e. eight years for a doctoral degree and four years for a licentiate degree.

Employment as a doctorand can be extended if the doctoral candidate undertakes institutional service in parallel with their studies. Such service may at most amount to 20 percent of full time and may thereby extend the employment period by a maximum of one year (doctoral degree) or half a year (licentiate degree). All doctoral candidates



who are admitted to graduate-level education in the history of religions must comply with the current General Study Plan. Possible collaborations in the form of cotutelle, participation in a research school, or externally funded projects can only affect the individual differences in the education that are documented in the Individual Study Plan.

6.1 Individual Study Plan

Individual study plans must be drawn up for all active doctoral candidates in the history of religions. The individual study plan contains the commitments of the university and the doctoral candidate, a financial plan, and a timetable for the doctoral candidate's education. The plan is determined by the Department Board after consultation with the doctoral candidate and their supervisors. The individual study plan must be followed up at least once a year, and, after consultation with the doctoral candidate and the supervisors, be changed by the university in the extent deemed necessary. For details regarding the establishment, management, and follow-up of the individual study plans one is referred to Chapter 6, Sections 29 and 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the Rules for education and examination at PhD level at Stockholm University, the Area of Human Sciences' instructions, and the Faculty of Humanities' Rules for education and examination at postgraduate level.

6.2 Supervision and Other Resources

At the beginning of the education, at least two supervisors shall be appointed for each doctoral candidate, one of whom shall be designated as the main supervisor. The supervisors are appointed by the Department Board upon recommendation from the chair and the director of studies for doctoral education in the history of religions.

The main supervisor should be employed at Stockholm University, normally at the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies. All supervisors must hold a doctoral degree, and at least one of them should have at least the qualifications of an associate professor (*docent*). The university shall provide training for supervisors. At least one of the supervisors should have completed such training or be deemed by the Disciplinary Board (*områdesnämnden*) to possess equivalent competence.

The amount of supervision time per academic year should be proportional to the doctoral candidate's level of activity and, in the case of full-time studies, amount to at least 80 clock hours, divided between the two supervisors. The distribution of supervision time should be specified in the individual study plan. The individual study



plan should also specify the distribution of work tasks between the supervisors. The doctoral candidate should conduct their studies with the level of activity established in the individual study plan and, in case of any problems, contact their supervisors or the director of doctoral education.

Active doctoral candidates at the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies are entitled, in proportion to their level of activity, to a workspace, typically in a shared room, library resources, and an expense allowance as determined by the Department Board.

A doctoral candidate who requests it shall be allowed to change supervisors. The decision regarding the change is made by the Department Board. A doctoral candidate wishing to initiate a change should notify the responsible person for doctoral education or the department's director of studies for doctoral education. Proposals for a new supervisor should be developed in consultation with the chair (*ämneshörelse*) for history of religions.

The doctoral candidate is entitled to supervision during their education unless the Rector, with support from Chapter 6, Section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance, decides otherwise. If a doctoral candidate significantly neglects their obligations according to the individual study plan, the Rector shall decide that the candidate is no longer entitled to supervision and other resources for the education. Before such a decision is made, the doctoral candidate and their supervisor should be given an opportunity to express their views. The assessment shall be based on their accounts and other available investigations. The assessment shall also take into account whether the university has fulfilled its own obligations according to the individual study plan. The decision shall be in writing and substantiated.

A decision to withdraw resources according to Chapter 6, Section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance may be appealed to the Appeals Board for Higher Education. If the resources for the education have been withdrawn according to Chapter 6, Section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the doctoral candidate may, after applying to the Rector, regain their right to supervision and other resources. The doctoral candidate must demonstrate, by presenting an additional study result of significant quality and scope or by otherwise making it likely that they can fulfill their remaining obligations according to the individual study plan.

For further information on this matter, please refer to the Regulations for Education and Examination at Stockholm University, as well as the Guidelines for Individual Study Plan within the Humanities Area.



Additional details regarding supervision and other resources are determined in the individual study plan.

6.3 Courses and Examination

For the doctoral degree, the course component comprises two semesters of full-time studies, i.e., 60 credits, and should be designed to fulfill relevant parts of the degree objectives as stated in section 3.1 above. For the licentiate degree, the course component comprises one semester of full-time studies, i.e., 30 credits, and should be designed to fulfill relevant parts of the degree objectives as stated in section 3.2 above. All courses must be approved by the main supervisor before work on them commences.

Compulsory courses for the doctoral and licentiate degrees

Compulsory courses for both the doctoral and licentiate degrees consist of 15 credits. The courses may be taken at the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions, and Gender Studies, within the research school activities at or outside of Stockholm University, at a collaborative institution or equivalent, or at another educational institution. Therefore, the course titles and structures may vary to some extent.

However, the compulsory part of the courses must always include the following themes and areas:

- Research traditions in the history of religions, 7.5 credits
- Recent theory and method in the history of religions, 7.5 credits

For doctoral candidates who have not completed a course in Scientific Methods and Research Ethics, 7.5 credits, or equivalent, as part of advanced-level / MA education with an approved examination, it is also compulsory to take a corresponding course of 7.5 credits.

