Stockholms universitet

Psychologist program term 8
Department of Psychology
VT 2025

Course instructions

Arbete, organisation och grupp, 2: Konsultativt arbete i teori och praktik, 15 hp (PSPR26)

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The course has both theoretical and practical components, and builds on both individual work and work done in teams. A significant part of the course consists of a project carried out in small teams ~~of three people~~ over the course of the whole term. These course instructions are comprehensive so that it can form the basis for planning and coordinating the work with other courses. *You should get answers to most of your questions about the work by reading these instructions carefully.*

Course structure
The course and course overview is presented in the first scheduled class meeting (*Kursintro*). The course runs over the course of one whole term (*Terminsdel A – D*). The following days are set aside for the course during the term: the whole day on Monday and Friday, plus Thursday morning. In the beginning of the course, some scheduled time is dedicated to planning – *make active and effective use of this time!* The Psychologist training program requires participation in different courses at the same time, and this particular course also includes both individual and team work, and multiple deadlines. *Plan all the activities as far as possible, way ahead of time, and book time for all activities already at the beginning of the course.* The course members must set aside time for contacts with companies / organizations to plan the project work early in the course. *The course coordinator recommends that the students contact companies / organizations and make an appointment for a first study visit as soon as possible.*
For the current schedule: see Athena.

Course content

The course builds forth on previous courses in work and organizational psychology within the Psychologist training program, through in-depth studies in theory and application in a practical context. Early in the course, the emphasis is on literature studies, theoretical aspects, and establishing a relationship with an external organization. The aim is that the students will receive knowledge of central theories and newer developments within organizational psychology, which can then be applied in the practical work at a company or in an organization. *Teachers assume that the literature is read before lectures.*
The whole of the course is based on the student developing their own model for consultation and project methodology and applying it through the project work, to work and organizational psychological issues that a psychologist can face in public or private activities. The course introduces practical organizational psychological work by the students in small teams, through contact with a public sector organization or authority, or private organization, in collaboration with representatives from this organization, describe the organizational and psychosocial working environment. The work environment must then be theoretically clarified: first individually (divergent perspectives) and then through a convergent process to build shared understanding and forming a shared understanding within the team of the coming empirical work. The students then conduct a minor empirical study to describe and analyze the work environment. The students return the results to the client and at a later stage give suggestions for interventions that are connected to aspects of relevance for the organizational and psychosocial work environment. Through the course, the students get to practice documenting the process in all its parts and present this in writing in report form.

Project work: Individual & Team

Getting started
During the first weeks of the course, the students, *in a team*, conduct a study visit with accompanying data collection in the form of interviews to:

- create interest in implementing a small project whose purpose is to produce proposals on how the organizational and psychosocial work environment can be understood, analyzed, and developed for the benefit of employees from an organizational psychological perspective.
- identify key variables of interest for the relevant organization that could be highlighted in the project and be a focus for intervention.
- get different stakeholder's perspective on the work environment.

Prior to and during the study visit, it is appropriate to gather written material in the form of business plans, organizational or business descriptions, target documents, annual reports or previous employee surveys. Most businesses also have a website from which information can be retrieved. In connection with the study visit and interview(s), it is advisable to discuss whether there are any specific dimensions of the organizational and psychosocial work environment that the organization's representatives are particularly interested in getting clarified, or gaining a deeper understanding in. The students can already at the first contact and during the study visit orally describe what work they want to do at the company and during which time period. *It facilitates the continued work of the team to already at the first contacts with the organization discuss or even book in times for data collection(s) and for giving feedback.*

To facilitate contact with organizations and companies there is an introduction letter available on Athena. The letter is a basic template that may be used to start initiating contacts with potential organization partners. The organizational and psychosocial work environment will early on be investigated and described by taking various theoretical perspectives on individual employee health and wellbeing. These perspectives are also to be informed by information gathered through the qualitative interviews. Subsequently, the organizational and psychosocial work environment is described through the use of a quantitative measurement and comparison to norm group(s). The whole activity should highlight areas of strength or for development, which can be addressed in the final suggestions for interventions to the organization. Important for all parts of the project work is that there is good theoretical and where possible, empirical support for analyses and suggestions for improvement.

