

**Graduate Program Rules and  
Requirements 2024-2025**

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

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## Overview of the Department

The Department of Sociology has two interrelated missions: 1) to provide the highest quality education at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels, and 2) to foster state-of-the-art research among faculty and graduate students. Teaching and research in the department help meet the needs of the state and nation by addressing important social issues.

Departmental programs focus primarily on four broad areas:

- Inequality/Stratification
- Criminology and Deviance
- Global/Environmental Sociology
- Family and Religion

The department also has faculty who teach and do research in Sexuality, Medical Sociology, Demography, Education, Economic Sociology, International Development, Formal Evaluation, Migration, and the Sociology of Aging.

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, coursework offered by the Department of Sociology provides an analytic research emphasis for studying, understanding, and explaining major social issues. Research in these areas updates and refines knowledge and helps formulate and evaluate social policy. The department offers a diverse curriculum covering a wide range of topics in sociology. During a typical year, the department will have over 2,000 enrollees from throughout the university, with about 350 undergraduate majors. The graduate program has about 35 graduate students pursuing either a master's or doctoral degree. During a typical year, the department awards 175 baccalaureate degrees and 6 graduate degrees. Over the years, the department has been very successful in placing its graduates as teachers and researchers in colleges and universities, and as applied sociologists in a wide variety of public and private agencies.

All graduate students, regardless of their career orientations, receive a thorough grounding in both theoretical and methodological aspects of sociology, as well as pursuing their chosen areas of specialization. Core seminars in research methods (5293) and statistics (5283, 5483, and 5683) emphasize the collection and analysis of survey data. The theory courses cover classical (5933) and contemporary (6903) sociological perspectives. The department regularly offers substantive courses for graduate credit in Inequality and Social Differentiation, Criminology and Deviance, Global and Environmental Sociology, as well as Family and Religion.

The department offers a number of structured research opportunities for graduate students in conjunction with the required seminars in research methods and statistics. The department has full access to the data archives maintained by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, and also houses many data sets collected by the National Opinion Research Center, the Bureau of the Census, and the faculty

themselves. These are available to students for analysis and a number of seminars have components that introduce students to the use of these data sets. Many graduate students use these data for writing theses and dissertations, to present papers at professional meetings, or to submit articles for journal publication. In addition, students also have the opportunity to work as research assistants on faculty grants and often co-author publications with faculty members.

The department awards 6-8 new Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) each year to incoming students. At present, the department supports over 90 percent of its full-time graduate students with GTA funding. The GTA represents a value of over \$27,000 and involves working with a professor 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters. In exchange for this work, students receive a stipend (\$17,500 for MA students, \$20,000 for PhD students), a tuition waiver, and student health insurance. For more detail on the graduate assistantships, visit: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/funding/graduate-assistantship>.

The department recognizes the importance of graduate students' participation in professional meetings and offers travel awards to students presenting their research. The Sociology Department provides Graduate Student Travel Awards of up to \$500 for presentations at national, international, and regional meetings. To be eligible for such an award, students must also apply for travel funding from the College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate Student Senate, and the Graduate College. For more information on travel funding, visit: <http://www.ou.edu/cas/soc/graduate-program/resources>.

## **Degrees Offered**

- *Master of Arts (MA)*
- *Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*

# Master of Arts in Sociology: Degree Requirements, Rules, and Regulations

The M.A. degree in sociology is a 34-hour program requiring a thesis.

The following core coursework is required:

- Fundamentals of Sociological Statistics (5283)
- Advanced Methods of Social Research (5293)
- Advanced Regression Analysis (5483)
- Categorical, Panel, and Advanced Statistical Analysis (5683)
- Professionalization Seminar (5821)
- Sociological Theory (5933)
- Three hours of Thesis Credit (5980)

In addition to the core courses, completion of the program entails 15 hours of elective coursework. Twelve of the 15 hours of electives must be courses housed in the Department of Sociology at the 5000-level or above. The remaining three hours of electives may be Directed Readings (5960) or coursework outside the department.

## Important Deadlines for MA Students

Below is a list of important deadlines. These deadlines are the responsibility of the student. The specific dates for any given year can be found on the Graduate College website: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/current-students/progress-completion/deadlines>. The timeline and deadlines for the thesis submission changed effective Spring 2022. Please double-check the specific dates on the Graduate College Website.

All forms can be found at: <https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms>.

### 1) Fall of second year in the program:

- a. Choose a thesis chair and finalize your thesis topic. Your chair will help you choose the other two members of the committee.
- b. Submit both the *Program of Study* and *Master's Thesis Topic and Committee Membership* forms to the Graduate College in early October.
- c. Work with your thesis committee chair to produce a proposal.
- d. Give your committee members a copy of the proposal. Schedule and hold the proposal defense with the committee.

