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The management office
(ledningskansliet)

This document is a translation. In case of a discrepancy between the Swedish original and the English version of the decision, the Swedish original will prevail.

Guideline on Third-Cycle Studies

This regulation has been approved by the President (reference number V-2019-0111). The regulation is valid from 13 February 2019 and was last modified on 1 May 2025 (reference number HS-2025-0632). The management office (ledningskansliet) is responsible for supervision and questions regarding the steering document.

The regulation governs questions regarding studies on a third-cycle level. The regulation describes, among other things, tasks to be performed and who will perform the tasks. If the person who is to perform a particular task is prevented to do so by conflict of interest, illness or other similar circumstances, it is the Head of School's responsibility to allocate the task according to the Head of School's right to manage and distribute the work within the school. If the Head of School assesses that the task cannot be handled within the school, the Head of School should hand the matter over to the President.

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1 Third-cycle qualification

1.1 Degree of Doctor

Summary of provisions in Annex II to the Higher Education Ordinance

A Degree of Doctor is obtained after the doctoral student has completed an education of 240 ECTS in a subject for studies on a third-cycle level. In order to obtain a Degree of Doctor, the doctoral student must have received a passing grade on an academic thesis (doctoral thesis) of at least 120 ECTS.

KTH's precise requirements

The doctoral student must have completed courses of at least 60 ECTS, of which 45 ECTS must be on a third-cycle level and no more than 10 ECTS can be on a first-cycle level.

In addition to the general course requirement, a maximum of 60 additional ECTS for courses at any level may be included in the study plan for the subject.

The doctoral student must also meet the specified requirements decided by KTH in the general study plan for the subject.

For students admitted before December 31, 2013, decision V-2012-0908 applies.

1.2 Degree of Licentiate

Summary of provisions in Annex II to the Higher Education Ordinance

A Degree of Licentiate is obtained after the doctoral student has completed an education of 120 ECTS in a subject for studies on a third-cycle level. In order to obtain a Degree of Licentiate, the doctoral student must have received a passing grade on an academic thesis (doctoral thesis) of at least 60 ECTS.

KTH's precise requirements

The doctoral student must have completed courses of at least 30 ECTS, of which at least 15 ECTS must be on a third-cycle level and no more than 10 ECTS can be on a first-cycle level.

In addition to the general course requirement, a maximum of 30 additional ECTS for courses at any level may be included in the study plan for the subject.

The doctoral student must also meet the specified requirements decided by KTH in the general study plan for the subject.

For students admitted before December 31, 2013, decision V-2012-0908 applies.

1.3 Title of qualifications

A third-cycle qualification at KTH is referred to as a *Degree of Licentiate of Engineering* or a *Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*. In individual cases, following a decision according to the below mentioned, other prefixes (e.g. *Philosophy*) may be used.

Decision on other prefixes than degree

Decisions on other prefixes are made by the Director of Third-Cycle Education early in the doctoral student's studies, and never later than five weeks before the specified date for a licentiate seminar or public thesis defense. Decisions must take into account the doctoral student's focus in her/his studies at the first-cycle and second-cycle level or background in the subject area, as well as the focus of her/his studies on a third-cycle level at KTH.

2 Subject

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provisions:

Chapter 6 § 25 A university or higher education institution that may issue third-cycle qualifications must decide on the subjects in which studies third-cycle level are to be organized. Ordinance (2010:1064).

2.1 Establishment of a subject

An application to set up a subject must include:

- The subject and classification of the subject according to the standards for the Swedish classification of research subjects (SCB),
- The doctoral program in which the subject is to be included. If the subject is to be included in an existing doctoral program, the revised program description must be attached to the application. If the subject is to be included in a new doctoral program, the application for the establishment of a doctoral program must be submitted at the same time.
- Description of current research in the subject area.
- Needs and external environmental analyses covering:
 - Possible collaborative partners and stakeholders.
 - Related subjects at KTH.
 - Recruitment basis, target group.
 - Equal opportunity perspective (this may relate to aspects such as the subject's orientation, as well as current and historical gender distribution among students, teachers and researchers).
 - Sustainability perspective.
- Description of available resources and any need for renewal in relation to:
 - Research environment.
 - Supervisors.
 - Financing.
 - Infrastructure.
- Proposal for a general study plan for the subject. The proposal must be designed according to KTH's template for the general study plan (see also Section 2.1.1.).

Application and continued preparation

The School Faculty Board and the Director of Third-Cycle Studies apply for the establishment of a subject. If several schools are involved, the School Faculty Board and the Director of Third-Cycle Studies at the affected schools must support the application in writing.

The application is submitted to the Faculty Council through the management office (ledningskansliet inom verksamhetsstödet). The Faculty Council prepares the application and submits a proposal to the President for a decision.

2.2 Discontinue subject or change the name of subject

An application to discontinue a subject or change the name of a subject must include:

- A justification.
- Date of discontinuation/name change.
- Management of existing doctoral students.
- Transitional provisions clarifying how KTH will ensure that admitted doctoral students are given the opportunity to complete their studies within the subject and/or doctoral programme, and within what time frame they may do so. (Does not apply to proposals for name changes.)

The application for the discontinuation/name change of the subject is made by the School Faculty Board and the Director of Third-Cycle Studies at the school in question. If several schools are involved, the School Faculty Board and the Director of Third-Cycle Studies at the affected schools must support the application in writing.

The application is submitted to the Faculty Council through the management office (ledningskansliet inom verksamhetsstödet). The Board of Education prepares the application and submits a proposal to the President for a decision.

2.3 Decision on subject

The President decides on issues that concern establishing, modifying and discontinuing subjects

Once the decision has been made on a change or discontinuation, the responsible school must inform doctoral students, supervisors and other stakeholders about the change or discontinuation and its consequences.

3 General study plan

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provisions:

Chapter 6, § 26 For each subject in which third-cycle studies are organized, there shall be a general study plan. Ordinance (2010:1064).

