

Guidelines for KI's thematic doctoral programmes

Dnr 1-52/2025

This is a translation of the Swedish document *Riktlinjer för KI:s tematiska forskarutbildningsprogram*. In the event of any discrepancy between the versions, the Swedish version constitutes the official decision, and the Swedish wording will prevail.



**Karolinska
Institutet**

Guidelines for KI's thematic doctoral programmes

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Revised with regard to: 1. possibility for KI's thematic programmes to allocate funds for additional costs for KI courses in international collaborations after an application procedure (until now, additional funds had to be applied for at the Course and Program Committee); 2. KI's thematic programmes no longer need to submit their multi-year planning to the coordinator at the Faculty Office of Education. However, programmes should inform about planned courses for the coming year on the dedicated web page; 3. Editorial changes.			

1. Introduction and purposes

Karolinska Institutet (KI)'s doctoral programmes are thematic and interdepartmental. The doctoral programmes coordinate quality-assured courses and other learning activities for doctoral students within a defined research field.

1.1 Purposes of thematic doctoral programmes

The purposes of organising courses and activities in the form of thematic doctoral programmes are:

- To ensure that the needs for courses and learning activities for doctoral students are determined by those with expertise in the relevant research field.
- To favour coordination and efficiency
- To encourage high-quality activities to support doctoral students' learning.
- To offer doctoral students a network that extends beyond their own research group and department.

1.2 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to clarify for the programmes what their responsibilities are and how it should be implemented, ensuring that activities are carried out in the same way across KI.

Abbreviations:

KFU: The Committee of Doctoral Education (*kommittén för utbildning på forskarnivå*)

KPK: Committee of courses and programmes, The Course and Programme Committee subordinate to KFU (*KFU:s kurs- och programkommitté*)

2. Responsibilities of the thematic doctoral programmes

The areas of responsibility of the thematic doctoral programmes are:

1. To coordinate, plan and organise a well-thought-out range of courses and activities in the research field
2. To develop and ensure the quality of courses and activities
3. To provide information about the programme's activities

Below is a more detailed description of each area of responsibility

2.1 To coordinate, plan and organise a well-thought-out range of courses and activities in the research field

Within each programme, there must be a long-term, well-thought-out course offering with [progression](#) adapted to the needs of doctoral students in the relevant research field.

Although it is desirable that the planning is carried out according to plan, the Steering group may decide on changes to the activities as long as they remain within the

established budget.

In addition to regular courses, programmes should also encourage, coordinate and organise other activities for doctoral students, such as seminars, workshops, retreats and conferences.

All courses and activities organised by the programme shall be open to all doctoral students and post-docs at KI.

The Programme is responsible for handling funding applications from course providers and organisers of learning activities (see principles for this below under "Course costs" and "Costs for other activities").

Where applicable, the programmes will seek synergies by collaborating with other networks and environments (e.g. other doctoral programmes, research networks, strategic research areas (SFO), centres, research schools, master programmes, other universities etc.)

2.2 To develop and ensure the quality of courses and activities

The programme, *i.e.* the steering group and programme director, is responsible for ensuring that the courses and activities funded by the programme are of high quality.

The programme is encouraged to support the course providers' pedagogical development and implementation of Strategy 2030, e.g. by providing information about [KI's pedagogical policy](#), the opportunities available for [pedagogical and other development for teachers](#) at KI, encouraging the use of pedagogical tools and organising workshops for course providers.

The programme should work to ensure that sustainability and equal opportunities aspects, including accessibility, are integrated into the courses.

The programme has a responsibility to ensure that syllabi are of high quality, e.g. that the learning outcomes are reasonable and examinable. This requires good knowledge of course design and a dialogue with course providers before syllabi are finalised for final review and approval.

[Course evaluations and course analyses](#) and [activity evaluations and activity analyses](#) should form the basis for quality assessment. The programmes should, where necessary, support course providers in development and course design.

2.3 To provide information about the programme's activities

Own website

The programme shall disseminate information to doctoral students about their activities through a website within KI's domains, which is updated regularly.

The website shall contain

- Information about the programme and its activities, including:
 - link to the common KI-web page with KI's overall course offerings, and
 - planned doctoral education activities within the programme,

Composition of the steering group,

- Contact details and information on how doctoral students sign up to receive,

information about the programme,

- Information on how course providers/activity organisers apply for funding from the programme.

Common web page with KI's overall course offerings

The planned course offerings of the doctoral programme must be available on the [website](#) designated for this purpose. It is part of the programmes' responsibility to keep this website up to date.

The purpose of the website is:

- to make it easier for doctoral students to plan their training; and
- to inform teachers, supervisors, other programmes and others.

Follow-up

The programmes must submit a written report annually for the previous year, according to instructions.

Follow-up is also done through dialogues and meetings. How this is organised may vary from year to year.

3. Principles of budget and resource utilisation

3.1 Budget framework

The programme's budget framework for the coming year is set annually by KFU. The budget is based on the activities carried out in previous years, on information about upcoming changes, and on KFU's budget and strategic position.

Funds are paid to the programme's host department within the regular resource allocation. Funds not used during the year may be withdrawn.

If conditions change such that the budget framework no longer covers the activities, the Chair of the KPK should be contacted for further discussion.

