

Graduate Program Handbook

A resource for faculty and graduate students in the
Department of Sociology

Last updated in 2026/27

The Department of Sociology intranet is an essential resource for graduate students and faculty. It includes forms, documents, application materials, and more.
Visit the [Sociology Intranet](#) – accessed through Google Drive.

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Introduction and Context

Supervisory and mentoring relationships are core to the success of graduate students, faculty, and the department as a whole. We foster collegial relationships that individually and collectively develop the intellectual, professional, and personal skills of our members.

What is the purpose of the handbook?

The Sociology Graduate Supervisory Handbook is meant to be a comprehensive, up-to-date resource for graduate students and faculty supervisors in the department. It should be the first place people look for information and guidance.

The Handbook provides the following:

- [PART I](#): Core principles of graduate supervisory and mentoring relationships
- [PART II](#): Tips and guidelines for developing and maintaining successful supervisory roles and relationships (from setting up that initial meeting to resolving conflict to devising a workable plan)
- [PART III](#): General Program Requirements (Ethics, Professional Development, etc.)
- [PART IV](#): PhD Program – timelines and requirements
- [Part V](#): MA (Thesis-Based) Program – timelines and requirements
- [Part VI](#): MA (Course-Based) Program – timelines and requirements
- [Part VII](#): Resources

While this handbook focuses on the thesis or major research project supervisory relationships, it also accounts for other mentoring relationships that contribute to graduate student success, such as those formed in teaching and research assistantships, comprehensive exams, supervisory committee work, research collaboration and co-authorship, and a variety of other formal and informal contexts.

Who is the handbook for?

The handbook aims to facilitate strong mentoring relationships by focusing on the roles and responsibilities of faculty, graduate students, the Sociology Graduate Office, and other programs and resources at the U of A.

How did the handbook come about?

In 2014, the Sociology Graduate Office launched a project exploring successful graduate student supervision with the goal of crafting a handbook. A survey of department faculty and graduate students was followed by a set of round table discussions. Further input came from a survey of alumni, existing graduate manuals, and a variety of U of A resources – including a 2013 report on the quality of graduate supervision at the University of Alberta and a review by the Graduate Program and Policy committee in 2024.

Note: The [University Calendar](#) is the official source for information on the program; any discrepancy found between this handbook and the calendar will be resolved according to the calendar.

I: Core Principles of Supervisory and Mentoring Relationships

The overarching principles for supervisory relationships in Sociology were derived from consultation (survey feedback and round table discussions) with faculty and graduate students in the department.

The three principles below assume a shared commitment in the department to scholarly rigour, lively intellectual dialogue, professional practice, and diverse approaches.

See [Part II](#) of the handbook, “Roles & Relationships,” for specific guidelines and tips for putting these principles into practice.

Principle 1: Clear and Timely Communication

- Supervisors/mentors provide meaningful, useful, and critical feedback to students regarding their scholarly work, progress in the program, and concerns or questions
- Students actively seek, integrate, and ask questions about all aspects of their scholarly work (e.g., research, teaching, writing, professional development)
- Supervisors and students discuss and agree on a general approach to communicating with each other
- Supervisors and students share responsibility to:
 - set out clear expectations for their respective roles and responsibilities (see Roles and Responsibilities and Timelines sections below)
 - directly address misunderstandings or conflicts
 - adhere to negotiated meeting times, schedules, and deadlines, and inform each other about changes to those schedules (note that supervision continues during summers and sabbatical unless other arrangements are made – see Appendix E of the Faculty Agreement)
- Assuming a timeline has been agreed upon and adhered to, and knowing that a variety of circumstances can intervene, students should expect to receive feedback for the following areas in the timeline below:
 - Short proposal, letter, or application – 1-2 weeks
 - Thesis chapter, article, or full proposal – 2-4 weeks
 - Full thesis – 4-6 weeks for full review and 1 week for minor revision

Principle 2: Respect and Integrity in Scholarly Practice

- Supervisors/mentors and students aim for:
 - interactions that are respectful, professional, and open to honest criticism
 - workspaces that are welcoming and fair
- Supervisors/mentors and students demonstrate professional integrity in:
 - conducting research in an ethical manner, in accordance with U of A policies
 - developing a clear understanding concerning ownership and acknowledgement of intellectual labour and property, including in relation to publications and authorship
- Supervisors/mentors model and invite respectful, professional conversation and debate, keeping in mind the power imbalances that exist between faculty and students

Principle 3: Ongoing Development of Skills

- Supervisors/mentors proactively support and advise students on disciplinary knowledge and skills as well as professional development and career paths
- Faculty in any supervisory/mentoring relationship discuss students' specific skills and interests, and actively seek ways to help students develop them
- Students take responsibility for their professional development in consultation with supervisors, the Sociology Graduate Office, [GPS](#), and the broader set of resources available on and off campus. The Handbook also provides information about [PD and IDP](#) requirements.
- Supervisors and students together consider:
 - academic and non-academic career options
 - appropriate participation in research, teaching, and professional skill development opportunities (e.g., training workshops, grant applications, assistantships)
 - opportunities for collaboration, networking, and apprenticing

By the time of graduation, the quality of supervision often makes the difference between a good and an outstanding graduate program.

II: Roles and Relationships (Developing and Maintaining Supervisory Relationships)

The Thesis Supervisory Relationship

The most important mentoring relationship in thesis-based MA and PhD programs is between the supervisor and student. For the purposes of this handbook, “thesis” includes dissertations in the PhD program, theses in the MA Thesis-Based program, and capping projects in the MA Course-Based program.

Student and supervisor should develop and maintain this relationship through ongoing communication and interaction, mutually agreed upon goals, and respectful, critical engagement with a student’s learning, research, and professional development. This section offers tips for navigating some of the important junctures in a supervisory relationship.

Choosing a Supervisor

Choosing a supervisor normally happens by the **second semester** of a student’s program. In some cases, students may have confirmed a supervisor earlier. In others it may take more time. Prior to meeting with a potential supervisor, students can seek out information to help determine the potential fit of a supervisor. We recommend the following:

- Look online for information about a supervisor’s stated research and teaching interests, recent publications, recently supervised projects, public profile, and online CV.
- Find out about the person’s style and approach through taking a course with them, going to one of their talks, or requesting an informal meeting to discuss research interests.
- Talk with other graduate students who work with this person to gain a sense of their supervisory style.

Here are a few questions for a student and a potential supervisor to consider and discuss when forming a supervisory relationship:

- What kinds of research does the faculty member conduct and supervise? What research interests does the student have? Is there a good fit between the content and approach of the student’s project, and the expertise and interests of the faculty member?
- What previous supervisory experience does the faculty member have?
- How many students does the faculty member currently supervise?
- Is the faculty member actively involved in moving students ahead in their program? Do the faculty member’s students graduate in reasonable lengths of time?
- What kinds of opportunities for collaboration and professional development are available (e.g., co-authorship, research assistantship, reading/writing group)?

Co-Supervision: Things to Consider

Co-supervision of a PhD or MA Student occurs when two professors share the entire supervisory process for one graduate student. Although each professor may not be involved to the same extent throughout the process and each supervisor may bring different complementary strengths, all supervisory decisions are the shared responsibility of both supervisors. Co-supervision offers unique benefits and challenges. Here are a few factors to consider:

- Why is co-supervision a better approach than single supervision?
- Do the two potential supervisors have a strong working relationship?
- What elements will each supervisor bring to the supervisory relationship?
- Are the potential co-supervisors open to working as part of a team? Have they worked as a team in the past?
- How will communication be managed? In cases where supervisors offer conflicting advice, how will this be negotiated? What steps will be taken to help ensure a student does not fall through the cracks or get pulled in two very different directions?

