



FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Master programme: Spatial and Social Transformations

Masterprogram: Samhällets rumsliga och sociala omvandlingar

Programme code: SARUM

ECTS Credits: 120

Education level: Second cycle

Degree type: General qualification

Language of instruction: English

Finalized by

Faculty Board of Arts and Social Science, 2025-12-11

Valid from

Autumn semester 2026

Entry requirements

A Degree of Bachelor comprising at least 180 credits, including 90 credits with progressive specialisation in the main field of Human Geography or equivalent. In addition, upper-secondary school English 6 or English level 2. Equivalence assessment can be made.

Introduction

Spatial and Social Transformations is a two-year Master's programme (120 credits) that leads to a Master's degree with human geography as the main field of study. The programme provides specialised knowledge of how spatial and social change processes influence societal development, politics and everyday life. It also offers a foundation for understanding how mobility, travel and experiences shape our daily lives, society and culture. Students develop specialised skills in analysing and critically evaluating contemporary transformations of places and societies from local, regional and global perspectives. The programme addresses processes and phenomena such as urbanisation, rural transformation, digitalisation, mobility, climate change, migration and crisis preparedness.

The courses within the programme are based on human geography and linked to spatial and social planning and tourism studies. They address issues such as the importance of places in a changing world, the impact of media technologies on people, mobility, migration and belonging, as well as how spatial change processes are planned, negotiated and implemented. A central aspect is risk and crisis preparedness, as society's way of interpreting and managing uncertainty not only shapes structures and exposes vulnerabilities, but also creates opportunities for change. As such, risk management becomes an important arena for societal transformation.

Programme graduates are qualified for work in planning, social analysis, place development and policy design in both the public and private sectors. The programme also prepares students for doctoral studies in human geography or related subject areas.

Programme outcomes

For programme completion, students must meet the national requirements for a Degree of Master as well as the specific local programme requirements.

National outcomes for a Degree of Master (60 credits)

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Master (60 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, and
- demonstrate specialised methodological knowledge in the main field of study.

Competence and skills

For a Degree of Master (60 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 predetermined time frames
- 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, and
- demonstrate the skills required for participation in research and development work or employment in some other qualified capacity.

Judgement and approach

For a Degree of Master (60 credits) the student shall

- demonstrate the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues and also to demonstrate awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and
- demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning.

Independent project (degree project)

A requirement for the award of a Degree of Master (60 credits) is completion by the student of an independent project (degree project) for at least 15 credits in the main field of study.

National outcomes for a Degree of Master (120 credits)

Knowledge and understanding

For a Degree of Master (120 credits) the student shall

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding in the main field of study, including both broad knowledge of the field and a considerable degree of specialised knowledge in certain areas of the field as well as insight into current research and development work, and
- demonstrate specialised methodological knowledge in the main field of study.

Competence and skills

For a Degree of Master (120 credits) the student shall

- demonstrate the ability to critically and systematically 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 critically, autonomously and creatively as well as to plan and, using appropriate methods, undertake advanced tasks within predetermined time

frames and so contribute to the formation of knowledge as well as the ability to evaluate this work

- demonstrate the ability in speech and writing both nationally and internationally to clearly report and discuss his or her conclusions and the knowledge and arguments on which they are based in dialogue with different audiences, and
- demonstrate the skills required for participation in research and development work or autonomous employment in some other qualified capacity.

Judgement and approach

For a Degree of Master (120 credits) the student shall

- demonstrate the ability to make assessments in the main field of study informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues and also to demonstrate awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work
- demonstrate insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used, and
- demonstrate the ability to identify the personal need for further knowledge and take responsibility for his or her ongoing learning.

Independent project (degree project)

A requirement for the award of a Degree of Master (120 credits) is completion by the student of an independent project (degree project) for at least 30 credits in the main field of study. The degree project may comprise less than 30 credits, but at least 15 credits, if the student has already completed an independent project in the second cycle worth a minimum of 15 credits in the main field of study or the equivalent from a study programme outside of Sweden.

Local outcome

In addition to the requirements specified above, the student shall

- demonstrate understanding of human geography as an academic discipline, its central theories and its importance for analysing and understanding contemporary spatial and social change processes.

Programme structure

The first and second semesters focus on master-level studies within the main field of human geography and address how spatial and social changes can be contextualised and analysed in relation to societal development, planning, mobility, digitalisation, crises and sustainability. Students are introduced to central theoretical concepts and work with current case studies from a local and regional development perspective, where they are faced with challenges and opportunities related to contemporary social issues. The courses included in the programme

address questions about the significance of place and how places are designed, changed and communicated over time.

Before the second semester, students decide whether they intend to write an independent project of 15 credits at the end of the semester (for a Master's degree 60 credits) or an independent project of 30 credits during semester four (for a Master's degree 120 credits).

For students who choose a one-year Master's (60 credits), the second semester consists of a specialised course, a methods course and an independent project of 15 credits. For students who choose to complete a two-year Master's (120 credits), the same semester instead comprises specialised courses totalling 30 credits.

Semesters three and four consist of courses with a specialisation in regional studies, focusing on contemporary tourism and planning research, as well as practical field studies. The courses are based on contemporary societal changes and students also get to specialise further through excursions, practical components, research preparatory components and an independent project of 30 credits. For students who want to pursue parts of their studies abroad, the third semester is the best option.

The programme addresses gender equality and sustainable development as central analytical perspectives for understanding and critically examining society's spatial and social transformation processes. By integrating these perspectives into theoretical and empirical components, the programme discusses how power, resource distribution and social structures shape access to spatial and social opportunities.

Instruction takes the form of lectures, seminars, excursions, fieldwork and individual projects. Guest speakers from relevant research fields and sectors of society provide additional insight into current social issues. Excursions may incur extra costs for students.

Programme curriculum

The study route of the programme is outlined below. Note that the titles and the order of the programme courses may change.

Study route for a Degree of Master (60 credits):

Semester 1

The geographies of transformation – an introduction, 7.5 credits

The interplay between urban and rural areas, 7.5 credits

The geographies of digitalisation, 7.5 credits

Tourism as a force for societal transformation, 7.5 credits

Semester 2

The classics of human geography and tourism studies, 7.5 credits

Research methods, 7.5 credits
Independent project in human geography, 15 credits

Study route for a Degree of Master (120 credits):

Semester 1

The geographies of transformation – an introduction, 7.5 credits
The interplay between urban and rural areas, 7.5 credits
The geographies of digitalisation, 7.5 credits
Tourism as a force for societal transformation, 7.5 credits

Semester 2

The classics of human geography and tourism studies, 7.5 credits
Crisis, resilience and transition, 7.5 credits
Planning theory, 7.5 credits
Mobility, security and geopolitics, 7.5 credits

Semester 3

Regional studies, excursion course, 7.5 credits
Contemporary tourism and planning research, 15 credits
Methods for empirical studies of societal transformation, 7.5 credits

Semester 4

Independent project in human geography, 30 credits

Title of qualification

Degree of Master of Social Science (60 credits)
Major: Human Geography

Degree of Master of Social Science (120 credits)
Major: Human Geography

Credit transfer

According to the Higher Education Ordinance, Chap. 6, Sect. 6-8, students have the right to transfer credits and have prior learning recognised upon approval.

Additional information

The local regulations for first- and second-cycle education at Karlstad University stipulate the obligations and rights of students and staff.