

# **PhD studies in Geography with emphasis on human geography: Instructions**

## **Introduction**

This document provides supplementary guidance to PhD studies in geography with emphasis on human geography at Stockholm University. The study plan is approved by the Faculty of Social Sciences and is the central governing document for the postgraduate studies. The instructions are also approved by the Department of Human Geography.

General information about PhD studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences is available in the faculty's student handbook and in the student handbook by The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education.

## **Admissions**

### **Application for postgraduate studies**

Admission to the PhD level is restrictive and limited by financial and tutoring resources. Depending on the available resources, announcements of postgraduate positions are made on June 1 and January 15. Questions concerning the application should be made to the director of studies in charge of courses at the PhD level.

Application should contain a CV (Curriculum Vitae, list of qualifications), and a letter of intent describing why you are applying for postgraduate studies, the research problem the applicant is interested in solving, and which research profile the candidate considers appropriate. It is also important to include independent essays written at the advanced level (alternatively, C- and D- level if you graduated before 1 July 2007). The application must also include an excerpt from LADOK and other certificates and documents relevant to the assessment of your qualifications.

### **Funding and Employment**

Only PhD students with full funding may be accepted. This means that announcements for PhD positions are made when research funds are available. In other words, finance is possible either by faculty funds through the university or through external funding agencies such as Formas, FAS or SIDA.

The department's policy is not to use educational grants as funding for PhD studies, instead PhD funding is used to finance postgraduate positions. 20% of

the employment may consist of departmental work. All PhD students are covered by a collective agreement and have a wage progress according to the Swedish labour legislation. At the commencement of employment the PhD student receives a starting salary. When at least 50 percent of the requirement towards a PhD exam is attained or a licentiate examination is passed the PhD student is transferred to a higher wage level. Normally this is achieved when the PhD student is halfway towards a PhD exam. When at least 80 percent of the requirements towards a PhD exam is achieved the PhD student is transferred to the last step of the wage ladder. If the PhD student does not reach the 80 percent level when there is 12 months left of the study period it is possible that the employer together with the supervisor estimates that 80% will be achieved within the next 6 months and that the PhD student is entitled to reach the last wage level.

PhD studies follow an individual curriculum which is updated annually by the student and the supervisor. This curriculum also has to be approved by the director of studies and the Prefect of The Human Geography Department. The curriculum is also an agreement about the extent to which the remaining time is covered by funding. The individual curriculum is also checked against the results from yearly discussions on progress between the student and the person in charge of the PhD studies at the department.

Each PhD student has the right to her or his own workplace at the department, equipped with computer, e-mail and telephone links. The Departmental ambition is that during their last year of study the graduate student should have her or his own room. The Departmental intention is also that the PhD students should have access to their workplace 6 months after the funding has stopped or up until they have defended their thesis. If the disputation takes place ahead of time the PhD is entitled to her or his workplace until the funding has ceased.

### **Design of the PhD training**

The PhD training includes a doctorate of 240 credits: 150 credits for the thesis and 90 credits for courses. The licentiate degree requires 120 credits: 60 credits each for thesis and courses.

### **Tutors and tutoring**

The students admitted to PhD studies have a right to supervision during the time that may be required to fulfil their training. This means 8 terms of full time studies to reach the doctorate for those who does not claim any credits for courses at the advance level and 4 terms to reach the licentiate level.

The supervisor and assistant supervisor are appointed for each doctoral student at admission. The assistant supervisor may be appointed for a period of 12 months. The mentoring is reviewed after the first year with regard to the development of the thesis. The PhD student is entitled to 60 hours of tutoring

each year (including the reading of texts), to be distributed among the main supervisor and assistant supervisor as agreed.

It is the departmental board or if the board so decides, the prefect of the department that will decide on the choice of supervisor and assistant supervisor. The person appointed as main supervisor should have a permanent post at the department. The PhD student has the right to change supervisor. Requests for substitution must be made to the departmental board.

### **The individual Study plan**

Look at the Study plan concerning education at the research level, section 5.3.

### **Courses and accreditation.**

The most important guiding tool for the courses is the individual study plan which shows the training program a PhD student must follow. The study program is established during the first year of training and has to be approved by the collegium of supervisors at the department (handledarkollegiet).

In order to achieve a balance between the width, breadth and depth of the subject and the methodological competence the following course structure is recommended:

1. One should have a minimum of 15 credits within another field of human geography than the one the thesis is focused on.
2. One should have a minimum of 15 credits within methodological courses applicable to the methods used in the thesis.
3. Since there is an increasing demand for pedagogic training it is recommended to attend pedagogy courses of 7.5 credits

A large number of the courses on the subject of human geography are offered as part of the national postgraduate courses which is collaboration between the Swedish human geography departments. This collaboration normally consists of 2 or 3 departments working together in order to offer distance courses, consisting of internet based meetings (normally 2x2 days) together with individual work at the department.

