



Guidelines for assessment panels on admissions to third-cycle education

1. General information

These guidelines, as well as admissions to third-cycle education, are based on the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), *Admission Regulations for Third-Cycle Education at Södertörn University*, *Regulations on grounds for assessment during selection to third-cycle education at Södertörn University* and the general syllabus for the admitting third-cycle subject area.

2. Assessment panel for admissions to an advertised doctoral studentship

Under the university's admissions regulations, a specially appointed assessment panel with subject expertise must assess applicants if a doctoral studentship is advertised externally. For example, this applies to the admission of doctoral students to the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS), admissions to projects or programmes funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies or other external financiers and for admissions to doctoral studentships funded by the university's direct government funding for research.

2.1. Composition of the assessment panel

The admitting third-cycle subject area submits proposals for the assessment panel to the steering committee for the research area for doctoral studies, with processes the case prior to a decision being made. A decision about the assessment panel is then made by the Faculty Board or the body to which the Faculty Board has delegated decision-making powers.

The composition of the assessment panel must fulfil the following criteria

- it must have at least two members
- at least half the members must be associate professors (docent) or more qualified
- members must have at least half-time employment at Södertörn University

- gender equality must be considered
- when admitting doctoral students to BEEGS, a representative from the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES) must be included (read more under item 2.3)
- when admitting doctoral students to the university's other graduate schools, a representative from the relevant graduate school must be included.

One member of the assessment panel is appointed as contact person and coordinator (calls to meetings).

2.2. Task of the assessment panel

The task of the assessment panel is to review all the applications for the advertised doctoral student(s) and identify a shortlist. The number of shortlisted applicants must be at least twice as many as the number of advertised positions.

Applicants must be assessed using the criteria stated in

- section 4 of the Admission Regulations, on eligibility and selection
- the general syllabus for the third-cycle subject area, section 3 on eligibility and selection¹
- any other requirements stated in the advertisement for the doctoral student(s).

See section 2.3 for grounds for assessment for BEEGS. For grounds for assessment for other graduate schools, see their conditions in the agreements between the higher education institutions.

The assessment panel must also conduct interviews and contact the referees for all shortlisted applicants. The assessment panel must then write a statement presenting the ranked shortlist, using the template and accompanying instructions.

2.3. Assessment panel for admissions to doctoral student(s) at BEEGS

When admitting doctoral students to BEEGS, the Admission Regulations state that a representative from CBEES must be a member of the assessment panel. The assessment by the CBEES' representative must be documented below a specific heading in the statement and have 5-10 sentences for every shortlisted applicant.

The CBEES' representative must participate in all interviews and decision-making processes about the final ranking, and should at least be an associate professor (*docent*) unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The assessment panel must consider the applicants jointly, using the third-cycle subject area's grounds for assessment in the general syllabus and BEEGS' research profile in the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe.

¹ Section 3 of the general syllabus comes from *Regulations on grounds for assessment during selection for third-cycle education at Södertörn University*.

The CBEES' representative must specifically consider BEEGS' research profile, as well as the availability of appropriate supervision and any research specialisations in the third-cycle subject area. In turn, subject representatives must consider BEEGS' research profile, as well as the variety of supervisory expertise at the university. Using these perspectives, the assessment group then provides an overall assessment.

3. Assessment panel for admissions to a non-advertised doctoral studentship

For admissions without previous advertising, the Admission Regulations state that an assessment of the applicant must be conducted by representatives from the third-cycle subject area who have subject expertise. This applies when admitting

- applicants employed by another organisation, externally employed doctoral students
- employees at the university who are offered a doctoral position as part of their employment
- applicants with scholarships
- doctoral students who have previously started their third-cycle programme at a different higher education institution, or if there are similar reasons.²

The assessment panel is appointed by the research area's steering committee after a proposal from the admitting third-cycle subject area.

The composition of the assessment panel must fulfil the following criteria

- it must have at least two members
- at least half the members must be associate professors (docent) or more qualified
- members must have at least half-time employment at Södertörn University
- gender equality must be considered.

The task of the assessment panel is to review applications using the criteria in

- section 4 of the Admission Regulations, on eligibility and selection
- the general syllabus for the third-cycle subject area, Section 3 on eligibility and selection.³

This task also includes conducting an interview with the applicant, contacting referees and writing a statement, using a specific template and the accompanying instructions.

Doctoral students with a doctoral studentship at the university but who have been admitted to a different higher education institution may, under the Higher Education Ordinance⁴, apply

² Chapter 7, Section 37 of the Higher Education Ordinance

³ Section 3 of the general syllabus comes from *Regulations on grounds for assessment during selection for third-cycle education at Södertörn University*.

⁴ Chapter 7, Section 38 of the Higher Education Ordinance

to transfer to Södertörn University without a new admission. There are specific routines and procedures for these cases.

4. Conflicts of interest

The university complies with the Swedish Agency for Public Management's⁵ and the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions'⁶ rules on conflicts of interest when assessing and recruiting new doctoral students.

Any member of the assessment panel who considers themselves to have a conflict of interest, must give up their place.⁷ In these cases, a decision about the composition of a new assessment panel is made according to section 2.1 above.

A member of the assessment panel may not be a referee for an applicant. The applicant may either swap their referee and provide a new name to the relevant HR generalist, or the member can give up their place on the assessment panel and a new decision will be made under section 2.1, above.

5. Entry into effect

These guidelines enter into effect on 7 September 2022 and replace *Kriterier för sammansättning av och anvisningar till ämnenas bedömargrupper vid doktorandantagning (dnr 51/1.1.2/2014)*.

⁵ *Jäv i offentlig tjänst*. Brochure from the Swedish Agency for Public Management (2020)

⁶ *Jävsregler i högskolan* Report from the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (1997)

⁷ A member of an assessment group having supervised an applicant is not normally regarded as a conflict of interest. Cf. item 1, page 12 in *Handläggning av anställningsärenden inom högskolan*. Guidance from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2019)