



**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, EDUCATION
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Student handbook for doctoral studies in human geography at Örebro University

Introduction

These guidelines for doctoral studies in human geography at Örebro University are a complement to the rules set out in the Higher Education Ordinance and in Örebro University's rules and regulations for doctoral education (Regulations Handbook for Doctoral Education at Örebro University). In these guidelines, there is some repetition of provisions included in the documents mentioned, albeit applied specifically to the subject of human geography and with certain additions. These guidelines shall take effect on 1 April 2022.

These guidelines have been prepared by the committee of supervisors in human geography. On the committee are representatives of the supervisors and doctoral students in the subject. Its role is to provide support and clarification at the various stages of the doctoral programme, for doctoral students as well as for supervisors. The head of subject, or a person appointed by them, is responsible for forwarding these guidelines to new supervisors. The principal supervisor is responsible for forwarding these guidelines to new doctoral students.

Recruitment and admission

Recruitment of doctoral students is a concern for the whole department of human geography ('department') and great effort should be made to ensure successful recruitment. The recruitment process is to be overseen by at least two researchers with a doctoral degree to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that:

- those admitted to the doctoral programme in human geography have an interest in and a capacity for completing the programme within the determined timeframe, and
- the supervisory competence and other resources are adequate.

The committee of supervisors appoints those to be in charge of recruitment before the admission process is initiated. Those in charge are to account for their considerations and recommendations to the committee of supervisors, upon which the committee submits a proposal for decision on admission of doctoral students to the research administrator. The research administrator will then in turn present the matter to the head of school or, where applicable, the dean.

When admitting doctoral students with special funding, such as project funding, the project manager (or equivalent) shall specify the specialisation for the position. The assessment of applicants is then made by the project manager and at least one other researcher with a doctoral degree in the subject.

Supervisors and supervision

For doctoral students admitted to the doctoral programme, one principal supervisor and one assistant supervisor are appointed in connection with admission. As a rule, the principal supervisor is to be employed at the department of human geography at Örebro University. Supervisors are proposed by the committee of supervisors following nomination by the head of subject. The head of school makes the formal appointment and decides on any exceptions to the requirement of employment at Örebro University as set out above.

Supervisors are to possess high and relevant competence. On the appointment of supervisors, importance is to be attached to their scientific competence within the planned

research field as well as to their supervisory skills. These quality criteria apply to principal supervisors as well as to assistant supervisors. Principal supervisors are to have at least the qualifications required for appointment as docent and assistant supervisors are to have at least a doctoral degree. At least one of the supervisors is to have completed a course on supervising doctoral students, however, preferably all supervisors are to have this qualification.

The role and duties of supervisors are described in the [Regulations Handbook](#), 10.3. In addition, the department particularly wants to highlight the following:

The principal supervisor is responsible for the introduction of the new doctoral student. During this onboarding, the doctoral student is to receive information on the national and local rules that apply to doctoral education, but also on subject-specific guidelines and procedures. Questions relating to time for supervision and mutual expectations are to be discussed and clarified. The doctoral student must also be informed of their right to change supervisor and how this is done.

An essential responsibility for the supervisors is to monitor that the doctoral studies are progressing according to plan to ensure that the programme can be completed within the intended timeframe. The doctoral student is to prepare, together with their supervisors, a realistic timetable for the work ahead. This plan is to be documented and evaluated annually in the doctoral student's individual study plan (ISP). It is important that any problems in writing the doctoral thesis that risk interfering with the timetable are picked up on early.

If supervision is not working satisfactorily

If there are problems relating to supervision, both doctoral student and supervisors may contact the head of subject to discuss the situation. First, a joint discussion should be held, focusing on solutions to improve the situation. Matters of this nature are to be handled swiftly. If a solution cannot be reached by means of internal discussions within the subject, the head of school must be contacted.

In some cases, the appropriate solution is to change supervisor(s). Regarding changes of supervisors, the following is prescribed in the Regulations Handbook for Doctoral Education at Örebro University:

A doctoral student who wishes to change supervisor should report this directly to the head of school. A doctoral student does not need to state any reasons for a change of supervisor and does not need to take part in any discussions of the case. If the doctoral student wishes, they may start the process by talking to someone else at the university. The Office for Academic Policy can answer questions ([Regulations Handbook](#), 10.2).

The head of school decides on any changes of supervisors. If the need for a change of supervisor is due to the supervisor's situation, the head of subject is to nominate a new supervisor.