The basic idea of the courses is to offer the PhD student a possibility to create an education suitable for her or his needs in collaboration with the supervisor and the director of studies at the research level. The main limitation of this possibility is the requirement of "courses in human geography comprising at least 45 credits at postgraduate level, advanced level or equivalent ". This means that the PhD student who has not been studying human geography at the advanced level must spend at least half of their course credits to obtain

qualifications within the field of human geography.

Examination of courses must be related to a curriculum. If you attend an organised course it normally has a curriculum. But you also have the option to make your own course focused on literature or methodology. But in that case you also have to produce your own curriculum and it has to be approved by the director of studies at the research level and the supervisor. Examples of such a curriculum are presented in Annex 1.

Attendance at conferences may entitle credits provided that there is an approved curriculum with a specified method of examination. As an example, you can participate in a conference and write a report on the sessions you have attended. If you present a paper the curriculum could be the design of the presentation. And the examination could be the evaluation of the presentation, the result of the participation in a session and thoughts about how to make an attendance at a conference as rewarding as possible.

One could also design a course where the object is to fulfil the third task (informing the public about university research and activities). For example one could write a popular science essay, design and deliver a public presentation, or a similar activity. As the previous case there has to be a syllabus and the course must fit into one's curriculum.

How you choose to distribute your course credits between organized courses with lectures and self-designed courses depends on the profile you want to give your PhD studies. For one PhD student it may be appropriate to seek a close connection between the courses and their dissertation work. One solution may be the self-designed courses in which both the methodology and literature are connected to the thesis. Another PhD student may instead benefit from founding their thesis on a deeper subject or methodology competence built on participation in national PhD courses.

### **Departmental work**

Departmental work according to an agreed extent could involve different types of assignments. It could be teaching, administrative- or developmental work.. Scope and content of the PhD students' departmental work must be planned well in advance.

### **Development discussions**

The director of studies at the research level offers yearly development discussions for active PhD students at the department. On this occasion, the individual study plan is monitored and the student will have the opportunity to fully discuss their work situation.

### **Seminars**

The higher seminar is an important part of the training at research level. The seminar takes place each week and deals primarily with the department's ongoing research. Other topics may also be addressed and speakers of interest could be invited to participate. Printed information about a seminar should be available one week in advance in the porter's room. Researchers could have seminars about common themes and arrange meetings with invited guest that are of interest to more than on research group. The seminars also provide an opportunity for the PhD student to test their theoretical and methodological ideas and problems in a smaller group with a similar research focus.

Participation in the higher seminar is mandatory and should be accounted for in the individual curriculum. It is by participating in the seminars that you will learn how a thesis should be designed and the requirements for producing a scientific text.

### **Research Conference**

At least every second year a research conference is organised in collaboration between the PhD student council and the staff of PhD supervisors. The purpose of the conference is to disseminate knowledge about the ongoing research projects at the department and promote exchanges between different lines of research.

### **Thesis Work**

Thesis work is presented in public three times before the dissertation.

The one-year memorandum is an important document within the educational framework at the PhD level. It will be presented and critically assessed by the end of the first year of doctoral studies. The memorandum should present the purpose of the thesis and the questions at issue. The questions and the purpose should be based on a literary survey and theory formation within the subject of human geography. The memorandum should also explain how the question that the thesis is going to answer is treated and analysed empirically (or equivalent). The one-year memorandum is a development of the individual study plan's description of the PhD project. If the thesis is going to be a compilation thesis the memorandum should contain an embryo to a summarizing chapter (kappa),

the basis for a first article and provide an overview of planned parts of the thesis. It is important that this presentation is designed to give the collegium of PhD supervisors a possibility to evaluate the thesis focus and feasibility. The memorandum is reviewed in advance by the designated commentator /commentators at the higher seminar and must be available in writing, at least one week before the scheduled seminar date.

A meeting of the collegium of PhD supervisors is held after the seminar to discuss if the presented research plan is a good basis for future thesis work.

The second presentation takes place about half way through the allotted time according to the study plan. At this presentation the PhD student is expected to account for a third of the text within the thesis.. This can be done in two ways, either through a half time seminar or by submitting a licentiate dissertation. The aim is, in both forms, that the collegium of PhD supervisors should be able to evaluate the thesis and determine future work and to provide an opportunity for the PhD student to get the work commented on by others than the supervisor and assisting supervisor. In both cases a text is presented containing theoretically founded, precise questions, a work method, an analytical section where the method is applied and a plan for continued work. A licentiate dissertation should also contain an empirically based analysis containing method, results and conclusions. The licentiate thesis should be a coherent work with an introduction, thesis and analysis, while an interim PM could miss this completed structure and may instead offer a more complete presentation of the materials and methods used in the project.