Key Facets of a Successful Supervisory Relationship

There are many factors that can impact the success of the supervisor/student relationship. What follows is a brief outline of *key areas of interaction* between students and supervisors.

Timeline for Completion – and the Plan for Getting There

Discussions about the timeline for completion of the graduate degree program should attend to the student's expected timeline, program requirements and options, commitments the student has outside of the degree program, and how supervisors can assist the students in meeting their goals. A full review and discussion of a student's progress must be conducted at least once a year (before the Annual Progress Report, due in July each year, is one good time to do so).

Supervisors and students should consider the following factors in these discussions:

- Balancing activities to support intellectual development, professional skill building, and program completion.
- Professional goals of the student (e.g., academic, government, or other career interests) and relevant pathways and opportunities for meeting those goals.
- Review of plans, including any changes to supervisor's and supervisee's time commitments, and expectations for availability.

Additional Notes

- The department and university require that students remain in Edmonton for the first two years of the PhD program. This is a formal requirement of the program.
- GAships cannot be guaranteed when students are away from campus.
- Working full-time while completing a full-time graduate degree is strongly discouraged.
- Except when on holiday, supervisors are required to be available to students throughout the year. This includes sabbaticals, unless other arrangements are made.

Methods of Feedback

Feedback is needed on a variety of projects, including conference papers, scholarship proposals, job application packages, and thesis drafts. It is important for supervisors and students to discuss different approaches to providing feedback to determine what combination of methods works well for both parties (i.e., meeting in person, emailing drafts, summative versus in-text comments), and to agree on timelines for submitting items and receiving feedback. The main objectives are to ensure that students receive feedback, understand what is necessary to move forward, understand the roles of different members of the supervisory committee relative to their work, and have a clear mechanism for responding to feedback.

Scholarship/Funding Applications

The department expects students to apply for scholarships for which they are eligible, including SSHRC, internal University of Alberta Scholarships, and other relevant awards. The scholarship handbook is available on the [GPS website](#) and the department provides a spreadsheet of [awards and timelines](#) throughout the year.

Supervisors are expected to provide guidance in how to prepare and complete proposals, review scholarship applications, notify students if they are aware of awards for which they are eligible, and provide letters of recommendation.

Students are responsible to look into available awards, write and revise proposals based on feedback from their supervisor, and provide reference letters writers with award details and completed application documents. It is essential that students keep supervisors apprised of their applications plans and build in sufficient time for review and feedback.

Professional Development and Job Preparation

The Department, GPS, and other programs at the University of Alberta provide opportunities to consider various career pathways and to develop a variety of skills are provided. At the U of A, this includes the U of A Career Centre, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Faculty of Extension, the Community Service-Learning Program, and others.

Supervisors are expected to be aware of these opportunities and to regularly discuss a student's particular career interests with them. They should also help students build the skills and the profile needed for success in the job market, and advise students regarding the type and timing of career development opportunities. Although many professional development activities will happen outside of the direct supervisory relationship, supervisors are expected to provide or refer students to appropriate opportunities, such as reading/writing groups and research assistantships, and to help with scholarship applications, networking, conference attendance, co-authorship, and support for job applications.

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own professional development by actively seeking relevant funding and training and by consulting their supervisors on major professional development and career planning decisions.

When Issues Arise – Resolving Conflict

Problems can arise at any point in supervisory relationships. The point at which a conflict arises will likely impact the consequences of the conflict and the actions taken to address it. There are important steps that can be taken to help resolve the conflict and to address it in a professional manner. The [GPS Graduate Program Manual](#) has further resources and information on what steps to follow.

- Take early action. It can be easy to avoid discussing difficult situations. Although some situations may resolve without any intervention, others may become worse if action is not taken.
- Look for the root cause of the problem – it may not be what is initially presented.
- Seek resolution at as low a level as is possible – going to higher authorities can involve more time and complexities, and should be reserved for especially challenging circumstances.
- Remember that there is a power imbalance in supervisory relationships; students have a lot to lose, and may not feel comfortable speaking freely.

Transitioning through the Program

As students move through the program, there are *transition stages* during which they might feel unsure of how to maintain momentum towards finishing the degree. The following section outlines a few moments during a program when students may face difficulties. While this is not a comprehensive list, many of the strategies suggested can be applied to a variety of situations.

Moving Beyond Coursework

Students may feel they lack direction after completing coursework. The end to short-term deadlines and regular feedback and assessment may be a difficult transition. A number of steps can help students adjust. For example:

- Participate in departmental academic and social events, including opportunities to present research ideas and progress, to maintain contact with peers and other professors in the department.
- Maintain and perhaps increase the frequency of meetings between supervisor and student to provide updates on progress, discuss questions or concerns, and plans for next steps (e.g., comprehensive exams, thesis proposal).

Writing the Thesis

The task of writing the thesis arrives when all other program requirements and original research activities have been completed. This period can pose new stresses and challenges for students. For example:

- Writer's block. It is important to discuss writing habits, models for structuring a thesis, and resources for helping students with their writing.
 - Setting small writing goals can help motivate students during this stage
 - There are numerous resources available on and off campus to help with writing, including the Centre for Writers and the Writing Centre.
- Isolation. Finding other graduate students who are at a similar point may be helpful, whether this is via informal interactions, short-term retreats, or longer-term reading or writing groups.
- Managing large amounts of data and/or a book-length set of ideas. Students should work closely with their supervisor and supervisory committee in making decisions about the structure and organization of the thesis.

Committee Membership

Supervisory Committee (PhD)

In addition to their supervisor, PhD students are also expected to work with a Supervisory Committee. This committee will include the thesis supervisor plus at least two additional committee members (usually one internal and one external to the department). See the calendar [here](#) for more information.

While supervisors are ultimately responsible for formalizing the committee, students and supervisors should work collaboratively to determine the make-up of the committee or examiners. In the case of a PhD supervisory committee, members can provide significant input by acting as a sounding board for ideas, providing developmental input on parts of the thesis or on other facets of a student's program, and providing expertise that complements the supervisor's areas of expertise.

Committees often offer the most value when established as early as is feasible in a student's program, and when regular meetings are held with the student, especially following the candidacy exam. GPS regulations stipulate that Supervisory Committees should meet once a year until a student completes the program to discuss progress and to ensure that a student is receiving the support needed. The completion of GPS' required Annual Progress Report can serve as a catalyst for such a meeting.

Some points to consider when selecting supervisory committee members include:

- Is the person available (i.e., are they around campus or willing to come to campus for meetings) and will they likely be around for the remainder of the student's project? Are they approachable?
- Does their area of expertise and approach to research fit with the research project, and expand or complement the central contributions of the supervisor(s)?

University Examiners (MA Thesis Program)

The MA Thesis program does **not** require a supervisory committee. Rather, the MA program requires the inclusion of university examiners (also referred to as "reviewers") that approve the proposal and the final thesis.

While supervisors are ultimately responsible for recruiting the university examiners, students and supervisors should work collaboratively to determine the make-up of the examiners.

Note: It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that these examiners meet the criteria for a university examiner in the calendar [here](#) for the final examination.

