

GENERAL SYLLABUS FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES IN MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCES

incl. general syllabus for programmes leading to a licentiate degree.

Most admissions to doctoral studies at Stockholm University should be to programmes leading to a doctoral degree.

National regulations concerning doctoral studies can be found in the *Higher Education Ordinance*, Chapters 5-7, 10, 12 and Appendix 2. In addition, the following rules and regulations are in effect at Stockholm University: *Admission Regulations for Doctoral Studies at Stockholm University*, *Regulations for Third-Cycle Education and Examinations at Stockholm University*, and *Local System of Qualifications for Stockholm University*.

This general syllabus was adopted by the Board of Science on 2013-03-20 and revised on 2017-06-12.

1 Subject description

The subject Molecular Biosciences at Stockholm University includes studies and research in three transdisciplinary profile areas: 1) molecular cell biology, 2) infection and immunobiology, and 3) integrative biology. The subject covers studies of viruses, bacteria, archaea and eukaryotes, with emphasis on a molecular description of the mechanisms that control the organization and dynamics of life processes at the cellular level, as well as cellular development and interactions of cells with their environment in a multicellular context.

2 Programme objectives

In addition to the provisions for first- and second-cycle studies, third-cycle (doctoral) studies should provide the knowledge and skills required to be able to conduct independent research.

The programme leads to a licentiate or doctoral degree. The objectives defined for these degrees in the *Higher Education Ordinance* are presented in sections 5 and 6 below.

Områdesnämnden för naturvetenskap



3 Prerequisites and entry requirements

Admission to doctoral studies requires that the applicant meets the general and specific entry requirements, in addition to being otherwise capable of completing the training.

3.1 General entry requirements

In order to meet the general entry requirements for doctoral studies, the applicant must have completed a second-cycle degree, completed courses equivalent to at least 240 higher education credits (of which 60 credits must be in the second cycle), or have otherwise acquired equivalent knowledge in Sweden or elsewhere.

The academic area board may permit an exemption from the general entry requirements for an individual applicant under special circumstances.

3.2 Specific entry requirements

Specific eligibility and admission to postgraduate education in molecular biosciences requires

- that the applicant at the undergraduate level has at least 120 credits in molecular biology, biology, chemistry or the equivalent
- at least 60 credits at an advanced level in molecular biosciences or the equivalent, of which at least 30 credits must consist of an independent thesis project.

4 Selection and admission

The selection between candidates who meet the entry requirements will be made with reference to their ability to benefit from the training. However, the fact that an applicant is deemed able to transfer credits from previous training or professional experience may not alone give the applicant priority over other applicants in the selection process. Admission decisions are made in accordance with current delegation policies.

The criteria for assessment used in the selection are:

- The applicant's documented subject knowledge, theoretical and experimental, with relevance to the research area.
- The applicant's documented knowledge of scientific theory and method.
- The applicant's suitability such as analytical ability, initiative ability and collaborative ability, supported by a thesis, degree project or equivalent, as well as from the applicants' references and interviews conducted in connection with the admission procedure.

5 Programmes leading to a doctoral degree

5.1 General provisions

Programmes leading to a doctoral degree require four years of full-time study (240 higher education credits).

The program consists of a component of course modules that comprises 50 credits plus the thesis itself. The course component contains three compulsory courses totaling 16 credits, which are common to all doctoral students in the subject, see further section 5.3 below. An individual study plan (see below) of the two parts of the program must be drawn up for each postgraduate student. When approximately two years of full-time studies remain for the completion of the doctoral degree, the doctoral student must fulfill the requirements for the licentiate degree or undergo half-time review.



Licentiate degrees are recommended in the first instance. Even if the course component precedes the thesis component, the student is encouraged to discuss the topic of the thesis at an early stage.

Objectives for doctoral degrees according to the Higher Education Ordinance

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must:

- demonstrate broad knowledge in, and a systematic understanding of, the field of research, together with deep and current specialist knowledge in a defined part of this field;
- demonstrate familiarity with research methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.