An alternative format for the licentiate thesis is one or more article manuscripts together with summarizing chapter (kappa).

The difference between a licentiate seminar and a half way seminar is also that at the licentiate seminar, the work will be defended publicly and also evaluated by a committee consisting of three members with at least a doctorate degree and one has to be professor. At the half-time seminar the work is read and commented on by at least one external examiner and judged by the staff of PhD supervisors. At the half-time seminars there is usually also a PhD student acting as a commentator.

The third and last presentation of the thesis is the so-called final seminar, which takes place when the dissertation is finished and is available in a coherent manuscript form, usually half a year ahead of the public defence of the thesis. After the final seminar there is a meeting of the collegium of supervisors to approve the public defence of the thesis. There is also a possibility of proposals to revise some of the work and the revised work may require additional approval

by the collegium of supervisors.

The collegium of supervisors has according to the above described course plan formally reviewed and evaluated the student's thesis project on three separate occasions.

### **Dissertation & Publications**

The course of events after the final seminar is as follows.

(1) The PhD student gathers and evaluates comments from seminar participants and then makes a work schedule for the period up to a finished dissertation manuscript.

(2) If the collegium of supervisors has recommended a revision of the manuscript after the final seminar a new version of the thesis should be submitted to the collegium of supervisors well in advance.

(3) The dissertation date is decided when the final seminar version or the revised version is approved by the collegium of supervisors, an examiner is also appointed and the composition of the grading board is established.

It is also possible to accomplish the dissertation with a compilation thesis. A compilation thesis consists of articles written for publication in scientific journals and a summarizing chapter (kappa). The scope of a compilation thesis is ultimately determined by the purpose to show that the PhD student has fulfilled the requirements according to the general curriculum for a doctorate or a licentiate degree. For further details of these requirements, see appendix 2

Monographs in English are published in the Acta series. Dissertations in Swedish as well as compilation theses are published in the series Meddelanden ("Reports").

(4) Scripts are completed with figures, tables, photos, a summary and an abstract. When all is ready, it takes about five weeks to get a paper printed and delivered.

(5) The notification of the date of defence (spikning) should be announced at least three weeks before the scheduled defence date. Updated instructions can be obtained from the Department of Student Affairs at Stockholm University and is available on the university website.

(6) The dissertation is made public. It is at this time that the general public are able to gain access to our academic work. All those interested in the topic of the

thesis are welcome. Family and friends of the respondent are often present. The aim is both to examine the thesis and to give the student an opportunity to show their ability to maintain oral scientific reasoning. The defence lasts approximately for two hours. The doctoral candidate (respondent), is first given an opportunity to present minor corrections. Then the opponent usually summarizes the thesis and discusses critical points that the respondent will have the opportunity to respond to. When the opponent has finished the audience and examination committee members are invited to ask further questions.

(7) After the defence of the thesis is completed, the examination committee will meet with the supervisor and the opponent. The decision of the examination committee is communicated both orally and in writing.

(8) An approved thesis is registered in LADOK. When the thesis credits and the necessary course credits are registered, you can apply for a PhD exam.

(9) The solemn closing of the postgraduate studies is a ceremony that usually takes place in the Stockholm City Hall. Those who received their doctorate during the year are invited.

### **Guidance and counselling**

Guidance and counselling during the postgraduate studies are organized as follows.

1. In connection with the design of the individual course program is a discussion with the supervisor and director of studies for the postgraduate level on the type of work the postgraduate is interested in after graduating. The program is then designed in such a way that it provides good support not only for the thesis work but also for the type of employment that the graduate is aiming for.
2. The question of how you look at your career after graduation will also be addressed in the scheduled development discussions that are offered to all employees at the institution.
3. A good way to prepare for the career after graduation is to carry out short-term consulting assignments during the postgraduate studies. This means that you will decrease the pace of study and instead finance your work by using the money you bring in from the consulting engagements.
4. Towards the end of the postgraduate studies the student will be offered the opportunity for an informal career coach. This may be the supervisor or another person in or outside the department. The Department is required



to establish a list of those willing to take on coaching duties, and it is then up to the student to contact the person he or she wants as a career coach.

