Syllabus for the PhD programme in Media and Communication Studies

This is a translation of Allmän studieplan för utbildning på forskarnivå i medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap. If there are discrepancies between the English and Swedish versions, the latter takes precedence and is the legally binding document.

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1 Learning outcomes
Studies at the third-cycle (PhD) level shall essentially build upon the knowledge gained by students at first- and second-cycle levels or equivalent knowledge. In addition to what applies for studies at first- and second-cycle levels, studies at the third-cycle level shall develop the knowledge and skills needed in order to independently carry out research. (Swedish Higher Education Ordinance, 1 chapter, 9a §)

1.1 Licentiate Degree
According to the Higher Education Ordinance, third-cycle students shall, for a Licentiate Degree:

Knowledge and understanding
• 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
• 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,
• 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
• demonstrate the skills required to participate autonomously in research and development work and to work autonomously in some other qualified capacity.

Judgement and approach
• demonstrate the ability to make assessments of ethical aspects of his or her 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 his or her ongoing learning.

The following requirements shall also apply for a licentiate degree in media and communication studies (local learning outcomes). Licentiate students shall:

**Knowledge and understanding**
• demonstrate knowledge about the history of media and communication studies, applied methods and theoretical perspectives within the field including how they relate to other traditions within the arts and social sciences
• demonstrate knowledge about the specific research field and an ability to relate it to other fields within media and communication studies

**Competence and skills**
• demonstrate ability to independent and critical use and application of methods and theories within media and communication studies through writing a licentiate thesis

**Judgement and approach**
• demonstrate the ability of having a reflexive approach in research, in other words to critically review the research process, one’s own research position within it including a good understanding of the significance and potential impact of the research results on affected parts.

1.2 **Doctoral degree**

According to the Higher Education Ordinance, PhD students shall, for the Degree of Doctor:

**Knowledge and understanding**
• 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
• demonstrate familiarity with scientific methodology in general and the methods of the specific field of research in particular.

**Competence and skills**
• demonstrate the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis as well as to review and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations autonomously and critically
• 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
• demonstrate through a dissertation the ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through his or her own research
• 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
• demonstrate the ability to identify the need for further knowledge and
• 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.
Judgement and approach
- demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics.
- demonstrate specialized insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

The following requirements shall also apply for a doctoral degree in media and communication studies (local learning outcomes). Doctoral students shall:

Knowledge and understanding
- demonstrate broad and deep knowledge about the history of media and communication studies, applied methods and theoretical perspectives within the field including how they relate to other traditions within the arts and social sciences.
- demonstrate broad and deep knowledge about a specific research field and an ability to independently and critically relate it to other research fields within media and communication studies.

Competence and skills
![](https://www.imslp.org/wiki/Image:Music.png) demonstrate ability to independent and critical use and application of methods and theories within media and communication studies through writing a doctoral thesis.

Judgement and approach
- demonstrate the ability of having a reflexive approach in research, in other words to critically review the research process, one’s own research position within it including a good understanding of the significance and potential impact of the research results on affected parts.

2 Eligibility and prior knowledge required

To be admitted to studies at the third-cycle level, the applicant must meet the basic eligibility requirements and any specific eligibility requirements stipulated by the faculty board, and must be deemed to have such abilities as are otherwise required in order to assimilate the education. (Swedish Higher Education Ordinance, chapter 7, 35 §)

2.1 Basic eligibility requirements
The basic eligibility requirements are having been awarded a degree at second-cycle level, having completed course requirements worth at least 240 credits, of which at least 60 credits must be at second-cycle level, or in some other way – either in Sweden or abroad – having acquired largely equivalent knowledge. The faculty board may grant dispensation from the basic eligibility requirements for individual applicants, if special reasons exist. (Swedish Higher Education Ordinance, 7 chapter, 39 §)

2.2 Specific eligibility requirements
In order to meet the specific eligibility requirements for admission to studies in media and communication at the third-cycle level, the applicant must have completed at least 30 credits at second-cycle level in media and communication studies – or the equivalent in other subjects or areas of relevance for the position. Good knowledge in English language is also a requirement.
3 Selection

A selection of applicants who meet the entry requirements will be made with reference to their ability to benefit from PhD studies, and is mainly based on the following assessment criteria: previous study results and the quality of a submitted research plan, where relevant related to the research profiles of the department in question.