Skills and abilities

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must:

- demonstrate an ability to engage in scholarly analysis and synthesis, as well as in independent, critical review and assessment of new and complex phenomena, issues, and situations;
- demonstrate an ability to identify and formulate issues critically, independently, creatively, and with scholarly precision; to plan and conduct research and other advanced tasks using appropriate methods within specified time limits; and to review and evaluate such work;
- demonstrate an ability to make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge through their own research presented in a thesis;
- demonstrate an ability, in both national and international contexts, orally and in writing, to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in dialogue with the scholarly community and society in general;
- demonstrate an ability to identify areas where further knowledge is required;
- demonstrate the potential to contribute to social development and support the learning of others, both in the fields of research and education and in other qualified professional contexts.

Judgement and approach

For a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must:

- demonstrate intellectual independence and scholarly integrity, as well as an ability to make ethical assessments relating to research;
- demonstrate specialised insight into the potential and limitations of research, its role in society, and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

5.2 Individual study plan

An individual study plan must be drawn up for each doctoral student. The individual study plan should include:

- a research plan, including a timetable;
- information relating to how the supervision is organised;
- a plan of which courses/what type of courses the doctoral student is going to take;
- a description of other academic activities, such as participation in seminars and reading courses;
- a description of other obligations the student and the department may have during the training period;
- a financial plan covering the entire period of study;



- if the training is not funded by means of employment, the financial plan should specify what social benefits apply to the type of funding in question, for example in the event of illness or parental leave.

The individual study plan should be drawn up in consultation with the doctoral student and his or her supervisor, and be reviewed at least once a year. The individual study plan should be adopted and reviewed in accordance with current delegation policies. When the individual study plan is reviewed, it should be specified how the doctoral studies relate to the qualitative targets outlined in the *Higher Education Ordinance*.

5.3 Courses and instruction

Compulsory courses are decided by the Institutional Board and must be specified in the individual study plan, stating the course's credits (number of credits).

There are three compulsory courses for postgraduate students in molecular life sciences that are accepted as of 2017-07-01. These are:

- The introductory course (3 credits) given by the biological section's research school, is compulsory for all doctoral students in the section, and includes among other things, ethics and scientific conduct, presentation techniques and publication procedures. Postgraduate students are expected to complete this course during their first 3 semesters following admission.
- The second compulsory course is an overview course of 10 credits with the aim of ensuring broad knowledge in the subject area. It should be started during the student's 3rd or 4th semester and should be approved by semester 6.
- Finally, all doctoral students must complete a writing course "Writing a research proposal" of 3 credits during their first year and preferably during their first three months.

The remaining courses are selected in agreement with the supervisor; these can be supplementary second-cycle courses relevant to the subject, as well as national or international postgraduate courses.

Courses that have already been included for fulfillment of the requirements for special eligibility cannot be counted in the doctoral degree.

The doctoral student should actively participate in seminars discussing current research findings. Courses or instruction may be provided in collaboration with other departments. The doctoral student should make use of the opportunities provided to attend guest lectures, both in their own and adjacent subject areas.

5.4 Thesis

As part of the training, the student must write an academic thesis. The thesis should reflect the doctoral student's ability to complete the selected research task in a scholarly and independent manner, with or without collaboration. The thesis should be of such quality that it could be considered to meet reasonable requirements for publication in an academic journal of good quality. The doctoral thesis should be written either as a unified, coherent academic work (monograph) or as a compilation of academic papers with a summary. The papers may be co-authored with other people, but the doctoral student's contributions must be clearly distinguishable.

The thesis should be written in English. The department is responsible for the English summary of the thesis being translated into Swedish.



5.5 Supervision

Each doctoral student should be assigned a principal supervisor and at least one co-supervisor. At least one of the supervisors should have received training in supervision or be considered to have equivalent qualifications. Decisions regarding supervisors are made in accordance with current delegation policies.

A doctoral student is entitled to change supervisors after a request to the departmental board, in which case the individual study plan should be revised.

5.6 Examination and public defence

In order to receive a degree, the student must have received a pass grade on the thesis and on the course examinations included in the programme. Each course is usually concluded with a written or oral examination. In some cases, continuous examination may take place during teaching sessions or laboratory work. Examinations are assessed using the grades Pass or Fail.