5. Planned and implemented educational and vocational guidance will be recorded in the individual curriculum.

# **Annex 1:**

## Syllabus for the course at graduate level Example 1

### **Name of course**

Land Availability and Fertility

### **Goal**

After completing this course the student will have a broad knowledge about the research dealing with the question of how farmland availability affects family formation and fertility

### **Curriculum structure**

The course is conducted during spring 2008 and consists of three parts:

1. A mapping of the field using a literature search within various bibliographic databases. The references found are classified into three categories: key references, central references, and supporting references
2. Literature Review. The selected references are reviewed. Key references reviewed in detail, central references reviewed briefly, and support references processed as time permits.
3. PM. The results of this review are summarized in an essay that contains a presentation of the key findings in the literature, a discussion of the methods and sources used, and an assessment of how far the research has developed: research flaws, and how believable the present conclusions are? Approximately 5000 words.

### **Examination**

Examination by presentation of the paper at a seminar in the Plus group.

### **Credits**

This course provides 9 credits (6 old credits).

### **Approval**

Course plan approved

Study counsellor

Supervisor

## Syllabus for the course at the graduate level Example 2

### **Name of course**

Participant observation

### **Goals**

After completing this course the student will

1. Have knowledge about the capabilities and limitations of the method
2. Have the ability to plan, implement and evaluate a study based on participant observation

### **Curriculum structure**

The course is conducted during spring 2008 and consists of three parts:

- 1 Literature Review and planning
- 2 Implementation of a field survey
- 3 PM, The results are summarized in a paper dealing with the literature, the study design, main results, a discussion of problems that have occurred and an evaluation of the participant observation method . Approximately 5000 words

### **Examination**

Examination by presentation of the paper at a seminar in the Landscape Group.

### **Credits**

The course gives 12 credits (8 credits old).

### **Approval**

Course plan is approved

Study counsellor

Supervisor

## Annex 2: Compilation Thesis-What is required?

The general curriculum specifies the requirements for a Ph.D. in human geography:

The PhD should possess:

### **Knowledge and understanding**

Demonstrate a broad knowledge in human geography and a systematic understanding of the field of research and a deeper knowledge in a defined part of the field, and demonstrate a familiarity with scientific methodology in general and with scientific methods in particular.

### **Skills and abilities**

Demonstrate ability for scientific analysis and synthesis and be able to independent critical review and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues and situations.

Demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively and with scientific precision, identify and formulate issues and to plan and using appropriate methods, conduct research and other advanced tasks within specified timeframes and to review and evaluate such work and with a thesis demonstrate the ability to contribute to the development of knowledge.

Demonstrate ability to present and discuss research and research results with authority. in dialogue with the scientific community and society in general both in a national and international context, orally and in writing

Demonstrate an ability to identify needs for further knowledge,

Demonstrate a potential for research and education and in other advanced professional contexts contribute to social development and to support others' learning,

### **Values and attitudes**

Demonstrate intellectual independence and scholarly integrity and the ability to make ethical assessments, and demonstrate deeper understanding of the capabilities and limitations of science, its role in society and people's responsibility for its use.

The requirements for a doctoral thesis are largely based on those requirements. This means that there is not the number of essays or the length of the thesis that determines whether you have written an acceptable thesis. The key is instead the scientific ability that was shown. This means that in principle, but hardly in practice, should one be able to defend a thesis based on a single paper as long as this paper demonstrates broader knowledge, a systematic understanding, depth and current specialist knowledge etc.

In practice, however, an examination board must approve the thesis and the experience tells us that the board also is influenced by what they perceive to be the normal extent of a thesis. One way to interpret the actual board decisions is that they are not in agreement with the above mentioned requirements. Instead the thesis will be judged based on the expected achievement by a PhD student with adequate qualifications to succeed with her or his PhD studies. If they think that the dissertation reaches this achievement level it is approved, if it is below this level the board will not approve.

Articles included in a compilation thesis may differ in terms of scientific quality, the stage reached in the publication process, the number of co-authors, and how big the student's contribution to the article is.

A composite thesis consists typically of 3-5 papers. The papers should be designed as scientific papers, i.e. to have an overall logic: question-theory-method- empiric- conclusion. The share of co-authored papers may vary. If a compilation thesis lacks a strong self-written essay it may be difficult to assess the student's own ability. This can be compensated by a more extensive summarizing chapter (kappa). The PhD student's own contribution in the co-authors of papers can also be verified by a special certificate.

If the essays included in a compilation thesis have been published or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, this is recognition that they have reached a satisfactory scientific quality. Then the examination Board does have a preliminary assessment of the essays quality, to build upon. If an essay is neither accepted nor published the examination Board has to assess the essay without the support of any earlier refereeing.

A compilation thesis will also be assessed by how well the student has been able to formulate relevant research questions and then answer them with the help of a well-conducted analysis. If the essays included in the thesis have weaknesses in that regard it is important that the summarizing chapter (kappa) links together the various components in a way that clarifies the PhD students scientific ability.