Chapter 6 § 27 In a general study plan, the following must be outlined: The primary content of the education program, the requirements for special qualifications, and the other regulations that are required. Ordinance (2010:1064).

3.1 Template for general study plan

The management office (ledningskansliet) provides the template for the general study plan to be used. The template is published on the intranet.

3.2 Amendment of the general study plan

The application for an amendment of the general study plan for the subject is prepared at the school or schools in question according to the process of processing provided by the School Faculty Board.

3.3 Decision on the general study plan

In accordance with the delegation order (*delegationsordning för KTH V-2022-0779*) the School Faculty Board decides on issues of accepting, amending and repealing general study plan.

Once the decision has been made on an amendment or a repeal, the responsible school must inform doctoral students, supervisors and other stakeholders about the amendment or repeal and its consequences.

4 Doctoral programmes

KTH's subjects in studies on third-cycle level are coordinated into doctoral programmes in order to strengthen the quality of education and to enable cohesion between groups of doctoral students. A doctoral programme must have at least 15 doctoral students and 10 supervisors.

4.1 Establishing KTH's doctoral programmes

An application to establish a subject must include:

- Programme description according to KTH's template (see 4.1.1).
- Current subject study plan(s) or application for the establishment of a third-cycle subject.
- Available infrastructure.
- Opportunities for international collaboration.
- Existing related doctoral programmes at KTH.
- Description of the composition and tasks of the programme council.
- Proposal(s) for the school that is the Programme Director (if several schools are affected).

4.1.1 Template for programme description

The template shall be provided by the Management office and published on the intranet.

4.1.2 Application and continued preparation

The application is prepared by the Director of Third-Cycle Studies. If several schools are involved, the School Faculty Boards at the schools in question must provide a statement.

The application is submitted to the School Faculty Board.

4.2 Change programme and programme description

An application to amend the programme or the programme description must include (see Section 4.3 for change of name):

- An account for the proposed amendments.
- Justification for the proposed amendments.
- Date on which the amendment is to take effect.
- Transitional provisions, if any.

Application and continued preparation

The application is prepared by the Programme Director of the Doctoral Programme and must be approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies.

The application is submitted to the School Faculty Board.

4.3 Discontinue or change name of a doctoral programme

An application to discontinue doctoral programmes or change the name of a doctoral programme must include:

- A justification.
- Date of discontinuation/name change.
- Management of existing doctoral students.
- Transitional provisions clarifying how KTH will ensure that admitted doctoral students are given the opportunity to complete their studies within the subject and/or doctoral programme, and within what time frame they may do so. (Does not apply to proposals for name changes.)

Application and continued preparation

The application is prepared by the Programme Director of the Doctoral Programme and must be approved by the Director of Doctoral Studies.

4.4 The application is submitted to the School Faculty Board. Decision on doctoral programmes

In accordance with the delegation order (delegationsordning för KTH V-2022-0779) the School Faculty Board decides on issues of establishing, changing and discontinuing doctoral programmes. Doctoral programmes based at more than one school at a time are decided by the President.

Once the decision on a change or discontinuation has been made, the responsible school must inform doctoral students, supervisors and other stakeholders about the decision and its consequences.

5 Course and syllabus

When third-cycle education is conducted in the form of a course, there must be a syllabus for the course. Questions concerning the syllabus, examiner and examination of third-cycle courses are regulated in *guidelines on syllabus, grading system and examination at all levels of studies* (V-2020-0650).

6 Admitted doctoral student

6.1 Starting doctoral studies

Admitted doctoral students must have taken up their place of study within three months of the date of admission. Doctoral students who apply for a residence permit must have taken up their place of study within one year. Claiming their place of study means that the doctoral student must be registered, have a KTH account and be in place at the university where the studies will be conducted (normally at KTH, but exceptions may occur, for example in the case of agreements within educational cooperation).

For admitted doctoral students, supervisors must be appointed and an individual study plan must be drawn up, see also the *admission regulations at KTH* (V-2016-0944).

6.2 Supervision

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provision:

Chapter 6 § 28 For each doctoral student, at least two supervisors must be appointed. One of them will be appointed as principal supervisor. The doctoral student has the right to supervision during her/his training, unless the President, with the support of § 30, decides otherwise.

A doctoral student must be allowed to change supervisors if she/he requests this. Ordinance (2010:1064).

In the case of educational collaborations, the supervisor at KTH shall be appointed as the principal supervisor.

6.2.1 Requirements for being appointed as principal supervisor

The following may be appointed as principal supervisors:

1. Anyone who is employed at KTH as a professor or visiting professor.
2. A person who is employed at KTH as an adjunct professor and who is also accepted as a docent.
3. A person who is employed permanently at KTH as an associate professor, lecturer or researcher and who is also accepted as a docent.
4. A person who is employed as assistant professor and who is also accepted as a docent.

The principal supervisor must have completed university training related to doctoral supervision on a third-cycle level, or possess equivalent competence.

Supervisors must be active in the subject of the third-cycle subject or in a subject related to the third-cycle subject.

In the cases specified in points 1-4 above, the principal supervisor must have an employment rate of at least 20 percent of full-time working hours. In the event that the principal supervisor is employed on a temporary basis, the remaining period of employment will be taken into account in relation to the doctoral student's remaining education time. Other circumstances, such as retirement, will also be taken into account.

6.2.2 This individual can then be appointed as an assistant supervisor

An appointed assistant supervisor must have been awarded the qualification of Degree of Doctor or have the equivalent scientific or artistic competence or any other professional skills that are of significant importance. Corresponding scientific or artistic competence is considered to be (1) A completed foreign third-cycle education programme, or (2) scientific or artistic work corresponding to a doctoral thesis in the subject area and documented experience of research activities corresponding to the fulfilment of key learning outcomes for third-cycle studies in the subject area.

The assistant supervisor must have completed university training related to doctoral supervision on a third-cycle level, or possess equivalent competence.

