



Faculty Board

## **Development Plan for Third-Cycle Education in Service Studies at the Department of Service Management and Service Studies**

### **Background**

During the 2021 spring semester, a self-appraisal was carried out by the Department of Service Management and Service Studies (ISM). It covered all levels of education, from the first to the third cycle.

External experts Professor Stefan Tengblad, of the University of Gothenburg, and Professor Johanna Moisander, of Aalto University in Finland, made a series of recommendations based on the self-appraisal and other materials (such as interviews) in accordance with Lund University's eleven criteria for quality improvements. The result of the external experts' work was summarised in a report, which was discussed with the external experts at a meeting in October 2021.

The external experts' report was also discussed by the department's Supervisory Committee on two occasions: 24 November 2021, and an extra meeting for this matter alone, on 9 February 2022. An earlier version of the Development Plan was presented to the Department Board and the Faculty Board in spring 2022. The current plan is based on opinions expressed in these forums. The Development Plan was subsequently presented to the department's Supervisory Committee, on 5 October 2022, as well as at the Department Board's meeting on 19 October 2022. This version of the plan has been updated, taking into account opinions expressed on those occasions.

## Development areas

The external experts identified four strengths in the department's third-cycle education: highly qualified, engaged doctoral students, the use of supervisory committees comprising two or three supervisors per doctoral student, the fact that doctoral students are employed and a strongly collegiate, supportive and informal organisation. These strengths should be retained in future development work.

The external experts identified five challenges pertaining to current third-cycle education:

1. the education has a diffuse profile – what kind of labour market is the department educating doctoral students for?
2. diffuse learning outcomes for third-cycle education
3. weak integration of doctoral students into research teams
4. unclear whether doctoral students are offered career planning support
5. the number of third-cycle courses, and the frequency with which they are offered, is unclear

The evaluators arrived at a number of recommendations for the development of third-cycle education at the department, relating to each of the challenges above.

1. The development of an updated syllabus for third-cycle courses: *make clear the aims* of the third-cycle education, in particular in terms of the skills that those who complete the programme are expected to have. The evaluation group expressed concern that it may prove difficult to satisfy requirements for expertise both for those aiming for a career outside academia and for those heading for a career within academia. It is felt that the aims of the third-cycle education are not clear as *to which group the education is primarily intended for*. This work should be undertaken *alongside doctoral students and other teaching staff*. Creating a broad group that can work on this obtains more perspectives on the learning outcomes of the education and the activities undertaken to secure them. The evaluation group proposes that

the programme syllabus contain a description of the ideal profile for doctoral students at the department.

2. The development of an updated general syllabus for the third-cycle programme: *make clear the learning outcomes of third-cycle education*. The evaluation group considers that the description of the learning outcomes, and how these are to be achieved needs to be developed in the existing general syllabus for the third-cycle programme. The evaluation group points out that doctoral students are often expected to identify their own learning needs, without support from the programme syllabus. The programme syllabus should clearly define the knowledge, the skills and the approaches that the students are expected to learn, and the syllabus should be developed on that basis, for example, by stimulating (fostering) critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and other relevant skills within the academic labour market, including publication in high-ranking journals.
3. The evaluation group expresses concern about the theoretical basis for the subject of service studies, stating that the area is primarily empirically defined, representing not a clearly disciplined field or cohesive network of researchers, but rather several approaches with distinct theoretical origins, which may cause difficulty in the forming of a common academic identity and disciplinary base. According to the evaluation group, research teams with clearer profiles could create a better basis for theoretical grounding and provide a clearer identity for new teaching staff as well as doctoral students. In conclusion, the evaluation group underline how internationalisation through contacts with international research networks for individual doctoral students is important and should be nurtured, for example through participation in international conferences and the development of strategic collaborations with higher education institutions outside Sweden.
4. Development of career planning support. The evaluators propose that the department develop clearer career planning support for doctoral students that includes advice, mentoring

and other measures that help the doctoral student to find employment in an international labour market after completing their education. This could, for example, be part of the Supervisory Committee's remit.

5. Review of the third-cycle courses offered. The evaluators note that the courses offered at the department should be reviewed and developed in order to support the learning outcomes that the education is based upon.

### Plan for development work

Given the five assessments above, the following development measures are proposed for the period 2022-2024

#### **1. Review of programme syllabus for the third-cycle education, broad collaboration within the department**

- The review will focus on formulated learning outcomes and activities to achieve them, but the extent of compulsory credits in the education as a whole, as well as career planning support and more have all been identified as development points by the evaluation group.
- The programme syllabus will be re-examined in terms of the phrasing about prioritised future labour markets for those obtaining a doctoral degree within the department, and how the skills in demand can be secured through the education. The learning outcomes for third-cycle education are to be made clearer in terms of the types of expertise the doctoral student profile needs to acquire during the third-cycle education.
- The work is led by the director of research studies, who engages with the Doctoral Student Committee and other staff in the concrete development work.
- The work began in autumn 2022, and is expected to be completed in 2024, resulting in a revised general syllabus for the third-cycle programme.

## **2. Clarification of the third-cycle education's links with the department's research strategy**

The evaluation group recommended that the department strengthen existing research profiles, and in so doing secure doctoral students' access to active research environments at the department. In addition, the department wishes to strengthen the connection between third-cycle education and the research strategy that has been approved. This necessitates further work to create research teams in which doctoral students are naturally included, as well as ensuring that the third-cycle education is structured in a way that strengthens, and is strengthened by, the research strategy at the department.

Developed collaborations with the research teams is a central element in the department's research strategy and concrete efforts are ongoing to form and establish these. As part of that process, each doctoral student is linked to a research team. When it comes to the recruitment of doctoral students financed by the department, the department has already begun directing recruitment to the profiles that the research teams have.

- Work with the research teams has been ongoing since spring 2022, and includes clearer scientific discussions within the respective research teams, while the department's higher seminars enable broad dialogue between research teams and between all doctoral students and researchers at the department.
- The work with the research teams is led by the coordinator of the respective group (professor), in consultation with the head of department.

The assessment group see challenges in that service studies is an empirical area rather than a theoretical field. They have therefore recommended a clarification of the theoretical approaches that are central to the department's research in order to make it easier for doctoral students to operationalise learning outcomes and in order to identify with a research collective at the department and internationally. This development point has at least two parts. One relates to the schooling-in of the doctoral student and identification

with various theoretical approaches used by researchers active in the department. The other pertains to making this kind of theoretical knowledge available to doctoral students not previously familiar with it through third-cycle courses.

There is also an acknowledged problem with the irregularity of third-cycle courses, partly because of the low number of doctoral students admitted (1 or 2 per year), which makes it difficult to obtain sufficient numbers of participants for regularly recurring third-cycle courses. This is further exacerbated by the number of credits being relatively high (75 credits). The department has acted upon the points raised and work is ongoing to review course structure and course frequency.

- In the period 2022-2023, the department is developing a proposed new structure and content for third-cycle courses, building on key theoretical approaches within the department's research, and thereby enabling a sustainable supply of teaching staff on third-cycle courses. One concrete aim is to develop regularly recurring third-cycle courses in service studies that are run even with low numbers of participants.
- The director of research studies will lead this work and establish proposals in the Supervisory Committee and Doctoral Students Committee, the board, the Council of Professors and the department as a whole.
- Additionally, an assessment of the number of credits and what might form the basis of credits will be undertaken.
- This work will start in autumn 2022 and be led by the director of research studies and will be established in the Supervisory Committee and the board during 2023.