However, the sole circumstance that an applicant is deemed to have previous educational or professional experience accredited for these studies may not give the applicant priority over other applicants. (Swedish Higher Education Ordinance, 7 chapter, 41 §)

Licentiate studies are aimed primarily at those who are employed and who wish to develop their competence with studies at the third-cycle level. A decision about admission to studies at the third-cycle level with a licentiate degree as the ultimate objective will be made by the faculty board (may not be delegated), and may only be made when the applicant has submitted a written request to the faculty board (Umeå University’s admission regulations).

A decision about admission to studies at the PhD level with a doctoral degree as the ultimate objective will be made by the head of department at the relevant department, after a report by the director of research studies, following consultation with the professors (or with other representatives) within the relevant main field of study.

If a doctoral student who has taken a licentiate degree and is readmitted with the ultimate aim of taking a doctoral degree, a corresponding reduction of time and funding from the student’s previous third-cycle studies needs to be shown in the individual study plan with a time and funding plan.

4 Structure and content of the studies

4.1 Structure

Studies in media and communication studies at the third-cycle level conclude with a licentiate degree or a doctoral degree. Studies consist of 120 credits for a licentiate degree and 240 credits for a doctoral degree. A doctoral student who has been admitted to studies at PhD level with a doctoral degree as the ultimate objective may, if he or she so desires, take a licentiate degree as an intermediate objective.

Studies in media and communication studies at the third-cycle level that conclude with a licentiate degree span two years of net studying time, and consist of a course element worth 30 credits and a licentiate dissertation worth 90 credits.

Studies in media and communication studies at the third-cycle level that conclude with a doctoral degree span four years of net studying time, and consist of a course element worth 60 credits and a doctoral thesis worth 180 credits.

As soon as possible after admission, the head of department appoints a main supervisor and an assistant supervisor, following a report by the director of research studies. For every doctoral student, an individual study plan is drawn up, in which funding,
supervision, courses, thesis work, etc. are detailed. The plan is established by the head of department following a report by the director of research studies. The study plan is reviewed and updated at least once a year.

All students at the third-cycle level must be affiliated with a graduate school. Students are normally affiliated with the Faculty of Arts Doctoral College. In cases where a student is to be affiliated with another graduate school, this is stated when the student is admitted and when the individual study plan is drawn up.

4.2 Content

The courses in the PhD programme in media and communication studies can be divided in two categories – compulsory basic courses and specialization courses. Doctoral students aiming for a doctoral degree need to complete 60 credits of courses and/or reading (literature) reviews. The equivalent amount for doctoral students aiming for a licentiate degree is 30 credits. Compulsory basic courses constitute at least 22.5 worth of credits for both types of degrees (doctoral and licentiate).

Compulsory basic courses at third-cycle level in media and communication studies are (regularly) given as teacher-led courses and orientation basic courses (7.5 credits each) in media theory, media history and research method are taught at the university. And in the cases when this is not possible, these compulsory basic courses are offered as individual reading courses.

The remaining credits for specialist courses that each doctoral student takes are decided in dialogue with the supervisor and included in the individual study plan. Doctoral students have the opportunity and (are recommended) to take courses at other universities in Sweden and abroad, if decided in dialogue with supervisor(s). Specialization courses for doctoral students are generally offered as reading courses, but can also occasionally be offered at the Department and/or at the Faculty.