Teaching Assistant (TA) and Research Assistant (RA) Mentoring

Relationships between faculty supervisors and student RAs or TAs can provide an opportunity to get to know and work with a variety of members in the department. Graduate assistantships are employment relationships and key components of professional development.

The department provides a detailed [Time Use Sheet](#) to help students and professors engage in a discussion about the work that will be expected of the student, and an overview of how the hours will be spent. These details should be discussed and clarified in a face-to-face meeting at the beginning of the appointment.

Points to consider:

- What is the timeline for the GA activities? Are there crucial days or weeks when the workload is especially heavy or pressing?
- What kinds of skills and interests are needed for the RA or TA assignment?
- What experiences and skills does a student bring to the GAship?
- What skills does a student wish to develop as part of the GAship?
- What opportunities can the faculty member offer that will contribute to the student's professional and scholarly development?
- What resources and supports will a student need to successfully carry out the TA or RA duties, and how will they be provided?
- How will the supervisor and student communicate about progress and/or problems? How will they check on any need to adjust workload, priorities, or types of duties?

Supervisors should be mentors and professional role models. They should be clear about deadlines, priorities, and expectations, and offer the resources and developmental steps needed for student GAs to be successful. They should plan with the TA/RA to ensure that duties do not impede a student's progress through the program.

Students should seek guidance and practice professionalism (e.g., time management, organization, planning). They should be clear about their abilities and interests, and consider how they can best meet the needs of the project while also developing new skills.

Roles and Responsibilities

All graduate students and supervisors in Sociology should be aware of the rules and policies applying to supervisors, graduate students, graduate advisors, departments, and GPS as laid out in the University Calendar and in the [Graduate Program Manual](#).

Student Responsibilities

- Consider yourself a junior colleague within the department
- Establish a reasonable timeline in consultation with your supervisor, and consult your supervisor if difficulties arise in meeting these timelines
- Be respectful in your response to feedback
- Be aware of and conform to departmental and university deadlines, specifically those that are outlined in the graduate portions of the University Calendar
- Be aware of scholarship opportunities, and seek advice and assistance from the department and your supervisor in making applications
- Be aware of your supervisor's and the department's expectations for graduate students
- Maintain open communication with your supervisor
- Inform your supervisor regularly about progress, and provide GPS with an annual progress report
- Participate in department events promoting professional development
- Participate in departmental research days and conferences
- In the event of a conflict in the supervisor-student relationship, discuss with your supervisor and graduate director in a timely fashion
- Inform your supervisor of how you can be contacted, and when you will be unavoidably absent, particularly for longer periods of time

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Consider graduate students as junior colleagues
- Guide students in selecting and planning meaningful research topics that can be completed within a reasonable time frame for the student's degree
- Establish with the student a reasonable timeline, including milestones to measure progress throughout the project
- Provide students with adequate opportunities for discussion and constructive feedback throughout their degree process
- Ensure there are sufficient material and supervisory resources for each graduate student under supervision

- Provide guidance and feedback on progress to help ensure a student's successful completion of their program. This includes:
 - Being reasonably accessible between scheduled meetings
 - Establishing regular meeting times for discussions about progress
 - Ensuring a supervisory committee is established in accordance with graduate unit practices or regulations
 - Arranging an annual meeting with the student and the committee as per GPS guidelines
- Assist and encourage the wider professional development of students, which can be promoted through:
 - Participating in departmental research days and conferences
 - Attending and presenting at conferences
 - Being willing to write reference letters
 - Introducing professional colleagues and assisting in the creation of a network of contacts
- Maintain open communication with the student
- Inform your graduate student of how you can be contacted, and when you will be unavoidably absent, particularly for longer periods of time

Graduate Office Responsibilities

- Supervise new students until a supervisor is officially assigned (usually by the second term of the program)
- Provide guidance regarding choice of supervisor and committee members
- Offer regular and diverse professional development opportunities in teaching, research, and skill development, and refer students and supervisors to professional development available outside of the department
- Ensure that students and supervisors are informed of policies, procedures, programs, and resources inside and outside the department
- Track the progress of individual graduate students through the program
- Manage and track all departmental paperwork related to a student's exams, coursework, funding, and convocation
- Seek input from graduate students and faculty regarding supervisory needs, and respond to supervisory issues as they arise and as help is requested
- Ensure students receive proper supervision and that the regulations and requirements of GPS are met
- Maintain open communication with students concerning any problem; in the event of a conflict in the supervisor/student relationship, the Graduate Director will discuss the issues with the student and supervisor in a timely fashion
- Manage student funding arrangements, teaching and research assistantships, office space, awards and scholarships, and conference and research funds

III: General Program Requirements

This section covers general requirements that apply to more than one or all programs. For information on the timelines, requirements, and procedures for your specific program, please refer to parts [IV \(PhD\)](#), [V \(MA Thesis\)](#), and [VI \(MA Course\)](#).

Ethics Requirement

INT D 710 and (for PhD students) INT D 720 are to be completed by the end of your first term. Applications for ethics approval through the REO (Research Ethics Office) must be approved prior to engaging in research with humans or animals.

Purpose: There are two different ethics components to your program; one is required for all students and the other is required for research involving humans and/or animals:

1) Ethics and Academic Citizenship: All students are required to complete the GPS mandated Ethics and Academic Citizenship Requirement at the start of their programs.

- New MA students (course-based and thesis) will be automatically registered in INT D 710 in their first term by GPS and should complete this online course by the end of that term to satisfy this requirement.
- New PhD students will be registered in INT D 710 + INT D 720 by GPS in their first term and should complete both online courses by the end of that term to satisfy this requirement.
- Current students who have completed the old GET online course + attended an ethics proseminar prior to fall 2022 do not need to take these courses and have met this requirement.
- Current students who completed the old GET online course prior to fall 2022 but have not attended an ethics proseminar can use optional online GPS courses to fulfill the extra three hours of the old requirement. More information can be found [here](#).
- For more information on this requirement in general, see [here](#).

2) Research Ethics Approval: Students conducting research that involves interviews or human research must complete the ethics application before beginning their research. Please visit the [Research Ethics Office](#) to begin your application with your supervisor.

IDP and PD Requirement

*IDP to be completed within 12 months for MA students and 18 months for PhD students (unless part-time). PD hours to be completed by end of program for MA students and before candidacy (year three) for PhD students. ***Students admitted prior to Fall 2016 do not need to complete this requirement. ****

- 1) Individual Development Plan (IDP):** The IDP is a professional development workbook that is meant to help students think about their career before they leave academia. Upon completion, students are to review their workbook with their supervisor. *The workbook does not need to be submitted to the graduate office and can stay in your possession.* You and your supervisor will sign a completion form and submit that to the department after the full requirements have been completed. See [here](#) for more information.
- 2) Eight Hours of Professional Development Activities:** After completing the IDP, all students must complete a total of eight hours of professional development activities. The range of activities that can count towards your PD hours is broad, but PD activities do have some things in common. As per the GPS guidelines, all professional development activities must include the following components:
 - Comprises formal training and includes active learning, with an assessment component (self-assessment, reflection, quiz, write-pair-share, evidence of knowledge application). Learning activities under the tutelage of Indigenous elders fall under this consideration where students may provide a self-assessment, application of knowledge, reflection, or practice that aligns with the learning of Indigenous knowledge.
 - Falls outside of research methods training, capstone project, thesis or equivalent, and required practicum. Practicums and internships that have assessment, reflection, and feedback components can be applied towards the PD requirement (e.g. GSIP).
 - Supports the career goals and/or seven skills/competencies identified in the individual development plan

See [here](#) for more information and access to online workshops from GPS.