Content of the doctoral programme

The doctoral programme in human geography is to place doctoral students in a position where they can achieve the objectives for the doctoral and licentiate degrees respectively (see [Higher Education Ordinance](#)). In addition to the training provided via supervision, the

doctoral programme in human geography is to include taking courses, attending research conferences and participating in the subject's current research.

Doctoral courses

The subject's [general syllabus](#) (ASP) lists the required courses for the doctoral and licentiate degrees respectively. The department is expected to offer the compulsory courses on a regular basis. Doctoral courses are also offered via the National Research Program for human geography; by graduate schools; as well as by the faculty and university. The doctoral students within the subject are awarded, wherever possible, financial grants to attend courses at other higher education institutions. Before a doctoral student signs up for a course at another higher education institution, however, the principal supervisor is to assess the relevance of the course and check with the head of subject if there is available funding.

Research conferences

Building and contributing to networks during the course of the doctoral programme is central to knowledge development and future activities. The doctoral students within the subject are therefore to be given the opportunity to regularly attend research conferences, primarily international ones.

Current research within the department

Doctoral students are encouraged to learn about, and actively contribute to, the current research within the subject. This is best done by including doctoral students in the subject's research environment and by them participating in the subject's research seminars (*högre seminarium*). Doctoral students are also to be given the opportunity to learn about current research at other research environments, not only at ORU and other higher education institutions, but also internationally.

Internationalisation

Internationalisation is to inform the doctoral programme in human geography. Doctoral students are to be encouraged to explore the international research arena, by participating in courses and conferences and spending time at universities abroad to test their research internationally and lay the foundations for an international network of research contacts. Funding for such activities can generally be applied for by the doctoral student themselves from external funding bodies; from the university's central funds; or, if none of these can offer funding, from the department of human geography.

Doctoral and licentiate theses

A doctoral/licentiate thesis in the subject of human geography may take the format of monograph or a compilation thesis. Which format to choose is primarily up to the doctoral student. Regardless of format, the doctoral student must demonstrate that they meet the intended learning outcomes for the doctoral or licentiate degree respectively (System of Qualifications, Annex 2, [Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100](#)), and follow local guidelines for doctoral theses and licentiate theses within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HS) at Örebro University ([Regulations Handbook](#), 15.1.2 and 16.1.1).

A doctoral/licentiate thesis in human geography is to contain new scientific knowledge which is based on autonomous research. The doctoral/licentiate thesis is to contain accounts of the aim, background and reasons for the study; a review of relevant research; descriptions of the theory and method applied; an account of research-ethical

considerations; a presentation of the results; as well as a critical discussion of the study's theory, method and contributions to the research field.

Doctoral thesis – monograph

A monograph is a thesis that has been written as one entity and generally takes the form of a coherent study of a specific topic, which is published at the time of the public defence. A monograph normally has the doctoral student as its sole author. The monograph is to be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English. A thesis written in Swedish, Norwegian or Danish should include a summary in English. A thesis written in English should include a summary in Swedish. To all doctoral theses, a brief abstract in English is to be attached.

Doctoral thesis – compilation thesis

A compilation doctoral thesis consists of at least three sub-studies and one introductory chapter also known as *kappa*. What is characteristic of the compilation thesis is that the sub-studies are published not only in the thesis, but also in scientific journals, research anthologies or as research reports. How many sub-studies are needed depends on a number of things, such as the scope and content of the sub-studies and introductory chapter; the publishing of the sub-studies; and the level of the peer review. In addition to fulfilling the requirements that apply to all theses in human geography, the introductory chapter should contain a summary and synthesis of the results of each sub-study.

The sub-studies may be authored by the doctoral student or by the doctoral student in cooperation with the supervisor(s) in question or other person(s) in the scientific community. When co-authoring, the introductory chapter must clearly state how the work has been divided between the authors. The doctoral student should be the sole author of at least one of the sub-studies. The ambition should be to have at least two sub-studies published or accepted for publication when the thesis is sent for printing. The sub-studies and the introductory chapter are to be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English. A thesis with an introductory chapter written in Swedish, Norwegian or Danish should contain a summary in English. A thesis with an introductory chapter written in English should contain a summary in Swedish.

Licentiate thesis – monograph

A monograph is a thesis that has been written as one entity and generally takes the form of a coherent study of a specific topic, which is published at the time of the examination. A monograph has the doctoral student as its sole author. The monograph is to be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English. A thesis written in Swedish, Norwegian or Danish should include a summary in English. A thesis written in English, should include a summary in Swedish.

