



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

UTBVET 2022/78

# General Syllabus for Doctoral Studies in Curriculum Studies

Revised by the Faculty of Educational  
Sciences Faculty Board, 1 June 2023  
Replaces the previous syllabus UTBVET 2022/78  
adopted 3 February 2022



## 1 Intended outcomes

According to the System of Qualifications in the Higher Education Ordinance<sup>1</sup>, for a doctoral degree, the doctoral student must:

- demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of curriculum studies as well as advanced and up-to-date specialised knowledge in a limited area of curriculum studies,
- demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and with methods in curriculum studies in particular,
- demonstrate a capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis, and for autonomous and critical review and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues and situations,
- 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 by means of a dissertation their ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through their 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,
- 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,

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 2 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance. Quotations from the Higher Education Ordinance (*Högskoleförordning*, SFS 1993:100) are taken from the translation on the website of the Swedish Higher Education Authority (<https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/>), with minor adaptations.



- 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.

Doctoral studies in curriculum studies are intended to lead to a degree of doctor of philosophy, but can also include, or conclude with, a degree of licentiate of philosophy.

According to the System of Qualifications in the Higher Education Ordinance, for a licentiate degree, the licentiate student must:

- 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.
- 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.



## **2 Description of the field**

Curriculum studies as a field of research and area of knowledge deals with matters relating to the content of education and teaching. The subject of curriculum studies is deeply rooted in both scientific traditions and teaching practices. The research questions which constitute the core of curriculum studies arise at the meeting point between specific subject-matter and the teaching and learning of that subject-matter which takes place under some form of activity. It is therefore of interest to study, for example, the content of the teaching and what justifies the selection of that content, who the teaching is aimed at and how their learning process works, how the subject-material is handled in the teaching and who has power over the selection process. Curriculum studies as a field of research and area of knowledge therefore deals with questions found at the point of intersection between an area of activity or knowledge, and education, teaching, learning and socialisation, with regard to both cognitive and normative content.

## **3 Entry requirements**

For admission to doctoral studies, an applicant must

1. meet the general entry requirements and the specific entry requirements that the Faculty Board may have prescribed, and
2. be considered in other respects to have the ability required to benefit from their studies (cf. HF Chapter 7, Section 35).<sup>2</sup>

### **3.1 General entry requirements**

A person meets the general entry requirements for third-cycle courses and study programmes if they have

1. been awarded a second-cycle qualification,
2. satisfied the requirements for courses comprising at least 240 credits of which at least 60 credits were awarded in the second cycle including at least 15 credits for a degree project, or
3. 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. (HF Chapter 7, Section 39). This decision may not be delegated.

The same assessment criteria must be applied irrespective of form of funding.

### **3.2 Specific entry requirements**

To meet the specific entry requirements for admission to doctoral studies in

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<sup>2</sup> See Section 10 of this document for a list of references.



curriculum studies, applicants must have successfully completed courses in education at no lower than Bachelor's level including at least 90 credits in curriculum studies. Applicants who have acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad also meet the specific entry requirements.

The same assessment criteria must be applied irrespective of form of funding.

## **4 Admission and selection**

### **4.1 Information and call for applications**

A call for applications for places in doctoral studies is posted on the Department of Education website and on the Uppsala University website at least three weeks before the deadline for applications. The department website also contains information about admission procedures for doctoral studies, the time when places are advertised, documents to be appended to applications, the structure of the programme and forms of funding.

### **4.2 Admission**

Admission to doctoral studies and appointment to doctoral studentships follow an open and competitive process. Normally admissions take place once a year. Applications for admission are to be addressed to the Faculty of Educational Sciences Faculty Board but submitted to the Head of the Department of Education.

The Faculty Board may only admit applicants to doctoral studies for whom a funding plan covering the entire duration of their studies is in place, usually through appointment to a doctoral studentship. However, the Faculty Board may admit applicants who have some other form of funding for their studies if the Board considers that this funding can be guaranteed during the entire period of study and that applicants can devote enough time to their studies to enable their completion within four years in the case of a licentiate degree or eight years in the case of a doctorate (see HF Chapter 7, Section 36).

The Faculty of Educational Sciences Faculty Board has delegated to the Head of the Department of Education the authority to decide on admission to doctoral studies. Admission decisions are normally made after selection and ranking by an assessment committee appointed by the body of supervisors in curriculum studies.

This does not apply to admission to doctoral studies of 120 credits concluding with a licentiate degree. In these cases, admission decisions are



taken by the Faculty Board after considering a selection and ranking as described above.

### **4.3 Selection**

Selection between applicants who meet the entry requirements must be made based on their potential to benefit from doctoral studies in curriculum studies. Interviews may be held with the applicants.

In the selection process, the applicant's provisional thesis plan and previously completed independent projects (particularly Bachelor's and Master's degree projects) are reviewed with respect to independence, methodological clarity and theoretical awareness, analytical and stylistic stringency, and critical approach. A degree in education or experience of educational professional practice is advantageous.