*NOTE: The proposal and proposal defense are sociology department requirements. The defense must be held in the semester prior to graduation. Because the proposal and defense are departmental requirements, no Graduate College forms are required.*

- 2) Spring of second year in the program (or intended semester of graduation):
  - a. Enroll in three hours of Research for Master's Thesis (SOC 5980). The Graduate College requires students to be enrolled in research hours the semester of graduation.
  - b. File for graduation by mid-February: <http://www.ou.edu/commencement/graduates/apply>.
  - c. Submit a request for degree check within the first 2 weeks of the semester.
  - d. Submit a reading copy of the thesis 4 weeks prior to the last day of finals (and at least 2 weeks prior to the defense) and submit the Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend to the Graduate College.
  - e. Your committee has 3 weeks prior to the last day of finals (and at least 1 week prior to the defense) to sign the Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend.
  - f. Schedule a tentative defense date with your committee early – faculty schedules get busy at the end of the semester. Last day to hold a defense is 2 weeks prior to the last day of finals.
  - g. Hold the thesis defense at least 2 weeks prior to the last day of finals.
  - h. Submit the final, corrected thesis to SHAREOK at least 1 week prior to the last day of finals: <https://shareok.org>.
- 3) For additional information, see: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/current-students/progress-completion>.

## **Thesis Information**

As part of Sociology Master's program, all students must write a thesis. A Master's thesis is an original research project that is conducted under the supervision of a faculty committee. In most cases the thesis is the equivalent of an article published in a scholarly journal. Before a master's student can begin thesis research (i.e., collecting and/or analyzing data) they must have a research **proposal** approved by their thesis committee. A research proposal is a detailed description of the rationale for conducting the proposed research and the research design (i.e., methods/analysis) that will be used. The thesis committee consists of three sociology faculty members, of whom one is chosen as chair.

The research proposal must be approved at least one semester before the semester in which the thesis will be defended (e.g., approval in fall for defense in spring). The research proposal must be approved before an application is submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval of research using human subjects. The student must have approval from the IRB before engaging in any data collection or data analysis involving human subjects. There are very few exceptions for any kind of sociological research (e.g., use of archival census data on aggregates like countries). Any project involving contact with humans (such as interviews or questionnaires), even if the data have been collected by someone else (existing surveys), requires IRB approval. The student should be mindful of the fact that getting IRB approval can be arduous and time-consuming, so procrastination is not a sound idea. Committee members must receive a copy of the research proposal at least one week prior to the proposal meeting.

At the thesis **defense**, the student must demonstrate that they have executed the research project that was approved at the proposal stage to the satisfaction of the thesis committee. Because committee members have seen and had the opportunity to comment on drafts of the thesis, by the time a thesis defense is held it should be *pro forma*. Students should consult with their committee about the expectations for the defense. At the defense, the student may be asked to make revisions to the thesis before the final draft is submitted. Normally, these revisions are minor. The student is responsible for providing every member of the committee with a draft of the thesis. If there are revisions, the student is responsible for providing every member of the committee with a final copy of the thesis.

### **M.A. Graduate Student of the Year Award**

In consultation with the faculty, the Graduate Awards Committee awards the M.A. Graduate Student of the Year. One master's-level student will be selected each year. Faculty members are encouraged to nominate students when nominations are solicited by the graduate liaison each spring. The nomination packet consists of a letter of nomination by a faculty member, support letters from other faculty members (optional), and the student's CV.

### **Helpful Forms/Documents**

All Graduate College forms are available on the Graduate College website:

<http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms>

The Department of Sociology forms are available on the Department of Sociology website:

<http://www.ou.edu/cas/soc/graduate-program/resources>

Graduate College Bulletin: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms/bulletin>

Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms/thesis-dissertation-packet>

# Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology: Degree Requirements, Rules, and Regulations

To earn the PhD degree, students must: complete at least 90 hours of graduate hours, inclusive of electives, required classes, and dissertation hours; pass the general examination; and write and defend a doctoral dissertation.