Licentiate thesis – compilation thesis

A compilation licentiate thesis consists of at least two sub-studies and one introductory chapter also known as *kappa*. What is characteristic of the compilation thesis is that the sub-studies are published not only in the thesis, but also in scientific journals, research anthologies or as research reports. In addition to fulfilling the requirements that apply to all theses in human geography, the introductory chapter should contain a summary and synthesis of the results of each sub-study.

The sub-studies may be authored by the doctoral student or by the doctoral student in cooperation with the supervisor(s) in question or other person(s) in the scientific

community. The doctoral student should be the sole author of at least one of the sub-studies. When co-authoring, the introductory chapter must clearly state how the work has been divided between the authors. The ambition should be to have at least one sub-study published or accepted for publication when the thesis is examined. The sub-studies and the introductory chapter are to be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English. A thesis with an introductory chapter written in Swedish, Norwegian or Danish should contain a summary in English. A thesis with an introductory chapter written in English should contain a summary in Swedish. To the thesis, a brief abstract in English is to be attached.

Other

In the event of a doctoral/licentiate thesis diverging significantly from the recommended guidelines above, the thesis in question is to be brought up for discussion in the committee of supervisors well in advance of the final seminar. The principal supervisor is responsible for initiating such a discussion on the committee.

Quality review of doctoral and licentiate theses

The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that doctoral and licentiate theses within the subject undergo quality review lies with the committee of supervisors. This quality review takes place continuously throughout the doctoral programme.

Doctoral thesis ([Regulations Handbook](#), 15.1)

During the course of the programme, the doctoral student is to present their work at the research seminars (*högre seminarium*) in human geography. How often depends on the type of thesis project. The following three review points are, however, compulsory:

- Thesis proposal (*avhandlings-PM*) to be reviewed in the student's first year on the programme (first-year review). The thesis proposal is to discuss the problem area, preliminary aim and preliminary research questions; include an initial presentation of previous research in the field; as well as the planned theoretical framework and method application, including initial research-ethical considerations, of the thesis. The thesis proposal should consist of 20–25 pages.
- Thesis text to be reviewed when about half of the thesis work is completed (mid-way review). At the mid-way review, the topic and aim; research review; as well as the theoretical framework and method application, including research-ethical considerations, of the thesis are discussed in more detail. Moreover, the completed data collection, if relevant, is to be presented along with an initial analysis and results.
- Thesis manuscript to be reviewed when it has essentially been completed (final review). All parts of the thesis must be included, preferably in its intended final form. Some parts, although to a limited degree, may be presented in their preliminary form.

Doctoral students holding a licentiate degree and are pursuing a doctoral degree are to present their work at two review points:

- Thesis text to be reviewed when the continued work has been further detailed and the thesis project has been revised and elaborated (mid-way review). At the mid-way review, the topic and aim; research review; as well as the theoretical framework and method application, including research-ethical considerations, of the thesis are discussed in more detail. The parts of the licentiate thesis that will be used in the doctoral thesis are presented.

- Thesis manuscript to be reviewed when it has essentially been completed (final review). The final review should be held no later than about three to six months before the planned date for the public defence. All parts of the thesis must be included, preferably in its intended final form. Some parts, although to a limited degree, may be presented in their preliminary form.

At these review seminars, the doctoral student's work will be reviewed by an appointed commentator and others present. The material is to be available well in advance of these seminars – two weeks as a minimum for the mid-way review and three weeks as a minimum for final reviews. Plenty of time must be reserved especially for the final reviews. For the first-year review, a commentator is normally appointed from within the subject. For the mid-way review, the commentator may be from within the subject or an external reviewer. Normally, however, an external reviewer should be appointed. ([Regulations Handbook](#), 15.1.2).

The task of the commentator is to review the manuscript, point out any limitations and flaws and provide constructive comments that can improve the thesis' scientific quality and relevance. Immediately following the mid-way and final reviews, the committee of supervisors convene to discuss further comments and conclusions. The principal supervisor is responsible for 1) communicating to the doctoral student the comments from the mid-way and final review committees and what else has been brought forward during the seminars, and 2) converting the comments into constructive supervision.

No later than two weeks after the final review, written documentation of the review is to be submitted. This should contain:

- an account of the limitations that have been identified during the review,
- a description of the suggestions for improvements that have been put forward,
- a plan for revision, and
- a proposal for a date for the public defence.

