Stockholms universitet

Dnr SU FV-3287-26

General Syllabus for Doctoral Studies in Sociology

Note that the Swedish version of this document is the officially approved version and should be referred to as the authoritative document if questions arise. This English translation is not official and is provided for informational purposes.

1. Official approval

The general syllabus for doctoral studies in sociology was officially approved by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences at Stockholm University on 2007-05-13 and revised 2026-10-01.

The general syllabus is valid from 2027-01-01.

2. Subject description

Sociology is the science of human social behavior and the relationship between individuals and society. In other words, social processes are studied at the individual, group and societal levels in sociology. Special emphasis is placed on understanding and explaining individual's actions and social identities, group relationships and processes, social stratification and social system processes, and cultural structures and processes characterizing modern societies. Sociology involves studies of societies and social action in a very broad sense, i.e. there is a diversity of perspectives but no dominant theory or defined empirical field.

Typical sociological subject areas are power, social stratification, organization, culture, social movements, racism, sexism, conflicts, marginalization, alienation and social norms. Sociologists also study politics and explain how ethnic conflicts arise, investigate how people are affected by work and economy, how people's health and working conditions are affected by organizational structures or explore religion in order to understand how identities and groups are formed. In other words, Sociology's ambition is to emphasize the importance of social processes and interpersonal relations in the analysis of political, economic, cultural, legal and media processes, regardless of whether the object is society as a whole, or the life contexts of individuals.

3. Programme objectives

Doctoral studies in sociology can be concluded with a licentiate or doctoral degree.

A doctoral student in sociology can take a licentiate degree as a stage in the doctoral programme. The licentiate degree is not compulsory for a doctorate in sociology.

Stockholms universitet

3.1 Degree of Doctor

A Degree of Doctor is awarded when the doctoral student has completed a doctoral programme worth 240 higher education credits.

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must:

- demonstrate broad knowledge of sociology and a systematic understanding of the field of research, together with deep and current specialist knowledge in a defined part of the field of research;
- demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.

Skills and abilities

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must demonstrate:

- an ability to engage in scholarly analysis and synthesis, as well as in independent, critical review and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues, and situations,
- an ability to identify and formulate research questions critically, independently, creatively, and with scholarly precision; to plan and conduct research and other advanced tasks using appropriate methods within specified time limits; and to review and evaluate such work;
- an ability to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge through their own research in a thesis;
- an ability, in both national and international contexts, orally and in writing, to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in dialogue with the scholarly community and society in general;
- an ability to identify needs for further knowledge;
- the potential to contribute to social development and support the learning of others, both in the fields of research and education and in other qualified professional contexts.

Judgement and approach

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must demonstrate:

- intellectual independence and scholarly integrity, as well as an ability to make ethical assessments relating to research;

Stockholms universitet

- a specialized insight into the potential and limitations of research, its role in society, and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

Academic thesis (doctoral dissertation)

A Degree of Doctor is awarded when the doctoral student has received a passing grade on an academic thesis (doctoral dissertation) worth at least 120 higher education credits.

3.2 Degree of Licentiate

A Degree of Licentiate is awarded either when the doctoral student has completed an education worth at least 120 higher education credits in a subject at the doctoral level, or when the doctoral student has completed at least 120 higher education credits of a doctoral programme intended to result in a doctoral degree, provided that the higher education institution has decided that such licentiate degrees can be awarded.

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Licentiate, doctoral students must:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the field of research, including current specialist knowledge in a specific area of this subject, as well as specialised knowledge of research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.

Skills and abilities

For a Degree of Licentiate, doctoral students must:

- demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively, and with scholarly precision identify and formulate issues, and to plan and, using appropriate methods, complete a limited research project and other qualified tasks within specified time limits, so as to contribute to the development of knowledge and to evaluate this work;

- demonstrate an ability to present and discuss research and research findings clearly, in dialogue with the scholarly community and society in general, orally and in writing, in both national and international contexts;

- demonstrate the skills required to participate independently in research and development and to work independently in other advanced contexts.

Judgement and approach

Stockholms universitet

For a Degree of Licentiate, doctoral students must:

- demonstrate an ability to make assessments of ethical aspects of their own research;

- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society, and our responsibility for how it is used;

- demonstrate an ability to identify the need for further knowledge and to take responsibility for developing that knowledge.

Academic thesis

In order to obtain a Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student must have received a passing grade on an academic thesis worth at least 60 higher education credits.

4. Prerequisites and entry requirements

4.1 General entry requirements

In order to meet the general entry requirements for doctoral studies, the applicant must have:

1. completed a Master's degree,
2. completed courses equivalent to at least 240 higher education credits (of which 60 credits must be at the Master's level), or
3. have otherwise acquired equivalent knowledge in Sweden or elsewhere.