Elective courses for the doctoral and licentiate degrees

For the doctoral degree, elective courses totaling 37.5 credits should be chosen and combined in a way that contributes to the achievement of the degree objectives. For the licentiate degree, elective courses totaling 15 credits should be chosen in a way that contributes to the achievement of the degree objectives. For doctoral candidates

who have not taken Scientific Methods and Research Ethics, 7.5 credits, or equivalent, as part of their previous education, elective courses totaling 30 credits should be chosen for the doctoral degree, and an elective course of 7.5 credits should be chosen for the licentiate degree.

Pedagogical training in higher education can be included as a credited part of the education, up to a maximum of 7.5 credits, for those pursuing a doctoral degree.

The names of the courses and the examination format should be specified in the individual study plan.

6.3.1 Transfer of Credits

Previous education can be credited towards the doctoral education in History of Religions to a maximum of 30 credits. The credited courses must not be part of the eligibility requirements that applied at the time of admission. Applications for credit transfer should be submitted on a specific form, indicating which courses the credited courses should replace.

The credit transfer affects the duration of studies, reducing the funded period of education (net study time) accordingly, following the principle of one week per 1.5 transferred credits.

Decisions regarding credit transfer are made by the Department Board.

6.3.2 Additional Obligations

During the education, the doctoral candidate should also:

- If the planned dissertation project requires it, apply for ethical approval before commencing data collection.
- Participate in research seminars (preferably the higher seminar in History of Religions) and contribute to the review of others' work, as well as engage in discussions on other relevant texts and topics.
- Present the results of their ongoing research and draft dissertation texts at the higher seminar in History of Religions. The following checkpoints at the higher seminar are mandatory, all accompanied by written materials:

- Presentation of the dissertation project (usually during the first term of the education).
- Chapter seminar, at least one.
- 50% seminar, where the materials should include a complete outline of the dissertation, introductory chapter, and at least two additional chapters.
- Final seminar, where the materials should consist of a complete manuscript of the dissertation.

6.4 Dissertation and Public Defence

To obtain a doctoral degree, an approved dissertation equivalent to 180 credits is required. The subject of the doctoral dissertation is determined in consultation with the supervisors early in the doctoral studies. A starting point for this consultation is the research plan submitted by the doctoral candidate as part of the application for doctoral level education.

The dissertation should demonstrate the candidate's ability to independently and scientifically address the chosen research task – either within or outside the framework of teamwork – in a satisfactory manner, fulfilling parts of the objectives outlined in point 3.1 above.

The dissertation should be structured either as a unified, coherent scientific work (monograph dissertation) or as a compilation of scientific papers authored by the doctoral candidate alone or in collaboration with others, accompanied by a substantial introductory frame text (*kappa*) (compilation dissertation).

If the research is conducted as part of a teamwork, the doctoral candidate's contributions should be clearly distinguishable.

The research and the obtained results should be presented in a manner that meets the quality standards for acceptance in a scientific series or reputable journal, regardless of whether it is a monograph or compilation dissertation.

The recommended page count for a monograph dissertation is 200-250 pages.

A compilation dissertation should consist of four scientific articles, the majority of which are usually published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific

publications. Any non-peer-reviewed articles should be of such quality that the reviewer at the final seminar deems them publishable. At least half of the articles should have the doctoral candidate as the sole author, and at most one of the articles may have a different first author than the doctoral candidate. The dissertation should meet the requirements of independence outlined in the Higher Education Ordinance for a doctoral degree.

The introductory thesis framework (*kappa*) of a compilation dissertation should range from 40 to 60 pages and be proportional to the extent of the articles. The framework should address the overall research problem, research context, methods and materials, as well as results. The emphasis in the results section should be on integrating and reflecting upon the different sub-results presented in the various articles. The framework should clearly indicate, if applicable, the doctoral candidate's own contributions versus those of other authors.

Furthermore, the following requirements must be met:

- The dissertation should be the result of independent research that significantly contributes to the advancement of knowledge.
- The purpose, research questions, and scientific methodology should be clearly presented and justified.
- The methods employed should be appropriate in relation to the purpose and research questions of the dissertation, and they should be applied correctly and effectively.
- The existing research should be presented in a way that clearly distinguishes previous research from the doctoral candidate's own contributions presented in the dissertation.
- The material should be presented and characterized, and the delimitations of the material should be explained and justified.
- The dissertation should demonstrate good scientific accuracy in terms of citations, references, bibliographies, tables, diagrams, and other relevant aspects.
- The dissertation should have a logical structure and consistent organization.
- The language used in the dissertation should be correct.
- The results should be summarized, reflected upon, and placed in relation to the scientific development in both national and international contexts.