**** For reference, attendance in department professional development workshops, the proseminar course, and at talks with guest speakers may count towards your PD hours. If you are unsure if any activity can count towards your hours, please consult with your supervisor and the current Graduate Director for the program****

IDP and PD Completion: After you have completed both your IDP and PD hours, please fill out and sign off on the “Individual Development Plan & Professional Development Completion Form” and return it to the graduate office at socgrad2@ualberta.ca. This form can be found in the Sociology Intranet drive [here](#).

Identifying a Thesis Supervisor

By second semester of the first year of the program

Every student in a thesis-based program at the U of A is required to have a supervisor. In Sociology, all thesis-based graduate students must formally identify a supervisor by the **second semester of their first year**, but as they are developing relationships with faculty, they can approach a faculty member at any time.

It is strongly advised that students begin to have initial conversations with potential supervisor(s) early in the program (see [PART I](#) of the Handbook). In many cases, a possible supervisor has been identified during the application and admission stages.

Until the formal identification of a supervisor, the Graduate Director acts as the official supervisor for new graduate students. They can assist in identifying an appropriate supervisor.

The timelines and step-by-step guidelines in the following pages provide further detail on the roles and responsibilities of students, supervisors, and supervisory committees in the thesis-based MA and PhD programs.

Submitting Theses and Applying for Convocation

After successful defense and before the end of the sixth year in the program

Purpose: Adhere to GPS guidelines in order to ensure you have officially submitted your thesis by the proper deadline. **There are two important deadlines, the convocation deadline and the registration deadline; these vary each year.** This is necessary to successfully graduate and ensure you do not pay extra fees.

- **Student** checks GPS website to determine deadlines for submission, and ensures that the thesis is properly formatted. There are deadlines for Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. These deadlines are connected to registration requirements for each term. See: [Formatting your thesis.](#)
- The Program Completion form is submitted to the Graduate Office by the **Exam Chair** following successful completion of the exam; the Graduate Office then submits the form to GPS by the deadlines. See: [GPS guidelines](#) for students admitted Fall 2011 and after.
- **Student** uploads thesis and signs off on Library Release and other GPS requirements
- **Student** applies for Convocation on Bear Tracks.

Students MUST submit their thesis to upload to the thesis library within 6 months of the defense or they will need to reapply for admission to the program to graduate.

IV. PhD Program

PhD Program Timeline

Year One

- ☐ Complete INT D 710 & 720 (ethics)
- ☐ Identify a Supervisor
- ☐ Complete a Minimum of Three Courses
- ☐ Choose Major and Minor Comprehensive Exam Areas

By...

December 31
March 1
April 30
May 15

Year Two

- ☐ Complete Major and Minor Comprehensive Exams
- ☐ Confirm the Supervisory Committee
- ☐ Complete GPS Annual Report
- ☐ Complete Outstanding Coursework (If Applicable)

December 31
March 1
July 30
August 31st

Year Three

- ☐ Confirm the Candidacy Examiners
- ☐ Obtain Research Ethics Approval (if applicable)
- ☐ Complete Candidacy Exam Requirements
- ☐ Begin Thesis Research
- ☐ Complete GPS Annual Report

August 31 (or earlier!)

July 30

Years Four and Five

- ☐ Hold Annual Meeting with Supervisory Committee
- ☐ Conduct Thesis Research and Writing
- ☐ Hold Final Oral Examination
- ☐ Complete GPS Annual Report

July 30

Note: All PhD Students must be registered full-time to maintain standing in the program unless otherwise approved for part-time status. When not taking courses equal to nine credits, full-time registration in any given term is fulfilled by registering in thesis credits: Thesis 903, 906, or 909 as required to maintain full-time registration of 9 credits per term.

PhD Program Requirements

- **Coursework:** 4 courses at 3 units each for a total of **12 units**

PhD students are required to complete [12 course-based units](#). These 12 units of the required coursework consist of graded 500- and 600-level courses with at least 9 units being completed within the Sociology Department.

Students are expected to complete at least three of these courses within their first year of the program. All coursework must be completed by the end of the second year.

There are no required PhD courses. However, students who did not complete courses in social theory, qualitative methods, and quantitative methods as part of their Master's degrees will be expected to complete these courses as part of their required PhD coursework. Make sure to consult with the Graduate Director about coursework plans.

- **Major and Minor Comprehensive Area Exams:**

Students must complete written or oral exams in one major area and one minor area.

- **Candidacy Proposal and Exam:**

Students must pass an oral Candidacy exam taken in the subject field of the thesis research.

- **Thesis**

Students are expected to complete and defend a thesis by the end of the program.

- **Ethics Training:**

All PhD students are required to complete INT D 710 & INT D 720 to fulfill the GPS [Ethics + Academic Citizenship Requirement](#).

- **Professional Development:**

All graduate students must complete the GPS mandated [Professional Development Requirement](#) comprising an IDP booklet and 8 hours of approved activities.

Note: Students in the MA and PhD programs are also expected to attend Professional Skills Workshops hosted by the Department.

Program Total: 12 units + a thesis

PhD Comprehensive Area Exams

Students admitted in 2026-27 and later must complete written or oral exams in one major area and one minor area. Students admitted before the Fall of 2026 may choose to follow the comprehensive area exam procedures or the previous specialization exam procedures.

Exam Procedures

Beginning with the 2026-27 cohort, PhD students are expected to complete one Major Area Exam and one Minor Area Exam by the end of their first term of the second year of their PhD (Year 2, Term 1). The Major Area Exam must occur before completing the Candidacy Exam, but the Minor Area Exam can occur before or after Candidacy. Students are encouraged to prepare for and complete both exams during the same period.

- Exams will occur over a two-week period at the end of each Fall term. Usually, this will be over the last week of November and first week of December, but this might vary with student preferences.
- Students who do not complete their exams during this period may request for a second exam period at the end of the Winter term. However, this will depend on committee member availability.
- Students are expected to decide on areas for their Major and Minor Exams by the end of the second term of their first year (Year 1, Term 2).
- To complete an exam, students notify the Graduate Office at least three months before the planned exam date (i.e., by the end of August) and indicate the planned format by completing [this form](#).
- The Graduate Office will send around reminders in April each year.
- The Graduate Office then notifies the committee chair about the student's intentions so that the committee can have the exam prepared for the given time.

Exams Areas

- The Sociology department currently offers exams in the following Major Areas:
 - Theory
 - Culture
 - Criminology
 - Criminal Justice Institutions
 - Law, Human Rights, and Society
 - Inequality, Stratification, and Policy
 - Gender and Sexuality
 - Racism and Decolonization
- Minor Areas are included within these Major Areas. Please see exam reading lists for details.
- For questions regarding specific lists, please contact the [Area Committee Chairs](#).
- Faculty may propose additional areas beyond the current list. To propose a new area, faculty must identify three committee members with strengths in those areas, choose a chair, develop a reading list, and submit the list to GP&P for review and approval.
- Students may opt to develop additional areas in collaboration with a faculty member by suggesting an area, jointly developing a reading list with that faculty member, and proposing a list of additional committee members. The faculty member will then submit the list to GP&P for review and approval.
- Students may also include additional sub-areas within specified reading lists by suggesting 8-12 additional readings in that sub-area. All sub-areas must be approved by the Area Chair.