Note that it is not possible to highlight ***all*** the aspects that may be relevant to the company or to a problem. The work must be delimited and at the first tutorial, problems and delimitations for how a limited problem can be illuminated are discussed. It is also important to manage the expectations of the chosen organization partner and be clear from very early on that the intention may not be to describe *all* dimensions of the working environment, but rather, illuminate or describe parts of it for a deeper understanding.

The survey
The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (Version III, COPSOQ; https://copsoq.se/) measures various dimensions of the organizational and social work environment. The instrument has wide use and has been translated into many languages. The instrument gathers information about dimensions such as work demands, how work is organized, how

individuals collaborate regarding work and employees' health and well-being. Information is always collected anonymously.

Most useful, the instrument has various norms available which allows for comparison with specific occupational groups. As such, the instrument can be applied as part of work environment risk assessment and organizational development. In this course, the aim is to describe the organizational and psychosocial work environment, and give suggestions for interventions that are connected to relevant aspects of the organizational and psychosocial work environment, or intervention guidelines that have empirical support.

What kind of organization?
The organization should be large enough to make it meaningful to highlight the dimensions that the COPSOQ instrument covers (for guidelines, see https://copsoq.se). A rule of thumb is that it must be a large enough work organization with different functions, groups or departments that need to be coordinated and managed. There is no absolute number, but feedback for groups of less than 10 may for example be problematic and is not recommended. In this course, 10 should be seen as the absolute minimum number of acceptable participants. However, this number should also be read together with the guidelines on *ethics*, *response rate* and *representativeness* (see guidelines in the link above). If you plan to do any statistical analysis (for example, group comparisons, correlations, regression), the assumptions of the statistical technique need to be adhered to. These are not covered during this course, but in general it would imply many more participants.
It is also possible to carry out the project within a part of a larger organization, such as for example a production unit within a larger company, or a specific department in a hospital. It is also recommended that there should be some formal relationship between the organization and its employees – for example, that they earn a salary. In other words, an organization where individuals do volunteer work on a part-time basis is not well suited for studying organizational dynamics as it is understood and taught in this course.

The project must have practical relevance. The project aims to identify the most important aspects of the organizational and psychosocial work environment under investigation and suggesting (an) intervention(s) to maintain strengths, solve problems, or start improving weaker aspects. The project should be carried out as an empirical study in a company or in an organization to give suggestions on how the psychosocial working environment can be improved.

How the work is divided between individuals and teams
The project work is presented in an organizational report consisting of a description of the work environment, as defined by the organization (or their representative(s)), and the team themselves, identified during the study visit and a first data collection based on qualitative interviews. In collaboration with the organization, the students then delimit the problem. Individually, students write a theoretical analysis of the problem – this forms part of the individual examination (*Individual Report 1*). Thereafter, the students create a joint, team agreed upon understanding of the organizational and psychosocial work environment to subsequently investigate. The chosen dimensions of the work environment are investigated (reported, compared and discussed) through the empirical data.

Following the initial, qualitative work to investigate and describe the organizational and psychosocial work environment, the group work will also add data of a quantitative nature. The practical work of gathering data to highlight the relevant and important dimensions of

the psychosocial work environment is done with the help of a standardized survey – the COPSOQ. Results from the survey data-collection allow comparison of the chosen partner organization with a norm group. The comparison with the norm group should highlight aspects of the work environment in which the organization is performing well and are acceptable (compare favorably or are in line with the norm group). It should also highlight areas within the psychosocial work environment which the organization may wish to improve upon (compares unfavorably to the norm group).

Those individual employees who will be invited to participate in interviews and/or complete the COPSOQ survey are determined in consultation with the organization's management, or by the designated contact person, and also the supervisor (*handledare*). The principle for selection is that the persons are deemed to be able to provide material information on the relevant and identified issues.

After qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (reported in the *method* and *result* section of the organizational report), the team presents the results to their client. In order to give suggestions for intervention, the results of the report need to be discussed with the client in order to prioritize. Following this, the project can proceed and the team can start to formulate their suggested intervention(s). Concurrently, an individual report (*Individual Report 2*) in the form of a typical *Discussion* is developed. In terms of the project work, two organizational visits are therefore envisioned at this stage of the project work: one to test and agree the *results* of the investigation with the participating organization, and a second to give feedback on possible interventions, based on the agreed-upon results.