**All students admitted to the Ph.D. program must complete the following required courses:**

- Fundamentals of Sociological Statistics (SOC 5283)
- Advanced Methods of Sociological Research (SOC 5293)
- Advanced Regression Analysis (SOC 5483)
- Categorical, Panel, and Advanced Statistical Analysis (5683)
- Professionalization Seminar (5821)
- Teaching Seminar (5831)
- Sociological Theory (SOC 5933)
- Issues in Sociological Theory (SOC 6903)
- 2-24 hours of Dissertation Research (SOC 6980)

In addition to the core courses, completion of the program entails 18 hours of elective coursework. A maximum of 24 dissertation hours (SOC 6980) may be applied to the degree. A maximum of 34 credit hours may be transferred from the MA degree with the approval of the student's advisory committee and the dean of the Graduate College. The purpose of coursework is to prepare the student for the general examination and the dissertation. The accumulation of coursework, in and of itself, does not constitute progress toward the degree.

With few exceptions, the student seeking this degree anticipates a career in teaching and/or research. Departmental requirements emphasize professional competence in sociology as a whole, especially research methodology, and expertise in two specialty fields within sociology. At the PhD level, the student should acquire a broad knowledge of the fundamentals of sociology and a focused specialization in two substantive areas of expertise.

## **Important Deadlines for Doctoral-Level Students**

Below is a list of important deadlines. These deadlines are the responsibility of the student. The specific dates for any given year can be found on the Graduate College website: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/current-students/progress-completion/deadlines>. The timeline and deadlines for the thesis submission changed effective Spring 2022. Please double-check the specific dates on the Graduate College Website.

All forms can be found at: <https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms>.

1. Fall of first year in the program: Advisory Conference Report (ACR)
  - a. Choose your doctoral committee chair and form your committee. Your chair will help you choose your graduate college representative (outside member), and two or three additional Department of Sociology committee members based on your two general exam areas. More information about the advisory committee can be found here:

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms/bulletin/doctoral-info#8.3.1>. Also, see the next section below, “The Doctoral Committee.”

- b. Schedule a meeting with your committee members. They will review and sign the *Advisory Conference Report* form. Submit the form to the Graduate College.
2. Fall of third/fourth year in the program: General Exams
    - a. If needed, file a Change in ACR form with the Graduate College no later than 30 days prior to the start of the exam.
    - b. File *Application for Doctoral General Examination* in late August/early September.
    - c. Take the written portion of general exams in September/October.
    - d. Hold oral defense in November.
  3. Fall of fourth/fifth year: Dissertation
    - a. If needed, file a Change in ACR form with the Graduate College to reflect any changes in committee membership.
    - b. Hold dissertation proposal with committee in the semester prior to the graduating semester. *NOTE: The proposal and proposal defense are sociology department requirements. The defense must be held in the semester prior to graduation. Because the proposal and defense are departmental requirements, no Graduate College forms are required.*
  4. Graduation semester: Dissertation Defense
    - a. Schedule a tentative defense date with your committee early – faculty schedules get busy at the end of the semester.
    - b. File for graduation ( <http://www.ou.edu/commencement/graduates/apply>) by mid-February for spring semester graduation, by early June for summer graduation, and by mid-September for Fall graduation.
    - c. Enroll in at least 2 hours of Research for Doctoral Dissertations (SOC 6980). The Graduate College requires students to be enrolled in research hours the semester of graduation.
    - d. File for graduation early in the semester:  
<http://www.ou.edu/commencement/graduates/apply>.
    - e. Submit the *Request for Degree Check* within the first 2 weeks of the semester.
    - f. Submit a reading copy of the dissertation 4 weeks prior to the last day of finals (and at least 2 weeks prior to the defense) and submit the Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend to the Graduate College.
    - g. Your committee has 3 weeks prior to the last day of finals (and at least 1 week prior to the defense) to sign the Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend.
    - h. Schedule a tentative defense date with your committee early – faculty schedules get busy at the end of the semester. Last day to hold a defense is 2 weeks prior to the last day of finals.
    - i. Hold the dissertation defense at least 2 weeks prior to the last day of finals.
    - j. Submit the final, corrected dissertation to SHAREOK at least 1 week prior to the last day of finals: <https://shareok.org>.



5. For additional information, see: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/current-students/progress-completion>

## The Doctoral Committee

As you move through the PhD program, the duties of your committee changes.

