



Social Psychology Post-graduate seminar



Postgraduate studies can be divided into two degrees:

- **Doctor of Social Sciences**

- doctoral thesis
- 60 CRS

- **Licentiate in Social Sciences**

- a lower post-graduate degree (optional)
- thesis + 60 CRS



Doctoral thesis

- a **scholarly monograph** or a **compilation of articles**, based on independent research, that makes an **original contribution to knowledge**.

- in Finnish, Swedish or English.



Monograph versus article-based thesis

“Monograph is an academic suicide”

- you only get one item into the list of publications in your CV

“Those who cannot do a monograph, do an article-based thesis”

- the nature of research questions has an impact on the choice between the two.

- **If you consider a monograph-based thesis, please note:**

-you work alone and get feedback from peers, supervisors and teachers only; the formal feedback will come only at the end.

- **If you consider an article-based thesis, please note:**

- it can take a long time before a submitted manuscript is published in a journal.



The following criteria are applied in the assessment of doctoral dissertations:

- The presentation of the research problem and the grounds for it
- Originality demonstrated in the planning and implementation of the work
- Mastery of the research field, familiarity with and use of the literature
- The assessability of the choices made and solutions reached during the research process
- The adequacy of the doctoral candidate's own contribution.
- The publishing profile of the publications in an article-based dissertation
- The difficulty and scope of the research
- The quality and thoroughness of the work, the applicability and mastery of the methods used
- The consistent deduction of results from the material studied
- The significance and status of the research and its results within the field of research (the new ideas and insights, solutions to problems and observations the research includes)
- The consistency of the presentation of the work
- The style and language of the presentation.



Doctoral studies (minimum of 60 credits) consist of the following parts:

- 1) Seminars (12 ECTS)
- 2) Research Ethics, Philosophy of Science (3 - 6 ECTS)
- 3) Other general scientific skills and knowledge (5 - 15 ECTS)
- 4) Specialized training in the topic of the doctoral thesis (10 - 25 ECTS)
- 5) Training in university pedagogy or leadership (5 - 20 ECTS)

Those who have a Master's degree with a major other than Social Psychology read the following books before starting their doctoral studies:

- Hewstone & Stroebe: Social psychology, an introduction (3 rd. ed.)
- Augoustinos, Walker & Donaghue: Social cognition: An integrated introduction (2nd ed.)

In addition, they take Master level courses and literature for 20 - 30 credits (to be agreed with the advisor).



1. Seminars (at least 3 terms, 4 credits each)

- The seminar gives the students practice in communicating their research ideas and discussing other people's projects. The goal is also to get more broadly acquainted with the variety of approaches and methodologies currently in use in social psychological research, as well as with the problems encountered in different stages of the doctoral work. The position of Social Psychology in society will also be covered in the seminar work. The participants present both research proposals and ongoing studies, as well as research which is in its final stages. The seminar includes also guest lectures by senior scholars in the field. In case the student is a member of a national doctoral program that also organizes regular seminars, 1 - 2 seminars can be substituted with these.
- It is advisable to divide one's participation in the seminars over a period of several years. Ideally, students present (1) their research plan at the outset of their study, (2) portions of the on-going study (e.g., a manuscript for an article) in the middle, and (3) an overview of the doctoral project in the final stages of the doctorate.



2. Courses on Research Ethics and the Philosophy of Science organized by the Faculty.

- The Faculty organizes two types of research ethics courses (4 credits altogether).
- Taking part in other research ethics courses may be applicable too.



3. Other general scientific skills and knowledge.

- This part can be covered by taking a variety of courses, e.g. on scientific writing and publishing, international summer and winter schools (e.g. by EASP, ESF etc.), courses on methodology, active participation in relevant congresses and by keeping learning diaries on guest lectures and examinations of doctoral theses. While many of the courses currently indicate the number of credits to be gained by attendance, it is advisable to consult the supervisor before participation.



4. Specialized training in the topic of the doctoral thesis.

- This part consists of studies in the student's special area. Credits can be gained by attending specialized courses more immediately related to the thesis. The courses must be 'academic' in the sense that they focus on new scientific knowledge. Professional or continuing education courses, which emphasize acquisition of new skills, are not accepted.



5. Training in university pedagogy or leadership

- The maximum number of credits accepted for doctoral studies in this category is 20 ECTS.

A doctoral degree should be such that it can be completed in four years of full-time work.



En route to the Doctorate

<http://www.helsinki.fi/tohtoriksi/english/>

Thus far:

- you have made a research plan
 - changes can be made, but they have to be discussed with the supervisor(s).
- you have been nominated a supervisor
 - changes are possible, if needed.

Other things to note:

- In Finland all the doctoral thesis are published.
- Before you can defend your thesis publicly, you have to get a permission from two pre-examiners nominated by the Faculty council.
- The time from finishing the thesis manuscript to its defence takes few months at minimum.
- Approximately five students defend their doctoral thesis in Social Psychology annually. Everybody is welcome to follow the public defences.
- If you prepare your thesis in a project or in a doctoral school, you are employed by the University and you get a desk and basic infrastructure from the department.
- If you have a grant, you can apply for a desk and infrastructure from the department. You pay for your health insurance (<http://www.mela.fi/526/Insured-wellbeing>) and in most cases for the desk and infra too.



Funding

- **Grants / Foundations**

- Tura-database (utu.fi/hallinto/tutkimuspalvelut/turatiedotus.htm), post-graduate students' e-mail lists, Central Campus information sessions, newspapers etc.
- Examples of the biggest foundations: Koneen säätiö, Suomen kulttuurirahasto, Emil Aaltonen's Foundation, Alfred Kordelin's Foundation, CIMO (for foreign students)

- **Research projects**

- the project leaders are worth contacting, but usually members of the research team take part in the planning and application of the project funds from the beginning.