The organizational report developed by the team should ultimately give suggestions for interventions to maintain or improve the organizational and psychosocial work environment. The proposals that are finally given should be well-founded, empirically-supported, and be sharp and concise in the sense that they should give concrete guidance on what needs to be *done* to develop the business or improve identified shortcomings. A useful tip here is to also search the literature on interventions *as work progresses throughout the project*. If deemed necessary, the supervisor may recommend a new literature search focused only on the intervention literature at this stage of the project. The work must have a practical benefit and will be assessed on the basis of this criterion for quality. The organizational report should also be presented to the client – either in report form or verbally.

The team compiles a presentation of the entire project work and conducts a general rehearsal (*general repetition (Genrep)*) at a seminar *before* the final feedback to the organization. Teams will be assigned to different sessions with different examiners who chair each session. All teams are expected to attend the entire day and also provide feedback to other teams. The presentation should be a PowerPoint presentation of approximately 20 - 25 minutes, followed by about 20 - 25 minutes time (45 minutes total) for questions from the other teams and the examiner(s), which are answered by the team. *Teams are required to make use of their full allocated time!*

The presentation should be designed so that it is addressed to the company (not other students on the course) and focus on results and proposals for organizational change and intervention(s). Feedback can be given on content and performance. The students finally carry out a consultative effort in the form of a longer and qualified feedback to the organization of the recommendations for intervention. The idea is that this will begin work on

developing or changing relevant aspects of the work environment, with the help of proposed interventions.

The organizational report content should outline the purpose of the report, a description of the organization, a description of the problem, a method-section, a results-section and recommendations to the organization in the form of suggested intervention(s). All these parts are deemed necessary and must be included in the final report.

Teaching methods
During the course a lecture series is given, the purpose of which is to explain theories and concepts and to broaden the understanding of the literature by linking to other current research and practice in the field. The lectures run parallel to the individual- and team-work.

The project work during the course is carried out under supervision. During the supervision, the collaboration will be the subject of discussion in order to streamline the work, and to strengthen the students' motivation and job satisfaction. The teams book time for four scheduled mandatory tutorials with their supervisor. Prior to each tutorial occasion, a draft of the various parts of the report is submitted and feedback is provided during the tutorial occasion, or by email/the course website. Where possible, and if feedback is provided before the supervision meeting, the students are expected to have read this *before* the supervision, as preparation. Experience shows that the teams need support during the work and the supervisor is available for a limited number of hours per team (4 hours total) for the *entire* project work (including reading and feedback).

Course Requirements
Teaching is aimed at individual development and development of consultative skills in team work. Teaching includes some compulsory lectures. Teaching for the teamwork is mostly done during group-supervision. In support of the consultative work, lectures are given in methodology and relevant literature on the subject. The course includes contact with and tasks assigned to external organizations, initiated by the students, and where the students must act in a professional manner based on good practice in consultative work. In case of absence on compulsory elements of the course, opportunities for completion, its form and scope are assessed in each individual case.

Course requirements / compulsory parts:
a) attendance at the course compulsory lectures
b) Group submission of written PM before stated end times
c) Group verbal presentation of the PM at a seminar
d) Attendance at and participation in seminars
e) Participation in team work and engagement in consultative work with the organization, in order to meet b) and c) above

Compensation via written assignment(s) can be given in the absence of (a) or (d). The possibility of such compensation is assessed by the course responsible teacher. Compensation information must be submitted to the course coordinator according to the appointed deadline. If the student does not submit a compensation assignment in time, the student must redo this course part in the next course session.

The teaching can be done in both English and Swedish. In order to complete the course, it is required that all the course requirements are met (see above), and approved results are obtained on both parts of the examination.

Examination
The course is examined by:
a) An individual written exam with focus on identifying and describing prominent variables of interest in the organizational and psychosocial work environment.
b) An individual written report on completed consultative work, including a discussion of the methods and results of the group report, and a reflection.

The two individual tasks are scored each with 0-5 points. When summing these two (where at least 1 point is required for each one passed), 2 points corresponds to the grade E, 3-4 points the grade D, 5-6 points the grade C, 7-8 points the grade B and 9-10 points grade A.
On the examinations of teamwork, the grade is passed/failed.

