

General syllabus for third-cycle courses and study programmes in

DISABILITY RESEARCH

Funktionsnedsättning och samhälle

This syllabus was approved on 16 March 2010 (reg. no. CF 62-642/2008)¹. It was last amended on 9 September 2026 (reg. no. ORU 3.1.1-02432/2026)².

By virtue of the Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 26 (1993:100), Örebro University prescribes the following.

1 Subject description

Disability research is an interdisciplinary field, integrating knowledge from a range of disciplines in the study of functional impairments and disability. Focus is on the interaction between functional impairments and the problems and possibilities in the environment that either hinder or help an individual's participation in society.

Disability research discusses functional impairments and disability from a biopsychosocial perspective. This means that not only are the physiological causes of functional impairments in focus, but also the possible consequences of the functional impairment in a certain social or cultural context, in terms of, for instance, rights and participation. In addition to the biopsychosocial aspects, other perspectives on functional impairment and disability are examined – such as medical and social models.

2 Outcomes

The intended learning outcomes for the award of the degree, the qualitative targets, are evident from [annex 1](#) to this syllabus. The different components of the third-cycle study programme shall together equip the doctoral student to meet all intended learning outcomes³. The intended learning outcomes are referred to in more detail in the degree requirements in sections 5 and 6.

¹ Faculty Board of Medicine and Health

² The English translation of this general syllabus was last amended on 5 October 2026.

³ In the Swedish higher education system, and in accordance with the terminology recommended by the Swedish Council for Higher Education, courses and study programmes at the doctoral level are referred to as *third-cycle courses and study programmes*. In this document, the terms *doctoral* and *third-cycle* are used interchangeably as prefixes to terms related to studies on the doctoral level and they should therefore be considered synonymous [translator's comment].

3 Admission to the programme – entry requirements and selection etc.

Provisions on entry requirements and selection can be found in annex 2 to this syllabus. For information on admission in other respects, see the admission regulations for Örebro University.

4 Programme organisation – general information⁴

There are two types of third-cycle, or doctoral, study programmes – one concluding with the doctoral degree (240 credits, corresponding to four years of full-time study) and one concluding with the licentiate degree (120 credits, corresponding to two years of full-time study).

The programmes mainly consist of courses and the writing of a doctoral or licentiate thesis. The programme components are assessed by means of course examination and the public defence of the thesis respectively. The doctoral student is expected to take an active part in seminars and other auxiliary components during their period of study. The student is further recommended to take advantage of the opportunities offered to attend guest lectures etc. at the university, and to attend and contribute to national and international conferences.

For each doctoral student, a minimum of two supervisors will be appointed, supporting the student during their studies⁵. One of them will be nominated principal supervisor. The detailed organisation of the programme shall be determined in an individual study plan.

In addition to the requirements laid down in this general syllabus, there may be special requirements for the doctoral student's programme, such as courses that are compulsory within the framework of a research school, which must be specified in the individual study plan. The credit distribution between courses/examinations and thesis should nevertheless be in accordance with the programme organisation as laid down in this general syllabus.

Credit overview

Overview of programme organisation and degree requirements	Courses/examinations, credits		Thesis, no. of credits	Total no. of credits
	Compulsory	Elective		
Doctoral degree	23	37	180	240
Licentiate degree	18	12	90	120

⁴ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Sections 4, 5, 28 and 29 and local guidelines on the organisation of third-cycle courses and study programmes

⁵ The Higher Education Ordinance stipulation that at least two supervisors be appointed for each doctoral student does not apply to doctoral students who commenced their studies before 1 July 2007. Instead, the older provision of at least one supervisor applies (point 18, transitional provisions of SFS 2006:1053).

5 Degree requirements for the Degree of Doctor, 240 credits

For the Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must

- have received a passing grade in the examinations⁶ of the 60 credits generated by the courses listed below,
- have received a passing grade on a scholarly dissertation (doctoral thesis) corresponding to 180 credits. The thesis is to be defended orally at a public defence event⁷.