6.2.3 The responsibilities and tasks of a supervisor

Once the doctoral student has been admitted to her/his programme, the principal supervisor must develop an individual study plan. Once the study plan has been decided, the principal supervisor is responsible for conducting a follow-up at least once a year, and for making changes to the plan to the extent that is necessary, as well as for ensuring the fulfilment of KTH's commitments. (See also Section 6.3.)

The principal supervisor is responsible for supervising the doctoral student and for ensuring that the course studies and thesis work can be conducted at an appropriate pace. In addition, the principal supervisor must, among other things, propose special reviewers at the licentiate seminar and opponents and grading committee members at the public defence of the doctoral thesis (see Sections 7.3 and 7.4).

The responsibility and duties of assistant supervisors must be outlined in the doctoral student's individual study plan.

All supervisors must plan for anything that might affect the supervisor's availability to the doctoral student.

6.2.4 Change of supervisors

This is outlined in Chapter 6. § 28 second paragraph of the Higher Education Ordinance states that a doctoral student who requests it should be allowed to change supervisors.

The request for a change of supervisor is made to the Director of Third-Cycle Studies, or to the Head of School in the event that the Director of Third-Cycle Studies is the doctoral student's supervisor. Such a request must be dealt with expeditiously. When deciding on a new supervisor, the individual study plan shall be amended in accordance with Section 6.3.

In practice, the right to change supervisors is subject to limitations resulting from the availability of qualified supervisors and other factual circumstances (further guidance can be found in the Higher Education Appeals Board decision 03-17-2006, Reg. no 451-462-05, as well as the former Swedish National Agency for Higher Education's report *Fakultetsnämndernas tillsyn över utbildningen på forskarnivå ur rättssäkerhetsperspektiv* (2008:5 R)).

Examples of other circumstances that may result in a change of supervisor

- If the employment situation of the principal supervisor changes, the tasks of principal supervisor should be reviewed. If the principal supervisor's employment at KTH is terminated, this will normally also conclude her/his assignment as supervisor. This individual can then be appointed as an assistant supervisor. If special reasons exist, the

individual may stay on as the principal supervisor, e.g., if the doctoral student will soon complete her/his degree.

- If there is a circumstance that raises a question of conflict of interest under Section 16-18 of the Administrative Act (2017:900), such as a friendship relationship or conflict between a doctoral student and supervisor.
- If the collaboration between doctoral student and supervisor is clearly not working.

Consultation prior to the decision

The Head of School must consult the Director of Third-Cycle Studies and the doctoral student before a decision is made.

6.2.5 Decision to appoint a supervisor

Heads of School appoint supervisors. The right to make such a decision may only be sub-delegated to the Director of Third-Cycle Studies.

6.3 Individual study plan

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provision:

Chapter 6, § 29 For each doctoral student, an individual study plan shall be drawn up. The plan shall include the university's and the doctoral student's commitments, as well as a timetable for the doctoral student's education. The plan shall be determined following consultation with the doctoral student and her or his supervisor.

The individual study plan shall be regularly followed up and, following consultation with the doctoral student and her or his supervisor, it may be changed by the university to such extent as is deemed necessary. The duration of the student's education may be extended only if there are special reasons to do so. Such reasons may include leave due to sickness, leave for total defense service, leave to undertake a position of trust in a trade union or student organization, or parental leave. Ordinance (2010:1064).

6.3.1 Content

KTH's obligations must be stated in the student's individual study plan. The study plan is a governing document for the student's entire education program, and shall efficaciously contribute to her/his training and follow-up. The study plan must be concretely designed. This does not exclude the possibility that the plan may initially be incomplete; e.g., in the beginning, the latter part of education may be planned in less concrete terms. However, the study plan for the coming year must be detailed. In normal cases, KTH's system support for individual study plans should be used. The system support outlines the content of the study plan. In cases where individual study plans cannot be established through the system support, e.g., in educational collaborations, the doctoral student's study plan must contain equivalent content, to the extent that it is possible. The principal supervisor is responsible for developing the study plan (see also Section 6.2.3).

If the doctoral student is employed in accordance with Chapter 5. § 1 of the Higher Education Ordinance, the study plan must have a clear link between the predetermined sub-objectives and the local collective agreement on doctoral pay (the so-called doctoral ladder).

In the case of educational collaboration, the mobility that is included must be stated and a guideline value is that the doctoral student must be 50 percent at KTH.

Doctoral students at KTH shall, if necessary, be given the opportunity to take a course in Swedish at university level (first cycle or second cycle). The course may be included in the third cycle course credits but may not exceed 10 credits.

6.3.2 Decisions and amendment of decisions

The Head of School decides to admit and amend the individual study plan, after consultation with the doctoral student and supervisor. (May be sub-delegated to the Director of Third Cycle Education).

The work on a first version of the individual study plan shall be initiated no later than one month after the doctoral student has taken up his/her place of study. The process must be initiated by the principal supervisor. This first version of the plan shall be established within three months of when the doctoral student takes the given place of study.

The principal supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the individual study plan is revised at least once a year and that further follow-ups are made. Initiatives for revision and follow-up can also be taken by the doctoral student, assistant supervisor and Program Director. The Director of Third Cycle Education must ensure that follow-up is carried out regularly.

6.3.3 The transfer of credits

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provisions:

Chapter 6, § 7 A student has the right to have their previous knowledge and skills formally recognised. However, a student's previous knowledge and skills cannot be formally recognised if they are found to differ considerably from the knowledge and skills required for the particular course or study programme.

Knowledge and skills refer to those the student has developed

1. by having successfully completed higher education studies at a Swedish higher education institution,
2. by having successfully completed higher education studies at a higher education institution abroad,
3. through another type of education resulting in a documented qualification presented in Annex 2 of the Ordinance (2015:545) on the reference framework for lifelong learning qualifications, or following official confirmation that the knowledge and skills are the equivalent of a level included in the reference framework, or
4. through another type of education or professional practice.