In addition, consideration is given to the availability of a supervisor at the department with a research specialisation that is relevant to the thesis topic proposed in the application. One necessary condition is that the department can offer a good research environment and stimulating supervision for the doctoral project concerned.

However, during selection, the fact that an applicant is considered eligible for credit for previous studies or for professional or vocational experience must not in itself give that applicant priority over other applicants (see HF Chapter 7, Section 41).

## **5 Content and structure**

### **5.1 Structure**

Doctoral studies in curriculum studies lead to a doctoral degree (PhD) or a licentiate degree. The programme comprises 240 credits for the doctoral degree and 120 credits for the licentiate degree. A doctoral student admitted for doctoral studies leading to a doctoral degree may, if they wish, take a licentiate degree as an intermediate step.

Doctoral studies in curriculum studies leading to a doctoral degree comprise an effective period of four years of studies and consist of coursework comprising 75 credits and a doctoral thesis comprising 165 credits.

Doctoral studies in curriculum studies leading to a licentiate degree comprise an effective period of two years of studies and consist of coursework comprising 37.5 credits and a licentiate thesis comprising 82.5 credits.



Coursework and work on the thesis are to be pursued in parallel. Teaching in doctoral studies in curriculum studies takes the form of supervision, seminars and courses.

Supervision and other educational elements relating to research ethics in general, and to good research practice and ethical review in particular, must develop the ability of doctoral students to take responsibility for compliance with good research practice in their research. The requisite ethical clearance must be obtained for the research conducted, as required by law (RUF Chapter 8).

## 5.2 Supervision

For each doctoral student, at least two supervisors must be appointed, one of whom is principal supervisor with main responsibility for the student's studies, including work on the thesis. At least one of the supervisors must be an employee or adjunct employee of Uppsala University. The supervisors must hold a doctorate or equivalent degree and at least one of the supervisors must be qualified as a docent (RUF Chapter 8).

Doctoral students are entitled to supervision during their studies unless the Vice-Chancellor has decided otherwise by virtue of the Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 30. A doctoral student who so requests must be allowed to change supervisor (see HF Chapter 6, Section 28).

Principal supervisors must undertake three weeks of training for supervisors in the form of the course given at the University's Unit for Academic Teaching and Learning, or an equivalent course, during their first year as supervisor at the latest.

## 5.3 Individual study plan

An individual study plan must be established for each doctoral student. The individual study plan must contain a timetable for the doctoral student's studies, information about the organisation of the doctoral student's supervision, a funding plan, a description of the other undertakings made by the doctoral student, the Faculty Board and the department during the period of studies, and any other details needed to enable the studies to be pursued effectively and efficiently.

The study plan must be approved by the head of department after consultation with the supervisor and the doctoral student. Both deviations from the plan and intermediate targets reached are to be documented in the individual study plan on an ongoing basis.

The individual study plan is subject to regular follow-up and can be revised in consultation with the doctoral student and the supervisor (HF Chapter 6, Section 29). The period of study may only be extended if there are special



grounds for doing so. Such grounds include leave of absence because of illness, for military service or for an elected position in a trade union or student organisation, or parental leave. The study plan must be approved by the head of department or another person in a position of responsibility after consultation with the supervisor and the doctoral student (RUF Chapter 5).

## **6 Courses**

Doctoral studies in curriculum studies leading to a doctoral degree include coursework comprising 75 credits, 30 credits of which are compulsory.

The following courses are compulsory:

- Didactics: Research traditions in Curriculum Studies and Teaching and Learning (15 credits)
- Methodologies in Didactic Research (15 credits)

The remaining courses are chosen in consultation with the principal supervisor.

Doctoral studies leading to a licentiate degree include coursework comprising 37.5 credits. Of these, 22.5 credits are compulsory (either Didactics: Research traditions in Curriculum Studies and Teaching and Learning, 15 credits, and Methodologies in Didactic Research, 7.5 credits, or Methodologies in Didactic Research, 15 credits, and Didactics: Research traditions in Curriculum Studies and Teaching and Learning 7.5 credits). The remaining courses are chosen in consultation with the principal supervisor.

After consultation with and approval from the principal supervisor, the coursework can include courses taken at another department or another higher education institution.

### **6.1 Examinations**

Courses are assessed by oral or written examination by agreement with the course director or principal supervisor. Courses can also be assessed in stages by assessment seminars or similar assessments. Grades are determined by a teacher specially appointed by the head of department (the examiner) (HF Chapter 6, Section 32). Examinations are assessed with one of two grades: pass or fail (AFUU Section 5).





## **7 Thesis and public defence**

### **7.1 Thesis**

The doctoral thesis may take the form of either a single, cohesive academic work (a monograph thesis) or a brief summary (introductory chapter) of academic papers that the doctoral student has written alone or jointly with some other person or persons (a compilation thesis).

The doctoral thesis or, where relevant, the academic papers/articles, must be of a quality that meets the requirements for publication in a scholarly forum.

Theses and essays included in compilation theses that have multiple authors can only be counted towards a licentiate degree or a doctoral degree if it is possible to distinguish the contributions of the individual defending the thesis (AFUU Section 5).