The Faculty Board of Social Sciences may permit an exemption from the general entry requirements for an individual applicant under special circumstances.

4.2 Specific entry requirements

Besides the general entry requirements, the applicant must have completed at least one independent research project within sociology or a closely related discipline that has resulted in a paper or other written product.

The applicant must also have competence in English. These language skills must include the ability to read, speak, and write in English.

The entry requirements can be fulfilled if the applicant has acquired equivalent competencies, whether in Sweden or abroad.

Potential evaluation of equivalent competencies for entry requirements is carried out by the director of doctoral studies, and the final decision is made by the department head.

Stockholms universitet

5. Announcement and admission procedures

Decisions on admission of applicants for doctoral studies in sociology are taken by the Departmental Board at the Department of Sociology. The Department Board may not delegate decisions on admission. The Department Board may only admit applicants who will be employed as doctoral students.

Decisions on admission of applicants for doctoral studies with other financing besides a PhD student position are made by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences. The university may only accept applicants for doctoral studies who are employed as doctoral students. The university may however accept an applicant who has some other form of financing of their studies, if the university's assessment is that the financing is secured for the entire course of study and that the applicant can spend a sufficient proportion of their time on their studies so that they can be completed within four years for a Licentiate degree and eight years for a doctoral degree.

For more information on how exceptions according to Chapter 7, section 37 in the Higher Education Ordinance are applied, applicants are referred to the Faculty of Social Sciences' guidelines for doctoral education (*riktlinjer för utbildning på forskarnivå*).

Doctoral student positions are announced once or twice a year (1 February and/or 1 September). The positions are advertised on the university's recruiting site, on the department's website and via international mailing lists and newsletters. The call for applications clearly states who should be contacted for any questions about the position. The application period is always one month, i.e. applications are accepted until 1 March and 1 October, respectively. When applying, the applicant must enclose: (i) a research plan including subject area and purpose of the thesis, ii) CV and iii) previous writings and other documents that the applicant wishes to submit.

The admission process consists of several steps to give the greatest possible legitimacy and legal certainty. For more detailed information, please refer to the department's website.

5.1 Assessment and selection criteria

An admissions committee appointed by the head of department in consultation with the director of doctoral studies reviews the applications and makes a selection. Selection among applicants who meet the requirements for basic eligibility is made on the basis of their capability to successfully attend the doctoral programme. The selection criteria used in the selection are as follows:

- the quality of the applicant's previous written work and other qualifications
- the originality, feasibility and potential sociological contributions of the research plan
- documented competence in research in sociology or a related discipline
- independence in analysis and execution of previous work

Stockholms universitet

- documented ability to meet stated timelines
- methodological and scientific maturity
- communication and collaboration skills

The admissions process consists of multiple phases to ensure legitimacy and due process. For more detailed information, see the department website.

6. Programme content and structure

The doctoral programme in sociology consists of 75 higher education credits earned through courses and a thesis comprising 165 credits. 30 higher education credits are the equivalent of one term of full-time studies.

The programme is laid out so that the doctoral studies require four academic years for doctoral students who work full time on their doctoral education. Therefore it is assumed that a doctoral student will focus entirely on this programme and take advantage of coursework and supervision in an efficient way. Upon request a doctoral student can be employed part time with a minimum of 50 percent of full time, i.e., eight years.

The study period for achieving a doctoral degree is four years of full-time study, and the scope is 240 higher education credits. It is possible to take a licentiate degree after 120 higher education credits, of which 60 higher education credits shall consist of courses and 60 higher education credits from a scientific work. A licentiate degree can be extended to a doctoral degree by taking additional course credits and by extending the licentiate thesis to a doctoral thesis.

All doctoral students admitted to doctoral studies in sociology shall follow the current general syllabus. Any collaborations in the form of cotutelle, individual participation in graduate schools or externally funded projects can only affect individual differences in the education documented in the study plan.

Based on the availability of teaching opportunities, administrative work and research assistantships, students may prolong their doctoral programme by undertaking departmental service, which aims to strengthen the doctoral student.

Details of the study plan are determined by section 6.3 and recorded in the individual study plan.

Stockholms universitet

6.1 Individual study plan

All active doctoral students in sociology must have an individual study plan. The plan is drawn up by the supervisor in consultation with the doctoral student and contains the department's and the doctoral student's commitments, a funding plan and a schedule for the doctoral student's education. The plan is approved by the head of department after consultation with the doctoral student and the supervisor.

The individual study plan is followed up at least once a year in consultation between the doctoral student and their supervisors and revised by the department to the degree required.