Ordinance (2024:1305)

Chapter 6, § 8 The higher education institution must assess an application for formal recognition, in accordance with Section 7.

Credits may only be awarded to those who are students unless otherwise provided by statute or ordinance. Ordinance (2024:1305)

In accordance with the delegation order (delegationsordning för KTH V-2022-0779) decisions regarding the transfer of credits are made by the School Faculty Board (this responsibility may be sub-delegated to the Director of Third-Cycle Studies, who may further sub-delegate it to the Program Director or to the Principal Supervisor or to the Examiner). In the event of a denial

of a requested credit transfer, a referral regarding appeals should be provided with information on how to appeal against the decision (see also Section 9).

When transfer of credits of previous education, shorter training periods may be necessary.

6.4 The duties of a doctoral student (so-called “Departmental Duties”)

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provision:

Chapter 5 § 2 An individual who is employed as a doctoral student must primarily devote her/himself to her/his own study programme.

However, an employee may work to a limited extent with education, research, artistic research and administration. Prior to the completion of a doctorate or an artistic doctorate, such work may not account for more than 20% of full-time working hours. Ordinance (2014:1012).

The scope of the work and the duties to be carried out under the above provision must be outlined in the individual study plan. The doctoral student's training period will be extended in accordance with the scope of the work. In issues related to teaching work, the below mentioned Section 6.5 must apply.

6.5 Training in education at a university level for doctoral students

A doctoral student who is to teach at the undergraduate (first cycle) or graduate (second cycle) level must undergo relevant training in education at the university level before her/his teaching assignment begins. The training in education at the university level must be documented in the individual study plan.

Doctoral students who will not be performing teaching assignments may also undergo training in teaching in higher education.

6.6 Student influence

The students' right to influence is determined in Chapter 1, § 4a and Chapter 2, § 7 of the Higher Education Act, as well as Chapter 2, § 14 of the Higher Education Ordinance. The Student Union Ordinance (2009:769) contains provisions on student unions at national universities and colleges. At KTH, student influence is also mainly regulated in *rules of procedure at KTH* (V-2019-0561) and in a *guideline on student influence* (V-2019-0605).

6.7 The extension of the education period and study financing (due to certain types of leave)

6.7.1 Extension of the education period

A doctoral student who has been on leave due to sickness, total defense service or due to a position of trust in a trade union or student organization or parental leave may receive an extension of her/his education period (see Chapter 6 § 29 of the Higher Education Ordinance; the provision is reproduced in its entirety in Section 6.3 above).

The decision shall be prepared by the Director of Third-Cycle Studies, or the person to whom the Director delegates the task in the individual case.

Decisions regarding the extension of the education period are made by the Head of School following preparation by the Director of Third-Cycle Studies. The right to make such a decision may only be sub-delegated to the Director of Third-Cycle Studies.

For information on departmental duties, see Section 6.4.

6.7.2 Extension of study financing

A doctoral student who is employed as a doctoral student pursuant to Chapter 5, § 1 of the Higher Education Ordinance may receive renewed (extended) employment under the provisions of § 7 of the same chapter. According to Chapter 7, § 36 of the Higher Education Ordinance, no equivalent provision exists for doctoral students with some other form of study financing. However, doctoral students with an educational scholarship are subject to the provisions on insurance set forth in Chapter 1, § 11 c of the Higher Education Ordinance.

A decision shall be prepared by the Director of Third-Cycle Studies, or the person to whom the Director delegates the task in the individual case.

Decisions regarding the extension of study financing are made by the Head of School (this responsibility may be sub delegated) (see also Section 6.8).

6.8 Study financing

KTH's provisions on study financing for doctoral students, both upon their admission and during their education, are available in the *Admissions Regulations at KTH* (V-2016-0944).

6.9 The renunciation of a study place

The renunciation of a third-cycle study place must be executed in writing by the doctoral student through an online form (available in the KTH forms archive). If a doctoral student renounces her/his study place and if there are grounds for it, the student's resources should be retracted in accordance with Chapter 6 § 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance (see Section 6.10).

6.10 The right to supervision and other resources

A doctoral student's right to supervision and other resources can only be affected by a decision by the President to withdraw supervision and other resources or at the request of the doctoral student, for example by the doctoral student requesting a break in studies or giving up their place by withdrawing from their studies.

Other resources include teaching, costs associated with courses, workspace, computer, telephone, office supplies, library resources, access to laboratory facilities and equipment.

6.10.1 Withdrawal of supervision and other resources

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provision:

Chapter 6, Section 30 If a third-cycle student substantially neglects their obligations under the individual study plan, the vice-chancellor must decide that this student is no longer entitled to supervision and other study resources. Before such a decision is made, the third-cycle student and their supervisors must be given an opportunity to make representations. The case must be considered on the basis of their statements and other available records. The assessment must consider whether the higher education institution has fulfilled its own obligations under the individual study plan. The decision must be in writing and provide reasons.

Resources may not be withdrawn for any period in which the third-cycle student has been appointed to a doctoral studentship or is receiving a doctoral grant. Ordinance (2010:1064).

Withdrawing a doctoral student's right to supervision and other resources is a drastic measure that is a last resort when other possible solutions have been exhausted.

Supervision and other resources may not be withdrawn for the time the doctoral student is employed as a doctoral student. The question of withdrawal therefore needs to be raised in good time before the current employment period is to be extended, if the doctoral student is employed in a doctoral studentship.

When a school considers applying to withdraw a doctoral student's resources, Administrative Law and Human Resources must be contacted at an early stage for support in the further handling of the matter. This is because a doctoral student's funding and studies must be managed in parallel.

Rules of procedure for the withdrawal of supervision and other resources V-2023-0677 contains more detailed provisions on how cases concerning the withdrawal of supervision and other resources are handled.

Decisions regarding the withdrawal of supervision and other resources are made by the President (may not be sub-delegated). Such a decision can be appealed by the doctoral student to the Higher Education Appeals Board.