Exam Structure

Major Exam

- Students will complete the core reading list and a selection of subsections, for one area exam. This list will include 50-70 readings.
- Students will have the option of completing the exam in one of two forms:
 - One day (8 hour) in-person written exam where the 8 hours includes at least 2 breaks.
 - Oral exam (2-3 hours) with committee members discussing questions.

Minor Exam

- Students will complete a subset of an area reading list for one area exam. This subset will include at least two of the subsections and 20-30 readings.
- Students will have the option of completing the exam in one of two forms:
 - One half-day (3 hour) in-person written exam
 - Oral exam (1-2 hours) with committee members
- Regardless of format, students will answer *three of at least six provided exam questions* in their chosen exam area for a Major Exam and *one of at least three provided exam questions* for a Minor Exam. Area exams might include subsections where some questions within these subsections are required.

Written Exam

- For the in-person written exam:
 - Students will complete the exam on an approved computer without Internet access.
 - Students may bring up to 50 pages of notes for the Major Exam and 20 pages for the Minor Exam. These can be single or double spaced, with text at 11-point font or larger. Student may also bring a copy of the exam reading list. These may be printed or digital and must be shared with the committee at least 24 hours before the exam.
 - Answers should each be approximately 900-1,500 words (3-5 double spaced pages) with the full exam not exceeding more than 5,000 words (16 double spaced pages) for a Major Exam and 1,800 words (6 double spaced pages) for a Minor Exam.
 - Students will be given up to 8 hours to complete Major Exams. This time period includes any breaks that students may take.
 - Students will be given up to 3 hours to complete Minor Exams. This time period includes any breaks that students may take.

Oral Exam

- For the oral exam:
 - Students will first receive a copy of the exam questions and be given 30 minutes to review the questions and decide which three they want to answer for the Major Exam and which one they want to answer for the Minor Exam
 - Students may bring up to 50 pages of notes for the Major Exam, 20 pages for the Minor Exam, and a copy of the exam reading list. These may be printed or digital and must be shared with the committee before the exam.
 - Students will complete the exam by discussing answers to the chosen questions with the committee members
 - Major exams will be 2-3 hours long, not including the 30-minute question review period
 - Minor exams will be 1-2 hours long, not including the 30-minute question review period
- Providing options for both a written and oral exam helps to allow for flexibility and choice for students in the exam environment and type.
- Students in need of additional accommodations for extra time may request to split the exams into multiple parts to complete over multiple days. For instance, students taking the Major Exam over two days will receive half the questions on the first day and the second half on the second day.

Exam Adjudication and Decisions

Major Exams result in three outcomes:

- **Pass:** The majority of committee members agree that each of the three questions is a pass and the exam demonstrates broad knowledge of the area. Committee members provide written feedback to the Committee Chair who compiles and shares this feedback with the student.
- **Pass with Revisions:** The majority of committee members agree that at least 2 of the 3 questions is a pass and the exam demonstrates broad knowledge of the area. Committee members provide written feedback to the Committee Chair who compiles and shares this feedback with the student. The student is given one month (4 weeks) to revise the additional question. The student provides the revised answer to the Committee in writing for both written and oral exams. The Committee then reassesses the exam, provides feedback to the student, and decides if the revised exam is a Pass or Fail.
- **Fail:** The majority of committee members agree that at most one of the three questions is a pass and the exam does not demonstrate broad knowledge of the area. Committee members provide written feedback to the Committee Chair who compiles and shares this feedback with the student. The student may then request to retake the exam during the next exam period. Exams can only be taken twice.

Minor Exams result in two outcomes:

- **Pass:** The majority of committee members agree that the question is a pass and the exam demonstrates broad knowledge of the area.
- **Fail:** The majority of committee members agree that the answer to the question is not a pass and the exam does not demonstrate broad knowledge of the area. Committee members will provide written feedback for the student. The student may then request to retake the exam during the next exam period.
- Regardless of the exam outcome, the committee will provide written feedback for students that indicates their assessment of the student's exam and reasoning behind it within three weeks of the exam completion.
- Students may only complete an exam in the same area twice. If they fail an exam twice, their continued standing within the program will be reevaluated.

Area Committees and Responsibilities

- Area Committees will comprise one Chair and two additional members. Members may include Sociology faculty and adjuncts.
- Area Committee leadership and membership will be recorded as part of department service to ensure that members receive credit for their work.
- Areas and committees will be posted on the department website.
- Each year committees will consult to see if lists require updating or changing. Lists will undergo a full review every five years.
- When students notify the Grad Office of their intent to complete the exam, Area Committee members will consult on the reading list and plans for the exam.
- Area Committee members and the Graduate Director will meet with the set of students taking the exam in that period to provide information about the structure of the exam and expectations for completing the exam.
- Area Committee members will then create a set of at least six exam questions to provide to the students taking the exam during the given period.

PhD Candidacy Examination

To be completed by the end of the third year of the PhD program (GPS requirement)

Purpose: The candidacy exam moves the student into the thesis portion of the PhD program. The candidacy examination is an oral examination. The department requires that students complete their Major Comprehensive Area Examination prior to the Candidacy Examination, but the exam does not form part of the candidacy exam itself. Once a student's coursework is complete, ongoing preparation for the doctoral candidacy exam should take place between the student, supervisor, and supervisory committee.

For candidacy examinations, students must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the examining committee that they possess:

1. an adequate knowledge of the discipline and of the subject matter relevant to the thesis;
2. the ability to pursue and complete original research at an advanced level; and
3. the ability to meet any other requirements found in the department's published policy on candidacy examinations.

The candidacy examination must be held within three years of the commencement of the program in accordance with [Section 8.7.1: The Degree of PhD of the Graduate Program Manual](#). The candidacy examination must be passed no less than six months prior to taking the final oral thesis examination.

If the candidacy exam is not completed by the end of the third year, the **student** must complete an [Application for Doctoral Program Requirements Extension form](#) (GPS requirement).

Candidacy Preparation

- Student works with the supervisor to decide on the topic and direction of the thesis and the format of the thesis (standard or paper-based).
- Student begins to draft Candidacy Proposal with feedback from Supervisor
 - Candidacy Proposals vary in length, but generally they are 30-40 pages long.
 - Strong proposals will describe a research topic, methodology, and methods with extensive background research and a clear plan for completing the research.
- The student and supervisor then work together to constitute the Supervisory Committee, by inviting at least two additional faculty to be part of the committee.
 - The Supervisory Committee usually includes one member from Sociology and one from outside the department, not including a co-supervisor if there is one.
 - Adjunct Professors can serve as Supervisors or members of the Supervisory Committee.

- Supervisor works with the student to decide on a University Examiner for the candidacy exam.
- The final committee consists of the three members of the Supervisory Committee (or four members if there are co-Supervisors) plus one University Examiner. An additional university examiner may be appointed if deemed necessary by the supervisor. See: [Committee Membership Rules](#)
- **Supervisor** consults with Supervisory Committee members to determine if the student is ready to proceed to candidacy, usually by distributing a copy of the draft candidacy proposal for review.
- **Supervisor** fills out [this](#) form **at least 4 weeks prior** to the proposed examination date to inform the graduate office of the details of the exam and start the scheduling process.