There are three “phases” of the doctoral committee:

1. The Advisory Committee: in the first semester of the PhD program, students choose a committee chair, two additional members of the Sociology faculty (reflecting the two general exam areas), and an outside faculty member (what the graduate college calls the “graduate college representative”). With advice from the committee chair and/or the graduate liaison, students fill out the Advisory Conference Report (ACR) form, meet with the advisory committee to go over the plan of study, then submit the signed form to the Graduate College. This is the “planning” phase of your doctoral journey. The advisory committee helps students figure out a reasonable plan for earning the degree, based on prior degrees/coursework (e.g., students with MA degrees in disciplines other than Sociology may benefit from an extra year of coursework) and general exam areas.
2. The General Exam Committee: most students will take their general exams in the fall semester of their third year (students who take an extra year of coursework can postpone their exams to fall of their fourth year). The student chooses/retains the committee chair and the outside member. The graduate liaison determines the other three members of the committee based on the two general exam areas – this ensures that all exam areas are covered, and that members of the faculty rotate through serving as graders. This change in the committee occurs in the spring semester immediately prior to the fall semester when exams are taken. **No later than 30 days prior to the exam date, students must submit a form to the graduate college requesting a change in their ACR, updating the committee composition as well as any variations in coursework from the original ACR.** The graduate college will not approve student requests to take the general exams if the ACR form is not updated. This part of the process is important.
3. The Dissertation Committee: after students have successfully passed their general exams, they may make any changes to the committee that they deem necessary going into the dissertation. Students will submit a change in ACR form to the graduate college no later than the semester prior to the dissertation defense. Students can retain four members from the sociology department, or can drop down to three members.

## General Exams

The general examination in sociology consists of two components, a written component and an oral component. The written component consists of writing answers to questions covering two substantive areas within the discipline of sociology. The oral component consists of verbally answering questions covering these substantive areas. The general examination is taken in the **fall semester of the third or fourth year** of the PhD program, once a student has completed all the required coursework and most of the elective hours of coursework (except dissertation hours). During the departmental orientation every August, the Graduate

Liaison will direct all new PhD students to the reading lists and sample questions on the Canvas sites. The liaison will also give them a document outlining the schedule and structure of the exam.

Students select two areas of specialization from the list below. The availability of specific areas is subject to change based on availability of faculty. Below are the areas and the faculty members comprising each area committee:

1. Class Stratification (Bass, Burns, Peck, Perry)
2. Criminology and Deviance (Chapple, Gerlinger, Hope, Worthen)
3. Cross-National Sociology (Bass, Burns, Carrillo, Ipsen)
4. Environmental Sociology (Burns, Carrillo)
5. Family (Bass, Beutel, Burge, Hope, Maher)
6. Gender (Beutel, Burge, Perry, Worthen)
7. Quantitative Methods (Peck, Piotrowski, Schleifer, Wang)
8. Race/Ethnicity (Carrillo, Chapple, Perry)
9. Sociology of Religion (Burns, Perry, Schleifer)
10. Social Demography (Bass, Beutel, Piotrowski)
11. Students interested in the intersection of class, gender, and racial stratification can take a combined exam covering all three areas rather than choosing two areas from above.

### **Exam Committees**

The exams are written and graded by a committee of five faculty members – the student’s dissertation chair, three additional members of the sociology faculty (assigned to the committee by the Graduate Liaison based on the examination areas), and a faculty member from outside the sociology department. If the student’s dissertation chair is not a member of the area committee for either of the student’s specialty areas, then a sixth member will be added to the committee (so that each student has two graders for each specialty area).

### **Reading Lists**

Each exam area has a set list of readings. Exam questions will be written from the reading lists, so students are expected to read and master all the material from the reading lists in preparation for the exams. Students will have access to all of the area reading lists, along with sample exam questions, in their first year of the PhD program. The reading lists will be updated (as needed) each April. **Students are responsible for the version of the lists that are posted in April prior to the exam date.**

### **Graduate College Representative**

The university requires that an outside (non-departmental) member serve on all general exam committees. During the first year of the Ph.D. program the student and the student’s doctoral committee chair will work together to find an outside faculty person to serve on the committee and sign the advisory report.

The outside person is assigned the role of overseeing the process and therefore could be from any department. The outside person’s research interests do *not* have to overlap with the student’s. The outside faculty person’s primary role is ensuring that the process is in compliance with Graduate College guidelines.

The designated Graduate College representative of an advisory conference committee or doctoral committee must hold an M2, M3, RM3, or RM4 University of Oklahoma graduate faculty appointment outside the student's academic unit. See the Graduate Bulletin for more information:

<https://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms/bulletin/doctoral-info#8.3.1.2>.

## Structure of the Exam

The general exam has two components, written and oral. The written component is take-home, and students have one week for each exam (with a two-week break in between exams). **The written component consists of six questions, three from each area, of equal weight in the overall grade. Students are strongly recommended to limit each answer to 10 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins).** Reference pages are not included in these ten pages. Every student taking an exam in the same substantive area and at the same time receives the same exam questions. The exam questions are not given to the students in advance. Students are expected to incorporate all relevant material from the reading list into their answers. They may also include material from outside of the reading list. If the grading members of the committee determine that the answers to the written portion of the exam are satisfactory, the student will proceed to the oral component of the exam.