Specialization courses, with a focus on a particular thesis subject, are designed in dialogue with the supervisor(s). Reading lists exists for previously established and specialization courses (held before 2014). They need to be updated in dialogue with the supervisor(s) in relation to each thesis subject – and releases of more updated literature. The reading for these type of courses is mainly done individually, but can also be conducted in groups of PhD-students.

All PhD-students affiliated to the Faculty of Arts Doctoral College takes the compulsory course package offered there. A total of 15 credits of courses are offered by the Faculty of Arts Doctoral College, and 10 credits are compulsory for each PhD-student aiming for a doctoral degree. For PhD-students aiming for a licentiate degree, a total of 12.5 credits are given within the Faculty of Arts Doctoral College, and a total of 7.5 credits are compulsory. Compulsory courses within the Faculty of Arts Doctoral College can – in dialogue with supervisor(s) – be exchanged for other courses.

The examination of courses at third-cycle level can be in oral and written form. Tasks are given the grade pass or fail.
The higher seminar in media and communication studies is a central part of the doctoral programme. Phd-students are expected to take active part. Research projects and manuscripts are discussed, as well as newly published literature and drafted articles, with Faculty members, both researchers and teachers, in media and communication studies. Guests from other Departments and universities are invited a couple of times each semester. PhD-students are expected to present and discuss a manuscript (drafted article or chapter in the thesis) at least once a year at the higher seminar.

A “mid-point review seminar” is also compulsory for all PhD-students at the Faculty of Arts (dnr. 500-1227-12). The mid-point review seminar is planned to take part at about mid-term of the candidacy. A final seminar is also compulsory for PhD-students - and expected to take part about six months before the viva.

Courses in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education can be included as second courses, 1.5 credits per course week, maximum 7.5 credits. Courses must be completed for points to be reported.

4.3 Licentiate dissertation/Doctoral thesis

The licentiate dissertation/doctoral thesis can take the form of either a single, continuous scientific work (a monograph) or a compilation of scientific articles. A dissertation by publication (a compilation of scientific articles) needs an introduction that binds the different parts together including a summary of them written by the doctoral student alone. It needs to be clearly stated what is the doctoral student’s own contribution, and (if such is the case) what materials have been contributed by others.

A doctoral thesis by publication should include 3-5 scientific articles, and at least two of them are expected to be accepted for publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals. A licentiate thesis should include at least two articles and one of them ought to be accepted for publication in a peer-review journal. For more information about the dissertation by publication format, see “Riktlinjer för sammanläggningsavhandlingar vid humanistisk fakultet”, and the “Handbook for Doctoral Students” at Faculty of Arts. The licentiate dissertation must be defended orally at a public seminar. It is assessed as either a pass or a fail. The final grade is based on both the content of the dissertation and its defense.

The doctoral dissertation must be defended orally at a public seminar. It is assessed as either a pass or a fail. The final grade is based on both the content of the dissertation and its defense.

5 The degree

A licentiate degree in media and communication studies is achieved once the doctoral student has completed studies at the third-cycle level worth 120 credits and has received a pass grade in the tests included in the studies, and has written, and defended at a seminar, a licentiate dissertation, which has been passed by the examining committee.

A doctoral degree in media and communication studies is achieved once the doctoral student has completed studies at the third-cycle level worth 240 credits and has received a pass grade in the tests included in the studies, and has written, and defended at a public defense, a doctoral thesis, which has been passed by the examining committee.

A degree certificate will be issued on application to Student Services/the Degree Evaluation Office.
6 Other instructions

The provisions that apply in respect to third-cycle studies can be found in:

- The Swedish Higher Education Ordinance: Chapter 5 (Employment as Doctoral Student, etc.), Chapter 6 (Studies) and Chapter 7 (Access to Education), Appendix 2 (Degree Ordinance) and transitional regulations
- Admission regulations for studies at the third-cycle level at Umeå University (FS 1.12-25-14)
- Local degree ordinance at Umeå University (FS 1.1.2-482-14)