Exam Procedures

- Candidacy Exams typically run for two hours but may run longer as needed.
- Each committee retains the right to establish its examination processes.
- A common procedure is to hold two rounds of questions, with each round of questions proceeding in order from the University examiners to the supervisory committee and ending with the supervisor.
- The final exam results in one of the following outcomes: adjourned, pass, conditional pass, fail and repeat, fail with a recommendation to terminate the doctoral program or for a change of category to a master's program.
- NOTE: The student should also provide evidence that (where applicable) research ethics approval has been sought or received.
- See [GPS Website](#) for rules and procedures governing the exam [Decision of the Candidacy Examining Committee](#)

Student provides the examining committee with a final copy of the proposal at **least three weeks prior** to the exam date, and **Supervisor** ensures it is distributed.

PhD Final Examination

Completed at least six months after the candidacy exam

Purpose: A doctoral thesis, at a minimum, must embody the results of original investigations and analyses and be of such quality as to merit publication, meeting the standards of reputable scholarly publications. It should be of high caliber and should advance knowledge in the student's major field of study. Because it is an extensive piece of work and likely to be the basis of further endeavors, the thesis should be genuinely interesting and important. It should be well researched, well thought out, and well written.

The Sociology Department accepts both traditional and paper-based dissertations, as outlined in the tables below.

Dissertation Format

Traditional Doctoral Thesis	Paper-Based Doctoral Thesis
Normally includes the following elements: Introduction of a substantial and comprehensive nature, addressing the overarching objective and questions, and the organization of the thesis Minimum 4-6 chapters of publishable quality. Each chapter has a specific purpose within the thesis but is not necessarily “stand alone”, and will build on and refer to other thesis chapters. Conclusion of a substantial nature highlighting the key findings of the thesis and the original contributions it makes to knowledge in the candidate’s field. Appendices may be included in some cases with methodological or other details that pertain to the thesis as a whole.	Normally includes the following elements: Introduction of a substantial and comprehensive nature, addressing the overarching objective and questions, the research program constituted by the thesis, and the organization of the thesis including a summary of each paper Minimum of three (3) “stand alone” papers of publishable quality in a peer reviewed journal. Each paper addresses a unique objective or question. Conclusion of a substantial nature highlighting the key findings of the thesis and the original contributions it makes to knowledge in the candidate’s field. Appendices may be included in some cases with methodological or other details that pertain to full set of papers.

Dissertation Evaluation

Traditional Doctoral Thesis	Paper-Based Doctoral Thesis
Must meet the standards set out by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, specifically: i) embody “original investigation and analyses” ii) make a “substantial contribution to the candidate’s field of study” iii) be of “publishable quality” (see Grad Program Manual). Final evaluation of the thesis is made by the Doctoral Examination Committee based on overall quality and contribution, regardless of whether or where chapters of the thesis have been published.	Must meet the standards set out by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, specifically: i) embody “original investigation and analyses” ii) make a “substantial contribution to the candidate’s field of study” iii) be of “publishable quality” (see Grad Program Manual). Final evaluation of the thesis is made by the Doctoral Examination Committee based on overall quality and contribution, regardless of whether or where papers from the thesis have been published.

Paper-Based Thesis

The paper-based (article-based) thesis is one option for meeting the requirements for a publishable-quality thesis that makes an original and substantial contribution. It is differentiated by its structure and format; procedures and standards for the committee and the exam remain the same as with the traditional doctoral thesis.

The paper-based PhD thesis in sociology must meet the following requirements:

- Thesis forms an identifiable research program with an overarching set of questions, goals, and contributions. A comprehensive Introduction sets out this program of research and a Conclusion provides concluding discussion and implications.
- A minimum of three papers of peer-reviewed publishable quality, each which addresses a unique, stand-alone problem and/or takes a distinct approach within the broad intent of the thesis.
- Evidence of active pursuit of publication of the thesis articles in relevant venues. By the time of the final oral examination, it is strongly recommended that students will have begun the process of submitting one or more papers to relevant peer-reviewed venues, with advice of the supervisor and committee members. The student must include for the information of the examining committee the name(s) of the peer reviewed venues to which each paper has been or will be submitted.

NOTE: Evaluation by the final examining committee is (as with all theses) based on overall quality and contribution of the thesis as a whole, regardless of whether or where papers from the thesis have been published.

Choosing to complete a paper-based thesis is an important decision that should be explored early in a student's graduate program in consultation with the supervisor and supervisory committee. In exploring this option, the student and the supervisor should carefully consider the following:

- do the goals of the thesis research lend themselves to several distinct papers?
- are the approaches to the research agenda diverse enough to warrant stand alone articles?
- what are the potential impacts on a student's timeline and career trajectory?
- is this the optimal pathway to knowledge development in this case?
- what are the relevant journals (or other refereed venues) to target for submission?

A paper-based thesis should be formatted as follows:

Introduction

The paper-based format requires a substantial (50-60 pages) introduction that clearly identifies the parameters of, and provides full context for, the program of research constituted by the thesis. Usually this entails discussion of the central problem(s) or issue(s), contextual information, key concepts, objectives, methods and methodologies, and scholarly contributions of the thesis including situating the entire project in the relevant literatures. A brief summary of each paper is also expected in the Introduction: it should be clear how each paper contributes to the overall research program. In some cases, it might be appropriate to use a methodological appendix to provide full details of methods and approaches used to carry out the research.

Papers (Articles)

Each paper is an independent manuscript with its own distinct goals and arguments (and possibly distinct methods and theories). Each paper will have its own list of footnotes and references.

Conclusion/Discussion

A concluding chapter provides summative discussion of, and reflection on, the findings, arguments, and contributions of the body of work represented in the thesis. Normally, implications for the relevant field(s) of study are explicated, which may include discussion of new or revised directions for research.

The Manual of [*Regulations and Guidelines for Thesis Preparation*](#) is available on the GPS website.

Thesis Preparation

- In collaboration with the **Supervisor and Supervisory Committee** the **Student** will work on the area of research presented in the Candidacy Examination.
- The Supervisor arranges a meeting with the committee and the student *at least once annually* during this period.
- **Supervisor** reads and provides timely feedback (i.e., within two to three weeks) and guidance on thesis chapters and on the thesis as a whole. Members of the **Supervisory Committee** provide review and input on chapter drafts as warranted.

Exam Committee

- **Supervisor** confirms with examiners that they are willing to serve on the committee. The final committee comprises the members of the Supervisory Committee, one University Examiner, and one External Examiner approved by the Faculty of Arts.

Note: These examiners may be the same as for the Candidacy Exam. See: [Committee Membership Rules](#).

External Examiner

- **Supervisor** contacts a prospective External Examiner several months before the expected date of the final exam for an initial assessment of their interest in serving as an external examiner. Once preliminary interest has been confirmed, and **at least 10 weeks before the expected final exam date**, the Supervisor uploads the CV of the external using [this](#) form to start the approval process with the Faculty of Arts. See: GPS - [Approval of External Examiner](#)

Note: An External Examiner should be a recognized authority in the field, in a tenured university position, and active in graduate student supervision. The External Examiner must also not have any close personal or professional relationship to the supervisor or student.