Compulsory courses, total of 23 credits

Research Ethics and Good Research Practice, 3 credits

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes D9 and D10, annex 1.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Health and Disability, 7.5 credits

(The course is offered by Örebro University)

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes D1, D3, D4, D9 and D10, annex 1.

Disability and Society, 7.5 credits

(The course is offered by Linköping University)

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes D1, D2, D3, D4 and D7, annex 1.

Conducting Research with and about Persons with an Impairment or Disability, 5 credits

(The course is offered by Jönköping University)

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes D1 (part of), D2, D3, D4, D9 and D10.

Elective courses, total of 37 credits

Which course/courses a doctoral student shall take is determined based on an assessment of what courses will enable them to meet the intended learning outcomes. The doctoral student plans, in consultation with the supervisor, which courses should be part of their programme. The selection is then laid down in the individual study plan.

Subject specialisation and complementary courses

This block includes courses on research methods comprising at least 7.5 credits and specialisation courses of relevance to the doctoral student's thesis work. The course and examination shall refer to outcomes D2 and D3, annex 1. The elective courses on research methods aim to provide specialised knowledge of the method/-s applied within the subject area of the thesis.

Doctoral thesis and public defence, 180 credits

At the public defence event, the assessment of the doctoral thesis and the public defence thereof shall refer to all intended learning outcomes specified for the award of the doctoral degree, see annex 1.

⁶ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 32

⁷ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Sections 5 and 33

6 Degree requirements for the Degree of Licentiate, 120 credits

The licentiate degree is the degree awarded to those who have been admitted to and successfully completed a licentiate programme. Students who have been admitted to the programme concluding with the doctoral degree have the right to apply for the award of a licentiate degree, as a half-way degree⁸. The degree requirements in this section apply to the licentiate degree both as a final and as a half-way degree.

For the licentiate degree, the doctoral student must

- have received a passing grade in the examinations⁹ of the 30 credits generated by the courses listed below,
- have received a passing grade on a scholarly paper (licentiate thesis) corresponding to 90 credits¹⁰.

For courses and course blocks that are identical for the licentiate and doctoral degrees, please see outcomes and descriptions in section 5. For any other courses and course blocks, see below¹¹.

Compulsory courses, total of 18 credits

Research Ethics and Good Research Practice, 3 credits

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes L9, L10 and L11, annex 1.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Health and Disability, 7.5 credits

(The course is offered by Örebro University)

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes L1, L3, L4, L9 and L10, annex 1.

Disability and society, 7.5 credits

(The course is offered by Linköping University)

The course and examination shall refer to outcomes L1, L4 and L11, annex 1.

Elective courses, total of 12 credits

Which course/courses a doctoral student shall take is determined based on an assessment of what courses will enable them to meet the intended learning outcomes. The doctoral student plans, in consultation with the supervisor, which courses should be part of their programme. The selection is then laid down in the individual study plan.

Subject specialisation and complementary courses

This block includes courses on research methods comprising at least 7.5 credits and specialisation courses of relevance to the doctoral student's thesis work. The course and examination shall refer to outcomes L1, annex 1. The elective courses on research methods aim to provide specialised knowledge of the method/-s applied within the subject area of the thesis.

⁸ Örebro University's local regulations on qualifications

⁹ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 32

¹⁰ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 6, Section 5

¹¹ Since the licentiate degree may constitute a half-way degree on the road to a doctoral degree, the courses intended for a licentiate degree should, in conformity with the courses intended for a doctoral degree, be linked to the outcomes for the doctoral degree, see further in the guidelines for general syllabuses for third-cycle courses and study programmes.

Licentiate thesis, 90 credits

On the examination of the licentiate thesis, the assessment shall refer to all intended learning outcomes specified for the award of the licentiate degree, annex 1.

7 Further information

Further information about provisions for doctoral study programmes can be found on the university website. Documents there include the admissions regulations for Örebro University and other information on national and local regulations.

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Entry-into-force and transitional provisions

This general syllabus shall be in effect from 1 July 2007.