The thesis should be defended orally at a public defence seminar. The defence seminar should follow the regulations of the Academic Area of Science at Stockholm University.

5.7 Credit transfer

Provisions concerning credit transfer can be found in the *Higher Education Ordinance*, Chapter 6, sections 6-8.

Courses that were part of the specific entry requirements cannot be given credit for as part of the doctoral degree.

Decisions regarding credit transfer are made in accordance with current delegation policies.

5.8 Additional information

Doctoral students admitted to research studies in accordance with the study plans employed at the three former institutions that jointly formed the Department of Molecular Biosciences, Wenner-Gren Institute (MBW) on 01-01-2013, have the right to complete their studies according to these study plans, but should also be given the opportunity to change their subject to Molecular Biosciences. At the request of the doctoral student, the department board and supervisor may decide on transitional provisions for such a change of study plan and subject.

6 Programmes leading to a licentiate degree

Under special circumstances, the academic area board may decide to allow admissions to programmes that lead to a licentiate degree worth at least 120 higher education credits. An assessment that funding can be secured for the time required to complete a licentiate degree, but not a doctoral degree, does not alone constitute such a special circumstance.

Decisions to admit students to programmes that lead to a licentiate degree are made in accordance with current delegation policies.

In cases where a student who has been admitted to a programme leading to a licentiate degree wishes to pursue a doctoral degree, a new academic review and an analysis of the financial plan will be carried out before a decision to admit the student to a programme leading to a doctoral degree can be made in accordance with current delegation policies.



6.1 General provisions

A third-cycle programme comprising at least 120 credits, or a part comprising at least 120 credits of a third-cycle programme leading to a doctoral degree, may be completed with a licentiate degree.

The licentiate degree requires a scientific essay of at least 60 credits and an approved course component of at least 25 credits. Even if the course component precedes the thesis component, the student is encouraged to discuss the topic of the thesis at an early stage.

Objectives for licentiate degrees according to the Higher Education Ordinance

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Licentiate, doctoral students must:

- 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.

Skills and abilities

For a Degree of Licentiate, doctoral students must:

- demonstrate an ability to critically, independently, creatively, and with scholarly precision identify and formulate issues, and to plan and, using appropriate methods, complete a limited research project and other qualified tasks within specified time limits, so as to contribute to the development of knowledge and to evaluate this work;
- demonstrate an ability to present and discuss research and research findings clearly, in dialogue with the scholarly community and society in general, orally and in writing, in both national and international contexts;
- demonstrate the skills required to participate independently in research and development and to work independently in other advanced contexts.

Judgement and approach

For a Degree of Licentiate, doctoral students must:

- demonstrate an 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 our responsibility for how it is used;
- demonstrate an ability to identify their need of further knowledge and to take responsibility for developing their knowledge.

6.2 Individual study plan

The individual study plan should be written the same way as for a doctoral degree, see 5.2.

6.3 Courses and instruction

Mandatory courses are decided by the Institutional Board and must be specified in the individual study plan.

Additional courses that can be included in the course component are selected according to the guidelines stated under section 5.3 above.



Courses that have already been included for fulfilment of the requirements for special eligibility cannot be counted in the licentiate degree.

The student should actively participate in seminars discussing current research findings. Courses or instruction may be provided in collaboration with other departments. The student should make use of the opportunities provided to attend guest lectures, both in their own and adjacent subject areas.

6.4 Thesis

As part of the training, the student must write a licentiate thesis. The thesis should be of such quality that it could be considered to meet reasonable requirements for publication in an academic journal of good quality.

6.5 Supervision

See 5.5.

6.6 Examination

The first paragraph of 5.6 also applies to licentiate degrees. The examination of a licentiate thesis takes place in connection with a publicly advertised licentiate seminar and should follow the regulations of the Academic Area of Science at Stockholm University.

6.7 Credit transfer

Provisions concerning credit transfer can be found in the *Higher Education Ordinance*, Chapter 6, sections 6-8.

Courses that were part of the specific entry requirements cannot be given credit for as part of the licentiate degree.

Decisions regarding credit transfer are made in accordance with current delegation policies.