Exam Arrangements

- Supervisors and co-supervisors are responsible for organizing the exams. **At least two months before the exam**, and if and when all members of the Supervisory Committee are ready to indicate that the thesis can go ahead to a final oral exam, the **Supervisor** contacts the members of the Supervisory Committee to request their confirmation in writing “that the thesis is of adequate substance and quality to warrant that the student proceed to the final examination.”
- The Supervisor shall, at this time, also recruit a Chair for the exam among members of the faculty in the Department.
- Once an External Examiner is approved and invited by the Dean of Arts, and **at least five weeks in advance**, the **Supervisor** contacts the student and *all* members of the committee to set the date and time for the exam, and to assess video-conferencing arrangements. The final details of the exam must be reported to the graduate office at this time in the form [here](#) (if they have not been already).
- **Student** must provide a final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate Program Administrator so that it can be sent to the External Examiner. GPS regulations require that **the External be given four weeks to read the dissertation**.
- The **student and supervisor** ensure that all other committee members receive a copy of the dissertation at least four weeks prior to the examination date
- If the exam is to begin with a public presentation, it is up to the **Student and Supervisor** to notify the department and other audience members. Usually, the public presentation takes up the first 10-15 minutes of the exam, after which visitors are asked to leave.

PhD Exam

- Final Exams typically last up to three hours but may run longer. Each committee retains the right to establish its examination processes. Most committees hold two rounds of questions, with each round of questions proceeding from the university examiners (usually starting with the External Examiner) to the Supervisory Committee and the Supervisor.
- It is standard procedure for the candidate to leave the room at the beginning of the exam while the committee establishes and clarifies procedures, and to leave again at the conclusion of the exam during deliberations.
- The final exam results in one of the following outcomes: adjourned, pass, pass subject to revisions, fail. The decision of the examining committee will be based both on the content of the thesis and on the candidate's ability to defend it. See [GPS Website](#) for rules and procedures governing the exam

Graduation

- **Student** applies for graduation on [Bear Tracks](#) and [uploads thesis](#) for GPS review.

V. MA (Thesis-Based) Program

The MA (Thesis-Based) Program provides students with an opportunity to earn a graduate degree that offers comprehensive training in social theory and research methods combined with specialized topical learning and research experience through thesis research in an area of interest. This program is suitable for students who are interested in sociology and criminology.

The time required to complete this program will vary according to the previous education of the applicant and the nature of the research undertaken, but typically students will take a *minimum* of two years (24 months).

MA (Thesis) Program Timeline

Year One

☐ Complete INT D 710	By... December 31
☐ Identify the Supervisor	March 1
☐ Complete Mandatory Sociology Courses	April 30
☐ Submit First Draft of Thesis Proposal to Supervisor	July 1
☐ Identify Examination Committee members	July 7
☐ Complete GPS Annual Report	July 30
☐ Distribute Thesis Proposal to Examination Committee	August 31

Year Two

☐ Defend Thesis Proposal	By... October 1
☐ Ensure Elective Courses Are Completed	April 30
☐ Final Oral Examination	August 31
☐ Submit Thesis	Convocation Deadline

Note: All MA Thesis Students must be registered full time to maintain standing in the program. When not taking courses equal to nine credits, full-time registration in any given term is fulfilled by registering in thesis credits: Thesis 903, 906, or 909 as required to maintain fulltime registration of 9 credits per term.

MA (Thesis) Program Requirements

- **Coursework:** 6 courses at 3 units each for a total of **18 units**

MA (Thesis) students are required to complete [18 course-based units](#). These 12 units of the required coursework include 4 required courses and 2 elective graded 500- and 600-level courses.

- [SOC 533](#) Seminar in Research Design - 3 units
- [SOC 535](#) Seminar in Contemporary Sociological Theory - 3 units
- [SOC 515](#) Quantitative Methods in Social Research - 3 units
- [SOC 518](#) Qualitative Methods in Social Research - 3 units
- Two (2) elective courses - 6 units

Elective courses may be taken within or outside the Department. Independent reading courses or courses outside the Faculty of Arts must be approved by the Sociology Graduate office.

Students are expected to complete all required courses within their first year of the program. All coursework must be completed by the end of the second year.

- **Thesis**

Students are expected to complete and defend a thesis by the end of the program. This includes the completion of a proposal defense prior to October 1st of the second year in the program.

- **Ethics Training:**

All MA students are required to complete INT D 710 to fulfill the GPS [Ethics + Academic Citizenship Requirement](#).

- **Professional Development:**

All graduate students must complete the GPS mandated [Professional Development Requirement](#) comprising an IDP booklet and 8 hours of approved activities.

Note: Students in the MA and PhD programs are also expected to attend a series of Professional Skills Workshops hosted by the Department.

Program Total: 18 units + a thesis

MA Thesis Proposal

Initial summary of proposal by early summer of the first year and full proposal by October 31 of the second year

Purpose: The proposal should demonstrate that the candidate is able to work in a scholarly manner and is acquainted with the principal works on the subject of the thesis. It should also demonstrate the viability of the project by, for instance, identifying source material and providing a timeline for the project. As far as possible, the thesis proposal should be an original contribution.

Proposal Preparation

- **MA student** identifies a **Supervisor** by March 1 of the first year, and begins to work with the Supervisor on the Thesis Proposal.
- By the summer term of the first year, the **student** submits a preliminary draft of their thesis proposal to the Supervisor.
 - Proposals vary in length, but generally they are 20-25 pages long.
 - Strong proposals will describe a research topic, methodology, and methods with background research and a clear plan for completing the research
- **Supervisor** works with the student to identify two Reviewers (not including the co-supervisor if there is one). Reviewers can include one faculty member outside Sociology. Adjuncts are also able to act as reviewers.
- **Student** distributes a full-length Thesis Proposal to the reviewers once the supervisor is satisfied with the preliminary proposal.

Proposal Defence

- Following submission of the final draft of the Thesis Proposal to the reviewers, students must defend the proposal successfully in an oral examination. The examination includes the supervisor and the two reviewers.
- Students must complete the Thesis Proposal exam no later than **October 1 of the 2nd year**.
- The oral exam typically lasts 60 to 90 minutes, and is intended to ensure that a student is ready to proceed with the thesis project. The supervisor will Chair the thesis proposal defence. See [Master's Thesis Proposal](#)

MA (Thesis) Final Examination

To be completed by August 31 of the second year

Purpose: GPS standards for an MA thesis stipulate “the thesis, at a minimum, should reveal that the student is able to work in a scholarly manner and is acquainted with the principal works published on the subject of the thesis. As far as possible, it should be an original contribution.”

Thesis Preparation

- In collaboration with the **Supervisor** the **Student** works on the area of research presented in the Thesis Proposal to complete research and develop a Master’s thesis.
- **Supervisor** reads and provides timely feedback (i.e., within two to three weeks) and guidance on thesis chapters and on the thesis as a whole.
- The minimum standard for an MA thesis is a 15,000 to 20,000 word (50 to 70 page) original research paper.

Exam Preparation

- At least **six weeks** before the planned defence, the **Supervisor** arranges the date and time of the final exam and informs the Graduate Office by submitting the names and positions of the examination committee members along with the date and time of the examination using [this](#) form.
- The examination committee consists of (a) the Supervisor; (b) a University Examiner who also serves as Chair of the examination; and, (c) a second University Examiner.
- One of the University Examiners may also serve as Exam Chair.
- The two examiners are normally the same as the proposal exam. See: [Examining Committee Membership](#)
- At least **three weeks** before the exam, the **supervisor or student** forwards the final thesis to all committee members.