## Oral Defense

The university requires that general exams have an oral component. Therefore, all students who have satisfactorily completed the written portion of the exam have to orally defend their exam. During the oral component, all members of the committee will have the opportunity to ask the student questions. Students should be prepared to do any of the following during the oral component of the exam: clarify/expand on answers from the written component of the exam; answer questions from the written component of the exam that the student did not answer; answer questions covering any material from the two areas.

The following materials are allowed in the oral exam:

- (1) A copy of the reading list for each area
- (2) If submitted to the committee chair ahead of time and approved, two pages of typed notes. Notes must have .75 inch or wider margins, and 10-point or larger font.
- (3) Printed copies of the answers from the written component of the exam.

No other materials (including laptops, tablets, etc.) are allowed. The oral defense should not exceed two hours. Both the written and oral components of the exam must be completed within the same semester, per Graduate College guidelines.

## Sample Questions

Each area committee has compiled a list of sample questions that are available to students on the Canvas sites. These questions will not be used on exams but are intended to give students a sense of the types of questions they can anticipate.

## Exam Schedule

**Students are required to declare their two exam areas no later than the semester before the scheduled exam.** Students will have access to the first exam (via Canvas) beginning at 12:00 am on the last Friday in September. Students must upload their exam answers by 5:00 pm the following Friday. Students will have access to the second exam beginning at 12:00 am on the third Friday in October and be due the following Friday at 5:00 pm. The members of the examination committee will download the answers from Canvas.

### Fall Exam Schedule (subject to change)

**Last Friday in September:** Students download first area exam from Canvas.

**First Friday in October:** Students upload their answers to Canvas.

**Third Friday in October:** Students download second area exam from Canvas.

**Fourth Friday in October:** Students upload their answers to Canvas.

**Late October/early November:** Committees grade the written answers. The committee chair for each student notifies the Graduate Liaison about the results for the written component of the exam. The Graduate Liaison officially notifies the students of their exam results. Students will be not be informed of their results until both exams have been graded.

**November:** Committees hold the oral component of the exam for each student who has been allowed to proceed beyond the written component. At the conclusion of the oral component the committee decides if the student has passed the general exam – **note that students must pass both the written and the oral components of the exam.** As mandated by the Graduate College, the committee gives the final exam results to the Graduate Dean within 72 hours of the oral component of the exam. Each member of the committee signs the general exam report.

## Exam Feedback

After the written portion of the exam has been graded, students will meet with their committee chair, who will summarize the feedback from the graders. Students satisfactorily completing the written portion of the exam may also contact the other members of the committee to seek advice for preparing for the oral portion of the exam. Students who do not satisfactorily complete the written portion of the exam are strongly encouraged to consult with their committee members regarding improved performance before retaking the exam in the spring.

## Exam Success

In order to pass the general exam:

1. *Students must perform satisfactorily on both of the substantive areas on the written component of the exam.* Students who perform satisfactorily on both areas of the written component of the exam may proceed to the oral component of the general exam. Students who fail the written portion of the general exam may retake it the following spring semester (March). However, if only one of the

substantive areas on the written component was considered unsatisfactory, then the student will retake only the unsatisfactory substantive area. Once the relevant elements of the written component of the exam are considered satisfactory, then the student may proceed to the oral component of the general exam. A second failure on the written component of the general exam, or a fail on the oral exams following a fail on either of the written exams, will result in dismissal from the program.

2. *Students must also perform satisfactorily on the oral component of the general exam.* In cases where the student's written answers were considered satisfactory but the performance on the oral component of the exam was not, they will retake the oral component of the general exam in the following semester (timing to be determined in consultation with the student's committee). An unsatisfactory performance on the second attempt of the oral component of the general exam will result in dismissal from the program.

### **Spring (retake) Exam Schedule (subject to change)**

**January 15-30:** A student preparing to take the exam must file an amended Advisory Conference Report showing the new members of his/her committee, if they have changed (this requires signatures from all new members and all old members being replaced) no later than 30 days prior to the exam retake. If the student failed both written exams in the prior semester, they must also apply for authorization to take the general exam with a form signed by all members of the committee (if they only failed one area, new paperwork is not required).

**First Friday in March:** Students download exam questions from Canvas.

**Second Friday in March:** Students upload their completed answers to Canvas.

**[If student needs to retake both written exams, they will schedule exams around spring break, in consultation with the committee and the graduate liaison]**

**Third/fourth week in March:** Committees grade the written answers. The committee chair for each student notifies the Graduate Liaison about the results for the written component of the exam. The Graduate Liaison officially notifies the students of their exam results.