If the student has a certificate from Stockholm University with a recommendation for special support, the examiner is entitled to give a customized examination or let the student complete the examination in an alternative manner.

Grading scale

Grading of individual written work takes place according to a goal-related seven-point grading scale:
A = Excellent (5 points)
B = Very good (4 points)
C = Good (3 points)
D = Satisfactory (2 points)
E = Enough (1 point)
Fail grades
Fx = Fail, some more work is needed because learning objectives have not been met
F = Fail, new examination required

Grading criteria
Detailed information on the grading criteria for individual work is included in this course guide (see below).

Final grade
To obtain an approved final grade for the course, a minimum grade of E (or 1 point) is required for both the individually written reports. In addition, all required parts of the course must be approved.

Failure
For each course occasion, at least three examination opportunities must normally be offered within one year. Students with the lowest grade E may not undergo a re-examination for higher grades. Students who have failed twice during the course or part of the course have the right to request that another teacher be appointed to determine the grade of the course. The request for this can be made to the department board or the official appointed by the board.

Complementary information
Complementing the grade Fx up to the approved grade is allowed if the student is close to the limit for approval in the examination tasks. Completion must be received within the time specified by the teacher responsible for the course. If the student does not submit a supplementary assignment in time, the student must redo this course part in the next course opportunity.

Individual written examinations/reports

Individual report 1
The examination takes the form of an individual written report. Detailed instructions for this report are provided separately through the course website (Athena). The report is assessed according to the degree of independent problematization and in-depth study. Results on this report provide the basis for grades on the seven-level goal-related scale according to the listed below criteria.

Individual report 2
In parallel with the teamwork, students also develop an individual report, dealing with the discussion and theoretical integration of the results. This individual report is based on the results of the group work, but is an individual interpretation of said results. Detailed instructions for this individual report are provided separately through the course website (Athena).

The individual reports are assessed using the following criteria:

Ratings	Criteria
A. *Excellent* (5 points)	The student can independently connect central concepts, theories and models to the case. Alternative models and theories to explain different variables in the psychosocial work environment are described, compared and discussed. The student argues and discusses independently in relation to the course literature, and integrates in a meritorious manner relevant principles and problematizations on an overall theoretical plan. Concepts are defined and boundaries are theoretically and practically justified on the basis of the empirical literature and the case. The student describes the relationships between different variables and the psychological reasons why these relationships exist.
B. *Very good* (4 points)	The student can, in his or her own words, account for differences and similarities between central concepts, theories and models, and reasoning about the relevance of the central concepts, shortcomings and validity/relevance in connection with the case. Alternative models and theories to explain different variables in the psychosocial work environment are described, compared and discussed. Concepts are defined and boundaries are motivated theoretically or practically based on the empirical literature and the case. The student explains the relationship and clarifies in general terms why the connections exist.
C. *Good* (3 points)	The student can, with his or her own words, describe differences between central concepts, theories and models, and apply central concepts to parts or aspects of the case. Some alternative models and theories for explaining different variables in the psychosocial work environment are described, compared and discussed. Concepts are defined and boundaries are theoretically justified. The student describes the relationships between essential variables.
D. *Satisfactory* (2 points)	The student can account for central concepts, theories and models linked to some aspects of the case. Some alternative models and theories for explaining different variables in the psychosocial work environment are described in their main features, and delimitations are justified. Concepts are defined. The student can describe certain relationships between variables.

E. *Enough* (1 point)	The student can define central concepts and describe the main features of relevant theories and models linked to some aspects of the case. Some alternative models and theories for explaining variables in the psychosocial work environment are described in their main features and delimitations are justified. Concepts are defined. The student can describe certain relationships.
Fx. *Additional information is required*	Complementary work is required in some sub-aspect in order for the expected study results to have been achieved. Other aspects meet the requirements for at least grade E.
F. *Insufficient*	The expected study results have not been achieved.

Examination of the project work

On the group report, the same requirements are placed on content and form as on a customary academic report within psychology, i.e. **APA format** is required. The report content should outline the purpose of the report, a description of the organization, a description of the problem, a method-section, a results-section and recommendations to the organization in the form of suggested intervention(s).
The *presentation* of the organizational work is assessed by the examiner at the General Repetition (*GenRep*).

