General syllabus for Degree of Licentiate in Practical Philosophy

The syllabus was confirmed by the Faculty Board of Arts at Gothenburg University on 23 November 2017. It is complemented with the following documents, available via the website of the Faculty of Arts (www.hum.gu.se).

Instructions for Third-cycle Studies at the Faculty of Arts.


Here the term ‘doctoral student’ is used for a third-cycle student.

A doctoral student admitted for third-cycle studies for taking the Degree of Doctor in Practical Philosophy is entitled to request to take the Degree of Licentiate in Practical Philosophy provided the requirements for courses and essays specified in this syllabus are fulfilled.

Title of qualification and teaching and research duties

The degree obtained is the Degree of Licentiate in Practical Philosophy. Practical Philosophy addresses questions of norms, values and ideologies. Central research areas include moral philosophy (ethics), social philosophy (political philosophy and legal philosophy), philosophy of religions and aesthetics.

1. Objectives

1.1 General national objectives

According to the Qualifications Ordinance, Appendix 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the objectives for the Degree of Licentiate are as follows:

Knowledge and understanding

For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:

– demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the field of research including current specialist knowledge in a limited area of this field as well as specialised knowledge of research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.
Competence and skills
For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:
– 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 pre-determined 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 at large, and
– demonstrate the ability required to independently participate in research and development work and to independently work in other qualified activities.

Judgment and approach
For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:
– demonstrate the 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 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 their own ongoing learning.

1.2 Subject-specific and supplementary objectives

Knowledge and understanding
For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:
– demonstrate an expanded and deepened awareness of practical philosophy’s methods and areas of application.

Competence and skills
For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:
– demonstrate the ability to independently pursue research within practical philosophy,
– demonstrate the ability to plan and conduct courses at first and second cycle levels within several areas of practical philosophy,
– demonstrate the ability to plan and implement research projects,
– demonstrate the ability to produce academic publications.

Judgment and approach
For the Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student shall:
– demonstrate a deepened understanding of the possibilities and limitations of practical philosophy, its role in society and its relationship to other disciplines.

2. Entry requirements
Admission to the programme requires that the applicant fulfils the general and specific entry requirements provided in Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance.
2.1 General entry requirements
A person meets the general entry requirements under Chapter 7, Section 39 of the Higher Education Ordinance if he or she:

1. has been awarded a second-cycle qualification, or
2. has satisfied the requirements for courses comprising at least 240 higher education credits of which at least 60 higher education credits were awarded in the second-cycle, or
3. has acquired substantially equivalent knowledge in some other way in Sweden or abroad.

2.2 Specific entry requirements
Admission to the third-cycle programme in Practical Philosophy requires:

1. 30 higher education credits in Practical Philosophy as a second-cycle subject, at least 15 of which must be from a degree project or equivalent knowledge,
2. the type(s) of Swedish and English skills needed to be able to benefit from compulsory parts of the course and to be able to actively participate in seminars and similar activities.

3. Admission and selection
Admission to third-cycle studies in Practical Philosophy is normally initiated by the Department announcing a call for doctoral studentships. Admission is conditional upon the studies being properly funded.

In selecting between applicants, their ability to benefit from the course or study programme shall be taken into account in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance. To facilitate the selection process, the applicant must submit:

1. Theses, degree projects and any publications. These are assessed based on the following five quality criteria, of which the final two have the heaviest weighting: Suitable subject definition, relevant questioning, suitable command of the subject and structuring of the thesis, suitable use of language, formalities, academic quality, independence.
2. A project draft no more than 2,500 words in which the applicant stipulates a research domain that he/she would like to develop, justifies its relevance and discusses which theories, methods and materials would be relevant. The project draft is assessed on the basis of the following criteria: whether the research displays familiarity with previous and current research, whether the research questions are viable and grounded in current research, whether the draft is judged to be realistic, as regards its implementation at third-cycle level and whether the draft shows that it is likely the applicant will make a valuable contribution to research in the field. The project draft also provides supporting information for assessing the Department’s supervisor competence within the research domain stipulated.
3. Other documents such as letters of recommendation.

Admission and selection are also conditional on the Department’s supervisory resources within the doctoral student’s research focus. Admission may also include an interview in addition to a review of qualifications submitted. Admission decisions are made by the Head of
Department following preparation at the Department.

4. Programme disposition and content
The third-cycle programme for taking the Degree of Licentiate in Practical Philosophy comprises 120 higher education credits and leads to a Degree of Licentiate.