A doctoral thesis can include a previously assessed licentiate thesis, a part of such a thesis or revised parts of a licentiate thesis. When parts of the licentiate thesis are included in the doctoral thesis, these are to be treated as part of the doctoral thesis and must be defended at the public defence of the doctoral thesis.

The topic and language of the thesis are to be decided in consultation with the supervisors. Every doctoral thesis must contain a summary in English, if the thesis is written in Swedish, or in Swedish if the thesis is written in English. If the doctoral thesis is written in a third language, there must be both a summary in English and a summary in Swedish. Every thesis must also be accompanied by a brief abstract in English.

The thesis manuscript must be presented at one or more research seminars or be subjected to equivalent review under the aegis of the department. State funding for the printing of doctoral theses is available as specified in regulations laid down by the Faculty Board. This also applies, where relevant, to licentiate theses.

### **7.2 Public defence**

The doctoral thesis must be defended orally in public. The time and place of the defence are to be determined by the Dean. Doctoral defences and licentiate seminars may take place during the semester and during the summer recess, with the exception of the period 15 June to 15 August (RUF Chapter 11).



The doctoral defence must be publicly announced in good time (at least three weeks) by electronic posting. The period from 15 June until 15 August may not be counted as part of the period of availability. Shorter periods of availability may be granted by the Dean, but only in exceptional circumstances (cf. RUF Chapter 9).

At the time of posting, the doctoral thesis must be available at the University in a sufficient number of copies to enable a satisfactory examination of the thesis to be made at the defence.

The doctoral defence is to be led by a chair. There must be an external reviewer (opponent) at the defence. The chair of the defence, the external reviewer and the examining committee are decided by the Dean following application.

The examining committee must consist of three members, most of whom must be taken from outside the department to which the doctoral student belongs and at least one of whom must come from another higher education institution. In addition, an external reserve should be appointed. The members of the examining committee should normally represent different legal genders. A person who has been a supervisor of the doctoral student may not be on the committee. The external reviewer and supervisors may participate in the examining committee's deliberations but may not be present when the decision is taken (AFFU Section 5 and the Instructions for the Production of Doctoral and Licentiate Theses).

The grade for the thesis is decided by the examining committee and may be either pass or fail. The examining committee is quorate when all members are present. The opinion on which the majority agrees will constitute the committee's decision. When deciding on the grade, the committee must consider the contents of the thesis and the defence of the thesis (AFUU Section 5).

All course credits should be completed before the doctoral defence takes place.

Over and beyond this, the Faculty Board can adopt additional rules and guidelines concerning the public defence of doctoral theses.

### **7.3 Licentiate seminar**

The licentiate thesis must be orally defended at a public seminar. The time and venue for the seminar are determined by the head of department. The thesis must be available for three weeks before it is defended. Notice of the public discussion of the thesis must be given at least three weeks in advance at the home department.



In the case of licentiate theses written by licentiate students admitted with a licentiate degree as the final objective, notification of submission of the thesis should be in electronic format (RUF Chapter 9). Licentiate theses are assessed with one of two grades: pass or fail. When deciding on the grade, consideration must be given to the quality of the thesis and its defence (Instructions for the Production of Doctoral and Licentiate Theses). The grade is determined by an examining committee appointed by the head of department.

The examining committee must consist of three people. The licentiate thesis can be published in one of the department's scholarly series. A publication grant is available (Instructions for the Production of Doctoral and Licentiate Theses).

## **8 Degree**

A doctoral degree in curriculum studies is attained when the doctoral student has completed doctoral studies comprising 240 credits in curriculum studies, receiving a passing grade on the examinations included in the programme, and has written and publicly defended a doctoral thesis, receiving a passing grade from the examining committee.

A licentiate degree in curriculum studies is attained when the licentiate student has completed doctoral studies comprising 120 credits in curriculum studies, receiving a passing grade on the examinations included in the programme, and has written a licentiate thesis and defended it at a seminar, receiving a passing grade.

A degree certificate is issued by the Vice-Chancellor upon application to the Graduation Office.

## **9 Entry into force and transitional provisions**

This syllabus comes into effect on 1 June 2023. Previous syllabi cease to apply to doctoral students admitted for doctoral studies after that date. Doctoral students admitted before that date can choose either to follow the syllabus previously in effect or transfer to the present syllabus. This is specified in the individual study plan.

## **10 Other remarks**

- HF: Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100), Chapter 5 (Employment of doctoral students), Chapter 6 (Courses and study programmes) and Chapter 7 (Admission to courses and study programmes)
- RUF: Guidelines for Doctoral Studies at Uppsala University (UFV 2022/728)
- AFUU: Admission and Grading Regulations for Doctoral Studies at Uppsala University (UFV 2022/729)



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- Instructions for the Production of Doctoral and Licentiate Theses (UTBVET 2015/19)
- Other guidelines and rules concerning doctoral studies adopted by the Faculty of Educational Sciences Faculty Board