In addition, supervisors must conduct an assessment of whether the studies are following the plan once a semester and inform the doctoral student of this assessment. In the case of significant deviations from the individual study plan, the head of department must be informed. Both supervisors and doctoral students have the right to propose changes to the study plan, but decisions on changes to the study plan are made by the head of department. In the case that a doctoral student does not agree with changes in the individual study plan, this should be noted in the individual study plan with an explanation and the student should be notified of the individual study plan that has been signed.

For further details regarding the preparation, management and follow-up of the individual study plan, see Chapter 6, sections 29 and 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance, Regulations for doctoral studies at Stockholm University, the guidelines of the Academic Area for Human Science and the guidelines of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

6.2 Supervision and other resources

At least two supervisors must be appointed for each doctoral student. One of them must be appointed as the main supervisor. At least one supervisor must have undergone supervisor training or be considered to have equivalent competence by the Faculty Board of Social Sciences. All supervisors must hold a doctoral degree or equivalent, and at least one supervisor must have docent competence. The person appointed as the principal supervisor must be employed at the department or, if the department permits, at another department or institute within the faculty. However, at least one supervisor must be employed at the department. Doctoral students are allowed to change supervisor. Requests for change of supervisor must be made to the director of doctoral studies, and supervisors are appointed by the head of department.

In addition to supervision, the department must provide a workplace and the working conditions required for the programme.

Stockholms universitet

The doctoral student also has the right to study and career guidance during the doctoral studies, and the main responsibility for the latter lies on the supervisors.

The doctoral student is entitled to supervision during the doctoral studies as long as the Vice Chancellor, in accordance with Chapter 6, section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance, does not decide otherwise. If a doctoral student to a significant extent does not fulfill their obligations under the individual study plan, the Vice Chancellor may decide that the doctoral student shall no longer be entitled to supervision and other resources. Before such a decision is made, the doctoral student and their supervisors must be given the opportunity to comment. The evaluation must be done on the basis of their reports and other inquiries that are available. In the assessment, whether the university has fulfilled its own commitments according to the individual study plan must be considered. The decision must be in writing and justified. Resources may not be cancelled during the time that the doctoral student is employed or receiving an education allowance for doctoral students (Chapter 6, section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

If educational resources have been cancelled in accordance with Chapter 6, section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the doctoral student can appeal to the Vice Chancellor to regain the right to receive supervision and other resources. The doctoral student must then demonstrate additional evidence of progress in their studies that is of considerable quality and scope, or in some other way demonstrate that it is likely that they can complete their remaining tasks according to the individual study plan (Chapter 6, section 31 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

Decisions on the cancellation of resources and decisions to deny requests to reinstate resources in accordance with Chapter 6, section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance can be appealed to the Appeal Board of the University.

For further information regarding supervision and other resources, reference is made to regulations for postgraduate studies at Stockholm University and instructions for individual study plans at the Academic Area for Human Science.

6.3 Courses and examinations

The course part for the licentiate degree and the doctoral degree is 60 and 75 higher education credits, respectively. Courses must be completed before the public defense of the thesis. The department attaches great importance to the fact that the mandatory courses have been selected in a comprehensively manner to represent sociology. The doctoral student's elective courses and reading courses must be chosen in consultation with the supervisors. For doctoral degrees, the following mandatory courses must be taken at either the advanced level or the graduate level:

Stockholms universitet

1. Core concepts in sociological theory or classical sociological theory (7.5 credits)

2. Theoretical approaches to sociological analysis or Modern sociological theory (7.5 credits)

3. Qualitative methods in the social sciences (7.5 credits)

And one of the following two quantitative method courses:

4a. Quantitative methods in the social sciences 1 (7.5 credits)

4b. Quantitative methods in the social sciences 2 (7.5 credits)

The above courses should be taken during the initial five semesters of the doctoral programme. If one or more of them or equivalent courses have been taken before admission to the doctoral programme, they may in some cases be credited (see below under 6.3.1) or replaced by other courses of equivalent scope. The remaining course credits must be divided between elective courses and individual reading courses. For both the licentiate degree and the doctoral degree, a maximum of 7.5/15 higher education credits may consist of reading courses. The content of reading courses is determined by the supervisors. The reading course should contain a general part, and if the student wishes, a specific part with literature related to the thesis.

Courses in university level teaching corresponding to a maximum of 7.5 higher education credits may be included in the doctoral programme, but then the scope of the reading course should be reduced by the corresponding number of higher education credits.

Each course is followed by an individual exam. The examination forms are stated in the course syllabi and can be written and/or oral. Grades on courses that are included in the programme are determined by the examiner. Courses are graded either "fail" or "pass".

Supervisors are not eligible to examine doctoral students. This applies to all courses, including reading courses.