3.2 Reimbursement for courses

The following principles apply:

Reimbursement should follow the standard amounts decided by the KFU, as shown on [this webpage](#). In order for the course-giving department to receive the full flat-rate amount, at least eight KI doctoral students and/or KI postdocs must have completed the course, including the examination (but without the requirement of a passing grade). If there are fewer than eight, the amount is reduced according to the instructions on the website. Please also note the rules on how compensation is handled in case of late cancellation.

In addition to the flat rate, programmes may also reimburse extraordinary costs, e.g. external teachers with unique expertise, laboratory activities requiring additional resources. Programmes are encouraged to consider such special circumstances in a systematic and transparent manner.

Course funds may be used for:

- Teachers (internal and external), including possible travel costs
- Administration costs
- Teaching materials (not course literature)
- Teaching premises

Course funds may not be used for:

- Catering/meals
- Office rent

Programmes must inform course providers of how to apply for [funding from their programme for additional costs for KI courses in international collaborations](#).

The programmes shall not finance general science courses unless the programme has been specifically commissioned to do so.

3.3 Reimbursement for other educational activities for KI doctoral students and KI postdocs

Please note that there is a by KFU decided fixed maximum amount per KI doctoral student for the funding of retreats/conferences.

If non-doctoral students participate in activities such as retreats/conferences, their participation should be funded by other actors (e.g. networks or departments).

3.4 Administrative costs

The budget framework from KFU includes reimbursement for programme administration and coordination at a fixed percentage of the annual budget for courses and activities + a fixed sum. The percentage and the fixed sum are decided by KFU and are the same for all programmes. Travel costs for the programme director or coordinator may be incurred in connection with approved activities within the programme.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Programme Director and Chair of the Steering Group

The programme director is appointed by KFU; only one programme director can be appointed per programme.

Responsibility of the programme director / chair of steering group:

- Leading the steering group meetings
- Appointing members to the steering group
- Leading and distributing the operational work within the framework set by the steering group
- Being the contact person between KFU/KPK, the head of department and the steering group
- Ensuring that rules and instructions are followed
- Ensuring that course providers are correctly reimbursed by authorising or certifying relevant payments
- Participating in meetings arranged by KPK/KFU

The same person can be both programme director and coordinator/administrator.

4.2 Steering Group

Each programme has a steering group. Members are appointed by the programme director.

Responsibility of the steering group:

- Responsibility for quality assurance and for ensuring that there is a good, long-term range of courses in the relevant research field.
- Decides on the programme budget within the framework set by KFU.
- Decides overall how the operational work of the programmes is to be organised, in consultation with the concerned heads of the organisation.

Composition of the steering group:

- Broadly composed with members from several departments and include student representation
- The number of members should not be so large as to make it difficult to meet at least once a term.
- Members should be knowledgeable in the research field with an overview of which courses and other educational activities should be offered to doctoral students.
- There should be pedagogical expertise to be able to provide feedback on course syllabi.

4.3 Coordinator/administrator

Each programme must have one or more operational staff to coordinate and administer the programme. The funds paid to the host department include reimbursement of administrative costs (see Principles of budget and use of funds).

4.4 Host department

Host department means being the recipient of programme funds within the regular resource allocation, and transferring funds to course providers.

Normally, the host department is the department where the programme director is employed, but other solutions are possible.

The Head of at the host department is, through his/her regular delegation from the Rector, responsible for all activities at the department. This includes ensuring that funds are used as intended and that administrative resources are available.

The head of the host department has ultimate employer responsibility for the programme director, coordinator and administrator, provided that they are employed at that department. Decisions to appoint a programme director must always be made in consultation with the head of department.

4.5 The Course and Programme Committee (KPK)

KPK is subordinate to KFU and has been delegated responsibility for coordinating and following up the programmes' activities and for establishing course syllabi.

4.6 The Committee of Doctoral Education (KFU)

KFU has ultimate responsibility for the quality of KI's doctoral education. This includes:

- Deciding in which research fields the course offerings for doctoral students should be organised in thematic programmes.
- Establishing guidelines and instructions for the doctoral programmes.
- Appointing, in consultation with the relevant head of department, a programme director for each programme. At the same time, deciding which department will be the host department (normally the department of the programme director).

5. Principles for establishing and discontinuing doctoral programmes

5.1 Establishing a new doctoral programme

An application to KFU to establish a new doctoral programme must include descriptions of:

- The need for a doctoral programme in the research field (e.g. number of doctoral students within that field),
- Differentiating from other doctoral programmes and relations to other initiatives/activities (e.g. research networks, strategic research areas (SFO), departments, research schools),
- Planned organisation,
- Planned scope including preliminary plan for courses and other learning activities,
- Preliminary budget.

5.2 Discontinuing a doctoral programme

KFU may, after preparation in KPK, decide to discontinue a doctoral programme or to merge several programmes. Such a decision must be preceded by an investigation in which the following aspects must be considered:

- The quality of courses and activities and of the programme's management and administration
- Number of participants in the activities carried out
- Number of courses completed over time
- Number of doctoral students in the research field
- Teaching capacity
- Financial considerations
- Strategic considerations

The decision should be based on a weighing of the reasons for either continuing or discontinuing the programme.

An opportunity to address shortcomings should be provided where possible.

The chair and coordinator of the doctoral programme and, where appropriate, the department should be consulted in good time.