



Programme syllabus

Faculty of Social Sciences

Tillämpad samhällsvetenskaplig analys, masterprogram, 120 högskolepoäng

Applied Social Analysis, Master Programme, 120 credits

Level

Second Level

Date of Ratification

Approved by the Faculty Board within the Faculty of Social Sciences 2015-09-28

The programme syllabus is valid from autumn semester 2016

Prerequisites

General entry requirements for second-cycle studies and specific entry requirements:

- Bachelor's degree with a minimum of 90 credits in a Social Science, Psychology or Economics main area; students with different curricula can be accepted on an individual basis;
- English B/6 or equivalent.

Description of Programme

The International Master Programme in Applied Social Analysis (ASA) caters for those interested in doing social analysis using a rigorous scientific approach and provides the knowledge and skills required for participation in research and qualified development work within this area. It provides students with the capacity to produce, manage, analyse, model, and understand empirical data (qualitative, quantitative, network, experimental, and big data) using different research methods. The underlying goal is to make students able to model and understand empirical situations of high societal relevance using an applied science approach, i.e., an approach oriented to the production of scientific knowledge to support decision-makers within medium and large organizations. The increasing availability of qualitative and quantitative data in recent years has provided public and private organizations with the potential to better forecast and analyse the effects of their decisions and policies. However, a widespread lack of competences within their current staff often prevents them to do so effectively. The programme addresses this issue by providing to students the different skills needed to analyse qualitative and quantitative data, and to apply the resulting knowledge in situations having practical societal importance.

Objectives

Key objectives in accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance

Knowledge and understanding

For a Master of Science degree (120 credits) the student shall:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including both an overview of the field and specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field as well as insight into current research and development work;
- demonstrate specialised methodological knowledge in the main field of study.

Competence and skills

For a Master of Science degree (120 credits) the student shall:

- demonstrate the ability to integrate knowledge and analyse, assess and deal with complex phenomena, issues and situations even with limited information;
- demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate issues autonomously as well as to plan and, using appropriate methods, undertake advanced tasks within specified time limits;
- demonstrate the ability in speech and writing to report clearly and discuss his or her conclusions and the knowledge and arguments on which they are based in dialogue with different audiences;
- demonstrate the skills required to participate in research and development work or to work independently in other advanced contexts.

Judgement and approach

For a Master of Science degree (120 credits) the student shall:

- demonstrate an ability to make assessments in their main field of study, taking into account relevant scientific, social and ethical aspects, and demonstrate an awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work;
- demonstrate insight into the potential and limitations of science, its role in society and people's responsibility for how it is used;
- demonstrate an ability to identify their need of further knowledge and to take responsibility for developing their knowledge.

Programme specific objectives

For the Master degree in applied social analysis the student shall:

- demonstrate a global understanding of the scientific method and its application to social science research;
- demonstrate essential specialist knowledge about the main methods used in social science research;
- demonstrate the capacity to analyse and understand the empirical data using the most appropriate methodology in relation to the problem at stake;
- demonstrate the capacity to link the scientific research and data with social problems and challenges.

Content

Programme Overview

The ASA Programme is located and taught at the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Programme is organised to provide a strong common methodological background to all students, while the students themselves have extended freedom to choose the specific subject of application of the methods learned (within the scope of the social sciences) through focused optional courses and the thesis work. The first year of the programme holds a methodological focus, with courses presenting the different methods used in the social sciences. The second year concentrates more, although not exclusively, on the substantive themes chosen by the students within the possibilities offered by Linnaeus University. A substantial part of the optional courses should hence be connected to the thesis work. A strong emphasis is also placed on the research content of the thesis, which may be done working in contact with existing research groups at the university or within external organizations.

The Programme is rooted on complex system science approach: a perspective investigating how the relations between parts give rise to the collective behaviours of a system and how the system itself interacts and forms relationships with its environment. Many of society's most pressing problems derive from this complexity and do not fit well the boundaries of traditional disciplinary research. Complex problems require novel ideas that result from thinking about highly connected complex adaptive systems without giving up on a rigorous scientific approach. This translates into the strong and wide-range methodological approach characterizing the Programme.

Content

Teaching is in English and the required reading is, with the possible exception of some policy documents, in English. The Programme's first term is structured to gather students with different educational background and is therefore initiated with a course introducing social science issues and three basic methodological courses. The main goal is to provide all students with the basic skills needed to successfully move on to the study of more advanced methods and the understanding of complex societal issues. During the second term, advanced social science research methods are proposed and students have the opportunity to start their specialization in a specific subject, with 15 credits that can be selected based on individual attitudes and interests. The third term introduces new research methods and offers the opportunity of further 15 credits of elective courses to develop new knowledge on specific issues. The Programme ends with a research-based thesis of 30 credits.

Programme Courses

Term 1

1. Introduction: Explanation in the Social Sciences, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1N)
The main aim of the course is to introduce the student to the programme and its goals. The course discusses the different ways of doing research in the social sciences, along with their potential and meaning. Other topics covered are the choice of the most appropriate method to study the issue at stake and the interface between science and policy.