6.10.2 Doctoral student who has had supervision and other resources withdrawn

A doctoral student who has had supervision and other resources withdrawn is still enrolled in third-cycle studies at KTH. The doctoral student has the right to pursue third-cycle studies on their own and has the right to be assessed, i.e. to apply to submit a thesis and defend it at a public defence or at a licentiate seminar.

6.10.3 Application to have supervision and other resources restored

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provision:

Chapter 6, Section 31 If educational resources have been withdrawn under Section 30, the third-cycle student may have their right to supervision and other resources restored after application to the vice-chancellor. The third-cycle student must then convincingly demonstrate, by presenting prospective study results of considerable quality and scope or in some other way, that they can fulfil their remaining obligations under the individual study plan. Ordinance (2010:1064).

More detailed provisions on how a doctoral student applies to have their right to supervision and other resources restored and the application procedure are found in *Rules of procedure for the withdrawal of supervision and other resources* (registration number V-2023-0677).

Decisions on whether a doctoral student's right to supervision and other resources should be restored are made by the President (may not be sub-delegated). Such a decision can be appealed to the Higher Education Appeals Board.

6.11 Disciplinary measures

Chapter 10 of the Higher Education Ordinance contains provisions regarding student disciplinary measures. Notifications (according to Chapter 10, § 9 of the Higher Education Ordinance) are addressed to the President and sent to the Registrar.

For information on appeal, see Chapter 12 § 3 of the Higher Education Ordinance (the provision is reproduced in Section 9).

6.12 Examination of suspected deviations from good research practice

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provision:

Chapter 1 § 17 A higher education institution must examine other suspected deviations from good research practice than those that those to be examined under the Act on Responsibility for Good Research Practice and the Assessment of Research Misconduct (2019:504).

A higher education institution must establish guidelines for its examination of suspected deviations from good research practice. Regulation (2019:1151).

A suspicion of deviation from good research practice in research related to the doctoral student's research work is handled in the manner specified in KTH's guideline on the management of suspicion of deviation from good research practice (V-2021-0539). If a doctoral student is suspected of having committed a disciplinary offense in her or his other studies, a notification of disciplinary measures may be considered, provided that the conditions set forth in Chapter 10 of the Higher Education Ordinance are met (see Section 6.11 above).

6.13 Expulsion

The Higher Education Act contains the following provisions:

Chapter 4, § 6 The Government may issue regulations on the expulsion of students until further notice in cases where the student:

1. suffers from a mental disorder,
2. abuses alcohol or drugs, or
3. has been found guilty of a serious crime.

A further requirement for expulsion is that a palpable risk is considered to exist that in consequence of the circumstances set out in 1-3 above the student can harm another person or damage valuable property during her or his studies.

Chapter 4, § 7 A board for the higher education sector must hear issues relating to expulsion. The chair of the board must be a lawyer and have experience of acting as a judge.

Students and higher education institutions may appeal to the general administrative courts against expulsion decisions taken by the board.

Leave to appeal is required before appeal may be made to the Administrative Court of Appeal.

At the request of the expellee, decisions relating to expulsion must be reviewed after two years. Act (1996:555).

These provisions are supplemented by the Regulation (2007:989) on the Expulsion of Students from Higher Education. Under § 7 of that regulation, the President, or a person deputized by said President, must provide a written notification of expulsion to the university's expulsion Board (which is an independent authority).

7 Examination of courses, licentiate theses and doctoral theses

See section 8 on the management of issues involving conflict of interest.

7.1 The examination of courses

Questions concerning the syllabus, examiner and examination of third-cycle courses are regulated in a guideline on syllabus, grading system and examination at all levels of studies (V-2020-0650).

7.2 Formality and review of licentiate thesis and doctoral thesis.

7.2.1 Language

The licentiate thesis/doctoral thesis (dissertation) is normally written in English. In individual cases, the Director of Third-Cycle Studies may decide on another language. The summary must always be available in both English and Swedish.

7.2.2 Format, identifier and number of copies for print

The licentiate thesis may be drawn up as a summary essay or a summary thesis (a collection of scientific publications/manuscripts published by the candidate, with an introduction and a summary of the included work). The publications/manuscripts included may be written by the individual doctoral student or in collaboration with others. If the publication/manuscript has several authors, the student's contribution must be clearly stated. The licentiate thesis and the doctoral thesis may also be written as a monograph (a relatively extensive, coherent scientific paper). In a monograph, earlier publications may be attached as appendices.

7.2.2.1 Identifiers for licentiate theses and doctoral theses

The KTH Library provides information on which identifier e.g., ISBN, is applicable.

7.2.2.2 Number of printed copies

The licentiate thesis/doctoral thesis must be printed in at least 30 copies.

7.2.3 Making the thesis publicly available and distribution

The licentiate thesis/doctoral thesis must be available to the public at least three weeks prior to the licentiate seminar/public thesis defense. These three weeks must fall between January 7 – June 30 and August 1 – December 20.

The licentiate thesis/doctoral thesis must be made available electronically in DiVA, as well as by submitting a printed copy to the KTH Library. The thesis must also be made available according to the distribution list and in the manner (electronic or printed product) decided upon by the Director of Third-Cycle Studies.

Information about licentiate seminars/public thesis defenses and subjects at a third-cycle/doctoral level must be made available on the title page of the thesis and in the printing information sheet.

7.2.4 Quality objectives

KTH's quality objective is that a doctoral thesis should be of such a level of quality that substantial parts of it can be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal of good International quality, and that a licentiate thesis should be of such a level of quality that it can be included as part of a summary thesis/dissertation for a doctoral degree. Additional

specified quality requirements/objectives may be found in the general study plan for the postgraduate/third-cycle programme subject in question.

7.2.5 Supervisor review and plagiarism review

The review of both the formalities and the scientific content of the licentiate thesis/doctoral thesis shall be continuously carried out by designated supervisors. The principal supervisor is responsible for conducting a plagiarism check once the manuscript is completed. Any deficiencies must be rectified before the manuscript is submitted for advance review.