Doctoral students who have commenced their studies before 1 July 2007

Doctoral students who have commenced their doctoral studies before 1 July 2007 shall continue their studies in accordance with the new provisions for third-cycle courses and study programmes. As a main rule, these students will obtain their qualification pursuant to the new provisions¹².

These students have however, as an alternative, the right to complete their studies and obtain their qualification pursuant to the earlier provisions for third-cycle courses and study programmes. This right exists until, but no later than, the end of June 2015 (point 5, transitional provisions of SFS 2006:1053).

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Amendments approved by the vice-chancellor on 19 October 2010 shall take effect on 1 January 2011. These amendments are brought about by changes in the Higher Education Ordinance, but do not lead to any substantive changes in the general syllabus.

Amendments approved by the faculty board on 15 June 2011 shall take effect on 1 September 2011. These amendments refer to the compulsory courses.

The old degree requirements referring to the previous foundation course of 30 credits apply:

- to doctoral students who have successfully completed said foundation course of 30 credits before 1 September 2011.
- to doctoral students who have completed said foundation course of 30 credits but have not obtained a passing grade before 1 September 2011. These doctoral students have the right to at least three further examination opportunities per course component, evenly spaced over the period, until 1 January 2013.

Doctoral students who have only completed one or more components of the previous foundation course of 30 credits shall continue their studies under the new degree requirements. Components that have been completed but that have been dropped from the programme shall either be examined to generate credits or be compensated accordingly with the time spent on such components. Decision on these matters shall be taken by the head of school.

¹² Point 1, transitional provisions of SFS 2006:1053.

(Corrected 11 May 2012, section 5, third paragraph: Number of credits for compulsory courses for the doctoral degree corrected to 37.5 credits.)

Amendments to the general syllabus approved on 11 March 2014 shall take effect on 1 April 2014. These amendments refer to changes to the subject description (section 1) as well as a change to the degree requirements, a redistribution of course credits between compulsory and elective courses (sections 4, 5 and 6). These amendments also refer to an adaptation of the general syllabus to the new template, through which, among other things, the different components of the programme are more clearly linked to the different intended learning outcomes (primarily sections 5 and 6).

Doctoral students already admitted to the doctoral programme shall complete their studies in accordance with the previous degree requirements. If requested by a doctoral student and it is deemed appropriate, provisions may be made in the individual study plan for the student to complete their studies in accordance with the new degree requirements.

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Amendments to the general syllabus approved on 9 March 2017 shall take effect on 1 July 2017. These amendments refer to changes to the subject description (section 1) as well as a change to the degree requirements, a redistribution of course credits between compulsory and elective courses (section 4, 5 and 6).

Older degree requirements concerning previous compulsory courses of 30 credits in total (19 credits for the licentiate degree) shall apply to doctoral students who have successfully completed all compulsory courses before 1 July 2017.

Doctoral students who have only completed one or two, or none, of the three previous compulsory courses for the doctoral degree, alternatively only one, or none, of the two previous compulsory courses for the licentiate degree, shall continue their studies in accordance with the new degree requirements. Successfully completed course components that have been dropped from the programme shall be compensated accordingly with the time spent on such components. Decision on these matters shall be taken by the head of school.

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Amendments to the general syllabus approved on 11 May 2022 shall take effect on 1 June 2022. These amendments refer to the following:

As of 1 January 2022, the name of the doctoral study subject has changed to Disability Research. Revisions have been made to the subject description, partly as a result of the name change and partly since the subject no longer takes its departure from the Swedish Institute for Disability Research (IHV). The previous obligatory foundations courses 1 and 2 have been replaced by new compulsory courses, the responsibility for which is shared between several higher education institutions. A new faculty-wide compulsory course on research ethics and good research practice has been included on the study programme. For the degree requirements for the doctoral degree, these amendments mean a reduction of the number of compulsory course credits from 25 to 18 credits, and a corresponding increase of the number of elective course credits from 35 to 42 credits. For the degree requirements for the licentiate degree, these amendments mean an increase of the number of compulsory course credits from 12.5 to 18 and a reduction of elective course credits from 32.5 to 12 credits. The number of credits for the licentiate thesis is increased from 75 to 90 credits.