**April:** Students whose answers for the written portion of the remedial exam are considered satisfactory proceed to the oral portion of the exam. As mandated by the Graduate College, committee chairs will give the final exam results to the Graduate Dean within 72 hours of the oral component of the exam. Exam committees sign the general exam reports for all the students whose exams they graded. If a student fails an exam twice, the department will recommend to the Graduate College that the student be dismissed from the program.

### **Academic Misconduct**

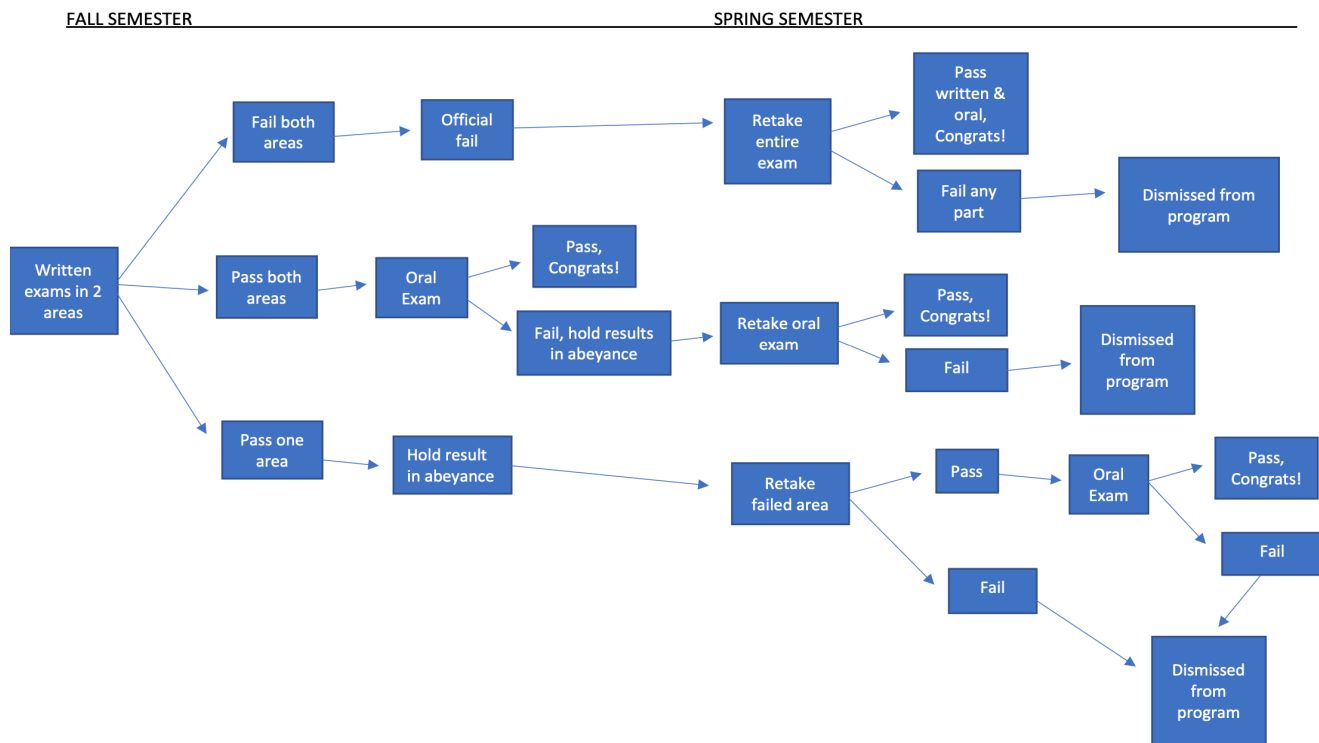
Students are subject to the OU Integrity code, which can be reviewed at:

[http://integrity.ou.edu/students\\_guide.html](http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html). Additionally, students are committing academic misconduct if they: (a) receive exam assistance from anyone during the weeks they are completing the written component of the exam, (b) share their answers with anyone else in the graduate program while they are working on the

exam or after they have completed the exam, (c) view another student's exam answers at any time while they are in the graduate program.

If students are asked questions on the general exam that they have previously answered in a graduate seminar, they may draw upon prior written work, but answers should not be exact reproductions of prior answers.

**GENERAL EXAM FLOWCHART**



**The Dissertation**

Once a student has successfully passed their general exams, they form the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee can be the same composition as the examination committee or can be adjusted in consultation with the dissertation chair. The dissertation committee is comprised of the chair, two or three Sociology faculty members, and the graduate college representative/outside member. Before a PhD student can begin dissertation research (i.e., collecting and/or analyzing data) they must have a research proposal approved by the dissertation committee. A dissertation research proposal is a detailed description of the rationale for conducting the proposed research and the design (i.e., methods/analysis) that will be used.