The principal supervisor is responsible for preparing this documentation and submitting it to the head of subject no later than two weeks after the final review.

In most cases, this quality review process – from the final review to the public defence – will take four to six months.

Licentiate thesis ([Regulations Handbook](#), 16.1)

During the course of the programme, the doctoral student is to present their work at the research seminars (*högre seminarium*) in human geography at two review points:

- Thesis proposal (*uppsats-PM*) to be reviewed in the first year on the programme (first-year review). The thesis proposal is to discuss the problem area; preliminary aim and preliminary research questions; include an initial presentation of previous research in the field; as well as the planned theoretical framework and method application, including initial research-ethical considerations, of the thesis.

- Thesis manuscript to be reviewed when it has essentially been completed (final review). All parts of the thesis must be included, preferably in its intended final form. Some parts, although to a limited degree, may be presented in their preliminary form.

At these review seminars, the doctoral student's work will be reviewed by an appointed commentator and others present (in accordance with the instructions for doctoral theses above). For these reviews, commentators are normally appointed from within the subject.

Commentators are appointed by supervisor(s) in consultation with the head of subject. The task of the commentator is to review the manuscript, point out any limitations and flaws of the thesis and provide constructive comments that can improve the thesis' scientific quality and relevance. Directly following the final review, written documentation is to be drawn up of the limitations of the thesis as well as the suggestions for improvements that have been put forward, and a plan for revision is to be prepared. The principal supervisor is responsible for preparing this documentation and plan, ensuring that these are submitted to the examiner prior to the licentiate seminar.

Thesis production

Well in advance of the printing of the thesis, the doctoral student should familiarise themselves with the information available from the [Printing Office](#) (Repro). Generally, the doctoral student is to complete and submit a form with details for thesis preparation and production no later than 10 weeks before the date (*spikning*) on which the date of the defence will be announced (generally 13 weeks before the planned defence).

Doctoral thesis

When preparing doctoral theses in human geography, the university's thesis template is to be used. The thesis will be printed as a book and the university funds the production of the number of copies that has been decided on by the university ([Regulations Handbook](#), 15.2.1).

Licentiate thesis

When preparing licentiate theses in human geography, the university's thesis template is to be used. If the thesis is to be discussed at a seminar or used in teaching in other ways, the school may provide reproduction/copying of additional copies for doctoral students and others who will participate in the seminar ([Regulations Handbook](#), 16.2).

Public defence and licentiate seminar

Public defence

The public defence is to take place on one of the university's campuses unless there are special grounds to the contrary. An external reviewer with at least the qualifications required for appointment as docent is to be appointed, as well as an examining committee, normally consisting of three members of which one must have the qualifications required for appointment as professor. Other members must as a minimum have the qualifications required for appointment as docent. No more than one member of the examining committee may be from within human geography at Örebro University and at least one member must be from another higher education institution. The chair of the defence must be a professor or docent employed at Örebro University.

When planning the defence, any conflicts of interest must be considered, especially in terms of the appointment of members of the examining committee. For more information on conflicts of interest, see the [guidelines for appointing examining committee members etc](#), point 4 (in Swedish only).

The faculty needs the proposal for the date of the public defence no later than two months prior to the defence. The proposal is to be preceded by consultation within the subject. For more detailed information, see the document containing [information on the proposal for and decisions on the public defence at Örebro University](#) (in Swedish only).

Within the department of human geography, the following procedures are followed in preparation of the defence:

Consultation: Consultation within the subject takes place when the principal supervisor no later than three months before the public defence submits a proposal for examining committee members and external reviewer to the head of subject. When needed, the head of subject will consult the committee of supervisors. The committee of supervisors is informed of the proposal at the next committee meeting.

Examining committee and external reviewer: Generally, the principal supervisor is responsible for identifying and contacting members of the examining committee and external reviewer. As a decision formally appointing the examining committee members is not made until at a later stage, it needs to be made clear when the persons in question are first approached that the composition of the examining committee needs to be discussed among the peers in the subject. One member of the examining committee should generally be from human geography at Örebro University. Furthermore, one of the members of the examining committee should be appointed from within a closely related subject at Örebro University.

Chair: The committee of supervisors nominates the chair of the defence. Primarily, one of the professors or docents within the subject is to be put forward for the role.

Administration and practical arrangements: After the consultation process within the subject, the research administrator assists the principal supervisor in the administration of the matter. The research administrator presents the matter to the head of school and forwards the relevant documents for a decision by the dean.