Doctoral students already admitted to the doctoral programme shall complete their studies in accordance with the previous degree requirements. If requested by a doctoral student and it is deemed appropriate, provisions may be made in the individual study plan for the student to complete their studies in accordance with the new degree requirements.

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Amendments approved by the faculty board on 30 January 2024 shall take effect on 9 February 2024. As a result of these amendments, the general syllabus has been updated with respect to the degree requirements that shall apply for the doctoral and licentiate degree respectively on one of the compulsory courses within the subject. Doctoral students admitted to the programme on the basis of a previous version of the general syllabus shall hereafter take the course in question in accordance with the course syllabus approved by the school.

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Amendments approved by the faculty board on 9 September 2026 shall take effect on 1 October 2026. The amendment refers to the introduction of a new compulsory course for doctoral students aiming for the doctoral degree: Conducting Research with and about Persons with an Impairment or Disability (5 credits). As a result, there is an increase of the number of compulsory course credits from 18 to 23 credits and a corresponding reduction of the number of elective course credits from 42 to 37 credits for the programme concluding with the doctoral degree.

Doctoral students already admitted to the doctoral programme shall complete their studies in accordance with the previous degree requirements. If requested by a doctoral student and it is deemed appropriate, provisions may be made in the individual study plan for the student to complete their studies in accordance with the new degree requirements.

Outcomes¹³

Outcomes for the DEGREE OF DOCTOR	Outcomes for the DEGREE OF LICENTIATE
For the Degree of Doctor, the third-cycle student shall	For a Degree of Licentiate, the third-cycle student shall
<i>Knowledge and understanding</i>	<i>Knowledge and understanding</i>
D1 demonstrate broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field as well as advanced and up-to-date specialised knowledge in a limited area of this field, and	L1 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.
D2 demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.	L2 (for the equivalent to D2, see L1, second part)
<i>Competence and skills</i>	<i>Competence and skills</i>
D3 demonstrate the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis as well to review and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations autonomously and critically,	L3 (no direct equivalent to D3)
D4 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,	L4 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,
D5 demonstrate through a dissertation the ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through his or her own research,	L5 (no direct equivalent to D5, refer however to L4, second part)
D6 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,	L6 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
D7 demonstrate the ability to identify the need for further knowledge, and	L7 (comp. L11)
D8 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.	L8 demonstrate the skills required to participate autonomously in research and development work and to work autonomously in some other qualified capacity.
<i>Judgement and approach</i>	<i>Judgement and approach</i>
D9 demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics, and	L9 demonstrate the ability to make assessments of ethical aspects of his or her own research,
D10 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.	L10 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
	L11 demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning (comp. D7).

¹³ Extract from the Qualifications ordinance, annex 2, Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100)

Admission to doctoral studies – entry requirements

1 Admission requirements – Higher Education Ordinance

The Higher Education Ordinance stipulates that the number of doctoral students that may be admitted by the university may not exceed the number that can be offered supervision and otherwise acceptable conditions for study and whose studies are funded pursuant to the provisions in the Higher Education Ordinance¹⁴.

The requirements for admission to third-cycle courses and study programmes are that the applicant

1. meets the general and specific entry requirements that the university may have laid down, and
2. is considered in other respects to have the ability required to benefit from the course or study programme¹⁵.

2 Entry requirements

2.1 General entry requirements

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

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

The higher education institution may permit an exemption from the general entry requirements for an individual applicant, if there are special grounds¹⁶.

Transitional provisions

A person with *credits or qualifications from undergraduate programmes under the previous higher education system* corresponding to the entry requirements above will also be eligible¹⁷. Exemptions from the entry requirements may be made also in these cases, if there are special grounds¹⁸.

2.2 Specific entry requirements

A person meets the specific entry requirements for third-cycle courses and study programmes in the subject if they have received a passing grade in courses of at least 90 credits, including an independent project on the advanced course level¹⁹ in a main field of study of significance to the research field for functional impairments and disabilities. A person who has acquired substantially corresponding knowledge, in Sweden or abroad, also meets the specific entry requirements.