The dissertation research proposal must be approved at least one semester before the semester in which the dissertation will be defended (e.g., approval in fall for defense in spring).

The dissertation research proposal must be approved before an application is submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval of research using human subjects (if such approval is needed). The student must have approval from the IRB before they can engage in any data collection or data analysis involving

human subjects. There are very few exceptions for any kind of sociological research (e.g., use of archival census data on aggregates like countries). Any project involving contact with humans (such as interviews or questionnaires), even if the data already have been collected by someone else (existing surveys), requires IRB approval. The student should be mindful of the fact that getting IRB approval can be time-consuming, so procrastination is not a sound idea.

Committee members must receive a copy of the proposal at least two weeks before a meeting to approve the proposal is held.

As part of the degree program, PhD students must write a doctoral dissertation. A dissertation is an original research project. The doctoral dissertation is the final and most important component of the series of academic experiences that culminate in the awarding of the doctoral degree

Three major functions are fulfilled by the dissertation experience:

1. It is a work of original research scholarship that makes a contribution to existing knowledge.
2. It demonstrates the student's mastery of research methods of the special field.
3. It demonstrates the student's ability to address a significant intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion.

The student should select a dissertation topic in consultation with the committee chair.

A student whose dissertation research may involve any of the following should promptly contact the appropriate office for advice:

- Human subjects: Contact the Institutional Review Board. (See also Use of Human Subjects in Research.)
- Vertebrate animals: Contact the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. (See also Use of Vertebrate Animals in Research.)

Students whose dissertation research may involve any of the following should review the "Research Issues" section of the Graduate College Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet with their committee chair as early as possible in the research process, and inform their Graduate College counselor of the potential need for an embargo of their dissertation.

- Information that is protected from dissemination by applicable law or by contract: Review the "Research Holds and IP Holds" section of the Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet. Dissertations may not contain material that requires permanent restriction from publication.
- Intellectual property that may potentially be patentable: Review the "Disclosure of Patentable Inventions" section of the Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet.

The Department and the Graduate College allow the submission of dissertations in two different organizations or forms: (1) the traditional form or (2) the manuscript form. The organization that a student uses is at the discretion of the student's committee. In general, the traditional form is the equivalent of a scholarly monograph; the manuscript form is the equivalent of three articles suitable for publication in a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal.

### *The Traditional Format*

This is the organization that has been historically used for theses and dissertations. Following is a typical format for dissertations using this type of organization:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Materials and Methods
- Chapter 3: Results (there may be multiple results chapters)
- Chapter 4: Discussion/Conclusion

### *The Manuscript Format*

The manuscript format allows students to organize the Methods and Materials and Results chapters of the Traditional Organization into independent chapters each comprised of a manuscript. The manuscripts do not need to be submitted or accepted for publication to be included in the dissertation. Work that is done but is not ready for publication at the time of writing the dissertation would be organized as an independent chapter using the same format as a manuscript.

The Introduction and the Discussion/Conclusion chapters would be comparable to these chapters in the traditional organization. The Introduction should be a scholarly work that introduces the topic of the dissertation, reviews the literature of the topic, and presents the hypotheses to be tested. The Discussion/Conclusion should discuss the results presented in the dissertation in the context of the field of study. It is important that this section be a scholarly extension of the discussion sections in the manuscripts in the chapters. This section should not be just a reiteration of the discussion presented in each of the manuscript chapters.

This organization would allow the student to gather, organize and write up their results as a manuscript for submission and hopefully encourage and facilitate the submission of manuscripts. Manuscripts in the format submitted for publication are the copyright of the author and can be placed directly into the theses or dissertation, even if published; only the journal format is the copyright of the journal. If the student and their committee agree, published manuscripts may be placed in the dissertation in the published format; however, the student must obtain permission from the publisher to use this format and permission of the publisher must be submitted to the Graduate College. In either case, the source of a published manuscript must be included.

Following is a typical format for dissertations using the manuscript organization:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Manuscript 1 (to be submitted, submitted, or published manuscript)
- Chapter 3: Manuscript 2 (to be submitted, submitted, or published manuscript)
- Chapter 4: Manuscript 3 (to be submitted, submitted, or published manuscript)
- Chapter 5: Discussion/Conclusion



## Dissertation Defense

The doctoral dissertation is written and defended under the guidance of the student's dissertation committee, consisting of four/five members of the graduate faculty (one being the graduate college representative/outside member).