MA Exam

- Final Exams typically last 1.5 to 2 hours. Each committee retains the right to establish its examination processes. Most committees hold two rounds of questions, with each round of questions proceeding from the outside examiner to the supervisor.
- It is standard procedure for the candidate to leave the room at the beginning of the exam while the committee establishes and clarifies procedures, and to leave again at the conclusion of the exam during deliberations. To ensure that no recording devices are in the room, students should leave the room with their belongings
- The final exam is held, resulting in one of the following outcomes: adjourned, pass, pass subject to revisions, fail. The decision of the examining committee will be based both on the content of the thesis and on the candidate's ability to defend it.
- See GPS Website for rules and procedures governing the exam Decision of Master's Final Examination

Graduation

- **Student** applies for graduation on [Bear Tracks](#) and [uploads thesis](#) for GPS review.

VI. MA (Course-Based) Program

The flexible course-based MA program in Sociology provides students with an opportunity to earn a graduate degree in 8 to 12 months. It can be completed on a full-time or part-time basis and includes two pathways – a capstone option and a course-only option.

MA (Course-Based) Program Timelines

Capstone Option Timeline

Year One

- ☐ Determine Pathway with Grad Office
- ☐ Identify the Supervisor
- ☐ Complete INT D 710
- ☐ Complete Coursework
- ☐ Define Project
- ☐ Register in SOC 900 (Spring + Summer Terms)
- ☐ Final Project Examination

By...

November 1
December 1
December 31
April 30
May 1
Registration Deadlines
August 31

Course Only Option Timeline

Year One

- ☐ Determine Pathway with Grad Office
- ☐ Complete INT D 710
- ☐ Complete Coursework

By...

November 1
December 31
August 31

Note: Suggested timelines are provided for full-time course study. Students enrolled part-time have up to 6 years to complete their degree.

MA (Course-Based) Program Requirements

- **Required Coursework:** 4 courses at 3 units each for a total of **12 units**

All MA (Course-Based) students are required to complete [12 units of mandatory courses](#).

- [SOC 533](#) Seminar in Research Design - 3 units (course includes research proposal capping exercise)
- [SOC 535](#) Seminar in Contemporary Sociological Theory - 3 units
- [SOC 515](#) Quantitative Methods in Social Research - 3 units
- [SOC 518](#) Qualitative Methods in Social Research - 3 units

In addition to these core 12 units, students must also complete one of the two following options to fulfill the degree requirements:

- a. **Course Option (12 units):** Four (4) additional graded 500- and 600-level courses, two of which can be taken outside the Department. Independent reading courses or courses outside the Faculty of Arts must be approved by the Sociology Graduate office.

OR

- b. **Capstone Option (12 units):** Two (2) graded 500- and 600-level courses, which can be taken within or outside the Department (6 units) + a capping project (6 units). Capping projects ([SOC 900](#)) can vary and may include a literature review and project proposal, an independent empirical research project, a practicum, or community-based research. Unlike the Course Option, students in the Capstone Option work with a supervisor to complete the capping project.

- **Ethics Training:**

All MA students are required to complete INT D 710 to fulfill the GPS [Ethics + Academic Citizenship Requirement](#).

- **Professional Development:**

All graduate students must complete the GPS mandated [Professional Development Requirement](#) comprising an IDP booklet and 8 hours of approved activities.

Note: Students in the MA and PhD programs are also expected to attend a series of Professional Skills Workshops hosted by the Department.

Program Total: 24 units

MA (Course-Based) Capstone Option

By the end of the program

Purpose: The six-credit capstone project (SOC 900) is a flexible option for capping the degree through applying knowledge and skills gained in the program. Most students complete the project in the Winter or Spring/Summer terms with faculty member supervision. Capstone opportunities are flexible and can include:

- Completing student-led individual research (i.e., student has their own project that a faculty member supervises)
- Participating on a faculty member's research project in some capacity (e.g., supporting a literature review, conducting interviews, analyzing survey data, helping with knowledge mobilization activities)
- Working as part of a research team (e.g., student joins a larger project team often working with other students who can help mentor them)
- Collaborating on a community engaged project (e.g., student is involved with a community organization and wants to continue work with them)

Capstone Project Details

- The project is usually completed during the Spring/Summer term for students completing the degree in 12 months or during the Winter term for students completing the degree in 8 months.
- By December of the first year in the program, a **Student** completing this pathway confirms a **Supervisor** for the capstone project, and begins working with them to define, launch, and complete the project.
- The Student and Supervisor then submit a proposal for the SOC 900 capstone to the Grad Office by completing the [SOC 900 Registration Form](#).
- Grad Office reviews the proposed SOC 900 plan and registers student in the course.
- Student completes the project components or activities and submits deliverables to project supervisor.

Outcome

- The project supervisor evaluates the project. The outcome of the project is either pass with a grade of Complete (CR), or fail with no grade point value assigned (NC). **Supervisor** enters the grade and informs the Grad Office and student of the final outcome.
Note: If the student will not be completing the project in their current term of SOC 900 registration, **Supervisor** should ask the graduate office to submit an IN grade.

Graduation

- Student applies for graduation on [Bear Tracks](#) upon completion of all coursework.

VII. Resources

U of A Resources

Graduate Program Policies, Procedures, and Forms

[Graduate Program Manual](#)

- Provides rules and regulation governed by the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

[Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies Forms Cabinet](#)

[Registration and Fees Deadlines](#)

[Sociology Intranet](#)

- Resources and forms for graduate programs

Supervision

[Graduate Program Manual](#)

Graduate Student Employment

[Graduate Student Collective Agreement](#)

[Student Employment](#)

Professional Development

[Professional Development Resources, Workshops, Programs, and Opportunities \(GPS\)](#)

Awards and Funding

[GPS Awards and Funding](#)

[Sociology Awards Page](#)

[Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council](#)

Further Graduate Resources

An Ongoing Collection of Suggested Readings

General Information and Advice

Calarco, J. M. (2020). *A field guide to grad school: Uncovering the hidden curriculum*. [Princeton University Press](#).

Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT/ACPPU) Bulletin - www.caut.ca/resources/publications

Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey - www.cags.ca/cgpss/

Chronicle of Higher Education – www.chronicle.com

Haggarty, K.D. & Doyle, A. (2015). *57 Ways to Screw Up in Grad School*. [University of Chicago Press](#).

Hook and Eye: Fast feminism, slow academe – www.hookandeye.ca

Maldonado, V., Wiggers, R., & Arnold, C. H. (2013). *So you want to earn a PhD?: The attraction, realities, and outcomes of pursuing a doctorate*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/At-Issue-Doctoral-ENGLISH.pdf>

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The Professor is In – www.theprofessorisin.com

Wall, S. (2008). Of heads and hearts: Women in doctoral education at a Canadian university. In *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31(3), 219-228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2008.04.007>

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Halse, C. (2011). 'Becoming a supervisor': the impact of doctoral supervision on supervisors' learning. *Studies in higher education*, 36(5), 557-570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.594593>

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Manathunga, C., & Goozée, J. (2007). Challenging the dual assumption of the 'always/already' autonomous student and effective supervisor. *Teaching in higher education*, 12(3), 309-322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510701278658>

Thomas, K. M., Willis, L. A., & Davis, J. (2007). Mentoring minority graduate students: Issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students. *Equal Opportunities International*, 26(3), 178-192. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150710735471>

Wang, T., & Li, L. Y. (2011). 'Tell me what to do' vs. 'guide me through it': Feedback experiences of international doctoral students. *Active learning in higher education*, 12(2), 101-112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787411402438>

Writing

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- Kennelly, I., & Spalter-Roth, R. M. (2006). Parents on the job market: Resources and strategies that help sociologists attain tenure-track jobs. *The American Sociologist*, 37(4), 29-49. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02915066>
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