At the public defence, the research administrator is responsible for the practical arrangements. The supervisors and/or chair of the defence receives the external reviewer and the examining committee. The chair of the defence leads the defence and will also deal with any problems that may occur.

After the defence, the examining committee convenes. The chair of the defence accompanies the examining committee, external reviewer and supervisors to the meeting room, ensures that a chair and secretary for the examining committee are appointed and informs the room about the two-part meeting setup that Örebro University applies for examining committee meetings:

- *The first part* of the examining committee meeting is reserved for information transfer from external reviewer and supervisors, that is, any questions that the examining committee may have for the supervisor or external reviewer. Attending this part of the meeting are the members of the examining committee, the external reviewer and all supervisors.
- *The second part* is reserved for the examining committee's deliberations and decision, which means that they will discuss the thesis and then come to a decision about a grade. Attending this part are only the members of the examining committee.

After the questions and answers, the chair of the defence will leave the meeting, but they will have to be available to answer any further questions. The examining committee will inform the doctoral student of their decision immediately after the meeting.

Licentiate seminar

The licentiate thesis should be defended at a licentiate seminar. The principal supervisor chairs the seminar, where the thesis is reviewed by the appointed reviewer/external reviewer and examiner. The reviewer/external reviewer must be a subject specialist and have a doctoral degree. The examiner, who is appointed by the head of school, must generally be a teacher with at least the qualifications required for appointment as docent in the subject of human geography at Örebro University, but may also be employed within another subject at the university. During the seminar, the examiner may request that additions be made to the thesis, in which case, these are to be submitted within three weeks.

At the department of human geography, the following procedures are followed in preparation of the licentiate thesis:

Examiner: The head of subject nominates the examiner, and the head of school makes the appointment decision. The examiner is appointed for and must participate in the final review.

Reviewer/external reviewer: Well in advance of the licentiate seminar, the principal supervisor forwards their proposal for a reviewer/external reviewer to the head of subject who makes the appointment decision. Generally, the principal supervisor is responsible for identifying and contacting the reviewer/external reviewer.

Administration and practical arrangements: After the supervisor's consultation with the head of subject, the research administrator assists the principal supervisor in the administration of the matter. The research administrator presents the matter to the head of school.

If the reviewer/external reviewer or examiner at short notice are prevented from attending, the following protocol must be followed:

- 1) the possibility for the person in question to participate in the seminar via video link is explored, and
- 2) if the above is not possible, the licentiate seminar is to be postponed.

Doctoral student influence on the programme

Students must have the right to exercise influence over their education and opportunities to have a say when it comes to their studies are to be offered to students individually and as a group.

Individual influence is mainly exercised over questions relating to their own thesis. One objective of doctoral education is for students to develop research autonomy, and the cooperation between doctoral student and supervisor is to reflect that ambition. This means that normally, the doctoral student makes the decisions concerning the direction of the thesis, its execution and design (exceptions from this principle need to some extent to be made for students who are part of a project). The role of the supervisors is to guide and support the student in the decisions taken at various stages of writing the thesis. Doctoral students are also to have the right to exercise influence over doctoral education in other respects, such as courses, participation in conferences, networks and similar.

As a group, doctoral students' influence is mainly exercised by having a representative on the committee of supervisors in the subject, where questions relating to doctoral education and the programme are discussed and decisions are made. The head of subject also facilitates student influence by organising doctoral student meetings once a semester, to which all the doctoral students in the subject are invited.

Doctoral studies and gender equality

The department of human geography is to actively strive for gender equality on the doctoral programme. Aspects of gender equality are to be considered in connection with various matters and at the various stages of doctoral education:

- Upon admission of new doctoral students, gender consciousness is to apply. Women and men are to be assessed on the basis of the same criteria. Gender balance is to be sought, which means that any existing imbalance is to be considered in the admission process.
- Both men and women are to hold the role as supervisor, and also here, the department is to act gender consciously and strive for a balance.

Evaluation of the doctoral programme

The department of human geography is to monitor and evaluate the doctoral education, both during the course of the programme and after its conclusion.

An annual follow-up and evaluation of the various components of the programme, including supervision, is to be done and documented in the individual study plan (ISP). In addition, the department recommends supervisors and doctoral students to have a continuous dialogue surrounding supervision. That way, any problems can be identified at an early stage.

Monitoring and evaluation of the doctoral programme are also done on the courses offered by the department, by means of course evaluations and at the doctoral student meetings organised by the head of subject.