The student must submit a reading copy of the dissertation to each committee member **30 calendar days prior** to a doctoral dissertation defense meeting.

The student's dissertation committee members will have 14 calendar days to respond to the dissertation with comments and the formal authorization to proceed to the defense by signing the "Authorization to Proceed with the Thesis/Dissertation Defense," which is available on the Sociology Graduate Program webpage. If a faculty member does not respond in 14 calendar days, then it is considered authorized by that faculty member. The student must submit the Sociology Department's "Authorization to Proceed with the Thesis/Dissertation Defense" form to the Graduate Liaison no less than 14 calendar days prior to the dissertation defense date.

In addition, the doctoral candidate must submit the Graduate College form, "Request for Authority for Defense of Dissertation," to the Graduate College at least 14 calendar days prior to the dissertation defense date – this form must be signed by the dissertation committee chair and the Graduate Liaison. The Graduate Liaison will not sign this form until the student has submitted the Sociology department's "Authorization to Proceed with the Thesis/Dissertation Defense" form to the Graduate Liaison, indicating that all members of the dissertation committee have read the dissertation and believe it is ready to be defended.

Once the Graduate College has approved the request for the defense form, it will issue authorization for holding the defense (a form indicating defense success or failure).

Students should tentatively reserve the conference room for the dissertation oral defense meeting when submitting the reading copy of the dissertation to their committee. It is **not** recommended that defenses be scheduled during the last full week of class in the fall or spring semester. Therefore, to adhere to the Graduate College guideline of holding the defense by the last day of class of the graduating semester and the Sociology guideline of not holding defenses during the last week of class, a student should defend the dissertation at least one week prior to the last day of class in the graduating semester.

In the dissertation defense the student must demonstrate that they have executed the research project that was approved at the proposal stage to the satisfaction of the committee. Normally, committee members have seen and had the opportunity to comment on drafts of the dissertation so that by the time a dissertation defense is held it is *pro forma*. At the dissertation defense, students may be asked to make revisions to their dissertation. Normally, these revisions are minor.

The student is responsible for providing every member of the committee with a reading draft of the dissertation. If there are revisions, the student is responsible for providing every member of the advisory committee with a final copy of the dissertation.

If there is an extenuating or emergency circumstance, the department chair and Graduate Committee may allow an altered timeframe. To be considered, the student must submit a formal petition to the Graduate Committee through their committee members with their support, and therefore, signatures.

## **Residency Requirements**

The student must be in residence as a full-time student at the University of Oklahoma for at least two consecutive 16-week semesters and be engaged in coursework or research activities as prescribed by the academic unit.

## **Time Limits**

A doctoral student who enters the University of Oklahoma graduate program with a Bachelor's degree is expected to pass the general examination within five calendar years. A doctoral student who enters with a Master's degree is expected to pass the general examination within four calendar years. A doctoral candidate is expected to complete all degree requirements, including the written dissertation and its defense, within five years of the semester in which the student passed the general examination.

## **Teaching as a Graduate Student**

At the doctoral level, a student in good academic standing generally assists a professor for one year as part of GTA duties. During the second year of the PhD program, students normally begin teaching their own section of an introductory-level course. Once the student has successfully passed the general examination, the chair may assign the student an upper-division course in one of the student's two areas of expertise.

PhD students having sole responsibility for teaching a course in the Sociology Department are required to take the Professionalization Seminar (SOC 5821) and the Teaching Seminar (SOC 5831).

As a general rule, students should not have appointments that exceed .5 FTE (including jobs outside the department or university). After the Master's degree, students will not be supported by the department for more than five years as a graduate assistant, graduate instructor, or adjunct instructor.

## **Doctoral Graduate Student of the Year Award**

In consultation with the faculty, the Graduate Awards Committee selects the Graduate Doctoral Student of the Year. One PhD-level student is selected each year. Faculty members are encouraged to nominate students during the spring semester when nominations are solicited by the Graduate Committee. The nomination packet consists of a letter of nomination by a faculty member, letters of support from other faculty members (optional), and the student's CV.

## **Helpful Forms/Documents**

All Graduate College forms (e.g., Report of the Advisory Committee, Application for the General Examination, etc.) are available on the Graduate College website: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms> .

The Department of Sociology forms (e.g., Authorization to Proceed with Thesis/Dissertation Defense, Graduate Student Travel Award) are available on the Department of Sociology website:  
<http://www.ou.edu/cas/soc/graduate-program/resources>.

Graduate College Bulletin: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms/bulletin>

Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet: <http://www.ou.edu/gradcollege/forms/thesis-dissertation-packet>