Language

The dissertation should be written in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English, or German. A doctoral dissertation written in Swedish should include a summary in English, while a dissertation written in English should include a summary in Swedish. If the dissertation is written in a language other than Swedish or English, it should include summaries in both Swedish and English. The summary should be comprehensive enough to provide a clear understanding of the purpose and main content of the dissertation, the scientific methodology used, and the results obtained, even for readers without knowledge of the language of the dissertation. References should be made to the different chapters of the dissertation.

For each doctoral dissertation, a brief English abstract of no more than 2000 characters including spaces should be included. The abstract should:

- State the title of the dissertation, the language in which it is written, the author's name, university, and department.
- Summarize the content of the dissertation according to the structure: problem, methods, and results.
- Include keywords and other relevant information for literature searches in automated information systems.

Public defence

The doctoral dissertation in History of Religions shall be examined prior to the public defence in accordance with the guidelines established by the Department Board. For the doctoral degree, an approved dissertation must be defended at a public oral defence in dialogue with an opponent appointed specifically for each dissertation. The defence should be conducted in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, or English and follow the rules applicable at the Faculty of Humanities. There shall be an examining board appointed specifically for each dissertation. At least one member of the examining board should be affiliated with a different institution.

The doctoral dissertation is evaluated with one of the grades Pass or Fail by an examining board appointed specifically for each dissertation. The evaluation takes into account both the content of the dissertation and the public defence.

6.5 Licentiate Thesis and Seminar

To obtain a licentiate degree, an approved scientific thesis equivalent to 90 higher education credits is required. The subject of the licentiate thesis is determined in

consultation with the supervisors early in the program. The research plan submitted by the doctoral candidate as part of the application for doctoral-level education serves as a starting point for this consultation.

The thesis should demonstrate the doctoral candidate's ability to independently and scientifically solve the chosen research task in a satisfactory manner, thereby fulfilling parts of the objectives outlined in section 3.2 above. The thesis should be structured as a unified, coherent scientific work. If the research is conducted as part of a collaborative effort, the contributions of the doctoral candidate should be clearly distinguishable.

The research and the obtained results should be presented in a manner that meets the quality standards for acceptance in a reputable scientific series or journal. The recommended length for a licentiate thesis is 100-150 pages.

Furthermore, the following requirements apply:

- The thesis should be the result of independent research work that significantly contributes to the development of knowledge.
- The purpose, research question, and scientific method should be clearly presented and justified.
- The methods employed should be appropriate in relation to the thesis's purpose and research questions, and they should be applied correctly and effectively.
- The existing research should be presented in a way that clearly distinguishes previous research from the doctoral candidate's own contributions presented in the thesis.
- The material should be presented, characterized, and its limitations should be disclosed and justified.
- The thesis should demonstrate good scholarly accuracy in terms of citations, references, bibliography, tables, diagrams, etc.
- The thesis should have a logical structure and consistent organization of its contents.
- The language used in the thesis should be grammatically correct.
- The results should be summarized.

Language

The thesis should be written in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English, or German.

If the thesis is written in Swedish, it should include an abstract in English. If the thesis is written in English, it should include a summary in Swedish. If the thesis is written in a language other than Swedish or English, it should include summaries in both Swedish and English. The summary should be comprehensive enough for a reader without knowledge of the thesis language to gain a clear understanding of the purpose and main content of the thesis, the scientific method used, and the results obtained. References should be made to the different chapters of the thesis. The main supervisor of the doctoral candidate is responsible for ensuring that the summary meets the prescribed requirements. The assessment of the summary is included in the evaluation of the entire thesis.

A brief English abstract of the thesis should be attached to each licentiate thesis, comprising a maximum of 2,000 characters including spaces. The abstract should:

- indicate the title of the thesis, the language in which the thesis is written, the author's name, university, and department,
- provide an overview of the content of the thesis according to the structure of problem, methods, and results,
- include keywords and other relevant information for literature searches in automated information systems.

Licentiate Seminar

The licentiate thesis in History of Religions shall be examined prior to the licentiate seminar in accordance with the guidelines established by the Department Board. To obtain the licentiate degree, a successful defence of the licentiate thesis is required at a public oral licentiate seminar. The examination of a licentiate thesis takes place during a licentiate seminar publicly announced well in advance. The time and location are determined by the department. For the seminar, an opponent and an examiner or an assessment group are appointed. The thesis should be orally defended during the seminar in dialogue with the appointed opponent. The licentiate seminar should be conducted in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, or English, and follow the rules applicable to the Faculty of Humanities.

The licentiate thesis is assessed with either a Pass or Fail grade by an assessment group or an examiner appointed specifically for each thesis. Supervisors are not involved in the grading of the thesis. The assessment takes into account both the content of the thesis and the public defence.



The licentiate degree can be obtained as an intermediate step within the doctoral education program towards a doctoral degree. A completed licentiate degree can be built upon to meet the requirements for a doctoral degree.

7. Transition Rules

A doctoral candidate who was admitted before this general study plan came into effect may, after consultation with the main supervisor and the director of studies, request to switch to this study plan. The request should be made to the Department Board. The individual study plan will then be updated accordingly.