7.2.6 Mandatory advance review

An advance reviewer should always examine the licentiate thesis/doctoral thesis, in order to assess whether it is ready for final examination. Sufficient time must be set for this assignment.

The advance reviewer must have been awarded the Degree of Doctor and be scientifically competent corresponding to the docent.

The principal supervisor suggests who should be appointed as an advance reviewer. Applicable rules on bias must be taken into consideration; see Section 8 and §§ 16-18 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

The Director of Third-Cycle Studies appoints advance reviewers and sets the schedule for such assignments. (This may not be sub-delegated.)

7.3 Licentiate seminars and the grading of licentiate theses

7.3.1 The application of the presentation of a licentiate thesis

Licentiate seminars are held between January 7–June 15 and August 15–December 20. An application of the presentation of a licentiate thesis for examination at a seminar must be made at least five weeks before the planned date of the licentiate seminar. These five weeks must fall within the limits of the above dates. The Director of Third-Cycle Studies may determine another time for the application, but it must never occur less than five weeks prior to the planned date of the licentiate seminar. The application is made using the form “Application: Licentiate Seminar.”

7.3.2 Requirements for a special reviewer and who proposes this

The licentiate thesis must be reviewed by a special reviewer who acts as an opponent at the licentiate seminar.

The special reviewer

- 1) must have been awarded the Degree of Doctor,
- 2) must be a distinguished researcher in the relevant subject area,
- 3) must be scientifically competent equivalent to a docent,
- 4) may not be employed at KTH.

The main supervisor submits a proposal for a special reviewer to the Director of Third-Cycle Studies.

7.3.3 Requirements for examiner for licentiate thesis and who proposes this

Grades (see Section 7.3.5) on the licentiate thesis are decided by an examiner. The person who is employed at a rate of at least 20 percent of full-time working hours at KTH as a professor, visiting professor, adjunct professor, associate professor, assistant professor or lecturer (with a Degree of Doctor) and whose employment lasts at least until the time of examination may be appointed as an examiner.

The person who is the supervisor of the doctoral student may not be appointed as the examiner.

The main supervisor submits a proposal for an examiner to the Director of Third-Cycle Studies.

7.3.4 Decisions regarding the appointment of a special reviewer and examiner and the time and place of a licentiate seminar

The Director of Third-Cycle Studies determines the time and place of the licentiate seminar and appoints a special reviewer and an examiner for the licentiate thesis. This may not be sub-delegated. Before a decision is made the rules on bias must be taken into account; see Section 8 and §§ 16-18 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

The Director of Third-Cycle Studies is responsible for ensuring that information about a licentiate seminar is distributed to interested parties and published in the official KTH calendar. The principal supervisor is responsible for the distribution of the licentiate thesis according to the approved distribution list.

7.3.5 The grading of licentiate theses

Licentiate theses may be awarded a grade of Pass or Fail, and these grades are determined by the examiner. (This may not be sub-delegated.)

7.4 Public thesis defenses and the grading of doctoral theses

The Higher Education Ordinance contains the following provisions:

Chapter 6, § 33 The qualification descriptors for PhD's and doctorates in the fine, applied and performing arts lay down that an approved doctoral thesis is required for the award of these degrees.

The doctoral thesis shall be presented and defended orally in public. A faculty examiner (opponent) shall be appointed for this presentation. Ordinance (2010:1064).

Chapter 6, 34 § At least one of those participating in the grading of a doctoral thesis shall be someone who does not have a post at the higher education institution awarding the degree. Ordinance (2010:1064).

Chapter 6, 35 § A higher education institution may issue regulations on the grading system to be used and on public defenses and grading in other respects. Ordinance (2010:1064).

7.4.1 The application of a public thesis defense

Public thesis defenses are held between January 7–June 15 and August 15–December 20. The application of the public thesis defense must be made at least five weeks before the scheduled date of the public thesis defense. These five weeks must fall within the limits of the above dates.

The Director of Third-Cycle Studies may determine another time for the application, but it must never occur less than five weeks prior to the planned date of the public thesis defense.

The application is made using the form “Application: Public Thesis Defense.” Normally, a notification of a public defence is made in agreement between the doctoral student and the supervisor.

A doctoral student always has the right to apply for his/her public defence on his-her own initiative. The same form as stated in the second paragraph above can be used in such a case and the doctoral student then fills in the part that the doctoral student is expected to fill in and submits the form to the education office/equivalent at the school where the subject on a third-cycle level is organizationally placed.

7.4.2 Requirements for the opponent, chairman of the public defence and examination board and who proposes these

Opponent

The opponent must have been awarded the Degree of Doctor, be scientifically competent corresponding to the docent and be internationally prominent researcher in the current subject area. The opponent may not be employed at KTH.

If the appointed opponent is prevented from fulfilling her/his duties on short notice, a member of the grading committee (not employed at KTH) may be appointed to serve as the opponent. This decision is made by the Director of Third-Cycle Studies.

Chairperson for the public thesis defense

The chairperson should have been awarded the Degree of Doctor and employed at a rate of at least 20 percent of full-time working hours at KTH. The chairperson shall have good knowledge of the Swedish Third-Cycle Studies, the examination and the degree description for the doctoral degree. The chairperson may not be one of the doctoral student’s supervisors.

Grading committee

A grading committee must consist of three or five members. Women and men must be equally represented, unless special reasons prevent this (any such reasons must be presented in the decision to appoint a grading committee).

For a grading committee consisting of three members, at least two members must be collected outside of KTH (may not be employed at KTH). For a grading committee consisting of five members, at least three members must be collected outside of KTH (may not be employed at KTH). Deviations in the composition of the board may be made only in the event that a replacement is called in to be a member of the grading committee and provided that the requirement laid down in Chapter 6. § 34 of the Higher Education Ordinance has been fulfilled.