- **Doctoral programmes**

- Sovako doctoral programme, 7 sub-schools
 - Labornet
 - UCIT etc
- The national doctoral programmes will not continue in their current form. It is still uncertain how the doctoral schools and programmes will be organized in the future. More information will be found in sp-jatko@helsinki.fi



If you prepare your thesis in a project or in a doctoral school, you are working as an employee, and you will get a desk and basic infrastructure from the department.

If you have a grant, you can apply for a desk and infrastructure from the department. You'll pay for your insurance (<http://www.mela.fi/526/Insured-wellbeing>) and most likely for the desk and infrastructure too.



In this seminar you will:

- **present your paper**
- **comment on other participants' papers**
- **plan how to organize discussion in the sessions**
- **comment on each others' ways of presenting their paper (if the presenters want this)**

The paper (max 20 pages) can be for example:

- **a detailed research plan**
- **an article manuscript draft**
- **a part of a monograph draft**
- **part of the summary of the article based thesis**

Guides for writing seminar papers:

- The American Psychological Association's Publication Manual (6th edition).
- http://www.helsinki.fi/sosiaalipsykologia/opiskelu/opiskelun_tueksi/kirjoitusohjeet.pdf
- <http://www.helsinki.fi/socialpsychology/studying/Writing%20Instructions.pdf>
- Hirsjärvi S, Remes P & Sajavaara P: Tutki ja kirjoita. Tammi: Helsinki.



How is a typical session organized?

- At the beginning of each seminar session the person who has written the paper will present it briefly, for about 10–15 minutes. If s/he wants comments of the presentation, we will give it in a simple way. After that **the opponent in charge** should make a suggestion for those 3–5 most significant issues that should be discussed in seminar. When making this suggestion it is useful to exploit the written **comments of all participants**. When the topics have been agreed it is time for the opponent in charge to continue as a chair of the meeting. Sessions are NOT meant to be dialogues between the author and opponent but the papers should be discussed together. **The opponent should think beforehand how to make an active and constructive session**. It's therefore a good idea to write down beforehand which person has put forward which idea. In that way you can also ask that person to present his/her ideas. It also makes sense for everyone to take your own comments along to the seminar, so that you'll remember what you have written.
- Passing the seminar requires at least 80% attendance. If you are absent from a seminar you are still required to hand in a commentary.



The core of the paper:

- *Research questions and hypothesis:*
- Are they derived from previous research and other relevant sources?
- Are they presented clearly and economically?

- *Answers to the research questions:*
- Are all research questions being answered?
- What should be done so that the research questions will be answered?
- Is the paper meandering too much from the main topic?



Going through the whole paper in a systematic manner

- **Title**
- clear? fitting? pithy? interesting? distinctive?
- **Abstract**
- **Introduction**
- Is the theoretical approach/background appropriate/sufficient?
- Is the relevant literature (current and essential sources) included?
- Is there something unnecessary?
- Is the argumentation proceeding logically?
- Is the division into paragraphs well-founded?
- Are the research questions/hypotheses traced justifiably?
- Are the research questions/hypotheses defined clearly?
- **Method**
- Has the gathering of the research material been done in a meaningful way?
- Have all research methods been presented clearly and sufficiently?
- Is the size of research material suitable (or should there be more/less)?
- Is the research material treated in a meaningful way?



-
- **Results**
 - Is the presentation of the results clear and sufficient?
 - Is the examination of the results going in the right direction?
 - **Discussion**
 - Are all central issues being presented?
 - **References**
 - Have all books and volumes in the reference list cited in the text, and vice versa?
 - Is the reference technique and reference list in order?
 - **Language**
 - Is the language used professional and vivid?
 - **Finishing**
 - Are all tables and figures understandable as a separate entity?
 - Are all tables and figures well formulated?
 - Are there any careless mistakes in the text?



Minimum requirements for a commentary:

The purpose of a commentary is that the person who has written the seminar paper will get feedback that helps him/her to proceed with his/her work. It should become apparent from the comments that you have carefully looked at the paper and commented on its core issues. Mere praise is not enough.

At minimum each commentator has to attend to the following questions:

- What is the theoretical approach/background and how well it has been mastered in the seminar paper?
- Would some other theoretical approach be more reasonable or is something else needed as supplement?
- Has the research material been chosen in a well-grounded way, and what kind of conclusions one can draw from it?
- Is the argumentation in the paper proceeding logically?
- Can the paper be considered a good scientific text?
- Detailed proposals for improvement.
- Comments and corrections relating to language must not be in the main part in a commentary, but it is good to touch upon them as well.



Giving feedback:

- The feedback should be given in the same way, as you would like to get it yourself. So it should be given in the matter-of-fact and constructive way. In addition, it's good to keep in mind that all people are different in their ways of receiving feedback. However, the seminar is more effective if the issues demanding improvement or corrections are interfered at latest at this point. This means that you should not avoid the criticism. Responsible feedback requires attending to a paper carefully. This means, among other things, that at least the responsible opponent has to be ready to go into the source books of the paper.



Useful links

What makes a good review?

<http://orgtheory.wordpress.com/2011/05/31/the-editors-speak-what-makes-a-good-review/>

The Hamburger method of constructive criticism

<http://orgtheory.wordpress.com/2011/05/31/the-editors-speak-what-makes-a-good-review/>