2. Qualitative Methods I, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1N)

The aim of the course is to introduce students to the basic concepts and knowledge needed to plan and implement qualitative research, such as interviews, observation and field studies.

3. Quantitative Methods I, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1N)

The aim of the course is to introduce basic concepts and tools making the student able to handle quantitative data research. These include, but are not limited to, research design, basic probability concepts, descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing and linear models.

4. Modelling and Social Simulation, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1N)

The goal of the course is to introduce modelling and simulation techniques to study human societies. The student has the opportunity to learn the logic of modelling and the use of agent-based models to better understand social phenomena and as an instrument to support policy-making.

Term 2

5. Qualitative Methods II, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1F)

The aim of the course is for the students to deepen their knowledge in qualitative analysis. The course embraces a discussion of common features (fundaments) of qualitative analysis which may be used when a researcher does not affiliate with any single, specific tradition. When it comes to conducting qualitative analysis within specific traditions, scientific basis as well as techniques and procedures for grounded theory analysis and discursive analysis are discussed and practised.

6. Quantitative Methods II, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1F)

The aim of the course is to make the student able to manage advanced quantitative analysis techniques. The course introduces statistical models to handle time series, longitudinal data, big data, and other more complex data types. Even if the course includes a theoretical part, the goal is to make students able to apply the methods learned to analyse and understand real-world data.

7. Elective courses (15 credits)

Elective courses should focus of one (or a few) specific topic of interest for the student and where the methods learned could potentially be applied.

Term 3

8. Experimental Methods, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1F)

The course covers all the aspects needed to make the student able plan, run and analyse social science experiments. These include theory, design, implementation, and methods for data analysis. Various types of experiments are introduced, including laboratory, field and web experiments. The potential and limits of each instrument is presented and discussed.

9. Social Network Analysis, 7.5 credits (mandatory) (A1F)

The course introduces social network analysis theory and tools. Besides traditional concepts of social network analysis developed within sociology, the course recognises that the advent of social media and internet-mediated interactions has dramatically expanded the amount of data available and has pushed the boundaries of existing techniques. The goal is to make the student able to manage and analyse network data.

10. Elective courses (15 credits):

The choice of the elective courses should preferably orient the student in the direction of the thesis work.

Term 4

11. Master Thesis, 30 credits (mandatory) (A2E)

The degree project is an independent project of 30 higher education credits. The aim for the student is to apply to a specific research question one or several of the theories and methods learned in the courses included in the programme .

A minimum of 7.5 credits in Qualitative methods and 7.5 credits in Quantitative methods is mandatory to do the thesis work. Students coming from other master programmes and enrolled in the second year of the ASA programme should take the Qualitative methods I and Quantitative methods I courses using their elective credits in case they do not fulfil this requirement.

Internationalization

The Programme permits and encourages studies abroad on your own up to an entire semester. These can be conducted within the framework of the overall range of agreements with foreign universities within Linnaeus University or by students organising their studies at a foreign institute of higher education in another manner. The possibility of doing the thesis work abroad also exists. The foreign studies are planned in consultation between students and programme coordinators.

Societal Relevance

The Programme focuses on applied issues and offers students the opportunities for qualified research tasks and investigation assignments that are conducted in the form of projects and theses. Collaboration with the surrounding community is institutionalised by stakeholders and organizations being connected to the Programme. This ensures an influx of proposals and projects related to the operations for investigations and projects which entail the analysis of social issues of local and national relevance.

Scope of Programme

The programme council holds the specific charge of checking that the programme contents: (i) integrate long-term thinking in the courses; (ii) include an ethical perspective where equal opportunities, diversity and sustainable development are recognized as core values for social analysis during the education.

Quality Development

Continuous evaluation and improvement of the programme takes place, e.g., through course evaluations which are compiled into written reports and reported back to the students. Students actively participate in the follow-up and development of the programme through the programme council. In addition to course evaluations, there is an evaluation at the end of the programme, which is also reported back to the students. Evaluation results are used in the programme's quality development work.

A program coordinator holds the overall responsibility for its management, organization and quality. In addition, a program council formed by the program coordinator, teachers and student representatives, and the head of department (or head of department appointed person) is in place with the task of continuously follow and monitor the organization and the contents of the programme. Besides maintaining a high standard of education – including the definition of guidelines to guarantee a clear applicative dimension of the course and exam contents – the council holds the specific charge of checking that the programme remains up-to-date with the rapid changes occurring in the social and technological realms.

Degree Certificate

After completed studies in accordance with the objectives specified by the Higher Education Ordinance and the Linnaeus University Degree Ordinance, the student can apply for a degree certificate. Those having completed the International Master Programme in Applied Social Analysis (120) credits can receive the following degree:

Master of Science (120 credits) with specialization in Applied Social Analysis
(Main field of study: Sociology)

The diploma is bilingual (Swedish / English). Students are to receive a diploma and a Diploma Supplement (English).

Other Information

In order to be admitted to the courses on the Programme, the specific requirements stated in each course syllabus must be fulfilled by the start of the course.