Requirements for members of the grading committee:

1. Each member must have been awarded a Degree of Doctor, and a majority of the members must be scientifically competent corresponding to docent.
2. At least one member must have good knowledge of Swedish education on a third-cycle level, the examination and the examination description for a Degree of Doctor, as described in Appendix 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance.

Replacement of a member of the grading board

A replacement must always be appointed. The replacement may be active at KTH. The advance reviewer may be appointed as a substitute.

Proposal for opponent, chairperson for the public thesis defense, grading committee and replacement

The principal supervisor makes a proposal for the opponent, chairperson for the thesis defense, members of the grading committee and replacement. Applicable rules on bias must be taken into consideration; see Section 8 and §§ 16-18 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

7.4.3 Decisions regarding the time and place of the thesis defense and the opponent, grading committee and chairperson of the thesis defense

The Director of Third-Cycle Studies determines the time and place of the thesis defense and appoints the opponent, members of the grading committee and replacement. This may not be sub-delegated. Before a decision is made the rules on bias must be taken into account; see Section 8 and §§ 16-18 of the Administrative Procedure Act.

The Director of Third-Cycle Studies is responsible for ensuring that information about a public thesis defense is distributed to interested parties and published in the official KTH calendar. The principal supervisor is responsible for the distribution of the thesis/dissertation according to the approved distribution list.

7.4.4 Description of the public thesis defense

The thesis defense is open to the public. The doctoral student's principal supervisor shall be present at the public defense, unless special reasons prevent her/him from fulfilling this obligation. The public thesis defense is conducted in the following order:

Chairperson for the public thesis defense

The chairperson opens the public thesis defense session. The chairperson is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral student (respondent), the opponent and the grading committee are provided with the necessary conditions for a well-executed presentation and opposition. The chairperson shall provide a form for the grading committee's minutes to the grading committee. The chairperson should also ensure that the minutes can be delivered directly to the school office upon conclusion of the session.

The chairperson presents the respondent and the opponent. The chairperson describes where the research has been conducted and which other person(s) has/have participated in the project in addition to the respondent. The chairperson closes the introduction by informing those present that they will be provided with the opportunity to ask questions following the opponent's examination.

Doctoral student (respondent)

The doctoral student is given the opportunity to comment on any formal errors in the thesis. The doctoral student or the opponent provides a brief summary of the thesis. This summary shall include, inter alia, problems, achievements and the scientific and societal relevance of the results. The summary regards the thesis in question and may not constitute a lecture on current research problems in the doctoral student's field of research. If the opponent summarizes the thesis, the doctoral student is given the opportunity to comment and to supplement this summary.

Opponent

The principal supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the opponent is provided with detailed information about the thesis and its design, as well as the process of the thesis defense prior to the thesis defence taking place.

The opponent discusses the thesis with the doctoral student and asks questions that primarily concern the work and the area described in the thesis. The opponent's examination is completed once the opponent has exhausted her/his line of questioning. During this part of the public thesis defense, the audience may not participate in the discussion.

Chairperson for the public thesis defense

Once the opponent's examination has been completed, the chairperson asks the members of the grading committee to discuss such issues that the members think require further elucidation with the doctoral student. Thereafter, other persons in attendance are given the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the thesis. The principal supervisor, the opponent and the doctoral student have the right to participate in the discussion that may ensue.

The chairperson concludes the thesis defense, which normally lasts approximately 2–3 hours.

7.4.5 Grade on thesis

The grade can be pass or fail and the grade is decided by the grading committee. (This may not be sub-delegated.)

7.4.6 The grading committee's decision regarding the grade awarded for the thesis/dissertation

The members of the grading committee must attend the public thesis defense. The grading committee must meet as soon as possible after the public thesis defense. The members of the grading committee must appoint one of the members to act as chairperson. At the grading committee meeting, the opponent must be present and give an oral statement on the thesis. At the meeting, the main supervisor has the right to be present and give a statement. Both the opponent and the main supervisor must leave the meeting before the board makes a decision. In addition, the grading committee decides which other persons are entitled to attend and give a statement before the committee decides on a grade.

The meeting of the grading committee and its decision regarding the grade awarded to a thesis must be documented in a protocol which must be immediately adjusted by all members of the grading committee. When it comes to a decision, the opinion of the majority will apply. In the event of a tie, the chairman's opinion will determine the matter. Anyone who disagrees with the final decision may make her/his reservations known by submitting a note of dissenting opinion. This dissenting opinion shall be reported in the form of a separate document appended to the protocol. All those who do not report a dissenting opinion are considered to be in support of the decision. Whosoever contributes in the final processing without taking part in the decision has the right to have her/his dissenting opinion recorded.

7.5 Degree certificate

The Higher Education Ordinance contains, inter alia, the following provisions:

Chapter 6, § 10 In the certificate the higher education institution shall indicate

1. the title of the qualification,
2. the cycle in which it was awarded,
3. if the qualification forms part of a joint degree as laid down in § 17 of Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434),
4. the first and second cycle courses taken for award of the qualification, and
5. at which higher education institution the courses laid down in item 4 or corresponding third-cycle courses and programs have been completed.

A translation of the title of the qualification to one or several languages may be included in the certificate. Ordinance (2011:687).

Chapter 6, § 10 a A certificate shall be accompanied by a

1. diploma supplement that describes the study program and its place in the educational system, and
2. in the case of a Higher Education Diploma in Vocational Education a diploma supplement that lists the qualified and relevant vocational expertise that formed the special entry requirements pursuant to § 4 of the Ordinance on admission to programs leading to the award of a Higher Education Diploma in Vocational Education (2010:2021) and the regulations issued in conjunction with that provision.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education may issue more detailed specifications of the contents of a diploma supplement as laid down in item 1 above. Ordinance (2012:712).

The degree certificate shall also specify the third-cycle subject, any specialization within this area, and the title of the thesis/dissertation. The degree certificate must be bilingual (Swedish/English).