All team work is assessed as G/U (*godkänd* eller *underkänd*). In this case, U may also be deemed equivalent to Fx, in which case the relevant examiner will outline what additional work is required in order to meet approval.

Plagiarism, cheating and unauthorized cooperation
As part of your responsibility as a student, you must know the rules that exist for examination. Detailed information can be found both at the department's and Stockholm University's website www.su.se/regelboken. Teachers are obliged to report suspicion of cheating and plagiarism to the principal and the disciplinary committee. Plagiarism and cheating are always disciplinary matters and can lead to suspension. An example of plagiarism is to write a text in a verbatim or almost verbatim manner (applies to single sentences) and not to indicate where this comes from. This also applies to texts you have previously written (self-plagiarism). For example, cheating is counted as having access to unauthorized means, such as mobile phone, during examinations. Having study groups together is developing and time-saving, but when it comes to examination tasks, you must be careful to work yourself (unless otherwise clearly stated) in order not to risk it being counted as unauthorized cooperation.

Teachers on the course
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Compulsory literature

NOTE! All literature that has been read during previous Work and Organizational Psychology courses constitutes prior knowledge, and literature from course 24 on semester 7 (Arbete, organisation och grupp, 1: Fördjupning i teori och metod) in particular.

The following book is a good basic reference guide for the consultation process.
Thylefors, I. (red.). (2020). *AO konsulten. En handbook i arbets- och organisationspsykologi.* Natur & Kultur, Stockholm. (319s).

Specific lectures are also based on articles that you find listed below (and on the course website on Athena). This content constitutes necessary *prior knowledge* for the lectures. Please also note that lectures may appear in a different order from term to term in order to fit the schedule.

Kursintro

Lowman, R. L. (2016). *An introduction to Consulting Psychology: Working with Individuals, Groups and Organizations.* Washington, DC: APA. (kapitel 1: The work of consulting psychologists).

Describing the psychosocial work environment / (COPSOQ)

Burr, H., et al. (2019). The third version of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire. *Safety and Health at Work, 10,* 482 – 503.

Multiple resources that you find on the following websites:

- https://copsoq.se/
- https://www.copsoq-network.org/

Intervjuer

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Coughlan, M. (2009, June). Interviewing in qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, *16*(6), 301-314. DOI: 10.12968/ijtr.2009.16.6.42433

Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2021) One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18:3,328-352, DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Mixed Methods approaches in consultation work

Cristina B. Gibson, C. B. Elaboration, generalization, triangulation, and interpretation: On enhancing the value of mixed method research. *Organizational Research Methods, 20*(2), 193 – 223.

Turner, S.F., Cardinal, L.B., & Burton, R.M. (2017). Research design for Mixed Methods: A triangulation-based framework and roadmap. *Organizational Research Methods, 20*(2), 243 – 267.

Arbetsmiljöns betydelse för medarbetare och arbetsgivare

Sverke, M., Falkenberg, H., Kecklund, G., Magnusson Hanson, L., & Lindfors, P. (2016). *Kvinnors och mäns arbetsvillkor – betydelsen av organisatoriska faktorer och psykosocial arbetsmiljö for arbets- och hälsorelaterade utfall. Kunskapssammanställning 2016:2.* Stockholm: Arbetsmiljöverket.

Building the survey

Artologik. (2018) *Manual. Survey & Report.* Version 4.3. Artisan Global Media: Växjö, Sweden.

Berthelsen, H., Westerlund, H., Bergström, G., & Burr, H. (2020). Validation of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire version III and establishment of benchmarks for psychosocial risk management in Sweden. I*nternational Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*, 3179 (22p).

Multiple resources that you find on the following websites:

- https://copsoq.se/
- https://www.copsoq-network.org/

Interventioner i organisationer

Karanika-Murray, M., & Weyman, A. K. (2013). Optimising workplace interventions for health and well-being: A commentary on the limitations of the public health perspective within the workplace health arena. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management, 6*(2), 104 – 117. DOI 10.1108/IJWHM-11-2011-0024

Reference literature

Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2021) One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?, *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18(3)*, 328-352, DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238.

Hasson, H. & von Thiele Schwarz, U. (2017). *Användbar evidens. Om följsamhet och anpassningar.* Stockholm: Natur & Kultur.

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