

Individual study plan – Guidelines

The individual study plan is an important tool to ensure the quality of graduate education. The study plan should from the outset extend over the entire study period. One important reason is that the student and the supervisor agree on what is expected to happen over the next 4-5 years. It should be emphasized that the study plan is not a research plan but a plan for how the qualitative targets (“examensmålen”) will be achieved. These targets are regulated in the system of qualification (“examensordningen”).

Contents

A study plan should contain the following formal data:

- Name
- Swedish personal identity number (“personnummer”)
- Subject of graduate education
- Department, unit
- Main supervisor and other supervisors
- Email address
- Date of admission
- Planned semester/study period (“termin”) for dissertation
- Planned date when the thesis will be printed
(definite date decided during your last year)
- Planned date when the thesis should be made public (“spikad”)
(decided definitely last year)
- Planned date when the thesis should be distributed
(decided definitely last year)
- Type of thesis : summary or monograph
(final choice is made a year in advance)
- For Summary: how many publications to be included. A thesis is recommended to normally contain at least two accepted publications and two manuscripts-in-preparation
- Estimated date of submission of first manuscript, and other milestones
- Language of thesis
- How much the course work and the thesis part is in credits (“högskolepoäng”)
- Which courses are parts of the doctoral studies.
- Milestones for learning outcomes (see goals in the “exam-order”)
- What resources will be available: offices, lab space, equipment, time for tutoring and other infrastructure needed for the studies to be conducted in an efficient manner
- Planned date of half-time seminar
- Any external legal contracts that are relevant to the postgraduate studies
- Clear and detailed plan for the first year's work

Employee interviews

The PhD student should have employee interviews (“medarbetarsamtal”) with supervisors and another person designated by the department. The PhD student should (no matter who the employee interview is made with) also have the opportunity to converse privately with another person (appointed by the Department) than the supervisor. If necessary, this person will then talk with the supervisors. The employee interview should be done annually. Responsible for this happening is the Head of Department but it can be delegated. The PhD student should have the opportunity to influence with whom the employee interview will take place.

Establishment of study plan

In the preparation of a study plan, there should be a meeting with the student, the supervisor, possible assistant supervisor and head of department (or other appropriate person) to ensure that the plan is reasonable and clear enough.

Follow up of study plan

The individual study plan should be updated once a year, but it can be done more often. In particular, an update should be made whenever any significant deviation from the plan occurs, e.g. if the expected results fail to materialize. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring the update of the study plan is done.

The update is done by the student and the supervisor together. The updated study plan is then agreed in a meeting between the student, supervisor and one other person, such as subject representative. At the same time, the learning outcomes and the corresponding milestones should be discussed.

Funding

It is important that funding is reported for the entire study from the outset. Which grants are used, which shared faculty resources used, etc. If known funding is lacking for the last part of the studies, it is important to have a plan for how it will be resolved if the anticipated resources fail to materialize.

Graduate students are not responsible for the funding, but it may be desirable that they know how their salary is funded and any conditions attached to the funding such as particular project goals. Especially in projects fully financed by external funds, it is important to follow the guidelines that the financier set. Formally, it is the department that has primary responsibility for the funding.

Tutoring

A doctoral student must have at least two supervisors, one of whom is the principal supervisor. The intention in the higher education ordinance (“högskoleförordningen”) is that both supervisors play an active role rather than have one active and the other simply a “paper construction. The following shall be documented:

- A principal supervisor
- One or more other supervisors
- Supervision, extent (minimum number of hours estimated), and nature from each supervisor

Research plan – thesis work

The thesis work shall be continuously reported in the study plan with regard to both extent and nature. Both the planned activity and the actual outcome should be reported. If large deviations occur it should be commented on.

It is particularly important that there is a clear and detailed plan for the first year's work.

Departmental duties

All forms of departmental duties must be reported in the study plan, both the extent and the nature, e.g. if it is teaching, responsibility for equipment, etc. It should be recognized both the intended scope and the actual scope. If there are large discrepancies it should be commented on.

Courses and other elements that earn credit

At an early stage a plan should be made for the courses to be included in the exam. All courses should be recognized and it should be reported in the study plan which courses are part of the doctoral studies. In the general study plan the mandatory courses for each subject is specified.

The PhD student and the supervisor(s), in cooperation, make a plan for which courses should be included. When doing this, one should take into account the system of qualifications (“examensordningen”) target for broad knowledge combined with deep specialist expertise.

Courses that are completed as part of previous studies can be used for credit transfer. These must be courses in addition to those that are entry requirements (“behörighetsgrundande”). To be eligible for graduate studies the student must have 240 credits while a Master of Science degree in Sweden is at 300 credits. It should be noted that at least 60 credits of the 240 credits must be at the advanced level, and the Faculty of Science requires a thesis of 30 credits. The balance of 60 credits can be used for credit transfer. However, it should not be more than 50 % of the course requirements that consist of credited courses.

An accreditation of undergraduate and FU courses take place at the student's request and must be approved by the department head. The courses should be relevant to the Ph D project. A credit transfer means that the time for doctoral studies is shortened correspondingly.

There may be other elements that will give credits and they should be recognized in the same way as courses.

Learning outcomes

In the individual study plan the system of qualification (“examensordning”) goals should be taken into account. For example this can be done through evaluations of the skills the graduate student has achieved on a few occasions during the studies. It is useful to put these occasions as milestones. It is suggested that the learning outcomes are discussed at each update of the study plan.

Interim targets

A study plan should contain well-defined milestones such as when the first manuscript is to be sent in for publication. Research is inherently difficult to predict, but there should be milestones defined for the entire study period and these may be updated as the project progresses.

Suitable targets include e.g. approximate times when publications will be drafts, submitted, etc., a half-time seminar, participation in conference(s) with oral presentation or a poster, when research results for the sub-projects are to be completed and review of learning objectives.

Gantt chart

A Gantt chart adds no new information, but makes the whole process transparent.

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