¹⁴ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 7, Section 34

¹⁵ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 7, Section 35

¹⁶ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 7, Section 39

¹⁷ Point 10, transitional provisions for SFS 2006:1053

¹⁸ Previous transitional provision Point 11 for SFS 2006:1053 expired at the end of June 2015

¹⁹ The “advanced course level” refers to the same level of progression as under the previous higher education system. With the new credit system, the advanced course level thus refers to 61-90 credits within the main field of study.

Transitional provisions

A person with *credits or qualifications from undergraduate programmes under the previous higher education system* corresponding to the entry requirements above will also be eligible²⁰.

2.3 Ability in other respects to benefit from the course or study programme

The assessment whether the applicant has such ability in other respects to benefit from the programme shall be made based on prior courses and programmes taken by the applicant, on other previous activities, as well as on the essays and other independent projects of a scholarly nature that have been submitted by the applicant (compare assessment criteria in accordance with the university's regulations on the selection of doctoral students below).

3 Selection from among the applicants

In selecting between applicants, their ability to benefit from the programme shall be taken into account. The higher education institution determines which assessment criteria shall be used in determining the ability to benefit from the programme.

However, the fact that an applicant is considered able to transfer credits from prior courses and study programmes or for professional or vocational experience may not alone give the applicant priority over other applicants²¹.

Assessment criteria for selection²²

The criteria A - B aim at facilitating an examination of the applicant's ability to benefit from the programme. They should therefore be relevant to the applicant's ability to later achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. The outcomes are described in annex 1 to this general syllabus.

A Courses, study programmes and other previous activities – formal qualifications

The assessment is based on submitted certificates and transcripts as well as on degree certificates and/or course certificates.

Completed courses and study programmes and experience contributing to the applicant's ability to successfully benefit from the programme applied for are considered an additional qualification.

- Courses and study programmes

Special emphasis is given to the scope, depth and grades of the applicant's prior courses and study programmes within the subject area applied for, particularly the grades on written independent projects.

Emphasis is also given to the scope, depth and grades of prior courses and study programmes within other fields of great relevance to the subject area applied for.

²⁰ Point 10, transitional provisions for SFS 2006:1053

²¹ Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 7, Section 41

²² Local regulations on the selection of doctoral students to third-cycle courses and study programmes etc.

- Other previous activities

Special emphasis is given to long and independent professional and/or vocational experience of great relevance to the subject area applied for.

B Capability – demonstrated knowledge, competence and skills

The assessment is based on a consideration of the applicant's submitted essays and other written independent projects of a scholarly nature, as well as on a research plan. For those applicants who at this stage are considered to be most qualified, and if it is deemed necessary, references will be taken and interviews will be carried out.

It is considered an additional qualification if the applicant demonstrates such knowledge, competence and skills that contribute to their being successfully able to benefit from the programme applied for. These are for example

- sound theoretical, analytic and methodological knowledge;
- sound ability to discuss, in writing and in speech, issues and conclusions;
- intellectual independence; and
- sound ability to carry out advanced tasks within given time frames.

Special emphasis is given to the applicant's ability to

- identify and formulate realistic and productive research problems;
- integrate knowledge and experience and apply these in ways and in contexts where they have not previously been used; and
- conduct a dialogue characterised by independence as well as by an ability to cooperate.

C Weighing up qualifications

The fact that an applicant is considered able to transfer credits from prior courses and study programmes or for professional or vocational experience may not alone give the applicant priority over other applicants (Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 7, Section 41).

When weighing up the assessment criteria A and B, the greatest emphasis is placed on criteria B, Capability.

D Gender equality

If, followed from the above, applicants are found to have equal qualifications, preference will be given to applicants of the sex that is underrepresented among the doctoral students within the subject area²³. The underrepresented sex here refers to if and when the share of either female or male students enrolled on the subject area's third-cycle study programme amounts to less than 40 per cent.

²³ Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434), Chapter 1, Section 5, second paragraph and other provisions