6.3.1 Transferring credits from previous coursework

At the graduate level in sociology it is possible to credit a maximum of 30 credits from courses in sociology at the advanced level that were taken before admission to doctoral studies. Crediting courses from previous coursework should be done at the beginning of the doctoral programme. When crediting courses from studies prior to admission, the doctoral time is automatically shortened according to the principle of one week per 1.5 higher education credits accredited. Decisions on credit transfer are made by the director of doctoral studies.

It is also possible to include courses taken during the doctoral period that are arranged by another department or institution. In order for a course at another university to be included in

Stockholms universitet

the doctoral programme, a written application from the supervisor and doctoral student is required that includes the name of the course in Swedish and/or English and the number of higher education credits and level, i.e. advanced level or graduate level. An application should be made to the director of doctoral studies, who makes the decision.

6.3.2 Other mandatory elements

The doctoral programme in sociology contains three mandatory seminars: i) start-up seminar, ii) half-time seminar and iii) final seminar. The seminars give the doctoral student experience with presenting their research, but are primarily important as check points for assuring the quality of the doctoral student's thesis work, assessing the possibility of achieving the degree objectives and, if necessary, taking measures to develop training and research as needed. It is the supervisor's responsibility to plan and book the seminars in consultation with the doctoral student and the director of doctoral studies. The doctoral students are also expected to attend at least half of the doctoral seminars that are given at the department during their doctoral period. Below follows a brief description of the three types of seminars.

The start-up seminar will take place within one year after commencing doctoral studies, and the aim is for the doctoral student to present the dissertation plan.

The half-time seminar will take place no later than the fifth semester of the doctoral programme. The purpose is to present the first article or chapter in the thesis, and describe how this fits in with the overall thesis plan.

The final seminar should normally take place no later than 6 months before the planned public defense. The purpose is to review the majority of the dissertation and the “kappa”/ introduction chapter. The drafts must be at a level corresponding to at least 80% of the final thesis manuscript.

6.4 Doctoral thesis and public defense

For a doctoral degree, an approved dissertation is needed consisting of an independent work within the field of sociology, which corresponds to 165 higher education credits. The work is planned in consultation with the supervisors.

A doctoral dissertation in sociology can be either a monograph or a number of compiled articles (compilation thesis). Requirements for the quality and scope of the research effort do not differ between the two forms. A compilation thesis must contain an introductory kappa and a number of articles, each of which must have a quality and scope that corresponds to an article that could be approved in a referee assessment for an international scientific journal. In cases where other than the doctoral student contributed to one or more articles, the doctoral student's contribution

Stockholms universitet

must be clearly stated. Depending on the number of co-authored articles, a summary thesis usually consists of three to five articles.

If it is not evident from any of the other parts of the thesis, the kappa in a compilation thesis or the introduction chapter in a monograph:

- Systematically places the thesis in a broader sociological context and the research field to which the thesis contributes.
- Identifies the contribution of the thesis to the development of knowledge in the research field, as well as what additional knowledge is needed within this field.
- Relates the thesis method(s) to scientific methodology in general and commonly used methods in the research field.
- Makes relevant assessments related to research ethics for the thesis.

The doctoral thesis can be written in English or Swedish, and dissertations written in Swedish must have a summary in English and vice versa.

The dissertation must be defended orally in a public defense that can be held in Swedish or English. The opponent and grading committee members may participate digitally. The doctoral thesis is assessed with either a grade of fail or pass by a grading committee that is composed specifically for each dissertation. The grading takes into account both the content of the dissertation and the public defense of the dissertation.

The opponent and grading committee for the public defense are appointed by the board of the faculty of social sciences on the proposal of the supervisors in consultation with the head of department. The composition of the grading committee and other aspects of the public defense are in accordance with established guidelines regarding public defense of the faculty of social sciences.

6.5 Licentiate thesis and licentiate seminar

The Licentiate degree requires an approved licentiate thesis corresponding to 60 higher education credits, which may consist of one or more articles with the same quality requirements as above.

The licentiate thesis is examined at a seminar during a semester by an opponent with at least a doctoral degree who has good knowledge of the field and methods that are essential for the thesis. The thesis must have been available at the department and university library at least three weeks before the seminar takes place.

For the examiner or the examining committee's composition, see established guidelines for the licentiate seminar at Stockholm University.

Stockholms universitet

The opponent and examiner or examining committee is appointed by the department board/ head of department on a proposal from the professor working most closely with the topic. The licentiate thesis is assessed with either a fail or pass grade.

7. Transition rules

Doctoral students who have been accepted before this general study plan has been approved can request that they be transferred to this new study plan after consultation with the supervisor and the director of doctoral studies. The request must be made to the director of doctoral studies. The individual study plan should then be updated.

8. Other

For other issues, refer to the current legislation, guidelines at Stockholm University and the Faculty of Social Sciences and locally applied regulations.