The third-cycle programme consists partly of courses, which are examined incrementally, and partly of own research work, which is to lead to a scholarly thesis.

The student shall participate in seminar activities within the confines of her or his education and, unless there are special reasons, participate in Department-wide activities.

4.1 Courses
The programme consists of a course part comprising 30 higher education credits.

1. Pedagogy and methodology, 10 higher education credits:
a) compulsory course in teaching and learning in higher education,
b) other compulsory courses in pedagogy, methodology, etc.,
c) other skills and methods training in connection with teaching and seminar activities.

The basic course in teaching and learning in higher education (5 higher education credits) should be completed during the first year of third-cycle studies.

Advanced orientation in Practical Philosophy (10 higher education credits). The component includes specialisation within one or two issues in practical philosophy. Further content is decided in consultation with the supervisor and is documented in the individual study plan.

Advanced orientation outside Practical Philosophy (10 higher education credits). The component enables the third-cycle student to deepen or expand their knowledge in one or more subjects outside of practical philosophy that can be related to the subject and/or the doctoral student’s research area. For example courses can be chosen in theoretical philosophy, logic, linguistics, theory of science, history of ideas, political science, psychology, biology, medicine etc. The subjects are chosen in consultation with examiners.

The component or aspect of it held outside of the Department are examined in the form of the accompanying course requirements being met. Additional components are examined in ways the supervisor or other examiner seem suitable, for example written examinations or take-home tasks, seminar participation, and/or practical exercises. Where courses or course components are examined through seminar participation or practical exercises, the examiner shall ensure that the third-cycle student’s performance is clearly documented in the individual study plan. At some point the examination is to be in the form of an academic article intended for publication, or a presentation for an academic conference authored by the doctoral student, together with senior researchers if necessary.

If a doctoral student requests credit transfer from previous education, this shall be specified in the individual study plan (see 6.1).

4.2 Licentiate thesis
The thesis comprises 90 higher education credits
The doctoral student is expected to provide regular reports on her or his thesis work. This is primarily done by writing articles or thesis drafts, which will be presented regularly at Department seminars. Normally, the doctoral student will, together with the supervisor or other senior researcher if necessary, develop at least one of these drafts to an academic article intended for publication.

A licentiate thesis is defended at a public seminar. Both the content and defence are considered in the assessment of the thesis. The thesis is graded with one of the grades Pass or Fail.

For more information, see Instructions for Third-cycle Studies at the Faculty of Arts.

5. Supervision
At least two supervisors shall be appointed for each doctoral student: one principal supervisor and one assistant supervisor. At least one of the supervisors must be employed at the University of Gothenburg, normally at the doctoral student’s home Department. At least one of the supervisors must be qualified for appointment to a readership (Docent) and at least one of the supervisors must have completed supervisor training.

The doctoral student is entitled to supervision at least as stipulated by the standard adopted by the Faculty Board (see Instructions for Third-cycle Studies at the Faculty of Arts).

A doctoral student who so requests is entitled to change supervisors.

6. Individual study plan
An individual study plan, which shall be finalised by no later than two months after commencement of studies, shall be drawn up by the doctoral student and supervisor, in consultation with the doctoral examiner, in connection with admission.

The individual study plan shall be reviewed at least once a year. The review shall clearly identify the doctoral student’s progression.

Doctoral students, supervisors and doctoral examiners shall affirm in writing that they have read the individual study plan and any revisions made.

6.1 Credit transfer
When the individual study plan has been established, the doctoral student may request that credits be transferred from past successfully completed second- or third-cycle education. Credits applied to fulfil the general or specific entry requirements may not also be applied towards the third-cycle degree, but must be replaced with another course. In addition, the following applies:

(i) A doctoral student who has successfully completed a second-cycle course that is included as a compulsory or elective course at third-cycle level may request that the course be replaced with another course of the same extent in the individual study plan. This does not affect the duration of the programme for the Degree of Licentiate.

(ii) A doctoral student who has completed part of her or his third-cycle education while he or she was enrolled as a third-cycle student at another higher education institution or in another subject may request that the part be applied directly to her or his degree without replacements.
This reduces the duration of the study programme for a Degree of Licentiate in proportion to the credits transferred.

6.2 Timetable and funding plan
The individual study plan shall include a timetable and associated funding plan for the entire period of study, up to the planned date of taking the Degree of Licentiate.

7. Transitional provisions
Doctoral students admitted before 23 November 2017 may, following consultation with supervisors, request permission from the Head of Department to transfer this programme syllabus. The individual study plan must then be updated.