8 Management of conflict of interest issues

The Swedish Higher Education Act contains the following provisions:

16 § Anyone who, on behalf of an authority, takes part in the proceedings in a way that may influence the authority's decision on the matter is biased if

1. he or she or a related party is a party to the matter or is otherwise likely to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent,
2. he or she or a related party is or has been the representative or agent of a party in the case or of anyone else likely to be affected by the decision to a not insignificant extent,
3. he or she has participated in the final processing of a case before another authority and as a result has already taken a position on matters which the authority must examine in its capacity as a higher instance, or
- 4) there is any other particular circumstance which calls into question his or her impartiality in the case.

If it is clear that the question of impartiality is irrelevant, the authority shall disregard the conflict of interest.

§ 17 The person who is biased may not take part in the processing of this matter and may not be present when the matter is determined. However, he or she may carry out tasks which cannot be carried out by anyone else without the process being significantly delayed.

§ 18 Anyone who is aware of a circumstance that may make him or her biased must report this to the authority immediately.

An authority must examine a conflict of interest issue as soon as possible.

The person concerned may take part in the examination of the issue of conflict of interest only if it is necessary in order for the authority to make a decision and a replacement cannot be called in without the process being significantly delayed.

The applicability of the conflict of interest rules

The Administrative Act applies to the management of cases described in this guideline, for example change of supervisors, appointment of examination boards and grading during examination.

Information about rules on conflict of interest

The person who is biased may not take part in the processing of this matter and may not be present when the matter is determined. The person proposed for an assignment, such as opponent, must be informed about the rules on conflict of interest both when asked to undertake the assignment and when the decision is made to appoint the assignment to this person.

Reporting a conflict of interest and handling of conflict of interest issues

The person involved in the management of a case must report any conflict of interest himself/herself. Other people can also report an issue involving conflict of interest. If the person who is the subject of the conflict of interest has not left the proceedings on his/her own initiative or been replaced by another person, KTH must decide on the conflict of interest issue. KTH must examine a conflict of interest issue as soon as possible, regardless of who has reported a conflict of interest. A decision in which KTH has examined the conflict of interest issue can be appealed.

Report of a conflict of issue can be made to the immediate manager, the Director of Third-Cycle Studies or the Head of School or according to routines within the school.

Examples of circumstances that may raise the question of conflict of interest (from case law)

Joint authorship/co-publication is a circumstance that usually raises the issue of conflict of interest or other bias. A close, long-lasting and recently ongoing scientific collaboration has in practice been clearly considered a conflict of interest. (jfr Överklagandenämndens beslut 2000-09-20, reg.nr 22-244-00, samt Sigeman, Tjänstetillsättning vid universitet och högskolor - Rättsfrågor i överklagandenämndens praxis, sid 12-14).

A normal supervisor/doctoral student relationship is not in itself something that can be considered capable of upsetting confidence in a person's impartiality. The mere fact that two persons were colleagues in an institution several years earlier and, in doing so, merely had a normal collegiate relationship cannot, as a general rule, be regarded as capable of disturbing the confidence in a person's impartiality. (Jfr Sigeman, Tjänstetillsättning vid universitet och högskolor - rättsfrågor i överklagandenämndens praxis, sid 3, samt Överklagandenämndens beslut 2000-09-20, reg.nr 21-250-00.)

On KTH's intranet there is a web page about conflict of interest (search path: KTH Intranet / About your employment / Terms of employment and benefits / Being a government employee) where several examples are available.

9 Correction and amendment of decision and appeal

9.1 Correction and amendment of decision

§§ 36-39 of the Administrative Procedure Act contains provisions on the correction of typos and the amendment of decisions.

9.2 Appeals

The Higher Education Ordinance contains, inter alia, the following provisions:

Chapter 12 § 2 The following appeals may be made to the Higher Education Appeals Board for the higher education institution:

1. a decision relating to employment at a higher education institution, with the exception of a decision on employment as a doctoral student or as a lecturer in a promotion according to Chapter 4. § 12 c,
2. Decisions under Chapter 4, § 13 to refuse an application for promotion,
3. a decision that an applicant does not meet the general entry requirements for admission to first or second cycle higher education courses and study programs and a decision not to grant an exemption from the general entry requirements for admission in cases referred to in the second sentence of § 3 or the second paragraph of § 28 of Chapter 7,
4. a decision on the transfer of credits for courses and study programs or professional or vocational activities,
5. rejection of a student's application for exemption from a compulsory element of a course or study program,
6. a decision to withdraw study resources from a doctoral student pursuant to § 30 of Chapter 6 and a decision that a student is not to recover these resources pursuant to § 31 of Chapter 6,
7. rejection of a student's request to be issued with a degree certificate or a course certificate, and
8. a decision not to allow those admitted to first or second cycle courses and study programs to defer commencement of their studies or to continue their studies after an approved period of leave. Ordinance (2017:844).

Chapter 12 § 3 of § 40 of the Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900) contains provisions on appeals to the general administrative court. However, decisions by a disciplinary board other than decisions on suspension and warnings may not be appealed. Regulation (2018:957).

Chapter 12 § 4 Appeals against decisions by a higher education institution on matters other than those laid down in this chapter may only be made if permitted by a statute other than the Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900). Regulation (2018:957).

The manner in which decisions are appealed is set out in §§ 40-44 of the Administrative Procedure Act. If a decision is subject to appeal, a referral regarding appeals should be provided with information on how to appeal against the decision.

A written appeal shall be submitted to the Higher Education Appeals Board, but be sent to the Registrar KTH, Brinellvägen 8, 100 44 Stockholm.

According to § 45 of the Administrative Procedure Act (2017:900), KTH shall examine whether the appeal has been submitted in time. If the appeal has been received too late, KTH will decide to reject the appeal. When an expulsion decision is subject to appeal, the decision must be accompanied by a referral for appeal.

If the appeal is deemed admissible, then the appeal, together with copies of the other documents in the case and any statement of opinion from KTH, must be submitted to the Higher Education Appeals Board within one week.

A decision by the Higher Education Appeals Board may not be appealed.